



On the Record: Studio Executives and Directors Overwhelmingly Support Preservation of the Theatrical Release Window

Howard Stringer, Sony Corp. Chairman
Michael Lynton, Sony Pictures Entertainment Chairman
Tom Bernard, President, Sony Pictures Classics
Sumner Redstone, Executive Chairman, Viacom Inc. and CBS Corp.
Shari Redstone, Vice Chairman, Viacom Inc. and CBS Corp.
Tom Freston, CEO, Viacom Inc.
Thomas Lesinsky, President of Paramount Digital Media Group
Harry Sloan, CEO, MGM
Rick Sands, COO, MGM
James Gianopulos, Co-Chairman, Twentieth Century Fox Filmed Entertainment
Tomas Jegeus, Executive Vice President of Twentieth Century Fox International
Steve Gilula, COO, Fox Searchlight
Ron Meyer, President and Chief Operating Officer, Universal Studios
Lew Coleman, President, DreamWorks Animation, SKG
Alan Horn, President and Chief Operating Officer, Warner Brothers Entertainment
Dan Fellman, Warner Bros. President of Domestic Distribution
Sid Ganis, President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
Robert Iger, President and CEO of Walt Disney Company
Dick Cook, Former Chairman of Walt Disney Studios
Bill Mechanic, Pandemonium Films
Edward Arentz, Managing Director, Music Box Films
Tom Sherak, Partner, Revolution Studios
Jon Feltheimer, Chief Executive, Lions Gate Entertainment
Bob Berney, President, Picturehouse
M. Night Shyamalan, Director
Steven Spielberg, Director
James Cameron, Director
Jonathan Demme, Director
Tim Burton, Director
Barry Sonnenfeld, Director
Ron Howard, Director
Walter Salles, Director
John Hamburg, Writer and Director



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Howard Stringer, Sony Corp. Chairman

“If you collapse a window or go day and date ... if you eliminate the movie theater, you’re doing movie of the week. And the sizzle ... of the movie industry will be gone. You have to guard the value of the content.”

—News Conference at the Michelangelo Hotel, New York City
September 29, 2005, as reported in *Variety*, Sunday, October 2, 2005

Michael Lynton, Sony Pictures Entertainment Chairman

“We at Sony believe very strongly in the theatrical window. It is our lifeblood as well as that of theater owners. Busting it up is dangerous.”

—October 27, 2005, as reported in *Los Angeles Times* on October 28, 2005

“We’re confident that the existing window structure is the best economic model.”

—*Fortune Magazine*, January 23, 2006

Tom Bernard, President, Sony Pictures Classics

“Collapsed windows are the worst thing that ever happened to specialized films. Polluting the theatrical window is doom.”

—*Multichannel News*, November 7, 2005

“Polluting the theatrical window is doom and hits like *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* or *March of the Penguins* that need time to build would be all over in two weeks.”

—*Film Journal*, April 2006



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Sumner Redstone, Executive Chairman, Viacom Inc. and CBS Corp.

“Sumner Redstone, executive chairman of the new Viacom and CBS Corp., left no doubt about where he stands on the idea of the industry moving toward simultaneous releases of feature films to theaters and DVD or video-on-demand platforms during a wide-ranging Q&A session Tuesday night hosted by the Museum of Television & Radio in Beverly Hills.

“‘Any exhibitor playing pictures under those circumstances would be committing suicide,’ said Redstone, who has deep roots in exhibition through another company, National Amusements, controlled by his family. Despite the boxoffice slump last year, ‘it’s not going to happen,’ Redstone said emphatically.”

—*The Hollywood Reporter*, January 12, 2006

Shari Redstone, Vice Chairman, Viacom Inc. and CBS Corp.

“Shrinking windows is bad for business, and I mean everybody’s business.”

“Movies are meant to be seen in the theater.”

—March 29, 2006 at the Bank of America Media, Telecommunications and Entertainment Conference as reported by *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 30, 2006

Tom Freston, CEO, Viacom Inc.

“The Windows system has served the film industry quite well. And from a profitability standpoint, the studios have been a great beneficiary from this sequential release of product. We don’t see any reason to change that.”

—Viacom Earnings Conference Call, February 22, 2006 (transcript on file)



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Thomas Lesinsky, President of Paramount Digital Media Group

“WILL THE EVOLUTION OF DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION FORCE DAY-AND-DATE RELEASES OF THEATRICAL AND PACKAGED MEDIA OR AT THE VERY LEAST RE-JIGGER THE DISTRIBUTION FOOD CHAIN?”

