

LEAFLET EUROPA INTERNATIONAL & EUROPA FILM FESTIVALS

TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN SALES AGENTS & FESTIVALS

SALES & FESTIVALS

A SALES COMPANY

A sales company aims to represent and sell films on the international market. To do so, companies are divided into different departments.

1. At the beginning of the process, the **acquisition department** is in contact with the producers of the film, who will mandate the sales company to represent the film outside of its territories of origin (usually the producers will exclude the territories of production and co-production because they will choose to handle their film directly with festivals and distributors in their own country). The sales mandate usually grants the exclusive rights to the sales agent to exhibit and conclude deals in the territories defined, for a certain period (in years).
2. The **sales department** deals with all of the buyers (all-rights distributors, TV broadcasters, VOD platforms, ancillaries), to sell the film and develop commercial exploitation. With all-rights distributors, once they conclude a deal, the sales agent is no longer in charge of the exploitation of the film in the sold territory: the distributor bears this responsibility, also for festivals in the territory of the distributor. Non-exclusive deals can usually be concluded with broadcasters, platforms and ancillaries. Every deal is concluded for a limited period and specific territories.
3. The **festivals department** is usually represented by one person, the festival manager. They are responsible for the exploitation of the film in the non-commercial circuit and play a double role in the life of the film.
Firstly, the goal of the festival manager is to position the film and give it the best exposure on the international market and to find the best opportunity to launch the film, with 2 options: film for sales or film for festivals, depending on the film. The premiere will define, and have a decisive impact on, the sales strategy. Indeed, the festivals also organize the most important film markets, attended by buyers seeking to acquire films from sales agents for their territory and audience.
Secondly, for the territories where the film doesn't have a distribution deal, the festival manager is in charge of placing the film on the non-commercial circuit.
4. Finally, the **servicing and marketing departments** are responsible for collecting all of the material related to the film from the producers, and then provide the buyers with such material in order for them to exploit the film. Furthermore, those 2 departments usually take care of creating the duplication of a DCP for the festivals department, and the advertising material (poster, press kit, trailer etc.) of the films that the company represents.

A FESTIVAL MANAGER

The festival manager of the company is responsible for relations with all of the festivals. They take care of the submissions to festivals, answers requests received, and prospect new festivals. Once a film has been selected, they coordinate the invitation, negotiation, confirmation and delivery.

Their work is based on a strategy pre-defined together with the sales executives of the company. First, they will submit the film to the most important international festivals in the world (A-Festivals), for the world/international premiere. This moment in the life of the film will be decisive. It is at the world premiere that the film has the best chance of being sold to distributors, receiving visibility and being seen by festival programmers from all over the world.

After that, a specific strategy will be developed for each territory to help sell the film. That means the festival manager will first target the festivals that will potentially help convince a local distributor to buy the film.

If there is no distribution deal after the national premiere, the festival manager will continue to look for film festivals in the territory, trying to give it the best exposure for the audience to have access to a film that will, in the end, not get theatrical distribution.

In this sense, festivals are launch platforms for the film. A festival is the first place where the film will be seen by a local audience, get the attention of industry professionals and the press. In addition, an invitation to visit the festival, allows the filmmaker to meet the audience abroad and experience the reception of their film. It is also an opportunity for the filmmaker to participate in the promotion of her/his film (by giving interviews, etc.).

A FESTIVAL

A film festival is a platform providing a cinematic experience to a diverse audience. It is understood to be an event programming eligible films (fiction, documentary, or animation), that are being screened to wide audiences, including the general public, as well as accredited, international, audio-visual professionals and the press. Within this framework, there is a strong emphasis on independent, cultural films.

