

Toronto Star – June 21, 2018

## Riveting documentary *The Cleaners* puts a sad face on social media's gatekeepers

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#)

Thu., June 21, 2018

### The Cleaners

A scene from the documentary *The Cleaners*, about the shadowy world of “content moderators.” (HOT DOCS)

*A documentary about Internet content moderators, directed by Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 88 minutes. 14A*

German filmmakers Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck explore the shadowy world of “content moderators,” the anonymous people working for social media giants like Facebook, in a documentary that is as riveting as it is disturbing.

In places like Manila — where labour is cheap and pushback from workers minimal — the film examines the toll taken on the people whose job is to try to keep the faceless hordes of internet trolls in check while monitoring violence, nudity and child sexual exploitation. The demands placed on them amounts to cruel and unusual punishment.

Despite high wages, there's a serious price to pay for these workers in the form of psychological trauma incurred from being inundated by hateful language and images of such scorching violence and sexual abuse. Meanwhile, there's little or no accountability for these social media giants, which earn billions in profits while forcing these employees to remain hidden and silent.

Filled with hard numbers and harrowing first-person accounts, *The Cleaners* is impeccable, revelatory filmmaking at its best.

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<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/06/21/riveting-documentary-the-cleaners-puts-a-sad-face-on-social-medias-gatekeepers.html>

## DOC EXAMINES THE TRIAL OF OSKAR GROENING

By: **Joseph Serge, Managing Editor**

June 3, 2018



Oskar Groening at his trial.

Is it OK to prosecute people for crimes against humanity, even if they weren't directly involved in the actual killings? This is one of the questions asked in a new documentary, *The Accountant of Auschwitz*, which opens on June 8.

Directed by Toronto filmmaker Matthew Shoychet and recently screened at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto, *The Accountant of Auschwitz* focuses on the high-profile trial of former SS officer Oskar Groening in Germany, and the importance of continuing to prosecute the remaining Nazi war criminals.

For decades after the Second World War, Germans grew indifferent to the Nuremberg trials and other subsequent war criminal prosecutions. There seemed to be little enthusiasm or political will for them. It was difficult for Germans to accept the idea of large-scale prosecutions, when so many of their friends and relatives were linked to the Holocaust in some form or another.

In the 1950s and '60s, many convicted Nazis had their sentences reduced, and many others were acquitted. Of 22 defendants at the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of 1965, for instance, 16 were released within three years. One example, which was outlined in the documentary, is Hans Stark, who poured the poison Zyklon B into the gas chambers and was released after three years.

By the '60s, the German justice system (which comprised many former Nazis) made it so prosecutors had to prove that the accused committed a specific atrocity against a specific person. Thus, it became impossible to prosecute guards and other support staff who worked at the camps.

This all changed with the 2009 Demjanjuk trial in Germany. After being convicted some 15 years earlier in Jerusalem, but then acquitted after new records came to light showing that he wasn't Treblinka's Ivan the Terrible, Ivan Demjanuk went back to the United States, where he worked at an automobile factory. The U.



S. Justice Department continued investigating him and discovered that he had worked during the war as a guard at the Sobibor extermination camp in occupied Poland. With prosecutor Thomas Walther's help, Demjanjuk was extradited to Germany, put on trial and, at age 91, was found guilty of accessory to murder.

What was crucial here was that the court ruled that just serving as a guard at a death camp made him complicit, regardless of how minuscule his role was. This set a precedent in Germany and prosecutors started to look for more guards, more "cogs in the wheel," as Toronto's Bill Glied, a survivor and co-plaintiff in the Groening trial, would call them.

The Demjanjuk trial was one of two issues that would come to haunt Groening. The other was a 2005 interview he gave to the BBC, in which he exposed his own role in the Holocaust. Prior to that, Groening was a virtual unknown, living out his life peacefully in a small German town. During the war, his role at Auschwitz was primarily sifting through the luggage of new arrivals at the death camp and collecting their valuables.

He explained this and the mechanics of the Holocaust in amazing detail in the interview, which he gave primarily because he had come across someone who denied that the Holocaust happened.

"I see it as my duty now," he says in the interview, "to face up to the things I witnessed and to oppose the Holocaust deniers who claim that Auschwitz never happened.... I was there."

The German prosecutors, including Walther, were able to tie him to the Hungarian deportations of 1944. By proving that he stood on the ramp at Auschwitz during their selection process, even for just one day, they argued successfully that he was complicit in the Holocaust.

The unique thing about this trial is that it was one of the few in which the accused not only admitted his role, but actually described what happened. As Harvard Prof. Alan Dershowitz says in the film, "He deserves some credit for testifying to the truth of what he saw."

Although he was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison, Groening, who was 93 when the trial started, died before spending a day behind bars.

*The Accountant of Auschwitz* is one of the best Holocaust documentaries in decades and raises other important issues, like whether it's fair to try someone 70 years after he committed a crime. It also raises questions about whether Groening's trial was merely a way for Germany's justice department to rectify its past failures. It opens June 8 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto.

<http://www.cjnews.com/culture/entertainment/doc-examines-the-trial-of-oskar-groening>

## WOMEN IN FOCUS: SHE DOES THE CITY'S GUIDE TO LUMINATO 2018

AUTHOR **SHEDOESTHECITY** | PHOTO KAYTEE DALTON. YOLANDA BONNELL IN 'BUG'

POSTED ON JUNE 4, 2018

**Luminato** starts this week and has a decidedly feminist bent, illuminating women's issues, experiences and ideas. We've rounded up 5 of the most thought-provoking, inspiring and intriguing happenings that you've got to check out.



**NO GOING BACK: Future Feminism, a town hall meeting:** A panel of luminaries, including artist **Vivek Shraya**, YWLN's **Arezoo Najibzadeh**, sexual health advocate Krysta Williams and activist **Tessa Hill**, take to the stage to offer their views on feminism today. Expect a rigorous exchange of ideas and a discussion on where we're taking the future.



*Yolanda Bonnell in 'bug'. Photo by Kaytee Dalton*

**bug:** Yolanda Bonnell's stunning performance of her original play, *bug*, will get you thinking about how inter-generational trauma can set in motion a cycle of abuse and addiction. If you missed prior runs of this play, don't miss this Luminato world premiere (and read our exclusive interview with Yolanda [here](#)). June 20-24.

## She Does the City – June 4, 2018 (2 of 2)



**Amal Clooney in Conversation with Nick Clooney:** Renowned international human rights lawyer Amal Clooney will be making her first public speaking appearance in Toronto. At top of mind? The pressing human rights issues facing the world today. June 22.



**Burning Doors:** The fearless, refugee-led theatre troupe, Belarus Free Theatre, joins forces with Pussy Riot's Maria Alyokhina to share stories of artists who have been persecuted around the world. They will bring Alyokhina's story to life and force us to confront the political oppression that still threatens artistic expression and personal safety. June 20-24.



**Game-Changers: Inspiring Women:** Swing up to Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema for a six-film documentary series that celebrates revolutionary women. Screenings of *Mankiller*, *Anita*, *Bhutto*, *Madonna: Truth or Dare*, *Public Speaking* and *!Women Art Revolution* will get you thinking about speaking your truth and asserting your power. June 9-16. Get full lineup and schedule [here](#). Luminato runs at various locations across Toronto June 6-24.

## Director Morgan Neville on Won't You Be My Neighbor? and the enduring legacy of Fred Rogers

Andrew Parker June 5, 2018 9:42 am



“No one could be that good.”

That was a frequent sentiment many utter quietly to themselves when thinking about iconic children's entertainment personality Fred Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister who forewent a career in the church to dabble in the then freshly minted medium of television. After working as a puppeteer in his native Pittsburgh and developing his first show for the CBC in Canada, Rogers returned to his hometown and PBS broadcaster WQED in the late 1960s to work on what would become one of T.V.'s most endearing, iconic, educational, and emotional series: *Mr. Rogers Neighborhood*.

Communicating with kindness and respect for his young audience, Rogers used a combination of rationality, imagination, and playfulness to tackle sometimes difficult subject matter that parents sometimes had difficulty talking to their children about, including divorce, illness, civil rights, assassination, and everything in-between. Adored by children who appreciated the often sweater clad Rogers for his warmth and candor, Mr. Rogers was an unlikely success: a television personality and producer that technically, morally, and creatively broke almost all of the young medium's established rules.

Although Rogers had some darkness in his life, many cynical adults found it hard to believe that someone that focused on kindness, equality, and emotional awareness could be that chipper and well mannered without being a complete phony. As award winning documentarian Morgan Neville shows in his biographical documentary look at Rogers, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* (opening in Toronto this weekend and expanding across the country in the following weeks), those cynical adults were absolutely wrong, and that Rogers, who passed away in 2003, might have been an even gentler soul than many realized.

Neville (*Best of Enemies*, the Oscar winning *20 Feet from Stardom*) first became curious about the beloved television host after an exchange with musician and frequent Rogers collaborator Yo-Yo Ma while making his previous film, *The Music of Strangers*. After Ma said that it was Rogers who taught him how to approach celebrity with a sense of kindness and humility, Neville gradually began performing more and more research about Fred, eventually changing the filmmaker's own opinion that no human being on earth could have been as good and pure as Rogers claimed to be.

Through collaboration with his producer, Yo-Yo's son Nicholas Ma, who still had connections to the Rogers family, Neville was able to gain access to a wealth of footage and material from the understandably protective Fred Rogers Company, including some footage that hasn't been seen for decades, and some private movies and outtakes that have never been made previously public. The result of Neville and his team's hard work is – perhaps improbably – one of the most hotly anticipated releases of the normally blockbuster driven summer movie season. If that isn't a testament to what Rogers tried to achieve with his groundbreaking television series, I don't know what is.

## The Gate – June 5, 2018 (2 of 6)

We were able to sit down and chat with Neville about *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* and Fred Rogers' enduring legacy while he was in Toronto last month for the film's Canadian premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival.

**While I'm sure there will be some people who might think you're an interesting choice to be making a film about Mr. Rogers, I can see why you would be a good fit. You've worked on films about music before, and one of the biggest loves of Fred's life was music. And one of the things that I loved about him was that he was always trying to share that passion for music with his viewers. Was that one of the things that might have initially endeared him to you as a subject for a film?**



Morgan Neville

**Morgan Neville:** Oh, yeah, Fred loved music. He was a composition major when he was in college! But weirdly it wasn't what really got me going with Fred. He wrote every song on his show, which amounted to over two hundred songs, and I always cared a lot about how his music was used. I worked a lot with our composer to make sure that it was well represented. I did love getting into that a lot; choosing what kind of instruments we would use in the score and what the tone of it should be when trying to connect it to what Fred did. We brought in a lot of themes from some of Fred's songs for the score. The song "Tree, Tree, Tree" is one of the best represented in the film because there's a portion of that one that comes up a few times throughout the score. I loved working with Fred's music, but that wasn't the initial impetus to do this.

One of my big themes that I gravitated towards as I look back on it now is this creation of a sense of common ground. How do we speak to each other and how can culture work as a meeting place for common communication and understanding? *Best of Enemies* is actually more of a mirror documentary to this one, even though it's not musical in nature, because that's also almost all about the art of communication. It's the same time period, it's about television, and it's about the potential for good and bad within the medium.

**And while *Best of Enemies* is about two wildly opposed people like Gore Vidal and William F. Buckley trying to debate each other, in some ways Fred's job was even harder because his methods and the topics he was choosing to take a stand on were more divisive, mostly because he was often talking about how various things that we don't like thinking about would impact us emotionally instead of politically or economically.**

**Morgan Neville:** Exactly, and that's one of the biggest reasons why Fred's so special. He was the only person on television who was speaking to people who had no identity yet: children. You're talking about two to six year-olds who don't have a sense of self yet, much less a capacity for labelling or accepting labels. He was speaking to people about the principals of humanist behaviour. How are you supposed to be a human being? What does it mean to be a person? How should you treat yourself? How should we treat others? These are first principles, and that's what's so powerful about his message, and for me that's what made me want to make the film.

I think we've forgotten a lot of those basic principles of how we should treat each other and what kind of neighbourhood we want to have. We've really forgotten that stuff because it's a lot more profitable these days to push divisiveness or otherness than it is kindness. There's no lobby for kindness. (laughs)





I think a lot of filmmakers making a documentary about a famous figure would save the “why this person is relevant to our world today” portion for the end of the film, but here you actually start with it, via a clip from the first season of his show, where King Friday the XIII says he wants to build a wall around his kingdom to protect him from outsiders. Was that a conscious decision to let people know immediately why Mr. Rogers is still relevant?

**Morgan Neville:** Part of it was because that was the first season, and it was too good for it not to be there. Here’s a Republican minister who’s in many ways the definition of what a Compassionate Conservative should be, and to him “Love Thy Neighbor” is redefined by “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”. These aren’t radical notions. These are Christian, religious, and humanist notions that go back millennia. I think you need to understand from the beginning that he was never doing this to be a radical. He was doing this because he thought it was the right thing to do. He thought this was what Jesus Christ would do.

There were actually lots of other examples that were just as sharp as that one that I didn’t end up putting in the film because I didn’t want the film too heavy-handed. I also didn’t want to alienate people who I think should see the film. I never wanted the film to be partisan in that way. I never wanted it to scold the audience or tell them what to think because Fred wouldn’t have wanted that. At the same time, Fred believed in what I also believe in: asking questions and letting the audience come up with their own answers.

**Is it a challenge to make a film about someone as driven by love and compassion as Fred?**

**Morgan Neville:** Certainly. From the beginning, one of the biggest questions was about what the dramatic tension would be when talking about Fred Rogers. On the surface, he seems like someone who never changed, and the definition of dramatic storytelling is built around how a lead character changes. (laughs) But when you look at him under a microscope, you realize that Fred did change. The show was always changing in subtle ways, and that was always a reaction to the changes in the world around him. In that way, the tension is between Fred and the world and his ideas, which become increasingly antiquated or quaint over the years in the eyes of some. And it sometimes made Fred angry that people found him quaint or Pollyannaish, and I can see where that anger comes from, and I agree with it.

**In terms of how he made his show, Fred broke almost every filmmaking rule in the book, especially when it comes to a program aimed at children. In many ways – and this is something your film shows – Fred was kind of like a child’s introduction to “slow cinema,” often documenting every step of a process, frequently without any talking or musical accompaniment. He had a tendency to let things play out naturally. Is it interesting as a filmmaker to go through all the footage of his show and witness how counterintuitive the show’s style often seems?**

**Morgan Neville:** Sure! What Fred always talked about was being simple and deep, and any filmmaker knows that being simple and deep at the same time is incredibly difficult. To do something that seems simple is often very

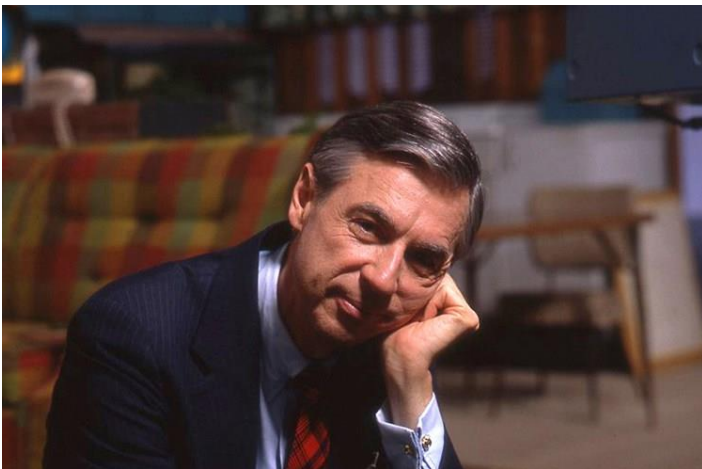
## The Gate – June 5, 2018 (4 of 6)

tough. Going behind the curtain and looking at Fred's process, you realize that he put so much thought into every shot, line of dialogue, and all of his research. He would take almost everything on his show up with child development experts, and he would labour over every small detail. There was so much consideration put into that, and I wanted with this film to do my best to mimic and honour that vision to make something simple and deep at the same time.

I also feel like part of what I responded to while making it was how the things Fred were doing back then would be what we classify today as mindfulness, which is something people are talking about more and more these days in a culture that's increasingly chaotic, fast paced, disconnected from other people, and connected to our screens. In a way, having that moment where we can have consideration over something simple and deep is great.

In fact, I interviewed – not for this project, but for something else – Sherry Turkle, a professor at MIT, who wrote a book about how computers are changing the way we use our minds and bodies, and she talked about the value of boredom. Boredom has a very important function in terms of how we develop our sense of self. Part of what Fred did was that he didn't try to fill up every moment of space he was allotted to tell you what to think. He wanted to give you space to contribute something back to the viewing.

That's why people, more so than anyone else on television that I can think of, were able to have an actual relationship with him. He spoke to kids individually. They would talk back to the television. They would respond in kind. So when Fred would meet children anywhere, he would always act like they had a pre-existing relationship, because they did. That was a very real relationship. It wasn't just a TV host to audience relationship. It was a lot more one-on-one.



He was also a realist that entertained but never spoke down to children. The Land of Make Believe was very open about not being real. Fred never tried to trick or put one over on the audience for the sake of a thrill, laugh, or reaction. He always made sure that the kids knew that the puppets were puppets and that they were engaging in playtime, which I think could inspire more creativity. If this guy could do it, then a child would probably think they could do it, and that helps in those times of boredom.

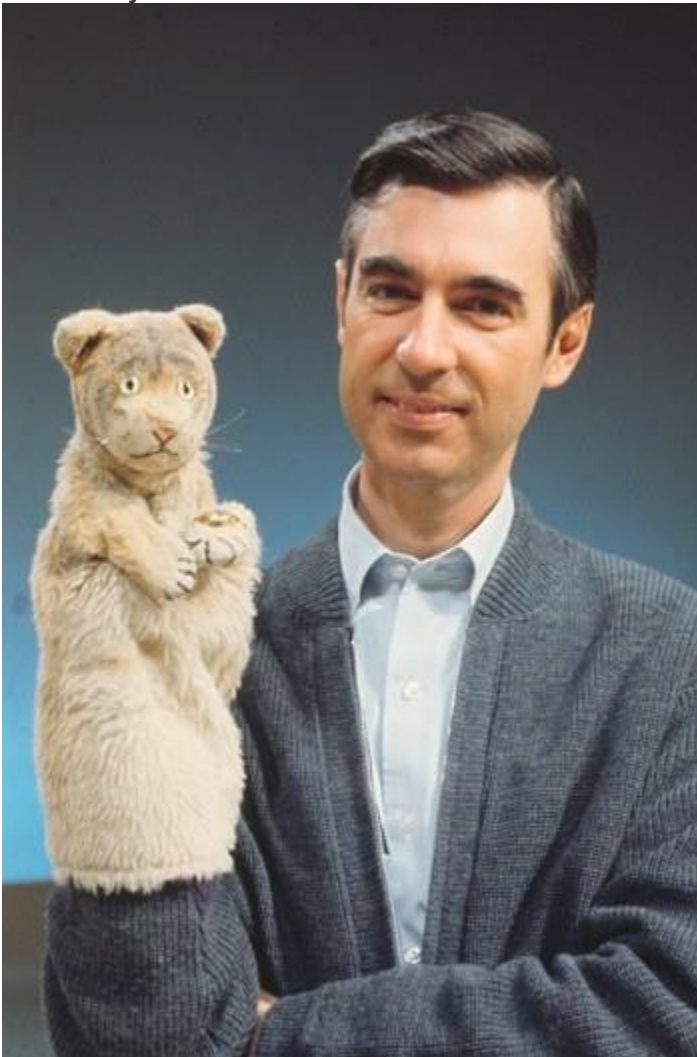
**Morgan Neville:** Exactly. And it's funny because you could always see Daniel Striped Tiger in Fred's living room set, and he was never trying to create anything along the lines of *H.R. Pufnstuf*. He was always up front about everything. He never wanted to deceive a child about anything.

I think the most hate mail he got was when he did an episode explaining to children that Santa Claus wasn't real. He thought that children would genuinely be afraid and maybe become paranoid by the whole "He sees you when you're sleeping/He knows when you're awake" thing, and that some kids might see Santa as this ominous figure who's breaking into your house in the middle of the night. He thought this was something that adults shouldn't be doing to children, and a lot of adults were angry and wrote in to the show.

The creation of everything on Fred's set was so authentic, especially Daniel Striped Tiger, who looks every bit like a well loved children's toy. Just the sight of Daniel can make some adults start to tear up because

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they can instantly be transported not only to feelings of Fred's show, but also something similar that they might have had in their own lives at one point. When you're watching something that seems so realistic and rudimentary on a surface level, do you get an appreciation of how the simplicity of Fred's show has created some truly iconic characters?



**Morgan Neville:** Absolutely. At one point we were editing a scene with Daniel, and we wanted to slide a shot, but there was a discussion that we had with the editors because if we slid the shot, it wouldn't be in sync anymore. We carried on that conversation for the longest time until we realized that Daniel's mouth doesn't even move. (laughs) It hadn't ever occurred to us that his mouth didn't move because he was so real to us. None of the puppet's mouths move! But it never occurred to us because they felt so alive.

It's a powerful thing, and we talk about it in the film how Fred loved puppets because he was essentially a very shy person. These puppets would bring out all these different sides of his personality that we never got to see publicly: the troublemaker, the paternal figure, the vulnerable figure, and then you have Daniel, who was really the key to understanding all of Fred's insecurities and laying them out in the open for everyone to see.

Daniel was always Fred's most personal creation, I think. Daniel was a tame tiger, and Fred talked about that a lot. I think Fred was someone who had a lot of anger at times, but he always tried to work through that anger and tame it. He used his music, his puppets, and Daniel specifically to really harness that anger and fear. He wanted to show through Daniel in a subtle way how fear sometimes manifests itself as anger, but that even a tiger could be tamed.

He was trying to eliminate fear, which was one of his main things with children. He wanted to seek out everything in the world that a child could be afraid of and try to explain it to them. His thing was that if he could get rid of the fear and get rid of the anger, you could talk about and understand almost anything.



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One of the things that film talks about is that I never knew was how Fred Rogers set aside the kid's show in the late 70s to make an interview show geared towards adults, where he would adopt a similar style of interviewing that he used on children. The little bit of footage of it that you have in the film is fascinating, and even though that show failed, it really helps to illustrate everything you've said about Fred and his ability to keep things simple and deep. What was it like being able to compare his on screen interactions with real adults and the characters on his show?

**Morgan Neville:** Kids are so nakedly emotional that they'll tell you exactly what they're thinking and often exactly what you want to know if you ask them. As you get older, you put up facades and mask your true emotions and intentions, and Fred never did that. I think it could be very intimidating for an adult to be approached by him and be asked quite openly, "What are you afraid of?" "Where do you find love?" He was asking these very deep questions that adults don't even like asking themselves in private most of the time. We tend to run away from those questions, but children will answer those questions completely and honestly. There's something therapeutic about those kinds of conversations, but I think they're also really challenging.

There are a few episodes of that show that I really hope they bring back out. They only did about twenty-four episodes. There's one with Hoagy Carmichael that's really great. There's one with Milton Berle where it's a really HEAVY conversation. Milton GOES THERE with Fred and really gets into the sadness behind humour. It was such an interesting show, but it definitely wasn't what anyone was looking for on television at the time. (laughs)

As the film goes on and starts to look at the later years of Fred's life, particularly when he's asked to come out of retirement to do some P.S.A.s in the wake of 9/11, it shows how even this iconic bastion of positivity was beginning to wonder if his words would have an impact anymore, and I think that's how a lot of people are feeling these days. What's it like to bring a film like this to an audience at a time when people are really starting to question the nature of the world around us and if our contributions to society will make any sort of positive impact?

**Morgan Neville:** I think people are wondering if we're even going to have a neighbourhood soon. It definitely feels like we're in a time where we can't agree on what kind of neighbourhood we want to have. We can't agree on how we want to treat each other, and we can't agree on how we want to treat ourselves. When we see so much divisiveness, anger, and derision of the other throughout our culture, that's so corrosive to all the things that we should be agreeing about, which is the joint set of emotional and ethical rules that we should all be living by. When people ask me "who's the next Fred Rogers?," there is no next Mr. Rogers. What I've come to think is that within the millions of people who grew up watching him, he left a piece of himself. Really, it's the responsibility of all of us to be the next Mr. Rogers. That's his legacy: reminding ourselves of the radical nature of kindness and goodness. We don't do that. It's easy to laugh at those things as sounding naive, but I think it's deadly serious. He was a warrior for kindness, and we should all be that. The thing that binds us together even in our disagreements is kindness.

And who knows what films can do to help this, but we do them in the hope that they will have some impact. I wanted to leave the audience with the thought that it's not what Fred's going to do, but what we're going to do. Fred wasn't just a saint who waved a wand and did good things. He struggled and laboured very hard with great doubts for decades to do what he did. We have to struggle with that, too. It's hard work to be good and kind, but we should do that work.

***Won't You Be My Neighbor opens exclusively in Toronto (at Varsity Cinemas) and select U.S. cities on Friday, June 8, 2018. It expands to Vancouver and Montreal on Friday, June 15th and to additional cities on Friday, June 22.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034118/director-morgan-neville-on-wont-you-be-my-neighbor-and-the-enduring-legacy-of-fred-rogers/>

## Original-Cin – June 5, 2018 (1 of 5)

### ORIGINAL-CIN Q&A: WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR'S MORGAN NEVILLE ON MISTER ROGERS, HIS COUNSEL TO YO-YO MA AND HIS BEAUTIFUL LEGACY

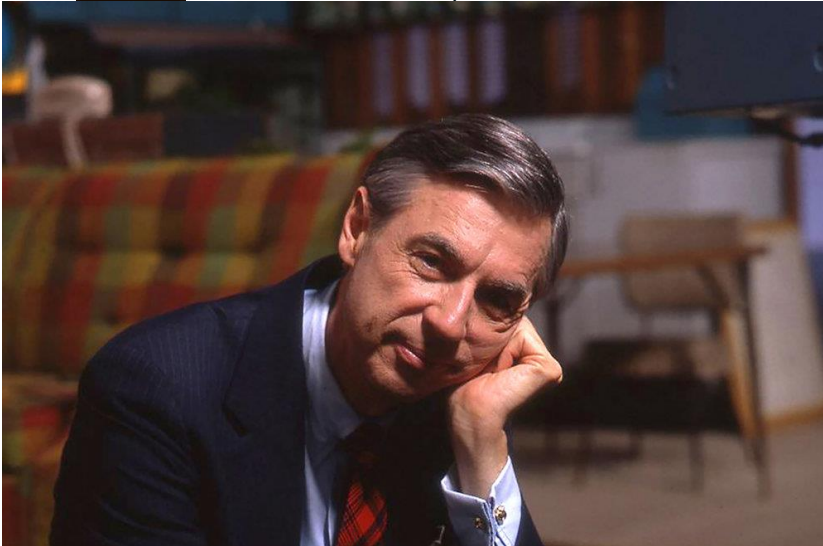
June 5, 2018

If you grew up between the years of 1968 to 2000 Fred Rogers was part of your neighborhood.

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, a staple on American Public Television for close to 35 years, is examined in the emotional new documentary, Won't You Be my Neighbor? from Academy Award winning documentarian Morgan Neville (20 Feet from Stardom).

The film shows Rogers as the universally beloved television host and benefactor that he was in real life and on screen. Through behind-the-scenes clips and stories from producers and guests on the show, Neville offers a glimpse into how Rogers positively affected childhoods everywhere with lessons on divorce, violence, and the simple trials of growing up.

Original-Cin's Bonnie Laufer recently spoke with Morgan Neville in Toronto when Won't You Be my Neighbor was shown at the Hot Docs festival. The film will open in theatres on June 8th.



Fred Rogers: Yes, we'll be his neighbour!

**OC: Having grown up with Fred Rogers and Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, watching this film and bringing him back into the forefront was a real treat. What was it about Fred Rogers that made you decide you wanted to explore more about him and his life?**

MORGAN NEVILLE: "It's hard to remember exactly what it was that made me want to do the film other than a feeling that this was a voice that I don't hear anymore.

"So essentially, you know, late one night for whatever reason, I watched a bunch of YouTube videos of him giving commencement addresses. I went down the rabbit hole of Mister Rogers videos."

**OC: You couldn't fall asleep,,,**

MN: "Yeah!" ( laughs) "I couldn't fall asleep and my insomnia led to this film. But there was something about the way he was talking that felt healing in some way. But it also just felt like an empathetic, mature grown up voice that I just don't hear anymore.

"So really it was reacting to that and feeling like, 'I think this is saying something to me, and maybe it's going to say something to other people about the issues I care a lot about.' Things like public discourse, and disability, and common ground and kind of how culture can build bridges to other communities and other people.

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“And all the things he was talking about, really about the neighborhood, became this kind of urgent feeling for me. So when he’s talking about, ‘Won’t you be my neighbour?’ he’s saying, ‘What kind of citizen are you going to be and what kind of society do we want to have?’ Essentially, he’s asking these fundamental questions about how we treat each other and how we treat ourselves.”

**OC: I understand that musician Yo-Yo Ma was instrumental in getting the film made as well. How did that come about?**

MN: “That was really one of the first seeds that probably led me down that YouTube rabbit hole. Years ago I’d started making a film with Yo-Yo Ma called The Music of Strangers. And one day at lunch, early on, I happened to ask him, ‘How did you figure out how to be famous?’

“He immediately replied, ‘Mister Rogers taught me.’ I kind of laughed, and he said, ‘No I’m not kidding. He really went out of his way to notice, when I first went on the show, that I was struggling with fame. And he mentored me over the years and we became very good friends.’

“(Ma) went on to say how he went on to learn how to use fame as a force for positive social change and not as a weight around his neck. So I thought that was so interesting and it completely blew up my conception of Mister Rogers in my mind.

“He said that he and Mister Rogers used to talk about fame, calling it, ‘the other F-word,’ and that it was really something that was toxic. And in a way Fred Rogers was the least likely TV star in history.



Director Morgan Neville

“He actually hated television and he didn’t need money. It wasn’t those things for him. It was about his calling, which was, ‘How can I help people?’ It was his ministry.

“He was a Presbyterian Minister and, without a doubt, what he decided that meant was to look out for children and protect children every way you could. Essentially, what his show did at every turn, was to try to preserve what his show was all about and give children what they needed and not what anybody else said what they needed.”

**They must have really needed it, because the show ran for almost 35 years. What was it about the simplicity of that show that struck a chord? The format never changed. Even while the world was changing, the show never did.**

## Original-Cin – June 5, 2018 (3 of 5)

MN: “You’re right, the show on its surface never really changed. You can play all 33 years of episodes in a loop and you probably wouldn’t be able to tell what year you were watching.

“He wanted that to be consistent because kids love consistency. It’s the reason kids like watching the same movie 12 times. They also like transitions, all these things that we now know because we’re somewhat more enlightened as parents. They were things nobody was talking about, but Fred knew because he studied cutting-edge child development.

“When you actually dissect it, you see that Fred did subtly change the show over time, and as he became more confident and well-known and had a bigger platform, he decided that he could use the show to really tackle important questions, kind of address the issues of the day.

“What’s interesting is even as the show went on, if he thought there was something done in an old episode that wasn’t quite right anymore, he would go back and wear the same clothes, shoot an insert and fix it.

“I think at one point he had met a woman, and in one of the first episodes say 1968-69 and Fred asked her if she was a homemaker or a nurse or a housewife. And a few years later, he thought that was out of step so he went back and changed it because he wanted the episodes to be fresh.”

**Usually when documentarians decide to make a film - and you have done a number of them - they struggle with how they are going to find footage. You certainly did not have that problem with Won’t You Be my Neighbor. I think you probably had way too much footage to go through for this project. How on earth did you get through it in time and where did you even begin?**

MN: “There was an incredible amount of footage. That was the hard part, weeding down the footage. And so we had researchers and editors, myself and the production team weeding through it. The thing that was the godsend was that, when Fred passed away, they set up an archive of his material at the Fred Rogers Center (at St. Vincent College near Pittsburgh).

“They’ve had an archivist working on his material for 15 years. You know, he got he got more letters than anybody in America and he would spend an hour or two a day just doing correspondence.”



Mister Rogers and his pal, the Speedy Deliveryman Mr. McFeeley (David Newell)

**OC: That’s a job in itself. How on earth did he do it?**

MN: “A full time job if you ask me. But he had people that would help him.

“He believed that a child that would write him a letter believed that they had a one on one relationship. He strongly felt that if he didn’t respond, he would be not to be honoring that relationship.

“Then when we would get into things, we discovered that the letters had been categorized - for example if there were letters about disappointment, or bullies or death. This was hugely helpful and made it much easier for us to find things.



## Original-Cin – June 5, 2018 (4 of 5)

"It would have taken me another year to make the film if everything was just thrown into boxes. So that helped tremendously. In a way, when we showed up to make this documentary, we told them what we wanted to do which was to make a film not about the man but about the ideas of the man. They said, 'We trust you. You can have complete control and we've never done this before. But you can do whatever you want.'

"Once they made that decision, giving us the keys to the kingdom and full support, it almost felt like materials had been prepared for 15 years just for us. I was truly spoiled. It's never going to be this easy ever again."

**OC: What ultimately surprised you about Fred Rogers after finishing the film?**

MN: "There were so many things about him that surprised and impressed me. For instance, he spoke French, Greek and Hebrew. He would wake up every morning and read the Bible in Hebrew or Greek. He went to France around 1947 and he visited orphanages. There was a young boy that he met that had a lot of potential, but there was no one there who could help him or who would take an interest in helping him. So Fred, who had family money, took a major interest in him.

"The boy didn't move to America but Fred sponsored him and ultimately adopted him. He paid for his entire education and the boy went on to become a very successful businessman running a cheese company."

**OC: Wow, how come you didn't use that story in the documentary?**

MN: "It's just one of those things, there was only so much we could put into the documentary."

**OC I think you may need a part two!**

MN: "I know, there's a lot more!"

**OC: Clearly people are very excited for this movie. I remember when the trailer was first released everyone was posting on social media how much they were looking forward to it and how Fred Rogers was a huge part of their lives. I understand that the trailer had over 11 million hits on the first day. That's unprecedented for a documentary!**

MN: "I think it's the most viewed documentary trailer in history."

**OC: Why do you think people are so interested in Fred Rogers?**

MN: "There is a great well of love for Fred Rogers and nostalgia for Fred. My guess is that it's a sense of somebody fighting for goodness, somebody who's speaking up for disability and speaking up for radical kindness. Someone who is speaking up for how we can treat each other in a better way and not demonize each other.

"There's so much in our culture now that profits by dividing us, whether it's our economics or our politics. And to have somebody who stands up and says, 'I'm here to speak for the better of us, for people treating each other better,' and how we all have the obligation, not only the ability but the obligation, to do that.

**OC: It's sad that children who are growing up now don't really have anything comparable to Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood.**

MN: "There's nothing like Mr. Rogers and I think even by the early '80s, he was saying, 'If I came on today, I would never make it on TV.'

"I think he was truly one of a kind and came on at that perfect moment to make it on television. The kinds of things he was doing talking to kids about deep issues.....

**OC: He certainly was ahead of his time.**

MN: "He was way ahead of his time. He was pretty extraordinary. Now nobody in his wake is doing that. I don't think there is anyone who will be like Fred. It took such an incredible emotional maturity and understanding of childhood, in such a pure way, that I don't know if our culture can mature to the point where we can do that again."

**OC: I agree. Plus people are so judgmental these days it would be impossible to do a show like that.**

## Original-Cin – June 5, 2018 (5 of 5)

MN: "It is sad. And you see in the film that even Fred, in his lifetime, was starting to get criticized for being who he was. He was criticized for telling everybody that they're special, and he's a Pollyanna character who was just a wishy-washy goody two-shoes."

"That is the tragedy of it when you can't look at somebody who was trying to do something truly good, for all the best intentions, and there's always someone who has to tear it down."

**OC: I got pretty choked up watching this movie, I can't even begin to imagine how emotional it must have been for you going through this process.**

MN: "You know it was extremely emotional although it was emotional in the best way. Spending more than a year in, The Neighborhood, basically living in the material, I think it permeated all of our behaviour."

"The producers and editors and all of us felt like we were in this beautiful bubble of the neighborhood, and in a way was like the best way I could have spent last year. I really felt like we were doing something really constructive and it's hard to put into words how deep our emotions ran."

**OC: Not many people know this but one of Michael Keaton's first jobs was working on Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. You don't really touch on that in the doc but eagle eyed viewers will see him on the set in one of the scenes. Did you approach Michael for an interview?**

MN: "I did, but he just couldn't do it. His loss!" ( laughs)

**OC: I have to tell you that one of my favourite documentaries is 20 Feet From Stardom, a film that went on to win a Best Documentary Academy Award. How does winning an Oscar change your life or help you getting more docs made?**

MN: "I've been making docs for 25 years. And I think, because I didn't have huge success until my mid 40's, to me it's a practical matter. I guess to quantify the difference, rather than spending 50% of my time raising money and 50% of my time making movies, I spend 90% of my time making movies and 10% raising the funds." (laughs)

**OC: I'd say that's pretty good!**

MN: "Absolutely! That is a huge trade off. And I feel like why i have been able to be so prolific in the past few years is because I don't have to spend all this time raising money. I can just make movies."

**OC: I'm sure Netflix has been a big part of that with them streaming so many documentaries. Plus you produce Ugly Delicious, a great doc-series exclusively for them.**

MN: "You're not wrong about that. Having Netflix in the picture has helped tremendously. Something I have heard for years from people is, 'I love documentaries, I just don't know where I can watch them.' Now they can. Netflix is making them very accessible and I am so happy about that. There's so much good work being done and so many opportunities and so that Netflix (and other streaming services) have placed the docs on an even playing field with thrillers and other genres is just fantastic."

**OC: Speaking of Netflix, your next film sounds very exciting!**

MN: "Yes, it's a documentary about filmmaker Orson Welles focusing on the final 15 years of his life. It mainly centers around his unfinished final feature, The Other Side of the Wind, using archival and new audio interviews as well as outtakes from the film."

"It's something that has fascinated me for many years. I made the decision to make the movie before I even saw what material was available. All I knew was that there was six years of film and I figured there had to be some treasures to be seen there, and I was right."

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2018/6/5/original-cin-qa-wont-you-be-my-neighbors-morgan-neville-on-mister-rogers-his-counsel-to-yo-yo-ma-and-his-beautiful-legacy>

## Unthinkable Complicity: Why I Made a Film About the Accountant of Auschwitz



Author [Ricki Gurwitz](#)  
Posted on June 6, 2018

Three years ago on April 21, 2015, I was working as a TV news producer when a headline started blinking across the wires: “Accountant of Auschwitz goes on trial for the murder of 300,000 people.” It caught my attention immediately.

The idea of bringing former Nazis to court to answer for the crimes of the Holocaust is interesting for any history buff such as myself. I had also recently returned from a trip to Poland, The March of the Living, which pairs people of all ages with survivors of the Holocaust. Together, they travel to ghettos and death camps used by the Third Reich to implement the Final Solution. Staring at the shoes of dead children, and the huge mountains of hair from those who were shaved upon arrival to the camps, there seemed no doubt in my mind of any moral ambiguity. Every SS officer who participated in these crimes, even seventy years later, should pay for his role in the worst mass murder in human history.



What I found, however, as I read more about this particular trial, was a tale with interesting twists that sparked questions with no easy answers. Oskar Gröning, the ninety-four-year-old former SS guard on trial, never killed anyone. As he put it, he was a mere cog in the machine. Meanwhile, most of the ideologues, the elite SS men who gave the orders to kill and were instrumental in the destruction of the Jews, went unpunished after the war due in large part to Germany’s unwillingness to prosecute their own. Now, seventy years later, most have perished but for one man who, at age twenty-one, collected the stolen loot of prisoners as they were carted off trains at Auschwitz.

## She Does the City – June 6, 2018 (2 of 2)

Gröning came forward in 1985, standing up to Holocaust deniers in an attempt to set the record straight. He gave a public interview in 2005, believing himself to be exempt from prosecution. But in 2009, a new generation of lawyers in Germany, coupled with a change in legal thinking, meant anyone who served at a death camp could be tried as an accessory to murder. The net suddenly got much wider, and Gröning could face prosecution. His 2005 interview made prosecutors aware of his role in the Holocaust, and in 2013 they pressed charges.

Reading more about the details of this case, and the history of German trials after the war, I was convinced that a documentary needed to be made to delve into these complicated questions of law and morality. Determined to make this film, I quit my full-time job and devoted all of my attention to this project. But I had no experience in this realm. I had never made a film before.

I reached out to my friend Mathew Shoychet, whom I had met on *The March of the Living*, as I knew he had studied film and was as passionate as I was about Holocaust education. But he had also never made a feature film before. We needed some helping hands to guide us through this very ambitious project. By a stroke of good luck, I was put in contact with Emmy-award-winning filmmaker Ric Esther Bienstock, whose 2013 film, *Tales from the Organ Trade*, achieved a similar feat to the one we were trying to accomplish in this film.

In her documentary, Bienstock delved into the world of organ trafficking, a topic which, on the surface, seems to be very black and white, with the line of “good” and “evil” drawn neatly in the sand. Bienstock managed to unpack a complicated issue to expose a world of moral ambiguity and successfully challenge audiences’ previously held beliefs on this subject.

More than anything, I wanted to make a film about this trial because I myself was torn about where I stood on this issue. Gröning claimed he was just following orders. He didn’t kill anyone. But he was there. He was a witness to, and helped to run, a machinery of death that killed 1.1 million people. Who is complicit, and how far down the line do you prosecute? Had Germany gone after all the so-called Grönings—the lesser cogs—after the war, a huge percentage of the population would have been in jail. How does a country move on after a crime is committed on such a large scale by so many of its citizens?



Furthermore, does Gröning’s good deed later in life absolve him of his past sins? Does standing up to deniers right the wrongs he committed all those years ago? And will his trial send a warning to future war criminals that justice will eventually catch up to them as well? These questions are relevant now more than ever as right-wing extremist groups gain traction around the world and war crimes are still being committed long after the world proclaimed “Never Again.”

*The Accountant of Auschwitz* aims to shed some light on the question of responsibility and culpability at the root of all war crimes and how we might learn from the past to ensure a more peaceful future.

**[The Accountant of Auschwitz](#) is opening this week at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema (506 Bloor St. W) on June 8. Following the evening screenings on June 8th & 14, there will be a Q+A with the director, producers and Holocaust Survivors. Get tickets [here](#).**

<http://www.shedoesthecity.com/the-accountant-of-auschwitz>



## THE ACCOUNTANT OF AUSCHWITZ: WHEN BEING THERE IS A WAR CRIME

June 6, 2018, By Jim Slotek

Rating: A

During the post-WWII Nuremberg trials, the prevailing defence was, famously, “I was following orders.” As detailed in the documentary *The Accountant of Auschwitz*, the go-to then became, “I was just there. I didn’t kill anybody.”

Which is why the 2015 case of ex-Nazi SS officer Oskar Gröning represented a change of course in addressing war crimes. Gröning was, indeed, an accountant at the infamous Nazi death camp, one who catalogued the property of mostly Jewish detainees because, in his words, “they no longer needed it.”

But in a precedent set by the trial of the late Cleveland auto worker John Demjanjuk, German law was amended in 2009 to make it a crime simply to be at the scene of a war crime, in Gröning’s case, simply to be an SS officer at Auschwitz.



Auschwitz survivor Eva Kor forgives former SS officer Oskar Gröning, creating an uproar

To that extent, the law was akin to the U.S. RICO Act (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations), which effectively made it a crime to belong to any organization that committed crimes, whether a Mafia family or a motorcycle gang.

So, was every German officer culpable at Auschwitz? Director Matthew Shoychet and writer/producer Ricki Gurwitz’s doc – which was the runner-up for most popular film at the recent Hot Docs festival – wrestles with that notion, and shines a light on an uncomfortable fact of post-War Germany.

To wit: Germany prosecuted relatively few of its accused war criminals. (Of 6,500 guards at Auschwitz, only 49 were ever prosecuted. We meet a U.S. war crimes investigator, Benjamin Ferencz, now in his 90s, who remains haunted by his inability to make prosecutions stick).

## Original-Cin – June 6, 2018 (2 of 2)

The irony is that Groning, who continued to maintain his own innocence until his death earlier this year, incriminated himself in the process of refuting the Holocaust deniers he detested. In 2005, he made numerous media appearances, including the BBC, confirming what he saw at the death camp, how the train passengers were separated, who went where and what happened to them.

As the only war crimes defendant to ever freely testify, Groning's testimony in *The Accountant of Auschwitz* makes for morbidly fascinating viewing. Groning talks about his time there as "joyous.. gossiping and chatting, like a small town with a canteen and a cinema." He is removed from the horrific events of the Holocaust, beyond being determined to confirm that they happened for history's sake.

There are interviews with Groning's neighbours in the German town of Luneberg who decry the prosecution of a nonagenarian – as indeed most of the still-living Nazi war criminals would be. If this new standard of culpability had been in place in the '40s, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Germans could have been charged. But now, it's a mainly symbolic act, one that brings together in court surviving camp prisoners and their erstwhile captors – all in their dotage.

Still, these meetings make for dramatic scenes, to say the least, in *The Accountant of Auschwitz*. Many were there to express their undying hatred of Groning and the Auschwitz SS. But one survivor, Eva Moses Kor, created an uproar by forgiving Groning in court.

It's a moment of intended grace that leaves many with a sour taste – symbolic of the conflicting emotions on display in what will be one of the last Nazi war crimes trials we ever witness.

*The Accountant of Auschwitz*. Directed by Matthew Shoychet. Starring Oskar Groning, Benjamin Ferencz, Eva Kor. Starts Friday June 8 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

Q&As with the director, producers and Holocaust survivors after evening screenings on June 8 and 14.

## 10 new movies we can't wait to see in summer 2018

These are the films NOW film critic Norm Wilner is most excited to watch this summer

BY **NORMAN WILNER**

JUNE 10, 2018

6:00 AM



*Lakeith Stanfield (left) and Tessa Thompson star in the sci-fi fantasy comedy about telemarketing, Sorry To Bother You.*

Now that studios drop potential blockbusters year-round, the stakes for summer movies feel... lower, somehow. A good documentary, a fun ride, a fun ride that's also a good documentary. (They totally exist.) And while I feel 2018 already has its perfect summer release in **Hotel Artemis**, here are a few other movies I'm excited to see in the coming months.

### AMERICAN ANIMALS

Six years ago, Bart Layton's true-crime documentary **The Impostor** turned a twisty narrative into a compelling meditation on faith, hope and deception. Now he's back with a docu-drama hybrid starring Evan Peters, Barry Keoghan, Blake Jenner and Hello Destroyer breakout Jared Abrahamson as four college students who tried to pull a campus heist. The actual perpetrators, older but not necessarily wiser, appear in interview footage. **June 22**

### THE FIRST PURGE

The Purge movies evolved into a real-time conversation about the cynical rot within American politics so gradually we didn't even notice – and now, a prequel shows us how it all began, with Marisa Tomei as the politician who started the ball rolling. **July 4**

### ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

After the grim finale of Avengers: Infinity War, the Marvel universe could use a little superhero foolishness – so Paul Rudd and Evangeline Lilly are stepping up and getting small to help Michael Douglas with another super-secret project. Walton Goggins, Michelle Pfeiffer and Killjoys' Hannah John-Kamen join the cast. There is no downside to any of this as far as I can tell. **July 6**

### LEAVE NO TRACE

Eight years after Winter's Bone, writer/director Debra Granik returns with another study of people in the margins of America – here, it's Ben Foster and Thomasin Harcourt McKenzie as a father and daughter living off the grid in Oregon. I am led to understand it's a thriller in much the same way that Winter's Bone was – so I'm all in. **July 6**

### SORRY TO BOTHER YOU

All I know about this much-buzzed Sundance hit is that it's some sort of sci-fi fantasy comedy about telemarketing... and really, that's all I need to know. Wait, I also know the cast is packed with ringers

like Lakeith Stanfield, Tessa Thompson, Armie Hammer and Terry Crews. Oh, and writer/director Boots Riley was the lead singer of the 90s hip-hop outfit The Coup, which means shit's gonna get real. **July 13**

### **THREE IDENTICAL STRANGERS**

Another documentary, I know. But this one has a fascinating hook, telling the story of triplets separated at birth and reunited at 19 through dumb luck... and that's just the setup. I missed this at Hot Docs – I was watching **40 other films**, jeez! – but I won't make that mistake again. **July 13**

### **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE – FALLOUT**

Tom Cruise's action franchise returns for a sixth go-round, promising even more real footage of an aging movie star risking his life because it's the only way he can feel anything anymore. (I mean, one assumes.) Christopher McQuarrie – who made the terrific fifth installment, Rogue Nation – is back at the wheel, as are co-stars Ving Rhames, Michelle Monaghan, Simon Pegg, Alec Baldwin and Rebecca Ferguson. **July 27**

### **THE MEG**

Look, we can all agree that there aren't enough movies where Jason Statham fights a giant shark with a submarine. So Jon Turteltaub made one, bringing along Rainn Wilson, Li Bingbing, Cliff Curtis and Ruby Rose. And sure, they're all great. But mostly I want to see this because Jason Statham fights a giant shark with a submarine. **August 10**

### **DOG DAYS**

Ken Marino – the affable MVP of everything from Party Down, Children's Hospital, Burning Love and every iteration of Wet Hot American Summer – assembles his pals Nina Dobrev, Finn Wolfhard, Eva Longoria, Tig Notaro, Thomas Lennon, Lauren Lapkus, Adam Pally, Rob Corddry and Jessica St. Clair for a comedy about people and their dogs. I like all of those things. **August 10**

### **SUPPORT THE GIRLS**

Regina Hall, Haley Lu Richardson, Dylan Gelula, AJ Michakla and James Le Gros are among the ensemble cast of this comedy set over one day at a Hooters-like restaurant... which, if we're being honest, is not exactly the most exciting pitch. So why am I marking it on my calendar? Because it's written and directed by Andrew Bujalski, who makes eccentric character studies like Mutual Appreciation, Computer Chess and Results – and he's sure to nudge things in an unconventional direction. **August 24**

**normw@nowtoronto.com | @wilnervision**

## This week in Toronto: a tense Picnic and a time-travelling Dinner

Sun., June 10, 2018timer7 min. read



### TUESDAY

#### Kendrick Lamar

**Watch this because:** He's just like any other Pulitzer Prize-winning rapper.

Continuing the sports metaphor and imagery driving this "Championship Tour" of Top Dawg stablemates, consider Kendrick the imperious LeBron figure and the rest (Schoolboy Q, Ab-Soul et al) his supporting cast of minions. With a four-piece band priming the pump, this is very much his show, including a "Pulitzer Kenny" shout-out and everything but the brandishing of a wrestling champion's belt in lieu of that singular award, the first ever bestowed to a pop artist. The tour hasn't been without its casualties; singer SZA, still listed on the bill, declared herself on the disabled list at the end of last month with throat problems. (Budweiser Stage, 909 Lake Shore Blvd. W., 7:30 p.m.)

—Chris Young

### THURSDAY

#### The Sorority

**Watch this if:** You're up for a smashing of Toronto's mopey, male R&B template.

With formidable chemistry and no little humour, The Sorority are four GTA female emcees — Keysha Freshh, Haviah Mighty, Lex Leosis, pHoenix Pagliacci — who since finding themselves together at an International Women's Day cipher two years ago have been battering down as many of the hip-hop boy's club stereotypes as they can fit into their bars. It all broke this spring with debut LP *Pledge* and, given the buzz around the record and a tour across the country in May, this homecoming figures to be a victory lap equally empowering and irresistible — with any luck, the first of many to come. (Adelaide Hall, 250 Adelaide St. W., doors 8 p.m.)

—CY

#### Back in Time for Dinner

**Watch this if:** You have an appetite for the food and domestic customs of the past.

## Toronto Star – June 10, 2018 (2 of 3)

The term “living history” takes on new meaning for Southern Ontario’s Campus family as, each week, mom Tristan, dad Aaron, and teens Valerie, Jessica and Robert revisit a different decade, from the 1940s through the 1990s. Not only do they cook meals from that time, they dress in period clothes and their home is renovated to match the era. In the ’40s, for instance, they trade their refrigerator for an “icebox” and their TV and gadgets for a radio and card games. It’s eye-opening and entertaining. (Psst, quirky comedy *Crawford*, which debuted as a web series in February, also makes its broadcast CBC debut on Thursday at 9.) (CBC at 8 p.m.)

—Debra Yeo

### The Walrus Talks the Future

**Watch this if:** You thought you knew what to expect.

After last week’s election, it’s clear that Canadians have some very different ideas for what the future should look like, either two weeks from now or until the Earth burns itself up. So The Walrus’s talk series is looking toward the future in its latest incarnation, featuring Evergreen CEO Geoff Cape, storyteller Lisa Charleyboy, Sidewalk Labs engineer Craig Nevill-Manning, author Margaret Atwood (particularly gifted at imagining scary dystopias) and more. (Evergreen Brick Works, 550 Bayview Ave., [6:30 p.m.](#))

—Carly Maga

## FRIDAY

### Breakthroughs Film Festival

**Watch this if:** You want to check out the next great female directors.

Shorts by many new Canadian talents are part of the lineup at the Breakthroughs Film Festival, a two-night showcase of emerging female filmmakers. A charmer by Toronto’s Dominique Van Olm, *Little Brother*, is a standout in Friday’s program thanks to the subtle take on sibling dynamics in this story of a boy and his older sister reconnecting. A Cree First Nation filmmaker based in Winnipeg, JJ Neepin makes a similarly strong impression with *Laundry Day*. Up-and-comers from Japan, Australia and South Africa provide many more reasons to check out the offerings at the BFF. (Royal Cinema, 608 College St., [7:30 p.m.](#))

—Jason Anderson

### Malpaso Dance Company at Luminato

**Watch this if:** You want to see what you missed in 2015.

This Cuban contemporary company sold out on its last visit to Luminato. It’s back with a mixed bill that features works choreographed by its artistic director Osnel Delgado, Canadian Aszure Barton and Ohad Naharin of Batsheva Dance Company. Delgado’s *Dreaming of Lions* is inspired by Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, and features music from Arturo O’Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. Barton brings *Indomitable Waltz* and Naharin’s contribution is *Tabula Rasa*. (Elgin Theatre, 8 p.m., also June 16, festival continues to June 24)



## Toronto Star – June 10, 2018 (3 of 3)

—DY

### SATURDAY

#### !Women Art Revolution at Game Changers

**Watch this if:** You want an invaluable crash course on feminist art.

The art world was very much a man's world until the formidable subjects of this documentary changed the game. Lynn Hershman Leeson's film celebrates the achievements of Judy Chicago, Martha Rosler and many other women artists and activists of the 1960s and '70s who had had it up to here with the male dominance and discrimination in the creative fields. Their boldness is matched by the many other women you'll encounter in *Game Changers: Inspiring Women*, a six-doc series by Luminato and Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema that also includes the Fran Lebowitz profile *Public Speaking*. (Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., [1 and 4 p.m.](#))

—JA

#### Alan Cumming: Legal Immigrant

**Watch this if:** You want a dose of Americana with a Scottish accent.

Inestimable star of Broadway, television and our hearts, Alan Cumming is returning to Toronto with another cabaret performance following 2016's sold-out two-night stint of *Alan Cumming Sings Sappy Songs*. *Legal Immigrant*, his new tour, reflects on the performer's 10 years as a U.S. citizen with a variety of stories, lessons and songs that represent America today — for better or worse — from *Merrily We Roll Along* to P!nk to Disney. (Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., [8 p.m.](#))

—CM

### SUNDAY

#### Picnic at Hanging Rock

**Watch this if:** You're in the mood for a female-led, gothic-style mystery.

Brit Natalie Dormer, who's played two doomed queens in *The Tudors* and *Game of Thrones*, stars in this miniseries as Mrs. Appleyard, the proprietor of a turn-of-the-20th-century girls' school in Australia who has a secret past. Headstrong farm girl Miranda (Lily Sullivan), rich beauty Irma (Samara Weaving) and pal Marion (Madeleine Madden) are sort of the Mean Girls of the school. And then there's orphan Sara (Inez Curro) and her whipping girl Edith (Ruby Rees). Things start to unravel for all of them when three students and a teacher go missing during the picnic of the title. (Bravo at 10:15 p.m.)

—DY

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/2018/06/10/this-week-in-toronto-a-tense-picnic-and-a-time-travelling-dinner.html>

Toronto Star – June 21, 2018

## Riveting documentary *The Cleaners* puts a sad face on social media's gatekeepers

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#) Entertainment Reporter  
Thu., June 21, 2018

### The Cleaners

★★★★



A scene from the documentary *The Cleaners*, about the shadowy world of "content moderators." (HOT DOCS)

A scene from the documentary *The Cleaners*, about the shadowy world of "content moderators." (HOT DOCS)

*A documentary about Internet content moderators, directed by Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 88 minutes. 14A*

German filmmakers Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck explore the shadowy world of "content moderators," the anonymous people working for social media giants like Facebook, in a documentary that is as riveting as it is disturbing.

In places like Manila — where labour is cheap and pushback from workers minimal — the film examines the toll taken on the people whose job is to try to keep the faceless hordes of internet trolls in check while monitoring violence, nudity and child sexual exploitation. The demands placed on them amounts to cruel and unusual punishment.

Despite high wages, there's a serious price to pay for these workers in the form of psychological trauma incurred from being inundated by hateful language and images of such scorching violence and sexual abuse. Meanwhile, there's little or no accountability for these social media giants, which earn billions in profits while forcing these employees to remain hidden and silent.

Filled with hard numbers and harrowing first-person accounts, *The Cleaners* is impeccable, revelatory filmmaking at its best.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/06/21/riveting-documentary-the-cleaners-puts-a-sad-face-on-social-medias-gatekeepers.html>



**Review: ‘Design Canada’**

*Take stock of Canada’s “brand identity” before July 1*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published June 22nd, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



***Design Canada***

(Canada, 74 min.)

Dir. Greg Durrell

The question of a “brand identity” is difficult to tackle. Corporate values, principles, history, and mandates combine with consumer-friendly concision. Now imagine this entity has thirteen unique departments, one of which considers itself a distinct brand-within-a-brand, two official languages and countless unofficial ones, a sprawling geographical range, and a rocky history of cultural genocide. The long road to Canada’s brand is a tricky one. However, this productive conversation ensures the collective identity undergoes constant reappraisal.

The question of the national brand identity fuels an engaging discussion in *Design Canada*. This upbeat and patriotic doc from Greg Durrell surveys the history of iconic images that are central to Canadian nationalism. The film puts under the microscope the brands and logos that stir a sense of national pride. Icons for institutions such as the CBC, Royal Bank of Canada, Canadian National Railway, and *Roots* are a few of the logos that audiences should recognize. Much of the film looks to the logos of the 1960s when conversations of Canadian national consciousness peaked with innovations in design. Audiences might think of the boozy, swinging 60s as the *Mad Men* days, but the doc argues that Canadians led the charge for good design during those heady times. Durrell, a graphic artist whose portfolio includes the Canadian Olympic Team branding, ensures the film itself is a model of good design. Vibrant colours and bright lighting make for warm and accessible interviews, while unique title cards play with spatial relations in the frame. The cleanliness of the design guarantees that one doesn’t lose sight of the message.

Interviews with personalities like broadcaster George Stroumboulopoulos, journalist Heather Sung, author Douglas Coupland, and graphic designers Burton Kramer (creator of the original CBC logo), Stuart Ash (the man behind the triangular maple leaf symbolising Canada’s centennial), and Heather Cooper, (whose *Roots* beaver adorns a sweater in nearly every Canadian closet) add perspectives to the conversation. *Design Canada* illuminates the many pieces that comprise the puzzle of Canadian identity.

*Design Canada* begins with the biggest image of all: the Canadian flag. Durrell chronicles the great flag debate of the 1960s and Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson’s mission to unite the nation with a new flag for Canada’s Centennial. The talking heads of *Design Canada* observe with good humour that it took nearly 100 years after confederation for Canadians to realize they deserved their own flag

to wave with pride. The rebranding of Canada with the flag epitomized the challenge of forming a collective national consciousness in such a diverse nation.

The talking heads note the significance of iconic “Canadian” images like the maple leaf and the beaver, but beyond the enjoyable appraisals of Canadiana, the stronger aspects of the conversation engage with the actual design of the prospective flags. Even a Canadian who has looked at the national flag every day may have taken this conversation for granted. (The old Red Ensign with the Union Jack and coat of arms slapped like patchwork on a rectangle was neither a grand feat of design nor a symbol with which to rally the masses.) The graphic designers marvel at the cleanliness of the flag with its thirteen-point maple leaf and red bars encapsulating a nation from sea to sea. The simplicity of the Canadian design is a national hallmark one sees in brands from coast to coast.

Moreover, the flag debate exemplifies how icons carry strong emotional connections. From the stuffy three-leafed “Pearson Pennant” the PM favoured to John Diefenbaker’s conservative, full-throttle tirade against change, the doc draws out the cultural conversations these images embody. Brand recognition relies on relationships, so the alteration of a corporate logo—a contentious conversation that fuels one of the more engaging chapters of the doc—illustrates the challenges of introducing change.

These reappraisals of Canadian identity ultimately signal a strong national consciousness. *Design Canada* looks at inclusive efforts to rebrand the nation by acknowledging facets of the population traditionally omitted from the discussion of “Canadianness.” Ensuring that French and English appeared in equal font and size on all national brands, for example, was a stride towards unity. Another segment of the film shows how the efforts of Expo ’67 highlighted the Indigenous cultures of the land and gave a first step for self-representation by acknowledging that history differed from the sanitized version offered by schoolbooks. The interviews with figures like Sung and Stroubouloupoulos add to this conversation by emphasizing the need to see the fluidity of the Canadian identity: just like corporate logos, our idea of “Canadian” will date itself if it doesn’t embrace change.

***Design Canada* opens at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) on June 22.**

## Review: 'The Cleaners'

### *A tough investigative doc*

By [Marc Glassman](#) • Published June 22nd, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



#### ***The Cleaners***

(Germany/Brazil, 88 min.)

Dir. Dir. Hans Block, Moritz Rieseewieck

A tough investigative doc that slowly, inexorably, turns into a cinematic essay about contemporary anger and hatred, *The Cleaners* reveals how Facebook censors images and texts worldwide. German directors Hans Block and Moritz Rieseewieck track down a group of “content moderators” in Manila who decide what material stays up on Facebook and what gets taken down. These young Filipinos aren’t schooled in art or communications or ethics. They’re simply doing their jobs and with little training, the decisions they make are problematic, to say the least.

One operator proudly reveals that he could win the *Guinness Book of Records* since he makes judgments on 25,000 images in a good day. The filmmakers offer a chorus of “delete, delete, ignore, delete” from moderators during critical junctures in the doc. One of the content moderators hesitates briefly before deciding that Nick Ut’s Pulitzer Prize winning photo of a naked 9-year-old Vietnamese girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, fleeing from a U.S. napalm attack should be deleted from the Internet. After all, it shows a young girl’s genitals and he has been trained not to care about the context; it’s simply wrong to show it.

Another content moderator not only deletes artist Illma Gore’s drawing of a naked Donald Trump complete with a small penis, she removes her Facebook account. As Gore points out, her Trump image was a representation, not reality, but such subtlety seems beyond the scope of her Facebook censor.

But it’s also too easy to attack the content moderators. Block & Rieseewieck make it clear that the Filipinos profiled in their film aren’t even actually employed by Facebook or Twitter or Google; in fact, a local business, which works with those companies, pays their checks. No one has said that Zuckerberg is dumb enough to leave an email trail. And the moderators haven’t been properly trained.

*The Cleaners* gradually expands its scope, taking on the very nature of Facebook and its digital colleagues. Nicole Wong, who has served as an associate counsel for Google, is treated quite sympathetically as she rationalizes why it’s tough to make judgment calls on visual material. She

even makes a case for geo-blocking, the pernicious system, which makes it impossible for people in a country like Turkey to find out what others think and know about their country. With geo-blocking, those who are most affected by a dictatorship or a totalitarian government can't find out what lucky people in the West can access without a problem.

Facebook's practices allow them to look good to their local supporters while not helping others at all. Block and Riesewieck boldly explore the political situations in Turkey and the Philippines, where dictators control freedom of speech—an issue that Facebook pretends to espouse.

What becomes obvious as the film progresses is that content moderators aren't controlling the rise of anger throughout the world. Facebook, Google and Twitter have given power to the racists and right-wing nationalists who need a forum to express their terrifying views. "The cleaners" in Manila and elsewhere are told not to affect freedom of speech; it's an idealistic goal that has turned ugly. While problematic images are being deleted, the true enemies of Facebook's utopian ideology are allowed to espouse violence—and no one will stop them.

The film ends with a stunning revelation that a content moderator, who was an expert in self-harm videos, has committed suicide. It's clear that "the cleaners" are not the problem. Perhaps it's the fault of Zuckerberg and his friends; certainly they're doing nothing to prevent further violence around the globe. Block and Riesewieck's film is thoughtful and provocative. We are living in perilous times, when freedom of speech can lead to hatred and no one knows what's real anymore. *The Cleaners* is a film made for the times we're living in right now.

***The Cleaners* opens June 22 at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#).**

Marc Glassman is the editor of POV, artistic director of Pages Unbound, film critic for Classical 96.3 FM and an adjunct professor at Ryerson University.

## This week in Toronto: Shakespeare, Scorsese and a streetball legend

Sun., June 24, 2018

**Watch this if:** You want to know what it takes to please Martin Scorsese.

For the first night of a doubleheader for TIFF's Books on Film, host Eleanor Wachtel sits down with veteran screenwriter Jay Cocks to get the skinny on one of Scorsese's greatest movies (it's also his most genteel). Nominated for five Oscars in 1993 (it won for costume design), *The Age of Innocence* is Scorsese and Cocks' skilful adaptation of Edith Wharton's 1920 novel about the troubles faced by an upper-crust New York family. You can also catch Cocks for a look at *Silence*, his latest collaboration with his pal Marty. ([TIFF Bell Lightbox](#), 350 King St. W., 7 p.m.) —Jason Anderson

### Dora Mavor Moore Awards

**Watch this if:** You want to celebrate the best of Toronto theatre, opera and dance.

The Monday night the Toronto performing arts community waits all year for has arrived. Organized by the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts, the Dora Mavor Moore Awards are the city's biggest accolade for theatre, opera, dance and design artists. This year they're hosted by Astrid Van Wieren, one of the original cast members of *Come From Away* who's now performing in the Broadway production. Come for the awards, stay for the ice cream and hotdogs at the after-party. (Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre, 189 Yonge St., [7:30 p.m.](#)) —Carly Maga

### Cécile McLorin Salvant

**Watch this because:** Voices like hers come around "once in a generation or two," says Wynton Marsalis.

With Jill Scott, Gregory Porter, Bettye LaVette et al in town this jazz festival season it makes for difficult choices when you're looking for a heavenly singer. Then there's Salvant, the fast-rising rocket of the lot. Her easy wit and way of faithfully serving the song while breathing new wit and nuance into it put her in the front ranks among more seasoned performers and, at the age of 28, she's got a lot of room to grow. Her Gershwin/Jelly Roll Morton "Jelly and George" project with Aaron Diehl on piano was one of Koerner Hall's highlight nights last year. For this TD Toronto Jazz Festival show, she's accompanied by three of her New York regulars in Kyle Poole, Paul Sikivie and Adam Birnbaum on piano. ([Trinity-St Paul's Centre](#), 427 Bloor St. W., doors 8 p.m.) —Chris Young

### A Tribe Called Red, Keys N Krates, Iskwe

**Watch this for:** A big blowout finish to Indigenous History Month.

Now this should build to a fine thumping party and it's free, downtown and outdoors, a co-present from the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund. Start with Hamilton artist Iskwe's trip-hop-rooted electropop. Next comes Toronto electro trio Keys N Krates, who in 10 years have honed a dramatic sample-heavy sound that blows up whether in the club or in a festival slot like this one. They'll set the table for A Tribe Called Red's powwow beats to finish it off. Appropriately enough, they started this whole celebratory [month](#) off June 1 in Ottawa. (Yonge-Dundas Square, 7 p.m.) —CY

### Channel Zero: Butcher's Block

## Toronto Star – June 24, 2018 (2 of 2)

**Watch this if:** You like a show that's scary but also relatable.

The third season of this horror anthology series based on internet “creepypastas” has already aired in the U.S. where it gained a 100 per cent approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes. The main characters are sisters Alice and Zoe (Olivia Luccardi and Holland Roden): one suffering from schizophrenia; the other fearful it will afflict her, too. The AV Club called

it “one of the best TV depictions of the fear about the potential onset of mental illness.” Rutger Hauer and Krisha Fairchild also star. ([Showcase](#) at 9 p.m.) —Debra Yeo

### THURSDAY

#### Shakespeare in High Park

**Watch this if:** You want fresh air and fresh talent.

Thirty-six years ago, Canadian Stage began its grand tradition of open-air Shakespeare productions with, naturally, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. “Dream” might not be in the title of the series anymore since it became known as “Shakespeare in High Park,” but that play is returning to the High Park amphitheatre this summer under the direction of Tanja Jacobs, alternating with Frank Cox-O'Connell's take on *Romeo and Juliet*, another Bard staple. Performing these two plays, two of Shakespeare's most popular, is an impressive cast of exciting up-and-comers, including Rachel Cairns (Tarragon Theatre's *Bunny*), Peter Fernandes (Canadian Stage's *Love and Information*, Outside the March/The Company Theatre's *Jerusalem*) and Jakob Ehman (Soulpepper's *Idomeneus*). (High Park Amphitheatre, 1873 Bloor St. W., [8 p.m.](#), on until Sept. 2) —Carly Maga

### FRIDAY

#### Letterkenny

**Watch this if:** Your Canada Day weekend includes Hicks, Hockey Players and Skids.

The residents of fictional Letterkenny, Ontario, are back for another six pack of episodes. The new adventures include the Hicks (series creator Jared Keeso, Nathan Dales, Michelle Mylett, K. Trevor Wilson) attending a wedding; the Hockey Players (Dylan Playfair and Andrew Herr) switching to coaching; and the Skids (Tyler Johnston and Evan Stern) exploring the dark web. Among those being skewered by the series' fast-talking, foul-mouthed wit are “citiots,” people from L.A. and the hard right. ([CraveTV](#)) —DY

#### Rock Rubber 45s

**Watch this if:** You're all about sneakers, hoops and hip hop.

The name of Bobbito Garcia may mean nothing to you now, but that'll change when you see this high-energy doc about a man who's been a legendary figure on the streets of New York for over three decades. A DJ, streetballer and breakdancer in the Rock Steady Crew, Garcia would qualify as a standard-setter for style even if he wasn't one of the world's most revered sneaker collectors and designers. He'll surely be the coolest man in the room when he visits Toronto for the Canadian premiere of this film profile, which includes interviews with fans and friends like Lin-Manuel Miranda and Spike Lee. (Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., [8:30 p.m.](#))

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/2018/06/24/this-week-in-toronto-shakespeare-scorsese-and-a-streetball-legend.html>



## Review: Design Canada

Andrew Parker June 20, 2018 8:25 am



### Design Canada

**6.5** out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Graphic designers are some of the most unsung heroes in the art world. You're unlikely to see their works in galleries or museums. Their works are rarely remarked upon by critics. You might not even know any of their names. And yet, there's a fair chance that the most successful graphic designers have had their works reach more eyes than some of the greatest visual masterpieces in the world. Just because graphic designers are often responsible for logos, advertising, and commercial ventures doesn't mean that their contributions to the visual world aren't any less valid, and Greg Durrell's documentary *Design Canada* looks at homegrown talents and their most famous creations, some of which the average Canadian will see multiple times a day without ever thinking twice about it.

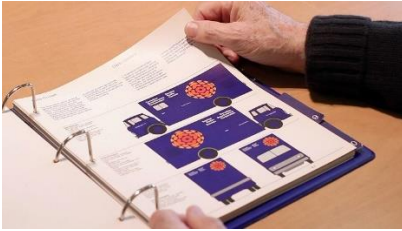
Durrell, a graphic designer by trade, takes a look at the history of modernist corporate design and how Canadians have defined small parts of their national identity through the most iconic and eye catching creations of some of the country's best visual artists. There are few Canadians that wouldn't be able to immediately identify the bursting CBC logo, the sleek and sinewy CN lettering, or the bubbly font that's placed prominently on Roots products, but although these corporate signposts are instantly recognizable, many don't know who created them and how they came into use.

*Design Canada* seeks to correct this oversight by offering a modern overview of graphic design in the country, starting in the 1960s and bringing the viewer into the current era; giving credit to those responsible, many of whom appear in the film. Considering the film starts in the 1960s, the creation of the beloved maple leaf flag – which for non-Canadians reading this wasn't adopted until 98 years after confederation – and the importance of Montreal's expo67 factor heavily into establishing a new design identity for the country.

No creativity happens in a vacuum, and modern art is often the result of numerous cultures coming together and blending their knowledge. Durrell posits that modern Canadian design was simple, straightforward, and sleek, but heavily indebted to European, American, and indigenous influences. Durrell focuses mostly on the European side of Canadian design, but there are some telling, if brief nods to others who made an impact. Much like the country has become a welcoming cultural melting pot, the designs and logos created during the 1960s and 70s served as a subtle reflection of that amalgamation of influences. There's sadly not a lot made about indigenous or female contributions outside of a couple key scenes, probably because, by the film's own admission, graphic design is still a notoriously white and male industry, and the most iconic images of the late 20th century were products of their time and era.

## The Gate – June 20, 2018 (2 of 2)

Things are turning around today, but a bit more about how the industry has slowly become more inclusive would have been beneficial.



Since most effective graphics – like those used by CBC, CN, Air Canada, no name, the dearly missed Montreal Expos, and the 1976 Olympics – are simple in construction, *Design Canada* places the emphasis firmly on how much effort goes into creating and brainstorming deceptively rudimentary logos. Filtering complex ideas and feelings through a concise artistic lens is more difficult than it looks, and the men and women on hand to discuss their work put in a lot of time, effort, and brain power to create logos that many people Canadians could sketch from memory. It's no surprise when, later in the film, many of the designers profiled bemoan updates and changes to their logos over the years. They worked hard on them, and they're well within their rights to see modern day tweaks and revisions as after-the-fact criticism.

Anyone interested in more flowery, ornamental design work could be disappointed. Most of *Design Canada* focuses staunchly on simplicity, and the idea that design can be maximized instead of minimized is predominantly represented by the input of Roots logo creator Heather Cooper, one of the few women profiled and one of the few designers of her day to buck against the “less is more” trend. On one hand, this approach allows Durrell's film to take on a streamlined approach that's more in line with some of the country's most iconic images. In another way, this also makes it feel like the works of maximalists are somewhat minimized.

The initial onslaught of numerous talking heads feels overwhelming off the top, but Durrell eventually settles into a nice groove. The frantic pace of the film's opening moments eases up once the introductory historical ground has been covered and *Design Canada* starts talking about individual designs and artists. Durrell proves to be a gifted filmmaker in his debut directorial outing, creatively but simply staging and shooting intelligently conducted talking head interviews. It's hard to make a documentary based predominantly around interviews and archival footage that wants to retain a degree of simplicity to better reflect the subject matter, but Durrell has found a way to make just that. *Design Canada* is attractive on its own terms, and as intellectually stimulating as some of the finest documentaries made about the artistic process.

Canadians see many of the logos and graphics depicted in *Design Canada* as retro and nostalgic, but Durrell doesn't rest on good feelings. *Design Canada* wants to make viewers understand why these images were effective and groundbreaking. It's a film that wants the viewer to know how advertising and iconography works on them, while simultaneously maintaining a love for form and function. Like the images profiled, it sounds simple, but it's delightfully complex.

***Design Canada* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, June 22, 2018. It will also screen at The Plaza in Calgary on Wednesday, June 20, The Garneau in Edmonton on Thursday, June 21, Rainbow Cinemas in Saskatoon on Saturday, June 23, The Rio in Vancouver (for two shows) on Thursday, June 28, Cinema du Parc in Montreal on Friday, June 29, Vancouver's Cinematheque on Thursday, July 5, Princess Cinemas in Waterloo from Monday, July 9 to Thursday, July 12, Park Theatre in Winnipeg on Tuesday, July 17, and in St. John's at LPSU Hall on Thursday, September 20.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034396/review-design-canada/>



## Review: The Cleaners

Andrew Parker June 20, 2018 8:11 am



**The Cleaners - 6.9** out of 10

Andrew Parker

Protecting social media from the likes of hate speech, distressing images, terrorist ideologies, bullying, and fake news while preserving freedom of speech and artistic expression has always been a slippery moral slope, but German filmmakers Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck's documentary *The Cleaners* shows the ambiguous moral battle from a secretive and protected point of view that hasn't been glimpsed before. Looking at the censoring of social media from the perspective of third-party content moderators, *The Cleaners* begins as a fascinating, purposefully infuriating exposé of how platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Google have been both protective and over-protective of users. Block and Riesewieck don't end up staying on that task, however, opting to go after a more pressing topic around the halfway point, resulting in a film that feels like two different, but interconnected films.

Blending talking head interviews with a sleek visual style reminiscent of an espionage thriller, *The Cleaners* finds Block and Riesewieck travelling to Manila – one of the least likely places in the world to become a hub for information technology – to speak with five content moderators working for a third party vendor on behalf of some of the world's largest social media corporations. Their jobs entail looking at hundreds of the billions of social media posts, images, and videos that users share everyday around the world and deciding within seconds of their posting if borderline controversial posts are appropriate. If a reviewer deems something inappropriate, the post is deleted.

To a slight degree, the role of these content moderators seems reasonable. If someone is thinking of harming themselves, a moderator can find a way to intervene. They're on the front lines when it comes to stopping the proliferation of child exploitation and sexual abuse. They've been trained in how to identify terrorist propaganda, and they can curtail calls to incite violence. There are positives to the work provided by these men and women (one of whom communicates with the filmmakers solely via text and email to remain anonymous), and many take pride in the good they do. They're also thrilled to have steady employment in a country where such job security is hard to come by. Many are also permanently haunted by the graphic content that they've had to process over the years, and even one mistake could cost an unsuspecting social media user their reputation, livelihood, or even their lives.

*The Cleaners* has been designed in such a way to show that such policing of the internet isn't infallible and sometimes targets content that's designed to educate, inform, or advocate. Since nudity is public enemy number one on most social media platforms, where does one morally draw the line between art

## The Gate – June 20, 2018 (2 of 2)

and pornography? Since different cultures have varying degrees of permissiveness and sometimes oppressive censorship laws, how can there be a blanket set of social online rules? What's the difference between something meant to be satirical and something that's hurtful? These are questions that are hard to answer, and even the experts profiled in *The Cleaners* and others trotted out before U.S. Senate committees on the same subject don't have clear answers.



Spending time with these moral scrubbers (without providing names to provide some degree of anonymity) is insightful and surprisingly humane, but also frustrating. It's not that Block and Riesewieck are portraying these blue collar men and women as people who don't know how to do their jobs properly, but that their task is already impossible by definition. If these people are the best we can do to protect the internet while preserving freedom of speech, are they helping or hindering the process?

That last question is probably why *The Cleaners* switches gears in its second half and pushes its initial subjects somewhat into the background. While these human protectors might be imperfect, flawed, and boasting a moral thought process some would argue with, Block and Riesewieck switch to talk about the devilish nature of algorithms and geographical restrictions that have effectively sheltered human beings into self-contained online bubbles.

Algorithms have effectively changed the face of discourse for the worse, offering online content creators platforms for sometimes hateful, incendiary, and patently false propaganda that can reach the widest range of users possible. The content moderators make it known that even if an opinion is created via obvious misinformation, they can't intervene because it's still an opinion. When they don't scrub such skewed viewpoints from their platforms, they're allowed to fester and grow larger thanks to algorithms that will allow the people most interested in such topics to consume this content unabated and unchecked, with next to no logical or beneficial counterpoints to make it through the analytical data provided to the corporations aggregating materials. There are few things that have contributed greater to the political divisiveness and the forwarding of hate speech than algorithms, the true, unseen danger; mechanical bits of code with even fewer moral convictions than most human beings.

While it's important to talk about algorithms, the title of Block and Riesewieck's film is *The Cleaners*, and the second half all but abandons that thread to talk about a different, but understandably interlocked issue. While the filmmakers eventually come back to their initial focus at the end, *The Cleaners* feels like a film that's put on pause at the midway point to watch a segment from a different film. Both films are certainly worthy of praise and are effective in their desire to wake people up about dangers to free speech in the digital era, but it leaves both halves feeling like they could have been made into two capable standalone films instead of one lengthy effort. Part of this could be because gaining access to content moderators couldn't have been easy, but there are plenty of interview subjects (including people living on the front lines of the Syrian civil war and a right wing blogger looking to start violent fights wherever he can) in the film's second half who could make up a compelling film on their own. It's still a good film, but it would have had a better impact as two films or a longer series.

***The Cleaners opens at The Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema on Friday, June 22, 2018.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034394/review-the-cleaners/>

## The Design Canada Documentary is Out Now

• [Erin Donnelly](#)

Article Details



***Design Canada*, a new documentary from the team behind *Helvetica*, introduces us to the graphic designers behind the nation's most iconic logos.**

Burton Kramer. Lorne Perry. Heather Cooper. Fritz Gottshalk and Stuart Ash. They're not exactly household names, but these masters are responsible for some of Canada's most iconic designs, including the logos for the CBC, CN Rail, Roots and the Royal Bank. Emblems familiar to every Canadian from coast to coast to coast, young and old alike.



These unsung heroes are finally getting some recognition with the release of *Design Canada*, a new documentary by graphic designer and first-time director Greg Durrell, who teamed up with Brooklyn-based Canadian filmmaker Jessica Edwards and *Helvetica* director Gary Hustwit to successfully crowd-fund and complete this full-length feature.

For the most part the film sticks to the nation's clear heyday of graphic design: the mid-'60s to mid-'70s, an era kicked off with the introduction of Canada's first official flag, in 1965. Developed via competition, the flag's big reveal was followed by a plethora of plum design gigs in the country's centennial year, including Ash's stylized maple leaf marking the milestone itself and the Expo 67 branding created by industrial designer Julien Hébert.



We are treated to the stories behind these works and a slew of familiar iconography, used on everything from government signage, to books, brochures, trains, jerseys and posters, including the '76 Olympics poster by Raymond Bellmare, pictured above. One might expect this to pop up as an example of controversial work: the image, meant to appeal to the nation's youth, zooms in on a jean jacket pinned with a number of buttons, including one bearing a marijuana leaf icon. But in Canada's original Trudeau epoch, no one batted an eye, says Bellmare.

## Azure – June 19, 2018 (2 of 2)



During this Helvetica-heavy era, the style of the day may have been Swiss Design, but it was Canada that was churning out the world's best graphic design, claims Massimo Vignelli, who was interviewed for the film before he died in 2014. Vignelli offers up high praise on screen for works such as Allan Fleming's CN rail emblem. Intended to evoke timelessness, and solve the issue of the company's constant rebranding – and the expense that went along with it – the design is still used almost 60 years after Fleming first sketched it on a cocktail napkin.



In fact, though this film is a bit of a love letter to the discipline's past, that doesn't mean we don't get a look at the present. While the stories behind the designs are often told by creators who have long since retired, many of the graphics are still going strong, and others are being brought out of retirement. While writer Douglas Coupland complains about the destruction of Ontario's Trillium Foundation logo in a recent update, we also get to see how other symbols have made a comeback, such as Sloan Savage's classic 1977 Blue Jays logo, which was tweaked ever-so-slightly and reintroduced after a rocky streak of re-imaginings disrupted its original 20-year run.



Concrete's John Pylypczak sums it up early in the film: "Did Canadians design these symbols, or did these symbols design Canada?" Would the Roots brand have been as successful without its internationally recognizable beaver branding by Heather Cooper? Would Paul Henderson have scored that tie-breaking goal against the Soviets in 1972 had Team Canada not been united by the incredibly simple and striking maple leaf-wrapped jerseys created by John Lloyd? How much of a part did Julien Hébert's work play in drawing over 50 million visitors to Montreal for Expo 67 – at a time when the national population was only 20 million? Not only are these visuals representative of some of the country's biggest achievements, but they should also be counted among them.

Design Canada premiered June 13 and is now screening across the country, including at Toronto's Hot Docs Cinema, June 22 to July 5. A full list of dates is available [here](#).

<https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/design-canada-documentary/>

## THE CLEANERS: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA OUTSOURCED CENSORSHIP TO THIRD WORLD SWEATSHOPS

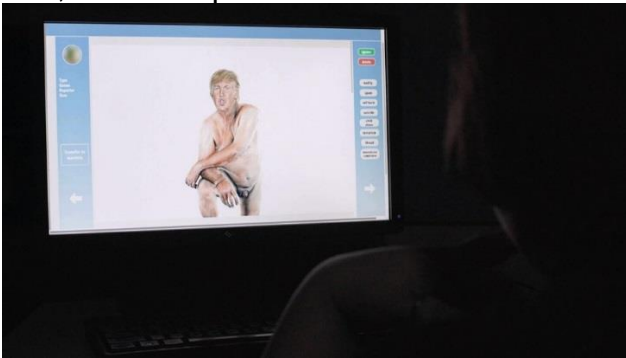
June 19, 2018

By Jim Slotek; Rating: A

It's possible you've had a post censored by Facebook or some other social media outlet, and may even have had your account suspended. You likely were curious as to who passed judgment on the nude art or profane-but-honest sentiment.

Allow me to fill in the picture for you, based on the jaw-dropping and worrisome documentary *The Cleaners*. That person was likely a Filipino in what amounts to a censorship "sweat-shop" in Manila, someone whose day consists of clicking "Ignore" or "Delete" on up to 25,000 images and videos per shift.

Yes, censorship has been out-sourced.



A Filipina "digital scavenger" censors a Donald Trump meme in the doc *The Cleaners*

And in a bizarre juxtaposition of our self-expression on this problematic 21st Century medium and the means used to suppress it, we meet Ilma Gore, the L.A. artist who created a viral graphic of Donald Trump, nude with a micro-penis. And we meet the smallish Filipina woman who deleted it, a young, religious individual who wanted to quit her job (with a third party company hired by Facebook) on the first day, and who now sees it as "protecting people from sin."

"It says he is not a strong leader, that's why his penis is small," the "cleaner" says. "It degrades Donald Trump's personality, so it must be deleted."

Like any Third World factory job, hers is tenuous. If her decision is overturned on appeal, it is considered a "mistake." Three mistakes in a month, we're told, and you lose your job.

German directors Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck pull off a pretty slick segue between these "digital scavengers" and the bigger geopolitical concerns that have arisen surrounding social media.

We meet a male censor who turns out to be a fan of Philippines strongman President Rodrigo Duterte, via his favourite girl group, Mocha Girls (who campaign actively for the leader and deride the media). That partial reveal of the censor's politics leads to Facebook's bigger ethical transgression – its willingness to self-censor, or turn a blind eye as needed, to preserve its presence in places like Turkey, Myanmar and, yes, the Philippines.



## Original-Cin – June 19, 2018 (2 of 2)

In Myanmar, that means leaving in anti-Rohingya hate posts in a country where Facebook is virtually the only source of “news” for many, contributing to a humanitarian crisis that has seen a million of the persecuted minority leave the country.

In Turkey, it means no criticism of President Recip Erdogan is allowed, no footage of the Turkish flag being burned and no map representation of “Kurdistan.”

The Cleaners does not strictly target Facebook. It returns from time to time to the 2017 Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism – an investigation that, among other things, sought to define the role Russian use of social media in disrupting the 2016 U.S. election. Reps for Facebook, Twitter and Google testified together. And as a group, their monitoring seemed to vary from the heavyhanded (Facebook) to the almost non-existent (Google).

But it becomes clear after a while that Facebook remains the platform of choice worldwide, for ordinary citizens as well as terrorists, child pornographers and would-be suicides. (We learn that at least one of the Filipino cleaners, whose speciality was censoring self-harm videos, went on to commit suicide himself).

The issues in The Cleaners are many – ranging from whether censorship is actually harmful, historically (a rep from an NGO monitoring the Syrian Civil War complains about having to race to save images of atrocities before they’re erased) to whether our very ability to function as a democracy is undermined by everyone having their own “truth,” and the ability to surround themselves strictly with views that support that worldview.

The Cleaners is a doc of remarkable access and a feast for thought.

The Cleaners. Directed by Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck. Opens Friday, June 22 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

## Review: 'Becoming Who I Was'

*A film of quietly moving grace.*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published June 14th, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



Courtesy of Hot Docs

### ***Becoming Who I Was***

(South Korea, 96 min.)

Dir. Chang-Yong Moon, Jin Jeon

Programme: Special Presentations (North American Premiere)

Despite his young age—five years old when production for this eight-years-in-the-making doc began—Padma Angdu is a wise and noble monk of noble standing and birth. The young boy is what the Tibetans call a “Rinpoche.” Angdu recalls receiving this title at the age of six when the high Lamas in his community recognised him as the reincarnation of a wise teacher. A formal ceremony enshrines this young boy as born again to impart wisdom that seems beyond the years of his small body.

Fortunately, Angdu has an equally wise teacher. His elderly godfather, Urgyan Rickzan, looks after him and teaches him the ways of the world, providing food and shelter as well as simple pleasures like play and companionship. But when the boy's status elevates to Rinpoche, the hierarchy shifts and the student assumes rank over his guardian. Yet although the Rinpoche might perceive himself to have a calling higher than that of his godfather, who is the community's only traditional doctor, there are basic elements of growing up that no child can learn without a mentor. It's not that Angdu treats his godfather badly. He just seems ignorant to earthly elements despite being finely attuned to everything spiritual.

Fate gives a cruel turn for both Angdu and Rickzan. The young boy, growing up in Ladakh, India, where many monks live in exile following the Dalai Lama's escape from China in 1959, fails to reconnect with the peers of his past life. As a result, the Lamas banish him.

What ensues is a transformative journey, a spiritual pilgrimage and coming-of-age alike as Rickzan takes Angdu back under his wing. The pair ventures forth on a return to Tibet so that the Rinpoche may find harmony with his past self and continue his teachings. Angdu discovers his godfather's self-sacrifice throughout the long and arduous journey.

The film has a stirring and awe-inspiring air of serenity that befits its subject. Striking drone shots use the powerful magnitude of the natural landscape, particularly in the final touching moments in the snowy mountains, to let viewers look over the boy like an all-seeing eye from the heavens. The devotion and selflessness on display in the film is truly touching, too, in the elder godfather's dutiful care for the boy. *Becoming Who I Was* seamlessly lets the scope of the complex socio-historical backdrop wash over the film as the young boy struggles to make sense of the disconnect between life in desolate Ladakh and the calling he feels for Tibet. *Becoming Who I Was* is a film of quietly moving grace.

*Becoming Who I Was* opens at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on June 15.

[Becoming Who I Was \(Trailer\)](#) Directed by Moon Chang-Yong, Jeon Jin. from [Cargo Film & Releasing](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Pat Mullen is POV's Associate Online Editor. He covers film at [Cinemablographer.com](#), and has contributed to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Paste, BeatRoute, Modern Times Review, and Documentary magazine and is a member of the Toronto Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society. You can reach him at [@cinemablogrpher](#) <http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-becoming-who-i-was>

## The Gate – June 13, 2018 (1 of 2)

### Review: *Becoming Who I Was*

[Andrew Parker](#) June 13, 2018 11:32 am



### *Becoming Who I Was*

6.3 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

A quietly restrained emotional rollercoaster contained within an in-depth sociological case study, the documentary *Becoming Who I Was* offers a look into the scars left behind for an entire uprooted and banished culture and how even the most seemingly serene of religions can be imperfect and borderline unjust. Director Moon Chang-yong and co-director/producer Jeon Jin's look at one young Buddhist boy's search for self and quest for enlightenment in the mountains of India is a work of great complexity, cultural specificity, and intense emotional response, but there's still a sense that something's missing and that the film's narrowed vision can't contain everything that's happening.

Five year old Padma Angdu lives in a remote Buddhist community in Ladakh, located within the borders of the Kunlun and Himalayan mountain ranges. Padma has been deemed a Rinpoche, the reincarnation of an important Lama from Kham in Tibet. Padma speaks of his memories from a previous life, and initially the young boy is revered. Unfortunately, in accordance to Buddhist culture, no one from Kham arrives to claim Padma as their own, and the young boy is effectively ostracized, ridiculed, and branded a fraud by many locals. Unable to stay and study in his community, Padma is cared for primarily by his uncle/godfather Urgain, a travelling doctor and healer who puts his life and career on hold to care for the young child. Padma's future remains uncertain. He's not accepted in Ladakh, but a combination of Chinese repression and control over Tibet and the inhospitable terrain separating him from Kham makes the journey to his spiritual homeland nearly impossible. Even if Padma were to complete the journey to Tibet, his life as a monk would be in constant danger thanks to Chinese rule over the country.

Since premiering on the festival circuit last year (including screenings at Hot Docs and Berlin), *Becoming Who I Was* has been referred to by many as something charming and spiritually uplifting. While I agree that Chang-yong and Jin's film is well worth seeing, all I was able to take from *Becoming Who I Was* is a sense of being emotionally gutted from start to finish. Running counter to the common, more genteel narratives of Buddhism on screen, Padma's trials and tribulations – which were captured by the filmmakers over the course of eight formative years – amount to abject cruelty in most cases and outright abuse in some instances. While Chang-yong and Jin rarely capture any of Padma's religious hazing on camera, the effects are immediately noticed on the young man's tear streamed face. Here is someone who didn't really be asked to be anointed as a religious icon being taken to task for having the audacity to live – by political and geographical circumstance – outside the area where he should be called upon to serve. That's not charming or uplifting as many critics have branded it. That's harsh, but also something that needs to be seen for the young man's story to have some eventually uplifting warmth. Outside of Padma's friends, his caregiver, and his rarely glimpsed mother, Tashi, the community doesn't seem keen on accepting the young man as a spiritual equal, but there's a warmth, kindness, and

## The Gate – June 13, 2018 (2 of 2)

generosity that still manages to shine through. While the psychological toll clearly being taken on a young man who's too emotionally unequipped to process such complex feelings is resounding, so too is the charity and good karma exhibited by Urgain. Padma's guardian will do everything in his power to provide for his young ward, while realistically comforting the boy and saving up enough funds to hopefully make the fraught and lengthy journey into Tibet. If *Becoming Who I Was* mostly feels like a bittersweet and taxing look at one man's search for spiritual and geographical self, it's the moments of tenderness and understanding between Padma and Urgain audiences will remember fondest.



*Becoming Who I Was* builds triumphantly to a suitably rousing final third where Padma and Urgain make a two month long trek towards the Tibetan border. This is the section of the film that contains the most charm and warmth overall, but the filmmakers have been keen enough to include moments of emotional release throughout, even if it's just their subjects sledding through the mountains or remarking about the joy of sitting in front of a warm fire.

But the final section also feels somewhat truncated and plagued by some nagging questions, mostly regarding the overall validity of Padma's claim to spiritual greatness, how the rest of the young man's family functions, and why the boy's status seems to change so frequently within his community.

Ultimately, it's realized that the film was simply building to the literal journey the entire time, but the significance of such a trip beyond the bold faced emotions behind it would be more appreciated. Over eight years, plenty of footage has to exist that could give context to the struggle, and while there probably wouldn't be room for it all in a single feature film, much of what remains feels one sided for the sake of sending viewers home on a happy(ish) note.

In spite of the flaws and gaps, *Becoming Who I Was* remains a thoroughly intriguing text about the cultural plight of displaced Buddhists and the specificity of their religion. The boy at the heart of *Becoming Who I Was* has fallen through the spiritual and political cracks, and although some claim to doubt his deification, Padma's journey is an unlikely, but potent reflection on the injustices suffered by Tibetan Buddhists on the whole. No matter what feelings one takes from *Becoming Who I Was*, viewers will be provoked to thought and educated by what they see. It might not add up nicely to the sum of all its parts, but the intricacy of such a film and the efforts to convey those contradictions and religious ideologies is appreciated just the same.

***Becoming Who I Was* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, June 15, 2018. Check out the trailer for *Becoming Who I Was*:**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034311/review-becoming-who-i-was/>

Toronto Star – June 8, 2018

## The Accountant of Auschwitz takes a sobering look at Nazi prosecutions

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#) Entertainment Reporter  
Fri., June 8, 2018

★★★★



Oskar Groening was 93 on the first day of his 2015 trial, on charges of being accomplice to the murder of 300,000 people at the Auschwitz concentration camp. (ANDREAS TAMME/GETTY IMAGES)

### The Accountant of Auschwitz

Oskar Groening was 93 on the first day of his 2015 trial, on charges of being accomplice to the murder of 300,000 people at the Auschwitz concentration camp. (ANDREAS TAMME/GETTY IMAGES)

*Directed by Matthew Shoychet. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 78 minutes. PG*

Filmmaker Matthew Shoychet does something rather interesting in *The Accountant of Auschwitz*.

Rather than focus solely on the 2015 trial of Oskar Groening, a former death camp guard who literally plundered and catalogued the possessions of murdered Jews, Shoychet offers [a much broader overview](#) of such prosecutions, from the first post-Second World War trials at Nuremberg to the present day.

Along the way, he uncovers plenty that's illuminating and unsavoury, starting in Germany, where we learn that many judges of the time were in fact Nazis, and both the German government and people saw the prosecutions as "victors' justice." The film tracks the evolution of international law over the decades, which eventually allowed authorities to make the case against people like Groening, hiding in plain sight for 70 years.

As a living witness, Groening's most important contribution is in debunking those evil enough to continue to deny the Holocaust occurred.

