

Editorial · Festival Strategy

The Festival.

How we choose where to premiere. What each festival actually rewards. Why festival strategy is the most underrated financing decision in independent film — and the most expensive one to get wrong.

01

The Philosophy.

A festival premiere is not a trophy. It is a **launch sequence**. The festival determines which sales agents return our calls, which distributors show up, which critics write the first words about the film, and which audience encounters the film first.

Most independent films are sunk at premiere — not at production. A great film that premieres at the wrong festival can disappear. A good film that premieres at the right festival can carry a director's career for a decade.

Our job is to be honest about where each Nemea film realistically belongs, not where we wish it belonged. Chasing the wrong tier is the most common — and most expensive — mistake in this industry.

Three rules we do not break.

One world premiere. A film has exactly one world premiere. It cannot be taken back. Every other screening is downstream of that decision.

Honest tier before ambitious tier. If a film is an honest Rotterdam Tiger film, premiering it in Venice Orizzonti and being rejected burns the best realistic path. Always submit to the realistic tier first, with the aspirational tier as an optional stretch — never the other way.

Premiere rules are non-negotiable. A film screened publicly anywhere — any screening, any country — burns its world-premiere status. That includes cast and crew screenings, investor screenings, market screenings without proper flagging.

OPERATING PRINCIPLE

A festival strategy is **set at greenlight, not at picture lock**. The target festival shapes the delivery schedule, the sales-agent relationship, the marketing posture, and the rough-cut calendar. **Films edited without a festival target drift.**

02

The Tiers.

Not all festivals carry the same weight. The tier system below is how we internally classify venues — not by prestige alone, but by **what a premiere there is actually worth in sales, press, and career trajectory**.

A

Big Five

WORLD-PREMIERE FESTIVALS

Cannes · Venice · Berlin · Toronto · Sundance. The premiere venues that define a year in cinema. A main competition slot at any of these is the ceiling for an independent film. **A film here is a career event.** Sub-sections (Un Certain Regard, Orizzonti, Panorama, Platform, World Cinema Dramatic) are still top-tier.

A-

Parallel Sections

CANNES-ADJACENT + VENICE-ADJACENT

Directors' Fortnight, Semaine de la Critique (Cannes) · Giornate degli Autori, Settimana della Critica (Venice). Independently curated, often more adventurous than the official selections, and **a launch here does not disqualify a film from building on other tiers.** Historic launch points for Spike Lee, the Dardennes, Ken Loach.

B+

Strong Second Tier

PRESTIGE WITHOUT BIG FIVE PRESSURE

Rotterdam (IFFR) · Locarno · San Sebastián · SXSW · Karlovy Vary · Tribeca. **Lower rejection risk, real industry attendance, meaningful awards, and a legitimate path to global SVOD sales.** Often the right home for a debut auteur film that would be lost in a Big Five section.

B

Regional Launchpads

WHERE WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND IP

Morelia (FICM) · Guadalajara (FICG) · BAFICI (Buenos Aires) · Mar del Plata · Havana. Domestic prestige, Oscar qualification paths for shorts, pipeline into Cannes Critics' Week via the Morelia partnership. Not where we premiere a feature — **where we host, build, and catch early work.**

C

Specialty & Genre

WHERE SPECIFIC FILMS FIND THEIR AUDIENCE

Sitges (genre/horror) · Fantasia Montréal · CPH:DOX (documentary) · IDFA (documentary) · Annecy (animation) · Tribeca · Fantastic Fest. **Niche authority.** A horror film at Sitges travels further than the same film at a generalist festival.

THE TIER MISTAKE

A common error is treating Tier A as the only legitimate target. For most Nemea films — \$2M budgets, first or second features, Spanish-language — **Tier B+ is often the honest, correct, and more successful premiere.** Rotterdam Tiger, Locarno Concorso, or San Sebastián Zabaltegi can launch a film further than a buried Cannes Special Screening.

The Big Five.

Deep profiles of the world-premiere festivals. Sections, premiere rules, deadlines, what they actually reward.

