

Blurring the Lines between Big and Small Screen
Industry Discourse on Television Series at Film Festivals

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ABSTRACT

Situated within Critical Media Industry Studies, this thesis uses thematic analysis of secondary data, including trade press articles, interviews, and festival reports to explore how industry discourse frames the inclusion of television series at film festivals, focusing on its motivations, strategies, and cultural implications. The study examines how industry stakeholders navigate the convergence of film and television, reshaping industry practices and perceptions. Key themes identified include the adaptation of film festivals to include TV series, the recognition of high-quality TV series as legitimate art forms, and the creation of unique festival experiences that differentiate TV series from traditional film screenings. Findings reveal that cultural and economic factors drive the inclusion of TV series at film festivals. Festivals such as Sundance, Berlinale, and Cannes have adapted their programming to accommodate episodic content, highlighting the artistic merit and innovative storytelling of contemporary TV series. This adaptation responds to market demand and is a strategic move to remain relevant and competitive. The study also highlights the industry's internal narratives and discourses reflecting broader shifts, emphasizing flexibility and inclusivity in programming. Moreover, the research highlights significant benefits for TV industry professionals, including enhanced visibility, networking opportunities, and career development. Festival inclusion provides creators with a prestigious platform to showcase their work, facilitating connections with industry peers and potential collaborators. However, mixed emotions also accompany the inclusion of TV series at film festivals — concerns about timing, audience engagement, and market saturation present challenges that should be carefully navigated. The logistical complexities of programming TV series alongside films and the need for strategic planning to align festival schedules with release schedules are critical issues identified. Overall, this thesis contributes to our understanding of media convergence and evolving media consumption. It illustrates how boundaries between film and television are increasingly disappearing, pushing festivals to adapt and innovate. By examining industry discourse, the research provides insights into the strategic, artistic, and economic motivations driving the inclusion of TV series at film festivals and broader media landscape implications. The findings highlight the importance of recognizing TV series as significant cultural and artistic works deserving of the same prestige as films.

KEYWORDS: *Media Convergence, Television Series, Film Festivals, Industry Lore, Critical Media Industry Studies*

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Theoretical Framework	10
Critical Media Industry Studies and Industry lore	10
Trade stories	12
Film and television convergence	14
Film festivals and their history	17
Research Method	19
Results.....	23
Embracing Television: Industry Shifts and Adaptations	23
Showcasing Quality	26
Crafting unique experiences	29
The Benefits of Festival Inclusion for TV Industry Professional	31
Navigating skepticism and mixed emotions.....	35
Envisioning the Future	37
Conclusion.....	41
List of References	48
Appendix A	56

Introduction

The presence of television series at film festivals represents a significant shift in the landscape of both the film and television industries. This phenomenon, has gained momentum in recent years, reflecting broader trends in the media industry, particularly surrounding media convergence, changes in audiences' preferences, and evolving industry practices.

A striking example of this evolving dynamic is the premiere of the HBO series *The Idol* which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2023. Cannes, a pillar of cinematic excellence, has traditionally been associated with the celebration of auteur-driven films and the glamour of the big screen. However, in recent years, Cannes has gradually opened its doors to television series, marking a significant departure from tradition and sparking discussions and debates among industry professionals, critics, and audiences alike (Szalai, 2015, para. 6).

The Idol, a television series created by Sam Levinson and Starring Lily-Rose Depp and The Weeknd, explores the dark and provocative world of pop music (HBO, n.a.). Its world premiere at Cannes, conducted with the same parade typically reserved for high-profile films, underscores television's growing acceptance and recognition as an art form, effectively blurring the boundaries between film and television.

As explored by Lynn Spiegel (1992, pp.1-10) in her work surrounding the evolution of television and its cultural impact, especially in the context of gender and domesticity, television has evolved from its early roots as a medium primarily associated with domesticity and everyday life to one that embraces complex narratives and high production values. This shift has played a crucial role in legitimizing television as a form of high-quality storytelling comparable to cinema.

On the other hand, Raymond Williams' *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* offers a foundational analysis of television's role in shaping modern culture. Williams (as cited in Newman & Levine, 2012, p.133) examines television not only as a technological innovation but also as a cultural form that reflects and influences societal values. He argues that television has the power to shape public consciousness and cultural norms, much like cinema. His insights into the technological and cultural dimensions of television highlight its significance as a medium of artistic and cultural expression.

Spiegel and Williams' works help us better understand the factors contributing to the legitimization of television series at film festivals. Their works both highlight the transformation of television from a domestic medium to a sophisticated form of cultural expression. This transformation is crucial in understanding why television series such as *The Idol* are now celebrated alongside films in prestigious settings. This event emphasizes the legitimacy of

television series within the film festival circuit, blurring the boundaries between film and television, and reflecting broader cultural and technological shifts within the media landscape.

The Idol is a relevant entry point to this subject for several reasons. As a starter, the involvement of high-profile personalities such as Abel Tesfaye (also known as The Weeknd) and Sam Levinson, along with a notable cast, brought significant media attention to the series. This highlights how television series with prominent creators and actors can generate buzz similar to high-budget films. Additionally, the series' controversial content and the critiques it received could highlight the risks and challenges associated with including provocative TV series in film festivals, which can spark discussion about the criteria and standards for including television series in such events. Furthermore, the series' exploration of themes like fame, mental health, and the dark side of the music industry reflects broader cultural and industry trends. Its presence at Cannes can be seen as part of a more significant movement towards more diverse and complex storytelling on the television screen, which film festivals have started to acknowledge.

This development serves as a poignant entry into the broader discourse surrounding the evolving relationship between television and film, particularly in the context of film festivals. It illustrates how the lines between these two mediums are becoming increasingly fluid, reflecting a new era of media consumption and production.

Film festivals have historically been platforms for showcasing cinematic art and fostering industry connections, film festivals such as the Venice Film Festival, Berlinale, or Cannes have been instrumental in promoting cinema as an art form and a means of cultural expression. These festivals provided a stage for filmmakers to present their work to a global audience, fostering a passion for cinema and cultural appreciation. Over time, film festivals have transformed from mere exhibition platforms to comprehensive events that include industry networking, market sections, and talent development programs (De Valck, 2007, p.109). The inclusion of television series at these festivals represents a natural progression in their evolution, reflecting the changing dynamics of the media landscape and stressing their cultural and social relevance.

Film festivals have become significant networking hubs where industry professionals such as filmmakers, producers, distributors, and critics converge to exchange ideas, negotiate deals, and discover new talent. This networking aspect is crucial for the growth and sustainability of the film industry, as it facilitates collaborations and the distribution of films (De Valck, 2007, p.73). The presence of television series at the festivals further enhances these opportunities, as it brings together professionals from both the film and television industries, in turn fostering cross-industry collaborations.

Moreover, including television series at film festivals also highlights these events' cultural and social relevance. Film festivals are more than showcasing films; they are significant cultural events that reflect and influence societal trends and issues. Bennet, Taylor, and Woodward (2014) explored how cultural festivals, including film festivals, have become central to the cultural life of cities and communities. Bennet et al. (2014) argue that these events are not just about the arts and entertainment but are also about cultural and social exchange. They serve as platforms for dialogue, promoting cultural diversity and fostering a sense of community and belonging among attendees (pp. 2-5).

Additionally, Wong (2011) discusses how film festivals serve as sites of cultural negotiation and power dynamics, where issues of representation, identity, and globalization are actively engaged. She highlights the role of film festivals in shaping cultural narratives and influencing public discourse on critical social issues (p. 5). These festivals provide a space for cultural exchange and dialogue, helping to foster a greater understanding of diverse cultures and social issues. By incorporating television series, festivals acknowledge the growing importance of high-quality TV dramas in culture and media consumption. This inclusion also democratizes access to diverse forms of storytelling, promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

Throughout history, film festivals have been the domain of cinematic premieres, offering filmmakers a prestigious platform to showcase their work to the audience and industry professionals. However, the rise of high-end TV series has led to a significant crossover between film and television, pushing festivals to adapt and include TV series in their lineups, which gave birth to new program sections and events such as Canneseries and Séries Mania in France, Berlinale Series in Berlin, and the Primetime section at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) (Goodfellow, 2019, para.5). Moreover, in recent years, major film festivals have showcased an array of television series. SXSW has hosted world premieres for series such as *Dear White People*, *Mr Robot*, and *Ramy*. Tribeca Film Festival has featured screenings and talks with TV creators, including premieres of *Chernobyl*, *The Boys*, and *Genius*.

The inclusion of television series at film festivals offers numerous advantages for the medium of television. For creators, it provides a source of recognition and an opportunity to interact with audiences and industry professionals in a prestigious setting. Harlan Coben, an American novelist, TV writer, and producer, expressed his enthusiasm for the festival experience, pointing out the excitement of discussing his work and connecting with his cast and crew (Hazelton, 2018, para. 4), which was echoed by other industry professionals who see festivals as a valuable platform for celebrating and launching new shows alongside some of the best feature films of the year (*The Big Question: TV at film festivals*, 2016, para. 4).

From a marketing perspective, festival screenings can elevate the brand of a TV series, much like a film premiere. Valerie Cabrera of AMC Studios noted that being invited to a prestigious festival can put a stamp of legitimacy on a series aimed at an upmarket audience. That became clear when AMC's historical adventure series *The Terror* had its world premiere at the Berlinale Series, generating buzz and facilitating second-window deals for international territories. Similarly, the screening of *Killing Eve* at Canneseries helped Endeavor Content work with local licensees and partners on coordinated marketing strategies (Hazelton, 2018, para. 8).

The growing presence of television series at film festivals can be understood through the lens of critical media industry studies, which examine the practices, discourses, and power structures within the media industries. This field of study provides valuable insights into how industry norms and behaviors are established and challenged over time. Critical media industry studies analyze the production, distribution, and reception of media content, with a focus on the institutional and organizational dynamics that shape these processes. According to Havens, Lotz, and Tinic (2009), this approach emphasizes the interplay between economic, cultural, and technological factors that influence media practices and policies (pp. 234-235). By looking at the inclusion of television series at film festivals under this lens, we can explore several key aspects of the media industries:

- Industry lore and norms: the shared beliefs and practices that guide industry behavior (Havens, 2008, as cited in Burroughs, 2019, p.3). Traditionally, film festivals have prioritized cinematic works, reflecting a longstanding norm that celebrates film as distinct and superior art form. However, the increasing inclusion of television series suggests a shift in these established norms.
- Power structures and gatekeeping: critical media industry studies also examine the power structures within media industries, including who has the authority to make decisions about what content is deemed worthy of inclusion in film festivals (Havens et al., 2009, pp. 10-11). The decision to include television series reflects a broader democratization of media gatekeeping, suggesting a blurring of boundaries between what is seen as 'elite culture' and 'popular culture' or high and low brow.
- Economic incentives and market strategies: Economic incentives and market strategies can explain the inclusion of television series at film festivals can be understood through. As streaming platforms and serial content becomes increasingly dominant, film festivals may adapt to these trends to remain relevant and attract broader audiences.
- Audience preferences and consumption patterns: the changing preferences of audiences

- Cultural and social impact: television series, particularly those with complex narratives and high production values, contribute significantly to contemporary cultural discourse. By including these series, film festivals acknowledge their cultural relevance and the role they play on shaping societal conversations.

Moreover, the narratives and discourses circulating within industry-specific publications, also play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and practices within the media industry (Perren, 2015, p. 228). Trade publications such as *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* have documented the growing presence of television series at film festivals, highlighting the strategic importance of these events for television creators and producers. These publications provide valuable insights into the motivations and strategies behind the inclusion of television series at film festivals, revealing how industry stakeholders navigate the ever-evolving film and tv industries.

The academic relevance of studying the inclusion of television series at film festivals lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of media convergence and the evolving nature of media consumption. This research area is particularly significant given the accelerated convergence of film and television over the past few years, driven by the rise of streaming platforms and changes in audience viewing habits.

By analyzing this trend, scholar can gain valuable insights into how the boundaries of traditional media are being redefined. Including television series at film festivals represents a concrete manifestation of the blurring lines between film and television, providing a unique lens through which to examine the broader consequences of media convergence. This phenomenon reflects the emergence of hybrid formats, such as mini-series, which combine elements of both film and television to create a unique and immersive viewing experiences.

Furthermore, this research can shed light on media convergence's economic and cultural implications. Studying the inclusion of television series at film festivals can offer a deeper understanding of changes in the industry regarding production, distribution, and exhibition strategies, as we are at an exciting point in history where established filmmakers and creators are experimenting with new formats and storytelling techniques (Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p. 7).

This research can also provide insights into the evolution of audience preferences and consumption patterns. As viewers increasingly engage with content across multiple platforms and formats, the distinction between film and television is becoming less and less clear. Analyzing how industry professionals frame and justify the inclusion of television series at prestigious film events can reveal significant trends in how the industry is adapting to these changing audience behaviors.

Moreover, this research contributes to our understanding of how cultural institutions like film festivals adapt to the changing media landscape. It raises questions about the role of these events in curating and legitimizing different forms of audiovisual content in an era of media convergence.

By focusing on the industry discourse surrounding this trend, researchers can uncover the narratives and justifications governing television series' inclusion at film festivals. This thesis can provide valuable insights into how industry professionals are navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by media convergence, and how they are refining concepts of artistic value and cultural prestige in the process.

Given this context, the convergence of film and television raises essential questions about how industry professionals perceive and express these changes. The discourse surrounding the inclusion of television series at film festivals offers valuable insights into the evolving media landscape and the cultural dynamics at play. To explore this topic, and through the critical analysis of secondary data such as trade press articles, interviews, and festival reports, this research paper aims to answer the research question:

With the growing convergence of television and film, how have television and film professionals discursively framed the inclusion of TV series in the film festival circuit? This question addresses the changing perceptions within the industry and examines the broader implications of media convergence. By analyzing the discourse of industry professionals, this research aims to discover the underlying motivations, strategies, and cultural narratives that motivate the inclusion of television series at film festivals. Understanding these discourses will provide a deeper insight into the evolving relationship between film and television and the changing media consumption and production landscape.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Media Industry Studies and Industry lore

This study of industry lore and the inclusion of television series in the programming of film festivals contributes to the field of Critical Media Industry Studies. By exploring how the film and television industry, along with its stakeholders, discursively reframe the perception of television series and their legitimacy at film festivals, it is possible to uncover valuable insights into the underlying lore and logic that govern the decision-making processes in the dynamic realms of the film and TV industries. As film and television carry significant cultural influence, dissecting the industry lore surrounding them offers both researchers and audiences a framework to assess and comprehend the industry's societal effect.

Critical media industry studies aim to provide a framework for researching media industries that brings new ways of understanding them from a critical standpoint by considering the complex interplay of social, economic, political, and cultural forces within the industries, which is done so by studying the business culture of media organizations, the circulation, and evolution of knowledge regarding media texts and audiences, and the influence of these elements on industrial practices (Havens & Lotz., 2017, p. 5). In the context of the film and television industry, this research approach allows for an in-depth examination of the interactions between cultural and economic forces within the industry. That is useful for looking at the evolving relationship between television, film, and film festivals.

Additionally, there is a need for more empirical research into the media industries, which critical media industry studies undertake. Traditional media studies have been criticized for being too theoretical and lacking empirical grounding, while approaches that are purely critical and rely on textual analysis and cultural theory have been seen as inadequate for understanding the complexities behind media production, distribution, and consumption. Critical media industry studies seek to combine critical theory with empirical methods to deliver more nuanced, contextual analyses of media organizations and their dynamics and practices. The approach aims to uncover and understand the impact of media industries within cultural, social, and political spheres (Havens et al., 2009, p. 249). This type of research exposes how industry stakeholders define and refine industry practices based on broader cultural factors. That is relevant for analyzing the inclusion of television series at film festivals as this is a practice that was not originally common in film festival programming: the inclusion of television series at film festivals

is a result of film festivals adapting their programming strategy due to the rise of high-quality TV, challenging the traditional boundaries between film and television.

Using a critical media industry studies approach is well suited for examining the inclusion of television series at film festivals. This framework builds upon previous research using a similar lens to analyze the strategic ways media companies leverage film festivals. Scholars have also explored how festivals function as ‘sites of rupture’ where established industry, norms and hierarchies are often challenged and renegotiated (Edgmon, 2019, p.3). Applying this critical approach to the phenomenon of the addition of television series at film festivals allows us to unpack the complex catalysts behind this trend.