The film also points out how hollow the phrase "never again" rings in a world where genocides remains a horrific recurrence.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/06/08/the-accountant-of-auschwitz-takes-a-sobering-look-at-nazi-prosecutions.html>



## Review: 'The Quest of Alain Ducasse'

### *A unique and fascinating film*

By **Marc Glassman** • Published June 8th, 2018



Courtesy Magnolia Pictures

### ***The Quest of Alain Ducasse***

(France, 84 min.)

Dir. Gilles de Maistre

We're in a time when Anthony Bourdain, Paul Bocuse and Wolfgang Puck are superstars. Everyone can start a conversation by asking if you have a favourite new superfood—is it quinoa or coconuts?—and what foodie shows are the ones you obsess over on TV. So it's no surprise that French documentary filmmaker Gilles de Maistre was given funding and carte blanche to follow the chef and culinary impresario Alain Ducasse for two years to figure out what makes him tick.

Ducasse controls over 20 restaurants, has 18 Michelin stars, builds culinary schools and presents his eco-friendly sustainable philosophy worldwide. Although he occasionally dresses in kitchen whites at major receptions, Ducasse is no longer a celebrity chef; he's more of an iconic presence, respected by his peers and the rich and famous who spend time and money in his restaurants.

In *The Quest of Alain Ducasse*, de Maistre follows the culinary expert from France to Japan to Brazil to the United States, Monaco and the Philippines. A charming, thoughtful figure, Ducasse is seen eating sushi in Kyoto and every manner of meals around the globe but his main interest seems to be with finding produce that is exceptional in every locality he visits. Ducasse was raised on a farm in southwestern France and loves vegetables since he was a child. As a chef and entrepreneur, he was a key figure in simplifying exquisite French food, emphasizing a food-to-table approach that eliminated extravagant sauces and over indulgent presentation styles. His search for the truth in food remains at the heart of his quest.

There is, of course, a show biz quality to Ducasse. The journey around the globe completed, Ducasse works with his team to create Ore, one of the most prestigious restaurants in the world, located at the legendary Palace de Versailles. Much of the last quarter of the film is taken up with the opening of Ore and its glittery first reception.

One of the unique aspects of the film is that filmmaker de Maistre never shows us Ducasse's wife and children. Their absence is only referred to once; it clearly was a condition imposed by Ducasse. We are made to understand that Ducasse is obsessed with food and his working philosophy and that his private life is not important in understanding his "quest." Whether that's true or not, *The Quest of Alain Ducasse* does offer us insights into a very successful culinary giant and is a unique and fascinating film.

*The Quest of Alain Ducasse* opens June 8 at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

Marc Glassman is the editor of POV, artistic director of Pages Unbound, film critic for Classical 96.3 FM and an adjunct professor at Ryerson University.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-the-quest-of-alain-ducasse>

## Review: The Accountant of Auschwitz

Andrew Parker, June 8, 2018 6:32 am



### The Accountant of Auschwitz

7.8 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Director Matthew Shoychet's *The Accountant of Auschwitz*, an unsettling, but comprehensive look at what's destined to be one of the last high profile trials of Nazi war criminals, asks viewers to contemplate what justice entails when talking about horrific, massive large scale human rights atrocities. More than just another documentary about a low ranking fascist who was put on trial for "following orders" as a member of the S.S. in World War II, *The Accountant of Auschwitz* offers an important look into German's flawed attempts to reconcile with the darkest period in their country's history and what those attempts mean to the victims, survivors, and families of those impacted by the holocaust.

In 2015, 93-year old Oskar Gröning was arrested and made to stand trial in his hometown of Lüneburg, charged with the murder of 300,000 Jews at the infamous Auschwitz prison camp during World War II. Gröning, like many Nazis, wasn't the one pulling the trigger or marching innocent human beings to their deaths. He was the person tasked with taking the money of every Jew that entered the camp. He was a witness to mass murder, he was complacent in the genocide, and he was certainly an accomplice to it in some ways. But is Gröning, by legal definition, a murderer if he never pulled a trigger or a lever? And with so few Nazi war criminals left to try and convict still alive, are trials like Gröning's about compensation and justice or are they more about sending a message for future generations?

In order to understand the Gröning case and what it means to the holocaust survivors who come to bear witness at his trial, Shoychet (making his feature length directorial debut), writer Ricki Gurwitz, and producer Ric Esther Bienstock have to first outline the positives and negatives of the German legal system as it pertains to the prosecution of Nazi war crimes. *The Accountant of Auschwitz* eloquently outlines what many see to be widespread miscarriages of justice across decades, while others shrug it off as simply a by-product of a country that was once home to so many fascists that prosecuting them all would be virtually impossible and take a lifetime to accomplish.

Speaking with many survivors, historians, and legal experts who were involved in war crime prosecution, Shoychet outlines a system where justice was both fleeting and hard to come by, and closure was nonexistent. Since many judges in Germany had previously aligned themselves with the Nazi party, strong prosecution of people who worked in the death camps was unlikely, with many subscribing to the "they were just following orders" defense of lower ranking S.S. workers (despite the fact that not once in the history of Nazi Germany was there ever evidence that anyone was punished for disobeying orders, making the threat of retaliation used as a defence into a complete fallacy). When criminals were

## The Gate – June 8, 2018 (2 of 2)

prosecuted for their acts during the Holocaust – no small task since many escape the country or lived under new identities – the sentences issued were a pittance; a handful of years in prison, with most getting an early release. The sentences in the dwindling number of these cases today continue to be miniscule, but the trials continue into the modern era to serve as an example of why humanity can never afford the cost of such unconscionable ethnic cleansing ever again.



There's catharsis in "nailing a few bad apples to the wall" as one interview subject points out in *The Accountant of Auschwitz*, but does this type of justice mean anything when so many of the highest ranking Nazis – who actually did murder hundreds of thousands of Jews – either escape prosecution or emerged with little more than a slap on the wrist? Is a symbolic victory still a victory? Through an in-depth, but well paced and constructed examination of history, the true meaning behind the Gröning trial comes to light. Not even the survivors brought in as witnesses to the horrors of Auschwitz – which was such a large place that most of them admit to never meeting or remembering Gröning – can fully agree about what kind of justice they want from the trial.

There's no footage of Gröning's trial available, but the transcripts suggest a man who remains unapologetic about his role during World War II. Clearly, he's guilty of something, and he admits as much, but the frustration of watching his cavalier responses and occasional smugness rankles. Gröning isn't a likable person, but he also purposefully put himself into this position, via conducting brutally honest interviews with the BBC and *Der Spiegel*. When holocaust deniers show up to protest the trial as being a sham, Gröning is one of the first people to call them out for being idiots. Is the trial of *The Accountant of Auschwitz* just another bit of lip service being paid to the families of holocaust survivors, or is it a case where a man is purposefully making an example of himself?

None of these questions are easy to answer, and Shoychet doesn't need an abundance of style to let them simmer in the minds of the audience, ending *The Accountant of Auschwitz* with perhaps the most important and chilling question at the heart of these dwindling trials: if the world stood up and said "never again" following the holocaust, why are we living in an age where wide-spread religious persecution, and ethnic genocides are occurring at the largest rate ever? For calling out the ineffectiveness of trial's like Gröning's while delivering a look at how the definition of justice changes from person to person, *The Accountant of Auschwitz* deserves to be commended for such a multi-layered and well researched approach to such a fraught subject that extends beyond historical footnote. While Shoychet and company don't have any easy or clear answers to any of their questions, they do offer the viewer a lot of different ways to draw their own moral conclusions.

***The Accountant of Auschwitz opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, June 8, 2018.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034214/review-the-accountant-of-auschwitz/>

Toronto Star – June 7, 2018

## Climate doc *Metamorphosis* needs a big screen for maximum impact

By [PETER HOWELL](#) Movie Critic  
Thu., June 7, 2018

★★★★



### Metamorphosis

Filmmakers Nova Ami and Velcrow Ripper turn a poetic lens on the climate crisis in *Metamorphosis*. (NFB)

*NFB documentary on how humans are adapting to global climate change. Directed by Nova Ami and Velcrow Ripper. Screens June 7-8 at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. Opens June 8 at the Carlton. 85 minutes. G*

Shock, awe and alarm as Nova Ami and Velcrow Ripper aim a poetic lens at a rapidly changing world.

*Metamorphosis* charts destruction worldwide caused by climate warming — forest fires in California, dying coral in the Caribbean, floods in Venice — but it also looks for beauty and intelligent adaptation.

Positive signs include an apartment building in Milan that incorporates trees in its structure and an underwater artist who sinks concrete sculptures moulded from real persons to create new places for coral to thrive. The environmental crisis is real, and humans are to mainly blame for it, but many people are trying to save and elevate the planet.

Co-directors Ami and Ripper reflect on how “everything is connected” — air pollution in New York City can affect island life in the South Pacific — and change is inevitable.

Sometimes there’s a little too much poetry. Locations aren’t always made plain as camera drones drift over landscapes and context is intuited.

But [the imagery](#) is frequently breathtaking, even when showing a terrifying event like a raging forest fire. See *Metamorphosis* on the biggest screen possible.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/06/07/climate-doc-metamorphosis-needs-a-big-screen-for-maximum-impact.html>

## Review: The Quest of Alain Ducasse

[Andrew Parker](#) June 7, 2018 9:15 pm



### The Quest of Alain Ducasse 3.5 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Alain Ducasse is one of the world's foremost chefs and restaurateurs, having opened 23 restaurants in numerous countries around the world and earning 18 coveted Michelin Stars in the process. He's a big deal, and more than worthy of having his success story covered in some form, but it's hard to believe that the approach and style adopted by French filmmaker Gilles de Maistre for *The Quest of Alain Ducasse* was the best way to go about making such a biography. Offering precious little insight about what makes the influential, but enigmatic Ducasse tick and a tone that borders on condescension, it's a frustratingly opaque list of bullet points that barely differentiates itself from the litany of other documentaries already out there about upper class, white, male chefs who have dug their heels into a specific corner of the restaurant industry.

*The Quest of Alain Ducasse* purports that it wants to be a tour through the heart of modern cuisine with one of the world's top chefs, but it's really just de Maistre showing off his subject's day-to-day life and accomplishments without much context beyond constantly reminding the viewer of Ducasse's esteemed position in the culinary world. The filmmakers followed Ducasse for two years as the chef (who only actually cooked anything in front of de Maistre once during that time frame) continues about his perpetually packed schedule. One moment he's helping to construct an ambitious new restaurant at the Palace of Versailles. The next he's visiting a chef's school that he's funding in Manila. Then it's off to America to spend some time with equally influential chef Dan Barber. Then he has to check in on the sturgeon farm in China that provides the caviar for his restaurants. Between that are business meetings, menu tastings, research trips, and hobnobbing with foreign dignitaries. All that emerges from this globetrotting is that Ducasse isn't that mysterious, but rather an average, knowledgeable businessman.

If that's all we're going to get from *The Quest of Alain Ducasse*, it almost isn't worth the investment of time. There's nothing that de Maistre gets out of the notoriously private Ducasse (who doesn't address a single personal issue throughout) that can't be gleaned from looking at the man's resume, and that piece of paper might actually have room for some interesting extra details. It's not that Ducasse isn't a charming or likable figure to follow, but that nothing being captured by de Maistre is particularly exciting or revelatory. It's a film about a well known personality that's devoid of any real personality.





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To make matters worse, de Maistre is trying desperately to make something out of nothing by constantly inserting himself into *The Quest of Alain Ducasse*. From time to time, de Maistre will ask leading questions from behind the camera that are borderline asinine: “Do you want to be the king of gastronomy?” “Do you still dream in the fast lane?” “Is your food political?” That last question almost goes somewhere before it becomes apparent that Ducasse won’t answer anything posed to him, but he’ll at least play nice with the filmmakers.

But that softball line of questioning that should have been cut from the film entirely is nothing compared to the stifling, unnecessary, grating, and dumbed down narration that treats the viewer like they’re an imbecile incapable of understanding not only Ducasse’s greatness, but simple concepts like how draining it must be to travel the world in a private plane or what it means to be an in-demand chef. The footage captured by de Maistre already speaks for itself, and the narration only describes what the viewer just saw. There’s no ambiguity in the image, so the filmmaker’s need to underline everything that’s happening strikes as insulting. Furthermore, the tone of narration suggests a frustration on the part of the filmmaking team to get any personal details or musings from their subject, often coming across – in tandem with the film’s strangely overbearing score – like the filmmakers are trying to nab a wily criminal that’s been on the lam for decades. It’s a bizarrely tone deaf touch to material that would have worked fine without hammering home the obvious context. *The Quest of Alain Ducasse* still wouldn’t be an exceptional movie without the misplaced stabs at journalism and narration straight out of a nightly news magazine, but it would be a lot less annoying.

There are some moments peppered throughout that can bring a smile to viewers’ faces, most of them coming from Ducasse’s frequent displays of generosity. He’ll give bold criticism to any of his chefs if something isn’t working, but he’ll also explain that he wants his concerns to be taken as a dialogue and not as gospel. He’ll jovially chat with the pilots of his plane when one of them asks him the proper technique to cook a lobster. He always comes alive with joy in any situation where he can give back to the world around him, particularly during time spent at his Manila cooking academy or while volunteering to oversee a meal made from unnecessarily wasted food in Brazil. The care that Ducasse puts into his craft shines through, as does his warmth.

But that’s still not enough for *The Quest of Alain Ducasse* to overcome de Maistre’s pedestrian direction and the subject’s lack of emotional openness. But even with a better director and a more open subject this is still just another documentary about a rich white genius from the food service sector being celebrated for being successful, and quite frankly I think it’s time to put a stop to these kinds of films for the next couple of years. It feels like every other month there’s a new foodie flick profiling a similar, almost always white and almost always male culinary wunderkind, and all of them are basically the same movie. If people still go to see these things because they love to look at all the pretty food, I suggest they start saving their money and going to actual restaurants where you can smell, taste, and touch the food instead of marvelling at it from a distance, or at the very least staying home and watching the Food Network to learn how to cook all of this stuff themselves. While Ducasse is undoubtedly a major player in the world of haute cuisine, I’m positive we don’t need another documentary where a great chef is celebrated simply for being great and being enormously wealthy.

***The Quest of Alain Ducasse opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Friday, June 8, 2016. It will be available on iTunes and VOD the same day.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034210/review-the-quest-of-alain-ducasse/>

## Review: 'Mankiller'

*New doc profiles Wilma Mankiller's leadership and legacy*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published June 7th, 2018



Courtesy Luminato

### ***Mankiller***

(USA, 77 min.)

Dir. Valerie Red-Horse Mohl

"My own role has just been to be here for a tiny tiny period of time in the totality of history," says Wilma Mankiller at the end of new bio-doc about her. "I guess I don't think I leave any great legacy and I hope that when I leave, it will just be said that I did what I could."

It's a year for giving notable women in history their due credit and Mankiller's reflection on her legacy is an understatement of high modesty. Shortly after Ruth Bader Ginsburg proved herself the coolest superhero since Black Panther, Wilma Mankiller shows her muscles as a trailblazer for equality in the USA. *Mankiller* gives Indigenous women and audiences their [RBG](#) with this respectful profile of the late figure who dedicated her life to fighting for justice and equal rights. Significant for its dissection of the battle for Indigenous sovereignty in the USA and as a work of intersectional feminist filmmaking, *Mankiller* is an admirable portrait of a leader. This doc by Valerie Red-Horse Mohl charts Mankiller's time on this physical earth and her journey to become the first female Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Mankiller's experience is inextricably linked to the fight of Indigenous persons in the USA and the doc observes the fight for sovereignty in tandem with her rise to power. The film sees instances of displacement, which talking heads liken to a contemporary Trail of Tears injustice, as Mankiller and her family found themselves uprooted from their tribal lands in Oklahoma. Her years in San Francisco, where she eventually married Ecuadorian immigrant Hector Hugo Olaya de Bardi and had two daughters, brought her in first contact with the fight for Indigenous sovereignty. This episode of *Mankiller* sees several of the talking heads discuss the significance of the Indigenous occupation of Alcatraz Island. The protest drew attention to the fact that the relevant treaty observed that unused land must be returned to its original inhabitants and still photographs show Mankiller as an important member in this chapter of history. The doc shows the fight to be a success and a landmark step in a struggle at which Mankiller was on the front lines throughout her life and career.

The bulk of the film concerns Mankiller's political career that advanced in 1983 when incumbent Chief of the Cherokee Nation Ross Swimmer tapped her to be his deputy chief in his bid for re-election. A new interview with Swimmer accompanies archival interviews with Mankiller as they both discuss the virulent misogyny that dogged the campaign when men jeered at the idea of a female leader. Mankiller admits that she experienced "more discrimination as a woman than as an Indian," and the film bridges the struggle for Indigenous rights with the women's movement and the fight for equality nationwide. The film, furthermore, smartly opens by

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framing Mankiller's significance within the Cherokee's legacy as a matriarchal culture and it gradually suggests that her leadership is a de-colonial return to order.

Cut to a few years later and Mankiller is the Chief of the Cherokee Nation when Swimmer pursues a position in the Reagan administration. The film dips into greatest hits territory, understandably so, as it extols the many advances the Cherokee saw under Mankiller's leadership including economic and social prosperity fuelled by investment in gambling. *Mankiller* shows the fresh perspectives and pragmatism one can bring to public service with life experience that differs from prior leaders.

While *Mankiller* doesn't break conventions of broadcast-quality profile documentaries and their reliable formula of interviews and archival footage, it conveys Mankiller's story and significance in plain and accessible terms. Absent of the subject herself, who died from complications related to cancer in 2010, *Mankiller* inevitably lacks the same bite that makes a film like *RBG* so timely and relevant, but Red-Horse Mohl provides enough archival footage of her subject to ensure that others aren't always speaking for her. The talking heads include an admirable range of voices from Mankiller's daughters Gina and Felicia, to feminist icon Gloria Steinem. One leaves the film assured that no matter how tiny an amount of time Mankiller graced the earth, she made a difference.

***Mankiller* opens at the Hot Docs Fred Rogers Cinema on Saturday, June 9 as part of Luminato's [Game Changers](#) Series.**

## Review: The Accountant Of Auschwitz is short but mighty

Documentary tracking a war crimes trial packs a ton of info and issues into a powerful pic

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#)

JUNE 7, 2018

10:30 AM



**THE ACCOUNTANT OF AUSCHWITZ** (Matthew Shoychet). 80 minutes. Opens Friday (June 8). See [listing](#).  
Rating: NNNNN

Don't be fooled by The Accountant Of Auschwitz's slender run time. This documentary about the 2015 trial of Oskar Gröning, the man who registered the possessions left by prisoners on the train as they were processed in Auschwitz, deals with a head-spinning number of issues.

Gröning was an unusual defendant. He openly confirmed the crimes committed at history's most efficient killing machine, actively challenging Holocaust deniers. In fact it was his alarmingly candid interview with the BBC that led to his arrest. Presumably, he assumed that the fact that he personally killed no one made him immune to prosecution and, in fact, that was his lawyers' primary line of defence: he himself was not responsible for war crimes.

Via interviews with one of the lead prosecutors at Nuremberg, Benjamin Ferencz, commentators such as Alan Dershowitz and survivors, director Matthew Shoychet packs into the doc a record of Gröning's trial as well as a solid survey of war-crimes trials and how their emphases have shifted over time.

At the Nuremberg trials post-WWII, the important generals were brought to justice. More recently, concentration camp guards and people like Gröning are coming under scrutiny. In one segment Dershowitz asks, if a person is locked in a room with someone about to murder him, isn't the guard blocking the prisoner's escape culpable, too?

Shoychet wisely does not use that much archival footage of Auschwitz itself – just enough to evoke the terror. And he does some clever things along the way. At one point Ferencz, sharp as a tack, recalls from memory his opening statement at Nuremberg, which he recites as his voice is layered over the original statement he made nearly seven decades ago.

Even issues dealt with briefly emerge as huge here, often both emotionally powerful and intellectually challenging. In the former category stands the fact that Holocaust deniers protested outside the courtroom as Gröning's trial began, a testament to the extent to which Holocaust deniers are completely unhinged. Gröning himself had been crystal-clear that the death camps were very real.

A short sequence in which one of the survivors forgives Gröning – causing a major uproar – is guaranteed to make you think.

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/the-accountant-of-auschwitz-Matthew-Shoychet/>

## Review: The Accountant of Auschwitz is an informative, thought-provoking doc

KATE TAYLOR

PUBLISHED JUNE 7, 2018UPDATED JUNE 7, 2018



Bill Glied in The Accountant of Auschwitz.

- The Accountant of Auschwitz
- Directed by Matthew Shoychet
- Written by Ricki Gurwitz
- Classification N/A
- 98 minutes

RATING

RATING



Why is Germany prosecuting former SS guards now in their 90s, most of whom will never live to serve jail sentences? In this measured, informative and thought-provoking documentary, Toronto director Matthew Shoychet uses the case of Oskar Groning, the so-called accountant of Auschwitz who tallied the prisoners' confiscated possessions, to examine the rationale behind last-ditch war-crimes trials.

Ironically, Groning came to the attention of authorities because he gave interviews about his experiences to refute Holocaust deniers, but he also took little responsibility for his part in the killing machine. Shoychet and writer Ricki Gurwitz explain how both Germany's failure to prosecute war criminals in the 1940s and '50s and the precedent-setting conviction of former camp guard Ivan Demjanjuk in 2011 produced the recent trials. The film considers scapegoating and whether the man in his 90s is the same person as the one in his 20s, but gives more space to arguments in favour of late justice. Using powerful interviews with four remarkably composed Auschwitz survivors, it argues Groning's conviction serves as both reminder of the past and precedent for the future.

The Accountant of Auschwitz opens June 8 in Toronto

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/reviews/article-review-the-accountant-of-auschwitz-is-an-informative-thought/>



## Review: Metamorphosis

Andrew Parker June 6, 2018 4:06 pm



### Metamorphosis

**5** out of 10, [Andrew Parker](#)

*Metamorphosis* is an ecological advocacy documentary with a uniquely psychological approach. Canadian documentarian Velcrow Ripper and his wife and co-director Nova Ami take a look at how climate change has had catastrophic effects around the world and a handful of people who are looking to save us from a potentially apocalyptic fate. In terms of the ecological angle behind *Metamorphosis*, there's not much of anything new to offer or talk about. From an artistic aspect, it's gorgeous looking, but overall unexceptional. But the psychology behind *Metamorphosis* is very interesting. Unfortunately, when one thinks about how a film is working on a psychological level rather than an artistic or narrative level, something always feels a bit off.

Unless you're still in denial that climate change is a real problem (and if you believe that you can stop right here and read something else), I don't need to tell you how bad things are getting. Ami and Ripper travel the world showing us how badly our environment has deteriorated. High water levels in Venice leave streets flooded sometimes several days a week, with the city's population cut virtually in half over the past forty years as a result. Cyclone Pam devastated and destroyed 70% of the homes on the island of Vanuatu. The Sierra snowpack that provided most of the clean water for Southern California has all but dried up. Forest fires wipe out entire communities. Migrating wildlife have fewer and fewer safe places to go thanks to late springs and early winters. The aquatic ecosystems of the Caribbean are dying off thanks to the heightened acidity of the water. Things are terrible all over, and Velcrow and Nova spend a great deal of *Metamorphosis* talking to those either witnessing climate change or are victims of its wrath. With so many ecological documentaries out there on the subjects of climate change, anti-pollution activism, and the sociological impacts of extreme weather on the human race, one has to ask if *Metamorphosis* is doing anything new or revolutionary from such a well worn point of view, and the answer is sadly no. The cinematography is stunning, incorporating plenty of drone shots and gorgeous panoramic views, but no one ever set out to make an ugly looking eco-doc because it would entirely defeat the purpose of making a film in the natural world. There are some artful, interpretive moments scattered throughout, but they similarly add little outside of a slight performative element.

The tragic stories relayed within *Metamorphosis* are delivered with heavy hearts and a great deal of empathy from Ami and Ripper, with the filmmakers allowing their interview subjects to narrate their experiences in their own words instead of giving them leading questions. That's a nice way to handle the misfortunes of others, especially those who never openly courted such ecological setbacks and disasters in the first place. Every stop of Ripper and Ami's tour of ecological collapse comes with its own specific tour guide, which keeps things fresher than having a bunch of scholarly talking heads interrupting and discussing the same tragedies. And yet, there's still nothing all that particularly new or novel in this

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approach. It never amounts to much more than a list of some bad things that have happened in a world where bad things happen all the time.



But the psychology of Ripper and Ami's approach is sound. *Metamorphosis* is a film that deliberately wants to strike subtle amounts of fear into the audience. Again, such a fearful overall approach from directors of ecological documentaries is nothing new, but Ripper and Ami are very up front about how they're making the viewer feel. They admit that they want us to get angry, anxious, sad, and fearful because they want *Metamorphosis* to function as a way to get in touch with those feelings. One can't fully get over the fear or anxiety of a dying planet without first acknowledging those off-putting feelings. In order to get over a problem, you first have to admit that there's a problem. After showing in no uncertain terms said problems, *Metamorphosis* starts transitioning around the halfway point into a film about people who have faced the fear head-on and started coming up with solutions to their problems: turning abandoned desert swimming pools into gardens, planting milkweed for butterflies, implementing low cost solar power for those in great need.

The design of the film on a psychological level is a better reflection of the film's title than the half baked, metaphorically obvious throughline about monarch butterflies. True change is only achievable once old methods of thinking and antiquated ideas are broken down and something new is created from anything that's somehow left over. *Metamorphosis* breaks down the viewer in a bid to build them back up, with hopes that they'll go out into the world and do the same. In this respect, I hope Ripper and Ami are successful in shaking some people up, but something tells me that the otherwise stock approach employed here will end up in just another ecological advocacy film that's aimed straight at those who already know climate change is a problem worth fearing, not one that will reach the audiences that it needs to shake from complacency.

***Metamorphosis* screens at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Thursday, June 7 and Friday, June 8 as part of their Films Changing the World series. It opens formally in Toronto at Carlton Cinemas on June 8 and Calgary at Globe Cinema on June 20. It screens at Metro Cinema in Edmonton on June 22 & 23, in Victoria at Cinecenta on June 24 & 25, and at Vancity in Vancouver June 26-28. Check out the trailer for *Metamorphosis*:**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034167/review-metamorphosis/>

## Riveting documentary *The Cleaners* puts a sad face on social media's gatekeepers

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#) Entertainment Reporter  
Thu., June 21, 2018

### The Cleaners

A scene from the documentary *The Cleaners*, about the shadowy world of “content moderators.” (HOT DOCS)

*A documentary about Internet content moderators, directed by Hans Block and Moritz Rieseewieck. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 88 minutes. 14A*

German filmmakers Hans Block and Moritz Rieseewieck explore the shadowy world of “content moderators,” the anonymous people working for social media giants like Facebook, in a documentary that is as riveting as it is disturbing.

In places like Manila — where labour is cheap and pushback from workers minimal — the film examines the toll taken on the people whose job is to try to keep the faceless hordes of internet trolls in check while monitoring violence, nudity and child sexual exploitation. The demands placed on them amounts to cruel and unusual punishment.

Despite high wages, there's a serious price to pay for these workers in the form of psychological trauma incurred from being inundated by hateful language and images of such scorching violence and sexual abuse. Meanwhile, there's little or no accountability for these social media giants, which earn billions in profits while forcing these employees to remain hidden and silent.

Filled with hard numbers and harrowing first-person accounts, *The Cleaners* is impeccable, revelatory filmmaking at its best.

Bruce Demara is a Toronto-based reporter covering entertainment at the Star. Follow him on Twitter: @bdemara

## Review: 'Design Canada'

*Take stock of Canada's "brand identity" before July 1*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published June 22nd, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



### ***Design Canada***

(Canada, 74 min.)

Dir. Greg Durrell

The question of a “brand identity” is difficult to tackle. Corporate values, principles, history, and mandates combine with consumer-friendly concision. Now imagine this entity has thirteen unique departments, one of which considers itself a distinct brand-within-a-brand, two official languages and countless unofficial ones, a sprawling geographical range, and a rocky history of cultural genocide. The long road to Canada’s brand is a tricky one. However, this productive conversation ensures the collective identity undergoes constant reappraisal.

The question of the national brand identity fuels an engaging discussion in *Design Canada*. This upbeat and patriotic doc from Greg Durrell surveys the history of iconic images that are central to Canadian nationalism. The film puts under the microscope the brands and logos that stir a sense of national pride. Icons for institutions such as the CBC, Royal Bank of Canada, Canadian National Railway, and *Roots* are a few of the logos that audiences should recognize. Much of the film looks to the logos of the 1960s when conversations of Canadian national consciousness peaked with innovations in design. Audiences might think of the boozy, swinging 60s as the *Mad Men* days, but the doc argues that Canadians led the charge for good design during those heady times.

Durrell, a graphic artist whose portfolio includes the Canadian Olympic Team branding, ensures the film itself is a model of good design. Vibrant colours and bright lighting make for warm and accessible interviews, while unique title cards play with spatial relations in the frame. The cleanliness of the design guarantees that one doesn’t lose sight of the message.

Interviews with personalities like broadcaster George Stroumboulopoulos, journalist Heather Sung, author Douglas Coupland, and graphic designers Burton Kramer (creator of the original CBC logo), Stuart Ash (the man behind the triangular maple leaf symbolising Canada’s centennial), and Heather Cooper, (whose *Roots* beaver adorns a sweater in nearly every Canadian closet) add perspectives to the conversation. *Design Canada* illuminates the many pieces that comprise the puzzle of Canadian identity.

*Design Canada* begins with the biggest image of all: the Canadian flag. Durrell chronicles the great flag debate of the 1960s and Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson’s mission to unite the nation with a new flag for Canada’s Centennial. The talking heads of *Design Canada* observe with good humour that it took nearly 100 years after confederation for Canadians to realize they deserved their own flag to wave with pride. The rebranding of

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Canada with the flag epitomized the challenge of forming a collective national consciousness in such a diverse nation.

The talking heads note the significance of iconic “Canadian” images like the maple leaf and the beaver, but beyond the enjoyable appraisals of Canadiana, the stronger aspects of the conversation engage with the actual design of the prospective flags. Even a Canadian who has looked at the national flag every day may have taken this conversation for granted. (The old Red Ensign with the Union Jack and coat of arms slapped like patchwork on a rectangle was neither a grand feat of design nor a symbol with which to rally the masses.) The graphic designers marvel at the cleanliness of the flag with its thirteen-point maple leaf and red bars encapsulating a nation from sea to sea. The simplicity of the Canadian design is a national hallmark one sees in brands from coast to coast.

Moreover, the flag debate exemplifies how icons carry strong emotional connections. From the stuffy three-leafed “Pearson Pennant” the PM favoured to John Diefenbaker’s conservative, full-throttle tirade against change, the doc draws out the cultural conversations these images embody. Brand recognition relies on relationships, so the alteration of a corporate logo—a contentious conversation that fuels one of the more engaging chapters of the doc—illustrates the challenges of introducing change.

These reappraisals of Canadian identity ultimately signal a strong national consciousness. *Design Canada* looks at inclusive efforts to rebrand the nation by acknowledging facets of the population traditionally omitted from the discussion of “Canadianness.” Ensuring that French and English appeared in equal font and size on all national brands, for example, was a stride towards unity. Another segment of the film shows how the efforts of Expo ’67 highlighted the Indigenous cultures of the land and gave a first step for self-representation by acknowledging that history differed from the sanitized version offered by schoolbooks. The interviews with figures like Sung and Stroumbouloupoulos add to this conversation by emphasizing the need to see the fluidity of the Canadian identity: just like corporate logos, our idea of “Canadian” will date itself if it doesn’t embrace change.

***Design Canada* opens at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) on June 22.**

[Design Canada – Documentary Film Trailer](#) from [Hulse & Durrell](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Pat Mullen is POV’s Associate Online Editor. He covers film at [Cinemablographer.com](#), and has contributed to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Paste, BeatRoute, Modern Times Review, and Documentary magazine and is a member of the Toronto Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society. You can reach him at [@cinemablogrpher](#)

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-design-canada>



## Review: 'The Cleaners'

### *A tough investigative doc*

By [Marc Glassman](#) • Published June 22nd, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



#### ***The Cleaners***

(Germany/Brazil, 88 min.)

Dir. Dir. Hans Block, Moritz Riesewieck

A tough investigative doc that slowly, inexorably, turns into a cinematic essay about contemporary anger and hatred, *The Cleaners* reveals how Facebook censors images and texts worldwide. German directors Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck track down a group of “content moderators” in Manila who decide what material stays up on Facebook and what gets taken down. These young Filipinos aren’t schooled in art or communications or ethics. They’re simply doing their jobs and with little training, the decisions they make are problematic, to say the least.

One operator proudly reveals that he could win the *Guinness Book of Records* since he makes judgments on 25,000 images in a good day. The filmmakers offer a chorus of “delete, delete, ignore, delete” from moderators during critical junctures in the doc. One of the content moderators hesitates briefly before deciding that Nick Ut’s Pulitzer Prize winning photo of a naked 9-year-old Vietnamese girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, fleeing from a U.S. napalm attack should be deleted from the Internet. After all, it shows a young girl’s genitals and he has been trained not to care about the context; it’s simply wrong to show it.

Another content moderator not only deletes artist Illma Gore’s drawing of a naked Donald Trump complete with a small penis, she removes her Facebook account. As Gore points out, her Trump image was a representation, not reality, but such subtlety seems beyond the scope of her Facebook censor.

But it’s also too easy to attack the content moderators. Block & Riesewieck make it clear that the Filipinos profiled in their film aren’t even actually employed by Facebook or Twitter or Google; in fact, a local business, which works with those companies, pays their checks. No one has said that Zuckerberg is dumb enough to leave an email trail. And the moderators haven’t been properly trained.

*The Cleaners* gradually expands its scope, taking on the very nature of Facebook and its digital colleagues. Nicole Wong, who has served as an associate counsel for Google, is treated quite sympathetically as she rationalizes why it’s tough to make judgment calls on visual material. She

even makes a case for geo-blocking, the pernicious system, which makes it impossible for people in a country like Turkey to find out what others think and know about their country. With geo-blocking, those who are most affected by a dictatorship or a totalitarian government can't find out what lucky people in the West can access without a problem.

Facebook's practices allow them to look good to their local supporters while not helping others at all. Block and Riesewieck boldly explore the political situations in Turkey and the Philippines, where dictators control freedom of speech—an issue that Facebook pretends to espouse.

What becomes obvious as the film progresses is that content moderators aren't controlling the rise of anger throughout the world. Facebook, Google and Twitter have given power to the racists and right-wing nationalists who need a forum to express their terrifying views. "The cleaners" in Manila and elsewhere are told not to affect freedom of speech; it's an idealistic goal that has turned ugly. While problematic images are being deleted, the true enemies of Facebook's utopian ideology are allowed to espouse violence—and no one will stop them.

The film ends with a stunning revelation that a content moderator, who was an expert in self-harm videos, has committed suicide. It's clear that "the cleaners" are not the problem. Perhaps it's the fault of Zuckerberg and his friends; certainly they're doing nothing to prevent further violence around the globe. Block and Riesewieck's film is thoughtful and provocative. We are living in perilous times, when freedom of speech can lead to hatred and no one knows what's real anymore. *The Cleaners* is a film made for the times we're living in right now.

***The Cleaners* opens June 22 at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#).**

Marc Glassman is the editor of POV, artistic director of Pages Unbound, film critic for Classical 96.3 FM and an adjunct professor at Ryerson University.

## Review: Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist

[Andrew Parker](#) June 28, 2018 7:42 pm



**Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist**  
3.7 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Unfocused, alternately fawning and insulting, and not getting any help from an obstinate, stand-offish central subject, the documentary *Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist* is a thoroughly underwhelming and unnecessary look at a fashion world figurehead. Of the three signifiers that come after Dame Vivienne Westwood's name in the title of Lorna Tucker's documentary, none of them are adequately explained or put into any sort of context. It's a film that exists solely because the filmmaker thinks that this person is great, and the subject has just enough ego left to let someone follow them around.

An iconic name in British fashion, Vivienne Westwood rose to prominence around the same time punk rock was tearing up the U.K. After getting married and divorced at a young age, Westwood partnered financially and romantically with former Sex Pistols manager (and film producer) Malcolm McLaren. The pair would filter the anarchic nature of punk rock through their clothes, and become the bedrock that Westwood would build upon long after her partnership with McLaren dissolved.

With that above paragraph, I've said basically everything that Tucker has to say about Westwood's "punk" leanings. Although *Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist* has plenty of interview access to Vivienne and her inner circle, every time she's asked about arguably the most interesting time in her life, the designer bristles and moans that she's bored by discussing it anymore. Considering that she's allowing Tucker into her personal and professional life, one can be forgiven for thinking that Westwood would be slightly more forthcoming. Tantalizingly, Westwood says that every garment she ever created tells a certain narrative. She doesn't want to share any of them with us, mind. The viewer just has to take her every word as gospel. A fashion historian pops up on two occasions throughout Tucker's film to talk about some specifically iconic garments, and the insight is so nuanced and fruitful, that one wishes the film were about her and not Westwood. Every interview with Dame Westwood sounds like she'd rather be working or at home. She acts either purposefully evasive or ignorant when asked if she could remember the moment when her company became successful. She seems embarrassed by her status as a one-time counter-cultural icon. She could have declined appearing in film (and if anyone is in the position to say no to a filmmaker, it's her), but I think the not-so-secretly media courting and marketing savvy Westwood wanted to bring her activist leanings into a sharper light.

That portion of the film's title doesn't fare much better. Those wanting to learn more about her philanthropic streak and advocacy on climate change issues will be waiting until nearly the end of *Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist*, and by the time Tucker's film shambles to its conclusion, all Westwood has to say on the subject is that she read a single magazine news article and she was shaken by it. That's it. That's all you're getting. One flippant response tossed off by someone with an elephantine ego that suggests she had just found the Holy Grail. If her reticence to speak about her past in the documentary's early moments was glib, her ham-fisted and, frankly, corny activism comes across as phony without any sort of necessary context, especially since she previously showed no interest in the subject until approximately seven or eight years before this film was

## The Gate – June 28, 2018 (2 of 2)

made. As one of Tucker's talking heads points out somewhat backhandedly: "The most sustainable thing she could do would be to close the factory." And considering how disinterested Westwood seems by her own success, it's hard to swallow Tucker's limp response, which says Vivienne doesn't do something that drastic (and ACTUALLY punk) because there are people still making money off her name.



*Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist* does spend a lot of energy on the "icon" part of the equation. Westwood constantly espouses her admittedly stellar work ethic and her desire to never showcase something she feels less than 100% certain about. There's definitely something praiseworthy to be said about her uncompromising, plain spoken, frequently vulgar demeanor that's endearing in small doses. It's also interesting to note how press treats her differently at home and abroad, especially within archival footage of a British talk show aimed at octogenarians that finds the designer practically giggled off the stage by the studio audience. That one moment builds more sympathy for Westwood than the entire rest of the documentary, but it also best showcases the strength that it takes to become an icon. She takes her setbacks in stride and is able to identify fools from a distance. She has succeeded without corporate sponsors in a notoriously simpatico industry that thrives on external collaboration. That deserves a lot of respect, but it only amounts to tidbits that will pique the interest of those wanting to learn more about the business side of the fashion industry, not the actual clothes, people, or history behind it.

Westwood's subtle imposing of will over Tucker's film certainly isn't endearing, or even all that interesting or dramatic. Although Tucker spends plenty of time with Vivienne and her current 50/50 business partner and husband Andreas Kronthaler, most of the time spent with them is mundane and fawning. There's hardly anything critical or interesting said by Westwood, Kronthaler (who comes across rather poorly in his own interviews), and any of the film's other interview subjects, and Tucker never goes the extra mile to circumvent her subject's frustratingly narrow world view. If the opening moments about punk are underdeveloped thanks to Westwood's reticence, and the activism bits are tacked on to appease Tucker's subject, the remainder of *Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist* is a pointless bore that doesn't improve in any way over reading a book or article written about the film's central figure.

Curiously, the film's final moments tip ever dangerously into mocking Tucker's subject. While Vivienne and Andreas look over their latest collection and critique every minor detail, the filmmaker makes sure to capture every eye roll and mocking glance that occurs behind their backs. I'm not sure why this was included in *Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist*, especially so late in the film, and I can imagine it would potentially upset Tucker's subject. Then again, they probably don't care. They clearly don't care about their own movie, and they're content with their success, so why should they care that their staff clearly hates their guts behind their back? If they don't care about being in a documentary and engaging with a public that might genuinely be interested in them, why should you care about seeing *Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist* in the first place?

***Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema and TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto and Vancity Theatre in Vancouver on Friday, June 29, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034555/review-westwood-punk-icon-activist/>

## **Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist**

(out of 4) Directed by Lorna Tucker. Opens Friday at TIFF Bell Lightbox and Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 83 minutes. PG The title is a bit of overkill. Sure, venerable fashion designer Vivienne Westwood got her start in the punk era of the 1970s, though she really doesn't want to talk about her association with the Sex Pistols.

Yes, she's an activist for the environment, conscious of ensuring her products aren't contributing to the problem.

She's certainly an icon in the fashion world and the film shows her hardscrabble climb to the top, with setbacks along the way, including a vicious exhusband.

But the best part of director Lorna Tucker's film is giving us Westwood unfiltered in the present, while using interviews and archival footage to detail her rise from humble workingclass roots. (At the outset, she pronounces herself "totally bored" with the project.) One particularly delicious segment comes when a fashion critic describes Westwood as a "loose cannon" just before she wins designer of the year in 1990.

Then she wins it again, to the chagrin of a snooty presenter.



Original-Cin – June 29, 2018

## WESTWOOD PUNK, ICON, ACTIVIST: DOCUMENTARY PAINTS PREDICTABLE IF PERSUASIVE PORTRAIT

June 29, 2018

By Kim Hughes

### Rating: B

The new documentary on Vivienne Westwood doesn't much challenge long-held perceptions about the iconoclastic British fashion designer who was visionary enough to buoy the brilliant Malcolm McLaren yet street enough to fraternize with the Sex Pistols. Rather, it enshrines them, ensuring Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist is catnip for the converted but less revelatory than might be hoped for.



Try this on for size...

From Westwood's first on-camera snarl, where she decries having to engage in something as boring as talking about herself, through to her public dressing-downs of assistants and multiple activist marches (in heels no less), Westwood makes it clear that years of mixing with fey high-fashion types hasn't softened her post-war, working-class edge.

Indeed, the prevailing narrative thrust of the film is Westwood's stubborn (even subversive) refusal to fit into convenient slots as a designer, businesswoman, mother, wife or any other label society cares to confer.

And while true, it's a point quickly exhausted, not to mention tough to swallow given Westwood's global fashion empire created *after* cementing her status as the godmother of punk rock but before morphing into a key plot point in *Sex and the City*.

Still, there are some less-structured glimpses of Westwood in director Lorna Tucker's breezy film, which winningly showcases Westwood's sometimes gorgeous, sometimes head-scratching designs from across the decades.

Comments from her two sons hint at a mother who wasn't exactly greeting her kids at the door with trays of cookies, and her marriage to a *much*-younger (though equally volatile) former fashion student suggests a woman who, for all her surface bluster, is gripped by the same insecurities as the great unwashed who don't hobnob with Kate Moss or lay claim to the Order of the British Empire.

Westwood Punk, Icon, Activist. Directed by Lorna Tucker. Opens June 29 at Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema and TIFF Bell Lightbox and in Vancouver at Vancity.

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2018/6/29/westwood-punk-icon-activist-documentary-paints-predictable-if-persuasive-portrait>

## Review: 'Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist'

### *Celebrity puff pieces are so last season*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published June 29th, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



#### ***Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist***

(UK, 80 min.)

Dir. Lorna Tucker

Vivienne Westwood seems like a real pain in the ass. It would be an understatement to call her a difficult subject. She doesn't want to talk about America. She doesn't want to talk about the Sex Pistols. When director Lorna Tucker interviews Westwood in a set-up that could be the backdrop for a *Vanity Fair* spread, she amplifies her squirmy restlessness by preceding each response with a fatigued whine. "It's all so boring," Westwood quips, insisting that there are better things to talk about than her, although she'll gab endlessly about herself if one massages her just right. Forget clothes or the environment, Vivienne Westwood's favourite subject is obviously Vivienne Westwood.

Westwood reportedly isn't happy with this documentary, [having released a statement via Twitter following the film's Sundance premiere](#), and it's easy to see why. *Westwood: Icon, Punk, Activist* chronicles the career of the subversive British fashion designer from her days shaking up the punk scene to her present success as a global brand. Tucker eschews celebrity profile hagiography to provide a fuller and fairer portrait of Westwood. That's exactly why the film works: Westwood isn't just another bullshit puff piece.

Tucker deserves full praise for gaining access to Westwood's life and workspace, and for keeping the cameras rolling as the fashionista natters about like a space cadet. She seizes some great moments, like a snippet in which Westwood berates an underling for the width of a hem or a scene in which she pauses during a meeting to embarrass an employee whom a client (or she) deemed unprepared for a presentation. These episodes, skillfully edited by Paul Carlin amidst the range of whiny and self-congratulatory interviews with Westwood and her bratty beau Andreas Kronthaler, show the style maven's empire to be an unruly mess.

As the camera rolls, Tucker captures moments of jaw-dropping unprofessionalism, like a scene in which Westwood flounders during a presentation for the managers of her worldwide franchise and Kronthaler overshadows her with a burst of flamboyantly toxic machismo and plays the blame game on unseen third parties. The reaction shots of their dumbstruck store managers are priceless. Little accountability yields lots of drama.

The doc nevertheless conveys how Westwood has somehow persevered and exploded as brand despite her scatterbrained business sense and iconoclastic designs. When Westwood is willing to talk intelligently about her own work, she is wonderfully revealing. (Tucker also interviews a fashion historian who explains the worth of Westwood designs housed in an archive.) Westwood opens up about using clothes as anti-establishment tools during the punk days, and her reflections on a career as an outsider implore one to admire her success. Few independent producers find such longevity without compromising the signatures that inspired their fan bases. Westwood is very frank that the growth of her brand has compromised the quality of her work and

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Tucker provides evidence that supports this sentiment. Even better are the scenes where Westwood takes control of her brand integrity by calling out anyone who lets a stitch slip.

A snippet of the doc deals with Westwood's environmental activism; however, it feels breezily tacked on and underdeveloped. (This aspect is the one with which Westwood takes particular issue.) Tucker captures Westwood visiting the North Pole—in fancy suede shoes and photo-op ready wardrobe—as she talks in voiceover about her concerns over global warming. A few other scenes convey how Westwood incorporates green messages into her fashion shows and uses her celebrityhood to engage with the public. However, her activism looks like a fad, due to the way it appears clumsily in the film—as if it's an obligation. Unfortunately, Tucker doesn't address the garment industry's own culpability in global waste with current fashion items using toxic chemicals while last year's clothing designs are discarded into rivers and landfills worldwide.

Despite the flaws of *Westwood* the film and Westwood the person, Tucker's doc inspires one to admire the designer's longevity and autonomy. Westwood's designs might resemble haute couture clown costumes in the eye of some beholders and the best piece of archival footage harnesses this impression to illustrate Westwood's doggedness. It comes from the British talk show *Wogan* in which Westwood kept a brave face as the audience collectively laughed at her designs. One guffaw followed another, yet the film sees Westwood stoically defending her clothes when even host Sue Lawley couldn't resist a giggle. The film shows how an artist can find success by sticking to her vision, tuning out the critics, and developing her style with her fans. Whatever one makes of her as a film subject, *Westwood* ensures one cannot deny the merits of this fashionista's success.

***Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist* opens June 29 in Toronto at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) and TIFF Lightbox, and in Vancouver at [Vancity Theatre](#).**

## Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist best when it lets its blunt star talk

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#) Entertainment Reporter  
Thu., June 28, 2018

### Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist

Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist is in UK cinemas now.

*Directed by Lorna Tucker. Opens Friday at TIFF Bell Lightbox and Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 83 minutes. **PG***

The title is a bit of overkill.

Sure, venerable fashion designer Vivienne Westwood got her start in the punk era of the 1970s, though she really doesn't want to talk about her association with the Sex Pistols.

Yes, she's an activist for the environment, conscious of ensuring her products aren't contributing to the problem.

She's certainly an icon in the fashion world and the film shows her hardscrabble climb to the top, with setbacks along the way, including a vicious ex-husband.

But the best part of director Lorna Tucker's film is giving us Westwood unfiltered in the present, while using interviews and archival footage to detail her rise from humble working-class roots. (At the outset, she pronounces herself "totally bored" with the project.)

One particularly delicious segment comes when a fashion critic describes Westwood as a "loose cannon" just before she wins designer of the year in 1990. Then she wins it again, to the chagrin of a snooty presenter.

She's a bit of a prickly pear but Tucker captures the essential Westwood: down to earth, resourceful and likeable.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/06/28/westwood-punk-icon-activist-best-when-it-lets-its-blunt-star-talk.html>

## Review: Always at The Carlyle

Andrew Parker July 4, 2018 8:04 am



**Always at The Carlyle**  
**5 out of 10**

[Andrew Parker](#)

Those in the mood for anecdotes about living the New York City high-life will be sufficiently charmed by Matthew Miele's documentary *Always at The Carlyle*, a look at one of the most elite hotels in the world. Anyone looking for a serious, deep-dive into The Carlyle's enduring brand or anything remotely salacious or critical will be sorely disappointed. Much like going to a party at a film festival, *Always at The Carlyle* lays the glitz, glamour, and name-dropping on as thick as humanly possible, putting the cares and critiques of the outside world firmly out of place and out of mind. It's as fluffy as a cloud, and the personalities profiled are warm and charming, but it's nothing more than a well made, feature length commercial for something most people watching it will never be able to book in their lifetime. Come for the fantasy. Don't come for anything else.

For almost 90 years, the venerable Carlyle at the corner of East 76th and Madison has played host to royalty, high ranking foreign dignitaries, and the A+ List of celebrities. Boasting impressive architecture, old school class, and some of the most celebrated watering holes in North America, The Carlyle is celebrated for its attention to small details, unparalleled customer service, and an airtight level of discretion that its high profile clientele greatly value. Its astronomically high room prices generally keep the place exclusive, and it isn't as opulent and modernist as many of its competitors, but those who stay there regularly will tell their friends and acquaintances that they'll get what they pay for in terms of comfort, service, and security.

Miele isn't a stranger to this kind of fawning, unchallenging documentary, especially ones that revolve around specific luxury brands. Much like his previous efforts *Scatter My Ashes at Bergdorf's* and *Crazy About Tiffany's*, Miele's goal is to make a brand feel both unattainable and relatable. They aren't so much commercials as they're carefully constructed, feature length press releases and PR tools. Miele's M.O. for most of his cinematic work has been to further foster brand loyalty and notoriety. Is that insidious and one sided? Perhaps if one views such things cynically, but at least Miele is up front about his goals, and the aims of *Always at the Carlyle* are unambiguous from the doting opening frames. The cavalcade of talking heads trotted out to speak about The Carlyle's opulence and esteem are a veritable who's who of famous guests; from George Clooney to Anjelica Houston to Wes Anderson to Sofia Coppola to Lenny Kravitz and so on and so on and so on. The sheer amount of star power contained within *Always at The Carlyle* feels both unnecessary and overwhelming; like a shock and awe campaign of charm and charisma. That's not to say that there aren't some choice quips to be found amid all these doting anecdotes that don't do anything other than fluffing up an already reliable brand name.



## The Gate – July 4, 2018 (2 of 2)

Tommy Lee Jones, a notoriously difficult and ornery person to interview, has never been more relatable than when he tells of his close friendship to one of the hotel's bellhops. Harrison Ford, also a difficult person to interview, laughs that he's never been afforded one of the hotel's more prestigious suites. And then there's Jon Hamm, a great person to interview, who looks perplexed by his inclusion here, remarking that he would never in a lifetime spend upwards of ten grand a night to stay at The Carlyle, emerging as the film's only gently dissenting voice in the process.



Very little is made about The Carlyle's storied history and construction. The backstory behind the hotel amounts to barely a minute of screen time, with Miele firmly placing the emphasis on what The Carlyle means to the people who stay there and not to the people who created it. Bits and pieces of the hotel are examined, with specific reverence, most notably the intricately designed decor of Bemelman's Bar, which is adorned with the artwork of *Madeline* creator Ludwig Bemelman. Miele's subjects speak at great length about how little has changed within the walls of The Carlyle over the past decades, but little about how such institutions are created.

Those hoping for more than a cursory look at the hotel's history will be sorely disappointed, but if they're looking for the perspective of the people who make such an institution a welcoming place for high rollers, *Always at The Carlyle* will deliver some satisfaction. Although many of the behind the scenes workers at the hotel are notoriously tight lipped about their interactions with famous people, the access granted to Miele does help to show the hotel's inner life. The bellhops, housekeepers, bartenders, elevator operators, and concierges all speak lovingly about their jobs, and even subtly ruminate on how outdated The Carlyle might seem to outsiders. It's elite, but not overly flashy, and everyone carries with them an attitude to match. Their stories are vastly more exciting than the celebrity anecdotes, and a better documentary could be made out of just following the workers on their day to day routines and not saying anything at all.

Not everything about *Always at The Carlyle* is wine and roses, but the flashes of darkness that permeate are the result of external optics rather than Miele's commercially minded work. The late Anthony Bourdain is a prominent interview subject here, and Miele works mightily to both name-check Woody Allen (who frequently plays clarinet at The Carlyle) and distance himself from the controversial auteur.

There's some discomfort to be found here, but mostly just inadequacy. *Always at The Carlyle* sells a dream that most will be unable to afford. It's a commercial disguised as a fairy tale. Now might not be the time to be celebrating class inequality, and if that sort of thing rankles you, I'd stay away from *Always at the Carlyle* like the plague. Anyone in the mood for some inside baseball anecdotes from celebrities and hotel workers, however, will happily indulge in this bubbly, sugary, nutrition-free concoction.

***Always at The Carlyle* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto, The Plaza in Calgary, Princess Theatre in Edmonton, Studio 7 in Regina, Roxy Theatre in Saskatoon, and Vic Theatre in Victoria on Friday, July 6, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034590/review-always-at-the-carlyle/>

## Review: The Oslo Diaries

Andrew Parker July 5, 2018 11:41 am



## The Oslo Diaries

6.8 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

With *The Oslo Diaries*, documentarians Mor Loushy and Daniel Sivan aren't only offered unprecedented access to some of the key figures in the now maligned and ultimately fruitless Israel-Palestinian peace talks of the early-to-mid 1990s, but the perspectives being offered are from unique, previously unseen primary sources that bring the underlying conflicts into sharper, newly relevant light. In addition to sit down interviews with many of the consultants and politicians on both sides of the initially covert and secretive plan to bring the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization to the bargaining table, Loushy and Sivan use the in-the-moment feelings that participants put down in their personal diaries to help propel their documentary, offering up a great deal of emotional weight alongside their cautionary, but narrowly focused history lesson.

It all began secretly in 1992, when Israeli professors Ron Pundak and Yair Hirschfeld are asked to covertly meet with three high ranking members of the PLO to discuss the first steps towards peace. The meetings, slated to take place in Oslo and away from prying eyes, were to be carried out in complete secrecy, with few knowing they were even taking place. If the talks were discovered, participants on both sides could be in danger, and potentially branded as traitors during a time of non-communication between Yitzhak Rabin's Israeli government and Yasser Arafat's PLO. Across several rounds of talks and negotiations, sticking points would emerge, higher ranking Israeli officials would get involved, and eventually news of these historic, clandestine summits would be leaked to the press. The final results of the Oslo meetings were a series of rushed and historic photo opportunities for embattled president Rabin and an increasingly exhausted Arafat, but it wouldn't be long before politics, nationalist sentiments, and religious fervour would put a stop to any progress, and the thirty year long conflict between the two sides would return to status quo.

*The Oslo Diaries* doesn't offer much of a history lesson about Israeli-Palestinian conflict either before or after the time period stretching between 1992 and the early 2000s, so at least a cursory knowledge of the dispute is a definite prerequisite. Loushy and Sivan, to their credit, aren't overstuffing their movie by looking at every facet of a politically, ethically, and religiously charged conflict that sustains to this day, preferring to look at a fixed moment in time and how an initially positive and well meaning idea can be ruined by external political factors.

## The Gate – July 5, 2018 (2 of 3)

There's plenty of blame to go around as to why the Oslo talks ultimately failed, and everyone interviewed by Loushy and Sivan tend to point to the same signposts, regardless of their side of the debate. At a certain point, the talks became hurried. Israelis often refused serious conversations about settlers, the redrawing of national boundaries, and the removal of troops from Gaza and Jericho, preferring a stance that amounts to someone saying "take it or leave it." Once the talks were leaked to the press, events started steamrolling along, leaving many key bargaining decisions still on the table when Rabin and Arafat made their way to the White House garden or former president Bill Clinton for a pretty, but now ultimately hollow press opportunity. Ensuing rounds of talks, in Norway and elsewhere, would produce diminishing returns, but the key players – especially left leaning Rabin, who was in a politically tenuous situation and facing strong opposition from nationalist Benjamin Netanyahu – clung to the idea that things could be worked out if given enough time.

What's most striking about Loushy and Sivan's deep dive into what has become a now historically depressing footnote in Israeli-Palestinian relations isn't their attention to detail, but the emotion that the filmmakers are capable of finding within the process. Any documentarian worth their salt could have assembled all the facts and data surrounding the over 1,100 days of talks along a timeline and made something worthwhile out of it. By working closely with those intimately invested in the process and looking back on the words that were penned by such key players during the talks, *The Oslo Diaries* places a uniquely human face on the fight for peace.



Many of the diary entries read throughout *The Oslo Diaries* come from a place of emotional and intellectual honesty, often highlighting things on either side that couldn't be said aloud for the sake of diplomacy. The words of former Palestinian finance leader and chief negotiator Abu Ala (Ahmed Qurie) hit the hardest, offering quiet pleas that the talks work so he can return to Palestine and visit his father one final time. Everyone profiled puts a personal face to religious and political squabbling, and while those most responsible for making a mockery of the peace process aren't heard from, those willing to speak up about their participation in the talks are more than eager to talk about how the dissolution of their work made them feel, both in the moment and long after.

Loushy and Sivan support the diaries with plenty of talking head interviews that are just as candid, including the final on camera interview of former Israeli president and key figure Shimon Peres. There's also great use of archival footage, with Loushy and Sivan finding moments to highlight and point to that looked hopeful and optimistic in the moment, but were ultimately undercut by tension and disbelief that things were going to work out. An archival interview between Arafat and a British journalist (conducted

## The Gate – July 5, 2018 (3 of 3)

shortly after his first White House visit) where the Palestinian leader slowly realizes that the accords aren't as favourable to his people as he once thought is both cringe-inducing and indispensable.

What *The Oslo Diaries* still lacks, however, is that greater sense of history, and while some might not need it, there's a void that no amount of emotion or factual data pertaining to the accords can fill. Loushy and Sivan, for better and for worse, plunk viewers into a fixed period in time, never straying very far from the established borders. Those borders have some of the most fascinating material, but *The Oslo Diaries* make it seem like these peace talks occurred in their own separate vacuum, far removed from the strains of history and bloodshed. To some degree, this approach is correct, but like the talks themselves, the filmmakers are leaving a lot of material on the table that begs to be exposed and talked about.

That's a bit disappointing, but Loushy and Sivan make up for that oversight by leaving things on a potent, currently relevant point. The crumbling of the peace process was both influenced by and the result of rising Israeli nationalism and protectionism, and in its final moments *The Oslo Diaries* eloquently shows without much embellishment how righteous wars are easier to sell to an eager populace than peace, understanding, or unified compromise. *The Oslo Diaries* might be about a single moment in Israel-Palestinian relations that many want to forget, but it's a moment that looms large and had more global connotations than many outsiders realized. The Oslo talks weren't the end of anything, but rather the start of something newer, scarier, and further reaching.

***The Oslo Diaries opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, July 6, 2018.***



## Review: 'The Oslo Diaries'

*Engrossing doc weaves history past and present with plea for peace*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published July 6th, 2018



### *The Oslo Diaries*

(Canada/Israel, 97 min.)

Dir. Mor Loushy, Daniel Sivan

The late Shimon Peres gives his final interview in *The Oslo Diaries*. Appropriately enough, directors Mor Loushy and Daniel Sivan afford the former President and Prime Minister of Israel the last word in the documentary. As the credits begin to roll, they ask Peres if Israel and Palestine will ever see peace. Still an optimist over two decades after the peace talks and negotiations that nearly ended violence between Israel and Palestine were broken off, Peres hopes for a resolution. "The only alternative is a long-going war, but contrary to what people think, in war there are no victories; only victims," replies Peres, who had worked so hard for the Oslo Accords to be accepted by Israel. "No war is ever finished unless it's being replaced by peace."

Audiences need to hear this plea for peace. The 93 minutes that precede Peres's answer convey how the road to peace is long, violent, and painful. *The Oslo Diaries* chronicles the events of the early and mid-1990s in which parties from Israel and Palestine negotiated terms for a peaceful accord in the secret safety of Oslo, Norway. This engrossing and thorough doc takes audiences through the corridors of history to learn about the backroom talks and private thoughts that brought this corner of the world to the precipice of peace. As divides widen worldwide between progressives and conservatives, and as tensions rise with growing migration that the ensuing nationalism and xenophobia it breeds, the significance of *The Oslo Diaries* resonates strongly.

The film chronicles the unofficial meetings that began in 1992 when talks between Israelis and Palestinians were punishable offenses. The key players in the off-the-books negotiations include Yair Hirschfeld and Ron Pundak for Israel and Abu Ala for Palestine, along with then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization Yasser Arafat, and Peres, who was Minister of Defense at the time. The covert nature of their meetings means that the filmmakers had limited materials at their disposal. Outside of the images that made headlines when Rabin and Arafat shook hands and signed an agreement, Loushy and Sivan rely on the personal diaries of the participants and some haphazard archival footage of the negotiating teams.

The consumer grade video documentation from the '90s leaves something to be desired as grainy footage shows the teams mingling outside the peace talks, but one can forgive the warring nations for not shooting their negotiations on film. What's lost in the visuals lends a higher purpose to the audio as the diaries of the



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participants offer voiceover narration. These are the private thoughts of public figures and *The Oslo Diaries* offers multiple layers to these historical negotiators who worked tirelessly to ensure their children wouldn't be at war with their neighbours.

These excerpts provide introspective reflections on the great responsibility of finding common ground to create peace. The men record thoughts of hope and despair as they try to make allies out of enemies. Stitched together in a chorus with contemporary interviews with participants who are still living, *The Oslo Diaries* reminds audiences that history continues to write itself as parties articulate in different languages their desire for a common goal. Don't let the past prevent a better tomorrow.

The doc unpacks a wealth of information with its mix of archival footage and insightful interviews. It's no easy task to fit into a feature-length film a history as volatile and complicated as that of the relationship between Israel and Palestine. However, Loushy and Sivan concisely contextualize the period in which the Oslo negotiations began and then build upon the complex history as the talks ebb and flow. These nuggets of history, embedded within the stakes of the accord, unearth the personal antipathies that the men from both parties needed to control in order to inspire peace in others.

The film invites audiences to witness the false promise of the talks as parties on either side fail to uphold their terms of the agreement. There is criticism. There is violence. There are far too many deaths. The grisly images of bodies littering the streets of Israel and Palestine are difficult, yet necessary to see, as the film situates the stalling talks within a seemingly endless cycle of violence.

The doc inevitably culminates with the assassination of Rabin in 1995, tragically following his participation in a peace rally, and Loushy and Sivan conclude as the diaries reflect a mere first draft for world peace. As the film turns to the election of Benjamin Netanyahu, an outspoken critic of the Oslo Accord, it sees an unsettling victory for nationalism that emboldens conservative factions and amplifies divides rather than bridging them. The conflict has deep roots and *The Oslo Diaries* uses the competing philosophies of the world leaders, and their respective compatriots, to ask why peace is often more difficult a choice than conflict. The unsaid irony of *The Oslo Diaries* is that the peace talks were for the children of Israel and Palestine. Now that the agents of the Oslo Accords are leaving this world, the next generation needs to ensure their elders' efforts were not in vain.

***The Oslo Diaries* opens in Toronto on July 6 at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#).**

## ALWAYS AT THE CARLYLE SQUANDERS ITS OLD WORLD SAGA ON MODERN CELEB SIZZLE

July 9, 2018

By Karen Gordon

Rating: C-plus

In a parallel universe, I'm on my way to the Carlyle Hotel in Manhattan right now to hear Bobby Short in the Cafe Carlyle. I've always been part New Yorker, drawn to an older romantic version of the city typified by places like the 80-plus-year-old hotel.

The somewhat uneven documentary *Always At the Carlyle* aims to give us a sense of what it takes to maintain the legacy, and to service celebrities and royalty. They in turn, according to what we see, are drawn by the sense of tradition and Old World (if sometimes faded) elegance. But its focus on celebrity ends up stealing the film's soul.

Director/writer Matthew Miele crams a lot into the film, which is both the good news and the bad news. We get some of its history, its origins as a hotel for the upper-crust and, therefore, a focus on maximum elegance and service. There's a scene where a staffer goes through a room with a figurative fine-toothed comb, pulling old petals off a small bouquet, extracting what looks like a thread from an empty drawer, sharpening the pillow corners. In a place where I.M. Pei once stayed, details are next to godliness.



Poignantly, the late Bourdain is a contemporary celeb who touts the Carlyle's Old World charm.

As the film tells us, the hotel's common spaces all have a provenance, showing the signature of the various designers and painters who painted the walls in the Cafe Carlyle and Bemelmans Bar. There are master gallery paintings in one of the lobbies. As someone says, "It's an old hotel and it has problems. but it has a certain patina." The decor is so iconic that, the film seems to suggest, a makeover would be the exact wrong move.

Perhaps the best endorsement for maintaining the status quo is what was allegedly overheard being said by a former New York real estate tycoon named Trump, now turned President. To wit: "I confirm my belief. This place is a joke."

Director Mathew Miele talks to long-term staff members, from the people who customize the linens (regular clientele have their beds made up with specially monogrammed linens) to the concierge staff, to the "restaurant Captain," a term we're told is no longer used in the business, except at the Carlyle. To a person, the staff loves their jobs, many saying they hope to retire there.

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There are lots of great stories about historic figures, who stayed at the Carlyle. The film deals with the huge list of celebrities past and present who have had a connection to the hotel - John F. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy Jr., Jackie O. Marilyn Monroe, Lady Diana (whose children continue to stay at the Hotel's Royal Suite), and writers Mark Twain and, surprisingly, Hunter S. Thompson.

But when it comes to their current clientele, there's a tight lips policy in place. The staff reveals that George Clooney is their favorite guest, but that's about it.

However, celebrities talk for themselves.. In a collection of interviews gathered over a number of years, we hear comments about the hotel from Clooney, Harrison Ford, Wes Anderson, Lenny Kravitz and many, many, many more. Too many "manys" in fact.

Perhaps most poignantly, the late Anthony Bourdain appears throughout the film, talking with great affection about the hotel and Bemelmans bar in particular.

The celebrity angle ends up being one of the film's weaknesses. The film twists and turns seemingly to get as many celebrity stories and comments in as possible. Not all of them are interesting or give us much insight. And that's tremendously problematic for this film. It begins to feel like Miele couldn't make his mind up about who to cut and so threw everyone in. It makes the documentary feel less substantial and more like a promotional video.

It also gives the doc a wobbly focus. It gets odder towards the end when it puzzlingly veers off to pay pay homage to the late Broadway star Elaine Stritch, following which a series of musicians talk about what kind of material they like to sing in one of the rooms.

There's also an uncomfortable upstairs/downstairs feeling. Sure, it's nice to hear George Clooney wax on about the joys of staying for months at the hotel with his wife. and how the staff loves him back. But unless you're absolutely charmed by everything celebrity, the steady stream of rich and famous talking about the things they can do that you can't, and the way they're specially treated that you aren't, starts to deflate the film.

It sends mixed messages. In a movie that aims to be about a hotel that's succeeded because it's continued to resist commodification and kept its Old World charm and elegance, the pandering to the Entertainment Tonight era celeb robs it of some of its soul.

Always At The Carlyle. Directed and written by Mathew Miele. Starring Anthony Bourdain, George Clooney, Harrison Ford. Now playing at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

In ReviewTags Manhattan society, Old World glamour, Legendary hotels, The Carlyle, Anthony Bourdain, Princess Diana, George Clooney, Documentaries, Matthew Miele

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2018/7/9/always-at-the-carlyle-squanders-its-old-world-saga-on-modern-celeb-sizzle>

## ASTONISHING NEW DOC EXPLORES REUNION OF JEWISH TRIPLETS

By: Jordan Adler, July 9, 2018



Eddy, David and Bobby. (NEON photo)

*Three Identical Strangers*, one of the biggest documentary sensations of 2018, is an easy movie to recommend. However, it is a difficult film to write about, as so much of its emotional power comes from unexpected, and even devastating, story turns.

“I’ve been asking people not to talk about it,” says the film’s director, Tim Wardle.

That may be a high order for Canadian audiences, especially after the documentary has already been a film festival favourite at Sundance, where it won a special jury prize, and at Hot Docs in Toronto. (*Three Identical Strangers* opens in Toronto and Vancouver on July 13 before expanding to other Canadian cities this summer.)

However, it is not a spoiler to divulge some preliminary details, which are covered in the opening 10 minutes – and are, well, included in the film’s title.

The documentary’s opening section focuses on the reunion of identical Jewish triplets: Bobby Shafran, Eddy Galland, and David Kellman. They were born in Long Island, New York, on July 12, 1961, and were soon adopted by three different families.

They did not know of each other’s existence until 1980. When Bobby arrived at a community college in upstate New York, he was stunned to see many of the students welcome him enthusiastically, as if he was an old friend. They were mistaking him for Eddy, who had attended that college the previous year.

Soon, Bobby tracked down Eddy, and their reunion became headline news. The story escalated further when a newspaper photograph of the two brothers reached David’s adoptive mother, who got in touch with the other families.



Director Tim Wardle. (Mongrel Media photo)

## Canadian Jewish News - July 9, 2018 (2 of 2)

For Wardle, the story was too good to pass up. He was working in development for a U.K.-based production company when documentarian Grace Hughes-Hallett brought in this idea.

"It was definitely the most amazing story I'd ever come across," Wardle tells The CJN. "It worked on all these different levels. It's a great human story... Then, you've also got these bigger thematic issues going on – free will, destiny, nature vs. nurture."

As Wardle recalls, much of that pre-production work involved gaining the trust of the subjects and their families.

"It took about three to four years to fully get them on our side," Wardle says. "When you see the film... you get a sense of why they might find it hard to trust people."

The film chronicles the growing fraternal bonds between the three men, alongside the media frenzy surrounding this miraculous revelation. Beyond the facial uncanniness, the brothers' postures, mannerisms, vocal inflections, and even particular life experiences were bizarrely similar.

Wardle says that one of the joys of making *Three Identical Strangers* was the opportunity to partake in different forms of documentary filmmaking. There are lovely, personal interviews with two of the brothers and their families, alongside terrific reconstructions of the brothers' freewheeling young adult years.

The opening sequence, a re-staging of Bobby's arrival to the community college to discover that people were mistaking him for Eddy, was filmed in Hamilton, Ont.

Nevertheless, there are more unsettling details surrounding the reason for the brothers' initial separation. It is due to those disturbing story developments – which I will not reveal – that Wardle says contemporary audiences do not know much about the brothers and their story.

As he explains, many non-fiction projects about the brothers, originally meant for TV audiences, were pulled by their broadcasters – possibly due to how certain authorities wanted to quell the story.

On a lighter note, Wardle says that making the film and showing it to audiences this year has helped to rekindle the bond between Bobby and David.

"They weren't getting on particularly well while we were filming it," Wardle explains, adding that their interviews were filmed separately. "They said that sharing [the documentary] with people has brought them closer."



## Review: The King

Andrew Parker

July 11, 2018



## The King

4 out of 10

Andrew Parker

I always enjoy a great metaphor. There are few literary, poetic, and cinematic devices that are more satisfying to employ. If used correctly, a metaphor can provoke fantastic amounts of thought, humour, and reflection in a reader or viewer. The caveat to using metaphor – either as a descriptive device or as a means to link two seemingly dissimilar strands of thought – is that they have to make logical, emotional, or artistic sense to have any sort of lasting impact. A metaphor needs something to back up its comparisons and/or allusions. Otherwise, it's just an incongruous thing to say or do that just sits there looking pretty and doing nothing.

I once had a heated discussion with a fellow film critic about the nature of metaphor, both visual and narrative. My assertion that a certain film's admittedly gorgeous visual charms and narrative grace were hollow because the film's central metaphor for love and life made nary a lick of sense on any level. My argument was dismissed out of hand with the response: "Metaphors don't have to make sense." My blood has boiled about that statement ever since I heard it. A metaphor, visual or oral, is a device used to move or provoke intelligent thought. If the metaphor isn't decipherable on any level, it's (A) not really a metaphor, but rather a musing, and (B) it has failed to elicit an emotional or intellectual response. Next to people using the words "literally" or "ironic" inappropriately, nothing in the English language makes my skin crawl more than an inappropriate handling of metaphor.

This reminiscing about a semantic argument you probably don't care about brings me to Eugene Jarecki's documentary, *The King*, which is nothing if not upfront about how its central metaphor might not make sense to anyone other than the filmmaker. Attempting to draw parallels between the rise and fall of famed musical icon Elvis Presley and the "crumbling of the American dream," Jarecki (*Why We Fight*, *The House I Live In*) uses "the king of rock and roll" as a literary lens to examine modern society. I'm not sure if Jarecki's metaphor was ever going to work, considering that all of his tenuous comparisons are both frivolous and impossible to properly define (since no two people will ever agree on the definition of "the American dream"), but there are bits and pieces scattered throughout *The King* that make some interesting points.

The approach employed by Jarecki is initially interesting. Travelling to towns and cities across America that influenced Presley and his career in The King's own 1966 Rolls Royce, Jarecki simultaneously looks at the musical icon's past and the present state of every location that impacted him. Presley was born into a poor family in Tupelo, Mississippi, where today a large class divide finds some residents exasperated by The King's legacy. He moved to the equally impoverished Memphis, Tennessee

## The Gate – July 11, 2018 (2 of 3)

(currently boasting an unenviable 29% unemployment rate), where he studied black music at the height of segregation, swiping his future influences liberally and never once giving back to the community that provided the sound propelling him to superstardom. Presley, like many modern entertainers, branched out from music to making a decade's worth of terrible movies in Los Angeles; transforming from a recording artist and into a sellable brand, losing a great deal of personality and authenticity in the process. He was heralded as the living embodiment of the American dream by many, and his service in the U.S. military by extension was symbolic of what it takes to protect that dream. Even his later, plumper years in Las Vegas were endemic of a sea change for the city of sin, one where the mafia gradually moved out and prestige projects moved into the fabled strip.

Each portion of Presley's life could make for interesting metaphorical connections to any number of historical, psychological, or literary concepts. No one lives a life that equally fruitful and tragic without becoming a cautionary tale, a form of literature and cinema that endures precisely because of the emotional and intellectual responses people derive from them. The problem with *The King* as an admittedly admirable and atypical documentary is that Jarecki starts with a single metaphor and proceeds to pile on multiple additional metaphors that confuse and distract. The backbone of *The King* is to compare the decline of Elvis Presley's health and career to the current economic, political, social, and moral decline of the American empire. But outside of comparing someone addicted to fame and creature comforts to a society that has become addicted to capitalism, Jarecki's sprawling, convoluted, and messy central metaphor is tenuous at best and tedious at worst.

Every moment where Jarecki is able to directly compare Presley's past to America's present is satisfying, and some of the many talking heads trotted out to speak on such matters make some keenly observant points. *The King* deserves a lot of credit for not being a biography with hagiographic leanings, and instead attempting something a lot more sociological in nature. It's a study of fame and fortune that's keenly aware that success (and its lasting effects long after someone's death) doesn't exist in a vacuum. Early moments where Jarecki sees firsthand the poverty in Tupelo and Memphis – places where Elvis is celebrated, but he never once gave back to – are powerful enough to sustain their own film. Equally interesting is comparing Presley to more politically involved celebrities of the time, like Marlon Brando, Jane Fonda, and Muhammad Ali. While they used their notoriety to talk about causes they believed in, Presley staunchly refused to engage in political or social discussion. The fact that the biggest musical artist of the era refused to speak up on anything potentially controversial speaks volumes then and now.



Unfortunately, *The King* has many miles to travel and far too many people that Jarecki wants to talk to. The selection of interview subjects throughout *The King*, many of whom Jarecki interviews in the backseat of Presley's perpetually breaking down car, is journalistic overkill. There are plenty of scholars and Elvis historians giving necessary, sometimes curiously contradictory background information. Chuck D and Van Jones are indispensable dissenting opinions when it comes to discussing Presley's legacy as the "white man with a negro sound and negro feel" that record producer Sam Phillips wanted to market to mass audiences during times of segregation.

## The Gate – July 11, 2018 (3 of 3)

But there are also far too many uninteresting musical performances conducted in The King's car that pad things out and never add much outside of extra running time. When the performances stop and the musicians are interviewed, rarely do they have anything that can tie into what Jarecki is trying to accomplish. Worse still, there are a handful of celebrities from outside the musical world trotted out to talk about celebrity and American politics. Of these, Ethan Hawke fares the best, rattling off stories about Presley with energy and gusto; like someone you've sat down to bullshit with over some beers. But an intensely uppity Alec Baldwin, a depressed looking Ashton Kutcher, and a playful, but unnecessary talk with Mike Meyers (who's really on hand just to compare Canada to America for what feels like the eight billionth time) are distracting both from Presley's story and from Jarecki's core thesis. Not even a gorgeous looking interview with the usually erudite Dan Rather atop the Empire State Building is able to add any narrative or metaphorical substance. Some of the things that come up in conversation tie in, but most of it amounts to people who just really like to hear the sounds of their own voice, regardless of what they're talking about. For a film attempting to show how success has wide ranging impact on society at large, almost all of the film's showier interviews seem to exist in the same vacuous space that Jarecki wants to avoid.

Everything about *The King* begs for some semblance of refinement and editing. At nearly two hours in length (and it certainly feels much, much longer), Jarecki spends a lot of time rambling with nothing artful or thoughtful enough to sustain all the wheel spinning. Even on a technical level, *The King* is overly ambitious, incorporating an intricate camera rig on the Rolls Royce (something Jarecki clearly wants to show off, partially because it's too ungainly to hide) and several cars that follow along. When watching many of the musical performances and celebrity interviews that don't need to be here, it's hard to stay in the moment. It's easy to let the mind wander and contemplate what could have been if Jarecki had just stuck to the thesis he wanted to prove in the first place. By showing the heavily artificial and rigorously designed nuts and bolts of his name dropping project, Jarecki, possibly unwittingly, ends up calling out his own level of privilege and how he has been afforded to make such a film about "the American condition" in the first place. The longer it drags on, the more tone deaf and oblivious *The King* becomes, in spite of smattering of interesting points and threads that could have developed into a better documentary. When a film wants to talk about fame's connection to poverty, race, and national identity, being flashy for no reason feels like poor form.

To Jarecki's credit, I think he knows exactly the kind of muddled film that he's made, and that he has made it from the heart, which is somewhat endearing. One of the best interviews from an unlikely subject comes when the Rolls breaks down and the film's road crew chief has to tow it on the back of a flatbed. The driver, with the camera turned onto him, flat out says that he has no clue what kind of film Jarecki is making and that the director probably doesn't know what the documentary is supposed to be saying, either. He also has a great speech about how the traditional, old school mentality that working hard will make everyone successful is the biggest lie you can tell someone. This mea culpa and moment of self-awareness in an otherwise obtuse film speaks volumes, and makes many of *The King's* flaws somewhat forgivable.

Part of the reason for *The King's* metaphorical leanings seems to be because Jarecki was filming in the waning days of the last U.S. presidential election. That provides a good amount of bedrock for Jarecki's anti-biographical thesis, but upon it all the filmmaker builds a lot of potentially distracting and unnecessary shrines to the very form of capitalism that the film seeks to dismantle. See what I did there? Bedrock. Building. Shrines atop a basis that was meant for something good? I don't mean to spell it out for you, but that's a metaphor. And yes, they do have to make some kind of sense, unlike this film's closing musical montage, which cuts sharply from Barney the Dinosaur to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, not because there's any link, but because they're just two iconic images that people will recognize.

***The King opens in Toronto at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, July 13, 2018.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034639/review-the-king/>

## The King offers Elvis as a metaphor for what's ailing America

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#), Entertainment Reporter

Thu., July 12, 2018

### The King

Forty years after the death of Elvis Presley, two-time Sundance Grand Jury winner Eugene Jarecki's new film takes the King's 1963 Rolls-Royce on a musical road trip across America. From Memphis to New York, Las Vegas, and beyond, the journey traces the rise and fall of Elvis as a metaphor for the country he left behind. In this groundbreaking film, Jarecki paints a visionary portrait of the state of the American Dream and a penetrating look at how the hell we got here. A diverse cast of Americans, both famous and non, join the journey.

Documentary co-written and directed by Eugene Jarecki. 107 minutes. Opens Friday at Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema. **PG**

Filmmaker Eugene Jarecki does something rather unusual with *The King*, which becomes something extraordinary and insightful.

Driving across the U.S. in the late Elvis Presley's 1963 Rolls Royce, he uses the life and death of "The King" as a metaphor to explore the troubled state of America, in a documentary that is jam-packed with archival footage, insightful commentary, musical performances (in the back of aforementioned vehicle).

The election of Donald Trump as U.S. president could not provide a better example of what's gone so terribly wrong south of the border, that a country once so full of promise decades ago in dealing with racial and economic inequality has simply failed to heed the lessons of history.

Presley, Jarecki argues persuasively, had similar promise as a poor young man growing up in Tupelo, Miss., where he grooved to Black American music and drove legions of older citizens mad with worry and fear over his wicked gyrations and smouldering sexuality. The film tracks Presley's career under the tutelage of greedy Colonel Tom Parker — including those wretched movies — until he became a pill-popping sell-out Las Vegas performer who died tragically young.

Along the way we hear from some wizened (and wise) old friends and commentators like Dan Rather, Ethan Hawke and — surprisingly — Ashton Kutcher, whose take on fame is telling. Even Mike Myers has some worthy things to say from a Canadian perspective.

There's a lot packed in this film so it may take a second or third viewing to get it all. But Jarecki's sombre and sorrowful message comes through, an urgent wake-up call to change course.

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In *The King*, filmmaker Eugene Jarecki uses the life and death of Elvis Presley as a metaphor to explore the troubled state of America. (LEVELFILM)

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/07/12/the-king-offers-elvis-as-a-metaphor-for-whats-ailing-america.html>

## Review: 'The King'

*Is Elvis Presley's career trajectory the perfect analogy for the USA?*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published July 12th, 2018



### ***The King***

(USA, 107 min.)

Dir. Eugene Jarecki

Is there a better metaphor for the United States of America than the career trajectory of Elvis Presley? Eugene Jarecki makes a bold claim that the life of the King is inextricably linked with the American ethos. For him, charting the rise and fall of Presley's tumultuous career offers the perfect analogy for how much the U.S. empire of the West missed the mark in its quest for greatness. *The King* shows that, like Elvis, the States exploded with electrifying promise after the Second World War with the advent of rock 'n' roll and television, and then let itself loose with a little swagger before its obsession with war and power allowed the promise of a great empire to crumble on self-driven hedonism, excess, and consumption. The nation grew fatter and fatter as it reached the age of Donald Trump's America. The USA is now a bloated has-been, undone by one fried peanut butter and banana sandwich too many, wheezing its dying breath on the toilet.

This choice to situate a conversation about the King within the climate of America looming under the threat of Donald Trump could have backfired spectacularly. The film, shot primarily in the final legs of the 2016 presidential election, features a tangible sense of unrest in the USA, but also a vital concern to take stock of the nation as it reached a fork in the road. Jarecki takes a novel approach to the music doc as he blends it with one of the most quintessentially American genres—the road movie—by taking a spin in Elvis Presley's Rolls Royce and inviting fellow Americans to join him on a ride.

An elaborate set-up of cameras and mics captures every angle of this intimate cruise through America's heartland. Jarecki gives a ride to everyone from musicians like Emmylou Harris to actors like Ethan Hawke to TV auteurs like David Simon and working class Americans—real salt of the earth people, who sing in the back seat or reflect on the legacy of *The King*. Each leg of the journey sees a casual and open conversation about Elvis and the state of America today.

While the tone of unease is palpable, most interviewees feel confident in a Clinton victory and suggest that the country has enough common sense to avoid a self-appointed king like Trump. Alec Baldwin, for example, rants about selfies and Donald Trump, but rolls down his window to play unofficial pollster on the streets of Manhattan. Nary a Manhattanite roots for Trump and Baldwin dismisses the likelihood of a Trump presidency. This sense of false confidence underlies many of the interviews in *The King* as some Americans remain at odds with the climate of their own country. Everyday Americans get equal chances to speak with some parroting the soundbite about wanting to make America great again, while destitute members of the working class voice the hardships the Trump campaign harnessed for its victory. Perhaps sensing the chill in the air better than most political pundits, Jarecki creates the first truly great documentary about Trump's America using contemporary footage with citizens from all walks of life.

It seems there was a little bit of Elvis for every bit of America in the years following World War II. Walking side by side like parallel footprints, *The King* sees the nation's fascination with celebrity as one facet of its self-



directed bastardization. Music fans eager to learn about the King's career will certainly find an all-encompassing study of Presley's meteoric rise to fame in *The King*, yet the intimate connection Jarecki draws between the journey of *The King* and the nation's struggle to realize the American dream yields the richness of this documentary.

*The King* considers Elvis's breakthrough in the era of segregation when radio stations, music halls, and public transit featured an explicit divide between white and Black Americans. Expert talking heads situate Elvis's sex-soaked appeal within the context of whitewashing and cultural appropriation as he lifted sounds, intonations, and songs from the African American tradition, and repackaged them with enough mainstream (re: "white") appeal to break through when black singers could not. The well-worn example of the difference between his cover of "Hound Dog" and the original by Big Mama Thornton serves as the first example of the myth of an American dream where some citizens can pursue wealth and security, while others are excluded from finding success with the same tools.

Similarly, the chapter on Presley's well-publicized stint in the army positions the King's explosion in popularity with America's reconfiguration of itself as a monolithic war machine. Interviewees and archival images which liken the King to the full-blooded realization of G.I. Joe is a flat-out lie. Then came the temptations of Hollywood and Presley's decision to sell out his musical talents for a career making lousy movies, and Jarecki intercuts this section with the USA's turn into Reaganism and the unbridled pursuit of capitalism. As Ethan Hawke intuitively notes while reflecting on Presley's career, every time the King faced a decision, he chose money. Money over talent, money over happiness, money over freedom. What's fascinating about *The King* is the interchangeability of "Elvis" and "America" in nearly every line of dialogue.

David Simon, however, notes that Jarecki's conceit for the film is problematic since he drives Elvis's Rolls Royce, rather than a truly "American" car like a big fat gas-guzzling Cadillac. The European-ness of the Rolls Royce, on the other hand, puts Trump along for the ride as Jarecki and his travellers consider a nation in search of a king. Many interviewees observe that, unlike Britain, the USA is an empire without royalty. The film posits Trump as the inevitable man to be crowned king—or, more aptly, to crown himself king—as the nation reaches the apex of its capitalist rule.

The motif of the road movie serves the film well, too, as the journey isn't complete. There is far more road left to cover. Jarecki and his passengers take a deep look at the nation as they drive through its cities and towns. The atmosphere is tense as is the awareness of false idolatry. There is a sense of a collective reappraisal as the passengers look beyond the fool's gold of the king's crown. With *The King*, Jarecki delivers a brilliantly original music doc that deconstructs the decline of the America empire through one of its greatest icons.

## Review: 'Filmworker'

### *Kubrick stans, rejoice!*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published July 12th, 2018



Leon Vitali on the set of Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*  
Kino Lorber

### **Filmworker**

(USA, 94 min.)

Dir. Tony Zierra

The mad artistry of Stanley Kubrick gets the doc treatment in *Filmworker*. This documentary is supposed to be a film about Kubrick's devoted assistant Leon Vitali, but, by the midpoint, it becomes apparent that Vitali isn't as interesting a subject as Kubrick is, so director Tony Zierra inevitably shifts his gaze towards the bigger prize. Vitali remains the Igor to Kubrick's Dr. Victor Frankenstein years after the filmmaker's death in 1999. Vitali continues to work on Kubrick's films, having just overseen a new restoration of [2001: A Space Odyssey](#), so he's devoted as many years of his life to Kubrick's films as the director did. This story has the premise for a great documentary, but while Zierra delivers some nuggets on Kubrick's oeuvre, he loses sight of the film's deeper meaning.

Zierra questions Vitali in a range of interviews that lets the self-ascribed "filmworker" recall his career as Kubrick's jack-of-all-trades. Vitali speaks about landing a job on Kubrick's lavish production of *Barry Lyndon* and finding himself amazed by the director's bravado, artistry, and dedication to the moving image. *Filmworker* gives a brisk insider's overview of Vitali's decision to walk away from a promising acting career. Step behind the camera as the right hand man for an auteur tells all about the master.

It's obvious that Zierra spent ample time with Vitali since the interviews, all of which are awkwardly framed and drably shot, see the subject in a range of set-ups and outfits. However, the discussion isn't especially immersive. Vitali hides behind his sunglasses and refuses to let Zierra into his head as he tells about working behind the scenes on *The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, and the restorations of Kubrick's work. That's all fine since Kubrick is a great filmmaker, but there's also a tragedy to Vitali's sacrifice that Zierra doesn't adequately penetrate.

There's also something awkward about the celebratory tone *Filmworker* takes towards Stanley Kubrick's behaviour. Vitali and other interviewees describe Kubrick as an unrelentingly difficult creative force, a demanding and ruthless perfectionist who could wear down seasoned professionals. Conflating tyranny with genius is a bit passé. Was Vitali the Eve Harrington to Kubrick's Margo Channing? There's no real sense of Vitali's stake in devoting his life to Kubrick beyond catering to the filmmaker's success. After a while, the anecdotes amount to Kubrick stanning—"stanning" being a kind of stalkery fervent fandom—as the assistant gushes about the artist's work without end.

However, Vitali's proximity to Kubrick illuminates much of the art that transcended the filmmaker's personality and demanding character. There is value to this oral history of an insider's view of great filmmaking. Vitali is humble and willing to live in Kubrick's shadow—it's just too bad the film about him overshadows his contributions to Kubrick's success. Always a bridesmaid, they say.

***Filmworker* opens Friday, July 13 at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#).**

Pat Mullen is POV's Associate Online Editor. He covers film at [Cinemablographer.com](#), and has contributed to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Paste, BeatRoute, Modern Times Review, and Documentary magazine and is a member of the Toronto Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society. You can reach him at [@cinemablogrpher](#) <http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-filmworker>

## THREE IDENTICAL STRANGERS

JULY 12, 2018ADDISON WYLIE0 COMMENTS



### FILED UNDER REVIEWS

*Three Identical Strangers* is a one-of-a-kind story, which I suppose is ironic considering it's about a set of triplets. However, the movie is comparable to another documentary.

While expertly directed by Tim Wardle, *Three Identical Strangers* reminded me of [Catfish](#), the 2010 film that was later turned into a successful MTV reality show about online anonymity. Both films featured an unbelievable true story, and they're both mysteries in their own right. But, both films were also gifted with a deceiving albeit intriguing marketing campaign. Through its promotional materials, *Catfish* was given the perception of a horror movie as its filmmakers used hands-on researching skills to uncover someone's true identity. The finished film, while tense, was sad and more poignant than anyone could've been prepared for. The same goes with Wardle's *Three Identical Strangers*. Initially, the film is pitched to movie goers as a stranger-than-fiction tale of three adult brothers reuniting through coincidences, which seemingly leads to an outrageous reveal as to why they were separated as kids. However, as the film becomes less romanticizing and more honest, the audience is affected and shaken by the heartless activities that led up to this grand reveal.

There you are, anxiously waiting for this review to get to the point. It's tremendously difficult to expand on *Three Identical Strangers* without delving into spoilers, which I won't do here. It's a film that is best appreciated with an empty slate and an open mind. I've watched *Three Identical Strangers* twice now: once at this year's Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival and again preceding its Canadian theatrical release. While I enjoyed the film the first time, I was left feeling distraught; having not been prepared for the doc's psychological depth. On a second go, not only was I emotionally prepared, but I was astounded by how *Three Identical Strangers* was just as fresh and surprising, also leaving me impressed by its ingenious use of archival footage, intimate interviews, and reenactments.

One last thing: *Three Identical Strangers* is also similar to *Catfish* in a more personal way. Just as I named *Catfish* as the cream of the crop for its year, *Three Identical Strangers* is, also, one of the best documentaries you'll see this year.

## Review: 'Whitney'

### *Latest Houston doc digs deeper*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published July 12th, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



#### **Whitney**

(USA/UK, 120 min.)

Dir. Kevin Macdonald

*Whitney* might be the first documentary made about Whitney Houston with the full authorization of her family but don't let that much trucked-about showbiz line fool you. This documentary isn't a completely sanitized account of the great singer. Houston's story gets the full warts-and-all treatment from Oscar winner Kevin Macdonald (*Marley*). While the documentary inevitably bears evidence of well-calculated efforts by the Houston dynasty to overlook the darker aspects of the star's tragically short-lived career, *Whitney* pushes hard enough to give audiences a deeper appreciation of the late pop icon. The film is as sad as it is celebratory as it reaches down to Houston's deepest troubles while hitting the highest notes of her career.

The Houston clan's involvement in *Whitney* is significant, especially since the documentary is the second one about the singer to be released within a year. 2017's *Whitney: Can I Be Me?* by Rudi Dolezal and Nick Broomfield debuted to respectable acclaim from audiences at Tribeca and Hot Docs before falling into obscurity as the Houstons threw support to their own project. It's hard to detach *Whitney* from *Can I Be Me?* and viewers will inevitably find Macdonald's doc more rewarding and insightful if they have seen the Broomfield/Dolezal film. But one doesn't need to have seen it. Houston's story is significant and complex enough to yield multiple approaches. Even Houston's "I Will Always Love You" was a cover of a Dolly Parton's song and it's hard to disagree that her version of the tune exceeded the original.

*Can I Be Me?* is good tabloid entertainment whereas *Whitney* is great rigorous filmmaking. The previous film gets some juicy details since Dolezal, a friend of Houston, [shot an exhaustive array of footage with the singer in the 1990s](#). *Can I Be Me?* features oodles of previously unseen candid moments with Houston that reveal the singer at her highest and lowest as she battled drug addiction and personal demons while putting on amazing shows night after night.

After years of trying to cobble together a feature doc out of his footage, and struggling to find common ground with the Houstons who wanted nothing to do with the project, Dolezal landed the help of veteran Broomfield who shaped the film into an engrossing cradle to grave portrait. *Can I Be Me?*'s intimate look revealed the depth of Houston's relationship with her long-time friend and employee Robin Crawford with whom many interviewees in the film suspected Houston may have been intimate. The doc likens Crawford to being Houston's voice of reason, and as the film chronicles Crawford's unfair ousting from Houston's circle—she and Bobby Brown didn't get along—it gives audiences a sense that the star lost her biggest ally among a sea of bad influences.

Here's a good example of the difference between the two films. Dolezal has the footage to show audiences the richness of Houston's relationship with Crawford, but he's limited with what he can do with it because the doc



lacks the key interviews to transcend mere speculation. It puts on a good show but can't fully illuminate its subject.

None of the filmmakers scored an interview with Crawford, but Macdonald does get Brown, Houston's family members, and record producer Clive Davis, all of whom boycotted the *Dolezal/Broomfield* film. Together the films form a fascinating dialogue about the Houston enclave and the pressures that inevitably contributed to the star's depression and substance abuse. Crawford appears very little in the archival footage of Macdonald's film—she's a footnote compared to a principal player in *Dolezal* and *Broomfield's* doc—and her name arises in few interviews. However, *Whitney* says more by saying less. Houston's friend Steve Gittleman directly states that Whitney was probably what people now identify as "fluid" but didn't know how to address her sexuality. Even better is the response of Houston's brother Gary who dismisses Crawford as "wicked," "evil," and "a nobody." The Houstons clearly have an opinion about Crawford. The ingenuity of the editing in *Whitney* affords audiences a rich if troubling sense of the dynamics of power and control within Houston dynasty.

Similarly, the best interview of *Whitney* might be when Macdonald sits down with Brown. The bad boy bluntly states that he doesn't want to talk about Houston's drug problems. He doesn't deny them, but he doesn't feel they're relevant to Houston's story, which, as Macdonald observes from off-camera, leaves an awfully big gap in the final years of her life. The guardians of Houston's secrets say so much when they say nothing within their fully authorized account.

Macdonald navigates the impressive range of interviews and archival footage to get to the root of Houston's story. If Houston's family doesn't want to discuss her troubles and simply prefers to talk about how wonderful she was growing up when everyone called her "Nippy," then all Macdonald has is yet another well-trodden Norma Jean/Marilyn tale about the tragedy of navigating a public life. There's a better story here and Macdonald knows it.

