



SIFFA UK

INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDANT
FILM FESTIVAL & AWARDS

2023
PROGRAMME



Festival
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LUBA BALAGOVA-KANDOUR

SIFFA FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

SIFFA goes beyond just showcasing films. Within the framework of the festival, we also offer an educational element that includes presentations, masterclasses, and a concert program. We believe in providing opportunities for learning, growth, and cultural enrichment through various artistic mediums.

We also actively support British cultural institutions and music schools. By integrating classical, popular music into the festival, we are focusing on the integral role of music in cinema and create a multidimensional experience for attendees, further enhancing the cultural exchange and appreciation of the arts.

The impact of SIFFA UK extends beyond the festival itself. Our coverage in national newspapers and media outlets, including The Mail Online, The Mail on Sunday, The Sunday Express, and BBC radio, has reached millions of homes globally. This exposure allows us to share our message of peace and cultural exchange with a broad audience.



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VII INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL SIFFA UK

THE EVENT DATES:

NOV 20-28, 2023

OPENING CEREMONY
AND SCREENINGS:

PICCADILLY VUE CINEMA

ADDITIONAL SCREENINGS:

THE CASTLE CINEMA

CLOSING CEREMONY:

DEAR DARLING MAYFAIR



Dear Darling,



SINDIKA



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FEATURES NARRATIVE JURY:

MOHY QUANDOUR

SIFFA CO-FOUNDER, HONOURED JURY PRESIDENT

KARL BARDOSH

HEAD OF THE NARRATIVE FEATURES JURY

GULRUKH KHAN

MEMBER OF THE JURY (FEATURES)

PETRA TERZI

MEMBER OF THE JURY (FEATURES)

GRANT MILLER

MEMBER OF THE JURY (FEATURES)



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MOHY QUANDOUR

SIFFA CO-FOUNDER HONOURED JURY PRESIDENT



Winner of international film festivals, People's Writer of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic, awarded the Russian Golden Cross ("for the contributions to the Culture of the Fatherland").

Mohy Quandour's beginnings in the film industry started with advertising films at J. Walter Thompson (JWT) and MPO studios in New York. Then moved to Hollywood in the early seventies and he was best known for his Hollywood television work on such classic series as Mannix and Bonanza.

He went on to direct such films as "Cherkess", which won him Best Director and Best film at the Monaco International Film Festival, "Cold Wind", "The Spectre of Edgar Allan Poe" (with Robert Walker and Cesar Romero) and "The Prisoner" (with Julie Cox, Andrey Chernichov, Yegor Paznko James Wallace and Mel Borz).

Quandour produced several award winning documentaries such as "The Last Horsemen" and "Musical Journey" and others for European TV networks.

Quandour has authored more than 50 historical best-selling novels published in the USA and the UK. These were translated into several languages including Russian, Arabic, Turkish, French, Spanish and German. His most popular literary works are: "The Night of the Generals", "The Kafkas Trilogy", "Antidote", "The Plot", "Revolution", "The Last Hunt".



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KARL BARDOSH

HEAD OF THE FEATURES NARRATIVE JURY



Accumulating over 30 years of professional experience in Europe, Asia, Brazil, Hollywood and New York in all genres of film and television, Prof. Karl Bardosh of New York University has been an award-winning director, producer, writer, editor of features, shorts, television series and documentaries. Throughout these years Prof. Bardosh has been a trendsetting pioneer in many areas of film and television.

Prof. Bardosh pioneered Cell Phone Cinema as early as 2004 then introduced it in India, in co-production with Executive Director, Sandeep Marwah at the Asian,

cademy of Film and Television, (Film City Noida, January, 2007).

During the 2019 Cannes Film Festival Prof. Bardosh has just introduced Cell Phone Cinema for the first time via two competitions:

The World Peace and Tolerance Initiative at the American Pavilion and at the Global Short Film Awards at the Carlton International Imperial Ballroom.

Students from different countries have competed together with professionals and won important awards. Both events were in conjunction with the Marche du Film during the Festival of Cannes.

In addition, Prof. Bardosh has been frequently serving as Script Doctor, Creative Consultant and Dramaturg on international co-productions and as Artistic Director, Judge and Panelist for international film festivals and competitions.



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GULRUKH KHAN

FEATURES COMPETITION JURY MEMBER



Gulrukh Khan is a multi-awarded international film-maker, writer, holistic specialist, gender and animal rights activist, public speaker and high-level conference organiser. She has directed, produced and scripted a diverse range of short films, education videos and documentaries over the past 25 years. She has won awards in Cannes and New York for her films. Her 'Mantra for the New Millennium' documentary was shown at the UN Peace Summit in the presence of Kofi Anan and was the signature film at the Festival of Light in London in the presence of Ex Prime Minister Tony Blair and 2000 business leaders.

Her other awards include Lifetime Achievement in Film, Best Documentary Feature (NY), Best Spiritual Film (Cannes), Ambassador for Peace, Iconic Women Leaders Creating a Better World, Women Super Achiever Award, Exceptional Female Award, Wintrade Sponsor Award, Stardust Award, Mayor's Award and Women Awarding Women Award. She has been a regular speaker at the House of Lords, Women Economic Forums and has spoken at the World Forum, amongst other World-class global events. She is ex-Chair of ALL Ladies League UK and London and launched the London arm in 2016. She has been a Judge for several award ceremonies and also a Senior Judge for the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition and had attended a reception for the awardees at Buckingham Palace. She sits on the board of the Bosnian Pyramid Foundation and is in mid-project for a documentary about them.

Gulrukh is also a fully qualified and practicing Holistic Specialist with 20+ years of experience.



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PETRA TERZI

FEATURES COMPETITION JURY MEMBER



Petra Terzi produced CAA-Creative Artists Agency concerts with Kevin Costner and Michael Bolton in Greece. She is known for her role in “Un Cuento Perfecto” Netflix series as location manager in Mykonos and Santorini. Petra produced the award-winning feature film *Tenderness*. Petra’s short films (2016-2021) have been selected in over 80 Festivals, received awards. She directed award-winning documentaries “Roses Trilogy” and “She Should Run – Cyprus”. She is currently developing her first feature film “Kanela”, a Greek, Spanish and French co-production scheduled to start shooting in 2023, as well as the inspirational film “I am Nana” based on the true story of a disabled dancer.

Cultural International Festivals network and the Inspire-TV™. She founded the Cyprus International Film Festival (2006), the Bridges International Film Festival in Greece (2008), the WIFT chapter in Cyprus (2018) promoting gender equality in film.

Her memberships include the Greek Directors Guild, the Cyprus Directors Guild, the NYWIFT (Women in Film and Television in New York) and WIFT Canada. She is a professor at the Communication University of China in Nanjing and in Laikon University in Athens, Greece. She holds a degree in Business Administration, a degree in Film Direction and a Master of Arts in Digital Video Production. Petra is the publisher of the magazine Cine@Art and an active member of the Association of European Journalists.



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GRANT MILLER

FEATURES COMPETITION JURY MEMBER



Grant Miller is the CEO of various companies, including Daily Sport, The Bet, 3X Group, Preston Holidays, UK Reader Promotions, Bid TV, Metrika, Designer IP, and Covent Garden Nutraceuticals, demonstrating his leadership across diverse industries. With his business acumen spanning media, promotions, retail, and nutraceuticals, Grant is also passionate about the arts. He is currently positioning himself as a cultural figure, aiming to challenge prominent personalities such as Melvyn Bragg. His keen interest in both business and the arts reflects his multifaceted career.

In addition to his extensive business ventures, Grant Miller has built a reputation for his dynamic approach to entrepreneurship, overseeing a wide array of industries including media, technology, and health. His innovative strategies and business leadership have driven success across multiple sectors. Miller's passion for the arts is not only a personal interest but also a growing part of his professional journey, as he seeks to make a significant impact in cultural conversations. His ambition to take on Melvyn Bragg highlights his aspirations to become a key figure in the cultural domain.



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DOCUMENTARY FILMS JURY:

SYLVIE BOLIOLI

HEAD OF DOCUMENTARIES JURY

ROSA RUSSO

MEMBER OF THE JURY (DOCUMENTARIES)



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SYLVIE BOLIOLI

HEAD OF DOCUMENTARIES JURY



Sylvie started her career in show business at an early age. She wrote, directed, produced and acted in her first play when she was only nine years old. She then joined the “Jeune Theatre du Soleil” where she toured the South of France performing Greek classics. After gaining an MBA in Management and International Marketing, she went on to work in England as a magician’s assistant whilst studying drama at RADA!

In parallel with her business career, Sylvie has always pursued her involvement in entertainment both in front and behind the camera.

Sylvie Bolioli is an accomplished freelance marketing executive with expertise in commercial due diligence for mergers, acquisitions, and capital ventures, collaborating with major clients like Butterworth and the Midem Organisation. She has appeared on British, Mexican, European, and U.S. television and worked alongside directors like Sam Mendes. As a director, Sylvie made her debut in Mexican TV commercials and later directed Martin Scorsese for the Film Fra Sør Festival. Her short film Gas, based on a Hitchcock story, received widespread praise from outlets like The Hollywood Reporter. She followed this with Law & Disorder, a feature documentary on the insanity defense, which launched at Cannes. In addition, she directed films for the UNHCR and appeared in commercials and the TV series You, Me and the Apocalypse. Co-founding the Ramsgate International Film Festival in 2017, Sylvie continues producing films with Polaris Productions, while working on documentary and fiction projects.



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ROSA RUSSO

DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION JURY MEMBER



Rosa Russo is an award-winning Italian London-based producer and director. Her filmography includes both feature films and documentaries, many of which have been selected and awarded at prestigious international festivals. Among these are “Capo Nord” by Carlo Luglio, “Non Con Un Bang”, “La Vita degli Altri”, “Un paio d’occhiali”, “May I Kill U?”, “Back to Berlin”, “Borges and I”.

She made her directorial debut in 2008 with the documentary “Every Day but Sunday,” filmed in Ethiopia. It was selected at major European festivals and won

several awards, including the UNICEF Award at the Oeti in Barcelona.

