

Jennifer Thompson

The Evolution of the Film Festival

December 6, 2006

LIS 697-6 Film and Media Collections

Professor Nancy Friedland

It's difficult to believe that the moving image has only been around for approximately 100 years. Film's existence is such a part of the collective conscience that it's difficult to remember a time when it wasn't the most prevalent form of visual communication in our culture. The celebration and the promotion of film are even more recent. Originally, when Hollywood studios began creating films and screening them for audiences, film was considered the entertainment equivalent of a magazine or a comic book. It was something to pass the time, and then to be forgotten. Studios rarely kept their films to be shown again. Instead, the nitrate film was burned and recycled for its silver content (hence my belief in the existence of the moniker "silver screen" for old films). However, the establishment of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City provided a stepping stone for film to be declared an art form. With Iris Barry at the helm of MoMA's Film Library, film was promoted as art and studied as a significant, culturally relevant medium of communication.

Paralleling Iris Barry's aggressive promotion of film as art in the United States, celebrations of film's unique medium began springing up all around the world. First, the Venice Film Festival was established in Italy. Closely following it was the creation of the Cannes Film Festival in France. These two festivals set a standard for those that followed, particularly the majority of film festivals that were founded in the 1940s and 1950s. According to the mantras of these film festivals, film should be celebrated by both serious students as well as the community. However, film should also be promoted, because how is the majority of the community going to know about these films (excluding the people that attend the film festival)? Therefore, the actors and directors tend to accompany their film to the festival, resulting in a sometimes chaotic, often glamorous promotional bid. As the decades of the 20th century have passed, there's been a gradual change in the state of film festivals. This is perhaps most evident with the Sundance Film Festival, the independent festival in Park City, Utah. In the past 10 years, Sundance has become a punching bag for both critics and film lovers. To many, the focus of the festival has been changed from the promotion and celebration of independent film to a star-filled extravaganza overwhelmed by free merchandise and paparazzi-photographed promotional opportunities for people who aren't even a part of the independent film scene.

Has the film festival's evolution actually become a mutation of what it once was? Or is the film festival's initial purpose still intact, and the crazed pop-culture world we live in forcing us to look at the film festival in a new light? And, as for the future of the film festival, will it still be a large event filled with celebrities and promotion? Or will it become completely electronic, only visited on the Internet and perused by billions of people?

To begin the discussion of the film festival, one must speak of the importance of Iris Barry. In 1935, Iris Barry began her tenure as the Museum of Modern Art's library curator (McGreevey & Yeck, 1997, p. 51). A controversial figure, Barry fully believed that film should be studied as an art form. Her main goal as the library's curator "...was to assemble a film collection that illustrated the important historical and artistic steps in the development of motion pictures since their inception" (McGreevey & Yeck, 1997, p. 52). By influencing the trustees of the museum, Barry attained three main goals during her tenure at the Museum of Modern Art. First, she made film acceptable for serious students to study as an art form. Second, she created a circulating collection of films to be used for educational purposes (McGreevey & Yeck, 1997, p. 53). And third, she screened films for the public. This last goal lends itself to the evolutionary development of the film festival. Originally, the films were screened for members at the Museum of Natural History (Slide, 1992, p. 19). However, "...on May 11, 1939, the Film Library commenced its first series of public screenings at the new Museum of Modern Art building at 11 West 53 Street" (Slide, 1992, p. 19). For the first time, older films were being shown to new audiences. As Slide (1997) states, "with these screenings, the Museum of Modern Art began the first continuous repertory presentation for classic and contemporary motion pictures" (p. 19). Barry's screenings provided Americans with the possibility that they could see the same motion picture again and again.

Because the films could be viewed multiple times, either via the theatre at the MoMA or through the circulating film collection, the discussion of film as art became a popular discussion topic. Film salons and film classes began to form at universities and in New York City. Other museums began to form their own archives and film collections, thereby allowing other film lovers around the world to discuss and celebrate film as an art form. And not just American films, but films from all over the world. Americans were

being introduced to French films and Italian films through these circulating collections. It took Americans a while to catch up to their European counterparts in celebrating film via a major festival, but eventually they did.