The film moves beyond Houston's close family after giving them their obligatory airtime. As the doc traverses the concentric circles of Houston's friends and family—and one really must emphasize the dexterity of the editing in *Whitney* as the collages incorporate archival footage to inject the social backdrop of Houston's significance—Macdonald finds voices willing to speak about the star more frankly and objectively. These interviews form the emotional core of the film as people like Houston's assistant, Mary Jones, reveals that the singer was a victim of sexual abuse as a child. Houston's brother, Gary, confirms Jones's story that their cousin Dee Dee Warwick molested Whitney when she was young. The burden of keeping her story a secret, and of associating sexual experiences with violation and shame, illuminates so much of the troubles that other portraits of Houston have failed to reveal. As one watches a career and life cut short by drug addictions and battles with the bottle, *Whitney* lets a weight off its subject's chest with hopes of empowering other survivors so that they too may find help and guidance.

The film also covers Houston's many successes to underscore the tragedy of her stunted career. The most forceful voice in the doc belongs to Whitney Houston as the soundtrack encompasses her greatest performances from "The Star Spangled Banner" to "I Will Always Love You." Just count the goosebumps that arise when Macdonald presents an isolated vocal track from Houston's poppy dance anthem "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" around the mid-point of the film. The raw emotion, the pure joy, and the bittersweet hopefulness carried within Houston's voice are timeless. *Whitney* takes Houston off the celebrity pedestal and finds a troubled, fallible human being with a voice that will live forever.

***Whitney* opens in theatres Friday, July 13.** <http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-whitney>



## Presley's legacy gets all shook up in The King

BRAD WHEELER

REVIEW

**The King**

CLASSIFICATION: N/A; 107 MINUTES

Directed by Eugene Jarecki  
Starring Van Jones, Ethan Hawke, Chuck D, James Carville, Greil Marcus, Mike Myers, David Simon  
★★★

**T**hey said you was high-classed, well that was just a lie. — Leiber and Stoller's Hound Dog

America has left the building, if it was ever there in the first place. That's the curious notion of *The King*, a worthwhile road-film doc and lively political discussion on dashed dreams from the inquisitive Eugene Jarecki, twice a Grand Jury Prize-winner at Sundance (for 2012's *The House I Live In* and 2005's *Why We Fight*).

Here, Jarecki drives in circles as he attempts to explain the rise and fall of Elvis Presley as analogous to the crumbling of the American Dream. A seemingly random collection of opining celebrities ride in Presley's 1963 Rolls-Royce, a vehicle that, like the film itself, sometimes rattles and sometimes hums as it makes its way to the soul of a republic and a rock 'n' roll icon. Provocative and at times unwieldy, *The King* is something of a stoned CNN Special Report on wheels.

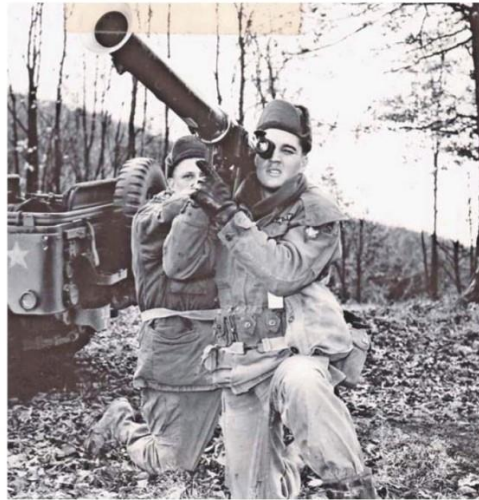
How does it end? Well, you know it ends: With Elvis bloated, opiated and constipated, and with a fat, divided America slumped on the toilet.

*The King*'s most intriguing talking head is Van Jones, the author and television news commentator who distinguishes himself as the film's chief contrarian and the fly in Jarecki's buttermilk.

"It's an interesting country," Jones says of America. "It inflicts pain on black people, denies it inflicts the pain, but benefits from the soulful cry that arises from the pain."

He's talking about blues, a music taken by the white man from African-Americans. Jones directly confronts director Jarecki, whom he sees as "desperate" to rescue Presley from the charge of cultural appropriation.

On the other side of the issue is rapper Chuck D, who believes "culture is culture" and meant to be shared. This is the same Chuck D who on the 1989 Public



Eugene Jarecki's *The King* suggests Elvis Presley's stint in the army changed him. Enlisting as a James Dean-type rebel, he left as part of the John Wayne establishment.

Enemy song *Fight the Power* bluntly rapped that Elvis was a "straight-up racist sucker" and no idol to him.

So, America's relationship with Presley is complicated, and so is Jarecki's pursuit — and we haven't even addressed Ashton Kutcher's philosophy on fame or musician John Hiatt's on-camera sobbing yet.

The film's journey begins where Presley began, in Tupelo, Miss. It's a town of no opportunities now, even though its favourite son has been hailed as a classic rag-to-riches success story. Asked about the pursuit of happiness, a working-class white woman mentions peace, harmony, love and family. "And health," adds a cigarette-puffing friend.

Jarecki searches for one of the Presley family's Tupelo homes. The African-Americans in town have no idea which street Elvis lived on. The South was segregated when Elvis was born; one man's American Dream was another's American Nightmare.

The ride continues to Memphis, to New York, to Hollywood — with a sidebar to Presley's army stint in Germany, where the fall of the King, it is suggested, began. Being a soldier is at turns tedious and terrifying — conditions, we are told, which can lead to drug abuse.

Presley's days in uniform changed him, the film contends. Enlisting as a James Dean rebel, he came out as John Wayne es-

tablishment. Back in America in the 1960s, Presley, who revered black music, was no civil-rights hero. He did go to Hollywood to make bad movies.

Long an intellectual pursuit, the mythologizing of Elvis has picked up steam of late. The recent HBO doc *The Searcher* is rich in its archival and ethno-musical content, but its tone is apologetic and its conceit (that Elvis was a soulful, spiritual seeker locked in a box not of his own making) is nonsense.

When it comes to dispelling the kind of myths put forward by *The Searcher*, actor Ethan Hawke is one of *The King*'s more refreshing voices. Where musician Hiatt literally weeps for a "poor mama's boy from Mississippi" who was trapped by fame and a manipulative manager, Hawke notes that at every turn Elvis "chose money" over all else, whether it was moving from a small record label to a slicker, bigger one or choosing films over music or sticking to Vegas rather than touring the world.

Where Hawke is casual and bright in his Rolls-Royce ruminations, fellow actor Kutcher is so ponderous and world-weary — "[People] reach a point in fame that is so large they actually have to be able to afford a kind of living to protect themselves from the very fame that they've created, or go away" — that you're grateful he himself has gone away.

Jarecki picks up all sorts of celebrated people and thinkers — probably too many. I would have liked to hear more from Elvis's Graceland cook and less from Alec Baldwin. And why is the car of choice a British-made Rolls-Royce and not a Cadillac, a symbol of the American Dream if there ever was one?

Elvis's own voice in *The King* is a disembodied one, culled from

old interviews. In the film's prelude, we hear him in favour of "happiness" over worldly goods. Later, however, Presley wishes that everybody could have all the luxuries he had.

Elvis picked money over happiness, as did a racially divided America, where democracy became synonymous with capitalism, and where a dream to some was just a lie to others.

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**Review: Filmworker profiles Kubrick's most devoted acolyte**

Documentary on cinema icon's personal assistant is fascinating and disconcerting

BY **NORMAN WILNER**

JULY 11, 2018

6:30 AM



**FILMWORKER** (Tony Zierra). 94 minutes. Opens Friday (July 13). See [listing](#). Rating: NNNN

Leon Vitali first met Stanley Kubrick when the director cast him as Ryan O'Neal's nemesis Lord Bullingdon in his production of *Barry Lyndon*. It would be the last time Vitali worked in front of a camera again until Kubrick asked him to play one of *Eyes Wide Shut*'s masked orgy facilitators, almost a quarter of a century later.

Nearly two decades after that, and 19 years after Kubrick's death, Vitali remains the filmmaker's most devoted acolyte and protector, having given up a promising career in film and television to work exclusively as Kubrick's assistant. It was, he says in Tony Zierra's new documentary *Filmworker*, nothing less than a calling – the thing he simply knew he had to do.

Cinephiles seeking insight into Kubrick's personality and process will find plenty of it here, as Vitali spins stories of Stanley's mercurial temperament, technological expertise and devotion to his pets. *Barry Lyndon*'s O'Neal, *The Shining*'s Danny Lloyd and *Full Metal Jacket*'s Matthew Modine and R. Lee Ermey turn up as character witnesses to Vitali's thoughtfulness and work ethic.

There's some fascinating behind-the-scenes footage from those productions, and a general sense of goodwill toward Vitali, who comes across as a very pleasant zealot but a zealot nonetheless, having devoted himself so completely to Kubrick that he became more serf than assistant.

It's more than a little disconcerting to watch Vitali, who in his lanky, bespectacled scragginess resembles a lankier version of Warren Zevon, tell story after story about what amounts to decades of abuse by his mercurial, increasingly eccentric boss while slowly positioning himself as the artistic collaborator who made those masterworks possible.

I have met Vitali, and I believe he believes his own stories. I'm also aware of how often his gospel of *What Stanley Would Have Wanted* has shifted and changed over time on various issues, not the least of which are the home-video versions of Kubrick's films for Warner Bros. – an issue *Filmworker* investigates in its wonkiest moment.

Zierra and producer Elizabeth Yoffe are somewhat more credulous. Indeed, they seem so enthralled by Vitali as a subject that they let larger questions about Kubrick's demanding auteurship and the toll of creative work slide past them.

*Filmworker* proceeds from the assumption that working with Stanley Kubrick was worth whatever it took out of Vitali – but then, of course, its subject can't possibly allow himself to wonder if it wasn't.

<https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-news/watch-sacha-baron-cohen-dupe-gun-lobby-in-who-is-america-clip-699423/>



## Director Tim Wardle talks about the curious case of *Three Identical Strangers*

Andrew Parker

July 16, 2018



After remarking about the unseasonably warm weather in Toronto for a late April morning, UK filmmaker Tim Wardle will attempt to talk to me in an interview about his latest documentary, *Three Identical Strangers* (which opens in Toronto and Vancouver this weekend, expanding to additional cities over the summer). It's a difficult film to talk about for two reasons. First, it works best as a narrative to know nothing about what happens before going in. Second, thanks to a shadowy conspiracy that lies at the heart of what started out as a feel good human interest story, there's still a frightening degree of ambiguity that hangs over *Three Identical Strangers*.

"The thing with this film is that at a certain point, there are things that I generally avoid talking about too much," Wardle says over coffee in a downtown hotel suite. "After the film's premiere at Sundance, I saw some of the reviews, and even if they were generally positive, I think some of them gave a bit too much away. Some of the reviews were just descriptions of the story, and not even reviews of the film. And I'm sure that there will be some people who'll appreciate that, but I think this is a story that benefits greatly from a certain degree of discretion beforehand."

Wardle's hesitancy to talk about certain elements contained within *Three Identical Strangers* is understandable, as it affords the people involved in a bizarre, convoluted, and potentially insidious situation to share their unfiltered feelings about their lives for the first time.

In 1980, nineteen year old New York City area community college student Bobby Shafran is shocked when he receives something close to a hero's welcome on his first day of school from people he's never met before. The outpouring of love is a case of mistaken identity, as Bobby looks and sounds exactly Eddy Galland, a student who stopped going to the same school the previous semester. Bobby and Eddy are put in touch with each other, and confirm that they were twins that were separated at birth. The feel-good story of brothers who haven't seen each other since they were six months old sparks a media frenzy that only intensifies when a third man – David Kellman – turns out to be another identical sibling. The three hit it off famously and partied hard together with their newfound celebrity throughout the 1980s, but eventually nagging questions about their differences and why the triplets were split up in the first place lead to the darker areas Wardle is disinclined to spoil for audiences.

We met with Wardle on the morning of *Three Identical Strangers*' Canadian premiere at the Hot Docs International Documentary Festival to discuss the advantages of making such an American film from the perspective of a cultural outsider, gaining the trust of a family that has been burned by the media in the past, and a little bit about the secrets hidden at the heart of these brothers' stories.

**I think there are a lot of people who might remember the happier elements of this story as they were unfolding in the early 1980s, but definitely fewer who saw the darker elements to the**

## The Gate – July 16, 2018 (2 of 4)

situation these triplets found themselves in. When you start making a film like this, how long does it take to distance yourself as a filmmaker from the happier, more vastly established version of events and to cut through all the puff pieces and human interest stories?



Tim Wardle

**Tim Wardle:** It's a good question. I was aware of both sides of this story ahead of time, and I knew a certain amount going into it. I knew there were these three boys who were separated at birth and didn't know anything of each others' existence. I knew they were reunited at the age of nineteen and they became famous to a certain degree. I knew the darker reasons behind why this had happened, but I didn't know everything. I think the duality of the story was always what attracted me to make this film. If it had just been a human interest story about triplets who were reunited, I would have found it interesting, but I probably wouldn't have thought to make a film about it. When I heard the story behind the story, that was what made me want to make a film about it.

It's a story that when you try to make it into a film makes you realize the tonal variety of what's happening, so you have to try and gather as many perspectives as you can to make sure that everything is being served. When you make films and documentaries in particular, I guess, they start in one mode and you stay within that tonal space all the way through. This was a story that has real extremes in its tone. That's a challenge when you try to research something like this, especially when some of the biggest details are hidden, but that was also what appealed to me.

**The film nicely shows that these brothers have had to answer the same exact questions about their relationship over and over for the past thirty-seven years, and I'm sure there was some trepidation on their part to go on camera, thinking they might have to put up with the same line of questioning all over again. What did it take to convince them that your film was going to be different?**

**Tim Wardle:** It was really tough. It took me the better part of four years to win their trust, and the trust of their families, to get them to embark on this journey with us. They've been promised a lot in the past, and they've been let down a lot during their lives, as you can see from the events that happen in the film. All I could do was say that I was interested both in what has been told before, as well as what hasn't been told. They're both equally important, and I was very honest with them that their story will always come with this media spin that's been put on it.

On one level, this is a film about the nature of storytelling; how we tell stories and how they tell their own stories. It's fascinating because on one level, this film functions as a critique on the media and how we tell stories, and I have to be aware that I'm doing that myself. I explained all of this to them, and I think they got that. If they believed that I was going to do all of that, I don't know, but one of the most amazing experiences for me was showing them the film when I was done with it.

Two things happened. One was that they loved the film, which was great, but the stronger emotion that came out was when they told me that I delivered exactly what I said I was going to deliver. I don't think that's happened much for them in their lives. That emotion and thanks was so much stronger than their liking of the film. That was really rewarding.

## The Gate – July 16, 2018 (3 of 4)



**You're also working with brothers and family members who turned out to be better journalists than the journalists that were covering them. They were the only people asking the question: "Why would a family of identical triplets be separated at birth and not put up for adoption together?" How invaluable was the legwork that the family already did to your film?**

**Tim Wardle:** Extremely, so. You have to remember that a lot of those early years where the brothers were together, they spent a lot of time together partying and enjoying their lives to the fullest, so a lot of what was being done was being done by the families in those early years. It was later on when things started to go wrong in their relationship that they started asking deeper questions. But you're right; initially the media reported it as a happy-go-lucky story, which rubbed many people in the family the wrong way. There's a tabloid journalist in the film, Howard Schneider, who was at NewsDay, but teaches journalism now, who uses this story and what the family was able to uncover outside of the media spin to illustrate the unknowability of a narrative. Journalists thought they knew where this story was going, but the family knew that it ended someplace entirely different that no one else really wanted to talk about.



**There are a finite amount of answers that anyone covering this story in-depth – both from your perspective and the families' perspectives – that anyone can get thanks to people who have either passed away, refused to go on the record, or documents that are sealed. That has to be hard to approach as an outsider, but it could also be an advantage since you haven't covered this story before and you aren't a blood relative of the family. Do you think that offered you slightly more access than others have been granted in the past?**

**Tim Wardle:** I think to some degree, that's true. I think, more importantly, being an outsider who wasn't from North America ended up helping me more than I expected. Coming in as a British person, I think the



## The Gate – July 16, 2018 (4 of 4)

people I needed to talk to were more open to me than they might have been to a New Yorker or a family member. It was almost like there was this diminished expectation. “This film’s gonna die. No one’s gonna see it.” (laughs) But I think there’s a lot of assumed knowledge that because I wasn’t from here, everyone felt the need to explain their portion of the story from the start. There’s a curiosity that comes I think from speaking to someone you don’t get to converse with every day. I usually find talking to Americans and Canadians more fascinating than talking to British people. I talk to British people all the time. I think when it comes to the people who hadn’t spoken up before, it might have been an advantage. It also leads to a fuller story with details that some people might have taken for granted, like when we talk about the sort of economic divide that the triplets faced before they met each other. I wouldn’t have immediately known how important different areas were or what a certain car said about the people driving it. People sometimes give more details to outsiders than they will to people closer to the story, and I think that definitely helped here, and it certainly opened a few extra doors.

**Not to give too much away, but a key component to this story is currently located in sealed documents that likely won’t be accessed by anyone until 2066, which is almost deliberately too late for anyone involved with this story to discover the missing piece unless someone lives long enough to look into it. Do you hope that someone remembers this story that far down the road and finishes what these brothers and their families started?**

**Tim Wardle:** If I’m alive that long, even if I’m in a wheelchair, I would be one of the first people lining up to see these documents. (laughs) Hopefully, this story has a life outside the film. There are people currently making moves towards more transparency, and I think that’s a really good thing. It’s fascinating as a filmmaker when you have a Pandora’s Box at the centre of your story that you can’t open. When I started, I thought that we had to get this thing open, or else the film wouldn’t work. Actually, what I realized is that even if we don’t answer everything, it’s not the end of the world because the questions that we leave hanging are ones that people will want to research more. If we wrapped everything up neatly in a bow, I think people would like the movie, but maybe then they wouldn’t ever think about it again. I think presenting this as an ongoing story isn’t a bad thing at all.

It’s interesting because there are two kind of key reactions that people tend to have when they see where this story ultimately heads. There will be those who see what transpired as something evil, and others who will see the point and validity of what was happening. There are just as many people who will think that this makes sense and others who will have a lot of ethical qualms. It’s easy to judge with hindsight, especially with a story like this that starts in the 50s and 60s, well before the brothers are even born. It ties into a part of culture that no one likes talking about, but was completely plausible at the time.

I love watching the film with an audience that goes in to this story completely cold, but I always feel somewhat guilty that this story goes down some pretty dark roads. It starts off somewhat cheerful, and then it goes into some much darker places. It’s all thrilling and fascinating, and I hope that we acclimatize the audience to follow us to those darker places. I know this sounds like foreshadowing, but that’s a big part of the film. One of our biggest notes from CNN Films was that we needed to tease things a bit more so that the darker elements don’t come as an abrupt, shocking tonal shift no one can see coming. We also don’t want people to switch off too early and think they know exactly where everything is going. You don’t want to bait people by saying “and no one could believe what happened next,” but you want to tease out the additional layers to the story.

***Three Identical Strangers opens at Varsity Cinemas in Toronto and in Vancouver on Friday, July 13, 2018. It expands to Montreal on July 20 and to additional cities throughout the summer.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034672/director-tim-wardle-talks-about-the-curious-case-of-three-identical-strangers/>

# Review: 'Hitler's Hollywood'

*In-depth master class on the power of images*

By [Patrick Mullen](#) • Published July 20th, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



## ***Hitler's Hollywood***

(Germany, 105 min.)

Dir. Rüdiger Suchsland

"What kind of a nation is it that needs poets to be able to kill and to die?" asks Udo Kier in voiceover in *Hitler's Hollywood*. This comprehensive slice of film history asks difficult and relevant questions. How audiences of the present make sense of the films of the past is a discussion worth having, particular as movie buffs consider how to contextualize influential films that one can no longer celebrate without awkwardness or political correctness. *Hitler's Hollywood* is as thorough and informative as a Master Class seminar, if as dry as Melba toast, and the collage of classic images presents snippets of film history that are both beautiful and unsettling. Sometimes the question isn't one of separating the artist from the art, but one of (re)considering the work's place in history. This doc by Rüdiger Suchsland navigates a tricky chapter of film history thankfully without celebrating it.

*Hitler's Hollywood* gives an in-depth survey of the machinery of Nazi propaganda. Kier guides the quickly paced film in a soft-spoken voiceover that contextualizes the ideological force of the pictures that filmmakers cranked out under the guidance of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda. As expected, there are images of blue-eyed Germans with blond hair, idealized by the Nazis as the perfect specimen of the human race, and the film makes a startling reminder of the necessity of diverse on screen representation. Casting matters, particularly when roles put characters in dichotomies of strength and weakness. Each clip is a document of cultural genocide with the erasure of Jews and other groups Hitler deemed undesirable.

Suchsland's doc explains how the basic function of propaganda is to permeate the minds of viewers with subliminal messages, rather than punch them in the face with obvious slogans. *Hitler's Hollywood* surveys the basic elements of iconography that reinforced the Third Reich's aim. By looking at a sea of Aryan actors, images of bodily perfection, towering composition of soldiers in solidarity, or strong patriarchal figures commanding authority, Kier explains how elements of each frame normalized Nazi ideology into the status quo. Rousing songs were also frequent to create emotional connections to the regime. The doc cites cultural theorists like Siegfried Kracauer and puts academic consideration into terms accessible for wide audiences as Suchsland surveys a large body of work. The observations of *Hitler's Hollywood* might not be penetrating for viewers well versed in film analysis or history, but the doc, like an earnest university professor, prepares viewers with the foundational knowledge for the discussion.

The most significant chapter of the film looks at Leni Riefenstahl's landmark documentary *Triumph of the Will*. The 1935 film remains overwhelming today, presenting the sheer scope of the Nazis' presence. The film intimidates with its compositions that emphasize the strength and scale of Hitler's army while Riefenstahl's frames liken Hitler to a pop idol adored by the masses. One can see how the film was so influential in putting Germans under Hitler's spell. Even with just a few clips of *Triumph of the Will*, it's hard to watch the footage without shaking off a chill. Suchsland's documentary unpacks how filmmaking has the power to contribute to the deaths of over six million people. The film has the decency to omit the question of artistic merit but illustrates how a text retains historical significance with the proper context.

Perhaps more surprising is the range of genres that appears in *Hitler's Hollywood*. Not every piece of Nazi propaganda was *Triumph of the Will* or *Nation's Pride*. Outside of the bombastic showings of Nazi machismo, Suchsland finds a German remake of Frank Capra's slapstick romance *It Happened One Night* and an Ingrid Bergman film that the Hollywood icon would rather see lost to history. *Hitler's Hollywood* examines how the different tones and stories ensured that propaganda enveloped audiences from different angles and was inescapable for anyone going to movies on Nazi screens.

While the film runs far too long and Kier's narration sometimes borders upon inaudible, *Hitler's Hollywood* gives audiences lots to digest on the power of images. The doc navigates film history to articulate an informative reminder on the necessity of media literacy. Not everyone needs to take a Film 101 course to understand the difference between real images and fake ones, but Suchsland's doc prompts audiences to recognize that the best viewer is an active one.

***Hitler's Hollywood* opens Friday July 20 at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) and is available on home video.**

Pat Mullen is POV's Associate Online Editor. He covers film at [Cinemablographer.com](#), and has contributed to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Paste, BeatRoute, Modern Times Review, and Documentary magazine and is a member of the Toronto Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society. You can reach him at [@cinemablogrpher](#)

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CBC-q – July 18, 2018

## In a new documentary, Elvis is a metaphor for the American Dream

CBC Radio · July 18



American popular singer and film star Elvis Presley (1935 - 1977), to his fans the undisputed King of Rock 'n' Roll. (Getty Images)

0 comments

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To some people, there's no one more American than Elvis Presley. A guy who came from very little and through hard work, took over the world. But at the end of his life, Elvis came apart in a very public way.

His trajectory — the meteoric rise and tragic fall — is the subject of a new documentary called *The King*. It traces Elvis' life and death and uses it as a metaphor for the state of the American Dream.

Writer, director and producer of *The King*, Eugene Jarecki, joins *q* guest host Talia Schlanger to talk about the film.

It's on now at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

— *Produced by Cora Nijhawan*

## HOT DOCS WEEKEND ROUNDUP: NAZI FILM TROVE REVEALED, CHINESE HERO SHORTCHANGED

July 18, 2018

### Hitler's Hollywood

By Liam Lacey; **Rating: B**

Between 1933 and the end of the Second World War in 1945, more than 1,000 films were made in Nazi Germany, a film industry that was nationalized and controlled by propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, though privately financed and popular in their appeal.

There were all kinds of films, a thick goop of syrup and poison: Nazi-recruiting films, sentimental melodramas, anti-Jewish propaganda, historic epics, and rather stiff musicals (swing music was outlawed). There were even screwball comedies, including a knock-off of *It Happened One Night*.

One missing genre: horror films, possibly because they were too close to real life.



Hitler and Goebbels on set. No popcorn blockbusters for these knuckleheads...

Written and directed by Rüdiger Suchsland, *Hitler's Hollywood* is an unsettling collection of film clips with commentary, narrated by actor Udo Kier, intellectually bolstered with quotes from Siegfried Kracauer, Susan Sontag, and Hannah Arendt. His narration is like an autopsy report, pointing out evidence of the pathology with perfect hindsight.

"Every death was a happy death in Nazi cinema," we hear. Or, that German cinema suffered from "a total lack of irony" and a "rather forced cheerfulness." It is replete with images of bodies in choreographed motion: "Everything is in order; in lock step."

The death obsession had an erotic component: the Swedish-born actress, Kristina Söderbaum, became mockingly known as "the Reich's floating corpse" because of her tendency to play characters that committed sacrificial suicides, exposing "the necrophiliac core of the Nazi fantasies."

Of course, in the 1930s, forced cheerfulness and escapism were hardly unique to Nazi films. Busby Berkeley's musicals showed mechanized bodies as much as *Triumph of the Will* did, albeit for different aims. You want death-obsessed cinema? The 2014 movie *Guardians of the Galaxy* had more than 80,000 onscreen deaths. The contemporary actress Charlize Theron holds a record with 25 onscreen deaths but no one yet has cited her as evidence of national pathology.



## Original-Cin – July 18, 2018 (2 of 2)

There's also a lot of overlap with mainstream movie tastes. We see a 23-year-old Ingrid Bergman in her only German film, *The Four Companions* (1938), four years before she starred in the anti-Nazi *Casablanca*. The Nazi film era also produced the Puerto Rican-set romance *La Habanera* (1937), directed by Detlev Sierck, later better known as a master of the American melodrama Douglas Sirk.

Hitler's Hollywood attempts to subject a great variety of films to a single test — how did they reflect Nazi ideology? — and the examples serve the film's purpose but apart from the blatant anti-Semitism and ideological kitsch, the era's celebrations of collective sacrifice and violence feel entirely familiar today.

*Hitler's Hollywood*. Written and directed by Rüdiger Suchsland. Narrated by Udo Kier. At Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema beginning July 20.



Letter from Masanjia.

### Letter from Masanjia

By Liam Lacey

#### Rating: C

An urgent human rights issue and a fascinating story worthy of a Hollywood thriller are not well served in *Letter from Masajia*, a documentary by Chinese-born, British Columbia-based filmmaker, Leon Lee.

In 2012, an Oregon woman, Julie Keith, opened a Styrofoam Halloween tombstone she bought at K-Mart. Inside the package, Keith found an SOS letter from a Chinese political prisoner, begging for help. Her story made the papers, even as far away as China, where it was seen by the now-released letter-writer, a middle-aged engineer named Sun Yi, who had been imprisoned and tortured in the Masanjia labour camp, because he followed the outlawed Falun Gong spiritual practice.

Director Lee contacted Sun and, using Skype and the assistance of an unnamed cameraman in China, help Sun Yi to tell his story — and subsequent events after the filming began. This is a harrowing story of cruelty and perseverance but Lee's decision to render his account of imprisonment and torture in black-and-white animation produces emotional distance rather than empathy. This is one of those cases where a journalistic account (see Marsha Lederman's April 26 story in *The Globe and Mail*) proves more helpful than a film.

*Letter from Masanjia*. Directed by Leon Lee. With Sun Yi and Julie Keith. At Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema beginning July 21.

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2018/7/18/hot-docs-weekend-roundup-nazi-film-trove-revealed-chinese-hero-shortchanged>

## Review: Hitler's Hollywood

[Andrew Parker](#) 6 days ago



### Hitler's Hollywood

6.7 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Both an insightful, well researched look into a cinematic past that's been swept under the rug and a potentially eerie warning of things to be on the look-out for in the future, *Hitler's Hollywood* looks at the special breed of blockbuster that was produced, marketed and released under the rule of the Third Reich in Germany. Writer-director Rüdiger Suchsland has assembled a wealth of footage from films that – for better and for worse – have been largely kept out of the public eye and global cinematic conversation because they were produced during and under the supervision of a fascist regime that controlled every aspect of the media. Not all the film's glimpsed in *Hitler's Hollywood* are worth saving or reappraising, but the history behind this frequently overlooked place and time in world cinema is invaluable to an understanding of politics, fascism, and filmmaking as we know them today.

The timeline of *Hitler's Hollywood* runs from approximately 1933 to 1945, the heyday of state run communications in Germany. Overseen predominantly by propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, the German film industry thrived before and during World War II thanks to the country's love of big screen grandeur and theatricality. Much of their output wasn't vastly different or cheaper than much of their western cinematic counterparts, but a lot of it was made in service of acclimatizing a populace to Nazi ideology.

Suchsland has created what more or less amounts to a 100 minute cinematic lecture. *Hitler's Hollywood* is an assembly of hundreds of clips from dozens of German produced films from the era, with actor Udo Kier (whose mother was born there and lived through the early years of Nazi occupation) narrating contextual information provided by the director. Through this approach, Suchsland offers up common themes, motifs, and styles that kept cropping up through the years. Most German films produced in this era were chipper, but forced; shoving an "everything is great" mentality down the throats of viewers. Of the over one thousand films produced in Germany between 1933 and 1945, more than half were comedies or musicals designed to boost spirits. There was only one sci-fi picture made, and that was an unabashed knock-off of ex-pat Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. It was a star driven system that pulled in actors from all across Europe to forward Goebbels' cinematic agenda. There was an unironic, phony sense of nationalism that permeated every frame, and despite the often unwarranted sunny outlook, German cinema at the time was constantly preoccupied with death, particularly through characters who nobly sacrificed their lives for the motherland. There was a distinct love of certain visual aesthetics: camera wipes, juxtaposition of militaristic images, monumental

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production design, intricate choreography, stirring montages, and plenty of fades. The men were usually stocky, hearty souls, and the women were often depicted as naughty blondes.



Some of the films profiled are vile pieces of work that outright advocate for the murder of Jews, the infirm, or the mentally ill. Some, like *Triumph of the Will* (which remains widely studied in film schools for a number of reasons), are documentaries that are so rigidly staged and mounted that they're more akin to rock concerts than serious scholarship. Some films would go on to be banned during the era for being subtly or ambiguously subversive. Some films are an outright cry for help coming from the people who made them. And late German cinema from the Nazi era offers as much of a glimpse into the collapse of an empire as the earlier works showcased how Hitler and his ilk rose to power.

*Hitler's Hollywood* is a rather straightforward cinema studies lesson. If you're not willing to engage with the clips and narration employed by Suchsland, there won't be much else for you here. There won't be many anecdotes because the people who made most of the films profiled in *Hitler's Hollywood* are either long since dead or they definitely aren't going to talk about what kind of roles they played. And outside of a scant few external voices (mostly readings from Susan Sontag and Hanna Arendt), the only true critical voice and perspective is the one being provided by Suchsland to Kier.

All Suchsland can offer is pure analysis and examination of the cinema from the era, most of which viewers will likely never be able to glimpse again outside of this documentary. And as a work of scholarship, it's as good as a single feature film on the subject could possibly be. A true, undiluted analysis of German World War II era cinema could fill volumes and miniseries, but as an academic distillation of what movies and movie going was like at the time, *Hitler's Hollywood* does a fine job.

It's also hard to not read into the margins of Suchsland's work given the current state of world affairs. A lot of the signifiers that Germany was sliding towards totalitarianism could be seen in the earlier films from the period. The writing was on the wall, but few took notice until it was too late to do anything about it. By that point, cinema wasn't run by individuals with dreams and ideas, but by a single, government run company who vetted everything and put down their authorial stamp on anything due to be released. At times, *Hitler's Hollywood* plays like a checklist of potential cinematic warning signs. In that respect, Suchsland's work is downright spooky, but it's predominantly meant to be read as a look at how thinly veiled propaganda removes all substance from motion pictures and leave no room for critical theory. It might be unnecessarily dry at times, but there are few films that could give a greater appreciation for film studies and criticism than *Hitler's Hollywood*.

***Hitler's Hollywood* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, July 20, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/034717/review-hitlers-hollywood/>

## Review: Generation Wealth doesn't value your hard-earned time

KATE TAYLOR

PUBLISHED JULY 26, 2018



Generation Wealth, Lauren Greenfield's titillating survey of America's grossest obsessions, only flirts with economic and social context.

### ELEVATION

- Generation Wealth
- Written and directed by: Lauren Greenfield
- Classification: 14A; 106 minutes

### RATING

RATING ★ ★ ☆ ☆

In her new film *Generation Wealth*, photographer and documentarian Lauren Greenfield interviews a critic of capitalism who compares the U.S. to ancient Rome, but warns that this empire will take the world down with it when it falls. If there's hard evidence for that apocalyptic view of American geopolitics, this film might have included more of it.

Greenfield's titillating survey of America's grossest obsessions, from plastic surgery to porn, only flirts with economic and social context, mainly limiting itself to observation and personalization. Greenfield tells us she charts the extremes to understand the mainstream, but glimpses of an explanation for the insanities and obscenities depicted in *Generation Wealth* are frustratingly few.

Greenfield began her career as a still photographer, initially shooting the privileged teenagers who she grew up with in L.A., but is now probably best-known for her last, shocking film, *The Queen of Versailles*, about a couple building the biggest house in America. The queen herself (who reappears in *Generation Wealth*) is



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Jacqueline Siegel, the trophy wife of a time-share billionaire whose fortunes collapsed in the 2008 real estate crash. Following that film's exposé of the bloat and eventual implosion of the American dream, this new film is a personal project and a career retrospective for Greenfield after she recognized that all of her work deals with wealth in some form.

Here, she returns to those pampered and posturing L.A. teens to find a few unrepentant jerks, but also many older and wiser people leading more balanced lives. On the other hand, another subject, a bus driver who had her entire body made over by a plastic surgeon in Brazil, is now broke and living in her car while her parents take care of her children.

Chris Hedges, a journalist, clergyman and that apocalyptic critic of capitalism, suggests America's pursuit of extreme wealth dates to the 1970s and the decision to drop the gold standard, thereby enshrining a psychology of living on debt unanchored to real assets. Television exacerbated the problem because, as several observers remark, people no longer keep up with the Joneses but with the Kardashians.

Another surprisingly reflective voice is that of Florian Homm, the fugitive investment banker who eventually served a jail sentence for fraud in the U.S. and now lives in Germany. He offers his own life story as an object lesson in what money can't buy: on holiday in a French port and surrounded by luxury yachts for sale, he told his wife to take her pick, but all she wanted was that he turn off his phone so for once they could have a quiet dinner.

Still, his American son and the son's girlfriend, also interviewed here, wonder if Homm is repentant or merely regretful. Many of Greenfield's subjects simply replace one pathology with another. One Wall Street workaholic, a woman who Greenfield first discovered because she spent more on personal care than anyone else the filmmaker interviewed for a film about body image, has cut back on her 100-hour work-weeks. Now she is making some time to raise a child after an equally manic quest to get pregnant in middle age.

The theme of working mothers runs throughout *Generation Wealth* as Greenfield considers both her mother's absence from her childhood and her own repeated separations from her young children as her camera took her around the world. She may not wish to appear judgmental of her subjects' obsessions while letting herself off the hook, but in both generations of the Greenfield family committed fathers seem to have filled in any gaps. The filmmaker's anxiety on this score feels more like a tangent than a strong motivation for her studies of wealth: the big social picture, rather than the small personal one, would have done much to deepen her film.

In the end, everybody knows what is wrong here and how to fix it. A sympathetic Icelandic fisherman explains how the hot banking job that he took during the boom evaporated overnight. Today, he's happily back on his boat.

*Generation Wealth* opens July 27 in Toronto and Vancouver



# African Docs to Global Audiences

## FilmMart carves out space for local voices

By CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS

July 28, 2018



CREDIT: ZAHRA SIDDIQUI

DURBAN — With a global debate calling for greater diversity and representation onscreen, and growing demand for documentaries across borders and platforms, the organizers of the 9th Durban FilmMart (DFM) made a concerted effort this year to add African voices to the conversation.

“For Africa, documentary filmmaking is such an important space, in terms of developing content and really understanding how to tell stories to audiences through cinema,” said Toni Monty, head of the Durban Film Office and the DFM.

She added: “We really want to increase that focus and create a bigger space for documentaries in Durban. We inched forward on that this year, with the intention of really building that in the future.”

Eight documentaries were among the 16 African projects in development taking part in this year’s finance forum at the DFM. Before pitching to an audience of leading broadcasters, financiers, funding bodies, and other potential investors, the filmmakers took part in an intensive mentorship process led by veteran South African documentarians Don Edkins and Xoliswa Sithole; Joost Daamen, from the Int’l. Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA); and Elizabeth Radshaw, Olena Decock, Angela Tucker, Kristi Jacobson, and Ricardo Acosta, from the Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group.

The process began six weeks before the DFM, as Edkins and Sithole – often working over patchy Skype connections across the continent – helped guide the filmmakers through the key elements of their Durban pitches. Edkins said the goal was to focus on both the visuals of the pitch, in the form of a teaser or trailer, as well as its narrative arc.

“The process is really interesting because it provides for real dialogue around the film,” he said. “We discuss the story, how they see it in cinematic terms, why they are making the film, audiences, and how to finance it. We view the teaser or trailer for the film and discuss that.”

In Durban, an intensive two-day mentorship took place.

“For some teams, this is the first time they have pitched publicly, so it was important to provide guidance on key elements of a documentary pitch,” Decock and Radshaw explained by email. “You want to outright address creative and production questions in the pitch, but leave enough of a teaser to secure a follow-up meeting with decision-makers. Most importantly, they address key film story questions and position the film for funders and audiences.”

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"I find a real sense of forward movement during the mentoring process," said Edkins. "Some of the filmmakers are still busy shooting research material and finding new elements for their story, and more visual material which has to be cut into the teaser. It's an opportunity for open discussion."

Fine-tuning a pitch ahead of the DFM isn't just a way to land crucial sources of financing.

"Articulating your story for funders is essentially articulating it for your audience," said Decock and Radshaw. "Early on in the documentary filmmaking process, it's important to understand who would be most interested in your film. Not everyone will get a chance to see your documentary, so you want to ensure you reach those who have the appetite for it."

"The African documentary landscape has been making real strides in recent years," said Nataleah Hunter-Young, who's worked on programming at the Toronto Int'l. Film Festival and Hot Docs, and curated the doc program of the Durban Intl. Film Festival this year. "I think that is directly linked to increased resourcing and development, both on a national infrastructure level, and in terms of investments in the development of filmmakers, specifically. Continentally-based organizations like DocuBox, in Kenya, STEPS, in South Africa, and the Ouaga Film Lab, in Burkina Faso, to name a few, have specifically sought to support African documentarians in telling authentic stories in new and challenging ways through mentorship, funding, and skills development."

She added, "A number of major international festivals have also demonstrated their commitments to supporting African filmmakers through investing dollars, time, and resources into emerging artists."

Among the steady supporters who again had a strong presence at this year's DFM were the Berlinale, the Int'l. Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, the Intl. Film Festival Rotterdam, and the Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group, whose documentary fund, which is currently accepting online submissions, provides development funds to approximately 4-10 African projects each year, and has awarded funding to 53 projects from 19 countries.

"Despite all of this, more initiatives are needed," Hunter-Young continued. "Some of that is currently being built on the local and continental level, but there is still room for more international partners and a generally stronger international commitment. I think it's safe to say that we're also starting to see a push from African filmmakers themselves to document their stories without necessarily needing to rely on European or North American dollars."

Hunter-Young continued: "I anticipate we'll be seeing many more intra-continental co-productions in the years to come, including North-Sub-Saharan partnerships, which is long overdue!"

"What is really necessary is to access finance from different sources to make the film, and have professional support available where it is needed. And have distribution platforms to reach audiences," added Edkins.

For African filmmakers, there's perhaps never been a better time to find those viewers.

"I think international audiences have woken up to the fact that they've been fed a lot of lies about the continent through film and television – something that the documentary genre can certainly take a lot of credit for – and I am still hearing filmmakers and funders talking about how ready they are to move away from films commissioned by NGOs, or made by non-African filmmakers with little to no investment in the communities they're portraying," said Hunter-Young.

"That said, I believe that this awakening amongst audiences has led to a hunger for African stories, told by African people, in ways that ideally no longer have to conform to the traditional genre tropes," she added. "The challenge, I think, is more with supply than it is with demand. In a city like Toronto – one of the most multicultural cities in the world – demand for African stories is never short. We programmers know the demand is there, so it's our job to fill it and ensure audiences are aware of it."

*Pictured: Nataleah Hunter-Young*

<https://variety.com/2018/film/festivals/durban-push-bring-african-docs-global-audiences-1202889100/>

## Review: Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood is a fascinating and poignant chronicle of sexual politics

NATHALIE ATKINSON

SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PUBLISHED AUGUST 2, 2018UPDATED 55 MINUTES AGO

- Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood
- Directed by: Matt Tyrnauer
- Classification: 18A; 98 minutes

### RATING



At the heart of Matt Tyrnauer's new documentary is Scotty Bowers himself.

Thanks to his bestselling 2012 memoir, *Full Service*, Scotty Bowers has become an unlikely LGBTQ folk hero.

His book and now this documentary have been billed as exposés, but whether you believe most or even half the salacious anecdotes is almost beside the point. At the heart of Matt Tyrnauer's doc is Bowers himself, now 95 and refreshingly free of sexual hang-ups or guilt as he shuffles around making repairs to his Hollywood Hills home. And what Tyrnauer (*Valentino: The Last Emperor*, *Citizen Jane*) offers is an anthropology of the sub rosa social life made necessary by a repressive Hollywood studio system.

Arriving in 1946 Los Angeles, Bowers was a handsome young former Marine from Illinois who soon became the lover and sex fixer to many of Hollywood's biggest names. He was pumping gas on Hollywood Boulevard near the old Warner Bros. lot and developed the side hustle after an assignation (and a \$20 tip) from customer Walter Pidgeon. Forty years running a sexual matchmaking service followed, but the documentary isn't about proving the stories – although for good measure, Tyrnauer uncovers a few fellow former hustlers, clients and bald-faced friends (such as the late gossip columnist Liz Smith) to corroborate and offer additional perspective on the era.

Hollywood Babylon author William Mann and filmmaker Peter Bart also drop in, as does thespian Stephen Fry (who calls Bowers "pre-gay"). Is Scotty's frank oral history about the likes of Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, Cary Grant and Bette Davis dishy? Absolutely, baby. And the colourful R-rated memories of the stars are juxtaposed with entertaining, well-chosen clips from their films (Grant's gay quip from *Bringing Up Baby* comes up, naturally).

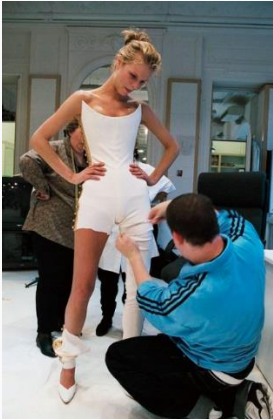
But the film is also a chronicle of the sexual politics of the era – and the subsequent systematic erasure of LGBTQ history (under the guise of privacy and not "spoiling" the illusion) by the juggernaut industry that shaped our culture. That perspective on the proclivities makes Scotty as fascinating as it is poignant.

*Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood* opens Aug. 3 in Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/reviews/article-review-scotty-and-the-secret-history-of-hollywood-is-a-fascinating/>

## McQueen documentary keeps focus on fashion, not just its designer

By **MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN**The Washington Post  
Wed., Aug. 1, 2018



- Designer Alexander McQueen tends to a model's garment in the documentary *McQueen*. (1996-98 ACCUSOFT INC., ALL RIGHT / ANN RAY PHOTO)

There are two Alexander McQueens in *McQueen*, the fascinating documentary portrait of the acclaimed fashion designer who committed suicide in 2010 at the age of 40.

One is the eternally boyish McQueen we see onscreen, in both archival footage of media interviews and behind-the-scenes glimpses of his creative process. That McQueen — “Lee,” as this product of London’s East End was called by those who knew him, using his first name and not the somewhat grander middle one he adopted for his clothing brand — resembles a pudgy child prodigy: brilliant, prone to button-pushing but pleasantly down-to-earth, especially when talking about his meteoric rise to the heights of haute couture. That softness and sweetness remains, even when, late in the film, he appears much thinner and more brooding, the result of drugs and a gathering darkness.

But a second McQueen, one given to nasty outbursts toward his co-workers and occasional personal vendettas when he felt betrayed, is only spoken of in interviews with his friends, muses, mentors and creative colleagues, and never emerges on camera. If there was a devil hiding inside McQueen — and it is not hard to imagine that there was, given his daring and controversial designs, which infamously evoked violence and rape in early shows — it remains hidden from our view. Oblique discussion of the sexual abuse McQueen suffered as a child at the hands of his brother-in-law shed some light on his demons.

What does come under the spotlight are the clothes.

Just as the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 2011 exhibition *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* focused on the oxymoronic nature of McQueen’s art — simultaneously punky and polished, nose-thumbing and deeply thoughtful — the film by Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui lavishes attention where it belongs: on the wearable, at times almost sculptural objects created by McQueen in his short 18-year career, first for his own namesake line and later for the house of Givenchy.

The fashion shows we see are risqué, angst-y, intense and provocative, even questioning the nature of beauty. Robotic arms shoot spray-paint on the white dress (and body) of a twirling model in one. In another, set on a

## Toronto Star – August 1, 2018 (2 of 2)

stage that turned the catwalk into a mock-up of a padded asylum, the show culminates in a finale featuring a heavy-set, naked model inspired by photographer Joel-Peter Witkin's *Sanitarium*.

McQueen, you see, wasn't interested in pretty things. Or, rather, as *McQueen* makes clear, he wasn't only interested in pretty things.

This documentary is just the latest in a recent spate of films about fashion-world iconoclasts: *The Gospel According to André* about André Leon Talley; *Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist*, about Vivienne Westwood; and *Love, Cecil* about Cecil Beaton. More than these other films, *McQueen* makes the case that its subject was an artist whose clay was clothing. It also, despite giving short shrift to psychoanalysis, reminds us that everything you might want to know about the artist can be found in the art.

As McQueen himself puts it, directing our attention to where it matters, "If you want to know me, just look at my work."

### McQueen

Documentary directed by Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Cinema. 111 minutes. **14A**

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/07/31/mcqueen-documentary-keeps-focus-on-fashion-not-just-its-designer.html>



## Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood's racy tales of the stars are delicious — and credible

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#) Entertainment Reporter  
Thu., Aug. 2, 2018

### Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood

Documentary starring Scotty Bowers. Directed by Matt Tyrnauer. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 87 minutes. **18A**

Who knew that history could be such titillating fun?

Because make no mistake, *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood* and the book, *Full Service*, that inspired it deserve to be treated at least semi-seriously in terms of the era they describe.

Scotty Bowers, the engaging and surprisingly spry nonagenarian (he still climbs up on roofs) and retired procurer to the stars, has certainly heard from plenty of outraged critics — including from some standing in line to buy his book — about how he has maligned the departed or, worse, destroyed their preciously constructed images of Hollywood heroes past.

Filmmaker Matt Tyrnauer gives us plenty of Scotty, with the film opening at a 90th-birthday celebration — with an X-rated cake — and he's a fascinating fellow, seamlessly bisexual, legendarily discreet and mercilessly free of the guilt that most people in his profession and of his period would be saddled with.

Tyrnauer uses lots of archival film footage, old photos and interviews with some of Scotty's oldest cohorts in sin to lay out the story of a young Marine who, post-Second World War, found himself pumping gas at a Hollywood gas station and from there ended up developing a lucrative sideline that sustained him through subsequent decades.

The revelations of the secret sex lives of the likes of former housemates Cary Grant and Randolph Scott, Charles Laughton, Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, composer Cole Porter and director George Cukor — and others — are certainly salacious and eyebrow-raising. But Tyrnauer does a fine job of sketching out the strict societal and moral codes of the time, when it would have meant instant career suicide for a star to be caught doing anything other than the missionary position with a lawfully wedded spouse.

(You can also add the Duke and Duchess of Windsor to the list of closet sexual adventurers and Bowers tells a very amusing tale about the assistance he provided famed sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, who had "heard of" him long before they met.)



Scotty Bowers, centre, in his prime as seen in *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*. (HOT DOCS CINEMA)

Scotty Bowers, centre, in his prime as seen in *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*. (HOT DOCS CINEMA)

Tyrnauer, perhaps in an effort to get the audience to see and know the real Bowers — and to believe what he's saying — spends probably a bit too much time exploring his life in the present, including a recent propensity for hoarding.

Still, the film explores a fascinating period in history through the eyes of a likeable and credible observer and participant, making it a deliciously enjoyable and occasionally naughty cinematic adventure.

## How to design an Alexander McQueen documentary

NATHALIE ATKINSON

SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PUBLISHED AUGUST 2, 2018UPDATED AUGUST 3, 2018



Co-directors Ian Bonhôte, left, and Peter Ettedgui pose for a photo, as they promote their film *McQueen* in Toronto on April 27, 2018.

CHRIS YOUNG/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

In the 15-month process of making the new documentary *McQueen*, one of the last scenes locked in was Super 8 footage of the fashion designer Alexander McQueen and his dogs below a majestically gnarled 400-year-old elm tree on the grounds of his country cottage. The pastoral scene dissolves into an image from McQueen's macabre catwalk show, but not before audiences see a fleeting glimpse of one of the dogs in the foreground, crouching to take a crap.

It is the perfect, in-your-face detail that the movie's provocateur subject would appreciate.

McQueen was the renegade anti-establishment son of an East London cabbie who rose to head the storied French house of Givenchy at 27. He parlayed that into funding his namesake global brand, before taking his life in 2010 when he was 40.

In light of the posthumous and record-smashing museum retrospective *Savage Beauty*, McQueen has been one of the most anticipated documentaries, fashion or otherwise, of the year. Throughout the film, co-directed by Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui (*Listen to Me Marlon*), McQueen and his dark wit feel spectrally present.

Some crucial parts of the film only came together at the last moment, such as the footage with Fashion Television's Jeanne Beker. "It's what we called 'the golden interview,'" Ettedgui says in Toronto on the eve of the movie's premiere at Hot Docs, "where he talks very candidly about the fact that it's lonely for him at the top, as it were. He's laughing, but you can see in his eyes that the responsibility is quite overwhelming for him. When we looked at that in our little computers, the hairs on the back of our neck stood up."

In fact, there were many 11th-hour additions. "Stuff would come in," Ettedgui adds, "and we'd have to rip the material up to re-edit it and bring that material back in. That happened constantly."

From what the directors were told, "that's a very McQueen way of working. ... On the day of the show McQueen would say, 'No, I don't like that,' and he would get the scissors out." (That is echoed in the film when head of

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Givenchy tailoring staff, Catherine de Londres, remembers being apprehensive any time he got out the scissors in the atelier.)

Some of McQueen retreads the necessary biographical tidbits – how stylist-mentor Isabella Blow bought McQueen's school graduation collection, and suggested Lee Alexander McQueen use his middle name to sound more posh (although to family and friends he was still known as Lee); their later growing estrangement; her eventual suicide. And there's the apocryphal tale of McQueen sewing profanity into the lining of a jacket he tailored for Prince Charles. Yet sifting through misspelled and mislabelled B-roll of more than 175 different archive sources and tracking down rare personal home movies yielded results for Ettedgui and Bonhôte. Structured in five parts, which use key fashion shows as turning points in the designer's artistic evolution, McQueen is a powerful and illuminating portrait precisely because of the pair's inventive archival footage collage, with old interviews and photographs as well as original new interviews all set to a stately orchestral score by Michael Nyman (The Piano).

A sublime technician of silhouette, McQueen explored dark and deeply autobiographical themes in his shows. He often said, "If you want to know me, look at my work." So another breakthrough came when Ann Ray, one of McQueen's preferred photographers to whom he gave full access, agreed to let the documentarians use her archive (more than 35,000 images taken over the course of 13 years). "Although it's photographic and not in motion, it gives you such a strong impression of McQueen at work," says Ettedgui.

As much as possible, the directors say, they wanted the designer himself to narrate the film, which sounds obvious but means that information and details supplied by contributors are either led by or punctuated with the designer's own words. Their intentions helped secure the participation of close collaborators like former assistant Sebastian Pons and members of the McQueen family, including his sister Janet and nephew Gary James McQueen, a textile artist who worked for his uncle.

In much of the archival footage, we see Sarah Burton – the one-time intern who is now head designer of the continuing Alexander McQueen brand, owned by Gucci Group – working literally at the designer's elbow, wordlessly and perfectly in sync. But that's the extent of her presence in the documentary; she declined to participate. "I think Sarah in particular has kept a very dignified silence around Lee," Ettedgui says. "There's a natural concern, because there's been quite a lot of sensationalist stuff in the tabloids and books, they don't want to attach themselves to that and get worried that their words are going to be manipulated or misconstrued."

Following the death of the fashion designer in 2010, there has been a musical, and biographies that run the gamut from lurid to reverential. In her book *Gods and Kings*, journalist Dana Thomas talks of McQueen's eating habits, sexual liaisons and proclivities — Burton, for example, was forewarned that her duties might include washing McQueen's sex toys. But while touching on the designer's depression and drug abuse where they affected his work, McQueen steers clear of the tabloid fodder to focus on the creativity and commerce.

The movie also covers the changing business in the celebrity-heavy 1990s and industrialization of fashion during the rise of conglomerates like LVMH, Givenchy's parent company. "That's very much a part of it," Ettedgui explains, "there's an element – I think Detmar Blow [widower of Isabella Blow] called it 'the Faustian pact' – that when you got in bed with Givenchy and LVMH and so on, life was going to change. There's a certain inevitability to that."

Thomas's book and the filmmakers' conversations with her gave them crucial insight into that: "Without making it an academic treatise we thought it was very important to try and have some of that impression. Because really McQueen – and [fellow LVMH designer] John Galliano – really did suffer a great deal."

But the pair also think it's important not to look at McQueen as a victim of the fashion system.

"He wanted it," Ettedgui says. "He knew exactly what he could get out of Givenchy so he was very responsible for that. And another thing is that as the pressure came bearing down and he went to Gucci Group, no matter what pressure was coming on the outside, the biggest pressure was coming from McQueen himself."

McQueen opens Aug. 3 in Toronto before expanding to other Canadian cities.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-how-to-design-an-alexander-mcqueen-documentary/>

## CBC, Metro Morning – August 1, 2018

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### Metro Morning with Matt Galloway



07:07

### Documentary showing on bike culture in cities

Aug 1, 2018

Cyclists and drivers sometimes feel like enemies in this city. But not only in Toronto. A documentary exploring those tensions in cities around the world airs tonight at the Hot Docs Cinema. But it also looks at cycling as a tool for urban change. We talk to a cycling advocate about "Bikes vs. Cars".

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/shows/metro-morning/segment/15562429>



## This week in Toronto: a hip-hop celebration, unhinged beach romance and more

Sun., Aug. 5, 2018

### MONDAY

#### Better Call Saul

**Watch this if:** You enjoy a well-told tale, even when you already know the ending.

This prequel doesn't get the love of its predecessor, *Breaking Bad*, but viewers are rewarded with the same careful attention to detail from creators Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould, and excellent acting from an ensemble led by Bob Odenkirk and Jonathan Banks. As Season 4 begins, characters including the inimitable Gus Fring (Giancarlo Esposito) are dealing with the death of one major character and the hospitalization of another. Bonus watch: new series *Lodge 49* follows at 10 p.m. with Wyatt Russell, the son of Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn, as an aimless, homeless, jobless former surfer who begins to find redemption when he stumbles on the fraternal order of the title. (AMC at 9)

—Debra Yeo

#### Olivia Chaney

**Watch this because:** She's got a voice, a sensibility and a growing songbook that'll give you chills.

Chaney's an English multi-instrumentalist who has been busy: last year, her extraordinary voice breathed new trad life into the Decemberists via their *Offa Rex* collab, and she also worked with the Kronos Quartet. Now she comes into this T.O. debut off her second solo album, *Shelter*, a gorgeous piece of work — she's a versatile, moving performer who in this kind of setting channels the ghosts of Britfolk stalwarts past while remaining very much an artist of 2018, seeking refuge while, in her words, "the demons do persist." Kate Boothman, who has been showcasing her latest *I Am An Animal* around town, gets the opening call sans bandmates and figures to set the stage well. (Drake Underground, 1150 Queen St. W., doors 8 p.m.)

—Chris Young

### TUESDAY

#### Bachelor in Paradise

**Watch this if:** You need an antidote to the formulaic earnestness of *The Bachelorette*.

Yes, this *Bachelorette* season turned out to be more of a slog than we were expecting, but ABC is rewarding fans who stick it out for Monday's finale (8 p.m. on City) with the premiere one night later of what looks to be an unhinged fifth [season](#) of this guilty pleasure spinoff. The cast looks like a *Bachelor/Bachelorette* dream team; we know there'll be at least one engagement on the beach, between franchise stalwarts Ashley Iaconetti and Jared Haibon; and there's even Canadian content in the form of erstwhile *Bachelorette Canada* winner Kevin Wendt. (ABC at 8 p.m., also City Wednesday at 8 p.m.)

—DY

### Shakira

**Watch this for:** Infectious global pop in a shiny, hip-shaking package.

It's been seven years since the Colombian singer-songwriter and dancer has toured the globe and much has changed for her since, including her two young children travelling with her for part of the way. And while she's talking about scaling back some, her slick and tightly produced Latin pop can still cross borders, though she remains a far bigger star in Europe and Central and South America. This El Dorado tour, named after her Grammy-winning album of last year, might be a bit of an acid test for Toronto, which she didn't include on that 2010-11 Oral Fixation tour. There'll be some catching up and no doubt some counting up, too. (Scotiabank Arena, 40 Bay St., doors 7:30 p.m.)

—CY

### THURSDAY

#### SummerWorks Performance Festival

**Watch this if:** You want an experimental August.

Sometimes you need to shake things up, and the SummerWorks Performance Festival, which starts Thursday, is doing so in its 2018 edition. Typically known for its various program streams from theatre to dance to musical works in concert to live art to highly conceptualized concerts, this year SummerWorks is funnelling that same artistic diversity into two streams: SummerWorks Presentations, with fully developed works, and SummerWorks Lab, which features works in progress and new experiments. Within those 32 productions across both streams, there are some big names in theatre, music, poetry and performance. (Aug. 9-19, Multiple venues, [summerworks.ca](http://summerworks.ca))

—Carly Maga

### Mamma Mia!

**Watch this if:** You can't resist it.

Listen, if you're the type of person who can't resist Cher's vibrato and Christine Baranski's high kicks in *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* (the sequel/prequel to *Mamma Mia!* no one asked for), then you

already know the blockbuster musical that inspired these filmed offshoots is returning to Toronto after it received its North American premiere here in 2000 (and ran for five years afterwards). So strap on those bell bottoms and disco dance to the opening night of a musical that truly kicked off the jukebox trend. (Aug. 9-19, Ed Mirvish Theatre, 244 Victoria St.)

—*CM*

## **Manifesto**

**Watch this if:** You want to be immersed in hip-hop culture.

The fact that the Manifesto Festival of Community & Culture, a festival celebrating all aspects of hip-hop culture, is returning to its original location in Nathan Phillips Square, with a backdrop of City Hall, adds another layer to an already vital lineup of multidisciplinary arts events. This year's edition, the festival's twelfth, includes highlights like Hatecopy at the festival's art show, Dom Pare and Nick Reynoldson in the comedy program, the two-year anniversary celebration of Revolutions Per Minute, and a headlining free concert with Chronixx and his backing band Zinc Fence Redemption and Charlotte Day Wilson on August 17. (Aug. 9-19, various venues, mnfst.com)

—*CM*

## **SATURDAY**

### **Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami**

**Watch this if:** You're kicking yourself for missing it before.

It came to TIFF last year and it came to the Bell Lightbox earlier this summer. Does the formidable Ms Jones — model, singer, songwriter and more — have to drag you to the cinema personally? The documentary about her, directed by Sophie Fiennes, has now circled over to the Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema for a special Saturday-night show, fitting for the creator of an irresistible dance anthem like "Pull Up to the Bumper." Linda Barnard's review from TIFF says the rest: "Fiennes provides a meandering observation of the woman behind the glamazon, disco diva and full-throated and furious singer/performance artist in this unstructured doc. Fans will revel in stunning concert performances, from 'Nipple to the Bottle' to a deeply moving 'Amazing Grace.'" (Hot Docs Cinema. 506 Bloor St. W., 9:30 p.m.)

—*Garnet Fraser*

## SCOTTY AND THE SECRET HISTORY OF HOLLYWOOD: BISEXUAL SECRETS OF EVERYONE FROM TRACY & HEPBURN TO THE DUKE & DUCHESS

August 6, 2018

By Liam Lacey; Rating: B

Scotty Bowers, the lively subject of *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood* is a plain-spoken, unrepentant now 95-year-old scamp who - while working at a Hollywood Blvd. gas station - set up sex partners of both sexes for the elite in post-War Hollywood.

There are so many high-profile names here – Spencer Tracy, and Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, George Cukor, Charles Laughton, Bette Davis - that a viewer can easily come away with the impression that everyone in Hollywood led a double life, or at least was in on the secret.

The movie was inspired by Bowers' 2012 book, *Full Service*. Director Matt Tyrnauer tracks Bowers around as he drives to parties and book signings, and is at home with his wife Lois (who refuses to read his salacious memoir). We also see him as he visits the various bungalows he seems to have accumulated in his years as a hustler. One might use the word "pimp" to describe his living, though friends, journalists and talking heads (Stephen Fry is the most famous) reject the label: Scotty was just about making people happy.



Hey, it's a living: Ex-Marine Scotty Bowers dishes on his side-gig as a Hollywood hook-up artist

Moments of *Scotty* are popcorn-spitting funny, thanks to Bowers' eagerness to dish about anyone: The Duke and Duchess of Windsor?(Yes, and yes). Cole Porter? (In multiples). J. Edgar Hoover? (Yes, and in a dress). Dr. Alfred Kinsey? No, Dr. Kinsey just wanted to study him. "He'd heard about me before we met," explains Bowers.

As juicy a subject as Scotty Bower is, Tyrnauer's film, several years in the making, tends to meander. And the director's dogged attempts to figure out what makes Bower tick begin to test both his subjects' and the audience's patience.

We hear that an adult neighbor molested him when Bowers was a child, but he insists it was consensual. There's some evidence that he suffered post-traumatic stress disorder as a marine in WWII, but, he says he

## Original-Cin – August 6, 2018 (1 of 2)

had already been selling sex to a ring of priests in Chicago before he joined up. Is his compulsive hoarding an attempt to hold onto the past, or just something that aged people sometimes do? The probing eventually makes Bowers sad, as when he talks of his brother, who was killed in combat or his daughter, who died at 23 from consequences of an illegal abortion (a victim of sexual hypocrisy of the era).

More successful is Tyrnauer's clever repurposing of classic Hollywood film clips in ways that suggest the "secret history of Hollywood" was there in plain sight all along: Most film fans know the scene in *Bringing Up Baby* where Cary Grant, explaining why he's dressed in Katharine Hepburn's feather-trimmed robe, says "Because I just went GAY all of a sudden." But there's also the scene from *My Favorite Wife*, with Cary Grant ogling Randolph Scott's swim-suit clad body. Grant and Scott, who were lovers, lived together as "roommates." (Sometimes Scotty joined them in a threesome).

In one case, the example is unexpectedly poignant: We see Walter Pidgeon and Charles Laughton, two of Bowers' closeted clients, as senators whispering to each other in Otto Preminger's *Advise & Consent*, a 1962 drama about a politician who is blackmailed for a homosexual affair.

*Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*. Directed by Matt Tyrnauer. Based on the book "Full Service: My Adventures in Hollywood and the Secret Sex Lives of the Stars" by Scotty Bowers with Lionel Friedberg. With Scotty Bowers, Lois Bowers, Peter Bart and Stephen Fry. *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood* can be seen at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema until Wednesday, Aug. 8.



## Screening series of the week: Our Beautiful City

Curator Will Di Novi screens *The Human Scale* this week at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, part of a series of docs about city issues around the world

BY **NORMAN WILNER**

AUGUST 22, 2018



*Will Di Novi says the Our Beautiful City series offers perspectives on how we can meet civic challenges that face Toronto.*  
(Photo by Samuel Engelking)

Wonder why Toronto's repertory cinemas are putting up lovingly bespoke posters for movies you haven't thought about in forever? That's because big-screen revival series are back in a big way, offering audiences the chance to discover a buried treasure – or reconnect with an old favourite – with an enthusiastic crowd, a knowledgeable host and sometimes even a floor show.

Every week, we'll spotlight someone behind one of Toronto's specialty screening series – and let them pitch their latest event.

### THE PROGRAMMER

**Will Di Novi**, special programs curator at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. "When I'm not screening or programming documentaries, I'm taking long rambles up and down Bloor with my wife and one-year old daughter, and obsessing over the Raptors' next decisive season," he says. He's on Twitter at [@willdinovi](https://twitter.com/willdinovi).

### THE SERIES

**Our Beautiful City**, a series about city-building as it relates to the future of Toronto, at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema Tuesday (August 28) at 6:30 pm.

### WHAT'S SHOWING

Andreas Dalggaard's **The Human Scale**, a documentary about Danish city planner Jan Gehl, followed by a Q&A with Amanda O'Rourke, Executive Director of the Toronto-based nonprofit 8 80 Cities.

### WHY THIS SERIES?

"Our Beautiful City is a fun series in which we screen thought-provoking documentaries about city issues around the world and then bring in the city's leading thinkers to help us relate them back to the civic challenges and opportunities that face Toronto," explains Di Novi. "We've been proud to feature awesome guests like Jennifer Keesmaat, who brought her expertise as Chief Planner to the urban design doc *Urbanized*, and The

Globe and Mail's Alex Bozikovic, who gave us the inside scoop on Frank Gehry's Toronto architecture projects after a screening of Sydney Pollack's excellent *Sketches of Frank Gehry*. Our last event was a screening-and-discussion fundraiser focused on making Toronto safer for cyclists, and it featured a great conversation with Councillor Mike Layton and Cycle TO's Liz Sutherland after we showed the timely and urgent doc *Bikes vs. Cars*. The atmosphere was electric!"

### WHAT'S THE VIBE?

"The series is driven by a wonderful sense of community spirit and solidarity, with thoughtful people from all different backgrounds and walks of life coming together to enjoy good films and share perspectives on how we can meet the civic challenges that face Toronto," he says. "All the screenings feature intros and extended post-screening Q&As with expert guests who receive lots of smart questions from our audience. It's always really gratifying to see the conversations that start in the cinema continue into the lobby and out into the streets beyond."

### WHY THIS MOVIE?

"The Human Scale is a really beautiful and engaging global survey of the work of Danish city planner Jan Gehl and how his vision for more humane, intimate and healthy cities is being implemented in places as disparate as New York, Chongqing and Melbourne," says Di Novi. "With Toronto's population rapidly growing, and increasing concerns over its future as a livable city, this film should really resonate with Torontonians in 2018 and it'll set the table for a good conversation about what we can do to make sure our city's growth is sustainable and inclusive."

### WHAT'S NEXT?

"I'm very excited for our event on September 18th, which will be a 15th anniversary screening of Andrew Munger's **Campaign: The Making of the Candidate**," Di Novi says. "It's a riveting doc following David Miller during his unlikely, come-from-behind victory in the 2003 mayoral election. Miller will be joining us for a post-screening Q&A and it'll be fascinating to hear him revisit that decisive moment in our city's modern history. Regardless of who you support in this fall's mayoral election, this will be a great opportunity to reflect on the lessons of Toronto's recent past, the city's future priorities and above all the importance of going out and making your voice heard in local elections."

## Realscreen – September 13, 2018

### WCSFP '18: Filmmakers Ian Cheney, Lynette Wallworth join lineup

By **Daniele Alcinii**

September 13, 2018



Peabody Award-winning director Ian Cheney, Vice Media's Derek Mead and acclaimed Australian filmmaker Lynette Wallworth are among those on tap to speak at the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers '18.

The 26th annual edition of the Congress serves as a meeting ground for science, history and natural history content creators and executives to share, explore and reveal how advancements within their industries are communicated to the world.

Congress '18 will be held in Brisbane, Australia from Nov. 27-30.

New England-born filmmaker Cheney (pictured) is an Emmy-nominated (2013's *The City Dark*) and Peabody Award-winning documentarian. He co-created, co-produced and starred in the feature documentary [\*King Corn\*](#) (2007), which aired on PBS's doc strand 'Independent Lens' and was awarded a George Foster Peabody Award in 2009. His most recent film, 2018's *The Most Unknown*, was advised by world-renowned filmmaker Werner Herzog and [follows nine scientists](#) to extraordinary parts of the world to uncover unexpected answers to some of humanity's biggest questions, including how life began and what consciousness and time are.

Cheney will be joined at the event by Vice Media's Mead, who executive produced *The Most Unknown*, for a discussion about innovative approaches to narrative in documentary.

Wallworth will also join this year's event to speak on the topic of gender and respect for diverse peoples.

The Australian artist and filmmaker uses immersive environments, interactive technologies and narrative long-form film to reflect connections between people and the natural world. Two of Wallworth's past projects have exhibited as part of the Sundance Film Festival's "New Frontier" program: *Evolution of Fearlessness* and the full-dome feature *Coral: Rekindling Venus*.

Her 73-minute feature doc *Tender* was honored with an Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Award for best televised documentary in 2016 and was also nominated for a Grierson Award, recognizing innovative and exciting documentary films. In 2017, Wallworth took home a News & Documentary Emmy award for Outstanding New Approaches in Documentary Film for her virtual reality narrative *Collisions*. Her documentary short *Awavena* (2018) combines Indigenous story tellers with VR/mixed reality non-fiction to explore the way of life led by the Yawanawa, the Indigenous people of the Amazon.

<http://realscreen.com/2018/09/13/wcsfp-18-filmmakers-ian-cheney-lynette-wallworth-join-lineup/>

## What's the Deal With All the New Trump Documentaries?

By Chris Lee



Photo: Scott Olson/Getty Images

In a fiery campaign speech over the weekend, Barack Obama took aim at Donald Trump, accusing the 45th president (and, more broadly, the Republican Party) of fueling the “politics of fear and division.” Heading into prestige movie season, however, the commander-in-chief has managed to rally and unify at least one outside-the-Beltway constituency: documentary filmmakers.

A raft of new documentary features either chronicling the president's rise to power or the people who helped him get to the White House have been making the film festival rounds and generating fresh headlines on the way to their theatrical releases. Several of these movies are unabashedly partisan, with the directors' anguish and confusion over Trump's upset victory in the 2016 election baked into their narratives. And as perhaps befits any film chronicling a former reality-TV star whose Oval Office tenure has been characterized by almost nonstop chaos, several of the docs deliver a kind of histrionic viewing experience that's as over the top as their subject.

With so many Trump documentaries flooding the movie marketplace, it can be confusing to distinguish one from another. Here's a rundown of the growing list of Trumpumentaries:

### Active Measures (August 31)

Having premiered at Toronto's Hot Docs Film Festival in May, this rigorously researched, zealously informational documentary attempts to connect the dots between Trump and Russia — specifically, to illuminate how Vladimir Putin used propaganda and disinformation to manipulate the 2016 presidential election in an effort to further Kremlin foreign policy. Featuring talking-head interviews with a deep bench of former State Department and CIA officials, geopolitical leaders, academics, and politicians — Hillary Clinton and John McCain among them — *Active Measures* credibly establishes a pattern of collusion. Director Jack Bryan wisely chooses to follow the money, establishing a spiderweb of connections between Russian mobsters and oligarchs who invested heavily in Trump's real-estate holdings, propping up his failing businesses and pulling Trump into the Russian sphere of influence while laundering their ill-gotten cash. The film ultimately fails to find the smoking gun tying Trump to Russia — but onscreen, there's smoke aplenty.

### American Chaos (September 14)

In the months leading up to 2016's presidential election, self-described “political junkie” and lifelong Democrat James Stern became increasingly alarmed by Trump's galvanized base and set out on a journey across red-state America to better understand the people comprising the Trump wave. “The thing to do is actually to listen,” Stern says in the film. “Not to fight with them. Just take it in.” A movie of earnest intentions, it follows the director (who is better known as a producer of such movies as *Steve Jobs* and *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* and the TV series *Last Chance U*) as he travels to suburban Florida, the Arizona border near Mexico, the coal mines of West Virginia, and Cleveland for the GOP convention, interviewing fervid Trump supporters — nearly all of them elderly and white — about their motivations for supporting the Make America Great Again candidate. Unfolding more like a listening tour than some culture-war diagnostic, the Sony Pictures Classics–released doc is notable for its near total absence of hardball questions.

### **Fahrenheit 11/9 (September 21)**

A deliberate inversion of the title of firebrand documentarian Michael Moore's George W. Bush-bashing doc *Fahrenheit 9/11* — the highest-grossing documentary of all time — the new film is explicitly intended as a rallying cry for depressed progressives and insurgent Democrat politicians that sets out to answer the central conundrum surrounding Trump's election. As Moore asks in the film (which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival last week): "How the fuck did this happen?" Although *Fahrenheit 11/9* queasily recounts the infamous 2016 election night (and traffics a screwy theory that Trump was motivated to run for president as a side effect of discovering Gwen Stefani's salary on *The Voice* was larger than his on *The Apprentice*), the movie is not wall-to-wall Trump agita. The Oscar-winning director travels to his hometown of Flint, Michigan, to ambush Republican governor Rick Snyder, whose catastrophic directive to switch Flint's water supply to a lead- and bacteria-poisoned water source sickened thousands of residents. And as *Fahrenheit* wends toward its conclusion, the director lays out a pair of opposing ideas meant to motivate viewers into political action: that the government is even more sinister and corrupt than liberals dared fear (and the total destruction of democracy is nigh), and yet despite all the chaos, America stands poised for a progressive revolution.

### **American Dharma (TBD)**

Premiering out of competition at the Venice Film Festival last week, ahead of its North American premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, Academy Award-winning director Errol Morris's documentary about controversial former White House strategist Steve Bannon has been enveloped within a hive of controversy. Essentially an extended interview between Morris and the so-called architect of Trump's blindsiding electoral victory, the film touches upon Bannon's hard-edged nationalist ideas, the media, his favorite movies (a former film producer himself, Bannon singles out directors including Stanley Kubrick, Orson Welles, and John Ford for praise) as well as expounding on the most famous occupant of the West Wing. But some critics have put the film on blast for Morris's decision to not take a more confrontational approach — "it's a toothless bromance," *Variety* opined — effectively giving Bannon a new soapbox from which to broadcast his white nationalist worldview.

### **Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes (December 7)**

A disquieting deep dive into one of the most influential media moguls in history, this feature doc, which premiered recently in Toronto and will make its American debut at the New York Film Festival on October 3, shines a spotlight on the current moment in America's fractious political life. Ailes is the controversial Republican power broker who, over nearly half a century, helped stage manage Republican politicians from Richard Nixon to the tea party to Donald Trump — anger and fear-mongering at the core of his messaging. Founding Fox News with the backing of Rupert Murdoch, Ailes chucked out the rule book for television propriety and turned verbal bomb-throwing, agenda-driven opprobrium and toxic conservatism into must-see TV. And before the #MeToo movement achieved critical mass, the news mogul was among the first powerful men to be brought down by accusations of sexual misbehavior.

### **F\*\*\* Your Hair: The Latin-Owned Brewery That Dumped Trump (TBD)**

An as-yet-unfinished doc that is currently employing a Kickstarter campaign to fund its final post-production costs, *F\*\*\* Your Hair* chronicles the predicament of 5 Rabbit Cerveceria, a Latin-owned and -inspired brewery in Chicago that in 2015 had been producing a house beer for Trump International Hotel & Tower. But when the then-candidate made ugly public comments calling Mexican immigrants rapists and criminals, the brewery severed all ties with the Trump organization and withheld its kegs of Trump Golden Ale, leading to a minor media flap, with the Donald himself taking to television to castigate the brewery — but also (arguably) inspiring larger corporations such as Macy's, Amazon, and NBC to sever business relationships with Trump.

### **Our New President (TBD)**

Making its public debut as an opening-night selection at the Sundance Film Festival in January, this "collage film" arrived as the very embodiment of fake news, covering the 2016 American presidential election entirely through footage comprised of Russian state-sponsored propaganda, YouTube clips, and segments from Russia's government-operated puppet news TV channels. The focus is on Trump's political ascent: the candidate is deified as a Putin-style aristocrat-strongman leader while wild falsehood after wild falsehood — that Hillary Clinton murdered her political opponents and suffers "retardation," that the American government plotted to assassinate Trump on his Inauguration Day — is pumped into Russian public consciousness with Orwellian gusto.

[https://www.vulture.com/2018/09/whats-the-deal-with-all-the-new-trump-documentaries.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+nymag%2Fvulture+%28Vulture+-+nymag.com%27s+Entertainment+and+Culture+Blog%29](https://www.vulture.com/2018/09/whats-the-deal-with-all-the-new-trump-documentaries.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+nymag%2Fvulture+%28Vulture+-+nymag.com%27s+Entertainment+and+Culture+Blog%29)



## This Week in Toronto: Joan Baez, Bruno Mars and JFL42

By Toronto Star  
Sun., Sept. 16, 2018

### TUESDAY

#### Joan Baez



Bruno Mars brings his 24K Magic tour to Toronto's Scotiabank Arena next Saturday and Sunday. (AMY HARRIS / AMY HARRIS/INVISION/AP)

**Watch this for:** The most celebrated folk singer left standing in her final rodeo.

At age 77, it's last call for Joan Baez on a local stage, part of a farewell tour that will wind up next spring after a spin through Europe. She's got a lot of goodbyes to take care of, in other words, and though her instantly recognizable falsetto no longer extends to the upper reaches the spirit is evidently more than willing. Last March, for instance, had her releasing a new album, *Whistle Down the Wind*, her first studio work in a decade — she's not going gently into that good night game, and no doubt there will be a few fellow veterans of Mariposas gone by in the house who will share in this closing of circles. ([Roy Thomson Hall](#), 60 Simcoe St., 8 p.m.) —*Chris Young*

#### A Moveable Feast: Paris in the '20s

**Watch this if:** You want a Parisian salon here in Toronto.

Soulpepper Theatre is moving on from its challenging 2018 with the announcement of a new Executive Director, Emma Stenning, a couple of promising summer productions in *Orlando*, *Bed and Breakfast* and *Sisters*, and the return of an audience favourite concert—*A Moveable Feast: Paris in the '20s* created by director Frank Cox-O'Connell, writer Sarah Wilson, and arranger/musical director Mike Ross. It takes audiences back to the romanticized time of "The Lost Generation" in Paris (Hemingway, Picasso, Fitzgerald, Stein, Joyce, and the whole crew) with music, literature excerpts, and witticisms you'll be able to quote along with. Pair this with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre's *Gertrude and Alice*. (Until Sunday, [Young Centre for the Performing Arts](#), 50 Tank House Lane) —*CM*

### WEDNESDAY

#### Harlem Duet

**Watch this if:** You want a new-school *Othello*.

It has been nearly 20 years since Djanet Sears's *Harlem Duet* premiered, and it has since gone on to become a Canadian theatrical force. It's conceived as a riff on Shakespeare's *Othello*, set in Harlem and taking place throughout time: in 1860, in 1928, and in the present day, about a Black man leaving his Black wife for a white woman. Not only is it the perfect time to look at Sears' exploration of race, sex and gender again, but it follows Tarragon Theatre's interest in alternative takes on Shakespeare, such as last season's rock-and-roll-inspired *Hamlet*. (Until Oct. 28, [Tarragon Theatre](#), 30 Bridgman Ave.) —*CM*

### **Vanity Fair**

Becky Sharpe has always seemed one of the more unlikable heroines of classic English literature, but you'll find yourself rooting for her — and railing against the upper class snobs who try to keep her down — in this adaptation of the 1848 novel by William Makepeace Thackeray. This miniseries from ITV and Amazon Studios has everything you'd want from a period drama — sumptuous sets and costumes, lavish cinematography — but there's a modern sensibility in Becky's dogged determination to better her circumstances. English actress Olivia Cooke (*Bates Motel*) stars. (CBC at 9 p.m., also on the CBC TV app and at [cbc.ca/watch](#)) —*Debra Yeo*

### **THURSDAY**

#### **JFL42**

**Watch this if:** You want to go out, just for laughs.

Toronto's little sister of the Montreal comedy juggernaut Just For Laughs arrives again this week, bringing some big names in stand-up along with it (and film, and TV, and podcasts). There was a recent shakeup to the lineup with the loss of Nikki Glaser, leaving the headliner group with only one woman (but it's Wanda Sykes, so we'll take it) alongside Seth Meyers and Joe Rogan. But the 42 are where the real exciting talent is, like Maria Bamford, Dulcé Sloan, Margaret Cho, Chris Fleming, *Get Out*'s Lil Rel Howery, and more. (Until Sept. 29, [multiple venues](#)) —*Carly Maga*

### **Perfect Blue**

**Watch this if:** You've yet to join the cult of Japanese anime great Satoshi Kon.

A manga artist, animator and filmmaker who died of cancer at the too-young age of 46 in 2010, Satoshi Kon has become increasingly revered as a pivotal figure in the history of anime, as well as a major influence on directors outside the genre, including Christopher Nolan and Darren Aronofsky. The first of his four features, *Perfect Blue* is a wildly imaginative mind-bender about a pop idol who loses her grasp on reality when she's threatened by a mysterious stalker. The Revue's monthly anime series hosts a 20th-anniversary screening with prizes from The Beguiling. ([Revue Cinema](#), 400 Roncesvalles Ave., 6:45 p.m.) —*Jason Anderson*

### **FRIDAY**

#### **What Walaa Wants**

**Watch this if:** You want invaluable views of life in the Middle East.

The first of the fall film fests to arrive in the weeks after TIFF, the Toronto Palestine Film Festival has been a consistently strong showcase of Palestinian cinema and culture since its founding in 2008. A prizewinner at Hot Docs that's also a highlight of the TPFF's three-day slate of docs, features and shorts at the Lightbox, *What Walaa Wants* is Toronto director Christy Garland's compelling portrait of a headstrong girl who's determined to join the Palestinian Security Forces. Garland will talk more about the six years she devoted to Walaa and her story at a post-screening Q&A. ([TIFF Bell Lightbox](#), 350 King St. W., 8:45 p.m.) —JA

## SATURDAY

### Bruno Mars

**Watch this because:** No one plunders classic funk and soul better than Mars and his band.

This 24K Magic tour began nearly a year ago and is into its final couple of months of filling the world's biggest stadiums. Business as usual, then, for the Hawaii native, an all-round entertainer of rare ambition whose cheery, dynamic stage persona draws deeply on pop music legends (not for nothing is he being tipped for the lead in a proposed Prince biopic, and that's Michael Jackson's record he broke in selling out Aloha Stadium for the tour's final stop). He's also canny enough to bring along touring mates who are headline material on their own, Pharrell Williams and Ellie Goulding in support his last couple of times in here. Cardi B pulled out of this final leg to stay at home with her baby daughter, so it's Grammy winner Ciara who gets the call. (Scotiabank Arena, 40 Bay St., 8 p.m., and again on Sunday) —CY

## SUNDAY

### Anne With an E

The Season 2 opener of this Canadian Screen Awards Best Drama winner begins with the type of pure whimsy that made *Anne of Green Gables* a beloved book character so long ago. But creator Moira Walley-Beckett hasn't lost her edge. She continues to peel back the layers that reveal Anne (in a wonderful performance by Amybeth McNulty) in all her wounded humanity. And as the season opens, Anne and the people of Avonlea face genuine peril from the con men we met at the end of Season 1. (CBC at 7 pm, also on the CBC TV app and at [cbc.ca/watch](#)) —DY

## LeVar Burton, ESPN Headline Hot Docs Podcast Fest

Posted on September 18th, 2018 • [0 Comments](#)

[Embed from Getty Images](#)

By Pat Mullen

The Hot Docs Podcast Festival announced the line-up for its third annual edition of the audio extravaganza. The festival returns after a successful second year with a mix of live conversations from the leading voices in podcasting. The festival offers streams targeted for the general public along with industry conversations and “how to’s” with industry insiders.

The Live Podcast Line-up kicks off on Thursday, November 1st with an all-star roster of Canadian podcasters. Talents from shows such as *First Day Back*, *Nobody Cares (Except for Me)*, *Tai Asks Why*, *Personal Best*, and *Red Man Laughing* join hosts Matt Galloway and Lindsay Michael in a variety show style events celebrating the all-Canadian podcasting scene from coast to coast.

Other offerings in the live series include a reading by actor LeVar Burton, star of *Star Trek: Next Generation*, *Roots* and the children’s show *Reading Rainbow*. Burton brings his popular reading series to Toronto to perform a live page-turning event with musical accompaniment and a guest appearance by a figure from the local literary scene.

The fest spotlights LGBTQ stories in the giddy podcast *Nancy* as BFFs Tobin Low and Kathy Tu take the stage for one of their totally intimate conversations. Culture critics Bim Adewunmi and Nichole Perkins tackle the hottest bits of celebrity culture in *Thirst Aid Kit*, while Hot Docs lands a live recording of ESPN’s sensationally popular *30 for 30*, the podcast extension of the series that produced Oscar winner *OJ: Made in America*. *30 for 30* debuted at #1 on the iTunes charts last year. On the home front, Leah-Simone Bowen and Falen Johnson humorously confront the divide between Canada as we perceive it and Canada as it really is in the eye-opening/ear-opening podcast *The Secret Life of Canada*.

On the industry front, the festival features a notable roster of talents including Annalise Nielsen (*The Unconditional Podcast*), Vish Khanna (*Kreative Kontrol*), Tobin Low (*Nancy*), and the returns of Ryan McMahon (*Red Man Laughing*) and Jesse Brown (*CANADALAND*).

The Hot Docs Podcast Festival runs November 1-5. Visit the [Hot Docs website](#) for the complete line-up.

## LOVE, GILDA: HEARTFELT DOC ON LATE, BELOVED SNL ALUM HITS ALL THE RIGHT NOTES

September 20, 2018

By Kim Hughes, **Rating: A**

A runaway hit at last spring's Hot Docs festival, director Lisa D'Apolito's Love, Gilda gets a wider release and with it, a chance for a new generation to discover the extraordinary talents of Gilda Radner, original Saturday Night Live cast member and trailblazer in an era hardly noted for gender parity in comedy.



A young Gilda Radner and friend.

That Radner was immensely funny is not the revelation here. It's that she seemed like a genuinely sweet person, largely unaffected by fame, and stirred lasting devotion in contemporaries Chevy Chase, Laraine Newman, Paul Shaffer and Martin Short — who speak fondly and generously of her — while inspiring comparatively bright young things from Melissa McCarthy to Amy Poehler.

We know that because those latter two, along with a small cast of others, reverentially read from Radner's journals, bringing her words to life while adding context to her performance approach and style. There are audio tapes, too.

It's a rich trove, and one that serves D'Apolito's film well, especially as she explores the necessarily complex aspects of Radner's life: anorexia and gnawing self-doubt despite achieving great acclaim in her lifetime. The film also covers her affluent Detroit childhood, her early career days in Toronto, her marriage to actor Gene Wilder and, most poignantly, her battle against ovarian cancer which killed her, cruelly and quickly, at age 42.

Childhood photos, film clips, SNL reels (Emily Litella! Lisa Loopner! Roseanne Roseannadanna!) and other visual ephemera propels the narrative. It's hard to imagine anyone who enjoyed Radner's performances in their lifetime not finding much to love about Love, Gilda... even as our hearts break a little at what might have been had she lived longer.

Love, Gilda. Directed by Lisa D'Apolito. With Bill Hader, Amy Poehler, Maya Rudolph, Chevy Chase, Laraine Newman and Martin Short. Opens September 21 at Toronto's Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema as well as on iTunes and On Demand.



## Toronto Star – September 20, 2018

### Love, Gilda is named after what star wanted most

By [PETER HOWELL](#) Movie Critic  
Thu., Sept. 20, 2018

#### Love, Gilda



Gilda Radner in *Love, Gilda*. (COURTESY: THE ESTATE OF GILDA RA / VIA HOT DOCS)

*Documentary on the life, career and ambitions of Saturday Night Live funny lady Gilda Radner. Directed by Lisa D'Apolito. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 88 minutes. **STC***

Gilda Radner had a host of characters she performed on *Saturday Night Live*, the late-night TV show that made her famous.

As Lisa D'Apolito's documentary *Love, Gilda* shows, the funny lady also had varied responses to that fame, which both enraptured and repelled her.

Radner, who died from ovarian cancer in 1989 at the age of 42, grew up in Detroit thinking of herself as homely and fat (she had a lifelong struggle with eating disorders), yet secure in the knowledge that she could make people laugh with her many, often self-deprecating, characters — in her *SNL* years they included such popular creations as language-mangling senior Emily Litella and sassy Latina Roseanne Roseannadanna.

Her brief life included an Emmy win, a hit one-woman show on Broadway and a posthumous Grammy. She also starred in several Hollywood comedies. Yet at heart, Radner longed to be just accepted and adored as a regular person.

"My main priority is to be a girl," she writes in her abundant diary notes, revealed in *Love, Gilda*. "I never wanted to be anything else."

But her talent at making people laugh would insist on making her a star, right when she first grabbed public attention as part of the *Godspell* troupe in Toronto, where she would meet Martin Short, a future *SNL* player and briefly a romantic partner.

Radner was the first cast member hired by *SNL* producer Lorne Michaels for his counterculture TV show. She was arguably the most beloved member of The Not Ready For Prime Time Players during their five-year reign on *SNL* from 1975-80.

*Love, Gilda* credits her with being the first person to utter the word "bitch" on network TV without being censored, a tribute both to Radner and the popularity of her daffy Litella character, whom she based on her adored childhood nanny.

She's also apparently the first person to talk openly on network TV about having cancer, which she did on her friend Garry Shandling's show, a few months before her death. She managed to make fun of a very bad situation, also doing so in her autobiography *It's Always Something*, titled for a Roseanne Roseannadanna catch phrase.

"My biggest motivation has always been love," Radner wrote in another of her diary entries. The feeling comes through in *Love, Gilda*, prompting us to return it in kind.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/09/20/love-gilda-is-named-after-what-star-wanted-most.html>

## Review: Love, Gilda

[Andrew Parker](#) September 20, 2018 5:03 pm



### Love, Gilda

7.8 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Gilda Radner remains one of the most underrated and vital performers in the history of comedy, and Lisa D'Apolito's poignant and detailed documentary *Love, Gilda* expertly showcases why more people today should be talking about her contributions to popular culture. Drawing heavily from journals and recordings that Radner kept to document her own thoughts, fears, and ideas, *Love, Gilda* offers a side of the actress that very few were ever able to witness for themselves. It's as intimate as a motion picture memorializing a public figure often gets and appropriately reverential without deifying its subject. *Love, Gilda* is a biopic with the same intense amount of dignity, grace, and wit as its subject showed to the world around her. Long before she was essentially the first person – male or female – to be hired to the cast of *Saturday Night Live* (then just known as *NBC Saturday Night*), Gilda Radner was a nice girl from a loving, well-to-do family that split their time between Detroit and Miami Beach. She got the performing bug in high school, but put it all on hold to follow a sculptor that she was dating to Toronto. That trip north of the border ultimately changed Gilda's life forever, leading to high profile stage gigs and a spot among one of the most stacked casts of Second City players in history. She shone brightly as one of the featured female performers on one of the most iconic television shows ever created, but her personal life was always at odds with her more boisterous on screen persona. Gilda was a woman who loved with all her heart and thought with every inch of her mind, right up until her death from cancer in 1989.

Those familiar with Radner's posthumously published memoirs *It's Always Something* already know what an introspective and thoughtful writer the actress was, but D'Apolito's deep dive into Gilda's journals and tapes are illuminating in unexpected ways. Radner was always heralded as a pioneer who worked in a testosterone soaked industry, but *Love, Gilda* shows the frequently scared, conflicted, and insecure woman behind some of *SNL*'s most beloved characters. D'Apolito (delivering an assured and strong debut feature) makes it known early and often that Gilda was incapable of performing or improvising a sketch if it didn't feel authentic. She was a performer who took in everything around her for inspiration, and delighted in sharing her insights with audiences. Her performances were birthed from a desire for attention, but they were also constructed out of a need to share her thoughts with the world. She played with the joy and buoyancy of a child, but thought like a soulful academic.

## The Gate – September 20, 2018 (2 of 2)



Jack's o' lantern

There are plenty of former co-stars, producers, family members, and modern day admirers of Radner's trotted out throughout *Love, Gilda*, and they're all honoured and touched to be let into some of the more intimate aspects of the comedienne's life. While the interviews conducted by D'Apolito certainly provide plenty of necessary context, it's impossible to not be moved by Gilda's own eloquently written words; thoughts that she probably never expected to be shared with the outside world.

Whether she's speaking about her struggles with eating disorders, her grief over losing her father, her fear of burning out during the course of *Saturday Night Live*, her love of husband Gene Wilder after floating from boyfriend to boyfriend, or her distaste for fame, Radner was capable of fleshing out her true feelings as expertly as she was creating a character. If her performances were a way of sharing her insights with outsiders, her journals, recordings, and home movies were equally well thought out and calibrated bits of catharsis. Two quotes from *Love, Gilda* will forever stick out in my mind: "I am a rising star with heavy chains attaching me to a hard ground" and "My picture's in the newspaper, but my body's in the garbage." Those are the kinds of statements that any writer would kill to put into print, and Radner kept them to herself. If that's not a sign of true talent, I don't know what is.

*Love, Gilda* doesn't leave any mystery or unanswered questions to its depiction of Radner's life, nor does it theorize or put words into the mouth of a subject who can't be there to refute them. Such a warts-and-all technique feels appropriate given the subject's desire to approach all aspects of performance and introspective thought from a place of honesty and truth. Radner could disappear into a character like only the best performers could, but that was because she could see the authenticity in everything and everyone around her. She never once deceived an audience and never did anything for a quick buck. That's probably why she never had much of a film career and why her landmark one woman Broadway show was so deeply personal. If Gilda didn't feel it, she didn't do it, and while her relatively modest list of credits and accomplishments means that her contributions to comedy from the mid-70s to the mid-80s is destined to go overlooked when compared to her more prolific male counterparts, D'Apolito has made a compelling and moving case that Radner shouldn't be forgotten. Her tragic passing at a young age left the comedy world with a Gilda sized void. *Love, Gilda* makes one properly appreciate the size of that void and what it represents.

Oh, and stick around to the end of the credits. You'll be thankful that you did.

***Love, Gilda* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Friday, September 21, 2018. It will be available on iTunes and VOD services the same day.**

## Podcast: Michael Caine Talks The Swinging '60s

**MIKE CRISOLAGO AND GINA BUCCI** | SEPTEMBER 24TH, 2018



Photo by Vera Anderson/WireImage

In the new documentary *My Generation*, an exploration of the music, fashion, rebellion, free love and hippie haze of the 1960s, Michael Caine, who serves as narrator and co-producer, notes how his parents would always refer to their own youth as “the good ol’ days.” He says, in the film, that he asked them one day, “What was so good about the ‘good ol’ days?” And so Mike asked the 85-year-old Hollywood legend the same thing when they connected to discuss the documentary – “What was so good about the 1960s?” Caine answered without hesitation: “Freedom. The freedom to do the things we wanted to do, and how it changed everything for everybody.”

Caine, of course, was already in his 30s during the height of the era, which is why he refers to himself as something of a “grandfather” of his own generation. Yet in our interview he says the decade was, “not only one of the most important periods in my life, it was one of the most important periods for people of working class in England ever.” And the film, packed with vintage footage, music and interviews from the period interspersed with modern perspectives from cultural legends of the time, transcends the generational experience across the pond.

Despite a time zone mix-up that led to our interview occurring an hour early on Mike’s office phone instead of in *Zoomer’s* radio booth – at least Mike had a chance to swallow the mouthful of lunch he was eating when he answered the call – Caine discussed not only his recollections of the 1960s but how his generation’s unique spirit continues to shape the world and the very way we think about aging itself.

Listen to the full interview by clicking “Play” on the podcast player above. And check out *My Generation* in Toronto on September 28 at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, In Ottawa October 1-4 at Bytowne or on Video On Demand beginning October 9.

## TIMELY DOC BRINGS GILDA BACK TO LIFE

By Michael Fraiman, September 26, 2018



Gilda Radner and her dog, Sparkles, in a scene from *Love, Gilda*.

(Mongrel Media photo)

Gilda Radner shone on camera. When she popped onstage, she looked as though she might burst out laughing at any moment, her cheeks framed by elliptic creases, her eyes squeezed tight by the breadth of her smile. Wading through the ocean of archival footage she left behind, it's evident that Radner was born to perform.

This makes it all the more baffling that no filmmaker has heretofore created a documentary about the late star's life. The source material is all there: Radner exploded into stardom as a founding member of *Saturday Night Live*, where she spent six years before a depressive bout of bulimia. When she met Gene Wilder on set in the early 1980s, she divorced her husband for him, igniting a passionate and well-publicized romance until her death, at age 43, from ovarian cancer in 1989.

