



SAN LUIS OBISPO
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL

Celebrating its 30th Anniversary, San Luis Obispo International Film Festival Announces Film Lineup for 2024

*With over 25 countries represented, Kelly O'Sullivan, Alex Thompson's **Ghostlight** opens the festival and **Thelma** is the Closing Night selection*

(San Luis Obispo, CA)—San Luis Obispo International Film Festival (SLOIFF) has announced this year's exciting film lineup, led by the Opening Night selection of the critically-acclaimed **Ghostlight**, and Sundance comedy breakout **Thelma** for the Closing Night selection.

With a slate of over 125 narrative features, short films, documentary features and shorts, music videos and festival favorites from the last 30 years, the festival has a broad spectrum of content on offer for serious cinephiles, devoted film buffs and casual movie fans both locally and across the region. The festival runs from Thursday, April 25 through Tuesday, April 30, with an encore presentation in Paso Robles, and virtually, from May 1 – 5.

Also on tap is the SLO Film Fest's famous **Surf Nite**, the popular **Central Coast Filmmaker Showcase**, **Cal Poly Short Cuts**, **Music Video Showcase**, and a special 45th Anniversary presentation of the horror classic, **Dawn of the Dead** (1978) in association with local film festival MicroHorrors.

Additional programs include short films curated by **R.A.C.E. Matters**, **Filmmakers of Tomorrow**, featuring short films by those 18 and under, a collection of shorts from **Actor's Edge** school, **Coastal Awakening** focusing on films reflecting mindfulness, and the **30th Anniversary Series** screening festival favorites throughout the years. New this year is the event **Community of Skate**, debuting with the iconic **Dogtown and Z-Boys** and the short documentary **4DWN**.

San Luis Obispo International Film Festival Director Skye McLennan said, “We take immense pride in the fact that half of the films in competition showcase the creative talents of female-identifying or non-binary filmmakers, and also half of the films spotlight individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. We firmly advocate for the empowerment that arises when individuals seize control of their narratives believe in sharing these visions on the big screen.”

Over 57 films, in the categories of Narrative Feature, Narrative Short, Documentary Feature, Documentary Short, Student Film, Music Video and Animated Film, will be participating in the **George Sidney Independent Film Competition**. Central Coast Filmmaker Showcase Films are eligible in the same categories. George Sidney and Central Coast films will also be eligible for **The Audience Awards** in five categories. Three films in the Documentary Short category were nominated for Academy Awards, with one, ***The Last Repair Shop***, taking home the Oscar.

Actor Josh Brolin is leading the Narrative Feature jury alongside Christopher Tung (Netflix), and Wendy Guerrero (Bentonville Film Festival), as well as Narrative Shorts jurors Lissa Khoshbakhti (Disney) and Fanshen Cox (TruJuLo Productions), among others.

Ghostlight, directed by Kelly O'Sullivan and Alex Thompson, comes to SLOIFF on Opening Night following its debut at Sundance. The Opening Night Reception kicks off the 30th Anniversary Festival and presents an opportunity to meet special guests, filmmakers, and major contributors along with catered bites by Luna Red, wine from Ancient Peaks Winery and a live acoustic set from popular SLO County band, IMVA, at the Fremont Theater.

The extraordinary and heartfelt ***Ghostlight*** follows a melancholic construction worker as he drifts away from his wife and daughter, only to discover solace and purpose within a local theater's production of Romeo and Juliet. As the drama unfolds onstage, paralleling his own life, he and his family learn to confront their own personal loss. A poignant exploration of grief, ***Ghostlight*** is the quest for belonging and profoundly explores the impact of unexpected connections.

On Closing Night, the SLO Film Festival wraps up with the announcement of the Jury award winners, alongside a showing of Sundance favorite, the comedy ***Thelma***. Marking the feature directorial debut of Josh Margolin and inspired by his own grandmother's real-life experiences, the film stars June Squibb as Thelma Post, a victim of a phone scam. Determined to reclaim her money, Thelma embarks on a journey, unsupported by her daughter and son-in-law (Parker Posey and Clark Gregg) but aided by a longtime family friend, played by Shaft legend Richard Roundtree in his final onscreen performance. This intergenerational tale reminds us to never underestimate age and that it's never too late for an adventure.