For instance, past research using critical media industry studies has focused on examining how media industries adapt to broader technological, and audience shifts, such as the rise of streaming platforms and the changes in attitudes toward traditional television (Burroughs, 2019, p. 14). Moreover, critical media industry studies help uncover the power dynamics and cultural politics involved in defining what counts as a ‘legitimate’ media form worthy of inclusion at prestigious film festivals. By questioning these underlying forces, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the evolving relationship between the film and television industries, as well as the changing status of television as an artistic medium.

The film and television industries are a complex web of power dynamics where cultural capital and taste play a significant role in shaping the practices, narratives, and aesthetics deemed as legitimate. According to Bourdieu (1986, as cited by Ramsey, 2024, para 9), cultural capital is a form of symbolic power that provides access to limited rewards and is subject to monopolization. In the context of the film and TV industry, cultural capital can be seen as the knowledge, skills, and preferences that industry stakeholders and audiences alike value. The production of media texts is influenced by the cultural capital of the individuals involved, from the writers and directors to the producers and executives. In turn, the taste of these individuals, shaped by their cultural capital, determines what types of stories are told, how they are told, and what genres and styles are worthy of recognition. This process is not neutral, as the cultural capital and taste of those in power can perpetuate dominant ideologies and social hierarchies. As Foucault argued, power is not just repressive but also productive, shaping discourses and subjectivities (Foucault, 1979, as cited in Havens et al., 2009, p.237). In the film and television industry, power is exercised through the very ways that media professionals think and talk about their work, reinforcing certain narratives and aesthetics as legitimate and others as inferior. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony also comes into play, as the dominant groups in the industry secure the

consent of the dominated through cultural means, such as the valorization of specific genres and styles (Gramsci, 1971, as cited in Havens et al., 2009, p.237).

The inclusion of television series at film festivals is a prime example of how cultural capital and taste shape the industry's values and norms. The selection of TV series for festival programming is influenced by the cultural capital of the festival organizers, who are often derived from the same cultural and social circles as the industry professionals they serve. The taste of these organizers, shaped by their cultural capital, determines which TV series are deemed worthy of recognition and which are not. This process of selection and recognition reinforces certain narratives and aesthetics as legitimate and others as inferior, perpetuating dominant ideologies and social hierarchies. By examining the role of cultural capital, taste, and power in the film and TV industry, particularly in the context of festival programming, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of how power operates at multiple levels, from the micro-level of individual preferences to the macro-level of industry norms and expectations.

Trade stories

Caldwell's concept of trade stories is a critical framework for understanding the internal narratives and discourses that circulate within the media industry. Professionals within the industry often share these stories through trade publications, interviews, and behind-the-scenes account, and they serve multiple functions

- They help industry insiders make sense of their work environment (Caldwell, 2008, p. 345),
- Establish professional identities (Caldwell, 2008, p. 346),
- Navigate the complex power dynamics within the industry (Caldwell, 2008, p. 346).

In the context of this research on including television series at film festivals, Caldwell's notion of trade stories provides a valuable lens for analyzing how these events are framed and perceived within the industry.

Trade stories play a key role in framing industry practices and perceptions, particularly regarding the inclusion of television series at film festivals. By analyzing trade stories, we can uncover the discursive strategies used by industry players to legitimize or critique this practice. For example, trade stories might highlight the economic benefits of including TV series in film festival programming, such as attracting a broader audience or generating additional revenue streams. Alternatively, they might discuss the cultural implications such as the elevation of television series to the same artistic status as films. For instance, a study on higher-institution-

based film festivals by Liu, Ling, and Nechita (2023) discusses how these events can serve as platforms for student filmmakers to showcase their work and connect with industry professionals (p. 350). The study aligns with Caldwell's notion of trade stories, as the narratives surrounding these festivals often stress their role in fostering upcoming talent and bridging the gap between academia and the industry. Researchers can gain insights into how the inclusion of television series can be framed as a valuable addition to a festival lineup by examining the trade stories related to film festivals.

Caldwell also emphasizes how trade stories help industry professionals make sense and navigate uncertain conditions (Caldwell, 2008, p. 345), such as those brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. It makes sense to briefly touch on the pandemic as it has significantly impacted the film and television industry, leading, for a time, to the rise of virtual film festivals and the increased inclusion of TV series in festival programming (de Valck & Damiens, 2023, pp. 90-93). Trade stories during this period often discussed the challenges and opportunities presented by these changes, providing a platform for industry professionals to make sense of the evolving landscape.

Moreover, trade stories are instrumental in constructing professional identities in the media industry (Caldwell, 2008, p. 346). By examining these narratives, we can gain insights into how industry professionals perceive their roles and responsibilities in relation to the inclusion of television series at film festivals. For instance, festival programmers might use trade stories to position themselves as innovators who are pushing the boundaries of traditional film festival programming. Likewise, TV series creators might leverage trade stories to highlight their work's artistic merit and its suitability for festival inclusion. Estrella Sendra's case study of the Decolonizing Film Festivals and Curating African Cinemas networking event provides an example of how trade stories can shape professional identities. The narratives surrounding this event emphasize the importance of curatorial practices and the role of festivals in promoting inclusivity (Sendra, 2023, p. 102). By looking at these trade stories, we can understand how the inclusion of television series at film festivals can be seen as part of a broader effort to diversify and democratize the industry.

Besides, Caldwell's notion of trade stories also sheds light on the power dynamics within the media industry (Caldwell, 2008, p. 346). In the context of this research, it is valuable to reflect on how trade stories can reinforce these dynamics in the context of film festivals. For example, trade stories might reveal tensions between traditional film enthusiasts and proponents of including TV series, highlighting the struggles for cultural capital and legitimacy within the

industry. Analyzing these narratives, allows researchers to uncover the underlying power relations that shape industry practices and discourses.

Adding Caldwell's notion of trade stories into this research allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the discursive strategies used by industry players to construct and maintain their power and legitimacy. Trade stories enable us to critically examine how the inclusion of television series in film festival programming is framed and perceived within the industry, providing valuable insights into the cultural and economic dynamics at play. Through the analysis of trade stories, this research can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of film festivals in shaping industry practices and public perceptions.

Film and television convergence

Media convergence is a transformative phenomenon that blends traditional and new media forms, enabling the creation and reinterpretation of content across diverse platforms. This concept, extensively discussed by media scholar Henry Jenkins (2006), suggests that convergence is not solely driven by technological developments but also by the evolving social and cultural practices that influence how media is consumed and interacted with (p. 2). Media convergence also allows for new forms of content consumption and content distribution.

In film and television, this convergence has led to the blurring of traditional boundaries, with content increasingly being produced, distributed, and consumed in innovative ways across multiple platforms. This shift has facilitated the emergence of new forms of storytelling, such as transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006, p. 20-21), exemplified by the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which spreads its narrative across films, television series, comics, and video games.

The historical connection between film and television can be traced back to the 1950s in the United States when the film industry began to recognize television as a complementary medium rather than just a competitor. As Newman and Levine note (2012), this period marked television's promising legitimacy and its challenge to the established cultural hierarchy as major studios and independent producers adapted their strategies to this emerging medium, setting the stage for a long-standing combination of film and television (p. 4).

As media convergence progressed, particularly with the development of digital technologies, the boundaries between film and television became even more fluid. Independent filmmakers, facing decreased opportunities in traditional cinema, turned to television, attracted by its evolving narrative complexity and potential for broader creative expression (Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p. 8). This transition contributed to the rise of what Newman and Levine

(2012) describe as 'Quality TV', a phenomenon where television began to attain a level of narrative and aesthetic sophistication once exclusive to cinema (p. 45).

In parallel, Richards' (2021) exploration of 'Cinematic TV' highlights how television series have adopted cinematic techniques, thereby enhancing their visual and narrative depth. This evolution reflects a broader trend where television content is no longer seen as inherently inferior to film but is often its equal in craft and impact. The integration of cinematic qualities into television has not only elevated the medium's status but has also led to a renaissance in television storytelling, characterized by complex, layered narratives and high production values (pp. 1-10).

The impact of streaming platforms has been a leading factor behind of these changes, particularly regarding distribution, marketing, and financing. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards direct-to-streaming releases, fundamentally altering how content is accessed and valued by dismissing the traditional theatrical release (Lang & Rubin, 2021, para. 7). This new distribution landscape, as Richards (2021) points out, offers independent filmmakers unprecedented opportunities to reach global audiences directly, bypassing traditional gatekeeping mechanisms of theatrical distribution (p. 3).

Film festivals, traditionally the playground of cinematic art, are responding to these shifts in audience expectations by increasingly incorporating television series into their programming (Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p.85). This adaptation is not merely a response to the popularity of TV series but a recognition of their growing cinematic quality. Television series today are often indistinguishable from films in terms of production values, narrative complexity, and character development, partly due to increased budgets and the involvement of renowned filmmakers and actors crossing over from film to television.

The inclusion of television series in film festivals can be seen as a response to the blurring lines between film and television, driven by media convergence. Festivals are expanding their inclusion criteria, recognizing that the cinematic experience can also be achieved in episodic and serial formats (Newman & Levine, 2012, p. 36). This shift is also a strategic move to attract a broader audience, catering to their evolved tastes and consumption habits, which now often include both film and high-quality content.

Moreover, the adaptation of film festivals to include television series reflects a broader industry trend towards flexibility and inclusiveness in the face of changing media landscapes. By showcasing high-quality television series that possess cinematic qualities, film festivals are not only acknowledging the artistic merit of these works but also the shifting dynamics of media consumption, where distinctions between different forms of media are becoming less defined and, by showcasing television series alongside films, festivals not only recognize the blurring of

traditional media boundaries but also adapt to changing audience consumption patterns, who increasingly view film and television content as a continuity of each other rather than distinct categories. This change in consumption patterns is also a consequence of the rise of streaming platforms (Newman & Levine, 2012, p. 2; Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p. 84).

The consequences of media convergence extend beyond production and distribution. As audiences become accustomed to accessing a diverse range of content through multiple platforms, their expectations regarding quality, interactivity, and accessibility continue to evolve. This has caused creators and distributors to innovate continually, not only in how stories are told but also in how they are delivered and experienced. For instance, the rise of interactive and virtual reality content has been seen as the next frontier in media convergence, offering immersive experiences that further blur the lines between different media forms.

Furthermore, the evolution of audience expectations in the age of media convergence has been particularly marked by an increased appreciation for serialized storytelling. The rise of digital platforms accelerates this change, allowing for binge-watching and more immersive engagement with complex narratives. Audiences now expect a higher level of narrative sophistication and continuity, which serialized formats deliver effectively (Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p. 84-85). This change in consumer preference is supported by the success of platforms like Netflix, where serialized storytelling thrives and often leads to deeper audience investment in the characters and plot developments over time.

In conclusion, the impact of media convergence on the film and television industry, its practices, and the audience is profound, particularly in the context of serialized storytelling and the inclusion of television series at film festivals. Media convergence has reshaped the media landscape, blurred the traditional boundaries, and created new opportunities for storytelling and audience engagement. The ongoing transformation challenges traditional perceptions of television and film, suggesting a future where the distinctions between these mediums may become increasingly irrelevant, prompting a new era of narrative entertainment where the focus shifts from the medium to the message and its impacts on the audience. Additionally, as audiences grow more accustomed and appreciative of serialized, cinematic content delivered through formats once associated to television, film festivals are adapting by showcasing these works alongside traditional films. This adaptation reflects a broader understanding within the industry that the lines between film and television are increasingly convergent, driven by both technological progress and evolving viewer preferences.

Film festivals and their history

Film festivals have evolved significantly since the early 20th century, reflecting broader cultural, technological, and industry changes. The Venice Film Festival, first initiated in 1932, is traditionally considered the first significant film festival. It was established not only as a platform for showcasing film but also as an innovative interface for education surrounding the moving image by recognizing the potential of art as an educational tool in a period dominated by educational films (de Valck, 2007, p. 23). This pioneering event set the stage for the evolution of the film festival format, which progressively integrated various cinematic and non-cinematic influences over the decades.

Film festivals have played a crucial role in shaping film history and the canon. They have been instrumental in redefining film genres, boosting film movements, and bringing attention to cinemas and filmmakers from all over the world, particularly for documentary film festivals (de Valck, 2007, p. 102). The curatorial practices and alternative patterns of film circulation at festivals like Venice and Cannes have provided visibility to independent productions and minor genres, such as documentary or short films, challenging the traditional narratives of film history dominated by major studios and mainstream cinema.

The role of film festivals has also been significant in the context of documentary films. Documentary film festivals have historically been platforms for exploring political, social, and cultural issues, reflecting the genre's commitment to addressing real-world problems. These festivals have facilitated the circulation and reception of documentary films and have been critical in defining the genre's place within the broader film industry (Vallejo & Winton, 2020, p. 8-11).

In recent years, the rise of digital technologies has further transformed film festivals, introducing new challenges and opportunities. The adoption of digital technologies has changed how festivals operate, from submission processes to how audiences engage with the festival experience. Digital platforms have enabled festivals to reach a global audience, beyond geographical and physical limitations, and have introduced new dynamic in the interaction between festivals, filmmakers and audiences (de Valck, 2008, p. 17-18).

Furthermore, the inclusion of television series in film festival programming marks a significant evolution in the landscape of film festivals, reflecting broader trends in media convergence and changes in audiences' expectations. This shift can be traced back to the early 2000s, a period characterized with the use of terms such as 'Quality TV' and 'Cinematic TV', which, as previously mentioned, saw television series adopt narration techniques usually associated with film as well as narrative complexities that were originally seen only in cinema. Film festivals such as Sundance, Toronto International Film Festival, and Berlinale were among

the pioneers in including television series in their programming (Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p.85). These festivals expanded their categories to include TV series, recognizing their impact on culture and their ability to draw in audiences who might be less interested in the traditional film offerings. This inclusion allows festivals to stay relevant and competitive in an entertainment landscape that is becoming increasingly crowded.

The inclusion of television series into film festivals reflects a broader cultural shift towards recognizing and acknowledging the artistic value of all forms of visual storytelling (Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p. 86). Film festivals, usually seen as the curators of cinematic excellence, acknowledge that television series can also be a medium for high-quality, innovative storytelling that deserves recognition and celebration.

The impact of this change in attitude is profound, not only for the festivals themselves but also for the creators and audiences. Filmmakers and showrunners who earlier might have focused exclusively on cinema are now exploring the possibilities of television, often using it as a platform to tell stories that require more time and space than a traditional film would allow, as seen with David Chase, the creator of HBO's *The Sopranos*, who stated that at first, "he was much more interested in creating short films about the characters and their world, but HBO pushed him toward greater serialization; nevertheless, many episodes would still make sense if watched out of order without their serial contexts" (Mittel, 2015, p. 29). On the other hand, audiences benefit from an enriched festival experience that includes a broader variety of content, accommodating diverse tastes and preferences.

The history of film festivals is a dynamic one that mirrors the evolution of the film industry and broader societal changes. From their early days as educational platforms to their current status as significant cultural events, film festivals have continually adapted to meet the changing needs of filmmakers, audiences, and the industry as a whole. As they evolve, they continue to play a role in the propagation and appreciation of cinema, shaping the landscape of global film culture.

Research Method

This research will qualitatively analyze a diverse range of publicly available secondary data, including trade and press articles, interviews with industry stakeholders like festival directors, press releases, and festival reports, to examine how industry lore and discourse are constructed around the inclusion of television series at film festivals and to explore the broader industry conversations surrounding this trend. In total, 43 documents were analyzed. This dataset will provide valuable insights into the practices of the film and TV industry and about the implications of the inclusion of television series at film festivals.

The data was collected from online media focused on film and television including but not limited to *ScreenDaily*, *Variety*, and *Deadline*. The range of data provides valuable insights from different actors within the industry. While trade press articles are helpful and most often contain correct information about what goes on in the industry, they may be limited as their focus can be on prominent members of the industry or their content might be heavily charged with the editorial point of view which can lead to bias (Perren, 2015, p. 229-230). To mitigate this, the secondary data used in this research also includes other articles, such as press articles, interviews, and festival reports to provide different perspectives on the research topic.