Her documentary ‘One Girl’ (www.onegirlfilm.com), an international co-production involving the UK, Italy, Romania, Finland and Creative Europe, has been selected in over 30 international festivals in the United States, Asia, and Europe, winning various awards. She is currently working as a director on the feature film “Hearts of Salt,” filmed in Sicily, Wales, and Tunisia.



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SHORT FILMS JURY:

ELISABETH JONES

HEAD OF SHORT FILMS JURY

DEBRA WOOTTON

MEMBER OF THE JURY (SHORTS)

DAVID FAIRMAN

MEMBER OF THE JURY (SHORTS)



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ELISABETH JONES HEAD OF SHORT FILMS JURY



Elizabeth Jones is a dedicated and passionate cineaste with a rich background in film production, having produced two short films that were featured at the Cannes Film Festival.

Her contributions to independent cinema extend beyond production, as she provides a network of supporting artists to enhance indie features, docudramas, and shorts.

As a regular judge of feature films at festivals, she frequently attends film industry events to stay engaged with emerging trends.

By day, Elizabeth is a practicing lawyer, successfully balancing her legal career with her deep passion for the film industry and independent filmmaking. Her dedication to both fields showcases her ability to blend creativity and professionalism, making her an integral part of the indie film community.



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DEBRA WOOTTON

SHORT FILMS COMPETITION JURY MEMBER



Debra Wootton, the CEO of Webra Group at Pinewood Studios, is a multifaceted Creativepreneur, serving as a Film & TV Producer and a Digital Animation Specialist.

Her portfolio includes notable works such as “Secret Wings” (2016), “Mr. Plastimime” (2014), and “One Girl” (2018). Debra’s contributions to the industry extend beyond her professional roles.

She is the Founder of the 529 Club, established in 2009, and the driving force behind the Saronikos International Festival of Creative Arts (SIFCA), which was launched in Greece in 2022.

Her commitment to promoting education and diversity in the industry is evident through her active involvement on the boards of the UK Film Education Trust, dedicated to supporting emerging talent, and Animated Women UK, which focuses on supporting women in animation and VFX.

Furthermore, Debra’s collaboration with Terry Ackland Snow and the team at Film Design International (FDI) for art direction training in film and TV at Pinewood Studios underscores her dedication to nurturing technical and craft skills within the film and TV industry.



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DAVID FAIRMAN

SHORT FILMS COMPETITION JURY MEMBER



David Fairman is an established and award-winning art and advertising photographer and film director. He has worked for many of the world's leading advertisers and brands (including BT, British Airways, Emirates, Coca-Cola and Sony). David's work has been described as Worthy of Fellini by US film critic Jack Farance.

In the early 1990s, David joined Picture Palace Productions in London as a commercials director. In 2000 he directed and produced his first feature "Cold Fish", a dark thriller. "Lighthouse Hill" starring Jason Flemyng (Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels) followed.

"Messages" starring Jeff Fahey (Lawnmower Man and Grindhouse) was produced and directed in 2005. "Carmen's Kiss" co-written, directed and produced by David Fairman is being distributed by Entertainment 7 in the USA. He executive produced "An Organization of Dreams" which premiered at the London Film Festival in 2009. A future production, "Sands of Time...The Lost Cup" an action-adventure movie which David has co-written and will direct is budgeted at \$ 25 Million is being co-produced by Louis G Friedman, co-producer of X Men: Wolverine. He is now in development of "A Shadowing of Angels" inspired by the true story of a commando rescue from ISIS in Iraq. Another film he plans to produce and direct is "Only Anarchists Are Pretty" which is the story of Malcolm Mc Claren and the Sex Pistols. David has had his Art photography exhibited at major galleries around the world. He recently had published two photography art books of his work originally exhibited at The Hamilton's Gallery London entitled "Gauguin Still Lives on Tahiti" and "Venice Masquerade".



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OPENING GALA

THE QUEEN OF SPADES



UK | 135 mins | [PG] – 1949

An army officer becomes obsessed with learning the secret to a card game for which an elderly countess sold her soul years earlier.

Directed by Thorold Dickinson

Written by Rodney Ackland, Arthur Boys, Alexander Pushkin

With: Anton Walbrook, Edith Evans, Yvonne Mitchell

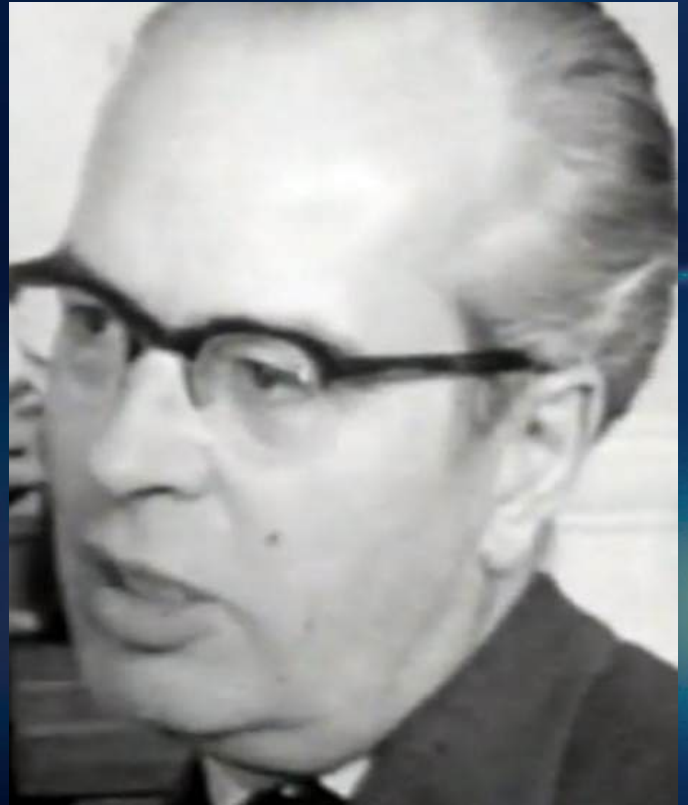


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MEET THE DIRECTOR

THOROLD DICKINSON

Born in Bristol, England, Thorold Dickinson began his film career during the silent era as a writer. He went to work for Ealing in the 1930s, first as an editor and then as a director. He directed or produced military training films during World War II, and after the war he turned out a string of unique and well-received films, such as *The Queen of Spades* (1949), about an elderly woman who strikes a deal with the devil that will enable her to always win at playing cards, and *Secret People* (1952) a story of resistance against an undemocratic regime which features two sisters in exile. A resister from their past draws the younger of the two into an act of violence which harms neutral civilians.



In 1955 Dickinson directed *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* (1955), a drama about the 1947 war for independence in Israel, which was the first Israeli film to be distributed worldwide. The next year he went to work for the UN Department of Public Information as the head of its film division, producing several documentaries. He was appointed president of the International Federation of Film Societies, and in the early 1960s he was offered, and accepted, a position on the teaching staff of the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, where he instituted a pioneering postgraduate course in the research and study of Film Form and Film History. He retired from London University in 1971 as its first Professor of Film, and was then awarded the CBE. He died in London in 1984.



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NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION:

FOR THE SAKE OF AVA
MOHSEN SERAJI

DON'T BURY ME WITHOUT IVAN
LYUBOV BORISOVA

GORGON MEDUSA
VLADIMIR ALENIKOV

AUL CHALLENGE
ISLAM SATYROV

PAPER DREAM
ALI ATSHANI

MERCY LAND
SIMON RICKARDS

KNOTS
OLEG KHOMOKOV

TYGER
ALEXANDER MILO BISCHOF

MAYA
JULIA VERDIN



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FOR THE SAKE OF AVA NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



Iran | 100 mins | [12A] – 2022

A theater group of teenage girls in Iran accept their show to participate in a prestigious festival abroad. The main actress, named Ava, is a girl with an Iranian mother and an Afghan father, that's why she doesn't have a birth certificate or passport. The director of the show decides to replace Ava with a boy to solve the problem, but the other members of the group decide to do anything for Ava, the passport producer, from bribing the employee of the passport office to taking the head of the passport office hostage and even leaving illegally with human trafficking...

Written and Directed by Mohsen Seraji

Written and Produced by Faranak Foroutan

With Hediye Zaman, Mahdi Zaminpardaz, Faranak Foroutan



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

MOHSEN SERAJI

Mohsen Seraji is a film director known for his thought-provoking narratives that explore social issues in Iran. His 2022 film *For the Sake of Ava* focuses on a group of teenage girls in a theater troupe. The main actress, Ava, faces the challenge of not having a birth certificate or passport due to her mixed Iranian-Afghan heritage, complicating her ability to travel abroad for a prestigious festival. The film highlights the lengths her friends go to in order to help her, touching on themes of bureaucracy, identity, and the struggles of marginalised groups.



Seraji's work reflects his commitment to exploring the societal pressures and obstacles faced by individuals, particularly those in vulnerable positions.



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DON'T BURY ME WITHOUT IVAN

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



Russia | 124 mins | [12] – 2022

This true story took place in 1910 in Eastern Siberia, in the expanses of Yakutia. Yakut Stepan Beresekov periodically falls into a lethargic sleep. Only a Russian, the son of a priest, Ivan Popov, can distinguish his condition from real death. But Popov leaves for a long ethnographic expedition. Stepan decides to follow his savior so as not to be buried alive.

Directed by Lyubov Borisova

Written by Lyubov Borisova , Yulia Klimenko

Produced by Ivan Bolotnikov , Dmitry Shadrin , Sardana Savvina

With Aleksandr Chichakhov, Innokenti Dakaiarov, Vera Efremova



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

LYUBOV BORISOVA

Lyubov Borisova is a filmmaker of Yakutian origin best known for her work in showcasing the stories and culture of her homeland. Her films often reflect the life and traditions of Yakutia, telling the unique stories and capturing landscapes of the region. Borisova's filmmaking is characterised by its deep connection to her homeland and her ability to blend personal and cultural narratives into compelling cinema.

She gained recognition for films such as *The Lord Eagle* (2018), *The Sun Above Me Never Sets* (2019), *Cold Gold* (2021) and *Don't Bury Me Without Ivan* (2022).



Her films demonstrate her connection to the rich traditions of Yakut storytelling and have earned her recognition within the Russian and international film communities. Her films often explore deeply personal narratives set against the backdrop of the unique Siberian landscape, blending historical context with the emotional struggles of her characters. Borisova continues to be a prominent voice in Russian cinema, highlighting the Yakutian experience.



