



**MARCHÉ DU FILM**  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

**PRESS REVIEW**  
The Hollywood Reporter

Date: 11/05/2026  
Author: Scott Roxborough

---

## **Cannes Market Goes Beyond Film Sales With AI, Creator Economy Focus**

***Cannes Marché Chief Guillaume Esmiol on bringing innovation, AI, and the creator economy to the Cannes Market without losing focus on the movie business.***

Guillaume Esmiol has spent the past several years quietly remaking the [Cannes](#) Marché du Film in his own image — which is to say, in the image of someone who came up not through traditional film sales but through tech and finance innovation. He began his career in business development and digital media innovation roles at French network TFI, and did a stint at corporate start-up studio Wefound [before succeeding Jérôme Paillard as head of the Cannes Market](#), taking over as sole boss in 2023.

Under his direction, the Marché has [expanded beyond its core role](#) as the world's leading market for buying and selling independent films, to include a sprawling schedule of 250 panels and events covering everything from private equity financing to artificial intelligence and, new this year, the creator economy. Ahead of the 2026 edition, Esmiol sat down with *The Hollywood Reporter* to discuss where the film industry's most important marketplace is headed.

**When you took over the Marché, you came from a technology and innovation background rather than traditional film sales. What was your vision for what the market should become?**

It actually took me a while to fully understand what the Marché really is, and I always use this explanation with my team: The Marché has three markets in one. The first is the market of film sales — the booths, the screenings, all the networking between sales companies and distributors. But we are also a market to develop and finance film projects. The third market is the market of knowledge. This year, we've organized or will host 250 events, including panels and conferences, all during one edition of the Marché. It's where I put all the key topics of the industry: innovation and, [AI](#) of course, but also the state of the industry, sustainability, and, for the first time this year, the creator economy.

**[AI is both the great hope and the great fear](#) for many in this industry. How do you approach covering it at the Marché?**

If people have fears, I think it's our role to explain the topic and to address those fears. We like to explain how the technology works, but also host all the debates on its impact, including around IP rights, and also to illustrate the opportunities. I also like to have real, concrete use cases and not just discussions — very concrete examples of how this technology has been used on actual films. That being said, I think it's important to create a framework that respects what we support. We don't want to speak about AI replacing creativity; we want to speak about AI and tech enhancing creativity and creating new business opportunities. That's also why we don't create just an "AI summit", but an "AI for Talent Summit."

**Can you share any specific sessions from this year's program that exemplify that approach?**



**MARCHÉ DU FILM**  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

**PRESS REVIEW**  
The Hollywood Reporter

Date: 11/05/2026  
Author: Scott Roxborough

---

We're going to have a panel with James Manyika [Senior VP and President for Research, Labs, Technology & Society at Google-Alphabet] and Darren Aronofsky. He is an amazing film director and producer, and I think it's very interesting [to see how he's using AI](#). They'll be speaking together at the AI for Talent Summit on Saturday morning. There will be many other discussions between film professionals, such as director Xavier Gens and Guillaume Duchemin, director of La Fémis [the prestigious cinema school] and industry leaders from tech companies such as Nvidia, OpenAI, and top startups. It will be interesting to let them speak about what they're really doing. Because when you're talking with them, you realize that there are actually a lot of humans involved in their projects. It's far from the shortcuts that we sometimes hear.

### **Why did you decide to bring the creator economy into the Marché this year?**

In these last years, there have been more and more very interesting use cases. In France, *Kaizen* is a very interesting one. The film [a documentary about YouTube star Inoxtag attempting to climb Mount Everest] it was distributed by MK2, and they made huge numbers in movie theaters. It proved how a creator can activate their community and bring a different audience to theaters. But there's another use case I find very fascinating: [Markiplier](#). He's American, and he produced his own film — *Iron Lung*. He self-distributed his film, which has not made more than \$50 million worldwide. That's quite impressive, especially coming from outside the traditional industry. I think it's the right moment to speak about different kinds of bridges between these industries of film and the creator economy, about the sourcing of new talent from this world for film producers, but also about the new marketing and promotional aspects, about creators who can activate their communities to watch their movies.

### **To what degree do you hope the Marché can become a platform for regulatory debates around AI and IP?**

The Marché is truly [international](#) — so there will be the European perspective, but also the American vision, and even the vision from Asia. It's very interesting to have this unique place where those visions can confront each other. This year, there is going to be a very strong presence of Europe — the European Commission is coming to Cannes, and the very top level will be there. The European Parliament is also organizing events at the Marché. During the AI for Talent Summit, we're going to speak about responsible AI and try to define what it means — because not everybody has the same definition. We're going to give the stage to some tech companies and startups that are proposing new approaches to defend IP and the rights of authors.

### **Stepping back to the core business: what is the biggest concern right now for traditional film buyers and sellers?**

It's the market globally — because in some territories, box office numbers are not as big as before Covid. It means that some distributors find it harder to buy films, or to pay as much as before. But if your question is about what attendees expect from the Marché, our job is not to sell square meters or screening rooms, it's about reducing friction to business, about making things run smoothly so business can take place. Cannes is crazy — buyers and sellers are running from one meeting to another — and sometimes ten minutes lost can mean an opportunity missed. So we've worked on having easier access to the Palais, become much more flexible in organizing screenings, and have specific initiatives for buyers. It's really about making the Cannes experience fluid.



**MARCHÉ DU FILM**  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

**PRESS REVIEW**  
The Hollywood Reporter

Date: 11/05/2026  
Author: Scott Roxborough

---

**How do you measure the evolution of the Marché under your watch?**

We obviously measure the number of participants each year. We have reached record levels with more than 40,000 professionals at the Festival, including 16,000 registered at the Marché du Film. Since I arrived, we have also been measuring the NPS, the Net Promoter Score — where you do satisfaction surveys and only count people answering nine or 10 out of 10, and subtract those answering zero to six. The sixes and sevens you toss out. After my first market, we were around 10. Then we climbed to 20. Last year, we were at 33, which is a huge improvement. Beyond the NPS, we are, and want to stay, the most important market for film sales. That's our core business, and being the leader is something you have to defend. I would also like the Marché to be a laboratory for new business models, for new creations, for new kinds of creativity.

**Is there one conversation that gave you real optimism about where the film industry could be going?**

I remember the pitch of a startup I liked. They said: "We want to be the Pixar of the AI era." Before Pixar, nobody really believed in 3D animation. After Pixar, everybody was doing 3D with new creative possibilities. So maybe someone will manage to produce films with AI in a way that is still authentic but completely disruptive — or maybe not. But the Marché is the place we should be having this discussion.

**Source :** <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/cannes-market-goes-beyond-film-with-ai-creator-economy-1236591832/>