Festivals can be specified as locally bound events with several film screenings which take place:

- on at least three consecutive days
- with at least fifteen films (or about forty-five short films) or film screenings
- at one or more venues; and which offer professional and film cultural exchange
- have preferably already been held at least three times

Further criteria are:

- traceable programmatic line and clear profile
- regional and/or national and/or international relevance
- conducted periodically
- competent management, due and proper business conduct
- professional projection/suitable for cinemas and accompanied screening situation
- predominantly original versions
- film guests and industry professionals

A FESTIVAL PROGRAMMER

Festival programmers are in charge of sourcing and selecting the most appropriate films for their respective events. They intend to create a balance of tone and form and aim to develop a relationship with the audience or to draw attention to groundbreaking films. They devise a selection of films that most appeal to their regular audience as well as attracting new business.

Festival programmers are responsible for the relationship with the sales companies. Usually, the representative from the sales company with whom the festival programmers are in touch is the Festival manager. They will work together to provide the festival audience and the film with the best possible experience.

SCREENING FEES

Beyond the artistic and promotional benefits of having a film in a festival, the task of the festival manager is to create the best exposure for the film in the non-commercial exploitation and generate the related revenues via screening fees. There is also the possibility of other specific deals that do not include a screening fee, such as an awarded competition or a talent strategy.

The interest for a producer to mandate a sales agent to represent her/his film is to apply international market expertise, by finding the best place to give exposure to the film, but also to generate exploitation revenues, both commercial and non-commercial. Screening fees are, in that sense, crucial for both the sales agent and the producer. Especially now that the market has become so fragile for independent films, frequently, the non-commercial income will represent the main - not to say the only - resource.

The festival manager will aim to confirm as many festivals as possible to generate more screening fees.

As a consequence of this, the festival manager cannot afford to have a festival that does not pay a screening fee or holds the payment indefinitely. Not paying the screening fee is irreverent not only to the sales agent, but mainly to the producer and to the director of the film, and last but not least, unfair to fellow festivals who follow this rule.

The festivals are asked to proceed with the payment of the screening fees ahead of the screening, otherwise the festival manager is allowed to cancel the agreement and the delivery of the screening copy. The idea is to treat invoices as contracts (except if agreed otherwise between the 2 parties). Please, **remember that all fees discussed exclude VAT or any other taxes** that apply to the territory of the festival.

PREMIERE STATUS – SOME DEFINITIONS

- 1/ WORLD PREMIERE - first screening of the film in the world
- 2/ INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE - first screening of the film outside of the country(ies) of origin
- 3/ REGIONAL PREMIERE - first screening in a respective region (needs to be specified, could be a continent, group of countries etc.)
- 4/ „NATIONAL“ PREMIERE - first screening in the respective country
- 5/ FIRST SCREENING for premiere means a first screening open to the public / announced to the public - that could mean a free screening, a ticketed screening, a festival screening, an online screening or broadcast screening (any public presentation of the film)

Closed market and industry screenings and secret crew screenings are not considered screenings for the purpose of premiere status and are allowed before the premiere.

As briefly explained earlier, premiere status will impact the sales strategy of the film. Priority is given to A-festivals for the world/international premiere.

Then, there are the regional and national premieres, that have an importance mainly when the festival giving the premiere of the film happens to host an important film market at the same time.

From the sales perspective, for most regional and national premieres, premiere status is not a priority when choosing a festival for the film, but from the festival perspective premiere status can be of relevance in terms of things like talent presence, media attention or funding allocations.

Festival managers keep in mind the premiere needs of festivals and create festival strategies for the territory based on those needs, often with a goal of having the film available for as many festivals and audiences as possible. Sales companies and festivals should communicate and respect strategic decisions and accommodate most interests.

In special cases, such as changes of festival dates or festival cancellations due to unforeseen circumstances, premiere status should be re-discussed and both sides agree to work together to find the best possible solution for the film.

RELATIONS BETWEEN SALES, FESTIVALS & DISTRIBUTORS

The main goal of a sales agent is to seek a distributor in a given territory. It means that even if the festival manager is discussing the invitation of a film with a festival, it will be left pending until a deal with the distributors is closed, unless the distributor gives his approval for the sales company/festival manager to handle the invitation directly. Then, it will be the responsibility of the distributor to accept or decline the festival's invitation, according to their own strategy for the film.

