

tips

for LGBT

independent
filmmakers

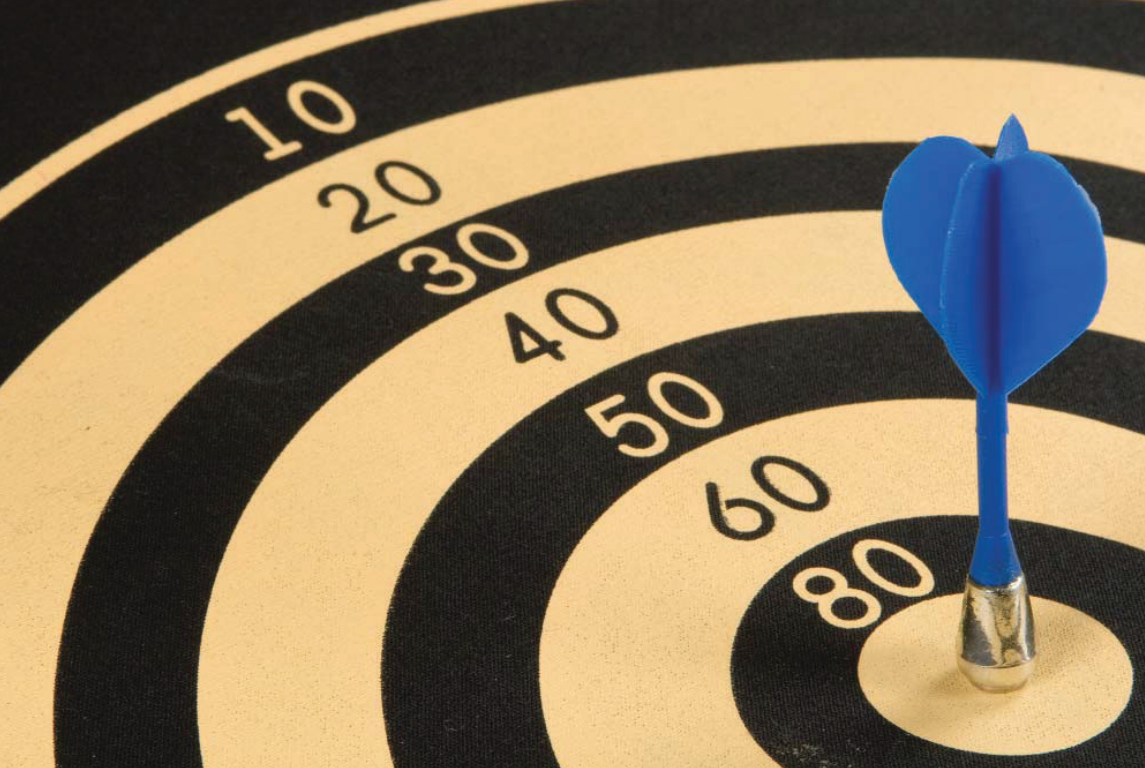




introduction

After over 28 years distributing lesbian and gay films, we thought it would be helpful to share a few tips and answer some of our most frequently asked questions. We hope you find this little book enjoyable as well as an indispensable resource guide. Most of all, we hope it helps you make great, problem-free and profitable movies.



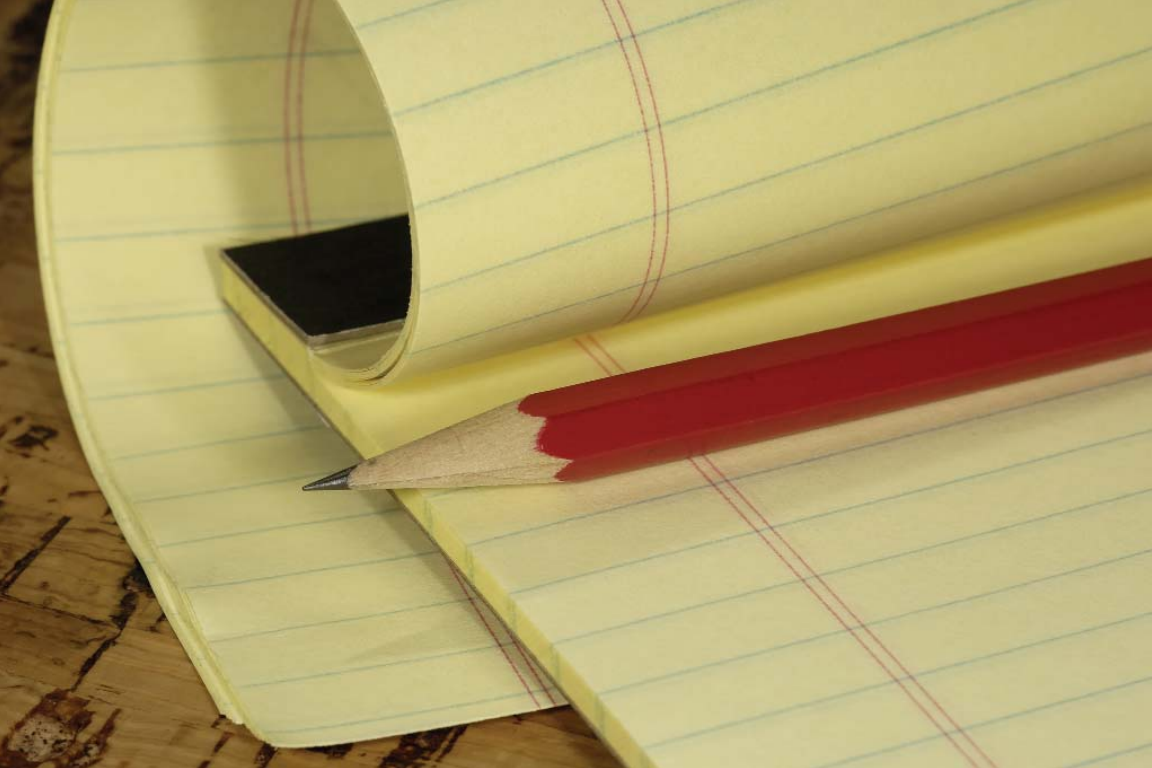


your story

If you plan to make a movie for ALL audiences, you may not connect with any of them.

