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Nashville Film Festival Announces 2023 Full Slate and Programs, Including Official Selections and Special Presentations

Opening with GLORIA GAYNOR: I WILL SURVIVE, the Full Slate Includes Over 140 Titles in the 54th Festival from September 28 to October 4

Nashville, TN (August 30, 2023) — The [Nashville Film Festival](#) (NashFilm), a week-long celebration of film, music and culture, today announced its full film program, including special events, official selections and more, for its 54th annual event, taking place **September 28 - October 4, 2023**. This year's festival features more than 140 titles, including 51 feature-length films; more than 20 selections mark their U.S., North American and world premieres with the festival. The films selected to the festival join the previously announced opening night presentation of **GLORIA GAYNOR: I WILL SURVIVE** at Nashville's Belcourt Theatre, as well as **UNCHARTED**, **ASLEEP IN MY PALM**, **IT'S ONLY LIFE AFTER ALL** and **BLACK BARBIE**.

Following the poignant opening night screening on September 28, additional notable festival presentations include Apple Original Film's **FINGERNAILS**, a mysterious journey inspecting love in increasingly desperate couples starring Jeremy Allen White and Annie Murphy; Neon's **EILEEN**, William Oldroyd's eery story of how a woman's friendship with a new co-worker (Oscar winner Anne Hathaway) at the prison facility takes a sinister turn; **ALL DIRT ROADS TASTE OF SALT**, a film from A24, tells the story of a decades-spanning exploration of a woman's life in Mississippi and an ode to the generations of people, places, and ineffable moments that shape us; **LA CHIMERA**, also from Neon, set in the 1980's about a young English archaeologist who gets caught up in the illegal trafficking of ancient finds; Amazon Studios' **SILVER DOLLAR ROAD**, a searing documentary directed by Raoul Peck, about a Black family in North Carolina battling decades of harassment by land developers attempting to seize their property; and **FLORA AND SON**, an Apple Original Film and John Carney's story of a complex relationship between mother and son who discover the transformative power of music.

Featured in the festival's additional programming is a four-film series spotlight on strength in the face of adversity, showcasing trailblazing directors in documentary film. The films selected for this series include: **THIS WORLD IS NOT MY OWN**, a hybrid documentary drama based on the life of writer Andrea Dworkin; **THE TUBA THIEVES**, exploring forty years of inequality after the release of the hit film; **THE HERRICANES**, a spotlight on a women's full tackle football team fighting to play the game they love; and **JESSZILLA**, a coming-of-age story about what it means to be a champion.

Highlighting the festival's deep ties to the Tennessee community and region, this year's program features 6 films made in or with connections to the state, including **COUNTRY BRAWLERS**, a raw and intimate look into the lives of professional boxers and their coaches in Appalachia; **PENCILS VS. PIXELS**, a celebration and exploration of the computer animation revolution that changed everything; and **ALL THE WRONG INGREDIENTS**, following a driven young chef who reluctantly partners with his out-of-control imaginary friend to make a genius dessert and ends up blacklisted.

In addition to the Tennessee features competition, the festival will present "Spotlight Nashville," a special slate of films highlighting Nashville's rich history outside of music: country comedy and delicious bites. This double feature includes: **MINNIE PEARL: FACING THE LAUGHTER**, a full-length documentary about the life and work of Sarah Cannon, aka Minnie Pearl; and **FOOD ROOTS**, following owner and restaurateur of Nashville's Sunda, Billy Dec journeys through the Philippines to learn the recipes of his ancestors and gain a deeper understanding of his cultural and culinary identity.

"The Nashville Film Festival continues to expand and present groundbreaking films and programs that showcase the amazing creative community we have here in Nashville and around the world," said Jason Padgitt, Executive Director of NashFilm. "Throughout our 54th annual festival, we are thrilled to present diverse, powerful and engaging stories that directly connect audiences to the important work happening in the art of film and music."

"Following a record number of submissions, we're thrilled with the diverse lineup of films we're able to present this year from filmmakers around the world," said Lauren Thelen, Director of Programming. "I'm grateful for our programming team and the incredibly unique and captivating mix of films they compile, from moving music documentaries to thrilling horror experiences, and we are honored to showcase a variety of screenings to ensure there's something for everyone in this year's festival."

Each of the 140 films selected for this year's Nashville Film Festival will screen in person at iconic cultural venues throughout the city over the course of the week, with many available online through the festival's virtual platform. Even more programming announcements are expected in the run-up to the 2023 Nashville Film Festival, including the closing night presentation and late additions to the program as festival organizers put the finishing touches on the most compelling festival line-up to date.