It is also common for a distributor to confirm a festival premiere in their territory, but the festival takes place before the film is delivered to the distributor. In this case the sales agent will handle delivery of the film and material to the festival directly, because the distributor does not have access to it at this stage.

In the case of local distributors that have taken local delivery, the sales agent remains the main contact for the festival. The festival should not transfer the material to the local distributor without authorization from the sales agent.

ONLINE SCREENINGS DURING A FESTIVAL

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, many festivals are now taking place in hybrid form, i.e. simultaneously in theatres and online in response to various health measures in place in some countries. As a result, festivals are increasingly negotiating to secure the rights to screen films both in theatres and online. This allows them to maintain their usual activities with their audiences regardless of the consequences of the current health situation. Films in the programme thus retain and can even enjoy increased exposure. If it makes sense for a particular screening of the film, the sales agent will do their utmost to work for the best interest of the film in terms of geoblocking.

However, in order to guard against piracy, the festival must be able to detail the settings of its streaming servicing system that will allow it to make content available on the web in a secure manner. In addition, to avoid any misunderstanding and to ensure the security of the film, several conditions for streaming can be included in the agreement between the festival and the sales agent, such as the duration of online availability, the maximum number of views, the number of screenings, geographical accessibility (geo-blocking) and all other necessary clauses. The festival is obliged to respect agreed streaming terms and sales agents have the right to request screening reports if needed.

Talent may be invited by festivals to produce short presentation videos to be shown prior to online screenings. These requests must be agreed upon in advance with the sales agent who will be in contact with the talent.

NON-THEATRICAL EXPLOITATION

Outside of film festivals, sales agents consider as non-theatrical screening any screening that takes place with an audience, should it be restricted or not. The following count as non-theatrical screenings:

- Screenings with schools and universities
- Screenings with embassies, NGOs
- Screenings with institutions (national or film institutes)
- Film museums and cinematheques
- Unique screenings in theatres as part of a special programme

They are subject to the same rules as film festivals and must be incorporated in the strategy of the film, also in terms of events. Festivals should have priority when it comes to these screenings.

FESTIVALS DOING DISTRIBUTION AND VOD

The classic commercial market is being increasingly weakened by the global change in the industry. Festivals, on the other hand, are growing and becoming the main access for audiences to see independent films, to the point that many of them now are developing distribution and VoD activities.

However, sales agents are confronted with the problem that working with festivals doing distribution is sometimes not competitive enough, as they often cannot commit to pay MGs. It is still very hard for sales agents to find a real interest in selling a film to a festival providing distribution without an MG, as it would be difficult to convince the producer of the interest they have in allowing such deals.

SUBMISSION & BOOKINGS

A PERFECT BOOKING PROCESS

- Sales agent submits the film / the festival asks for a screener / the film is seen at the festival by programmers
- The festival invites the film
- The sales agent responds to the invitation and confirms (or not) interest in the screening
- Festival and sales agent agree on materials (such as copy), conditions (number of screenings, fees, section, invitations) and deadlines.
- THE FILM IS CONFIRMED
- The materials are transferred

IMPORTANT NOTES ON THE BOOKING PROCESS

Submissions of the film

Submissions can be completed by providing a link for consideration, responding to a link request, submission by email, meeting at a market (unless a deal is made), access to the screener or even a submission via popular submission platforms - it DOES NOT MEAN the film can be screened. At this point both the festival and the sales agent are allowed to decline the film or festival.

Submitting the film means only that if both parties are interested in collaboration, and providing the conditions are acceptable, they can discuss the details after an invitation.

Invitation

If the film is programmed, the sales agent should let the festival know if they can screen the film as soon as possible, but the festival needs to understand that there are a lot of parties involved - such as people in charge of sales, potential deals in the midst of negotiation, potential distributors, film institutes, producers and premiere obligations, that forces the sales agents to wait especially when the invitation is sent months in advance! The festival should inform the agent if there is a deadline. So, if the invitation expires after some time, the festival should inform the sales agent in advance.

