

**New Zealand  
FILM COMMISSION**



**Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga**

# Short Film Marketing Guide

Prepared by the New Zealand Film Commission

# A well marketed short film can kickstart a career in feature filmmaking.

Great short films can be told by both emerging or experienced directors. They can help to hone storytelling skills, prove talent or concept and facilitate relevant industry connections on the pathway to features.

Good marketing of a short film will determine who sees the film when and where, and whether there will be any financial or professional return, immediate or long term. Marketing a short film is as much about the film itself as it is about the team of filmmakers, and it's a long game.

This guide will provide insight and guidance on maximising the reach of your short film by providing festival, online and marketplace guidance. The aim is to be an introduction only, rather than a comprehensive manual.

# Where to begin...

Film marketing is about persuading an audience that your film is worth seeing. It starts the moment you conceive the idea.

- You persuade your peers
- You persuade a writer/producer/director
- You persuade investors/funders

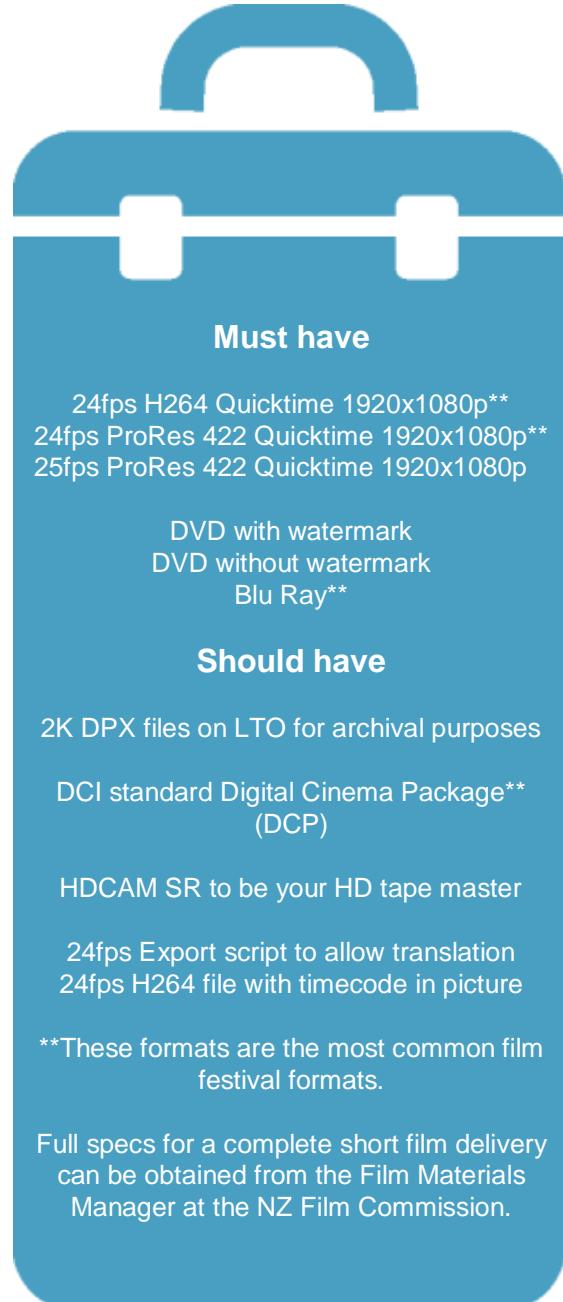
If you make it through those stages then you're already marketing your film. It's during pre-production that you collect your **marketing tools** and **define your audience**, before you've started post-production that you **refine your strategy** and decide on your **delivery items**, and leading up to and during release that you **execute your campaign**. At every stage of production and release you must constantly **refine your strategy to reach your audience**.

## Defining/refining Audience

- Who is your primary audience?
- Who is your secondary audience?
- Who is your tertiary audience?

Find out everything you can about who your audience is. Are they at a festival? Are they online? Where do they live? What are their hobbies? What other films do they watch, and when, where and how do they watch them? For films funded by NZFC an international Film Festival release is a primary audience.

Your strategy and audience should be prioritised based on the professional development goals you are seeking. The audience for your film may be defined by the story, tone, genre, duration, cast, crew or other aspects of your film, but these may change over the course of production, and your audience goals may adapt.