More narrative feature film highlights include Slamdance winner, ***African Giants***, which introduces two first-generation Sierra Leonean American brothers – one an aspiring actor and the other a second-year law student – as they navigate the changing dynamics of brotherhood and their contrasting views on their heritage after one makes a surprise announcement. The French feature ***Mr. Blake at our Service***, stars John Malkovich, who arrives at a French Estate and takes on the unanticipated role of butler after realizing the occupants need help. His arrival revitalizes them and prompts them to work together to restore the manor's former beauty. A Funny and heartwarming coming-of-age film, ***Uproar*** follows a rugby-obsessed teen (Julian Dennison) in New Zealand learning to find his voice and awareness of his Māori heritage. It also stars Minnie Driver and Rhys Darby. Another Slamdance winner, ***Good Bad Things***, tells the story of Danny, a young man with muscular dystrophy, who steps out of his comfort zone and into the world of online dating.

Documentary features include Best Directing Sundance winner ***Sugarcane*** about an investigation into abuse and missing children at an Indian residential school that ignites a reckoning on the nearby Sugarcane Reserve. The spirited ***Let the Canary Sing*** takes the audience on a nostalgic exploration of the life and career of legendary pop icon Cyndi Lauper, with a boisterous narrative anchored by the inimitable Lauper herself. Executive produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, ***We Are Guardians*** takes us into the heart of the Brazilian Amazon where thousands are unlawfully invading protected lands for fast profits while Indigenous people fight to protect their ancestral home.

Surf Nite in SLO, the film festival's signature one-of-a-kind surfing film event, is screening **Trilogy: New Wave**. The evening kicks off with a set by local band RIFF TIDE and guests are encouraged to enjoy drinks in the Fremont Theater's stunning art deco lobby prior to introductory comments and the film presentation.

Several special presentations have been scheduled including the feature film **Camera**, shot locally in Morro Bay, and starring Beau Bridges and **SOMM: Cup of Salvation**, the latest chapter in the acclaimed documentary series about wine.

Every year **Coastal Awakening**, a collective of writers, artists, historians, chefs, surfers, and philanthropists, sponsors a film series grouped around a theme close to the creative spirit of the Central Coast. This year the focus is on films celebrating "Mindfulness and Contemplation." The series starts out with **Groundhog Day** (1993), starring Bill Murray, followed by **The Matrix** (1999) directed by the Wachowskis, and starring Keanu Reeves. The French film **A Man Escaped** (1956) directed by Robert Bresson concludes the series.

R.A.C.E. Matters teams up again with the film festival to present **Space**, a free program of five contemporary short films. Prior to the film screenings at the Fremont Theater, R.A.C.E. Matters will hold a Sunday Brunch fundraiser at Saints Barrel with appetizers and bubbly. The following day, across all venues, is the **Central Coast Filmmakers Showcase**, highlighting the work of talented filmmakers from Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties. Later in the evening, **Cal Poly Short Cuts** features 8 short films created by Cal Poly students under the mentorship of Professor Randi Barros Screenwriter and Editor, and James Werner, artist, and Associate Professor of Art & Design.

The **30th Anniversary Series** presents a series of retrospective screenings programmed by key SLOIFF contributors former Executive Director Wendy Eidson, Founder Mary Harris, Palm Theater Owner Jim Dee, and current Executive Director Skye McLennan. **Double Indemnity** (1944), **Big Night** (1996), **The Adventures of Priscila, Queen of the Desert** (1994), **Wild Bill: Hollywood Maverick** (1995), **Muriel's Wedding** (1994), **Dersu Uzala** (1975), **Pursuit of Equality** (2005), and **Riding Giants** (2004) comprise the series. *Riding Giants* screens at the Bay Theater in Morro Bay with director Stacy Peralta in attendance.

New this year to the festival is **Community of Skate**, an event that kicks off in the lobby of the Fremont Theater with live music by The Bogeys. An exhibition of skateboards created by the San Luis Obispo High School Advanced Graphic Design Class will be on view along with a demonstration of live-screen printing. The reception is followed by the screening of two films that celebrate the culture and community of skateboarding – the iconic ***Dogtown and Z-Boys*** (2001) and the short documentary ***4DWN***. Narrated by Sean Penn, the award-winning *Dogtown and Z-Boys* tells the story of how skateboarding was revolutionized in the 70's by local skaters from the run-down beachside area between Santa Monica and Venice, nicknamed Dogtown. *4DWN* tells the unconventional and deeply personal story of a South Dallas skatepark whose mission is to change the lives of everyone who walks through the gate. Legendary skateboarders Kareem Campbell, Stacy Peralta and Mike Crum will be in attendance. Skate-themed films will be aired throughout the day before the event and include ***Art and Life: The Story of Jim Phillips, Skateboard*** (1978) and ***This is Brighton*** (2023).