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GORGON MEDUSA

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



Russia | 110 mins | [15A] – 2022

«Gorgon Medusa. Rehearsal with an Orchestra» is a modern interpretation of the famous ancient myth about Perseus and the Gorgon Medusa. Tsar Polydekt, harassing Danae who had taken refuge on his island, sends her son Perseus after the head of the Gorgon Medusa. He is sure that Perseus will not return, since Medusa's gaze is deadly. However, Perseus is helped by his father, the all-powerful god Zeus. But everything happens completely unpredictably – Perseus falls madly in love with Medusa, and she falls in love with him.

The film is based on the performance of the Moscow Music and Drama Theater "ÁNTE".

Written and Directed by Vladimir Alenikov

Produced by Sergey Shumakov

With Daria Taran, Alexander Khotenov, Ksenia Muslanova, Ilya Antonenko, Yanina Tretyakova, Marianna Vasilyeva, Alexander Rapoport, Igor Korovin, Vladimir Alenikov and Tatyana Konovalova



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

VLADIMIR ALENIKOV

Vladimir Alenikov, born on August 7, 1948, is a renowned director, screenwriter, writer and producer with a career that spans several decades. He first gained recognition with his work in Soviet cinema, including directing and writing for the popular characters Petrov and Vasechkin, which became widely beloved through films like Vacation of Petrov and Vasechkin. His talent for storytelling in various genres, from comedy to drama and thriller, has made him a versatile figure in both Russian and international cinema.



One of his recent works, Gorgon Medusa. Rehearsal with the Orchestra (2022), reinterprets the ancient Greek myth of Perseus with a modern twist, combining live orchestral performance and a unique "rehearsal" narrative style. Alenikov's ability to blend classical themes with contemporary storytelling techniques has earned him accolades, including multiple awards at international festivals. He has also worked in Hollywood, directing the film The Gun (from 6 to 7:30 PM), which gained international recognition. Throughout his career, Alenikov has continued to explore new creative directions, contributing significantly to both theater and film.



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AUL CHALLENGE

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



Russia | 93 mins | [U] – 2023

"Aul Challenge" follows 11-year-old Timur, an urban teenager who makes a bet with his father and moves to a rural village to live with his strict grandfather. Timur struggles with life in the village: no internet, unfriendly peers led by Myrzabek, and even Asya, a girl he likes, criticizes him for not knowing their native language. However, with the help of his witty friend Bubble and support from his grandfather, Timur learns horseback riding to impress Asya and eventually discovers the deeper family rift between his father and grandfather. As Timur matures, he understands the importance of family and forgiveness, and takes on the challenge of winning the village horse race for his grandfather.

Directed by Islam Satyrov

Written by Khalimat Gergokova, Vadim Saitov

Produced by Magomet-Ali Naymanov

With Amir Naymanov, Amir Kumratov, Ramazan Dzhemakulov



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

ISLAM SATYROV

Islam Satyrov is a multi-talented director, screenwriter, composer, and arranger. He started his education at the Astrakhan College of Music, where he majored in saxophone at the pop-jazz department. Later, he expanded his expertise in film by graduating from the feature film directing course, short film group under Master Dmitry Kupovyh, and the screenwriting course under Master Maria Ogneva at the Kinostart film school in 2020.

Satyrov has directed several short films, including *Whisper of Happiness*, which won the 2nd Stavropol All-Russian debutant pitching in 2018, and *In Active Search*, filmed at the Crystal Spring festival in 2019.

His work as a documentary director includes *Kambak – Tumbleweed*, *Sary-su*, and *Yakub*. Additionally, he is a composer and arranger, having completed a musical album of Nogai folk lullabies in 2013 and worked as a sound producer for a film score in 2019. His documentary *Insta-Shepherd* received a special jury prize at the Unfiltered Cinema festival in Minsk and was featured in international festivals in Mexico and Nigeria.





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PAPER DREAM

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



USA | 84 mins | [15] – 2022

The story of this film is about an albino teenage boy who falls in love with a young girl. The albino boy has been hiding from the public because of his condition. A girl takes advantage of his pure heart and makes him a social media influencer meanwhile he falls in love with her.

Directed and Produced by Ali Atshani

Written by Ali Atshani, Jaber Ghasem Ali

With Mina Vahid, Amir, Hossein Mousavi, Karman Tafti



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

ALI ATSHANI

Ali Atshani, born in Isfahan, began his filmmaking journey in high school with a short film, *Namaye Entezar*. He continued making short films and documentaries while studying computer engineering. His first major success came with the documentary *Unfinished* (2002), which was banned in Iran but won awards internationally. In 2004 and 2006, he self-funded and directed two feature films, *The Forgotten Positives* and *One Step to God*, which garnered critical acclaim abroad and were successfully screened in Iran.

Atshani's first professional project, *Banana Skin* (2007), explored spiritual themes and received mixed reviews due to its controversial subject matter.

His 2009 film *Democracy Tou Rouze Roshan* faced government pushback but became a box office hit. In 2011, he made *The President's Cellphone*, which was banned by the government but later released. Atshani also directed Iran's first 3D film, *Mr. Alef* (2012), which, despite limited attention in Iran, was recognized internationally. His subsequent films, including *Negar's Role* (2013) and *Paradise* (2015), continued to challenge societal norms and censorship in Iran.





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MERCY LAND

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



UK | 108 mins | [12]

In a future world ravished by climate change, a mother and daughter fight to survive as warring clans battle for control of the wastelands.

Written, Directed and Produced by: Simon Rickards

Produced by: Niti Sidpra

With: Celia Learmonth, Olivia Clarke, Ben Silver



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

SIMON RICKARDS

Simon Rickards has been building on the success of his debut feature film *British Made*, which won numerous awards and was viewed by over half a million people on Amazon Prime. A graduate of film studies in London, Simon has worked with top media companies like BBC, Sky TV, Cineworld, and Arqiva Media. His passion for cinema, especially films that reflect social issues and politics, led him to establish Godiva Films in 2005. Over the course of five years, Simon produced more than 15 short films and documentaries, many of which received recognition at international film festivals. In these projects, he worked as a writer, director, assistant director, editor, or cinematographer, honing his skills in various aspects of filmmaking.



After the success of *British Made*, Simon embarked on his second feature film, *Mercy Land*, a science fiction film set in a world shaped by the effects of climate change. The film was produced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented challenges, but Simon and his team adapted creatively to use the atmosphere and restrictions to their advantage. *Mercy Land* not only entertains but also raises important questions about the impact of climate change, blending action with socially relevant themes. Simon's ability to merge compelling narratives with thought-provoking content continues to establish him as a director to watch, with *Mercy Land* serving as a testament to his dedication and growing reputation in the film industry.



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KNOTS

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



Russia | 83 mins | [15A]

Long-haul driver Berd, a mature man, marries seventeen-year-old Dina. They build the largest house in the village, which eventually turns into an impregnable fortress.

Directed by Oleg Khamokov

Written by Zarina Kanukova

Produced by Natalya Smagina, Nikolay Yankin

With: Tamara Balkarova, Svetlana Mamresheva, Alim Khokonov



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

OLEG KHAMOKOV

Oleg Khamokov, born in 1987 in the village of Deyskoye in the Tersky district of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, is a talented filmmaker and actor. His journey into the arts began in 2004 when he enrolled in the theater department of the North Caucasian State Institute of Arts, where he studied "Acting Art." He graduated in 2008 with a diploma as an "Actor of theater and cinema." Khamokov later worked in television as a director and videographer, further developing his creative skills.

In 2010, he entered the prestigious Creative Workshop of renowned director Alexander Sokurov at the Kabardino-Balkarian State University, which significantly shaped his filmmaking approach.



His filmography showcases a range of work, including Letter to Mother (2010), Land of the Narts (2011), Dream (2012), Live (2013), Army (2014), and Antigone (2015). In 2023, he released his most recent film, Knots, continuing his exploration of complex narratives and artistic expression. The film delves into the complexities of human relationships and societal challenges. The film showcases his signature style of exploring deep emotional and philosophical themes, continuing his trajectory as a filmmaker with a focus on intricate narratives



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TYGER

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



UK | 92 mins | [12]

After his release from prison, an ex-soldier embarks on a journey in an attempt to reunite with his family. While in prison, Joe was forced to be away from his wife and beloved daughter, Grace, who is about to turn six years old. Grace means the world to Joe and he is desperate to see her again. Before he can do that, he is put on a rehabilitation program by the local council where he is housed in a dilapidated bedsit in Margate and assigned a dead-end job to “help” integrate back into society. Joe is just another lost soul destined to fall between the cracks of the system, abandoned by the government and marginalised by society. His only desire is to make enough money to travel to Scotland and finally be with Grace. But one single moment threatens to destroy his plan and change his life forever.

Director: Alexander Milo Bischof

Writer: Alexander Milo Bischof, Dylan Edwards

Producer: Olga Kavtreva

Cast: Dylan Edwards, Laura Haddock, Ben Aldridge



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

ALEXANDER MILO BISCHOF

Alexander Milo Bischof is a Swiss filmmaker based in London, known for his distinctive style of cinematic storytelling that blends striking visuals with character-driven narratives. He gained recognition with his debut feature film, *Trouble Will Find Us* (2020), which premiered at the Busan International Film Festival and won awards at the Manchester Film Festival and Ramsgate Film Festival. His passion for crafting emotionally intense stories is evident in his films, which often explore themes of human relationships and personal struggles.



His latest project, *Tyger* (2024), continues this focus, following the journey of an ex-soldier and recovering addict who, after serving a five-year prison sentence, embarks on a mission to reunite with his daughter. Filmed over 14 days in the UK, *Tyger* showcases Bischof's skill in combining hard-hitting social themes with a visually compelling narrative. Produced through his company, Stave Hill Films, this second feature promises to build on the critical success of his previous work.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MAYA

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



US | 104 mins | [15]

Fifteen-year-old Maya is struggling after her father's abandonment and living with her mother Camila's abusive boyfriend, Diego. When Maya meets Ray online, he becomes her confidant and convinces her to run away with him. However, Maya soon discovers Ray's true intentions as he begins exploiting her, setting her up with his "clients" and bringing her to motels with another girl, Kayla. Meanwhile, Camila, devastated by Maya's disappearance, overdoses but agrees to get sober to bring her daughter back. As Camila fights to rescue Maya from Ray's grip, Maya must face the trauma she has endured. The battle between Ray's control and Camila's love intensifies—can Camila help Maya heal, or will Maya remain trapped in the dark world she's fallen into?

