

# Four Wall Release Plan

## **AMERICAN HARMONY**



# American Harmony Four Wall Release Overview

*American Harmony* completed its 30-city traditional theatrical release in mid-2010, having garnered accolades along the way at various film festivals around the country, including winning Best Documentary at the 2009 San Diego Film Festival. For an independent documentary, a traditional theatrical release that large is a major accomplishment in itself.

That being said, a 30-city release doesn't begin to reach the totality of the audience that the producers and the Barbershop Harmony Society would like to reach with this film. With over 800 chapters in cities across the US and Canada, there are 50,000 barbershoppers (BHS, SAI, and HI) out there whom we'd like to reach.

There were also many places where a traditional theatrical release was not feasible due to any number of factors. Some of these factors included unreasonable financial terms, potential theater location (urban/downtown venues that local chapters didn't want to use), and in some cases the unwillingness of theater owners to even risk the screen time on an independent documentary.

These are all issues involved in executing a traditional theatrical release where you are trying to get screen time for a weeklong run, with the theater taking a cut of the box office. This limits the possible scope of an independent theatrical release.

Now that the *American Harmony* DVD is released, we can move on to the second phase of screenings: the four wall phase.

A four wall screening is one which can take place in any space with four walls, seating, and the right projection and sound equipment (hence the name "four wall"), and which is usually scheduled for one night (or two). The venue could still be an actual movie theater (if the financials work) or a hotel ballroom, library screening room, church hall, or a community center.

The four wall release plan detailed below will allow any barbershop chapter the ability to put on a public screening of *American Harmony* not only for their members, but for family, friends, and possible members, and make some money to boot.

Under this plan, the chapter becomes the producer of the event (as a membership drive, fund raising event, etc), and *American Harmony* is just the "hired entertainment". The advantage to this approach is that the chapter, being a 501(c)3 non-profit entity, may be able to get venues at a discounted price (or even free).

## The Financial Terms

As with all films, private screenings of the DVD in your home for your normal circle of friends and family is allowed under copyright law, but public screenings require a license from the producer or distributor.

Normally, a license would involve a cash payment, usually based on the seating capacity of the screening venue, but the producers want to remove as many roadblocks as possible for chapters interested in hosting a public four wall screening.

To that end, the financial terms granting a license to a chapter to host one public screening of *American Harmony* are these: Order a number of DVDs equal to half the registered membership of the chapter, with a minimum of twenty DVDs. That's all.

Chapters will be able to purchase these DVDs at 15% off the prevailing retail price of the DVD. You may then resell them at or after the screening at the full retail price and keep the difference. This allows the chapter to not only recoup the money paid out for the screening license, but also gives it the opportunity to show a profit on DVD sales.

You also have the option of buying more DVDs than required for the screening license, at the discounted price, if you feel that you can sell more than the minimum.

In order to make it even easier on chapters, the producers will ship the DVD order in advance with no money up front from the chapter. The chapter treasurer will be responsible for sending a check to the producers for the appropriate amount of money generated through sales at the event after the event is over.

Other than that, it's completely up to the chapter as to how they want to structure the event. If you believe you can fill a 200 seat theater at \$10 per head, great! Sell those tickets and keep the money. If you'd like to sell a certain number of tickets, but give others away to local music educators and students, that's your prerogative. If you want to foot the bill entirely and show it for free to the public, no problem.

### Case Study

As an illustrative example, let's say a 40-member chapter decides to host a public four wall screening. They rent a local community center space with seating for 125 for \$200, rent projection and sound equipment for another \$300, and buy 20 DVDs at \$15.29 apiece (15% off of \$17.99 the prevailing retail price offered by Harmony Marketplace and cduniverse.com as of September 6, 2011), or \$305.80.

Their **total** costs would be approximately \$806.

They then sell 100 seats at \$8 per seat and give away 25 tickets to local educators and some students. They also sell 20 DVDs out the door at \$17.99 apiece (or, alternatively, sell them for \$15.29 to people who paid for a ticket, as a way of passing on the discount).

Their total revenue would be about \$1160, and they would show a profit of \$160. Plus, they are exposing 25 non-barbershoppers to the best of our hobby. If you assume a sold out 200 seat venue, even at twice the venue cost, the profit just goes up.

This example is a fairly conservative one, and the cost structure could change radically for the better under certain circumstances. For instance, if you find a local art house theater willing to let the chapter use the space for a screening for free (since the chapter is a 501c3 non-profit entity), the venue rental and projection/sound costs go to zero.

All the producers are looking for with this plan is for the four wall screenings to drive DVD sales, both through the up front purchase of DVDs required for the screening license, and through post-event DVD sales online by those who saw the movie but didn't get a chance to buy a DVD at the event.

## Marketing

As with any regular chapter show, you will have to do some marketing if you want to fill the seats and have the biggest impact.

Leveraging your chapter show email lists, producing flyers (customizable flyers are available from the production company web site), word of mouth, specific invitations to recruiting targets, publicizing on your web site or Facebook fan page, etc, are all necessary marketing activities. Depending on your circumstances, this may add a little to your cost structure, so keep that in mind.

A downloadable set of customizable flyers with space for your screening details, as well as online DVD sales flyers to hand out at the screening, can be found here:

<http://www.americanharmonythemovie.com/fourwalldocs.zip>

## Venues

The possible venues fall into two general categories: an actual movie theater, or a non-theatrical four wall venue such as a library, community center, hotel ballroom, or church hall. Each has their own pros and cons, so it will be up to you to determine what works best for your specific chapter.

