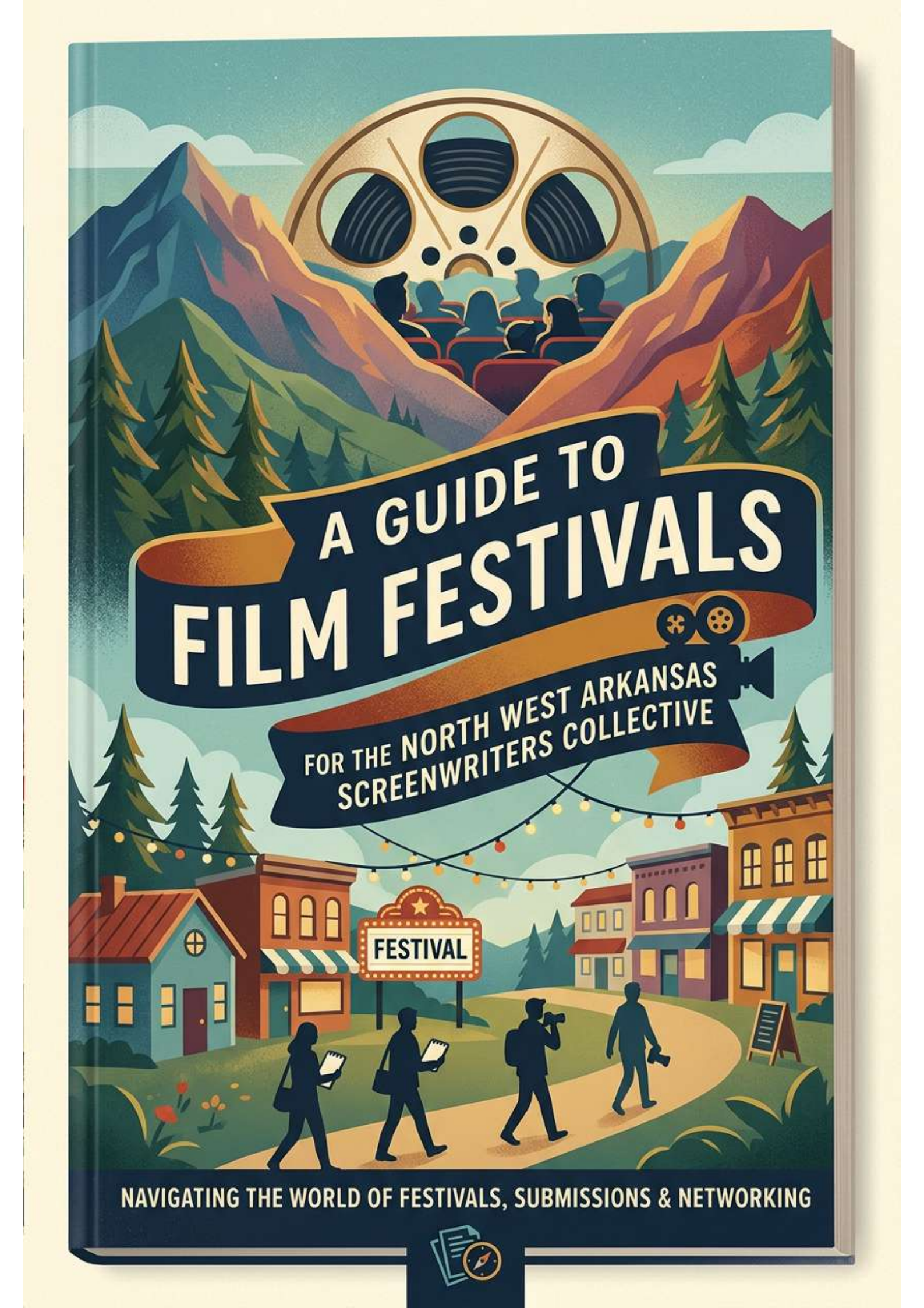




A GUIDE TO FILM FESTIVALS

FOR THE NORTH WEST ARKANSAS
SCREENWRITERS COLLECTIVE

FESTIVAL

NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF FESTIVALS, SUBMISSIONS & NETWORKING



Hello Screenwriters!

For many people, the idea of attending a film festival may feel a bit overwhelming. You have questions about what you, as a writer, would even do there. The fact is that festivals are some of the best places to meet people, figure out the industry (local, national, or even international!), and develop fun relationships. Heck, you might even watch a movie or two.



In this packet, you will find a guide to the various things you might find at a film festival and some pointers about what to do at a festival to get the most out of your time there.

If you've been to a festival before and are planning on going again, why not let some newer screenwriters tag along? They'll get to learn the ropes and you'll have someone there to enjoy the experience with.

Enjoy the guide!

Part 1: Choosing A Festival

If you're reading this, you're more than likely living in Arkansas. If not, some of this will still be applicable but it will be centered on our lovely state and all it offers for screenwriters.