In addition, the festival should make sure that they are contacting the sales agent directly for confirmation, not the directors / producers / actors or other parties involved with the film. By agreeing to the screening, the sales agent guarantees they have the right to do so and can clear them for the screening.

Reply to invitation

If the sales agent replies to the invitation and is interested in screening the film, the festival should understand that the deal depends on the agreement of all conditions, so showing interest should not be viewed as confirmation - it merely means both parties want to work together and agree to figure out a deal in good faith.

Negotiations

When the conditions are being negotiated, the important aspects are the format in which the film will be screened, invitations for the director or other representatives, the fees and the number of screenings.

Materials and invitations will be discussed in further detail, but it is important for the booking process that an agreement to screen the film is dependent on materials (the copy) and that ownership of the copy is not the same as having the right to screen the film.

All promotional and screening materials of the film are only to be used in the context of the festival/event where they have agreed/negotiated screening rights. Festivals should not exploit the film further.

If the sales agent agrees that the festival can screen the film from the DCP, the screening rights are not cleared for other formats such as BluRay, DVD or online streaming unless clearly approved by the sales agent.

Festivals should only use the provided promotional materials except if explicitly agreed otherwise with the sales, then festivals may be allowed to create its own promo material.

The screening fees may not cover the material delivery costs; the festival manager agrees to let the festival know in advance about the delivery costs. The delivery costs are requested by the lab the sales company is working with.

Online screenings

The possible effects of the festival changing its programme to a virtual/hybrid edition should be discussed as early as possible. It is important to note that rights for a theatrical screening do not automatically mean the film can be screened online, if physical screenings are not possible. Each case should be discussed individually between the festival and the sales agent. Online screenings are often considered as different screening rights and/or have different holdbacks (TVOD, SVOD, free VOD) and sales agents are not always able to agree to online screenings for all films.

Online screening conditions

In case of online screenings, conditions such as number of views, number of screenings, geoblocking, format of screening (whether open for the whole festival or at the specific time), timeframe and security measures used by the festival should be discussed before the screening is confirmed.

Confirmation

If the film is CONFIRMED = both parties agree on conditions and confirm the deal - the film should not be withdrawn from the festival by either side.

Of course, specific situations can affect either side leading to a screening being cancelled. In that case the other party should be informed as soon as possible, and the situation should be resolved in good faith.

It is unacceptable for a film to be confirmed weeks or months in advance and suddenly, when the programme is published by a festival, the film is omitted, or the festival or sales agent randomly decides to change their mind. Any changes in the programme need to be discussed and require further approval by both parties.

Materials

Any materials relating to the film - such as copies or KDMs - should be transferred to the festival only after the invoice is paid. Of course, the sales agents are aware that sometimes things have to move quickly and in the case of a festival deadline, the sales agents should help as much as they can and send the materials before the payment – however, this should be an exception, not a rule.

Promotional materials should be transferred and sent to the festival as soon as possible (but can be subject to availability) to help with the workflow.

Both festivals and sales agents should be open-minded regarding the information form needed. Festivals should make sure they only ask for information that is essential and not random items that will never be used. Most sales agents have info-sheets available they can provide and perhaps filling out a form is not necessary (especially if it's not an automatic form but a word / pdf / hand-filled form that the festival will need to copy-paste or rewrite - there is no need to duplicate work). The sales agent should provide all materials they can if needed.

Cinando Applet can be used to transfer the information automatically from Cinando to forms that are connected with a database that requires roughly half a day of IT work by the festival.