Cannes Festival de Cannes · 79th Edition MAY 12–23, 2026 CANNES, FRANCE JURY PRESIDENT: PARK CHAN-WOOK 	
SECTIONS	Official: Competition · Out of Competition · Un Certain Regard · Cannes Premiere · Midnight Screenings · Special Screenings · Cannes Classics · La Cinef. Parallel: Directors' Fortnight (Quinzaine des cinéastes) · Semaine de la Critique · ACID.
PREMIERE RULE	World premiere strictly required for Competition. Parallel sections accept films that have not premiered internationally.
DEADLINES 2026	Feb 25 (La Cinef school films) · March 2 (shorts) · March 13 (features) · April 1 (Classics).
VOLUME	2,541 feature films submitted (2026). 21 in main competition. Critics' Week: 1,050 submissions for 11 slots.
AWARDS	Palme d'Or · Grand Prix · Jury Prize · Best Director · Best Screenplay · Caméra d'Or (best first feature across all sections, including parallel).
MARKET	Marché du Film — the largest film market in the world. If we premiere at Cannes, the market is where the film is sold.
WHAT IT REWARDS	Auteur vision at scale. Formally ambitious work. Political cinema. Cannes famously favors directors who return — it builds relationships across decades.
NEMEA TARGET	Un Certain Regard is the realistic aim for a strong sophomore Nemea feature. Critics' Week is the correct target for a first or second feature by a director with real voice. Directors' Fortnight is where more adventurous or genre-bending work finds its home.

Venice

Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica · 83rd Edition

SEPTEMBER 2–12, 2026
LIDO DI VENEZIA, ITALY
DIRECTOR: ALBERTO BARBERA

SECTIONS

Official: Venezia 83 (Competition) · Out of Competition · Orizzonti · Venice Spotlight · Venice Classics · Venice Immersive · Biennale College Cinema. **Parallel:** Settimana Internazionale della Critica · Giornate degli Autori.

PREMIERE RULE

World premiere required for all competitive sections. Films must have been completed after September 6, 2025. Venice Immersive accepts international premieres.

DEADLINES 2026

May 4 (Classics) · May 7 (Immersive) · May 28 (Orizzonti Shorts) · **June 4 (features).**

AWARDS

Golden Lion · Silver Lion · Grand Jury Prize · Volpi Cup (acting) · **Luigi De Laurentiis Award (Lion of the Future)** for debut features across all competitive sections.

INDUSTRY PROGRAMS

Venice Production Bridge — the festival's industry arm. Includes **Venice Gap-Financing Market, Final Cut in Venice** (works-in-progress from Africa, Latin America, Middle East), **Meet the Streamers.**

WHAT IT REWARDS

Prestige, slow cinema, visual authorship. Venice is the launch pad for Oscar campaigns — a September premiere gives a film the fall window. Roma, The Shape of Water, Nomadland all launched here.

NEMEA TARGET

Orizzonti is the right aim for new-talent work and formal experimentation. **Giornate degli Autori** for independent, character-driven debut features. **Settimana della Critica** for first or second features. Santiago's A Cielo Abierto premiered here.

Berlinale

Berlin International Film Festival · 76th Edition

FEBRUARY 12–22, 2026
BERLIN, GERMANY

SECTIONS

Competition · **Perspectives** (debut fiction competition — replaced Encounters in 2025) · Panorama · Generation (Kplus + 14plus) · Berlinale Shorts · Forum · Berlinale Classics · Berlinale Special.

PREMIERE RULE

World or international premiere required for Competition. European premiere required for Perspectives, Panorama, Generation, Forum.

DEADLINES 2026 EDITION

Oct 22, 2025 (features) · Nov 5, 2025 (shorts). Fee: €175 features · €75 shorts.
Registration portal only — no FilmFreeway.

AWARDS

Golden Bear · Silver Bear (Director, Screenplay, Acting, Supporting Acting, Artistic Contribution) · **TEDDY Award** (queer cinema, across all sections) · Berlinale Documentary Award · Best First Feature.

MARKET

European Film Market (EFM) — the second-largest film market after Cannes. Held concurrently. Early in the calendar year, which shapes the entire spring sales cycle.

WHAT IT REWARDS

Political cinema, human rights, queer cinema, collective authorship. Panorama describes itself explicitly as "queer, feminist, political." A film with a social urgency finds its audience here faster than anywhere else.

