

50TH SEATTLE
INTERNATIONAL
MAY 9-19 FILM FESTIVAL

PROGRAMMERS'

PICKS





BETH BARRETT

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

GHOSTLIGHT

A beautifully woven tale about family, theatre, love, grief, hilarity, and all the things in between. A true Sundance discovery.

YOUNG HEARTS

Starring the literally luminous Lou Gossens, this tender coming-of-age film is the coming-out story we all wish we had, with all the confusion of young love, friendship, and dealing with a father enjoying unlikely success as a midlife pop-singing sensation.

THE QUEEN OF MY DREAMS

Based on her short film (which premiered at SIFF 2012), this debut feature from Fawzia Mirza tells a mother-daughter love story mixing up the Technicolor Karachi 1960s, Bollywood, and the adventures of a modern-day queer Pakistani Canadian woman.

GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS

Set in a strict boarding school in the Himalayas, a young girl's sexual awakening comes into conflict with the narrow views of her emotionally stunted mother. Incredible debut film from Shuchi Talati that won both the Grand Jury and Audience Awards at Sundance.

A NEW KIND OF WILDERNESS

Living the ideal Norwegian pastoral dream, taking long walks, and growing their own food takes on a different tone when young mother Maria passes away and the rest of the family has to deal with their grief, uncertainty, and what "home" means. Truly stunning.



STAN SHIELDS

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING

ÀMA GLORIA

Marie Amachoukeli's second feature is a beauty to behold, a disarming charmer that slowly opens up to reveal an honest, clear-eyed look at the unadulterated intensity of a child's affection for their mother, even when that person is not their biological parent.

CITY OF WIND

The spark of young love forces a teenage shaman to wrestle with a choice between rural tradition and urban modernity in this fascinating coming-of-age story from Mongolia.

GHOSTLIGHT

Unassuming at first, directors Kelly O'Sullivan and Alex Thompson's feature capitalizes on the built-in dynamics of a real-life family (and an excellent Dolly de Leon) to produce a simultaneously heartwarming and heartbreaking family drama.

GRASSHOPPER REPUBLIC

Welcome to the hazardous, lucrative world of Ugandan grasshopper harvesting. Over the course of three seasons, this immersive documentary follows a local grasshopper-trapping team as they seek their fortune by capturing this elusive prey.

LUTHER: NEVER TOO MUCH

The career of the supple and ethereally voiced Vandross has long been due for a documentary, and Dawn Porter's elegant testament to his life and talent captures both that powerhouse talent and his uphill battle against the prevailing cultural and industry forces of his time.



JUSTINE BARDA

SENIOR PROGRAMMER

CRITICAL ZONE & TERRESTRIAL VERSES

From Iran, where the Women, Life, Freedom movement continues, there are two remarkably audacious films, *Critical Zone* and *Terrestrial Verses*. Both are transgressive in their subject matter and inventive in their form.

THE ETILAAT ROZ & HOLLYWOODGATE

There are two fascinating documentaries that offer distinct views of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan—one from the perspective of the staff of the national daily newspaper (*The Etilaat Roz*) and the other from the perspective of the Taliban (*Hollywoodgate*).

THE BURDENED

The Burdened is a rare and excellent film from Yemen, a country which, in addition to its decade-long civil war and collapsing economy, has also been the object of recent U.S. military strikes, in response to the Houthi effort to pressure Israel to end its war on Hamas.

THREE PROMISES & THE VANISHING SOLDIER

There's a documentary comprised of a woman's home movies about life in Palestine during the Israeli military retaliation for the Second Intifada (*Three Promises*), as well as a portrait of a young Israeli soldier and his ambivalence about his role (*The Vanishing Soldier*).

DANCING ON THE EDGE OF A VOLCANO

And from Lebanon, there's an extraordinary film that is both a firsthand account of the devastating port explosion in Beirut and, improbably, a "making of" film about a film that played at SIFF two years ago, *Costa Brava, Lebanon*.



DAN DOODY

SENIOR PROGRAMMER

WE CAN BE HEROES

Drawn to a hidden, magical realm (NY's Hudson Valley), a group of fearless champions (i.e. neurodivergent, queer, and self-proclaimed "nerdy" teens) converge to combat an overwhelming force of devastation that threatens to destroy their legendary realm (Wayfarer LARP camp). By far, this is my favorite Festival film this year; warm, generous, and profoundly moving, too.

