

Hollywood shuts down, Broadway goes dark to curb virus cases

March 12 2020, by Jake Coyle



Emily Blunt and John Krasinski attend the world premiere of Paramount Pictures' "A Quiet Place Part II" at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall on Sunday, March 8, 2020, in New York. (Photo by Charles Sykes/Invision/AP)

The entertainment industry prepared Thursday for an unprecedented

shutdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus, canceling upcoming movies, suspending all Broadway performances and eliminating live audiences from television shows until it's safe to welcome crowds back.

To accommodate calls for social distancing, Hollywood moved to pause the normal hum of TV productions and the bustle of red-carpet movie premieres. After New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo banned gatherings of more than 500 people, Broadway theaters announced that they would close immediately and remain dark through April 12.

The closures amount to a nearly complete halting of the industry, from Lincoln Center to Hollywood, and the largest-scale shutdown of many of the country's major arteries of culture.

The upcoming "A Quiet Place 2" and the latest "Fast & Furious" movie joined the many postponements that have erased much of the upcoming movie release calendar. The Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center, the New York Philharmonic and Carnegie Hall all canceled events through March 31.

The dawning awareness of the virus' reach had already forced the cancellation or postponement of all major imminent events on the calendar, including the sprawling South by Southwest conference and festival in Austin, Texas; Hollywood's annual movie expo CinemaCon, in Las Vegas; this month's Kids Choice Awards in Los Angeles; the sunny California music festival Coachella, which was put off until October; and big television events like the NBA season, which was put on hiatus after a player tested positive for the virus. The NHL also suspended its season.



Empty ticket selling booths are seen as couple buys discounted Broadway theatre tickets at the TKTS kiosk, Wednesday, March 11, 2020, in New York's Times Square. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Wednesday he will ask business owners to stagger their employees' work shifts or let them work from home to reduce potential coronavirus exposures. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

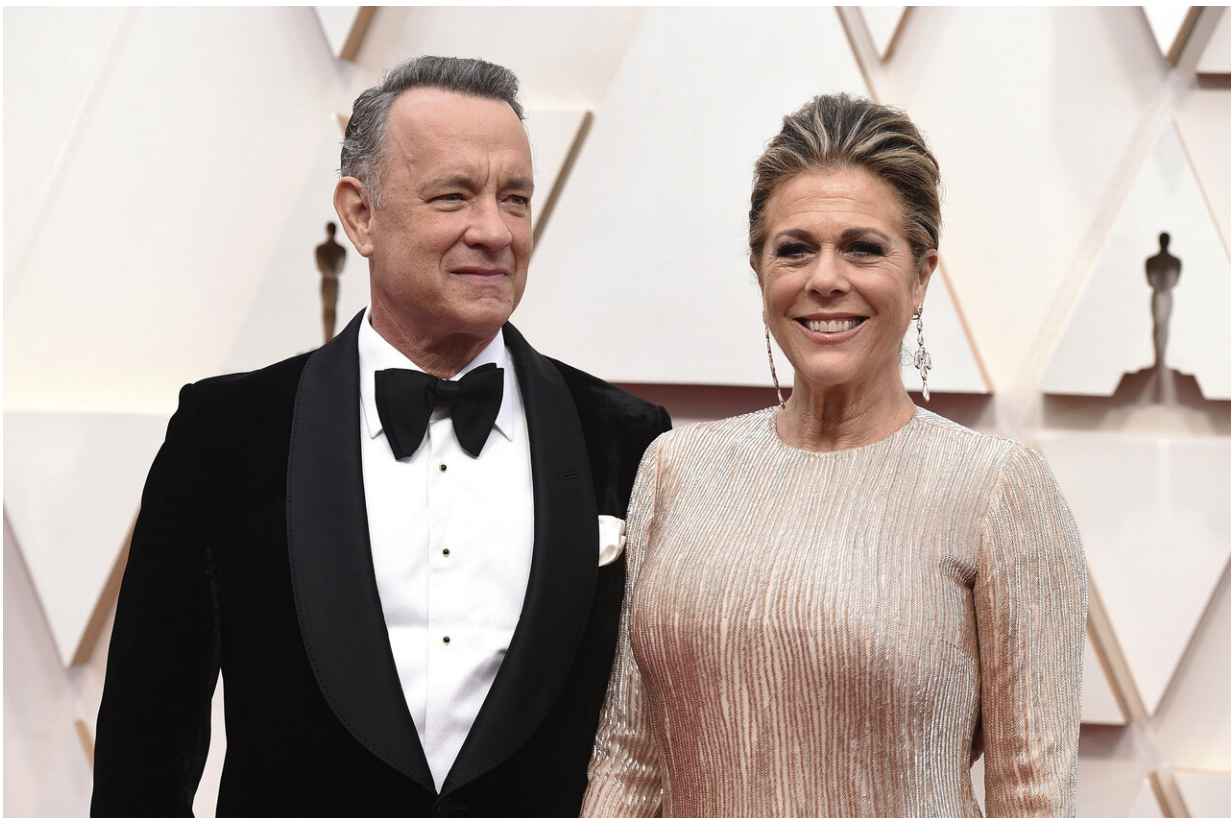
Earlier Thursday, California urged bans of not just the largest events but also gatherings of more than 250 to help stymie the virus' spread. California Governor Gavin Newsom recommended the cancellation or postponement of gatherings of 250 or more people through at least the end of the month. That put a new focus on Broadway, multiplexes and smaller concert venues.