Written, Directed and Produced : Julia Verdin

Produced by: Jason Piette

With: Patricia Velasquez, Isabella Feliciano, Billy Budinich



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

JULIA VERDIN

Veteran filmmaker Julia Verdin is a multi-hyphenate – she is known as an accomplished producer, award-winning Director and has written a number of screenplays. Having been in the film business for 30 years, Julia has established herself as one of Hollywood's leading independent filmmakers, with over 37 critically acclaimed feature films produced to date. She founded and has been running Rough Diamond Productions since 1995. She has also recently made her mark as a writer and director and has just completed directing her fifth film. She is also known for her social impact work in film.



Some of the memorable, acclaimed theatrical releases and top film festival favorites Julia has produced, includes 2 Jacks, directed by Bernard Rose, based on the Leo Tolstoy short story "Two Hussars": the film starred Danny Huston, Jack Huston, Sienna Miller, Jacqueline Bisset, and Billy Zane; Stander, directed by Bronwen Hughes starring Thomas Jane, Deborah Unger, Dexter Fletcher, and David O'Hara; Sony Pictures Classics released The Merchant of Venice, directed by Michael Radford, starring Al Pacino, Jeremy Irons, and Joseph Fiennes; and Riding The Bullet based on a Stephen King story, directed by Mick Garris, and starring David Arquette, Jonathan Jackson, Erica Christensen, and Barbara Hershey. Julia's faith-based film, The Least Among You was a Lionsgate release, starring Lou Gossett Jr., Lauren Holly, and William Devane, and featured in major festivals, being nominated for two N.A.A.C.P awards. Julia also Executive Produced the 2015 Lionsgate release Born of War, directed by Vicky Jewson, starring James Frain and Sophia Black D'Elia.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION:

3723 VOZNESENSKY

VALERY BELOV

GYPSY BILLIONAIRE

JOEL VAN DER MOLEN

VYSOTSKY. THE ODESSA NOTEBOOK

ANATOLY BALCHEV

APNEA

STEFANO POGGIONI, CLAUDIA CATALDI, AND ELENA POGGIONI



Festival
Awards
Screenings

3723 VOZNESENKY DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION



Russia | 52 mins | [12]

Famous Soviet astronomer Nikolay Chernykh, who discovered more than five hundred planets, in 1976 gave one of them the name of Andrei Voznesensky, thus confirming the cosmic scale of the poet's personality.

Directed by Valery Belov



Festival
Awards
Screenings

GYPSY BILLIONAIRE

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



UK | 57 mins | [12]

Born into a poor Romany Gypsy family, Alfie Best grew up facing racism and working with his father from a young age. By 14, he started his first business, and by 1989, he was earning £200,000 annually before losing everything in the recession. Despite setbacks, Alfie's vision led him to invest in mobile phones and later affordable housing. Today, he owns Europe's largest affordable housing company, worth over one billion pounds.

Gypsy Billionaire is the story of how a man who should have failed became the most successful Gypsy in history whilst helping to solve the biggest crisis of our times.

Directed and Produced by Joel Van der Molen

With Alfie Best, Claire Sweeney, Terry Stone and Joel Van der Molen



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

JOEL VAN DER MOLEN

Joel Van Der Molen, a highly accomplished filmmaker, has won 31 Global Film Awards, highlighting his exceptional talent in the industry. Born and raised in Southeast England, Joel initially pursued a career in tennis before his passion for acting and storytelling took over. He studied at The Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London, where he honed his skills and developed a love for filmmaking.

Through his passion for storytelling, Joel uses film as a powerful medium to inspire and motivate audiences. His work reflects his creative approach to telling compelling stories, which resonates deeply with viewers worldwide.



His filmmaking is a testament to his dedication to uplifting others through the art of cinema.

Today, Joel continues to make an impact in the film industry by combining his creative vision with his love for storytelling. His journey from an aspiring tennis player to an award-winning filmmaker showcases his versatility and commitment to inspiring others through his craft.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

VYSOTSKY. THE ODESSA NOTEBOOK

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



Russia | 70 mins | [12]

A film about the life, work and creative endeavors of Vladimir Vysotsky in Odessa. At the legendary Odessa film Studio, Vysotsky played the first major roles on film and for the first time sang from the screen with his characteristic husky voice, which by that time had already been replicated on tape cassettes throughout the country. The Odessa period is one of the key milestones in the poet's life and work. Here he not only revealed himself as a film actor, but also declared himself as a poet, composer, having written dozens of songs for films of the Odessa Film Studio, which were included in the golden fund of the national cinema.

Directed by Anatoly Balchev

Produced by Mark Ivasilevitch



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

ANATOLY BALCHEV

Anatoly Balchev began his career in the arts as a composer, creating music for cinema and theater, and writing songs for Russian pop stars. His talent as a composer led him to release his own albums, showcasing his original songs. In 1990, Balchev made his directorial debut with *The Poets' Café*, a self-written piece that marked his entry into filmmaking. Throughout the 1990s, he expanded his creative horizons by co-producing *Cops in Russia*, the Russian adaptation of Fox Television's hit show *COPS*.

In 1998, Balchev founded the Apollo Film Studio, where he delved deeper into international film collaborations.

His studies in Hollywood filmmaking culminated in his directorial work on the Russian-American movie *Passenger from San Francisco*. This cross-cultural project reflected his growing expertise in blending Russian and Western cinematic techniques. In addition to directing, Balchev has written several screenplays that are awaiting production, highlighting his continuous dedication to the craft of storytelling.

Balchev's career reflects a unique blend of music, television, and film, bridging Russian and American entertainment industries. His multifaceted background in composition, screenwriting, and directing has established him as a versatile figure in Russian cinema. As a creative visionary, he continues to explore new narratives while awaiting the realization of his written works on the big screen. His efforts to merge different cinematic traditions have earned him a distinct place within the international film community.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

APNEA

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



Italy | 64 mins | [12]

The voices of 14 migrants leaving their home, moving through Libya and getting to Italy after crossing the Mediterranean Sea mingle into a single story, representing thousands of other stories sunk under the sea.

Directed by Stefano Poggioni, Claudia Cataldi, Elena Poggioni

Produced by Yiyuan Chang

With: Julia Saeed



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

STEFANO POGGIONI, CLAUDIA CATALDI, ELENA POGGIONI

The Factory Prd, established in 2013, is a dynamic film production company known for its versatility across various media formats. Over the years, it has produced more than 100 music videos and commercials, showcasing its expertise in visually driven storytelling. Additionally, the company has produced two short films, demonstrating its growing capabilities in narrative filmmaking. Apnea, its first feature-length film, represents a significant milestone for The Factory Prd as it transitions into full-scale cinematic productions, setting the stage for future projects in the industry.



The Factory Prd's expansion into feature films with Apnea marks an evolution in the company's creative ambitions. Known for its extensive experience in producing music videos and commercials, the company has honed its skills in crafting visually compelling content. The transition from short films to long-format storytelling demonstrates the company's dedication to exploring new cinematic horizons. With Apnea, The Factory Prd is aiming to establish itself as a serious contender in the film industry, blending creative innovation with high-quality production values.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

SHORT NARRATIVES COMPETITION:

METaverse

PING QI GE

KNIGHT OF CUPS

FABIO RAVIOLI

OUR FUTURE

THIBAUT MARTIN

THE STORY OF FERNANDO

NATALLIA BULYNIA

EVERYTHING CALLS

NIMROD K. EILAT

INHERITANCE

ALEKSANDR LETUNOV

GETTING TO THE MOON

JACOB NICHOLSON

TOSHA-MOMONTOSHA

OKSANA STASHENKO

I DO NOT EXIST

SAMUEL J. MAY

GOOD TO TALK

STEPHEN BROEKHUIZEN

HOBO

TIANAI ZHANG

RESCUE

IVAN SHALAEV

JUNE & GINA

SAM STERLAND

MEMORIA

ALINA BICHIEVA



Festival
Awards
Screenings

METaverse

SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(China) – 9 mins

In the era of artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence is combined with the film and television industry. This work uses the method of combining artificial intelligence to generate video and personal creation, to tell a story about a kind of psychological therapy provided by artificial intelligence for human beings in the future.

Writer / Director / Producer: Ping Qi Ge

With: Jiuhe Zhou



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

PING QI GE

Ping Qi Ge is a master's student specializing in digital image design and creation at Shandong University of Art & Design. His latest work, Metaverse, explores the integration of artificial intelligence with the film and television industry. The film presents a future where AI provides psychological therapy for humans, combining AI-generated video with personal creation to tell this futuristic story. Ping Qi Ge takes on multiple roles as the writer, director, and producer of this innovative project, furthering his exploration of technology's role in storytelling.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

KNIGHT OF CUPS SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(Italy) – 5 mins

Inside a rough and surreal environment under renovation, there are a teenager and an elderly man, sitting at a table playing a game of Scopa. On the sidelines, an elderly lady is busy sewing. As the boy gradually drops a card, the old man makes his play and with satisfaction earns points. Suddenly, just before the last possible play, the two elderly people disappear and with them also the last playable card. The boy, amazed and intrigued by the noises that echo in the environment, explores the rest of the house, among dark and surreal situations, until he finds a mirror set in the wall. Looking in the mirror, he faces himself. Attracted by yet another disturbing noise, he reaches an adjoining room where he finds the two elderly people. The man gives the boy the card he should have played. The boy returns to the gaming table and drops, in place of the old man, the card which allows him to earn yet another point and win the game.