The relevance of all selected secondary data to the research question was established through criterion sampling, employing an online search strategy that exclusively searched for:

- Television series that have been selected for festivals,
- Announcements regarding festival programming,
- Interviews of television directors and producers
- Interviews of festival programmers and directors,
- Combination of terms such as 'series premiere film festival'.

The criterion sampling method was chosen for its ability to guarantee that the data collected is directly relevant to the research questions and objectives. This method involves selecting articles that meet a predetermined criterion of importance, which, in this case, is the inclusion of television series in film festivals.

The analysis of these documents will also provide a deeper understanding of key industry stakeholders, such as television producers, directors, festival programmers, and festival directors. By examining their perspectives and accounts, we can gain valuable insights into the industry's inner workings, decision-making processes, and power dynamics.

Moreover, the secondary data provides insights into the business culture of the film and TV industry as well as the practices of film festivals, which is essential to understand the industry's process of reflexivity, and that is key for critical practice in film and television as it allows for a deeper understanding of how the industry operates and how it constantly redefines itself. The concept of industrial reflexivity refers to the self-awareness and self-referencing nature of the film and television industry. It implicates the industry's ability to analyze and reflect on its own practices and behaviors critically. This concept also highlights the industry's consciousness of the potential impact of how it presents itself to the public, both through its products and through the discourses surrounding them (Caldwell, 2008, p. 361).

Industrial reflexivity manifests in various forms, such as behind-the-scenes documentaries, making-of featurettes, and interviews with industry professionals. These reflexive practices provide insights into the production processes and serve as a means for the industry to shape its public image and narratives. By selectively revealing certain aspects of its operations and concealing others, the industry engages in a form of self-representation and self-mythologization. Furthermore, industrial reflexivity plays a crucial role in constructing industry lore and perpetuating of certain narratives and ideologies with the film and TV industry. Through reflexive practices, the industry reinforces particular values, norms, and power structures, while simultaneously obscuring or marginalizing others. This process of self-definition and self-legitimation is deeply intertwined with the industry's economic and cultural processes (Caldwell, 2008, p. 361; Perren, 2015, p. 229).

As highlighted by Caldwell (2008) and expanded by Havens et al. (2009), critically observing the industrial practices, often obscured by political economy approaches to media industry research, is possible through the critical analysis of industry artifacts of discourse, such as the data set used for this research. This approach is precious in the absence of direct access to the industry practitioners at the executive level, allowing researchers to uncover the underlying power dynamics and cultural practices that shape the industry (Caldwell, 2008, p. 348; Havens et al., 2009, p. 245).

Caldwell (2008) emphasizes that the media industry is not just a site of economic transactions but also a cultural space where meanings, identities, and power relations are constantly negotiated and redefined (p. 345). By focusing on the reflexive practices of industry professionals, such as trade press articles and interviews, it is possible to gain Insights into how the industry views itself and its role in society. These texts often contain implicit and explicit references to the values, priorities, and challenges the industry faces. Havens et al. (2009) further argue that traditional political economy approaches, which often prioritize economic factors and

institutional structures, can overlook the nuanced and often cover cultural practices that influence industry operations. They suggest that a critical analysis of industry artifacts can reveal the discursive strategies used by industry players to construct and maintain their power and legitimacy (pp. 249-250).

By analyzing the secondary data through the lens of industrial reflexivity, this research aims to uncover the complex interplay between the industry's self-representations, business practices, and cultural impact. It seeks to critically examine how the industry constructs and disseminates narratives about itself, and how these narratives shape public perceptions, industry norms, and the broader audiovisual cultural landscape.

This research will use thematic analysis to process the secondary data and analyze how the film and television industry frames its business practices and the inclusion of television series in film festival programming. Thematic analysis is a widely used approach in qualitative data analysis, particularly in media studies. This method allows researchers to systematically identify and analyze recurring themes and concepts within a data set, which can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of the media industry (Jensen, 2002, p. 247).

Thematic analysis involves multiple key steps, starting with familiarization with the data, which includes reading and re-reading the data to become deeply immersed and familiar with its content, which is followed by the generation of initial codes, where interesting features and patterns of the data are systematically coded across the entire data set. These codes are then compiled into potential themes, which are reviewed and refined to make sure that they accurately reflect the data. The themes are then defined and named, which is concretized by the analysis that will follow in the next sections of this research paper.

This method involves the inductive categorization of data based on various themes and requires comparing, contrasting, and abstracting elements of meaning within a data set (Jensen, 2002, p. 247). Thematic analysis can uncover and interpret underlying themes and patterns in the data, which is also valuable for identifying different perspectives and experiences of various stakeholders and individuals within the film and TV industry. By identifying common themes across different groups, this method allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various complex factors at play in the film and tv industry, particularly with the position of television series at film festivals.

Thematic analysis also emphasizes the importance of language as a primary vehicle of evidence in qualitative research (Jensen, 2002, p. 251). In the context of this research, this is fundamental as, at the basis of critical media industry studies, is the notion that discourse has a role in shaping industry practices and perception (Havens & Lotz, 2017, p. 5). Moreover, the

thematic analysis of this research was informed by principles from discourse analysis, which involves analyzing how language is used in texts to construct social realities and industry norms. This approach is beneficial for understanding how the film and television industry constructs and disseminates narratives about itself and how these narratives shape public perceptions and industry norms. In addition, Foucault's understanding of discourse as the creation of knowledge and power will guide this part of the analysis. Foucault's theory of discourse puts forth that language and practices within any given society are not only ways of expressing knowledge but are also vital in creating it. According to Foucault (1972, as cited by Adams, 2017, para. 2), discourse govern what can be said, who can say it, when, and with what authority. It shapes our perceptions of reality and, by extension, the distribution of power within society. When it comes to the media industry, discourse reflects the interests and ideologies of those in positions of power and actively constructs and reinforce these power relations.

In the context of analyzing the discourse surrounding television series at film festivals, employing a Foucauldian approach means critically examining how the film and television industry's discourse serves to create and disseminate knowledge that upholds or challenges existing norms and power structures within the film and television industry, which involves analyzing how discourse shapes industry practices and the representation of television series.

By looking at the power-knowledge relationship, this research can uncover the mechanisms through which the film and television industries exert influence over (societal) norms and values, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of media in the shaping discourse surrounding the industry.

Results

The convergence of television and film has had several impacts on the dynamics of the film festival circuit. Traditionally reserved for cinematic works, film festivals are now increasingly welcoming high-quality television series, which has prompted a reevaluation of festival programming and industry practices.

This result section examines how television and film professionals discursively frame the inclusion of TV series in these prestigious events by revealing the multifaceted implications of this trend and offering insights into industry adaptations, quality recognition, unique experiences, professional benefits, skepticism, and future prospects. By exploring these dimensions, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the strategic, artistic, and economic motivations pushing the addition of television series into the film festival circuit.

Embracing Television: Industry Shifts and Adaptations

Including television series at film festivals represents a significant adaptation to the evolving media landscape, characterized by the increasing quality and prestige of television productions. The industry's discourse reflects a broad acknowledgment of this shift and an ongoing effort to integrate television content into traditionally film-centric events.

Sundance Film Festival has been at the forefront of this change. Historically known for its support of independent cinema, Sundance has embraced television series as a natural extension of its mission. As highlighted by an agent from a Hollywood agency, "Sundance should be embracing TV more than they have in the past" (Travers, 2018, para. 14). This sentiment underscores the growing market for independent television, which has seen a significant demand increase in recent years. The following year, the festival also adjusted its logistics to accommodate episodic content better, and this includes modifying its screening schedules and using smaller venues to accommodate the number of attendees (Travers, 2019, para. 5). These changes highlight Sundance's proactive approach to integrating television into its lineup, ensuring that both filmmakers and audiences have a positive experience.

The expansion of television programming at film festivals is not limited to logistical adjustment but also emphasizes the importance of the theatrical experience. One festival organizer noted, "Getting people out to a theater to have a collective experience only helps support the importance of the big screen" (*The Big Question: TV at film festivals*, 2016, para. 5). This

approach not only enhances the audience's experience but also supports the broader entertainment industry by promoting the theatrical experience and the communal aspects of viewing, which are often lost in the era of digital consumption.

Berlinale has also adapted by integrating television series into the Berlinale Special Gala section, aiming to push series further into the limelight (Whittock, 2023, para. 8). This strategic move is in line with similar initiatives at Cannes and SXSW, illustrating a broader trend among film festivals to embrace television series. The Berlinale Series program (now discontinued), introduced in 2015, had become a significant platform for showcasing high-quality international series, which reflects the festival's commitment to innovation and excellence in storytelling.

Historically resistant to integrating television content, the Cannes Film Festival has also shifted its stance. Cannes' artistic director, Thierry Frémaux, once stated, "Cannes is a film festival" and suggested that a separate festival should be created for television (Schneider, 2017, para. 5). However, since then, Cannes has screened episodes of series from David Lynch and Jane Campion, for example, "Even TV series, unless proven otherwise, are using the classic art of cinema," Frémaux said (Schneider, 2017, para. 6). Additionally, the city of Cannes has since launched a TV festival in partnership with Reed Midem (Schneider, 2017, para. 7). This change in opinion represents a recognition of the artistic merit and cultural impact of television series, aligning Cannes with the broader industry trends.

Some new festivals, specially dedicated to showcasing TV series, have also emerged in response to the high quality of television content such as *Séries Mania* and *Canneseries*. These festivals, along with others like *SeriesFest* and *ATX Television Festival*, reflect the industry's recognition of the significance of episodic storytelling and its potential to attract large audiences. As Janet Pierson from SXSW stated, "It just seems inevitable... Those of us who are programmers are always looking for great work. In this day and age, why would anyone still restrict to one time format?" (Schneider, 2017, para. 9). These sentiments echo the industry's recognition of the need for flexibility and inclusivity in programming, acknowledging the diverse formats through which creators can tell stories. The spread of TV-focused events is a natural development of how content has evolved as Beta Film managing director Moritz von Kruedener remarked, "They are a natural development of how content itself has developed in recent years" (Goodfellow, 2019, para. 27). This reflects the industry's acknowledgment of television's increasing prestige and its impact on traditional film festival programming. The rise of high-quality television series has led to blurred boundaries between film and television, with many creators and audiences viewing them as equally legitimate forms of artistic expression.

The adaptation of film festivals to include television series is a response to market demand and reflects broader cultural and economic shifts. Festivals like TIFF have embraced this trend since 2015, launching programs such as TIFF Primetime to feature TV premieres such as *Black Mirror* and *Transparent* (Travers, 2018, para. 1). This move highlights the festival's commitment to remaining relevant in a rapidly changing entertainment landscape, where television series now often compete with films in terms of quality and cultural impact.

Industry professionals recognize the necessity of adapting to these changes. As Dennis Ruh from Berlinale noted, "As the lines between film and series continue to blur, it's imperative for festivals like Berlinale to evolve, ensuring series maintain a prominent place within both our market and festival landscapes" (Balaga 2024, para. 17). This evolution is crucial for festivals to remain competitive and relevant, providing a platform for diverse forms of storytelling that reflect contemporary media consumption habits.

Moreover, festivals are ideal platforms to discover new talent and provide opportunities for diverse voices. One festival organizer emphasized that "festivals are uniquely placed to discover new diverse talent, and an expanded brief would deliver much-needed opportunities for vital new voices. Traditional silos and elitisms are self-limiting and we ignore this at our peril" (*The Big Question: TV at film festivals*, 2016, para.6). This highlights the role of festivals in fostering creativity and supporting emerging artists, as well as providing a platform for underrepresented voices and stories that might not find a place in more traditional media channels.

The economic reasons behind this adaptation are also essential to consider. The rise of TV series at film festivals is not just a cultural phenomenon as well as a reflection of broader economic shifts within the film and television industry.

The rise of TV at film festivals reflects the changing face of independent television development, from the boom of digital web series in the early 2010s to the current marketplace, which is liable to be shaped by the streaming wars for a decade to come. (Betancourt, 2021, para. 4)

Internal industry narratives that influence perceptions and practices also shape the discourse surrounding the inclusion of television series at film festivals. These narratives often highlight the challenges and opportunities of integrating television content into film festivals. For instance, the introduction of the Indie Episodic section at Sundance was seen as a necessary evolution to support emerging independent voices (*Sundance Institute Announces Indie Episodic, Shorts & Special Event Selections for 2018 Sundance Film Festival*, 2017, para. 2). This reflects Sundance Institute's commitment to adapting to the episodic format and supporting creators in developing original projects. The initiative has been well-received, with many industry professionals praising

Sundance's effort to up to stay up to date with the industry and provide a platform for innovative storytelling as highlighted by an attendee's comment, "These creators get to go out there and say, 'I got to show my work at Sundance' — that's huge exposure for them" (Travers, 2018, para. 12).

The experience and support of other festivals, such as SeriesFest, demonstrates the industry's adaptation to the new landscape. As Randi Kleiner, CEO of SeriesFest, observed, "This is so new — the idea of buying and selling episodic content — it's great [Sundance is] getting into it" (Travers, 2018, para. 15). This highlights the industry's recognition of the importance of episodic content and the opportunities it presents for both creators and audiences. SeriesFest, which focuses exclusively on episodic storytelling, has become a key event for industry professionals wanting to discover new talent and innovative series.

Moreover, the market potential of episodic content is not to be ignored. As Dennis Ruh noted, "Embracing this change is crucial for fostering a rich, diverse cinematic culture that celebrates storytelling in all its forms. I am confident the festival and the market will continue to give series a prominent role" (Balaga, 2024, para. 18). This sentiment reflects the industry's acknowledgment of the changing media landscape and the importance of staying current with audience preferences and industry trends. Additionally, as pointed out by Dennis Ruh, film festivals have also recognized the value of collaboration between filmmakers and television creators which can foster collaboration and exchange of ideas and techniques, enriching both film and television productions.

The inclusion of television series at film festivals represents a significant adaptation to the evolving media landscape that is driven by both cultural and economic factors and influenced by industry narratives; film festivals increasingly embrace television content, reflecting broader shifts in media consumption and production, which highlights the ongoing convergence between film and television and also highlights the need for festivals to evolve and remain relevant in a rapidly changing industry. Film festivals have recognized that embracing television series is essential for staying relevant and competitive. By adapting their programming and logistics, festivals such as Sundance, Berlinale, and TIFF have successfully integrated episodic content providing a platform for diverse voices and innovative storytelling.

Showcasing Quality

As television series gained recognition for their high-quality storytelling, film festivals, in turn, increasingly embraced these works by showcasing them alongside traditional films. The emphasis on quality and diversity in TV series programming at festivals highlights their

significance in contemporary storytelling and their evolving role within the entertainment industry.

Festivals such as Berlinale, SXSW, and TIFF have made efforts to spotlight the artistic merit and innovative nature of television series. Martina Bleis, head of the Berlinale Co-Production Market, underscore the festival's commitment to excellence by emphasizing the diverse selection of projects:

The selection this year is remarkably diverse, but all the projects provide a combination of both excellent entertainment and substantial depth. Very experienced series creators and producers have been invited, as well as successful filmmakers venturing into series-making for the first time and with a completely fresh perspective (*Jan 17, 2024 Co-Pro Series 2024: Ten Exceptional Series Projects at 10th Anniversary Edition*, 2024, para. 13).

This dedication to quality ensures that audiences experience television storytelling at its finest, and it highlights the festival's role in promoting diverse and impactful narratives.

The recognition of television series as a legitimate art form is further reflected in the reactions of creators such as Christina Lee, showrunner of the HBO Max series *Made for Love*. She appreciates the inclusion of television series at festivals, stating,

We just appreciate that they're including television... Because, you know, I think that we are, as creatives, approaching TV differently and really looking at the artistry of it. And so to be seen that way as well through these festivals is a real honor. (Betancourt, 2021, para. 8)

This recognition elevates television series to the same artistic level as films, highlighting their creative and narrative complexity. Besides, the recognition from such esteemed platforms validates the creators' hard work and sets a standard for quality in the television industry.