So the big question lingers: why make this movie now? It could be that our political climate is ripe for a Radner reflection. Amidst women sharing #MeToo stories and taking down Hollywood titans, and a surging backlash against the straight, white men who've long dominated the media, first-time director Lisa Dapolito has crafted a creative, energized, emotional tribute to the late comedic queen.

In its first minutes, *Love, Gilda* positions Radner as an almost prescient feminist icon. Her personal diaries, lovingly repurposed as the film's narrative spine, reveal that she never worried much about the ubiquitous male gaze. "Because I'm not a perfect example of my gender," she wrote, "I decided to be funny about what I didn't have, instead of worrying about it."

Nonetheless, she was long plagued by society's expectations of stereotypical beauty. At age 10, her mother, believing Radner to be fat, insisted she take diet pills. Over time, she would indeed lose a fair amount of weight, eventually culminating in an eating disorder that became apparent long before "bulimia" was a common term.

Radner transformed these dark thoughts into comedy, which she described as "hittin' on the truth before the other guy thinks of it." Yet her style was only occasionally self-deprecating. She became famous for her caricatures on *SNL*, where she played characters like Roseanne Roseannadonna and Emily Litella, which challenged traditional notions of femininity.



## Canadian Jewish News – September 26, 2018 (1 of 2)

Her characters, she confides in the film, were an extension of herself: unapologetic, irregular, bombastic and very funny. Early in her career, after arriving in Toronto and making a name for herself with John Candy, Eugene Levy and Joe Flaherty at The Second City comedy club, John Belushi invited her to join Bill Murray and Dan Aykroyd at the National Lampoon troupe.

Radner would gleefully appear onstage alongside the comedic heavyweights, but her womanhood denied her entry to their clubhouse: they never wrote sketches for her, often wasting her talents on bit parts like waitresses and secretaries. Behind the scenes, she enjoyed romantic flings with almost everyone, to the point that she told a friend she had trouble watching *Ghostbusters* because she'd dated everyone in it.

The bitter irony of Radner's success is the dearth of work she's left behind: her six years on *SNL* are hardly mainstream anymore and, after she left, she starred in a handful of critically panned comedy films. Most millennials have never seen her work, nor have they even had the chance.

Dapolito cleverly solves this problem by inviting some of the most famous modern *SNL* alumni – including Amy Poehler, Maya Rudolph and Bill Hader – to read from Radner's diaries and reflect on how she inspired them personally. Indeed, Radner's legacy survives less in taped recordings than in those who grew up watching her. (Poehler concedes, only half-jokingly, that most of her *SNL* characters were B-grade ripoffs of Radner's seminal work.)

Coalescing today's culturally aware comedy scene with a deep dive into Radner's life more than justifies the fact that nobody's made this movie until now. Actually, it makes it better, almost as if Radner's spirit were waiting for the right moment in history to make a grand comeback on the big screen, reminding audiences just how hard it is to be a woman in comedy.

## BAD REPUTATION: DOC SHOWS HOW JOAN JETT CRASHED MALE ROCK 'N' ROLL PARTY

September 26, 2018, By Kim Hughes

**Rating: A**

It's impossible to fully gauge the influence Joan Jett has wielded on two generations of rockers as a musician, band leader, and a feminist icon. But judging by the legion of heavyweights — Jett contemporaries and knock-kneed fans — stepping up to testify in director Kevin Kerslake's richly watchable doc *Bad Reputation*, it's immense though, as with The Ramones, Jett's impact is perhaps disproportionate to her actual record sales.

Still, it's hard to imagine Hole or L7 (or Bikini Kill or Elastica...) happening without Joan Jett who, at 60, is as passionate and plainspoken as ever. Maybe more so now that there is nothing to lose.



A vintage shot of Joan Jett with songwriting partner Kenny Laguna.

Like the woman herself, *Bad Reputation* offers little of Jett's behind-the-scenes personal life, keeping the spotlight tightly focused on her career first with trailblazing girl-group the Runaways (and they *were* girls; Jett was just 17 when they launched in 1975) through to her more complex and lasting work with the Blackhearts. And what a thrill ride!

Though the Runaways period feels well-documented — notably by director Floria Sigismondi's spot-on 2010 film starring Kristen Stewart as Jett and Dakota Fanning as lead singer Cherie Currie whose memoir *Neon Angel* inspired the story — Jett's post-Runaways career provides the film's most compelling arc.

That she and musical partner Kenny Laguna unsuccessfully shopped Jett's solo debut to 23 American record labels before forming their own independent Blackheart Records is a stark reminder that the music business has always been dicey and often deaf. But that just amps up the drama here. Jett's breakout victory in 1981 with the *I Love Rock 'n Roll* album and title track feels entirely earned, Jett's tireless composure in the face of endless and often aggressive sexism a dynamic rallying cry.

Two things give *Bad Reputation* additional spark: its wealth of often surprising celebrity interviews (Iggy Pop, Deborah Harry, Kathleen Hanna and Fugazi's Ian MacKaye we were expecting, Miley Cyrus not so much), and its deep dive into the circus-like aspects of the business as conducted by onetime Runaways manager Kim Fowley — a yang counterpoint to Malcolm McLaren's yin if there ever was one — and Laguna, without whom Joan Jett & the Blackhearts would almost certainly be less than they eventually became.

Jett's own candid recollections provide a superb backdrop, not to mention heaps of context, for everything unspooling on screen, especially her forays into the British punk scene at the height of the Sex Pistols. It's also fascinating to watch the ease (and credibility) with which Jett slid between punk and straight-up rock as few others have.

Still, as Martin Mull famously and allegedly quipped (there's debate about the quote's provenance), "Writing about music is like dancing about architecture." It's hard to describe exactly how fun it is to watch the performances and archival footage generously offered in *Bad Reputation*. Suffice to say rock fans with a bellyful of beer will have a ball.

*Bad Reputation*. Directed by Kevin Kerslake. With Joan Jet, Cherie Curie, Miley Cyrus, Kathleen Hanna, Debbie Harry, Iggy Pop, Pete Townshend. Plays September 29, and October 3, 12 at Toronto's Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema; opens theatrically September 28 in Montreal; and is available September 28 on iTunes and On Demand.

## STUDIO 54: STEP INSIDE NEW YORK'S MOST LEGENDARY NIGHTCLUB IN THRILLING DOCUMENTARY PLAYING AT HOT DOCS

POSTED ON SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Although we'll never be certain what EXACTLY happened behind closed doors at Studio 54 (what we wouldn't give to be a fly on the wall back then), [a 2018 documentary](#) coming to Hot Docs next month is sure to give us a thrilling glimpse into New York's most legendary nightclub.

Opened in the late 1970s by Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager, two friends from Brooklyn, this exclusive hotspot became the city's ground zero for disco, drugs and debauchery before closing down after only three years. A wild space that welcomed queer culture at a time of rampant homophobia and made headlines with its celebrity guest lists, Studio 54 came to symbolize an entire era. Director Matt Tyrnauer (*Citizen Jane*) peels away the myth and reveals the ins and outs of the club's short lifespan and lasting legacy.

*Studio 54* is playing from October 12 to 24 at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema (506 Bloor Street West) and is co-presented by [The 519](#), [Beam Me Up Disco](#), [Inside Out LGBT Film Festival](#) and [Pride Toronto](#). For showtimes, click [here](#).

## Review: Bad Reputation

Andrew Parker, September 26, 2018 7:17 pm



### Bad Reputation

**6.5** out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Told in a manner as briskly paced as a punk song, the interview heavy documentary *Bad Reputation* looks at the successes and struggles of rock and roll pioneer Joan Jett. Playing all the hits and hitting all the necessary career milestones in a relatively comprehensive manner, director Kevin Kerslake and frequently collaborating writer/editor Joel Marcus (*As I AM: The Life and Times of DJ AM*) have made a film that moves as briskly, forcefully, and thoughtfully as some of Jett's greatest and heaviest compositions. Fans of the worthily revered rocker will likely enjoy this full throttle trip down memory lane, but anyone looking for any sort of personal or introspective insight about Jett's remarkable career will be left in the dust.

Since being gifted with a cheap, department store bought guitar at the age of thirteen, Joan Jett embraced music as her life's calling and never looked back. Only a year after taking up the guitar, Jett helped to found The Runaways, possibly the most iconic, influential, and noteworthy all female band in rock history. Squabbles with management and fellow band members eventually led to The Runaways' acrimonious and unceremonious break-up early into their careers, with Jett carving out her own path in the music industry. It was a rocky road that was paved onto the bones of a roller coaster. For every success, there were dozens of other setbacks with less than supportive record labels and just as many glass ceilings to break through.

Kerslake and Marcus allow Jett, who's front, centre, and gregarious throughout, to tell her life story from front to back along a timeline. While there are plenty of other interview subjects who are brought in for context and commentary (including Iggy Pop, Kathleen Hanna, Debbie Harry, and various family members), *Bad Reputation* is Jett's story to tell on her own. Jett has always boasted a refreshing "take it or leave it" attitude when it comes to her personal beliefs and convictions, which includes some contradictions like championing animal rights causes and calling out fake feminists while simultaneously working tirelessly to make sure U.S. troops are kept entertained during times of war. Jett is a passionate person to listen to and watch, but to her facts are facts, and *Bad Reputation* is packed from floor to ceiling with every possible detail and anecdote regarding the singer-songwriter's varied career. It's not the most original or ambitious approach, but it's told with Jett's trademark candor and no bullshit delivery.

## Review: Minding the Gap

[Andrew Parker](#) September 26, 2018 7:29 pm



### Minding the Gap

9.5 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Shot over the course of twelve years by someone who initially wanted to capture the everyday lives and passions of his skateboarding friends, Bing Liu's documentary *Minding the Gap* is a complex and monumental work. Starting off as a look at the bond shared by three young men growing up in the economically depressed town of Rockford, Illinois – where 47% of the population makes minimum wage or less, if they have a job at all – *Minding the Gap* gradually transforms into something groundbreaking. It's an unparalleled and incomparable look at how a stifling environment produces shared, learned behaviours and sometimes inescapable cycles of quiet suffering.

Asian-American Bing and his best friends Zack Mulligan, a white boy with a rather unfortunate moustache, and Keire Johnson, a black man with an unforgettable laugh, have spent most of their days in a manner similar to many American teens and young adults. They hang out, play pranks on each other, drink, smoke weed, and spend a great deal of time finding new places to skate (staying one step ahead of the cops and overzealous security guards in the process). Bing is the de facto cameraperson of the group, capturing the exploits of his buddies in striking detail. But as they get older and revelations about their shared histories start taking shape, Bing becomes more interested at looking at how their dying community and their fractured family lives have begun to shape them as human beings.

It sounds a lot like I'm side-stepping a lot of what makes *Minding the Gap* an unconventional look at early adulthood, and that's because to speak directly of the elements that make Liu's film so unique would be to rob his film of most of its emotional and intellectual power. There will come a point in *Minding the Gap* where the bond between the friends will become strained and their paths as adults will begin to diverge further apart, not thorough confrontation, but via ideological differences. These bonds are tested through naturally shifting personal goals and specific, drastically life altering events. It spoils nothing to say that Zack's life is changed forever when his girlfriend, Nina, gives birth to their son, Elliott; or that Keire has quietly been working his way through the ranks at his restaurant gig and now wants to pursue a better future; or that the filmmaker has quietly been looking at the lives of his friends to better understand his own traumatic upbringing.

That last part is most significant because *Minding the Gap* effortlessly transitions itself from being an observational look at growing up into a more trenchant and captivating look at how abusive behaviour leaves behind life lasting scars. A news report heard in the background of a scene during *Minding the*



## The Gate – September 26, 2018 (2 of 2)

*Gap* states that Rockford has the second highest rate of violent crime for a city of its size in the United States, and over a quarter of those assaults arise from domestic abuse incidents. Bing, Zack, and Keire have all been affected by domestic abuse, but all three process what they've been through in different ways. Keire is conflicted when talking about his deceased father, who the young man admits doled out beatings, but was always immediately apologetic about it because "that's how he was raised." Zack, whose father was a skate punk that gradually became more and more conservative over time, sees a parent who slaps their kid around when they've done wrong as something completely normal. Bing, in the film's most devastating sequence, asks his mother, Mengyue, directly, on camera to tell him why she ignored the savage beatings he was subjected to at the hands of his stepfather.



Having grown up in a family of little means with an abusive parent might give me a bit of perspective that other critics viewing *Minding the Gap* might not possess, but Liu's handling of such a delicate, complex, and emotionally loaded subject is nothing short of an undiluted, raw depiction of the everyday reality for millions of people around the world. Poverty breeds frustration and depression, two potent feelings that are often channeled into unhealthy outlets. The young men in *Minding the Gap* have skateboarding as a creative and physical outlet, but when the demands of the adult world begin weighing on them more heavily, they'll have no choice but to learn from, move past, or succumb to the lessons imparted on them by those closest to them. The gap referred to in the title is a wide one, and all three young men (two of whom never completed high school) are in constant danger of falling into it.

While I admittedly have a few nagging questions about how Liu handles a key, transformative moment in the core friendship (in terms of what he knew and when he knew it), the filmmaker's dedication to his craft and longform storytelling is nothing short of exemplary. For a novice filmmaker who mostly came up like so many other kids making skate videos to pass around among friends, Liu displays a wizened, almost preternatural ability to capture the emotional essence of those around him. I'm sure that Liu was helped in some way by Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*, the Roger Ebert biopic *Life Itself*), a legendary documentarian who's no stranger to sifting through a decade's worth of footage to get to the heart of the human experience, but there's no way that *Minding the Gap* wasn't made by someone who didn't know what they were doing the entire time. Liu's filmmaking chops are patient, non-judgmental, and resoundingly empathetic. He might not have known what he had in the moment, but I hope he knows the power of his final work. In the film's numerous skateboarding sequences, he also proves to be one hell of a cinematographer, following his friends' every move and trick on a board of his own with a sort of precision and fluidity that most master camerapeople can't muster.

*Minding the Gap* is a documentary that has the power to change lives and open eyes about growing up in America. By the time Liu's ambiguous, powerful, and not altogether hopeful conclusion rolls around, viewers will have the stories of these three young men, one young woman, and their parents burned into their memories for weeks and months to come. *Minding the Gap* isn't just another documentary about healing and hardship, but something far more personal to the people who made it and something far more fruitful and universally relevant to anyone who sees it. It's the kind of work that comes from honest, unvarnished truthfulness. It's the kind of film where words rarely do justice, and the conversations that will arise from watching it will be more valuable than a thousand glowing reviews.

***Minding the Gap* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, September 28, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/035787/review-minding-the-gap/>

## Talkin' about My Generation (again) is familiar but fun film fodder

By [PETER HOWELL](#) Movie Critic

Wed., Sept. 26, 2018

### My Generation, $\frac{3}{4}$ stars

MY GENERATION Official Trailer + Clip (2018) Michael Caine, London 60's Documentary Movie HD

*Documentary of Swinging London of the 1960s, as recalled by Michael Caine and his famous friends. Directed by David Batty. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 85 minutes. PG*

The prospect of viewing yet another documentary about Baby Boomers, Swinging London and the 1960s could prompt hallucinations even in people who aren't on LSD. What's left to say about history's most ardent navel-gazers?

Plenty, argues actor Michael Caine in *My Generation*, a doc by Britain's David Batty that wins you over by dint of its affection and access. Caine roamed London in the '60s, rubbing shoulders with the Beatles, Rolling Stones and Twiggy, and he remembers everything — he swears he only smoked marijuana once and then “laughed for five hours.”

Caine is a genial tour guide for this magical memory tour. He's seen both at his current age, a vital 85, and also in archival screen images from his youth, when he was becoming famous for zeitgeist-ful films like *Alfie* and *The Ipcress File*.

*My Generation* largely gazes at the giant navel that was London, and rightly so — the city really was Ground Zero for the so-called generational “youthquake.” In doing so, the film wisely resists the standard documentary technique of stringing together a series of talking heads — no small temptation, given the famous people rounded up for reminiscing.

Caine chats with chums with bold-face names — rockers Paul McCartney and Roger Daltrey, fashionistas Mary Quant and Twiggy, celebrity photographer David Bailey and more, but their voices are heard over youthful video of themselves or collages of the wild London scene. The combined visual and aural effect is not unlike the experimental films of the NFB's Arthur Lipsett, which were of the same era. Editor Ben Hilton certainly has a way with archival images.

It's all set to a pop soundtrack that includes gems like the Beatles' “Strawberry Fields Forever,” the Rolling Stones' “You Can't Always Get What You Want” and the Kinks' “You Really Got Me,” which would make for a dandy soundtrack LP if Caine, who also takes a production credit, is able to finagle the song licensing.

Anybody seeking deep wisdom out of all this is likely to be disappointed, but Caine and company do offer cogent insights into just how entrenched the British class system was when the young'uns arrived to blow up the status quo.

"Suddenly, people realized that the working class wasn't as thick as it looked — and it had talent! ... It was a revolution," McCartney says.

Caine tells of showing up for an audition for a small role in *Zulu*, the 1964 historical epic of a famous battle between British soldiers and Zulu warriors in South Africa. The part would have had him speaking in his natural Cockney accent, but another actor had already grabbed it.

Director Cy Endfield, an American, asked Caine if he could speak in a "posh" British accent, which Caine insisted he could. He got the major role of Lieut. Gonville Bromhead, a breakthrough for his film career. A British director would never have given a Cockney speaker a role like that, Caine says, because class distinctions would have made it impossible.

You don't have to take Caine's word for it on that point. The film obliges with archival footage of bowler-hatted toffs and scowling nuns, the kind who would later be skewered on *Monty Python*, expounding how the youth of the '60s are all going to hell in a handcart.

There are other plum visits down memory lane, which are really more like revisits, since they've been made so often. Quant tells again how she launched the miniskirt craze. Rocker Marianne Faithfull amusingly summons once more the famous drug bust at Keith Richards' Redlands country estate, where she became tabloid fodder as the mystery "naked girl in a fur rug" after cops roused the place.

It gets a little repetitive, even at a brisk 85 minutes, but Caine leaves us with a fair argument, that the 1960s were "maybe the first time the future was shaped by young people."

Dunno if that's true, but it's got a good beat and you can dance to it.

## Review: Minding The Gap is a stunning skateboarding doc

Bing Liu's coming-of-age documentary about skateboarders in the U.S. Midwest thoughtfully explores trauma, anger and resentment

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#)

SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

[Expand](#)



**MINDING THE GAP** directed by Bing Liu. 93 minutes. Opens Friday (September 28) at the Hot Docs Cinema. See [listings](#). Rating: NNNNN

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The way boys are raised is the subject of two of the year's biggest documentaries: [Won't You Be My Neighbor?](#), Morgan Neville's film about the philosophies of children's entertainer Fred Rogers, and [Three Identical Strangers](#), Tim Wardle's strange and disturbing investigation into triplets separated at birth.

The films have pulled in \$22.5 million and \$11.3 million at the U.S. box office. As with the story in *Three Identical Strangers*, it can't be mere coincidence that audiences are interested in questioning the values instilled in children in the past 50 years at a time when the culture is examining toxic behaviour – and the wider societal acceptance of it.

"What do you do with the mad that you feel?" Rogers asked during his testimony in 1969 to a U.S. senate subcommittee in one of *Won't You Be My Neighbor's* most crowd-pleasing scenes. His speech about acknowledging anger while teaching children that anger is "mentionable and manageable" feels as urgent today as it did when it saved public broadcaster PBS from a devastating budget cut.

That scene came to mind as I watched Bing Liu's *Minding The Gap*, a feature documentary that's expansive in scope and personal in execution.

The film doesn't have the profile of the aforementioned docs – it's available on streaming platform Hulu in the U.S. and getting a small theatrical run here this weekend – but its compassionate portrait of three boys grappling with domestic abuse, racism and economic depression vividly captures the underlying causes of anger and resentment.

Born out of a love of skateboarding videos, the film tells the story of Liu and two teenage friends, Keire Johnson and Zack Mulligan, who grew up in Rockford, Illinois. Each is obsessed with skateboarding, which provides an escape from less-than-stellar situations at home. Liu opens the doc with a montage of skate footage and boys having fun. The sweetness of these scenes and the friends' emotional openness are

amplified by beautiful and probing camerawork that instantly draws you in – but soon it becomes clear skateboarding is an outlet for a lot of anger.

Over the course of Liu's 12-year filming period, Zack becomes a young father but his relationship to his girlfriend, Nina, disintegrates not long after their daughter is born. Keire, meanwhile, struggles to gain financial independence and starts hanging with a group of friends who have more ambition than Zack. Fraught relationships with fathers cast a long shadow over both.

Through all of this, Liu is confronting his mother on camera about abuse he suffered at the hands of his stepfather. As the story takes darker twists and turns, the stakes are not just about who will do the right thing, but how the young director will handle the disturbing information that is revealed. His personal journey and need for self-reflection become the film's driving force, reframing not only the audience's experience but permeating the lives of Keire and Zack, both of whom are as animated and articulate interviewees as they are energetic skateboarders.

In the doc's stunning third act, the various story strands crescendo in an almost montage-like sequence that feels like an elliptical callback to the early skateboarding scenes. Liu, now a filmmaker, has taken that same joie de vivre and channelled it into a new medium. The resulting film packs an emotional wallop.

Minding The Gap might be an account of the lives of three men (and one woman) at a specific time and place, but Liu's emphasis on self-reflection is deeply resonant. The doc is like an artistic interpretation of the Mr. Rogers speech. What do you do with the anger you feel? You go skateboarding. You make a movie. Both are forms of catharsis.



## Review: My Generation

[Andrew Parker](#) September 27, 2018 10:28 am



### My Generation

6 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

A celebration of London in the swinging 60s, the heavily nostalgic documentary *My Generation* will appeal primarily to those who were between their late teens and early thirties during one of the most culturally, politically, and socially impactful decades in human history. It's a crowd pleasing, back patting sort of work that looks at how a new generation of post-World War II Londoners established a new set of boundary pushing and traditional challenging social constructs out of previous stuffy and boring norms and attitudes. I'm pretty sure that this is the attitude that every generation has to the one that came before it, so the overall idea behind *My Generation* isn't anything terribly original, controversial, or groundbreaking, but taken on its own modest, montage based terms, it's still a charming and entertaining bit of pop culture history.

Cockney actor Michael Caine leads director David Batty's fast paced guided tour through the UK's evolving counterculture; narrating, conducting interviews with those who became famous during the 60s, and offering plenty of personal anecdotes along the way. Caine is one of the best examples of an artist or performer who benefitted from a loosening of social constructs in the 1960s. Although he was a classically trained performer, his working class roots traditionally held him back from getting any steady or noteworthy work until he was in his early 30s. Caine speaks lovingly and insightfully about how much he credits the counterculture movements of the 1960s with giving him a career in the first place, and *My Generation* feels every bit a passion project for the actor as it does the team working behind the camera.

It's clear very early on that Batty and writers Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais have extensive television backgrounds. The majority of *My Generation* is comprised of montages set to a not inexpensive laundry list of chart topping pop and rock hits from the era. Given that a lot of influential art and political ideas came about from the era, the decision to lean heavily on archival material is understandable, but quite often *My Generation* feels like a bunch of low budget music videos strung together that have been cobbled together from various outside sources. The music and images are significant, but at its heart *My Generation* is nothing more than a clip show with a lot of name checking, albeit one that ranks higher than a Time-Life record compilation commercial or Billy Joel's hit song "We Didn't Start the Fire." It takes a lot of assembly, and it's well edited, but there's nothing revolutionary about Batty and company's depiction of cultural revolutionaries.

*My Generation* also boasts an off kilter style of interview technique. Audio of Caine interviewing the likes of Twiggy, Paul McCartney, Roger Daltrey, and photographer David "makes love daily" Bailey can be heard over a lot of the assembled footage, but the conversations themselves are never shown. It's a truly

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missed opportunity on Batty's part, since the audio suggests that Caine boasts a remarkably candid, relaxed, and refreshing sort of interview technique, engaging with his subjects as peers first and period icons second. It was likely a decision to make the film feel more kinetic and less stodgy, but the people being interviewed (even in archival snippets from people who are deceased or otherwise couldn't participate) were literally made for the camera by the era being discussed. To only have Caine captured in his current state feels like a disservice to everyone else being profiled and cited.



©Jeff Spicer/XIXI Entertainment

Amid Batty's many curious technical decisions, however, *My Generation* does lay a lot of political and social groundwork to explain why the 1960s were watershed years in London's history. For the first time in the country's history, artists, models, musicians, and performers from working class backgrounds were breaking into the mainstream consciousness, with many suffering pushback from cultural elites and elders. Not only were these new breeds of artisans and entertainers becoming popular at home amid rigid constructs that were designed to keep them repressed, but they were also garnering crossover appeal across the pond. Models like Twiggy, multi-faceted artists like Marianne Faithful, bands like The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, and The Who, and performers like Caine, Albert Finney, and Julie Christie were making major waves across the ocean thanks to the shifting tectonic plates of culture. *My Generation* explains how this was all possible by examining the frustrations of a new generation that were born to parents who lived through the Great Depression and World War II back to back. There was a time for safety, comfort, and healing in the UK in the immediate years afterwards, but this new generation and culture sought to rouse the country from emotional stagnancy.

Most of the anecdotes and profiled subjects chosen for *My Generation* nicely draw parallels between an artist's environment and their art, and since that's basically Batty's entire overarching point, his film can be deemed a modest success. It's virtually impossible to whittle the popular culture of an entire decade to a single 85 minute volume, even when the work in question examines the contributions of only a single, major metropolitan city. That could be why *My Generation* ends in an oddly abrupt place once it starts talking about attitudes towards drug usage leading to the downfall of many celebrities in the eyes of the public. The lessons of the 1960s live on today, with many of *My Generation's* figureheads now being representative of the first wave of modern cultural disruptors. Their story doesn't have an end, and the sourest note of all here is how Batty attempts to put too fine a point on their chapter in history.

Overall, however, this *My Generation* is meant to be taken as breezy, fluffy, and safe entertainment, and like many things that seemed shocking and novel at the time, Batty's film feels old fashioned and like it's had any rough edges sanded off. And while it is entertaining, there's a distinct sense that its flashy visual graphics and elaborately assembled montages aren't coming close to replicating what it was like to live through such an era. If it weren't for Caine and his well spoken peers, *My Generation* would be wholly pointless and squarely redundant. Thanks to the participation of those involved and Batty's eye and ear for great archival footage, *My Generation* charms in spite of its overly nostalgic and truncated construction.

***My Generation* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Friday, September 28, 2018. It opens at Bytowne in Ottawa on Monday, October 1.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/035793/review-my-generation/>

## Review: 'My Generation'

*Michael Caine offers a tour of cultural revolution in the swinging '60s*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published September 27th, 2018



Michael Caine in *My Generation*

Photo by Jeff Spicer

*My Generation*

(UK, 85 min.)

Dir. David Batty

Listen up, you princes of Maine, you kings of New England!

Michael Caine might be a regular English gentleman to younger viewers on this side of the pond, but the two-time Oscar winning actor was never destined for stardom. As Caine narrates in this tour of the swinging 60s, English society was still very much caught in the stranglehold of the class system when his parents brought him into the world. Kids, depending on the social strata that were born into, knew their place and couldn't aspire to much if they hailed from one of the lower rungs. Caine, a cockney boy from South London, was destined to continue his father's practice as a fishmonger, except, as he says, he didn't like the smell of fish.

Caine uses his own trajectory to present a study of the larger movement of social change in England. The youth of the Queen's kingdom defied their elders by insisting that they didn't want to smell like fish their entire lives if they didn't want to. The youth of the '60s wanted better and Caine's sparkling recollections portray a city that rejuvenated itself lemony fresh with mini-skirts, androgynous haircuts, and birth control pills. There might not be much here that audiences didn't get in the *Austin Power*s movies, but the clothes are sexy and the music is hip as Caine enjoys the role of narrator and reflects upon the greater cultural revolution of which he was a part.

Caine is one of the best actors of his generation or any other, so his story's worth the ticket. His extraordinary career spans from Alfie the playboy to Alfred the butler, and he's starred with everyone from Laurence Olivier to Kermit the Frog, yet as he explains in his fun, breezy narration, he might have settled for bit parts in repertory theatre since even they were a step up from the fish for which he was destined. The actor explains how his cockney accent—now a distinguished trademark—kept him on the lower rungs of supporting players as English producers and directors generally wanted their films to project a certain image. Everyone in old English movies sounds like they're at high tea in Buckingham Palace because movies were made largely by and for the upper class. Caine talks about his love for going to the movies night after night even if he didn't see his life reflected onscreen, and how a screening of David Lean's *Brief Encounter* wowed him with its middle aged romance told in vernacular language.

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The actor credits his breakthrough role in *Zulu* to an American director who couldn't distinguish between a real posh accent and a fake one. Caine playfully recounts how repertory theatre prepared him to mask his working class roots with phony affectations, and to an untrained ear, all posh English accents sounded the same. The actor, né Maurice Micklewhite, adds how he changed his name when his agent insisted he avoid having the same name as another actor in the union, and the story goes that he looked at a marquee across the street advertising *The Caine Mutiny* and gave the answer on the fly. (Perhaps Tom Cruise would have won his Oscar for *Magnolia*, after all, if as Caine says, he had looked to the marquee on the neighbouring theatre that was playing *101 Dalmatians*.)

*My Generation* has a lot of fun as Caine guides audiences through the “lower” parts of London, and England more broadly, where culture was undergoing a major revolution in cafés and dive bars while the aristocracy marinated in the status quo. Caine recalls a time when one could pop out for a sandwich and hear some new band called The Beatles without worrying about mobs of screaming fans. Many of the English stars who formed this new wave of pop culture came from similar working class backgrounds as Caine and the doc highlights how their success tapped into a greater culture pulse that desired to elevate stars who reflected a wider representation of society.

The doc includes the success stories of other Brits with Twiggy, Paul McCartney, Marianne Faithful, and photographer David Bailey, among others, joining Caine for the ride. Audio conversations between Caine and his contemporaries accompany a groovy tapestry of 1960s nostalgia as valuable archival footage highlights the youthful vitality of a generation that flourished with newfound freedom. Caine is the only star to appear on camera in the present tense, but the seamlessness of the collage works to the film's advantage as it shows the stars in the prime of their lives while their commentary reflects ageless wisdom.

Told in three chapters that loosely denote the euphoria of the youth movement and the dark counterblow of conservatism, *My Generation* skirts over much of the hardships faced by youths who fell to the excesses of sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll or became The Establishment's scapegoats for bad behaviour. The doc also overlooks the fact that change often comes for a select few, but the imbalances of representation within the archival footage are also products of the longstanding value systems that impeded progress—and still do—as the Michael Caines of other communities break through barriers today.

One might take the success of a star like Caine for granted, but *My Generation* offers a valuable reminder to audiences not to judge the potential or dreams of others. Everyone deserves a fair shot.

*My Generation* opens in Toronto at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) on Sept. 28 and in Ottawa at [The ByTowne](#) on Oct. 14.

## MY GENERATION: MICHAEL CAINE SERVES AS TOUR GUIDE TO SWINGING 60S LONDON

September 27, 2018

By Liam Lacey

**Rating: B+**

"What was it all about? I'm going to show you," says Michael Caine, recalling the days of *Alfie* and the London cultural moment which raised the bespectacled Cockney actor to unexpected stardom.



His name is Michael Caine.

Without any aspirations to deep analysis or comprehensiveness, David Batty's documentary, *My Generation* is an enjoyable 85-minute archival immersion in the visual and musical culture of swinging London in the 1960s. Caine, now 85, is the narrator, but we also have voice-over contributions from various acquaintances: Paul McCartney, Marianne Faithfull, Twiggy and Mary Quant among others, who appear on camera as their young and lovely selves and are heard off-camera in conversation with Caine. Collectively, they chronicle a decade when London was a youthful global style-setter in art, fashion and music. Why do the clothes and haircuts still look so good? Were the fires of creative excess held in by the tradition of fine English tailoring perhaps?

Loosely modelled on Peter Whitehead's 1967 cult film, *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London*, the film divides into three chapters: incipient change in "Something in the Air," the mid-60s peak, "I Feel Free," and the inevitable crash "All Was Not As It Seemed," which chronicles the price of excess and the Establishment backlash, employing the sort of hyperactive editing that used to scream "bad trip."

"We'd pushed for change, and now change was pushing us back," intones Caine in the sometimes stiffly scripted narration.

The "generation" of the title is a chronologically sprawling group who reached adulthood somewhere between the late-1940s to the late-60s. It includes hair stylist Vidal Sassoon (b. 1928), actor Caine (1933), fashion designer Quant (1934), photographer David Bailey (b. 1938) plus war babies The Beatles (b. 1940-1943), The



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Who's Pete Townshend, composer of the song "My Generation" (b. 1945), singer Faithfull (b. 1946) and teen model, Twiggy (b. 1949).

Along with people, we have brief sketches of Radio Caroline (the off-shore pirate radio station), talk of the Pill, and a survey of photography (the "black trinity" of fashion photographers Bailey, Terence Donovan and Brian Duffy). And we see the crowds around the fashion meccas (Biba's, Mary Quant's Bazaar) of the time. Various middle-aged scolds (Tory MP Gerald Nabarro in a hilarious handlebar moustache) grumble about standards falling everywhere.

Perhaps most interesting, for those of this side of the pond, is how much the English saw the youthquake of the 1960s in terms of a class revolution. Caine, born Maurice Micklewhite, was the son of a charwoman and a fish-market porter, and he is conscious of his success as changing the old order. He recalls how he landed the role of an officer in the film *Zulu* (1964) only because it was directed by an American, Cy Endfield. An English director wouldn't have considered him, despite his nine years in repertory theatre playing all kinds of roles. "Suddenly people realized the working class wasn't as thick as it looked," says McCartney, about the new status of the working-class artist.

Youth and working-class rose hand-in-hand: "It was the first time the future was shaped by young people," says Caine, with the obligatory caveat that youth is a state of mind, not years.

This rose-coloured backward glance, fun while it lasts, comes with a depressing after-kick. The great working-class British Isles actors of the 60s — Caine, his roommate, Terrence Stamp, Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay, Irishmen Richard Harris and Peter O'Toole, Rita Tushingham — were a new representation of how English film stars could talk and look. In just a few years of contemporary conservative Britain, though, these kind of performers have largely been replaced by a privileged group who can afford drama school fees and risky careers, namely, Benedict Cumberbatch, Tom Hiddleston, Eddie Redmayne, and Dominic West.

*My Generation* may be fluffy nostalgia but it touches on a painful truth about a generation's aspirations raised and dashed again.

*My Generation*. Directed by Dick Batty. Written by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais. Opens September 28 at Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, and October 1 through 4 at the Bytowne in Ottawa.

## MINDING THE GAP: ACE DOCUMENTARY FOLLOWS HIGHS AND LOWS OF SKATE KIDS

September 27, 2018, By Liam Lacey

**Rating: A**

One of the best documentaries this year to date, *Minding the Gap* is a first-time film by Bing Liu, shot over several years in the filmmaker's hometown with two of his skateboarding friends as they make the difficult transition from adolescent escapism to troubled adulthood.



A scene from *Minding The Gap*.

While this is an autobiographical story about a young aspiring filmmaker and his skateboarding crew, it also speaks volumes about contemporary rust-belt USA, masculinity and abuse, weaving its themes and characters around scenes of the boys sailing through the near-empty streets.

Their hometown is Rockford, a northern Illinois city of about 150,000 which took a hard hit during the recession. The film reflects the struggle of aspirations against a tough socio-economic background. (*Hoop Dreams* director Steve James served as executive director, and it echoes his sensibility and concerns.) Thanks to its long gestation period, it's a film that changes its style and tone as it progresses as we watch the filmmaker both grow up and grow artistically, moving from clowning skateboard montages to troubling direct-to-camera revelations.

Almost too conveniently, the three friends serve as three distinct representative types: Zack, the brash white working-class kid who feels he's chronically underachieving; Keire, a shy African-American kid; and filmmaker Liu, the Chinese-American immigrant struggling to find his social place.

Charismatic Zack, who works as part-time roofer, is their rock star leader, a risk-taker determined to get old. The sensitive Keire has a skateboard inscribed with the phrase, "This device cures heartache." Each boy conflicts with their father or stepfather and clings to their skateboarding crew as "more family than family."

Adulthood overtakes them. When 23-year-old Zack and his 21-year-old girlfriend, Nina, have a baby, neither is prepared for the responsibility. The relationship unravels, with drinking, violence and then a separation.

When Keire's father dies, the young man begins to understand his father's rough discipline and racial fears. Shortly after Keire gets his first car, he finds himself facing a cop's gun, for no apparent reason except that he's black and behind the wheel.

The director serves as a sounding board for his friends, and gradually works up to confronting his immigrant mother about his own past. Why did she stay with his abusive stepfather so long? The segment is wrenching.

Liu, now 29, is as good an action cinematographer as he is an unwaveringly honest interviewer. He balances the personal stories with the scenes of the young men skating, where the tumbles hurt but the temporary physical pains are a small price for the joys of freedom.

*Minding the Gap*. Directed by Bing Liu. With Bing Liu, Zack Mulligan and Keire Johnson. Opens September 28 at Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2018/9/27/minding-the-gap-ace-documentary-follows-highs-and-lows-of-skate-kids>

## Review: 'Minding the Gap'

*Bing Liu's debut is intimate and personal filmmaking at its finest.*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published September 27th, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



Photo by Bing Liu

### ***Minding the Gap***

(USA, 100 min.)

Dir. Bing Liu

Kartemquin Films has enjoyed a long history as one of the benchmark homes for socially conscious documentaries about everyday Americans. That tradition for excellence looks to be in good hands as director Bing Liu confidently announces himself with one of the most remarkable directorial debuts of the year with *Minding the Gap*. It could prove to be the *Hoop Dreams* of a new generation. (*Hoop Dreams* director Steve James is among the film's executive producers.) Liu offers a frank portrait of his tightly knit social circle of skateboarder friends as they rule the streets of Rockford, Illinois, a derelict town in the Rust Belt of America, and he dexterously develops a behind-the-scenes skate video into an absorbing study of the dynamics of race, poverty, gender, class, and violence that shape society.

Liu introduces audiences to his friends Zack and Keire as they goof around with a carefree spirit that some viewers may find immediately relatable. When the film begins, they're enjoying that brief period between the innocence of adolescence and the responsibilities of adulthood. They goof around and cruise through the skate parks, construction sites, vacant municipal terraces, and just about anywhere they can catch some speed and ride the rails.

*Minding the Gap* captures the dynamics of the group in fluid, enthralling cinematography as Bing trails his friends on their skateboards. There's a freshness and youthful vitality to the film, both in the subjects we see and in the hand behind the camera. Liu's fine eye quickly catches a dynamic that unites boys in their camaraderie. Skateboarding offers an outlet for the sadness and loneliness they experience at home.

The doc takes a while to find its groove, but once it does, Liu finds a rich character study in what at first seems to be an aimlessly extraordinary skateboarding project. Liu looks at his group of friends and wonders why they all left home as young men. He, Zack, and Keire find great therapy as the camera offers an ear to their stories. They all have tales of abandonment and abuse. Liu speaks about the stepfather who beat him for years, and he realizes that Zack and Keira share his experience of coming from violent homes. The young men speak

openly and honestly—their interviews are disarmingly candid—as they let great weights off their chests by revisiting years of abuse that shaped how they are today.

The stories extend beyond the skateboard parks as Liu folds his own history in the narrative. He sits down with his estranged mother who calmly and painfully acknowledges the horrible things that her ex-husband did to her family. She knows that nothing can change the past, and this is something that Bing and company all agree on, but she encourages her son to make the film and explore whatever he needs to say to find closure.

Liu's interrogation of violence and trauma also intervenes in a potentially volatile situation brewing in his circle of friends. Zack is a new father, but the aggression he shows towards Nina, the mother of their son Elliot, is cause for concern. *Minding the Gap* sees the group of friends confront the issue directly by sharing recordings of feuds between Zack and Nina and asking if their friend has the potential for violence. They generally don't agree that he does, but Liu's camera captures an out of control alcoholic who shouldn't be anywhere near a young child. Zack knows this and he escapes, only later to unburden himself remarkably just as Keire does while reflecting upon the father he barely knew.

*Minding the Game* poignantly weaves through the lives of these young adults as they confront their responsibilities in this world. There are revealing conversations about race and white privilege as Keire, the only Black friend in his group, listens to peers gripe about relatively minor problems when he nearly gets shot by a cop during a roadside stop. There are troubling comments about misogyny and masculinity, like Zack's way of rationalizing that he would never hit Nina, saying, "You should never beat a woman, but sometimes bitches need to be slapped." Liu goes there, showing his friends at their highest and lowest, and the intimate proximity of the camera between the subjects, and ultimately himself, proves transformative. *Minding the Gap* is intimate and personal filmmaking at its finest.

*Minding the Gap* opens at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) on Sept. 28.

**For a second take on *Minding the Gap*, read Liam Lacey's [review from Hot Docs](#).**

Pat Mullen is POV's Associate Online Editor, etc. He covers film at [Cinemablographer.com](#), and has contributed to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Paste, BeatRoute, Modern Times Review, and Documentary magazine and is a member of the Toronto Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society. You can reach him at [@cinemablogrpher](#)

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## **This week in Toronto: Jade Bird, giraffes and a lady Doctor**

*Sun., Sept. 30, 2018* timer 5 min. read

### **TUESDAY**

#### **Fall for Dance North**

**Watch this if:** You want even more of the world's best contemporary dance.

Justin Peck could be the buzziest choreographer in the world at the moment, having won over new audiences to the problematic *Carousel* with his Tony Award-winning choreography and as the subject of the documentary *Ballet 422*, which chronicled the creation of *Paz de la Jolla*. That ballet, along with 11 other acclaimed works from around the world, is presented in the expanded 2018 version of [Fall for Dance North](#), which takes over two large venues in addition to a free performance series at Union Station. (Sony Centre for the Performing Arts, 1 Front St. E.; Ryerson Theatre, 350 Victoria St., on until Oct. 6)

—Carly Maga

#### **Jade Bird**

**Watch this for:** A post-birthday party and then some.

The young and well-regarded London-based Bird brings an edge reminiscent of Alanis Morissette and Patti Smith to this local debut. With just a five-song EP out — *Something American*, hinting at her mid-Atlantic sound — she's got plenty more in the vault for a debut long-play scheduled for next year. She has been doling out those offerings on guitar and piano, with three bandmates, during her first big tour on this side of the pond. Blessed with confidence and chops that suggest a bright future, all she seems to need for this one would perhaps be some leftover cake, the show coming just a day after her 21st birthday. Chris Porterfield of Field Report comes in solo to open proceedings. ([Horseshoe](#), 370 Queen St. W., doors 8 p.m.)

—Chris Young

### **WEDNESDAY**

#### **The Woman Who Loves Giraffes at Doc Soup**

**Watch this if:** You want to know about an unsung defender of animals.

In 1956 at the age of 23, a Canadian biologist named Anne Innis Dagg made a solo trip to South Africa to study giraffes. Though that made her the world's first person to study the behaviour of an animal in the wild, her story has been almost unknown, a startling fact given the renown achieved by Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey. In the season opener for [Hot Docs'](#) monthly Doc Soup series, director Alison Reid gives Dagg the attention she's due while sounding an alarm about the present-day perils facing the biologist's beloved giraffes. Dagg joins the filmmaker for Q&As after the screenings on Wednesday and Thursday. (Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., 6:30 p.m.)

—Jason Anderson

#### **RUTAS International Multi-Arts Festival**

**Watch this if:** You want to see Indigenous, women-led international performances.



## Toronto Star – September 30, 2018 (2 of 3)

Aluna Theatre's [RUTAS](#) festival is always one of the most enigmatic, meaningful collections of performances that an arts-loving Torontonians can find in the fall. This year's edition offers a particularly diverse selection of genres: documentary film, conversations, a community meal, a cabaret series featuring names like Lido Pimienta, Fly Lady Di and Jasmyn Fyffe; a performance of ancient Mayan baptism rituals; contemporary works from local names Liz Peterson, Susanna Fournier and Keith Barker; a puppet show from Mexico City and a triptych of works by Ecuadorian choreographer Wilson Pico. (Artscape Daniels Spectrum, 585 Dundas St. E., on until Oct. 14)

—CM

### THURSDAY

#### Krapp's Last Tape

**Watch this if:** You want another chance to look back.

It's rare for the unpeeling of a banana to be so impactful. For those unlucky Torontonians who missed last season's limited, intimate run of Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* directed by Mac Fyfe and starring an icon of the early Toronto theatre scene, Bob Nasmith, the production is being remounted for a much longer stay at Theatre Passe Muraille's Backspace. Nasmith's performance as a man listening to self-recordings from his past is so pitch perfect it earned the actor a special citation at last year's Toronto Theatre Critics Awards. ([Theatre Passe Muraille](#) Backspace, 16 Ryerson Ave., 7:30 p.m., until Oct. 21)

—CM

#### The Jerry Cans

**Watch this for:** Bringin' it all back home, Far North style.

Though their 2018 has been something of a coming-out party, Iqaluit's finest have been building to this moment for a good long time, copping a slew of awards and rising acclaim for their unique blend of folk, rock and Inuit styles. Now they hit their biggest, warmest stage yet as one of the featured acts for Koerner Hall's 10th anniversary season-opening week. Among the likes of Kathleen Battle and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble, they're the five-piece outliers and well used to taking advantage of that. The bonus here comes with openers the New North Collective, six performers who, like the headliners, manage to touch a lot of bases while never pulling up their roots. ([Koerner Hall](#), 273 Bloor St. W., 8 p.m.)

—CY

### FRIDAY

#### The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret

**Watch this if:** You'd like a refresher on #MeToo.

This documentary by Canadian [Barry Avrich](#) has already been seen at Hot Docs and gets its Canadian broadcast premiere here. The allegations against once-powerful Hollywood executive Harvey Weinstein, who faces trial on charges of predatory sexual assault, rape and committing a criminal sex act, make up the bulk of the film, with several of his accusers describing attacks on camera. However, it also looks at other powerful men who have been accused, and the backlash against the #MeToo movement. Avrich has said he made the

## Toronto Star – September 30, 2018 (3 of 3)

doc “to immortalize this debate and the conversation, affect change.” As lawyer Marie Henein says in the film — yes, the same one who successfully defended Jian Ghomeshi against his accusers — “Unless there’s some real thought put into how to respond, what you’re gonna hear is, ‘We turned over a new leaf, we’re fabulous’ ... If you believe that, you’re pretty naive.” ([CBC](#) at 9 p.m., also at [cbc.ca/watch](#) at noon)

—Debra Yeo

### SATURDAY

#### Carbone at Cinéfranco

**Watch this if:** You want to make some French connections.

Based on details of a true-life scheme to defraud the European Union countries of billions of euros, this French thriller stars Benoit Magimel as the owner of a trucking company who falls for the allure of too-easy cash. Gérard Depardieu co-stars in Olivier Marchal’s film, which makes its North American premiere at [Cinéfranco](#), a showcase of French-language cinema taking place over the next two weekends at the Carlton. Offerings including many more recent hits from France, Quebec and other places where chic scarves are worn. (Carlton Cinemas, 20 Carlton St., 4:30 p.m.)

—JA

### SUNDAY

#### Doctor Who

**Watch this if:** You think Time’s Up for Time Lords.

Considering that the alien Doctor of the title takes on new physical form every so often, allowing the TV franchise to stay alive with new lead actors, it’s surprising in hindsight that it’s taken 55 years for one of those entities to be female. But she’s finally here, No. 13, played by British actress Jodie Whittaker, best known here as the mother of a murder victim in *Broadchurch*. She co-starred in that series, coincidentally, with the 10th Doctor, Scottish actor David Tennant. And it’s another *Broadchurch* alum, series creator Chris Chibnall, who’s guiding the new *Who* season with Matt Strevens, who produced *An Adventure in Space and Time*, the 2013 movie about the early days of *Doctor Who*. Also new: Doctor 13 has not one but three companions, Bradley Walsh (*Coronation Street*), Mandip Gill and Tosin Cole. As Tennant’s Doctor would say, “Allons-y!” ([Space](#) at 1:45 and 8 p.m.)

—DY

## Bathtubs Over Broadway at VIFF inspires ‘wonderment, respect, affection and love’

MARSHA LEDERMAN

VANCOUVER

PUBLISHED OCTOBER 1, 2018UPDATED OCTOBER 1, 2018



Steve Young searches for recordings of industrial musicals in a scene from the documentary *Bathtubs Over Broadway*.

### CACTUS FLOWER FILMS

There are a few film screenings I've attended over the years that I wouldn't have minded being interrupted by a fire alarm. *Bathtubs Over Broadway* was not one of them. In fact, on Sunday morning, when the Vancouver International Film Festival audience had to evacuate the theatre about two-thirds of the way through the film, people stuck around – in the pouring rain and in the absence of any information. We needed to get back into that theatre and back to the magic of this documentary.

We did eventually shuffle back inside – in pure Canadian form, we politely sought the seats we had previously occupied – and settled back in to learn more about a world many of us had never known existed.

Neither did Steve Young, the protagonist, if I can call him that, when he first came across the weird old record albums that would become his obsession and inspire this documentary. As a comedy writer for David Letterman's late-night television show, Young went out looking for oddball records to feature on the recurring "Dave's Record Collection" segment. In this comedy endeavour, he encountered some strange Broadway-musical-type albums that appeared were written about certain products or corporations. He became intrigued with these cast recordings and started searching for them all over the place.

What he found is captured in this delightful documentary. "Industrial musicals" were live musical-theatre productions commissioned by corporations. They would be performed at company conventions and large meetings to get employees – typically the sales force – excited about whatever that corporation was selling: cars, tractors, dog food, silicone. Sometimes these musicals were recorded as LPs; and sometimes, to Young's delight (and ours), even filmed. Some of the performers went on to mainstream stardom – Florence Henderson, Martin Short, Chita Rivera – but many continued to tap dance in obscurity.

## Globe and Mail – October 1, 2018 (2 of 2)

(Canada was not immune from this cultural phenomenon; Wayne and Shuster starred in a 1960s industrial musical for Gulf Canada. Young also encountered an “absolutely bonkers musical about road graders” from a 1975 Toronto sales meeting, as he told the Vancouver audience. Alas, neither of these is featured in *Bathtubs Over Broadway*.)

In this absolutely charming doc, Young begins searching for these rare recordings but finds so much else along the way. He becomes particularly intrigued with a 1969 musical for American Standard Inc., *The Bathrooms Are Coming* and its wonderfully ridiculous earworm showstopper, *My Bathroom* (“where I wash and where I cream”). Meanwhile he is dealing with a personal sea change in his life as Letterman announces the end of his show, where Young has been employed for many years.

Director Dava Whisenant deftly follows Young’s arc from sneering, hardened comedy writer to collector to fan to author – and so much more.

“When Steve first started meeting people [who made industrial musicals], they were concerned that we were going to be laughing at them and laughing at the material,” Whisenant explained during the truncated (see fire alarm, above) Q&A after the film.

For sure, that is how this started out, way back when. But by the time he was looking for the creators, Young had developed a deep appreciation for the art form. As he put it in Vancouver, he found himself encountering “all these other layers of wonderment and respect and affection and love.”

That’s pretty much exactly how I felt – right down to love – watching this documentary, which also screened at Hot Docs in Toronto earlier this year. VIFF is adding another screening of *Bathtubs Over Broadway* for its VIFF Repeats program immediately following the festival (the date has yet to be determined). And while no distribution deal has been announced, this film deserves as wide an audience as possible. It’s a kicky reminder that inspiration can be found in the weirdest places – maybe your bathroom, maybe a movie theatre.

VIFF continues until Oct. 12. VIFF Repeats will screen at the Vancity Theatre Oct. 13-17 ([viff.org](http://viff.org)).

## M.I.A. documentary a conflicted and compelling portrait of its subject

By [RAJU MUDHAR](#) Staff Reporter  
Thu., Oct. 4, 2018



### Matangi/Maya/M.I.A.

Recording artist Mathangi "M.I.A." Arulpragasam comes off as complicated and conflicted but likable in the documentary *Matangi/Maya/M.I.A.* (EVAN AGOSTINI / INVISION/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS) *Starring M.I.A. Directed by Stephen Loveridge. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 97 minutes. Not rated.*

*Matangi/Maya/M.I.A.* is an illuminating and enjoyable portrait of one of the most interesting pop musicians of this century who, even after this, remains inscrutable in many of the ways that matter.

Born Mathangi Arulpragasam — the film is named for the various names she goes by — this is directed by her friend, and former art school classmate, Steve Loveridge.

It is clearly a love letter from a pal and one that tries to show her as he understands her: a complicated, conflicted artist whose amazing backstory informs all that she does and has led to her creating some incredible music and art. The daughter of a founding member of the Sri Lankan resistance, she was caught between that world and the often racist Britain her family immigrated to.

What really makes the doc is the use of grainy home video footage, much shot by Arulpragasam herself. In subsequent interviews she has said she is still uncomfortable with how much of it is being shared in this film.

There are also good glimpses at controversial parts of the story, showing her side of the infamous Lynn Hirschberg New York Times profile and also the Super Bowl incident where she gives the finger while supporting Madonna during the halftime performance.

Despite being someone who will lash out as a defence mechanism, M.I.A. comes off as a great deal more likable than she's been portrayed in the media, and as someone who is working to help the causes that are important to her.

But just as her art can be messy and cacophonous, this isn't a neat and tidy doc that ties up all the loose ends. Loveridge provides much needed warmth, but there are areas where the film could have benefited from a more pointed and less close to his subject director.

In a year where studies of fictional female pop stars are coming in various forms like *A Star is Born*, *Son Lux* and *Her Smell*, *Matangi/Maya/M.I.A.* shows how compelling the real thing remains.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/10/04/mia-documentary-a-conflicted-and-compelling-portrait-of-its-subject.html>



## Studio 54 doc is a clear-eyed view of a notorious nightclub

By [PETER HOWELL](#) Movie Critic

Thu., Oct. 11, 2018

### Studio 54



#Studio54 was the epicenter of 70s hedonism - a place that not only redefined the nightclub, but also came to symbolize an entire era. Its co-owners, Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell, two friends from Brooklyn, seemed to come out of nowhere to suddenly preside over a new kind of New York society. Now, 39 years after the velvet rope was first slung across the club's hallowed threshold, a feature documentary tells the real story behind the greatest club of all time.

*Documentary on the rise and fall of the legendary New York disco. Directed by Matt Tyrnauer. Opens Friday at Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema. 98 minutes. **STC***

Studio 54 was famous for being infamous.

The New York City nightclub, the subject of Matt Tyrnauer's revealing doc *Studio 54*, was notorious as much for the multitudes it kept outside its doors as for the privileged few who partied within during the 33 months of its 1970s disco heyday.

Showboating co-owner Steve Rubell ruthlessly worked the velvet rope, allowing entry only to people whom he deemed sufficiently famous or beautiful. Among those turned away were members of the band Chic, whose 1978 disco hit "Le Freak" chronicled their shunning.

Among the favoured was Margaret Trudeau, estranged wife of Canada's prime minister Pierre Trudeau, who shocked Canadians after she was photographed dancing at the club on the night her husband lost the 1979 federal election. She's briefly glimpsed in archival news reports in the film, including an Italian gossip sheet report of her fling with tennis ace Vitas Gerulaitis, one of many scandalous matchups of the era.

Being outrageous was, of course, the *raison d'être* of Studio 54. Rubell and his low-key partner Ian Schrager, childhood buddies from Brooklyn, created the West 54th Street dance mecca in a matter of weeks in the spring of 1977, making canny use of TV and theatrical sets left over from the building's previous incarnation as an opera house and later TV studio — *Captain Kangaroo* used to broadcast from what was then called CBS Studio 52.

The place was designed to be sensational and it was from day one, attracting the likes of Andy Warhol, Mick and Bianca Jagger, Keith Richards, Elizabeth Taylor, Michael Jackson, Freddie Mercury and future U.S.

President Donald Trump and his first wife Ivana. Celebrities were “comped” — but not all of them; members of the Rolling Stones who weren’t Mick or Keith had to pay to get in.

Studio 54 also attracted unwelcome attention from New York liquor officials and federal tax sleuths, who would later bring additional infamy to the place when Rubell and Schrager were charged (and later jailed) due to multiple tax and conspiracy offences that included skimming \$2.5 million from the club’s cash registers. The disco’s reputation as a drug den — a veritable snowstorm of cocaine blew through it — didn’t help the owners’ case before the courts, despite the battery of high-profile lawyers they hired to defend them.



*Studio 54 was the most infamous of New York discos during its three-year heyday. A new doc explains why. (COURTESY OF FILMSWELIKE)*

Tyrnauer documents it all with journalistic rigour, building his film around the bittersweet memories of the reclusive Schrager — Rubell, seen and heard in archival footage, died from AIDS in 1989 — and those of former Studio 54 employees, publicists and patrons.

The latter group included Michael Jackson, viewed pre-surgery and pre-superstardom as a shy young pop singer circa 1978, raving about how exciting it was to dance there: “It’s where you come when you want to escape,” he tells an interviewer, as a star-struck Rubell looks on.

The look of the film is oddly more punk than disco. What few scenes we see of wild Studio 54 parties were filmed mainly on grainy and blurry 16mm and even 8mm celluloid. This was a time before everybody was carrying a digital video camera in their pocket or purse.

Schrager makes the claim that Studio 54 marked “the beginning of the age of celebrity,” a boast that’s hard to prove. But there’s no doubt he and Rubell worked the gossip press as hard as Rubell worked the velvet rope, paying for newspaper mentions of their famous guests.

Despite its Darwinian door policy, Studio 54 was refreshingly free of discrimination as to race, sexual orientation and attire — or non-attire, for those who dared to bare. Musician/producer Nile Rodgers, the co-founder of Chic, recalls that when he eventually did gain access to the club, and he was impressed by the inclusivity and diversity he witnessed therein.

“It felt like the first time people were non-judgmental,” Rodgers says — although even making it into Studio 54 meant you’d already been judged worthy by mercurial doorkeeper Rubell.

## Review: Studio 54

Andrew Parker

October 13, 2018 10:43 am

7/10

Matt Tyrnauer's look back at one of the glitziest, decadent, more than borderline illicit, and short lived nightclubs, Studio 54, is a comprehensive and objective look at an NYC cultural phenomenon that burned bright and burned out quickly under the weight of poor decisions. Talking primarily to those involved with the day-to-day operations of Studio 54, Tyrnauer's documentary balances nostalgia for a bygone era, regrets for past transgressions, and even an unlikely comeback story. For those who lived through it, those who wish they had, and the uninitiated, Studio 54 is the best primer on the club to date.

Although its name has become synonymous with elitism, drug use, and no small amount of freakiness, the height and success of Studio 54 only lasted from its opening in 1977 until its sale to new owners in 1980. Opened in the bowels of a former theatre (which it has since reverted back to forty years later), Studio 54 was the brainchild of Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager, a pair of best friends who attended Syracuse University together. They couldn't be any more different. Steve was a boisterous, braggadocious, extroverted gay man who got his start in business owning and operating a chain of steakhouses. Ian was an introverted straight dude with an eye for art, technology and design who initially studied to become a lawyer. Together and inspired by the underground gay club scene, Schrager and Rubell wanted to create an exclusive, vibrant nightclub that reflected the energy and excess of the disco era. Not long after their grand unveiling, Studio 54 became the place to be seen. Celebrity sightings were regular occurrences, and the club's lofty, but malleable requirements to gain entry became the stuff of legend. Unfortunately, drug stings and investigations into Rubell and Schrager skimming money would lead to Studio 54's sudden derailment and eventual closure.

While much has been made in films both fictional and documentary about the legacy of Studio 54, Tyrnauer's film includes many perspectives that haven't been previously been put on the record. While Rubell, who died at the age of 45 from AIDS related complications, isn't around to speak on his own behalf, Tyrnauer represents his point of view nicely through carefully selected archival interviews and footage. Rubell's words rhyme nicely with those of Schrager, who provides Tyrnauer with the narrative backbone for his documentary. Previously reticent to look back on what he thinks were youthful mistakes and transgressions, Schrager, who has since bounced back as one of the people responsible for the boutique hotel boom, is as forthcoming and honest as he could possibly be. While Tyrnauer tries to press his main subject about many of the club's illegal activities, Schrager's very careful to only talk about the ones that have been proven in a court of law, sometimes brushing off the director's genuine concerns with a hearty chuckle. At the same time, Schrager seems to be using the chance to talk about Studio 54's meteoric rise and fall as a form of therapy and cautious reflection on the past.

Tyrnauer, who's been making a name for himself as one of today's preeminent documenters of queer culture on film with works like *Valentino: The Last Emperor* and *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*, looks beyond Rubell's man in the front and Schrager's behind the scenes brain to look at Studio 54 from all angles. Showing the least amount of interest for Studio 54's memory as a celebrity hotbed, Tyrnauer turns not to stars of the era to talk about their experiences, but to journalists, artists, and club workers to get a clearer picture of how the company worked and who knew what and when with regards to some of the darker business aspects. The approach is richer and more welcome than any sort of fawning or falsely laudatory look at Rubell and Schrager's creation could ever hope to be. Studio 54 looks at the personalities that shaped one of the greatest

## The Gate – October 13, 2018 (2 of 2)

hotspots in American history, and why it mattered to the people who created its image. The world already knows what the view from outside the club was like, and plenty of people knew the atmosphere inside its walls, but few films have ever looked at how enormously difficult it was to keep a place like Studio 54 afloat, giving proper due to those who might have been taken for granted in other projects (especially Schrager).

The pacing of Studio 54 is rather quick, launching into the club's successes almost as if they happened overnight and inside of a vacuum. Very little is made of the club scene that surrounded Studio 54 and the jealousy that festered between rival dancehalls until late in the film. There's not too much of a stage being set, and Studio 54 feels like someone kicking open a door and just letting everyone get to the good stuff immediately. It makes the film entertaining, but there's a larger cultural significance that's getting the short end of the stick here. If it didn't happen directly to Rubell and Schrager (or silent partner Jack Dushey, who breaks his silence here) or within the walls of the club, Studio 54 isn't particularly interested or invested in it, which is a bit of a shame in an otherwise well approached perspective.

The first hour paints a vivid picture of the nightclub's heyday, but the final thirty minutes of Studio 54 are where things really get good. As Schrager and Rubell grow in their confidence, so too do their laundry list of baffling gaffes. They were brought down basically because they were dumb enough to keep detailed records of their embezzlement. They inexplicably failed to secure a liquor license for over a year into the boozy club's operation. Drugs were so prevalent that even the most innocuous documents had traces of uncut cocaine on them. They had one of the most powerful and infamous attorneys in history, Roy Cohn (the subject of Tyrnauer's next documentary), and they still felt the need to shoot themselves in the foot by hiring 36 additional lawyers to muddy the waters. It's no wonder that Schrager sometimes laughs at the things they almost got away with because it all seems ludicrous in hindsight.

Studio 54 isn't a film that's meant to recreate what it was like to be on the dance floor or in the sex soaked balconies of the NYC mecca for late-70s glamour. It's a look at what it was like to be in the offices and the front lines, which is arguably a much more interesting story. The memory of Studio 54 will last for quite some time, and Tyrnauer's documentary ensures that the narrative from here on out regarding the club will remain thoughtfully balanced.

Studio 54 opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema and Cineplex Forum in Montreal on Friday, October 12, 2018. It expands to the Winnipeg Cinematheque on October 13, Princess Cinemas in Waterloo and The Vic in Victoria on October 19, and to Metro Cinemas in Edmonton on November 16.

## STUDIO 54: ENLIGHTENING DOC CAPTURES A MOMENT AND TELLS US WHICH ROLLING STONES HAD TO PAY TO GET IN

October 13, 2018

By Jim Slotek. Rating: B

There've been plenty of nostalgic backward glances at Studio 54, the flashpoint of the celeb-spiced disco era, and liberation signpost for gay pride. But most tend to concentrate, not on the showman who made it possible, but the show-off.

The show-off was the late Steve Rubell, while the showman was his best friend and business partner Ian Schrager

Rubell's aggressive spotlight-hogging is seen in all its needy glory in Matt Tyrnauer's documentary *Studio 54*. He's the guy who was portrayed as a virtual gargoye by Mike Myers in the 1998 movie *54*, and who's seen here in his famous role of velvet-rope judge, handpicking the "bridge and tunnel crowd" who lined up for a chance to get in and rub elbows (and maybe even dance with) Mick and Bianca Jagger, Liza Minnelli, Diana Ross and Sylvester Stallone.



Studio 54's Steve Rubell (left) and no-longer-silent partner Ian Schrager

(Even celebs sometimes barely met his standards – we're told the Rolling Stones got in, but only Mick and Keith got in for free).

But *Studio 54* gives equal time to the publicity-shunning Schrager, whose vision it was to buy and turn a former CBS studio theatre in a dangerous neighbourhood on 54th St. into a theatre of lusty, dancing humanity. He kept the motif and even opened the purse-strings for proto-Cirque du Soleil stage shows that could cost \$50,000 for a single night, just to provide kitschy gimmickry for the famous regulars.

It was a big-money gamble in the '70s (half a million dollars, largely coughed up by an investor named Jack Dushey), one that captured the imagination of the world and paid off to an extent that tempted fate. In another era, free and open sex and cocaine use would be enough to shut a nightclub down. But as recounted by Tyrnauer (Valentino: The Last Emperor), plain old greed and tax evasion (up to and including oddball stashes of huge amounts of cash) brought the whole thing to the ground and sent the pals to jail.



## Original-Cin – October 13, 2018 (2 of 2)

This is, as I say, much more Schrager's story than any previously told – mostly owing to the fact that Rubell died of AIDS in 1989 (though he kept his diagnosis secret right through to the obituaries). The quieter Schrager proved his acumen on his own as a global boutique hotelier, who was pardoned for his disco-era tax evasion by President Barack Obama.

There are nuggets in *Studio 54* that were new to me, including Rubell and Schrager shaving time off their prison sentences by providing evidence of tax fraud by their nightclub competitors (ie. ratting them out). The rest is history as mythology, interviews with surviving bar-staff (AIDS took its toll on both the patrons and the players) and archival footage of newly-out club-goers extolling their "safe place" and private paradise. In one particularly bizarre segment, a waaaay pre-cosmetic-surgery Michael Jackson praises his good friend Rubell as being genuine and real. It evokes a later interview with Elizabeth Taylor where she called Jackson, "one of the most normal people I know."

It's all pretty rosy, though legendary guitarist-producer and Chic frontman Nile Rodgers offers a thoughtful last word about the place, conflating the deep, late '70s/early '80s recession, and Middle American resentment, with the glamorous and licentious images they received about nightlife in New York. The movie cuts to the election of Ronald Reagan, with the suggestion that *Studio 54* might even have helped him get elected.

If there's a weakness to the documentary, it's that it has a documentary budget, and must make do with a second-tier soundtrack. When there are actual hits, it's one-hit stuff like Andrea True Connection's "More, More, More," which is cheaper than Donna Summer and The Village People, but does a poorer job of capturing the aural atmosphere of the Me Decade's ultimate shrine.

*Studio 54*. Directed by Matt Tyrnauer. Starring Ian Schrager, Steve Rubell, Nile Rodgers. Now playing at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

**Toronto Guardian – October 14, 2018**

## **Films on our radar at Planet in Focus Environmental Film Festival**

**GROUND WAR:** Andrew Nisker. Canada, 2018.

An intensely personal piece, Andrew Nisker's *Ground War* is an investigation into the death of the filmmaker's father. Harold Nisker was a "health nut," a man who exercised diligently. For decades, Harold played golf every day except for winter: it kept him fit and he loved the game. It was only after his father's shocking death by cancer that Andrew, an investigative documentarian, began to wonder why the golf course he played in was so uniformly green and manicured. His discovery that one of the chemicals used at the course was part of Agent Orange, the notorious "defoliant" that killed countless Vietnamese during the Vietnam War sets Nisker on a journey that takes him to the original quite weedy and bumpy Scottish golf course, Donald Trump's Americanized version of it, and a look at what causes cancer. *Ground War* asks a lot of questions –and many are not answered.

Sunday, October 28, 6:30pm. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

**BEYOND CLIMATE:** Ian Mauro, Canada. 2016.

Working with renowned environmental educator and broadcaster David Suzuki, filmmaker and professor Dr. Ian Mauro focuses on issues faced within British Columbia, which are all too typical of those experienced around the globe. Hosted by Suzuki, the doc begins in the mountains of BC, exploring the effects of record-breaking forest fires, and moves toward the Pacific coast, where the ocean is becoming more acidic. The salmon streams, so important for Indigenous life and culture are being affected by warming waters while pipeline development and oil shipping tanker spills threaten the entire eco-system of northern B.C.. *Beyond Climate* is a stunning, well-argued plea, which asks viewers to recognize the pressing issues of climate change in our own backyard and begin to adopt an environmentally respectful and low-carbon future, in which humans "move back and give nature a chance."

Friday, October 26, 7:00pm. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

Documentary subject Janae Kroc.

## ORIGINAL-CIN Q&A: TRANS BODY BUILDER DISCUSSES DOC THAT CAPTURES HER REBIRTH

October 15, 2018

By Liam Lacey



Canadian director Michael Del Monte's *Transformer*, which won audience awards at the Austin and Hot Docs film festivals, tells a story both unusual and topical.

The film follows a period in the life of Janae Marie Kroczaleski (who goes by Janae Kroc), a transgender woman who, until three years ago, was famous as world record-breaking powerlifter and body builder Matt "Kroc" Kroczaleski. The former high school football player and Marine known as "Kroc" presented an image of hyper-masculinity. But after being outed by a YouTube video in 2015, Kroc lost a sponsorship and her

job as a pharmacist, got the first-stage of gender reassignment surgery and participated in a film which opens on Friday (October 19). Kroc spoke to Original-Cin from her home in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

**Original-Cin: You've gone through some tremendous changes in a relatively short time. Can you take me back to the beginning of this ride?**

Janae Kroc: I was outed in July 2015 on a Monday, about 11 am. My phone started going crazy when I was at work. At first it was my friends saying, 'Hey, you've been outed.' I'd been out to my family and friends for about a decade and I was already out to the elite members of the powerlifting community and some sponsors. But my fans didn't know. I was waiting for my boys to graduate high school because I didn't want them to have to deal with a possible backlash of who I am.

After my friends called, then it was places like *Inside Edition* and *TMZ* and I'm like, 'You are kidding me?' For the next couple of months, my life was turned upside down. I decided if my story was going to be told I wanted to be the one who told it so I granted all the interviews and for a couple of months, all I did was talk about everything that was going on. On the bright side, it got me into activism and to open about everything a lot sooner, but it also caused a lot of turmoil.

**OC: Were reactions better or worse than you expected?**

JK: The reaction of the powerlifting community was about 50/50. I actually got more support than I expected. I knew my friends would stand by me but, of course, there's also a lot of hate. Most important to me, was my sons got through it OK and fortunately, all that went pretty smoothly. Some of their friends asked questions and we did hear about parents saying nasty things but no one ever said it directly to me or my boys.

**OC: Do you think the discipline of training and competing toughened you mentally for what you faced?**

JK: I've often said that in a sense, my success in powerlifting prepared me for coming out as trans. I was already used to doing interviews. I was used to being talked about on the Internet and being hated on. For the most part I'm the kind of person who, at this point in my life, my self-esteem is pretty decent, though I don't know if I could have handled this at other points in my life.

I'm naturally a kind of tough person mentally. I was always able to endure a lot but physical strength and emotional strength are a bit different. I've also been through some things in life: I grew up very poor, I had an alcoholic father and I learned to be independent at an early age. Marines helped prepare me mentally for things later on and I went through cancer in 2004. I'm a firm believer that adversity strengthens us.

I knew the possibility of being outed could happen anytime. I thought I was prepared but there were things I didn't foresee like Internet stalkers and people creating false social media pages with my name and people trying to blackmail me.

**OC: After you were outed, as we see in the film, you moved fairly quickly toward the first stage of your surgery. Did the experience meet with your expectations or was there some let-down?**

JK: The surgery was a great thing, for sure. It definitely helped me feel a lot better about being able to see myself on the outside more as I do on the inside though I underestimated the toll it would take. I've had seven or eight surgeries — powerlifting-related injuries and one for cancer and I didn't use painkillers. I'm the kind of person who does a lot of research and I have a high pain threshold. I spoke to a lot of people who had gone through this surgery and a lot of them kind of warned me that the facial surgery is the toughest part. People would think that the gender confirmation surgery, or bottom surgery as people refer to it, would be a bigger deal. I'm sure it might be for some people but I found the facial surgery the most physically and emotionally taxing. I had the surgery in Beverly Hills. I rented an Airbnb and went there by myself; like I said, I'm a very independent person. But that first week was really tough. I couldn't open my eyes enough to even drive and I was pretty much stuck in the apartment and really lonely. In hindsight, I wish I'd had someone to talk to but it was definitely the right decision and I'm very happy with the results.

**OC: Your transition got you fired from your pharmacist job. Have you worked again at your profession?**

JK: Yes, actually I'm working at a hospital now. I was out of pharmacy for about a year and during that period I was focusing on activism and speaking engagements and taking on clients for training in strength-related stuff. I was pretty financially strapped. I started this job in March; it was the first job I ever interviewed for as a woman. Everyone here has been very supportive.

**OC: With everything else going on, what convinced you to agree to having a film crew following you around?**

JK: When Michael (Del Monte) first approached me, my main concern was not being sensationalized and turned into a freak show because of my alpha-male background. Michael came from Toronto and sat down with me and just said, 'Look, I think your story is fascinating and people need to hear it.' My response was that my only goal was to educate people who don't understand and inspire people who are like me. I felt he was very honest and straightforward and I trusted him. I thought Michael did a great job. The experience of watching the film was like looking at home movies from the last couple of years. Nothing was scripted or planned. It's a very accurate reflection of my relationship with my boys and what my life's been like.

**OC: We're learning a lot more these days about the social isolation of transgender people, especially when they're young. Has your story led to other transgender people reaching out to you?**

## Original-Cin – October 15, 2018 (3 of 3)

JK: I couldn't tell you how many people have contacted me thanking me for being open and honest about my experience. Any time people want to know how many trans or LGBT people there are out there, I say the same thing: We have no idea. So many people are hiding and so many are terrified because of the stigma attached to it, possibly violence or losing your job. It's a heavy burden.

I knew by the time I was five or six that I was different and it wasn't OK to tell people about it. This was pre-social media, pre-Internet so I had no idea there was anyone in the world like me. I had no words to describe it. All I knew was that I was constantly fantasizing about being female, that I saw myself as a girl and I couldn't figure out why I felt that way. It made me feel guilty and ashamed. I felt broken.

**OC: There's a tremendous amount of discussion about transgender identity right now, including some conservatives who question the legitimacy of the idea. What's your take on this cultural moment?**

JK: I think it's a good thing there is more awareness, that social media allows people to share their stories and support each other. But there's a lot of hate and ignorance out there. People don't understand it so they want to write it off as a mental illness, or claim that it's trendy or cool somehow. I got one message from a former fan who asked me what it was like to completely sell out by pretending to be transgender to revive my dying career. First, I hadn't realized my career was dying but if I were trying to revive it, pretending to be trans wouldn't be the way. It amazes me anyone would imagine someone would go through all this to gain some popularity when it's exactly the opposite.

It turns your life upside down. My parents are still struggling to deal with it even though they've known a long time. My mom's side of the family is large and close-knit and about half of them haven't talked to me since this came out. I got disinvited to a wedding last year and I haven't been to a Thanksgiving or Christmas with my family in three or four years. My mother won't say it directly but basically, I'm not welcome unless I present as very masculine. To imagine anyone would do this for any reason — except they absolutely have to — is absurd.

That's why visibility is so important. I guarantee you that almost every person knows someone who's trans who they don't know about; either someone who's still hiding or who has already transitioned. If people could see all the trans people out there, they'd realize we're like everyone else except for our gender identity. We have the same hopes and dreams and feelings for our families. I hope that people will see the film and that's one of the things they'll garner from it: That I'm like everyone else, trying to figure out who I am and to feel comfortable in my skin. My situation may be a little more extreme than many. But I hope people can relate to that.

*Transformer*. Directed by Michael Del Monte. With Janae Kroc. Opens in select theatres October 19.



## Canadian docs in demand, but accessibility still an issue: Report

By **Playback Daily**

October 18, 2018

While it's now easier than ever to find documentary content, Canadian audiences still have a hard time sourcing local docs, according to Hot Docs' latest study on Canadian documentary viewing habits.

The new report, titled "2018 Documentary Audience Reach," builds off of the organization's 2014 report prepared by Communications MDR, and examines Canadian audiences viewing habits amidst changes in technology, culture and the market.

The report, based on responses from more than 3,600 doc-lovers, found there is a strong demand for Canadian documentaries, with 90% of respondents agreeing it's important that Canadians have access to Canadian documentaries (62% said they strongly agree). This represents a 30% increase compared to Hot Docs 2014 report.

Despite this increase in demand, Canadian audiences are still having trouble finding homegrown projects. Less than half (47%) of respondents said they can easily find and watch Canadian docs. Moreover, a staggering 91% of Canadian doc-lovers report they would watch even more documentaries, if they were more accessible and knew where to find them.

That said, progress has been made: only 7% of respondents in the 2014 report said they could easily source docs.

So where are viewers watching doc content? Audiences primarily watch docs at home (94%), followed by the cinema (79%), according to the study. The report noted that fewer respondents said they're watching documentaries in theaters via a film festival (64%) compared to its 2014 study (81%). In its recent report, Hot Docs suggested this difference could be attributed to the 2018 survey being distributed to a larger pool.

When audiences aren't at the cinema they turn to Netflix (72%), followed by YouTube (54%) and a cable or satellite package (37%). Other platforms used by audiences include NFB.ca (15%), Amazon Prime (12%), CraveTV (9%), Kanopy (8%), Facebook (14%) and iTunes (13%). This closely mirrors Hot Docs' 2014 study, which saw the U.S. streamer come in as the most popular paid platform (52%).

The key influencers for finding out about documentaries continue to be articles and/or reviews (72%) and recommendations from family and friends (70%), however 76% of respondents listed film trailers as a very important/somewhat important decision making tool.

The Hot Docs 2018 Documentary Audience Reach study was funded by Ontario Creates (formerly the OMDC), Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB).

A total of 3,607 online questionnaires were completed between June 12 and July 30 of this year, and were sent to respondents via email and social media by Hot Docs and outreach partners ClIFF, Creative BC, the imagineNATIVE Film Festival, Inside Out, Knowledge Network, TVO, the NSI and more.

From Playback Daily, written by Lauren Malyk

<http://realscreen.com/2018/10/18/canadian-docs-in-demand-but-access-and-knowledge-still-an-issue-report/>

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# Hot Docs Releases New Documentary Audience Report

Posted on October 18th, 2018 • [0 Comments](#)



By Pat Mullen

Audiences love documentaries and want more of them! Hot Docs [released the results of a 2018 survey](#) today that revealed a strong demand for documentary. The report drew upon a crowd-sourced survey that took place this summer. Over 3600 doc fans shared their viewing habits. These findings offer valuable tools for documentary filmmakers in a shifting and increasingly fragmented market. This survey builds upon the 2014 Hot Docs report “Learning from Documentary Audiences.” <https://www.hotdocs.ca/i/learning-from-documentary-audiences>

The report noted that documentary consumption was up with 55% of respondents saying they watch more non-fiction films now than they did three years ago. 72% of respondents said they watch two or more docs per month. Respondents cited a wider range and availability of documentaries as key factors in their consumption. Notably, 71% of respondents attributed their uptick in viewing to the fact that there were more documentaries of interest now than there were previously.

However, 53% of respondents attributed the rise in documentary consumption to the greater availability of docs in cinemas, compared to 46% who said there are more documentaries available to access on TV than there were previously. 41% said the same for online.

Despite a rise in appetite, the number of respondents who said they see docs in movie theatres declined. 79% of respondents said they see films at a movie theatre, while a whopping 94% of participants admitted to watching their documentaries in the comfort of their own homes. Netflix sat atop the home viewing empire and accounted for 72% of the responses when participants noted how they viewed docs outside the theatre. This number for the streaming platform increased by 21% since the 2014 report.

Other streaming services cited for documentaries were YouTube (54%), NFB.ca (15%), library services (14%), Kanopy [also via library] (8%), and Facebook (14%). iTunes came in with 13% of respondents saying they used the service for documentaries and only 9% cited Vimeo on Demand, while 11% said they watched docs directly from a film’s website. iTunes dropped one percent from the previous survey while Vimeo on Demand held the same percentage. 23% of respondents also said they like good old-fashioned DVDs and Blu-rays. Of paid subscription services, Netflix dominated with 71% of respondents saying they watched docs via membership. Amazon Prime, relatively new to Canada, came in second at 15%, while Crave, Sundance Now, and Mubi came in with 9%, 2%, and 1%, respectively.

In terms of what audiences are watching, feature films remained the preferred format, despite dropping 7 points from the previous survey to land at 85% of respondents. Other formats included television feature

## POV Magazine – October 18, 2018 (2 of 2)

documentaries (69%), television series (60%), short docs (56%), radio or podcast documentaries (51%), and interactive documentary (31%). VR trailed with only 8% of respondents saying they used it for documentary.

Discoverability remained the key issue preventing audiences from seeing more documentaries either in theatres or at home. (An easy solution is to [subscribe to a documentary magazine](#) or a [documentary magazine's newsletter](#).) 50% of respondents said they would watch more documentaries if they had more information about documentaries of interest. 37% replied that they would watch more documentaries if they knew when and where docs were playing in the theatres. On the other hand, only 31% of audiences said they'd watch more docs if they knew where to find them online.

Respondents said that movie trailers were key when it came to deciding what to watch. 76% of participants deemed trailers very important. This figures offers one easy solution for filmmakers and distributors: have a preview ready while launching your film, regardless of the platform!

While a high number of participants emphasized the importance of trailers, previews only ranked third when respondents were asked to rank the influences on their decision making. Doc fans cited recommendations from articles or reviews as the most important influence on their decision making, followed by curation from trusted sources, such as a film festival, repertory cinema or subscription service, and recommendations from trusted online sources, such as blogs or user forums.

The study concluded that filmmakers can best reach audiences by making direct communication with audiences through tools such as social media, particularly Facebook, in order to raise awareness for a documentary throughout its life cycle. 69% of respondents said that they made plans to see a documentary after noting online buzz, likes, and shares about the doc by friends and family. With more audiences going online, the report underscored the value of marketing that highlighted the “when” and “where” of availability.

## Review: Dark Money

[Andrew Parker](#). October 25, 2018 10:49 am



### Dark Money 7.5 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Bone chilling and eye opening, director Kimberly Reed's *Dark Money* exposes the frequently sickening truth behind American political campaign finance and why it's so hard to reform a hopelessly broken system. Utilizing a non-partisan approach to expose the spreading of misinformation and lies via corporately funded smear campaigns carefully crafted to dupe and scare voters into casting their ballots for candidates backed by bottomless coffers, *Dark Money* is a shocking and necessary conversation starter. In her second feature, Reed eloquently looks at one state's fight to keep running for elected office fair and focused on the real issues, and more importantly at why campaign finance reform should be the gateway to looking at all other political issues.

Reed spends most of her time in the state of Montana, where citizens learned long before the rest of the United States that politics and big business shouldn't mix. After copper mining kings (whose now abandoned and enormous open pits are growing ecological disasters) were able to buy their way into government, the state said never again. In 1912, Montana passed legislation that said no corporation could contribute more money to a campaign than an average citizen, which in 2016 money would've been just over \$600. Almost one hundred years later via the Citizens United case, the United States Supreme Court would controversially – in what's regarded at this point in history as their worst decision – completely remove all regulations on how much corporations could spend on local, state, and federal elections, basically saying that multibillion dollar multinational corporations could spend whatever they want on whomever they want. Previously, only the infamous Koch Brothers were noted as being politically active billionaires who were willing to establish numerous fake non-profit organizations with the only intention being to send out misleading flyers, billboards, and literature to attack candidates in various areas that didn't fall in line with their special interests. It turned out very quickly that the Kochs were only the tip of a larger iceberg that was waiting for the day deregulation of campaign laws would finally arrive. While most other states with similar regulations on the books would roll over and stop fighting the high court's ruling, the people of Montana – who were embroiled in a major electoral scandal where hardline republicans were caught trying to enact a ten year plan to "purge" all moderate members of their own party out of office – would continue to fight.

*Dark Money*, which refers to the unseen, virtually untraceable sources of cash that pay for smear campaigns, finds a perfect case study on the nature of shady political contributions. Instead of travelling to a hotbed of liberal activity, Reed focuses squarely on the struggles faced by one of the most traditionally conservative states in the union. It's as blue collar and agrarian a place as one's likely to get in the U.S.; a state so sparsely populated and insular that all of its state representatives have to hold down day jobs on the side because being a legislator doesn't pay them enough throughout the year. There are a few elected democrats who become targeted in a wide reaching plot to flood the state halls of representation and justice with corporate money, but for the most part, *Dark Money* focuses on the curious story of republicans being dragged through the mud by other republicans, simply because they



## The Gate – October 25, 2018 (2 of 2)

refuse to take a seemingly easy payoff and that they had the gall to ask where the money was coming from. Most documentaries about politics these days preach solely towards its intended partisan demographic, but *Dark Money* is the rare example of a film that can cross those increasingly thicker lines with immediacy, intelligence, and well researched facts.



These groups would make themselves known in the fine print of mailers, handouts, and television commercials with seemingly official sounding names like Americans for Prosperity, Western Tradition Partnership, Mothers Against Child Predators, and Montana Citizens for Right to Work, but no matter what issue on a ballot they were trying to skew into their favour, they're all corporate fronts designed to funnel money at arm's length into campaigns of politicians who'll act more favourably to the conglomerates that are secretly behind them. The battle against fake news really begins with these corporate string pullers, who, in many places, also own major media outlets. Reed follows former *Great Falls Tribune* journalist John Adams as he attempts to untangle the web of corruption facing the people of Montana, but it's almost soul crushing difficult to behold.

It's even worse for lawmakers and regulators to try to hold these shell companies accountable. Money can't buy wealthy power brokers everything they want, but it buys them a lot of impunity that has only grown more powerful now that the Supreme Court basically stated that corporations have the same free speech and spending rights as average, everyday Americans. The key difference is that you can't arrest a corporation for fraud, and suing them only emboldens them at worst and gives them a financial slap on the wrist at best. If the unjustly skewed rhetorical rules being employed by corporations as depicted in *Dark Money* don't make you angry and concerned, you probably get paid handsomely by such a group to think otherwise or you've simply given up any last shred of your morality.

Reed doesn't have to dig too deeply as a filmmaker to discover these harsh truths about American politics, and she never interjects with her own opinions. The people she talks to in Montana – as well as Colorado and Wisconsin where similar issues have taken root in the courts – are more than willing to pour their hearts and souls into a quest for the truth. Their stories are personal, informative, and frequently emotional. People have had their lives professional lives ruined by outlandish, factless smear campaigns while running for political offices that many everyday citizens take for granted or never pay much attention to. *Dark Money* reminds viewers that all politics are local, and it's up to individual communities to fight back against public interests. Naturally, few people who work for shadow corporations are willing to talk, but they few willing to engage with Reed simply throw up their hands and espouse the more libertarian than conservative viewpoint of "that's the game, so what else are you gonna do?"

*Dark Money* does get bogged down a bit and somewhat repetitive in its final twenty minutes once the Montana court cases begin their proceedings, but everything that comes before it is one of the year's more vital documentaries. Accountability for corporate hands in electoral coffers can't be found without change and transparency. Here's hoping *Dark Money* can wake more than a few people up to that fact.

***Dark Money* screens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on October 23, 24, and 26.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/036277/review-dark-money/>

## HELEN ZALTZMAN BRINGS HER PODCAST TO THE STAGE

By: [Michael Fraiman](#) | October 31, 2018



Helen Zaltzman

Helen Zaltzman gets why some people might not like podcasts. But what she doesn't get is when they write them off entirely. She's heard people say that they tried listening to a podcast once, but didn't like it, so that must mean they won't like any podcasts at all.

"Nobody says, 'I tried one TV show and I didn't like it, so I'm never going to watch TV again,' " she says.

Despite the medium's relative obscurity – fewer than half of all Americans have ever listened to a podcast, according to Edison Research – the genre's popularity is climbing. As of June, there were more than 550,000 podcasts on iTunes. The medium has grown big enough for Hot Docs to launch an annual podcast festival in Toronto, at which Zaltzman will be performing on Nov. 4.

She'll be onstage for a 75-minute live production of *The Allusionist*, her three-year-old linguistics podcast that delves into the quirks and stories behind the English language. The show often becomes a vehicle for her personal philosophy toward language: a push against the monolithic idea of an immutable English, and toward a more compassionate take on how we use words.

"Delving into how language works and why we use it the way we do is ultimately about being an empathetic human being," she explains.

"Ultimately, it is about communicating. The particulars of how you do that are less important than if you manage to understand what they mean."

Zaltzman began podcasting 12 years ago, when her friend, Olly Mann, approached her with the idea of starting what would become *Answer Me This!*, one of the most famous podcasts during the medium's rise in the early part of this decade.

"I didn't have a reason to say no, so I said yes," she recalls. "Then we had to figure out how it all worked."

They recorded it in Zaltzman's living room with no real budget or professional equipment. In the show, they answered listeners' questions, but without social media, soliciting emails was even harder than it would be today. Nonetheless, a devoted community quickly formed around the show.

"It would be very difficult to do now what we did," she says, partly because there are so many podcasts and a relatively small audience pool. "Even at the time, it felt like a crowded market." Now, that market is even more saturated.

"I don't think there are too many podcasts, but I think not everything needs to be a podcast," she says. Some shows, particularly ones that don't take advantage of the intimacy and personality of audio, would be better as written articles or columns.

In 2013, after she'd won numerous awards in the radio and podcast world, she was approached by Roman Mars, a major figure at the podcast network Radiotopia and the host of *99% Invisible*, a podcast about the hidden stories behind famous designs. He asked if she had any ideas she'd been sitting on that Radiotopia could recruit her for.

Her pitch? "His show, *99% Invisible*, but for words," she says. She's always been interested in language, and studied English and Medieval English at university. That show, *The Allusionist*, has since ascended to become the most popular language podcast around. Most episodes hover around 20 minutes, making it a pleasantly approachable alternative to denser, longer language podcasts like *Slate's Lexicon Valley* or *A Way With Words*.

In Toronto, Zaltzman will perform a special live show she's been touring throughout North America. Her husband, musician Martin Austwick, will join her, making it much more of a performance than simply a live version of her podcast. "I came from a live performance background before podcasting," she says. "It's a very different audience – I like the fact that it's just happening there and then, and it's different every time."

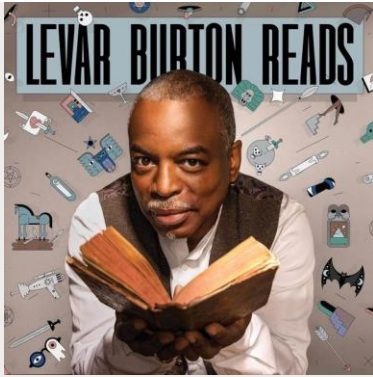
*Helen Zaltzman will perform as part of the Hot Docs Podcast Festival at 12:30 p.m. on Nov. 4. For tickets, go to [hotdocscinema.ca/c/podcast](http://hotdocscinema.ca/c/podcast).*

## When it comes to storytelling, LeVar Burton is over the rainbow

BRAD WHEELER

PUBLISHED OCTOBER 30, 2018UPDATED OCTOBER 30, 2018

COMMENTS



“Let’s take a deep breath” is how LeVar Burton begins LeVar Burton Reads, a popular podcast dedicated to short stories. Burton, known from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the landmark miniseries *Roots* and the PBS children’s series *Reading Rainbow*, believes in the big inhale. “I think any opportunity to take a deep breath is an opportunity well spent,” the 61-year-old says. “I know I need to take more deep breaths in my life. “

On Friday, the oxygenated actor brings his podcast to the Hot Docs Podcast Festival for a live reading of author Austin Clarke’s *Four Stations in his Circle*. Before setting out for a short tour, Burton spoke with *The Globe and Mail* from his home in Los Angeles.

Say a person doesn’t know LeVar Burton from Richard Burton. Why should they go see your live podcast show?

I would assume that anybody in that situation would be interested purely because they love to be read to, or they love storytelling, or they have an appreciation for the short story as an art form. There are plenty of reasons that have nothing to do with needing to know who I am or what I’ve done in the past.

*Reading Rainbow* ran from 1983 to 2006. How do your fans from that series see you now? As a former teacher? An uncle? An old babysitter?

You’re probably better off asking them. But I think there’s a comfort and a comfortability that exists between that generation and myself. Certainly a familiarity, if not comfortability. Because I’m a part of their childhood, I occupy a special place in their lives. They’re at an age now where they can appreciate nostalgia. And for a lot of them it wasn’t only from *Reading Rainbow*, it was also from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. And then you throw *Roots* in there, and there’s a cultural touchstone in my career as well. But it’s not easily defined, I suppose. It’s pretty amorphous. That’s what I am, an amorphous blob.

Amorphous or not, how does it feel to be a part of someone’s nostalgia?

I don't think about it all that often. When I do, like right now, thanks to you, I'll feel old. But I guess I'm okay with it. There's nothing I can do about it, you know? Given an opportunity, I would not go back and rewrite my life so as to produce a different outcome. I'm fine with how people see me.

What is it about short stories that appeal to you?

I'm a big fan, going back to being a kid and reading Ring Lardner and O. Henry. I've always felt there's a particular mastery involved in being a writer who can deliver a compelling character or characters in an interesting situation in 35 pages or less. And, oftentimes, having a twist at the ending.

You're a fan of the late science-fiction writer Gardner Dozois. Given your love of sci fi, getting the role of Lieutenant-Commander Geordi La Forge in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* must have meant more to you than just a landing a great acting gig.

Way more, yeah. It's difficult to express how important the original *Star Trek* was to me as a kid. I'm a firm believer that, absent one's own reflection in popular culture, it's really difficult to grow up with a healthy self-image. So, *Star Trek* was one of the reliable places where I could see people who looked like me on TV. And with Nichelle Nichols, who played Lieutenant Uhura, her presence was not token. She was part of the bridge crew. She was part of the command structure. [Star Trek creator] Gene Roddenberry's vision of the future was one that represented people like me.

Roddenberry envisioned a postracial society. And I think, with the election of President Obama, it seemed we were getting somewhere along those lines. What happened?

You want me to explain the current state of cultural affairs in North America? Oh my god, I'm woefully ill-equipped. I do agree with you, though. It does seem we are emerging from a period where we had a different idea of ourselves in Canada and the United States, in terms of race relations. And now what's happening today seems quite contrary to that. But asking me to explain that is like asking me to explain warp technology.

That was actually going to be my next question.

Ask and answered, in that case. [Laughs.] Ask and answered.

This interview has been condensed and edited.

The Hot Docs Podcast Festival and Creators Forum takes place Nov. 1 to 5, at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema; LeVar Burton Reads is performed live Nov. 2, 6:30 p.m. ([hotdocscinema.ca](http://hotdocscinema.ca))



## CRIMINAL'S PHOEBE JUDGE ON TRUE CRIME, TRUE LOVE & THE FUTURE OF PODCASTING



POSTED ON OCTOBER 30, 2018

*Criminal's* Phoebe Judge is the co-host of [This Is Love](#), a new podcast that uses “true crime investigative techniques to dissect matters of the heart.” The series focuses on a different relationship with each episode, and the stories told are at turns funny, gut-wrenching and heartwarming. We asked Judge about the series, how love and crime are similar, and what it feels like to be a podcasting superstar.

### **SDTC: How'd you come up with the idea for *This Is Love*?**

PJ: I think four years ago when we created *Criminal*, we always had an idea that at some point we'd want to do a show that wasn't about crime. While we were totally interested in crime, there are a million other fascinating topics in the world that we wanted to explore.

After four years, we thought to ourselves that now is the time to try something new, to stretch our wings a bit. What are other topics we can explore the broad definition of like we'd done with crime? Well, love. That would be exciting to us because we could push boundaries again of what the word means. We decided to do it.

### **What do stories of true love and true crime have in common?**

Just that they're so varied. There's no one thing that makes something a true crime or true love story. These are just stories about the human experience in some way.

### **Why do we enjoy the postmortem of each?**

I think we're just interested in how they can help shape and inform our own lives and experience. All we want to do is figure out why people do the things they do. What gets them to that place? I think people are genuinely curious about others, and about other life experiences. So we want to learn more.

A lot of times, topics like love and crime are taboo in some way. They're not talked about widely. They're private. That's why I think people are so intrigued by them. Because all these things touch on our own lives; we might not have direct experience with them, but we're curious because maybe they could happen to us.

### **How did you select the stories?**

## She Does the City – October 30, 2018 (2 of 2)

We wanted to show a broad range of what the word love means, a broad range of stories. We wanted to do things that didn't just touch on romantic love. That was really important. It wasn't going to be just boy-meets-girl stories. These were going to be stories of all different shapes of love.

So, of course, we had some relationship stories. We also had stories about a woman's experience swimming with a baby whale, and a family starting a restaurant. We wanted to surprise the listener, so that meant thinking about different geographical regions, male and female speakers, different races, different backgrounds. We wanted to have a really broad range of experiences.

### **Why do we long for genuine love stories now?**

I think people have always been longing for love stories; they make us feel good. They make us feel connected in some way. This is a time in the world when there is a lot going on. There's a lot of bad news. We were happy to create a show that made people feel good.