NEMEA TARGET

Panorama for a politically or socially engaged mid-career work. **Perspectives** for fiction debuts. **Forum** for formally experimental films. Berlin's February timing is a gift if our film is finished by December.

Toronto

Toronto International Film Festival · 51st Edition

SEPTEMBER 10–20, 2026
TORONTO, CANADA
CEO: CAMERON BAILEY

SECTIONS

Gala Presentations · Special Presentations · **Centrepiece** (established directors) · **Discovery** (first/second features) · **Platform** (juried, 12-film auteur competition) · TIFF Docs · Short Cuts · Wavelengths (invitation only).

PREMIERE RULE

Most flexible premiere policy of any major festival. Accepts world, international, or North American premieres. Cannes and Venice films are welcome and frequently use TIFF as their North American launch.

DEADLINES 2026

Feb 27 (submissions open) · **March 27 (early-bird)** · Later standard deadlines via FilmFreeway. Fee waivers available.

AWARDS

People's Choice Award (the single most predictive award of Best Picture Oscar nominations) · Platform Prize · Best Canadian Feature · TIFF Docs Audience Award · Discovery Award.

MARKET

2026 launches **TIFF: The Market** — backed by a \$23M CAD government investment. TIFF now has a full industry market alongside the festival. 2025: 9,000+ submissions, 216 features, 760,000 attendees.

WHAT IT REWARDS

Audience connection. Films that travel theatrically. TIFF's audience is passionate and large — a film that wins People's Choice often becomes the fall's breakout.

NEMEA TARGET

Platform for a juried, director-driven work. **Discovery** for first and second features. **Centrepiece** for a mid-career auteur. BC-shot films are structurally favored — directly relevant to Nemea BC productions.

Sundance

Sundance Film Festival · Final Park City Edition

JANUARY 22 – FEBRUARY 1, 2026
PARK CITY, UTAH (LAST YEAR) → BOULDER, CO FROM 2027
DIRECTOR: EUGENE HERNANDEZ

SECTIONS	U.S. Dramatic Competition · U.S. Documentary Competition · World Cinema Dramatic Competition · World Cinema Documentary Competition · NEXT · Premieres · Spotlight · Midnight · Kids · Episodic.
PREMIERE RULE	World Cinema Dramatic requires world or international premiere (no prior screenings outside country of origin). U.S. competitions require world premiere. Premieres section is invitation-only. Running time 50+ min for features.
VOLUME (2026)	16,201 submissions from 164 countries. 4,255 features. 97 selected. Acceptance rate below 1%.
AWARDS	Grand Jury Prize · Directing Award · Audience Award · Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award · NEXT Innovator Award · Sundance Institute/NHK Award · Alfred P. Sloan Prize.
FORMAT	Hybrid: Park City in-person (Jan 22 – Feb 1) plus online nationwide (Jan 29 – Feb 1) . Online platform carries all competition titles.
WHAT IT REWARDS	New American voices · World cinema that expands the American viewer's frame · Documentary ambition · Formal risk in first/second features. The festival is a filmmaker's festival — the acquisitions are secondary to the discovery.
NEMEA TARGET	World Cinema Dramatic Competition is the realistic target for a Spanish-language Nemea feature. A Sundance WCD premiere is one of the strongest North American launch points for Latin American cinema.

04

Strong Second Tier.

The B+ tier is **where most Nemea films should honestly premiere**. Lower rejection risk, real industry attendance, adequate awards, genuine SVOD paths. These are not consolation festivals — they are

often the correct choice.