“No. The filmed entertainment business was built on sequential distribution. It all starts with theatrical, then goes to airlines and hotels, then on to home video and pay-per-view/VOD and on to pay TV and free TV.”

—Q&A with Home Media Retailing, *HomeMediaRetailing*, June 17, 2006

Harry Sloan, CEO, MGM

“There has been much debate in Hollywood recently about film distribution windows – simultaneous on-demand offers, and shortening the time between theatrical and home entertainment release.

“So, I’d like to go on record here today saying that at MGM, our goal, both immediate and long-term, is to treat you, the exhibitors, as our first and most important partners.

“MGM’s primary commitment is to the full theatrical experience that can only be conveyed by seeing a film on a large screen in a theatre environment. That is why we want to affirm that we will respect and we will uphold our current model of distribution that allows first for theatrical and then, after a significant period of exploitation, windows for on-demand and DVD.

“My diverse media career spans all the various distribution platforms. And what I have learned through my experience is that the North American theatrical exhibition and marketing drives the success of all other ancillary revenue streams throughout the world.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you have my word today that MGM has no plans to change our windows of distribution, and remains steadfast in its commitment to theatrical exhibition first and foremost and to working in close partnership with you, the theater owners, to make both of our businesses successful.”

—ShoWest Convention speech, March 16, 2006 (transcript on file)



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Rick Sands, COO, MGM

“I’m a believer in windows, in an orderly distribution pattern, which includes exclusivity within windows. We are not leaders in changing windows. Right now, we’re respecting the theatrical and home video and pay television and then free television windows. As those windows change on an industry-wide basis, we will react. We are not being proactive in collapsing those windows. My background comes from building movies. If you have tent poles it’s easy to go day and date worldwide all media. It’s great, but that’s not the business I grew up in at Miramax and DreamWorks to a certain extent. We built the movies, like what we did with Chicago. We started out with a platform. We only had the top 10 cities, top 50, top 100. We really built a groundswell. Then you lay the publicity on top of that and the electronic marketing and you build movies into the successes that they become. Day and date, all media doesn’t allow you to do that because you’re not going to be on peoples’ minds and on shelves. As long as DVD is actually physically delivered, you can have a couple of weeks on the shelves, in terms of prime shelf space, and if people don’t buy, you’re gone. So that takes the discovery out of movies, worldwide day and day all media. It does protect you against piracy but it also changes the ultimate game.”

—*The Business of Film: Cannes 2006 Special Issue and Product Guide*, May 2006

James Gianopulos, Co-Chairman, Twentieth Century Fox Filmed Entertainment

“20th Century Fox Filmed Entertainment Co-Chairman James Gianopulos on Thursday defended the traditional DVD release schedule amid a push by Walt Disney Co. to rush theatrical releases to the home video market to counter piracy and a maturing home video market.

“Sending movies to home video markets much quicker than the average four-month exclusive that studios grant theaters could crimp growth, Gianopulos said at the Reuters Media and Advertising Summit in New York.

“‘When people say ‘Re-invent your business model because of the ubiquitous availability of pirated product.’ There’s a huge flaw with that,’ said Gianopulos. ‘You can never compete with free.’

“‘The amount of money we spend on marketing films is an incentive to bring windows forward,’ Gianopulos said. ‘On the other hand you never want to bring the window so far forward it impedes vitality and growth.’”

—Reuters, December 2, 2005



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“[Gianopoulos] said the tiered system that has been in place since home video emerged 25 years ago ‘is not random. It’s not accidental. There’s logic to it.’ What advocates of simultaneous release are proposing makes no sense.”

—*Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2006

Tomas Jegeus, Executive Vice President of Twentieth Century Fox International

“You can’t take away the ‘out of home’ experience. We have to protect windows.”

—December 8, 2005, as reported in *Screen Daily*, December 9, 2005

Steve Gilula, COO, Fox Searchlight

“We see ourselves as a theatrical motion picture company in which the theatrical venue is preeminent.”

Ron Meyer, President and Chief Operating Officer, Universal Studios

“DISNEY’S BOB IGER SAYS HE’S INTRIGUED BY THE IDEA OF RELEASING MAJOR MOVIES IN THEATERS AND ON DVD ON THE SAME DAY. YOUR RESPONSE?”