\*\*These formats are the most common film festival formats.

Full specs for a complete short film delivery can be obtained from the Film Materials Manager at the NZ Film Commission.

*Madam Black* (2016) Winner Prix Du Public audience award – Clermont-Ferrand 2016 Directed by Ivan Barge



## Marketing Tools

Break down your script into the key story elements and marketing hooks. It may be a pivotal scene, a dramatic look, a funny moment, a clever line of dialogue. Based on that you will need:

Production stills (i.e. cast, on set)

Graded film stills (i.e. high res frame

grabs for online use)

Short on set clips for online marketing

Short excerpts from the final film (total max 1 minute)

A trailer, poster and press kit

A director headshot

A website (optional)\*

Facebook page for the director &

A Facebook page for the film

## Planning your campaign

The best launching pad for a NZ film is still a World/International premiere at a top film festival.

A film's selection and/or awards at a film festival are its main selling points. A screening at [Sundance](#), [Cannes](#), [Berlinale](#), [Venice](#) or [Clermont-Ferrand](#) will allow the film to take on a life of its own, where it may receive an invitation from other festivals, and approaches for sales representation.

It is at a top festival that you can schedule meetings to discuss other projects, connect with your filmmaking peers and expand your professional network.

## Choosing Festivals

The following websites are a good starting point for festival research:

[NZ Film Commission Festival List](#)

[AG Kurzfilm comprehensive festival calendar](#)

[Britfilms Festival Directory](#)

[German Films Festival Guide](#)

[Oscars List of Accredited Short Film Festivals](#)

[FIAPF List of Festivals](#)

Your film can have a festival life of approximately two years. It is a common strategy to aim for the top festivals in the first year and then gradually start opening it up to more. Global to local.

There are several online platforms for film festival submissions that you should register with such as [Reelport](#), [Withoutabox](#) and [Short Film Depot](#).

Unless you have unlimited time and money you need to strategize as you can't submit to everything. Many European festivals are free to enter but festivals in North America and elsewhere often charge fees. Consider these costs when creating your strategy and submitting your film.

Be calculated about your choices and realistic about your chances.

There are some general guidelines to consider when considering a festival:

- **Age** – in general, the longer a festival has been running the more prestigious it can be. Festivals such as Berlin, Cannes and Melbourne have been running for over 60 years.
- **Exclusivity** – most A list (or top tier) festivals will require a premiere of some sort and will also have a strict eligibility rule regarding the age of your film (generally within the last 12 months for the top tier festivals).
- **Screening formats** – check the accepted screening formats for a festival before submitting. A festival that screens from DVD or H264 is likely to be less prestigious than one that requires DCP.
- **Screening history** – this should give you a good idea of the festival's reputation. Check out what films have screened at the festival in previous years for any recognisable titles.

Once you have done this festival research make an excel spreadsheet wish list of all those you are going to submit to, global to local. Consider the submission costs and the time involved. Then, separate them into an A list and B list according to your priorities. Consider including the festivals that will qualify you for post-production and/or travel through the NZFC in the event of selection.

## From strategy to submissions

Eligibility is usually focused around **completion date** and **premiere status**. A world **premiere** refers to the first official screening of your film anywhere excluding a cast and crew screening. The international premiere is the first screening outside of New Zealand.

Your film's 'life' doesn't begin until its first screening. This becomes your official **completion date** of the film. If the film hasn't had a screening then the completion date is the current month.

Online availability can affect your eligibility and you should consider holding back having the film freely available online until you have achieved your festival and/or sales goals.

### You will need:

- Vimeo Link to the film (password protected)
- DVD screeners (watermarked)
- H264 file (watermarked)
- Press Kit
- Still images in both high and low resolution

These tools will allow you to make all festival submissions.

## Short Film Festivals with Markets

For buyers, distributors and festival programmers to see your film, you need to enter it into to a festival that has a **short film market** attached. Buyers will prioritise watching the films which are selected for competition at the festival but they may also be looking for specific themes or genres.

The most established market exclusive to short films is attached to the [Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival](#) in France. It has a digital video library where buyers can watch every short film submitted to the festival that can also be accessed online for several months after the festival. The festival/market is held in February each year and it requires no premiere status to enter so it is strongly recommended.

