Tribeca’s Growing Creator Push Aims to Recast Its Future

Tribeca Festival, which spans from June 4 to June 14, is diving even deeper into the creator economy by giving 12 creators a red carpet and big screen content debut at a new event, UPNEXT Creators, which will take place on June 12 at 5:30 p.m. at AMC 19th St. East 6 in New York City.

These creators, who post on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube include the miniaturist Danny Cortez, horror short filmmaker Spency Lackey, and lifestyle creator Christina Young. This year will also feature a live conversation with the TikToker Tinx, premiere of Hulu’s docuseries Call Her Alex about podcasting mogul Alex Cooper, and includes a Tribeca X panel led by creator management firm Whalar.

This showcase is a marked increase in Tribeca’s focus on the creator economy from last year, when it first introduced the Creator Economy vertical with a hosted panel and award.

Attendance at Tribeca has slowly declined in recent years. In 2017, it had 153,000 attendees but those numbers decreased to 145,000 in 2024, according to festival press releases. Meanwhile, the influencers that Tribeca is honoring have a combined follower count of over 4 million, giving the festival access to a new audience it could potentially attract.

“There’s an entire generation out there that only gets their storytelling from creators, so we carved out a space at the festival and under the Tribeca enterprise umbrella for them to platform their stories and careers,” said Chris Brady, president and global chief commercial officer at Tribeca.

He added: “What we’re doing across the festival is representing how heavily invested we are in making sure these creators are not just treated as a marketing vehicle, but as true storytellers.”

The creators were chosen by the Tribeca programming team that assembles the festival’s full lineup. The team sought out narrative-forward creators that used social media in surprising ways as a storytelling tool.

“There is an explosion of talent online, and a huge audience for online creators, but what there is less of is trusted curators highlighting undiscovered talent,” said Cara Cusumano, Tribeca’s festival director and SVP of programming.

One could argue that the mainstream film industry need creators more than other way around.

YouTube has 150 million people watching YouTube on TV screens monthly and in the past month, both Amazon Prime and FX released TikTok creator-led television shows. And some film producers look to follower counts to decide whether or not to fund a project.

And some of the creators being honored at Tribeca question how much their participation in a film festival could boost their livelihoods, since they already find exposure for brand deals on social media.

“All of these creators who are being represented, we have our own platforms and the videos get millions of views and

comments," said Eric Jeng, a TikTokker being honored at UPNEXT Creators. "I don't think the creators need Tribeca. The creators need themselves to create their own content," he added.

For many years Tribeca has actively responded to the changing way audiences engage with stories. It dropped "film" from its name in 2020 and brought different forms of storytelling into its fold including audio, video games, and virtual reality.

"Every year we sit down to figure out how to embrace all forms of storytelling, what that means for the future of the festival, and where else we should be paying attention," said Brady.

Recommended videos
https://www.adweek.com/media/tribecas-growing-creator-push-aims-to-recast-its-future/