The first official film festival was formed in Venice, Italy, in August of 1932. Officially titled *1st International Film Festival of the Art Biennial*, the festival came into existence via a discussion from a unique group of people. The President of the Biennial of Venice, a count, a sculptor and two different secretary generals proclaimed that Venice needed a film festival (Berman, 2006, para. 2). Many of the films that were shown at the first festival became classics, such as *Frankenstein* and *Grand Hotel* (Berman, 2006, para. 3). Of course, the Venetians realized what is a film festival without a little star power? Numerous important film actors of the day were present at the festival, including John Barrymore, Greta Garbo and Clark Gable (Berman, 2006, para. 4).

Perhaps the most interesting part of the first Venice Film Festival is the lack of official awards. According to Berman (2006), “due to the lack of a judge and the awarding of official prizes, introduced only later, a list of acknowledgements was decided by popular vote, a tally determined by the number of people flocking to the films...” (para. 9). How interesting to think that the first film festival celebrated its appreciation of film as art not through critics or fellow film makers, but through the opinion of the people.

The Cannes Film Festival in France had a more terrifying beginning. According to Kenneth Turan (2002):

The initial Cannes film festival (the city won out as the site after an intramural tussle with Biarritz on the Atlantic coast) was scheduled for the first three weeks of September 1939... The Germans, however, chose September 1, 1939 to invade Poland, and after the opening night screening of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the festival was canceled and didn't start up again until 1946 (p. 18-19).

Once the film festival was settled, and established a yearly celebration in 1951, a much more salacious film festival was becoming popular with film lovers from around the world. Perhaps Turan (2002) says it best with his description of what put Cannes on the map as a festival:

It was in 1954 that French starlet Simone Sylva dropped her bikini top and tried to embrace Robert Mitchum in front of a horde of photographers, resulting in the kind of international press coverage that secured the festival's reputation. It had no trouble holding the world's attention, one disapproving film historian writes, because it 'early opted for glamour and sensationalism' by concentrating on 'the erotic fantasies of naked flesh so readily associated with a Mediterranean seaside resort' (p. 19).

Perhaps the critics of today's modern film festivals, such as Sundance and ShoWest, should refer back to this quote when they speak ill of the paparazzi-filled festivals.

However, even with all the nudity and attention-starved actresses, Cannes is still considered a pre-eminent film festival and a celebration of film as art. According to Turan (2002), "...Cannes overwhelmingly favors films by critically respectable auteurs who've been there before, a usual-suspects group of largely noncommercial filmmakers *Variety* categorizes as 'heavyweight helmers'" (p. 28). It seems as though Cannes has found a way to balance the craziness of the attendees with the artistic study of film. To Jonathan Romney (2006), "Cannes is where you go for lurid scandal and exotic formal efflorescences..." (p. 26).

Of all the descriptions I read about the Cannes Film Festival, I particularly liked Tim Robbins' description of the Cannes phenomena. As he's quoted in Turan's book (2002):

Cannes is a very strange mixture of the art of film and total prostitution of film...One of the things I remember from my first year here in 1992 is walking into a room and meeting a great actor like Gerard Depardieu and then walking out and seeing this poster of a woman with large breasts holding a machine gun. The film wasn't made yet, but they already had a title and an ad concept...This ability to somehow combine the yin and yang of the film business, to link at the same site the rarefied elite of the world's movie artists and a brazen international marketplace where money is the only language spoken and sex and violence the most convertible currencies, is the logic-defying triumph of Cannes (p. 22).

Ah yes, the promotion of film. It's easy to forget that the sole reason of many a film festival is to promote, promote, promote as well as beg and plead for a distributor to pick up your film. What good is showing your film at a festival if it won't get picked up and shown to the rest of the world?

Perhaps the most criticized film festival today is the Sundance Film Festival. Many, such as author Lory Smith, believe that "...Sundance has become America's preeminent film event and...arguably one of the most influential film festivals in the world" (Turan, 2002, p. 35). The festival's name and location changed multiple times during the beginning years, the late 1970s. Some of the initial names of Sundance were the U.S Film Festival, the Utah/U.S. Film Festival and the Sundance/United States Film Festival. Finally, the founder of Sundance, Robert Redford, settled on the name Sundance and relocated the festival from Salt Lake City to Park City. Interestingly, the location change was suggested by director Sydney Pollack, because Pollack felt that a film festival held in a ski town during winter time would attract Hollywood in droves (Turan, 2002, p. 35-36). Little did Pollack and Redford know just how successful Sundance was about to come.