Passes are now on sale and information on the film festival can be found at <https://slofilmfest.org>.

ABOUT SAN LUIS OBISPO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2024, the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival is a 6-day annual event, showcasing creative, diverse, and impactful works from around the world in a wide variety of venues, from the city's classic art deco [Fremont Theatre](#), to the vintage [Palm Theatre](#). The 2024 festival will run from April 25-30, Encore, taking place in Paso Robles, is held from May 1-5. Tickets and festival passes can be purchased [here](#).

Located half-way between Los Angeles and San Francisco, San Luis Obispo's laid-back vibe and serene natural beauty is the perfect setting for this highly regarded annual film celebration. Filmmakers rave about the warmth and attentiveness that is so much a part of the SLO Film fest experience, as do the industry pros and film critics who are fast discovering the film festival's thoughtful audiences and unique programming sensibility.

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Film images are available by request.

The 2024 San Luis Obispo International Film Festival official selections:

Opening Night Gala Selection

GHOSTLIGHT

DIRECTORS: Kelly O'Sullivan, Alex Thompson

WRITER: Kelly O'Sullivan | Drama/ 110 min/ USA

Straight from Sundance, GHOSTLIGHT is the extraordinary and heartfelt film following a melancholic construction worker as he drifts away from his wife and daughter, only to discover solace and purpose within a local theater's production of Romeo and Juliet. As the drama unfolds onstage, paralleling his own life, he and his family learn to confront their own personal loss. A poignant exploration of grief, GHOSTLIGHT is the quest for belonging and profoundly explores the impact of unexpected connections.

Closing Night Gala Selection

THELMA

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Josh Margolin

KEY CAST: June Squibb, Fred Hechinger, Richard Roundtree, Parker Posey, Clark Gregg, Malcolm McDowell | Comedy/ 97 min/ USA

We're privileged to present this Sundance favorite, marking the feature directorial debut of Josh Margolin. Inspired by his own grandmother's real-life experiences, the film stars June Squibb as Thelma Post, a victim of a phone scam who mails thousands of dollars to help her jailed grandson, only to discover he's not actually in jail. Determined to reclaim her money, Thelma embarks on a journey, unsupported by her daughter and son-in-law (Parker Posey and Clark Gregg) but aided by a longtime family friend, played by Shaft legend Richard Roundtree in his final onscreen performance. This intergenerational tale reminds us to never underestimate age and that it's never too late for an adventure.

Additional Narrative Feature Films

AFRICAN GIANTS

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Omar S. Kamara | Drama / 107 min / USA

Over a weekend visit in Los Angeles, two first-generation Sierra Leonean American brothers – one an aspiring actor and the other a second-year law student – navigate the changing dynamics of brotherhood and their contrasting views on their heritage after one gives the other a surprise announcement. Raw, vulnerable, honest, and an award winner from Slamdance, AFRICAN GIANTS delves into the depths of their shared history, unveiling untold truths and unresolved emotions.

ALL HAPPY FAMILIES

DIRECTOR: Haroula Rose | Comedy, Drama / 90 min / USA

A charming dramedy starring a well-known ensemble cast, ALL HAPPY FAMILIES starts out as a benign family get-together that ends up spiraling out of control as some shocking news threatens to tear everything apart. This deeply relatable portrait of family dysfunction chronicles two competitive

brothers as they reunite in their childhood home, reveal secrets and air long-held resentments. Starring Josh Radnor, Rob Hubel and Becky Ann Becker.

BLUE SUNSHINE - CALIFORNIA PREMIERE

DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER: Samyuktha Vijayan | Drama / 97 min / India

Aravind is eager to begin the process of transitioning from male to female. Amidst financial hardship and not knowing that Aravind is already taking hormone treatment, an arranged marriage is forced upon them. Gaining courage under pressure, Aravind begins to live life as a woman, Bhanu. When her workplace fails to acknowledge her as such, Bhanu struggles to find happiness until she meets a student being bullied for his feminine demeanor.