### **Voice is so important. Is that something you're conscious of when you're selecting subjects? Have you ever turned down someone because they sounded irritating?**

[Laughs] We'll take any voice as long as they can tell a good story.

### **Is it weird for you to be a podcasting star? Have you been recognized?**

I have been recognized a few times on the telephone, and it's always very funny and surprising to me. I don't think I'd ever call myself a podcasting star, but I'd rather be a podcasting star than a television star, [because] you can go undetected in the world. When someone does recognize your voice (it rarely happens), it's a lot of fun.

### **What would you do if you weren't making podcasts?**

I'd probably be a fisherman [laughs]. I love to cook. I just went on a police ride-along for *Criminal*, and it made me think that I might want to be a police officer.

### **What do you love about the medium?**

I love that there are no rules. Before Lauren Spohrer and I created *Criminal*, we were both working for a public radio show. So you had to tell a story in seventeen minutes, [or] in twenty-four minutes, and there was no getting around that.

There were also editors. Now we are our own editorial board. We tell the story in as long a time that it needs to be told, which is actually very short because we don't want to waste anyone's time. But the freedom of it is what I like so much.

### **How do you see it evolving?**

I think it's going to keep growing. I mean, look what's happened to podcasting in the last four years. What we do know is that people are moving towards this on-demand entertainment and, in this world of media and graphics and video and more advanced television systems, are still drawn to just the sound of the human voice. I'm so heartened by that—that this is still speaking to people. I don't think that's going to change.

Phoebe Judge is a special guest at this year's [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#), happening November 1-5. Grab tickets [here](#).

<http://www.shedoesthecity.com/criminals-phoebe-judge-on-true-crime-true-love-the-future-of-podcasting>



AUTHOR [SHEDOESTHECITY](#)

## MISSING HISTORY: SECRET LIFE OF CANADA CO-HOSTS LEAH SIMONE BOWEN AND FALEN JOHNSON REVEAL THE HIDDEN CHAPTERS OF CANADIAN HISTORY

POSTED ON OCTOBER 29, 2018

With a mission to share our country's untold—or under-told—stories, *The Secret Life of Canada* is now in their second season on CBC Podcasts and has twenty-two episodes under their belt. Co-hosts Leah Simone Bowen and Falen Johnson have covered a lot of ground when it comes to Canadian history. Together, they have quirky, whip-smart conversations about pieces of Canadian history that seem to have been left out of the narrative when they were learning history in school. We were curious to ask them what crucial lessons we are missing. What needs to get more time and attention in our education system?

### 1. There was slavery in Canada.

**Leah:** For over 200 years, people of African descent and Indigenous people were enslaved by British and French settlers. The only narrative I heard about in school, as it pertained to slavery in Canada, was about the Underground Railroad. While that is a critical and important part of our history as Canadians, omitting any mention of people who were enslaved in Canada before the Underground Railroad paints a very different story of who we are as a country.

### 2. There are over 600 nations of Indigenous people in Canada.

**Falen:** The oversimplification of nationhood in Canada is a real problem. When I was in school, Indigenous people were divided into a few basic categories: North-West Coastal, Eastern Woodland, or Sub-Arctic. These oversimplifications confused the hell out of me. Canada has over 600 nations within it, and those nations have different customs, languages, histories and world views. We are related in some ways, but vastly different in others.

### 3. After English and French, Mandarin is the most spoken language in Canada.

**Leah:** The first Chinese people arrived on this land in 1788, so it's no surprise that their contributions in Canada run deep, but I never heard any Chinese history growing up. Chinese men built the railroad, connected this country, and faced systematic barriers as the government enacted laws like the Chinese head tax, which

## She Does the City – October 29, 2018 (2 of 2)

restricted immigration. Hate groups like the Asiatic Exclusion League started popping up and caused riots and looting of Chinese and other Asian-Canadian businesses. The community persevered and that is why Mandarin and Cantonese are some of the [most frequently spoken languages in Canada today](#).

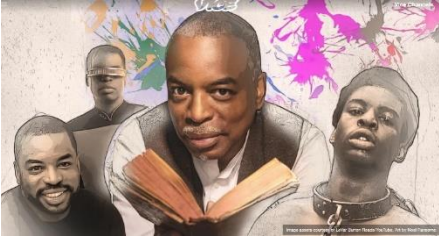
### 4. The Residential School System was a thing.

**Falen:** I didn't learn about the Residential School System in school. It wasn't until I was a teen and watched the movie [Where the Spirit Lives](#) that I first learned anything about the system. The film was seminal in educating people across Canada about this government- and church-imposed system. I should also mention that I grew up twenty minutes away from one of the oldest residential schools in Canada, so not knowing about the schools is pretty shocking. I also didn't know until I was in my twenties that the last school closed in 1996.

### 5. Indigenous people saved Europe!

**Falen:** Indigenous people have made many contributions to the world in many ways, including agriculture. When Columbus (Boo! Boo! Hiss!) landed in the Caribbean, he was totally lost. He wasn't in India, but he did find riches—[North American Indigenous foods](#). Foods like tomatoes, corn, squash, beans, and so many others. He would take some of these foods back to Europe with him, which would eventually begin to be cultivated in Europe. In a post-plague Europe where seventy-five million people had died, these foods would aid in the health and growth of Europeans.

*Follow The Secret Life of Canada on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). The Secret Life of Canada will join other celebrated storytellers on stage at the annual [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#). Don't miss out on this remarkable festival that celebrates beloved voices, both local and international, who are sharing conversations and stories that resonate deeply. Check out The Secret Life of Canada on Monday, November 5 at 9:00 p.m. Get [tickets](#) now.*



## LeVar Burton Has a Message for Nonreaders Like Donald Trump

We talked to the famed 'Star Trek' actor about his past, present, and future.

*This article originally appeared on [VICE Canada](#).*

I still remember the first time I watched *Roots*.

It was October 1989, and I was finally crowned old enough to join the grown-up business of late night television with my mom as an onlooker. Our wood-paneled TV sat in its corner, with me bouncing from the floor, to my stomach, just before latching onto my mom's lap. A man named Kunta Kinte was being whipped via my television screen for refusing to refer to himself as "Tony"—his slave designation. Before that moment, slavery and racism was an abstract concept from a picture book, but this felt real. It felt personal. With his mutilation hurting my eyes, I turned away and cried.

I cried for most of that week.

As I've grown, that image has stuck with me; the face of LeVar as a 19-year-old having the courage to be the face of that pain. It's what motivated me to confront topics of racism, and moving forward, I've often wondered how he felt about taking on that responsibility.

"Sharing an enthusiasm has been my soul and core intent," LeVar "Kunta Kinte" Burton, reveals in a phone call. "The actual outcome of that has been generations of people that hold me in high regard, it was never, not even slightly the expressed goal."

It's a hard thing to believe. After all, he was one of the few men that took the time to teach children like myself through the 70s, 80s, and 90s how to read through *Reading Rainbow*. I read my very first book back to front because of the man. The name of the book was *Momma Don't Allow*. And as if that wasn't enough, Burton found the time to move from working on the ground, to working in the stars as the fictional Lieutenant Commander Geordi La Forge—arguably the most intelligent officer on Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

In short, Burton took on the representation of a black struggle at the age of 19, but he also became the manifestation of optimism with a black face. Now, at the age of 61, he's still rocking the same belly laugh, while



## VICE – October 26, 2018 (2 of 6)

directing, acting, and reading to past and future generations through *LeVar Burton Kids* and *LeVar Burton Reads*. I had the amazing opportunity, just a week and change before my birthday, to ask this global treasure about the pressures of being an unblemished icon with a love for literature. And of course to draw his opinions about a certain non-reading president.

As corny as this is going to come off right now, there's no way I'm not typing this.

**You don't have to take my word for it.**

**VICE:** Listen, I'm sure you hear this a lot, but you're one of the reasons why I even write for a living, especially as a black writer. Seeing someone that looked like me, and spoke stories into existence—it meant the world to me.

**LeVar Burton:** Oh man, I really appreciate hearing that brother.

**I wonder about when you have these moments to sit down and take in comments like this. How do you not get overwhelmed over the generations of people who hold you at that high regard?**

Well for me, being not only someone that can read, but a reader for life has always been a badge of honor for my family. My intention all along has been to simply share that same enthusiasm for the written word because as you can tell from my life, I know full well the benefits of being a literate human being. And I know how books have helped to shape my own life. Sharing an enthusiasm has been my soul and core intent. The actual outcome of that has been generations of people that hold me in a high regard. It was never, not even slightly, the expressed goal at all [laughs], the goal was to just read and do my thing. Plain and simple.



'The Community' courtesy of NBC

**So what was the actual intent to start out?**

Oh, definitely to make a living like every other person out there [laughs]. But also to follow this thing called my passion you know. I had options before me. I was getting praise and I'm here getting a full scholarship at several universities and I chose the University of Southern California that provided the best opportunities to eventually become an actor.

**Yeah, and you became several faces within that space relatively quick. From *Roots*, representing race relations, to *Reading Rainbow* and *Star Trek*. I always wondered how you were able to steer clear of self-destruction like so many other early celebs.**

Yeah. Fame is extremely difficult to navigate through no matter how old you are. In my case, I was just lucky

enough to always have people around me that loved and cared for my well-being, and were willing, most importantly, to be honest with me. When I was of the mind that I could become some athlete, they were present to remind me that, no no no, biologically, that's not going to happen [laughs]. So more than anything, people with whom I've been comfortable with and who've I've been able to hold accountable to my most highest expression have been integral to my development.

**Who are some of those people that keep you in check?**

Oh man, my wife is certainly one of them. I also have a group of male friends that act as my council of accountability. Five or six close friends of mine who are committed to supporting each other through thick and thin. We've actually done this once a week for a couple of hours. And I'll say, it's been about two to three years now that I've been doing this on the regular.

**That's interesting. When did you decide that these group sessions were so necessary?**

You know... it came out of a period of my life when I was really searching for the methodologies of being more successful at general living. I saw that I had this opportunity in my life to slow down and think about this. And like with all of us, when you're on the move, it's those self-destructive tendencies that can potentially sabotage the whole damn thing. I'll say that I reached a point when I definitely wanted to avoid that. So it ultimately became about looking for more successful ways of living a life that can coexist with the fame. You know the cycle. You go through the process. You do the research, and you expose yourself to as much as you possibly can. That which makes sense, you embrace like I did, and that which doesn't make sense, you just keep on walking. But that rigorous relationship with self-introspection was really key here.



LeVar Burton and his mother, Erma Jean Burton. Courtesy of [Twitter](#)

**I want to talk about your mom in the role of your development, who I know you love to mention. Just how integral was she?**

Let me tell you, there is no person more important in my life. Certainly no one more influential. And since her passing this year, my heart has been really full of her legacy, especially more so now that she's gone. She was my everything, my teacher, taskmaster, and arbiter of taste *[laughs]*. She was my cheerleader, disciplinarian, and as a single parent, she became my everything. She had the ability to wear multiple hats, and indeed she did.

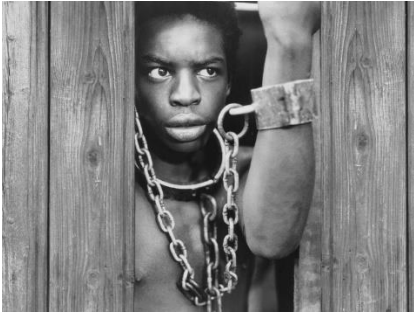
**I can relate. I was raised by a single parent myself, but I could never admit to following my mother's orders whenever she just told me to read. What did your mom do that was so effective for you?**

Certainly where literature is concerned as I've spoken about in the past, she was effective. But it extended to other areas of our relationship. You have to understand that my mom was a doer. She wouldn't just say you should read more, I would watch her read all the time. It's what she was always doing. We'd look into the everyday newspaper when I was a kid. We would have family dinners and we'd talk about the current events, the news reel, and we'd go from the Vietnam War all the way to the civil rights movement. We were that kind of active family. A family that was proactive in the lives we were trying to develop and pursue in the 60s and 70s in America.

**And when I say integral, I mean, you had to have had a really solid foundation to become the first mainstream representation of slavery in America when you took on *Roots*. I think a lot of people underestimate just how dangerous and risky that would have been in the 70s.**

Oh yeah, I mean when you think about it, black people in North America really had a love and hate relationship with being black in the 1970s, for rightful reasons. I mean, hello *[laughs]*. So that response to *Roots* was a two-pronged affair from the black community. Some were enormously proud to see a reflection of this dark past presented to audiences around the country. And some were just ashamed to acknowledge it as so deeply a part of our past. They

really wanted to step away from the idea of an enslaved America... it's an ongoing conversation. But you can't have a conversation about America in any way, shape, or form without having a conversation about slavery and institutional racism that birthed and followed it. It was the foundation for the things we love today. To discount that, and continually try to ignore that is harmful. It should be obvious by now, but we can never move forward unless we firmly handle that which came before. We've yet to successfully handle this original sin of America. We just haven't and ever since then, we've continued to struggle with it.



Courtesy of Warner Bros. Television

**While many of us continue to ignore it, as if we were post-racial.**

Exactly. To be frank, it's really clear to me that we're never going to be close to a post-racial society until we consistently acknowledge the racialization of America, and how we even managed to get here.

**But what was that like in the aftermath? I could imagine you are walking down these streets with you being recognized as the face of Kunta Kinte. I'm sure you've had experiences.**

Plenty.

**Well, tell me a few.**

I'll never forget being at an airport when this brother came running across this crowded lobby. He couldn't believe he was standing in front of Kunta Kinte. I eyed him and immediately admired his African dress and every section of what he was wearing from his pants to his tunic. This brother notices, strips down to his bare undergarments right in front of me, and insists that I take his clothes. This man intensely felt the need to give me something because he felt that I had given him something in return.

Even in the country Suriname, a small place on the coast of South America, there are songs written about Kunta Kinte. When I stepped out on those grounds and heard the words, it just took me out. It takes me out every time. I mean, I repeat, there are songs written about this character. This is a country with a black population that was a part of a 200-year guerrilla war with the Dutch, and they won. So these are a people who value the warrior aesthetic very highly. But... it's still so weird for me to be on both sides of that lens. Because I certainly get the historical and global significance of Kunta having played him. But I always feel very protective of him as well being as proud because he's very personal to me. So when I hear people say, "I don't want to hear about any more *Roots*," or, "I ain't gonna watch no more *Roots*, nobody wants that shit anymore, that was years ago" ...it's like.

**Like Snoop Dogg.**

[Laughs] Right? I'm like woah, hold up. Don't go blaming the narrator and don't blame the story. A story is someone's story. I get that you're not comfortable with it. And I get a lot of that discomfort around the impression that it's the only story that ever gets told about black people in America. But again, until we really learn from the

lessons of that story, which many still rarely do, we're never going to get beyond what we still seem to be dealing with today, but on a different scale.

**What's your view on how movies are dealing with issues of race today?**

We're certainly dealing with similar issues but in a different time. For films like *Get Out* or even the more recent title called *The Hate U Give*, these are more sophisticated and nuanced to match the times we're living in. It's a treatment of the same exact situations. Being black in America means that you're looked upon as being the other. But if you're black and male, you're looked upon as being a dangerous other more often than not. That's a journey, man. That's a real thing. That's not you or my imagination as some would convince us into believing. That's not you or I being the victim or playing the race card, that's real. That's the fucking reality. I mean sure, there's certainly other places in the world where the burden of blackness isn't engrained within an entire culture. That burden being that I have to be responsible for the emotional health of white people. That it's incumbent on me to make you feel comfortable. That's what it constantly feels like to live in this America. And look, I believe that everything is political no matter what people say. Every damn thing. That's life and life ain't fair. Human beings are forever capable of amazing goodness but also despicable evil. That's a duality that can never be ignored.

**I've got to know, how were you able to be the face of franchises that were incredibly popular and not be type-casted and regulated to one thing, pretty much like the rest of the *Star Trek* cast for instance?**

[Laughs] I frankly don't know to this day. I've followed my heart, my gut, and hoped for the best. Things have just really worked out for me in my life under those principles. When I look at the big picture, the totality of my life experience, I can't help but see that there's some kind of design within all that. There's some force at work that goes beyond my understanding. That much is clear. Can I necessarily explain it? No. But I sure do feel like I'm the beneficiary of something undeniably great.

**Have you turned down work to prevent being type-casted?**

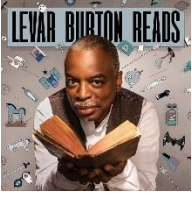
Oh of course. I've turned down plenty of work. But sure as hell not often [laughs]. I got bills to pay, man.

**It's not just about bills. You're still doing the same things you've been doing without lowering yourself. You've accomplished so much, yet you're doing podcasts for adults and the like.**

Noel, I just love what I do. I found my calling in life and this is that calling. I'm a storyteller and with that comes the desire to do that in as many ways as I possibly can. Acting, producing, writing, directing, podcasting, hell... shadow puppets, I mean, whatever [laughs]. I want to keep telling stories to both the young and old until it's all over because a told story will forever have the power to inspire us on our way to achieving our highest potential in life. It informs our journey, who we are, why we're on this earth. All of that information is self-contained within the stories that we tell and pass on, and I've been just one of the few who were lucky enough to become connected with my calling and my destiny really early in life. It would be impossible for me to not recognize that I'm attached to the hip to a real blessing that feels handed to me in this life, and I just want to maximize it. I don't want to leave any page unwritten in this life that I have. I want it all left on the page.

**There are a few that are less willing to read these stories anymore though. Take those self professed non-readers like Kanye West and Donald Trump.**

Oh, here we go with these non-readers.



Courtesy of LeVar Burton reads.

**Haha, but really, they seem to represent a growing number of people who have the same ideas about reading.**

I'm sure, and I got something to say about those people like Donald Trump and Kanye West who self profess themselves as non-readers. And this is what I want to say. I ain't got time for anyone like that anymore. I ain't got time for the Kaynes or the Trumps who don't read as it shows. Go somewhere else with that nonsense and take that bullshit someplace else. For as long as people like that will continue to publicly profess this idea to a generation of people, I'll be standing here for literature until my very last breath. I repeat, until my last very dying breath. I'll stand for it always in the living world. That's where I'm at right now as far as those two and anyone like them *[laughs]*.

**Nothing else needs to be said on that I guess. But I'm sure you acknowledge the varying degree of ways we're consuming information these days.**

I completely get that. But what we simply need to do is make sure we include the written word as a part of our regular diets. We need to create a balance as best we can as our modes of consumption change for our own benefit. We're certainly living in an era where the paradigm has shifted away from the written word into the moving pixelated image. But it's not like when writing entered the fray, we just suddenly stopped talking *[laughs]*. There's no reason why we should stop reading y'all. We gotta keep reading.

**I couldn't leave you without a *Star Trek* question, especially in mentioning Donald Trump and some of the dark times we're living in. I'd like to know what would you like to see happen as far as *Star Trek's* vision of the future.**

*Star Trek* needs to keep representing that hopeful vision of the future now more than ever. It's one of the reasons why I've always been attracted to *Star Trek* before my involvement and after. It was both the atehsis and the antidote to the dystopian view of a future world. I'm an Aquarius by design, and that compels me to bet on the human race. As far as the movies themselves in the JJ Abrams timeline, I've noticed that it adheres less to that same value system, the same system I personally value. To me, *Star Trek* is at its best when it exudes the idea of exploration as expressed in the way Gene Roddenberry had always envisioned it. Which was of course the idea that there's this infinite scope of diversity among the infinite combinations of life within a universe that by definition, is diverse and forever infinite. Watching *Star Trek* was always a powerful reminder that the only moment we're getting off this planet to explore the outer reaches of space is when we get our shit together in the here and now.

**So what's the little bit you can tell me as far as this Hot Docs podcast festival you'll be attending for your LeVar Burton Reads podcast.**

Well I'll be in several cities for the Hot Docs Podcast Festival so hey, if you guys like storytelling come on out. I'll be reading with live instrumentation It's going to be a great time for everyone. Noel dude, come on out. It would be great to see you in person.

**You know I will.**

Please make sure you do.

LeVar Burton will be **touring across North America** for LeVar Burton Reads Podcast beginning on October 31st. Follow Noel Ransome on **Twitter**.

This article originally appeared on VICE CA. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_nz/article/negxed/levar-burton-has-a-message-for-nonreaders-like-donald-trump](https://www.vice.com/en_nz/article/negxed/levar-burton-has-a-message-for-nonreaders-like-donald-trump)





AUTHOR [SHEDOESTHECITY](#)

## NICHOLE PERKINS OF THIRST AID KIT ON DESIRE, COMMUNICATION, SEX, AND WHAT (OR WHO) SHE'S THIRSTY FOR

POSTED ON OCTOBER 25, 2018

The [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#) is quickly approaching, so we connected with a few of our favourite hosts, who'll be there on stage, to ask them our burning questions. The [Thirst Aid Kit](#) podcast hosts, Bim Adewunmi and Nichole Perkins, are known (and very much loved) for their unfiltered, unapologetic, hilarious conversations about lust, from celebrity crushes to fantasies, as well as overarching themes on general thirstiness in body and mind.

Though we had a lot of questions to ask, we know how in-demand these two are, so we kept things simple with a couple of queries. Nichole was kind enough to answer both, and they are loaded with sage wisdom.

### **SDTC: Since the launch of *Thirst Aid Kit*, what would you consider to be the biggest lessons you've learned when it comes to desire?**

NP: One of the first things I've learned, or had reiterated since starting *Thirst Aid Kit*, is to have patience with people's need for approval. We have so many people email, tweet, or DM us asking for us to tell them it's okay to desire a particular celeb. We're not here to tell anyone who to like, or even how to like them. Our hope is that people examine their own reasons for their crushes and [that they don't feel] ashamed, even if they have controversial choices. You don't need anyone's permission to like who you like. You need permission to **act** on those desires. That's what's key.

I've also learned how important communication is for intimacy. Our drabbles often get reduced to erotica, and there is nothing wrong with erotica, but there is hardly ever any sex in what we write. Most often, our drabbles feature couples talking, performing a task together, supporting each other's work, or knowing when to give a partner quiet. These are all things that happen when you keep communication lines open. Yes, these drabbles are clearly fiction, no matter how much we'd love to cook with Andre 3000 or Mahershala Ali, but they all speak to our desires to be heard, seen, and acknowledged, which can lead to some seriously sexy times.

Speaking of the drabbles, I guess I've learned that for all the supportive and encouraging moments we write into our fanfic, actual sexy sex is just as important—LOL. I love writing about sex and romance and *Thirst Aid Kit* has helped me realize I might be good at it.

### **What are you still thirsty for?**

A dinner date with Sebastian Stan.

The [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#) takes place November 1-5, 2018 at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. Thirst Aid Kit is set to appear on Friday, November 2 at 9:30 p.m. Get tickets for their live show [here](#)! Check out the full lineup and schedule [here](#).

<http://www.shedoesthecity.com/nichole-perkins-thirst-aid-kit-desire-communication-sex-shes-thirsty>



AUTHOR CAITLYN HOLROYD

## OUR PICK OF THE WEEK: HOT DOCS PODCAST FESTIVAL

POSTED ON OCTOBER 31, 2018

The podcast medium has exploded in popularity in recent years (we recently launched [one of our own!](#)) and, thankfully, is showing no signs of slowing down. This week, audio storytellers from around the world will step out from behind the microphone and take the stage at the [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#).

Kicking off Thursday, November 1st, the festival will feature over 10 chart-topping shows and a new Creators Forum of panels, masterclasses, roundtable discussions and more. The lineup includes fan favourites like the *Criminal* spinoff *This is Love* with Phoebe Judge and Lauren Spohrer, the award-winning British podcast *The Allusionist*, and LeVar Burton (of *Star Trek* and *Reading Rainbow* fame).

Hot Docs Podcast Festival runs November 1-5 at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema (506 Bloor St. W.). [Single tickets](#) to the live podcasts cost \$19 to \$34, while passes range from \$89 to \$189.

<http://www.shedoesthecity.com/pick-week-hot-docs-podcast-festival>

## NOTES FROM THE HOT DOCS PODCAST FESTIVAL IN TORONTO

I spent much of the past week attending the Hot Docs Podcast Festival in the great city of Toronto, and I brought back a scattered collection of notes and observations on Canadian podcasting that I'm ill-equipped at the moment to string together into some unified clarifying narrative. But I'll share what I have in the form of scattered notes and collection because there are some ideas to stew over and, all things considered, I really liked what I saw.

(1) “The Canadian podcast industry here is a few years behind the US.” I heard this idea, and many variations thereof, quite a bit over the past week, and I almost always squirm when I hear it. Sure, I can see the data points and logical route supporting the notion, particularly when the analysis revolves around the subject of money and business creation. But I'm reticent to accept the statement in the way it's phrased: somewhere in the back of my head, I hold out hope that different countries can, and should, go down their own paths towards ecosystem development — that the Canadian podcast industry isn't behind anybody, that it's just early in their own trajectory. (On an unrelated note: I'd be a great soccer dad.)

I was consistently told Canadian podcast advertising remained nascent, still negligible in volume and experimental in budgets, and that there has yet to be clear pathways for upstart podcast companies in the country to reliably progress from idea to operational sustainability (let alone exits). Occasionally, I'd try to rebut the claim by saying the pathways in the US aren't super clear either, particularly if you're an independent. The invariable reply from the interlocutor: if I had the choice, I'd still prefer the upsides of the US — more money, more jobs, more potential outcomes.

Fair enough.

(2) Some contextual numbers to set the scene. As always, Edison Research has our backs in this department: their [Infinite Dial Canada 2018 report](#), published earlier this year, found that 61% of Canadians over the age of 18 are familiar with the term “podcasting,” and that 28% of that demographic report having listened to a podcast within the past month.

I know I just bumbled something about non-comparisons, but in case you need a yardstick: the Infinite Dial US found that 64% of Americans over 12 report being aware of the term “podcasting,” while 26% of the demographic having listened to a podcast within the past month.

Cross-national comparisons with the US is tricky, of course, in large part due to the intense differences in population sizes and geographical dynamics. Canada has about 36.7 million people, which is slightly below the population of California. To put things some perspective: America, as a whole, has about 325.7 million people, and if you do the rough math, the number of monthly American podcast listeners is about twice the population of Canada. That has implications about the way you could think about advertising returns.

## Hot Pod Newsletter – October 2018 (2 of 3)

(3) Here's a cliché about travel: sometimes you need to leave in order to see where you're from clearly. (A curious device to apply to myself, a newly-minted American immigrant, but applicable nonetheless.) It's true for podcast stuff as it is for anything else: poking around the Canadian scene made me appreciate the extent to which conversations in the US have been dominated by the podcast-as-IP boom, the increasing involvement of talent agencies, and the venture capital-backed shadow of Gimlet Media. Also: capitalism and anxiety.

Some things, though, are familiar on both sides of the border. One expression of this: the perceived podcast dominance of public radio in both the US and Canada. On the first day of the festival, I moderated a panel with the CBC's head of podcasts Leslie Merklinger and NPR's deputy director of programming and new audience N'Jeri Eaton, and there was a query during the Q&A that felt familiar to me. I can't remember the wording, exactly, but it was something along the lines of: "Do you feel like the CBC's dominance limits the ability of private podcasters to grow?" The sentiment echoes many emails I've received over the years from American readers about NPR, WNYC, and the wider American public radio system.

The perception is perhaps understandable: the CBC, Canada's public broadcaster and its biggest institutional podcast publisher, [is said to bring in](#) around 16 million global podcast downloads per month across a 40+ show-strong portfolio that includes broadcast repackages and original podcast content. In the States, NPR garners around 16 million unique monthly listeners in the US and over 140 million global downloads across a 41 show-strong portfolio. They look big, they feel big, and when you feel like a tugboat around tankers, the natural position to interpret threat.

But of course, life in a tanker is generally harder than you would think. Something that came across from both Merklinger and Eaton during the panel: despite the perception that the CBC and NPR are powerful and all-consuming in their respective countries, both individuals lead development funnels with budgets that are tighter than you would ordinarily imagine. Another cliché: people often look like they're doing better than they actually are on the outside.

Does the dominance of a podcast-publishing public broadcaster generally inhibit the ability of private podcasters to grow? I tend to reject this notion. That would dominance is an actual thing in the podcast industry, and there's been little evidence to suggest that at all.

(4) Another similarity of note: it's always worth paying attention to individuals taking matters in their own hands. There was a panel that caught my eye featuring [Vicky Mochama](#), co-founder of the independent podcast shop [Vocal Fry Studios](#); [Annalise Nielsen](#), a producer who's trying to start an in-house podcast network at a large publicly-traded Canadian media and entertainment company called eOne; and [Ryan McMahon](#), an Anishinaabe comedian, writer, podcaster, and proprietor of Indian &

## Hot Pod Newsletter – October 2018 (3 of 3)

Cowboy, a listener-supported Indigenous podcast network.

Of particular interest from the discussion was a focus on non-advertising revenue streams, which significantly touched on branded podcasts — a trail well-blazed in the country by Pacific Content, and taken up by Mochama — and crowdfunding, which proved central to the development of a new investigative podcast by McMahon in partnership with CANADALAND, called Thunder Bay. The Ryerson Review of Journalism has a solid write-up on CANADALAND's crowdfunding effort to raise the production, [which you should check out](#). The podcast, as well, is very good.

(5) The Hot Docs Podcast Festival is currently in its third year of operation, though the whole thing feels like it's been around for much longer. The festival was well-executed, thoughtfully composed, and frankly one of the best podcast events I've ever attended. This probably has a lot to do with the fact it's actually a spinoff of the quarter century-old Hot Docs international documentary film festival (no relation to Hot Pod, by the way); which is to say, they're old hands at putting stuff like this together. But something has to be said about the organization's general level of care in handling a new community: it's a rare team that displays awareness and respect for a world not of their own. I'll be glad to go back.

### (6) Miscellaneous Notes:

- Scribbled in my notepad: "Is there a moral argument for programmatic advertising?" Can't quite remember when I wrote that, or the context of it. But interesting question, I guess?
- Another scribble: "there's a palpable ongoing tension between wanting to build your own thing and wanting to sell that thing off to another organization."
- From the panel featuring the New York Times' Lisa Tobin: the windowing experiment with *Caliphate* was considered a "successful early experiment."
- The *Thirst Aid Kit* live show was the most fun I've had in a very long time. I don't know what BuzzFeed plans to do with the show [given the company's podcasting wind-down](#), but somebody should really pick it up.
- Toronto is probably my favorite city in the world right now. I mean, it's [no Long Island City or Arlington](#), but still. ^\\_(\ツ)\\_



## Review: Monrovia, Indiana

Andrew Parker. October 29, 2018 11:32 am



### Monrovia, Indiana

**7** out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

*Monrovia, Indiana* finds legendarily rigorous documentarian Frederick Wiseman travelling to America's heartland and taking the continually quickening pulse of the country's white middle class. In many respects a perfect counterpoint to his 2015 documentary *In Jackson Heights* – a pre-Trump era look at a multicultural and economically diverse New York City neighbourhood – *Monrovia, Indiana* looks at the citizens of a titular town at a crossroads. Most of Wiseman's latest is curiously apolitical in the ways that most American prefer not to discuss their personal proclivities in a public setting, but just as the film is set to be the director's most curiously frustrating (but still invaluable) effort, the veteran director, producer, and editor builds towards a moment of rapt poignancy that suggests he shares many of the viewer's potential criticisms of his latest work.

Like almost all of Wiseman's previous films, there's no plot or throughline to speak of in *Monrovia, Indiana*. Set predominantly in the spring and summer of 2017, Wiseman takes a look at a town in Indiana's Monroe County and the people that live and work within the largely agrarian community. Bouncing around between various businesses, social gatherings, and community organizations that keep things moving along in Monrovia, Indiana, Wiseman once again stitches together slices of life that will amount to an in-depth examination of both the complexity and simplicity of humanity. Like most of his recent output, Wiseman's latest isn't looking at any of the particularly intense working environments or overly dramatic life of death struggles that he might've earlier in his career, but that doesn't make his late period films any less captivating. Wiseman's films don't tend to grow shorter in length (although, at almost two and a half hours, this is a mid-range effort from him), but the focus has been placed more stringently on individuals and their place within greater social structures.

Wiseman bounces around between the local high school, hogpens, town council assemblies, meetings of the local chapters of the Masons and the Lions, baby showers, funerals, greasy spoons, pizza joints, tattoo parlors, farm equipment auctions, the town fair, the veterinarian's office, and even with a persnickety guy who's having trouble settling on a new mattress that fits his needs. Some of these moments and conversations drag on for minutes, and some are as fleeting as a snapshot. Some of these moments allow the viewer to indulge in the culture of the town, and others are meant to enlighten and foster greater senses of understanding, concern, and empathy whenever necessary. To paraphrase *Sesame Street*, these are the people in the neighbourhood; the people that you meet each day. Wiseman presents all of them as exceptional and impassioned in their own ways, and all of them as a part of something greater, whether they realize it or not.

For the majority of *Monrovia, Indiana*, Wiseman employs his laissez faire approach to show people being themselves and doing the jobs and roles they've been trained and conditioned to perform for most of their lives, and as such the film says curiously little about spending time in what appears to be a relatively conservative, predominantly Christian, and overwhelmingly white middle American community today. Not much is made in casual conversation about the state of the union or the divisiveness rampant therein, even during a trip to a local gun shop where people would rather talk about sports and antiquated forms of ammunition. It's all rather quaint and

## The Gate – October 29, 2018 (2 of 2)

welcoming, but probably because the community feels largely insulated from the problems of bigger cities and townships.



One has to work fairly hard to find any sort of conflict within *Monrovia, Indiana*, but it's definitely present whenever Wiseman returns to the town council meetings. The drama is subtle, but present in every conversation about rising homesteading rates and an influx of new residents that Monrovia might not be able to handle if growth continues at the same rate of speed. That's a common problem faced by cities and towns all over the world today, but there's an unspoken subtext within these everyday conversations that's never breaking through. Concerns about crime rates and burdens on the community suggest that a lot of the town's new residents are younger and living below or around the poverty line. Wiseman never looks at these new residents at all, which is a rare missed opportunity from a normally astute filmmaker. Larger conversations and arguments about, of all things, ineffective and aging fire hydrants speaks to other issues about corporate interests doing business within the community, exiting for a variety of reasons, and leaving citizens and lawmakers confused about how they should proceed. These concerns are present in some of the other footage Wiseman employs throughout *Monrovia, Indiana* and are more prevalent than any sort of overarching political discussions. It says a lot about the town, but little about the world outside of it.

The film is propped up greatly through Wiseman's skills as a masterful editor and the visual eye of cinematographer and frequent collaborator John Davey. Wiseman says all he seemingly wants to about the current American political climate by watching a bunch of families browsing aisles upon aisles of pro-gun, pro-Trump, anti-Obama truck decals at the town fair, which is a simple and powerful, albeit obvious, visual. Davey and Wiseman are most successful, however, at visually depicting the enormous gap between the town's young people and the upper middle aged and senior citizens tasked with running the community.

Outside of the aforementioned baby shower and a handful of brief sequences, it doesn't look like many folks in their twenties and thirties are sticking around Monrovia if they can at all help it. Those who do stick around after high school look like they're scraping by in menial service industry jobs or have returned from military service for a break. In the film's best visual moment, a teenager squirms and fidgets while one of her teachers describes in punishing detail the town's not-all-that-exceptional history as a "hotbed" for college basketball stars. It's not that the town leaders are out of touch when they don't bring up younger generations, but rather that there's a knowing sense that none of them are going to stick around very long, so it's pointless to bother with their concerns. These threads are picked up mostly through Wiseman's keen powers of observation, and his ability to construct such narratives without spoon feeding them to the audience.

Those cultural and generational disconnects happen in most small towns around the world, and setting those aside, *Monrovia, Indiana* largely depicts American life at its level best. Wiseman never stops the show to address the growing political discomfort within the United States, which becomes a bit of a two way sword. It would be out of character if he addressed it overtly, but it's also something too large to ignore. Thankfully, Wiseman closes out *Monrovia, Indiana* with two carefully constructed bits of cultural commentary that arrive almost back to back. One displays how confidence and a cheerful disposition can make any outlandish claims seem true. The other is decidedly blunter and more obvious, potentially acting as a preemptive cap on the aging documentarian's career as a filmmaker. *Monrovia, Indiana* has retained a lot of its aged population because it seems like it would be a great place to live and die with a minimal amount of stress. The film's personally and politically loaded parting shot might not be enough to make up with the wishy-washy nature of everything that came before it, but it definitely places *Monrovia, Indiana* – both the film and the town – into stark context for both the filmmaker and the rest of the nation around it.

***Monrovia, Indiana* screens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Saturday, October 27, Monday, October 29, and Tuesday, October, 30, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/036325/review-monrovia-indiana/>

## Scott Stinson: Podcast revisits time in baseball history that seems even more odd in hindsight

'It is certainly a weird chapter in baseball history, and Jose Canseco's part in that paragraph is particularly weird'

Scott Stinson. November 1, 2018



When Jose Canseco's book *Juiced* came out in 2005, the reaction to its stories of widespread steroid abuse was a baseball-wide eyeroll: you want us to believe this guy?

On one of the ESPN chat shows, back in the early days of the shouty format, this assessment was representative of the wider response: "I am not going to extend my benefit of the doubt to Jose Canseco, who has been a loose cannon at times." As was this: "What's the guy's character about? Look at his track record."

Those comments are part of the 30 for 30 podcast on *Juiced* that was released as part of the latest season of the audio series that shares its name with ESPN's television documentaries. The episode revisits a time in baseball history that seems a whole lot different 13 years later than it did at the time.

"It is certainly a weird chapter in baseball history, and Jose Canseco's part in that paragraph is particularly weird," says Jody Avirgan, the host of the 30 for 30 podcast, who is in Toronto this weekend as part of the Hot Docs Podcast Festival.

"What do you do when you have, sort of, the world's most imperfect messenger, when the message is right and important?" What you have, it turned out, was a lot of finger pointing, and a lot of people — players, managers, executives and media — rushing to note just how imperfect a messenger Canseco was. It was "Fake News!" many years before the term became a favourite hashtag for a certain U.S. President.

"When the book came out, people attacked him and not what was in the book," says Avirgan in an interview. "I think there are a lot of lessons in that for now, and I think that helps us rethink the steroid era. As is the case with a lot of big, difficult things, we're not good at reckoning. We're good at doing the minimum work to move on, and I think to some extent that's what baseball did."

Eventually, there was a lot of fallout. There were Congressional hearings, and Mark McGwire's "I'm not here to talk about the past" and Rafael Palmeiro's infamous finger-wagging. There was the Mitchell Report and much tougher punishments for failed steroid tests and the unofficial ban from sending steroid-era sluggers to Cooperstown. Some of that came about as a result of parallel investigations into the BALCO lab linked to Barry Bonds, but Canseco was out ahead of all of it. He said steroids were rampant in baseball and, lo, steroids were rampant in baseball.

What is fascinating about all this in the passage of time is that it's still not clear why Canseco did what he did. He cites anger at baseball, which treated him like something of a laughing stock by the time his major-league career

## National Post – November 1, 2018 (2 of 2)

ended in 2001, but he doesn't sound like he was out for revenge against former players, even as he was setting fire to their reputations.

Avirgan says that as the podcast was being put together, they realized they needed a part that explained Canseco's motivations. And then, as they went over his often random, scattered answers to their questions, they determined they weren't going to get a tidy explanation. "There was not going to be a coherent theory of everything that made us understand this man," he says.

This can be the problem with revisiting old stories. Sometimes not all the answers are there, whether it is with Canseco, or with other tales that 30 for 30 is examining this season: the 2003 poker boom, Hideo Nomo and associated mania, and the truly curious end of Rickey Henderson's career. (He was still playing semi-pro ball at 46.)

Among the revelations in the Juiced episode of 30 for 30 is that the book almost didn't make it into print. The publisher wasn't a sports fan, and only the co-author understood the significance of the bombshells that was Canseco was lobbying. Not until he came up with the idea of a chapter on the ballplayer's sexual exploits, including a supporting role played by the singer Madonna, was the publisher sold on the book having wide enough appeal to make it viable.

All of which leads to an intriguing counterfactual. What if Canseco had happily wound down his playing career and become an analyst or a coach? What if he had refused to name names, or had a boring sex life? If Juiced didn't happen, would baseball's steroid era have continued apace? Would there be dozens of players with 60-homer seasons to their credit, instead of five of them? Would Aaron Judge have already had 80 home runs in a season?

"We realized we were never going to get a straight answer on 'why are you doing this'," Avirgan says of Canseco, the man who changed baseball. "If he had never gotten pissed off in that way at that time, would he have written this book? Who knows?"

Whatever his reasons, Jose Canseco got mad at his sport, and he got back at it but good. No one believed him, but he was eventually vindicated.

It was the title of his second book.

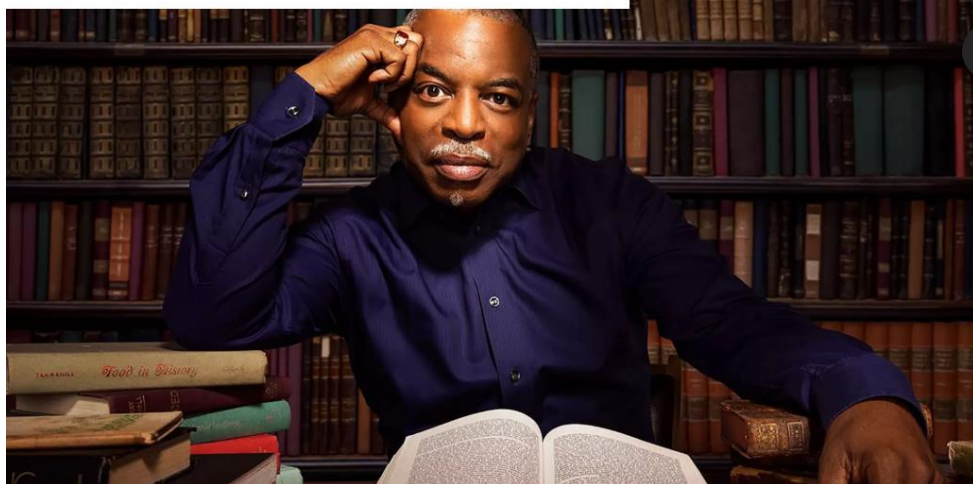
Jody Avirgan and ESPN's 30 for 30 will appear at the Hot Docs Podcast Festival at 4 p.m on Nov. 3.

\*This story was picked up in numerous other Postmedia outlets across Canada, including:

- |                      |                            |                           |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • The Winnipeg Sun   | • The Province             | • The Windsor Star        |
| • Calgary Herald     | (Vancouver)                | • Brantford Expositor     |
| • Edmonton Journal   | • The Star Phoenix         | • Brockville Recorder     |
| • Montreal Gazette   | (Saskatoon)                | • The Whiig Standard      |
| • Vancouver Sun      | • Londoner                 | • Fort McMurray Today     |
| • Ottawa Citizen     | • Belleville Intelligencer | • Stratford Beacon Herald |
| • Regina Leader-Post | • St. Thomas Times         | • Cochrane Times Post     |
|                      | Journal                    | • Kingston This Week      |

<https://nationalpost.com/sports/baseball/scott-stinson-podcast-revisits-time-in-baseball-history-that-seems-very-odd-in-hindsight>

## Weekend events in Toronto November 2-4 2018



Weekend events in Toronto land right between post-Halloween festivities and the start of the holiday season. LeVar Burton is here as part of the Hot Docs Podcast Festival while a big record show, giant confetti dome and The Bay's unveiling of its holiday windows are all happening as well.

### • Top Picks

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- **November 1-5**

#### [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#)

Podcasters from all over arrive for a week of programming that includes talks, screenings, a creators forum and lots more.

#### **Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema**

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- **November 1 - December 31**

#### [Happy Place](#)

A massive double rainbow, a room made of rubber ducks and a confetti dome are just some of the outrageously happy exhibits that make up this place.

#### **Harbourfront Centre**

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- **November 2**

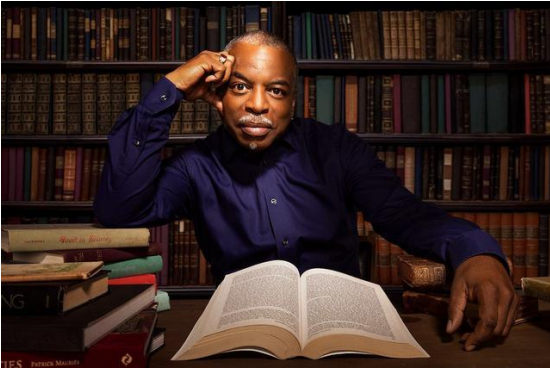
#### [LeVar Burton Reads Live](#)

From Roots, Star Trek and Reading Rainbow, LeVar Burton himself arrives as part of the Podcast Festival for a special live reading.

<https://www.blogto.com/radar/2018/11/weekend-events-toronto-november-2-2018/>



## The best weekend events in Toronto: November 2-4



### Hot Docs Podcast Festival

The annual podcast event returns to Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema this weekend with a venerable icon of sci-fi and children's TV: Star Trek: The Next Generation actor, Reading Rainbow host and literacy activist LeVar Burton. Now the host of his own podcast, LeVar Burton Reads, he'll do live reading of Giller Prize-winning author Austin Clarke's *Four Stations In His Circle* on Friday (November 2, 6:30 pm). Other hot tickets are BuzzFeed's pop culture podcast *Thirst Aid Kit* (November 2, 9:30 pm) featuring critics Bim Adewunmi and Nichole Perkins; Phoebe Judge and Lauren Spohrer's mash-up of their popular *Criminal* and *True Love* podcasts (November 3, 8:30 pm); and *Reveal Live: The Center Cannot Hold* (November 4, 4:30 pm), which will explore hate and extremism in America with host Al Letson.

November 1-5. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 6:30 pm. \$34. [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

### Secret Life Of A Mother

Hannah Moscovitch, Ann-Marie Kerr and Maev Beaty's collectively created piece about modern motherhood opens at the Theatre Centre.

October 25-November 11. 8 pm. \$20-\$30. 416-538-0988.

### Happy Place

Selfie-conducive fun house opens at Harbourfront Centre.

November 1-January 1. \$32.50-\$39.50. [HappyPlace.me/tickets](http://HappyPlace.me/tickets).

### Things You Shouldn't Say!

Drag quartet the Kinsey Sicks rail against the Trump era in a hilarious musical revue.

November 1. 8 pm. \$25-\$35. Al Green Theatre. [bit.do/kinseytoronto](http://bit.do/kinseytoronto).

### A Sketch Comedy Extravaganza Eleganza

Kristen Rasmussen directs a sextet of talented queer comics in this show.

November 2-3. 8 pm (doors 7:30 pm). \$15-\$20. *Buddies in Bad Times*. 416-975-8555. <https://bit.ly/2EL1fAS>

### Cadence Weapon

Toronto-via-Montreal-via-Edmonton rapper plays his first proper local show in a while.

November 3. *Velvet Underground*. Doors 9 pm. \$15. [ticketweb.ca](http://ticketweb.ca).

### Ronan Farrow

Investigative journalist talks with Robyn Dolittle about reporting the Harvey Weinstein story.

November 4. *Bluma Appel Theatre*. Doors 6 pm. Sold out. [stlc.com](http://stlc.com)

## If This, Then That: Podcast Fest Picks for Doc Fans

Posted on November 1st, 2018 •



By Pat Mullen

Just about everyone has a podcast these days. It's often hard to know where to start or what to listen to. Keeping up with the field of podcasts can be overwhelming outside of word of mouth recommendations and fortuitous discoveries.

The third annual [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#) (HDPF) returns this week and brings the best in audio-storytelling to audiences. Live, and sometimes interactive, experiences invite audiences to listen to the hosts of the most popular podcasts cutting through the busy field. [Highlights from last year's festival](#) included chats with Naomi Klein and Desmond Cole on Jeremy Scahill's *The Intercept*, humorously juvenile confessions on *Grownups Read Things They Wrote as Kids*, and five-alarm fun with snack food on *The Fridge Light*. The fest is a fun way to turn active listening into a communal experience, and to help audiences navigate the growing (and increasingly cluttered) field of podcasting.

To help readers plan their HDPF line-ups, here are a few recommendations based on documentary tastes:

**If you liked *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, then catch LeVar Burton Reads Live**

Friday, Nov. 2 at 6:30 PM

If the wonderful return to Mr. Rogers' neighbourhood provided a treat this summer with [Won't You Be My Neighbor?](#), then consider cozying up with a book in the company of LeVar Burton. The actor is well known for his work in *Roots* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, but he might be most familiar to audiences for sharing stories with kids on *Reading Rainbow*. These days, Burton turns the page with tongue-in-cheek humour by [taking his comforting voice to the podcast world](#) as he reads a short story to listeners in each episode with the help of a special guest. Burton enlists the help of a local author for a live reading at HDPF along with musical accompaniment.

**If you liked *OJ: Made in America*, then catch ESPN's 30 for 30**

Saturday, November 3 at 4:00 PM

Ezra Edelman's *OJ: Made in America* is arguably [one of the best documentaries ever to play Hot Docs](#). This eight-hour epic from ESPN's *30 for 30* program inspired a debate as audiences tried to distinguish between television and theatrical formats, but there was no denying that *OJ* made for great documentary regardless of the form in which one defined it. [30 for 30](#) leads the field again in pushing the boundaries of documentary form with this podcast that explores stories of the sports world. The 'cast debuted at #1 on the iTunes charts last year and is a go-to option for anyone seeking a new ballgame for water cooler conversation.

**If you liked *Amanda Knox*, then catch *Criminal* featuring *This is Love***

Saturday, November at 8:30 PM

If any subset of documentary rivals podcasting as the hottest of the hot, it's true crime. Great documentaries like *OJ*, *The Imposter*, and, more recently, Netflix hit [Amanda Knox](#) put audiences inside the minds of potential

## POV Magazine – November 1, 2018 (2 of 2)

killers. Whether through the power of the camera or through audio that inspires audiences to imagine the events, true crime docs and podcasts return to the scene of the crime, reconsidering evidence anew while exploring cases in which the justice system often failed. The popular true crime podcast [Criminal](#) has a new angle in the spinoff [This is Love](#) in which hosts Phoebe Judge and Lauren Spohrer tackle crimes of the heart. Like “Foxy Noxy” and her (alleged) crime of passion, few elements engage a crowd quite as well as sex and violence do.

**If you liked *I am Not You Negro*, then catch *Reveal***

Sunday, November 4 at 4:30 PM

The words of James Baldwin remain powerfully relevant in the contemporary political climate, as doc fans undoubtedly know if they caught Raoul Peck’s excellent [I am Not Your Negro](#) last year. The doc and the writer find a fine echo in [Reveal](#) by poet, playwright, and journalist Al Letson. It’s hard to listen to *Reveal* without being reminded of Baldwin’s reflections on race, systemic inequality, and humanity. The podcast also exemplifies the kind of deep dive into contemporary news stories that are dwindling from far too many outlets and Letson draws upon his own experiences growing up in Florida, engaging with the USA’s increasingly divisive culture from a thoughtful and engaged point of view.

**If you like *Running from Crazy*, then catch *Other People’s Problems***

Sunday, November 4 at 8:30 PM

Here’s one for all the Barbara Kopple fans who took advantage of [Hot Docs’ well-deserved retrospective this spring](#). One of the festival selections, Kopple’s *Running from Crazy*, offered a poignant and intimate portrait of actress Muriel Hemingway and her family’s history with mental illness. (Her celebrated grandfather, Ernest, is not the family’s only suicide.) Hemingway’s story shared with audiences a significant account of destigmatizing mental illness and fuelling conversations to get help for friends and family in distress. Hillary McBride takes listeners on a similar journey in [Other People’s Problems](#), a popular podcast that explores different aspects of mental illness with a compassionate ear. The live recording at HDPF features McBride in conversation with a client and several mental health experts as they seek to get people talking about self-care and well-being.

**If you liked *Design Canada*, then catch *The Secret Life of Canada***

Monday November 5 at 9:00 pm

Canada 150, for better or for worse, inspired passionate conversations of Canadian pride. The sesquicentennial year was painful for many communities, too, and prompted some overdue reflection and who we are as a nation and where we want to go. Leah-Simone Bowen and Falen Johnson’s podcast [The Secret Life of Canada](#) takes an approach that might appeal to fans of this summer’s popular doc [Design Canada](#) by fuelling conversations of national identity using tidbits of Canadiana as a starting point. The conversations might be unexpected as the hosts dive into lesser-known aspects of history and put unsung heroes into the spotlight.

**Bonus podcast!**

If all these peas in the pod inspire further listening, there’s a new ‘cast in town for doc fans. TVO’s [On Docs](#) offers engaging conversations on the documentaries of the day via in-depth interviews with host Colin Ellis. The first episode, launched last week, features [What is Democracy?](#) director Astra Taylor gabbing about philosophy and the state of the world. Other recent and upcoming episodes feature many filmmakers that might be of interest to POVreaders, like Shasha Nakhai ([Take Light](#)); Jennifer Baichwal, Nicholas de Pencier and Edward Burtynsky ([Anthropocene](#)); Janus Metz and Sine Plambech ([Heartbound](#)); Sarah Fodey ([The Fruit Machine](#)); Min Sook Lee ([Migrant Dreams](#)); and Nadine Pequenez ([The Invisible Heart](#)). On Docs can be found on apple and wherever good podcasts grow.

<http://povmagazine.com/blog/view/if-this-then-that-hot-docs-podcast-fest-picks-for-doc-fans>

## LeVar Burton on the value of stories and storytelling

CBC Radio · November 2



LeVar Burton with host Tom Power in the q studio in Toronto, Ont. (Vivian Rashotte/CBC)

When it comes to storytelling, one person reigns supreme: LeVar Burton. For years, Burton helped parents raise their children by sharing stories as the host of *Reading Rainbow*. The show encouraged a whole generation of young people to get out to the library and escape inside a good book.

Today, Burton is still telling stories on his own podcast *LeVar Burton Reads*. His mission is to get adults to take some time to enjoy a good story and listen to the ones he'll share through your headphones. Burton joins Tom Power live in the *q* studio to tell us more about his latest project. He's in Toronto for the Hot Docs Podcast Festival where he'll be taking the stage tonight.

*Listen to the full conversation with LeVar Burton near the top of this page.*

— Produced by Ben Edwards

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/levar-burton-on-the-value-of-stories-and-storytelling-1.4888004>





VIDEOS

CONTESTS



Lifestyle

## Why do we use Canadian-isms?

From saying 'eh' and 'sorry', to the ongoing debate about the proper way to pronounce Toronto, there are many fun Canadian-isms to explore. Joining Roger is 'The Allusionist' podcast host Helen Zaltzman to explain and help us decipher the words we use.

November 2, 2018 06:33



## METRO MORNING



Metro Morning with Matt Galloway



08:16

### The Secret History of Canada podcast

Nov 5, 2018

The Hot Docs Podcast Festival wraps up Monday night with a live recording of The Secret History of Canada. We speak with hosts Leah-Simone Bowen and Falen Johnson about the success of this really smart and funny podcast.

## Top creators go from studio to stage at Hot Docs Podcast Festival

### Annual Toronto festival hosted performances from LeVar Burton, WNYC's Nancy

Graham Isador · November 7



Co-hosts Kathy Tu and Tobin Low share stories and insights about the LGBTQ experience on the WNYC podcast Nancy. (Fabiola Carletti/CBC)

On any given week I listen to about nine hours of podcasts. I listen during my commute, or while I'm washing dishes. On nights when I'm alone they're what I fall asleep to. They've become a digital replacement for the bedtime stories I was told as a little kid.

Podcasts are important to me. I spend more time with audio hosts than I do with my closest friends, and while I'm always quick to champion my favourite shows, consuming the programs is a solitary act. The same is true for most listeners I know.

I spend more time with audio hosts than I do with my closest friends. - *Graham Isador*

So what happens when you take that kind of medium and put it in front of a room full of people? Is it possible to translate something made for audio and make it work on stage?



Podcast Playlist's Matt Galloway and Lindsay Michael hosted the opening and closing night showcases for the Hot Docs Podcast Festival. (Gabriel Li)

## CBC Arts – November 7, 2018 (2 of 4)

Last week, the [Hot Docs Podcast Festival](#) tried to answer that question. The fest, now in its third year, hosts some of North America's most popular podcasts, putting on live tapings and events, as well as a series of industry panels for those looking to know the ins and outs of how shows get made.

The fest opened up with CBC's [Podcast Playlist](#). Hosts Matt Galloway and Lindsay Michael welcomed five different podcasts to the stage of the Hot Docs Cinema (mostly Canadian talent), all with 10-minute segments to plug their content.

The miserable November weather and the 6 p.m. start time put a damper on the crowd, who took a while to warm up to the format. Performers fought an uphill battle to contextualize themselves and win over attendees within their time frame.

Performers fought an uphill battle to contextualize themselves and win over attendees within their time frame. - *Graham Isador*

About midway through the show, a well-dressed woman to my left patted me on the arm and asked: "Are they just going to talk to each other? Is that it?"

I understood the criticism. While I had been enjoying myself, I'm immersed in the podcast culture and was familiar with most of the people on stage. What if I wasn't? I'm not sure that talking alone would have been enough to hold my attention, though like any variety show there were hits and misses.

### Moving beyond the format

Highlights from the opening night of the Hot Docs Podcast Festival included:

- A hilarious set from comedian Jason Weems, whose story about continuing a career in stand up after a near-death experience will be the central focus of [First Day Back](#)'s upcoming season.
- A heartwarming sing-a-long about "gut brains" from 12-year-old Tai Poole, the host and personality behind [Tai Asks Why](#).
- A conversation with comedian Ryan McMahon about Canadaland's excellent new series [Thunder Bay](#), which takes a deep dive into Indigenous deaths in the Northern Ontario city.



## CBC Arts – November 7, 2018 (3 of 4)

Tai Poole, the 12-year-old host of *Tai Asks Why*, hosted a sing-along as part of his presentation about 'gut brains.' (Olivia Pasquarelli/CBC)

All of these segments found success by moving beyond the podcast format: a comedy set, karaoke session or two-minute primer on a documentary series all played better than strict question-and-answer interviews, performers who stuck too closely to a script, or ill-fated PowerPoint presentations.

All of these segments found success by moving beyond the podcast format. - *Graham Isador*

That would be a larger theme for the fest: those who embraced the differences of a live vs. recorded show, utilized or acknowledged the Toronto crowds, and/or created a performance adjacent to their podcast while keeping the general tone elicited the best responses.

WNYC's [Nancy](#), a show focused on talking about today's queer experience, slayed by bringing on board local burlesque troupe Boylesque TO for some raunchy fun, including a provocative retelling of classic Canadian children's book *The Hockey Sweater*.

[StartUp](#), the show that launched the massively successful podcast conglomerate Gimlet, highlighted some upcoming tape from their new season, but mostly used their time to teach the audience the tenets of successful storytelling. (*Have a Random-Ass Idea! Have characters! Are there stakes?*)



LeVar Burton, actor and host of children's show "Reading Rainbow", performed a live reading of the late author Austin Clarke's "Four Stations in his Circle." (Frazer Harrison/Getty Images)

[LeVar Burton](#) was by far the biggest celebrity to attend the festival. He joined local storyteller Itah Sadu, co-owner of the bookstore [A Different Booklist](#), to discuss the work of the late Caribbean-Canadian author Austin Clarke.

'Amped up the usual charm'

All these shows had their charms, but the best performance went to the live taping of [The Secret Life of Canada](#), which closed out the festival.

## CBC Arts – November 7, 2018 (4 of 4)



History podcast The Secret Life of Canada closed the Hot Docs Podcast Festival with a live taping of their show, all about Toronto's eclectic past. (Fabiola Carletti/CBC)

Hosts Leah Simone Bowen and Falen Johnson amped up the usual charm of their show by bringing aboard several heavy hitters from Toronto's Second City comedy club. Accompanied by three improvisers (with a standout performance from [Brandon Hackett](#)), Bowen and Johnson walked us through Toronto's eclectic past.

All these shows had their charms, but the best performance went to the live taping of The Secret Life of Canada.- *Graham Isador*

The hour-long set had the audience in stitches, playing part *Drunk History* and part *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, complete with audience jeers and a lot of funny hats.

Given the hosts' backgrounds as playwrights and performers, it's not surprising the set worked so well, but major props should be given to Bowen and Johnson for pulling off a performance that respected both their podcast's format and the need to play to a room full of people.



The Secret Life of Canada enlisted the help of improv artists from Second City for their live performance.(Fabiola Carletti/CBC)

The Hot Docs Podcast Festival offered a diverse lineup of shows that spoke to the range of voices and styles creating audio, while offering some truly great nights out. The fest, and the hosts, still have to work out some growing pains to bringing a new(ish) medium from speakers to the stage.

But in the meantime, we still have our headphones.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/podcastnews/top-creators-go-from-studio-to-stage-at-hot-docs-podcast-festival-1.4894103>

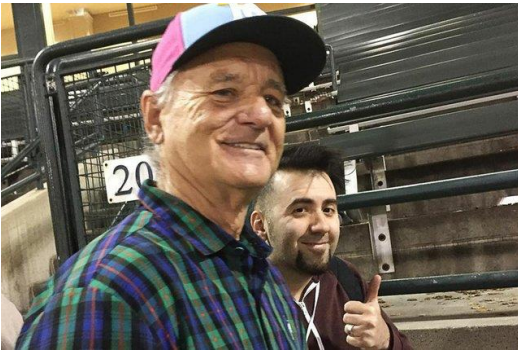


## Review: The Bill Murray Stories shows how technology prevents us from being present

Tommy Avallone's doc examining stories about the comic actor showing up to bring people joy is a sweet look at celebrity and spontaneity

BY **GLENN SUMI**

NOVEMBER 7, 2018



**THE BILL MURRAY STORIES: LIFE LESSONS LEARNED FROM A MYTHICAL MAN** (Tommy Avallone). 70 minutes. Opens Friday (November 9) at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. See [listing](#). Rating: NNNN

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The internet is rampant with examples of actor Bill Murray showing up at someone's birthday party or touch football game, washing a stranger's dishes or taking on temporary bartender duties at a club.

Tommy Avallone's sweet doc investigates many of these stories, forming a theory – put forth by many a journalist and author before – that these in-the-moment encounters are tied both to the actor's improv training and life philosophy.

While the structure of the film grows slightly tedious – Avallone repeatedly tries to reach Murray for an interview on his 1-800 number to create his own “Bill Murray moment” – the doc provides a fascinating look at celebrity, spontaneity and how technology often prevents us from being present.

Stay after the closing credits for one of the loveliest tales of all.

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/the-bill-murray-stories-life-lessons-documentary/>

## Six essential film festivals happening in Toronto in November 2018

From an international slate of Asian films and movies from the European Union to a series at one of Toronto's neighbourhoods, there's something for everyone on screens this week

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#). NOVEMBER 7, 2018

How many film festivals can one town accommodate? I ask myself this question year after year, and I always end up regretting it. Here's a quick run through six of the festivals that will be competing for your attention in the next couple of weeks. There will be more after that, but I didn't want to freak anybody out.

### EKRAN TORONTO POLISH FILM FESTIVAL

[ekran.ca](http://ekran.ca)

**When:** November 5-11

**Where:** Multiple venues, including Isabel Bader Theatre (93 Charles West), Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema (506 Bloor West) and the Revue Cinema (400 Roncesvalles)

**What's playing:** The festival opened earlier this week with screenings of Pawel Pawlikowski's [post-war romantic drama](#) Cold War and Olga Chajdas's [erotically charged drama](#) Nina, and continues through the weekend with a selection of new Polish commercial cinema, including Agnieszka Smoczyńska's amnesia thriller Fugue (November 8, 6:30 pm, Revue) and Filip Bajon's historical epic The Butler (November 10, 9 pm, Revue).

### TORONTO REEL ASIAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

[reelasian.com/festival](http://reelasian.com/festival)

**When:** November 8-16

**Where:** Multiple venues, including Isabel Bader Theatre (93 Charles West), TIFF Bell Lightbox (350 King West), Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema (506 Bloor West), Innis Town Hall (2 Sussex) and the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (6 Garamond)

**What's playing:** The 22nd edition of the festival opens with Kidding Hsu and Mag Hsu's Dear Ex (November 8, 7:30 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre), which explores the fallout when a man dies, and his ex-wife and adult son discover he left everything to his (male) lover; other worthwhile selections include House Of The Rising Sons (November 10, 5 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3), a big, bright about 70s Hong Kong pop stars The Wynners – directed and co-written by the band's drummer, Anthony Chan – that arrives as a kind of counter-argument to that other big 70s band history [Bohemian Rhapsody](#); Origin Story (November 12, 5:15 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 4), in which podcaster and television producer Kulap Vilaysack travels to Laos in search of her birth father, and Shinichiro Ueda's One Cut Of The Dead (November 15, 7 pm, Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre), a movie about moviemaking and zombies that's bloody good fun.

## Live from Hot Docs... It's Podcast Playlist

CBC Radio • November 8, 2018



Photo: Gabriel Li

## Podcast pick of the week



*Nobody Cares (Except for Me)* is a new-ish Toronto based podcast hosted by Anne T. Donahue. Each week, Anne is joined by a guest who shares something they're passionate about despite no one else feeling the same. During our live recording of this week's show, Anne was joined by comedian Courtney Gilmour. Together they discussed a very hot-button topic: the many complexities of sparkling water. Courtney and Anne made a great point: when you don't drink alcohol there really aren't that many exciting options out there. I've definitely drank tap water at a bar before and let's just say it wasn't very...festive. *Nobody Cares* is a podcast that celebrates how the weird and obscure things we love make us who we are. For that reason, it's my pick of the week.

- Kate Evans, Producer, Podcast Playlist

## Podcasts featured this week:



- **[First Day Back](#)** - Meet [comedian Jason Weems](#), who after literally dying on stage when his heart stopped for five minutes, was saved by an audience member. Now, he wants to find out if he can make jokes about his death. Listen to his live performance, followed by a Q + A with host [Tally Abecassis](#).
- **[Nobody Cares \(Except for Me\)](#)** - Host [Anne T. Donahue](#) invites comedian Courtney Gilmour on stage to discuss her obsession with sparkling water.
- **[Tai Asks Why](#)** - 12-year-old host Tai Poole examines a piece of age old advice. We've all heard the saying trust your gut, but is that scientifically accurate?
- **[Personal Best](#)** - Listen to the team at Personal Best try to create the "perfect podcast episode" live on stage.
- **[Red Man Laughing](#)** - Host of Red Man Laughing [Ryan McMahon](#), sits down one of the hosts of The Secret Life of Canada, Falen Johnson, to discuss food sovereignty.
- Ryan also talks about [Thunder Bay](#), his new show on Canadaland's podcast network.

Listen to the full length Canadian Broadcast Version:

### Podcast Playlist

Episode 156: Podcast Playlist Live!

LISTEN

00:00 54:00

Our interactive, variety show-style episode live from the Hot Docs Podcast Festival features storytellers from across Canada. Featuring: First Day Back, Nobody Cares (Except for Me), Tai Asks Why, Personal Best, Red Man Laughing. Plus, Ryan McMahon shares details about his new show with the Canadaland Network, Thunder Bay.54:00

What podcast would you want to see put on a live show? [Email](#), tweet us [@PodcastPlaylist](#), or find us on [Facebook](#).

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/podcastplaylist/live-from-hot-docs-it-s-podcast-playlist-1.4893818>

**In documentary The Bill Murray Stories, the star seems happy to do just about anything to make an event happier**

By [PETER HOWELL](#) Movie Critic  
Thu., Nov. 8, 2018

## **The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned From a Mythical Man**

Bill Murray with a fan in The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned from a Mythical Man. (COURTESY OF HOT DOCS)

*A documentary on the photobombing antics of comedian Bill Murray. Directed by Tommy Avallone. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 70 minutes. **STC***

*The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned From a Mythical Man* addresses the very real title star's amusingly bizarre habit of casually barging into regular lives.

Director Tommy Avallone follows up reports, readily available online — search “Bill Murray photobomb” on YouTube — of the comic actor's propensity to delight his many fans by spontaneously joining in on whatever they're doing.

Murray has popped up in engagement photos, at bachelor parties, birthday bashes and even a White House press briefing, the latter to mock-solemnly make his predictions for World Series success for his beloved Chicago Cubs.

Murray is happy to do just about anything to help make an event happier: shake a tambourine, serve drinks and even wash dishes. Avallone's film includes clips of many grainy and shaky cellphone videos taken by excited Murray fans, as the star of *Ghostbusters*, *Caddyshack* and *Lost In Translation* — to name just three of his many post-*Saturday Night Live* movie hits — suddenly graces them with his presence.

“No one will ever believe you,” Murray tells the startled and amused people he's “photobombed,” a term that in his case should be enlarged to “memory bombed,” one fan suggests, because of how much of an impact Murray makes just by acting like a regular Joe.

Murray, 68, often exits the scene as quickly as he makes it and he's not inclined — in this movie or elsewhere — to comment on the meaning of his random visits. When a fan at the 2015 Comic-Con asks Murray to explain his pop-up encounters, the comic smiles and feigns ignorance: “I don't know what he's talking about,” he says to the crowd. “It sounds like fun though, doesn't it?”

He'll leave it to others to analyze his intentions, although it's obvious he simply enjoys being loved. A Texas bartender named Tyler Van Aiken tells Avallone's camera that he figures Murray long ago decided that it would be easier to just embrace his stardom, rather than try to flee from it, as so many celebrities seem to do.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/11/08/in-documentary-the-bill-murray-stories-the-star-seems-happy-to-do-just-about-anything-to-make-an-event-happier.html>



**Review: The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned from a Mythical Man**

Andrew Parker November 8, 2018 11:33 am



**The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned from a Mythical Man**  
3 out of 10

*The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned from a Mythical Man* takes a jocular, but unnecessary and one-sided look into the cult of personality that has been built around one of Hollywood's most elusive and beloved stars. Built around the concept that everyone has a friend of a friend of a friend with a story about the *Ghostbusters* star crashing some random social gathering (announced or unannounced) and living it up with everyday common folk, *The Bill Murray Stories* takes on the appearance of a documentary that people might show to friends to prove a tenuous point and gently entertain, but it's not in any way a balanced, remarkable, or insightful piece of work.

Director Tommy Avallone (*I Am Santa Claus*), who had his own Murray moment, looks at an actor who's as elusive and well photographed as a sasquatch or a yeti when it comes to his private life. For years, Murray has made headlines for popping up in the strangest of places, all in the name of having a good time. Around the world, he's been known to show up at bars, house parties, weddings, karaoke nights, kickball games, coffee shops, construction sites where he makes friends and rubs elbows with people he doesn't know and who had no clue he would be appearing. These stories, many of them documented for posterity in the digital age, furthers Murray's status as a mythical figure, but also his image as an everyman.

*The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned from a Mythical Man* is exactly what it says on the tin; nothing more and nothing less. Avallone travels between places like Austin, Murray's hometown of Chicago, and Charleston, South Carolina (an apparent hotbed of activity for the actor) to talk with people who've basked in the performer's glow and sometimes surprising generosity. It's all rather monotonous. There are only so many times in the span of just over an hour one can listen to the similar stories of an actor gracing grateful people with his presence, and it's only about half an hour before Avallone's cutesy approach has grown monotonous (especially the director's numerous attempts to contact Murray for comment on the infamous 1-800 number he uses to vet those trying to get in touch). At the very least, Avallone sticks to interviewing people who've had genuine, verifiable encounters with Murray, and he's not trying to wade through the morass of stories that have most likely been fabricated.

## The Gate – November 8, 2018 (2 of 2)



*The Bill Murray Stories* is a film made strictly for devotees and those dreaming of similar close encounters. Many people would love to achieve a level of celebrity status where they could simply walk into a room, and everyone would embrace them with open arms and hang on their every word or action, which makes Murray's scattershot public appearances so endearing. Here is a man who could get away with pretty much whatever he wanted because people love his movies, he makes them laugh, and he wants to be treated like a regular person.

But does that make Murray some sort of magical unicorn or does it make him an entitled celebrity? That answer isn't quite clear because Avallone's film has no counterpoint whatsoever. *The Bill Murray Stories* are just that: stories. There isn't much to be said about anything who had a less than stellar experience with Murray, but those stories aren't hard to find if one knows where to look. In this depiction of the Murray myth – one that subscribes all too heavily to his status as a great example for how people should live in the moment – everything is wine and roses. Any idea that Murray might not be a perfect human being is quickly shuffled aside, and some of his actions could be seen as annoying and not altogether charming. I'm sure he's doing a lot of these acts from a place of love and respect, but questions about such entitled behaviour still abound.

It sounds cynical to say, but no one could be as perfect and delightful as Bill Murray is made out to be in Avallone's film. About the only thing that separates stories about Murray from tales of other people having fleeting encounters with celebrities is that time with Bill seems to last longer and have more of a personal connection. That's nice, but not everyone should aspire to meet Bill Murray, or worse yet, to BE Bill Murray. *The Bill Murray Stories* makes the case that we should strive to be more like the actor both on screen and off, and the results are genial, but unconvincing at best and troubling at worst.

***The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons from a Mythical Man opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, November 9, 2018. It's also available on VOD.***

## Review: The Woman Who Loves Giraffes

[Andrew Parker](#) November 14, 2018 5:03 pm



**The Woman Who Loves Giraffes**  
7 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

The extraordinary life and career of Toronto born zoologist Anne Innis Dagg gets a loving and much deserved tribute in filmmaker Alison Reid's documentary *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*. Paying homage to a woman whose research of animals in their wild and natural habitats predated the work of similarly minded female scientists Goodall and Fossey, *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* is naturally enlightening, inspirational, and rousing without resorting to unnecessary cinematic trickery. Reid makes the viewer feel joy and pride for all of Dagg's groundbreaking successes and sadness and anger at the patriarchal constructs that derailed her professional career for over thirty years.

In 1956, at the age of 23, Dagg became only the second scientist in history to study an animal in their natural habitat, and she frequently had to hide her gender to accomplish it. Drawn to the unique look and temperament of the giraffe, Dagg travelled solo to South Africa (in the early years of apartheid as a single, unaccompanied white woman) to document and research their behaviour and biology. Although one thinks the uniqueness of the giraffe's appearance would've led to dozens of studies before Dagg's time, there wasn't much done in the way of research, leaving the University of Waterloo PhD to literally write the seminal text on the creatures, one that remains cited in nearly all scholarly works written about the long necked animals today. She was the first person to film (which wasn't cheap at the time) and study the animal's internal biology, mating habits, diets, and emotions, and all of her contemporaries that are interviewed throughout by Reid freely admit that they'd be lost without Dagg's work.

*The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* starts off a bit too quickly for its own good. Although Dagg, her family, and friends are jovial and forthcoming in interviews, not much is made of Dagg's early years. Outside of fleshing out the relationship she had with her beloved, late husband, Ian, early on (told largely through their correspondences and her journals), *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* has a firm focus on its subject's professional life and not as much about her personal life. It makes sense when one considers that the lines between the personal and the professional would become blurred for Dagg not too long into her academic career, but there are some frustrating gaps within the film due to a lack of personal anecdotes and details. There are some here and there and many hints at her chipper, strong willed

## The Gate – November 14, 2018 (2 of 2)

personality, but none that are really examined after the opening handful of minutes. *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* is a film that dives in and rarely looks back even when it might make sense or enhance the film to do so.



*The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* becomes most personal and thoughtful once Dagg has completed her first round of groundbreaking research. After doing something that was previously unheard of for a woman travelling alone on an academic mission and producing something zoologists would herald as a bible on giraffes, Dagg, like many professional women working in male dominated fields at the time, found her career stalled. She was denied tenured status as a professor from the University of Guelph thanks to an overwhelmingly sexist oversight board, which is even tougher to stomach when Reid catches up with the smug head of the board, who remains thoroughly unrepentant for almost singlehandedly ruining Dagg's career. A potential opening at Wilfrid Laurier went to an unqualified and unseasoned male counterpart. She was repeatedly turned down for jobs she was overqualified to perform in the first place. Even her alma mater wouldn't extend her a job in light of her accomplishments because their dean refused to hire married women. Her frustrating lack of employment would empower her to fight for equality and against discriminatory hiring practices in academia, but it would also put a halt to any sort of full time career in her field for almost thirty years.

Not only does *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* carry with it an important and timely message about the struggles and contributions of pioneering women in scientific research, but Dagg's life lends itself quite naturally to Reid's three act structure. After looking directly at Dagg's research from the opening and then speaking at length about the struggles she faced at the hands of jealous and threatened male colleagues in the wake of her biggest success, Reid is able to follow her subject as she makes her first trip back to Africa in almost fifty years. Now that humans have supplanted lions as the giraffe's most deadly predator, 85-year old Dagg's renewed research and advocacy efforts are more important than ever. Their trip to Africa even offers up some nifty visual touches where Reid is able to capture Dagg in front of various landscapes and landmarks that appeared in the scientist's own 16mm films, as well as moments of great sadness and horror when the scientist witnesses first hand the danger giraffes are facing at the hands of humans.

*The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* boasts a perfect subject for a biographical documentary: an interesting and driven person who blazed a game changing path, fought against bullies that sought to keep them down, and found their work enduring and gaining newfound relevancy throughout the years. While there could stand to be a touch more personality and a bit more background into Dagg's life outside her work and hardship, *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* will hopefully inspire others to follow in her footsteps and speak out with their stories of toxic academic experiences. Dagg's work is indispensable to the scientific community, and Reid's film ensures that her struggles were never in vain and brought to a wider public consciousness.

***The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Friday, November 16, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/036671/review-the-woman-who-loves-giraffes/>

## The Woman Who Loves Giraffes is an all-too-human story, too

By [BRUCE DEMARA](#)

Thu., Nov. 15, 2018

### The Woman Who Loves Giraffes

THE WOMAN WHO LOVES GIRAFFES is a documentary film on the life and work of Anne Innis Dagg, the world's first 'giraffologist'.

*Written and directed by Alison Reid. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 82 minutes. **G***

Four years before Jane Goodall so famously came to Africa to study chimpanzees, a fresh-faced 23-year-old Canadian woman came to South Africa in 1956 to study giraffes.

The concept of studying an animal intensely in its natural habitat was new and Anne Innis Dagg a pioneer, only the second person in the world ever to have done so.

But while Goodall has earned her well-deserved place in science and popular culture, Innis Dagg has largely been forgotten. This documentary explains why and it's a fascinating tale, albeit with a depressing Canadian twist.

Stunt coordinator turned director Alison Reid deserves high praise for fine storytelling, combining ecology and social-justice issues while focusing on a woman ahead of her times, whose ambitions were thwarted by institutional sexism.

Reid offers a couple of reasons why Innis Dagg (the daughter of famed Canadian economist Harold Innis) never achieved anything close to the notoriety achieved by Goodall, although the film opens amusingly with Innis Dagg's appearance on the old game show *To Tell the Truth*. (Guess how many of the four panellists correctly guessed which of the three contestants was actually her.)

First, Reid posits that human beings don't have the same connection to giraffe as they do to primates (who share of a sort of kinship) or even to elephants.

The second, Innis Dagg was held back by the miserable small-minded world of Canadian academia of the late 1960s and the 1970s. She simply couldn't get tenure (or respect) from her male colleagues of the day, despite being the foremost giraffe expert of her time and being published in the world's top academic scientific journals.





Anne Innis Dagg in the documentary *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*. (VIA HOT DOCS)

In the end, even the Ontario Human Rights Commission and other institutions failed to come to her aid, propelling her lifelong activism as a feminist.

Her decades-long exile from Africa — she raised a family in Canada with a supportive husband and wrote books — offers an opportunity to revisit the continent in modern times to unveil a sobering truth, that giraffe populations have been decimated even more extensively than those of primates or elephants. These majestic animals are barely hanging on and that's the film's urgent secondary message.

Innis Dagg is a determined and fascinating woman and Reid brings the past (through archival footage) and the present together to tell a compelling story.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/11/15/the-woman-who-loves-giraffes-is-an-all-too-human-story-too.html>

## Smitten by Giraffes

*Alison Reid gives pioneering zoologist Anne Innis Dagg her due in 'The Woman Who Loves Giraffes'*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published November 16th, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



Anne Innis Dagg's story is one of being smitten by giraffes. It's also one of setbacks and comebacks. The Canadian zoologist has had a career as long and extraordinary as a giraffe's neck, but she's an unsung hero, often referred to as "Canada's Jane Goodall" when, in fact, her ground-breaking research on giraffes predated Goodall's studies of chimps by a few years. It's time to start calling Jane Goodall "England's Anne Innis Dagg."

Dagg finally gets her due in the new documentary *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*, directed by Alison Reid (*The Baby Formula*). The film chronicles Dagg's bold leap at the age of 23 when she became an unlikely researcher of giraffes in South Africa. Reid's doc energetically revisits Anne's arrival in apartheid-era Africa to go where no scientist had gone before and study animals in the wild—and at first accepted only because Mr. Matthew, the proprietor of Fleur-de-Lys ranch, thought the letter signed "A. Dagg" was from an Alexander or Andrew. *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* is an empowering portrait of Dagg and the generations of zoologists she inspired.



Anne Innis Dagg and director Alison Reid

Photo by Anne Dixon

### Inequity and Irony

*The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* shows Dagg encountering cruel inequity that stalled her research in its tracks. Despite earning a PhD upon returning home from Africa and publishing significant research in credible periodicals, the higher-ups at the University of Guelph denied her tenure. The film is rife with all-too relevant scholarly tragedy as Reid chronicles Dagg's unsuccessful fight against systemic gender inequality in 1970s academia. The fruition of her research was the now-canonical book *The Giraffe: its biology, behavior, and ecology*, co-authored with J. Bristol Foster and first published in 1976, but as the film chronicles in a mixture of fury and irony, Dagg left her mark on the field just when it turned its back on her.

Dagg, speaking in conversation with Reid and *POV* in Toronto, admits that this chapter of her life was the hardest to revisit. “Even if I had more books and more papers than any other person, I wasn’t worthy,” she recalls. “That was too much.”

For the film, Reid lands an eye-opening interview with the one of the professors at Guelph who denied Dagg tenure. His response is one of tone deaf ignorance—particularly for a contemporary audience—and reveals so much about the systemic inequity Dagg faced. Dagg doesn’t hold back when asked about that scene. “I liked it because it brought him down,” she admits. “I’ve hated him ever since [she was denied tenure]. I mean he was just a vicious, awful person.”

The story resonates with the current conversation in the film industry, and culture more broadly, for stronger representation for women. When asked how her own career reflects Dagg’s story, Reid says she hasn’t experienced anything quite on the level that her subject has. “Before I was a director, I was a stunt performer and stunt coordinator,” says Reid, whose prolific resume of stunt work includes television programs like *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Rookie Blue*, and various generations of *Degrassi* and films like Atom Egoyan’s *Chloe*, David Cronenberg’s *eXistenZ*, and Ruba Nadda’s *October Gale*. “I encountered bits and pieces, but thankfully nothing to the extent that Anne experienced,” says Reid.



Young Anne Innis Dagg at Fleur de Lys, the ranch in South Africa where she first studied giraffe behaviour in 1956.

Photo by Alexander Matthew

### **From Drama to Documentary**

The sad reality is that while such obstacles are awful for subjects, they can provide great material for filmmakers. “When I found out about Anne’s story, I saw that she was a pioneering woman with a real passion, for giraffes and would stop at nothing to be able to pursue her dream and study them,” says Reid. “She overcame all sorts of obstacles.”

Reid says the road to *Giraffes* didn’t begin with a documentary, but with a drama. “I thought it would make a great scripted film or miniseries,” notes Reid. “I went to Anne and she was kind enough to give me the rights to her book *Pursuing Giraffe* [published in 2006]. When I found out she was going back to Africa for the first time in over half a century, I thought it was too good an opportunity to miss.”

The fateful trip to Africa offers the third act of the film in which Dagg makes a triumphant comeback. Reid records the historic opportunity as Dagg attends a conference of giraffe lovers in Nairobi and retraces her journey. She discovers that even though she hasn’t been teaching zoology at the university level, she’s inspired a generation of students who revere The Giraffe as “the Bible” of their field. After being an outsider for years, Dagg finds herself with a community of giraffe lovers she didn’t know existed.



Dr. Anne Innis Dagg feeding giraffes at the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago

Photo by Elaisa Vargas

### **The Comeback Tour**

The film reveals Dagg's genuine surprise as she is touched to learn of her work's impact. "I didn't know anyone who knew anything about what I had done," admits Dagg. "At the time the book came out, I guess a few people picked it up, but then they didn't know how to get in touch with me because the press actually went belly up." Despite the years of obscurity and lost work, the film sees Dagg approach her research without losing a beat of energy or passion through the use of present-day footage combined with archival images.

Thanks to Anne's groundbreaking research, Reid's film draws upon a wealth of 16mm archival footage that shows the young Dagg in her element. Reid says that no restoration was needed for the reels shot in 1956-1957 since Dagg had successfully preserved the footage over the past few decades. "It was in fine shape after all those years," she explains, adding that Dagg's reels of 16mm were digitized right away when production began.

While Dagg's journey back to Africa was the starting point for Reid, *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* deftly weaves past with present as new images of Anne in Africa mirror the memories of her younger self. "We had an incredible opportunity here to blend the story of Anne's past with the present," Reid observes, whose film bears witness to her success in that endeavour.

### **Walking in her own footsteps**



Alison Reid and cinematographer Iris Ng

In addition to the archival images, *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* draws upon Anne's extensive writing, both academic and personal, to inject her voice into the mix. Tatiana Maslany (*Orphan Black*) provides the voice of the young Anne Innis Dagg, while Victor Garber (*Argo*) brings to life the words of Mr. Matthew. The mix of new footage and archival images provides a sense of Anne's journey and growth across the years. "Weaving back and forth between past and present," says Reid, "we had all these letters and this wonderful footage serving as devices between the past and present stories. To be back with Anne in the same place where she took the footage from 1956 was pretty incredible."

Reid observes that Anne's story revealed itself layer by layer as the documentary retraced her past. "There were some amazing coincidences, like the fact that she was invited to a conference at the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago where she fell in love with giraffes at age three," says Reid. The coincidences provide effective visual parallels as the contemporary scenes, shot by Reid and cinematographer Dale Hildebrand with Iris Ng lensing seamless recreations. These images put Anne back in the path from which she was cruelly pulled. "Another coincidence was the conference at Kruger [National Park] in South Africa, a stone's throw from Fleur-de-Lys, the ranch where [Anne] did her pioneering research," says Reid. "I had no idea these things were going to happen—and they afforded us an incredible opportunity to re-trace Anne's pioneering journey." As the past mixes with the present, Reid portrays Dagg's trip to Africa as a continuous journey, emphasizing her legacy and longevity while assert her rightful space within history.

### Flying Under the Radar

As audiences watch Dagg thrive in the wild, both as a 23-year-old and as an octogenarian, they might see further parallels between Dagg and Jane Goodall given last year's release of Brett Morgen's documentary [\*Jane\*](#). Reid and Dagg find that their film—a five year-production that was well under way when *Jane* debuted—is in good company. "It was very interesting to see the congruencies, like how they were both young women following their dreams," says Reid.

The director also highlights the roles of women in both films that reveal generations of unsung heroes and influences. "When you see the *Jane* documentary, you realize that her mother also had a very big impact on Jane's life," says Reid, who also notes the influence of Dagg's mother, Mary Quayle Innis, whose writing fuelled lessons given by Dagg's father, celebrated academic Harold Innis. "When you see *The Woman who Loves Giraffes*, you'll see that the relationship between Anne and her mother and Anne and her daughter were instrumental in Anne's life," notes Reid. Anne's daughter, Mary, accompanies her on the triumphant return to the giraffe community and provides a fitting image of the generations of women touched by Dagg's work. Dagg says she's returning the favour to her mother with a newly written book on her, which is currently seeking publication.



Anne Innis Dagg in South Africa, 1956  
Photo by Alexander Matthew

Reid finds further parallels in the levels of attention that Dagg and her giraffes receive from the public compared to Goodall and her chimps. "Anne's been flying under the radar here in Canada," says Reid. "Similarly, giraffes have been flying under the radar. Everyone knows and loves giraffes, but they're unaware that they're in such danger."



The film draws audiences' attention to the fact that giraffe populations have plummeted dramatically in recent years. Just this week, the status of Kordofan and Nubian giraffes was upgraded by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to critically endangered on the Red List on Endangered Species. "When Ann was a biologist, she was just a biologist and now biologists are necessarily conservation biologists," observes Reid. "There's no distinguishing between the two because these animals are in such bad shape."

*The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* couldn't arrive at a more appropriate moment. Dagg's renewed energy and re-immersion into the giraffe community ensures that her research is more relevant than ever as minds new and old raise awareness to preserve the species. Her own story, with all its ups and downs, can inspire a generation of women to claim their rightful place in the academic jungle and fight for their passions, whatever they may be.

*The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* opens at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) on Nov. 16.

Read the *POV* review of the film [here](#).

Pat Mullen is *POV*'s Online Co-editor, etc. He covers film at [Cinemablographer.com](#), and has contributed to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Paste, BeatRoute, Modern Times Review, That Shelf and Documentary magazine and is a member of the Toronto Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society. You can reach him at [@cinemablogrpher](#)

## Lalita Krishna Named Co-Chair of Hot Docs Board

November 21st, 2018



Lalita Krishna at the 2017 DOC Institute Honours

By Pat Mullen

Filmmaker Lalita Krishna is the new co-chair of the Hot Docs board of directors. The announcement comes following a vote by the festival board on November 19. Krishna succeeds long-time co-chair Michael McMahon, who held the position for 15 years during an 18-year run on the Hot Docs board.

Krishna steps into the role after McMahon, along with co-chair Robin Mirsky and the festival staff, helped grow Hot Docs into the mammoth festival it is today. The expansion of Hot Docs during his years includes the development of festival's industry components, the acquisition of the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, which screens documentaries year-round, and increases in funds and support for documentary filmmakers.

"It is an honour to co-chair the most prestigious documentary festival in North America, especially at this juncture when there are so many exciting plans for growth and diversification," said Krishna in a release from Hot Docs. "I had the privilege of having my first documentary screen at Hot Docs in 2000, and the Festival has always remained true to its commitment of giving filmmakers a platform for their creative work, and to provide the best documentary experience for the viewer."

Krishna's documentaries have screened at festivals worldwide. Her credits as a director include the documentaries *Jambo Kenya* (2005), *Shooting for Change* (2007), and *Mallamall* (2012). Her films *Tiger* (2005) and *Listen to Me!* (2015) both won Best Canadian Feature at Toronto's Reel World Film Festival. She has been producing documentaries for over 20 years with her company InSync Media and has been honoured for her work, mentorship, and advocacy for diversity in media by organizations including Women in Film and Television, New Jersey's Hopes and Dreams Festival, and Reel World Film Festival. Krishna also sits on the board of the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) as the representative for the Ontario chapter of DOC.

## Review: The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret

Andrew Parker. November 22, 2018 6:58 am



### The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret

**5** out of 10

A well meaning, but ultimately rather limp overview of gender inequality and sexual assault in the film industry, *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* is a documentary that feels like too little, too late. Best suited for those who haven't watched a nightly news report in over two years, one of the latest documentaries from prolific filmmaker and stage director Barry Avrich (delivering one of two films opening theatrically within two weeks of each other in Toronto) gives an overview of misconduct, assault, and rape allegations brought against some of Hollywood's biggest power players and stars, but never bothers to dig deeper and figure out what it all could mean.

*The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* finds its lynchpin in the case of disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, who's currently facing dozens of rape and sexual assault charges in New York, Los Angeles, and London brought on by a staggering number of women who claim that the former Miramax chief and Oscar courting guru made unwanted and sometimes threatening advances. It's not surprising that Avrich would want to build such a primer around Weinstein, and not just because he's a perfect example of how the Hollywood elite is capable of turning a blind eye to horrific indiscretions when the person committing them is successful.

Avrich attempted to make a no-holds-barred look at the super-producer several years ago, only to have his efforts suppressed by the Weinstein Company honcho. Naturally, like many in the industry, Avrich had heard the rumblings of Weinstein's monstrous private life, but with a lawsuit already looming over his head and no hard evidence at the time to back up his claims, the filmmaker had to tread lightly. In this sense *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* feels both like an overview and a chance for Avrich to get something off his chest that's clearly been bothering him for quite some time.



The structure here is akin to a longform newsmagazine report, with a wide number of interview subjects contributing to an overall fact dump that feels sterilized for mass consumption. *The Reckoning:*

## The Gate – November 21, 2018 (2 of 2)

*Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* talks with survivors and accusers of high profile sexual misconducts, former employees, assistants, and directors who worked at Miramax, journalists, and lawyers to flesh out this system that enabled a master manipulator like Harvey to thrive and skate through his lauded career without consequences for his actions. There are other high profile figures brought down by the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements that are touched upon here – Kevin Spacey, Bill Cosby, Charlie Rose, Matt Lauer, and most notably Bill O'Reilly – but *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* remains predominantly focused on the Weinstein case.

That makes perfect sense when one considers that most former employees of Harvey are no longer bound to their previously airtight and staggeringly litigious nondisclosure agreements. Plenty of people are willing to talk about their experiences in ways that Avrigh couldn't previously get on the record before. *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* is at its best when illustrating how famous cads can lawyer-up quickly and hide behind reams of legalese to confound, bully, and suppress anyone that might say anything about them that's less than exemplary. By looking at this aspect of Hollywood and celebrity culture, Avrigh makes a pronounced, connecting line between people like Weinstein and O'Reilly and the current American president, a man who has been caught several times bragging about potential sexual assaults as if they were no big deal. That's an important part of this overall story that remains frustratingly underexposed, and one that Avrigh handles rather well.

However, the rest of *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* is too stoic and standard to make much of a difference or lasting impact. Although Avrigh gets some help from female co-writers Melissa Hood and editor Michèle Hozer, there's no actual fire in this film's belly. It exists in its own "just the facts, ma'am" manner, interested almost exclusively in rehashing what's generally already known and agreed upon as fact. While many of the people interviewed are clearly passionate about creating change and bringing such abuses of power to light, Avrigh's film is somewhat cold and distant. It's virtually indistinguishable from any number of nightly news reports on the same subject, and it still exists in its own Hollywood bubble. Such an approach is unsurprising when one notes that following the film's premiere at Hot Docs in the spring, a one hour edited version of *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* aired on CBC a couple of months ago, and the feature length version (which is just now getting a theatrical release) aired on Documentary Channel earlier this week. It's not so much an impassioned or empathetic plea for change, and much more of a sterile, stock piece of safe journalism. It's virtually indistinguishable from a *Dateline NBC* exposee on the same subject.

The issues raised by *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* aren't ones that should be played safe or devoid of emotion. It's a topic where the people raising such issues should be allowed to speak freely, openly, and graphically about what happened so there's no chance of them being misunderstood and misrepresented. I believe that Avrigh understands and properly represents survivors of harassment and abuse, but *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* is the product of a journalist keeping their cards close to their chest. There's very little here that can't be gleaned from thousands of other interviews, documents, and documentaries already out there, and *The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* looks and moves like a nightly news bulletin that's already over a year too late to make much of an impact. It's a vital topic to keep in the public consciousness, but as a documentary, it's rather ineffective. It's exactly the kind of film one expects a white, male industry mover and shaker would make about such a subject.

***The Reckoning: Hollywood's Worst Kept Secret* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, November 23, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/036869/review-the-reckoning-hollywoods-worst-kept-secret/>

## An evening with Canada's podcast all-stars

A curious cold case, fighting back against mother nature and a romance inspired by puppetry.

CBC News · November 23, 2018



(Gabriel Li)

[Listen to the full episode](#)

Recorded live at Hot Docs podcast festival in November 2018. Featuring: *Uncover: Escaping NXIVM*, *Sickboy*, *The Shadows*, *Cited*, *Safe Space*, *Disparue(s)*.



## Podcasts featured this week:

- [Uncover: Escaping NXIVM](#) - Producers Josh Bloch and Kathleen Goldhar share never before heard tape and discuss an...ahem...interesting attempt at going undercover with the controversial alleged cult, NXIVM.
- [Sickboy](#) - Hosts Brian, Taylor and Jeremie are joined by YouTube star [Kenzie Brenna](#) to discuss body image, body positivity and overcoming eating disorders.
- [The Shadows](#) - From the creator of The Heart, Kaitlin Prest brings us a new, live performance and an excerpt of her new fiction podcast.
- [Cited](#) - The town of Buxton, North Carolina loves their lighthouse. But in the 1970s, the ocean threatened to swallow it up. For the next three decades, they fought an intense political battle over what to do. Fight back against the forces of nature, or retreat?



## CBC, Podcast Playlist – November 23, 2018 (2 of 2)

- [Safe Space](#) – Hosts Sarah Hagi and Vicky Mochama are joined by Sandy Hudson and Lido Pimienta to discuss some hot takes. Is your hatred of hover boards actually racist? Are people who take bad photos really worth even knowing? *Safe Space* weighs in.
- [Disparue\(s\)](#) – Host and former police officer Stéphane Berthomet joins us on stage for a behind-the-scenes discussion about the hit true-crime podcast from Radio-Canada.

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listen to the full length Canadian Broadcast Version:

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Podcast Playlist

### Episode 158: An evening with Canada's'podcast all-stars

LISTEN

00:00 54:00

Recorded live at Hot Docs podcast festival in November 2018. Featuring: Uncover: Escaping NXIVM, Sickboy, The Shadows, Cited, Safe Space, Disparue(s). 54:00

What podcast would you want to see put on a live show? [Email](#), tweet us [@PodcastPlaylist](#), or find us on [Facebook](#).