Rotterdam

IFFR · International Film Festival Rotterdam · 55th Edition

JANUARY 29 – FEBRUARY 8, 2026
ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS
DIRECTOR: VANJA KALUDJERIC

SECTIONS	Tiger Competition (12 world premieres by emerging filmmakers — first/second features) · Big Screen Competition (12 titles) · Tiger Short Competition (22 titles) · Bright Future (feature debuts) · Harbour · Limelight · Cinema Regained · Art Directions.
PREMIERE RULE	Tiger: world premiere. Bright Future: national premiere required. Films completed after Jan 1 of prior year.
AWARDS	Tiger Award: €40,000 (split between director and producer) + €10,000 Special Jury Award. Bright Future Award: €10,000 toward next-film development. Big Screen: theatrical release in Netherlands + NPO broadcast.
INDUSTRY	CineMart — one of the original co-production markets, running since 1983. BoostNL . Hubert Bals Fund (development and post-production grants specifically for filmmakers from developing-economy countries — directly relevant to Mexican productions).
WHAT IT REWARDS	Experimental, genre-bending, discovery cinema. Rotterdam is unapologetically for the adventurous — sci-fi arthouse, hybrid forms, formally wild work. A film that plays it safe is wrong for Rotterdam.
NEMEA TARGET	Tiger for an ambitious first or second feature with real voice — probably our single most realistic competition slot at a Big-Five-adjacent festival. Bright Future for a clean debut. Hubert Bals Fund applicable for Nemea films at development stage.

Locarno

Locarno Film Festival

AUGUST 5–15, 2026
LOCARNO, SWITZERLAND

SECTIONS

Concorso Internazionale (international competition) · **Cineasti del Presente** (first/second features) · Fuori Concorso · Pardi di Domani (shorts) · Open Doors · Retrospectiva · Piazza Grande (8,000-seat outdoor screenings).

PREMIERE RULE

World or international premiere for Concorso and Cineasti del Presente.

AWARDS

Pardo d'Oro (Golden Leopard) · Pardo per la migliore regia · **Pardo d'Oro — Cineasti del Presente** (first/second features). Winners historically cross to Oscar foreign language consideration.

WHAT IT REWARDS

Auteur cinema without Cannes pressure. Scary Mother, From What Is Before, La Flor all launched here. The Piazza Grande (8,000 people outdoors) is one of the most beautiful premieres in world cinema.

NEMEA TARGET

Cineasti del Presente is genuinely the right place for most Nemea debuts. **Concorso Internazionale** for a confident sophomore work.

San Sebastián

Festival Internacional de Cine de San Sebastián

MID-LATE SEPTEMBER 2026
SAN SEBASTIÁN, BASQUE COUNTRY, SPAIN

SECTIONS

Sección Oficial (competition) · **New Directors** · Horizontes Latinos · Zabaltegi-Tabakalera · Made in Spain · Perlak · Savage Cinema.

PREMIERE RULE

Official Selection and New Directors require world or international premiere.

AWARDS

Concha de Oro · Concha de Plata (Director, Actor, Actress, Screenplay) · **Kutxabank-New Directors Award** · **Horizontes Award** (best Latin American film).

INDUSTRY

Europe-Latin America Co-Production Forum — the most important co-production meeting point for Ibero-American cinema. Directly relevant to every Nemea film. Also **Glocal in Progress** and **WIP Latam**.

WHAT IT REWARDS

Spanish-language cinema at the highest level. Warm to Latin American work in a way that some Big Five festivals structurally are not. Historical launch pad for Spanish and Latin American directors into Spanish-speaking SVOD markets.

NEMEA TARGET

Sección Oficial or **Horizontes Latinos** are natural homes for Nemea films. For any film with heavy Spanish-speaking market strategy, this is arguably more valuable than a buried slot at a bigger festival.

SECTIONS	Narrative Feature Competition · Documentary Feature Competition · Narrative Spotlight · Documentary Spotlight · Midnighters · Headliners · Visions · Global (international films).
PREMIERE RULE	World premiere required for Narrative Feature Competition. Other sections more flexible.
AWARDS	Audience Award (Narrative, Documentary, Midnighters, Headliners, Global) · Grand Jury Prize (Narrative, Documentary) · Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award (visionary cinema).
WHAT IT REWARDS	Audience energy. SXSW is the film-tech-music convergence festival. A film that sparks word-of-mouth here reaches young, online audiences fast. Genre work, comedy, documentary, and debut work thrive here. Everything Everywhere All at Once premiered here.
NEMEA TARGET	For a genre-leaning or narratively bold Nemea film — particularly anything with comedy, thriller, or midnight energy — SXSW can be a stronger launch than a prestige festival. The US distribution access is meaningful. Weaker fit for slow-cinema drama.