GOOD BAD THINGS

DIRECTOR: Shane D. Stanger | Drama / 96 min / USA

Disillusioned by failed relationships, Danny, a young man with muscular dystrophy, steps out of his comfort zone and into the world of online dating. Sparking a profound journey of self-acceptance, Danny unexpectedly matches with Madi, an enigmatic photographer, who challenges him to be vulnerable and discover the extraordinary beauty of his unique body. All three screenings will be presented with Open Captions.

THE ITALIANS

DIRECTOR: Michelle Danner | Comedy / 100 min / USA

Starring Abigail Breslin, THE ITALIANS is a quirky dramedy about family, love, forgiveness and Italian cooking. Deeply touching, the story follows a traditional Italian-American family as they meet their son's new girlfriend, who is distinctly not Italian. Lily is an atheist, is not sold on having kids anytime soon and doesn't eat meat. Needless to say, dinner doesn't end well, but that's just the beginning of the Russo family's troubles.

MOUNTAIN BOY - CALIFORNIA PREMIERE

DIRECTOR: Zainab Shaheen | Adventure / 93 min / United Arab Emirates, UK

A story about adventure, family and friendship, MOUNTAIN BOY takes us on a stunning journey through the clear blue seas, high mountains and golden sunsets of the United Arab Emirates. Suhail, an autistic young boy who has been shunned by his family and villagers, retreats to the Mountains of Fujairah where he lives alone. Upon meeting his new friend Barakah, Suhail, still seeing the world as a place of wonder, is inspired to step out of his comfort zone, find his destiny and venture out to find acceptance, family and redemption.

MR. BLAKE AT YOUR SERVICE

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Gilles Legardinier | Romance, Drama, Comedy / 110 min / France, Luxembourg

When Mr. Blake (John Malkovich) arrives unannounced at a French Estate he once frequented with his late wife, everyone proves to be just as badly off as he is! Though Mr. Blake came to this nostalgic abode merely to collect his thoughts, after realizing the occupants needed extra help, he took on the role of Butler. Acting as a trigger, his abrupt arrival spurs them all back to life and prompts them to work together to restore the manor's former beauty, ultimately rewarding each of them a newly found lease on life.

THE QUEEN OF MY DREAMS - WEST COAST PREMIERE

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Fawzia Mirza | Romance, Drama / 97 min / Canada

Azra lives worlds apart from her conservative Muslim mother, but when her father suddenly dies on a trip home to Pakistan, Azra finds herself on a Bollywood-inspired journey through memories, both real and imagined. From her mother's youth in Karachi to her own coming-of-age in rural Canada, **THE QUEEN OF MY DREAMS** is a colorful, imaginative and uplifting portrait of womanhood, family, and the unpredictable journey of life's experiences that shape us all and make us more alike than we realize.

RILEY

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Benjamin Howard | Drama / 93 min / USA

Nearing the end of his senior year, **RILEY** shares the story of an ambitious and disciplined high school athlete, who, still closeted, grapples with his sexuality under the pressures of high expectations for his athletic pursuits and social pressures to maintain his popularity. Living his life within a carefully-designed blueprint upon which he's formed the basis of his persona, when his queer identity begins to compete against the idea of who he is supposed to be, Dakota Riley is forced to confront the consequences of denying himself, or come to terms with who he really is.

TOKYO COWBOY

DIRECTOR: Marc Marriott | Drama / 118 min / USA

Brash businessman Hideki arrives in Montana having convinced his Tokyo bosses he can turn a profitless US cattle ranch into a premiere-performing asset. Yet when his Hardee's-burger-loving Japanese Wagyu-beef expert fails him, Hideki is poised to misfire magnificently unless he identifies a missing element that's key to the transformation... himself.

TUESDAY

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Daina Oniunas-Pusic | Fantasy, Drama / 111 min / USA, UK

Starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus, **TUESDAY** follows a mother and her teenage daughter as they are forced to confront Death when it arrives in the form of an astonishing talking bird. From debut filmmaker Daina O. Pusić, **TUESDAY** is a heart-rending fairytale about the echoes of loss and finding resilience in the unexpected.

