



Impact of COVID-19 on Entertainment Industry

By Naomi Richard | VILLAGER Entertainment Reporter

(VILLAGER) - In the current coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic, musicians, filmmakers, television programming creators — and other professionals who support them — have been greatly affected. From cancelled festivals to cancelled film debuts to cancelled tours to closed theaters; the entertainment industry is suffering during the pandemic shutdowns.

Unlike options enjoyed in some other professions, creative artists rarely receive pay while working from home — or are afforded health care, short-term or long-term disability or a 401K retirement plan when they are not working. For musicians in this situation in our area, the Recording Academy's Texas Chapter is committed to creating, amplifying, and sharing resources that will provide some form of comfort.

The "Red River Cultural District" is banding together with the Austin live music community to support the venues, artists, creatives, service/hospitality and production workers that were expecting to rely on income from the now-cancelled SXSW. Donations to the local non-profit will help provide financial relief to those in Austin economically impacted by the cancellation of SXSW and COVID-19. To donate visit www.redriverculturaldistrict.org.

The Health Alliance for Austin Musicians (HAAM) provides access to affordable healthcare for Austin's low-income working musicians, with a focus on prevention and wellness. Since 2005, HAAM has helped 5,300 musicians to ac-



Idris Elba and daughter Isan Elba on Screen Actors Guild Red Carpet. Photo by Naomi Richard.

cess over \$73 million dollars in healthcare value. These include routine dental work, doctor visits and prescriptions, psychiatric counseling sessions, eye exams, outpatient procedures, specialist referrals, hearing screenings and more.

The coronavirus also has begun to take its toll on movie box office revenues around the country, according to *Box Office Mojo*. Announced last week, industry leaders AMC and Regal closed all U.S. theaters, which totals over 1,200 between the two of them, for at least six to 12 weeks. In addition to theater closures, all the major distributors have been forced to delay their upcoming releases.

Production shutdowns continue including *The Batman*, *Red Notice*, and the *Lord of the Rings* Amazon series. Virtually all films previously planned for release in the next two months have been delayed. These include: *Mulan*, *A Quiet Place Part II*, the James Bond film *No Time to Die* and the next installment of the *Fast and the Furious* film, *F9*.



Regal Theater Austin

Blockbuster actor **Idris Elba** has tested positive for the virus. Elba said in a video he posted on Twitter, "I didn't have any symptoms. I got tested because I had realized I got exposed to someone who had also tested positive. I found out last Friday [March 13] that they were tested positive, I quarantined myself and got a test immediately and got results back today [March 16]."

Talking to his fans Elba said, "Look, this is serious. Now's the time to really think about social distancing, washing your hands. Beyond that, there are people out there who aren't showing symptoms, and that can easily spread it. So now's a real time to be really vigilant about

washing your hands and keeping your distance."

Tom Hanks and his wife **Rita Wilson** also tested positive for the virus while on location in Australia preparing to film **Baz Luhrmann's** upcoming **Elvis Presley** Biopic.

The bottom line is that this virulent communicable disease will necessarily impact many places where communities *gather*; and if it can infect anyone, wealthy or not, famous or not — even those icons that we choose to entertain and inspire us — then we should all pay attention and do things consciously, like washing hands thoroughly and keeping social distance, in order to stop, slow and limit the spread of COVID-19.

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