Moreover, high-profile premieres, such as the screening of HBO's *Succession* at the London Film Festival, underscore the prestige and quality of TV series that get featured at these events. The inclusion of such critically acclaimed series attracts significant attention, showcasing the festival's role in highlighting the best in television storytelling: "One of the high-profile pieces of content programmed this year isn't a film at all, but episode one and two of HBO's hit series *Succession*" (Grater, 2021, para. 10). These premieres generate buzz and validate the importance of TV within the festival circuit, creating anticipation among audiences and industry professionals alike.

TIFF's Primetime program demonstrates the groundbreaking nature of serialized storytelling. Anita Lee, TIFF Chief Programming Officer, points out, "This year's Primetime programme is bigger than ever and gives audiences the exclusive and unmatched opportunity to

celebrate the best new international series together, in cinema, on the big screen” (Tinoco, 2023, para. 2). This celebration of serialized storytelling not only highlights the innovative and creative potential of TV series but also positions them as central components of the festival experience at TIFF. By presenting these series in a cinematic context, festivals highlight their narrative depth and production quality which is a step closer to bridging the gap between television and film.

Additionally, TIFF’s Primetime program also highlights the work of both established and emerging creators, providing a platform for a wide range of talent. Geoff Macnaughton, Senior Director of Industry and Primetime Programmer notes, “This year’s lineup highlights the work of both established and emerging creators, with a balanced mix of new discoveries and fan favourites” (Lattanzio, 2022, para. 5). This inclusive approach guarantees a rich and varied selection of series, celebrating creativity across the field. By spotlighting both accomplished and newcomer talent, festivals foster a dynamic and evolving narrative landscape that continually pushes the boundaries of what television can achieve.

The Berlinale Series program further highlights the importance of inclusivity and diversity in its selection process. Dennis Ruh, European Film Market Boss, emphasizes the inclusion of shows with recognizable names and diverse perspectives: “We are also looking for shows with recognizable names in front of and behind the camera. We consider the representation of diverse perspectives, cultures and characters. Shows that reflect inclusivity often have a broader appeal in the global market” (Whittock, 2023, para. 18). This approach assures that the selected series resonates with a broader audience, showcasing the global appeal and cultural significance of high-quality television productions. The commitment to diversity and inclusion enriches the storytelling landscape, offering viewers a range of perspectives and experiences.

Besides, adaptability and engagement potential are also major factors in the selection of TV series for festivals. Dennis Ruh highlights the importance of content that can travel across different platforms and international markets: “Another criteria is how well the content can be adapted for different platforms, including streaming services, traditional broadcast and international markets. Furthermore, we analyze the content’s ability to engage viewers and keep them invested throughout the series” (Whittock, 2023, para. 19). This adaptability reflects the strategic importance of television series in the global entertainment landscape, ensuring their relevance and appeal across diverse audiences. The ability to engage and retain viewers is a testament to the quality and compelling nature of the series. The need for content to be adaptable across platforms reflects media convergence, which is continuously impacting the television and film industry.

Furthermore, the addition of television prizes at the 2021 Film Independent Spirit Awards illustrates the connection between groundbreaking TV projects and the indie film world. The first-ever nominee TV roster featured series that premiered at various film festivals, demonstrating the mutual influence and shared values between indie films and high-quality TV series: “One need look no further than the addition of television prizes at the 2021 Film Independent Spirit Awards to see pioneering TV projects as both an extension and a byproduct of the indie film world” (Betancourt, 2021, para. 9). This inclusion highlights the evolving relationship between film and television, showcasing the quality and innovation present in both mediums. By recognizing TV series within that context, the industry acknowledges the high standards of storytelling and production in television.

The emphasis on the quality of television series at film festivals underscores their legitimate place in the landscape of contemporary storytelling. By highlighting diversity, artistic merit, prestigious premieres, and the adaptability of content, festivals play a crucial role in elevating TV series to new heights. On top of that, this focus enhances the festival experience and reflects broader media consumption trends, where high-quality TV series are celebrated for their innovation and cultural impact. As festivals continue to recognize and showcase the best in television, they contribute to the ongoing convergence of film and television, fostering a dynamic cultural landscape. The recognition and celebration of high-quality TV series at festivals promotes that the medium continues to evolve and flourish, setting new standards for excellence in storytelling.

Crafting unique experiences

The inclusion of television series into film festivals has introduced a distinct and enriching experience for audiences. Unlike traditional film screenings, television series offer episodic storytelling that can foster deeper engagement and interaction. This section explores how TV series create an immersive festival experience and how this differs from the traditional film-centric approach.

Television series showcased at festivals often feature innovative and unconventional storytelling, providing a different experience for audiences. Robert Franke, VP of drama at ZDF Studios, observes the trend towards unique productions: “We are seeing a trend [in moving] away from classic mainstream series and towards productions that are a little more unexpected and unusual” (Balaga, 2024, para. 12). This shift towards niche and innovative content enhances the

festival experience, offering audiences stories that break away from what they would typically see on TV.

Some festivals emphasize the cinematic qualities of TV series, treating them with the same admiration as films. Cannes's artistic director Thierry Frémaux when explaining the selection of HBO's *The Idol*, "We're showing the two episodes, and together they are like a film. We like to show series by cineastes. Sam Levinson is a very interesting young cineaste" (Goodfellow, 2023, para. 51). By showcasing series created by renowned filmmakers, festivals bridge the gap between TV and cinema, elevating episodic content to a cinematic experience that appeals to cinephiles.

Moreover, the communal aspect of watching TV series at film festivals adds to the overall festival atmosphere. Jane Campion, reflecting on audience reactions during the screening of her TV series *Top of the Lake*, said,

To hear an audience gasp and cry and cheer like in the old days after they'd been sitting for so many hours was remarkable. In this era of Twitter, where the human element can sometimes be missing, it was beautiful. There was such a feeling of community in that theater. It felt like a giant sleepover. (Hayes, 2013, para. 3)

This shared viewing experience is a significant aspect of what makes TV series screenings at festivals unique, fostering a sense of community and collective enjoyment among the audience.

Carlo Chatrian, former artistic director of the Berlinale, indicates the importance of episodic content from both a market and an artistic perspective: "He stressed that from the market and cinema language point of view it makes sense to include this way of storytelling and show that many of these shows deserve a big screen" (Whittock, 2023, para 15). This double focus on market viability and artistic integrity highlights how festivals serve as platforms for showcasing high-quality content and driving industry trends.

Trevor Groth, Director of Programming for the Sundance Film Festival emphasizes the importance of providing a dedicated space for episodic storytelling: "Episodic is one of the fastest-developing fields in on-screen storytelling today. By creating a dedicated space for independent episodic storytellers to shine, we're aiming to foster more creativity in the field" (*Sundance Institute Announces Indie Episodic, Shorts & Special Event Selections for 2018 Sundance Film Festival*, 2017, para. 3). This focus on independent creators fosters innovation and diversity, contributing to the festival's dynamic environment and offering audiences fresh and original content.

Festivals have become spaces where the distinction between film and television blurs. Events like TIFF allow audiences to experience episodic series pilots on the big screen, creating

anticipation for their TV release. As *Variety* discusses, “Rather than expanding the definition of ‘film’ to include projects that were ‘made for TV,’ festivals are carving out dedicated sidebars to celebrate this competing medium” (Chang & Debruge, 2015, para. 2). This inclusion demonstrates how festivals are adapting to the evolving landscape of visual storytelling and embracing the diverse formats in which stories are told.

Furthermore, screenings of television series at film festivals also influence market dynamics and audience engagement. Greg Drebin of 20th Century Fox Television Distribution highlights the value of festival exposure: “Even older shows can benefit from festival exposure... When you can get a crowd of people to sit around and watch a show—especially a comedy—it’s really valuable” (Hazelton, 2018, para. 7). This exposure not only revives interest in existing series but also enhances their cultural relevance and market appeal.

Mai Broström, co-creator of *Oxen*, explains the symbiotic relationship between film and TV at festivals: “We believe that real film lovers love TV series and real TV series lovers love film. This co-existence at festivals makes perfect sense” (Balaga, 2024, para. 19). This mutual appreciation fosters a richer cultural landscape, where both mediums inspire and elevate each other, leading to a more integrated and inclusive festival experience.

Integrating TV series into film festivals creates a multifaceted experience that differs from traditional film screenings. Festivals enhance their cultural relevance and appeal by embracing unique and unconventional content, celebrating cinematic qualities, fostering community, bridging market and artistic interests, and nurturing the coexistence of film and TV. This evolution reflects broader changes in media consumption and production, positioning festivals as dynamic platforms for innovative storytelling across both mediums. As the lines between film and television continue to blur, festivals are crucial in celebrating and showcasing the best of both disciplines, creating a vibrant and inclusive environment for all forms of visual storytelling.

The Benefits of Festival Inclusion for TV Industry Professional

The inclusion of television series at film festivals enriches the festival experience and also provides considerable benefits for TV industry professionals. This section explores how creators, producers, and other industry stakeholders gain from this growing trend, highlighting the multifaceted advantages of participating in these prestigious events.

Despite facing initial challenges, the inaugural TV section at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018 demonstrated the significant impact of festival inclusion on independent television. As one report noted,

it would be easy to presume the inaugural TV section failed to meet expectations. But that's far from the full story. The Sundance Film Festival's debut program illustrated the challenges associated with selling independent television — and there are many — but it also made a substantial impact for the creators and raised critical awareness for an emergent market. (Travers, 2018, para. 3)

This impact extends beyond immediate sales; fostering long-term career growth and industry recognition for creators is as essential. The festival's ability to spotlight independent TV productions highlights the potential for these creators to break into a market traditionally dominated by major networks and studios.

Moreover, festival screenings provide a valuable platform for networking and exposure. Notable actors and writers who attended the Sundance Episodic screenings were profoundly moved by the work. Lena Waithe, after watching *The Adulterers*, personally praised Tonya Glanz, enhancing Glanz's visibility and validating her work as a writer (Travers, 2018, para. 36). Interactions like that are crucial for building industry connections, gaining recognition, and fostering collaborative opportunities that might not have arisen otherwise. The presence of prominent industry figures at these screenings creates opportunities for spontaneous encounters and collaborations, often leading to new projects and partnerships.

For creators like Mehta, whose series *Delhi Crime Story* was featured at Sundance, the festival inclusion significantly increased interest from major distributors. As Mehta observed, “there was a lot of interest from a lot of people — and a lot of the majors... For the buyers, it changed everything. It's been curated now. It's already been pre-screened and pre-approved by the highest creative standard” (Travers, 2019, para. 10). This stamp of approval by a prestigious festival is a powerful endorsement, facilitating easier entry into the market, enhancing negotiation leverage, and often expediting distribution deals. The validation from a respected festival can transform the perception of a series, making it more attractive to distributors who seek content that other industry professionals have already vetted for quality.

The benefits of being included in a festival extend to career development opportunities. James Belfer, an American film producer, emphasized that festivals create significant career advancement opportunities for creators while discussing the impact of Sundance's Episodic section: “They're going to be sitting down with different networks, TV agents, and managers, and their careers are going to be much better off” (Travers, 2018, para. 26). Even if a show does not immediately secure distribution, the exposure and connections made during the festival can lead to future projects and collaborations. This long-term career boost is a vital advantage of participating in a festival. The networking opportunities provided by festivals are precious,

allowing creators to pitch their ideas directly to decision-makers and gain feedback that can elevate their projects.

In addition, television festivals also play a crucial role in the global landscape, pushing local producers to elevate their work and encouraging national film funds to invest more in ‘prestige TV’. The international exposure provided by festivals such as Canneseries has led to an explosion of high-quality production aimed at both domestic and global audiences. As noted, “this kind of global spotlight has forced local producers to up their game... The effect has been an explosion of well-funded, top-level productions, made with one eye on viewers at home and the other on those abroad” (Croll, 2019, para 5). Festivals like Canneseries offer a prestigious platform that helps series stand out in a crowded market, enhancing their visibility and appeal. The increased investment in high-quality investments also fosters a competitive environment that stimulates innovation and excellence in television storytelling.

Furthermore, the infrastructure built around festival screenings is pivotal in reimagining the production, distribution, and marketing of TV. As highlighted by the LA Times, watching TV episodes on the big screen at film festivals may never drive the cultural conversation in the way of a new Oscar contender emerging at Sundance or Cannes... But the infrastructure being built around the screenings themselves is where the production, distribution, and marketing of TV is now being reimagined. (Betancourt, 2021, para. 24) This new infrastructure provides creators with valuable resources and support, enabling them to navigate the complexities of the television market more effectively. The festival environment fosters a collaborative spirit where creators can exchange ideas, learn from industry veterans, and adapt to emerging trends.

Emerging creators can also find significant opportunities through festival inclusion. Kayla Lewis, who screened her senior thesis project, *Parked in America*, at SXSW, described the festival as a rare chance to build her career in the television industry. Festivals offer crucial access points for representation and networking, which are vital for newcomers without pre-established industry connections (Betancourt, 2021, para 17). This democratization of access is particularly important for underrepresented groups, allowing them to find platforms to connect with audiences, critics, collaborators, and executives. For emerging creators, festivals serve as a starting point that can propel their careers and provide visibility that would otherwise be difficult to achieve through traditional channels.

On the other hand, SeriesFest, founded by Randi Kleiner and Kaily Smith Westbrook, exemplifies how festivals can serve as year-round marketplaces for indie TV. The festival’s focus on pilot and scriptwriting competitions aims to discover new talent from underserved

communities. As Kleiner stated, “People need content. And, you know, there’s lots of it out there and lots of great creators out there. We provide an access point” (Betancourt, 2021, para 22). This access is critical for diversifying the industry and promoting innovative storytelling. By hosting competitions and providing platforms for emerging talents, festivals like SeriesFest play an essential role in identifying and nurturing new voices in the field of television. The continuous support and opportunities these festivals provide help sustain a diverse and dynamic creative ecosystem.

Festival inclusion also benefits established industry professionals by offering a platform to showcase new projects and gain industry recognition. Matt Kirsch and Julie Lake, the creators of the horror comedy *Dale’s House*, used SXSW as logical next step for their indie project. They “witnessed firsthand how projects can remain in development hell for years, whereas festival exposure provided a more direct route to recognition and potential deals” (Betancourt, 2021, para. 18). This highlights the strategic importance of festivals in accelerating project development and connecting creators with industry stakeholders. For established professionals, festivals offer an opportunity to showcase their work to a broader audience and gain critical acclaim that can enhance their reputation.

Moreover, industry professionals acknowledge the significant advantages of big-screen premieres for TV series. Guilbart, a high-end TV professional, affirms, “A big-screen premiere is one of the best ways to launch a show. At a time when there are more and more series, a festival-style launch can help distinguish a show” (Goodfellow, 2019, para 31). The prestige and visibility of a festival premiere can set a series apart, creating buzz and attracting attention from both audiences and industry stakeholders. This initial buzz can translate into better ratings, stronger marketing campaigns, and higher chances of renewal for subsequent seasons.

The curated nature of festivals adds an additional layer of credibility and prestige to the selected series. Limor Gott Ronen, SVP at Keshet International, explains that in a cluttered market with several buyers, festivals provide a valuable platform; “The carefully curated festivals are great [for that], because they give your show additional backup and pedigree, many times before you even take the show to market” (Croll, 2019, para. 8). This can significantly enhance a show’s marketability and appeal to distributors and networks. The endorsement from a prestigious festival can often be a decisive factor in securing distribution deals and attracting top-tier talent for future projects.

Including television series in film festivals provides an array of benefits for industry professionals. From enhancing visibility and career opportunities to fostering global market entry and building supportive infrastructures, festivals play a crucial role in the development and

success of television creators and producers. As festivals continue to evolve and embrace episodic storytelling, they provide valuable platforms for showcasing high-quality content and supporting the careers of TV industry professionals. This evolving landscape enriches the festival experience and pushes innovation and diversity within the field. By providing a prestigious platform for TV series, festivals help elevate the medium, encourage excellence in storytelling, and create opportunities for professionals at all stages of their careers.

Navigating skepticism and mixed emotions

Despite its many benefits, the inclusion of television series at film festivals has been met with a mix of enthusiasm and skepticism. While there are undeniable benefits, several challenges and concerns have been brought to light, reflecting the complex dynamics between traditional film programming and the addition of television content.