UPROAR

DIRECTORS: Paul Middleditch, Hamish Bennett | Comedy, Drama / 110 min / New Zealand

In this coming-of-age, **UPROAR!** follows Josh (Julian Dennison), a rugby-obsessed teen in New Zealand learning to find his voice. Meanwhile, the Springboks rugby team, representing Apartheid-era South Africa, are touring New Zealand, sparking protests and dividing the country. Funny and heartwarming, the film explores how Josh's newfound passion for acting, as well as a greater awareness of his Māori heritage, sends him into conflict where he is forced to either conform or stand up for himself and his future. Also stars Minnie Driver and Rhys Darby.

Documentary Feature Films

THE ARC OF OBLIVION

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Ian Cheney | 98 min / USA

In a universe that erases its tracks, we humans are hell-bent on leaving a trace. Set against the backdrop of the filmmaker's quest to build an arc in a field in Maine, the film heads far and wide to salt mines in the Alps, waters of the Arctic and ancient libraries in the Sahara to illuminate the strange world of archives, record-keeping and memory. **THE ARC OF OBLIVION** explores this quirk of humankind and

profoundly reminds us all of the fragility and beauty of the present moment and why we're constantly striving to capture it.

ART AND LIFE: THE STORY OF JIM PHILLIPS

DIRECTOR: John Makens | 90 min / USA

Embark on the epic ride of Jim Phillips, the genius behind skateboarding and rock culture's electrifying art, most notably Santa Cruz Skateboards' Screaming Hand. Drawing inspiration from his life in Santa Cruz, Jim helped shape the golden era of skateboarding, securing his place in modern art history. Exploring Jim's dynamic life and career, ART AND LIFE showcases his iconic work and explores his profound narrative of resilience, passion and enduring artistic vision.

BYE BYE TIBERIAS

DIRECTOR: Lina Soualem | 83 min / France, Palestine, Belgium, Qatar

Years after leaving her Palestinian village to pursue an acting career in France, Hiam Abbass returns home with her daughter. In this intimate documentary, BYE BYE TIBERIAS shares a stunning portrait of four generations of women, the inherited trauma they carry and the bonds of love, shared history and memories that connect us to those who came before.

CHASING CHASING AMY

DIRECTOR: Sav Rodgers | 92 min / USA

When filmmaker Sav Rodgers watched Kevin Smith's '90s rom-com Chasing Amy at 12 years old, his life was forever changed. Developing a kinship with it as he grew into his queerness, he embarked on CHASING CHASING AMY to explore the transformational impact of the film and examine its role in LGBTQ+ film culture. As Rodgers examines the narrative and sets out to understand the film that saved his life, he is forced to confront complicated truths of his own that will change who he is forever.

CITIZEN SLEUTH - WEST COAST PREMIERE

DIRECTOR: Chris Kasick | 82 min / USA

With true crime's increased popularity, Emily Nestor starts her own podcast – Mile Marker 181 – as she conducts an amateur murder investigation into a mysterious local death. Her podcast becomes a hit, drawing millions of listeners, but as Emily probes deeper into the case, she's confronted with a new truth she struggles to share. Told in real time over several years, CITIZEN SLEUTH chronicles the rise, fall and redemption of a podcaster in today's media landscape.

JAILHOUSE TO MILHOUSE

DIRECTOR: Buddy Farmer | 67 min / USA

Told with surprising humor and great candor, JAILHOUSE TO MILHOUSE is an intimate portrayal of Pamela Hayden, the recognizable voice behind the iconic Simpsons character, Milhouse. Sharing many of the same traits, both Pamela and Milhouse are resilient, optimistic, relatable and the ultimate survivors. After surviving an abusive boarding school and juvenile jail, Pamela is now opening up and sharing her story with the world and with teen girls about overcoming obstacles and turning their dreams into reality.

JOIN OR DIE

DIRECTORS/Writers/PRODUCERS: Rebecca Davis, Pete Davis | 99 min / USA

An ambitious documentary aiming to answer the question of why you should join a club and why the fate of America depends on it. Diving deep into Robert Putnam's Bowling Alone research, the film sheds light on the growing feeling of disconnection with community in America and how this decline may hold

the answers to our democracy's present crisis. A colorful collage featuring interviews from Hillary Clinton, Pete Buttigieg and Vivek Murthy, JOIN OR DIE will make you want to call all of your friends, start a book club, join your local bowling league and question why you ever stopped searching for these like-minded connections.