Hollywood still planned to usher in several new movies beginning

Thursday evening at theaters. North American's largest chains, AMC and Regal, did not respond to emails Thursday. Cinemas have been closed in China, India, Italy, Poland, Greece and other countries.

John Krasinski, writer and director of "A Quiet Place 2," announced that his film from Paramount Pictures would not open next week as planned but be postponed to an as yet announced date. Universal Pictures announced that the "Fast and Furious" movie titled "F9" would not open May 22 as planned but in April next year.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is that people have said our movie is one you have to see together," Krasinski said in a message on social media. "Well due to the ever-changing circumstances of what's going on in the world around us, now is clearly not the right time to do that."



In this Feb. 9, 2020 file photo, Tom Hanks, left, and Rita Wilson arrive at the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. The couple have tested positive for the coronavirus, the actor said in a statement Wednesday, March 11. The 63-year-old actor said they will be "tested, observed and isolated for as long as public health and safety requires." (Photo by Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP, File)

Paramount also shuffled the release of "Lovebirds" and "Blue Story." Few major releases remain in the coming weeks, with the notable exception of the Walt Disney Co.'s "Mulan." It's set for March 27 in the U.S. A spokesperson for Disney did not immediately comment Thursday.

Across Hollywood, the usual machinations of show business, from auditions to rehearsals, were grinding to a halt. Apple's "The Morning Show" was among the many productions put on hiatus. Central Casting closed its offices. The TCM Classic Film festival, scheduled next month in Los Angeles was canceled.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame postponed its annual induction ceremony, scheduled for May 2 in Cleveland. It was to have been televised live for the first time by HBO. Posthumous inductees Whitney Houston and the Notorious B.I.G. were to be honored, along with Depeche Mode, the Doobie Brothers, Nine Inch Nails and T. Rex. Canada's top music awards show, the Juno Awards, was also called off as a precaution.

A part-time usher and security guard who worked at two Broadway theaters in recent days tested positive for COVID-19 and is under quarantine. Broadway is particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus because its audience skews older, thousands of people are packed into

small seats for every show and the industry is dependent on tourism.



A notice in Italian outside a cinema reads: " We inform that we will sell tickets for a third of the capacity of the halls" also explaining that this is being done to comply with a the decree ordering a one-meter distance between spectators, in Rome, Saturday, March 7, 2020. Following the coronavirus outbreak Italy has asked people to maintain a one-meter (three-foot) distance from strangers in public, to refrain from unnecessary travel and to avoid gatherings. (AP Photo/Paolo Santalucia)

The announcement Wednesday evening that Tom Hanks and his wife,

Rita Wilson, had tested positive for coronavirus sent shudders through the industry. Hanks was easily the most famous person yet to publicly announce that he had the virus. He was in Australia to shoot an Elvis Presley biopic that Warner Bros. said would halt production.

"Not much more to it than a one-day-a-time approach, no?" Hanks said of their condition.

On Thursday, "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and "The Late Show With James Corden" joined other late-night talk shows in announcing they will tape without audiences. That followed similar decisions by CBS' "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert," NBC's "Tonight Show" and "Late Night With Seth Meyers," Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Trevor Noah," HBO's "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" and TBS' "Full Frontal with Samantha Bee."

CBS also said that production on the next season of "Survivor" was being postponed. "Jeopardy!" and "Wheel of Fortune" have also halted tapings with audiences.



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Noah Jupe, from left, Millicent Simmonds, and Emily Blunt in a scene from "A Quiet Place Part II." The entertainment industry, a business predicated on drawing crowds in theaters, cinemas and concert venues, braced Thursday, March 12, 2020, for a potential shutdown from the coronavirus as upcoming movies were canceled, festivals scuttled and live audiences eliminated from television shows. John Krasinski, writer and director of "A Quiet Place 2," announced Thursday that his film from Paramount Pictures would not open next week as planned but be postponed to as yet-announced date. (Jonny Cournoyer/Paramount Pictures via AP)



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Noah Jupe, right, and Emily Blunt in a scene from "A Quiet Place Part II." The entertainment industry, a business predicated on drawing crowds in theaters, cinemas and concert venues, braced Thursday, March 12, 2020, for a potential shutdown from the coronavirus as upcoming movies were canceled, festivals scuttled and live audiences eliminated from television shows. John Krasinski, writer and director of "A Quiet Place 2," announced Thursday that his film from Paramount Pictures would not open next week as planned but be postponed to as yet-announced date. (Jonny Cournoyer/Paramount Pictures via AP)

The closures, postponements and hiatuses are likely to be enormously costly. The shuttering of Chinese movie theaters—the world's second-largest movie market has been closed for more than a month—has already led to the loss of more than \$1 billion in ticket revenue. Last

year, global box office sales reached a new high of \$42.2 billion.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover within a few weeks.

As of Wednesday evening, 38 people had died in the U.S., while more than 1,300 people had tested positive for the new coronavirus. Tolls have been higher elsewhere. In Italy, where more than 15,000 people tested positive and more than 1,000 people have died, all stores except pharmacies and food markets were ordered closed.

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