

10 French Industry Players Reflect on 2020 and Share Visions for 2021

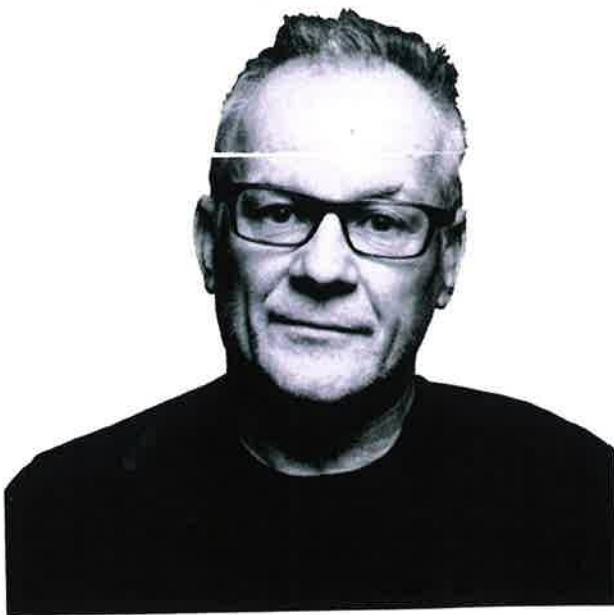
By Elsa Keslassy

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After a year that tested their limits and redefined landscapes, leaders in France's entertainment industry share thoughts on their top achievements, the pandemic's long-term impact and what's on the horizon for them in 2021.



THIERRY FREMAUX
Director, [Cannes Film Festival](#) / Director, Institut Lumière

What is the single thing — material or otherwise — getting you through the pandemic? The love of cinema. And the love of those who love cinema, for whom we tried to survive. Also, the new albums from Bob

Dylan and Bruce Springsteen.

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? A book about judo. When I was young, I was into films and judo. Without cinemas, I went back to judo.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on the industry? The acceleration and urgency in proving that cinema is a singular art — and a precious one. Like movie theaters.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? I hope that Cannes will be the first world event post-pandemic and that we will all reunite at last — artists, festivalgoers, the

press and festival directors. And hope that we will never leave each other again!

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021? To think about the eco-system of its film industry and open the doors to the future.

What's the biggest threat? After what we experienced in 2020, I don't see any threat bigger than that.

CECILE GAGET

President of international production and distribution, Anton Capital

What is the single thing — material or otherwise — getting you through the pandemic? The birth of my daughter Liv last July. It helps tremendously and has allowed me to see and understand the world differently.

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? Joining Anton this fall. We're very much in an active development phase and I'm looking forward to growing the business together.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? It accelerated a transition that had already started: films that go theatrical need to be an event; there is a contraction in terms of players in the entertainment fields; creators and producers are now dealing directly with streamers; and the windowing for movies is constantly shifting and will continue to impact content distribution strategies.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? Directors and producers who are able to deliver entertainment with a statement. Participant, for instance, has always been an inspiring model to me.

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? Doing great, bold and ambitious action thriller and genre movies. The threat is looming over what we used to call les “films du milieu” (movies with mid-range budgets) and romantic comedies. It’s increasingly difficult to get these films financed and produced since it’s tougher theatrically and streamers don’t have a big appetite for them.

CAROLINE BENJO
Co-founder, Haut et Court

What is the single thing – material or otherwise – getting you through the pandemic? Films and series, including the ones that we’re developing, and as a matter of fact, cooking, since there is nothing closer to producing: you

always need good products to succeed and the right people around the table!

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? Delivering two series during the first lockdown: “Possessions” for France’s Canal Plus and Israel’s YES, and “No Man’s Land” for Arte and Hulu; and launching them during the second lockdown. Same for two features we shot just before the lockdown and that are now ready to be released: “Gagarine” by Fanny Liatard and Jérémie Trouilh which was part of Cannes 2020’s Official Selection and was a great success, and “Memory Box” by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? An acceleration of a shift that had already begun in our industry and which would have taken a few more years to happen without the pandemic. On the upside, it's forcing us to re-invent ourselves. On the downside, many won't survive the process.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? Co-producing makes you braver and allows you to take even greater artistic risks when it is with bold and talented producers like Maria Feldman ("False Flag") and Eitan Mansuri ("When Heroes Fly") with whom we had a blast on "No Man's Land." We have some very ambitious projects with those international partners but also a few others in Europe, the U.K. and U.S. which will hopefully come to life in 2021. They're making our professional life quite exciting right now.