SCALA!!!

London's legendary repertory cinema offered its patrons a wealth of diverse film programming; if there ever was a high temple of cult cinema, it was the Scala, and this wonderfully entertaining documentary charts its life and times, and how it influenced a generation of renowned musicians, artists, and filmmakers.

ODDITY

Winner of the SXSW Midnighter Audience Award, *Oddity* is an absolutely original and unsettling supernatural thriller: a blind psychic uncovers the truth behind her sister's death with the help of a grotesque wooden mannequin.

DRAGON SUPERMAN

A true archival discovery from Taiwan. The evil Cosmos Gang threatens the city, and it's up to our motorcycle-riding masked hero, Dragon Superman, to bring them to justice. Cut from the same spandex as Santo and the Green Hornet, *Dragon Superman* is pulp cinema at its exhilarating best.

LIES WE TELL

Imagine your favorite "Masterpiece Theatre" story gone to hell. Based on Le Fanu's classic Gothic chiller, this taut thriller reimagines the genre's women-in-peril foundations through a dark and disturbing lens.



HEBE TABACHNIK

SENIOR PROGRAMMER

SATURN RETURN

The big winner at the 2024 Malaga Film Festival, where it received awards for Best Film, Direction, and Editing. It's an unconventional biopic about Los Planetas, a rock band from the '90s, that survived the very narrow path between dazzling success and complete disaster and produced the album that not only defined a generation but changed the music scene in Spain forever.

IGUALADA

It is unusual to find life stories as inspiring and transformative as that of Afro Colombian Francia Márquez, a political leader and activist who learned to subvert attacks on her ethnic origin, her social class, and her gender to fight for equality, freedom, and social justice.

THE EXTORTION

Alejandro, an airline pilot, hides a secret that puts his career in jeopardy. When agents of the Intelligence Service discover him and begin to blackmail him, the pilot, played by the superb Guillermo Francella, enters a world of intrigue and corruption in this high-octane thriller up in the skies and across the Atlantic.

RIOJA, LAND OF THE THOUSAND WINES

Take a mouthwatering tour through the whole Rioja winemaking process with testimonies of winemakers, sommeliers, award-winning enologists, and restaurateurs from La Rioja. This documentary is a sumptuous invitation to enjoy the surprising variety and delicious secrets behind Spain's most well-known wine.

HOLY MOTHER

In the 9th century, a 17-year-old nun becomes an abbess. Given the task of repopulating and Christianizing the border territories in conflict with the Moors, she is determined to fulfill her mission of challenging everyone. This tale from an almost forgotten past becomes a painful reminder of the challenges women still face in the world a thousand years later.



ANGELO ACERBI

PROGRAMMER

GLORIA!

Miracles happen and this film is one! First-time director Margherita Vicario brings her poetry and creativity in a story of female affirmation and empowerment in 1800s Tuscany, where music is the message.

GREEN BORDER

Helmer Agnieszka Holland brings us to the Polish-Belarusian border during the latest humanitarian crisis. An unapologetic tale of overpowering arrogance and political cruelty. Awarded at the Venice and Rotterdam film festivals.

THE SUMMER WITH CARMEN

In Athens, a cute dog named Carmen is the excuse for a sensual and funny existential tale of two friends who have to write a film but dig so deep in their own queerness that it changes their relationship forever.

MAKING OF

A social comedy with cinema as its backdrop. An extra starts shooting the making of a movie that becomes a gigantic mess. The proof that a making-of doc can sometimes be far better than the film itself! It's the perfect kind of intelligent French comedy we all love.





SUJ'N CHON

PROGRAMMER

DIDI (弟弟) & GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS

Two excellent but very different coming-of-age films—one based in Fremont, California; the other in northern India. Both made me wish my mother was still alive so I could tell her, “I see you, Mom.”

MOUNTAINS

An intimately told tale about a Haitian immigrant family living at the intersection of the “American Dream” and the real story. I’d also watch Junior’s hour-long stand-up special, as played by comedian Chris Renois.