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/podcastplaylist/an-evening-with-canada-s-podcast-all-stars-1.4914307>

## Review: The Price of Everything

Andrew Parker. November 24, 2018 11:25 am



### The Price of Everything

**7** out of 10

An examination of the controversial relationship between art and high finance, Nathaniel Kahn's insightful and nonjudgmental documentary *The Price of Everything* understands both sides of the sticky arguments being presented. Looking at the astronomically expensive world of high end modern art from the perspective of craftspeople and investors alike, *The Price of Everything* depicts the symbiotic relationship between artists who desperately want to make a living and wealthy investors who see the pieces produced as if they were stocks in a portfolio. While some people interviewed by Kahn throughout his latest film have strong feelings one way or the other on the matters at hand, the film itself shows that divorcing one's feelings about art as a commodity to be traded isn't as simple as it looks.

Until the mid-twentieth century, auction houses and museum buyers were panicked with thoughts that the well of masterpieces in the art world had dried up. The modern art movement that arose – led by the likes of Haring, Warhol, and Basquiat – was initially dismissed. Notable auction titans Christie's weren't allowed to bring any modern art onto their premises, let alone sell it. But once some of these twentieth century works started selling from increasingly and exponentially large sums, many in the art world began to change their tune. It wasn't long before some of the wealthiest people in the world started using modern art as a place to keep their money; storing it away, touring it, or hanging it on their walls as investments.

Almost all of the artists interviewed for *The Price of Everything* give the same line when asked how they feel about their works being sold for tens of millions of dollars. Like most artists, they're all about the work and they want to keep themselves separated from the business side of things. Conversely, while many of the one-percenter investors Kahn speaks to invest with an eye towards their personal artistic tastes, many others invest with their ears, noting what works and artists are on the financial rise. Some investors balance art with their commerce, while others simply want a place to keep their money that isn't a bank or a corporation; a clever way to skirt the taxman if one can afford it. In most cases, an artist can stand to make up to fifty percent of what their work sells for at auction. In the case of some re-sales, they can make almost nothing, with the bulk of the inflated price tag going back into the pocket of the initial investor.

Kahn's interest lies not in poking holes in the arguments of artists who wish to stay poor for the purity of their work or high rollers who squirrel some of the world's greatest masterpieces for use in their own private collections. Kahn would much rather look at how one half of this unlikely relationship can't survive anymore without the other. While there are some interview subjects that Kahn is clearly approaching with a great deal of skepticism (but never snark), there's a reasoned understanding given towards both sides of the argument.

## The Gate – November 21, 2018 (2 of 2)



When famed German artist Gerhard Richter sees some of his work about to go on the auction block, he bemoans that he'd much rather see the paintings go to a museum than a private collector or speculator. Kahn immediately follows Richter's statement with a remark from an auction house manager whose response to the artist's stance is as harsh as it is reasoned. While Richter has made a commendable artistic and socialist opinion about how we consume art, the auctioneer notes that museums often hide a lot of their best works away from public eyes for decades on end, effectively mimicking many investors. At least if one of Richter's paintings is in the collection of a private collector, there's more of a chance someone will appreciate it on a daily basis, and that the sale will make the work more culturally relevant and desirable in the first place.

*The Price of Everything* asks tough questions of those who speculate in the art world with the same "buy low and sell high" mentality as the stock market, but many of these investors fully realize that they could be participating in the construction of a bubble that could burst at any moment. They are the tastemakers who create and drive buzz for certain artists and creative movements, and they can also destroy them by simply selling any number of their "shares." They diversify their collections in ways similar to hedge fund managers, never having too many works from a single artist, region, or discipline. There's a science to all of it, but such discipline has turned art shows into trader's markets.

Kahn doesn't pretend to fully comprehend the sheer amount of wealth he's confronted with throughout *The Price of Everything*, but he has tremendous empathy for many of the artists willing to talk to him about how speculation has adversely impacted the way art is produced and consumed. With some living artists seeing their works as sparking feeding frenzies among investors, there's a fear of over-producing and saturating the market unnecessarily with subpar works, a worry that has driven Nigerian artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby almost to the point of burnout. Painter Larry Poons, Kahn's most endearing interview subject, speaks out frequently about his belief that art and business should never connect, but his once overlooked and dismissed works are about to see an uptick in their profitability because they've become "undervalued" over time, making them prime pickings for investors. And in the case of Jeff Koons – who might be the most successful artist of his time on paper (and who comes across the worst of any subjects on either side of the divide here) – some artists have become tacky luxury brands. Koons still has a lot of grand ideas, but he's clearly more invested in money than art at this point. He doesn't even physically craft many of his latest works, delegating the actual artistic construction to any number of his massive staff. Still, they sell just as well as they ever have.

One doesn't need to understand or appreciate either art or commerce to become captivated by *The Price of Everything*. Kahn presents all sides of the subject in such a fascinating and concise manner that his documentary is as educational as it is entertaining, and even though he can't explore every aspect of the industry within the rigorous confines of a single feature film. What emerges is a somewhat perverse world where money is placed above artistic intent, and it all kind of makes sense. You don't have to agree about the use of artworks as investment tools to understand *The Price of Everything*, but it makes one realize the value of everything being talked about. It's a fascinating film that will change the way one looks at modern art and make people question both artistic and financial intent.

***The Price of Everything* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto and The Vic in Victoria on Friday, November 23, 2018. It opens at Bytowne Cinema in Ottawa on December 9.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/036890/review-the-price-of-everything/>

## Review: The Great Buster

[Andrew Parker](#) November 26, 2018 8:21 am



### The Great Buster 7 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

A straightforward and charming look back at the career of one of the most comedic and creative minds in cinematic history, Peter Bogdanovich's *The Great Buster* eloquently and delicately lays out the highs and lows of the man often referred to as "The Great Stone Face." No one dominated the box office in the 1920s quite like Buster Keaton, whose string of successful shorts and features during the decade was impressive and unparalleled. Bogdanovich sets his own auteur hat aside and dons his film critic chapeau once again to walk audiences through the struggles and successes Keaton faced, often letting the actor, director, writer, and innovator's work speak for itself.

Joseph Frank Keaton was born to constantly travelling Vaudevillian parents who turned their two person physical comedy routine into a family act after the birth of their eldest son – rechristened Buster for the stage – and two subsequent siblings. When it came time for the Keaton Family to break up their lucrative and controversial act, Buster was introduced to the emerging wonders of cinema by mentor and friend Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, and after a handful of supporting roles and cameos, Keaton was making his own movies by the early 1920s. Starting off with 2-reel shorts and his first masterwork, *One Week*, until towards the end of the decade with his last truly noteworthy feature, *Steamboat Bill Jr.*, Keaton's blend of stunt-based physical comedy and elaborately constructed set pieces and sight gags made him one of the biggest draws in movie history. It wasn't meant to last, however. After being more or less forced into a bum deal with MGM that would strip him of the creative freedom that made his films so successful, Keaton's career floundered and faded, with only a handful of inspired reminders of what made his run in the 1920s so endearing and enduring.

Bogdanovich more or less follows along the timeline of Keaton's career through the opening stages of *The Great Buster*, narrating the briskly paced documentary with a handful of insights and facts, but never bogging things down by explaining everything to death. Bogdanovich's tone is warm, inviting, and matter-of-fact. While some might accuse the filmmaker and writer of dwelling too long in some spots while only paying fleeting lip service to some of Keaton's other career milestones and anecdotes, it's always clear to see what he's trying to do with *The Great Buster*.

## The Gate – November 26, 2018 (2 of 2)



The subheading for *The Great Buster* is “A Celebration,” and that’s precisely what Bogdanovich provides. He’s not here to lecture the audience about the minutiae of Keaton’s films or mount a tell all biography of the man, although he could likely do either if given the chance. He brings out a bunch of modern day historians and admirers to talk about Keaton’s influence on cinema (including Leonard Maltin, Johnny Knoxville, Mel Brooks, Richard Lewis, and Werner Herzog), but they’re on hand to briefly observe, respect, and admire, not to analyze. *The Great Buster* is a film about appreciation or art, not the deconstruction of it, making Bogdanovich’s film both an entertaining trip through Keaton’s career and a great starting point for anyone who might be inspired to take a deeper dive into its subject’s filmography.

The timeline pauses, fast-forwards, and eventually rewinds when it comes time to talk about Keaton’s 1920s feature efforts, preferring to address the bad stuff first. Bogdanovich doesn’t spend too much time talking about Keaton’s struggles with alcoholism or adultery, but instead looks more closely at how Buster’s post-1920s career drove the stoic comedian to unhappy places. Keaton’s MGM years were a debacle from which he’d never fully recover, and although he’d stay busy and financially stable through thankless stints as a gag writer and sequence director and successful work in commercials, shorts, B-movies, television, and a handful of productions outside America, the success he once experienced never returned. The biggest success in the second half of Keaton’s life is probably that he was able to stay somewhat sober and settle down with the love of his life. These setbacks aren’t presented by Bogdanovich as sour grapes or to make viewers wonder what might’ve been if Keaton hadn’t gone over to MGM. They’re shown as unchangeable facts and handled with a great deal of artistic empathy.

Bogdanovich doubles back on Keaton’s biggest successes to close out *The Great Buster* in a bid to send the viewer home happy and remind them that his subject was one of the biggest stars of the silent era next to Chaplin and Lloyd. Keaton was responsible for some of the most expensive and technologically innovative motion pictures of the time; marvels of the artform even by today’s standards. Often, Bogdanovich will allow long clips of Keaton’s works to play out unencumbered by narration or external explanation, giving viewers a chance to become appropriately awestruck by his subject’s comedic, narrative, and constructive ingenuity. From Jackie Chan to *Jackass*, physical comedy wouldn’t be where it is today without Buster Keaton, and Bogdanovich’s homage to one of cinema’s most overlooked greats gives the man his respectful due.

***The Great Buster is now playing at Mayfair Theatre in Ottawa. It opens on December 7, 2018 in Calgary (The Globe), Regina (Rainbow Cinemas), and Saskatoon (The Roxy), and on December 21 in Toronto at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/036912/review-the-great-buster/>



## Why the Psycho shower scene is an iconic moment in movie history

CBC Radio · November 29, 2018



78/52 is a new documentary by Alexandre O. Philippe that analyzes the iconic shower scene from Psycho. (Hot Docs)

0 comments

[Listen](#)

*Originally published May 4, 2017*

Alexandre O. Philippe argues that the shower scene in the 1960 film *Psycho* is "probably the most iconic scene in the history of movies."

It's a hefty claim but one that he backs up in his new documentary, *78/52*. "It's a 90-minute film about a two-minute scene," Philippe states. He understands how absurd that sounds but adds that he's "absolutely convinced I can spend the rest of my life studying this particular scene and never get to the bottom of it."

*78/52* breaks down the scene in every way possible, from its memorable soundtrack (those terrifying screeches!) to the fascinating sound effects that went into the actual stabbing. Philippe explains that Hitchcock brought in a number of melons in order to find the perfect stabbing sound. The winner? A casaba.

"It's very bony, it's starchy and it has a very small, gooey core," Philippe notes. "It really gives you that sense that you're stabbing through not just flesh but bone and viscera, and it's a pretty horrible, realistic-sounding melon."

*78/52* is screening now at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival. For more information on it, head over to the festival's [website](#).

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/thursday-may-4-2017-mary-walsh-zac-posen-and-more-1.4093251/why-the-psycho-shower-scene-is-an-iconic-moment-in-movie-history-1.4096994>

## Last surviving Nazi prosecutor Ben Ferencz gets due tribute in ‘Prosecuting Evil’

By [PETER HOWELL](#) Movie Critic

Thu., Nov. 29, 2018

¾ Stars

### Prosecuting Evil: The Extraordinary World of Ben Ferencz

Ben Ferencz spent his post-Nuremberg life helping to create the UN’s International Court of Justice in The Hague. (COURTESY OF TIFF)

*Documentary on Ben Ferencz, the last surviving prosecutor from the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. Directed by Barry Avrich. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 83 minutes. 14A*

“Law, not war” is Ben Ferencz’s mantra, and there’s no person alive who can advance this argument more persuasively than this 99-year-old lawyer.

The U.S. lawyer and activist is, without doubt, the world’s most dedicated seeker of justice. He’s spent the past 72 years (and counting) doggedly pursuing truth on behalf of the planet.

The remarkable subject of Barry Avrich’s new documentary *Prosecuting Evil* is the last surviving prosecutor from the post-World War II Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals.

The lesson Ferencz learned from that experience, at the age of 27, is that genocide ensues when war trumps justice.

#### READ MORE:

[Q&A: Ben Ferencz on the Nazis he put on trial](#)

He’s spent the years after Nuremberg helping to create the UN’s International Court of Justice in The Hague, a mechanism he deems all the more essential today, as the spectres of global conflict and revived Nazism loom large once again.

His energy never seems to flag, in a film that pays full tribute to him — while also sounding the alarm that his work is more urgent than ever.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/11/29/last-surviving-nazi-prosecutor-ben-ferencz-gets-due-tribute-in-prosecuting-evil.html>

## Human Rights Film Festival Review: The Rescue List

[Andrew Parker](#) December 5, 2018 5:29 pm



**The Rescue List**  
**6.5 out of 10**

[Andrew Parker](#)

Documentarians Alyssa Fedele and Zachary Fink's *The Rescue List*, which screens this weekend at the [Human Rights Film Festival](#) in Toronto, brings to light an often overlooked form of child slavery that has been ongoing for decades, and examines the healing process faced by those who lived through it.

In the 1960s, the construction of a hydroelectric dam in Ghana created Lake Volta, the largest manmade lake in the world. Unscrupulous profiteers saw the new waterway created by runoff from the Volta River as a cash cow. Fisheries would literally buy young children away from their impoverished families and force them into dangerous, backbreaking labour. It's estimated that there are over 20,000 such child slaves exploited by illegal fishing activities, and many of them are never heard from again once they're forced into servitude. In 2003, an organization known as Challenging Heights – founded in part by Kofi Annan – formed to help rescue child slaves and help rehabilitate them.

*The Rescue List* doesn't dwell too heavily on exposing the illegal use of child labour, probably because Fedele and Fink's access to such activities would be limited to what they see when out in the field with Challenging Heights and their primary guide, Kwame, who is a himself survivor of slavery. Instead, the focus is placed on the immediate effects that such harsh and illegal practices have on young children and what it takes to nurse them back to physical and mental stability.

*The Rescue List* isn't an exposé on the subject in the strictest terms, but by sticking close to those who've lived through such nightmares, Fedele and Fink tell the viewer all they need to know about the dangers involved. It's a vital part of such stories that often goes untold, and it's important that Fedele and Fink have brought it out into the open. Saving a child from slavery isn't enough when often the hardest work will have to be done once the chains of bondage have been severed.

**[The Rescue List screens at the Human Rights Film Festival in Toronto on Sunday, December 9, 2018 at 6:30 pm at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. Directors Alyssa Fedele and Zachary Fink will be on hand for a post-screening Q&A, moderated by activist and artist Emmanuel Jal.](#)**

# Review: Rams

Andrew Parker December 5, 2018 12:49 pm



## Rams

6 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

An insightful and thought provoking (but not exactly dramatic) look at one of the biggest names in product design, Gary Hustwit's documentary *Rams* profiles a man that's frequently credited with changing the ways customers look at consumer goods. Although German product engineer Dieter Rams would humbly note that some of his most iconic designs were the result of numerous different opinions and inputs, he formed a signature style that has been frequently aped and duplicated by some of the biggest names in art and technology. He never asked to become the poster person for the state of modern design since the mid-20th Century, but Hustwit's profile of Rams is a fitting tribute for a quiet and reserved man who's proud of his work, but doesn't want to take all the credit for it.

Initially living out his dreamed profession as an architect during the post-World War II reconstruction of Germany, Rams was offered a position at Braun, an electronics company that wanted to challenge people's notions of how household products should look and function. They didn't want traditional designs, preferring simplicity, cleanliness, and functionality over bells and whistles. The philosophy of the Braun brothers meshed nicely with Rams' sensibilities, and soon after the release of his first majorly successful design for the company – a record player that would affectionately become known as "Snow White's Coffin" – Dieter's name would become synonymous with the brand. His partnership with Braun lasted from 1961 to 1995, ending only when Gillette purchased the company and started to place corporate branding as a higher priority than overall design. He would freelance on the side for furniture



## The Gate – December 5, 2018 (2 of 2)

manufacturer Vitsø, with similar success, and assume more of a full time capacity with them once his time at Braun was at an end.

Today, consumers can readily see Rams' indelible influence on design in Apple and Ikea products. Rams might also be the only designer of consumer electronics and products whose works are worthy of touring exhibitions and permanent art installations. He used his notoriety of sorts to come up with a loose manifesto of ten essential elements of product design that are still treated like gospel today. It's easy to see why Hustwit (*Helvetica*, *Objectified*) would find Rams so fascinating. Here's a man who has spent his entire life to thinking about simplicity and function more eloquently than many fine artists.

As a person and as a documentary, *Rams* has little room for drama. His life doesn't have a great deal of tragedy, soul searching, or sudden turns. He's just an average man who's great at his job. He's lived at the same house in Kronberg for fifty years alongside his wife, Ingeborg. He's private by nature, but also a people person. He's always believed that in order to make a better product, you need to understand the people who use it. Whenever he speaks in Hustwit's documentary, it's authoritative, but based in common sense and decades of refined reasoning.

No moments in *Rams* would ever be described as suspenseful, dramatic, hilarious, or even all that emotional, but it's a warmly told look at a fascinating and important artistic influencer. In Rams' eyes, every product tells a story, and Hustwit's documentary gives viewers tips on how to figure out what a designer is trying to state with their work.

***Rams opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, December 7, 2018.***



Review: Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes

Andrew Parker December 5, 2018 8:14 am



**Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes**  
6.5 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

A detailed, but dry and sanitized look at one of the most controversial and disgraced figures in media and political history, Alexis Bloom's documentary *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* will make viewers better understand the personality and actions of its titular subject, but never really delves deeply into what this man's life means in a greater context. Perhaps because there's so much to discuss when talking about the man who mobilized the Fox News army or possibly a side effect of Ailes' notoriously litigious nature, *Divide and Conquer* isn't so much a film that speaks "truth to power" and more like one that speaks "truth about power." It's not nearly as satisfying or eye opening as it could've been, but as a straightforward biographical timeline, *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* is a well researched, edited, and compiled bit of scholarship.

Ever since he was a teenager growing up in Warren, Ohio, Roger Ailes was known as a persuasive, staunchly conservative man. He got his professional start in Philadelphia, working as production assistant for The Mike Douglas Show, which he would parlay into a job working for then presidential candidate Richard Nixon, becoming the first ever "media advisor" for a political campaign. Capable of helping GOP candidates utilize the power of television to its fullest potential, Ailes was a showman at heart who keenly understood the power of populist propaganda and how to use fear as a means of driving people to the polls.

While he was politically active, television remained his primary passion. After his talk show driven cable network and pet project, America's Talking, was canned in favour of the creation of MSNBC, Ailes teamed up with Rupert Murdoch to create Fox News in 1996. Driven not by journalism, but by a fierce sense of loyalty, a desire to provoke fear, and the creation of salacious headlines designed only to drive ratings, Ailes' most notable creation only fed its creator's ego. It would all come tumbling down, however, on what should've been the most important day in Ailes' career. On the same day Donald Trump was due to get the Republican presidential nomination, sexual harassment and assault allegations that had been brewing for decades behind the scenes at Fox News would lead to Ailes' ouster as CEO.

As frustrating, arrogant, and unapologetically malevolent as Ailes could be, he's nothing if not a fascinating subject to build a documentary around. *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* has plenty of ground to cover, and a wealth of former co-workers, producers, pundits, biographers, lawyers, and even damage control consultants willing to speak out about their time spent around the media megalomaniac. Bloom (*Bright Lights: Starring Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds*) has no shortage of biographical material to work from, and any specific portion of Ailes' life could easily spin off into its own

## The Gate – December 5, 2018 (2 of 3)

feature length film and offer vital truths about the evolution of the American political climate. Even his failed attempts to micromanage the dealings of his small, left leaning hometown's municipal government and press is a fascinating example of how Ailes couldn't function if he wasn't in complete and totalitarian control of everything around him.

Early on in *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes*, one of Bloom's interview subjects compares the news baron to Charles Foster Kane, and such an insight is obvious, but wholly appropriate. Through a combination of interviews, archival footage, and Ailes' own written words from any number of the books he penned, a picture emerges of a driven person who hungered for power because he thought it would make him more likable and desirable. Ailes craved the limelight, but if he couldn't bask in it, he would do whatever he could to control it. He would light a match, start an inferno, bark to millions of people that the match was created by liberals, and then proceed to douse everything in rhetorical gasoline. Fox News and America's Talking had their fair share of notable personalities over the years (including Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity, who more or less went down with Ailes, and Glenn Beck, who's still largely conservative, but regrets his role on the network today), but most of their talking points were coming straight from the mind of the network's CEO. Outside of his equally demanding and loyal wife, Beth (who's rarely glimpsed here, talked about often, and was reportedly cheated on more times than anyone can count), Ailes was a man with no real friends, plenty of enemies, and surrounded by people who wanted a slight rub of some of his power.



Ailes, for worse and not for better, changed the way that people consume news and political messages. Through his lucrative consulting firm, Ailes Communications, he helped the recently deceased George Bush Sr. manage a come from behind victory against Michael Dukakis by mounting the first ever negative television ad campaign designed to denounce a candidate. He proved that people would believe any news reports they were presented with as long as the graphics were flashy and the broadcasters were passionately shouting about every detail as if the end of days were already upon us. He knew that sex, particularly attractive women whose full bodies could be seen and not just their faces, would sell. People decry Fox News' style over substance approach all the time, and rightfully so, but a quick turn of the dial to CNN or MSNBC would show viewers a similar product if one were to turn the sound off. There are many reasons why Fox News became the top rated cable news source for years, and it doesn't solely have to do with its ability to function as a propaganda tool. No one in the industry wants to admit it, but all cable news outlets (and many broadcast ones) want to be Fox News, and that's precisely what Ailes wanted from the start. He wanted to be the trendsetter; the man everyone looked up to as the all powerful figure behind the garish curtain.

## The Gate – December 5, 2018 (3 of 3)

To her credit, Bloom coaxes all of this out of *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* with nuance and dexterity, even if the film does threaten to run a bit long and get bogged down under the sheer weight of all the details. Where the film stumbles, however, are the sections where Bloom attempts to parse the Weinstein level allegations brought against Ailes and some of his most prominent male co-workers. Outside of repeatedly restating the obviously justifiable viewpoint that no one should ever endure an abusive or uncomfortable work environment and giving victims and accusers a chance to share their experiences, *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* adds little to the current discussion surrounding male media titans who use their influence and bully women into unwanted sexually minded situations.

That's probably not entirely Bloom's fault, but it feels like the filmmaker is erring on the side of caution here. Despite being forcibly removed from his post, Ailes still has powerful allies and lawyers on his side. During his tenure at the network, he was able to help make provable and virtually airtight 2006 allegations brought against Bill O'Reilly disappear through a combination of victim shaming, out of court settling, and reams of nondisclosure agreements. There's always a sense throughout *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* that the worst is yet to come to light, but Bloom is never able to fully say what that might entail. Even when it comes to discussing how Ailes' preferred form of propaganda delivery eerily mirrors tactics employed by the Nazis, the facts are presented without any follow-through on what they all could mean.

*Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* is a righteously and rightfully angry film, but as a tool for enlightenment and change it falls short. Admirably and unlike her subject, Bloom relies on provable facts and emotional reactions that can't be proven or disproven in a court of law. Bloom and her interview subjects never yell and scream about their time spent in or around Ailes' circle of influence, which means that none of them are stooping to his level. At the same time, *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* is a film that plays fairly with someone known for fighting dirty. As a biography, Bloom's work is cohesive and comprehensive. As a takedown and call to action, it's an overlong, glancing blow at best.

***Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Friday, December 7, 2018. It's available on iTunes the same day.**

**Review: Almost Almost Famous**

Andrew Parker December 5, 2018 9:22 am



**Almost Almost Famous**

**5 out of 10**

[Andrew Parker](#)

While it isn't as perceptive, entertaining, or insightful of a documentary about talented musical impersonators as it could've been, Barry Lank's *Almost Almost Famous* does an okay job weaving together the narratives of three subjects who make their living largely by pretending to be someone else. By focusing specifically on a band of talented musicians making their way on a tour across Canada in a revue of classic 1950s rock and roll superstars and rarely branching out from there, *Almost Almost Famous* has a frustratingly narrow focus for something that could've delved deeper into tribute band subcultures. If it weren't for the candor and unique personal stories of Lank's three primary subjects, *Almost Almost Famous* would be a lot more pedantic and forgettable. You'll still probably forget the movie itself, but you'll remember the people who were in it.

Lank follows around The Class of '59, a touring company of musicians playing to packed and appreciative crowds of baby-boomers in small towns across the country. While these fans of old school rock and roll can't see most of their beloved musical idols on stage anymore, The Class of '59 gives them a chance to watch other folks emulate the star power exhibited by the likes of Elvis Presley, The Big Bopper, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Jackie Wilson in their prime. Mostly played on stage by veteran and up and coming musicians, these doppelgangers spend decades honing their craft and act, but just like their real life counterparts, they know their performing days are limited. Audiences only want to remember these musical superstars as they were at the height of their popularity and attractiveness, and the older these performers get, their careers as an impersonator reach an expiration date. In some cases, although the money can be pretty good for gigs essentially doing cover songs, the job is a rigorous, time sucking impediment that takes away from more personally fulfilling artistic pursuits.

A great deal of *Almost Almost Famous* is observational, with Lank tagging along with gruff Winnipegger tour manager Marty Kramer as he tries to keep his band of misfits rigidly focused on the tasks at hand. The stage show elements look like fun, but working for Marty seems like thankless, absolute hell, and I'm not entirely certain that's what Lank is trying to depict. While some of the band members deliberately push Kramer's buttons, he's the kind of managerial veteran who takes his D-list industry gig far too seriously. Any time spent backstage with the musicians as they attempt to rehearse, or waiting for tour busses and vans to arrive at airports, or listening Marty complain about whatever's bothering him that day might be an accurate depiction of life on the road for a touring band, but it's also pedantic and uninteresting. It's made worse by the fact that *Almost Almost Famous* focuses always on these specific guys, and not any of the tens or thousands of other musical impersonators making healthy livings. *Almost Almost Famous* anchors on a singular experience, which would be admirable if it wasn't so dragging and unfulfilling. It's never certain if Lank's film is celebrating or condemning such a lifestyle choice, or that the filmmaker even wants to question such things.



But whenever Lank slows things down to approach the band's three most magnetic personalities as individuals, *Almost Almost Famous* bears a lot more fruit. Perhaps paradoxically, the group's resident Elvis impersonator – former world champion Ted Torres Martin – is the lowest key member of the bunch. A quiet, reserved man who loves what he does but is quick to change out of costume and makeup as soon as the show is over, Ted speaks most eloquently about the shelf life of a celebrity impersonator. He keeps to himself on most nights, not because of anything involving ego, but rather because that's just who he is. When he hits the stage, he oozes The King's star power, but he knows that energy can't last forever. He's actively looking forward to seeing what the next generation of tribute artists are going to come up with, and his love for the form seems genuine.

By far the most electrifying and potentially divisive subject in *Almost Almost Famous* is Jerry Lee Lewis impersonator Lance Lipinsky, a man so complicated and fascinating that one almost wishes the whole film was built around his trajectory (and in some ways, it kind of is). A musical prodigy from small town Texas who's still in his twenties, Lipinsky sees his impersonation work as a form of paying his dues, while building a bigger audience and platform to launch his rockabilly career. He's a temperamental shit disturber, constantly getting Marty's blood racing to near heart attack levels with his on and off stage antics. His devil-may-care attitude and cockiness probably pushes as many people away as it invites, and his prominent and proud wearing of a Trump/Pence button in his jacket in Lank's sit down interviews practically dares people to hate him before getting to know him. And yet, by watching Lance's performance and listen to how passionately he talks about his craft, a lot of the young man's bluster seems justified. He's able to back up his own bullshit most of the time, and he knows when he's phoning in a performance out of disinterest. He's also been known to burn out due to exhaustion on stage, which says a lot about his dedication when one considers that he's the youngest member of the band by a wide margin. In short, he's honest with himself and with the audience, emerging as the true star of *Almost Almost Famous* whether you end up liking or loathing him.

But focusing solely on Lipinsky would rob viewers of the chance to spend time with Bobby Brooks Wilson, the company's resident Jackie Wilson impersonator. Not only does Bobby have an interesting and atypical start to his musical career – which came by way of Hawaiian karaoke bars following his military discharge – but a fascinating connection to the very person he's impersonating. On a personal level, Wilson's story has the most ups and downs, making him the most humane and easily relatable of the bunch.

But outside of the fascinating life stories and experiences relayed by the Lank's three primary subjects, *Almost Almost Famous* comes across as limp and filled with gaps. The viewer is always reminded that if any of the band members slip up or fall off, they could be replaced by any of the hundreds of other hungrier and younger impersonators waiting in the wings. There's always a sword hanging over the heads of these artists, but we never see the people waiting in the wings to take the stage next. Although it's clear that Lipinsky and Torres won't be around forever in this capacity thanks to their other endeavours and dreams, there's never any drama to be found in *Almost Almost Famous*. Even if these people were to lose their jobs, there's always a sense that they'll come out on the other end unscathed. The act needs them more than they need the act, so the stakes are remarkably low throughout. With either a wider focus or a more narrowed perspective that only focused on one of these men, *Almost Almost Famous* could've been onto something. Instead, it's uneven and only fitfully speaking to something grander that it should be talking about.

***Almost Almost Famous* opens at Carlton Cinemas in Toronto on Friday, December 7, 2018. It also screens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on December 14 and 17.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/037228/review-almost-almost-famous/>



## Divide and Conquer doc details Fox News founder's sexual scandals and a lot more that's appalling

By [PETER HOWELL](#) Movie Critic  
Thu., Dec. 6, 2018

### Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes

Like on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RogerAilesFilm>

*Documentary on the rise and fall of Fox News baron Roger Ailes. Directed by Alexis Bloom. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 107 minutes. **STC***

When Fox News baron Roger Ailes found himself in the boiling waters of sexual-harassment allegations in [July of 2016](#), the person he immediately called to for help was [Donald Trump](#).

Whatever lifeline Trump threw Ailes is unclear — it appears to be little more than consolations and a lawyer's phone number — but this factoid deep into the doc *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes* is one of many that make the film a bizarrely compelling watch. (We also learn that he was a hemophiliac, secretly carried a gun and liked to tap dance to relieve stress.)

Ailes resigned from Fox on July 21, 2016. It's the same day that Trump, no stranger himself to accusations of [sexual improprieties](#), spoke at the Republican Party leadership convention as its nominee, en route to becoming U.S. president.

One alleged predator slips beneath the waves; another surfs to victory. But this doc by Alexis Bloom (*Bright Lights: Starring Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds*) shows just how long Ailes, who died in 2017 at age 77, dodged his inevitable fate.

Described by former schoolmates as “mercilessly funny” during his breezy Eisenhower years of the 1950s in blue-collar hometown Warren, Ohio, Ailes would go on to become mercilessly ruthless in the way he exploited people both professionally and sexually.

While working at talk-show giant *The Mike Douglas Show* in the 1960s, Ailes schmoozed his way from junior producer to executive producer, stepping on the heads of older and more qualified candidates.

He jumped ship from the show in 1967 after convincing one of its guests, presidential hopeful Richard Nixon, that he could craft a media strategy to finally win the White House for the humourless, clueless, power-hungry Nixon.

Ailes did what he promised, borrowing camera angles from Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 Nazi booster *Triumph of the Will*, making Nixon seem like a man of the people. The feat was documented in *The Selling of the President 1968*, Joe McGinniss' landmark book on the distortions and manipulations of election campaigns.

Looking like a jollier version of Alfred Hitchcock — Bloom even uses Hitch’s old TV theme at one point — Ailes would later craft successful Republican presidential campaigns for Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, the latter via the infamous “Willie Horton” attack ads against Democratic rival Michael Dukakis.



A new documentary, *Divide and Conquer: The Roger Ailes Story*, directed by Alexis Bloom, deconstructs the rise and fall of the late head of Fox News Channel. The film opens in theaters on Dec. 6, as well as VOD, Apple iTunes, and Amazon streaming services. (AP PHOTO/JIM COOPER, FILE)

Ailes was motivated by his personal mantra: “We have a desperate need to return to the basics” in America. This credo found further expression in the right-wing politics of Fox News, which he started in 1996 with the backing of media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

“Return to the basics” evidently included the base treatment of women, as the thrice-married Ailes chased female subordinates with an entitlement born of confidence he could get away with anything.

“He needed that feeling of having a harem,” says one of many women interviewed in the film, all of them describing Ailes’ appalling tactics: any woman who refused his outrageous sexual demands was placed on a “no hire” list.

Ailes was a #MeToo villain before the #MeToo movement began. But *Divide and Conquer* is more than a rap sheet of his crimes against women.

Those testimonies are there, to be sure, but the film works best in breaking down Ailes’ motives and methods. The title is actually a misnomer: Ailes didn’t divide his enemies so much as he corralled like-minded believers into an “us vs. them” vision of America, where the “them” were unfeeling ruling elites in Washington, D.C.

Ailes and his political allies curried favour with red-state Americans, even if Fox News reporters patronized the audience with newsroom jokes about “rilin’ up the crazies.”

“Roger always knew the lowest common denominator in people,” another woman says of him, and boy, did he ever. As this doc shows, he went as low as he could possibly go, until his repugnant behaviour finally caught up with him — as it must to all such men.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2018/12/06/divide-and-conquer-doc-details-fox-news-founders-sexual-scandals-and-a-lot-more-thats-appalling.html>

## 12 HOLIDAY EVENTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

By Chelsea Brimstin

December 7, 2018

### HOT DOCS FOR THE HOLIDAYS: HOME ALONE: QUOTE-ALONG

Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema | December 23, 9:30 pm – 11:13 pm | [Tickets](#)



Hot Docs for the Holidays will be celebrating the festive season with a month long program full of free holiday classics and special screenings. Grab your ugliest Christmas sweater, and check out the fifth annual Home Alone quote-along, where they'll be screening the film with subtitles, so you can shout out your favourite lines and enjoy some cheese pizza as you yell, "keep the change, ya filthy animal!"

<https://indie88.com/12-holiday-events-you-dont-want-to-miss/>

**Review: 'Rams'**

*An appropriately no frills portrait of designer Dieter Rams*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published December 7th, 2018



**Rams**

(USA, 74 min.)

Dir. Gary Hustwit

Take a look around your kitchen. Survey your living room furniture and ogle your electronics. How many of them bear the Braun name?

Chances are that Dieter Rams designed something in your house. Rams profiles the German designer who fashioned many household items for brands like Braun and Vitsoë. The doc features an impressive catalogue of gadgets and furniture with designs that everyday viewers might take for granted. Rams has an offbeat sense of humour and his awkward yet pleasant screen presence illuminates the mind that approached design in his signature way: everything is pure pragmatic functionality. As the doc tours through various items of Rams' creation, it showcases products made with sleek and unfussy practicality. Rams' approach is very "no frills," but as the doc dives further into his philosophy and work ethic, one sees that is exactly why his designs endure.

Director Gary Hustwit, who directed *Helvetica* and executive produced this year's audience pleaser [Design Canada](#), zeroes in on Rams' 10 principles of good design to encapsulate his work and influence on the field. Rams emphasizes innovation, durability, utility, and sustainability. Every aspect of the aesthetic and composition serves to enhance the user experience.

His products aren't cheap—both in terms of cost and quality—and they run counterintuitive to today's standard for disposable culture. However, the film sees how these products endure while others fall out of fashion in the way that shag carpeting and shoulder pads went the way of the dodo. His designs aren't for individuals; they're for a collective group of users who interact with products in day-to-day living.

*Rams* follows the designer's principles as Hustwit delivers a film that is itself very "Ramsian." There isn't a second to this 74-minute film that doesn't need to be there. Brightly lit with warm natural palettes and cut with no-nonsense precision, the film plays without any flashy pizzazz to ensure a timeless, yet contemporary aesthetic. It's unfussy, uncontrived functional filmmaking with everything in the service of the subject and the viewer, just like Rams would have wanted.

*Rams* opens Friday, Dec. 7 at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-rams>

## Review: You Are Here: A Come From Away Story

[Andrew Parker](#) December 16, 2018 7:37 am



### You Are Here: A Come From Away Story

7 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

A moving look at the generous and tireless Canadian men and women who tried to turn some of the darkest days in world history into something a bit more comforting and life affirming, the documentary *You Are Here: A Come From Away Story* gives the people of Gander and surrounding Newfoundland communities a proper, intelligent, and thoughtful tribute. Although the efforts of Gander and the towns surrounding it in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks have been forever memorialized in the award winning, box office smash Broadway musical *Come From Away*, *You Are Here* looks a lot more closely and realistically at the enormous task they faced and the selfless charity it took to watch over thousands of stranded travellers.

Going into September 11, 2001, the biggest issue facing residents of Gander, Newfoundland was a school bus driver strike. As the morning would progress and unprecedented terrorist activity would cause thousands of citizens and first responders to lose their lives when hijacked commercial aircraft struck the World Trade Centre in New York City, Gander would quickly develop other concerns. With all air traffic into and out of the United States suspended, 38 airplanes carrying over 6,500 passengers from all over the world were forced to make emergency landings in the small community. While, historically, Ganderites are no strangers to taking in wayward travellers and shipwrecked sailors (by virtue of the fact that it's the easternmost point in North America, and therefore closest to Europe), no one could've been prepared for an influx of people who were essentially refugees for nearly a week in their town. After passengers were kept on the tarmac for upwards of twenty-four hours while airlines and U.S. officials frantically tried to figure out what to do, the residents of Gander and surrounding townships began a large scale relief effort designed to make everyone as comfortable as possible.

The musical version of these events from Irene Sankoff and David Hein make these events seem like a bit more of a cathartic party where everyone was invited to take place in an old fashioned east-coast hootenanny. While residents were keen on showing these traumatized, confused, and stranded travellers as good and hospitable a time as possible, the reality, as depicted by director Moze Mossanen (*My Piece of the City*) in *You Are Here: A Come From Away Story*, was far more fraught and complicated. If the musical was a testament to human kindness triumphing in times of unfathomable hardship, *You Are Here: A Come From Away Story* is a more detailed look at the enormous amount of work that goes into such an immense and slapped-together emergency operation.





## The Gate – December 16, 2018 (2 of 2)

*You Are Here: A Come From Away Story* looks at the details of Gander's story that often go overlooked in favour of more personalized details. While Mossanen interviews a fair number of travellers, community members, journalists, politicians, emergency workers, and airline industry professionals to get a sense of their emotions, feelings, concerns, and responsibilities across those five unplanned days in Newfoundland (with locals filmed in their usual homes and haunts, while the "come from aways" are in more static settings), *You Are Here: A Come From Away Story* is more interested in how everyone was able to pull together and make everything happen on scant notice. Gander, like the rest of the world, was unprepared for a man made disaster on the scale of 9/11, and in hindsight, the efforts of all involved might've been imperfect given the circumstances, but they were nothing short of miraculous when one takes it all in as presented by Mossanen. Glimpses of footage shot by passengers on that fateful day effectively capture the chaos of the situation, lending more weight to the stories once the film starts giving more specific examples.

While shelter, beds, fostering a sense of hospitality, and feeding thousands of unplanned guests were obviously concerns, there was much more to the *Come From Away* story that's often taken for granted. How does one herd together thousands of confused, frightened, and understandably disoriented people and get them from place to place? What do you do when your main emergency shelter at the local school can only hold approximately one-tenth of the passengers? What do you do when one of the grounded flights was carrying terminally ill Make-a-Wish children who might need to keep their spirits higher than many of their adult counterparts? Dietary needs, language barriers, caring for animals (including rare monkeys), setting up computer banks for communication purposes during a time when the internet wasn't as omnipresent, procuring fresh fruits and vegetables, and converting the local hockey rink into town's largest cold storage centre were just a handful of problems the Newfoundlanders needed to solve, and they had to do so while exhausted and running purely on adrenaline and instinct. It's hard not to be moved by the stories and experiences shared throughout *You Are Here: A Come From Away Story*, and ultimately Mossanen's film holds just enough catharsis as the stage show, albeit with far more factual and logistical insight. Anyone who marveled at the enormity of Gander's efforts before will have their eyes and hearts opened further by Mossanen's documentary.

It's understandable that Mossanen would want to touch on the writing and creation of Sankoff and Hein's world-conquering musical, but *You Are Here: A Come From Away Story* more or less wraps up in a logical and well constructed fashion after an hour. The final twenty minutes feels like feature-length padding that isn't entirely necessary, even if some of the stories are still moving human interest pieces surrounding specific individuals being profiled and the juggernaut musical. It starts to feel like Mossanen is searching for a grander ending to tie into the story's pop culture notoriety when there was already a low-key and poignant conclusion already in place. Thankfully, Mossanen does arrive at a tremendously and naturally tear-jerking end point with some Gander residents travelling to New York City to interact with the unseen American counterparts they never knew they were helping and comforting with their actions. That's a heck of an ending, but I'm not sure if the fifteen minutes or so that come before it are all that effective.

Nonetheless, *You Are Here: A Come From Away Story* – much like its toe-tapping counterpart – is a hard film to be cynical or critical about. It's a documentary that makes the triumph of the human spirit look appropriately and realistically like a lot of hard work. It's a feel good story of healing and overcoming fear that simply needs to stick to the facts in its bid to move the audience. It's a strong testament to the men and women who tried to make the world a better place in one of its saddest moments.

***You Are Here: A Come From Away Story* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Sunday, December 16, 2018. It's also currently available to watch on Crave TV and the Crave TV app.**

## Review: Of Fathers and Sons

Andrew Parker. December 17, 2018 3:02 pm



### Of Fathers and Sons

7 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

A harrowing and unflinching examination of the ways religious extremism can take root across generations, filmmaker Talal Derki's documentary *Of Fathers and Sons* will inspire plenty of debate in those who view it, both in terms of substance and execution. A dangerous and fruitful piece of longform journalism, the latest from Derki (*Return to Homs*), which picked up a Grand Jury Prize for Documentary at Sundance, embeds viewers in a world many wouldn't want to have access to without the distance of a camera's lens. Even with that distance built between the audience and Derki's subjects, *Of Fathers and Sons* remains one of the most gut wrenching documentaries of the year.

Shortly before Islamic extremist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda took control of his Syrian homeland and wars both civil and international began erupting, Derki fled to Berlin and safety. The filmmaker would return to the Middle East over the past several years to document the revolutionary changes that have forever altered the fabric of the region. For two straight years, Derki lied about his political leanings and posed as a photojournalist and extremist sympathizer to gain virtually unrestricted access to an al-Nusra supporting family.

*Of Fathers and Sons* spends time embedded with the family of Abu Osama, an Al-Qaeda obsessed true believer who works predominantly for terrorist organizations as a bomb manufacturer and defuser. He's a loving, doting, and sometimes physically stern father of eight who wants all of his children to join in the fight to establish and maintain an Islamic caliphate around the world. It's his belief that al-Nusra and similarly minded extremist sects (except ISIS, which he refers to as a "disobedient child" when asked about differences and similarities) are heading into what will be a lengthy, successful, and pious world war. He speaks candidly and with an alarmingly level head about executions that he has carried out, sings along jubilantly with songs on the radio about destroying all non-believers, and he's willing to show and train his children about any manner of mortal combat or warfare.

Of Abu Osama's children, Derki finds himself most drawn to thirteen year old Osama and twelve year old Ayman, both of whom worship their father (like many children do) as a perfect role model. It's all they know in life, and all they have no point of comparison that wouldn't be considered blasphemous or disobedient. They have been born into extremism, and while both Ayman and Osama are willing to immerse themselves in such a hateful and unwavering culture, there's a sense throughout *Of Fathers and Sons* that these two young men will be on different life paths very soon. Osama is a quick study, keen and ready to follow in his father's Jihadist footsteps. Ayman, on the other hand, has trouble concentrating and openly notes that he would prefer continuing his education rather than rushing into military service.

## The Gate – December 17, 2018 (2 of 2)



*Of Fathers and Sons* is a delicate and controversial kind of documentary to make. On one hand, those familiar with Derki's previous works will immediately know that the filmmaker is putting his life on the line, and that he's not condoning any of the actions being depicted or ideologies being espoused. On the other, it's hard to imagine how someone could maintain such stoic journalistic integrity in the face of overwhelming hatred, misinformation, violence, and abuse. *Of Fathers and Sons* is a film that pays witness to unbearable horror and sadness, and daringly attempts to engage with the perpetrators of such feelings on its own insidious level for the sake of delivering unfiltered and undiluted truths about religious extremism. At the end of the documentary and ready to return immediately home to his family, Derki describes the entire experience as a two year long nightmare, with the director instantly becoming the film's most empathetic figure.

Empathy and the search for meaning in something as inherently unfathomable as Jihad works curiously throughout *Of Fathers and Sons*, as the documentary's title suggests it might. The desolate, bombed out, and mine ridden landscapes that surround Abu Osama's family and community are bleak and inhospitable, but if one were to turn the sound (and subtitles) off, the way he interacts with his children in his modest and equally bleak looking home, and the adoring looks he often has in his eyes, are similar to the ways other fathers around the world show love for their children. The kids are allowed to wander and play (within reason, or else they're prone to punishment), but often they're playing in noted minefields or gleefully building their own rudimentary explosive devices. Osama speaks enthusiastically about how he's willing to step into harm's way when he becomes an adult to fight alongside his Islamic brothers in arms, but when Abu Osama gets severely injured, the young man breaks down into uncontrollable tears for his father. Men speak dismissively about how they view the women in their lives as nothing more than useless, interchangeable baby factories, but they do so in a manner eerily similar to how other western and European alpha-male types speak in similarly insidious patriarchal circles. When young men in their early teens are sent to military camps, the training is rigorous and intense, but they aren't technically the definition of child soldiers most people would subscribe to because they're being groomed for the future and not for immediate deployment.

With *Of Fathers and Sons*, Derki looks at a form of empathy far removed from the emotions experienced in the majority of the world. They have similar feelings that are recognizable to even the most casual of outsiders, but they're filtered through the lens of extremism. Here, the emotional truth of the matter is as equally stomach turning and confrontational as the unvarnished, cautiously captured factual truth of everyday life under the rule of extremism. In both the literal and underlying psychological sense, the truths depicted in *Of Fathers and Sons* are more terrifying than almost any other documentary to come out this year.

***Of Fathers and Sons* screens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Tuesday, December 18, Wednesday, December 19, and Friday, December 21, 2018.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/037500/review-of-fathers-and-sons/>

## THE GREAT BUSTER: BOGDANOVICH DOC ON SILENT FILM STAR PUTS LEGEND BACK IN LIGHTS

December 19, 2018

By Liam Lacey

**Rating: B+**

Some of the most astonishing action and comedy sequences you can see on movie screens this holiday happen to be on films that are almost a century old. They're in director Peter Bogdanovich's documentary, *The Great Buster: A Celebration*, looking back at the silent movie actor/director Buster Keaton, who justly remains the focus of a continuing cult of adoration among many comedians and film directors.



The great Buster Keaton.

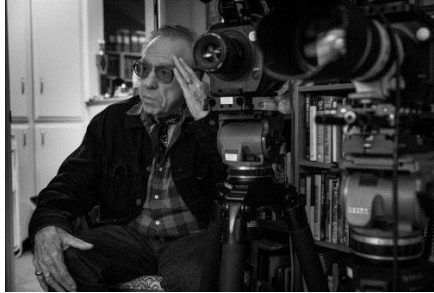
Keaton, nicknamed "the Great Stone Face," dignified the deadpan persona. His face remained unfazed in the midst of hair-raising predicaments and it was the secret to his popularity. But his legacy is also about his playful approach to the cinematic apparatus. His characters walk from the movie audience onto a movie screen, they escape pursuers by running through mirrors or they crash into painted backdrops. These gags give his work a surprisingly modern, surreal edge (Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel were fans). While Charlie Chaplin was a great clown on film, Keaton made great cinematic jokes.

Bogdanovich has assembled a wide range of marquee commentators — Richard Lewis, Bill Hader, Dick Van Dyke, Quentin Tarantino, Werner Herzog, and Johnny Knoxville to name a few — who cite Keaton's influence or their admiration for his art. (And if you're saying, 'Sure Buster Keaton's fun but he's no Spider-Man,' we have director Jon Watts talking about how Keaton was an influence on *Spider-Man: Homecoming*.) In truth, there are too many commentators and their expertise isn't always obvious. (Cybill Shepherd on Keaton's acting?) but they serve to remind us of the breadth of Keaton's influence.

The documentary begins with a 1972 clip from *The Dick Cavett Show*, with an interview with a young Bogdanovich and the director, Frank Capra Jr., about Keaton's legacy. Their conversation is illustrated with one of Keaton's more astonishing sequences from a film called *Seven Chances*, in which he is chased down a hill by an avalanche of flying boulders. Capra observes that Keaton's career went into decline with the sound era but also was challenged by the increasing popularity of cartoons. Bogdanovich points out that Warners

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Bros. cartoon mastermind Chuck Jones cited Keaton's gags as a key inspiration.



Filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich.

Bogdanovich continues as the film's narrator, tracing Keaton's career from his time as a vaudeville star, already famous for his pratfalls at the age of four. (The nickname "buster" meaning "a fall" was supposedly given to him by Harry Houdini). After a stint in the First World War, Keaton learned about filmmaking from the popular, later infamous, Fatty Arbuckle, forming his own company, BK Studios, in the early 1920s. At the end of the decade, Keaton made the error of signing with MGM, losing control of his films and suffering under a studio that was notoriously bad for comedians. He turned to drink, was fired and later, at 44, was rescued by his third marriage to Eleanor Norris, a 21-year-old dancer, who helped get him off booze and revived his reputation.

Of particular interest to Keaton buffs is the amount of footage available from the 1950s and 1960s: Numerous television commercials, some terrific bits on *Candid Camera* (a man at a diner who drops his toupee in his soup), a starring role in the Samuel Beckett-penned short, *Film*, plus parts in teenaged beach movies. One of the richest documents of Keaton's work is Gerald Potterton's 1965 NFB silent film, *The Railrodder*, with an accompanying "making of" feature, *Buster Keaton Rides Again*.

After Bogdanovich reviews Keaton's life in an efficient hour, he slows the momentum in the last 40 minutes by rewinding the story to the 1920s for an intro film class on Keaton's 10 feature films during that decade. The last segment feels awkwardly grafted on, though it serves as a reminder of how good Keaton was, focusing on *Sherlock Jr*, *The Navigator*, *The General* and *Steamboat Bill Jr*.

The latter film is responsible for Keaton's most famous and widely imitated gag (copied everywhere from *Arrested Development* to *The Simpsons*) in which Keaton, facing the camera, narrowly escapes being flattened by the facade of a three-story house that collapses over him — his body emerging unscathed through an open attic window. The moment as he turns his head slightly to see the near catastrophe might serve as an emoji of the miraculous: Tragedy, against overwhelming odds, narrowly averted.

*The Great Buster: A Celebration*. Directed by Peter Bogdanovich. Playing at Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Theatre December 21 through January 3. On Dec. 27, Hot Docs will also show a special screening of Keaton's most widely recognized masterpiece, *The General* (11:30 am) followed by *The Great Buster: A Celebration* at 1:45 pm.

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2018/12/19/the-great-buster-bogdanovich-doc-on-silent-film-star-puts-legend-back-in-lights>



## Review: The Atomic Café

[Andrew Parker](#) December 19, 2018 5:25 am



### The Atomic Cafe

8 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Digitally remastered and enjoying a renewed and frightening sense of relevancy, the 1982 documentary *The Atomic Cafe* initially saw release just as cold war tensions between the United States and Russia were reaching a terrifying fever pitch. Stitched together from various primary sources, *The Atomic Cafe* looked back on the escalating nuclear arms race with equal parts fear, criticism, and humour. It encapsulated a time when the threat of a nuclear holocaust was thought to be a stark, realistic possibility, and *The Atomic Cafe* was released just as such fears were starting to take root once again. Now with the Trump administration locked in a perpetual standoff with Russia, Iran, and North Korea, there's no better time for *The Atomic Cafe* to receive yet another examination and reassessment, because the more things change, the more they seem to remain the same.

Directors Jayne Loader and Kevin and Pierce Rafferty begin more or less at the beginning; looking back on the American use of atomic bombs to put an emphatic stop to their engagement with Japanese forces during World War II. After devastating the country into surrendering, the Americans – although happy with their victory – attempted to ignore the impact their creation had on the state of modern warfare. They foolishly believed that no one else in the world would want to possess such a destructive force, and by 1949, two years after the cold war with Russia had noticeably intensified, their biggest rivals possessed the bomb. After the atomic bomb came the hydrogen bomb, and once again, not long after the Americans had completed their latest super-weapon, the Russians created one of their own. Tensions rose throughout the 1950s and 60s, and suddenly Americans feared that such a weapon could be used against them, leading to a deluge of government propaganda, preparedness videos, misinformation, pop culture related jingoism, and hysteria.

Loader and the Raffertys constructed *The Atomic Cafe* from various period sources: archival interviews, educational filmstrips, military training videos, news reports, photojournalistic sources, advertisements, stock footage, and government propaganda all factor into the picture. What emerges is an expertly structured, but playful alternate timeline of the cold war arms race that starts in a logical place, escalates at the same pace as history, and ends at an ambiguous point that feels just as unresolved in 2018 as it did in 1982 or 1968. The result is a documentary that's hasn't lost an ounce of its depressing, thought provoking, truthful, and darkly hilarious nature, and a unique piece of scholarship that outlines the various ways human beings will lie to themselves in a bid to excuse their egos and justify fears they helped to create in the first place.

In the wake of the Trinity Tests, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and successful Bikini Atoll experiments (which basically railroaded an entire generation of indigenous peoples into giving up their way of life to better the American war effort), people spoke lovingly about the joys of nuclear weapons without paying much attention to the human cost. As the audio portions of interviews skirt the issue of health risks associated

## The Gate – December 19, 2018 (2 of 2)

with nuclear fallout, the filmmakers look at the unflinching gruesomeness left behind in the wake of such attacks, on both humans and animals alike. It was ignored then, and ignored even further once government organizations began suggesting that there are “acceptable limits” of radiation that imported foods and beverages could contain and still be deemed safe for human consumption.



Once their own creation comes back to bite them in the ass, Americans found themselves with new fears that they doubled down on, believing that, while their version of the bomb was better than anyone else's, they should prepare for the worst just in case. Parents started to think about getting their children fallout protecting suits that looked like giant oven mitts and were lined with shredded lead. Small towns would enact passion plays of sorts where they would pretend their communities had been invaded by Communist forces. Defenders of capitalism would hilariously espouse views that the buying power of the American public was the only thing keeping the country from falling victim to the Reds. 4-H clubs across the country would teach their young members how to create preparedness kits for long nuclear winters in the family bunker. Whenever the wind kicked up following nuclear tests on American soil, radio broadcasts would interrupt their scheduled programming to say that everything was fine, but that no one should leave their home for the next hour or so “just in case.” Bert the Turtle taught children in schools everywhere to “duck and cover,” while various pop ditties sang lovingly about America's military might and righteous cause.

While some of the specific elements of *The Atomic Cafe* were already passe at the time of the film's release in 1982, the prevailing spirit of Loader and the Raffertys' documentary remains just as potent. Today, as it was in 1982 and 1949, America remains blissfully fearful, unprepared, and overly confident when it comes to the prospect of nuclear strikes. Kids aren't being trained on what to do once the bombs start dropping in the middle of the school day (probably because the threat of mass shootings remains a more plausible and sickening threat), and people aren't sipping atomic themed cocktails while listening to their favourite musical artists crooning about our love for the bomb, but we might not be that far off from a return to those days. *The Atomic Cafe* expertly depicts the ways that humans who feel afraid, boxed in, and forgotten about will gravitate towards anyone boasting an authorial voice for guidance. Whether that person or group of people have anything intelligent or thoughtful to say is irrelevant. Much like the bomb, it's the size, impact, and sounds being made that count the most.

Gorgeously given a 4K restoration overseen by the filmmakers and recently added to the National Film Registry, *The Atomic Cafe* remains a concise, intelligent, and exceptionally edited documentary where history more or less hangs itself by using its own words. It's relevancy hasn't diminished in the slightest, and while some of the footage employed throughout *The Atomic Cafe* is certainly a lot funnier today than it was both thirty or seventy years ago, the fears that created such footage and sources haven't funny gone away. Instead of acting as a curious time capsule, once again *The Atomic Cafe* gives audiences a stark portrait of where we might be headed once again in the not too distant future.

***The restoration of The Atomic Cafe screens for one night only at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto on Thursday, December 20, 2018 at 6:30 pm. It's also currently available on DVD and Blu-Ray.***

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/037520/review-the-atomic-cafe/>

## Review: 'The Great Buster: A Celebration'

*Peter Bogdanovich and friends pay tribute to an icon of silent cinema*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published December 20th, 2018



Courtesy of Cohen Media Group

### ***The Great Buster: A Celebration***

(USA, 104 min.)

Dir. Peter Bogdanovich

"What you see is what you get," says film critic Leonard Maltin while appraising the works of Buster Keaton in *The Great Buster*. "To me, the best special effect in his films is Buster."

Maltin is one of many notable figures in the film world who gushes about the appropriately monikered Buster Keaton in *The Great Buster: A Celebration*. Peter Bogdanovich's documentary truly is a celebration of one of the silent film era's greatest and most influential stars. Keaton's shot at being #1 on the list is rivalled only by Charlie Chaplin, but Bogdanovich and company aren't interested in comparing the stars to see who comes out on top. What you see is what you get with *The Great Buster* and this fun and informative slice of film history is an unabashed celebration of cinephilia.

The film charts a cradle to grave portrait of Keaton's career beginning with his Vaudeville days when he was the main attraction in the family act. Little Buster's knack for physical comedy upstaged his parents and paved the way for childhood stardom. Bogdanovich, using some novel archival photos, observes that Keaton had his own car at the age of 12 and a signature trademark in his stone face that would help make him a comedic icon. Following the demise of the Keaton family show—which, as Buster's siblings reveal in an archival interview, happened following his insistence that the younger Keatons not miss an education like he did—Hollywood beckoned and Keaton used his Vaudeville chops to make America laugh harder than it ever had before.

*The Great Buster* offers a highlight reel of the best and worst of Keaton's filmography. It's surprising how well some of the short reels hold up despite being nearly 100 years old. (On the other hand, some are awfully dated.) Keaton's sense of comedic timing, his deadpan expressions, and his innovative use of technology and film form are timeless ingredients for great comedy. As Bogdanovich and the chorus of talking heads unpack their favourite gags and moments in the Keaton oeuvre, the doc credits Buster for pioneering stunt work and practical effects to advance the cinematic art form. Some of Keaton's stunts are astonishing feats that continue to inspire comedians, like the sight gag from *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* in which the front wall of a house fell and narrowly avoided crushing the comic by carefully placing him within a window frame. Quentin Tarantino (*Pulp Fiction*) makes a case that, in addition to being a great comedic director, Keaton was a technological innovator

and a master of action films thanks to his sense of timing and scale. This clip from *Steamboat* is just one great example, while sweeping snippets from *The General* offer strong evidence to support the claim.

As the title for the film indicates, *The Great Buster: A Celebration* draws from the praises of Keaton fans in the film world. The doc treads hagiography as the chorus of stars, including Carl Reiner, Bill Hader, Cybill Shepherd, Mel Brooks, and Dick Van Dyke gush about Keaton's greatness and his influence on their careers. Bogdanovich also draws some utterly random interviewees, particularly director Werner Herzog, who adds little to the conversation beyond novelty and star power. Some unexpected voices, like Jackass trickster Jonny Knoxville and *Spider-Man* director John Watts offer unique perspectives on Keaton's influence on a range of contemporary work from the shock-filled stunts of Jackass to the webbed-avenger's stoic face.

The interviews complement the archival images, which, while extensive, offer little footage of Keaton the man. There is a lot of footage of Keaton the performer, but the film finds some images of Keaton unmasked in clips from the 1965 NFB documentary *Buster Keaton Rides Again* that Bogdanovich provides. The NFB doc, a behind-the-scenes verité film about the making of the slapstick short *The Railrodder* — perhaps Keaton's last great hurrah with silent film style—is a highlight of the film as it shows Keaton discuss the creative process with his collaborators and provide some insight on his approach to film comedy. One wishes Bogdanovich could offer more looks at Keaton's life beyond his filmography and one might attribute the scarcity of candid footage to the cost of home moviemaking in the early years of cinema. The doc features some commentary on Keaton's alcoholism, depression, and failed marriages to add some balance to its portrait.

Bogdanovich might be a better film historian than he is a director, and this comment is by no means a slight on his filmmaking, and fans of classic cinema will love his well-researched and articulate dive into the silent era. He looks back at Keaton's prolific output in the last decade of the sound era as a Golden Age of Hollywood. The introduction of Keaton's depression and alcoholism coincides with his transition to sound-era studio filmmaking, which Bogdanovich interprets with a balanced mix of criticism both negative and positive. Bogdanovich's textual and contextual analysis of the films sees a decline in Keaton's work and spirit as he surrendered aspects of creative control to the system and saw the films decline in the hands of lesser talents.

However, Bogdanovich finds in Keaton an effective metaphor for the creative individual within the Hollywood studio system. He looks back to a pivotal and prolific period in Keaton's silent filmography from 1923 to 1926. Bogdanovich offers an in-depth case study of this period in which Keaton directed and starred in ten feature films including *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* and his most acclaimed work, *The General*. As Bogdanovich pores over the images of these Keaton films and interprets the best work by the artist as both an actor and a filmmaker, he observes the greatness that the cinema can achieve when independent artists have the resources and canvases to be innovative and original.

Bogdanovich's study of Keaton resonates as the studios find themselves in a new era of flux with streaming and digital disrupting the industry just as sound, and then television, changed the way people make and consume movies. Whether the art form flourishes or flounders is up to the people calling the shots, but if the studios want to succeed with great art that endures, they'll be smart to look closely at the chapter of Keaton's filmography that Bogdanovich so wisely identifies as his greatest.

*The Great Buster: A Celebration* opens at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) on Dec. 21.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-the-great-buster-a-celebration>



## Review: Pick of the Litter

Andrew Parker December 20, 2018 4:00 pm



### Pick of the Litter

**8** out of 10

More inspirational, suspenseful, and unpredictable than the best sports movies and more genuinely moving than an all day marathon of romances, the documentary *Pick of the Litter* follows around some very good boys and girls as they strive to make the world a better place. An intricate look at puppies that have been born into a program to become seeing eye dogs and the dedicated handlers that attempt to train them, *Pick of the Litter* takes a crowd pleasing approach to documentary storytelling that will leave viewers gasping and reaching for tissues every several minutes.

Documentary filmmakers Don Hardy Jr. and Dana Nachman (who previously collaborated on the similarly tearjerking *Batkid Begins*) follow a litter of five puppies born from the same mother as they navigate an intensive training program at Guide Dogs for the Blind. Of the 800 puppies that are bred by the program each year, only 300 pass through the program. Training often takes between 20 and 26 months, and happens in numerous stages, with Hardy and Nachman documenting the various steps taken by puppies Patriot, Primrose, Potomac, Poppet, and Phil as they navigate the program. As soon as the tiny and playful pooches have grown enough, they're transferred to outside puppy raisers for 14 to 16 weeks, who are tasked with taking the dogs through various real world scenarios and gently conditioning the animals to behave properly. Many dogs in the program will flunk out either during or after this part of the training cycle, getting "career changed" to either become breeders, train as service dogs for other purposes, or to get adopted out. After that stage, they're transferred back to Guide Dogs for the Blind for even more intensive training, and from there, the best of the best will graduate and be paired up with their forever owners and caregivers.

*Pick of the Litter* opens with stakes establishing testimonials from people who wouldn't be where they are today without their service dogs, and the weight of responsibility placed on these animals and those tasked with training them is felt immediately. Guide dogs have to possess acute mental stamina and control. Even the seemingly simple task of walking is something that has to be rigorously rehearsed. Guide dogs have to be able to navigate airports, subway platforms, and be prepared when erratic drivers speed through intersections without stopping. In dark hallways and burning buildings, guide dogs need to know how to find exits and guide their humans to safety. These animals have to obey commands at all times, but know when those orders should be ignored for the safety of the human they're guiding. But outside of helping those with damaged, failing, or non-existent sight navigate life's pitfalls, many guide dogs owners speak lovingly about how their new companions have opened up worlds previously unavailable to them. There are only so many places one can go with a cane, and a good guide dog is a conduit to freedom for many, and some are willing to wait for a year or more to be placed with a friend of their own.





Nachman and Hardy make certain that such heroism and hard work doesn't go unnoticed and unrewarded, as *Pick of the Litter* does a better than expected job of making viewers as invested as possible in each puppy and their various trainers. One can never fully understand or guess at what point each of these dogs might clue into what they're being trained to do, but *Pick of the Litter* is the type of competitive motion picture where the viewer doesn't want to see any of the subjects lose. The dogs themselves might still be wrapping their heads around the concept of responsibility, but their human counterparts definitely understand the importance of the task at hand.

Some of the trainers and handlers in *Pick of the Litter* have been at it for years. Some are fixers, specializing bringing pups in danger of flunking out of the program back from the brink. Others, like Nick, a high school teenager, are taking their first crack at training a dog. Some approach it like a serious profession proudly touting the number of times they've successfully raised guide dogs in the past, while others, like Adam, a military veteran, see the program as something that gives them a greater sense of duty and self worth. While the dog might not understand at such a young age that they've failed at something, *Pick of the Litter* shows how the trainers can be both proud and quietly devastated by a puppy's evaluations at the same time. Not all the animals can become guides, but all of the humans involved would love to know that they're responsible for raising a dog that can change someone's life.

I'm a big softie by nature, and not even that much of a dog person, but I have no shame in admitting that I was either crying or on the verge of tears across the entire running time of *Pick of the Litter*. Nachman and Hardy know exactly what buttons to push and how to make their film moving and inspirational without appearing manipulative or overly melodramatic. Dogs, like people, have different personalities, and the filmmakers flesh each of the five puppies out as if they were people. Viewers will quickly draw attachments to each of the dogs and the handlers alike, and the ultimate outcomes are unpredictable and sometimes sudden. A dog can be let go at any time, and those who seem to be doing either well or poorly can turn things around the very next day. It's an overwhelmingly emotional experience. Each of these trainers gets choked up and moved by their caring for a single dog. *Pick of the Litter* makes viewers feel the same thing five times over.

*Pick of the Litter* isn't the type of documentary that many critics take notice of, and that's kind of a shame. It's not political, international, incendiary, or even all that much of a curiosity. It's not about people overcoming adversity, a story that's too incredible to be believed, and it's not a movie with heroes or villains. *Pick of the Litter* is simply about humans and animals working together for a common good, and the rare kind of documentary that lends itself well to an intriguing and atypical story structure that crackles and impresses like a grand work of fiction. It's virtually impossible to not become enthralled and moved to tears by *Pick of the Litter*. It's a great movie to close out the tumultuous year that has been 2018.

***Pick of the Litter* opens at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, December 21, 2018. It's also available on iTunes.**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/037587/review-pick-of-the-litter/>

She Does the City – December 24, 2018

## SHE DOES THE CITY'S NYE GUIDE 2019

POSTED ON DECEMBER 24, 2018 AUTHOR **CAITLYN HOLROYD**

Goodbye 2018, hello 2019! Here are 30+ ways to ring in the new year.

**9:30 pm The Dude's New Year's: The Big Lebowski @ Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W.** Join Hot Docs for one of their most hallowed and wildest cinema traditions: the seventh annual Dude's New Year's event featuring The Big Lebowski! Hundreds of "Little Achievers" will ring in the New Year in style (sunglasses and bathrobes recommended). From the very first frame until well after the ball drops, even the nihilists will have something to believe in. Watch the countdown on the big screen and toast the New Year. Doors at 8 pm, screening at 9:30. \$22 tickets (includes screening, one drink, popcorn, and party favours) available [online](#).

## A holiday playscape at the ROM, a comedy bake-off and four other things to see and do this week in Toronto

BY WILL SLOAN | DECEMBER 24, 2018



### A holiday playscape at the ROM

1For its 12 days of Christmas, the Royal Ontario Museum is swapping out French hens for remarkable reefs and partridges in pear trees for ancient dinosaurs. In addition to the museum's regular exhibits, there's an itinerary of family-friendly activities that includes a live exotic animal display from Toronto-based animal shelter Hands on Exotics, a nature-inspired dance lesson and a giant snow globe photo-op. Wednesday, December 26 to Sunday, January 6. Museum admission \$14–\$20. *Royal Ontario Museum.*

### A 3-D projection show at the Aga Khan Museum

2Part Nuit Blanche-esque art installation, part light display, the Aga Khan Museum is using its granite exterior as a canvas for a massive 3-D projection show. The videos are a retrospective of the museum's 2018 programming, with animations of 12th-century paintings, scenes from 16th-century India and holograms of fleet-footed flamenco dancers. Thursday, December 27 to Sunday, December 30. Free. *Aga Khan Museum.*

### A comedy bake-off

3The Great Comedy Bake-Off is essentially a funnier, on-stage version of Netflix's *Nailed It!*, where local comedians (including last year's champion Brian Ward, *CBC Comedy*'s Luba Magnus and Big Norm of Bare Jokes) try to create elaborate treats for a panel of judges. It's worth noting that none of the contestants are pro bakers, so the odds of their snowman cookies turning into inedible burnt blobs are high. Thursday, December 27. \$15. *Comedy Bar.*



Photo by Dahlia Katz

### **A whimsical show from Puppetmongers Theatre**

4The brother and sister duo behind the Puppetmongers Theatre, Ann and David Powell, have hosted a quirky holiday show for 29 years. This season's performance, *Bed & Breakfast*, is a whimsical, family-friendly reimagining of *The Princess and the Pea*. The most spectacular part of the show is the set: a stunningly detailed period dollhouse set complete with working light fixtures and a steaming bathtub, which took seven years to complete. Wednesday, December 26 to Sunday, December 30. \$20–\$25. *Tarragon Extraspace*.

### **A (potentially) disastrous comedy night**

5For anyone who wants to end 2018 on the weirdest note possible, DisasterFest 2018 has a marathon of weird, experimental sketches that fall somewhere between a traditional stand-up show and an episode of *Fear Factor*. Past performances have included a real life on-stage Tinder date and one comedian's attempt to eat 10,000 calories in five minutes. Friday, December 28. \$15–\$20. *Bad Dog Comedy Theatre*.

### **A film festival of commercials**

6This unconventional film festival celebrates the art of advertising by screening the best commercials from around the world. These clips are meant to be funny, touching and even a little bit weird. For once, you won't be tempted to change the channel. Tuesday, December 25 to Saturday, December 29. \$11.50. *Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema*.

# The Top 10 Documentaries of 2018

*Looking back on the year in non-fiction film*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published December 27th, 2018 [0 Comments](#)



*Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *The King*, *McQueen*, *Bathtubs Over Broadway*, *Minding the Gap*, and *Maria by Callas* are some of 2018's top docs.

Call 2018 the year of the documentary. One story for docs this year was their incredible box office success with four non-fiction films cracking the \$10 million mark. Those films, [\*Won't You Be My Neighbor?\*](#) (\$22 mil), [\*RBG\*](#) (\$14 mil), [\*Three Identical Strangers\*](#) (\$12 mil), and [\*Free Solo\*](#) (\$11 mil and counting), helped prove that an audience for docs is alive and well in the theatrical market even if (or perhaps because) docs are so widely available on home video streaming. The booming attendance at Hot Docs also spoke to the healthy appetite for documentary as audiences demonstrated that they want to engage with films and filmmakers about the stories they tell. The success of these films also speaks to the stature and quality of festivals promoting the art form since seven of the ten documentaries listed here premiered at Hot Docs. (Two of them are TIFF docs and the other simply opened theatrically in Canada after debuting in Cannes.)

At the same time, documentaries captured a sense of urgency that many dramas failed to provide in 2018. Filmmakers took stock of the changing political climate, particularly in the USA with documentarians using the art form to make sense of their nation in the age of Trump. Figures like Fred Rogers harkened back to an age when being a Republican or a conservative wasn't inherently synonymous with evil or an aversion to change. Ruth Bader Ginsburg became the coolest superhero since Black Panther as a voice of reason that encouraged progressive Americans to keep up the fight.

2018 also saw many docs that simply excelled by advancing the art form. Films like *Anthropocene*, *Maria by Callas*, *Whitney*, and *McQueen* were impeccably well-made films that demanded the full theatrical experience with big screens and surround sound immersing audiences with the power of images. In addition to providing compelling and relevant stories that questioned our place in the world, the best docs of the year inspired audiences through art.

Without further ado, here are ten POV picks for the best documentaries of 2018.

Pat Mullen's top ten documentaries of 2018:



## POV Magazine Documentary Culture – December 27, 2019 (2 of 3)

1. **Won't You Be My Neighbor?** – Too often do critics and audiences dismiss docs about art and culture as slight or simple. Morgan Neville's invigorating *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* is the most effective and quietly political film of the year. Its portrait of square children's television icon Fred Rogers reminds audiences of a time when kindness was the status quo. Cut to 2018 and toxic vitriol is the preferred manner of delivery for everyone from film critics to the President of the United States. Neville uses this timely and deceptively simple analysis of Rogers' career to ask viewers what kind of world they want to live in as the archival images of *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* give way to the horrifying shots of 9/11, Trump supporters, and ultra-conservative loonies who don't share Rogers' Christian message for empathy. Too few documentaries present a problem to which audiences can easily take the first step towards finding the solution: Neville's doc asks us to take a lesson from Mr. Rogers and simply treat our neighbours with the same respect we expect and deserve from them in return.
2. **Minding the Gap** – Bing Liu's extraordinarily personal documentary sees the director find his voice as he examines his friends' coming of age stories. Liu offers an intimate portrait of his tightly knit social circle of skateboarder friends as they rule a derelict town in the Rust Belt of America, and he dexterously transforms a behind-the-scenes skate video into an absorbing study of the dynamics of race, poverty, gender, class, and violence that shape society. Liu goes there, showing his friends at their highest and lowest, and the proximity of the camera between the subjects, and ultimately himself, proves transformative. *Minding the Gap* is personal filmmaking at its finest.
3. **Bathtubs Over Broadway** – This Hot Docs hit rivalled *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* for offering the most laughter-filled press screening of 2018. The doc playfully dives into the eccentric field of "industrial musicals"—song and dance shows put on for corporate clients by aspiring/B-list actors—as former *Late Show with David Letterman* scribe Steve Young, an obsessive collector of industrial show arcana, probes the long lost history of the art form. Young's quest centres on the myth of *The Bathrooms are Coming*, which is like the Holy Grail of long lost industrials, as he seeks out rare recordings and interviews with the show's original stars. The doc is an uproarious ode to the lost art of capitalist show tunes and a spirited analysis of the changing cultural and political landscape of the USA.
4. **The King** – Like *Bathtubs*, *The King* makes sense of the USA at a time of change. This unique assessment of Trump's America reflects upon the USA as director Eugene Jarhecki invites a variety of his fellow Americans to take a ride in Elvis Presley's old car and discuss the nation's past and future. The film finds refreshing candour in these conversations as Americans make sense of the changes in values, and the country's fixation on war in between folksy musical interludes that evoke a great spirit of Americana. Appropriately enough, the country is embodied by a fat man who died on the crapper – which makes it a perfect companion piece with *Bathtubs Over Broadway* for encapsulating the USA today.
5. **Maria by Callas** – Tom Volf's debut feature is a passion project five years in the making. His devotion to bringing the life of Maria Callas to the screen echoes in every frame of this meticulously researched and beautifully assembled biography. The doc draws upon Callas's own words through writing and interviews, providing an insightful glimpse behind the tabloids and prima donna persona for which the famed opera star was known. The extended snippets of Callas performing her operas are extraordinary, but the real gold of the film is a rare interview with David Frost in which Callas gives the performance of a lifetime, playing herself on an entirely different stage.
6. **Anthropocene: The Human Epoch** – Have Jennifer Baichwal, Nick de Pencier, and Edward Burtynsky delivered the best cinematic trilogy since *The Godfather*? Their trifecta of environmental films comes full circle with *Anthropocene* concluding the essay on human activity that began with *Manufactured Landscapes* and *Watermark*. From the mines of Carrara, Italy to the lithium evaporation ponds in Chile's Atacama desert and the hallowed grounds of endangered species in the London Zoo, *Anthropocene* tours the globe to provide eye-

## POV Magazine Documentary Culture – December 27, 2019 (3 of 3)

opening glimpses at the art we helped create. Anthropocene's canvas of horrifying images gives audiences firsthand evidence of their complicity in the world's decline. It's also a visually compelling reminder—almost overwhelmingly so—that it's our responsibility and our responsibility alone to enact rapid change.

7. ***McQueen*** – Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui's archival portrait of late designer Lee Alexander is perhaps the most fascinating portrait of a star being born this year. The film bears the meticulous stitchings of McQueen haute couture as the filmmakers provide a dexterous collage of home movies, archival interviews, and fashion show highlights to illustrate the designer's brilliant clothes and dark mind. The film haunts as it sees McQueen disrupt the establishment of the European fashion world with his audaciously controversial designs that are violent and sexy. The core of the film is the betrayal of his mentor, Isabella Blow, and the cruelly all-consuming power of celebrity as McQueen's friends recall the final chapters of his career in emotionally charged interviews. *McQueen* is a triumph of warts-and-all biographical filmmaking.

8. ***1999*** – This haunting and lyrical study of memory and trauma poetically conveys the elusiveness of language we face while confronting grief. Director Samara Chadwick—who, full disclosure, is a POV board member—returns to her high school in Moncton, New Brunswick, which was rocked by a wave of suicides in 1999. Chadwick and her former classmates and teachers reflect on their inability to articulate the pain they experienced at the time and the film's wonderful interplay of English, French, and Chiac languages further conveys this struggle. Chadwick finds in visual language what her peers cannot put into words as prisms and video games refract memories and bring the spirits of the dead into the film. This extraordinary doc is a valuable tool for any teen or adult to know that someone else feels the pain they can't put into words.

9. ***Gurrumul*** – Oh my goodness, the music of *Gurrumul* will transport you to places you never imagined. An essential portrait of world music comes in director Paul Williams' look at late Yolngu singer Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, who was a breakthrough for Indigenous performers in Australia shortly before his death. His voice is simply extraordinary and the richly layered soundtrack ensures it hits the ears and hearts of audiences with full impact. *Gurrumul* is a man of few words and as the blind singer reluctantly revisits his past and childhood, the film situates his music and voice within Australia's dark legacy of colonialism and reconciliation.

10. ***Call Her Ganda*** – An important and extremely resonant addition to the world of true crime documentary this year is PJ Raval's deeply moving *Call Her Ganda*. The film examines the troubling case in which Filipina transwoman Jennifer Laude was murdered at the hands of US Marine Joseph Scott Pemberton while he was stationed in the Philippines. Raval unpacks the complicated political context of Jennifer's murder as her death becomes a rallying point for the LGBTQ community and the larger Filipino populace. Pemberton's toxic sense of entitlement over Jennifer's body is intimately linked to the longstanding colonial power of the USA, and Raval's doc ultimately makes a heartfelt plea for transgender rights while also asking the right of one nation to inhabit and overwhelm another finally be put to rest.

## DIVIDE AND CONQUER: THE STORY OF ROGER AILES, A STANDARD DOC ABOUT A LONELY, INSECURE GOP "FIXER"

December 4, 2018

By Liam Lacey

Rating: C

There's one illuminating segment in Alexis Bloom's documentary, *Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes*, which might have made a fascinating stand-alone short doc.

It recounts how Ailes, the Republican fixer and Fox News mastermind bought a mansion in the Hudson River valley town of Cold Spring, New York, took over two local newspapers and tried to turn the place into his own fiefdom.



Roger Ailes: The man who "riled the crazies" to create Fox News and masterminded the GOP

Ailes failed, ultimately, because the kind of "small-town" Americans he always claimed to represent pushed back against his bullying and bribery. Local contractor and part-time politician Richard Shea, who Ailes threatened to destroy, describes his terrible neighbour as a lonely, insecure man who just couldn't stop trying to dominate and impress. Even after Ailes lost the battle, he would call Shea on the phone to remind him how important he was.

Otherwise, this documentary by Bloom (*We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks*) is superficial, playing out with a series of talking-head interviews and some dramatic re-enactments, not unlike an A&E celeb biography.

We get an aerial view of Ailes career, from his days as a Mike Douglas Show booker (belying his 'anti-Hollywood' rhetoric) to a political fixer when he convinced Richard Nixon to hire him as a media consultant.

He went on to help shape the modern GOP, working for Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, Mitch McConnell, Rudolph Giuliani and Donald Trump, and creating the "rile the crazies" strategy of FOX News, promoting fear and paranoia in exchange for advertising dollars. The film covers Ailes forced resignation

in 2016 midst a flurry of sexual harassment revelations, but ignores his subsequent work for Trump as a debate consultant.

Among the archival clips, we have actor-director Austin Pendleton, a childhood friend of Ailes, who remembers Ailes fondly as a clever, engaging friend. Pendleton and others suggest that Ailes' drive and aggression were a response to his fear of death because of his haemophilia (a contributing factor to his death from a fall in May, 2017) - which seems disrespectful to decent people with haemophilia.

Attempts to add balance, including a damp-eyed interview with now-repentant, former conspiracy theorist and race-baiter Glenn Beck, do nothing to soften the image of Ailes as a profoundly destructive man, on both on a personal and political level. A proposed feature film about Ailes (with John Lithgow) and a Showtime miniseries (with Russell Crowe) are both in the works: Let's hope the dramatized versions prove more illuminating.

Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes. Directed by Alexis Bloom. With Glenn Beck, Austin Pendleton. Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes shows at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

**Missing Hyggigt: Our Review of 'Finding Hygge'**

Playing this week at the Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema as part of its monthly 'Doc Soup' series is the documentary on the Danish tradition/lifestyle named Hygge. Quickly becoming a buzzword worldwide that some fear is quickly becoming commercialized, Finding Hygge tries to delve deep into the meaning behind the tradition with mixed results.

Hygge loosely translates to feelings of coziness and warmth, comfort and charm. It's a lifestyle exercised by many Danes and means slightly different things to each person as Hygge can be attained in many ways and is very much a personal feeling. Through stories from many different individuals and families crossing every aspect of culture- farmers, journalists, businessmen, chefs and more- they all explain different ways they achieve Hyggigt in their lives. The film keeps introducing us to new people and examples throughout the film, leaving the audience with many different viewpoints on how Hygge is important.

And sadly, that's the film biggest issue. The film starts so many stories and interactions with different people but never sticks long enough with them to truly explore them. And since Hygge means different things to different people, solely using Hygge as a storyline for the documentary never really works. About the only other concept that gets introduced is the notion of social media being an extremely negative influence in all our lives, with one person boldly stating "Social Media is a constant bombardment of things going great for everyone else" as to why this concept is ruining people's lives. It's an interesting debate that could be made and fleshed out, but it is quickly dropped as the film shifts to yet another different scenario. The film also grazes over the commercialization of the Hygge trend, another story aspect that would have been better served with more time.

The result is a film that feels very slight and spends so much time trying to show everything that the filmmakers encountered in their travels that it fails to pose even 1 solid point of view through the entirety of the film. It's filled with interesting people and shows some fun ways to achieve Hygge, but never does anything to help explain the phenomenon, which was the main reason behind starting the documentary in the first place. The meandering storyline will likely have the audience's attention meandering at times as well, but perhaps that's how they will find their own Hygge in the end.



## Mental health film series returns to Hot Docs for Bell Let's Talk Day

Free series includes HBO doc about comedian Robin Williams and festival hit Laila At The Bridge

BY **MARIANNA LOZOWSKA**

JANUARY 16, 2019

5:00 AM



Courtesy of HBO / Bell Media

*Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind screens at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on January 30.*

Openly talking about mental health and addiction is the first step towards eliminating stigma. Those living with mental illness or addiction need to be provided with the correct tools and resources. But, resources are scarce and the waitlists are long, especially now with \$355 million cut in planned spending on mental health.

For the second time, Bell Media has partnered with Workman Arts, an organization that helps artists living with mental illness, and the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema to present a series of films about mental health and addiction.

In 2010, Bell Media launched their campaign Bell Let's Talk. Since its inception, the event has donated \$93.4 million towards mental health initiatives.

Although the event advertises Bell's products and services via a socially conscious campaign, it nonetheless provides a forum for people to talk about mental illness and addiction. The funds raised from Bell Let's Talk go to organizations support those in need at a time when funding is threatened.

This year's lineup consists of three documentaries that challenge the stigma around mental illness and addiction. Each screening includes an audience discussion with guests and experts moderated by Rendezvous with Madness program director Geoff Pevere. Counsellors will also be on hand.

The Mental Health Film Series runs from January 17 to 30. Get free tickets **online** or at the Hot Docs box office (506 Bloor West).

## **THE SONG AND THE SORROW**

Canadian singer Gene MacLellan died by suicide when his daughter, Catherine, was 15. Two decades later, she is an artist and navigating her own mental health issues while trying to understand her father's lifelong struggle with depression. In this doc, director Millefiore Clarke brings together Catherine's family and friends to talk about Gene, embrace his musical legacy and to have a candid discussion about mental health.

Clarke will be at the post-screening Q&A via Skype, along with Alex Shendelman, the program manager of the Traumatic Loss Survivor Support Program at Toronto Distress Centre and moderator Pevere.

*January 17. 6:30 pm.*

## **LAILA AT THE BRIDGE**

Directors Elizabeth and Gulistan Mirzaei made this documentary about Laila, an Afghan woman who helps people with heroin addiction. Known as "the mother of the addicts," Laila runs a treatment shelter and provides work for recovering addicts. The film screened at Hot Docs festival last year and has picked up a few awards on the documentary festival circuit.

Akia Munga, a harm reduction worker at Parkdale Community Health Centre and Parkdale Overdose Prevention Society, will be at the post-screening Q&A.

*January 23. 6:30 pm.*

## **ROBIN WILLIAMS: COME INSIDE MY MIND**

On Bell Let's Talk Day, the event concludes with Marina Zenovich's HBO film Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind. Zenovich celebrates the life of the late comedian while exploring the realities of living with mental illness. Never-before-seen footage reveals Williams's creative process, but also the state of his mental health leading up to his death in 2014.

After the screening, Canadian TV personality Joti Samra, comedians and actors Jessica Holmes and Mary Walsh will discuss the movie with Pevere.

*January 30. 6:30 pm. (Limited rush tickets available at door one hour before screening.)*

To drive donations on Bell Let's Talk Day, tweet, Snap and view Bell Let's Talk videos on Instagram and Facebook to donate five cents towards the cause. If you are a Bell customer, each text or call counts as a donation.

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/special-screenings/hot-docs-bell-lets-talk-mental-health/>

## This week in Toronto: Greek tragedy at the opera and a look at a bygone India on film

Sun., Jan. 20, 2019

### MONDAY

- **Around India With a Movie Camera**

**Watch this if:** You want to see India revealed through its earliest movies.

Though the British Raj ended when India gained independence in 1947, it still lasted deep into cinema's first century. That early period yielded a bounty of images that were captured by both British filmmakers and the subjects under their rule. Director Sandhya Suri delved deep into the British Film Institute's trove of footage to create this fascinating and often poignant look at life in India between 1899 and 1947. ([Hot Docs](#) Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., 6:30 p.m., also screens Jan. 22, 23 and 24)

—*Jason Anderson*

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/2019/01/20/this-week-in-toronto-greek-tragedy-at-the-opera-and-a-look-at-a-bygone-india-on-film.html>

## Women in Hollywood – January 23, 2019

### Julia Reichert to Receive Outstanding Achievement Award at Hot Docs 2019

#### Reichert: Eryn Montgomery

BY: Rachel Montpelier\_January 23, 2019

Documentarian Julia Reichert will soon have another honor to go with her Emmy and three Oscar noms. [Hot Docs has announced](#) it is presenting the director with its Outstanding Achievement Award at its 2019 festival. The annual prize is given “in recognition of a filmmaker’s enduring contribution to the documentary form.” Hot Docs will also host a retrospective of Reichert’s work, and the filmmaker is set to attend the fest and participate in a discussion and several post-screening Q&As.

Previous Outstanding Achievement awardees include Barbara Kopple, Kim Longinotto, Alanis Obomsawin, Heddy Honigmann, and Chris Hegedus.

Reichert has helmed or co-helmed seven feature docs as well as several TV and short documentaries. She nabbed Academy Award nods for best documentary feature for “Union Maids,” a portrait of three female union organizers, and “Seeing Red,” an exploration of the American Communist Party.” Reichert was nominated for the best doc short Oscar for “The Last Truck: Closing of a GM Plant.” She received an Emmy for “A Lion in the House,” a four-hour chronicle of several families’ experiences with cancer treatment over six years.

A co-founder of New Day Films, an independent film distribution co-op, Reichert is also the author of “Doing It Yourself,” a guide on self-distributing indies.

Her latest film, “American Factory,” a look at the culture clash between residents of an economically depressed Ohio town and the Chinese billionaire who opens a factory there, will debut at Sundance January 25. Reichert directed the doc with frequent collaborator Steven Bognar.

Hot Docs 2019 will take place April 25-May 5 in Toronto, Canada.

## Hot Docs: Julia Reichert to Receive Lifetime Achievement Honor

7:00 AM PST 1/23/2019 by Etan Vlessing



Tibrina Hobson/Getty Images

### Julia Ivanova has also been chosen for this year's Focus On retrospective at the Canadian festival.

Three-time Oscar nominee Julia Reichert, whose 1971 film *Growing Up Female* is considered the first feature documentary of the modern women's movement, is to receive the 2019 outstanding achievement award at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

Reichert will be in Toronto to take part in a keynote conversation and a retrospective of her films made over five decades during Hot Docs' April 25 to May 5 run.

"Not only a lauded filmmaker, Julia is a mentor, community builder and an impassioned chronicler of the complex issues facing America today, and we are honored to amplify the voice of this master storyteller, who has given voice to so many others through her work," Shane Smith, director of programming for Hot Docs, said Wednesday in a statement.

Reichert's films *Union Maids* (1976) and *Seeing Red* (1984) were nominated for best feature documentary Oscars, and her 2009 short *The Last Truck: Closing of a GM Plant* was nominated for an Oscar for best short documentary.

Hot Docs has also tapped Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova for this year's Focus On... retrospective. Ivanova, who is based in Vancouver, earned the 2011 best Canadian documentary prize at Hot Docs for *Family Portrait in Black and White*, and her other film credits include *From Russia, for Love* (2000); *Fatherhood Dreams* (2007); and *Limit Is the Sky* (2016), which won the Colin Low best Canadian documentary award at DOXA 2017.

Hot Docs will also showcase documentaries from Italy as part of its Made In program this year.



## The Last Resort makes you want to move to Miami Beach — in 1965

**Garnet Fraser** Toronto Star

Thu., Jan 31, 2019

### The Last Resort

The Last Resort opens December 21 at the JCC Manhattan and Quad Cinema in NYC before expanding to select cities.

Documentary built around photos and film of Andy Sweet and Gary Monroe. Directed by Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch. Opens Friday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. 70 minutes. **G**

For those of us trapped in Toronto during this recent, miserable cold snap, just looking at footage of Miami Beach and its denizens warms the heart a bit even as it fills the soul with envy. *The Last Resort* is built around those images but accomplishes something more — it builds a yearning to visit a vibrant, chromatic place in time that's 40 years gone.

Immediately after the Second World War, South Florida first became a popular tourist destination for frostbitten northerners, and soon some of them were coming to stay. As seen in this documentary, which draws upon the photography from the period by Andy Sweet and Gary Monroe, Miami Beach became a hub for older Jews in particular, and *The Last Resort's* directors Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch paint a divertingly attractive picture of their contented, almost giddy lives.

Though there are many Holocaust survivors in their numbers, the mood in the photos and old film footage is not just gratitude but outright celebration: we see energetic seniors, with their bright '60s and '70s clothing, at dance parties and open-air card games on folding tables in the park or on the beach. It's "like being in heaven," one resident says, sounding remarkably even-keeled. Says another: "You *live* here. In New York, all you do is just think of your death: Tomorrow I'm gonna die."

In life or in a movie, an Eden-ish mood like that probably won't last. Years pass and these are no longer the young old, these are the *old* old, isolated and gradually impoverished — financially and culturally — by deaths in their community and changing economic fortunes. And then, just after the film's halfway point, comes the Mariel boatlift, the wave of immigrants from Cuba that transforms Miami.

## Toronto Star – January 21, 2019 (2 of 2)

What we get next is, briefly, a kind of documentary companion to 1983's *Scarface*, giving this community's perspective on the social impacts as displaced Cubans now live next to them and sometimes — the various talking heads in the film agree — prey upon them. After that, South Beach gets saved, restored and thoroughly prettied up by investment; the vivid, even garish hues from the glory days return, and the art deco buildings look better than ever, but the Jewish community's delicious moment in the sun is long gone.

*The Last Resort* attempts to tell the story not just of that community but of Andy Sweet, a photographer capturing the period marvellously before drifting into trouble and being murdered. Despite all of his family and friends' anecdotes, the filmmakers fail to bring him to life — or maybe it's just that, as a subject, he's outclassed by the colourful tribe that caught his eye and held it for years.

Garnet Fraser is a deputy entertainment editor and a contributor to the Star's Entertainment section. He is based in Toronto. Follow him on Twitter: @garnetfraser



A photo taken by the late Andy Sweet as seen in the documentary *The Last Resort*. (via Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema)

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2019/01/31/the-last-resort-makes-you-want-to-move-to-miami-beach-in-1965.html>

**Review: 'The Last Resort'**

*When Miami Beach was a sunny paradise for Jewish porch-sitters*

By [Tara Hakim](#) • Published January 31st, 2019



A photograph by Andy Sweet from the documentary *The Last Resort*  
Courtesy Kino Lorber

***The Last Resort***

(USA, 70 min.)

Dir. Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch

Beaches, bikinis, parties and Art Deco architecture in vibrant colours make up Andy Sweet's photographs of 1970s South Beach, Miami. It's not that far removed from today's South Beach—only in Sweet's photographs, everybody is over 70, and overwhelmingly Jewish. They are a part of Sweet's ambitious 10-year endeavour, alongside photographer Gary Monroe, to document their hometown's Jewish retirement community living in the sunny paradise of 1970's Miami Beach, a now-bygone era in the city's past.

In *The Last Resort*, filmmakers Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch present an evocative portrait of this forgotten neighbourhood and time in Miami Beach as initially documented and illuminated through the photographs of Sweet and Monroe. The film is at once a tale of two artists and a tale of a community at one point in time, both dynamic and unsustainable.

Miami Beach was largely undeveloped until the end of the Second World War when it began and continues to thrive as a vacation area. People escaped the cities for Miami's beaches, air conditioning, low-cost living and fancy hotels like the Fontainebleau where stars like Frank Sinatra and Liberace performed. By the 60s and early 70s, as the rest of the country was experiencing political turbulence, Miami Beach remained a sunny, quiet haven. Throughout the 1970s, these former city escapees, many of them Jewish and now in their elderly years, were turning from seasonal visitors to year-round residents there to spend the end of their days in the sun. "Imagine South Beach today but instead of everybody being between 18-28, think of 80 and 82," Monroe says of the culture of porch-sitters that emerged.

Born in the 1950s, both Monroe and Sweet grew up in that serene environment, rooted in the strong Jewish environment. It was after they graduated from the MFA program at the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1977, that they returned home and embarked on their photographic journey. Many of their subsequent pictures feature porch-sitters, beach-goers and deck-chair loungers. Monroe says in the film, "We saw something that I soon realized was a precious legacy that was being forgotten, that was vanishing." Sweet and Monroe, with

divergent styles, took thousands of images of the residents. Monroe took black and white images and employed a more formal approach while Sweet favoured a more unmediated and immediate response, taking beachball coloured images that prioritise the human behind the camera. Although drastically different, Monroe described their work as synergistic, each depicting a different reality of the same event or people, both sharing a seed of genuine interest in the subject matter.

While the sunny haven and happiness of the retiree-centric world drew Sweet and Monroe in, as they continued to work, they were forced to grapple with a shifting Miami Beach, one that was no longer a safe, albeit sunny, paradise for the dwindling older population. As the 1980s rolled around, Miami was no longer a place to be. It started with the Mariel boatlift, when thousands of Cubans entered the city. Although most of the Cuban immigrant population enlivened and added flavour to Miami's culture and food, Fidel Castro released criminals from jail to make the journey, as well. Crime rates began to increase, which were only amplified and made more brutal with the infiltration of Colombian drug lords and the cocaine trade. The elderly Jewish residents felt that they had lost their community, and they became easy prey in the criminalized environment. In archival footage shown in *The Last Resort*, one of the older residents says, "We can't go out after 6pm." As drugs and crime began to dominate the city, and the elderly population was decreasing as they passed away, the vibrant Miami Beach of the good old days gradually faded away.

Sweet also fell victim to the city's emerging violence and in 1982, at the age of 28, he was found stabbed to death in his apartment by none other than Monroe. Sweet's legacy however, is far from dead—although it was close to being lost when his sister, Ellen Sweet Moss, moved his work into a Fine Art Storage facility which lost his archive. Unidentified, they were offered at \$ 5 a box, for five boxes of great photos. For quite a while it seemed that Sweet's artistry was lost as well as his life.