One significant challenge is the issue of timing and attention. For instance, Sundance's episodic section faced criticism for not gaining enough attention due to its late start. A source from an important Hollywood talent agency noted, "[the section] is not being paid attention to," citing a late start as one reason why attendance was down (Travers, 2018, para 13). This issue highlights the need for better integration and scheduling to make sure TV sections receive the spotlight they deserve. The alignment of the programming schedule is crucial to maximize visibility and engagement and to avoid conflict with established film events that traditionally draw larger crowds.

The blurred lines between film and high-end TV drama create logistical challenges for industry professionals who must juggle meetings and commitments across both domains. As observed, "professionals attempting to straddle both worlds often feel compelled to squeeze in these new meetings alongside traditional fixtures. But they admit it is a juggling act" (Goodfellow, 2019, para. 3). This juggling act can strain resources and attention, potentially diluting the impact of both film and TV programming. Professionals who navigate this space must balance their focus, ensuring neither medium is neglected in favor of the other.

Timing also plays a crucial role in the success of TV series at festivals. Distributors often must commit to traditional release patterns, which can conflict with festival schedules. For example, AMC "passed on screening a new series at a spring festival because it was so far ahead of the US premiere, there really wasn't a connection" (Hazelton, 2018, para. 13). This disconnect points out the need for better alignment between festival timing and industry release schedules to

maximize the benefits for TV series. The coordination between festivals and distributors is essential to foresee that premieres align with broader marketing and release strategies.

Moreover, a festival selection does not guarantee success for TV Series in the same way that it does for films. Mehta, discussing his series *Delhi Crime Story*, recognized the risk, noting that if the series does not sell to a major broadcaster, it might be deemed dead on arrival: “If it doesn’t sell to one of the majors or a broadcaster... then you’re done. You’re D.O.A.” (Travers, 2019, para. 8). This harsh reality underscores the high stakes involved and the need for strategic planning beyond festival participation. For TV series, securing distribution and broadcast deals remains a crucial component of success, with festivals serving as an important but not definitive step in that process.

Audience engagement is another concern. The traditional allure of cinema screenings might not translate as easily to TV series. As one professional questioned,

Liberation from imposed broadcast schedules is a mega trend in TV drama viewing, so why would an audience bother to drag themselves at a given time into a cinema venue to see episode one and two, unless you curate it, make an event or connect audience with the talent? (*The Big Question: TV at film festivals*, 2016, para. 1).

This highlights the necessity of creating unique, engaging experiences that differentiate TV screenings from regular viewing. Festivals must offer added value, such as Q&A sessions with creators, exclusive previews, or thematic events that enrich the viewing experience and make it worth attending in person.

Additionally, there is some skepticism about the value of original content versus established intellectual property (IP). As Adi Hasak commented, “Studios just want to be reinforced and feel there is some shot for success. The problem is most IP is not a bestseller” (Whittock, 2023, para. 7). This highlights the industry’s cautious approach to original content, which may affect the types of series selected for festival showcases. The preference for proven IP can limit the diversity of content presented at festivals, potentially interfering with innovation and creativity.

Competition between festivals also raises concerns. AMC’s Cabrera suggested that the market might be oversaturated with similar events, questioning the necessity of having multiple TV festivals in close proximity: “Do we really need a Canneseries and a Séries Mania in the same country two weeks apart? From a business standpoint, the market is a little bit flooded” (Hazelton, 2018, para 18). This competition could reduce the impact of each festival and create logistical challenges for participants. The rise of festivals requires careful consideration of timing, location, and focus to make sure each event can offer unique value and avoid market saturation.

Despite these challenges, the inclusion of television series at film festivals also presents opportunities for growth and innovation. It encourages collaboration between film and TV professionals, fosters a richer cultural dialogue, and expands the audience base for both mediums, festivals can create a more harmonious and impactful experience for all stakeholders involved.

While the inclusion of TV series at film festivals offers exciting opportunities, it also brings a set of challenges and mixed emotions. Timing, audience engagement, strategic planning, and market competition must be carefully navigated to guarantee the successful addition of television content into the film festival circuit. By addressing these concerns and leveraging the unique strengths of both mediums, festivals can create a more harmonious and impactful experience for all stakeholders involved.

Envisioning the Future

The evolving landscape of television series and their inclusion in film festivals suggest a dynamic future shaped by emerging trends, market dynamics, and the continuous blending of cinematic and episodic storytelling. This section explores how industry professionals envision the future of TV series within the film festival circuit, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

As TV series gain prominence, there is a noticeable trend towards narratives that tackle contemporary issues and adopt innovative storytelling techniques. A report from Berlinale noted, “There’s definitely a trend towards series featuring, for the most part gloomy, future scenarios. The climate crisis is a key topic, as are well-known genres with a female twist. We’ve also seen a lot of mystery plots and supernatural phenomena” (*Back to the Future*, 2023, para. 7). This shift towards addressing significant global issues reflects a growing desire among creators to produce content that resonates with current societal concerns, using the medium of television to explore complex themes and narratives.

The inclusion of TV series at film festivals has seen varying degrees of commitment, with some festivals scaling back on their TV activities due to financial reasons. For instance, with the Berlinale, as noted by *Deadline*:

The film festival had built a notable TV sidebar that proved popular with international scripted creatives and execs and locals alike. It has, however, scaled back its TV activity this year – with the inevitable result that fewer TV folk are in town (Clarke, 2024, para. 8).

This indicates a balancing act between maintaining the traditional focus on films and embracing the growing TV industry. Festivals must navigate these changes carefully to cater to both filmmakers and TV creators.

Moreover, a key challenge for the future is maintaining a balance between small independent productions and larger productions by financially comfortable players. Franke from ZDF Studios emphasized, “This diversity thrives when both small independents and larger, financially robust players find equilibrium, ensuring a varied storytelling ecosystem. The challenge ahead is maintaining this balance amidst short-term market volatilities” (Balaga, 2024, para. 14). This balance is crucial for fostering a rich and diverse storytelling landscape where innovative and experimental projects can coexist with big-budget productions. The industry’s ability to adapt rapidly to market changes will be critical in maintaining and sustaining this balance.

However, creators are expected to continue driving the market and shaping the future of festivals. As a report on Sundance highlighted, “With creators driving the market and the festival in general, future changes will revolve around them” (Travers, 2018, para. 32). This creator-centric approach highlights the importance of supporting visionary storytellers who push the boundaries of the medium, ensuring that festivals remain relevant and exciting platforms for new and established talent.

From a sales perspective, originality and a universal approach to storytelling are increasingly valued. A Berlinale report noted, “I am convinced that originality is a major advantage over generic content. The financing of unique content poses challenges, however, and what the Nordics have already mastered will become increasingly important also for other markets” (Balaga, 2024, para. 11). The Nordic model of producing high-quality, original content through strong cooperative effort serves as a potential blueprint for other regions, emphasizing the power of collaboration in overcalling financial and creative challenges.

Despite the current emphasis on security and predictability, the future holds promise for bold and adventurous projects. As the Berlinale stated,

It really takes a good IP, established names on the talent side or a genre that offers a certain amount of security to raise the funds required to push forward a marathon project like a series. An incredible amount has been produced in recent years and the experiments that the big streamers dared undertake to establish themselves have not all proven to be sustainable. (Back to the Future, 2023, para. 11)

This desire for stability might lead to a stronger focus on project development, potentially resulting in great series that combine high production values with compelling storytelling.

The restructuring and scaling up of festival programs, such as the Berlinale series Market, demonstrate a commitment to maintaining a strong presence in the TV landscape. Dennis Ruh explained,

Our colleagues running the Berlinale Series program strand formed a team with the Berlinale Series Market. We had to reorganize some responsibilities with this discontinuation. Carlo and his selection committee are scouting series for Berlinale Special Gala. The Berlinale Series Market team has been scaled up and we established a new selection committee for our flagship label Berlinale Series Market Selects. (Whittock, 2023, para. 12)

This strategic reorganization aims to enhance the festival's ability to support and showcase high-quality series.

Additionally, financial challenges also play a significant role in shaping the future of TV series at festivals. The costs of organizing such events have increased, yet Berlinale, among others, remains committed to not passing these costs on to clients excessively. Ruh noted, "The costs for organizing events have increased exponentially, but for us it was clear that it's not an option to just forward the costs to our clients and to increase the prizes immoderately" (Whittock, 2023, para. 29). This commitment to affordability assures that festivals remain accessible to a wide range of participants, fostering a diverse and inclusive environment.

There is also a growing recognition of the need to honor TV series (at film festivals) with awards akin to those for films. Meete Heeno, writer and producer, predicted that major markets like Berlin would soon offer more awards for TV, stating, "In time we will have the likes of best actor, best actress, best cinematographer and best make-up [for TV]" (Goldbart, 2023, para. 7). Such developments highlight the increasing parity between television and film, acknowledging the high standards and artistic achievements of TV productions.

The global expansion of TV series production is another significant trend. As noted, We're definitely at a turning point regarding series production on an international level. After years of dizzying increases in production and the constant new announcements of exclusive deals and new originals, this is the first year in which a new production record isn't expected to be set. (*Back to the Future*, 2023, para. 3)

This shift suggests a more measured approach to production, focusing on quality over quantity. Festivals play a crucial role in this landscape by highlighting the best international co-productions and innovative low-budget series, thereby setting standards for excellence and creativity.

In conclusion, the future of TV series and their place at film festivals is marked by both opportunities and challenges. The evolving trends in storytelling, the need for financial and

creative balance, and the commitment to supporting high-quality content will shape the industry's trajectory. As festivals continue to adapt and innovate, they will play a pivotal role in celebrating and promoting the best in television, ensuring that the medium continues to thrive and evolve. By embracing these changes, festivals can foster a rich and diverse cinematic culture that celebrates storytelling in all forms, paving the way for a dynamic future in TV series production and exhibition.

Conclusion

The inclusion of television series at film festivals represents a significant transformation within the film and television industries, driven by media convergence and the evolving relationship between film and television. This study aimed to answer the research question "With the growing convergence of television and film, how have television and film professionals discursively framed the inclusion of TV series in the film festival circuit?". We have gained considerable insights into this phenomenon by analyzing secondary data including trade press articles, interviews, and festival reports.

This research question was answered using the theoretical framework and methodologies employed in this study. Critical Media Industry Studies, focusing on industry lore and the concept of trade stories provided the backbone for this research. This approach allowed for an exploration of how industry narratives and practices shape the inclusion of TV series at film festivals, offering a critical lens for observing the evolving relationship between the mediums of film and television.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, this study examines how the inclusion of TV series at film festivals is influenced by the knowledge, skills, and preferences valued by industry stakeholders. Bourdieu's theory explains that cultural capital provides access to limited rewards and is subject to monopolization. In the context of the film and television industry, cultural capital is evident in the decision-making processes of festival organizers, who often come from similar cultural and social backgrounds as the professionals they collaborate with. This shared cultural capital shapes the selection of TV series, reinforcing certain narratives and aesthetics as legitimate and others as inferior.

Additionally, Michel Foucault's views on power and discourse inform this analysis. Foucault argued that power is productive, shaping discourses and behaviors. In the film and TV industry, power is exercised through how media professionals think and talk about their work, reinforcing certain narratives and aesthetics. Lastly, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony also plays a role, as dominant groups in the industry secure the consent of the dominated through cultural means, such as the valorization of specific genres and styles.

The first section of our results highlighted the significant shifts within the industry as film festivals adapt to the inclusion of television series. Traditionally, film festivals have been exclusive platforms for showcasing cinematic works. However, the boundaries between film and television have increasingly been blurred over the years, driven by several factors such as the rise of

streaming platforms and the increasing quality of TV productions. Festivals such as Cannes, Sundance, and Berlinale have created dedicated sections and/or integrated series into their programming. This shift reflects a broader industry trend towards inclusivity and adaptability. For instance, the Sundance Film Festival's introduction of the Indie Episodic section demonstrates how festivals modify their structures and schedules to accommodate television content. This adaptation is not only about expanding their offerings but also about staying relevant in a rapidly evolving entertainment landscape. By including episodic content, festivals attract a broader audience demographic, catering to both traditional film enthusiasts and TV series lovers, while also offer television professionals with opportunities for visibility and career development. This inclusion reflects the industry's recognition of the artistic and commercial potential of high-quality television series.

From a theoretical perspective, this adaptation is a manifestation of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. The decision to include TV series at prestigious film festivals is a way to leverage the cultural capital of television, which has increasingly been recognized for its artistic value. By integrating TV series, festivals align themselves with current industry trends and expand their own cultural capital.

The second section of our results emphasized the meticulous selection processes used by film festivals to make sure that the TV series showcased aligns with films in terms of quality and storytelling. The high-profile premieres of shows such as HBO's *Succession* at the London Film Festival underscores the quality of television series featured at these events. This elevation of TV series highlights exceptional storytelling and production value, often featuring works by acclaimed filmmakers who have experimented with television. The inclusion of television series at film festivals is also driven by their high standards and artistic merit. This recognition elevates the status of TV series, positioning them alongside prestigious cinematic works. The Berlinale Series Market, for example, showcases a diverse range of projects that combine excellent entertainment with substantial depth. This recognition of quality is crucial in legitimizing television as a form of high-quality storytelling comparable to cinema.

This legitimization process is closely tied to Foucault's notion of discourse and power. By including high-quality TV series, festivals shape the discourse around television, positioning it as a legitimate form of artistic expression. This shift in discourse reflects the changing power dynamics within the film and television industries, where television is increasingly seen as a platform for innovative and high-quality storytelling. On top of that, by legitimizing television, it becomes increasingly normalized to view television as a legitimate art form, thus challenging hierarchies of the film and television industry. This change also aligns with changing audience

patterns, as with the proliferation of streaming services and media convergence, audiences increasingly do not differentiate between television and film, consuming both through the same platforms and valuing them equally (Lyons & Tzioumakis, 2023, p. 84).

In the third section, we explored the unique and immersive experiences that TV series offer within the festival context. Unlike films, TV series provide episodic narratives that engage audiences over multiple installments, fostering a more profound connection. Festivals are curating innovative programs and events to maximize audience engagement, making the inclusion of TV series a valuable addition to the festival experience. Television series offer a different kind of storytelling experience that can enhance audience engagement and festival dynamics. Marathon screenings, interactive Q&A sessions, and themed events around screenings create a unique festival experience that the usual film screening cannot replicate. For example, the extended screening of Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake* at Sundance allowed audiences to experience a cinematic narrative in an episodic format, fostering a sense of community and shared engagement among viewers.

The creation of these unique experiences can be understood through Gramsci's concept of hegemony. By incorporating TV series and creating engaging experiences, festivals not only cater to audience preferences but also reinforce television's cultural legitimacy and pushing it as a natural and valuable part of the festival experience. This process helps to secure the approval of audiences and industry professionals, establishing TV series as an integral part of the festival experience.

The fourth section focused on the significant professional benefits that the inclusion of TV series at film festivals offers industry professionals. Enhanced visibility, networking opportunities, and career development are some of the key benefits highlighted by industry insiders. Testimonies from television creators and producers indicate the career-boosting potential of film festivals, with increased interest from distributors and valuable industry connections. For creators, festivals provide a prestigious platform to showcase their work, gain recognition, and interact with audiences and industry professionals. The exposure at high-profile festivals can lead to new projects, collaborations, and increased interest from distributors. This has been particularly beneficial for emerging creators and those from underrepresented groups. For instance, the success of the Indie Episodic section at Sundance has helped many creators secure deals and find new opportunities within the industry.

This aligns with Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. The inclusion of TV series at film festivals enhances the cultural capital of creators, providing them with opportunities to advance

their careers and gain recognition within the industry. This process of gaining cultural capital is essential for professional growth and success.

Despite the positive framing, the fifth section of our results revealed some challenges and mixed emotions regarding including of television series at film festivals. Concerns about timing, audience engagement, and market saturation have been brought to light. Professionals point out the need for strategic planning and careful curation to address these issues effectively. Skepticism often arises from traditionalists within the industry who question the place of television series within the film festival circuit. Concerns about the dilution of the festival's brand and the impact on traditional film screenings are common. Additionally, the timing of festivals can conflict with the traditional release schedules of television series, posing logistical challenges for distributors and creators. These concerns need to be navigated thoroughly to guarantee the successful inclusion of TV series into film festivals.