Other Strong Second Tier

<p>USA · JUNE</p> <p>Tribeca</p> <p>New York-based festival with serious industry attendance. US Narrative Competition, International Narrative, Spotlight Narrative.</p> <p>Audience and buyer-driven. Strong for first features and genre work. June timing is unusual in the calendar.</p>	<p>CZECH REPUBLIC · JUNE-JULY</p> <p>Karlovy Vary</p> <p>Eastern and Central Europe's most prestigious festival. Crystal Globe Competition · Proxima Competition (boundary-pushing work). Strong Eastern European critical attention, genuine industry presence.</p>	<p>SWITZERLAND · MARCH</p> <p>Visions du Réel</p> <p>Documentary festival in Nyon. International Feature Competition, Burning Lights Competition (hybrid/experimental). Strong pipeline into CPH:DOX and IDFA.</p>

DENMARK · MARCH-APRIL

CPH:DOX

The premier documentary festival.

Dox:Award · **F:act Award**

(investigative). **CPH:FORUM** co-production market. World-premiere target for ambitious documentary.

NETHERLANDS · NOVEMBER

IDFA

International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. Largest documentary festival in the world.

IDFA Forum is a major financing market. Documentary-only.

SPAIN · OCTOBER

Sitges

The preeminent fantasy, horror, and genre festival in the world. **Official Fantàstic Competition**. For genre work — horror, thriller, sci-fi arthouse — Sitges is a more valuable premiere than most prestige festivals for that material.

05

Latin American Circuit.

Regional festivals we engage with as **producers, hosts, workshop participants, and talent scouts** — not as world-premiere targets for our feature films. These are the venues where we build relationships, find IP, and develop the next generation of directors.

Morelia (FICM)

Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia · 24th Edition

OCTOBER 2026 (SECOND WEEK)
MORELIA, MICHOACÁN, MÉXICO
FOUNDER: DANIELA MICHEL

SECTIONS

Exclusively Mexican competition: Mexican Feature Film · Mexican Documentary · Mexican Short Film · Michoacán Section. Non-competitive: international premieres, Cannes Critics' Week partnership selection, retrospectives.

IMPULSO MORELIA

Industry workshop for Mexican features in post-production. **Exactly where Nemea films in post should be positioning.** Panels, feedback sessions, international industry attention.

MORELIA PRO

Workshops and labs, including the **Indigenous and Afro-descendent Filmmakers Development Laboratory** (Netflix Fund backing). Pipeline for future Nemea collaborations.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Cannes Critics' Week partnership since 2003 — selected Morelia films cross-program to Cannes. **Oscar-qualifying** for Shorts and Mexican Feature Documentary since 2008.

ADVISOR CONNECTION

Miguel Mier (Nemea advisor, Global COO Cinépolis) is Founder/President. 2025 jury president was Ava DuVernay. Historic jury presidents: Alexander Payne, Rodrigo Prieto, Pawel Pawlikowski.

NEMEA RELATIONSHIP

We do not premiere features here — we host. We attend every year, host meetings, place our shorts in competition, use Impulso Morelia for works-in-progress, and build the long-term pipeline. Morelia is our festival in a real and ongoing way.

<p>ARGENTINA · APRIL</p> <p>BAFICI</p> <p>Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema. International Competition, Argentine Competition, Vanguardia y Género. Rigorously curated, young audience, deeply serious about auteur cinema. Strong for films positioning for Spanish-language SVOD.</p>	<p>MÉXICO · JUNE</p> <p>Guadalajara (FICG)</p> <p>Festival Internacional de Cine de Guadalajara. Oldest film festival in Latin America. Ibero-American Competition, Mexican Competition. Important industry market (Guadalajara Construye, Industry Days). Attended by major Spanish-speaking SVOD buyers.</p>
<p>ARGENTINA · NOVEMBER</p> <p>Mar del Plata</p> <p>The only FIAPF A-list festival in Latin America. International Competition. Less industry-dense than BAFICI but genuinely prestigious within the Ibero-American critical community.</p>	<p>CUBA · DECEMBER</p> <p>Havana</p> <p>Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano. Historic Latin American festival. Coral Competition. Culturally important but politically complex — attendance and distribution implications need to be weighed per film.</p>

06 The Calendar.

Festival submissions do not fall when the festival happens — they fall **4-7 months earlier.** The calendar below is what matters for our production schedule.