BLACK BOX DIARIES

In her directorial debut, journalist Shiori Ito turns the camera on herself as she documents her years-long journey to bring her politically connected rapist to justice. Powerful and inspiring!

WE STRANGERS

A cheeky dramedy about a young Black housekeeper who may or may not be able to talk to the dead loved ones of her wealthy white clients.

THE MISSING & MOTHER OF ALL LIES

One is a sci-fi-action-queer love story. The other is a documentary centered on a family from Casablanca. Both clever use artistic forms—rotoscope/2D animation and dioramas—as doorways to confront painful secrets from the past.



JAMES DAVIS

PROGRAMMING COORDINATOR

SECRET FEST

I cannot tell you why I am excited about Secret Fest.

ANY SHORTS PACKAGE

There are a lot of fun films this year with a wide range of themes, coming from new and returning filmmakers.

THELMA

A cute, charming story. And June Squibb + Opening Night + the Paramount = Magic!

FOOD ROOTS

Join Billy Dec as he travels to the Philippines to learn about some old family recipes and reconnect with his culture.

I'M JUST HERE FOR THE RIOT

The early days of social media and its influences on the Vancouver riots in 2011.





KASI GAARENSTROOM

CINEMA PROGRAM MANAGER

KILLING ROMANCE

Bright, colorful, absolutely bonkers! Unexpected, and a joy. It'll knock your socks off. This is a must-see with a crowd. It's good!

THE PRIMEVALS

Step into a time machine to the era of '60s adventure films with *The Primevals*. Restored, pieced together, and completed from the late and great David Allen's unfinished film, this is an homage to a legend and a wildly fun film to boot.

EVIL DOES NOT EXIST

Ryūsuke Hamaguchi is back, baby! And he has another deeply contemplative narrative for us all, this time on the ecological impacts of thoughtless urbanization. Fun!

TIGER STRIPES

A bold directorial debut about the horrors of being a girl, growing up, and getting your tiger stripes. If you've ever been a teen girl, this'll hit ya right in the gut.

399: QUEEN OF THE TETONS

I am only human—I see cute bears, I cry, I follow them on Instagram.



MEGAN GARBAYO-LÓPEZ

EDUCATION MANAGER

BOB TREVINO LIKES IT

Barbie Ferreira and John Leguizamo give such tender performances in this unconventional buddy film about chosen family. A perfect one-two punch of gentle comedy and tearjerker that can be enjoyed by teens and adults alike.

SIROCCO AND THE KINGDOM OF THE WINDS

This sumptuous French animated film captivated my heart and I haven't stopped thinking about it. It reminded me of how I felt watching Hayao Miyazaki films as a child—totally swept up in the magic, adventure, color, and relatable girl heroines. This film is great for the entire family!

EMPIRE WAIST

This hilarious comedic romp about an insecure fat girl with a hidden passion for fashion is a breath of fresh air that will leave you wheezing with laughter. Perfectly capturing the awkwardness of adolescence and the healing power of statement outfits, this is actually the first film I have ever seen with two fat characters who are best friends. Tweens, teens, and parents will love this film.

WE CAN BE HEROES

This is one of the best documentaries I have seen in a long time! It follows quirky youth campers at a LARPing camp in the Hudson River Valley. As the kids gear up for their three-day LARPing event, the audience gets a peek into the lives of passionate, creative, and deeply human youngsters who find solace and belonging on the battlefield. This film is a crowd-pleaser for the entire family.

WHERE IS ANNE FRANK

This beautifully rendered animated film from the director of *Waltz with Bashir* is a great conversation starter for young people who are learning about the history of the Holocaust. With a timely message of "Never Again," new audiences will discover Anne and her story through the eyes of her charismatic imaginary friend, Kitty. This film is appropriate for folks ages 10 and up.



MARCUS GORMAN

PROGRAMMER

SECRET FEST #1

I'm sworn to secrecy on the film's identity, but you don't want to miss out on one of the most rollicking, high-energy films of 2024. Get your secret pass ASAP.

RED ROOMS

This one is for the Murderinos out there. Pascal Plante (SIFF 2018's *Fake Tattoos*) goes for the jugular in this tense psychological drama about a Montreal-based model who becomes obsessed with a high-profile, truly horrific murder trial.

