



How Netflix's J.D. Funari Creates the Perfect Trailer

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J.D. Funari joined Netflix's in-house marketing team in 2019, where he's cut trailers for originals such as *The Confession Killer*, *The Legend of Cocaine Island*, and *The Laundromat*. But despite working in a big company with big titles to match, Funari focuses on the thing he knows best: storytelling.

Funari will speak at Promax Europe 2020, taking place March 16-17 in Madrid, where he will discuss the anatomy of the perfect trailer. It's a process that's become instinctual as he continues to edit, create and watch movies himself.

"I'm always concentrating on how to tell this story the best way... you're going to gravitate toward certain moments. And a lot of times those moments are from deeper in the film, but as long as you're not showing too much of the context, people can't connect all the dots together."

However, that's not always the case. Within recent years, production studios have received criticism on social media for spoiling key moments and dialogue in their trailers. It's a balance that editors and executives must strike to meet the

primary objective: sparking interest.

"There are certain plot points in any given movie where you can feel like that's probably too much, so I'll naturally avoid those things," Funari said. "I'm never setting out to spoil a movie. I might not think it's a very good movie, but I'm still going to try to protect the plot points in it."

It also depends on the agency or production studio, Funari says. Spoilers aren't typically ideal; however, they can sometimes play into a larger strategy.

"There's data to back up that showing more may lead to more interest in a lot of cases, but because there's so much discussion about trailers online, they're more savvy about it. The best version of that is a trailer that feels like it's given away everything and actually hasn't."

Then there are films like *Inception* (2010), which has largely impacted trailer making to this day, Funari says.

"You have no idea really what the plot is, but because it's Christopher Nolan and there's a great amount of trust in him as a director and storyteller, people like that [approach, but] if it's a smaller movie and you try to go for something similarly ambiguous, it may not be enough for somebody to grab onto and it might just kind of turn them off."

These days, however, digital and social media have expanded the visuals used in both full-length trailers and teasers.

"Digital has allowed there to be much more stylistic, aggressive or non-traditional ways of approaching how you get somebody's attention when they're scrolling through a feed. I think some of the most exciting stuff, not from a storytelling standpoint, but from a purely stylistic standpoint, is in the digital space."

That includes the [60-second spot for Netflix's *The Laundromat*](#), which weaves dialogue, graphics and music to create additional buzz for the 2019 film starring Meryl Streep, Gary Oldman and Antonio Banderas.

'The Laundromat' 60 "Money" Trailer from J.D. Funari on Vimeo.

"It was a difficult movie to crack because it's one of those things where it's not a traditional structure. There's a lot of information in it, and it's harder to distill that information in a way that makes it look interesting without confusing the viewer, even though it's got of a great cast and it's a colorful movie."

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But for Funari, the success of a trailer isn't measured by the engagement or view count.

"It's less about how people respond to a trailer, because any video on YouTube is going to have people who say it's terrible and people who say it's great, and those are the extreme ends of the spectrum and basically cancel each other out."

Instead, his focus is on feedback from other peers, from whom he also gets inspiration.

"I get the most satisfaction from other editors and other people in the industry saying, 'Hey, that was a really awesome piece.' When I'm cutting, there are things the average person might not appreciate as much, but somebody who's also doing the same thing can understand the approach, technique, and also the fact that it got to the finish line without losing those things."

Funari will further explore his trailer-cutting process during Promax Europe on March 16-17 at Teatro Goya in Madrid, Spain. Registration is now open.