Writer / Director: Fabio Ravioli

Cast: Alessio Nicolai, Daniele Bimbi, Laura Biondi



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

RAVIOLI FABIO

Ravioli Fabio is a Tuscan director and screenwriter born in 1982. His stories start from simple and real situations, a pretext to delve into the human soul. From a solo trip, "Single Room" (2017) was born, which deals with the theme of solitude and emotional independence. Hence the first satisfaction: the short was selected for the CortoDino Film Festival XII Edition in Torre Annunziata. In 2018 the sentimental "A lume di candela" was filmed. After a break due to the Covid pandemic, he directs two new shorts: "Non transigo" (2021) made for the 48 Hour Film Project in Rome and "Selva rossa" (2022) shot on the occasion of the Dante celebrations at the request of the Municipality of Tresana (MS).



In September 2022 he participated in the 79th Venice International Film Festival by screening the trailer of the short film "Non transigo" inside the Fedic Forum. In 2023 he experiments with filming with smartphones and with "Priorità" he ironically recounts a cross-section of Italy during the 2020 Lockdown. The experiments continue and, wanting to dedicate a part of himself to his missing grandparents, he creates "Knave of Cups", a disturbing psychological thriller that wants to tell the eternal help that our loved ones give us even when they can no longer be physically present.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

OUR FUTURE SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(France) – 25 mins

A face-to-face meeting behind closed doors on the theme of Amazon deforestation brings together two heads of state. At the same time, a school director accompanies a student particularly concerned by the climate emergency to an unknown destination.

Writer / Director: Thibault Martin

Writer: Marc Koenig

Cast: Marie Bunel, Cécile Garcia Fogel, Alexandre Padilha de Azevedo



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

THIBAUT MARTIN

Producer and Director of commissioned films since 2005, Thibault Martin feels mature and decides to dive into the cinema in 2018. In parallel with writing a feature film, he develops the script, direction and production of his first short film, "Our Futures". Self-taught, touches everything, optimistic, he likes to make the extraordinary as plausible and forbids himself few things ; as for example, starting a career as a filmmaker at 50. Deeply aware of the fragility of democracy, he considers everything political and tries to express it in a poetic and universal way. He founded the production company



Artemis films in 2022 to tell "vertebrate" stories that sensitize all generations. A fan of teamwork, he attaches as much importance to the image as to the sound he particularly defends. His bet: to make political film like a flight and a show.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

THE STORY OF FERNANDO SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(UK) – 5 mins

A young Spanish Embassy worker visits an old colleague who is dying to present him credentials.

Writer / Director: Natallia Bulynia

Producer: Andre Manuel Nobre Quinteiro Lopes

Cast: Natallia Bulynia



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

NATALLIA BULYNIA

Natallia Bulynia is a versatile artist whose journey spans multiple countries and cultures. After moving to Seoul, South Korea, she began her acting career, bringing a unique international perspective to her work. Beyond her screen presence in major productions like *Killing Eve* and *Marvel's Secret Invasion*, Natallia also ventured into writing in 2020, exploring new creative paths. Her resilience and creativity are even more inspiring given her personal battle with Multiple Sclerosis, which she navigates while continuing to thrive in her artistic career.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

EVERYTHING CALLS SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(Israel) – 30 mins

Interpersonal connections may be trouble for some, so connect to a stream that provides you with solutions.

A troublesome man is looking for the one connection that will solve everything
Everyone calls?

Writer / Director: Nimrod K. Eilat

Producer: Merav Ktorza

Cast: Eldar Brantman



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

NIMROD K. EILAT

Nimrod K. Eilat is an Israeli film director known for his work on the short film *Everything Calls*. The film explores the complexities of interpersonal connections, centering on a man searching for a single connection that will solve all his problems. Nimrod wrote and directed the film, with Merav Ktorza serving as producer, and Eldar Brantman starring in the lead role. *Everything Calls* reflects Nimrod's focus on human relationships and the challenges that arise from seeking meaningful connections in a modern world.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

INHERITANCE

SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(Russia) – Narrative 13 mins

A father gathers his sons for a festive dinner, where he announces the distribution of inheritance. The younger son, who hasn't lived with his parents for a long time, receives his father's workshop, while the older son, who has always been by his side and helped develop the workshop, receives nothing.

Director : Aleksandr Letunov

Writer: Ekaterina Bobrovenko

Producer: Elena Tepukhina

With: Semyon Aleshin, Anatoly Krasnopivtcev, Elisey Bobrov



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

ALEKSANDR LETUNOV

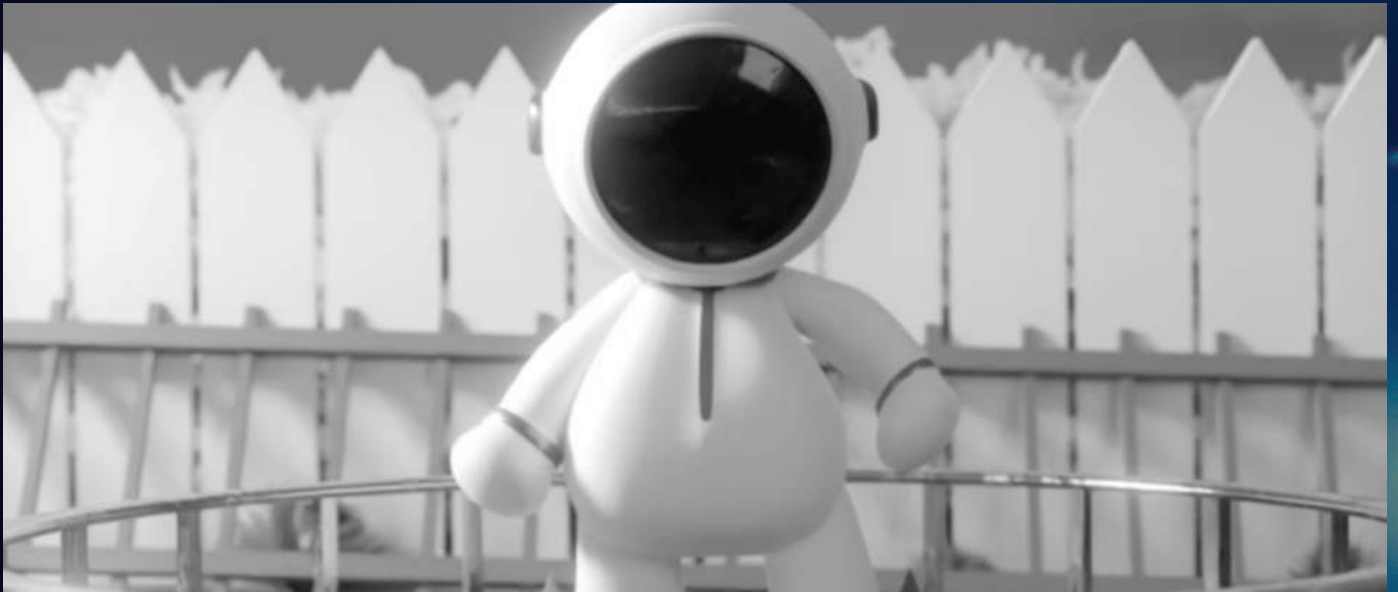
Aleksandr Letunov is a 2022 graduate of the Moscow Film School, where he studied directing fiction films under the guidance of acclaimed directors Alexei Popogrebsky and Pavel Bardin. Prior to that, he completed his education in 2016 at the Chelyabinsk State Institute of Culture and Arts, earning a degree in directing films and television. His academic background has provided him with a strong foundation in both film theory and practical filmmaking, and he has been involved in various creative projects since completing his studies.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

GETTING TO THE MOON SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(UK) – 4 mins

A whimsical animation that follows a young astronaut in 1969 as he tries to get to the moon by various means before meeting another astronaut with the same goal. Made entirely by one person with no budget in two weeks.

Writer / Director: Jacob Nicholson



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

JACOB NICHOLSON

Jacob Nicholson is a dedicated film student at Arts University Bournemouth, where he hones his skills in animation and filmmaking. His film *Getting to the Moon* reflects his creative ambition, as it was made entirely by him with no budget in just two weeks. The film, a whimsical 4-minute animation, follows a young astronaut's imaginative attempts to reach the moon. Jacob's hands-on experience and dedication to his craft are evident in his work, showcasing his ability to bring imaginative stories to life through animation.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

TOSHA-MOMONTOSHA SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(Russia) – 19 mins

Six-year-old boy Antosha lives in orphanage. He thought to himself that the volunteer girl would become his mother. Angels fulfill his dream: one day they go home together, like mother and son. Almost a magical story, one might say, a parable. "But was it really or this the story takes place somewhere in heaven." And the names of the characters in the film are not accidental: nannies Vera and Nadezhda, mother Lyubov, Angelina and Nikolai.

Writer / Director / Producer: Oksana Stashenko

With: Marina Yakovleva, Maxim Kolosov, Oksana Stashenko



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

OKSANA STASHENKO

Oksana Stashenko is a distinguished Russian theater and film actress, director, and screenwriter, celebrated for her contributions to the arts. She was awarded the title Honored Artist of Russia in 2009 and People's Artist of Ossetia in 2011, in recognition of her significant work in Russian cinema and theater. Stashenko has also won numerous awards at both Russian and international film festivals. Beyond acting, she has successfully worked as a TV presenter and continues to create and direct films, making her a multifaceted talent in the industry.

Stashenko's dedication to the arts has spanned decades, with a diverse portfolio that includes roles in feature films, short films, and television.

Her directorial efforts are particularly notable, including her work on *Tosha-Momontosha*, a heartwarming short film. With her rich experience and numerous accolades, Oksana Stashenko remains an influential figure in the entertainment world, known for her passion, versatility, and contribution to Russian culture.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

I DO NOT EXIST

SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(UK) – 39 mins

Circumstances have led to them requiring his services again, the man with the skills to remove any lingering doubts and give them the confidence to go through with it, but afterwards, will that be enough, have their actions been justified?