Other issues

Sales agents also recommend festivals use the Cinando Applet film submissions. It is a simple solution to transfer all of the information from the Cinando page to the festivals' database that saves time for both sides. More information can be found here: <https://www.europa-international.org/projects/cinando-applet-for-festivals-entry-forms/>

Safety

Safety of materials - it is important for the sales agents, as well as for the festivals, that they keep the materials very safe and that the films are not pirated. Sales companies are using watermarks, safe (geoblocked) screeners and different apps to protect films. Sales agents understand that it might make the work of festivals a little bit more difficult, and it is not because the sales agents do not trust the festivals - there are a lot of people who will be in contact with the materials. Sales agents are also bound by agreements with distributors, producers and other parties not to let the film end up on torrents, so it is out of their hands when sales agents say they cannot send a downloadable screener without a watermark – they are just making sure the film is as safe as possible. Due to agreements with distributors, producers and third parties, the screening link may also sometimes be geoblocked.

COMMUNICATION & GUEST COORDINATION

FESTIVAL MANAGER IS THE MAIN CONTACT

The festival manager should remain the main contact point throughout the whole process of the collaboration; from screener requests up to print traffic. If they are involved from start to finish, they can offer quick solutions and provide tips and suggestions in a timely manner.

FESTIVALS ARE GREAT MARKETING PLATFORMS FOR THE FILM! SALES SHOULD BE INCLUDED AS PART OF KEY INFO WHERE POSSIBLE

The sales company and at least one contact (email address) must appear in the catalogue and the website of the festival. This is crucial for buyers and festivals who would like to get in touch with the sales agent and see/share the film after the festival (and thanks to the festival!) Sales agents remain the first contact for a film.

SALES CONTACT SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE FILM (INCL. TALENT INVITATIONS)

When the festival wants to get in touch with talent (including directors, producers etc.), the festival manager is the main point of contact. Often, the talent does not make the final decision and as the sales companies are the key contact for festival strategy, it's important that they know what is happening to help coordinate travel, invitations and DCP availability. Also, the sales agents often know their filmmakers and their agents personally, so they can facilitate things in the festival's favour!

POST - FESTIVAL CASH PRIZE CLAIM

In order to avoid any miscommunication on non-artistic matters, when a film or talent has been nominated for selection in a cash-prize competition, terms and conditions must be clearly communicated to the sales company in writing prior to the first screening; stating a clear payment amount, currency and date, as well as a date of currency exchange rate, if the film or talent is to win the prize, and who receives the prize. The cash prize does not replace the screening fees. It is an incentive, not a reward.

FESTIVAL OR MARKET SCREENING TICKET ALLOTMENT

The cinematographic industry agrees that discovering a film on a big screen with an enthusiastic audience is exactly what festivals are about, so the sales agents would like to be able to offer film crew (and select distributors if the film is still available for their territories), the possibility of watching the film at festival screenings. Sales agents would truly appreciate a reasonable ticket allotment in relation to the size of the screening room where possible, especially when the festival takes place in the country of production or co-production.

UNPLANNED SCREENINGS

Sales agents are all working to get festival screening rooms fully booked! It is good news when the festival requests to add extra screenings; but it is even better to request this as soon as possible (especially for last minutes KDM requests and because of financial aspects).

DATA COLLECTION ON SCREENINGS

Sales agents would love to be ubiquitous, but unfortunately, they are not. They know the festivals work incredibly hard to drive press and sell tickets, and it would be fantastic for the sales agents to know how many people attended, any press coverage the film received, and if possible, which industry individuals attended the screenings. Of course, this cannot happen for all films and screenings, but the premiere information would be invaluable to the sales teams.

TALENT INVITATIONS – MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Having guests attending a festival is excellent for the audience, the coverage and also for the director. Make sure to offer them the best experience possible from the moment they set foot in the city until they get back on the plane; ground transfers, decent hotels, Q&A, precise schedule, invitations to industries activities, tour of the city, even local attractions. The more the guest enjoys their stay, the greater the chances that they will come back with their next film!