WINDOW	FESTIVALS	SUBMISSION DEADLINES
January	Sundance · IFFR (Rotterdam) · Göteborg	Sundance: mid-late Aug (prior year) · IFFR: early Oct · Göteborg: mid-Nov
February	Berlinale · EFM Market	Berlinale features: Oct 22 (prior year) · shorts: Nov 5
March	SXSW · CPH:DOX · Visions du Réel · Miami	SXSW: early Nov (prior year) · CPH:DOX: mid-Nov · Visions: late Nov
April	BAFICI · Tribeca · Hong Kong	BAFICI: mid-Feb · Tribeca: mid-Nov (prior year) through early Feb
May	CANNES + Parallel Sections · Marché du Film	Cannes features: March 13 · Cannes shorts: March 2 · Fortnight: March 13 · Critics' Week: mid-March
June	Guadalajara (FICG) · Sydney · Edinburgh · Shanghai	FICG: early March · Sydney: late Feb

July	Karlovy Vary · Fantasia Montreal · Jerusalem	KVIFF: late March · Fantasia: mid-April
August	Locarno · Melbourne · Sarajevo	Locarno: mid-April · Sarajevo: late April
September	VENICE · TIFF · San Sebastián · Telluride	Venice: June 4 · TIFF: March 27 (early) through July (late) · San Sebastián: mid-June
October	Morelia (FICM) · London BFI · Chicago · Sitges · Busan	Morelia: mid-July · BFI: early June · Sitges: mid-July · Busan: mid-June
November	Tallinn Black Nights · IDFA · AFI Fest · Thessaloniki · Mar del Plata	Tallinn: late Aug · IDFA: mid-Aug · AFI: late Aug
December	Marrakech · Havana · Tampere (shorts)	Marrakech: late Aug · Havana: late Sept

DELIVERY SCHEDULE

Our **picture lock target dates** are driven by festival deadlines, not by editorial preference. A film aiming for Cannes needs a delivery-quality cut by **early March**. A film aiming for Venice needs delivery by **late May**. A film aiming for Sundance needs delivery by **mid-September** of the prior year. These dates are in every production schedule from day one.

07

Strategy Per Film.

Not every film wants the same festival. Below are the profiles we see recurring in the Nemea slate and the honest target for each.

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<p>PROFILE 01</p> <p>Spanish-Language Auteur Debut</p> <p>First target: Cannes Critics' Week → Venice Settimana della Critica → San Sebastián New Directors → Sundance World Cinema Dramatic → Rotterdam Tiger.</p> <p>Avoid: submitting blind to Cannes Competition. Under-buried in a huge field.</p>	<p>PROFILE 02</p> <p>Spanish-Language Sophomore</p> <p>First target: Venice Orizzonti → Cannes Un Certain Regard → TIFF Platform → San Sebastián Sección Oficial → Locarno Concorso.</p> <p>A proven director's second film has access to sections where a debut cannot compete.</p>	<p>PROFILE 03</p> <p>Bilingual / English-Language</p> <p>First target: Sundance → SXSW → TIFF Discovery/Platform → Telluride (invitation only).</p> <p>North American premiere is the priority. US distribution leverage shifts everything.</p>
<p>PROFILE 04</p> <p>Genre-Leaning / Formal Risk</p> <p>First target: Rotterdam Tiger → SXSW Midnighters → Fantasia → Sitges → Locarno.</p> <p>Genre work dies in prestige festivals and thrives in specialist venues. Do not premiere a horror film at Venice.</p>	<p>PROFILE 05</p> <p>Documentary Feature</p> <p>First target: Sundance Documentary → CPH:DOX → IDFA → Berlinale Panorama.</p> <p>Documentary has a fully parallel festival ecosystem to fiction. Respect it.</p>	<p>PROFILE 06</p> <p>Politically Urgent</p> <p>First target: Berlinale Panorama or Competition → Venice Giornate degli Autori → Karlovy Vary Proxima → Sundance World Cinema.</p> <p>Berlin is uniquely oriented toward this material.</p>

08

Industry Programs.

Before we premiere, we develop. The festivals listed above run **labs, co-production markets, and residencies** that are often more valuable than the festival itself for a film still in development or post-production.