Writer / Director / Producer: Samuel J. May

With: Henry Davis, Paul Parker, Reece Alexander-Putinas



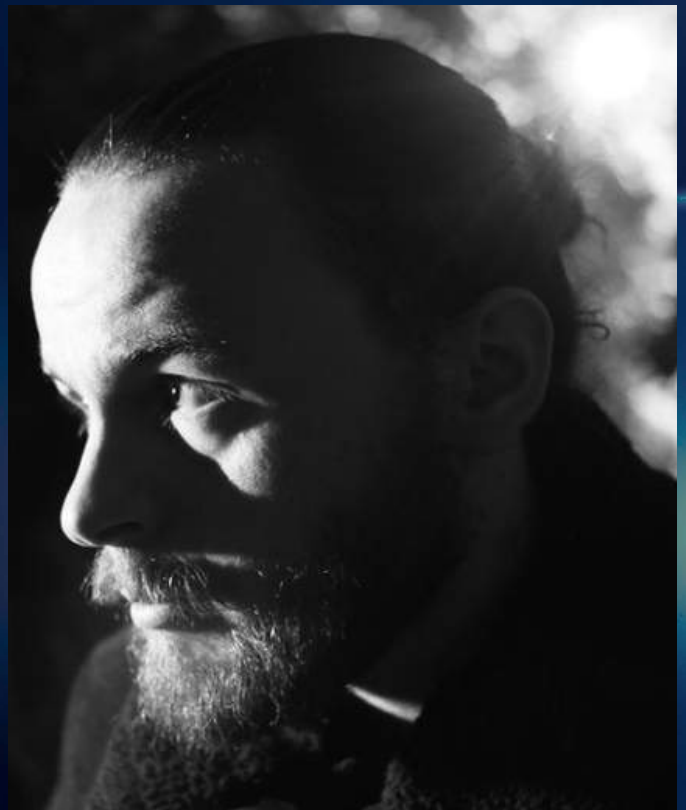
Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

SAMUEL J. MAY

Originally aiming to become a painter, Samuel J. Maygrew interested in film in late adolescence, after graduating from university with a degree in Film Production he was unable to work in the industry for several years due to injury and changed focus to writing, being published at sites such as Indiewire, Little White Lies and Filmmaker Magazine.

When able to return to work properly he looked to put together his own projects, both short and feature, though these became curtailed by logistical issues and then covid. Once the pandemic ended he was able to put 'I Do Not Exist' into production





Festival
Awards
Screenings

GOOD TO TALK SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(Ireland) – 10 mins

A man who feels he is near the end stumbles upon a counselling office with the light still on he takes it as a sign and sets forth trying to get help.

Writer/Director/Producer: Stephen Broekhuizen

Producer: Emmet O'Brien

Cast: Baz Black, Erin Hendrika, Angela Newman



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

STEPHEN BROEKHUIZEN

Stephen Broekhuizen studied film at USM before returning home to Ireland where he worked both in film and as a journalist. In 2016 with 3 friends he set up Deep Red Productions and to date have been involved in well over 100 projects primarily as a producer and director. In 2021 Broekhuizen completed his first two feature films and in 2022/23 Deep Red Productions plan on starting production on two new ones. Outside of film making Broekhuizen teaches film at college and is involved with his local soccer team both as a coach and as a member of the board.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

HOBO

SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



((USA) – 3 mins

As the commuting rabbit hurried past, it accidentally knocked over the sign of a homeless walrus by the street. The walrus wanted to confront the rabbit about the incident, but the rabbit seemed to be facing a bigger crisis of its own...

Writer / Director / Producer: Tianai Zhang

Cast: Joshua Howell



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

TIANAI ZHANG

Tianai Zhang is a Chinese artist based in New York and New Jersey, with a primary focus on background design, concept art for animation, and illustration. Tiani is passionate about bringing stories to life through her art and infusing each project with a touch of magic.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

RESCUE

SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(Lithuania) – 10 mins

A young guy's girlfriend dies during a sailing regatta. His grandfather comes to help him deal with this tragedy.

Writer/Director: Ivan Shalaev

Producer: Ksenya Uryvaeva

Cast: Vladimir Simonov, Evgeniy Kravtsov, Anastasia Panova



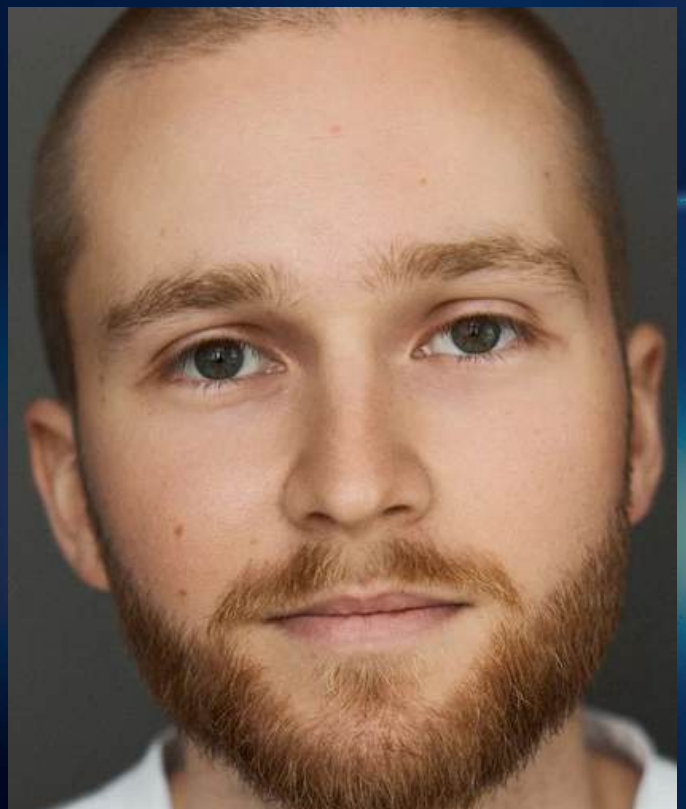
Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

IVAN SHALAEV

Ivan Shalaev is an emerging filmmaker known for his ability to explore deep emotional themes through concise storytelling. With a strong passion for human relationships and the complexities of emotion, Shalaev brings a thoughtful, reflective approach to his work.

Shalaev's direction is marked by an emphasis on intimate character development, creating powerful emotional narratives that resonate with audiences on a profound level. His vision reflects a blend of realism and emotional depth, making him a rising voice in contemporary cinema.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

JUNE & GINA

SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(UK) – 12 mins

A short drama film that explores an unlikely friendship that forms between recently widowed June and her late husband's former carer Gina. The friendship is born in a time of grief and loneliness as the pair navigate a new, uncertain world whilst living together. Their friendship slowly flourishes across the course of a year despite the pairs differences in age and culture, which can cause tension at times. However when Gina's mother falls ill, she must return home to Romania to care for her, leaving June alone but optimistic for this new chapter in her life, a chapter she didn't think would ever be possible.

Writer/Director: Sam Sterland

Writer: Alex Nicklin

Producer: Ruby Sinclair

Cast: Paddy Glynn, Monica Vieru



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

SAM STERLAND

Sam Sterland is a soon to be filmmaking graduate at UWE Bristol. He has a keen passion for telling intimate stories in eye-catching ways. Throughout university Sam has directed the experimental super short film 'Before You Wander Off' which explores how grief impacts memory and the comedy skit 'The Pub Manifesto' which explores British pub culture. Aside from directing Sam is an experienced cinematographer serving as Director Of Photography on several short films including 'Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster' and 'Justify'.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEMORIA

SHORT NARRATIVE COMPETITION



(UK) – 12 mins

Two gifted scientists create a time machine to help people heal trauma. While trying to test its technical abilities, they get stuck in the past, forced to face their darkest memories.

Writer / Director / Producer: Alina Bichieva

Cast: Malcolm Jeffries, Autumn Fenn



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

ALINA BICHIEVA

Alina Bichieva is a young and passionate filmmaker who moved to London from a small town in the heart of North Caucasus. She's been making short films ever since, exploring the theme of human connection through different genres. «Memoria» is her graduation project, made during the summer of 2023. Alina recently finished MetFilm school and is currently continuing to work on films and music videos.

Alina has a talent for weaving emotional depth into her work and is driven by a curiosity to explore the complexities of human interaction. Her short films are known for their fresh perspectives, blending artistry with heartfelt storytelling, and showcasing her growth as a bold and innovative voice in contemporary cinema.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

SHORT DOCUMENTARIES COMPETITION:

ADAPTIVE ADVENTURE

MEG WHITE

A WILL THAT SHALL REMAIN

ANNA KASSAY

PACING THE POOL

RADHEYA JEGATHEVA



Festival
Awards
Screenings

ADAPTIVE ADVENTURE SHORT DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION



(UK) – Documentary 14 mins

While navigating her way through an arduous journey with lupus, Kate Appleby continually engages and wholeheartedly immerses herself in outdoor adventures. Spreading awareness of hidden illnesses, Kate has become a powerfully inspiring woman among those in the outdoor community. This documentary examines the psychological and physical benefits yielded through thoughtful and respectful engagement with one's environment and explores the human connection to nature.

Writer / Director / Producer: Meg White

With: Kate Appleby



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

MEG WHITE

Meg White is an outdoor photographer and filmmaker, who recently completed a Master's Degree in documentary filmmaking at Manchester Metropolitan School of Digital Art. Her focus throughout her studies is on the human connection to nature. She is passionate about capturing and sharing the beauty of natural landscapes in the hope that others may become more conscientious of the environment. Her technical skills lie in cinematography and colour grading, and she has been experimenting with and employing different styles of editing.



Meg's past work encompasses a wide range of projects, from a documentary installation at the Manchester Library to photography for outdoor clothing and environmentally sustainable brands. Her hopes for this documentary are to make her audiences aware of hidden illnesses, as well as the healing and health benefits of spending one's days in nature.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

A WILL THAT SHALL REMAIN SHORT DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION



(Serbia) – 13 mins

A Will That Shall Remain is a short documentary film about a local band, Josh Moograin in a small Transylvanian town, Miercurea Ciuc. Kerry, the band's frontman is telling a touching story about music, friendship and hope.

Writer / Director / Producer: Anna Kassay



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

ANNA KASSAY

Anna Kassay is a first-time filmmaker, born in 2002, in Romania, belonging to the Hungarian minority, and currently living in Serbia. She is studying film production at SAE Institute, Belgrade. She has been involved in small student projects as an assistant director, scriptwriter, producer, and director. "A Will That Shall Remain" is her first individual short film, made in 2022, written, produced, directed, and edited by her. At the moment, she is working on music videos.

Her dream is to continue her journey into the world of film and cinema and to bring a new, reforming perspective to the filmmaking industry.





