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# IMMERSIVE MATTERS

## EXPANDING OUR IMMERSIVE REACH



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By now, most of us in the field of immersive content and performance have accepted a series of pandemic-related paradigm shifts and learned to work around them as best we can. The world at large continues (as of this writing) to grapple with successive waves of pandemic-related shutdowns, or, at the very least, curtailments of activities in order to emphasize safety and good health. Immersive venues are certainly part of that mix, and the opening weeks of 2022 continue to see careful openings, schedule changes, and even a few more shutdowns among all levels of theaters. That will likely continue to be the outlook for our communities for some time to come. The good news is that we've all learned to deal with the uncertainties and move ahead.

For IMERSA, the year 2021 saw a series of successful online IMERSA Days continue. We're very pleased with the results of those events, and 2022 promises more of our online "virtual" get-togethers. Our current plans are to offer a virtual event every two months, focused on some special aspect of the immersive experience. We are also planning to offer a virtual IMERSA presence at the upcoming IPS meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia. In addition, if all goes well, the autumn of 2022 will see us involved in a pair of "in-person" live events.

### IMERSA Days Finales for 2021

We rounded out 2021 with a pair of virtual IMERSA Days that brought dozens of attendees together on Zoom to explore some special subjects. The first was a "mini" version of the very successful Dome Fest West event that occurred last October. IMERSA invited several speakers to summarize their DFW presentations on the November 19th IMERSA Day. Joining the team were Ryan Moore, Michael Daut, Carolyn Collins Petersen, Kate McCallum, Will Nix, Mike Smail, Dayna Thompson, Michael McConville, Eric Hanson, Ed



Panelists, hosted by Michael Daut, gathered to share their insights into full-dome and immersive content and its audience effectiveness during the November virtual IMERSA Day. The panel featured speakers from the entertainment community, dome producers, and live-performance artists.

Lantz, Brett Leonard, Jenni Ogden, and Hilary McVicker.

This "speed dating" encapsulation of the Dome Fest West event featured four seminal sessions. The first was *The Potential of Immersive Storytelling in a Transmedia Age* in which Carolyn, Kate, and Will explored the distribution landscape (specifically, what theaters want and have been licensing), a dive into the essence of transmedia (storytelling across multiple platforms beyond just full-dome including companion programs, VR experiences, merchandise, etc.), and finally, a look at social impact entertainment, which has intentionality about broadening horizons to bring audiences a deeper understanding of key issues in our society through themes in full-dome stories.

The next session was *Masters of the Universe*, in which Mike, Dayna, and Michael McConville explored how planetariums have been expanding beyond space science programming through innovative, live experiences and collaborations between departments on college campuses.

In the next session, *Virtual Production Tools for Immersive Media*, Eric Hanson shared short presentations from industry innovators who are developing and using new tools to create virtual

environments, create 360° live-action video performance capture, and apply clever photographic techniques to create spectacular new experiences for the dome.

Finally, in *The Future of Immersive Venues*, Ed, Brett, Jenni, and Hilary explored ways that immersive venues can extend the power of full-dome into extended immersive experiences such as domeplexes, location-based immersive venues, interactive immersion with XR components, and even immersive emotional healing centers.

This event was a powerful look at the future and potential of the immersive full-dome format over the next five to ten years.

### Immersive Audio in Depth

On December 3, 2021, IMERSA hosted its last virtual IMERSA Day of the year and celebrated the topic of "Sound in Immersive Spaces: An Exploration of Immersive Audio Design." Monica Bolles moderated this fast-paced, in-depth look at techniques and technology for the best sound in immersive spaces. She was joined by Jean-Pascal Beaudoin (Headspace Studios), Mourad Bennacer (The Société des Arts Technologiques), Pierre Brand (Primetime Studios), and Ana Monte (Delta Sound



IMERSA's final virtual day of 2021 featured host Monica Bolles (middle row, center) and a panel of audio experts, including Jean-Pascal Beaudoin (middle left), Mourad Bennacer (middle right), Ana Montes (lower left) and Pierre Brand (lower right). They shared insights into the audio projects they've produced and best practices for immersive audio.

Labs). The panelists brought their unique perspectives and diverse approaches to the topic of spatial audio production and the challenges of creating and mixing content for extended reality (XR), virtual reality (VR), and full-dome spaces.

The panel focused on discussing some of the different approaches that audio designers, artists, and engineers take when creating content for different dome audio configurations, and VR and XR environments. There are currently a number of challenges, particularly since there are currently no standards in place. In addition, different skillsets are needed to create audio content for different immersive environments. In the end, the conversation held the promise of future discussions, especially as the industry continues to push forward and explore what the future holds for immersive audio. Please look for an upcoming survey that Monica and her team are coordinating about your current audio practices and future immersive sound goals.

### DomeFest West Rides Again in 2022!

Dome Fest West is an immersive dome film festival and conference taking place in Los Angeles, California on September 29 - October 2, 2022. The first one was held jointly with IMERSA in October 2021, and we will be involved again

this year. This year's event will bring together the immersive dome community again with Hollywood's up-and-coming content creators! It is a great way to share immersive experiences within the dome space between a wide range of producers and directors.

This year Dome Fest

West is accepting entries for the Best Live Experience. Entries may include theatrical shows, VJ/DJ performances, audience interactive productions, and more. One or more Live Experience entrants may be selected to perform at Dome Fest West.

Dome Fest West itself will be a four-day event that includes dome film screenings, technology presentations, industry panels, exclusive parties, and interactive workshops. Immersive creators from across the globe will have a chance to watch the most cutting-edge experiences and programs, learn from the best producers in the entertainment industry, and ultimately take immersive dome content to another level.

Key dates for Dome Fest West content submissions are:

- January 17, 2022 – Submissions Open
- March 25, 2022 - Early bird Deadline
- June 10, 2022 - Regular Deadline
- July 1, 2022 - Late Deadline
- July 22, 2022 – Final Extended Deadline
- August 15, 2022 - Notification Date
- September 29 – October 2, 2022 – Dome Fest West happens!

Submissions are being collected through FilmFreeway at <https://>

[filmfreeway.com/DomeFestWest](https://filmfreeway.com/DomeFestWest). More information about the event is available at [DomeFestWest.com](https://DomeFestWest.com)

### In-Person in Montréal

We are deep into the planning for our first “in-person” IMERSA Summit since 2019. It will be held in Montréal, Canada, from October 14th through 18<sup>th</sup> and will be hosted by IMERSA, Planétarium Rio Tinto Alcan, and the Société des Arts Technologiques. We are currently working with the local hosts on programming for the event. We are assembling a series of exciting panels and immersive content and will welcome participants in our vendor Expo. More details will be posted on the IMERSA.org website as they become available.

### Our Advisory Council Grows

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Ryan Moore, an immersive producer at Experience 360 in Los Angeles and executive director and co-founder of Dome Fest West, to our Advisory Council. He brings tremendous filmmaking experience to the council and offers a link to the West Coast creative community. Ryan's work in spherical, ultra-high-definition 360° media for VR brings an added dimension to IMERSA's pool of advisory talent.

### Join IMERSA

IMERSA membership is open to anyone with an interest in immersive content in domes, AR, and VR, whether live or pre-recorded. Dues-paying members are welcome to attend our virtual events free of charge and have access to recordings of past get-togethers. If you are involved in any aspect of the immersive theater or content production/performance experience, please consider joining IMERSA. Details about membership are available on our website at [IMERSA.org](https://IMERSA.org).

Many thanks to Michael Daut, Dan Neafus, Monica Bolles, Ryan Moore, and Ryan Wyatt for their contributions to this column.

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