LET THE CANARY SING

DIRECTOR: Alison Ellwood | 96 min / USA, UK

Alison Ellwood's spirited documentary LET THE CANARY SING takes the audience on a nostalgic exploration of the life and career of legendary pop icon Cyndi Lauper, with a boisterous narrative anchored by the inimitable Lauper herself.

THE MICHOACAN FILE

DIRECTOR: Bernardo Arsuaga | 91 min / Mexico, Canada

Narrated by Danny Trejo, THE MICHOACAN FILE explores the origin, history and impact of Mexican food in modern society. As the crosspoint between European and Asian trade routes throughout its history, Mexico has gained a vast and strong food culture, featuring infinite recipes, varieties and flavors. Diving into the past and present and examining culinary experts, anthropologists and traditional cooks, this timely, provocative and culturally significant documentary challenges and ultimately deconstructs what we understand about Mexican cuisine.

THE NETTLE DRESS

DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER: Dylan Howitt | 68 min / UK

Using only the fiber of locally foraged stinging nettles, textile artist Allan Brown spends seven years creating a couture dress by hand. A modern-day fairytale and hymn to the healing power of art and nature, THE NETTLE DRESS explores the process of an ancient craft and the journey of using art as an outlet to process grief. Throughout the years, the dress becomes more than just a piece of cloth as it transforms into a woven history, each foot of thread representing and honoring the stories of those Brown has loved and lost.

THE STRIKE

DIRECTORS/PRODUCERS: JoeBill Muñoz, Lucas Guilkey | 85 min / USA

A gripping story shedding light on a world and recent historical moment still not widely known, THE STRIKE explores a generation of California men as they endure decades of solitary confinement and, against all odds, launch the largest hunger strike in U.S. history. Told through intimate interviews and archival verite footage, the film goes beyond making a case against solitary confinement by illuminating the power of organizing this prisoner-led resistance, and in doing so, flipping the true-crime genre on its head.

SUGARCANE

DIRECTORS: Julian Brave NoiseCat, Emily Kassie | 107 min / USA, Canada

Straight from Sundance comes this powerful film about an investigation into abuse and missing children at an Indian residential school that ignites a reckoning on the nearby Sugarcane Reserve. A poignant and visually moving documentary, the film dives into the profound impacts of this school system and blends personal connection with compelling storytelling. Shedding light on forced separation, abuse and cultural devastation, SUGARCANE is a testament to resilience, urging audiences to honor humanity and seek truth.

THIS IS BRIGHTON

DIRECTOR: Beth Aala | 94 min / USA

A unique coming-of-age sports documentary filmed over the course of four years, THIS IS BRIGHTON shares the story of Brighton Zeuner, one of the best female contest skateboarders of her generation. On the precipice of skateboarding becoming an Olympic sport for the first time, this character-driven film reveals the anxiety and pressures of competition, growing pains of puberty, the effects of social media and how a global pandemic upended the promise of a young skater destined to be the best.

A THOUSAND PINES

DIRECTORS/PRODUCERS: Sebastian Diaz, Noam Osband | 74 min / USA

In this tale of labor and family, A THOUSAND PINES shines a light on the precarity of temporary work visas as Raymundo Morales leads a crew of workers who made the challenging decision to leave their families in rural Mexico to plant commercial pine forests in the U.S. Following the workers over the course of a planting season, the film examines the struggle to balance the job's physical demands and extreme isolation while remaining connected to their families back home and ultimately, becoming a family of their own.

WE ARE GUARDIANS

DIRECTORS: Edivan Guajajara, Chelsea Greene, Rob Grobman | 84 min / Brazil, USA

A journey of hope and resilience in the midst of crisis, WE ARE GUARDIANS takes us into the heart of the Brazilian Amazon where thousands are unlawfully invading protected lands for resources and fast profits. Through a tapestry of voices, this documentary provides a raw and intimate look into both the Indigenous peoples' fight to protect their ancestral lands and the illegal loggers trapped in a desperate struggle to make ends meet. Executive produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, WE ARE GUARDIANS is an exploration of the human spirit and our collective responsibility to protect the fragile balance of our world.