In the mid 1980s, approximately 250 films applied to compete in the festival's dramatic arena, but by 2000, a total of 849 films had applied. Only 16 films will ultimately be chosen to enter the competition (Turan, 2002, p. 32). Equally shocking are the statistics for the population growth of Park City, Utah during Sundance. According to Turan's statistics (2002):

For a town with a population in the area of 6,000, the growth in attendance – it's now estimated that more than 20,000 show up annually – has been equally unnerving. The festival expanded from 15,750 seats sold in 1985 to 135,922 in 1999, an increase of almost 900 percent (p. 32).

These statistics are amazing, especially considering what Redford had originally intended for the festival. According to Rexer (2002), "Mr. Redford dreamed a dream: to create a utopia where film directors, writers, actors and composers could explore ideas in a workshop setting, free from commercial pressure. 'My idea was simple,' he said, 'keep it authentic, keep the money out'" (para. 9).

Although the festival may still be authentic to its independent roots in film, it's certainly caused quite a stir in a few other areas. First, there is the festival dominance of Miramax. This production company has out-priced and acquired the majority of films it wants at the festival because of the aggression of one of its members, Harvey Weinstein. Weinstein has a reputation in Hollywood as a fear-mongering, aggressive, no-holds-barred producer. Recently, he and his brother, Bob, sold Miramax to Disney and began their own production company, The Weinstein Brothers.

During Sundance in the year 2000, Weinstein was absent from the festival, and yet talk of him still dominated the festival. Miramax refused to state why Weinstein was missing or where he was, except to say he was in a New York hospital. According to Lyman (February 2000):

Miramax inflamed speculation about Mr. Weinstein's condition by declining to reveal the name of the hospital or the exact nature of his condition, and rumors piled atop rumors until Mr. Weinstein in absentia was almost as dominant at this year's festival as he had been in the flesh in previous years (para. 16).

One of the most controversial distribution deals at Sundance was the negotiation of the movie *Shine* (1996), the Oscar-winning film starring Geoffrey Rush. Its debut at Sundance led to standing ovations, insurmountable praise and a fight to see who would distribute the film. Weinstein believed he had a deal with Pandora, who had already agreed to handle the overseas sales. However, Mark Ordesky of Fine Line Features negotiated on the side and got the distribution rights to the film. According to Turan (2002), "Weinstein was beside himself, threatening to sue to get the North American rights and loudly and publicly berating Pandora's representative in a Park City restaurant" (p. 40). Luckily Robert Redford stepped in, and helped negotiate a deal where Miramax and Disney, Miramax's parent company, got the rights in certain overseas territories (Turan, 2002, p. 40). This seems like quite a few steps away from Redford's original purpose – to keep the money out of the festival.

Second, in the past five to ten years, the press tends to focus on who is attending Sundance rather than what films are being screened. One of the main issues surrounding Sundance is the free merchandise that is given away to celebrities who attend the festival.

Each year, the amount of “swag” increases. According to the New York Post (2006), “more and more each year, Main Street in this old mining town is transformed into Rodeo Drive North as high-end retailers transform galleries and real-estate offices into temporary emporiums offering free goods to celebs” (“Swag-ering Celebs – Freebies Star at Film Fest,” para. 2). The majority of the photographs in magazines and newspapers accompanying articles on Sundance are not of the stars and directors promoting their film at talks. Instead, the photographs are of celebrities (the majority of whom don’t even have a film to promote at the festival) holding the latest cell phone, camera or Ugg boots next to their face as a promotional bit. These images provide a negative image of Sundance. It’s as if the festival has become secondary, and the focus has been taken from the interesting, independent films trying to find a distributor to what Paris Hilton sang at karaoke during the festival.