Here, Foucault's notion of discourse and power is relevant. Skepticism and mixed emotions reflect the existing power structures within the industry, where traditionalists hold significant influence. Addressing these concerns requires a shift in discourse and a reevaluation of what constitutes legitimate cultural production in film and television.

The last section of the results looked ahead to the future, considering the potential developments and trends that may shape the ongoing inclusion of television series into film festivals. The future of TV series at film festivals appears dynamic and promising. Maintaining quality, fostering innovation, and balancing independent and larger projects will be crucial for this trend to continue successfully. Industry professionals are optimistic about the future, emphasizing the need for adaptability and creative collaboration. The ongoing inclusion of television series is seen as a reflection of broader cultural and technological shifts within the media landscape. Festivals must continue to evolve embracing new forms of storytelling while maintaining the high standards that define their prestige. The future of TV series at film festivals will probably see a more seamless blend of film and television content, with festivals becoming platforms for diverse and innovative storytelling.

This optimistic view aligns with Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The inclusion of TV series into film festivals represents a cultural shift that secures the consent of industry stakeholders and audiences, establishing television as a legitimate and prestigious form of storytelling.

A further analysis of the results reveals several key themes. One notable aspect is the strategic importance of festival inclusion for television series. Festivals provide a platform for showcasing high-quality content and serve as essential networking hubs where industry

professionals can forge valuable connections. This aspect is particularly relevant in the current media landscape, where the competition for audience attention is fierce, and the lines between different media forms are increasingly blurred.

Moreover, this trend highlights the changing economics of content production and distribution. With streaming platforms investing heavily in original series over the last few years, there's a growing market for high-quality series that can stand out in a saturated market. Film festivals, by including television series, are helping to bridge the gap between independent creators and potential buyers, distributors, and producers, fostering a more diverse and dynamic industry. As the streaming wars continue to shape the landscape of audiovisual content, it's likely that the inclusion of TV series into film festivals will become more prominent. This evolution reflects not just changing industry practices, but also the flexible nature of visual storytelling in the digital era.

The challenges and skepticism towards this inclusion are also important to note. Concerns about the potential dilution of festival brands and the logistical issues associated with aligning TV series release schedules with festivals are a reflection of deeper anxieties within the industry. These challenges highlight the need for a strategic approach to this inclusion, where careful planning and curation can avoid potential obstacles. Addressing these concerns requires dialogue and collaboration between festival organizers, creators, and distributors to safeguard that the inclusion of TV series enhances rather than takes away from the festival experience.

As the industry continues to evolve, the distinctions between film and television are expected to become even less pronounced. Festivals might play a crucial role in this transition, serving as platforms for innovative storytelling across various media forms. This evolution will require festivals to continually adapt their programming and engagement strategies to meet the changing preferences and expectations of audiences.

Additionally, as previously stated, the state of the streaming wars is a significant factor of the inclusion of television series at film festivals. Initially, the competition among streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ and HBO Max led to a surge in high-quality content. However, this intense competition has also resulted in market saturation, with an overwhelming amount of content being produced. This saturation has contributed to audience fatigue and a growing sense of disappointment with the state of television (Porter, 2022, para. 1). As streaming platforms struggle to retain subscribers and justify their budgets, the inclusion of television series in film festivals can be seen as a strategic move to boost the prestige and visibility of selected series. Festivals provide an opportunity to highlight and showcase exceptional works, distinguishing them from the vast sea of content available on streaming platforms. This selective

showcasing can help mitigate the adverse effects of audience fatigue by curating high-quality series that stand out in a crowded market.

Moreover, the economic pressure that streaming platforms are currently facing can lead to more strategic collaborations with film festivals. As platforms look for how to optimize their investments in content, partnering with prestigious festivals can provide a valuable marketing push and generate buzz around select series. This relationship benefits both parties: festivals enhance their programming with acclaimed TV series, and streaming platforms gain a distinguished platform to premiere and promote their shows.

However, while discussing the future of television series at film festivals, it is also important to address how the financial landscape for film festivals has become increasingly challenging globally over the past few years, as mentioned earlier (Wiserman & Carey, 2024, para. 8). Many festivals face rising operational costs, competition for sponsorships, and the need to attract diverse audiences. These financial difficulties can significantly impact the inclusion of television series in their programming, as seen with the discontinuation of the Berlinale Series program at the beginning of 2024 (Rosser, 2023, para. 6). One major issue is the rising costs of organizing festivals. Venues rentals, marketing, staffing, and logistical expenses have all increased, often without a corresponding rise in revenue. Festivals need to navigate this financial pressure while maintaining the quality of their programming. The inclusion of television series, which can draw larger and more diverse audiences, offers a potential solution for financial relief by attracting new sponsors, attendees, and partners, but this inclusion is also costly, leaving TV creators and producers with uncertainty about the support of film festivals. Festivals must balance the current financial difficulties and the inclusion of television series with their core mission of promoting cinematic excellence. This involves careful and strategic curation, as well as selecting TV series that align with their individual artistic standards and thematic focus.

This research highlights the evolving relationship between television and film, offering new insights into how industry professionals navigate and shape this convergence. It underscores the importance of adaptability and innovation in maintaining the relevance of film festivals in a changing media landscape. By framing TV series as legitimate cultural and artistic expressions, professionals are redefining industry norms and expanding the scope of what constitutes cinematic excellence.

Moreover, this study contributed to our understanding of media convergence, demonstrating how the inclusion of television series into film festivals reflects broader cultural and technological shifts. It highlights the role of Critical Media Industry studies in unpacking the

complex dynamics of industry practices and discourses. This research also points out the significance of trade stories in shaping industry perception and legitimizing new practices.

While the study provides valuable insights, there are limitations to consider. The reliance on secondary data means that the findings are based on existing narratives and may only capture some perspectives within the film and television industry. To address this, future research could incorporate primary data by conducting interviews and surveys with festival organizers, filmmakers, and audiences to gather firsthand insights.

Additionally, the study's focus on high-profile festivals such as Berlinale, TIFF, Cannes, and Sundance and well-known series may overlook the experiences of smaller festivals and independent productions. Future research could benefit from a more diverse sample, including perspectives from a broader range of stakeholders and lesser-known festivals.

Lastly, there is a potential bias in sources, as trade press and festival reports may selectively highlight successful or high-profile examples of the inclusion of TV series, potentially neglecting less successful or controversial instances.

Addressing these limitations in future research, will allow us to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role of television series at film festivals and its impact on the broader media landscape.

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Appendix A

Adaptation & Inclusion = evolving

29 quotes

- “But the agent also believes “Sundance should be embracing TV more than they have in the past.” Such enthusiasm is just one indication that the market itself is strong. At SeriesFest, Kleiner has seen the demand for independent television really grow in the past two years.” 2:18 ¶ 73 – 74 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “Those people include audience members at the festival, as well as outreach to TV agents, managers, networks, and various other distributors. Sextro wants to gauge reaction from all corners to continue to improve impact. A few early ideas floating around include shifting the screening schedule so the episodic entries don’t compete against each other, and using smaller venues so creators don’t have to look out at empty seats.” 2:34 ¶ 127 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “Getting people out to a theatre to have a collective experience only helps support the importance of the big screen. Throwing more support behind our entertainment industry can only allow more opportunities for artists and theatre-goers to enjoy a theatrical experience. That’s why we’ve decided to expand on our television programming.” 14:7 ¶ 21 – 23 in 03.2016_The Big Question-TV at film festivals_SCREEN DAILY.
- “Berlinale Series as a program strand will be discontinued in the festival edition 2024. Instead, serial formats will be integrated into the Berlinale Special Gala section. This happens with the intention to push series further into the limelight with even more attention and is more in line with festivals like Cannes and Venice.” 40:8 ¶ 47 – 48 in 12.2023_European Film Market Boss Dennis Ruh Berlinale Series 2024_DEADLINE.
- But it’s still a big step for the Cannes Film Festival, as artistic director Thierry Fremaux told IndieWire’s Eric Kohn last year that “Cannes is a film festival,” and that “we must invent a special festival” for television. 20:7 ¶ 34 in 04.2017_TV at Cannes in 2017_INDIEWIRE.
- Now that the city of Cannes has done exactly that, partnering with Reed Midem to launch a TV festival, Fremaux has changed his tune. “Even TV series, unless proven otherwise,

are using the classic art of cinema,” he said. 20:17 ¶ 38 in 04.2017_TV at Cannes in 2017_INDIEWIRE.

- “Series Mania and Canneseries are among a proliferation of standalone TV festivals and TV-focused sidebars within film festivals and TV markets dedicated to developing high-end drama and showcasing hot series on the big screen.” 15:5 ¶ 20 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
- But beyond the presence of high-profile titles, the rise of TV at film festivals reflects the changing face of independent television development, from the boom of digital web series in the early 2010s to the current marketplace, which is liable to be shaped by the streaming wars for a decade to come. 16:5 ¶ 21 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- Just as independent filmmakers were grappling with a changing theatrical model that favored big-budget blockbusters and cable executives were hailing the arrival of Peak TV, Pierson and her peers saw a chance to embrace the bold work being done on the small screen, at times by the very people whose films they used to program 16:31 ¶ 26 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- “After a couple of years we just realized there was so much content being made, and made by filmmakers whose work we’ve seen or were aware of or were interested in, that we said, ‘Let’s try it and let’s see how it works,’” Pierson said. As with the rest of the festival, she noted, the focus remains on visionary work — the kind that often gets hailed as “cinematic” despite premiering on a network or a streaming service you can watch on your phone. 16:8 ¶ 38 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- New this year is the Indie Episodic section, designed as a dedicated showcase for emerging independent voices and their work. In recent years, the Festival has screened episodic content in the Special Events section, which includes new independent works that add to the unique Festival experience. This evolution reflects Sundance Institute’s ongoing support of the developing episodic format, which includes the Episodic Lab, where creators develop original projects under the guidance of veteran industry advisors. 38:3 ¶ 31 – 36 in 12.2017_SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES INDIE EPISODIC, SHORTS & SPECIAL EVENT SELECTIONS FOR 2018 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL_SUNDANCE.
- “Festivals are uniquely placed to discover new diverse talent, and an expanded brief would deliver much-needed opportunities for vital new voices. Traditional silos and elitisms are

self-limiting and we ignore this at our peril.” 14:8 ¶ 24 – 26 in 03.2016_The Big Question-TV at film festivals_SCREENAILY.

- “It just seems inevitable,” said Janet Pierson, the director of film at SXSW, which started including episodic TV several years ago. “Cannes has always been auteur driven, and they are showing episodic work by directors whose work they’ve supported and loved. Those of us who are programmers, are always looking for great work. In this day and age, why would anyone still restrict to one time format?” 20:11 ¶ 47 in 04.2017_TV at Cannes in 2017_INDIEWIRE.
- “CHANG: There are already several dedicated television events, like the Edinburgh Intl. TV Festival and the Banff World Media Festival, though none of them yet have the immediately recognizable stature of a Sundance or a Cannes. And while I’d agree with you that the selectiveness of Cannes is one reason why it remains in a festival class by itself, it’s arguably been too insistent on maintaining the TV-film partition. Because it was made for television, “Carlos,” one of Olivier Assayas’ finer achievements (and one that I’d hesitate to classify as either film or television), was denied a spot in competition by the festival’s board of directors in 2010, despite the heroic protests of Cannes director Thierry Fremaux.” 27:18 ¶ 60 – 61 in 08.2015_TV Is Not the New Film, But It's OK That Festivals Are Blurring the Lines_VARIETY.
- Television is taking over film festivals, and TIFF has been part of the trend since 2015. That’s when the Toronto International Film Festival first launched its Primetime program, and since then attendees have been treated to premieres like “Black Mirror,” “Casual,” “The Girlfriend Experience,” “The Deuce,” “Transparent,” and more. 34:1 ¶ 6 – 11 in 09.2018_TIFF TV Premieres 2018_ 'Homecoming,' 'Sorry For Your Loss,' Schedule_INDIEWIRE.
- What I can say at his point that in the next edition we will focus on best practices that show how production and sales were able to adapt their business models to the changing markets. In times of numerous challenges, we want to shed light on the opportunities arising from change. We will discuss new financing models, market development and co-production opportunities on stage, bringing high profile speakers to Berlin. 40:17 ¶ 80 – 81 in 12.2023_European Film Market Boss Dennis Ruh Berlinale Series 2024_DEADLINE.
- The need to focus that attention in a crowded entertainment landscape, and the proliferation of serial content that’s come with the streaming wars, may be driving the turn toward festivals that feature episodic storytelling almost exclusively, like Festival

Séries Mania in Lille, France; SeriesFest in Denver; ATX Television Festival in Austin; Banff World Media Festival in Banff, Canada; the Monte-Carlo TV Festival in Monaco; and Stareable Fest in New York City. 16:23 ¶ 89 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.

- “I think the powerful thing that’s happened over the past 10 years is that the internet has democratized who is allowed to be creative,” Kishore says. “And I think now we’re finally... taking that creativity and connecting it in a structured and smart way to the industry that’s hungry for it.” 16:29 ¶ 104 – 105 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- Says Ruh, “As the lines between film and series continue to blur, it’s imperative for festivals like Berlinale to evolve, ensuring series maintain a prominent place within both our market and festival landscapes. 13:16 ¶ 37 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- “Festivals have a duty to keep their eyes open and adjust their programming, industry and training activities according to market developments. This year, the Sarajevo Film Festival is expanding its co- production market with a new specialised section called Cinelink Drama. We feel it is a necessity for our regional film and TV players, and we are sure the platform will further enhance the artistic and production values in southeast Europe, which is full of talent and untold stories.” 14:10 ¶ 32 – 34 in 03.2016_The Big Question-TV at film festivals_SCREEN DAILY.
- Now in the midst of its second year, the Canneseries project was launched and spearheaded by the municipal authorities, but don’t mistake it for some kind of side project by local technicians biding their time until film gathering in May. If anything, this TV festival — where Starz’s “Killing Eve” launched in 2018 — is fundamentally reactive, reflecting the growing clout of scripted series in the international business. 21:4 ¶ 15 in 04.2019_How Canneseries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.
- Beta Film managing director Moritz von Krüedener says the proliferation of TV-focused events is a reflection of the changes afoot in the film and television scene. “They are a natural development of how content itself has developed in recent years,” he says. 15:27 ¶ 89 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
- “Obviously festivals should represent TV drama in their programmes — it makes total sense. Where there is a high demand both artistically and commercially, festivals and markets should follow. 14:4 ¶ 16 in 03.2016_The Big Question-TV at film festivals_SCREEN DAILY.

- Lewi: The whole idea of formats, as we used to call them, is nowadays a bit old-fashioned. Even an episode on a platform can vary in length. Opening up to series of less than 26 minutes makes sense. 37:6 ¶ 40 in 10.2017_Benoit Louvet, Albin Lewi Talk CanneSeries, Intl. High-End Series Boom_VARIETY.
- All three of those standalone screenings earned their projects distribution deals, while attendance appeared to be up across the board. Though the TV pilot programs aired in a smaller theater — last year they all debuted at The Ray, with over 500 seats to fill, while this year’s lineup premiered to 360 chairs in the Prospector Square Theater 6:12 ¶ 88 – 89 in 02.2019_Big Buys at Sundance Mean Indie TV is Real, and Gaining Ground_INDIEWIRE.
- While the “Peak TV” phenomenon has stemmed from the rise of premium broadcasters and the collapse of mid-budget filmmaking, streaming services have taken that fever and exported it across the globe. With their deep pockets and bottomless appetite for content, the streamers have radically expanded the marketplace, allowing international producers to find new homes for their series regardless of language or country of origin. 21:6 ¶ 29 in 04.2019_How CanneSeries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.
- “After a couple of years we just realized there was so much content being made, and made by filmmakers whose work we’ve seen or were aware of or were interested in, that we said, ‘Let’s try it and let’s see how it works,’” Pierson said. As with the rest of the festival, she noted, the focus remains on visionary work — the kind that often gets hailed as “cinematic” despite premiering on a network or a streaming service you can watch on your phone. 16:8 ¶ 38 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- “This is so new — the idea of buying and selling episodic content — it’s great [Sundance is] getting into it,” Kleiner said. And audiences may not be as important as they seem — at least, audiences in Park City. 2:19 ¶ 76 – 78 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “There’s such a volume of series that it’s difficult for the average viewer to know what to watch. There’s an overwhelming amount of choice,” said CanneSeries artistic director Albin Lewi in an interview at the festival. “It’s the goal of a festival to be prescriptive, and to advise. We want to give a boost to certain series.” 21:8 ¶ 33 in 04.2019_How CanneSeries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.

