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Interactive Design for Entertainment
Site Research

Sundance Film Festival – Online Shorts

(<http://www.sundance.org/festival/shorts/>)

Pros: The Sundance Festival is probably the second most-famous film festival in the world. They have recently added this “online shorts” aspect of the festival where films are screened for free in a site player. Additionally you can download the movies via Netflix, iTunes or Xbox. The site design includes aspects of their physical location (snowy scenery from Park City, Utah) and tabbed elements (in the shorts info sections which allow you to view plot summary, director’s bio and film cast). The year (’08) is presented VERY OBVIOUSLY so you know that the info on the page is current. Background imagery (snowy mountains) changes on different pages to let you know that you’re in a different area (but they don’t always change). A default video launches when you load the page telling you just what the Shorts festival is about. You can also choose to sort the short films by “Genre” (animation, comedy, drama and “on the edge”).

Cons: The main navigation only appears on hover and is not consistent from item to item. The colors change to represent different areas but the difference between “Latest News” and “Festival Info” (for example) is jarring ... the boxes begin at two different locations. Some of the text in the header image is white on white. There doesn’t seem to be a search function.

Technology: It appears that they are using Flash for the video players and ASP for the page itself.

VSM Cinema (<http://www.veryshortmovies.com>)

Pros: VSM’s design concept is the dark velvet rope and red carpet feel. They use the effect of spotlight circles and deep gradients to create an immediate “familiar” emotional reaction. I immediately know I’m here to watch movies. Complementary colors in the design make everything very easy to read and they are clear up-front, you will need the Adobe Flash Player to view the contents. There don’t seem to be any outside advertisements on the site.

Cons: Using words like “Cinema”, “Lobby,” “Screening Room” etc. they are sticking with their concept design but they are confusing the user. What is the difference, for example, between “Cinema” and “Screening Room?” “Cinema” is the home page, “Lobby” shows movie thumbnails/posters and plays short preview clips, “Screening Room” displays smaller thumbnails and allows you to select a movie which THEN pulls up the larger “screen” (for which you need to download the latest Flash player). You

can Vote in the screening room whereas you can't in the Lobby. "Vote" takes you to the same page as "Screening Room" so things get confusing.

Technology: It appears that they are using Flash for the video players and ASP for the page itself.

Festival de Cannes (<http://www.festival-cannes.fr/>)

Pros: The Cannes film festival/market is the most well-known and most prestigious of festivals and markets. It uses some of that "chic" in its site design with a classy blue/white design and scrolling photos of people wearing tuxedos and gowns. The ads that ARE present are very small thumbnails and the chosen typefaces and colors are easy on the eyes. The site does call to its purpose/subject by using a camera lens as the primary background image.

Cons: The camera lens is a little cliché for a festival as esteemed as Cannes. Because the festival is a French festival, the English on the site is not always the best. The search box overlaps the "Advanced Search" text. Since the site is geared towards Hollywood types that want to attend or see their film screen, it is not necessarily directed towards the layperson who may just want to view film updates or clips. The clips that are present on the site are hidden underneath "Festival Archives" and listed as "All Clips" rather than just "Clips." Clips are sorted and displayed by year and by text only. When you finally make a selection the clip opens with a more designed page but no information about the clip itself.

Technology: Javascript scripts seem to control revolving and scrolling pictures. IFrames contain the "Press Releases" on the main page. Clips are streamed via Windows Media Video or Real Media Video depending on user's choice. The rest of the page is HTML and CSS.

University of Southern California – School of Cinematic Arts (<http://cinema.usc.edu>) & USC – DADA (First Look Festival) (<http://anim.usc.edu/>)

Pros: (Cinema page home) The University of Southern California (USC) School of Cinematic Arts is considered one of the best film schools in the United States (if not THE best) and its design incorporates film elements immediately. Storyboard pages (thumbnail navigation), clipboards, script pages (for side navigation), CDs, grease pencil lines/circles (indicating selections), camera lenses, film cans and "Kodak yellow" are all elements of the design. The biggest and first thing on the page is a revolving video which is skinned to look like the view through a camera. The school and school segment branding is present on all pages so you know where you are. Secondary pages keep thumbnails and navigation in the same places but change the imagery for continued interest (file folders instead of scripts, etc.).

(DADA page) The USC – School of Cinematic Arts – Digital Animation and Digital Arts page is more directly competitive with our festival site. It is more designed than the USC School of Cinematic Arts site with a constant animation of film sprockets flowing along the side. It does represent the school's

physical location with some palm trees. Once you navigate to the online festival portion of the site you see the summary of the student, a large thumbnail of their work AND a thumbnail image of the student themselves (which is great for them).

Cons: (Cinema page) The skinned video player does distract from some of its content because of the central rectangles that don't disappear. Some secondary pages are wordy and boring but it's intended to be info-heavy and not a festival/video site. Some elements in the central video player are actually just images (not videos).

(DADA page) The main page contains a boat steering wheel (?) and a 3D axis symbol (but it's totally unrelated to the design around it.) Once you click on the "First Look Festival" link you're taken back to a page on the USC – School of Cinematic Arts page with an un-designed flash player and film summaries. It's consistent with the film school page but NOT with the Digital Animation and Digital Arts page. Clicking on "View Clip" on underneath the film summaries pulls up another USC – School of Cinematic Arts page with a bigger un-designed flash player but only a caption-sized summary of the piece in the player.

Technology: The main page is Flash in an HTML container but some secondary pages are in HTML. On the "first look" festival (DADA) pages the video players are flash players and the summary pages are all HTML.