



Tribeca launches distribution plans

New initiatives include online venture screening fest movies

By Gregg Kilday

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As the indie distribution scene continues to reconfigure itself, the umbrella organization that oversees the Tribeca Film Festival said Tuesday that it is launching two initiatives to forge new release patterns.

Tribeca Enterprises, established in 2003 by Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal and Craig Hatkoff, will court a wider audience through a new unit, Tribeca Film, which is described as a "comprehensive distribution and marketing platform." It also will introduce Tribeca Film Festival Virtual, an online venture that will screen full-length movies appearing at the Tribeca fest.

TFFV's first offering will be the world premiere of Edwards Burns' "Nice Guy Johnny," which will become available April 23, when it is also unveiled at the festival.

American Express, a founding sponsor of the fest, is becoming a founding partner of Tribeca Film and TFFV.

Tribeca Film plans to acquire and release films year-round through a network of distribution partners. Compressing traditional windows, it will feature VOD offerings that will launch day-and-date with the Tribeca fest, which runs from April 21-May 2, before expanding to theatrical, home entertainment and other platforms. It has already acquired 10 features, seven of which will screen day-and-date with the festival on such providers as Comcast, Cablevision and Verizon FiOS. The titles will remain available on a Tribeca-branded menu for a minimum of 60 days.

Tribeca Films' first batch of titles, which also will appear at the fest, include Participant Media and the Alliance for Climate Protection's environmental doc "Climate of Change": "Birth of Big Air," an ESPN documentary about extreme sports produced by Spike Jonze and Johnny Knoxville; "sex & drugs & rock & roll," the story of punk rock pioneer Ian Dury, played by Andy Serkis; and "Road, Movie," the tale of a young man driving across India. Other titles include the romantic comedy "TiMER," which played Tribeca last year.

The first TFFV, which runs April 23-30, will offer both paid and free content.

Passholders who pay \$45 will have access to original content, short films and a selection of festival titles. Free content will include a daily highlight reel from the fest, including news conferences and red carpet coverage.

"The traditional makeup of film festivals is evolving and distribution models are increasingly challenged," Tribeca chief creative officer Geoff Gilmore said. "At the same time, festivals have never had a more vital role in uniting audiences and serving as a marketing platform for films. We want Tribeca to become what New York City is: a spotlight for film culture in the world."

The Sundance Film Festival experimented with a similar, though more modest, VOD initiative in January. Under the title Sundance Selects, it offered three films premiering at the festival to cable and satellite TV systems for a 30-day period.