Third, as Sundance has expanded, the festival seems more like a business meeting rather than an independent community coming together to celebrate and promote their unique, non-Hollywood films. Even Redford has been compared to a “reluctant CEO, spending increasing amounts of time in board meetings” (Rexer, 2002, para. 17). According to Rexer (2002), Sundance “...now has to cope with crowds in excess of 20,000, 11 days of programming and constant pressure from producers, agents and studio executives trolling for a hit” (para. 8). It seems as though producers aren’t going to buy interesting films on their own. Instead, they want to buy interesting films that will guarantee success at the box office. I understand that this is the nature of distribution. The film is bought with the intention that it will make the company money. However, there doesn’t seem to be that independent spirit behind it. The film isn’t being bought because it gives a message or tells a story that Hollywood cannot. Distributors at Sundance are exactly like those that work for mainstream Hollywood – they want to see the gold.

The filmmakers at Sundance trying to get their films distributed are also under scrutiny. In a hilarious article, Stephen Morrow from *The Humanist* writes of his experience at Sundance. In the article, he states (1998):

...the youthful, albeit scruffy filmmakers I encountered over and over at Sundance had SUCCESS written across their foreheads rather than BUCK (the system). As if success was the only obsession worth having – not the process, not

the doing, just the result. Write a clever script, shoot it, get your film in the can, and the rest will follow – maybe you’ll win the lottery and have a hit (para. 12). Has the very nature of the independent filmmaker changed? Is it more important to have a hit than create a film with a mission and a vision? These questions are for another paper, but it’s something to think about when reviewing all of the criticisms about Sundance and its participants.

In 2000, questions arose as to whether Sundance was really a place to where an unknown filmmaker can be “discovered” and given a distribution deal for his or her film. According to Lyman (January 2000):

More than two dozen of the 113 feature films that were chosen to be part of the festival, and 13 of the 17 premiers, already have contacts with distributors – that is, a company that will market the movie and handle its dispersal to movie theaters. Which means that the people bring those films to Park City are not doing so in hopes of lining up a distributor, but in hopes of getting the film started with a barrage of buzz and publicity (para. 14).

So is Sundance still thought of as a “make or break” festival for independent filmmakers, or is it now a festival that merely promotes films that already have distributors? Or has the definition of “independent film” changed from when the festival first began? Lyman (January 2000) states:

There is a growing sense in film circles that America’s independent film movement is a victim of its own success over the last decade, and that this has altered the calculus of independent filmmaking and with it the nature of Sundance. This feeling is that the festival, the independent world’s leading annual event, has turned more mainstream, more commercial and, some complain, more likely to include films that are a little less astonishing and adventurous than in the past. (para. 15).

Although there are many negatives associated with the Sundance Film Festival, many are quick to jump to its defense. Arguments are made that the festival is still the pre-eminent independent showcase for films and that it’s the quality of the independent film that has increased, not that it’s become more mainstream. In Lyman’s article

(February 2000), Redford states that independent filmmakers are more technically advanced than they were even 10 years ago. Redford says “they [independent films] are far more elevated in technical quality than ever before, which makes them look like mainstream films” (para. 12 and 13). Lyle Rexer agrees with this argument. In his article on Sundance (2002), Rexer states “beyond its commercial clout, Sundance has helped change the look and feel of independent films. They are better produced, more culturally diverse and visually polished” (para. 6). There is a notion among critics and independent film aficionados that films made outside of the Hollywood hemisphere must be grittily made and of poor quality. However, with advances to filmmaking, such as digital video and digital editing, why shouldn’t the independent filmmakers also enjoy the latest and greatest equipment quality?

As to whether Sundance has maintained its commitment to its original message of promoting and distributing films that would otherwise be overlooked by Hollywood, both Redford and other critics believe that Sundance firmly stands behind its original beliefs. As Redford says to Lyman (February 2000):

I think we’ve been true to our original mission... We’re a festival. We’re not a market. The fact that the success of the festival has attracted the obvious characters is just part of the deal. It’s there, unfortunately, and it gets so much attention. But it’s not what we’re about (para. 18).

Turan agrees with Redford’s assessment of Sundance. Turan (2002) defines the festival as such:

Yet for all this carping and borderline sniveling, for all the people (invariably New Yorkers) who insist Sundance has become a twin to Los Angeles, the core feeling of the festival, its fundamental nature, has remained surprisingly unchanged albeit a bit harder to find under all the accoutrements of success (p. 44).

