Nornes questions the idea of an “A-list” festival
Focuses on how Eurocentric perspectives pervade even the festival scene
Lines up with Stringer’s arguments in “Global Cities and the International Film Festival Economy”
He begins by asking “Which festivals matter?” which is an interesting way to phrase things
Value is questioned too: sites like Sundance and Cannes are called “important” festivals, but we have to ask, who are they important to and for?
Non-Western festivals are secondary: he describes this method of viewing the international festival circuit as “first Europe, then elsewhere” (151)
Examples Nornes cites: Tokyo International Film Festival trying to attain recognition from Hollywood and Europe, Busan International Film Festival even feels secondary compared to its European and North American peers
The Asia-Pacific Film Festival is one of the oldest festivals in the world and began as a way to “bridge the gap” but had very little backing to achieve what it set out to do
Nornes argues that Asian film festivals have historically been judged by their usefulness to European programmers
The language barrier is key to understanding why these festivals have been seen as “secondary” – festivals like Hawaii were important in the ’80s because it allowed for English-speaking festival heads and distributors to actually be able to communicate with Asian filmmakers and producers
“With the internet and the appearance of many programmers with Asian language expertise, festivals like Hawaii, Hong Kong and Pusan appear more like regional or even local affairs.” (152)
Nornes argues that this international vs. regional view of the festival circuit is precisely why “regional” Asian film festivals matter: they level the playing field for people of all economic backgrounds, and inspire grassroots festival movements across the world
The transformative nature of marginalized festivals is what keeps them relevant, even if Hollywood and Europe don’t see them as such
Nornes’ conclusion is much more optimistic than Stringer’s which reads to me as positing that colonial and postcolonial power structures mean change isn’t necessarily possible on the level of groups marginalized by Eurocentric thought
Where do we stand on the issue? Are A-list, B-list, etc. good terms for assigning scholarly or curation-based value to a festival?
With a world that increasingly necessitates a more socially-conscious worldview, will more attention be paid to non-European “A-list” festivals as time goes on?
How do new forms of technology change things? Nornes brings up piracy and legal digital distribution, but how can we imagine these things changing the landscape going forward?