The full Nashville Film Festival program to date follows; film and event details, images and trailers are available [online here](#). Tickets for the festival are officially on sale and can be purchased online at www.nashvillefilmfestival.org.

Opening Night Presentation

Gloria Gaynor: I Will Survive (dir. Betsy Schechter) - 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.

Special Presentations

All Dirt Roads Taste Of Salt (dir. Raven Jackson) - A lyrical, decades-spanning exploration across a woman's life in Mississippi, the feature debut from award-winning poet, photographer and filmmaker Raven Jackson is a haunting and richly layered portrait, a beautiful ode to the generations of people and places that shape us.

Fingernails (dir. Christos Nikou) - In an attempt to improve a rocky relationship, a woman secretly begins working at a mysterious institute designed to incite and test the presence of romantic love in increasingly desperate couples. Starring Jessie Buckley, Riz Ahmed and Jeremy Allen White.

Eileen (dir. William Oldroyd) - Set during a bitter 1964 Massachusetts winter, young secretary Eileen becomes enchanted by the glamorous new counselor at the prison where she works. Their budding friendship takes a twisted turn when Rebecca reveals a dark secret — throwing Eileen onto a sinister path. Starring Anne Hathaway and Thomasin McKenzie.

La Chimera (dir. Alice Rohrwacher) - La Chimera follows the travails of Arthur, an Englishman in Italy with a preternatural ability to connect with the land. Starring Josh O'Connor and Isabella Rossellini.

Silver Dollar Road (dir. Raoul Peck) - From Academy-Award Nominee Raoul Peck, Silver Dollar Road follows the story of the Reels family as told by the matriarch Mamie Reels Ellison and her niece Kim Renee Duhon, two fierce and clear-eyed women bending to safeguard valiantly their ancestors' land and their brothers and uncles Melvin and Licurtis, who were wrongfully imprisoned for eight years - the longest sentence for civil contempt in North Carolina history. This documentary, based on the 2019 ProPublica article, highlights the covert ways the legal system has been exploited to keep Black land ownership fragile and the racial wealth gap growing.

Flora and Son (dir. John Carney) - Single mom Flora is at a loss about what to do with her rebellious teenage son, Max. Her efforts to keep him out of trouble lead to a beat-up acoustic guitar, a washed-up LA musician, and harmony for this frayed Dublin family. Starring Eve Hewson and Joseph Gordon-Levitt.

I Used to be Funny (dir. Ally Pankiw) - Sam is a young stand-up comedian and au pair struggling with PTSD, who is weighing whether or not to join the search for Brooke, a missing girl she used to nanny. Starring Rachel Sennott.

A Taste Of Things (dir. Anh Hung Tran) - Set in France in 1889, the film follows the life of Dodin Bouffant as a chef living with his personal cook and lover Eugénie. They share a long history of gastronomy and love but Eugénie refuses to marry Dodin, so the food lover decides to do something he has never done before: cook for her. Starring Juliette Binoche and Benoît Magimel.

Narrative Feature Official Selections

Drift (dir. Anthony Chen) - Jacqueline escapes her war-torn country to a Greek island. She meets an unmoored tour guide and the two become close as they each find hope in the other.

Cypher (dir. Chris Moukarbel) - Documenting the astronomical rise of rapper Tierra Whack, director Chris Mourkabel captures the weird and sinister side of fame. This riveting and enigmatic pseudo-documentary will have viewers questioning everything they see.

A Strange Path (dir. Guto Parente) - A young filmmaker returns to his hometown and attempts to reconnect with his father as the pandemic rapidly accelerates across Brazil. However, their relationship proves to be more complicated with increasingly bizarre phenomena occurring as they get closer.

Mamacruz (dir. Patricia Ortega) - Middle-aged Cruz is caught off guard when she discovers the secret pleasures of desire.

Cora Bora (dir. Hannah Pearl Utt) - Cora senses her open relationship is on the rocks. When the struggling musician and messy millennial goes home to Portland to win her girlfriend back, she realizes it's much more than her love life that needs salvaging.

Fallen Leaves (dir. Aki Kaurismäki) - Two lonely people who meet each other by chance in the Helsinki night and try to find the first love of their lives.

Slow (dir. Marija Kavtaradze) - Dancer Elena and sign language interpreter Dovydas meet and form a beautiful bond. As they dive into a new relationship, they must navigate how to build their own kind of intimacy.