MATERIAL DELIVERY

SALES AGENTS HANDLE SEVERAL FILMS AT THE SAME TIME

The sales agent will endeavor to send the film copy to the festival as early as possible, with the festival having provided their delivery instructions with plenty of notice and advised on preferred deadline to receive the material. The festival manager will try their best to meet the festival's deadline demands but sometimes there may be need for a little flexibility in regard to the print traffic.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Festivals should feel free to explain the reasons for early deadlines (tests in theatres etc.) as the sales agents might not be aware of a particular situation. Also, festival programmers should not hesitate to put the sales agents in contact with the festival's technical manager if the festival do not know how to answer questions regarding materials.

DIGITAL DELIVERY IS THE FUTURE, HELP TO SPREAD IT!

The advantages of digital delivery are of course, that it is quicker than sending a physical DCP. Unlike physical DCPs, digital deliveries will not be damaged during sending/shipment. In addition, festivals are not limited by the number of copies to have and the shipment schedule between festivals. However, it is important that festivals understand there is still a cost involved in sending the DCP digitally. Sometimes this cost can even be higher than shipment costs, so festivals may prefer to receive a physical DCP instead.

The festival is responsible for downloading the digital delivery link on time, expired aspera or H264 transfers' links may lead to extra cost to cover a second delivery (the laboratory charges the sales agent for the links and that will reflect on the festival costs).

FESTIVALS ARE TO COVER SHIPPING COSTS

The festival is to take charge of the shipping costs both ways, including taxes and customs, for the delivery of the screening material regardless of the screening fees applied, of the talent invitation and whether it is a physical or digital delivery. Shipping costs both ways are borne by the festival. If the material is to be received from another festival and sent on to the next one, only the inbound delivery should be at the festival charge. If the festival gets the copy from another festival, the festival sends it on to the following festival, which covers outbound delivery.

If the festival has to get in touch with the next festival, please cc the festival managers to keep them in the loop. As with any other delivery, a digital delivery has a cost that must be borne by the festival.

ALL SENT MATERIALS ARE LOANS

It is common practice in the industry that the sales agent sometimes forget to tell festivals that all materials (DCP, Blu-Ray, ProRes, H264, hard drives etc.) are on loan for the screenings and must be shipped back to the sales agent or the next festival according to the instructions solely given by the contact in the sales agent company. Ownership of the physical materials is not included in the screening fee. For digital deliveries, DCPs, ProRes and H264 must be deleted from the festival servers after the end of the festival. Materials created by the festival should not be transferred or sold to anyone without the sales agents' approval.

HOW TO MAKE A SHIPMENT 101

First step is to correctly pack the parcel to make sure the copy won't be damaged during transit. That is sometimes easier said than done. Second step is to follow given instructions and state the right declared value on the order and proforma to make sure the copy will not be held up at customs. For digital deliveries, make sure in advance and confirm with your IT if necessary that you have enough broadband width and storage space to download the files.

DAMAGES ON COPY

Unfortunately, sometimes even when all precautions are taken, the festival can receive a damaged copy. In case material gets damaged due to a lack of protection, the sender is responsible for covering the damage. In case material arrives without any visible damage from delivery but turns out to be broken and not properly working - the company which last tested/screened (apparently without it being damaged) is responsible for covering the replacement costs.

ONLINE SCREENINGS

Sales agents have very strict conditions for accepting online screenings. The platform used by the festival must have DRM security, geoblocking, cap on views and a time limit for availability. It is the responsibility of the festival to make sure its platform has the corresponding security settings. The provided H264 can include a watermark to track possible leaks. The sales agent can cancel an online screening if the agreed online screening conditions are not met by the festival.

BETTER TEST THAN SORRY

Once the festival has received the copy, they will test it in plenty of time prior to the first screening, to allow for replacement materials to be arranged if necessary, or any other issues are to be resolved. This also applies for digital deliveries: downloads should be made in a timely manner and testing done on time.

LET'S BE SUBTITLE FRIENDLY!