Other festivals that have short film markets are:

- [Tampere Film Festival](#) (Finland)
- [Oberhausen](#) (Germany)
- [Annecy Animation Festival and Market](#) (France)
- [Palm Springs International Short Fest](#) and Market (USA)
- [Hamburg International Short Film Festival](#) (Germany)
- [Sapporo International Short Film Festival and Market](#) (Japan)
- [Kurzfilmtage Winterthur](#) (Germany)

Many of the same buyers will be at different markets. Your films festival selections and/or awards will make a difference in its market value. The short film buyers do their 'shopping' at the beginning of the year at [Clermont-Ferrand](#) and get to see the latest films there.

You may be approached by a **short film sales agent** at a market to represent your film. The large majority of the sales they make will be TV sales, which can be very lucrative. You are encouraged to seek advice before entering into any sales agency agreements.



Jasmin McSweeney, Chelsea Wistanley and Kate Prior at Berlinale 2014

## Film festivals in New Zealand

An effective way to market your short film in terms of cost and exposure is to target film festivals, competitions and screenings in New Zealand. Listed below are the regular national festivals, however, there are other festivals that pop up from time to time. Alternatively, you could team up with other short filmmakers and organise a collective screening for your films.

### New Zealand International Film Festival (NZIFF)

The NZIFF has the NZ's Best short film competition with cash prizes. They also select shorts to screen in front of feature films. Being selected for the festival is a valuable opportunity to reach a large local audience and gain exposure.

### Show Me Shorts

Show Me Shorts is a short film only festival that screens annually in several cities throughout the country. It is Academy Accredited and has many great prizes and some excellent [resources](#) for filmmakers. Entries close in July each year.

### Wairoa Maori Film Festival

Based in Wairoa on the East coast of New Zealand, showcases Maori themed and indigenous film works including dramatic features, documentaries and short films.

### Māoriland Film Festival

Based in Otaki, on the West coast of New Zealand, showcases Māori themed and indigenous film works including dramatic features, documentaries and short films. Entries close in November each year.



Alex Backhouse, Director of *Unnatural History* (2014) at Locarno

## Selling your short film

There is a market for short films on television, online, in theatres and on DVD.

**Sales agents** generally prefer to pick up short films that are under 15-20mins, recent, have strong festival selections and/or awards. Often humorous films also sell well. A world sales agent usually takes all rights for every media worldwide under contract and then offers those rights individually to the short film buyers they find suitable for the film.

Things to watch out for:

- **Commission** (usually 30-40%)
- **Term** (usually around 10 years)
- **Expenses** (these should be outlined, reasonable and capped)

You can also handle the sales of your film personally rather than through a sales agent. In this case you will offer and licence individual rights to short film buyers in different media worldwide. Eventually you will read, negotiate and synchronise contracts and send out any requested materials. Below is a list of common media to licence shorts to. If you are considering finding a sales agent for your film don't submit it to buyers individually before this as it may cause confusion.



A scene from *Ellen Is Leaving* (2013) - Directed by Michelle Savill

## Television

There are domestic and international broadcasters who buy and show short films. The decisions regarding which films are selected and screened are made by acquisition executives and programming departments.

Sometimes short films are programmed in half hour blocks or individually as an introduction to other programming.

Generally, larger television markets including Europe, USA, Canada and Japan are more likely to acquire short films as cable channels proliferate and traditional free-to-air television and public broadcasters are seeking product.

**Canal+** in France is considered a highly respected television buyer for non-French shorts. They look for high profile, edgy shorts of all genres up to 30 minutes in duration but preferably shorter.

Another popular option in Europe is French-German broadcaster **arte**, which has its own hour long magazine style show called Kurzschluss dedicated entirely to short film. Their general preference can be described as art house and auteur.

## DVD

DVD compilations of short films have become a common by product of festivals – examples include Flickerfest and Shnit Film Festival. The licence fees will not make you rich, but they are high collections that can showcase your work against other filmmakers. The Film Shop in New Zealand will sell single and compilation DVDs for short films.