Documentary Feature Official Selections

Black Barbie (dir. Lagueria Davis) - A dive into the cross-section of merchandise and representation as Black women strive to elevate their own voices and stories, refusing to be invisible.

Plan C (dir. Tracey Droz Tragos) - A secret grassroots organization persistently fights to expand access to abortion pills across the USA keeping hope alive during a global pandemic and the fall of Roe v. Wade.

The Disappearance of Shere Hite (dir. Nicole Newnham) - Shere Hite's bestselling book "The Hite Report" liberated the female orgasm by revealing the most private experiences of thousands of anonymous surveys. Her findings rocked American establishment and current conversations about gender and sexuality, but few remember Shere Hite today.

Another Body (dir. Sophie Compton, Reuben Hamlyn) - A college student's search for answers and justice after she discovers deepfake pornography of herself circulating online.

Caterpillar (dir. Liza Mandelup) - Endlessly struggling to feel seen, David becomes infatuated with a mysterious company's promise to transform people's lives by permanently changing the color of their eyes. After traveling to India to get the controversial procedure, he begins to question if this artificial beauty will give him the fulfillment he truly seeks.

Natalia (dir. Elizabeth Mirzaei) - 29-year-old Natalia is about to make her Life Profession in the orders of the Byzantine Catholic Church, having left behind her exciting life as a young student to devote herself to God.

Time BombY2k (dir. Bryan Becker, Marley McDonald) - As the clock counts down to the dawn of the new millennium, America is forced to contend with the largest technological disaster to ever threaten humanity. Crafted entirely through archival footage, TIME BOMB Y2K examines how we grapple with existential threats in an increasingly technological world.

Spotlight of Strength: Trailblazers in Documentary Official Selections

This World Is Not My Own (dir. Petter Ringbom, Marquise Stillwell) - Over four acts, This World is Not My Own traces the lifespan of an artist who struggles to dedicate her life to art while exploring the personal and political events that shaped her singular body of work.

The Tuba Thieves (dir. Alison O'Daniel) - A spate of robberies in Southern California schools had an oddly specific target: tubas. In this work of creative nonfiction, d/Deaf first-time feature director Alison O'Daniel presents the impact of these crimes from an unexpected angle. Blending documentary and fictionalized performances and set to an L.A. landscape/soundscape never quite seen before, this film explores a dimensional experience of deafness and reorients the audience auditorily in an unfamiliar and exhilarating way.

The Herrerianes (dir. Olivia Kuan) - The Houston Herrerianes were a women's full tackle football team from the 1970s whose fight to play the game they love continues to resonate with female athletes today.

JessZilla (dir. Emily Sheskin) - As Jesselyn Silva is on the cusp of making the Olympic team, she faces her toughest battle yet, a cancer diagnosis. JessZilla is a coming-of-age story about what it means to be a champion.

Music Documentary Feature Official Selections

Dusty and Stones (dir. Jesse Rudoy) - Dusty and Stones struggle to sustain a country music career in their tiny African Kingdom of Swaziland and yearn for greater recognition. When they are unexpectedly invited to record in

Nashville and to compete in a Texas battle of the bands, the two cousins journey to the heart of American country music, determined to win big and turn their careers around.

Patria y Vida: The Power of Music (dir. Beatriz Luengo) - The powerful story of 6 afro descendants rappers who have rewritten Cuban history and sparked a lyrical battle for human rights through a song called "Patria y Vida". The song has become a revolution in the streets of Cuba, and it has been banned by the government, which imprisons people for the simple fact of listening to it.

Uncharted (dir. Beth Aala) - A behind-the-scenes look at Alicia Keys' She Is The Music songwriting camp in this revealing look at the music business that focuses on the lack of access and opportunity granted to young black and brown women.

It's Only Life After All (dir. Alexandria Bombach) - Blending 40 years of home movies, raw film archive, and intimate present-day verité, a poignant reflection from Amy Ray & Emily Saliers of Indigo Girls – the iconic folk rock duo. A timely look into the obstacles, activism, and life lessons of two queer friends who never expected to make it big.

Joan Biaz: I Am Noise (dir. Karen O'Connor, Miri Navasky, Maeve O'Boyle) - Since her debut at the age of 18, musician, civil rights campaigner and activist Joan Baez has been on stage for over 60 years. For the now 82-year-old, the personal has always been political, and her friendship with Martin Luther King and her pacifism have shaped her commitment. In this biography that opens with her farewell tour, Baez takes stock in an unsparing fashion and confronts sometimes painful memories.