Subtitles created by the festival should be sent to the sales agent. The festival is supposed to provide subtitles as part of the contract, if they own them and they should make the best effort to provide access to them. However, if the festivals don't own the subtitles rights, festivals are encouraged to support the sales agent in getting in touch with subtitles owners. The same applies if the festival creates audio-description.

A LITTLE HELP IF YOU ARE NOT A DCP WIZARD

One may want to master all technical aspects of screening materials and DCP but sometimes one can't know it all. Below are details that will make festivals and programmers life easier:

DCP: Digital Cinema Package

A DCP is a collection of digital files used to store and convey digital cinema (DC) audio, image, and data streams. General practice adopts a file structure that is organized into a number of usually multi-gigabyte size Material eXchange Format (MXF) files, which are separately used to store audio and video streams, and auxiliary index files in XML format. The MXF track files contain image and audio essence that are compressed and encoded in order to reduce the huge amount of required storage. It could be physically (e.g. Hard Drive, Pen Drive, etc.) or digitally delivered.

CPL: Composition Playlist

On a DCP every composition is defined by a Composition Playlist, or CPL. As the name suggests, the CPL defines and orchestrates the playback of all track files that comprise the composition. It does so temporally, in a reel-by-reel fashion. Each version of a title will have a unique CPL. This could be a version having a certain picture type (a particular aspect ratio, or 2D vs 3D), a different sound mix (say, 5.1 or 7.1), a soundtrack in a particular language, subtitles in a particular language.

How to read a CPL:

The resulting standard CPL file name is usually structured like this:

Title of DCP_Content type-Content modifiers_Aspect ratio_Language-Subtitle language_Territory-Rating_Audio type_Resolution_Studio_ Date produced_Production facility_Version.

Naming Convention, it has two primary objectives:

- To ensure as much information as possible is visible
- To display the information in a specific order, in assigned fields, so that theatres will know where to look for specific information.
- To achieve these ends, most of the information is abbreviated – including the film title if necessary – and most of the abbreviations are standardized.

Title of DCP: Maximum 14 characters

Content Type: FTR -> Feature TLR -> Trailer

Content Modifiers: 2D or 3D, 2K, 4K

Aspect Ratio: F-> Flat S-> Scope C-> Full Container

Subtitle Language: XX -> No Subtitles. Upper Case indicates subtitles rendered by Server/Projector. Lower Case indicates Burn in Subtitles

Audio Type Resolution: 51, 71, 20 -> 5.1, 7.1, 2.0(Stereo)

Version: OV -> Original Version, VF-> Version File. On the same Hard Drive you could find a DCP with several CPLs. An Original Version- OV (e.g.. film without subtitles) and some Version File (e.g. VF1 with French Subtitles, VF2 with Spanish Subtitles, etc.). "Original Version" always contains an entire feature. The "VF" or "Version File" only contains a partial feature (e.g., subtitles, alternate language, etc.)

CPL Example:

MOVIE_FTR_S_EN_XX_EN_51_2K_IND_20190405_IND_OV

MOVIE_FTR_S_EN_FR_EN_51_2K_IND_20190405_IND_VF1

The first language code (“EN” in our example) represents the audio language. The second language code (FR) represents the subtitle language. Subtitles are either generated in the theatre by the Digital Cinema projector or are burned into the image by the studio. If the Language Code is UPPER CASE, the subtitles are generated in real time by the projector. If the Language Code is lower case, the subtitles are burned into the image already.

Encrypted and Non-Encrypted DCP

DCP could be Encrypted or Non-Encrypted. Encryption is an optional solution and it is used to protect from unauthorized use. A Non-Encrypted DCP could be open and screened without any Key, whereas a KDM is needed to open and play an Encrypted DCP.