PROGRAM	HOST	WHAT IT IS	TIMING
Cannes Résidence	Cannes	6-month writing residency in Paris for early-career filmmakers working on first/second features	Twice yearly
Cannes Cinéfondation (La Cinef)	Cannes	Student film section + Parisian residency + project scholarships	Annual
L'Atelier	Cannes	Producers' workshop bringing 15 projects to meet financiers at Cannes	May
Biennale College Cinema	Venice	Development and production support — grants to produce micro-budget features, premiered at Venice	Jan-April call

PROGRAM	HOST	WHAT IT IS	TIMING
Venice Gap-Financing Market	Venice	Films seeking completion financing — one-on-one industry meetings	Sept
Final Cut in Venice	Venice	Works-in-progress workshop specifically for films from Africa, Latin America, Middle East	Sept
Berlinale Talents	Berlinale	One of the most prestigious filmmaker development programs — 250 participants annually	Feb
World Cinema Fund	Berlinale	Grants for film production in Latin America, Africa, Middle East, Asia — directly applicable to Nemea	2 calls/year
Sundance Institute Labs	Sundance	Screenwriters Lab, Directors Lab, Producers Lab, Documentary Edit Lab	Rolling
CineMart	Rotterdam	Oldest co-production market in the world (since 1983). Projects in development.	Jan-Feb
Hubert Bals Fund	Rotterdam	Grants specifically for filmmakers in developing countries — Mexican productions eligible	2 calls/year
TorinoFilmLab	Torino Film Festival	Script and project development programs for emerging filmmakers globally	Rolling
Co-Production Forum	San Sebastián	The most important co-production meeting point for Ibero-American cinema	Sept
Impulso Morelia	Morelia	Mexican features in post-production — industry workshop, panels, consultations	Oct
Sundance CDMX	Sundance Institute	Sundance's Mexican programming — labs, workshops, Mexican filmmaker pipeline	Annual

CORE PRINCIPLE

A film that goes through **Biennale College Cinema, Cannes Résidence, Sundance Labs, or World Cinema Fund** arrives at its festival premiere with a different pedigree. The programmers recognize the name. The sales agents return calls faster. **Lab participation is structural marketing.**

What We Avoid.

Most festival damage is self-inflicted. Below are the mistakes we do not make.

DO

What We Do.

- Set the festival target at greenlight, before the edit.

- Submit to the honest tier first, then stretch.

- Attend Morelia, Guadalajara, and Mar del Plata every year — whether we have a film or not.

- Build sales-agent relationships before we need them.

- Apply to development labs and co-production markets 12-18 months before picture lock.

- Protect world-premiere status ruthlessly — no cast/crew screenings, no investor screenings, no private screenings.

- Treat a festival rejection as information, not an insult. Revise strategy. Re-target.

- Accept that Tier B+ is often the correct premiere — not a consolation.

DON'T

What We Don't.

- Premiere a horror film at Venice. Genre work dies at prestige festivals.

- Submit a clear Tier B+ film to Cannes Competition and burn the realistic tier.

- Hold an investor screening before the world premiere. Screening = premiere burned.

- Let a film sit without a festival plan after picture lock. Films decay.

- Trust a sales agent who says "we'll figure it out later." Festival strategy is the plan.

- Chase a Big Five slot when we have a strong Tier B+ offer in hand.

- Premiere at a festival we've never attended. We understand a festival by being there.

- Allow a film to skip its natural Latin American premiere context for a weaker European slot.

The Reality.

Festival strategy is not a formula. It is a set of judgments about a specific film, a specific director, a specific moment. This document is doctrine — but every film's decision is made in a room with the director, the sales agent, the lead producer, and whoever among us is closest to the work.

Our advantage is that we show up. We go to Morelia when we don't have a film. We fly to Rotterdam for CineMart. We attend Sundance as observers in the years we aren't premiering. We know the programmers. We know the sales agents. We know the critics.

The festival is not where you announce a film. It is where the relationships you have built for years pay off.

FINAL RULE

When in doubt, pick the festival that has earned the right to launch this specific film — not the festival with the loudest name. The filmmaker's career is longer than any single premiere.