

THE LITTLE BOOK OF PREMIERE POLICIES

Created by The Film Festival Doctor, Rebekah Louisa Smith & Kyle Goldfinch

Welcome to myself and Kyle Goldfinch's comprehensive guide to navigating the sometimes confusing world of premiere policies! You don't have to have a degree in Geography to know how to work around festival premiere policies, instead our goal is to simplify this process for you.

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

It's very important to remember that not all festivals require a premiere (and this applies to both feature films and short films) however some do have premiere requirements therefore it is always important to check the film festivals rules and regulations & T&Cs.



A lot of filmmakers ask why the need for a premiere. In a nutshell, presenting a premiere of a film improves the reputation of a film festival as it offers exclusivity and a first look to audiences.

I'd advise to put together a spreadsheet to keep track of all of your submissions which is what I call a Film Festival Strategy spread sheet (I have one of these available to purchase on my shop) and to add into it a column entitled 'Premiere Policy'. This is where you can insert the details of what type of premiere policy that festival has. If the festival does not have a premiere policy insert N/A.

Some festivals might say that they prefer (for example) an Arizona Premiere but this isn't compulsory. What that means is if you can offer them this type of premiere great as they'd like it but they're not going to hold it against you if you can not give this type of premiere to them.

And finally, some festivals might ask you what type of premiere you can give them, if any. When filling in the administration forms there could be a section asking what type of premiere you can offer them and you are to tick a box regarding which one you can give. Usually it starts with world premiere through to no premiere.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECEIVE AN INVITATION TO SCREEN AT A FILM FESTIVAL

When you receive an invitation to screen from a film festival before accepting it, you'll need to do 2 things.

Refer back to this column and check if any other festivals have a conflicting premiere policy. For example, let's say you've been selected for the Tribeca Film Festival which has a New York State premiere policy for short films. Check if any other festivals that you have submitted to have this same premiere policy. If they do you'll need to withdraw from one

or the other - go with the festival that will help you to achieve your goals and is the most prestigious. You could always ask the festival that you are awaiting to hear back from that has the same premiere policy, if they can give you an early decision.

The second thing to do is to check the dates of when the festival runs and if there will be a conflict with other festivals in that region. For example, the Tribeca festival runs in June - if there are any other festivals that run in New York before the Tribeca festival runs in June and do not have a premiere policy you will still not be able to screen at those festivals and will need to withdraw.

Premiere policies for feature films tend to be bigger and a bit more restricting (i.e. US Premiere or International Premiere etc) at festivals such as TriBeCa and Toronto, however, they're not always as big at other strong regional Oscar and BAFTA qualifying festivals. The key is to repeat the same technique above and give closer attention to detail.

There are no premiere policies for unproduced screenplays.

THE HIDDEN PREMIERE POLICY

This is a phrase I coined back in 2012. Sometimes a film festival will prefer a premiere and at times it can become a dealbreaker during the decision-making process. In addition, they tend not to make this public knowledge. Obviously, this can be frustrating with regards to planning etc., however the way to juggle this situation, is to be as honest and flexible as possible and offer the festival the biggest type of premiere that you can. Think outside the box. For example, let's say that your film has screened in Maryland you can still offer a West Coast Premiere which is bigger than a city premiere.

THE TYPICAL PREMIERE STRUCTURE

A film's premiere structure tends to be as follows -

First up you will have a World Premiere - the first public screening of your film at a film festival.

If you had your World Premiere in the country of the films production (i.e a British film screening at the UK's BFI London Film Festival) next up will be your International Premiere which will be the first screening of the film outside of its country of production (i.e. a British film screening in France, Japan or New Zealand). After that could be the European Premiere, US Premiere, Canadian Premiere, Australian premiere or Chinese Premier etc. The order of the above will vary for each film with regards to which part of the world it will screen first.

If you had your World Premiere at a film festival outside of the country of production (i.e. a British film having its World Premiere in Brazil) your next screening won't be an International Premiere as that's already been taken by the World Premiere.

What will follow will be country and city premieres. You'll be able to offer the USA different types of premiere options which are outlined below.

Let's begin!