KDM: Key Delivery Message

KDM is required to play an encrypted film on a DCP. Each KDM enables **one version of the film to play on a target playback device** for a limited duration, which could be hours, weeks, or months. The KDM is the vehicle for securely delivering symmetric content encryption keys to authorized playback equipment. A KDM targets only one playback device and is an expression of trust in the targeted device. Further, the trust conveyed by a KDM is only expressed for one encrypted Composition (CPL). In order to create a KDM, theatres must provide their Server Certificates in order to create the proper KDM.

DKDM: Distribution Key Delivery Message

DKDM is a security passcode that enables post and finishing facilities to unlock DCPs within their mastering stations for the purposes of localizing and even editing the content.

DKDM is not available for festival screenings, those are only for distributors.

DCPs are always the preferred format for theatrical screenings.

For venues without DCP equipment, other screening formats may be requested:

ProRes

Info: ProRes refers to several different file codecs mainly used for post-production and editing. A film’s master file is usually a ProRes, and the final export is used to create different screening formats like DCPs, H264s and BluRay copies. Apple ProRes formats range from ProRes 422, 422 HQ to 4444 etc. ProRes masters can have several audio tracks (stereo, 5.1, 7.1) embedded in one file.

Use: Some festivals require ProRes masters in order to create DCPs with foreign language subtitling. Others are not equipped for DCP screenings and thus prefer the highest possible quality video files for screenings in theatres. As ProRes files are usually as large or larger than DCPs in size (feature length films ranging from 80-160 GB), they are not commonly used for festival screenings.

Specs:

Resolution can be everything from HD to 8K. Files used for festivals are usually HD

Frame rates are usually 23.976, 25 or 50fps

Scan type can be progressive or interlaced, progressive preferred for festivals

Bit rates range from 45Mbps to 500Mbps

Extension: .mov

Make sure:

As ProRes files are used mainly for editing, here are a few things to check when using ProRes files for festival screenings:

Credits/subtitles/inserts: does the file have the correct layout of credits, inserts and subtitles? Are the subtitles burned in or delivered as separate .srt files?

Opening beeps/cards and Cleanfeeds/textless elements: as ProRes files are being used mainly for deliveries to broadcasters, make sure the files are ready to screen – without color bars, audio beeps and descriptive text inserts before the film begins. Check that there are no “cleanfeeds/textless elements” at the tail of the file after the end credits. The file should only include the film as it’s intended to be seen in a theatre, same layout as the DCP version.

Audio layout: the files should contain only the audio tracks needed for the screening, 2.0 stereo or 5.1 surround. Check that no additional editing audio tracks are included, like M&E tracks.

H264/5

Info: H264 and H265 are AVC video codec formats for distributing HD content digitally. It's the most common codec for online videos (YouTube, Vimeo, Netflix). It compresses video and audio to create small files (feature length films ranging from 5-20 GB) with high quality and resolution.

Some Sales agents have a strict policy regarding online screenings and anti-piracy measures and might provide with discreetly water-marked file - almost transparent - in order to not interfere with audience experience.

Use: H264s are used for online festival screenings, physical screenings in venues not supporting DCPs, for creating screener links (using Vimeo or special screening rooms).

Specs:

Resolution can be everything from HD to 4K. Files used for festivals are usually HD

Profiles: high Profile (HiP) is standard for H264s used for festivals

Frame rates are usually 23.976, 24, 25 or 50fps

Scan type can be progressive or interlaced, progressive preferred for festivals

Bit rates should be set to 10-20 Mbps

Extension: .mp4, .mov and many more

To Check:

Many of the same recommendations as for ProRes files are relevant for H264s to make sure the audio layout and credits/insert/subtitle layouts are correct.

BluRay / DVD

DVDs should no longer be used for any screenings, always opt for an H264 played back using VLC on a computer or similar instead.

BluRays are still required by some festivals for back-up purposes or for screenings in smaller settings. Please note that sales agents no longer automatically keep physical copies as these are so rarely needed. In comparison, H264 will always provide better playback. For BluRay discs, it's important to make sure the copy is region-free and that the subtitle layout and menu options are clear.

Galway, July 8th 2022.

