

The Self-Distribution Checklist

What to Do When Festivals Don't Call Back
By Lex Nova Lawyer x Thoolie

Step 1: Pick Your Platform

PLATFORM	COST TO UPLOAD	REVENUE MODEL	NOTES
TUBI	Free (via aggregator)	Ad-supported (paid per view)	Wide reach, no upfront fee, needs aggregator like Filmhub
PLEX	Free (via aggregator)	Ad-supported	Similar to Tubi, emerging indie-friendly platform
VIMEO ON DEMAND	Monthly fee	You set the price	Full control, but you handle 100% of marketing
YOUTUBE RENTALS	Free to list	Rev split with YouTube	Easy entry, built-in audience, discoverability matters
AMAZON VIDEO DIRECT	Discontinued for indie films	Use a distributor	Amazon now requires an approved distributor like BitMAX or Filmhub

Step 2: Legal Must-Haves Before You Upload

 DELIVERABLE	WHY IT MATTERS
E&O INSURANCE	Distributors & platforms may require this — protects from legal claims
ACTOR RELEASES	You need signed agreements for every face on screen
MUSIC LICENSES	Sync + Master + Festival + Pass-through rights — all in writing
WORK-FOR-HIRE AGREEMENTS	For editor, composer, animator — prove you own the final product
CHAIN OF TITLE	Ownership documents from script to screen
LIKENESS RELEASE	Especially important if using social media clips or crowds
TRADEMARK CLEARANCE	Remove logos or protected marks unless you have rights

 **These platforms don't check your rights.**

But if someone sends a takedown notice, your film can be pulled — **or worse.**

Step 3: Marketing Basics

? QUESTION	✓ READY?
DO YOU HAVE A TRAILER + POSTER?	☐
DO YOU HAVE AN EMAIL LIST OR SOCIALS?	☐
HAVE YOU CREATED A PRESS KIT OR DECK?	☐
ARE YOU SUBMITTING TO BLOGS OR PODCASTS?	☐
ARE YOU OFFERING BONUS CONTENT (BTS, DIRECTOR'S CUT)?	☐

💡 **Self-distribution is not “upload and hope.”**
Build an audience *before* you go live.

Step 4: Optional Tools

- **Filmhub** – Distributes to Tubi, Plex, Apple TV, etc. (rev-share)
- **BitMAX** – Delivers to Amazon and other major streamers
- **Mailchimp or ConvertKit** – Build your fanbase
- **Canva or PosterMyWall** – Quick, professional marketing assets

Lex Nova Bonus Tip

“No deal” doesn’t mean “no shot.”

But your **legal house** and **marketing plan** need to be airtight — or your film will just sit in someone’s server with no views, no recoupment, and no reach.