KILLING ROMANCE

A retired actress and a student plot to kill her vain, possessive husband in this absurdist, ridiculously heightened, and consistently unhinged musical romantic comedy. Featuring one of Lee Sun-kyun's final performances before his untimely passing.

I SAW THE TV GLOW

Another woozy mindf**k of a film from Jane Schoenbrun (2021's *We're All Going to the World's Fair*), as two suburbanites find solace and madness in a *Buffy*-esque '90s TV show. Contains the year's most excellent soundtrack.

SO UNREAL

Amanda Kramer (*Give Me Pity!*, *Please Baby Please*) crafts a philosophical, montage-based video essay on the history of cyberspace/virtual reality cinema and how pop culture reflects and influences technology. To put it another way, it contains clips from pretty much all my favorite films.



MEGAN LEONARD

PROGRAMMER

GOOD ONE

Could not be more PNW-coded despite not being made in the PNW. Take a hike in feminine discomfort. Reichardt would approve.

THE BLACK SEA

The third Crystal Moselle film to make my programmer picks. Can't get enough. And Derrick B. Harden is a star.

SO UNREAL

Let Debbie Harry's voice hypnotize you on a trip through future internet movie past.

MY SEXTORTION DIARY

Next-level true crime investigation work.

AGGRO DRIFT

Living in its own world. A\$\$ on the BIG screen. Harmony Korning all over the place.





RITA MEHER

PROGRAMMER

AGRA

Boldly navigating themes of sexual repression, this film follows a young man's journey amidst the bustling streets of an overcrowded city of Agra, renowned for its majestic Taj Mahal, which we never see.

GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS

In this unusual film, meet our 16-year-old heroine Mira, whose sexy coming-of-age gets disrupted by her own mother's coming-of-age. Funny, but serious.

IN FLAMES

Zarrar Khan's striking debut *In Flames* blurs the lines between psychological thriller and gripping social drama.

TIGER STRIPES

A carefree 11-year-old girl starts to experience horrifying physical changes to her body as she gets her period and slowly turns into a tiger in this B-grade, low-tech dramatic thriller.



KATHLEEN MULLEN

PROGRAMMER

ADMISSIONS GRANTED

From the first interview, I was glued to my screen. I hadn't known all the complexities of what led to Affirmative Action being struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court, and in this documentary you get to view all sides of the debate. You realize when you walk away that the implications of the decision will not be known for a long time.

LOVE MACHINA

Love Machina is a love story and a deep dive into the possibilities of AI and living forever. I found it spellbinding and Martine and Bina to be a very compelling and charismatic couple—their drive to live together forever is truly worth seeing.

I'M JUST HERE FOR THE RIOT

Having lived in Vancouver for a long time, I loved how the filmmakers approached the Vancouver riots. Interviewing people who took part in the riot and the aftermath and exploring how excitement can turn into rage becomes a unique perspective and approach in this documentary, as well showing the world right at the cusp of the social media explosion and what it means to have your image of rioting stay on the internet forever.

SUBTERRANEAN

This documentary kept me on the edge of my seat as these dedicated people deep dive into these caves as a sport, as an obsession, as a hobby. Risking their lives to see something truly unique is inspiring, and you get to know the people who do it.

PORCELAIN WAR

I loved how this documentary portrays people who keep themselves together by making art in the midst of bombs falling and having to go out and protect themselves against the Russian invasion. It's a micro and macro picture of wartime for these brave Ukrainians.





COLLEEN O'HOLLERAN

PROGRAMMER

SCALA!!!

This documentary about the Scala, a music venue-turned-movie theater, is made for lovers of genre cinema and cult movies. Featuring stories of programmers and cinema aficionados over the years, *Scala!!!* speaks to the power of movie theaters to inspire culture and host creative spaces for the weirdos, underdogs, punks, queer community, outsiders, and artists.

RATS!

I had a perma-grin through this entire film! It is so funny and irreverent and satisfying, and I can't wait to watch it with an audience. So go see it, and we can do that!

MY SEXTORTION DIARY

Filmmaker Patricia Franquesa uses tech-mosaic to tell this thrilling and fast-paced story. Weaving together text correspondences, social media posts, and recorded phone calls, she takes us through the transformative experience she had finding her voice and power when confronted by a hacker trying to shame and extort her.