Festival
Awards
Screenings

PACING THE POOL

SHORT DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION



(Australia) – 9 mins

A tiny glimpse into the extraordinary life of Richard Pace. A different approach to life might have seen him crushed under the weight of the physical and mental stresses he has been through since he was a child, however, healing waters have helped him rise above it all!

Writer / Director: Radheya Jegatheva

Writer / Producer: Jay Jay Jegathesan

Writer: Richard Pace

With: Richard Pace, Val Pace, Ryan Pace



Festival
Awards
Screenings

MEET THE DIRECTOR

RADHEYA JEGATHEV

Radheya Jegatheva is an Oscar qualified and AACTA nominated filmmaker based in Perth, Australia and born in Johor, Malaysia to parents of South Korean, Japanese, Indian and Malaysian ancestry. Radheya is passionate about film, and the value of using film and animation in educational and social development contexts. He has spoken to thousands of school students to inspire them about getting into the arts, and his works have been used as an educational tool in schools and universities around the world.

Radheya's films have been selected to 28 Academy Award Qualifying Festivals.



He has also animated and contributed towards various large-scale multimedia installations and public projects, and recently performed animation and VFX work on Lynette Wallworth's 'How to Live...' which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.



Festival
Awards
Screenings

SPECIAL SCREENINGS PROGRAMME:

CHERKESS
MOHY QUANDOUR

ONE WAR
VERA GLAGOLEVA

SAVING PUSHKIN
IGOR UGOLNIKOV

AFRIKA
DARIA BINEVSKAYA

FORTRESS OF WAR
ALEXKSANDR KOTT

THE PILOT – A BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL
RENAT DAVLETYAROV

WHITE TIGER
KAREN SHAKHNAZAROV

REASONS FOR REASONING
YUQIAN ZHANG

DESTROYER
ALBERT BULLOCK

DRAGONS
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CHERKESS SPECIAL SCREENING



Jordan | 117 mins | [12] – 2010

1900, Jordan. At the turn of the century, more and more Circassian immigrants appear in Ottoman lands. The forced clash of two cultures leads to an inevitable conflict. The only thing that can prevent a possible tragedy is the power of sincere love.

Written & Directed by Mohy Quandour

Produced by Luba Balagova, Mohy Quandour

With Mohamad al Abadi, Azamat Bekov, Sahar Bishara



Festival
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MEET THE DIRECTOR

MOHY QUANDOUR

Mohy Quandour is a multi-award-winning film director, producer, composer, and author, best known for his work on popular TV series such as *Mannix* and *Bonanza*. One of his most acclaimed works is the historical epic *Cherkess* (2010), a historical drama that earned him Best Director and Best Film awards at the Monaco International Film Festival.

In addition to his extensive film career, he is also a prolific author, having written over 50 bestselling historical novels, many of which have been translated into multiple languages including Arabic, Turkish, Russian, French, Spanish and German.



His novels, such as *The Kavkas Trilogy* and *Children of the Diaspora*, are highly regarded, adding another dimension to his creative legacy. Quandour's body of work spans multiple genres, from film to literature, and his ability to weave historical narratives has garnered him recognition in both fields.

Mohy Quandour is also a classical music composer whose works have been performed in venues across Europe and Japan. His deep connection to his Circassian heritage inspired many of his projects, and his work often reflect his passion for history and culture.



Festival
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ONE WAR SPECIAL SCREENING



Russia | 89 mins | [15] – 2009

May, 8, 1945. Maxim Prokhorov, Major of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, arrives at a small northern island. There live eleven people: five young women, five children from one to three years, and the captain Karp Nichiporuk. The young mothers were exiled to the island from the territories occupied by fascists, and their children are the children of the German occupiers. Arrival of the Major upsets the casual life on the island. The Major has to "clean up" the island and the nearest settlements. The military man authorizes a plan to organize a training camp in the region. for saboteurs. The night of May, 9, the women are told about the German capitulation, their hopes for forgiveness and return home become a certainty. They are even allowed to celebrate the Victory.

Directed by Vera Glagoleva

Written by Gerard Michael MacCarthy

Produced by Natalya Ivanova

With: Aleksandr Baluev, Michael Khmurov, Fyodor Koposov



Festival
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MEET THE DIRECTOR

VERA GLAGOLEVA

Vera Glagoleva, born on January 31, 1956, in Moscow, was a celebrated actress and director. Known for her powerful work in films such as *Odna Voyna* (One War) (2009), *Zakaz* (The Order) (2005), and *Two Women* (2014), she became a respected figure in the film industry. She was married to Rodion Nakhapetov and later to Kirill Shubsky. Vera Glagoleva passed away on August 16, 2017, in Baden-Baden, Germany, leaving behind a lasting legacy in cinema.

In addition to her acting, Vera made her directorial debut in 1990 and went on to direct several films, including *Odna Voyna* (One War) (2009) and *Two Women* (2014), starring Ralph Fiennes.

Her directing work earned her considerable acclaim, solidifying her reputation as a versatile talent in cinematography world. In 2011, she was awarded the prestigious title of People's Artist of Russia, one of the country's highest honors for contributions to the arts.





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SAVING PUSHKIN SPECIAL SCREENING



Russia | 160 mins | [12] – 2021

Mikhailovskoe, where Pushkin crafted his works, falls under fascist occupation early in the war. Locals choose different paths—some join partisans, others collaborate, while Sergey, a skilled rustic man, stays neutral. German professor Maria Shiller arrives to manage the museum, leading tours for Wehrmacht soldiers and promoting Pushkin's cultural significance, which sparks disapproval from the German Command. As the front approaches, Berlin orders the removal of historical artifacts. Sergey, entangled in a forbidden relationship with Frau Shiller, takes it upon himself to protect the country's heritage.

Directed by Igor Ugolnikov

Written by Evgeniy Ayzikovich, Natalya Nazarova, Igor Ugolnikov

Produced by Eduard Pichugin, Pavel Smirnov, Igor Ugolnikov

With Sergey Bezrukov, Fedor Bondarchuk, Michael Epp



Festival
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MEET THE DIRECTOR

IGOR UGOLNIKOV

Igor Ugolnikov, born on December 15, 1962, in Moscow, Russia (then the Soviet Union), is a prominent Russian actor, producer, and director. He has made a significant impact on Russian cinema with his work in both film and television. Ugolnikov gained attention for his powerful performances and productions in historical war dramas. Notably, he is known for *Batalon* (2015), a film depicting the struggles of female soldiers in World War I, and *Fortress of War* (2010), which centers around the defense of the Brest Fortress during World War II. These films highlight his talent for portraying complex, emotionally charged historical narratives.



In addition to acting, Ugolnikov has established himself as a successful producer, shaping the direction of Russian historical cinema. He produced *Casus Belli* (2003), another war-centered drama that explores the human side of conflict. His dedication to bringing history to life on screen has earned him recognition in film industry, particularly for his ability to balance authenticity with gripping storytelling. Ugolnikov continues to be a major figure in the entertainment industry, celebrated for his work on projects that delve deeply into the nation's wartime past.



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AFRIKA

SPECIAL SCREENING



Russia | 54 mins | [U] – 2022

1943 On the outskirts of besieged Leningrad, in a deserted village, three children and their mother, who is too weak to go to the forest in search of food, remain. One day, the sons set off on their own and find themselves faced with an unchildish choice – to save their family or the dog they find at the battlefield.

Directed by Darya Binevskaya and Nadya Slavetskaya

Written by Darya Binevskaya

Produced by Dmitriy Belosohov

With: Oleg Chugunov, Andrey Garkunov, Ekaterina Guseva



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

DARYA BINEVSKAYA

Darya Binevskaya is a versatile filmmaker, known for her work as an actor, director, screenwriter, editor, and producer. She has made a significant impact in the Russian film industry through her multifaceted roles. Some of her notable works include the films *Afrika* (2021), a poignant wartime drama, and *My Name is Petya* (2019), which showcases her ability to tell compelling stories about family and survival during challenging times. In addition to her work behind the camera, Darya has been involved in various projects across film and television, contributing as an editor and producer, further solidifying her reputation as a valuable figure in film industry.



Darya Binevskaya's career is marked by her ability to seamlessly transition between different roles in the film industry, from acting and directing to writing and producing. Her directorial work has been widely praised for its emotional depth and storytelling, particularly in films that explore the human experience in times of conflict and adversity. Not only has she directed several short films and features, but she has also demonstrated her skills in editing and screenwriting, contributing to projects that span multiple genres, including drama, fantasy, and thriller. Her passion for filmmaking is reflected in the diverse range of stories she chooses to tell, making her a prominent figure in contemporary Russian and international cinema.



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FORTRESS OF WAR SPECIAL SCREENING



Russia | 138 mins | [15] – 2010

A drama about human tragedies during the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, in which Soviet troops held on to a border stronghold for nine days.

Directed by Alexksandr Kott

Written by Aleksei Dudaderv, Vladimir Eryomin, Ekaterina Tirdatova, Igor Ugolnikov

Produced by Evgenyi Ayzikovitch, Ruben Dishdishyan, Igor Ugolnikov

With: Aleksey Kopashov, Andrei Merzlikin, Pavel Derevyankov



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

ALEKSANDR KOTT

Aleksandr Kott, born on February 22, 1973, is an accomplished director and producer known for his visually driven films. He gained widespread recognition with *Test* (2014), a haunting narrative set against nuclear testing, notable for its reliance on minimal dialogue and powerful visual storytelling. Kott's earlier works, such as *Fotograf* (1998), showcased his talent for crafting deeply emotional and immersive narratives.

In addition to his visually distinct style, Kott's versatility as a director is evident in films like *Insight* (2015), which delves into themes of love and personal discovery. His ability to blend personal and universal themes has solidified his reputation in international cinema.





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THE PILOT – A BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL SPECIAL SCREENING



Russia | 105 mins | [15] – 2021

During a mission in WWII, the plane of Nikolai Komlev is shot down. He manages to bring his plane down in a remote forest clearing, but far from friendly territory, he faces a relentless test of physical and mental endurance.