Factors to consider (not necessarily in this order): cost, projection and sound capability, seating capacity, available dates of the venue vs. the available dates of your audience, and the likelihood of filling the venue. At the end of the day, it's better to sell out a 125 seat venue than to half fill a 250 seat one, so you need to be realistic about your possible numbers before choosing a venue.

If you are interested in renting an actual movie theater venue, the resources below are a good place to start. The advantage of using an actual theater is that you will get the best projection, sound, and seating environment for a movie screening.

However, depending on the market, they may be a little more expensive to rent than other alternative sites such as libraries. The only way to know for sure is to check with several venues and compare both the pricing and the available screening resources; some libraries are actually very well outfitted for doing movie screenings, and are more likely to be low or no cost for a non-profit.

### Independent and Art House Movie Theaters

<http://www.indiefilmpage.com/theaters.html>

The IndieFilmPage list is sorted by state and city, making it relatively easy to find options in your area. These are either individual independent theaters or small chains that regularly rent out theaters for events.

### National Association of Theater Owners (NATO)

<http://www.natoonline.org/theatrecircuitlinks.htm>

While the NATO list contains links to several large movie chains (like AMC, Regal, and Edwards), there are many small local and regional theater chains listed as well. The small chains and indie theaters will be your best options.

### **Wikipedia Movie Theaters**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cinema\\_and\\_movie\\_theater\\_chains#United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cinema_and_movie_theater_chains#United_States)

Again, many large chains are represented here, but also smaller regional chains that are likely to rent venues at a reasonable price.

### **College/University Venues**

Most local colleges and universities have multiple venues which are appropriate for movie screenings. The best thing to do is just call around to your local college or university and find out what is available, at what price.

One advantage to a college or university venue is that you may be able to have the school market the screening to students (especially if you're giving a student discount on tickets, or free student tickets).

### **Libraries/Community Centers**

Check with your local libraries and community centers to find out what facilities they have available, whether projection and sound equipment is provided or needs to be rented, and what the rental costs are for the venue. Many will have pricing for non-profits that is lower than their usual retail rental price.

## **Projection and Sound Rentals**

In the event that you need to rent appropriate projection and sound equipment, the producers recommend going through a reputable rental firm that specializes in this kind of equipment. Given the specifics of your venue (seating capacity and arrangement), they will be able to plan for an appropriately sized screen, a projector with sufficient lumens, and a sound system with the right amplification characteristics.

One such company, with a footprint that covers 36 states, is Fun Flicks® In & Outdoor Movie Events. Fun Flicks® has several different screening packages available to rent, and can work with you to get the right sized screen, projector, and sound equipment for your chosen venue.

Their standard indoor package rental is \$299. In addition, there is a premiere rental package which includes a larger screen suitable for groups of 100 or more, and includes an on site Fun Flicks host. Usually, the premiere package is \$599, but Fun Flicks has agreed to provide the premiere package to chapters hosting an *American Harmony* screening for the same \$299 price as the standard indoor package. Simply mention that you are booking Fun Flicks for an *American Harmony* screening at the time of booking, and you will get the discounted price:

<http://www.funflicks.com>

If there is not a Fun Flicks provider in your market, you may be able to find similar local providers online or in the Yellow Pages. There are any number of separate companies that rent projectors and sound equipment, but that requires more coordination on your part to get the appropriate equipment: projector, screen, and sound.

### **Technical Considerations**

As a general rule, the width of the screen in your venue should be, at a minimum, 1/6 of the distance to the farthest spectator. In a venue where the back row is 48 ft. away from the screen, the screen would need to be 8 ft. wide (110" diagonal at a 16:9 aspect ratio). That's a minimum measurement; you can go larger if the venue accommodates it.

From a projector standpoint, this example would require a projector which has enough lumens to project a 16:9 image to an 8 ft. wide screen at an appropriate throw distance to make it a good movie watching experience for the audience. There are some technical calculations involved which require knowing the gain of the screen being projected to and the ambient light in the room in order to come up with the right projector specs.

If all this sounds complicated, it can be. However, Canon has an online throw distance calculator which can be used to determine the majority of the necessary data:

<http://www.canon.com/lcd-sim/simulator.html>

Using that simulator for our hypothetical 8 ft. wide screen and a 3500 lumen projector, you would have to have the projector set a little over 12 ft. from the screen, but no more than 15 ft. Your seating would have to accommodate that positioning. Projectors with higher lumens would allow for a longer throw distance to produce that same 8 ft. wide image, but they are also more expensive to rent.

## Logistics

If you are interested in hosting a public four wall screening of *American Harmony*, here is a general outline of the steps you'll need to follow:

1. Identify a venue and a date/time. You'll want the date to be at least a month in advance, so you have enough time to publicize it to your members, family, friends, and show patron mailing list.
2. If you need to rent screening and sound equipment for your venue, contact Fun Flicks (or an equivalent local provider if there is no Fun Flicks franchise in your area).
3. Order an appropriate number of *American Harmony* DVDs (50% of your chapter's registered membership, or 20 DVDs, whichever is greater) by sending an email to [ahdvd@tijat.com](mailto:ahdvd@tijat.com). You will be able to order 20 DVDs or more at 15% the prevailing retail price, with no money up front.
4. Download the customizable flyer documents from <http://www.americanharmonythemovie.com/fourwalldocs.zip>. Modify the screening flyer docs with the specifics of the date, time, and location of your screening, and then email them out to all your prospective audience members. If you have the budget for it, print off some copies for posting in all the usual places where you would publicize your annual chapter show.
5. Have a great time at the screening!

## Questions?

Contact [info@tijat.com](mailto:info@tijat.com) if you have any questions or concerns about this process.