Narrative Short Films

7 MINUTES

DIRECTOR: Ricky Gervais | Comedy, Drama / 10 min / UK

AIKĀNE

DIRECTORS: Daniel Sousa, Dean Hamer, Joe Wilson | Animation/ 14 min / USA

AMPLIFIED

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Dina Naser | Drama / 19 min / Jordan, Palestine, Egypt

THE BULLFIGHTER

DIRECTOR: Giselle Bonilla | Comedy / 16 min / USA

DANDELION

DIRECTORS/WRITERS/PRODUCERS: Zhengwu Gu, Ling Zhao | Animation / 4 min / USA

GOLDEN CHILD

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Hannah Levin | Comedy / 10 min / USA

HOLDING ON FOREVER

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Chelsea Christer | Drama / 9 min / USA

THE HOUSE OF LOSS

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Jeon Jinkyu | Animation / 9 min / South Korea, Japan

MAHOGANY DRIVE

DIRECTOR: Jerah Milligan | Dark Comedy, Drama / 13 min / USA

THE MASTERPIECE

DIRECTOR: Alex Lora | Drama / 20 min / Spain

NÉLIDA

DIRECTORS: Marina Artigas, Celeste Lois | Romance, Drama / 18 min / Uruguay

ORDER FOR PICKUP

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Jackie! Zhou | Sci-Fi Drama / 13 min / USA

PECCADILLO

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Sofia Garza-Barba | Drama / 25 min / USA, Mexico

PICKLED HERRING

DIRECTOR: Milana Vayntrub | Comedy Drama / 18 min / USA

PLEASE HOLD THE LINE

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Tan Ce Ding | Drama / 19 min / Malaysia

SPRING ROLL DREAM

DIRECTOR: Mai Vu | Animation / 10 min / UK

THINGS UNHEARD OF

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Ramazan Kilic | Drama / 16 min / Turkey

WELCOME TO 8TH STREET

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Yoo Lee | Animation / 7 min / USA

WE MET AT CAMP

DIRECTOR: MC Plaschke | Comedy / 17 min / USA

WHAT YOU LEFT IN THE DITCH

DIRECTOR: Tucker Bliss | Drama / 17 min / USA

Documentary Short Films

THE ABC'S OF BOOK BANNING

DIRECTORS: Sheila Nevins, Naz Habtezghi, Trish Adlesic | 27 min / USA

DANCEABLE

DIRECTOR: Kelsey McGee | 23 min / USA

DICKS THAT I LIKE

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Johanna Gustin | 13 min / Germany

THE LAST REPAIR SHOP

DIRECTORS: Ben Proudfoot, Kris Bowers | 39 min / USA

MERMAN

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Sterling Hampton | 12 min / USA

MY NAME IS ANNABEL

DIRECTOR: Ida Joglar | 21 min / USA

THE ORCHESTRA CHUCK BUILT

DIRECTOR: Christopher Stoudt | 23 min / USA

PRIMERO, SUEÑO

DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER: Andrés Lira | 17 min / USA

SHERI

DIRECTOR: James 'Q' Martin | 29 min / USA

SLUDGE: A PFAS UPRISING

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Jeffrey Christian | 26 min / USA

WE RIDE FOR HER

DIRECTORS: Katrina Lillian Sorrentino, Prairie Rose Seminole | 19 min / USA

SLO Film Fest's Surf Nite

TRILOGY: NEW WAVE

DIRECTOR: Andrew Mackenzie

Three elite surfers – Griffin Colapinto, Ethan Ewing and Seth Moniz – travel to eight remote destinations searching for pristine waves and an escape from the stress of constant competition. As they travel and catch waves in these remote beaches, they are reminded of the importance of balancing their careers alongside their desire to rediscover the joy of surfing free from competition scores. With a mesmerizing mix of big waves, big tricks, and telling the stories of these three surfers before and after their winning titles, TRILOGY shares the bond they've built through surfing and the balance between making their hobby a career.

Red Eye Cinema

DAWN OF THE DEAD

DIRECTOR: George Romero

Country: USA; **Running Time:** 127 min

Katie Neville and Jason Kaiser, founders of the annual community festival, MicroHorrors, present an exclusive screening of DAWN OF THE DEAD in celebration of its 45th anniversary.