And who can argue with the fact that, year after year, Sundance promotes and finds distributors for some of the best films of that particular year? *Hustle and Flow*, *Murderball*, *Mad Hot Ballroom* and *The Squid and the Whale* are just a few of the films that came from the 2005 festival (Kleinman, 2005). Each of these films was well-received by critics and went on to be nominated and/or accept numerous awards.

Although the focus of this paper has been on three major film festivals – Venice, Cannes and, especially, Sundance, there are hundreds of other film festivals around the world. According to Turan (2002), there is no exact number of film festivals. Four different film festival guides, including *The Variety Guide to Film Festivals* and *The Ultimate Film Festival Survival Guide* give numbers somewhere between 400 to over 500 film festivals world wide. The *New York Times* estimates that there may be 1,000 film festivals (p. 2)!

As for the reasoning as to why there has been such an explosion of festivals in the past few decades, I think Turan (2002) has the best analysis. He believes that there are three connected factors that have expanded the number of film festivals:

Newly active independent and foreign-language filmmakers hunger for appreciative audiences, a need that dovetails nicely with audience members' yearning for alternatives to the standard Hollywood fare that dominates film screens not only in this country but also worldwide. And small distributors as well as national film industries locked into an unequal battle with the American juggernaut see these hungers as a not-to-be-missed opportunity to both earn money and promote their goods to the fullest extent (p. 7).

With the current number of film festivals, it's difficult to even imagine film lovers and critics being able to attend or describe other film fests from around the world. Luckily, there are magazines and websites devoted to film festivals as well as to analyzing and describing each of them. Turan's book does an excellent job of outlining some of the more unique and avant-garde festivals. There is Slamdance, a festival that was founded after four directors had films that were refused by Sundance and has, in and of itself, become quite popular with filmmakers. (Turan, 2002, p. 33). Some of the other unique film festivals include the Takoma Tortured Artists Film Festival in Washington, the Eat My Shorts! Comedy Short Film Showcase in Montreal, the Reject Film Festival in Philadelphia and the Brainwash Movie Festival in San Francisco (Turan, 2002, p. 4 and p. 6).

Although these guerrilla film festivals rarely, if ever, put out a film that captures the attention of the world, they do something that the bigger film festivals rarely do: they

allow filmmakers who wouldn't have a chance at a larger festival a place to showcase and promote their art. Since the larger film festivals are so much harder to get a film into, it's nice to know that the film community has opened opportunities all over the world for filmmakers who want their work to be seen. And even if their film isn't picked up by a distributor, when they show their film to distributors, they can put a note on the DVD that says "as seen in such and such Festival."

Some of these films are seen at international film festivals, and the films that are screened at these festivals would be difficult to see if a distributor didn't pick up the film and either release it straight-to-DVD or into the theatres. Some of the international film festivals are government-funded and government-run. I will speak of two in particular – Havana and Bangkok. While one is extremely successful, the other is full of large problems.

The Havana Film Festival was started by Alfredo Guevara, who also kick-started the film industry in Cuba when Castro's reign began. Guevara is good friends with Castro. He met Castro at Havana University, when Castro came to the school as a new student, full of radical ideas. After meeting Castro, "Guevara's life intertwined passion for film and for the revolution" (Turan, 2002, p. 85). When Castro came to power, Guevara made it his mission to start a Cuban film institute (Turan, 2002, p. 85). Interestingly enough, "the new regime's first cultural act was to create a state film organization, Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematograficos" (Turan, 2002, p. 85), better known by its initials, ICAIC.

Guevara has strong beliefs that mold both Cuba's political state as well as ICAIC. According to Turan (2002):

...since Guevara believed that ICAIC should be run by filmmakers and not bureaucrats, the institute gave Cuban writers and directors something unusual among state-run film systems; the ability to have give-and-take discussions about what can and cannot be filmed (p. 85).

This festival is extremely important to the Cubans. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, which, according to Turan (2002), "accounted for 85 percent of Cuba's foreign trade as well as billions of dollars in foreign aid" (p. 82), the Cuban economy virtually collapsed. Half of the movie theatres closed and Cubans, who are well known

lovers of cinema, couldn't venture out to the movies as easily as before. The existence of the Havana Film Festival allows Cubans to see films they would otherwise never have a chance to see, including *Pulp Fiction* and *In the Name of the Father* (Turan, 2002, p. 84).