THE 12 TYPES OF PREMIERE POLICIES

1. **World Premiere** - this refers to the first public screening of your film. And is also the first premiere that you will have of your film. Your film will have screened nowhere else in a public setting prior to this screening. Private cast and crew screenings are excluded as they are not public ticketed screenings.
2. **International Premiere** - this refers to the first public screening of your film outside the country of production. For example, let's say you produced your film in the U.K. and had the World Premiere at the BFI London Film Festival and your next screening is taking place at the Sydney Film Festival in Australia then this will be your international premiere.
3. **Country Premiere** – this refers to the first public screening of your film in a specific country. Let's say that your film has screened in the U.K., New Zealand, India and the next screening will be at the Morbido Film Festival in Mexico this means you'll be having your Mexican Premiere at this festival.
4. **City Premiere** – this refers to a public screening of your film in a specific city. Let's say that you will be screening your film for the first time in London this will be a city premiere of your film the same applies for example to Dallas, Texas, Boston Massachusetts and St Louis Missouri.
5. **North American Premiere** – this refers to the first time your film has screened in North America specifically either the United States, Mexico, Canada, Guatemala Haiti, Dominican Republic & Cuba.
6. **State Premiere** – this refers to the first time your film has screened in a specific U.S. state for example Arizona, California, New York, Texas, Philadelphia etc. There are

50 states in the USA. A state premiere also applies to other large countries such as Mexico, Australia & Russia.

7. **US Premiere** – The first time a film has screened in the U.S.A. Let's say that you've had screenings in the U.K., Japan and India and you receive an invitation to screen at a festival in Wyoming; this will be where you'll be having your USA premiere.
8. **East Coast Premiere** – The first time your film has screened anywhere east of the Mississippi River. New York for example is on the East Coast.
9. **West Coast Premiere** – The first time your film has screened anywhere west of the Pacific Coast. Los Angeles is on the West Coast and has a lot of festivals in and outside of LA County.
10. **Northeast Premiere** – The first time your film has screened in New England, New York, New Jersey & Pennsylvania - *if you've had screenings for example in Arizona and Hawaii and you receive an invite from a festival in New Jersey, that's where you'll be having your Northeast Premiere.*
11. **New England Premiere** – The first time your film has screened in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire & Maine. *If you've had screenings for example in New York, Arizona and Hawaii and you receive an invite from a festival in Boston, that's where you'll be having your Northeast Premiere.*
12. **Midwest Premiere** – The first time your film has screened in Nebraska, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. *If you've had screenings for example in a lot of US States but not any of the above states that's where you'll be having your Midwest Premiere.*
13. **Hawai'i Premiere** – The first time your film has screened in Hawai'i. *If you have your world premiere in Hawai'i this means you can still offer film festivals in the US the types of premieres explained above in points 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.*

Connect With Us

For more information regarding how I can help you get your film seen on the festival circuit and create you film's festival strategy drop me an email at info@thefilmfestivaldoctor.com or DM me on Instagram @rebekahfilmdr

About Us

The Film Festival Doctor, Dr. Rebekah Louisa Smith

After choosing not to pursue a career in Academia teaching film studies, Dr. Rebekah Louisa Smith began her film industry career in 2009, working as one of the producers of Wales's most successful national horror film festival; the [Abertoir Horror Festival](#), and during that time began to develop a great knowledge of the film festival business which led her to become inspired to start her own innovative company in an industry she loved.

Rebekah and the hard-working team behind her company The Film Festival Doctor are creators of success and are committed to nurturing filmmakers in order to help them secure film festival screenings, win awards, and a positive recognition within the film industry. Currently, her company has won more than 2,250 awards for their clients and one Oscar nomination. Her team has supported over 850 creatives across the world, enlightening and inspiring their journey towards achieving their goals and following their filmmaking dreams.

One of the factors which has led to her success is the blending of both practical business skills and spiritual techniques that infused new life into her company's growth. She decided to record her hard-won knowledge in her new book [Born to Do It: Becoming the Leader of a Business Niche Using Powerful Spiritual Techniques](#) to help others who are pondering the leap into entrepreneurship or are already on the journey, but yearning for more success and profitability.

Rebekah has been featured in Forbes, Good Housekeeping, Variety, Ladders, Parade, Screen Daily, The Sun & The Mirror and her profile continues to grow.

She is based in Dallas, Texas and loves continuing to support filmmakers all over the world.

Kyle Goldfinch

Kyle Goldfinch is an emerging producer, whose experience has spanned across film, communications and events management working some of Australia's biggest film festivals in Sydney. He has been highly engaged working in the LGBT screen space. He has won the Frank Wells Dedication Award for service of contributions to Queer Screen. He also has been on the selection committee for festivals including Mardi Gras Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival, Flickerfest and Scout Film Festival in Boston.

His experience of producing is diverse and spans across multiple different platforms. He wrote and produced the short film 'Neuromance' world premiered at Queer Screen's Mardi Gras Film Festival which was also runner up for the Audience Award for Best Short Film. He also served as the co-producer on the awarding short film 'Paper Daisies' which took out the Bronze Award For Best Student Cinematography at the ACS Awards. Outside of film, he was the host and producer of Orbital Radio's Film Festival Guide an hourly show where he produced a hour long podcast every month which explored film festivals every month, for this podcast, he researched, pitched ideas, spoke to publicists, interviewed talent, wrote blog posts, edited and uploaded the podcast episodes to Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

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