## Educational

Some publishing houses licence short films to accompany educational materials. Often these films have a focus on youth and it is a good way to make your film accessible to another audience. Some examples are:

- **Vista Higher Learning**
- **Katholisches Filmwerk**
- **VisLearn New Zealand**

## Closed Circuit

This refers to a closed group of viewers such as in a hospital, hotel, bar, airplane or university seminar. Consider the theme and content of your film and approach places that it may relate to. Perhaps there is a local bar with a projector or large screen who may be interested in a short film screening one night. If you are approached for a screening you may want to ask for a screening fee, however many places are unable to offer this.

## Short Films on the Internet

If you want to put your film online free of charge, first consider the value of audience. Is it more important to get 10 000 views on Vimeo, or 100 industry audience members in a cinema? Think carefully about this strategy as it will affect your options of festival and/or sales success.

There are many ways and places to put your film online, each with different environments and revenue models. Websites can offer shorts streamed for free or advertisement based revenue, for a fee, to rent or as a paid download. Some act as distributor and will offer monetary returns but many are simply offering you the chance to get your film seen by a large online audience. Some of these sites curate their programs and you have to submit your film for their consideration and others may contact you direct after hearing about the film through the festival circuit.

If more than 10% of the total duration of your film is screened online it may then be ineligible for some festivals. It may also cause issues with potential sales agents or distributors or if you were considering an Oscars strategy.

If you do come across a platform acting as a sales agent (e.g. offering your short film to third parties or other platforms) make sure that you get a fair share of the revenue and that it does not collide with any other contracts you may have in place.

## Online Sales and Licensing

There are many different models emerging, such as revenue sharing of sales and/or advertising revenue sharing. Many VOD providers, such as Mubi and Realeyz, offer monthly subscription models for their customers and share a percentage of the revenues from that accordingly with the short film licensors. Traditional methods of licensing for sales are delineated territory by territory but this is not always possible online and an increasing number of sites are seeking global non-exclusive rights.

Sales to television stations often still require exclusive rights in their territories. This is coupled with the fact that most major international TV stations which acquire shorts are insisting that online/VOD and mobile rights be included in the contracts for their particular territories. If you are in a position to have an offer for TV and an online deal make sure you synchronise the contracts, e.g. asking the online platform to exclude certain territories.

### NZ On Screen

NZ On Screen showcases local content and has a large database of historical and contemporary films. They offer streaming video that would otherwise not be readily accessible and have an established audience. There is no commercial aspect to the site or revenue offered.

### Vimeo On Demand

This is a direct distribution method available to PRO users. The revenue split is heavily in favour of the filmmaker and you retain control of your content and pricing.

### Short of the Week

Shortoftheweek is a popular curated site showcasing the latest short films and relevant articles. Their writers source content from around the web and they are well known for a strong editorial sense. They may also approach you for an online release if your film gains attention through festival selections. Having your film on their homepage can lead to many thousands of views. It is also a good resource to watch films yourself and gain an understanding of what is happening internationally.

### NZ Film On Demand

The New Zealand Film Commission has a transactional [video-on-demand](#) player that showcases NZFC funded short and feature films and offers a revenue stream to filmmakers. If you have completed an NZFC funded project your film may appear on this platform.

There will be regular showcases of films based around special events and festivals, and short films can be bundled with relevant feature films.



*Eleven* (2014) - directed by Abigail Greenwood

### Summary

Websites with downloadable content that offer financial return to the filmmakers:

- [iTunes Store](#)
- [KurzfilmAgentur Hamburg](#)
- [Some Like it Short](#)

Websites offering streaming content for no financial return to the filmmakers:

- [NZ On Screen](#)
- [Dazoo](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Daily Motion](#)
- [Short of the Week](#)
- [Vimeo Staff Picks](#)
- [Isuma.TV](#)

Online competitive film festivals:

- [Rushes Soho Shorts](#)
- [Stockholm International Film Festival](#)
- [Tribeca Film Festival online competition](#)

## Festival Attendance

### Eleven (2014)

Directed by Abigail Greenwood

#### 2014 Berlinale

Oberhausen

NZIFF - NZ's Best

Uppsala

Austin Film Festival

Chicago Children's Film Festival

NZ Film Commission supported Director Abigail Greenwood and writer/producer Kate Prior to attend the Berlinale, a major European film festival with the European Film Market attached.

