



BY MARIA BRASERO SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

# How Film Festivals Are Adapting to Change

Amidst a pandemic where public gatherings are considered a hazard, what’s the fate of all the hundreds of film festivals around the world? As Darwin predicted with various species, the ones that survive are the ones that figure out how to adapt to their new environment.

So, if you are a filmmaker with a project under your belt, I have good news for you. You don’t have to wait for God knows how long until the situation gets better – you can actually find many festivals that were able to redefine themselves and find creative ways to showcase their films.

We talked to Larry Laboe, the Executive Director of [NewFilmmakers LA \(NFMLA\)](#), a monthly film festival that showcases high-quality films from all over the world, and asked him how they managed to do the festival during the Covid-19 crisis.

*“The key steps in our process were to first ensure that the experience would generate results in regards to visibility for our filmmakers. Filmmaker career development, education, and professional connection building is a very important component of our festival and is what most of our filmmakers seem to be seeking. Secondly, we needed to ensure that our sponsors, supporters, and partners would be comfortable adapting to this new, virtual format with us. Finally, we needed to explore all our options for a virtual platform and build out a new run-of-show for presenting our festival in an online environment. For this, we chose to partner with Seed&Spark, a trusted partner that NFMLA has worked with over the years.”*

What are the main challenges?

*“The most relevant challenge is the ongoing battle for visibility. This task has become even more difficult because everyone is fighting for viewership amongst all the content platforms that are available as well as the never-ending stream of ZOOM’s that are taking place. The second challenge is fundraising. Because of the massive hit that the economy has taken due to COVID-19, it has put pressure on many funders who are no longer able to contribute or needed to greatly reduce their contribution. Figuring out ways to keep the festival and programming funded is a daily challenge and one that NFMLA is not alone in.”*

Despite all the challenges, the festival has managed to stay current and relevant. And it’s not the only one.

The [NY Latino Film Festival](#). is also going virtual. “Culture is not canceled. 2020 is not canceled. So we need to keep going,” Calixto Chinchilla, the founder of the NYLFF told us. The NYLFF is also offering drive-in screenings for John Leguizamo’s movie “Critical Thinking,” “Charm City Kings,” and the HBO documentary “Habla Now” which features testimonials from US Latinos – celebrities, recognized professionals, and everyday Latinos – who share honest stories about being Latino in the U.S.

Also, [Lady Filmmakers](#) is creatively adapting to circumstances by moving the festival both online as well as to drive-in movie events in Beverly Hills, CA and Myrtle Beach, SC. They will also have panels and Zoom parties with live entertainment.

[Hola Mexico Film Festival](#) has created a Virtual Theater online film series that started on May 21. The festival, which has been postponed until this September 2020, (originally slated for July) wants to help give viewers a chance to see some of the best films that have come out of Mexico in recent years and serve as a reminder of how much Mexican cinema has grown in the past two decades. The films have been specifically curated for this online theater experience.

As you can see, not all hope is lost. If you are a filmmaker, you have places that will celebrate your work. And if you are a cinephile, you can enjoy a myriad of pictures from the comfort of your couch.

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