The Havana Film Festival is one of the most popular events in Cuba. Thousands show up to the event to see films that would never make it into theatrical release, due to Cuba's lack of funding. As Turan (2002) states, "...the country lacks the money to procure these films for regular theatrical runs, so if they were not brought in for the festival, Cuban audiences would not get to see them at all" (p. 84).

Bangkok's Film Festival, also government run, has been quite a disaster. Formally known as the Bangkok International Film Festival, this overly hyped and poorly run film festival is entering its fifth year. The event is funded by the government's tourism authority, and according to Rayns (2006), "has an obvious commitment to promoting the country but no evident sense of how to run a film festival or how it might attract and satisfy its potential constituencies" (para. 1).

The 4th Bangkok International Film Festival, held in March of 2006, proved itself as an excellent example as to how not to run a film festival, especially when using taxpayers' money for the event. The ticketing systems announced that showings were sold out when they actually were not and most international films were shown without Thai subtitles (Rayns, 2006, para. 3). All in all, the film festival was a complete disaster. Any actors that participated in the event left as soon as they could and Thailand's biggest local distributor, Sahamongkol, refused to attend the event (Rayns, 2006, para. 3).

Havana and Bangkok's film festivals are just two examples of government-funded events. While one is obviously much better run and more beloved by the people, it shows that not just "anybody" can run a film festival. It takes time, effort and true love of the cinema in order to have a successful and interesting event that people want to attend. It takes perseverance and dedication, as well as good planning.

In the United States, perhaps the most well-run film festival is in New York City. The New York Film Festival is small in comparison to the majority of well-known film festivals around the world and to its other New York counterpart, the TriBeCa Film Festival. The New York Film Festival is run by the Film Society at Lincoln Center and was founded in 1969 "to celebrate American and international cinema, to recognize

and support new filmmakers, and to enhance awareness, accessibility and understanding of the art among a broad and diverse film going audience” (Film Society of Lincoln Center, para. 1). This exclusive and competitive film festival has sustained an excellent reputation since its founding.

Scott (2006) presents a wonderful description of the New York Film Festival in his article. He states:

Film festivals crowd the calendar and circle the globe, but New York’s is different. Instead of hundreds of films, it presents a few dozen, and it presents them, for the most part, one at a time, rather than in a frenzy of overscheduling. It is neither a hectic market place nor a pre-Oscar buzz factory, like Cannes or Toronto, or a film industry frat party, like Sundance. Its tone tends to be serious, sober, and perhaps sometimes a little sedate, even when the movies it shows are daring and provocative. (para. 2).

Perhaps its time that film festivals looked to the New York Film Festival as a model on which they should base their festival. Or, perhaps the film festival is in a position to completely re-think the way it is run.

What is the future of the film festival? Now that technology is changing at a rapid pace, and acetate film is no longer the material of choice for many filmmakers, will film festivals as we know them be completely changed? Or will the festivals stay the same, but just their formats differ?

One of Sundance’s largest rivals is considered to be a festival titled Nodance. Also held in Park City, Utah, this festival is only in its sixth year, but is doing something radically different than most festivals. According to Turan (2002), Nodance claims itself as “the world’s first and only DVD-projected film festival” (p. 33-34). When visiting Nodance’s website, a statement about the film festival appears on the main page. It states “the Nodance Film Festival celebrates the alternative digital film culture, with an emphasis on first-time filmmakers and digital filmmaking. Held annually in Park City, Utah, Nodance holds the distinction of being the world’s first DVD-projected film festival” (Welcome to Nodance, 2003, para. 1). Considering how prevalent digital filmmaking has become in the film industry, there’s a good chance that more of these

film festivals will develop in the near future. Or, perhaps, established film festivals will decide to convert to DVD-projected and digitally filmed movies for their own showings.

Another digital film festival is Resfest. Celebrating its tenth anniversary, Resfest is an international, digital film festival held in countries all around the world. According to its website, Resfest “was founded with the aim of being the first festival to champion the innovative films and videos independent creators were producing with the aid of the powerful new digital tools, like early DV cameras and desktop editing systems, that had just begun reaching filmmakers” (The Resfest Team, 2006, para. 2).