With that in mind, did you know that Arkansas has almost 20 different festivals that take place throughout the year? True story. And each one has something different to offer. Whether it caters to specific regions, certain types of films, or certain groups of people. Therefore, if you find yourself only able to go to a few, then you need to know what it is you're looking for before signing up.

Note: some festivals ask that you register in advance. Some also have registration tiers (regular, VIP, etc) that could cost various prices. Make sure to check out a festival's website before going, just to make sure. More than likely they will have some kind of ticket fee if you decide to drop in at the last minute (and don't forget the popcorn!).

Arkansas festivals range everywhere from the Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival all the way to the Rogers Short Film Festival. Two very different festivals covering two very different kinds of films. But both equally as important to writers.

Also, if your screenplay has been accepted to a festival, you may be able to get in for free, and you could even win an award! So be sure to submit your screenplays to local festivals that you plan on attending. It will give you even more things to talk to people about when you're there.

You can always look on www.filmfreeway.com to find Arkansas festivals. It will also be THE place to submit projects to festivals around the world. Open a free account sooner rather than later. You'll need it.

Part 2: Networking

One of the best parts about going to film festivals is that everyone is there for one reason: Film. That makes it much easier to talk to people. You've already got something in common! This sets them apart from regular networking events because you don't need to find common ground. You already have it!

Consider the fact that many people there will have a reason to be there. Maybe they're a director, a cinematographer, or a fellow screenwriter. We're not a quiet group. So feel free to talk to people. Tell them what you do. Give yourself some credit and be proud of whatever level of screenwriter you are. Beginner? Talk yourself up. Written something that's been produced? Talk yourself up. Written and directed your own film? TALK YOURSELF UP! Networking isn't just about learning about others, it's about letting them learn about you.

So, things to talk about:

1. Your screenplay
2. Their screenplay
3. The movie you are a part of
4. The movie they are a part of
5. The event itself
6. The region the festival is from, especially if you're from out of town
7. Your favorite movies you've seen at the festival
8. Other festivals you've been to

These are just a few of the best opening gambits for conversation at festivals. So no matter who you are or why you're there, you can always talk to people and not feel weird. Festivals are places for movie lovers and movie makers.

Part 3: Educational Opportunities

One of the best parts about a lot of festivals are panels. But what is a panel and why would you want to attend something like this when there are great movies showing!?

A film festival panel is basically a live, informal conversation onstage about a particular aspect of filmmaking or the film industry. Think of it like a live podcast recording, but with filmmakers sitting on a stage in front of an audience. A moderator leads a conversation with directors, writers, actors, producers, or other industry professionals about a particular topic. They might talk about how a film was made, the challenges they faced, their creative process, or what it is like working in the industry.

The audience usually gets a chance to ask questions at the end.

One of the best parts about panels is that you can learn about parts of the industry you never would have considered before. If you're a screenwriter and happen to catch a panel about producing, you might find yourself even closer to producing your own film.

It never hurts to learn more, and panels help you gather as much new information as possible.

Part 4: Volunteering

So there's going to be a film festival near you and you want to get involved. Well, funny you should bring this up because festivals are always looking for volunteers. And there are so many ways to volunteer.

1. Sell tickets and merch
2. Give information to festival-goers
3. Lead a Q&A following a screening
4. Be a screener
5. Be a reader

These are only a few of the options. But let's look at two very specific ones. They do not take place during the festival but in the lead up to the festival.

Screener: A screener has one of the most important jobs for a festival. You will essentially sign up to watch movies and rate them. Should they be in? Should they be out? You get to be part of the team that decides AND you get to watch MOVIES! You might be asked to watch a certain genre, length, etc. But no matter what, your opinion matters.

Reader: This is similar to a screener but instead of watching, you're reading screenplays. Brand new, never-before-seen screenplays. This means you're on the cutting edge of what new writers are hoping to put out in the world. You will get to decide which ones should be in the main competition and which ones might need a bit more work.

There are so many options and ways that you can volunteer with festivals that even this list can't cover all the bases. Contact your local film festival and ask them what they need. You'll be surprised by what you have to offer.

Part 5: Get Out There!

At the end of the day, the most important thing to remember is that you belong at a film festival. You do not need to have a produced screenplay, a feature film, or years of experience to be there. You are a screenwriter, and that means you are already part of the filmmaking community. Go see movies, introduce yourself to people, attend a panel, volunteer, ask questions, and be curious. You never know who you might meet or what opportunity might come from simply starting a conversation.

Most importantly, have fun! Film festivals are celebrations of movies and the people who make them. Take advantage of everything they have to offer, and don't be afraid to put yourself out there. The more festivals you attend, the more comfortable you'll become, and before long, you may find yourself showing a new screenwriter around and saying, "Come on. I'll show you how this works."