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Nashville Film Festival Unveils Gloria Gaynor Documentary “I WILL SURVIVE” as Powerful Opening Night Selection

*The 54th annual festival kicks off September 28, 2023, with the story of
global music icon and survivor*

Nashville, TN (August 22, 2023) - The [Nashville Film Festival](#) (NashFilm), a week-long celebration of film, music and culture, announced its official opening night film for the 54th annual event from September 28 – October 4, 2023, will be **GLORIA GAYNOR: I WILL SURVIVE**. The screening will take place on Thursday, September 28th at 6:30 pm at the historic Belcourt Theatre. A red carpet event will be held prior along with a special Q&A with Gloria Gaynor and director and Emmy-nominated producer Betsy Schechter, moderated by celebrated singer, songwriter and leader of the band MercyMe Bart Millard, directly following the film.

GLORIA GAYNOR: I WILL SURVIVE is the story of a disco legend who, for five decades, has inspired millions with her words “I will survive,” but only truly understood the lyrics when she hit rock bottom at age 65. The film centers around ageism, reinvention, the power of faith and a woman who empowers herself to create a magnificent second act.

The inspiring documentary recounts the compelling life story of Gaynor, a woman who after battling poverty at a young age endured a 25-year traumatic marriage (and divorce) from her husband and manager. The two-time GRAMMY winner shares how a freak accident early in her musical journey turned what could have been a career-ending disaster into a defining moment for one of disco's most legendary stars.

The film also follows Gaynor as she embarks on her long and unexpectedly difficult journey to write and record her gospel album, “TESTIMONY,” in Nashville with her producer and engineer team of Chris Stevens and F. Reid Shippen with guest collaborators Yolanda Adams, Bart Millard, Jason Crabb and Mike Farris. The album won Gaynor a second GRAMMY exactly 40 years after her first. Audiences will watch as Gaynor wields her inner drive and undeniable musical talent to change the course of her life. GLORIA GAYNOR: I WILL SURVIVE blends Gloria’s present-day, 8-year journey with the artist’s unimaginable ups and downs from the past.

“We are honored to be opening the 54th annual festival with the empowering and moving story of one of the world’s most iconic and inspiring artists,” said Nashville Film Festival Programming Director Lauren Thelen. “This film stands for so much more than just surviving an unfortunate experience; it’s about moving through struggles and coming out the other side a stronger and more impactful performer and person, something that resonates with many people here in Music City and across the country.”

GLORIA GAYNOR: I WILL SURVIVE premiered Gaynor’s unheard, moving story at Tribeca Film Festival earlier this year. All special guests, including Gaynor and Schechter, in attendance for the Nashville Film Festival’s opening night screening and red carpet event will be announced at a later date.

The full slate of films and programs selected for the 54th Nashville Film Festival will be announced later this month with screenings slated to take place at several arts venues throughout Nashville, including the historic Belcourt Theater, Regal Green Hills, the Franklin Theatre, Vanderbilt’s Rothschild Black Box Theater and Sarratt Cinema.

Members of the media interested in covering this impressive slate of films, as well as the festival as a whole, may [apply online here](#) for media accreditation. VIP Badges are now on sale for the 2023 Nashville Film Festival. For more information and to purchase passes, visit www.nashvillefilmfestival.org.

About the Nashville Film Festival

The Nashville Film Festival (NashFilm) is a globally recognized nonprofit organization and cultural event presenting the best in world cinema, American independent films and documentaries by veteran masters, up-and-coming directors, and first-time filmmakers. With Academy Award® qualifying status, the Nashville Film Festival celebrates innovation, music and the many voices of the human spirit through the art of film. Originally founded in 1969, the Nashville Film Festival is one of the first film festivals in the United States and will host its 54th festival from September 28-October 4, 2023. For more information, visit www.nashfilm.org.

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