Although the festival started out small, with only 73 submissions, in just 10 years, the festival has exploded. For the 2006 festival, Resfest received 2,200 submissions! Also, when it first started, Resfest was held in only five cities in the United States. This year, it will be held in 45 major American cities (The Resfest Team, 2006, para. 3). As Hoard says in his article about Resfest (2005), “the ethos is in keeping with the festival’s original fellowship-of-creativity spirit and the much vaunted democratisation [sic] of filmmaking that digital technology has brought about” (para. 3). The incredible growth can be contributed to several factors. First, the digital age has made it easier for anybody to become a filmmaker. The equipment tends to be much easier to use than traditional filmmaking equipment. Second, it’s much easier to buy digital equipment at reasonable prices. You could create a film on your cell phone if you truly wanted to!

It’s amazing to think that in just 75 years, the film festival has metamorphosed so much. From private screenings of films in salons of the wealthy to Iris Barry’s dedication to film as art in the 1930s, film was promoted not only as a means to pass the time but as an important visual and aural medium with which to connect. Venice’s triumphant first film festival set the standard for the others to follow by screening excellent films and making sure the actors and directors were invited to add a bit of glamour to the proceedings. Cannes’ mixture of sex, promotion and all-around craziness changed the direction of the film festival by devoting time and energy to promotion of current films and well as films that are to be made in the future.

The ever-continuing criticisms and defense of the Sundance Film Festival prove the passion of the film community for their art as well as allows for questions to be asked about the true nature of the film festival. Should film festivals, particularly independent

film festivals, stay true to their roots and only focus on films, or should they expand into commercialism and promotions of merchandise, thereby allowing more people to visit the festival and create more funding for the promotion of independent film?

Or will all of this disappear into the sunset once digital filmmaking secures its place as the dominant force in current filmmaking? Will there still be a need for a physical film festival? Or will film festivals be held over the Internet, with people watching the films on their own time after they've either streamed or downloaded the film when it's convenient to them?

Film festivals have always been a gathering of a like-minded community – people that love films, want to watch films and want to promote their films so that others can share in the filmmaker's vision. Is this physical film festival community threatened by the existence of the digital film, or will human contact still be needed even though the materials involved in filmmaking has changed?

These are questions that the future will answer. As of now, film festivals, no matter if they follow more traditional roots or whether they pursue digitalization, are still focused on community involvement. I can't imagine attending a film festival online and not hearing vocal reaction to films, as well as hearing directly from the creators of their films. But perhaps I'm old fashioned in thinking the future of the film festival must hold some physical involvement.

Works Cited

- Berman, P (2006) *Portale di Venezia*. History of the Venice Film Festival. Retrieved November 29, 2006, <http://www.carnivalofvenice.com/argomento.asp?cat=95>.
- Hoad, P. Digital Joins the Mainstream (2005). *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 15, Issue 10, Np. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb
- James, N., Rayns, T., & Romney, J. Home Truths (2006, April). *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 16, Issue 4, p. 24-27. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- Kleinman, G (2005). *2005 Sundance Film Festival Coverage*. DVD Talk. Retrieved November 30, 2006, from <http://www.dvdtalk.com/features/003687.html>.
- Lyman, R. (2000, January 20). Ferocious Buzz at Sundance, For Better or for Worse; A Film Festival Learns the Price of Popularity. *The New York Times*, p. P1. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Lyman, R. (2000, February 6). Sundance Gives Signs of Renewal. *The New York Times*, p. AR13(L). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- McGreevey, Tom, & Yeck, Joanne L (1997). *Our Movie Heritage*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Morrow, S. Notes from the Underground: Beyond Sundance (1998, May/June). *The Humanist*, Vol. 58, Issue 3, p. 18-21. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from The H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- No Author. (2006) *Mission*. Film Society of Lincoln Center. Retrieved December 2, 2006, from <http://www.filmlinc.com/about/about.htm>.
- No Author (2006, January 22). Swag-ering Celebs – Freebies Star at Film Fest. *New York Post*, p. 15. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- No Author (2003). *Welcome to Nodance*. Nodance Film Festival. Retrieved December 2nd, 2006, from <http://www.nodance.com/>.
- Rayns, T. More Baht Thank Sense (2006, May). *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 16, Issue 5, p. 6. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- The Resfest Team (2006). *Resfest is 10!* Resfest. Retrieved December 2, 2006, from <http://www.resfest.com/films.php>.