"My major takeaway as a producer was a true insight into the ecosystem of the film business on a large scale...the most valuable thing you can do is make new connections...I met and had email conversations with several sales agents who were at Berlin"

- Kate Prior

"The experience has had a huge impact on me professionally...the creative connections I made at the festival will be ones I carry through to other collaborations"

- Abigail Greenwood

### Queenie (2014)

Directed by Paul Neason

#### 2014 SXSW Film Festival

Milano Film Festival

The NZ Film Commission supported Director Paul Neason and producers Michelle Saville and Melissa Donald to attend SXSW, a music/film/television festival where *Queenie* screened in competition.

"For Paul, one of his primary goals...was to connect with the international community of independent film makers, especially those who worked in animation"

"One of Michelle's main goals was to reconnect with the people she had met the previous year, and to build her relationship with the SXSW festival"

"Melissa's first time at SXSW, her main goal was to seek out networks and connections with other producers in order to grow her understanding of the international film industry"

"SXSW is a whirlwind of inspiration, as well as a great platform for showing, promoting, and discussing your film"

- *Queenie*, SXSW Film Festival Report.

### Whisker (2014)

Directed by Steven Saussey

#### 2014 Palm Springs International ShortFest

Portland Film Festival

California Independent Film Festival

Show Me Shorts

NZ Film Commission supported Whisker travelled to Palm Springs International ShortFest with producer Yolande Dewey and director Steven Saussey where it won the Future Filmmaker Award.

"We got to see so many films and you got to understand that you're actually a part of a worldwide community of emerging film makers"

- Yolande Dewey

"The thing about the Future Filmmaker Award is that it's evidence that the film is being noticed on a worldwide scale right from its premiere showing which is really exciting, and it really feels like a springboard onto much bigger things."

- Steven Saussey



Michelle Saville wins the Jury Award at SXSW for *Ellen Is Leaving* (2013)

## **Appendix**

### **1. TELEVISION BUYERS - International**

See the UniFrance Catalogue of International Short Film Buyers

### **2. SHORT FILM WEBSITES**

- [The Centrifuge Brain Project](#)
- [Poppy](#)
- [Johannes Nyholm](#)
- [Blue Tongue Films](#)

### **3. NZ SHORT FILM PRESS KITS**

Cold Snap

[https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/default/files/2017-11/Cold\\_Snap\\_Press\\_Kit.pdf](https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/default/files/2017-11/Cold_Snap_Press_Kit.pdf)

Ellen is Leaving

<http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/nzfc/files/Ellen%20is%20Leaving%20Press%20Kit.pdf>

43,000 Feet

<http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/nzfc/files/43000%20Feet%20Press%20Kit.pdf>

Night Shift

<http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/nzfc/files/Night%20Shift%20Press%20Kit.pdf.pdf>

Honk If You're Horny

<http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/nzfc/files/Honk%20if%20you%27re%20Horny%20Press%20Kit.pdf>

Poppy

<http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/nzfc/files/Poppy%20presskit%20Jan%202011.pdf>

### **4. NZFC REPORT: CLERMONT-FERRAND INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL AND MARKET 2014**

[http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/nzfc/files/2014%20Clermont-Ferrand%20Market%20Report%20-%20FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/nzfc/files/2014%20Clermont-Ferrand%20Market%20Report%20-%20FINAL_0.pdf)

### **5. ADDITIONAL READING**

The Essential List of Festivals and Online Eligibility

<https://nz.pinterest.com/pin/82401868154918469/>

12 Steps to Avoid Going Broke Applying to Film Festivals

<http://filmmakermagazine.com/76069-12-steps-to-avoid-going-broke-applying-to-film-festivals/>

10 Tips to make the most of film Festival Submissions - Indiewire

<http://www.indiewire.com/2015/10/8-tips-to-make-the-most-of-film-festival-submissions-57174/>

Best Of: 50 Film Festivals Worth the Entry Fee, 2017

<https://www.moviemaker.com/archives/festivals/50-film-festivals-worth-the-entry-fee-2017/>

5 Easy Rules for submitting a film a film to film festivals from programmers themselves

<http://nofilmschool.com/2016/03/5-easy-rules-submitting-film-festival-programmers-themselves>