Directed by Renat Davletyarov

Written by Sergey Ashkenazi, Renat Davletyarov, Alexey Timoshkin

Produced by Renat Davletyarov, Dmitriy Pristanskov, Vladyslav Riashyn

With Pyotr Fyodorov, Anna Peskova, Valeriy Grishko



Festival
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MEET THE DIRECTOR

RENAT DAVLETYAROV

Renat Davletyarov, born on August 17, 1961, in Astrakhan, Russia, is a distinguished director, producer, and screenwriter. He began his career at the iconic Mosfilm studio, gaining extensive experience in various roles within the industry. Over the years, Davletyarov has become known for his historical and dramatic films, often focusing on themes of war, survival, and human endurance. His acclaimed works include *The Dawns Here Are Quiet...* (2015), a war drama, and *Steel Butterfly* (2012), a crime drama that showcased his versatile storytelling abilities.



Throughout his career, Renat Davletyarov has demonstrated a keen ability to bring complex narratives to life, both as a director and producer, ensuring his work resonates with both national and international audiences. His contributions to the film industry have made him a well-regarded figure, known for his ability to craft compelling stories that bridge the past and present.



Festival
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WHITE TIGER SPECIAL SCREENING



Russia | 104 mins | [12] – 2012

Great Patriotic War, early 1940s. After barely surviving a battle with a mysterious, ghostly-white Tiger tank, Red Army Sergeant Ivan Naydenov becomes obsessed with its destruction.

Directed by Karen Shakhnazarov

Written by Aleksandr Borodyanskiy, Ilya Boyashov, Karen Shakhnazarov

Produced by Galina Shadur, Karen Shakhnazarov

With Aleksey Vertkov, Vitaliy Kishchenko, Valeriy Grishko



Festival
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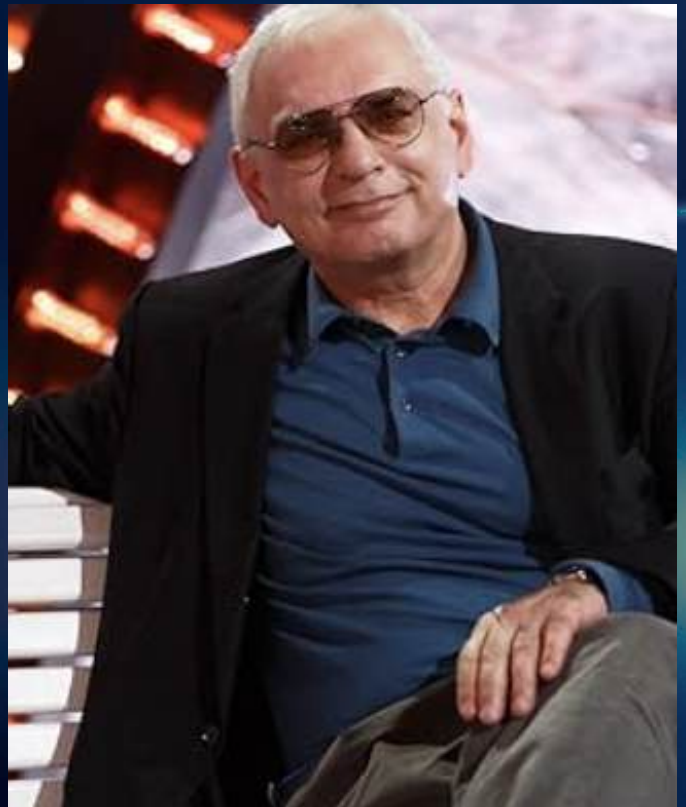
MEET THE DIRECTOR

KAREN SHAKHNAZAROV

Karen Shakhnazarov, born on July 8, 1952, is a distinguished director and producer known for his work in exploring psychological and philosophical themes through film. His notable works include *Palata N°6* (2009), an adaptation of Anton Chekhov's novella, which delves into the complexities of human suffering and mental health. Shakhnazarov's ability to craft deeply introspective films has garnered him international acclaim.

Another standout in his career is *Zerograd* (1988), a satirical and surreal exploration of identity, bureaucracy, and society.

His war epic *White Tiger* (2012), set during World War II, is a visually stunning and deeply philosophical take on the conflict. Shakhnazarov's unique approach to filmmaking, blending historical, psychological, and fantastical elements, has earned him a prominent place in global cinema.





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REASONS FOR REASONING SHORT NARRATIVES SPECIAL SCREENING



(USA) – 8 mins

In order to escape the victimhood with a horrific experience, she barricaded herself in her room and tried to distort her memories.

Writer / Director: Yuqian Zhang

Producer: Xinyu Qi

Cast: Liya Ma



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

YUQIAN ZHANG

Since making his first short film at the age of 16 and screening it in a theater on his high school campus, Yuqian Zhang has been making documentaries, feature films, music videos, etc. For some reason, early in his career, he used fake names such as Sam Urai or Zhaneu-Chan when his films were about supposedly “forbidden” topics. He graduated with honors from the China Academy of Art in 2021 and is still working on his films. In 2023, he was admitted to New York University.





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DESTROYER

SHORT NARRATIVES SPECIAL SCREENING



(UK) – 8 mins

During a shoot, an indifferent photographer recounts her childhood and her newfound relationship with a cousin.

Writer / Director: Albert Bullock

With: Sin Heng Chan, Sasha Jagsi, Jorge Fernandes



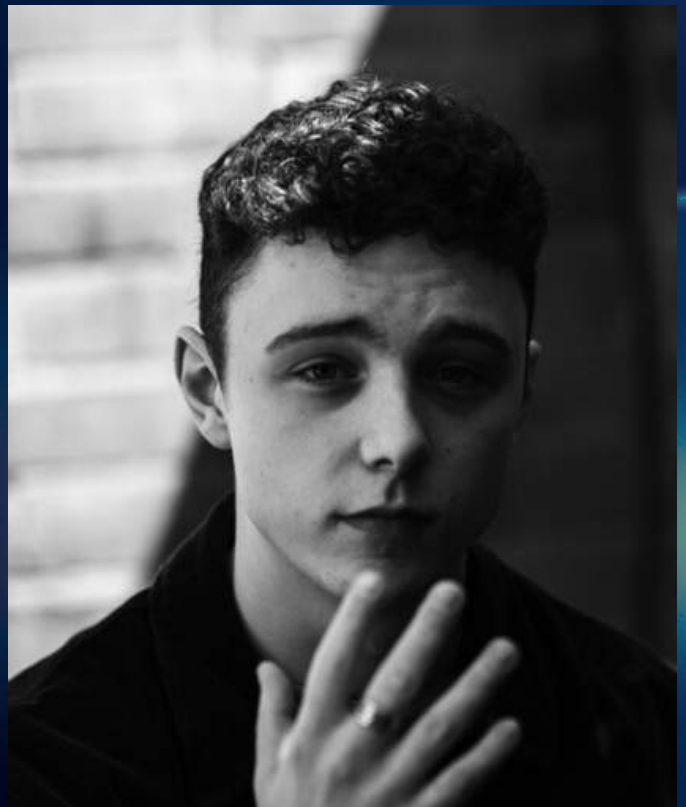
Festival
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MEET THE DIRECTOR

ALBERT BULLOCK

Albert Bullock, born on October 3, 2001, is an English amateur filmmaker currently studying Film and Television at the University of Warwick. His latest short film, *Destroyer* (8 minutes), reflects his interest in character-driven storytelling. The film follows an indifferent photographer as she recounts her childhood and her evolving relationship with a cousin during a shoot.

As a young filmmaker, Bullock is developing his skills in narrative filmmaking, with a focus on personal, introspective stories that explore human connections and relationships.





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DRAGONS SPECIAL SCREENING



(UK) – Documentary 10 mins – OUT OF COMPETITION

The Bristol Empire Dragons, a Dragon-boat racing community, have to navigate a journey of rebranding and inclusion to survive as a club.

Director: Tyrese Shipp

Producer: Sophie Taylor



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MEET THE DIRECTOR

TYRESE SHIPP

Tyrese Shipp is an emerging filmmaker and freelance director with experience directing outside broadcasts at iconic venues such as Bath Abbey and the Royal Albert Hall. He has served as Director of Photography for music videos, including for bands like King Nun and Lambrini Girls, and has created content for Team GB. In 2023, Tyrese won the NaSTA Gold for On-Screen Talent. He recently directed *Dragons*, a short documentary about the Bristol Empire Dragons, a dragon-boat racing club, navigating challenges of rebranding and inclusion to ensure its survival.





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Dear Darling,


SINDIKA



Festival
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AND THE WINNERS ARE...

President Award: **GIPSY BILLIONAIRE** by Joel Van der Molen

Best Feature Narrative: **DO NOT BURY ME WITHOUT IVAN:** by Luybov Borisova

Best Actor: Aleksandr Chichakhov for **DO NOT BURY ME WITHOUT IVAN**

Best Child Actor: Amir Kumratov for **AUL CHALLENGE**

Special Jury Consideration for Best Female Lead Actor: Svetlana Memresheva for **KNOTS**

Best Ensemble: **GORGON MEDUSA**

Best Director: Ali Atshani for **PAPER DREAM**

Best Feature Documentary: **APNEA** by Stefano Poggioni, Claudia Cataldi, Elena Poggioni

Best Screenplay: Jaber Ghasem Ali and Ali Atshani for **PAPER DREAM**

Best Cinematography: Sema Amanatov for **DO NOT BURY ME WITHOUT IVAN**

Best Editing: Ali Atshani and Ehsan Akbari for **PAPER DREAM**

Best Music: Varvara Rogovich and the ANTE Orchestra for **GORGON MEDUSA**





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AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Best Short Film: **I DO NOT EXIST** by Samuel J May

Best Short Film Director: Aleksandr Letunov for **INHERITANCE**

Best Short Documentary: **PACING THE POOL** by Radheya Jegatheva

Short Documentary Special Mention: **ADAPTIVE ADVENTURE** by Meg White

Best Compassionate Short Film: **TOSHA MAMON-TOSHA** by Oksana Stashenko

Short Film Special Mention: **AUTUMN EQUINOX** by Luis Felipe Moncada

Best Short Animation: **GETTING TO THE MOON** by Joshua Nicholson

SIFFA Award for Great Contribution to the Art of Filmmaking: **Vladimir Alienikov**

Audience Choice: **MERCY LAND** by Simon Rickards