“I’m not in favor of it. We have to be careful not to cannibalize our own product. The window of time between theatrical-release dates and DVD-release dates has a purpose in delivering financial results to us and different experiences to the audience. There’s a place for each of those windows.”

—Q&A with Jeffrey Ressler, *Time Magazine*, September 5, 2005

Lew Coleman, President, DreamWorks Animation, SKG

“We’d just as soon keep the windows where they are.”

—March 29, 2006 at the Bank of America Media, Telecommunications and Entertainment Conference as reported by *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 30, 2006



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Alan Horn, President and Chief Operating Officer, Warner Brothers Entertainment

“Warner Brothers is staunchly and adamantly supportive of preserving the theatrical window” ...[mentioning a statistic he had read indicating that 17 percent of people who had seen ‘The Dark Knight’ had gone back a second time] “I wonder how many of those would have gone out and bought the DVD instead of seeing it again at the theater.”

—*The New York Times*, August 10, 2008

Dan Fellman, Warner Bros. President of Domestic Distribution

“The downturn in boxoffice is not related entirely to video release dates. Boxoffice is historically content-driven, and as an industry we fell short this year as a result.” But, he noted, simultaneous theatrical/DVD release dates “are not going to happen at Warner Bros.”

—October 27, 2005, as reported in *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 28, 2005

Sid Ganis, President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

“And, by the way, I bet you none of the artists nominated tonight have ever finished a shot in a movie, stood back and said ‘That’s going to look great on DVD!’ Because there is nothing like the experience of watching a movie in a darkened theatre, looking at images on an eye enveloping screen, sound coming at you from all directions and sharing the experience with total strangers who have been brought together by the story they are seeing.”

—March, 5, 2006 at the 78th Annual Academy Awards

“And the question for all of us is this: is it time for the Academy to mandate a stated ‘window’ during which a picture must play exclusively theatrically if it is to be eligible for Academy Awards? What would that accomplish? What dangers might it stave off? Two, actually: one posed by an erasure of the line between movies that premiere in theatres and movies made for television, the other posed by the elimination of the theatres’ historic first crack at the audience. The other possible threat posed by the day-and-date release, though is more far-reaching; it is a threat to our art form itself. Exhibitors are having some difficulty filling theatres as it is. If it became normal practice for new pictures to be offered in theatres, on pay cable, on DVD and other media simultaneously, what percentage of the current audience would opt for the theatrical experience? Half? Less? We don’t know. We’re watching.”

—*Academy Quarterly Report*, Volume 17



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Robert Iger, President and CEO of Walt Disney Company

“DO YOU SEE [DISNEY MOVIES] BEING DISTRIBUTED IMMEDIATELY ON DVD, CABLE AND SATELLITE, NOT JUST IN THE THEATRES?”

“Not right away, no.... I think the movie experience, the big-screen, multiple-person experience is actually a pretty good experience. I think the whole industry should get behind improving that experience....”

“We create a lot of value with the initial big-screen release. So I like the notion of keeping that where it is. How long that lasts in some exclusive window, I don't know. It seems pretty obvious that the windows are going to compress.”

—Q&A with Kara Swisher, *Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2006

“The theatrical window clearly is important to theatre owners and distributors and film makers, but we also have to be mindful to provide consumers with a great price to value relationship and that includes great experiences in movie theatres, but also making sure we are giving people access to the movies they love on a well-timed, well-priced to market basis.

That doesn't mean there will be radical change. I actually believe over time there will be evolutionary change rather than radical our revolutionary change. But let me emphasize: we are not in discussions to sell movies to cable in the same window as theatrical.”

—*Imdb*, May 8, 2007

Dick Cook, Former Chairman of Walt Disney Studios

“The theatrical experience is still the most important experience in the pipeline,” Cook told the Reuters Media Summit in New York. “I don't see much shrinking (of windows) in the foreseeable future. We are comfortable where it is now.”

—November 30, 2006 at the Reuters Media Summit



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**Bill Mechanic, Pandemonium Films;
Former Chairman and CEO, Fox Filmed Entertainment**

“When you read industry discussions about collapsing the theatrical and home entertainment windows, there is a fundamental lack of understanding about how the movie business works as a business. For the past 25 years, it has become a better and better business in terms of income only because of sequential distribution. Take it down to a single market and the economics collapse. ... Eliminate the theatrical window and the same pictures that don’t create a head of steam theatrically now will most likely fail to create a head of steam in video. And there will be no subsequent market to pick up the losses.”