THE PRIMEVALS

Fellow fans of Ray Harryhausen, take note: This one's for you! Directed by David Allen, who did visual effects for such classics as *The Howling* (1981), and co-written by Randall William Cook, who did special effects for *The Gate* (1987), *The Primevals* pushes all the nostalgia buttons while taking us on an adventure unlike any other.

KILLING ROMANCE

Absurd and funny, *Killing Romance* is a fantastical thriller. Oh, and it's a musical. And it's a romance. Being all these things and more, it's impossible to pin down but irresistibly entertaining.



TRACY RECTOR

PROGRAMMER

MOVING POETRY: INDIGENOUS STORIES

Gorgeous and poetic short films made by Indigenous storytellers from around the world from Greenland to Fiji. They are filled with hope, healing, and bubbles of joy!

BRING THEM HOME

Land, people, and *iinnii* come together in this Blackfeet story of connection between all beings and Indigenous knowledge. This is the first feature documentary directed by Blackfeet siblings Ivy and Ivan MacDonald, who are also 4th World Media Lab alumni.

THE TUNDRA WITHIN ME

Snow, reindeer, family tension, and a dose of romance make for great storytelling in this Sámi-made film about unexpected love and reflection in Sápmi territory.

SUGARCANE

This investigative documentary film by first-time filmmaker Julian Brave NoiseCat is an absolute must-see film to better understand the impact of residential school abuses on First Nations people across generations.

STANDING ABOVE THE CLOUDS

Let's talk about this film for a very long time by women, about women, maybe even for women, who are all badass and doing the work of protecting the ancestors and the sacred—specifically Mauna Kea in the Kingdom of Hawai'i.



MARTIN SCHWARTZ

PROGRAMMER

WINGS OF DESIRE

Everyone's Favorite German Film has images—like Bruno Ganz as a ruffled angel atop a gray building, looking out over no man's land—that have conquered the world, but the closer you look, the more you see. Wim Wenders is a poet of cinema, but he's also a canny, extremely skilled director with an unflinching grasp of the medium.

FAMILIAR

If, like me, you are addicted to Romanian New Wave, BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW. Călin Peter Netzer's latest nesting-doll creation has layers of irony, deceit, and deadpan humor on the venality of human beings in unfair systems, but it also has post-Communist history and a passion for truth.

SCORCHED EARTH

If you didn't think Germany could create a proper hard-boiled, red-asphalt neo-noir, think again. The big heist is only half the picture in this gripping psychological thriller about double-crossed thieves on the gritty periphery of Berlin.

WOODLAND

A freezing lake, fields of pale gold, trees of all hues, trauma, tenderness, and a lost past; seeking solace in the country was never so immersive and delicate as in this year's rich and satisfying Austrian pick.

HITCHCOCK'S PRO-NAZI FILM

As a certified film fan and anti-Nazi, I cannot wait to see this bizarre bit of cinema history on the big screen. I've been puzzled by the politics in *Lifeboat* since I first saw it as a boy, and the older I get, the more I care about how ideology plays out in art, in ways we do and don't attend. Also: Tallulah Bankhead.



ANDY SPLETZER

PROGRAMMER

AGGRO DRIFT

Shot entirely on thermal imaging cameras, Harmony Korine captures Florida as filtered through a hangover, following a hitman who is drifting through a life that may as well be a videogame.

ALT SHORTS: SEE AND BE SEEN

As seen through colored filters, found footage, high school memories, or visual effects, these shorts will make you see the world in a different way.

THE BOX MAN

An absurdist take on obsession, addiction, and modern life from the "unfilmable" novel by Japanese author Kobo Abe ("The Woman in the Dunes").

GRASSHOPPER REPUBLIC

One of my favorite docs in the Festival, it's all about something I never knew even existed: a grasshopper harvest where workers can earn a year's salary in only three months...if it's a good harvest!

SO UNREAL

An entertainingly philosophical examination of cyberspace portrayed in the often low-budget science fiction films of the last 40 years. It'll make you want to visit Scarecrow Video afterward to find some of the more rare titles.

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topic, region, and more at:

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