We suggest that you pick a target audience and stop worrying about getting niched as a gay movie. If your movie is good, it will be noticed.

What's more, an LGBT theme helps your film stand out from the hundreds of independent features submitted every year.



script

This may be the most important part of your movie. There's a lot of competition out there so make sure you've developed the characters and dialogue enough to be fresh and strong. Do readings, get feedback, do rewrites and take the time to get it right.

Remember Shakespeare: "Brevity is the soul of wit."

Also, make sure that you have an accurate dialogue list at the end of production. This will be necessary for captioning in different languages.



chain of title

If you are not the original author of the story you need to establish “chain of title” with a letter from the original author granting you the rights to their story. Your distributor will require this documentation, so make sure to complete this before production begins.



art and photos

Take good photos of your cast during production. You may need to take a filming break to capture those close-ups. You can't have too many good photos of your talent. These become critical in the marketing of your film. Photo shoots after-the-fact can be prohibitive, particularly if the actors become hard to access. Additionally, it is not advisable to pull publicity shots from the final film. They seldom look good.



music

Use music you can afford. Hire a music supervisor who can access affordable music. Or, make a win/win deal with an up-and-coming artist to use their music. Be sure to include all rights (mastering, sync, performance) and all territories. Be wary, “Film Festival Only” rights are less expensive, but will severely limit your movie’s exposure. Create a music cue sheet. This will be necessary for television and foreign sales.



screen actors guild (SAG)

Be sure you understand the terms of your SAG agreement, and pre-negotiate all future distribution possibilities. We can't emphasize this enough. A huge SAG commitment could completely prevent or destroy your distribution.



talent

If you are working with name talent in your film, make sure to have a discussion with them about doing press when the film opens. Find out what their availability (and limitations) are, and don't assume they will be able to do PR when the film comes out.



crew

Filmmaking is always a community effort. As the director or producer, don't ever forget that without "them" you'd be nothing. Always be gracious and grateful (especially under pressure) to ensure that your entire team has a good experience and will want to work with you again.



distribution

We recommend that you get educated on the process of distribution before you start shooting. Develop a relationship with a distributor to get realistic feedback on your project ongoing realistic feedback. It's extremely important that your budget and expectations are in line with your opportunities. It is also vital that you understand "windows of release" as to not lose out on potential revenue.

You are going to be working with your distributor for years, so make sure you are working with people you like.



the deal

One of the most misunderstood concepts is the difference between a gross and a net deal.

A gross deal means that you get a percentage of every dollar made by your film, regardless of the distributor's expenses.

A net deal means you get a piece of the profit, in other words the distributor deducts expenses. So naturally your percentage will be higher on a net deal than it will be on a gross deal. If you agree to a net deal, make sure that you understand what expenses will be deducted.



your contract

Read every word of your contract and make sure you understand it.
Don't assume your lawyer knows all there is to know about distribution.
Ask others. Check all work yourself. In general: ASK QUESTIONS . . .
your distributor won't expect you to be an expert on distribution contracts.



publicity

When your film is playing on the film festival circuit, go for as much press as you can get. It will help establish a profile for the film and provide quotes that can be used for the DVD promotional campaign. The only exception to this is if you are playing festivals and virtually guaranteed a theatrical release, then you want to work towards getting press when the film opens in theatres.



local media

On the festival circuit, go directly to the local media with screeners, good photos and production notes. The festival's PR people will be enormously helpful, but they are often overwhelmed handling so many movies. They will appreciate your help, and you might get even better results. Local editors are usually looking for just a few good hot photos to represent the whole festival in their coverage; why shouldn't it be a photo from your movie?



film festivals and theatrical

Comparing your independent film to a studio independent film can be disastrous. Don't assume that a theatrical release is your best bet financially, or even on a marketing level. Fully maximizing the festival circuit, event or word-of-mouth screenings may be just as effective in terms of costs and raising awareness. Work with your distributor to find new ways to connect with your audience beyond the confines of a traditional limited release. Think creatively. Can you tie a fun event or charity into your screening? Then do it! Can you hold interviews for your film's talent in an interesting locale? Go for it! Stay involved. Nothing works better than a filmmaker being a part of the process to pack theaters.



creating the DVD

You may have noticed a difference in DVD quality. Pick a distributor who has the ability and willingness to present your movie at its best. Compare picture quality, menuing, authoring and functionality.

Special features can really enhance sales of your DVD, particularly if you have a following for your project. Keep this in mind throughout production and editing. But make the features count . . . no one wants to watch deleted scenes that never really added anything in the first place.



marketing and promotion

Your distributor should have broad access as well as unique access to your target audience—one who can meet all your needs from broadcast and film festival bookings to internet streaming to foreign sales.

Be wary of selling off rights separately or self-distributing. There are many hidden costs of self-distribution. Additionally, your distributor should be able to leverage their ongoing relationships to negotiate bigger sales for you in all categories.

Most importantly, pick a distributor who is in love with your movie.



notes



WolfeReleasing.com

WolfeVideo.com

408.268.6782

info@wolfereleasing.com