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? Having to reinvent our model and create a new dialogue with platforms to make them more aware of our ecosystem and how much it needs to be nurtured and reinforced for their own sake. And as far as we are concerned, we would like to be a bit less conservative and not be afraid to lose what we have in order to create what we don't have.

**PIERRE-ANTOINE
CAPTON
Founder, Mediawan
Group**

What is the single thing – material or otherwise – getting you through the pandemic? Our show "C A Vous," which is broadcast every day on France's public broadcaster and was one of the only news magazine shows that kept shooting during lockdown. We saw during the pandemic that our growing audience had high expectations to be well informed. I've rarely felt such a sense of responsibility as a producer!

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? In 2020, Mediawan celebrated its fifth birthday and roughly doubled in size and geographical footprint with the acquisition of Lagardère Studios and Good Mood. We're now present in Spain, Netherlands, Finland and

Senegal, in addition to France, Italy and Canada.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? The pandemic has put restrictions on shooting protocols and it has also accelerated pre-existing trends, in particular the demand for top content and the sector's consolidation. I think we're increasingly going to see big players emerge, and those that will have survived the pandemic will be more agile and flexible than before.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? In 2020, we formed a partnership with Leonine in Germany, and we've started working on some very exciting projects. I look forward to delivering some great Franco-German content with them!

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? 2021 should be a year of major changes with the implementation of the AVMSD directive earlier than in many other European countries. Global platforms will have the same investment obligations as the traditional broadcasters, which means there will be more opportunities for French production and distribution companies that can deliver quality content. However, we will have to remain careful about how distribution rights are redefined as we want to protect our creation eco-system.

PASCAL BRETON
CEO, Federation
Entertainment

day.

What is the single thing — material or otherwise — getting you through the pandemic? Writing to travel in spirit and escape the lockdown. My wife and I wrote a romantic travelogue in Italy which really helped me to bear the 100 Zoom calls a

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? In spite of the lockdown, I succeeded, along with my teams, to triple the number of projects with completed scripts. This means Federation will have two times more shows to produce in 2021 and 2022, notably for platforms.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic

on our industry? The impact will globally be very positive for TV scripted series because the market will be three times bigger in Europe within the next five years due to platforms. The impact will be more nuanced when it comes to film, half of which will be directly financed by platforms.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? Federation already works with all platforms in Europe. In 2021, I'd like to launch four or five big shows in the U.S. Several series that had been greenlit were stopped due to the pandemic. I'd also like to open new outposts of Federation in the U.K. and in Germany, where negotiations are ongoing.

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? France is creating an alternative model [to the American one] where we'll see the emergence of six to eight large European groups that will own IP rights, along with traditional channels and big U.S. platforms. Europe is becoming more and more attractive due to its huge talent pool and is driving the rebirth of our industry where French groups like Federation will be playing a key role.

MARC MISSONNIER
Producer, Lincoln TV
& Moana Films

What is the single thing – material or otherwise – getting you through the pandemic? I dove back into reading some classics with

great pleasure; one in particular, "War and Peace" by Leo Tolstoy. On a professional standpoint, it was by developing several scripts, including the adaptation of Vanessa Springora's "Le Consentement," which is being adapted and will be directed by Vanessa Filho. I had produced, with Carole Lambert, Filho's feature debut, "Gueule d'Ange" with Marion Cotillard.

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? The creation of the association Solidarité Cinéma, which helps all the film professionals who have been forgotten by government aid. We raised more than €220,000 (\$270,545) in private funding from producers, independent distributors and financial groups working with freelancers, and we distributed the funds across more than 70 professionals. Seeing their reactions when they realized that solidarity could exist in our industry was truly rewarding.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? A reassessment of the central role that theaters had up until now, and the blurring of boundaries between cinema and audiovisual, which becomes more porous than ever.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? Nothing cheers me up more than seeing how films continue to stir some passion and fascination among young generations, in spite of Instagram, Tik Tok, and others. As long as 20-year-olds will want to tell stories for the big screen, it will be my role to spot them and give them the means to express themselves. That's my challenge for 2021.

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? France is transforming its film financing and distribution model for at least the next 10 years. France has always been a pioneer in terms of balancing out regulation and business, and now it has the opportunity to apply this balancing act with global platforms. The threat lies in a potential imbalance between regulation and freedom. But I'm confident.

JEAN LABADIE
Founder, Le Pacte

What is the single thing — material or otherwise — getting you through the pandemic? Reading

books such as “The Big Sky” by A. B. Guthrie, “M l’enfant du siècle” by Antonio Scurati and “Le Roman de Tyll Ulespiegle” by Daniel Kehlmann.