During an ever-growing epidemic of zombies that have risen from the dead, two Philadelphia SWAT team members, a traffic reporter, and his television-executive girlfriend seek refuge in a secluded shopping mall. Content Warning: This film is presented as it was originally created and contains outdated cultural depictions and slurs.

HUMANIST VAMPIRE SEEKING CONSENTING SUICIDAL PERSON

DIRECTOR: Ariane Louis-Seize | Comedy, Drama, Horror / 90 min / Canada

Sasha is a young vampire with a serious problem: she's too sensitive to kill! When her parents cut off her blood supply, Sasha's life is in jeopardy. Luckily, she meets Paul, a lonely teenager with suicidal tendencies who is willing to give his life to save hers, but their friendly agreement soon becomes a nocturnal quest to fulfill Paul's last wishes before day breaks.

Additional Special Presentations

CAMERA

DIRECTOR: Jay Silverman | Drama / 112 min / USA

Filmed in Morro Bay and showcasing iconic, local landmarks, CAMERA shares the heartwarming story of loss, hope and healing. With the help of a broken film camera, an unlikely friendship develops between Eric (Beau Bridges), an eccentric repairman, and Oscar, a bullied 9-year old boy who cannot speak.

Under Eric's mentorship, Oscar finds his voice through photography, and in doing so, heals a wounded community.

SOMM: CUP OF SALVATION

DIRECTOR: Jason Wise | Documentary / 90 min / USA

This sweeping documentary follows a father and daughter as they set out to revive the ancient grapes of their homeland in Armenia. To do so, they must breathe life into the post-Soviet infrastructure of their country, harvest grapes during war, and then market their wine globally. From the team that made the SOMM documentaries, CUP OF SALVATION unveils the primal origins of our enduring passion for wine and how it continues to shape the very fabric of human existence.

R.A.C.E. Matters: Space

GAPS

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Jenn Shaw | DIRECTOR/WRITER: Jenn Shaw

IN WONDERLAND

DIRECTOR: Andrea Camacho McCracken | Drama/ Surrealism / 14 min / USA

BLACK GIRLS PLAY: THE STORY OF HAND GAMES

DIRECTORS: Michèle Stephenson, Joe Brewster | Documentary / 18 min / USA

NAI NAI & WAI PO

DIRECTOR: Sean Wang | Comedy / 17 min / USA

ESSEX GIRLS

DIRECTOR: Yero Timi-Biu | Drama / 15 min / UK

Central Coast Filmmaker Showcase

ANOTHER EIGHT SECONDS

DIRECTOR: Keith Malloy | Documentary / 16 min / USA

BINARY

DIRECTOR: Riley Thomas Stewart | Sci-Fi, Dark Comedy / 14 min / USA

THE DEATH OF RECESS

DIRECTOR: Spencer Taylor | Documentary / 102 min / USA

EL HALCÓN

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Arlene Torres | Drama / 16 min / USA

GHOST KITCHEN

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Elliot Peters | Drama / 25 min / USA

HARVEST CALLS

DIRECTOR: Kyle Plummer | Documentary / 24 min / USA

HOMECOMING

DIRECTOR: David Hardberger | Drama / 5 min / USA

MEET ME AT OUR SPOT

DIRECTORS/WRITERS: Esther K. Liew, Grace Rolen | Romance / 11 min / USA

PLEASING PLOVERS

DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER: Michael Love | Documentary / 10 min / USA

POSTSCRIPT

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Carlos Eduardo Plummer | Drama / 13 min / USA

THE SALT ON OUR SKIN

DIRECTORS: Alessandra Puig-Santana, Reese Raygoza, Tess McCormick, Michelle Truong, Audrey Engelsjerd, Lukas Olensinski | Documentary / 15 min / USA

SUPERSTAR

DIRECTORS/WRITERS: Talha Hussaini, Jacob Heimlich | Drama / 24 min / USA

TASTING NOTES

DIRECTOR: Miles Pepper | Documentary / 16 min / USA

THE UNBROKEN SKY

DIRECTOR/WRITER: Josh Peterson | Drama / 24 min / USA

WRESTLED AWAY: THE LEE KEMP STORY

DIRECTOR: Riley Hanlon | Documentary / 70 min / USA

YOU WILL BE MY MUSIC

DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER: Bob Williams | Documentary / 39 min / USA