Works Cited (continued)

- Rexer, L. (2002, January 6). Robert Redford's Movie Heaven: the Sundance Institute, Now 20, May Well Be the Actor's True Legacy in the Film Business. *The New York Times*, p. AR1 (L). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Scott, A.O. (2006, September 29). New York Film Festival Quietly Demands Attention. *The New York Times*, p. E1 (L). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Slide, Anthony (1992). *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co.
- Turan, Kenneth (2002). *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Works Consulted

- Berman, P (2006) *Portale di Venezia*. History of the Venice Film Festival. Retrieved November 29, 2006, <http://www.carnivalofvenice.com/argomento.asp?cat=95>.
- Hoad, P. Digital Joins the Mainstream (2005). *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 15, Issue 10, Np. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- James, N. Festival Report (2004). *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 14, Issue 11, p. 10-11. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- James, N., Rayns, T., & Romney, J. Home Truths (2006, April). *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 16, Issue 4, p. 24-27. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- Kleinman, G (2005). *2005 Sundance Film Festival Coverage*. DVD Talk. Retrieved November 30, 2006, from <http://www.dvdtalk.com/features/003687.html>.
- Kula, Sam (2002). *Appraising Moving Images: Assessing the Archival and Monetary Value of Film and Video Records*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Laughtland, A. Lost in the Filmfest Circuit (2002). *Gay and Lesbian Review*, Vol. 9, Issue 6, p. 33-34. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- Lyman, R. (2000, January 20). Ferocious Buzz at Sundance, For Better or for Worse; A Film Festival Learns the Price of Popularity. *The New York Times*, p. P1. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Lyman, R. (2000, February 6). Sundance Gives Signs of Renewal. *The New York Times*, p. AR13(L). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Lyman, R. (2002, January 21). Sundance: Less Buzz, More Deals; Bouncing Back After Some Lean Years for Independent Filmmakers. *The New York Times*, p. E1(L). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- McGreevey, Tom, & Yeck, Joanne L.(1997). *Our Movie Heritage*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Morrow, S. Notes from the Underground: Beyond Sundance (1998, May/June). *The Humanist*, Vol. 58, Issue 3, p. 18-21. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from The H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- No Author. Hardcore Cannes (2006, August). *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 16, Issue 8, p. 12. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.

Works Consulted (continued)

- No Author. (2006) *Mission*. Film Society of Lincoln Center. Retrieved December 2, 2006, from <http://www.filmlinc.com/about/about.htm>.
- No Author (2006, January 22). Swag-ering Celebs – Freebies Star at Film Fest. *New York Post*, p. 15. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- No Author (2003). *Welcome to Nodance*. Nodance Film Festival. Retrieved December 2nd, 2006, from <http://www.nodance.com/>.
- Rayns, T. More Baht Thank Sense (2006, May). *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 16, Issue 5, p. 6. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- The Resfest Team (2006). *Resfest is 10!* Resfest. Retrieved December 2, 2006, from <http://www.resfest.com/films.php>.
- Rexer, L. (2002, January 6). Robert Redford's Movie Heaven: the Sundance Institute, Now 20, May Well Be the Actor's True Legacy in the Film Business. *The New York Times*, p. AR1 (L). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Scott, A.O. (2006, September 29). New York Film Festival Quietly Demands Attention. *The New York Times*, p. E1 (L). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Slide, Anthony (1992). *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co.
- Stuart, J. (2006, October 18). Less is More at Hamptons Film Fest: The Menu of Films Is Trimmer, But the List of Celebs Isn't. *Newsday*, p. NA. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.
- Turan, Kenneth (2002). *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Vary, K. Cash for Czechs (2006, September). *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 16, Issue 9, p. 10. Retrieved November 20, 2006, from the H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb.
- Zitrin, R. (2006, October 26). Lights! Camera! Another Film Festival! *The Post Standard*, p. A10. Retrieved November 21, 2006, from Thomson Gale.