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? Keeping faith in the future of theatrical releases.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? A diminution of the release of American films in theaters.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? Carrying on with great directors such as those I work with, because filmmakers are the future of theatrical.

What’s the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What’s the biggest threat? The greatest opportunity may be the change in windowing along with the new rules of engagement for the platforms. The biggest threat is the overly important development of U.S. platforms

ERIC ALTMAYER
Co-founder,
Mandarin Production

What is the single thing — material or otherwise — getting you through the pandemic? The fact that we’ve been able to continue working in-person with our teams, especially on set.

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? To have shot two films [Francois Ozon’s “Tout s’est bien passé” with Sophie Marceau; Stéphane et David Foenkinos’s “Fantasies”] and two series [season two of “Mortel” and “Validé”] during this pandemic. And to have given our movie “Summer of 85” by Ozon a real shot in theaters between two lockdowns.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? The pandemic has accelerated the ongoing transition in how films are exploited, from theatrical to streaming platforms. Artistically, financially and culturally, it changes everything.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? With the best people in each field!

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? The platforms have given series global audiences and have created new opportunities for fiction creators like us, including abroad. The biggest threat is the shutdown of theaters.

SYDNEY GALLONDE
CEO, Make It Happen
Studio

What is the single thing — material or otherwise — getting you through the pandemic? Since the pandemic began, the sensation of time passing has become even more pleasurable. For the first time, life gave us time to create.

Having time for creative work has given our industry a chance to reinvent ourselves and get through the pandemic.

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? Despite this global crisis and the social distancing in place in each country, we were able to form partnerships with three of the largest public broadcasters in Europe, as well as MGM. The upcoming series adaptation of Guillaume Musso's bestselling novel "The Reunion" with MGM Studio and France Televisions is my greatest achievement this year.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? We have learned how to be more efficient and pragmatic due to the pandemic. Because of the risk of production shutdowns, broadcasters, agents, writers and producers have learned to be more efficient and work in a streamlined production process.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? Streaming newcomers are my target partners for 2021. For independent producers like me who have the ambition to make premium drama series that travel, there are only two ways: either build a European or international co-production or work with streamers. One alternative is more time-consuming than the other.

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? France has a much higher profile today than it used to, and that creates both opportunities and threats. Previously, all producers in France could access talent, IP and rights if they were creative and passionate enough. But now, for French producers and broadcasters aiming to secure local talent who are being chased by U.S. streamers and studios, it's becoming an epic fight in the vein of David and Goliath.

JOCELYN BOUYSSY

Director, CGR

Cinemas

What is the single

thing — material or

otherwise —

getting you

through the

pandemic? A

passion for cinema

and an undying faith

in this industry are

my professional

leitmotifs, but when

everything falls

apart, our families

and friends are the true pillars...If I have to cite only one thing, it's the

love of my son. He helps me ride through all the difficulties.

What was your greatest achievement in 2020? Our ICE theaters [featuring a popular premium large format launched by CGR] have thrived. Considering the health restrictions, we can say that it's a great achievement. "Tenet" for instance played in the ICE Immersive format and brought us exceptional B.O. results. We've also got the approval to play the next James Bond film in this format. Between March and September 2020, VOX Cinemas, the Middle Eastern chain, opened two new ICE screens in Saudi Arabia which were also very successful.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of the pandemic on our industry? Consumption habits have evolved due to the pandemic and have accelerated the rise of platforms but the success of movies in theaters before the second lockdown underscored the importance of moviegoing for all ages. French people are avid moviegoers; they love the collective experience and feel the emotion that watching a film together on a big screen brings out.

Who would you like to collaborate or do business with in 2021 and why? I'd say without any hesitation, James Cameron. Signing a pact with James Cameron and Walt Disney for the release of "Avatar 2" in ICE Immersive in 2022 would mark a milestone for our group. In 2021, we have several major releases coming up in the ICE Immersive format, notably Warners' "Wonder Woman 1984" Universal's "No Time to Die" and Paramount's "Top Gun – Maverick."

What's the greatest area of opportunity for France in 2021?

What's the biggest threat? The pandemic has pushed U.S. studios to take decisions that are damaging releases' windowing. They had experimented before but they've now officially made the switch due to the growing presence of platforms and the fact that cinemas have been closed for almost a year in the top two U.S. markets – Los Angeles and New York. But in these dark times, our local films got the opportunity to shine and helped France become the European country that suffered least from the drop in admissions. Going forward we'll aim to maintain the necessary balance between Hollywood movies and independent local productions.