- For decades, the US film industry has basked in - and benefited from - the limelight provided by the international film festival circuit, using glitzy premieres and their attendant PR opportunities to launch films to cinemagoers and potential buyers from around the world. Now it is the turn of the US television industry. 25:3 ¶ 13 in 06.2018_Why TV festivals are booming_SCREEN DAILY.

Series = experience

21 quotes

- Robert Franke, VP of drama at ZDF Studios, which is representing paranormal procedural “We’re on It Comrades,” agrees: “In this show, two investigators from the Institute for Paranormal Phenomena try to solve mysterious cases, whether it’s alien abduction or an attack by the creepy goat monster. We are seeing a trend [in moving] away from classic mainstream series and towards productions that are a little more unexpected and unusual.” 13:12 ¶ 31 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- FRÉMAUX: We’re showing the two episodes, and together they are like a film. We like to show series by cineastes. Sam Levinson is a very interesting young cineaste. In the past, we’ve shown drama series by David Lynch, Jane Campion, Marco Bellocchio, Nicholas Winding Refn and Olivier Assayas. 22:28 ¶ 147 in 04.2023_Cannes Festival Director Thierry Frémaux Discusses 2023 Lineup_DEADLINE.
- Carlo always supported the idea that episodic content should be part of Berlinale. He stressed that from the market and cinema language point of view it makes sense to include this way of storytelling and show that many of these shows deserve a big screen. After the next edition, the new festival director who will take over the reins will have to decide how to proceed in the future. For the market the presence of series and providing a designated platform is indispensable. 40:25 ¶ 60 – 61 in 12.2023_European Film Market Boss Dennis Ruh Berlinale Series 2024_DEADLINE.
- We didn't have any predetermined criteria. After the end of Berlinale Series we wanted to keep serial storytelling within the frame of the festival, because it brings something different into the picture. 11:28 ¶ 129 in 02.2024_A Focus on the Unusual_BERLINALE.
- As conversations rage on about the blurring of the lines between film and television, there’s no denying that events designed to champion and celebrate cinema have warmly opened

- their doors to those working in episodic storytelling in recent years. 16:4 ¶ 19 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- Beta Film managing director Moritz von Kruedener says the proliferation of TV-focused events is a reflection of the changes afoot in the film and television scene. “They are a natural development of how content itself has developed in recent years,” he says. 15:27 ¶ 89 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
 - Trevor Groth, Director of Programming for the Sundance Film Festival, said, “Episodic is one of the fastest-developing fields in on-screen storytelling today. By creating a dedicated space for independent episodic storytellers to shine, we’re aiming to foster more creativity in the field.”. 38:7 ¶ 39 – 42 in 12.2017_SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES INDIE EPISODIC, SHORTS & SPECIAL EVENT SELECTIONS FOR 2018 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL_SUNDANCE.
 - “To hear an audience gasp and cry and cheer like in the old days after they’d been sitting for so many hours was remarkable,” Ms. Campion said the next day. “In this era of Twitter, where the human element can sometimes be missing, it was beautiful. There was such a feeling of community in that theater. It felt like a giant sleepover.” 17:3 ¶ 8 in 03.2023_A Day of Watching TV at Sundance_The New York Times.
 - Ms. Hunter said she was reminded of theater happenings from her days as an emerging New York actress in the 1980s, attending productions like the marathon “Nicholas Nickleby.” “This feels to me like the same sense of excitement, a real extension of the experience,” she said. 17:9 ¶ 29 – 31 in 03.2023_A Day of Watching TV at Sundance_The New York Times.
 - “Smaller countries are going to play the game, because we already have a label to offer them. As for the larger actors, we had to buy some credibility,” said Lewi. He credited the success of “Killing Eve” with helping the festival lock down series from AMC and Starz, as well as “Doctor Who” writer Russell T. Davies on hand to present his HBO family drama “Years and Years” as the closing night selection. 21:20 ¶ 69 in 04.2019_How Canneseries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.
 - Even older shows can benefit from festival exposure, according to Greg Drebin, executive vice president of worldwide marketing at 20th Century Fox Television Distribution, which showcased a classic episode of The Simpsons together with other animated shows at last year’s Séries Mania. “It’s a chance to satisfy fans of a show, if it’s a retro piece, and give it some exposure in a new context,” Drebin explains. “When you can get a crowd of

people to sit around and watch a show - especially a comedy - it's really valuable." 25:6

¶ 25 in 06.2018_Why TV festivals are booming_SCREEN DAILY.

- Rather than expanding the definition of “film” to include projects that were “made for TV” (such as Steven Soderbergh’s *Liberace* biopic, “Behind the Candelabra”), festivals are carving out dedicated sidebars to celebrate this competing medium. Since its invention, television has been luring eyes away from the cinema. And now, at Toronto, audiences can go watch an episodic series pilot on the bigscreen, after which they’ll have to patiently wait until the series arrives on TV to see what happens next. 27:2 ¶ 22 – 23 in 08.2015_TV Is Not the New Film, But It's OK That Festivals Are Blurring the Lines_VARIETY.
- By that measure, the Episodic Section’s success shouldn’t be judged against the films premiering at Sundance in 2018, but those that premiered 40 years ago. And this year’s batch of series certainly could’ve benefited from Robert Redford shilling tickets. 2:8 ¶ 47 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “When you’re here with a film there’s a pretty well-defined marketplace that surrounds the festival,” Belfer said. “With TV, the market is ongoing. There are a couple of festivals and a pilot season where things get a little more attention, but when you’re trying to sell a show, you can do it whenever.” 2:20 ¶ 82 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- With many festivals still figuring out how to successfully integrate series into their programs, Ruh underlines the importance of “unique big screen experience.” 13:8 ¶ 26 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- Now back on the red carpet — this time in his hometown for a TV series — the 31-year-old says he isn't "trying to garner the same type of attention because television doesn't need to live up to the same sort of commercial standards that films do." 33:2 ¶ 22 in 09.2016_ Television goes beyond film's boundaries_CBC News.
- One of the key reasons why indie television is bought and sold differently than indie films comes down to the medium itself. Indie films are selling the final product; indie TV is selling a concept. 2:23 ¶ 91 – 92 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- And, like their film counterparts, TV distributors are careful about how their titles are treated and whether, for example, they screen in or out of competition. At 20th Century Fox, which screened network procedural *9-1-1* and cable drama *The Chi* in the Best of

USA out of competition section at this year's *Séries Mania*, "we prefer not to be in competition", says Drebin. "Not because we're not confident of our ability to win, but we feel like it's a different mindset when people are screening for comparison versus screening for enjoyment. The idea of art competing against art is always very difficult."

25:10 ¶ 38 in 06.2018_Why TV festivals are booming_SCREENENDAILY.

- Convincing filmgoers to fit television into their packed schedules has always been difficult. Sundance senior programmer Charlie Sextro said when the festival premiered "O.J.: Made in America" in 2016, less than 200 people were in attendance; compare that to the consistently overrun Eccles Theater, which seats 1270 for buzzy films, or The MARC's 550-person capacity. Yet O.J.: Made in America" went on to become a nationwide phenomenon, winning dozens of Best Documentary prizes, including the Oscar. 2:10 ¶ 51 – 53 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- "We believe that real film lovers love TV series and real TV series lovers love film. This co-existence at festivals makes perfect sense," says Mai Broström, co-creator of "Oxen" alongside Peter Thorsboe, who adds: "Between film and TV, there's both jealousy and inspiration. Sometimes cinema takes the lead, sometimes it's the show's turn. Just like in love in real life." 13:18 ¶ 39 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- This launch programme showcases the thrilling vibrancy of series being made around the world, with work ranging from a non-fiction whodunit-meets-cultural-history about male exotic dance troupe, the Chippendales, to a genre-bending supernatural police procedural from the director of *Train to Busan*. Talent from the Series programme will also be taking part in the festival's public and industry-facing talks and events. 35:1 ¶ 40 in 09.2021_First full series programme announced for 65th BFI London Film Festival_BFI.

TV & quality

9 quotes

- "The selection this year is remarkably diverse, but all the projects provide a combination of both excellent entertainment and substantial depth. Very experienced series creators and producers have been invited, as well as successful filmmakers venturing into series-making for the first time and with a completely fresh perspective. We are very much

looking forward to the Co-Pro Series Pitches with projects and potential partners here in Berlin, and we can hardly wait to see these series completed,” says Martina Bleis, head of the Berlinale Co-Production Market and curator of Co-Pro Series. 5:8 ¶ 38 in 01.2024_Co-Pro Series 2024 Ten Exceptional Series Projects at 10th Anniversary Edition_BERLINALE.

- One of the high-profile pieces of content programmed this year isn’t a film at all, but episode one and two of HBO’s hit series Succession. Tuttle gives all the credit to her series programmer, Rowan Woods (“our secret weapon”), who has put together the new series strand, which features eight TV shows in total. 36:8 ¶ 42 in 09.2021_London Film Festival Chief Talks Landing ‘Succession’ S3 Premiere_DEADLINE.
- That’s exactly how Christina Lee, showrunner of the upcoming HBO Max series “Made for Love,” talks about her show’s compatibility with a venue like SXSW, which is premiering her pilot episode. “We just appreciate that they’re including television,” she said. “Because, you know, I think that we are, as creatives, approaching TV differently and really looking at the artistry of it. And so to be seen that way as well through these festivals is a real honor.” 16:9 ¶ 40 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- « “This year’s Primetime programme is bigger than ever and gives audiences the exclusive and unmatched opportunity to celebrate the best new international series together, in cinema, on the big screen,” says Anita Lee, TIFF Chief Programming Officer. 32:3 ¶ 19 in 08.2023_TIFF Unveils 2023 Primetime Programme_DEADLINE.
- We are also looking for shows with recognizable names in front of and behind the camera. We consider the representation of diverse perspectives, cultures and characters. Shows that reflect inclusivity often have a broader appeal in the global market. 40:15 ¶ 69 – 70 in 12.2023_European Film Market Boss Dennis Ruh Berlinale Series 2024_DEADLINE.
- Another criteria is how well the content can be adapted for different platforms, including streaming services, traditional broadcast and international markets. Furthermore, we analyze the content’s ability to engage viewers and keep them invested throughout the series. We want the shows to travel. 40:26 ¶ 71 – 72 in 12.2023_European Film Market Boss Dennis Ruh Berlinale Series 2024_DEADLINE.
- One need look no further than the addition of television prizes at the 2021 Film Independent Spirit Awards to see pioneering TV projects as both an extension and a byproduct of the indie film world. This year’s inaugural nominee TV roster boasts series that bowed at various festivals around the world, including Amazon’s “Small Axe”

anthology series (three episodes of which screened at New York Film Festival 16:10 ¶ 42 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.

- “TIFF recognizes serialized storytelling as one of the most groundbreaking creative mediums today,” said Anita Lee, Chief Programming Officer, TIFF. “Growing increasingly risk-taking, it continues to attract top writers and directors globally. TIFF Primetime spotlights the best of series — the most acclaimed and anticipated — and the discoveries that will soon be the most talked about.” 30:2 ¶ 8 in 08.2022_TIFF 2022 PRIMETIME PROGRAMME CELEBRATES SEVEN POWERFUL SERIES_TIFF.
- “This year’s lineup highlights the work of both established and emerging creators, with a balanced mix of new discoveries and fan favourites,” added Geoff Macnaughton, Senior Director of Industry and Primetime Programmer, TIFF. “There is something for everyone, and each series will be followed by an extended Q&A with the creative team.” 28:8 ¶ 36 in 08.2022 TIFF Primetime Program_INDIEWIRE.

Festival inclusion & career benefits

35 quotes

- “it would be easy to presume the inaugural TV section failed to meet expectations. But that’s far from the full story. The Sundance Film Festival’s debut program illustrated the challenges associated with selling independent television — and there are many — but it also made a substantial impact for the creators and raised critical awareness for an emergent market.” 2:6 ¶ 34 – 36 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “actors and writers who had films at Sundance made their way over to Episodic screenings and were moved by the work. Tessa Thompson (“Sorry to Bother You”), Alia Shawkat (“Search Party”), John Gemberling (“Broad City”), Jon Daly (“I’m Dying Up Here”), and Amy Landecker were all in attendance, and there was one more who really made a difference. Lena Waithe, who spoke at Park City’s Respect Rally on January 20, swung by the premiere of Chris Roberti and Tonya Glanz’s “The Adulterers.” After the screening, she sought out Glanz to tell her how much she liked her series and that she thought Glanz was a terrific writer.” 2:36 ¶ 131 – 133 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.

- “But once “Delhi Crime Story” was announced as part of Sundance, Mehta saw the impact. He said there was “a lot of interest from a lot of people — and a lot of the majors” but, although he’d had conversations with distributors throughout production and editing, all the buzz came after the Sundance acceptance. “I think for the buyers, it changed everything,” he said. “It’s been curated now. It’s already been pre-screened and pre-approved by the highest creative standard.”” 6:8 ¶ 48 – 50 in 02.2019_Big Buys at Sundance Mean Indie TV is Real, and Gaining Ground_INDIEWIRE.
- While this kind of global spotlight has forced local producers to up their game, those producers have been greatly assisted by their own national film funds, which have looked to up their investment in prestige TV after the wipeout of home video narrowed the film distribution landscape. The effect has been an explosion of well-funded, top-level productions, made with one eye on viewers at home and the other on those abroad. Multiply the amount of polished series with the number countries producing them, and you’ll get a digit that risks overwhelming any and all. Enter Canneseries. 21:7 ¶ 31 in 04.2019_How Canneseries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.
- “I think the strongest thing that [the Episodic section] is ultimately going to do [...] is for the creators of these shows,” Belfer said. “They’re going to be sitting down with different networks, TV agents and managers, and their careers are going to be much better off.” 2:28 ¶ 104 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “This diversity thrives when both small independents and larger, financially robust players find equilibrium, ensuring a varied storytelling ecosystem,” underlines Franke. “The challenge ahead is maintaining this balance amidst short-term market volatilities, ensuring the industry’s ability to adapt swiftly to ongoing changes.” 13:14 ¶ 33 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- ““I think the strongest thing that [the Episodic section] is ultimately going to do [...] is for the creators of these shows,” Belfer said. “They’re going to be sitting down with different networks, TV agents and managers, and their careers are going to be much better off.” Whether the shows they brought to Sundance earn distribution or not, Belfer argued the benefits for the people working on them is much more immediate.” 2:29 ¶ 104 – 109 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.

- “How it will help with the shows, it may take another five or six months to see if it gets picked up by someone or [developed],” he said. “At the end of the day, I see the clout of these creators being a thing that skyrockets a lot quicker.” 2:29 ¶ 104 – 109 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- Other creators said they’d been contacted by interested parties even before the festival began. 2:41 ¶ 115 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- Karoliussen is among a rising number of film producers using these new TV co-production events to segue into TV, and this year’s Series Mania Co-Pro Pitching Sessions features projects from a number of feature film producers. 15:12 ¶ 42 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
- While the jury is out on which TV events will become pre-eminent in the long run, high-end drama professionals are unanimous on how a big-screen premiere is one of the best ways to launch a show. “At a time when there are more and more series, a festival-style launch can help distinguish a show,” says Guilbart. 15:31 ¶ 97 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
- The promise of careful curation (SXSW is showing only six pilots in competition this year) and the ability to screen before a built-in audience are obvious perks for creators. But there are added expectations as well. Success stories in these spaces don’t always look like development deals or green lights. 16:19 ¶ 71 – 72 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- “An established festival such as Berlinale, with the EFM market, is an excellent opportunity to introduce high-quality products. In particular, to a broad specialist audience,” says Armin Luttenberger, head of content sales international at ORF-Enterprise, which is behind “Kafka.” Noting that a “good mix” of topics depicting society’s diversity is key to a show’s success. 13:10 ¶ 29 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- “It wasn’t as busy a market eight years ago as it is today,” said Limor Gott Ronen, SVP at Keshet International, a leading global production and distribution house that is part of Israel’s Keshet Media. “In such a cluttered market, with so many buyers, you just want to go out with a show and give it the best possible platform. ...The carefully curated festivals are great [for that], because they give your show additional backup and pedigree,

many times before you even take the show to market.” 21:9 ¶ 37 in 04.2019_How Canneseries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.