New Directors Feature Official Selections

With Love and a Major Organ (dir. Kim Albright) - In an alternate world where hearts are made of objects and suppressing emotions is self-care, a lonely woman rips out her own heart for the man she loves, only to discover that he has run away with it.

What Doesn't Float (dir. Luca Balsler) - Seven stories. One city. A group of characters fill out this darkly comedic anthology of New Yorkers at their wits end. When the dailiness of urban life is suspended by unforeseen conflict, each character must make a decision. While the outcomes vary, a unified sense of the city emerges: New York becomes a mirror to the ego reflecting our true character, while the rest sink to the bottom.

Free Time (dir. Ryan Martin Brown) - Drew quits his job and then quickly decides he wants it back.

Asleep In My Palm (dir. Henry Nelson) - A father and daughter living off the grid in rural Ohio face the challenges of her adolescence as he escapes his violent past.

Lost Soulz (dir. Katherine Propper) - When aspiring rapper Sol is discovered by a group of Gen Z musicians at a party, he joins their tour through the heart of Texas and embarks on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

Graveyard Shift Feature Official Selections

The Sacrifice Game (dir. Jenn Wexler) - It's bad enough that boarding school students Samantha and Clara can't go home for the holidays, but things take a deadly turn when a murderous gang arrives on their doorstep - just in time for Christmas.

When Evil Lurks (dir. Demián Rugna) - In a remote village, two brothers find a demon-infected man just about to give birth to evil itself. They decide to get rid of the man but merely succeed in helping him to deliver the inferno.

The Puppetman (dir. Brandon Christensen) - Daughter of notorious killer on death row, The Puppetman, Michal, begins to suspect that there may be some truth to her father's claim of innocence, that an evil force was controlling his body as he slaughtered his victims. When those around her begin to die in brutal ways, she must try and break the curse of The Puppetman before all her loved ones are killed.

Divinity (dir. Eddie Alcazar) - Centers on two mysterious brothers, who abduct a mogul during his quest for immortality. Meanwhile, a seductive woman helps them launch a journey of self-discovery.

Tennessee Feature Official Selections

The Unraveling (dir. Kd Amond) - After suffering a traumatic brain injury, a woman is haunted by a gruesome presence and the suspicion that her husband has been replaced by an impostor.

You & I (dir. Baris Kefeli, Nukhet Taneri) - You & I is a slice of life narrative about the love between two people: Sara and Joseph. Former flames now in their middle age, an unexpected meeting brings them together for a weekend where they have an opportunity to explore the “What if’s?” that could have been with the one that got away.

Pencils vs. Pixels (dir. Bay Dariz, Phil Earnest) - Pencils Vs. Pixels is a celebration of hand-drawn animation and an exploration of the computer animation revolution that changed everything.

Called To The Mountains (dir. Josh Goleman, Robert H. Dyar, Jr.) - A group of Japanese teenagers discover American Folk music and how it changed their lives forever.

Country Brawlers (dir. Curren Sheldon) - Country Brawlers is a raw and intimate look into the lives of professional boxers in Appalachia and the coaches that give them a fighting chance in an unforgiving region.

All The Wrong Ingredients (dir. Nicholas Livanos) - A driven young chef reluctantly partners with his out-of-control imaginary friend to make a genius dessert before he's blacklisted from the world of fine food forever. But what happens to the rest of his life when he throws his ambition into overdrive?

Spotlight: Nashville Official Selections

Minnie Pearl: Facing The Laughter (dir. Barbara Jean Hall) - By day Sarah was a southern lady, by night she took the stage as the spontaneous and somewhat irreverent Minnie Pearl. This is their story.

Food Roots (dir. Michele Josue) - In FOOD ROOTS, Emmy-Award winning Chicago Restaurateur Billy Dec adventures through his mother’s native 7641 Islands of the Philippines to learn recipes from his last living elders, confronting culinary and cultural treasures and family secrets.

Get Me to the Stage On Time - A behind the scenes look at a band that has traveled millions of miles, made 24 albums, and played 6000 shows, thanks to legions of fans they could count on, even if Nashville counted them out. It’s a David and Goliath story that transcends musical genres, just like the band has. It’s the American Dream by way of a dirt road—and it’s the story of a band that turned 15 minutes of fame into a 40-year career.

Short Film, Episodic and Music Video Selections are available at [NashvilleFilmFestival.org](https://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.