—*Movie City News*, August 19, 2005

Tom Sherak, Partner, Revolution Studios

“There’s a reason for windows—it’s good for the art, and it’s good for the overall business. I think the idea of movies being made for and seen on the big screen is an important part of the experience. ... I don’t think movie theaters can exist if everything goes day-and-date (to all platforms). The idea of trying to rush everything at the same time is leading to the ruination of the theater as we know it.”

—*Kansas City Star*, November 27, 2005

Edward Arentz, Managing Director, Music Box Films

“Independents need longer windows . . . we’re about word of mouth.”

—*Variety*, May 14, 2010

Jon Feltheimer, Chief Executive, Lions Gate Entertainment

“We’ve got to protect the windows because the system still works.”

—*Financial Times*, August 11, 2005

Bob Berney, President, Picturehouse

“If what Cuban is doing is done in a bigger way by the larger studios, it could hurt the theatrical audience and I’m worried about that.”

—*Film Journal*, April 2006



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M. Night Shyamalan, Director

“If I can’t make movies for theaters, I don’t want to make movies. I hope [simultaneous release] is a very bad idea that goes away.”

—October 27, 2005, as reported in *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 2005

“Art is the ability to convey that we are not alone. When I sit down next to you in a movie theater, we get to share each other’s point of view. We become part of a collective soul. That’s the magic in the movies. If [simultaneous release] happens, you know the majority of your theaters are closing. It’s going to crush you guys.”

—ShowEast, Orlando, Florida, October 27, 2005,
as reported in *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 2005

Steven Spielberg, Director

“I have to go on record saying that I am not in favor of a DVD coming out the same day as the film opens, because I really believe that the average home system is far inferior to a movie house. And a lot of it is the social magic of going out to the movies, seeing it with a lot of people you have never met and sharing an experience. I feel there is no substitute for going out to the movies. There is nothing like it.”

—*Time Magazine*, March 27, 2006

James Cameron, Director

“I love movies. And I love them on the big screen. I’m not going to make movies for people to watch on their cell phones. To me, that’s an abomination. . . . And I don’t want to see day-and-date because of the sacred experience of the cinema. I don’t want that grand, visionary, transporting movie experience made for the big screen to become a thing of the past.”

—National Association of Broadcasters Conference at the Las Vegas Convention Center,
Las Vegas, NV April 23, 2006



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Jonathan Demme, Director

“Doesn’t it seem like the movie business is devouring itself because it can’t wait to get to home video?”

—*Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2006

Tim Burton, Director

“Tim Burton, director of last year’s ‘Charlie and the Chocolate Factory’ and the animated ‘Corpse Bride,’ called the notion of simultaneously release absurd. Obviously, he said, cinema is a business, ‘but everything should be done to treat it as an art form—it’s a visceral medium.’”

—*Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2006

Barry Sonnenfeld, Director

“THERE’S BEEN A LOT OF SENTIMENT IN THE TECH WORLD, THE INTERNET WORLD, TO GET RID OF THE DVD-RELEASE WINDOW ALTOGETHER. . . . DOES THE WINDOW SYSTEM MAKE SENSE ANYMORE?”

“I think the window should actually get longer, and I don’t understand that business model of releasing everything on the same day.”

—Q&A with Walt Mossberg, *Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2006

Ron Howard, Director

“Viewing in a theater is the optimum experience. It needs to be preserved.”

—*Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2006



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Walter Salles, Director

“As Fellini once said, ‘we go to the movie theatre as we go to a cathedral,’ that is, to have a collective experience. Trying to see a comedy in the privacy of your home is just not the same as seeing it with four hundred people in the theatre. There is that catharsis that stems from the collective laugh!

“When your neighbor starts to laugh, you feel relieved as well, and something of a contagious nature occurs. The same is true for any impactful, emotional filmic narrative. In the movie theatre, there is something that travels from one spectator to another that makes that collective experience unique.”

—*Dolby News Cinema Edition Winter 2005*

John Hamburg, Writer and Director

“I just don’t love (collapsing windows), because it’s indicative of our instant-gratification way of living today. Movies have a certain mystique and this comes from their need to be discovered and have that build-up that makes them more appreciated.”

—*Film Journal, April 2006*