It was only years later that Moss's partner, Stan Hughes, found Sweet's old contact sheets and took it upon himself to digitally restore each and every photo in accordance to Sweet's sensibilities. What he thought would take a few months, became a decade long endeavour. As he worked to pull colour out of faded photographs, he asked Monroe about Sweet's colour palette. Monroe simply responded with, "saturated, think beach ball!" And so, Sweet's lost treasure was found again.

Featuring interviews with Pulitzer prize winner Edna Buchanan, filmmaker Kelly Reichardt, Jewish Museum of Florida Executive Director Susan Gladstone and photographer Gary Monroe, *The Last Resort* encapsulates a short-lived vibrant community and era that is all gone now. Scholl and Tabsch's film shows that the old South Beach lives on through Sweet and Monroe's images, in the hearts of those that experienced it and now in this colourful charming documentary, which like Miami itself, has a little bit of everything.

*The Last Resort* opens in Toronto Feb. 1 at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#)  
[View all articles by Tara Hakim »](#)

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-the-last-resort>

## MINIATURE: A VERY TINY DOCUMENTARY WITH BIG IDEAS

January 31, 2019

By Jim Slotek

Rating: B-plus

It seems oxymoronic to recommend seeing a documentary on miniatures on the big screen. But, as it turns out, the subject is pretty big.

*Miniature* is the latest project by Tony Coleman and Margaret Meagher, who previously gave us the light-hearted ukulele documentary *Mighty Uke*. Though the subject carries a whiff of things child-like, *Miniature* speaks to something in the human condition as it exposes our fascination with tiny representations of things.



A scene from *Miniature*

The movie opens with the smallest-of-the-small, an almost microscopic, ornate crown placed on the head of a pin by artist Willard Wigan, to be presented to HRH Queen Elizabeth II.

It then heads back in time, with unearthed miniatures from Southern Germany of Pleistocene-age creatures, woolly mammoths and such, carved by early humans 35,000 years ago.

More contemporarily, but still facing backwards in time, we're shown the work of Cheryl Teamer, whose dollhouses are elaborate depictions of life in 1840s Louisiana.

Back in the present, we find elaborate miniature projects of villages and cities, some created merely to excite whimsy, others with more serious social intent.

The latter includes the work of "outsider artist" Jimmy Cauty, ex of the British electronic band The KLF, whose dystopian project *The Aftermath Dislocation Principle* is a diorama of a tiny village of 1:87 scale, whose citizens are apparently reeling in the aftermath of rioting, with emergency vehicles, police and burned buildings. The elaborate exhibition toured historic riot sites in the U.K.

We see Hypotopia, a concrete, knee-high urban landscape, which was built by social activists and artists, an installation in Vienna's Karlsplatz Square as a protest to the European Union's bailout of a national bank. Hypotopia is meant to represent what could have been built with the 19 billion Euros that were



## Original-Cin – January 31, 2019 (2 of 2)

poured into a financial black hole peopled by corrupt politicians and shady bankers. A statement born to die, Hypotopia tweaked consciences for months before being dismantled.

And then there is the granddaddy of all urban miniatures, Miniatur Wunderland Hamburg, a representation of the city that came to include Knuffingen Airport – billed, again oxymoronicly, as “the world’s largest model airport.” A bit of a technological marvel, visitors to Wunderland Hamburg see planes “take off” and “land” (via intricate wiring) throughout the day. A dream project of twins Gerrit and Frederik Braun, it is whimsy writ large and enjoyed by huge crowds of tourists.

I know love of miniatures to be a very European thing. The Prater Amusement Park in Vienna contains historical miniature mechanical representations of the very amusement park you are in, making for a somewhat meta experience. But *Miniature* shows it also runs strongly in the U.K. and the U.S.

What does it say about us that we have this innate desire to depict the world around us in a size we can encompass in our field of vision? Though it interviews academics on the subject, *Miniature* is not an overtly philosophical movie. But the mere act of showing us these people’s life’s work provides cause for wonder.

*Miniature*. Directed by Tony Coleman and Margaret Meagher. Starring Gerrit and Frederik Braun, and Jimmy Cauty. Plays 2 p.m. Sunday at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, followed by an engagement on Super Channel’s Fuse. Coleman and Meagher will present a post-screening Q&A.

## Chef Flynn Documentary Premieres in Toronto

By: **Sara Waxman**

January 26, 2019



Chef Flynn McGarry, culinary child prodigy, media darling, restaurant owner, is the subject of *Chef Flynn*, a documentary film by Cameron Yates.

*Flynn McGarry* began hosting his own supper club when he was 11 years old in his home, aided by his schoolmates. Fast forward. Now 19, he has been a fascinating subject for the readers of the New York Times Magazine, Time and food blogs the world over. McGarry is the subject of *Chef Flynn*, the second feature doc from director Cameron Yates (*The Canal Street Madam*).

### A Child Prodigy

We all love to film the rights of passage of our children: science experiments, soccer games, art projects until suddenly we realize that we documented hours and hours of our child's life. But when mom, Meg McGarry, is a filmmaker and the hobby of her 5 year old hobby is cooking and creating small culinary masterpieces learned from TV cooking shows, the videos are a cut above. The child prodigy's focus, tenacity and amazingly sophisticated palate become clear. While filming him cooking in his bedroom and hosting dinner parties aided by a kitchen brigade of his classmates, what was she thinking? A passing phase? Mozart?

### The Documentary

Enter Cameron Yates, a documentary film maker who sifted through this compendium of home movies and found a fascinating subject for his next film, *Chef Flynn*. Featuring over 18 years of personal archival footage as well as intimate vérité, this feature documentary portrait is not only the study of a rising star thrown into the media spotlight at an early age, but also a reflection of motherhood and what it means to give up one's own identity in furtherance of a child's passion.

## Respected in NYC

At 15, accompanied by his mother, Flynn moved to New York to do stages in top restaurants – and yes, the seasoned chefs in the most important dining city in the world showed him respect.

As his expertise and imagination soars, so does his reputation, and his tasting dinners in family home in California became a “must try”, as guests came from far and wide. Newspapers, magazines and bloggers wrote feature stories on this unusually talented young man. In the film, compiled of home movies and footage by Yates, we see the child grow up and the chef blossom. His focus is unwavering, and his personality does not become altered as his confidence in himself and his craft grows.



Of course, there are a few disappointments along the way, such is life, but by sheer talent and force of will, at age 19, his dreams have come to fruition. Today he has his own restaurant, Gem, located in New York's Lower East Side. Small, yes, but perfect. He serves a 12 to 15 course menu to two seatings of 12 guests Tuesday through Saturday.

Cameron Yates has captured this young man's life in a brilliant and inspirational documentary film. Playing now. One-Week engagement begins January 25, at the [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#).

## Hot Docs announces retrospectives, country spotlight for 2019 festival

This year's fest will focus on Italy and celebrate the careers of filmmakers Julia Reichert and Julia Ivanova

BY **NORMAN WILNER**

JANUARY 23, 2019

11:02 AM



*Filmmakers Julia Reichert (left) and Julia Ivanova are getting career retrospectives at the 2019 Hot Docs festival.*

Hot Docs will celebrate the careers of American director Julia Reichert and Vancouver filmmaker Julia Ivanova and cast a spotlight on Italian documentaries at this year's festival.

Reichert is the recipient of Hot Docs outstanding achievement award. She has been making documentaries for half a century, breaking out in 1971 with *Growing Up Female*, the first feature doc about the women's movement. She co-directed the Emmy-winning PBS documentary miniseries *A Lion In The House* with Steven Bognar, and produced and co-directed the Oscar-nominated *Union Maids*, *Seeing Red* and *The Last Truck: Closing Of A GM Plant*.

She'll be honoured with a retrospective of her work, and is coming to Toronto for an on-stage conversation and Q&As after selected screenings.

A Russian expat who moved to Canada in the 90s, Ivanova is the subject the festival's Focus On retrospective, having been designated this year's "significant Canadian filmmaker."

In addition to **Family Portrait In Black And White**, named best Canadian feature at Hot Docs 2011, her other films include *Fatherhood Dreams*, *Limit Is The Sky* and *From Russia, For Love*. She's currently working on a film about the Trans Mountain Pipeline, but she'll take a break from that to attend the festival.

Finally, this year's country-specific Made In program will focus on Italy.

The specific films to be screened in Reichert's and Ivanova's retrospectives will be announced in March, along with the Italian films.

The 26th annual Hot Docs festival runs from April 25 to May 5. For more information visit the **[festival website](https://nowtoronto.com/movies/features/hot-docs-2019-julia-reichert-julia-ivanova/)**.

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/features/hot-docs-2019-julia-reichert-julia-ivanova/>

## Hot Docs to Honour Julias Ivanova and Reichert, Spotlight Italy

Posted on January 23rd, 2019

By Pat Mullen



Director Julia Ivanova

Photo by Sergei Bachlakov, courtesy of the NFB

Audiences should not confuse their Julias at [Hot Docs](#) this year, but if they do, they're bound to catch a hot ticket. The festival announced today that Julia Ivanova and Julia Reichert are the recipients of this year's Focus On spotlight and Outstanding Achievement Award, respectively. The Focus On distinction honours a Canadian filmmaker with a commendable body of work, while the Outstanding Achievement Award acknowledges the work of an international filmmaker who has made a significant contribution to documentary. This year's Hot Docs festival will feature special programmes offering a selection of films by Ivanova and Reichert.

Hot Docs audiences might best recognize Ivanova for her 2011 documentary *Family Portrait in Black and White*. The film told the story of Olga Nenyia, a Ukrainian woman who adopted nearly 20 mixed-race children and raised them in a community overwhelmingly populated by residents with blond hair and blue eyes. The doc gave a frank depiction of the racial tensions in Europe and scored the prize for Best Canadian Feature Documentary at Hot Docs before earning a Genie nomination. A hit at Hot Docs as well as the Sundance Film Festival, critics praised the film for its even-handed portrait of a well-intentioned matriarch and the mixed results of her efforts in a country with an all-too prevalent skinhead culture.

"Julia Ivanova is a bright light in the Canadian documentary world," said Shane Smith, director of programming at Hot Docs, in a statement from the festival. "Her adventurousness and passion as a filmmaker, coupled with her acute ability to connect with her subjects and draw out their stories with great insight, is nothing short of remarkable. Julia is a fearless filmmaker and we're so pleased to showcase her work at this year's Festival." Focus On spotlights in recent years have featured the work of Canadian filmmakers such as [John Walker](#), [Rosie Dransfeld](#), and [Maya Gallus](#).

Ivanova was born in Moscow, but immigrated to Canada in the 1990s and has been a rising talent on the documentary scene since her 2000 film *From Russia, for Love*. The doc told the story of two North American couples on a quest to adopt children in Russia. Ivanova's films also include *Fatherhood Dreams* (2007), *Love Translated* (2010), *High Five* (2012) and [Limit is the Sky](#) (2016), a production with the NFB that looked at various youths in Fort McMurray. The film won the Colin Low Award for Best Canadian Documentary at Vancouver's DOXADocumentary Film Festival. Ivanova followed *Limit is the Sky* with the *Guardian* short



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doc [Ash & Oil](#) (2016). She is currently working on the doc *Pipeline in Paradise*, which examines the controversial Trans Mountain Pipeline through multiple perspectives.



Julia Reichert  
Courtesy of Hot Docs

Julia Reichert, meanwhile, received the news of the Outstanding Achievement Award just as her latest documentary heads to Sundance. Her documentary *American Factory*, directed with Steven Bognar, premieres at Sundance on January 25th in the U.S. documentary competition and brings a timely story of a Chinese billionaire who sets up shop in an abandoned Ohio General Motors factory where 2000 Americans find their hopes in conflict with a collision of cultures. Reichert and Bognar's 2009 short doc *The Last Truck: Closing of a GM Plant* received an Academy Award nomination. She also received Oscar nominations for *Seeing Red* (1983), directed with Jim Klein, and *Union Maids* (1976), directed with Klein and Miles Mogulescu.

Reichert's list of honours also includes a Primetime Emmy Award (for 2006's *A Lion in the House*, also made with Bognar), numerous film festival selections and honours, and the 2018 Career Achievement Award from the International Documentary Association. Her 1971 film *Being Female*, directed with Jim Klein, was added to the National Film Registry in 2011. Her collaborative films consistently engage with questions of class, gender, and race in the USA.

"Julia Reichert's exceptional career has spanned almost 50 years, and we're thrilled to be recognizing her with Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award this year," added Shane Smith. "Not only a lauded filmmaker, Julia is a mentor, community builder and an impassioned chronicler of the complex issues facing America today, and we are honoured to amplify the voice of this master storyteller, who has given voice to so many others through her work." Previous recipients of the Outstanding Achievement Award include [Alanis Obomsawin](#), Steve James, Patricio Guzmán, Werner Herzog, and last year's spotlight on [Barbara Kopple](#).

The film selections for both the Focus On and Outstanding Achievement Award will be announced with the full slate of Hot Docs titles in March. The festival also announced that this year's Made In programme will showcase Italian documentaries with titles to be named in the March unveiling. Italy has enjoyed special attention on the documentary front in recent years with Gianfranco Rosi scoring an Oscar nomination and the Golden Bear at Berlin for the compelling migration saga [Fire at Sea](#) and the Golden Lion at Venice for the offbeat [Sacro GRA](#), while Stefano Savona's *Samouni Road* won the Œil d'or prize for best documentary at Cannes last year. The program is supported by the Italian Trade Commission and Istituto Luce-Cinecittà. Hot Docs runs from April 25 to May 5, 2019.

<http://povmagazine.com/blog/view/hot-docs-to-honour-julias-ivanova-and-reichert-spotlight-italy>

## THIS MOUNTAIN LIFE: DOC GOES VERY HIGH BUT NOT VERY DEEP

January 24, 2019

By Liam Lacey

**Rating: C-**

Majestic mountain scenery meets a somewhat limited psychological insight in *This Mountain Life*, a mosaic documentary of several narrative strands, gathered by director Grant Baldwin in British Columbia, a province that is 75 percent covered by mountains.



The central story in the film follows an adult woman, Martina, and her Czech immigrant 60-year-old mother, Tania, who embark on a 2,300 kilometer hike together from Squamish to Alaska. They go through some harrowing experiences but survive and feel good about the trip. A young snowboarder, Todd and his friends, describe (and re-enact) what it's like to be buried in an avalanche. (Not good). A Metis guide, Barry Blanchard, describes a sense of tribal community among mountain people.

We meet several cross-country skiing nuns, zipping across snowfields like penguins, who feel a little closer to Heaven in the mountain air. A couple of the subjects are artists: an elderly stone carver and his wife, living amongst foraging bears and towering peaks, precariously far from medical care.

While the towering, rippling, sky-spearing landscapes encourage us to admire and ponder, the human subjects don't entirely succeed in expressing what they find meaningful about their high-altitude life beyond self-satisfaction.

Surely, there's more to be explored here about the big place mountains hold in our imaginations? These are the places of mystical breakthroughs, and not just from Tibetan lamas and Romantic poets. The founders of the three monotheistic religions had their big revelations on mountains.

On a psychological level, further research would help. "Prospect-refuge" esthetic theory suggests that the survival strategies we have evolved explain why we feel well-being when we have a high, panoramic view. On a cautionary note, we have "the Utah paradox," a statistically "happy" mountain state which also has a high rates of depression and suicide, possibly because altitude affects dopamine and serotonin levels in unpredictable ways.

In short, this softly inspirational documentary barely scratches the surface of a complex, stony phenomenon.

*This Mountain Life*. Directed by Grant Baldwin. Opens January 25 at Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema for a week-long run.

## Original-Cin – January 24, 2019 (1 of 3)

### ORIGINAL-CIN Q&A: DOC ON BOY WONDER CHEF CHARTS HIGHS AND LOWS OF PRO COOKING

January 24, 2019

By Bonnie Laufer

Flynn McGarry is not your average kid. Truthfully, he is quite extraordinary. Ever since he was a small child, he loved cooking. So much so that when he was 10 years old he decided that he was going to start his culinary journey and have it dominate his life.



Now 19, Chef Flynn is not only a master at his craft but runs Gem, his very own restaurant in New York City. It's the subject of the documentary *Chef Flynn*, an engaging look at McGarry's journey.

McGarry is an inspiration both to budding young chefs and to anyone wanting to pursue their dreams. In 2015, McGarry was named one of *Time* magazine's 30 most influential teens; we will be hearing a lot more from this talented young man in the years to come.

Original-Cin's Bonnie Laufer had the chance to chat with him about his culinary life and what it took to get where he is today.

**Original-Cin: Cooking is something that you have always been passionate about, a passion that really kicked in at around age 10. How did you know at that age that this was something you wanted to spend the rest of your life doing?**

Flynn McGarry: I don't think that it was a conscious decision at that age that this was something I want to spend the rest of my life doing but I've always been the kind of person that if I am enjoying something then I want to keep doing it. So becoming a chef was a natural progression for me. It never started as, 'I want to be a chef.' I loved cooking and I kept doing it. Being that young I was never pressured into anything and I could have stopped whenever I wanted but I just truly loved doing it and it turned into something much bigger than I could have ever anticipated.

**OC: You've always had the support, help and backing from your family. How important has that been in shaping who you are and what you've become?**

FM: It was definitely an integral part of my life especially as a child because I looked to my parents for guidance. I think having that support gave me the confidence to actually go work in kitchens, or set up a pop up restaurant in our home and let me fulfill my cooking dreams. My parents knew from the beginning that this wasn't just a hobby. They supported my passion and along with my sister were with me every step of the way. Without that there is no way I would have gotten this far so quickly.

## **Original-Cin – January 24, 2019 (2 of 3)**

**OC: We learn through the documentary that you turned your bedroom into a makeshift kitchen. What was it like for you to get started at such a young age and as things were seriously progressing as you got older how did you handle knowing that this was something you were really going to do for the rest of your life?**

FM: I don't think I ever really thought about it like that to be honest. It just kept progressing and I was always finding new things to cook and I really enjoyed what I was doing. I still think of it the same way, I keep finding new things that I enjoy about it and I think that is really what keeps me going. Every day is a new experience and being inspired and getting to create exciting new dishes is a dream for me. To be honest, it's very rare for me to think, 'This is my job.' I appreciate all the opportunities that I have been given and I love having this freedom to create and make people happy with the food that I present.

**OC: When the documentary was being shot was it annoying to you at any stage? The cameras were constantly in your face and we do get to see you when you are most vulnerable.**

FM: It really wasn't that bad but for me the most important element was having trust in the person who was making it. I have known the director/cinematographer Cameron Yates for as very long time so it made me a lot more comfortable for him to film certain things that you see in the documentary.

**OC: It was such a fascinating and honest look at your life and I especially love the footage of you as a little baby... not quite a year old bagging around the pots and pans!**

FM: Ha, I know. I guess I was destined to be a chef at a VERY early age! My sister found that footage and it was nice addition to the documentary.

**OC: What is the biggest lesson you have learned over the past nine years since you started taking your cooking seriously all the way to having your very own restaurant in New York City.**

FM: I think the most important thing that I have learned is that you have to be very confident but also I think about everything as though I am constantly learning. You can NEVER stop learning and I am always inspired by other chefs and the people I surround myself around. I never take the attitude of, 'Oh I know this because you never know everything.' My goal is to learn as much as possible and to continue learning.

**OC: We know that cooking has always been your passion and you can spend 24 hours a day cooking if you could but there had to have been time to just be a kid?**

FM: Well yeah, I was a kid until I was 12 years old and then I was just kind of over it (laughs). For me spending time cooking was kid stuff. I never felt like I was missing out on anything and I never felt the need to play or partake in other programs. I was doing something that was interesting to me and I never felt left out or that I was missing out on anything. Don't get me wrong, everyone is different and I think the freedom of being a 'kid' is needed and great but for me I was perfectly happy doing what I was doing. My parents were always happy and supportive with my decisions and in fact encouraged me to take some time away from the kitchen but I was always most happy when I was cooking and creating new dishes."

**OC: With so many television channels out there today cooking and baking shows are all the rage. We can't get enough of them and I was wondering why you think we are all fascinated by them?**

FM: I think it's because they are interesting and people want to learn how to cook. Chefs are interesting people and are artists in their own right. I see them as not disconnected as many art forms are but it's partaking in something that we can relate to. People get ideas from these shows and many see themselves in the contestants. Especially the shows that feature every day home cooks who want to explore their passions. I think it gives people confidence and there are so many elements that give people something to be interested in.

**OC: Who inspires you?**

## Original-Cin – January 24, 2019 (3 of 3)

FM: There are so many chefs that I am inspired by like Daniel Humm, René Redzepi and Thomas Keller. I am constantly inspired by people I work with and who have the same drive and passion that I have for cooking and creating.

**OC: I think it is important for kids who want to become chefs that they become more independent, build self-confidence and support their self-expression through a culinary education. How did these elements play in for you growing up as a young chef?**

FM: All of those things were and still are very important to me. That is one of the reasons I started my pop-up restaurants. There is always a learning curve but what was most exciting for me was the creating and then executing the dish. I always try to find a balance between the two. It's fun to create and take into consideration who and what inspires me so that I can add that to my dishes but I also made sure I put my own spin on it and create my own style of food. It takes a while to do that and I only feel like now I can sort of define what that is but it took many years to figure it all out."

**OC: What is your creative process like? You now run your very own successful restaurant and I am sure that you spend a lot of time creating new and exciting dishes for that. You offer 12 courses so it must give you such freedom to express yourself in so many different plates.**

FM: We try to change things up almost daily. I definitely have some signature dishes that people expect but I try to change something up all the time. I never want to be boring or stale. The idea behind our menu is to showcase what is available and what is inspiring at that moment too. Obviously some ingredients are only available at certain times of the year so we work around that. It all starts with the ingredients and the farmers that I work very closely with but from there I look at the foods as an art form. I can't really explain my process but it's all about what I have to work with and what inspires me. Having the restaurant gives me structure so sometimes I keep the same menu because I am not inspired that day, but other times I may change it up four times a week it really just depends. I want it to be a very personal restaurant in that way where the food changes by what I am inspired by and what interests me.

**OC: Do you ever surprise yourself with what you cook?**

FM: Every once in a while I will make something and think, 'Wow I didn't expect that!' I may put something in the menu that I don't necessarily like but customers love and ask for. It really is a new experience every day.

**OC: What advice would you give to young and aspiring cooks and chefs?**

FM: First and foremost, while it is important to cook your own stuff and kind of create dishes and be creative with it, you can't do any of that until you know all the basics. So to learn all the basics on your own or go work somewhere to learn all the basics, and then from there start kind of doing your own thing. But never be like, 'Alright, I'm done learning from other people.' Never get to a place where you think you know everything, because you never will. Especially in cooking — there's always something else to learn.

**OC: I was wondering if you ever step back and say to yourself, 'Wow, I can't believe what I have accomplished and I am not even 20 years old! Hard work definitely pays off!'**

FM: I don't do that for that exact reason. If I did that I don't think I would be doing what I am doing. Age is just a number, I can't focus on that and sometimes I wish others wouldn't either! You're right, I have worked really hard to get where I am and I don't plan on doing anything less. It's a tough business but I love it and it really makes me so happy.

*Chef Flynn.* Directed by Cameron Yates. Begins January 25 at Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2019/1/24/original-cin-qampa-doc-on-boy-wonder-chef-charts-highs-and-lows-of-pro-cooking>



## Hot Docs to highlight Italian docs, honor Julia Reichert, Julia Ivanova

By [Frederick Blichert](#)

January 23, 2019



Canadian international documentary festival Hot Docs has unveiled a series of special events and screenings scheduled for this year's event, including an outstanding achievement award for director Julia Reichert and a retrospective on Canadian filmmaker [Julia Ivanova](#).

Three-time Oscar nominee Reichert (pictured, right) has been selected as the recipient of the 2019 Hot Docs outstanding achievement award, honoring her documentary filmmaking career.

Reichert has been making documentaries for 50 years, with a focus on class, gender and race in America.

Her first film, *Growing Up Female* (1971), has been credited as the first feature documentary of the modern women's movement, and was recently selected for inclusion in the National Film Registry. Her later docs *Union Maids* (1976) and *Seeing Red* (1984), both co-directed with Jim Klein, were nominated for Academy Awards for best feature documentary, and her 2009 short *The Last Truck: Closing of a GM Plant* earned an Oscar nod for best documentary short. Her four-hour documentary, *A Lion in the House* (2006), made with co-director Steven Bognar for PBS, won the Primetime Emmy for exceptional merit in non-fiction filmmaking.

Outside of her filmmaking, Reichert was a professor of motion pictures at Wright State University for 28 years. She's served on the boards of the Ohio Humanities Council, the Independent Feature Project and the Association of Independents in Video and Film. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as well as the Television Academy. Additionally, she co-founded New Day Films, an independent film distribution co-op.

The outstanding achievement award at Hot Docs will include a partial retrospective of Reichert's work, screened during the festival. Titles included in the retrospective program will be announced in March.

"Julia Reichert's exceptional career has spanned almost 50 years, and we're thrilled to be recognizing her with Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award this year," said [Shane Smith](#), director of programming for Hot Docs, in a statement. "Not only a lauded filmmaker, Julia is a mentor, community builder and an impassioned chronicler of the complex issues facing America today, and we are honored to amplify the voice of this master storyteller, who has given voice to so many others through her work." Elsewhere, Hot Docs will honor Ivanova (left) with its annual Focus On retrospective.

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Through the program, Hot Docs will showcase a selection of the Moscow-born director's documentaries during the festival. Ivanova's past credits include docs like *From Russia, for Love*; *Fatherhood Dreams*; *Love Translated*; *Ash & Oil*; and *High Five*.

In 2011, the filmmaker took home the [Hot Docs Best Canadian Feature Film award](#) for her project *Family Portrait in Black and White*. Produced through her Vancouver-based production banner Interfilm with [Boris Ivanov](#), *Family Portrait* follows Olga NENYA, a woman who raises 16 orphans in a small Ukrainian town.

In addition, her film *Limit Is the Sky* recently won Vancouver-based DOXA Documentary Film Festival's Colin Low Best Canadian Documentary prize. Written and directed by Ivanova, the NFB-produced doc tells the story of six young Canadians who hope to make their livelihoods in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Ivanova is also currently working on her latest project, *Pipeline in Paradise*, a doc on two opposite human forces that are connected by the Trans Mountain Pipeline.

She joins past honorees like [John Walker](#), [Maya Gallus](#), Rosie Dranfield, Carole Laganieri, [John Zaritsky](#), Peter Mettler and more.

The festival will also feature a "Made In Italy" program highlighting documentary films from the European country.

"Recent years have seen a surge of in the quality and range of stories being told in Italian documentary," said Smith. "Italian filmmakers are taking advantage of the hidden histories and unique perspectives the country holds and are crafting local stories that offer a global perspective — that speak to not only what's happening in their country, but how these subjects relate and resonate with society at large."

Titles included in the program will be announced in March.

Past "Made In" programs have focused on Mexico (2018 and 2008), Japan (2017 and 2006), Australia (2016), India (2015), Denmark (2014), Poland (2013), Southeastern Europe (2012), Italy (2011), South America (2010), South Korea (2009), Brazil (2007), South Africa (2004) and Taiwan (2003).

Hot Docs will present its 26th annual edition from April 25 to May 5 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema and other venues in Toronto. Conference sessions and market events will include the Hot Docs Forum, Hot Docs Deal Maker and the Doc Shop.

*(With files from Playback Daily)*

<http://realscreen.com/2019/01/23/hot-docs-to-highlight-italian-docs-honor-julia-reichert-julia-ivanova/>

## This week in Toronto: Greek tragedy at the opera and a look at a bygone India on film

Sun., Jan. 20, 2019

### MONDAY

- **Around India With a Movie Camera**

**Watch this if:** You want to see India revealed through its earliest movies.

Though the British Raj ended when India gained independence in 1947, it still lasted deep into cinema's first century. That early period yielded a bounty of images that were captured by both British filmmakers and the subjects under their rule. Director Sandhya Suri delved deep into the British Film Institute's trove of footage to create this fascinating and often poignant look at life in India between 1899 and 1947. ([Hot Docs](#) Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., 6:30 p.m., also screens Jan. 22, 23 and 24)

—*Jason Anderson*

## THE LAST RESORT: A MOMENT IN TIME WHEN A KOSHER MIAMI EXPLODED IN COLOUR AND LIFE

February 1, 2019

By Jim Slotek

Rating: B-plus

Awash in colour and sunlight, the doc *The Last Resort* is both a modern cultural history of the confounding should-be-paradise that is Miami Beach, and a loving bio of a young, short-lived photographer who froze one of its moments in time.

And what a time! Buoyed by a post-war migration of older Jews, many of them from New York, a great many having escaped the Holocaust, it was like a sunlit reward for people who'd struggled their entire lives.



Miami Beach night-lifer, circa the '70s in *The Last Resort*.

Culturally it manifested itself in the Fountainbleu Hotel, Jackie Gleason's latter variety TV show and the Rat Pack adopting it as a second home (by his account, Paul Anka wrote "My Way" for Frank Sinatra in his room at the Fountainbleu and delivered it to him the next day). There's even vintage footage of Fanny Brice extolling Miami.

By the '70s, that culture was beginning to literally die off, and two young photographer friends in their twenties – Andy Sweet and Gary Monroe – decided to begin a 10-year project from the mid-'70s to mid-'80s depicting a South Beach scene dominated by Jewish seniors that they knew would not be there much longer.

"Imagine South Beach today, but instead of everybody being between 18-28, think of 80 and 82," says Monroe, who ended up bringing the project to fruition on his own.

For tragic reasons, arguably intrinsic to Miami itself, Sweet would not be there to finish the project. But his style suited the moment he captured, exploding in light and colours framed by sea-blue (whereas Monroe preferred to shoot in Diane Arbus-style black-and-white), preferring candidness to careful composition.

Directors Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch depict him as everybody's grandson, with smiling, elderly subjects who are glad for the attention, hams for the camera and instinctively inclined to pinch the photographer's cheeks. (Between cheerful stills, Sweet is remembered by Monroe, his sister Ellen Sweet Moss and reporter/crime-novelist Edna Buchanan)

Sweet captured them dancing, flirting, eating at delis, kibitzing and – the ultimate old Miami pastime – “porch-sitting,” reveling in this bright final chapter in their lives, afforded them by inexpensive art deco apartments and undervalued real estate.

The first half of the movie is, thus, a lovely experience. History turns the '80s part of their photo project to tragedy, with the influx of Cuban “boat people,” Central American cocaine cowboys, rising rents on crumbling buildings, and the final degradation of many last days spent in urban poverty. The community was sent packing – the kids to jobs up North, with what remained of the older population moving to other parts of Florida.

As these things go, opportunists would wait until some of the most desirable beach-front real-estate in the country would hit rock-bottom and buy it up (to their credit, largely preserving the art deco beach motif), setting the stage for South Beach as the decadent playground of the rich and famous it is today.

This story is told in pictures, while simultaneously narrowing its focus to individuals. Sweet's pictures are so alive, *The Last Resort* becomes the next best thing to being on the beach in 1975.

*The Last Resort.* Directed by Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch. Starring Gary Monroe, Ellen Sweet Moss, Edna Buchanan. Opens Friday, Feb. 1 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.



# La France s'anime au TAAFI



Le long métrage de Shôjirô Nishimi et Guillaume Renard, MFKZ sera présenté au TAAFI en fin de semaine.

Maude Fraser  
15 février 2019 à 16h28

Du 15 au 17 février, les films sont de retour au Festival international d'art d'animation de Toronto (TAAFI) et plusieurs oeuvres françaises émergent du lot.

Pour la première fois depuis 2016, le TAAFI réintègre le volet festival de films à sa programmation annuelle. L'organisme avait préféré, ces dernières années, se concentrer sur un salon de l'emploi pour les étudiants des divers domaines touchant l'animation.

C'est donc un grand retour pour ce pan du programme qui, lors de la création du festival en 2012, faisait partie d'un seul et même événement tenu conjointement avec un salon de l'emploi et des conférences axées sur l'industrie.

Selon John Ronney, membre de l'équipe de direction depuis l'automne dernier, en regroupant ces trois volets le festival s'éparpillait plus qu'il ne se focalisait.

«Cette année on a eu vraiment envie de tout faire. Mais pour ne pas répéter nos erreurs, on a décidé d'étaler la programmation sur un an.» Le festival organise donc désormais trois événements distincts: un pour les étudiants au printemps, un pour l'industrie à l'automne et un pour le cinéma d'animation à l'hiver.

## «L'histoire d'abord»

Selon John Ronney, aussi directeur de la programmation, le choix des films s'est fait de façon très organique. «On n'a pas de petites cases à cocher. On regarde les films qui ont été soumis, on note ceux qui sont les plus intéressants, et on essaye de les grouper selon leur genre.»

La mise en récit est ce qu'il y a de plus important pour lui, même dans un film d'animation. «C'est toujours l'histoire d'abord, l'art en second». Un film aux animations esthétiquement intéressantes n'est pas suffisant si l'histoire n'est pas accrocheuse.



Le film à l'humour décalé réalisé par Lea Oiry, Juliette Mercier, Amaury Choubane, Stanislas Becot, Johanna Guillaume a su retenir l'attention des programmeurs.

### **La France: remarquable en animation**

C'est donc pour leurs scénarios captivants que neuf films francophones ont été sélectionnés dans cette prochaine édition du TAAFI, au même titre que tous les autres films et courts métrages de partout dans le monde.

La présence de ces films d'animation dans la programmation n'étonne pas du tout John Ronney. «Dans l'industrie, la France a toujours été reconnue pour ses films d'animation de qualité.»

Parmi les trois longs métrages présentés, le film *MFKZ*, co-réalisé par Shôjirô Nishimi et Guillaume Renard, fait bonne figure. «Il est simplement hilarant, et unique en son genre», décrit le directeur de la programmation. Cette collaboration franco-japonaise s'ancre habilement dans la culture de l'anime, autant par son esthétique que par son histoire qui évoquera à certain celle du classique japonais *Akira*.



*Battle Royale* raconte l'histoire d'une domestique entichée d'un roi.

Parmi les coups de coeur du directeur figure aussi le court métrage *Battle royale* réalisé par Mégane Lepage, Kevin Langouët, Meghan Marino, Agathe Revillod et Fanny Robert-Dumas. «C'est une comédie assez sombre, mais qui est visuellement très drôle», explique-t-il.

### **Animer le drame**

Si la plupart des films français du festival sont des comédies, d'autres sont assez dramatiques. Le court métrage *Giant Child* de l'étudiant torontois Camila De Guzman, aborde pour sa part le deuil d'une mère.



Le film *Giant Child* de Camila De Guzman.

Selon John Ronney, les films d'animation dramatiques sont encore largement incompris.

Si la pensée populaire tendait à associer le cinéma d'animation à l'enfance, celle-ci a bien évolué.

«Avec des séries, comme *Family Guys* ou *BoJack Horseman*, il y a de plus en plus de place pour des animations destinées aux adultes», précise M. Ronney.

«La prochaine barrière à franchir, c'est avec le genre dramatique», soutient John. Pour lui, le langage de l'animation a ce pouvoir de faciliter l'accès à des sujets plus sérieux, de les rendre plus accessibles tout en insufflant aux spectateurs des sentiments puissants.

«Avec le cinéma d'animation, on peut plonger bien plus loin dans la tête d'un personnage et imager ses pensées avec des éléments visuels», conclut-il.

Le festival se tiendra toute la fin de semaine au cinéma Hot Docs sur la rue Bloor près de Bathurst.

### **Voici la liste exhaustive des films français qui y seront présentés:**

Dans la catégorie Feature samedi de 23h à 1h00

*MFKZ* (France, Japon)

Dans le cadre de Short 1 : Comedy Tonight, vendredi de 19h15 à 20h45

*Battle Royal* (France)

*Sacrées Nonnes* (France)

*Astroque* (France)

Dans le cadre de Saturday Morning Fun Time!, samedi de 9h00 à 10h30

*Taffy: Enter the Kitty* (France)

Dans le cadre de Short 2: Randomness, samedi de 11h15 à 12h45

*My body* (France)

Dans le cadre de Short 3 : The Oddball Collection, samedi de 16h15 à 17h45

*Hero* (France)

Dans le cadre de Short 4 : Flights of Imagination, dimanche de 11h15 à 12h45

*The jade recollection* (France)

Dans le cadre de Short 5 : Comedy tonight! The Sequel, dimanche de 13h30 à 15h00

*Tailored* (France)

## CBC, Metro Morning – February 18, 2019



FEATURED LISTEN LIVE **SHOWS** CATEGORIES >



### Metro Morning with Matt Galloway



#### Panel on youth activism today

Feb 18, 2019

10:23

Indygo Arscott doesn't think of themselves as an activist. But they have been working against colonisation and bullying for many years. And they are part of a panel on youth activism today at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

CATEGORIES

POLITICS

SOCIETY & CULTURE



## **10 Cheap Things To Do In Toronto This Weekend (Feb. 22-24)**

by Isabelle Khoo

### 10. Hakka Chinese Chicken with Yueh Tung Restaurant

Where: Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

When: Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Cost: \$18.58

If you've always loved stories about food, then check out this series led by Toronto-based food writer Suresh Doss. In this installment, Doss speaks with the Liu family, who own the Yueh Tung Restaurant, about how they pass down Hakka food traditions.



# A dazzling Ai Weiwei exhibit, a Leonard Cohen ballet and five other things to see, hear and do in Toronto this week

BY SINÉAD MULHERN, ALLISON BAKER AND JONAH BRUNET | FEBRUARY 25, 2019



Photo courtesy of Ai Weiwei studio

## A dazzling Ai Weiwei exhibit

1The Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei is one of the world's most creative activists. He works in a multitude of different media—photography, film, sculpture, even Lego—but always hits with a resounding impact, whether by smashing ancient relics or flipping off popular tourist attractions. A new exhibit at the Gardiner Museum is shining a spotlight on his ceramics—a central facet of his artwork from the beginning. Featuring a mix of original pieces and reappropriations of ancient Chinese artifacts, *Unbroken* is all about subverting history and breaking rules. Thursday, February 28 to Sunday, June 9. \$9–\$15. *Gardiner Museum*.

## A frosty beer fest

2Craft IPA snobs and buck-a-beer enthusiasts can get their fix at the fourth annual Winter Brew Fest. This year's brewery lineup includes Ontario and Quebec favourites like Side Launch, Nickel Brook, Muskoka and Broadhead. In between pints, guests can soak up the beer with a snack (local food trucks, like Sausage Party and Delight Bite Inc., will be on site to take care of the munchies), or join in on a beer yoga session—which is exactly what it sounds like. Maybe some liquid courage will help with those downward dogs. Friday, March 1 and Saturday, March 2. \$21–\$51. *Evergreen Brick Works*.

## A Leonard Cohen swing-along

3Leonard Cohen's melancholic lyrics and stringed compositions might not seem super-danceable, but internationally renowned choreographers Andonis Foniadakis, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Ihsan Rustem have made them the focus of this grand tribute, *Dance Me*, which fuses ballet and jazz with some of Cohen's most famous works. It's a compelling ode to the artist's poetic prowess, executed with impressive lifts, romantic duets and accompanying video projections. Friday, March 1 to Saturday, March 2. \$55–\$145. *Sony Centre for the Performing Arts*.

## A *Handmaid's Tale* talk

4Since the dramatic season finale, when June passed up her chance to escape Gilead and cross the border to Canada (where, ironically, the series films), viewers have been anxiously waiting to see whether the show's heroine will finally find freedom. Hulu recently announced that the new season will premiere June 5 (praise be!), and in the meantime, Atwood fans can get a *Handmaid's Tale* fix at Hot Docs Theatre's Curious Minds talk this week. The discussion, featuring some of the show's key players from behind-the-scenes—including executive producer Warren Littlefield and production designer Elisabeth Williams—looks at the making and

meaning of the series, and will cover everything from costume design to gender politics. Sunday, March 2. \$29. *Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema*.

### A royal RuPaul party

5For the first time in *Drag Race* herstory, the new season of RuPaul's cult competition show features a Canadian queen. Toronto's Brooke Lynn Hytes, who studied at the National Ballet School and did some of her first shows in the Gay Village, will be competing for the title of the next drag superstar. For the season premiere, the Queen of the North is trekking from her current home in Nashville to host a viewing party and Toronto drag reunion show at Woody's. Expect death drops, voguing and a whole lot of sequins. Thursday, February 28. Free. *Woody's*.



Photo by Cylla von Tiedemann

### A mix and match ballet

6The National Ballet blends together four short works into a stunning mix-and-match program. Front and centre is George Balanchine's *Apollo*, a neoclassical piece about the Greek god of music and his muses, set to music by Igor Stravinsky. Also on the agenda: *Night* (created by Canadian-born choreographer Julia Adam), *The Sea Above, The Sky Below* (revived for principal dancer Xiao Nan Yu's farewell season), and *Paquita*, a Romantic ballet about a young woman who gets kidnapped by gypsies. Friday, March 1 to Sunday, March 3. \$67–\$265. *The Four Seasons Centre for Performing Arts*.

### A night with Anderson .Paak

7When California-bred musician Anderson .Paak released his debut album in 2012, he used the pseudonym "Breezy Lovejoy." He's since shed the alter-ego, but it's still the best way to sum up his musical style. Equal parts swag, hip hop and soul, .Paak's songs are deliriously run, switching from quick-paced rap to funk. Fresh off his first Grammy win for Best Rap Performance, .Paak is headed on tour to promote his newest studio album (and he's said to have two more in the works). Tuesday, February 26. \$95.65–\$172.55. *Rebel*.

[https://torontolife.com/culture/todo/dazzling-ai-weiwei-exhibit-leonard-cohen-ballet-five-things-see-hear-toronto-week/?fbclid=IwAR2RYAJ7HSZBHK9TovY5u9VUCIKiYUliekx5O\\_gcQBfvX3ywPX\\_Mn1DfyAw](https://torontolife.com/culture/todo/dazzling-ai-weiwei-exhibit-leonard-cohen-ballet-five-things-see-hear-toronto-week/?fbclid=IwAR2RYAJ7HSZBHK9TovY5u9VUCIKiYUliekx5O_gcQBfvX3ywPX_Mn1DfyAw)

## Hot Docs 2019's Special Presentations Lineup Is Nearly 50 Percent Women-Directed

"Knock Down the House": Jubilee Films

BY: Laura Berger\_March 5, 2019

Hot Docs has announced the 15 features comprising this year's Special Presentations program. Seven of the titles are directed by women, or 47 percent of the slate, which is described as "a high-profile collection of world and international premieres, award winners from the recent international festival circuit, and works by master filmmakers or featuring star subjects."

The fest will host the world premiere of Phyllis Ellis' "Toxic Beauty," an investigation into the cosmetics industry's ties to cancer and diabetes, among other health concerns.

Other titles screening in the Special Presentations slate include [Sundance winners](#) "Knock Down the House" and "Always in Season." Directed by Rachel Lears, "Knock Down the House" follows four working-class, progressive women running for Congress. Rising political star Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez features prominently in the doc. Jacqueline Olive's "Always in Season" is an exploration of lynching and a mother's fight for justice after her teenage son is found hanging from a swing set in rural North Carolina.

Overall, Hot Docs' 2018 lineup [was 50 percent women-directed](#). The full schedule for its 2019 edition will be announced March 19. Hot Docs will run from April 25-May 5 in Toronto.

Check out all of the women-directed films screening in the Special Presentations program below.

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### ADVOCATE

D: Rachel Leah Jones, Philippe Bellaïche | P: Joëlle Bertossa, Paul Cadieux | Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland | 2019 | 105 min | Canadian Premiere

As one of the few Israeli human-rights lawyers willing to defend Palestinians, Lea Tsemel has been defying hostility and vitriol from the public and press for nearly 50 years to fight for clients in a stacked system.

### ALWAYS IN SEASON

D: Jacqueline Olive | P: Jacqueline Olive, Jessica Devaney | USA | 2019 | 88 min | International Premiere

The unresolved case of a Black teen found hanging from a swing set in North Carolina in 2014 is the lens through which this searing doc examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence.

### BUDDY

D: Heddy Honigmann | P: John Appel | Netherlands | 2018 | 86 min | Canadian Premiere

Master documentarian Heddy Honigmann turns her eye for authenticity and genuine interview to the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners. Witness canine humanity and life-altering trust at work in this observational marvel.

## **Women in Hollywood – March 5, 2019 (2 of 2)**

### **THE EDGE OF DEMOCRACY**

D: Petra Costa | P: Joanna Natasegara | Brazil | 2019 | 112 min | Canadian Premiere

Featuring unprecedented access to former Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva, the personal and political brilliantly combine in this unflinching exploration of one of the most dramatic and polarizing periods in Brazilian history.

### **KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE**

D: Rachel Lears | P: Rachel Lears, Robin Blotnick, Sarah Olson | USA | 2019 | 85 min | International Premiere

This rollercoaster ride follows four progressive women—including Bronx bartender Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—behind the scenes and in the streets as they grind through long-shot grassroots campaigns for Congress during the 2018 US midterms.

### **NOTHING FANCY: DIANA KENNEDY**

D: Elizabeth Carroll | P: Elizabeth Carroll, Dan Braun, Gina Abatemarco | USA | 2019 | 82 min | International Premiere

Dubbed “the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking,” a 96-year-old firebrand chef who’s spent her career celebrating the country’s regional cuisines rushes to solidify her hard-earned legacy in the face of her own mortality.

### **TOXIC BEAUTY**

D: Phyllis Ellis | P: Peter Raymont, Barri Cohen | Canada | 2019 | 90 min | World Premiere

Cancer, diabetes, developmental delays and more—the cosmetics industry’s ugly secrets are exposed through exclusive interviews with scientists, whistleblowers and consumer survivors who raise pressing questions about risks, regulations and the true cost of beauty.

## Hot Docs lineup includes premieres of 'Killing Patient Zero,' 'Toxic Beauty'

BY THE CANADIAN PRESS

POSTED MAR 5, 2019 12:37 PM EST

TORONTO — A documentary that aims to clear the name of a Quebecois flight attendant who was known as “patient zero” in the 1980s AIDS epidemic will make its world premiere at this year’s Hot Docs festival.

“Killing Patient Zero” is among 15 newly announced special presentations set for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5 in Toronto.

Laurie Lynd directed the Canadian film, which looks at “the homophobia behind the headlines” of the epidemic.

Also making its world premiere at the festival is the Canadian doc “Toxic Beauty” by Phyllis Ellis, which looks at “the cosmetics industry’s ugly secrets.”

The other special presentations are either Canadian, international or North American premieres.

Other titles include “Push” by Fredrik Gertten, in which a newly appointed UN specialist from Ottawa travels from Toronto to cities around the world to look at the issue of affordable housing.

“The Corporate Coup D’Etat” by Fred Peabody is a Canadian doc about democracy in the U.S., while “Knock Down the House” by Rachel Lears follows four women during the 2018 U.S. midterms, including rising Democrat star and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

In “Buddy,” director Heddy Honigmann looks at the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners.

Director Jacqueline Olive “examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence” in “Always in Season.”

And “Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy” by Elizabeth Carroll is about a 96-year-old chef who’s been dubbed “the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking.”



**Hot Docs lineup includes premieres of 'Killing Patient Zero,' 'Toxic Beauty'**

The Canadian Press

MARCH 5, 2019 09:37 AM

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<https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/hot-docs-lineup-includes-premieres-of-killing-patient-zero-toxic-beauty-1.23653261>

# “Knock Down the House,” “Nothing Fancy” among Hot Docs special presentations

By [Frederick Blichert](#)

March 5, 2019



Rachel Lears' *Knock Down the House* is among the feature docs being showcased as special presentations at Hot Docs this year.

The 15 documentary films selected are a high-profile collection of world and international premieres and award winners from the recent international festival circuit, as well as works by master filmmakers or featuring star subjects.

*Knock Down the House* follows four female progressive candidates, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (pictured), a congresswoman for New York's 14th District, as they campaign against prominent incumbents in the 2018 midterm elections. The film took home the [audience award at Sundance last month](#), where it had its world premiere, and was [picked up by Netflix](#) soon after.

Also featured are Elizabeth Carroll's *Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy*, about the eponymous 96-year-old chef known as "the Mick Jagger of Mexican cuisine," and Jeffrey Palmer's *N. Scott Momaday: Words From a Bear*, about one of Native America's most celebrated literary figures. Hot Docs runs from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto. The full program, including the opening night film, will be announced on March 19.

The full list of special presentation titles follows, in alphabetical order:

- ***Advocate*** (directors: Rachel Leah Jones and Philippe Bellaiche; producers: Joëlle Bertossa and [Paul Cadieux](#); Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland; Canadian premiere)
- ***Always in Season*** (director: Jacqueline Olive; producers: Jacqueline Olive and Jessica Devaney; USA; international premiere)

## Realscreen – March 5, 2019 (2 of 2)

- ***Assholes: A Theory*** (director: [John Walker](#); producers: Ann Bernier, Annette Clarke and John Walker; Canada; North American premiere)
- ***Buddy*** (director: Heddy Honigmann; producer: John Appel; Netherlands; Canadian premiere)
- ***The Corporate Coup D'Etat*** (director: Fred Peabody; producer: [Peter Raymont](#); Canada; Canadian premiere)
- ***The Edge of Democracy*** (director: [Petra Costa](#); producer: [Joanna Natasegara](#); Brazil; Canadian premiere)
- ***Gaza*** (directors: Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell; producers: [Paul Cadieux](#) and Brendan J. Byrne; Canada; Canadian premiere)
- ***Human Nature*** (director: Adam Bolt; producers: Sarah Goodwin, Meredith Desalazar and Elliot Kirschner; USA; Canadian premiere)
- ***Killing Patient Zero*** (director: Laurie Lynd; producer: [Corey Russell](#); Canada; world premiere)
- ***Knock Down the House*** (director: Rachel Lears; producers: Rachel Lears, Robin Blotnick and Sarah Olson; USA; international premiere)
- ***N. Scott Momaday: Words From a Bear*** (director: Jeffrey Palmer; producers: Jeffrey Palmer and Youngsun Palmer; USA; international premiere)
- ***Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy*** (director: [Elizabeth Carroll](#); producers: Elizabeth Carroll, [Dan Braun](#) and Gina Abatemarco; USA; international premiere)
- ***Push*** (director: [Fredrik Gertten](#); producer: [Margarete Jangård](#); Sweden; North American premiere)
- ***Toxic Beauty*** (director: [Phyllis Ellis](#); producers: Peter Raymont and [Barri Cohen](#); Canada; world premiere)
- ***The Trial of Ratko Mladic*** (directors: Henry Singer and Rob Miller; producers: Henry Singer, Rob Miller and Ida Bruusgaard; UK and Norway; Canadian premiere)

## Hot Docs to host Diana Kennedy, Gaza films

Adam Benzine, March 5, 2019



Culinary anthropologist Diana Kennedy

Documentaries about author N Scott Momaday, culinary anthropologist Diana Kennedy and the Gaza Strip are among the first titles chosen to be screened at the 2019 Hot Docs festival.

The event, which runs from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto, has unveiled 15 titles playing as Special Presentations, including Jeffrey Palmer's N Scott Momaday: Words from a Bear, Elizabeth Carroll's Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy, and Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell's Gaza.

Other films set to be screened at the festival will include Petra Costa's The Edge of Democracy, which featured former Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva; Adam Bolt's Human Nature, which examines the potential of the CRISPR-Cas9 genome editing technology; and Rachel Leah Jones' Advocate, which follows human-rights lawyer Lea Tsemel.

Meanwhile, Henry Singer and Rob Miller's The Trial of Ratko Mladic follows the case against the titular 'Butch of Bosnia'; Jacqueline Oliver's Always in Season examines the unresolved case of a black teen found hanging from a swing set in North Carolina; and Heddy Honigmann's Buddy looks at the relationships between service dogs and their owners.

The festival will also screen Knock Down the House, the political documentary acquired by Netflix earlier this year following its Sundance world premiere.

In related news, Hot Docs will this year welcome 10 international delegations to the 11-day festival, conference and market, including groups from Bermuda, Chile, Europe, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Nordic region, Scotland and the US, as well as the filmmakers' collective Brown Girls Doc Mafia and three regional delegations from Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the Yukon.

<https://www.c21media.net/hot-docs-to-host-diana-kennedy-gaza-films/>

# Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Doc 'Knock Down the House' Set for 2019 Hot Docs Festival

8:51 AM PST 3/5/2019 by Etan Vlessing



Courtesy of Sundance Film Festival

**The Netflix film about four female progressive candidates, including AOC, is getting an international premiere in Toronto, as is another Sundance award winner, 'Always in Season.'**

Rachel Lears' *Knock Down the House*, the [Sundance audience award winner](#) about four progressive women running for the U.S. Congress in 2018, including [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#), is set for an international premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian Documentary Festival before landing on Netflix, organizers said Tuesday.

And Jacqueline Olive's lynching doc *Always in Season*, which nabbed a special jury award for moral urgency at Sundance, will also get an international premiere in Toronto. Hot Docs unveiled in all 15 titles for its Special Presentations sidebar.

Trump-era politics will also feature with Fred Peabody's *The Corporate Coup D'Etat*, which looks at power shifting from citizens to corporations, and Fredrik Gertten's *Push*, about skyrocketing housing prices and stagnant incomes worldwide putting affordable housing beyond the reach of ordinary people. Hot Docs, set to run April 25 to May 2, also booked Elizabeth Carroll's *Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy*, about a popular 96-year-old Mexican chef; Jeffrey Palmer's *N. Scott Momaday: Words From a Bear*; and John Walker's *Assholes: A Theory*, an adaptation of the *New York Times* best-seller, for the National Film Board of Canada.

Other Special Presentation titles bound for Toronto: Petra Costa's *The Edge of Democracy*; Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell's *Gaza*; Rachel Leah Jones and Philippe Bellaïche's *Advocate*; Heddy Honigmann's *Buddy*; Adam Bolt's *Human Nature*; Laurie Lynd's *Killing Patient Zero*; Phyllis Ellis' *Toxic Beauty*; and Henry Singer and Rob Miller's *The Trial of Ratko Mladic*.



## Hot Docs lineup includes premieres of 'Killing Patient Zero,' 'Toxic Beauty'

March 5, 2019  
Canadian Press

TORONTO — A documentary that aims to clear the name of a Quebecois flight attendant who was known as “patient zero” in the 1980s AIDS epidemic will make its world premiere at this year’s Hot Docs festival.

Killing Patient Zero is among 15 newly announced special presentations set for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5 in Toronto.

Also making its world premiere at the festival is the Canadian doc Toxic Beauty by Phyllis Ellis, which looks at “the cosmetics industry’s ugly secrets.”

Other titles include Push by Fredrik Gertten, in which a newly appointed UN specialist from Ottawa travels from Toronto to cities around the world to look at the issue of affordable housing.

The Corporate Coup D’Etat by Fred Peabody is a Canadian doc about democracy in the U.S., while Knock Down the House by Rachel Lears follows four women during the 2018 U.S. midterms, including rising Democrat star and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

In Buddy, director Heddy Honigmann looks at the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners.

Director Jacqueline Olive “examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence” in Always in Season.

And Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy by Elizabeth Carroll is about a 96-year-old chef who’s been dubbed “the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking.”

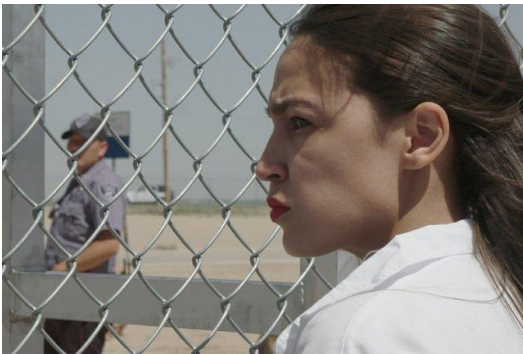
<https://nationalpost.com/pmnen/entertainment-pmn/hot-docs-lineup-includes-premieres-of-killing-patient-zero-toxic-beauty>

## Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez documentary to screen at Hot Docs 2019

Knock Down The House, which follows the U.S. politician's 2018 election campaign, is among 15 titles announced for the spring film festival

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#)

MARCH 5, 2019



*Knock The House Down, a documentary about Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's run for Congress, is screening at Hot Docs.*

Rachel Lears's **Knock Down The House**, which captured Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's emergence from obscurity to become the youngest woman ever elected to the U.S. Congress, will have its international premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs film festival in April.

Ocasio-Cortez was one of four progressive candidates followed by Lears and her crew through the recent U.S. midterm elections. The documentary won the Festival Favorite Award at the Sundance Film Festival in January, and was snapped up by Netflix for a reported \$10 million. It's one of 15 titles announced as Special Presentations on Tuesday, March 5. However, it is unclear whether Ocasio-Cortez or fellow subjects Cori Bush, Paula Jean Swearengin or Amy Vilela will accompany the film to Toronto.

Films set to make their world premieres as Special Presentations at Hot Docs are Laurie Lynd's **Killing Patient Zero**, which sets out to clear the name of the Quebec flight attendant identified as the Typhoid Mary of the AIDS epidemic, and Phyllis Ellis's **Toxic Beauty**, an exploration of the underside of the cosmetics industry.

Canadian filmmaker John Walker – the subject of last year's Focus On retrospective – returns with the North American premiere of **Assholes: A Theory**, which applies the observations of Aaron James's 2012 book to

## NOW Magazine – March 5, 2019 (2 of 2)

our current political and social reality; Swedish documentarian Fredrik Gertten's **Push**, about the fight to have affordable housing recognized as a human right, will also make its North American premiere at Hot Docs.

International premieres include Jacqueline Olive's **Always In Season**, about the 2014 lynching of North Carolina teenager Lennon Lacy; Jeffrey Palmer's **N. Scott Momaday: Words From A Bear**, about the Pulitzer prize-winning Kiowa author; and Elizabeth Carroll's **Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy**, a profile of the 96-year-old Mexican chef.

The seven Canadian premieres in the section cover a wide range of subjects.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is tackled in Rachel Leah Jones's **Advocate**, a profile of human-rights lawyer Lea Tsemel (one of the few Israeli lawyers who regularly defends Palestinians), and in Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell's **Gaza**, a portrait of everyday life in the Palestinian territory.

Geopolitics and the tenuous state of representative democracy are explored in Fred Peabody's **The Corporate Coup d'Etat**, which focuses on the gradual subversion of government in America by corporate interests rather than citizen groups, and in Petra Costa's **The Edge Of Democracy**, which looks at Brazil's recent political convulsions with the participation of that nation's former presidents Lula Da Silva and Dilma Rousseff. Henry Singer and Rob Miller's **The Trial Of Ratko Mladic** finds the man called the Butcher of Bosnia as he's brought to justice at The Hague for crimes committed during the Yugoslav War.

And on the more human side, Adam Bolt's **Human Nature** weighs the pitfalls and potentials offered by genetic engineering in the age of CRISPR, while Heddy Honigmann's **Buddy** considers the relationship between service dogs and their owners, picking up where last year's crowd-pleasing **Pick Of The Litter** left off.

Hopefully, this means we can look forward to more dogs on the red carpet this year. Dogs are nice.

Hot Docs has **previously announced** that American director Julia Reichert is the recipient of Hot Docs outstanding achievement award and Julia Ivanova is the subject of the festival's Focus On retrospective, having been designated this year's "significant Canadian filmmaker."

This year's country-specific Made In program will focus on Italy.

The 2019 Hot Docs festival runs April 25 to May 5; the full program and schedule will be announced on March 19. Further details are available at [hotdocs.ca/festival](https://hotdocs.ca/festival).

[@normwilner](https://twitter.com/normwilner)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/features/hot-docs-2019-alexandria-ocasio-cortez/>

# #HOTDOCS: SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS ANNOUNCED FOR 2019 HOT DOCS FESTIVAL

March 05, 2019

The 2019 HOT DOCS Film Festival announced today 15 Special Presentations including international and world premieres. The 26th edition of the Festival runs April 25 to May 5, 2019. Documentaries include KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE, which centers on Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sundance Award-winning ALWAYS IN SEASON.

A list of Special Presentations:

## **ADVOCATE**

D: Rachel Leah Jones, Philippe Bellaiche | P: Joëlle Bertossa, Paul Cadieux | Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland | 2019 | 105 min | Canadian Premiere

As one of the few Israeli human-rights lawyers willing to defend Palestinians, Lea Tsemel has been defying hostility and vitriol from the public and press for nearly 50 years to fight for clients in a stacked system.

## **ALWAYS IN SEASON**

D: Jacqueline Olive | P: Jacqueline Olive, Jessica Devaney | USA | 2019 | 88 min | International Premiere

The unresolved case of a Black teen found hanging from a swing set in North Carolina in 2014 is the lens through which this searing doc examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence.

## **ASSHOLES: A THEORY**

D: John Walker | P: Ann Bernier, Annette Clarke, John Walker | Canada | 2019 | 81 min | North American Premiere

Inspired by the New York Times bestselling book, this lively philosophical investigation into the rise of asshole behaviour across the world asks: What does it mean to be an asshole, and more importantly, how do we stop their proliferation?

## **BUDDY**

D: Heddy Honigmann | P: John Appel | Netherlands | 2018 | 86 min | Canadian Premiere

Master documentarian Heddy Honigmann turns her eye for authenticity and genuine interview to the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners. Witness canine humanity and life-altering trust at work in this observational marvel.

## **THE CORPORATE COUP D'ETAT**

D: Fred Peabody | P: Peter Raymont | Canada | 2018 | 90 min | Canadian Premiere

Piercing insights from journalist Chris Hedges and philosopher John Ralston Saul dissect America at a troubling crossroads, exposing Trump's MAGA doctrine as a symptom of a broken democracy where power now lies with corporations, not citizens.

### **THE EDGE OF DEMOCRACY**

D: Petra Costa | P: Joanna Natasegara | Brazil | 2019 | 112 min | Canadian Premiere

Featuring unprecedented access to former Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva, the personal and political brilliantly combine in this unflinching exploration of one of the most dramatic and polarizing periods in Brazilian history.

### **GAZA**

D: Garry Keane, Andrew McConnell | P: Paul Cadieux, Brendan J. Byrne | Canada | 2018 | 90 min | Canadian Premiere

Fully blockaded and home to almost two million people, the Gaza Strip is portrayed in the news as the world's largest open-air prison—but this rare immersion into everyday Palestinian life reveals the pressures of occupation and the humanity straining to flourish.

### **HUMAN NATURE**

D: Adam Bolt | P: Sarah Goodwin, Meredith Desalazar, Elliot Kirschner | USA | 2019 | 107 min | Canadian Premiere

In a brave new world in which science fiction collides with fact and DNA sequences can be edited with ease, this provocative examination forces us to reconsider what it means to be human.

### **KILLING PATIENT ZERO**

D: Laurie Lynd | P: Corey Russell | Canada | 2019 | 100 min | World Premiere

Skilfully revealing the homophobia behind the headlines, this doc traces the devastating impact of the 1980s AIDS epidemic and clears the name of the Québécois flight attendant who was infamously known as "patient zero."

### **KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE**

D: Rachel Lears | P: Rachel Lears, Robin Blotnick, Sarah Olson | USA | 2019 | 85 min | International Premiere

This rollercoaster ride follows four progressive women—including Bronx bartender Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—behind the scenes and in the streets as they grind through long-shot grassroots campaigns for Congress during the 2018 US midterms.

### **N. SCOTT MOMADAY: WORDS FROM A BEAR**

D: Jeffrey Palmer | P: Jeffrey Palmer, Youngsun Palmer | USA | 2018 | 85 mins | International Premiere

The life and career of Pulitzer Prize-winning Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday, one of Native America's most celebrated literary figures, is explored in this spiritual journey through the expansive landscapes of the West and New Mexico.



## **Mr. Will Wong – March 5, 2019 (3 of 3)**

### **NOTHING FANCY: DIANA KENNEDY**

D: Elizabeth Carroll | P: Elizabeth Carroll, Dan Braun, Gina Abatemarco | USA | 2019 | 82 min | International Premiere

Dubbed “the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking,” a 96-year-old firebrand chef who’s spent her career celebrating the country’s regional cuisines rushes to solidify her hard-earned legacy in the face of her own mortality.

### **PUSH**

D: Fredrik Gertten | P: Margarete Jangård | Sweden | 2019 | 92 min | North American Premiere

As skyrocketing housing prices and stagnant incomes squeeze families out of cities worldwide, a newly appointed UN specialist from Ottawa travels from Toronto to Barcelona to London and beyond, fighting to have affordable housing recognized as a human right.

### **TOXIC BEAUTY**

D: Phyllis Ellis | P: Peter Raymont, Barri Cohen | Canada | 2019 | 90 min | World Premiere

Cancer, diabetes, developmental delays and more—the cosmetics industry’s ugly secrets are exposed through exclusive interviews with scientists, whistleblowers and consumer survivors who raise pressing questions about risks, regulations and the true cost of beauty.

### **THE TRIAL OF RATKO MLADIC**

D: Henry Singer, Rob Miller | P: Henry Singer, Rob Miller, Ida Bruusgaard | UK, Norway | 2018 | 100 min | Canadian Premiere

Accused of horrific war crimes, the “Butcher of Bosnia” finally faces a verdict in the biggest trial since Nuremberg. Embedded with both the prosecution and defense, this courtroom thriller reveals the troublingly nuanced Serbian–Bosnian conflict that still rages on.

More announcements to come March 19, 2019. More details here: <http://hotdocs.ca>.

## Festival Hot Docs : un documentaire sur le patient zéro à l'affiche

Publié le mardi 5 mars 2019 à 15 h 08



Le Festival international canadien du documentaire Hot Docs, à Toronto, aura lieu du 25 avril au 5 mai. Photo: Festival international canadien du documentaire Hot Docs

### La Presse Canadienne

Un documentaire visant à rétablir la réputation d'un agent de bord québécois qui avait été surnommé le « patient zéro » au tout début de l'épidémie du sida, dans les années 1980, sera présenté en première mondiale au Festival international canadien du documentaire Hot Docs, à Toronto.

*Killing Patient Zero* figure parmi les 15 nouveaux films annoncés mardi par les organisateurs du festival qui se déroulera du 25 avril au 5 mai.

Laurie Lynd a réalisé ce documentaire canadien qui aborde « l'homophobie derrière les manchettes » sur cette épidémie.

L'agent de bord québécois était soupçonné d'avoir « propagé » l'épidémie du sida aux États-Unis, mais récemment, une recherche a officiellement écarté cette hypothèse. Selon une étude publiée dans la revue scientifique *Nature* en 2016, le virus circulait au pays depuis au moins les années 1970, et il provenait apparemment des Caraïbes. L'agent de bord n'aurait été en fait qu'une des nombreuses personnes déjà infectées avant la « découverte » de la maladie par les scientifiques.

Parmi les autres documentaires projetés en première mondiale se trouve *Toxic Beauty*, de Phyllis Ellis, qui traite des « vilains secrets de l'industrie des cosmétiques ». Les festivaliers pourront aussi visionner *Push*, de Fredrik Gertten, dans lequel un spécialiste des Nations unies originaire d'Ottawa voyage à Toronto et partout dans le monde pour étudier la question du logement abordable.

*The Corporate Coup d'État*, de Fred Peabody, aborde la démocratie aux États-Unis, tandis que *Knock Down the House*, de Rachels Lears, suit quatre politiciennes pendant les élections de mi-mandat, dont l'étoile montante du Parti démocrate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Dans *Buddy*, la réalisatrice Heddy Honigmann examine la relation complexe entre les chiens d'assistance et leur propriétaire.

La réalisatrice Jacqueline Olive discute quant à elle du « traumatisme persistant de plus d'un siècle de lynchage et de violence raciale continue » dans *Always in Season*. Finalement, *Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy*, d'Elizabeth Carroll, présente une chef de 96 ans surnommée « la Mick Jagger de la cuisine mexicaine ».

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1156678/festival-hot-docs-documentaire-toronto-patient-zero-sida>

## Hot Docs lineup includes premieres of ‘Killing Patient Zero,’ ‘Toxic Beauty’

MARCH 5, 2019.

TORONTO – A documentary that aims to clear the name of a Quebecois flight attendant who was known as “patient zero” in the 1980s AIDS epidemic will make its world premiere at this year’s Hot Docs festival.

“Killing Patient Zero” is among 15 newly announced special presentations set for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5 in Toronto.

Laurie Lynd directed the Canadian film, which looks at “the homophobia behind the headlines” of the epidemic.

Also making its world premiere at the festival is the Canadian doc “Toxic Beauty” by Phyllis Ellis, which looks at “the cosmetics industry’s ugly secrets.”

The other special presentations are either Canadian, international or North American premieres.

Other titles include “Push” by Fredrik Gertten, in which a newly appointed UN specialist from Ottawa travels from Toronto to cities around the world to look at the issue of affordable housing.

“The Corporate Coup D’Etat” by Fred Peabody is a Canadian doc about democracy in the U.S., while “Knock Down the House” by Rachel Lears follows four women during the 2018 U.S. midterms, including rising Democrat star and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

In “Buddy,” director Heddy Honigmann looks at the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners.

Director Jacqueline Olive “examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence” in “Always in Season.”

And “Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy” by Elizabeth Carroll is about a 96-year-old chef who’s been dubbed “the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking.”

<https://medicinehatnews.com/entertainment/entertainment-news/2019/03/05/hot-docs-lineup-includes-premieres-of-killing-patient-zero-toxic-beauty/>

## Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez doc getting its premiere in Toronto



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, or as she's known with the hip youth, "AOC," has been setting the political world ablaze.

March 5, 2019

As the youngest woman ever elected to the U.S. Congress, AOC has proposed some ideas many consider radical, and has been taking long-time stuffy politicians to task, making a name for herself extremely quickly.

Now, her story has been captured in a documentary.

Knock Down the House is a hot take on a few political campaigns during the 2018 U.S. midterms, focusing heavily on AOC herself.

That film will get its Canadian premiere at this year's Hot Docs Festival Special Presentation, along with several others receiving either a Canadian or international premiere.

The full selection of films screening at Hot Docs 2019, which runs from April 25 to May 5, will be revealed on March 19. For now, here's what to expect of the special presentations.

### **Advocate**

Lea Tsemel is a human rights lawyer in Israel that has spent almost 50 years defending Palestinians. This causes a nightmare of vitriolic and hateful comments and attacks from the public and the press.

### **Always in Season**

Lynchings and racism are explored through this doc that pivots around a 2014 unsolved case of a Black teenager found hung from a swing set in North Carolina only a few years ago.

### **Assholes: A Theory**

Based on a book, this documentary looks at "assholes," jerks, meanies and more. It examines how we have arrived at a culture where there are so many assholes, and how to stop them.

### **Buddy**

Service dogs aren't just there to look adorable, they serve a very important function. This documentary explores their relationship with humans and the trust required.

### **The Corporate Coup D'Etat**

This doc focuses around the observations of two journalists, examining the state of U.S. democracy and the Trump MAGA doctrine. Specifically, this film looks at the power of corporations versus the government.

### **The Edge of Democracy**

Brazil has always been a haven for political turmoil, and this doc looks to capture that. It'll explore the polarizing period of Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva.

### **Gaza**

The Gaza Strip is one of the most hotly contested and dangerous places in the world, and is almost ground zero for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This doc takes a look at life in the area, which is home to almost two million people.

### **The Trial of Ratko Mladic**

Often called the "Butcher of Bosnia," Ratko Mladic is a war criminal who was tried for his horrific crimes in a trial that is considered the largest since the Nazi Nuremberg trials. This doc follows that story, and looks at the continuing Serbian-Bosnian conflict.

### **Human Nature**

What does it mean to be human? In an age of science fiction and DNA editing, that question is becoming harder to answer. Human Nature is a doc that tries to answer it, potentially reconsidering the definition of human.

### **Killing Patient Zero**

The HIV and AIDS epidemic was long kept behind closed doors, most often forced behind them. This doc traces how homophobia and prejudice led to the deaths of millions, and refutes the identity of "patient zero".

### **Knock Down the House**

This doc follows four progressive women, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, through their grassroots campaigns during the U.S. Congressional races.

### **N. Scott Momaday: Words**

From a BearNavarro Scott Momaday is a celebrated and revered Pulitzer Prize winner. In this doc that journeys through New Mexico and the West, the Native American literary icon is showcased.

### **Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy**

A 96-year-old chef is considered the master of Mexican cooking, and as her lifespan dwindles, she faces her own legacy in the kitchen.

### **Push**

Here in Toronto, we know all too well how hard affordable housing is to come by. As housing prices skyrocket, a UN specialist travels to Toronto, Barcelona, London, and other world cities to examine the problem.

### **Toxic Beauty**

It's no secret that the cosmetics industry can be controversial and shady, including links to animal testing, cancers, and more. This doc takes a magnifying glass to the risks of beauty by interviewing experts and whistleblowers.



## Hot Docs lineup includes premieres of 'Killing Patient Zero,' 'Toxic Beauty'

TORONTO — A documentary that aims to clear the name of a Quebecois flight attendant who was known as "patient zero" in the 1980s AIDS epidemic will make its world premiere at this year's Hot Docs festival.

about 23 hours ago by: Canadian Press

Updated about 22 hours ago

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"Killing Patient Zero" is among 15 newly announced special presentations set for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5 in Toronto.

Laurie Lynd directed the Canadian film, which looks at "the homophobia behind the headlines" of the epidemic.

Also making its world premiere at the festival is the Canadian doc "Toxic Beauty" by Phyllis Ellis, which looks at "the cosmetics industry's ugly secrets."

The other special presentations are either Canadian, international or North American premieres.

Other titles include "Push" by Fredrik Gertten, in which a newly appointed UN specialist from Ottawa travels from Toronto to cities around the world to look at the issue of affordable housing.

"The Corporate Coup D'Etat" by Fred Peabody is a Canadian doc about democracy in the U.S., while "Knock Down the House" by Rachel Lears follows four women during the 2018 U.S. midterms, including rising Democrat star and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

In "Buddy," director Heddy Honigmann looks at the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners.

Director Jacqueline Olive "examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence" in "Always in Season."

And "Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy" by Elizabeth Carroll is about a 96-year-old chef who's been dubbed "the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking."

The Canadian Press

<https://www.kitchenertoday.com/around-ontario/hot-docs-lineup-includes-premieres-of-killing-patient-zero-toxic-beauty-1305934>

## 15 Special Presentations at Hot Docs



Capitol Dome\_The Corporate Coup d'État © White Pine Pictures 2018.

### 15 Special Presentations at Hot Docs

by Staff

(March 5, 2019, Toronto, ON) Hot Docs has announced the titles of 15 documentary features that will screen in this year's Special Presentations program, as part of the 26th annual edition of North America's largest documentary festival. The list includes six Canadian productions or co-productions and two of them were produced by Peter Raymont. Special Presentations features are a high-profile collection of world and international premieres, award winners from the recent international festival circuit and works by master filmmakers or featuring star subjects.

Notable subjects featured as part of the Special Presentations program include Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, newly elected Democratic Congressperson and the youngest woman ever to serve in the United States Congress (*Knock Down the House*); Diana Kennedy, the "Mick Jagger of Mexican cuisine" (*Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy*); and Pulitzer Prize-winning author N. Scott Momaday, one of Native America's most celebrated literary figures (*N. Scott Momaday: Words From a Bear*). Award winners from the recent international festival circuit include *Always in Season*, which won the U.S. Documentary Special Jury Prize for Moral Urgency at Sundance this year, and *Knock Down the House*, which won Sundance's Festival Favorite Award this year.

Following, in alphabetical order are the Special Presentation titles announced today:

#### ADVOCATE

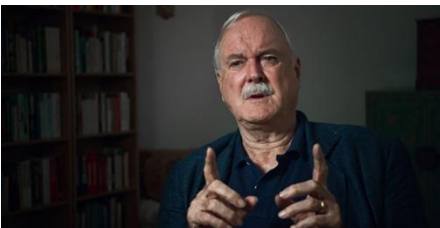
D: Rachel Leah Jones, Philippe Bellaïche | P: Joëlle Bertossa, Paul Cadieux | Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland | 2019 | 105 min | Canadian Premiere

As one of the few Israeli human-rights lawyers willing to defend Palestinians, Lea Tsemel has been defying hostility and vitriol from the public and press for nearly 50 years to fight for clients in a stacked system.

#### ALWAYS IN SEASON

D: Jacqueline Olive | P: Jacqueline Olive, Jessica Devaney | USA | 2019 | 88 min | International Premiere

The unresolved case of a Black teen found hanging from a swing set in North Carolina in 2014 is the lens through which this searing doc examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence.



John Cleese in a still from the documentary *Assholes: A Theory*.

## Northern Stars – March 5, 2019 (2 of 3)

### ASSHOLES: A THEORY

D: [John Walker](#) | P: Ann Bernier, Annette Clarke, John Walker | Canada | 2019 | 81 min | North American Premiere  
Inspired by the New York Times bestselling book, this lively philosophical investigation into the rise of asshole behaviour across the world asks: What does it mean to be an asshole, and more importantly, how do we stop their proliferation?

### BUDDY

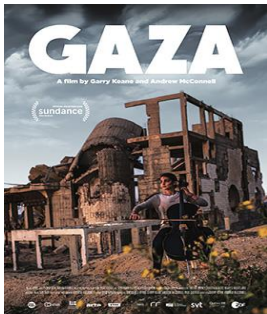
D: Heddy Honigmann | P: John Appel | Netherlands | 2018 | 86 min | Canadian Premiere  
Master documentarian Heddy Honigmann turns her eye for authenticity and genuine interview to the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners. Witness canine humanity and life-altering trust at work in this observational marvel.

### THE CORPORATE COUP D'ETAT

D: Fred Peabody | P: [Peter Raymont](#) | Canada | 2018 | 90 min | Canadian Premiere  
Piercing insights from journalist Chris Hedges and philosopher John Ralston Saul dissect America at a troubling crossroads, exposing Trump's MAGA doctrine as a symptom of a broken democracy where power now lies with corporations, not citizens.

### THE EDGE OF DEMOCRACY

D: Petra Costa | P: Joanna Natasegara | Brazil | 2019 | 112 min | Canadian Premiere  
Featuring unprecedented access to former Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva, the personal and political brilliantly combine in this unflinching exploration of one of the most dramatic and polarizing periods in Brazilian history.



### GAZA

D: Garry Keane, Andrew McConnell | P: Paul Cadieux, Brendan J. Byrne | Canada | 2018 | 90 min | Canadian Premiere  
Fully blockaded and home to almost two million people, the Gaza Strip is portrayed in the news as the world's largest open-air prison—but this rare immersion into everyday Palestinian life reveals the pressures of occupation and the humanity straining to flourish.

### HUMAN NATURE

D: Adam Bolt | P: Sarah Goodwin, Meredith Desalazar, Elliot Kirschner | USA | 2019 | 107 min | Canadian Premiere  
In a brave new world in which science fiction collides with fact and DNA sequences can be edited with ease, this provocative examination forces us to reconsider what it means to be human.

### KILLING PATIENT ZERO

D: Laurie Lynd | P: Corey Russell | Canada | 2019 | 100 min | World Premiere  
Skilfully revealing the homophobia behind the headlines, this doc traces the devastating impact of the 1980s AIDS epidemic and clears the name of the Québécois flight attendant who was infamously known as “patient zero.”

### KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE

D: Rachel Lears | P: Rachel Lears, Robin Blotnick, Sarah Olson | USA | 2019 | 85 min | International Premiere  
This rollercoaster ride follows four progressive women—including Bronx bartender Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—

## Northern Stars – March 5, 2019 (3 of 3)

behind the scenes and in the streets as they grind through long-shot grassroots campaigns for Congress during the 2018 US midterms.

### **N. SCOTT MOMADAY: WORDS FROM A BEAR**

D: Jeffrey Palmer | P: Jeffrey Palmer, Youngsun Palmer | USA | 2018 | 85 mins | International Premiere

The life and career of Pulitzer Prize–winning Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday, one of Native America's most celebrated literary figures, is explored in this spiritual journey through the expansive landscapes of the West and New Mexico.

### **NOTHING FANCY: DIANA KENNEDY**

D: Elizabeth Carroll | P: Elizabeth Carroll, Dan Braun, Gina Abatemarco | USA | 2019 | 82 min | International Premiere

Dubbed “the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking,” a 96-year-old firebrand chef who’s spent her career celebrating the country’s regional cuisines rushes to solidify her hard-earned legacy in the face of her own mortality.

### **PUSH**

D: Fredrik Gertten | P: Margarete Jangård | Sweden | 2019 | 92 min | North American Premiere

As skyrocketing housing prices and stagnant incomes squeeze families out of cities worldwide, a newly appointed UN specialist from Ottawa travels from Toronto to Barcelona to London and beyond, fighting to have affordable housing recognized as a human right.

### **TOXIC BEAUTY**

D: Phyllis Ellis | P: [Peter Raymont](#), Barri Cohen | Canada | 2019 | 90 min | World Premiere

Cancer, diabetes, developmental delays and more—the cosmetics industry’s ugly secrets are exposed through exclusive interviews with scientists, whistleblowers and consumer survivors who raise pressing questions about risks, regulations and the true cost of beauty.

### **THE TRIAL OF RATKO MLADIC**

D: Henry Singer, Rob Miller | P: Henry Singer, Rob Miller, Ida Bruusgaard | UK, Norway | 2018 | 100 min | Canadian Premiere

Accused of horrific war crimes, the “Butcher of Bosnia” finally faces a verdict in the biggest trial since Nuremberg. Embedded with both the prosecution and defense, this courtroom thriller reveals the troublingly nuanced Serbian–Bosnian conflict that still rages on.

These Special Presentations will screen as part of the 2019 festival. Hot Docs is North America’s largest documentary festival, conference and market running from April 25 to May 5, 2019. The full selection of films to screen at Hot Docs 2019, including the opening night film, will be announced on March 19. Ticket packages and passes are [now on sale online](#). Ticket package redemption and single ticket sales for Hot Docs members are available starting March 19. Single ticket sales open to the public on March 26.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/15-special-presentations-at-hot-docs/>

## Killing Patient Zero, Toxic Beauty to world premiere at Hot Docs '19

The projects from directors Laurie Lynd and Phyllis Ellis are among the Special Presentations lineup, while Sundance films *Advocate* and *Gaza* make their Canadian premieres.

By Kelly Townsend

1 day ago



The projects from directors Laurie Lynd and Phyllis Ellis are among the Special Presentations lineup, while Sundance films *Advocate* and *Gaza* make their Canadian premieres.

Read more: <http://playbackonline.ca/2019/03/05/killing-patient-zero-toxic-beauty-to-world-premiere-at-hot-docs-19/#ixzz5hPRDv6Rc>



## Finding Hygge reveals Danes' secret to happiness is a bit boring

By [GARNET FRASER](#) Toronto Star  
Thu., March 7, 2019



### Finding Hygge

A documentary exploring Denmark's secret to happiness.

*Documentary. Directed by Rocky Walls. Starts Friday at Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema. 93 minutes. **STC***

It's a state of mind — or, often, a social state. “Cosiness” is the closest word we have to it in English, but that's not quite right, we're told. Yours might arise when catching up with old friends, or when gardening alone. *Finding Hygge* explores a [trendy Danish idea](#) and finds that it is ... nice.

“It's something we talk about constantly,” says Meik Wiking, one of the documentary's principal talking heads, when explaining hygge. The Danes have been told repeatedly that they are the world's happiest people and, on the evidence of this film, directed by American Rocky Walls, they have decided that the self-conscious pursuit of happiness is a national specialty.

We spend a lot of time at first with Garrey Dawson, a British expat restaurateur who treasures the work-life balance he has found at a Danish village inn, and it's through his journey that we come to understand this distinct national notion — not joy, exactly, but a kind of contentment, the sort achieved through low-key social gatherings with family and friends and satisfying personal rituals.

A happy life makes for a dull biography, they say, and so it often is here. Denmark seems full of piercingly-blue-eyed people who have thought a lot about happiness, none of them very combustible; I don't know the Danish word for “excitement” but hygge, as described, seems to be its opposite. (I wish I could tell you that *Finding Hygge*'s side trip to exotic Manitoba solves the problem.)

None of that detracts from the esthetic appeal of the life vision set out here. A hygge-filled life in Denmark comes off as a fine aspiration, thanks to the appealing cinematography by Joe Frank — tasteful, minimally decorated interiors suggesting the most welcoming of upper-middle-class retailers; artfully composed establishing shots full of sturdy wooden arches and colourful flowers; and long aerial shots of verdant nature or laughing beachgoers dashing into the sea.

It does look easy for them. Life's struggles seem to have hit the cutting-room floor. No one in the film is unsuccessful (or ugly) or has a genuine problem that might keep them from hygge; the line between satisfaction and complacency seems to disappear. The young Manitoban's mother urges her to decompress after “her stressful day” — but what does she do for a living? We never see anyone work, except making nice meals in tidy kitchens. Does anyone ever argue at hygge gatherings? We see people talking amiably in groups but never hear what is actually talked about.

The movie — returning to the Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema after two screenings in January — isn't interested in elaborating on what in life hygge as a value is meant to push against, outside of working too hard, U.K./U.S.-style. We meet a journalist who used to crusade for justice and sustainability and get into arguments online but then something snapped and now she just wants to garden with her dog and write "joyful nice pieces working with nice people." The world outside might still be getting worse, but hers has gotten better.



Journalist Signe Wenneberg relaxes in Finding Hygge, a documentary at Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema. (VIA HOT DOCS TED ROGERS CINEMA)

The film does, to its credit, present people who argue that hygge itself has a dark side — its cosiness that makes it hard for new arrivals to penetrate old social circles — and, after Wiking argues that you don't need particular accessories to achieve hygge, we meet a half-Danish couple in Colorado whose store is devoted to selling you them.

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2019/03/07/finding-hygge-reveals-danes-secret-to-happiness-is-a-bit-boring.html>

## Women in Hollywood – March 13, 2019 (1 of 3)



### FESTIVALS

## Hot Docs Adds “One Child Nation,” “I Love You, Now Die,” & More to Special Presentations Lineup

### "One Child Nation"

BY: Laura Berger March 13, 2019

Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival has added more titles to its Special Presentations lineup, described as “a high-profile collection of world and international premieres, award winners from the recent international festival circuit, and works by master filmmakers or featuring star subjects.” **As previously announced**, Rachel Lears’ “Knock Down the House,” featuring rising political star Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Jacqueline Olive’s “Always in Season,” a history of lynching in the United States, are among the titles screening in this program.

Newly added films include “One Child Nation,” Nanfu Wang and Jialing Zhang’s exploration of the untold history of China’s controversial one-child policy and its impact on generations of families, and Erin Lee Carr’s “I Love You, Now Die: The Commonwealth vs. Michelle Carter,” a look behind the headline-making case of Michelle Carter, who famously coerced her boyfriend to commit suicide via text.

The Special Presentations slate now includes 31 features, 14 of which are directed or co-directed by women, amounting to 45 percent of the lineup.

Hot Docs runs from April 25-May 5 in Toronto. All of the women-directed and co-directed titles in the Special Presentations program can be found below. List adapted from Hot Docs.

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### ADVOCATE

D: Rachel Leah Jones, Philippe Bellaïche | P: Joëlle Bertossa, Paul Cadieux | Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland | 2019 | 105 min | Canadian Premiere  
As one of the few Israeli human-rights lawyers willing to defend Palestinians, Lea Tsemel has been defying hostility and vitriol from the public and press for nearly 50 years to fight for clients in a stacked system.

## **Women in Hollywood – March 13, 2019 (2 of 3)**

### **ALWAYS IN SEASON**

D: Jacqueline Olive | P: Jacqueline Olive, Jessica Devaney | USA | 2019 | 88 min | International Premiere

The unresolved case of a Black teen found hanging from a swing set in North Carolina in 2014 is the lens through which this searing doc examines the lingering trauma of more than a century of lynching and continued racial violence.

### **AMERICAN FACTORY**

D: Steven Bognar, Julia Reichert | P: Steven Bognar, Julia Reichert, Jeff Reichert, Julie Parker Benello | USA | 2019 | 115 min | International Premiere

When an abandoned General Motors factory in Ohio is reopened by a Chinese billionaire, the local blue-collar employees clash with modern Chinese innovations in this Sundance award-winner co-directed by this year's Outstanding Achievement Award recipient Julia Reichert.

### **BUDDY**

D: Heddy Honigmann | P: John Appel | Netherlands | 2018 | 86 min | Canadian Premiere

Master documentarian Heddy Honigmann turns her eye for authenticity and genuine interview to the complex relationships between service dogs and their owners. Witness canine humanity and life-altering trust at work in this observational marvel.

### **THE EDGE OF DEMOCRACY**

D: Petra Costa | P: Joanna Natasegara | Brazil | 2019 | 112 min | Canadian Premiere

Featuring unprecedented access to former Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva, the personal and political brilliantly combine in this unflinching exploration of one of the most dramatic and polarizing periods in Brazilian history.

### **FRAMING JOHN DELOREAN**

D: Don Argott, Sheena M. Joyce | P: Tamir Ardon, Nick Spicer, Don Argott, Sheena M. Joyce | USA | 2019 | 109 min | International Premiere

Car design guru, genius entrepreneur or brilliant criminal—who was the real John DeLorean? Narrative recreations starring Alec Baldwin punctuate revealing interviews with the enigmatic automaker's inner circle to elegantly parse the man from the scandalous myth.

### **GORDON LIGHTFOOT: IF YOU COULD READ MY MIND**

D: Joan Tosoni, Martha Kehoe | P: Joan Tosoni, Martha Kehoe | Canada | 2018 | 90 min | World Premiere

From a rural Ontario childhood to Greenwich Village of the '60s, stadium tours of the '70s and beyond, vivid archival footage helps chart the career of the legendary songwriter as he reveals the inspiration behind his lyrics and longevity.

### **I LOVE YOU, NOW DIE: THE COMMONWEALTH VS. MICHELLE CARTER**

D: Erin Lee Carr | P: Andrew Rossi | USA | 2019 | 140 min | International Premiere

This two-part HBO docu-series dives past the headlines and into the ethical morass of the case of Michelle Carter, who faces the prospect of jail time after coercing her boyfriend into suicide via text, blowing open troubling questions of how we communicate in the digital age.

## Women in Hollywood – March 13, 2019 (3 of 3)

### KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE

D: Rachel Lears | P: Rachel Lears, Robin Blotnick, Sarah Olson | USA | 2019 | 85 min | International Premiere

This rollercoaster ride follows four progressive women—including Bronx bartender Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—behind the scenes and in the streets as they grind through long-shot grassroots campaigns for Congress during the 2018 US midterms.

### NOTHING FANCY: DIANA KENNEDY

D: Elizabeth Carroll | P: Elizabeth Carroll, Dan Braun, Gina Abatemarco | USA | 2019 | 82 min | International Premiere

Dubbed “the Mick Jagger of Mexican cooking,” a 96-year-old firebrand chef who’s spent her career celebrating the country’s regional cuisines rushes to solidify her hard-earned legacy in the face of her own mortality.

### ONE CHILD NATION

D: Nanfu Wang, Jialing Zhang | P: Nanfu Wang, Jialing Zhang, Julie Goldman, Christoph Jörg, Christopher Clements, Carolyn Hepburn | USA | 2019 | 89 min | Canadian Premiere

Through vérité footage and raw interviews, this fearless, Sundance Award–winning exposé unmask the wrenching costs to millions of families of China’s infamous 1979 “one-child policy,” introduced to curb population growth and boost sweeping economic development.

### PICTURE CHARACTER

D: Ian Cheney, Martha Shane | P: Jennifer Lee, Ian Cheney, Martha Shane | USA | 2019 | 84 min | International Premiere

Explore the evolution of emojis, the colourful and creative pictorial language that surged from a simple set of icons to a swiftly evolving linguistic phenomenon that is reshaping how we communicate with one another.

### TOXIC BEAUTY

D: Phyllis Ellis | P: Peter Raymont, Barri Cohen | Canada | 2019 | 90 min | World Premiere

Cancer, diabetes, developmental delays and more—the cosmetics industry’s ugly secrets are exposed through exclusive interviews with scientists, whistleblowers and consumer survivors who raise pressing questions about risks, regulations and the true cost of beauty.

### WILLIE

D: Laurence Mathieu-Leger | P: Laurence Mathieu-Leger, Bryant McBride | USA, Canada | 2018 | 89 min | World Premiere

In the midst of the American civil rights movement, Willie O’Ree became the first Black player to skate in the NHL. An inspiration to many, the remarkable story of this recent Hall of Fame inductee’s courage and resilience transcends the sport.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-adds-one-child-nation-i-love-you-now-die-more-to-special-presentations-lineup/>



## Women in Hollywood – March 19, 2019

### **Hot Docs Announces Full Lineup, Tasha Hubbard's "nîpawistamâsowin" to Open the Fest Hubbard's "nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up" will open the fest: Hot Docs**

BY: Rachel Montpelier\_March 19, 2019

Hot Docs has unveiled the full lineup for its 2019 edition and it's set to be an exciting one for women filmmakers. According to a press release, the festival will present 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects from 56 countries — and 54 percent of the project directors are women.

The fest will open with "nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up," Tasha Hubbard's examination of racism in the Canadian legal system. "nîpawistamâsowin" is part of Hot Docs' competitive Canadian Spectrum program, which spotlights works from Canadian filmmakers.

Another woman-helmed Canadian Spectrum title is Ingrid Veninger's "The World of Nothing," a portrait of two brothers who migrate from Cuba to Spain in order to become internet stars.

Among the films screening as part of the competitive International Spectrum program are Nicole Schafer's "Buddha in Africa" and Pailin Wedel's "Hope Frozen." The former is the story of a Malawian boy growing up in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage and his struggle to reconcile his two cultures. The latter is a portrait of a bereaved Bangkok family and their controversial choice to cryopreserve a deceased loved one.

Hot Docs will host the Persister program this year, a showcase of women-directed films "about women speaking up and being heard." Featured titles include Claudia Sparrow's "Maxima," tracing the conflict between an Indigenous Peruvian woman and a multi-billion-dollar mining corporation, and Pachi Bustos' "Haydee and the Flying Fish," centering on a Pinochet regime survivor as she waits for a possibly game-changing court verdict to come in.

Julia Ivanova's work will be honored during Hot Docs' Focus On program. The film series will screen docs Ivanova made throughout her career, such as "Family Portrait in Black and White," "Limit Is the Sky," and "Love Translated." The program will also feature the world premiere of her latest project, "My Dads, My Moms and Me," which sees the filmmaker returning to catch up with the four gay men raising children she chronicled in 2007's "Fatherhood Dreams."

As previously announced, Julia Reichert will receive [Hot Docs' Outstanding Achievement Award](#), and [the fest's Special Presentations slate](#) includes Phyllis Ellis' "Toxic Beauty" and Rachel Lears' "Knock Down the House."

Hot Docs will be held April 25-May 5 in Toronto. Head over to [the fest's website](#) for more information and to purchase passes.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-announces-full-lineup-tasha-hubbards-nipawistamasowin-to-open-the-fest/>



## Toronto's Hot Docs film festival doubles down on gender parity and diversity with 2019 lineup

**BARRY HERTZ**

PUBLISHED MARCH 19, 2019UPDATED MARCH 19, 2019



Tasha Hubbard's 98-minute *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* documents Colten Boushie's grieving family's pursuit of justice.

### NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

If the twin forces of box-office receipts and critical acclaim add up to anything, we are currently living in the golden age of the documentary. Last year, four documentary films (RBG, *Won't You Be My Neighbor*, *Three Identical Strangers* and the Oscar-winning *Free Solo*) surpassed the US\$10-million mark at the North American box office, marking an unprecedented hot streak. And 2019 is already shaping up to be a year whose cultural landscape is, at least partially, defined by docs – witness the seismic conversations being stirred by HBO's *Leaving Neverland* and Netflix and Hulu's duelling *Fyre Festival* exposés.

Into this reality-crazed landscape enters Toronto's Hot Docs, which on Tuesday morning revealed the full slate for the 26th edition of its film festival. Given the organization's lauded history – this is the fest that made household, or at least in-the-know-household names out of Nick Broomfield, Barbara Kopple, D.A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus – there is little surprise that the 2019 edition will feature big names and bigger ideas.

There will be Ai Weiwei's *The Rest*, an on-the-ground look at Europe's refugee crisis; Martha Kehoe and Joan Tosoni's *If You Could Read My Mind*, the first feature-length documentary about Gordon Lightfoot; Don Argott and Sheena M. Joyce's *Framing John DeLorean*, a hybrid docu-narrative featuring Alec Baldwin as the would-be automobile titan; and *Killing Patient Zero*, Laurie Lynd's demystification of the Quebecois flight attendant once branded the epicentre of the 1980s AIDS epidemic.



Ai Weiwei's *The Rest* follows the daily lives of refugees in Europe as they hang in limbo between the humanitarian aid system and intensifying nationalism.

COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

Yet, the real story of Hot Docs 2019 is not what is being screened but who is responsible for these doc-obsessed times. Last year, Hot Docs celebrated 25 years by reaching, for the first time in its history, exact gender parity in its programming. This year's lineup does that milestone one better, with 54 per cent of the 2019 slate arriving courtesy of female filmmakers. The festival's embrace of diversity will start right from the top, too, thanks to the opening night selection of Tasha Hubbard's doc about the Colten Boushie case *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, which also marks the first film by an Indigenous director to kick off the festival.

Diversity and representation has long been a priority for Hot Docs – 2017's festival hit 48 per cent gender parity – and its impact can already be felt across the documentary community.

"It's something that we have to be really conscious of, so that more stories and voices can be heard. Not just gender parity, but more diverse representation, too," says veteran Toronto filmmaker Ingrid Veninger, who will be bringing her first documentary, *The World or Nothing*, to this year's festival. "If they made it a priority once, they need to continue making it a priority."