- “Nothing happens immediately,” said Ronen. “These days, there’s so much great content, so buyers look carefully at everything. ...It’s not that the festival does all the work; it just offers a very good stepping-stone.” 21:13 ¶ 50 in 04.2019_How Canneseries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.
- Watching TV episodes on the big screen at film festivals may never drive the cultural conversation in the way of a new Oscar contender emerging at Sundance or Cannes — or the water-cooler show of the moment. But the infrastructure being built around the screenings themselves is where the production, distribution and marketing of TV is now being reimagined. 16:28 ¶ 102 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- Creators making independent television are generally open to this idea, and herein lies the true focus of Sundance: the creators. 2:27 ¶ 102 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “Now that I’m doing TV as well as film, I could be travelling all year round from one festival to another,” says Norwegian producer Sigurd Mikal Karoliussen. “You have to be selective.” 15:4 ¶ 18 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREENDAILY.
- For Kayla Lewis, screening “Parked in America,” her senior-thesis project about a Korean teenage girl, at SXSW is a rare chance to begin building herself a career in the television industry — anything from getting representation to meeting future collaborators. While at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts she knew she wanted to make television. “But I don’t know how to break in, especially coming out of school and not really having any connections. Both my parents were in the food industry, so it’s not like I can just phone up my dad’s friend and be like, ‘Hey, hit me up.’” 16:20 ¶ 74 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- “People need content. And, you know, there’s lots of it out there and lots of great creators out there,” said Randi Kleiner, who launched SeriesFest with Kaily Smith Westbrook back in 2014. “We provide an access point.” The two have built their once weekend-long festival (now in its “seventh season”) into a year-round nonprofit organization that hosts pilot and scriptwriting competitions specifically focused on finding new talent from underserved communities. 16:26 ¶ 96 – 97 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.

- In the case of Matt Kirsch and Julie Lake, the duo behind the horror comedy “Dale’s House,” SXSW was a logical next step for an indie project they knew they’d have to produce themselves in order to capture a tricky tone that may not have come across on the page or in a pitch deck. The two have seen firsthand how projects can remain in development hell for years while the festival route worked for projects like Rightor Doyle’s “Bonding,” which played at Canneseries, Frameline and L.A. Outfest before being picked up by Netflix. 16:21 ¶ 76 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.
- “That’s been incredible,” he said about the connections he’s made at the festival. “For the past four or five days, I’ve just been walking up and down Main Street meeting people. I met Boots Riley, Kamsai Washington, Terence Nance — I’ve been trying to find Jeff Goldblum, but there’s no luck. I’m really trying.” 6:4 ¶ 31 – 32 in 02.2019_Big Buys at Sundance Mean Indie TV is Real, and Gaining Ground_INDIEWIRE.
- Release dates pose one set of challenges, and the festival’s competition poses another. Just days before Canneseries was set to kick-off, another French festival, the Lille-set Series Mania, came to a close. Both festivals offer industry watchers and the general public very similar propositions, both have strongly curated selections, and both benefit from industry and government support. Indeed, the two festivals seek to fill the same gap, to offer series television the same prestige festival platform that the Cannes Film Festival offers art-house cinema and the Annecy Festival offers animation. In North America, meanwhile, festivals such as Denver’s Series Fest continue to develop their own niche. 21:15 ¶ 56 in 04.2019_How Canneseries Reflects Television’s Growing International Business_INDIEWIRE.
- Television festivals focused on screening new shows to public and professional audiences - from free- standing events such as Canneseries and Séries Mania in France to festival spin-offs like Berlinale Series and Toronto’s Primetime section - are proliferating. And TV creatives, marketers and distributors are finding plenty of ways to use them. 25:4 ¶ 15 in 06.2018_Why TV festivals are booming_SCREEN DAILY.
- “With all the trade press and business press being in one place at one time,” says Beth McPhee, who is the executive vice president of international marketing and publicity at sales company Bloom, “[a festival screening] is a huge asset for us as we help broadcasters throughout the world figure out how to do press and junkets in a meaningful way that creates the most impact.” 25:8 ¶ 29 in 06.2018_Why TV festivals are booming_SCREEN DAILY.

- Filmmakers converge on the 10-day festival, hoping it will make their dreams come true. However, Jaffe marks a new kind of talent: He made a pilot, not a movie, and he's part of a 2019 TV class that saw big gains in attention, exposure, and cold, hard deals. 6:2 ¶ 17 in 02.2019_Big Buys at Sundance Mean Indie TV is Real, and Gaining Ground_INDIEWIRE.
- That leaves just five of the 12 Indie Episodic entries lacking new deals, and each of these can still take advantage of the Sundance stamp to push their projects and talent forward. 6:10 ¶ 60 in 02.2019_Big Buys at Sundance Mean Indie TV is Real, and Gaining Ground_INDIEWIRE.
- As the CEO of SeriesFest, a Colorado-based festival that serves as a global marketplace for indie TV, Kleiner said she's been coming to Sundance for the past few years. This year, she stayed in Park City specifically to check out the Episodic Section, and said she's excited about it because of the exposure Sundance offers creators and independent television as a whole. 2:15 ¶ 65 – 67 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- Belfer described Sundance as a megaphone for independent TV and said he'd gotten what he'd hoped to from his time at the 2018 festival. 2:21 ¶ 84 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “We used to meet in cafes but these events are ideal. They allow you to meet a bunch of potential partners and also gauge the international interest in a project,” she says. APC premiered Welsh thriller Keeping Faith at MIPTV last year with star Eva Myles in attendance and is planning a similar operation with Canadian police thriller The Murders, starring Jessica Lucas, this year. The company also launched Dutch crime drama Fenix at Series Mania in 2018, and French missing person thriller The Forest in 2017. 15:22 ¶ 69 – 70 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
- Beta Film is active at these new events on a number of levels. It recently acquired the Austrian gangster drama Big Bones after it was pitched at Berlinale's Co-Pro Series, where it won the top prize. “We follow pitching sessions and case studies at major markets closely, keeping track of the productions coming up,” says Von Kruedener. 15:28 ¶ 91 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
- The company also uses these events to develop and promote upcoming series to which it is attached, either as producer or sales company. “At Series Mania, there will be a case study for the first-ever Eastern European transnational production, The Pleasure Principle,” he

says, referring to Dariusz Jablonski's Odessa-Warsaw-Prague-set crime tale. 15:29 ¶ 93 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.

- "When we got in, it was like, '...that's different,'" Mehta said. "It wasn't like, 'Oh my God!' It was like, 'What does that [festival] do for this [show]?' [And the answer is] it makes us stand out above all the other similar types of things." 6:5 ¶ 39 – 40 in 02.2019_Big Buys at Sundance Mean Indie TV is Real, and Gaining Ground_INDIEWIRE.
- Despite the security that comes with going into TIFF with a distributor, creators say having the opportunity to showcase their series at the festival is still important. 33:6 ¶ 39 in 09.2016_ Television goes beyond film's boundaries_CBC News.
- But while those glitzy, network-stamped premieres at lauded fests tell a story of prestige TV being seen alongside the work of renowned auteurs from around the globe, there's another aspect of festivals' embrace of episodic storytelling.
At a time when the success of shows like "Insecure," "High Maintenance," "Broad City," "Drunk History" and "Workaholics" was ushering in a new generation of storytellers who'd cut their teeth in the digital video space, these festival showcases led the way for pilot competitions, which have become a way for indie creators (often from underrepresented groups) to find platforms to connect with audiences, critics, collaborators and executives. 16:12 ¶ 47 – 49 in 03.2021_How Sundance, SXSW 2021 and other fests defy TV gatekeepers_LA TIMES.

Television & Future Prospects

14 quotes

- "There's definitely a trend towards series featuring, for the most part gloomy, future scenarios. The climate crisis is a key topic, as are well-known genres with a female twist. We've also seen a lot of mystery plots and supernatural phenomena. And as for the aesthetics ... young people walking purposefully towards the camera, breaking through the fourth wall with their gaze and making pronouncements to the older generation. There are also establishing shots underlaid with abstract female singing – a lot of "aahs" in different pitches, like a religious choir. Dialects are also very popular. You notice surprising things when you watch a lot of series in a very short time. » 41:6 ¶ 29 in 2023_Back to the Future_Archive_BERLINALE.

- “The film festival had built a notable TV sidebar that proved popular with international scripted creatives and execs and locals alike. It has, however, scaled back its TV activity this year – with the inevitable result that fewer TV folk are in town.” 10:6 ¶ 45 in 02.2024_ Good News For TV Drama Producers_DEADLINE.
- “This diversity thrives when both small independents and larger, financially robust players find equilibrium, ensuring a varied storytelling ecosystem,” underlines Franke. “The challenge ahead is maintaining this balance amidst short-term market volatilities, ensuring the industry’s ability to adapt swiftly to ongoing changes.” 13:14 ¶ 33 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- With creators driving the market and the festival in general, future changes will revolve around them. 2:32 ¶ 121 – 123 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- “From a sales perspective, a universal approach to issues that interest our audience in the domestic market, but also viewers in other territories around the world, is certainly relevant,” he observes. “I am convinced that originality is a major advantage over generic content. The financing of unique content poses challenges, however, and what the Nordics have already mastered will become increasingly important also for other markets. The power of cooperation can ensure that common cultural spaces are represented.” 13:11 ¶ 30 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- “I would say this trend is continuing. It really takes a good IP, established names on the talent side or a genre that offers a certain amount of security to raise the funds required to push forward a marathon project like a series. An incredible amount has been produced in recent years and the experiments that the big streamers dared undertake to establish themselves have not all proven to be sustainable. Of course, it’s a pity to see that the number of really bold ideas and adventurous projects is once again decreasing. On the other hand, this is a very understandable development. And if this desire for more security and predictability leads to a stronger focus on project development, and great series are created as a result, then that is also good for everyone. There are some really, really good series around right now. » 41:9 ¶ 41 in 2023_Back to the Future_Archive_BERLINALE.
- Our colleagues running the Berlinale Series program strand formed a team with the Berlinale Series Market. We had to reorganize some responsibilities with this discontinuation. Carlo and his selection committee are scouting series for Berlinale Special Gala. The Berlinale Series Market team has been scaled up and we established a

new selection committee for our flagship label Berlinale Series Market Selects. We are well prepared. 40:10 ¶ 57 in 12.2023_European Film Market Boss Dennis Ruh Berlinale Series 2024_DEADLINE.

- We are in the privileged situation that we are keeping all our partners backing the activities of the Berlinale Series Market: our main partner Film-und Medienstiftung NRW, the funding partner Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and our media partner Deadline. At the same time, we face the same issues with the Berlinale Series Market as other festival and market organizers face all over the world. The costs for organizing events have increased exponentially, but for us it was clear that it's not an option to just forward the costs to our clients and to increase the prizes immoderately. 40:22 ¶ 93 in 12.2023_European Film Market Boss Dennis Ruh Berlinale Series 2024_DEADLINE.
- Heeno, whose credits include Splitting Up Together and Snow Angels, predicted major markets like Berlin will soon offer more than one TV gong. "In time we will have the likes of best actor, best actress, best cinematographer and best make-up [for TV]," said Heeno. 8:6 ¶ 43 – 44 in 02.2023_Berlinale Series Award Jury Interview_DEADLINE.
- "Embracing this change is crucial for fostering a rich, diverse cinematic culture that celebrates storytelling in all its forms. I am confident the festival and the market will continue to give series a prominent role," he adds. 13:17 ¶ 38 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- We're definitely at a turning point regarding series production on an international level. After years of dizzying increases in production and the constant new announcements of exclusive deals and new originals, this is the first year in which a new production record isn't expected to be set. This is reflected in our programme on the one hand with the newly completed international co-productions which could only have come about thanks to the courage to have big budgets and the aspiration to tell stories at a high level internationally. On the other hand, we're seeing series that are based on very strong ideas and that have been discovered through talent initiatives and don't require a large budget to tell a convincing story. 41:3 ¶ 17 in 2023_Back to the Future_Archive_BERLINALE.
- "This might be a reaction to the unsettling zeitgeist the world is facing and an increasing need to use comedy as a channel for processing complex emotions." 13:5 ¶ 23 in 02.2024_Berlinale Series Market Celebrates 10 Years_VARIETY.
- You could say that, yes. After having had some great entries from Latin American over the past two years, our gaze is turning eastward this year. One conspicuous aspect is the connection between the streamers and countries that haven't previously featured so

frequently in the selection – this makes clear the enormous amount of investment over the past few years in local markets with international aspirations. 41:2 ¶ 15 in 2023_Back to the Future_Archive_BERLINALE.

- Overall global content spend, including sports rights, was flat last year at \$243 billion, Ampere said. Drilling down into total shows, drama was hit particularly hard – the number of commissions in the last three months of 2023 fell between 30-40% on the peak in the fourth quarter of 2020. 10:2 ¶ 20 in 02.2024_ Good News For TV Drama Producers_DEADLINE.

Mixed emotions & potential problems

7 quotes

- For some, the word wasn't shared loud enough or early enough. A source from one of the major Hollywood talent agencies said "[the section] is not being paid attention to," citing a late start as one reason why attendance was down. (The Episodic entries began on the Tuesday after the all-important opening weekend.) The same source also argued Sundance had "the wrong philosophy when it comes to picking projects," arguing "most of the pilots felt like shorts rather than pilots." 2:17 ¶ 71 in 01.2018_Sundance Episodic Report Card_ Small Crowds, No Sales—Still a Success_INDIEWIRE.
- As the lines between film and high-end TV drama continue to blur, professionals attempting to straddle both worlds often feel compelled to squeeze in these new meetings alongside traditional fixtures. But they admit it is a juggling act. 15:3 ¶ 16 in 03.2019_The rise of TV festivals- can the industry keep up_SCREEN DAILY.
- Probably the most crucial factor for distributors however, is timing. While festivals are often hoping to stage national or even world premieres of new series, distributors are often tied to the traditional release patterns of the highly structured US industry. AMC, for example, recently passed on the possibility of screening a new series at a spring festival because the event "was just so far ahead of the US premiere, there really wasn't a connection," Cabrera explains. "You're not going to change your broadcast date because you want [a series] to get into a festival," she adds. "That would never happen." 25:11 ¶ 41 in 06.2018_Why TV festivals are booming_SCREEN DAILY.
- Mehta said he recognized that a festival berth isn't as much of a guarantee for success in TV as it is in film. Noting the risk assumed by his producers in terms of scale and budget, he said the priority had to be what happened outside the festival. "If it doesn't sell to one

of the majors or a broadcaster, which there are not so many in the world that will take something like this, then you're done," he said. "You're D.O.A." 6:6 ¶ 46 in 02.2019_Big Buys at Sundance Mean Indie TV is Real, and Gaining Ground_INDIEWIRE.

- "Yes, but where is the treat? Liberation from imposed broadcast schedules is a mega trend in TV drama viewing, so why would an audience bother to drag themselves at a given time into a cinema venue to see episode one and two, unless you curate it, make an event or connect audience with the talent?" 14:2 ¶ 9 – 10 in 03.2016_The Big Question-TV at film festivals_SCREEN DAILY.
- "Studios just want to be reinforced and feel there is some shot for success. The problem is most IP is not a bestseller," he said. "Europe is much more for embracing of original content," he added. 7:4 ¶ 42 in 02.2023_‘Shades Of Blue’ Creator Adi Hasak Calls U.S. TV “A Disaster Zone_DEADLINE.
- "There's always room for healthy competition," suggests AMC's Cabrera, "and there is room for growth. It just needs to be timed appropriately. Do we really need a Canneseries and a Séries Mania in the same country two weeks apart? From a business standpoint, the market is a little bit flooded." 25:14 ¶ 59 in 06.2018_Why TV festivals are booming_SCREEN DAILY.