According to the American advocacy group Women in Hollywood, the largest percentage of female directors, relative to men, worked on documentary films in 2018 (33 per cent, compared to 11 per cent for horror movies). The reasons are depressingly obvious: there are fewer male gatekeepers in the doc industry, the financial barrier to entry is lower, the stakeholders are fewer in number. So while Hot Docs' efforts are noticed, there is still far more work to be done and more difficult conversations to be had.

"It's a great reflection of the work that women have been doing, and I'm glad that people are taking notice," says Martha Keheo, co-director of *If You Could Read My Mind*. "Women are indeed well suited to making documentaries. But they're well suited to doing anything."



Don Argott and Sheena M. Joyce's Framing John DeLorean investigates the story of the enigmatic automaker. COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

Hot Docs' representation-forward priorities are visible throughout this year's selections and perhaps no more so than in the new Persister program, which exclusively features female-directed films about women "speaking up and being heard." Titles include the world premiere of *Maxima*, focusing on a battle between Indigenous Peruvian women and a mining giant; *Haydee and the Flying Fish*, which details the court battle of a Chilean woman who was tortured under the Pinochet regime; and *A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem*, an investigation into the league's labour violations.

"Like the lantern shown on the festival artwork this year, the filmmakers featured at Hot Docs light the way in showing us outstanding stories and outspoken subjects of immense power, relevance and importance," Shane Smith, Hot Docs' director of programming, said in a statement. "The work of documentary filmmakers in their unrelenting pursuit of the truth is as necessary as ever, and we're honoured to be sharing their vital, vibrant and creative films with Toronto audiences."

As with any genre's golden era, though, it may be a challenge to ensure nothing gets left behind or overshadowed. While last year's Hot Docs featured a record-high 246 films (including full-length, medium-length and shorts), this year's slight claw-back to 234 films (plus 18 "interdisciplinary projects") still represents a seemingly insurmountable amount of content to consume, even once the festival dust clears.

"In some ways, we're inundated with films, and it's challenging to stand out," says Veninger. "But in other ways, we're empowered as independent filmmakers with today's access to different online platforms. I'm not discouraged by the volume at all; in fact, I find it heartening that there are more people making films and by whatever means necessary."

The [2019 Hot Docs film festival](https://www.hotdocs.ca/) runs April 25 through May 5 in Toronto.(hotdocs.ca)

## Documentary on Colten Boushie case to open Toronto's Hot Docs festival

Film by Tasha Hubbard 1st by an Indigenous filmmaker to open festival

The Canadian Press · Posted: Mar 19, 2019 12:37 PM ET | Last Updated: March 19



Colten Boushie, left, was fatally shot in August 2016. Gerald Stanley, right, was acquitted of second-degree murder in the death of Boushie. (Facebook/Liam Richards/Canadian Press)

A film examining the case of a young Cree man who was killed on a farm in rural Saskatchewan will open this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto.

Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up* will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5.

A news release says the documentary "looks at inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system" after the case of Colten Boushie.

The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation died from a gunshot to the back of his head after entering a rural farm property with his friends near Biggar, Sask., in August 2016.

Last year a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally when he was trying to scare off young people who drove onto his property.

The verdict gained international attention and sparked rallies across the country.

Hubbard's film "weaves a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on

## CBC – March 19, 2019 (2 of 3)

their homelands," the National Film Board of Canada, which co-produced the doc, said in a statement. The film was also produced in association with CBC Docs.



Tasha Hubbard's *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up* will make its world premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival. It's the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open the annual festival. (Hot Docs)

The NFB said it's the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open Hot Docs, which revealed its full lineup on Tuesday.

In Cree, "*nipawistamasowin*" translates to "we (small group) will stand up for others (big group)," a spokeswoman said.

### **Ai Weiwei, Gordon Lightfoot docs**

Other Canadian films making their world premiere at this year's festival include Phillip Pike's *Our Dance of Revolution*, about Toronto's black LGBTQ community. *Prey* by Matt Gallagher is about a sexual-abuse survivor pursuing justice in a case against the Catholic church in Toronto.

Also having its world premiere is *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies* by Oscar-nominated Toronto filmmaker Larry Weinstein, which looks at the history of the art of persuasion.

The festival's Focus On program will feature Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova and her retrospective titles as well as the world premiere of her new film *My Dads, My Moms and Me*.

**Filmmakers featured at Hot Docs light the way in showing us outstanding stories and outspoken subjects of immense power, relevance and importance.** - *Shane Smith, Hot Docs*



## CBC – March 19, 2019 (3 of 3)

A total of 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects are in the festival.

Previously announced docs in the lineup include *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*. The Canadian singer-songwriter will also attend the festival.

Other guests set to attend include artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei (*The Rest*); biochemist Jennifer Doudna (*Human Nature*); New Brunswick-born Willie O'Ree, who was the first black player to skate in the NHL (*Willie*); and whistleblower Deane Berg along with Dr. Daniel Cramer and Dr. Ami Zota (*Toxic Beauty*).



Willie O'Ree, the first black player to skate in the NHL, is seen with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Willie, a documentary about O'Ree, is among the films set for the latest edition of Hot Docs. (Hot Docs) The festival will also have virtual reality and interactive experiences, including the live performance of *Supreme Law*, a satirical re-telling of the origins of Canada's Constitution with comedian Jus Reign.

Organizers say the films hail from 56 countries, with 54 per cent of the directors being women. That's up from last year, when 50 per cent of the films were made by female directors.

"Like the lantern shown on the festival artwork this year, the filmmakers featured at Hot Docs light the way in showing us outstanding stories and outspoken subjects of immense power, relevance and importance," Shane Smith, director of programming for Hot Docs, said in a statement.

"The work of documentary filmmakers in their unrelenting pursuit of the truth is as necessary as ever, and we're honoured to be sharing their vital, vibrant and creative films with Toronto audiences."

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/colten-boushie-documentary-hot-docs-1.5062605>



## Colten Boushie killing inspires Hot Docs opening-night film

By [Garnet Fraser](#) Toronto Star  
Tues., March 19, 2019

The opening-night film of this year's Hot Docs film fest will be *Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, a study of the [Colten Boushie killing](#) and its context in the Canadian west and Canadian history, the documentary festival announced Tuesday.

Boushie, a 22-year-old Indigenous man, was shot dead by farmer Gerald Stanley after an incursion onto Stanley's property in 2016; the farmer was later controversially acquitted of second-degree murder. Directed by Tasha Hubbard, who previously won acclaim for her film *Two Worlds Colliding*, about the treatment of Indigenous man Darrell Night at the hands of Saskatoon police conducting one of their now-infamous "starlight tours," *Nipawistamasowin* is touted as being "a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands."



Popular Canadian YouTuber Jasmeet Singh Raina, better known as JusReign, as seen in Katerina Civek's creation Supreme Law, coming to Hot Docs. ([HOTDOCS.CA](#))



A moment from *Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, a new documentary about the Colten Boushie killing. ([BLOG.NFB.CA](#))



Gaetan Dugas, the Quebec flight attendant long believed to be AIDS' "Patient Zero" in North America, is seen in a still photo in the documentary *Killing Patient Zero*. (HOTDOCS.CA)

The festival, running April 25 to May 5, also announced the following films:

- Baljit Sangra's *Because We Are Girls*, an Indo-Canadian family in small-town B.C. must come to terms with the fact that three sisters were sexually abused by the same relative;

<bullet> *Assholes: A Theory*, the return of documentary veteran John Walker, makes its North American premiere, after taking inspiration from Aaron James' bestseller of the same name;

- Katerina Cizek's interactive doc *Supreme Law*, which uses YouTube personalities to guide audiences on a fresh journey inside the shaping of the Canadian Constitution;
- *Human Nature*, about the revolutionary effects of CRISPR, the system for analyzing and editing DNA;
- *Inside Lehman Brothers*, a revisiting of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis that pays special attention to female mortgage brokers and accountants whose whistle-blowing fell on deaf ears;
- *Massacre River*, a world premiere which promises to reveal how thousands of Dominicans of Haitian background were left stateless after their citizenship was ruled invalid;
- and the world premiere of *Killing Patient Zero*, which rebuts the notion that Quebec flight attendant Gaetan Dugas was the initial source of AIDS in North America, as he was long suspected to be.

## Toronto Star – March 19, 2019 (3 of 3)

All told the fest says it's offering 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects, and Hot Docs adds that 54 per cent of the directors in this year's program are women. The full schedule is now online at [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

Among the previously announced Hot Docs films are movies about singers Gordon Lightfoot and Michael Hutchence, jazz legend Miles Davis, NHL trailblazer Willie O'Ree and famed Swedish author Stieg Larsson.

There's also *American Factory*, about the culture clash after an abandoned auto factory in Ohio is reopened by a Chinese billionaire; *Cold Case Hammarskjöld*, which explores the 1961 plane crash that took the life of the United Nations secretary-general; *Quiet Storm: The Ron Artest Story*, about the former NBA player turned mental-health advocate now known as Metta World Peace; *Framing John DeLorean*, about the entrepreneur and would-be '80s automaker; *XY Chelsea*, about [recently re-jailed](#) U.S. military-secret leaker Chelsea Manning; *Ask Dr. Ruth*, about the famous sex therapist/media personality Dr. Ruth Westheimer; and *One Child Nation*, which details the price of China's infamous 1979 "one-child policy," introduced to curb population growth; *The Rest*, directed by Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei, follows up his 2017 doc *Human Flow* by revealing the daily lives in limbo of refugees in Europe (and who will be interviewed as part of the fest on April 27); *I Love You, Now Die: The Commonwealth Vs. Michelle Carter*, a two-part HBO docuseries examining the case of Carter, who was convicted of manslaughter after sending her boyfriend [a barrage of text messages](#) telling him to kill himself, which he did; and *Our Godfather*, in which the family of a high-ranking Sicilian mob boss comes out of 30 years of hiding to reveal how he helped convict over 400 Mafiosi.

## Documentary on Colten Boushie story to open Toronto's Hot Docs festival

Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5.

### THE CANADIAN PRESS

Updated: March 19, 2019

TORONTO — A film examining the story of Colten Boushie, a young Indigenous man who was killed on a farm in rural Saskatchewan, will open this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto.

Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5.



*Debbie Baptiste, mother of Colten Boushie, holds a photo of her son during a press conference on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on February 14, 2018. A film examining the case of a young Indigenous man who was killed on a farm in rural Saskatchewan will open this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto. Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5. A news release says the documentary "looks at inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system" after the case of Colten Boushie.* **JUSTIN TANG / THE CANADIAN PRESS**

According to a news release, the documentary "looks at inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system" after the case of Colten Boushie. The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation died from a gunshot to the back of his head after entering a rural farm property with his friends near Biggar in August 2016.

Last year a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally when he was trying to scare off young people who drove onto his property. The verdict gained international attention and sparked rallies across the country.

Hubbard's film "weaves a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands," the National Film Board of Canada, which co-produced the doc, said in a statement.

The NFB said it's the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open Hot Docs, which revealed its full lineup on Tuesday. In Cree, "nipawistamasowin" translates to "we (small group) will stand up for others (big group)," a spokeswoman said.

Other Canadian films making their world premiere at this year's festival include Phillip Pike's "Our Dance of Revolution," about Toronto's black LGBTQ community.

"Prey" by Matt Gallagher is about a sexual-abuse survivor pursuing justice in a case against the Catholic church in Toronto.

Also having its world premiere is "Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies" by Oscar-nominated Toronto filmmaker Larry Weinstein, which looks at the history of the art of persuasion.

The festival's Focus On program will feature Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova and her retrospective titles as well as the world premiere of her new film "My Dads, My Moms and Me."

A total of 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects are in the festival.

Previously announced docs in the lineup include "Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind." The Canadian singer-songwriter will also attend the festival.

Other guests set to attend include artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei ("The Rest"); biochemist Jennifer Doudna ("Human Nature"); New Brunswick-born Willie O'Ree, who was the first black player to skate in the NHL ("Willie"); and whistleblower Deane Berg along with Dr. Daniel Cramer and Dr. Ami Zota ("Toxic Beauty").

The festival will also have virtual reality and interactive experiences, including the live performance of "Supreme Law," a satirical re-telling of the origins of Canada's Constitution with comedian Jus Reign.

Organizers say the films hail from 56 countries, with 54 per cent of the directors being women. That's up from last year, when 50 per cent of the films were made by female directors.

"Like the lantern shown on the festival artwork this year, the filmmakers featured at Hot Docs light the way in showing us outstanding stories and outspoken subjects of immense power, relevance and importance," Shane Smith, director of programming for Hot Docs, said in a statement.

"The work of documentary filmmakers in their unrelenting pursuit of the truth is as necessary as ever, and we're honoured to be sharing their vital, vibrant and creative films with Toronto audiences."



**Gerald Stanley** LIAM RICHARDS / THE CANADIAN PRESS

<https://thestarphenix.com/news/local-news/documentary-on-colten-boushie-story-to-open-torontos-hot-docs-festival>

## Big ideas remain Hot Docs' bread and butter as festival announces 2019 line-up

It will include such hot-button topics as climate change, the global refugee crisis, human genetic engineering, racism – and Gordon Lightfoot



Singer Gordon Lightfoot in *If You Could Read My Mind*. *THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO-Geoff George*

[CHRIS KNIGHT](#)

March 19, 2019 2:15 PM EDT

Hot Docs, the Canadian International Documentary Festival, has announced the line-up for this year's event, which will include such hot-button topics as climate change, the global refugee crisis, human genetic engineering, racism – and Gordon Lightfoot.

That's just to say that not every offering among the 234 films – 56 per cent of them directed by women – will be heavy. The octogenarian singer-songwriter is the focus of *If You Could Read My Mind* from directors Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe, which looks back over his decades-long career. There are also films about sex therapist Ruth Westheimer (*Ask Dr. Ruth*), service dogs (*Buddy*) and Miles Davis (*Birth of the Cool*).

But big ideas are the festival's bread and butter, and this year is no exception. *The Rest*, from Chinese activist and director Ai Weiwei, looks at the plight of refugees in Europe. *Human Nature*, from director Adam Bolt, discusses CRISPR gene editing. *Toxic Beauty*, directed by Phyllis Ellis, examines a lawsuit over the health risks of cosmetics. And *Willie*, from director Laurence Mathieu-Leger, tells the story of Willie O'Ree, who broke the colour barrier in the NHL in 1958. Along with *If You Could Read My Mind*, they'll be screened with directors and subjects in attendance.

The festival will open with *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, Tasha Hubbard's examination of the aftermath of the death of a young First Nations man in Saskatchewan, and the killer's subsequent acquittal. The Canadian Spectrum sidebar will also include such titles as *The Hottest August* (climate change and its effects on New York City), *Prey* (an Ontario lawsuit against the Catholic Church) and *Your Last Walk in the Mosque*, a painfully timely look back at the Quebec City shootings of 2017.

Along the festival's special presentations: *American Factory*, about a Chinese billionaire who re-opens a shuttered GM plant in Ohio; *Assholes: A Theory*, which examines the global rise in bad behaviour; *Killing Patient Zero*, a look back at the start of the AIDS epidemic; and *Framing John DeLorean*, about the famed car designer. And Alexandre O. Phillippe celebrates the 40th anniversary of Ridley Scott's sci-fi classic with *Memory: The Origins of Alien*.

The Hot Docs festival runs from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto. More information and tickets at [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

<https://nationalpost.com/entertainment/movies/big-ideas-remain-hot-docs-bread-and-butter-as-festival-announces-2019-line-up>



## Colten Boushie documentary to open Toronto's Hot Docs festival

By Victoria Ahearn The Canadian Press

### **WATCH ABOVE: Colten Boushie's family holds vigil one year after verdict.**

A film examining the case of a young Indigenous man who was killed on a farm in rural Saskatchewan will open this year's [Hot Docs](#) festival in Toronto.

Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up* will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5.

A news release says the documentary "looks at inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system" after the case of [Colten Boushie](#).

The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation died from a gunshot to the back of his head after entering a rural farm property with his friends near Biggar, Sask., in August 2016.

Last year a jury acquitted farmer [Gerald Stanley](#) of second-degree murder after he [testified his gun went off accidentally](#) when he was trying to scare off young people who drove onto his property.

The verdict gained international attention and sparked rallies across the country.

Hubbard's film "weaves a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands," the National Film Board of Canada, which co-produced the doc, said in a statement.

The NFB said it's the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open Hot Docs, which revealed its full lineup on Tuesday.

# More Than Half of Films at Hot Docs Film Festival Are Directed by Women

By [LEO BARRACLOUGH](#)

Senior International Correspondent [@LeoBarraclough](#)

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CREDIT: COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

More than half of the films playing at [Hot Docs](#), North America's largest documentary festival, are directed by women, the Canadian event said Tuesday. The festival's 26th edition, which runs April 25-May 5, will screen 234 films, with 54% of the directors being women.

In the competitive International Spectrum program, notable films receiving their world premieres include Nicole Schafer's "Buddha in Africa," about a Malawian boy raised in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage, who's torn between his heritage and upbringing; Pailin Wedel's "Hope Frozen," which profiles a grief-stricken Bangkok family and their unorthodox decision to cryopreserve their deceased daughter; Marcela Arteaga's "The Guardian of Memory," a film that reveals the desperate stories of Mexicans fleeing the violence of their country toward an unfriendly U.S. border; and Jolanta Dylewska and Andrzej Wajda's "Marek Edelman... and There Was Love in the Ghetto," an artful recreation of the Holocaust memoir of the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The Special Presentations program will screen the world premieres of Laurie Lynd's "Killing Patient Zero," which looks at the devastating impact of the 1980s AIDS epidemic and clears the name of the Québécois flight attendant known as "Patient Zero," and Mark Franchetti and Andrew Meier's "Our Godfather," about the family of a high-ranking Sicilian mob boss that came out of hiding to reveal how he helped convict over 400 Mafioso.



CREDIT: "OUR GODFATHER," COURTESY OF [HOT DOCS](#)

The program will also screen the international premiere of "American Factory," a new film by this year's Outstanding Achievement Award recipient Julia Reichert, with co-director Steven Bognar, about an abandoned General Motors factory in Ohio that's reopened by a Chinese billionaire.

## Variety (Arab Times Online) – March 19, 2019 (2 of 2)

Other pics making their international premieres are Rachel Lears' "Knock Down the House," which follows four progressive female politicians, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, as they campaign for Congress during the 2018 U.S. midterms; and a tribute to the life and career of Michael Hutchence, lead singer of rock band INXS, who died 1997, in Richard Lowenstein's "Mystify: Michael Hutchence."

In the World Showcase program, notable films include the world premiere of "Dear Brother," about a man who tries to keep his comatose brother alive through a one-sided dialogue of music, videos and touch; "Midnight Traveler," which captures an Afghan filmmaker's quest to seek asylum for his family after the Taliban puts a bounty on his head; the world premiere of "Massacre River," which details how thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent were left stateless after their citizenship is ruled invalid; the world premiere of "When We Walk," in which the filmmaker is confronted with the inequity of the U.S. Medicaid system as he battles multiple sclerosis; "Inside Lehman Brothers," a detailed account of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis, highlighting the female mortgage brokers and accountants whose whistleblowing fell on deaf ears; and the international premiere of "Last Breath," about a rescue mission to save a diver stranded 100 meters underwater with only five minutes of oxygen.



CREDIT: "MAXIMA," COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

The Persister program, which features female-directed films about women speaking up and being heard, includes the world premieres of "Maxima," about a fearless Indigenous woman in Peru who refuses to cower to a multi-billion-dollar mining corporation, "Because We Are Girls," the story of Indo-Canadian sisters from small-town British Columbia who, haunted by a childhood secret, finally face their abuser in court, and "Haydee and the Flying Fish," where a Chilean woman who was tortured under Pinochet's regime 40 years ago awaits a potentially historic court verdict; as well as the international premiere of "A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem," in which former cheerleaders alleging sexism and labor violations face off with the NFL corporation.

The Changing Face of Europe program includes the international premieres of "To Share or Not to Share," about a squash coach who abandons his successful career in London to launch a barter-based community in Estonia, and "The Reformist – A Female Imam," in which a strong-willed Muslim woman opens one of Europe's first mosques run by female imams in Denmark; as well as "Easy Lessons," the story of a Somali child bride who flees to Hungary to build a new life; "Scheme Birds," in which a scrappy soon-to-be mother struggles to find peace and a future in a Scottish steel town riddled with gang violence; and "#Female Pleasure," a rousing feminist film in which five women from around the world risk their lives to question the patriarchal barriers oppressing female sexual pleasure.

"The work of documentary filmmakers in their unrelenting pursuit of the truth is as necessary as ever, and we're honored to be sharing their vital, vibrant and creative films with Toronto audiences," Shane Smith, director of programming for Hot Docs, said.

## Hot Docs Festival Lineup Highlights Female Directors

12:16 PM PDT 3/19/2019 by Etan Vlessing



Courtesy of Hot Docs Media

'We Will Stand Up'

**Women will comprise 54 percent of directors at the Canadian fest, including Tasha Hubbard, who helmed the opening night film, 'We Will Stand Up.'**

Female filmmakers will represent the majority at the Hot Docs Canadian Documentary Festival, which finalized and unveiled its 2019 lineup on Tuesday.

Women will comprise 54 percent of the directors who will screen their work at the 26th edition, including Tasha Hubbard with her opening night film, a world premiere for *Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*. The documentary captures a family's grief and questioning of the Canadian legal system after the 2017 acquittal of Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley for the fatal shooting death of a young Cree man, Colten Boushie.

And among the 234 films and another 18 DocX virtual reality or interactive installations from 56 countries to screen at Hot Docs this year, 161 titles, or 64 percent, will be directed by at least one female director. This year's dominance by female helmers follows an ambitious drive by the Canadian film industry and its public funding agencies to achieve gender parity by 2020.

Hot Docs is also launching the Persister sidebar of female-directed films, which will include world premieres for Claudia Sparrow's *Maxima* and Baljit Sangra's *Because We Are Girls*, and an international premiere for Yu Gu's *A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem*, which pits former cheerleaders alleging sexism and labor violations against the NFL.

Hot Docs, which is set to run April 25-May 5 in Toronto, has also set world premieres for Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, which focuses on sex abuse in the Catholic Church; Phillip Pike's *Our Dance of Revolution*; and Nicole Schafer's *Buddha in Africa*.

The Canadian festival earlier unveiled a number of high-profile titles for its upcoming edition, including Rachel Lears' *Knock Down the House*, the [Sundance Audience Award winner](#) about four progressive women running for the U.S. Congress in 2018; and Jacqueline Olive's lynching doc *Always in Season*, which nabbed a special jury award for moral urgency at Sundance.

Other titles already announced for Hot Docs: Petra Costa's *The Edge of Democracy*; Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell's *Gaza*; Rachel Leah Jones and Philippe Bellaïche's *Advocate*; Heddy Honigmann's *Buddy*; Adam Bolt's *Human Nature*; Laurie Lynd's *Killing Patient Zero*; Phyllis Ellis' *Toxic Beauty*; and Henry Singer and Rob Miller's *The Trial of Ratko Mladic*.

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hot-docs-festival-2019-highlights-female-directors-1195647>

## Big ideas remain Hot Docs' bread and butter as festival announces 2019 line-up

It will include such hot-button topics as climate change, the global refugee crisis, human genetic engineering, racism – and Gordon Lightfoot

**CHRIS KNIGHT**

Updated: March 19, 2019



Singer Gordon Lightfoot in *If You Could Read My Mind*. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO-GEOFF GEORGE

Hot Docs, the Canadian International Documentary Festival, has announced the line-up for this year's event, which will include such hot-button topics as climate change, the global refugee crisis, human genetic engineering, racism – and Gordon Lightfoot.

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But big ideas are the festival's bread and butter, and this year is no exception. *The Rest*, from Chinese activist and director Ai Weiwei, looks at the plight of refugees in Europe. *Human Nature*, from director Adam Bolt, discusses CRISPR gene editing. *Toxic Beauty*, directed by Phyllis Ellis, examines a lawsuit over the health risks of cosmetics. And *Willie*, from director Laurence Mathieu-Leger, tells the story of Willie O'Ree, who broke the colour barrier in the NHL in 1958. Along with *If You Could Read My Mind*, they'll be screened with directors and subjects in attendance.

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Along the festival's special presentations: *American Factory*, about a Chinese billionaire who re-opens a shuttered GM plant in Ohio; *Assholes: A Theory*, which examines the global rise in bad behaviour; *Killing Patient Zero*, a look back at the start of the AIDS epidemic; and *Framing John DeLorean*, about the famed car designer. And Alexandre O. Phillippe celebrates the 40th anniversary of Ridley Scott's sci-fi classic with *Memory: The Origins of Alien*.

The Hot Docs festival runs from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto. More information and tickets at [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

<https://calgaryherald.com/entertainment/movies/big-ideas-remain-hot-docs-bread-and-butter-as-festival-announces-2019-line-up/wcm/9679c495-ed6a-4700-8b7e-c123518242ea>

## Hot Docs' bread and butter to make world premiere at



## ‘In My Blood It Runs’ to make world premiere at Hot Docs

20 March, 2019 by Jackie Keast



*Dujuan Hoosan and his mother in ‘In My Blood It Runs’. (Photo: Maya Newell)*

Director Maya Newell’s feature documentary *In My Blood It Runs* will have its world premiere in competition at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

*In My Blood It Runs* (formerly *Kids*) is one of 12 films in Hot Doc’s competitive International Spectrum program, the others being: *Amussu*; *Bhudda in Africa*; *Daymohk*; *For Sama*; *The Guardian of Memory*; *Hope Frozen*; *Life is a Belief*; *Marek Edelman...* and *There Was Love in the Ghetto*; *On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship* and *The Valley*.

Other Aussie projects in the festival include Richard Lowenstein’s feature doc *Mystify: Michael Hutchence*, which will screen as part of the special presentation section; shorts *Happy Android* from Jaina Kalifa, *Handout* from Vedrana Music, and *Dusty Devil* from Poppy Walker; and Lynette Wallworth’s VR project *Awavena*.

This year’s Hot Docs features a line-up of 252 documentary projects, 54 per cent of which are from female directors. It will open with First Nations/Métis filmmaker Tasha Hubbard’s *Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*.

*In My Blood It Runs*, a Closer Productions film made in collaboration with Arrernte & Garrwa families and communities in the Northern Territory, follows the story of 10 year old Dujuan Hoosan – a child-healer and good hunter who speaks three languages. He shares his wisdom of



history and the complex world around him, showing spark and intelligence, yet Djuwan is ‘failing’ in school and facing increasing scrutiny from welfare and the police. As he travels perilously close to incarceration, his family fight to give him a strong Arrernte education alongside the western education system, lest he becomes another statistic.

The film marks Newell’s follow up to 2016 doc *Gayby Baby*, which explored the stories of children of same sex parents, and sparked a nationwide debate about marriage and adoption equality after it was banned in NSW schools.

“It has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to learn from Djuwan over these years. I am inspired by Djuwan’s courage to share his story. He is growing up to be a strong young man and we are thrilled that his truth telling will begin as such a prestigious international Film Festival,” said Newell.

Hoosan, who is now 12, said: “I’m a bit nervous because it’s going to be my first time going overseas and on a plane. But I am really excited to share my story with the world.”

Newell directed and shot the film together with Hoosan, Carol Turner, Megan Hoosan, James Mawson, Margaret Anderson and Jimmy Mawson, and the producers are Sophie Hyde, Rachel Naninaaq Edwardson, Larrissa Behrendt and Newell, with executive producer Felicity Hayes, a Senior Traditional Owner of Alice Springs. Advisors to the project include Margaret Kemarre Turner, Agnes Abbott, William Tilmouth, Amelia Turner and Jane Vadiveloo.

*In My Blood It Runs* was developed via GoodPitch Australia, and has received funding from GoodPitch Australia, Documentary Australia Foundation, Screen Australia, Screen Territory and the South Australian Film Corporation.

Hot Docs runs April 25 – May 5 in Toronto, Canada.

## Colten Boushie documentary to open Hot Docs 2019

*Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* leads the lineup, which also includes docs about the Quebec City mosque shooting, Aung San Suu Kyi and Wu-Tang Clan

BY **NORMAN WILNER** MARCH 19, 2019



Melissa Kent / CBC Licensing

*Colten Boushie's mother Debbie Baptiste (left) and cousin Jade Tootoosis at the United Nations in New York.*

Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, about the outrage among Indigenous communities after all-white jury **acquitted** the killer of Cree man Colten Boushie, will open this year's Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival.

In the documentary, the Saskatoon-based director of *Birth Of A Family* blends personal reflection, footage of Boushie's family traveling to the United Nations and a history of colonialism on the Prairies in order to grapple with the 22-year-old's 2016 shooting death and the subsequent trial and acquittal of Gerald Stanley last year. The film was announced as the opening night gala at a press conference at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Tuesday, March 19.

The doc is among 234 features and shorts and another 18 "interdisciplinary projects" – including VR installations, food-and-film events, panel discussions and two free IMAX screenings at Ontario Place Cinesphere – from 56 countries. An estimated 54 per cent of the directors in the festival are women.

Ai Weiwei – who was unable to attend the premiere of Hot Docs 2012 opening-night feature *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* because he was effectively under house arrest in his native China – will attend the 2019 edition with the **previously announced** North American premiere of **The Rest**. A companion piece to 2017's refugee study **Human Flow**, the film will screen in the festival's Big Ideas series, which supplements its featured films

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with in-depth panels with the filmmakers and special guests. (Ai will also appear in a separate onstage conversation event at the Isabel Bader Theatre, one of the festival's regular venues.)

Also screening in Big Ideas this year: Laurence Mathieu-Leger's **Willie**, about the man who broke the NHL's colour barrier (with that man, Willie O'Ree, on hand for the post-screening panel); Adam Bolt's **Human Nature**, about the revolutionary possibilities offered by DNA resequencing (with biochemist Jennifer Doudna); Phyllis Ellis's **Toxic Beauty**, about the public health dangers posed by beauty products (and featuring whistleblower Deane Berg and doctors Daniel Cramer and Ami Zota), and Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe's **Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind**, accompanied by their illustrious singer-songwriter subject.

### CANCON, WORLD CINEMA AND ANIMALS

The Canadian Spectrum offers a wide range of topics, from environmental chaos (Brett Story's **The Hottest August**, Shannon Walsh's **Illusions Of Control**) to issues of gender and sexuality (Rama Rau's **The Daughter Tree**, Megan Wennberg's **Drag Kids**, Phillip Pike's **Our Dance Of Revolution**) to stories of advocacy and resistance (Ariella Pahlke, Nance Ackerman and Teresa MacInnes's **Conviction**, Matt Gallagher's **Prey**).

Ingrid Veninger's **The World Or Nothing** follows twin Cuban brothers as they migrate to Spain chasing online stardom; Chris Flanagan's **Shella Record: A Reggae Mystery** finds the filmmaker traveling to Jamaica in search of the woman who recorded an obscure track that's become his obsession. And Ubaydah Abu-Usayd and Abderrahmane Hedjoudje's **Your Last Walk In The Mosque** looks at the aftermath of the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting – a subject that will no doubt feel more fraught in the wake of **last week's massacre** in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Films screening in the International Spectrum series include Edward Watts and Waad al-Kateab's **For Sama**, a video diary from a mother in Aleppo to her infant daughter which just won the audience award at SXSW; Pailin Wedel's **Hope Frozen**, about a Bangkok family that makes the controversial decision to cryopreserve the body of their late two-year-old daughter, and Karen Stokkendal Poulsen's **On The Inside Of A Military Dictatorship**, which looks at Aung San Suu Kyi's doomed attempt to bring democracy to Myanmar after her election victory in 2015.

And the World Showcase program is heavy on personal stories such as Mo Scarpelli's **Anbessa**, about an Ethiopian mother and child living as scavengers on the edge of Addis Ababa; Julia Horn's **Dear Brother**, about

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a man dedicated to communicating with his catatonic brother through music, videos and touch; Alex Parkinson and Richard da Costa's **Last Breath**, about the effort to rescue a commercial diver trapped hundreds of feet underwater with just five minutes of oxygen; and Luke Lorentzen's Sundance favourite **Midnight Family**, about a Mexico City clan trying to break into that city's for-profit ambulance industry.

But there are also bigger-picture projects: Catherine Meyburgh and Richard Pakleppa's **Dying For Gold** exposes the human cost of South Africa's gold-mining industry; Isa Willinger's **Hi, A.I.** considers the inexorable integration of artificial intelligence into our daily lives, and Jennifer Deschamps's **Inside Lehman Brothers** looks back on the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis through the eyes of mortgage brokers and accountants – most of them women – who tried to sound the alarm, and were ignored.

New programs announced at this year's festival include Making Believe, which gathers documentaries about determining what's real and what isn't in the ever-shifting landscape of modern news media. Hans Pool's **Bellingcat – Truth In A Post-Truth World** follows the efforts of a global collective of citizen journalists that specialize in "open source investigation," separating facts from fake news. Larry Weinstein's **Propaganda: The Art Of Selling Lies** talks to artists like Kent Monkman, Shepard Fairey and Ai Weiwei, who work to push back against official narratives from politicians and governments.

Animal Magnetism will focus on "the complicated relationship between humans and animals" with films like Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska's Sundance smash **Honeyland**, about the efforts of Macedonian beekeeper Hatidze Muratova to live in harmony with her charges, and David Hambridge's **Kifaru**, which follows the Kenyan rangers who look after the last male northern white rhino in his final years.

### MIDNIGHT, ARTSCAPES AND INTERACTIVE

Returning programs include Artsclapes, which will screen (among others) Stacy Tenenbaum's **Pipe Dreams**, which looks at the Canadian International Organ Competition in Montreal; Jamie Kastner's **There Are No Fakes**, an investigation of a wide-ranging art forgery ring, and Halina Dyrschka's **Beyond The Visible: Hilma Auf Klint**, which explores the recent push to restore the Swedish abstract artist to the pantheon, and the decades of resistance that have kept her out. The first two episodes of Sacha Jenkins's Showtime documentary series **Wu-Tang Clan: Of Mics And Men** will also have their Canadian premiere in the program.

The Nightvision program is back as well, offering a curated selection of "future cult classics" including **Memory – The Origins Of Alien**, a look back at the artists who shaped Ridley Scott's 1979 masterwork from **78/52** director Alexandre O. Philippe; **Trixie Mattel: Moving Parts**, Nick Zieg-Owens's profile of the RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars champion as she tours with her one-woman show, and **Who Let The Dogs Out**,

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in which director Brent Hodge unpacks the provenance of Baha Men's 2000 hit single, which turns out to be far more convoluted than anyone could have imagined.

The interdisciplinary Doc X series returns with another host of experimental programming, including a live performance of **Supreme Law**, billed as an interactive and satirical look at the drafting of the Canadian Constitution, hosted by comedian Jus Reign. The program also features a host of VR experiences, including selections from Nicholas de Pencier, Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtynsky's Anthropocene project, a cancer-awareness tutorial **The Evolution Of Testicles** (hosted by the actor Chris O'Dowd) and **Traveling While Black**, a virtual documentary about the history of racially restricted movement in America from Roger Ross Williams, Ayesha Nadarajah, Félix Lajeunesse and Paul Raphaël. (Think **Green Book**, but without the cheerful white saviour – or the happy ending.)

And last year's Silence Breakers program of whistleblower documentaries has evolved into Persister, dedicated to stories of "women speaking up and being heard". Features include Baljit Sangra's **Because We Are Girls**, a look at Indo-Canadian siblings overcoming their misogynistic upbringing to face their abuser in a British Columbia court; Pachi Bustos's **Haydee And The Flying Fish**, about a woman tortured under the Pinochet regime waiting to see if a court judgment will give her some closure four decades later, and Yu Gu's **A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem**, a look at the class-action lawsuits filed by former cheerleaders against the National Football League for wage theft, sexism and labour violations.

In addition to the **previously announced retrospectives** for outstanding achievement award recipient Julia Reichert and the Focus On honouree Julia Ivanova, this year's festival will also include a Redux tribute to the National Film Board's female-forward Studio D, including the Oscar-winning shorts *Flamenco At 5:15*, *I'll Find A Way* and *If You Love This Planet*, and a new quartet of shorts produced to continue the shuttered division's Five Feminist Minutes series. New work from Anne Marie Fleming, Deanne Foley, Joyce Wong, Alexandra Lazarowich will screen in a single program along with four shorts from the original 1990 wave – including Fleming's own contribution, *New Shoes*.

Last week, Hot Docs announced this year's lineup of its high-profile **special presentations films**, which includes films about Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Dr. Ruth, Chelsea Manning, Michael Hutchence, Miles Davis and John DeLorean.

The 26th annual Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs from April 25 to May 5. Full schedule and program details available **at the festival website**.

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/features/hot-docs-2019-coltan-boushie/>



## Hot Docs to Open with Tasha Hubbard's 'nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up'

Posted on March 19th, 2019



Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* opens this year's Hot Docs NFB

By Pat Mullen

Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* will open this year's Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival. Hubbard's new film, which world premieres at the fest, examines the tragic death of Coulten Boushie, a young Cree man who was murdered on a settler farm in rural Saskatchewan in 2016. The powerful film sees Hubbard reflect on the longevity of systemic racism and violence against Indigenous people in Canada. The film is a co-pro of Downstream Documentary Productions and The National Film Board of Canada, produced in association with CBC DOCS and APTN.

*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* is one of several NFB films at this year's festival and helps make a strong showing for the Board on its 80th anniversary. Other new films from the NFB at Hot Docs include Rogério Soares' *River Silence*, Nance Ackerman, Ariella Pahlke and Teresa MacInnes's *Conviction*, Baljit Sangra's *Because We Are Girls*, Jon Walker's previously announced *Assholes: A Theory*, and a revamp of the Studio D era *Five Feminist Minutes* by Deanne Foley, Mary Walsh, Joyce Wong, Alexandra Lazarowich, and Ann Marie Fleming, whose [\*New Shoes\*](#) was among the original minutes and will receive a retro screening at the fest.

Other Canadian films announced today include *The World or Nothing*, which marks the doc debut of Toronto's queen of DIY indie filmmaking, Ingrid Veninger. The film is an offbeat portrait of identical twin brothers, who are ex-pat Cubans making a splash as dancers/YouTubers in Barcelona. Other Canucks include Larry Weinstein, who playfully examines the world of persuasive political messaging in *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies*, while Jason DaSilva offers a follow-up to his Hot Docs 2013 winner for Best Canadian Feature *When I Walk with When We Walk*. Matt Gallagher and Cornelia Principe examine a landmark court case in *Prey*, while Rama Rau returns to the fest with *Daughter Tree* after opening Hot Docs 2016 with *The League of Exotique Dancers*. Also returning is *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes* director Brett Story with *The Hottest August*, *St-Henri, the 26th of August* director Shannon Walsh with the eco doc *Illusions of Control*, and *Shiners* director Stacey Tenenbaum with the eclectic pipe organ saga *Pipe Dreams*. Making a Hot Docs debut on the other side of the programme is programmer Aisha Jamal with the personal doc *A Kandahar Away*, which studies her family's journey from Kandahar, Afghanistan to Kandahar, Saskatchewan, while the fest receives other international stories through Canadian lenses in Emily Gan's *Cave Birds* and Pedro Ruiz's *Havana from on High*.

## POV Magazine – March 19, 2019 (2 of 2)

On the Canadian shorts front, docs announced today include, but are not limited to, Samuel Matteau, Yannick Nolin, and Guillaume Fournie's crawfish fest film *Acadiana*, which will have audiences longing for the days when *Southern Accent* was just a few steps away from Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. Candy Fox's *ahkâmêyimo nitânis / Keep Going My Daughter* is an Indigenous ode to the next generation, while Andrew Moir's celebration of queer love *Take Me to the Prom* screens with the world premiere of Julia Ivanova's new film, *My Dads, My Moms, and Me*. Ivanova is this year's Focus On spotlight and the retrospective of her work will include the long overdue Ontario premiere of her 2016 film [\*Limit is the Sky\*](#).

Three Canadian films will play in this year's Scotiabank Big Ideas series, which offers extended conversations with some of the festival's hottest docs. Folk icon Gordon Lightfoot will take the stage with the world premiere of *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*, while hockey hero Willie O'Ree takes the spotlight with *Willie* to fuel a conversation about inclusivity in sports. Director Phyllis Ellis will present *Toxic Beauty* in the Big Ideas series with whistleblower Deane Berg, Dr. Daniel Cramer of the Harvard Cancer Center and Dr. Ami Zota of George Washington University to discuss the harmful effects of cosmetics. International films in the Scotiabank Big Ideas series also include director Adam Bolt and biochemist Jennifer Doudna in conversation for *Human Nature*, while the must-see event of the series might be a conversation with artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei, who is on hand with his film *The Rest*. Ai will also join for an additional conversation for audiences who can't make it to the Big Ideas screening.

Overall, Hot Docs will feature 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects from 56 countries in 15 programs at this year's festival. 54% of the line-up is directed by women.

Visit [HotDocs.ca](http://HotDocs.ca) for the complete line-up and schedule. Hot Docs runs April 25 to May 5.

[\*\*Subscribe today to read more about titles like \*nîpawîstamâsowin: We Will Stand Up\*, \*Willie\*, \*Gordon Lightfoot\*, \*The Hottest August\*, \*Havana from on High\*, and more in our upcoming issue!\*\*](#)

## Un documentaire sur Colten Boushie aux Hot Docs



Un film sur Colten Boushie, ce jeune Autochtone qui avait été tué par un fermier blanc en Saskatchewan, ouvrira la prochaine édition du Festival international canadien du documentaire - les Hot Docs. On voit ici sa mère, Debbie Baptiste.

PHOTO JUSTIN TANG, ARCHIVES LA PRESSE CANADIENNE

**VICTORIA AHEARN** | La Presse Canadienne  
Toronto

**Un film sur Colten Boushie, ce jeune Autochtone qui avait été tué par un fermier blanc en Saskatchewan, ouvrira la prochaine édition du Festival international canadien du documentaire - les Hot Docs.**

Le documentaire de Tasha Hubbard, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, sera présenté en première mondiale au festival, qui se déroulera du 25 avril au 5 mai.

Selon un communiqué, le film se penche sur «l'iniquité et le racisme dans le système judiciaire canadien» à la lumière de l'affaire Colten Boushie.

Le jeune homme de 22 ans de la première nation Red Pheasant avait été abattu d'une balle derrière la tête après s'être introduit dans une propriété rurale avec ses amis près de Biggar, en Saskatchewan, en août 2016. Un jury avait acquitté l'an dernier le fermier Gerald Stanley de meurtre au deuxième degré. Lors de son procès, il avait témoigné que son arme avait tiré accidentellement alors qu'il tentait de faire peur aux jeunes qui venaient d'arriver chez lui.

Le verdict avait attiré l'attention de la communauté internationale et provoqué des manifestations au pays.

Dans son documentaire, Tasha Hubbard «tisse un récit intense fusionnant une réflexion sur sa propre adoption, la désolante histoire du colonialisme dans les Prairies et une vision transformatrice d'un avenir où les enfants autochtones peuvent vivre en sécurité sur leur terre natale», peut-on lire dans un communiqué de l'Office national du film (ONF), qui coproduit le film.

Selon l'ONF, M<sup>me</sup> Hubbard est la première réalisatrice autochtone à ouvrir le festival, qui a révélé sa programmation mardi. En langue crie, «nîpawistamâsowin» signifie «nous (petit groupe) nous défendons les autres (grand groupe)», a déclaré une porte-parole.

Parmi les autres films canadiens présentés en première mondiale au festival de cette année, il y aura *Our Dance of Revolution*, de Phillip Pike, qui porte sur la communauté LGBTQ noire de Toronto. *Prey*, de Matt Gallagher, parle quant à lui d'un survivant d'agression sexuelle qui poursuit l'église catholique à Toronto.

Au total, 234 films et 18 projets interdisciplinaires sont au programme des Hot Docs.

<https://www.lapresse.ca/cinema/festivals-de-cinema/autres-festivals-de-cinema/201903/19/01-5218846-un-documentaire-sur-colten-boushie-aux-hot-docs.php>

## Tasha Hubbard's 'We Will Stand Up' to open Hot Docs 2019

Hubbard leads a contingent of women directors that make up 54% of the work featured in the 26th edition of the festival.

By Lauren Malyk

24 hours ago



Hubbard leads a contingent of women directors that make up 54% of the work featured in the 26th edition of the festival.

Read more: <http://playbackonline.ca/2019/03/19/tasha-hubbards-nipawistamasowin-to-open-hot-docs-2019/#ixzz5ij8NGrcZ>

<http://playbackonline.ca/2019/03/19/tasha-hubbards-nipawistamasowin-to-open-hot-docs-2019/>

## Tasha Hubbard's "We Will Stand Up" to launch Hot Docs '19

By Daniele Alcinii

March 19, 2019



First Nations/Métis filmmaker Tasha Hubbard's feature-length documentary *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* has been selected as the opening night film for the 2019 edition of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

The Toronto-set fest unveiled its complete film lineup at a press conference today (March 19), with 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects being chosen from 2,951 film submissions for the event's 26th edition. Of those selected, work by female filmmakers represented 54% of the 2019 program.

Hubbard's 98-minute *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* (pictured) documents a grieving family's pursuit of justice that becomes a flashpoint of the inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system after the killer of Saskatchewan Cree man Colten Boushie is acquitted of murder charges. The film is a Downstream Documentary and National Film Board of Canada production.

Notable films screening in the [previously announced Special Presentations](#) program include: the world premieres of Laurie Lynd's *Killing Patient Zero*, which looks at the impact of the 1980s AIDS epidemic and clears the name of the Québécois flight attendant known as "patient zero"; Mark Franchetti and Andrew Meier's *Our Godfather*, about the family of a Sicilian mob boss that came out of hiding to reveal how he helped convict 400-plus Mafioso; and Phyllis Ellis' *Toxic Beauty*, in which whistleblowers expose the cosmetic industry's dirty secrets.

Films screening in the World Showcase program include Julia Horn's *Dear Brother*, which documents the efforts of one man to keep his comatose brother alive through a one-sided dialogue of music, videos and touch; Suzan Beraza's *Massacre River*, detailing how thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent



## Realscreen – March 19, 2019 (2 of 3)

were left stateless after their citizenship is ruled invalid; Jason DaSilva's *When We Walk*, which follows the filmmaker as he confronts the inequity of the U.S. Medicaid system while battling multiple sclerosis; Hye-Ryeong Park's *The Wandering Chef*, tracing a celebrity Korean chef as he mourns the death of a beloved maternal figure through cooking; and Oisín Kearney's *Bojayá: Caught In The Crossfire*, which documents one of the worst massacres in the 50-year conflict between the Colombian military and FARC guerillas.

Also debuting in the World Showcase are Mijie Li's *Confucian Dream*, following a young Chinese wife who discovers Confucianism; Aisha Jamal's *A Kandahar Away*, which traces the journey of a family originally from Kandahar, Afghanistan as they move to Kandahar, Saskatchewan on the Canadian Prairies; Alban Teurlai and Thierry Demaizière's *Lourdes*, exploring the small town in southern France that serves as one of the world's most important pilgrimage sites; and Lily Zepeda's *Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man*, documenting an entrepreneur's mission to solve the global sanitation crisis.

In the Canadian Spectrum program, which explores issues affecting Canadians and the country, world premiering films include Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*; Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, following a survivor of sexual abuse as he takes on the Catholic Church in an Ontario court; Phillip Pike's *Our Dance of Revolution*, an examination of Toronto's four-decade-old Black LGBTQ community and its local legends; and Ingrid Veninger's *The World or Nothing*, where twin brothers migrate, among others.

In the Canadian Spectrum program, which explores issues affecting Canadians and the country, world premiering films include Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*; Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, following a survivor of sexual abuse as he takes on the Catholic Church in an Ontario court; Phillip Pike's *Our Dance of Revolution*, an examination of Toronto's four-decade-old Black LGBTQ community and its local legends; Ingrid Veninger's *The World or Nothing*, which provides an intimate portrait of 29-year-old Cuban twin brothers as they travel to Spain in pursuit of internet stardom; and Rogério Soares' *River Silence*, about the destruction of the Amazon's ancient ecosystems and displacement of thousands due to the construction of one of the world's largest dams.

Elsewhere, the International Spectrum will screen the world premieres of Nicole Schafer's *Buddha In Africa*, which traces a Malawian boy raised in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage as he teeters on the brink of a decision that will change his life forever; Marcela Arteaga's *The Guardian Of Memory*, chronicling Mexicans fleeing state-sponsored violence in search of a better life in an unwelcoming U.S.; and Nuno Escudeiro's *The Valley*, documenting the human rights crisis unfolding on the French-Italian border.

## Realscreen – March 19, 2019 (3 of 3)

This year's Big Ideas Series will include such guests as: contemporary artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei discussing *The Rest*; CRISPR biochemist Jennifer Doudna discussing Adam Bolt's *Human Nature*; Willie O'Ree, the first Black hockey player to play in the NHL, discussing Laurence Mathieu-Leger's *Willie*; Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot discussing Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe's *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*; and whistleblower Deane Berg, Dr. Daniel Cramer of the Harvard Cancer Center and Dr. Ami Zota of George Washington University discussing Ellis' *Toxic Beauty*.

The [previously announced](#) Made In Italy program includes: Beniamino Barrese's *Disappearance of My Mother*; Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi's *Dicktatorship*; Brunella Fili's *Alla Salute*; Francesca Mannocchi and Alessio Romenzi's *ISIS, Tomorrow. The Lost Souls of Mosul*; Claudia Tosi's *I Had a Dream*; Valentina Primavera's *Una Primavera*; and Alessandro Cassigoli and Casey Kauffman's *Butterfly*.

Screening in the DocX category, a section dedicated to celebrating documentaries that feature virtual reality and interactive experiences, are *Anthropocene: Carrara*, *Anthropocene: Ivory Burn* and *Anthropocene: Dandora*, three VR experiences from directors Nicholas de Pencier, Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtynsky; and the VR documentary *Traveling While Black* from directors Roger Ross Williams, Ayesha Nadarajah, Félix Lajeunesse and Paul Raphaël.

The festival's Focus On program, meanwhile, will spotlight the work of [Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova](#), including retrospective titles as well as the world premiere of *My Dads, My Moms and Me*, a new film by the director. Hot Docs will also present the Outstanding Achievement Award Retrospective, which celebrates the work of American documentarian Julia Reichert.

The full lineup for the 26th annual Hot Docs festival can be [found here](#).

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs from April 25 to May 5.

## Documentary on Colten Boushie case to open Hot Docs

TORONTO - A film examining the case of a young Indigenous man who was killed on a farm in rural Saskatchewan will open this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto.

Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's "nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up" will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5.

A news release says the documentary "looks at inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system" after the case of Colten Boushie.

The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation died from a gunshot to the back of his head after entering a rural farm property with his friends near Biggar, Sask., in August 2016.

Last year a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally when he was trying to scare off young people who drove onto his property.

The verdict gained international attention and sparked rallies across the country.

Hubbard's film "weaves a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands," the National Film Board of Canada, which co-produced the doc, said in a statement.

The NFB said it's the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open Hot Docs, which revealed its full lineup on Tuesday. In Cree, "nîpawistamâsowin" translates to "we (small group) will stand up for others (big group)," a spokeswoman said.

Other Canadian films making their world premiere at this year's festival include Phillip Pike's "Our Dance of Revolution," about Toronto's black LGBTQ community.

"Prey" by Matt Gallagher is about a sexual-abuse survivor pursuing justice in a case against the Catholic church in Toronto.

Also having its world premiere is "Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies" by Oscar-nominated Toronto filmmaker Larry Weinstein, which looks at the history of the art of persuasion.

The festival's Focus On program will feature Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova and her retrospective titles as well as the world premiere of her new film "My Dads, My Moms and Me."



© Provided by thecanadianpress.com Debbie Baptiste, mother of Colten Boushie, holds a photo of her son during a press conference on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on February 14, 2018. A film examining the case of a young Indigenous man who was killed on a farm in rural Saskatchewan will open this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto. Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5. A news release says the documentary "looks at inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system" after the case of Colten Boushie. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Justin Tang

A total of 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects are in the festival.

Previously announced docs in the lineup include "Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind." The Canadian singer-songwriter will also attend the festival.

Other guests set to attend include artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei ("The Rest"); biochemist Jennifer Doudna ("Human Nature"); New Brunswick-born Willie O'Ree, who was the first black player to skate in the NHL ("Willie"); and whistleblower Deane Berg along with Dr. Daniel Cramer and Dr. Ami Zota ("Toxic Beauty").

The festival will also have virtual reality and interactive experiences, including the live performance of "Supreme Law," a satirical re-telling of the origins of Canada's Constitution with comedian Jus Reign.

Organizers say the films hail from 56 countries, with 54 per cent of the directors being women. That's up from last year, when 50 per cent of the films were made by female directors.

"Like the lantern shown on the festival artwork this year, the filmmakers featured at Hot Docs light the way in showing us outstanding stories and outspoken subjects of immense power, relevance and importance," Shane Smith, director of programming for Hot Docs, said in a statement.

"The work of documentary filmmakers in their unrelenting pursuit of the truth is as necessary as ever, and we're honoured to be sharing their vital, vibrant and creative films with Toronto audiences."

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/entertainment/news/documentary-on-colten-boushie-case-to-open-hot-docs/ar-BBUXRjN>

# Hot Docs 2019 By The Numbers



## Hot Docs 2019 By The Numbers

*by Ralph Lucas – Publisher*

(March 19, 2019 – Toronto, ON) Good news, and it's true too. Documentaries are doing well, and the annual Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival (Hot Docs) is not just alive and well, but growing and thriving. From 2951 film submissions, this year's slate will present 234 films along with 18 interdisciplinary projects from 56 countries in 15 programs. We are pleased to report 54 per cent of the directors in this year's Festival are women.

"Like the lantern shown on the Festival artwork this year, the filmmakers featured at Hot Docs light the way in showing us outstanding stories and outspoken subjects of immense power, relevance and importance," said Shane Smith, director of programming for Hot Docs. "The work of documentary filmmakers in their unrelenting pursuit of the truth is as necessary as ever, and we're honoured to be sharing their vital, vibrant and creative films with Toronto audiences."

This symbol of the lantern is particularly apt for the opening night film, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*. Smith welcomed its director Tasha Hubbard (pictured with Shane Smith) to the stage to help introduce the film, which will have its World Premiere when the festival opens on April 24. Hubbard talked in a quiet voice, in



*Shane Smith & Tasha Hubbard at Hot Docs March 19, 2019*

places tinged with sadness, especially when she said this was a film she wishes she didn't have to make. *We Will Stand Up* shines a very bright light on the inequities and racism in the Canadian legal system.



## Northern Stars – March 19, 2019 (2 of 3)

On August 9, 2016, a young Cree man named Colten Boushie died from a gunshot to the back of his head after entering Gerald Stanley's rural property with his friends. The jury's subsequent acquittal of Stanley captured international attention, raising questions about racism embedded within Canada's legal system and propelling Colten's family to national and international stages in their pursuit of justice. Tasha Hubbard is the acclaimed director of *Two Worlds Colliding* and *Birth of a Family*. She weaves a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands. *We Will Stand* is produced by Hubbard and George Hupka for Downstream Documentary Productions, and Jon Montes and Bonnie Thompson for the National Film Board (NFB). The executive producers are David Christensen (NFB), Janice Dawe and Kathy Avrich-Johnson.

*We Will Stand Up* falls within competitive Canadian Spectrum program, which includes a large number of films.

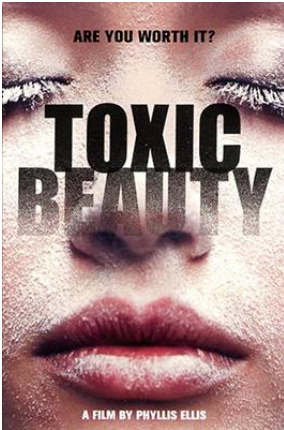


A few of them are *Prey*, from Border City Pictures, producer Cornelia Principe and director [Matt Gallagher](#). It looks at a subject that has been in the news almost constantly the last few decades and follows a sexual abuse survivor who pursues justice in a case against the Catholic Church; *Our Dance of Revolution* from director Phillip Pike is an overdue look at Toronto's Black LGBTQ community that presents an oral history of local legends and freedom fighters; and *The World or Nothing*, from [Ingrid Veninger's](#) focuses on twin brothers who migrate from Cuba to Spain in pursuit of internet stardom.

As mentioned there are 15 programs during Hot Docs. They include the Big Ideas Series, the International Spectrum and the World Showcase program. Each year Hot Docs looks at the films of a particular nation and this year it's the Made In Italy program. This year's Redux program, a retrospective showcase of documentaries that deserve another outing on the big screen is presented in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada and in recognition of the NFB's 80th anniversary, Redux will celebrate the work of its female filmmakers, including two shorts programs: Oscar-Winning-shorts, which includes three Academy Award-winning films that were produced out of Studio D in the 1970s, the world's first all-woman production unit under the NFB; and Five Feminist Minutes which, inspired by a series of shorts produced out of Studio D in 1990, will screen four new films from contemporary directors who pick up the thread where these trailblazing filmmakers left off.

The Festival's Focus On program will spotlight the work of Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova, including retrospective titles as well as the world premiere of *My Dads, My Moms and Me*, a new film by the director. Hot Docs will also present the Outstanding Achievement Award Retrospective, which will honour the timeless work of American documentary filmmaker Julia Reichert.

We previously covered the [Special presentations program](#), but seeing the trailer for *Toxic Beauty* was bit of a



shock. It's from writer, director, producer Phyllis Ellis who was honoured at the 2013 Canadian Screen Awards with the prestigious Donald Brittain Award for Best Social/Political Documentary for her film *About Her*. *Toxic Beauty* weaves together personal stories and world class research to expose a frightening hard truth – women are dying, children are at risk, and unregulated chemicals, toxins and carcinogens in cosmetics and care products are making us sick. It's from White Pine Pictures, renowned for their documentary films.

Also from White Pine, *The Corporate Coup d'État* dissects America at a troubling crossroads, offering piercing insights from journalists, authors, philosophers, and activists on the current state of democracy. Chris Hedges, John Ralston Saul—who was in attendance with White Pine founder and producer [Peter Raymont](#)—Maude Barlow, Cornel West and others describe President Trump as a symptom of a broken system where power now lies with corporations, not citizens. *The Corporate Coup d'État* will have its Canadian Premiere on April 29 at 9:30PM.

Other non-screen activities at Hot Docs includes the premier documentary conference and market, where Hot Docs welcomes over 2,000 industry delegates who will partake in a wide array of industry events and services, including conferences sessions, receptions and parties, and Hot Docs Deal Maker and the Hot Docs Forum.

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs from April 25 to May 5. The full lineup for the 26th annual Hot Docs festival [can be found here](#).

## Big ideas remain Hot Docs' bread and butter as festival announces 2019 line-up

It will include such hot-button topics as climate change, the global refugee crisis, human genetic engineering, racism – and Gordon Lightfoot

Chris Knight

Published on: March 19, 2019 | Last Updated: March 19, 2019 2:15 PM EDT



Singer Gordon Lightfoot in *If You Could Read My Mind*.

Hot Docs, the Canadian International Documentary Festival, has announced the line-up for this year's event, which will include such hot-button topics as climate change, the global refugee crisis, human genetic engineering, racism – and Gordon Lightfoot.

That's just to say that not every offering among the 234 films – 56 per cent of them directed by women – will be heavy. The octogenarian singer-songwriter is the focus of *If You Could Read My Mind* from directors Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe, which looks back over his decades-long career. There are also films about sex therapist Ruth Westheimer (*Ask Dr. Ruth*), service dogs (*Buddy*) and Miles Davis (*Birth of the Cool*).

But big ideas are the festival's bread and butter, and this year is no exception. *The Rest*, from Chinese activist and director Ai Weiwei, looks at the plight of refugees in Europe. *Human Nature*, from director Adam Bolt, discusses CRISPR gene editing. *Toxic Beauty*, directed by Phyllis Ellis, examines a lawsuit over the health risks of cosmetics. And *Willie*, from director Laurence Mathieu-Leger, tells the story of Willie O'Ree, who broke the colour barrier in the NHL in 1958. Along with *If You Could Read My Mind*, they'll be screened with directors and subjects in attendance.

The festival will open with *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, Tasha Hubbard's examination of the aftermath of the death of a young First Nations man in Saskatchewan, and the killer's subsequent acquittal. The Canadian Spectrum sidebar will also include such titles as *The Hottest August* (climate change and its effects on New York City), *Prey* (an Ontario lawsuit against the Catholic Church) and *Your Last Walk in the Mosque*, a painfully timely look back at the Quebec City shootings of 2017.

Along the festival's special presentations: *American Factory*, about a Chinese billionaire who re-opens a shuttered GM plant in Ohio; *Assholes: A Theory*, which examines the global rise in bad behaviour; *Killing Patient Zero*, a look back at the start of the AIDS epidemic; and *Framing John DeLorean*, about the famed car designer. And Alexandre O. Phillippe celebrates the 40th anniversary of Ridley Scott's sci-fi classic with *Memory: The Origins of Alien*.

The Hot Docs festival runs from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto. More information and tickets at [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

<https://www.recorder.ca/entertainment/movies/big-ideas-remain-hot-docs-bread-and-butter-as-festival-announces-2019-line-up/wcm/0679c495-ed6a-4700-8b7e-c123518242ea>

## Documentary on Colten Boushie case to open Toronto's Hot Docs festival

THE CANADIAN PRESS

The Canadian Press March 19, 2019



Documentary on Colten Boushie case to open Toronto's Hot Docs festival

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Last year a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally when he was trying to scare off young people who drove onto his property.

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Hubbard's film "weaves a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands," the National Film Board of Canada, which co-produced the doc, said in a statement.

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## **Yahoo Movies! – March 19, 2019 (2 of 2)**

"Prey" by Matt Gallagher is about a sexual-abuse survivor pursuing justice in a case against the Catholic church in Toronto.

Also having its world premiere is "Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies" by Oscar-nominated Toronto filmmaker Larry Weinstein, which looks at the history of the art of persuasion.

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Other guests set to attend include artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei ("The Rest"); biochemist Jennifer Doudna ("Human Nature"); New Brunswick-born Willie O'Ree, who was the first black player to skate in the NHL ("Willie"); and whistleblower Deane Berg along with Dr. Daniel Cramer and Dr. Ami Zota ("Toxic Beauty").

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Victoria Ahearn, The Canadian Press

<https://ca.movies.yahoo.com/documentary-colten-boushie-case-open-151017186.html>

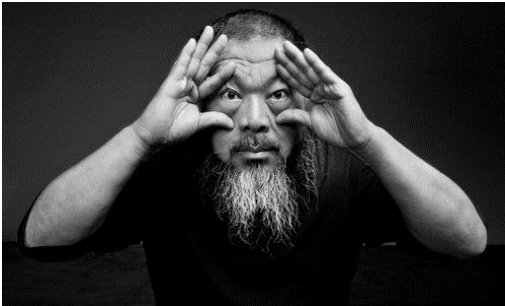


## HOT DOCS 2019: THINGS GET REAL AGAIN, WITH AI WEIWEI, GORDON LIGHTFOOT AND 232 MORE

March 19, 2019

By Liam Lacey

Things are about to get real again, as North America's biggest documentary showcase, the Hot Docs International Film Festival unveiled its full 2019 line-up Tuesday. In total, the festival – which runs April 25-May 5 - will show 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects from 56 countries.



Ai Weiwei looks at the refugee situation in Europe

Tuesday's announcement of the 26th annual fest unveiled a lengthy list of new films, in addition to 15 titles announced last week in the Special Presentations program. These include new films about Canadian folk laureate, Gordon Lightfoot, whistleblower Chelsea Manning and Willie O'Ree, the first black hockey player in the National Hockey League. O'Ree, Lightfoot and Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei are all expected to attend.

Other films focus on sex expert Dr. Ruth Westheimer, the author Stieg Larsson, singer Michael Hutchence and jazz musician, Miles Davis.

Some key titles:

*The Rest.* Dissident Chinese artist and filmmaker's Ai Weiwei's looks at refugees in Europe in this companion piece to his film, *Human Flow*.

*Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* looks back on the career of Canada's 80-year-old folk laureate.

*Willie*, looks at the career of O'Ree, the first Black hockey player to make it to the National Hockey League in 1958, and at 83, still reigning "diversity" ambassador for the league.



Gaetan Dugas, the so-called "Patient Zero" of AIDS, was a hero rather than a zero, doc suggests.



## Original-Cin – March 19, 2019 (2 of 2)

*Killing Patient Zero*: Laurie Lynd tells the true story of Gaetan Dugas, the Quebec flight attendant misidentified as “patient zero” in the 1980s AIDS crisis.

*Knock Down the House* by Rachel Lears follows four women candidates during the 2018 U.S. midterms, including Democrat star, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

*Always in Season*, from Jacqueline Olive, examines the history and ongoing practice of lynching as a tool of racial terrorism in the United States. The film won a special award for “moral urgency” at the recent Sundance Film Festival.

*Quiet Storm: The Ron Artest Story*, Johnny Sweet's film about the coach, former NBA defensive star and now a mental health advocate, now known as Metta World Peace.

*Framing John DeLorean*, uses a combination of archival material and dramatic re-enactments, starring Alec Baldwin, to tell the story of the futuristic car designer who ended up busted on cocaine trafficking charges.



Gordon Lightfoot at 80.

*XY Chelsea*, follows the life of trans-woman soldier and whistle-blower Chelsea Manning, whose 35-year-prison sentence was commuted by President O'Bama, though she was jailed again last week for refusing to testify in a Grand Jury investigating Wikileaks.

*Our Godfather*, in which the family of Sicilian mob boss Tommaso Buscetta comes out of hiding to tell how he helped convict 400 criminals.

*Assholes a Theory*, from Canadian filmmaker John Walker, based on philosopher Aaron James's bestseller of the same title.

*Picture Character*, looks about the world of emoji regulation. 😊

This year's Hot Docs opens with Tasha Hubbard's *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, a documentary about the death of Colten Boushie, the 22-year-old Indigenous man who died by gunshot in 2016 when he and his friends drove onto a farmer's property. Farmer Gerald Stanley was acquitted of second degree murder when he testified his gun discharged accidentally.

For the full schedule and ticket information, go to [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2019/3/19/rsl4g634qxnj85yndhvl8yrhgahq9l>

## Documentary on Colten Boushie case to open Toronto's Hot Docs festival

- [THE CANADIAN PRESS](#)
- Mar. 19, 2019 3:24 p.m.
- [ENTERTAINMENT](#)



TORONTO — A film examining the case of a young Indigenous man who was killed on a farm in rural Saskatchewan will open this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto.

Organizers say Tasha Hubbard's "nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up" will make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs April 25 to May 5.

A news release says the documentary "looks at inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system" after the case of Colten Boushie.

The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation died from a gunshot to the back of his head after entering a rural farm property with his friends near Biggar, Sask., in August 2016.

Last year a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally when he was trying to scare off young people who drove onto his property.

The verdict gained international attention and sparked rallies across the country.

Hubbard's film "weaves a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands," the National Film Board of Canada, which co-produced the doc, said in a statement.

The NFB said it's the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open Hot Docs, which revealed its full lineup on Tuesday. In Cree, "nîpawistamâsowin" translates to "we (small group) will stand up for others (big group)," a spokeswoman said.

## Red Deer Advocate – March 19, 2019 (2 of 2)

Other Canadian films making their world premiere at this year's festival include Phillip Pike's "Our Dance of Revolution," about Toronto's black LGBTQ community.

"Prey" by Matt Gallagher is about a sexual-abuse survivor pursuing justice in a case against the Catholic church in Toronto.

Also having its world premiere is "Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies" by Oscar-nominated Toronto filmmaker Larry Weinstein, which looks at the history of the art of persuasion.

The festival's Focus On program will feature Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova and her retrospective titles as well as the world premiere of her new film "My Dads, My Moms and Me."

A total of 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects are in the festival.

Previously announced docs in the lineup include "Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind." The Canadian singer-songwriter will also attend the festival.

Other guests set to attend include artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei ("The Rest"); biochemist Jennifer Doudna ("Human Nature"); New Brunswick-born Willie O'Ree, who was the first black player to skate in the NHL ("Willie"); and whistleblower Deane Berg along with Dr. Daniel Cramer and Dr. Ami Zota ("Toxic Beauty").

The festival will also have virtual reality and interactive experiences, including the live performance of "Supreme Law," a satirical re-telling of the origins of Canada's Constitution with comedian Jus Reign.

Organizers say the films hail from 56 countries, with 54 per cent of the directors being women. That's up from last year, when 50 per cent of the films were made by female directors.

"Like the lantern shown on the festival artwork this year, the filmmakers featured at Hot Docs light the way in showing us outstanding stories and outspoken subjects of immense power, relevance and importance," Shane Smith, director of programming for Hot Docs, said in a statement.

"The work of documentary filmmakers in their unrelenting pursuit of the truth is as necessary as ever, and we're honoured to be sharing their vital, vibrant and creative films with Toronto audiences."

## Le documentaire *El Toro* de la Manitobaine Danielle Sturk sera présenté à Toronto

Publié le mardi 19 mars 2019 à 20 h 42



*El Toro* est l'oeuvre la plus personnelle de la réalisatrice manitobaine Danielle Sturk. Photo: Radio-Canada

Radio-Canada

Le documentaire *El Toro*, de la cinéaste manitobaine Danielle Sturk, a été choisi pour faire partie de la sélection officielle du HOT DOCS à Toronto, le plus grand festival du documentaire en Amérique du Nord. Selon un communiqué du festival, le film de la réalisatrice manitobaine sera présenté dans le programme « Canadian Spectrum », soit la compétition officielle pour les productions canadiennes.

« Je pense que [les organisateurs] ont été touchés par le côté artisanal [de mon film]. Il y a une richesse avec le travail de tous les collaborateurs », affirme Danielle Sturk.

Selon elle, la forme même de son film, entre scènes tournées avec des comédiens, animations et collages, a participé au succès de cette sélection.

« J'ai pris beaucoup de risques artistiques avec beaucoup de styles différents. Si je l'avais écrit et proposé comme ça, dès le départ, à un producteur, je pense qu'on me l'aurait refusé », s'amuse-t-elle.

La première de *El Toro* à Toronto aura lieu le 28 et 29 avril, en présence de son auteure. « J'y vais en personne pour présenter et répondre aux questions », précise Danielle Sturk. Elle ajoute qu'elle est impatiente d'aller « à la rencontre d'un public plus international, qui ne connaît pas Saint-Boniface », afin de découvrir leurs réactions.

L'histoire du film se focalise en effet sur une histoire très personnelle et ancrée dans la communauté locale du quartier francophone de Winnipeg.

« C'est une histoire de famille, de temps et de lieu. C'est le vécu de ma tante et de mon oncle », rappelle-t-elle.

*El Toro* retrace, au travers des témoignages, l'histoire d'un restaurant tenu par la famille DeGagné dans la zone industrielle de Saint-Boniface durant les années 1960.

Le festival Hot Docs présente chaque année près de 200 documentaires en provenance du Canada et du reste du globe.

## Get It Durban – March 20, 2019



### “Buddha in Africa” to have its World Premiere at Hot Docs, Canada

20 March 2019

**The much-anticipated feature documentary, *Buddha in Africa* by South African filmmaker, Nicole Schafer, has been selected for its World Premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Festival (April 25 – May 5). The film will be presented in competition in the International Spectrum programme. The winner of the Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary Award will qualify for consideration for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.**

*Buddha in Africa* follows the personal story of a teenager growing up in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage in Malawi and the challenges he faces between his African roots and Chinese upbringing. Against the backdrop of China’s global rise, the film provides a unique insight into Chinese soft power in Africa.

The project received the IDFA Most Promising Documentary Award when it was first pitched at the Durban FilmMart in 2011 and has since been awarded funding from several international funds including the IDFA Bertha Europe Fund in the Netherlands, Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Doc Fund and the Alter Cine Foundation in Canada, Chicken & Egg Pictures in New York, the South African National Film and Video Foundation and the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission.

In 2018, *Buddha in Africa* was selected to participate in the Cape Town International Film Festival and Market Works-in-Progress lab. It received the highest award, combining two weeks of Online by Monk and two weeks of Grading at Priest Post with the following motivation: “For its unique subject and its meticulous patient development, for the crossroad of important themes, and for the different worlds that have overlapped and met in tangible captivating characters, the jury chose to give the combined two prizes to the very promising Malawi set film project *Buddha in Africa* by Nicole Shafer.” The film is an international co-production between Thinking Strings Media in South Africa and Memento Film in Sweden. Renowned Paris-based company CAT & Docs will be representing the film internationally. AfriDocs is the African broadcast partner.

“When I first came across this story, I was struck by how this orphanage was strangely reminiscent of the Christian missions during the colonial era,” says writer and director Nicole Schafer, “Only here African children have Chinese names and instead of learning about the West, they were learning about Chinese culture and history. I felt the orphanage would be the perfect metaphor to explore not only the impact of Chinese involvement in Africa, but also as a mirror for the legacy of Western colonialism that still exists on the African continent.”

“*Buddha in Africa* offers a new and unexpected insight into China’s presence in Africa through the lens of the Buddhist temple Amitofo Care Centre in Malawi,” explains co-producer, David Herdies of Memento Film. “It’s an interesting way to look at this new type of colonisation that is going on, but in a non-judgmental and human way.”

The film will screen at the following dates and times at Hot Docs:

Saturday, April 27, 6pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3,  
Monday, April 29, 1pm, SCOTIA 8 ,  
Sun, May 5, 10:15 AM, Scotiabank Theatre

<http://durban.getitononline.co.za/2019/03/20/buddha-africa-world-premiere-hot-docs-canada/#.XJJcbNVKjcs>



## Hot Docs '19: Untold stories, unpleasant people grace festival slate

By Frederick Blichert

March 20, 2019



The lineup for the 26th annual Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival [was announced at a press conference Tuesday](#) (March 19), where *Realscreen* caught up with a few filmmakers presenting their work, along with director of programming [Shane Smith](#), for a sneak peak at what to expect.

“Hot Docs is such a big festival that there’s no one through line... but what we did notice was a lot of stories that were formerly hidden or unknown being dug up and investigated by filmmakers,” says Smith.

Another common theme was a focus on the rise of populism internationally. Films like Petra Costa’s *Edge of Democracy*, about a military dictatorship in Myanmar, and James Jones and Olivier Sarbil’s *On the President’s Orders*, about the persecution of drug users in the Philippines, fit that bill.

The fest also features more upbeat fare, following larger trends in the documentary and unscripted TV spaces. “We’re always looking for celebratory stories about great subjects,” says Smith, who lists examples like Brent Hodge’s *Who Let the Dogs Out*, about the eponymous 2000 earworm, and Ryan White’s *Ask Dr. Ruth*, “this fantastic look at an amazing, indefatigable woman, but also the darkness in her past as well.” He adds: “Even the lighter films don’t necessarily shy away from the darker side of life.”

Smith also touches on the festival lineup’s diverse voices. With 54% of films directed by women, Hot Docs has surpassed the 50/50 goal that has become the gold standard at international festivals. While the programming team was conscious of diverse representation, the selections achieved gender parity quite organically, Smith explains: “It’s not like we were forcing films into the festival. They all deserve to be here, and a lot of them happen to be made by women directors.”

One of those women directors is Rama Rau, who was previously at Hot Docs in 2016 with her festival opener *The League of Exotic Dancers*. This year, she turned her lens to female infanticide in India, where there is a widespread preference for boys, with [The Daughter Tree](#) (pictured). “This is a film that’s been in development all my life,” Rau tells *Realscreen*. “I was born in India. I grew up in India, so I know how girls are treated.”

For the film, which received funding from Canada’s National Film Board and French and German investors, Rau had to search hard for stories in a country where most of the people she encountered didn’t want to talk — either about illegally aborting their pregnancies or having trouble finding a wife in a population that skews male.

“It’s only after I discovered a village where they plant trees every time a girl baby was born that I realized I had a film,” she says.

And she hopes that audiences will recognize that an issue affecting India’s population affects the rest of the world. “India and China have such huge populations, and a skewing of those populations will affect the world,” she says.



## Realscreen – March 20, 2019 (2 of 2)

On a completely different note, John Walker's [\*Assholes: A Theory\*](#) builds off of the *New York Times* bestselling book of the same name by Aaron James and explores how, why and if we should tolerate the assholes of the world.



Featuring interviews with James and comedian John Cleese (pictured, above), among others, the film blends lighthearted humor and a more serious tone, tackling everything from Silicon Valley, to the rise of populist world leaders like Silvio Berlusconi and Donald Trump, to the systemic abuses revealed by the #MeToo movement.

"Assholes can be funny," Walker says. "They can be entertaining. They can be wealthy. They can be leaders. And they can be very attractive. But there's a dark side. So we go to the dark side of what impact an asshole can have on an individual and on institutions and on countries."

*Assholes: A Theory* was co-produced with the NFB and received funding from the Documentary Channel, Telefilm, the Rogers Documentary Fund and foreign pre-sales.

Meanwhile, Hot Docs will feature a number of documentary shorts, including Blake Johnston and Kelso Steinhoff's *Uncaged: A Stand-In Story* (pictured, below).



*Uncaged* offers a quirky portrait of Marco Kyris, who served as Hollywood star Nicolas Cage's stand-in for 20 films over 10 years.

Kyris financed the film himself through his prodco Do Me Right Productions.

"Marco himself has this treasure trove of call-sheets and photographs of him and Nic Cage wearing the same outfits, setting up for shots, and this is a guy that nobody's really known about but seemed to be a really prominent part of Nic Cage on set during this time," Steinhoff tells *Realscreen*.

The short offers a look at how Hollywood blockbusters are made, and how celebrity personas are crafted. "If you're a Cage fan, this is an absolute must see," Johnston says. "You have to see Marco in action. He's literally Nicolas Cage. They both took so many mannerisms off of each other."

Don't expect Cage himself to appear though, as he and Kyris have had something of a falling out and haven't spoken in 14 years.

The 26th annual Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs from April 25 to May 5 at various theaters and venues in Toronto.

[http://realscreen.com/2019/03/20/hot-docs-19-untold-stories-unpleasant-people-grace-festival-slate/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=hot-docs-19-untold-stories-unpleasant-people-grace-festival-slate&\\_u=o%2buwg9e4HaE%3d](http://realscreen.com/2019/03/20/hot-docs-19-untold-stories-unpleasant-people-grace-festival-slate/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=hot-docs-19-untold-stories-unpleasant-people-grace-festival-slate&_u=o%2buwg9e4HaE%3d)



Entertainment

### What's showing at the 'HotDocs' 2019 festival!

The Hot Docs 2019 festival is around the corner. Entertainment City's Teri Hart chats with the people behind the documentaries showing at this years 'HotDocs' festival.

March 20, 2019 08:00

<https://www.bttoronto.ca/videos/whats-showing-at-the-hotdocs-2019-festival/>

## CTV News – March 19, 2019



<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1639553>

## Colten Boushie killing inspires Hot Docs opening-night film

WHATSON MAR 20, 2019 BY GARNET FRASER TORONTO STAR



A moment from *Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, a new documentary about the Colten Boushie killing. - [blog.nfb.ca/photo](http://blog.nfb.ca/photo)



Gaetan Dugas, the Quebec flight attendant long believed to be AIDS' "Patient Zero" in North America, is seen in a still photo in the documentary *Killing Patient Zero*. - [hotdocs.ca/photo](http://hotdocs.ca/photo)



Popular Canadian YouTuber Jasmeet Singh Raina, better known as JusReign, as seen in Katerina Civek's creation *Supreme Law*, coming to Hot Docs. - [hotdocs.ca/photo](http://hotdocs.ca/photo)

The opening-night film of this year's Hot Docs film fest will be *Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, a study of the [Colten Boushie killing](#) and its context in the Canadian west and Canadian history, the documentary festival announced Tuesday.

Boushie, a 22-year-old Indigenous man, was shot dead by farmer Gerald Stanley after an incursion onto Stanley's property in 2016; the farmer was later controversially acquitted of second-degree murder. Directed by

Tasha Hubbard, who previously won acclaim for her film *Two Worlds Colliding*, about the treatment of Indigenous man Darrell Night at the hands of Saskatoon police conducting one of their now-infamous "starlight

## Toronto.com – March 20, 2019 (2 of 2)

tours,” *Nipawistamasowin* is touted as being “a profound narrative encompassing the filmmaker’s own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the Prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homelands.”

The festival, running April 25 to May 5, also announced the following films:

- Baljit Sangra’s *Because We Are Girls*, an Indo-Canadian family in small-town B.C. must come to terms with the fact that three sisters were sexually abused by the same relative;
- Gordon Lightfoot, Willie O’Ree among the movie subjects at this year’s Hot Docs festival
- *Assholes: A Theory*, the return of documentary veteran John Walker, makes its North American premiere, after taking inspiration from Aaron James’ bestseller of the same name;
- Katerina Cizek’s interactive doc *Supreme Law*, which uses YouTube personalities to guide audiences on a fresh journey inside the shaping of the Canadian Constitution;
- *Human Nature*, about the revolutionary effects of CRISPR, the system for analyzing and editing DNA;
- *Inside Lehman Brothers*, a revisiting of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis that pays special attention to female mortgage brokers and accountants whose whistle-blowing fell on deaf ears;
- *Massacre River*, a world premiere which promises to reveal how thousands of Dominicans of Haitian background were left stateless after their citizenship was ruled invalid;
- and the world premiere of *Killing Patient Zero*, which rebuts the notion that Quebec flight attendant Gaetan Dugas was the initial source of AIDS in North America, as he was long suspected to be.

All told the fest says it’s offering 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects, and Hot Docs adds that 54 per cent of the directors in this year’s program are women. The full schedule is now online at [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

Among the previously announced Hot Docs films are movies about singers Gordon Lightfoot and Michael Hutchence, jazz legend Miles Davis, NHL trailblazer Willie O’Ree and famed Swedish author Stieg Larsson.

There’s also *American Factory*, about the culture clash after an abandoned auto factory in Ohio is reopened by a Chinese billionaire; *Cold Case Hammarskjöld*, which explores the 1961 plane crash that took the life of the United Nations secretary-general; *Quiet Storm: The Ron Artest Story*, about the former NBA player turned mental-health advocate now known as Metta World Peace; *Framing John DeLorean*, about the entrepreneur and would-be ’80s automaker; *XY Chelsea*, about [recently re-jailed](#) U.S. military-secret leaker Chelsea Manning; *Ask Dr. Ruth*, about the famous sex therapist/media personality Dr. Ruth Westheimer; and *One Child Nation*, which details the price of China’s infamous 1979 “one-child policy,” introduced to curb population growth; *The Rest*, directed by Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei, follows up his 2017 doc *Human Flow* by revealing the daily lives in limbo of refugees in Europe (and who will be interviewed as part of the fest on April 27); *I Love You, Now Die: The Commonwealth Vs. Michelle Carter*, a two-part HBO docuseries examining the case of Carter, who was convicted of manslaughter after sending her boyfriend [a barrage of text messages](#) telling him to kill himself, which he did; and *Our Godfather*, in which the family of a high-ranking Sicilian mob boss comes out of 30 years of hiding to reveal how he helped convict over 400 Mafiosi.

<https://www.toronto.com/whatson-story/9231455-coltan-boushie-killing-inspires-hot-docs-opening-night-film/>



## Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival

**When:** April 25 - May 5

**Where:** Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema & other venues

**Web:** [www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca)



Hot Docs is North America's largest documentary festival with a selection of more than 150 documentaries both from Canada and around the globe. Prepare for cutting-edge stories about the environment, animals or toxic beauty. There will be several video profiles, panels and conversations with both filmmakers and various featured people talking both about the documentaries as a whole and their important messages.

<https://torontoism.com/toronto-news/2019/03/toronto-events-april-2019>



## Hot Docs Unveils 2019 Line-Up



**Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival** revealed its complete film line-up for the upcoming edition from April 25-May 5, 2019.

The festival will feature 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects representing 56 countries, across 15 programs. The Big Idea Series will bring in notable guests such as artist and director Ai Weiwei, biochemist Jennifer Doudna, NHL player Willie O'Ree, and Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot.

The Canadian Spectrum programming will feature *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* and *Our Dance of Revolution*, while the Made In Italy track will include *Disappearance of My Mother* and *The Lost Souls of Mosul*, among others. For the Focus On spotlight, the work of Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova will be shown.

Find the complete programming **online**.

<http://www.videoageinternational.net/2019/03/20/news/hot-docs-unveils-2019-line-up/>

## Violence, sexual abuse and rampant drug use shocks in Morrisseau art fraud documentary

Wednesday, March 27th, 2019 1:51pm

“There Are No Fakes” will have its world premiere at Hot Docs in Toronto this spring. It will be broadcast on TVO in late June.

“It just gets darker and darker and more and more twisted...” —filmmaker Jamie Kastner

By Shari Narine

Windspeaker.com Contributor

The most shocking aspect of filmmaker Jamie Kastner’s documentary “There Are No Fakes” should be how he carefully pieces together evidence of a fraud ring that paid artists to produce Norval Morrisseau paintings. But it isn’t.

“The fraud is kind of just the beginning. The fraud is by far the least shocking thing in this story... It just gets darker and darker and more and more twisted and there are a number of fascinating twists in there,” said Kastner, who admits some of those twists surprised even him.

The nearly two-hour long documentary was sparked by the court case initiated by Kastner’s high school buddy and Barenaked Ladies member Kevin Hearn. Hearn was awaiting his court date where evidence was going to be presented to determine that Spirit Energy of Mother Earth, the painting he purchased from the Maslak McLeod Gallery, was a fake Morrisseau.

Morrisseau, an Anishinaabe artist dubbed the “Picasso of the North”, was a member of the Indian Group of Seven. He was the first Indigenous artist to have his work shown in a contemporary art gallery in Canada. His work was also shown internationally. He passed away in 2007 at the age of 75.

Kastner was “intrigued” by what Hearn told him.

“I made it clear to him that if I were to do this story, I would appreciate his collaboration, but I would equally be talking to other sides of the story and Kevin would have no editorial control or say over the film in anyway,” said Kastner, who had been a print journalist. “The principles of journalism are still at the core of the work I do.”

Over the course of three years, Kastner raised funds for the project, undertook research and shot close to 30 hours of film. It took six months, not an unusual amount of time, he says, to edit the documentary, which is presented as a “trial within a trial.”

Kastner interviewed the players involved – gallery owners, an auctioneer, legal counsellors, artists, and others with personal connections to Morrisseau and to the events – who often contradicted one another. He did his interviews prior to the December 2017 court date hoping people would be more open with him.

“I think that each side had a point-of-view that they were trying to promote. Maybe once they saw the other sides’ cards, as it were, they may have been less forthcoming. And I think that’s probably true. I felt that I would get greater honesty from them before the trial, before they knew how it played out, before they could be either feeling smug at having won or bitter about having been defeated,” said Kastner.

## Wind Speaker – March 27, 2019 (2 of 2)

Some of the comments that Kastner received during his interviews were disturbing with their threats of violence and racial slurs, stark confessions of sexual abuse, and detailed accounts of rampant drug use.

Kastner says there were a couple of people he wished he could have spoken to, including Gary Lamont. From the interviews and information Kastner collected, Lamont headed the Thunder Bay fraud ring that allegedly produced thousands of Morrisseau fakes. Lamont had been sentenced to five years in jail on five counts of sexual assault in early 2016. However, Kastner is confident that he spoke to “enough people close to that person who could bring him to life.”

Kastner also didn't get the opportunity to speak to Joe McLeod, the owner of Maslak McLeod Gallery, as he passed away early in 2017.

Kastner admits there were aspects of the Morrisseau story that he chose to leave out, including that the fraud ring the documentary outlines was investigated by the Thunder Bay police, but charges were never laid, and that another court case challenging the authenticity of another Morrisseau painting was unsuccessful.

“You've just got to make painful choices to get the essence of the story in there and you hope you make the right ones,” he said.

Kastner's documentary style is to unfold the story gradually instead of disclosing everything the viewer needs to know in the first five minutes.

“My sense is maybe you can intrigue a wider range of people and get people who are already not part of the choir, as it were, to think about things if you take a different approach,” he said.

The ride he takes the viewer on ramps up. The documentary concludes with the result of Hearn's court case relegated to words on an end card. The Hearn court case was only a “loose framework” by which to tell “a fairly shocking story on latter day colonialism,” said Kastner.

“Here it is happening in a very palpable way that I actually managed horrifyingly to capture on camera ... (and it) is so shocking to the average white urban liberal person that that kind of shit still goes on yet absolutely important for them to see as a result. It is a remarkable story of abuse on so many levels, on cultural levels, on personal levels. That's the story I set out to tell,” he said.

“There Are No Fakes” will have its world premiere at Hot Docs in Toronto this spring. It will be broadcast on TVO in late June.

## SA documentary selected to have its world premiere at Hot Docs in Canada

By **Durban Film Office (DFO) Press** - March 25, 2019



The much-anticipated feature documentary, *Buddha in Africa* by South African filmmaker, Nicole Schafer, has been selected for its world premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Festival (25 April – 5 May). The film will be presented in competition in the International Spectrum programme. The winner of the Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary Award will qualify for consideration for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

*Buddha in Africa* follows the personal story of a teenager growing up in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage in Malawi and the challenges he faces between his African roots and Chinese upbringing. Against the backdrop of China's global rise, the film provides a unique insight into Chinese soft power in Africa.

The project received the IDFA Most Promising Documentary Award when it was first pitched at the Durban FilmMart in 2011 and has since been awarded funding from several international funds including the IDFA Bertha Europe Fund in the Netherlands, Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Doc Fund and the Alter Cine Foundation in Canada, Chicken & Egg Pictures in New York, the South African National Film and Video Foundation and the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission.

In 2018, *Buddha in Africa* was selected to participate in the Cape Town International Film Festival and Market Works-in-Progress lab. It received the highest award, combining two weeks of Online by Monk and two weeks of Grading at Priest Post with the following motivation: "For its unique subject and its meticulous patient development, for the crossroad of important themes, and for the different worlds that have overlapped and met in tangible captivating characters, the jury chose to give the combined two prizes to the very promising Malawi set film project Buddha in Africa by Nicole Schafer."

The film is an international co-production between Thinking Strings Media in South Africa and Memento Film in Sweden. Renowned Paris-based company CAT & Docs will be representing the film internationally. AfriDocs is the African broadcast partner.

"When I first came across this story, I was struck by how this orphanage was strangely reminiscent of the Christian missions during the colonial era," says writer and director Nicole Schafer, "Only here African children have Chinese names and instead of learning about the West, they were learning about Chinese culture and history. I felt the orphanage would be the perfect metaphor to explore not only the impact of Chinese involvement in Africa, but also as a mirror for the legacy of Western colonialism that still exists on the African continent."

"*Buddha in Africa* offers a new and unexpected insight into China's presence in Africa through the lens of the Buddhist temple Amitofo Care Centre in Malawi," explains co-producer, David Herdies of Memento Film. "It's an interesting way to look at this new type of colonisation that is going on, but in a non-judgemental and human way."

<https://www.screenafrica.com/2019/03/25/film/film-content/sa-documentary-selected-to-have-its-world-premiere-at-hot-docs-in-canada/>

## Survivors of pedophile priest who served in Sudbury subject of documentary

Prey — the new documentary project by Windsor-born filmmaker Matt Gallagher — gives voice to those who were subject to the abuses of disgraced priest William Hodgson Marshall.

Dalson Chen, Windsor Star

[More from Dalson Chen, Windsor Star](#)

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A still image from Prey - a new documentary by Windsor-born filmmaker Matt Gallagher, spotlighting the survivors of pedophile priest William Hodgson Marshall. Prey premieres at Hot Docs on April 26, 2019. (Handout / Windsor Star)

Over the course of 38 years, William “Hod” Hodgson Marshall — who served as a Basilian priest and Catholic teacher in Sudbury, Toronto and Windsor — sexually abused at least 17 minors.

“I grew up Catholic in Windsor. I was an altar boy at a church in the east end,” recalls filmmaker Matt Gallagher.

“I was a grown man when these things about certain priests started coming out ... I haven’t considered myself a Catholic since I was 18 years old. But this film was still very difficult to do.”

“It’s stories of abuse, told by men, kept secret for so long.”

Set for a world premiere next month, Gallagher’s latest documentary project — a TVO production entitled Prey — gets particularly close with one of Marshall’s victims, Rod MacLeod, and his search for justice.

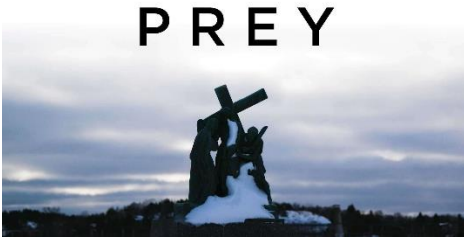
MacLeod was a student at an all-boys high school in Sudbury in the 1960s when he first became subject to Marshall’s attention at the age of 13.

The abuse went on for four years.

The film’s central narrative is MacLeod’s modern-day lawsuit against the Basilian Fathers of Toronto, the Catholic order that moved Marshall from community to community despite knowledge of his predations.

Shot over the course of the spring and summer of 2018, the documentary follows the civil proceedings. Now 69 years old, MacLeod was represented by London lawyer Rob Talach.

“They call (Talach) ‘The Priest Hunter,’” Gallagher explains. “He’s filed 395 lawsuits against the Catholic church.”



A promotional image for Prey – a new documentary by Windsor-born filmmaker Matt Gallagher, spotlighting the survivors of pedophile priest William Hodgson Marshall. Prey premieres at Hot Docs on April 26, 2019. (Handout / Windsor Star) COURTESY

“Rod MacLeod refused to settle. He turned down all the offers the church threw at him, because he wanted to have a public trial. He wanted people to hear this story.”

Marshall died in 2014 at the age of 92. But the man who some students secretly called “Happy Hands” still makes a haunting appearance in the film — in the form of a video deposition that was previously sealed evidence.

“We had access to a 90-minute video of this priest confessing to four decades of crime,” Gallagher says. “It has never been seen before.”

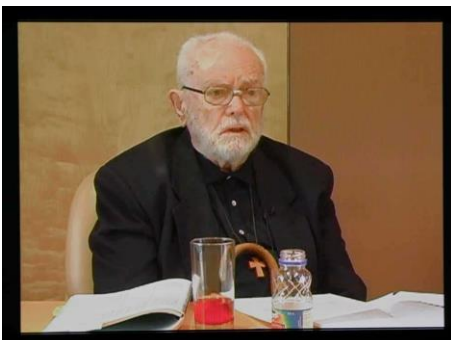
Recorded in 2012, the deposition video shows a fixed shot of Marshall’s withered face as he struggles to answer Talach’s questions.

“You knew, in those days, sir, that it was a criminal offence, correct?” Talach demands.

“I imagine so,” Marshall replies.

“You knew it was wrong?”

“Yes,” Marshall replies, weakly.





## **Sudbury Star – March 22, 2019 (3 of 3)**

A still image from *Prey* – a new documentary by Windsor-born filmmaker Matt Gallagher, spotlighting the survivors of pedophile priest William Hodgson Marshall. *Prey* premieres at Hot Docs on April 26, 2019. (Handout / Windsor Star)

### **COURTESY**

Gallagher says the Catholic church also has a voice in the film through a spokesman for the Basilian Fathers, Fr. David Katulski.

“That’s one of the most interesting things,” Gallagher says. “His job is to handle all these cases of abuse by priests. Father Katulski is an honourable man, but his job is to deal with victims, over and over and over.”

“He basically has the worst job in the Catholic church.”

Although MacLeod is the focus of the documentary, Gallagher also turned his lens on other survivors — such as Windsor resident Patrick McMahon, who came forward with the first criminal complaint against Marshall.

“Patrick has been doing these one-man protests around the city of Windsor,” Gallagher explains. “One weekend, during the summer, the bishop was supposed to make an announcement in a letter to be read at all the churches in the diocese.”

“I followed Patrick with my camera as he went to these churches and silently stood outside them with his signs. Most everyone ignored him.”

Gallagher says McMahon is also responsible for the title of the documentary — a play on the words ‘pray’ and ‘prey.’

**PREY – Trailer from Matt Gallagher on Vimeo.**

MacLeod’s lawsuit was decided last April 26, and the film’s world premiere in Toronto next month will be exactly one year later.

Despite the dark nature of the documentary’s subject matter, Gallagher feels there’s also a good deal of hope to be found in it — the bringing of truth to light.

“These are things that, in some cases, have been kept buried for 50-plus years,” Gallagher said. “It was very difficult for these men to tell these stories. But I think they’re doing the right thing.”

**Prey premieres at the 2019 Hot Docs Festival in Toronto on April 26, with repeat screenings April 27 and May 2.**

**The film will be broadcast on TVOntario this fall.**

**Visit [www.bordercitypicturesinc.com](http://www.bordercitypicturesinc.com) for more information.**

<https://www.thesudburystar.com/news/local-news/windsor-born-filmmakers-new-documentary-spotlights-survivors-of-pedophile-priest/wcm/1fd89615-b356-47bd-bf83-d1b44fcee1d>

## Here Are All the Music Movies Playing Hot Docs in 2019



By [Josiah Hughes](#)  
Published Mar 22, 2019

Once again, this spring will see Toronto welcomingly inundated with an onslaught of non-fiction films as [Hot Docs](#) returns from April 25 to May 5. There's nothing better than a doc with a larger-than-life subject, which is why we're particularly keen on the fest's music movies.

Subjects this year include Gordon Lightfoot, INXS frontman Michael Hutchence, Miles Davis and the Wu-Tang Clan, among others.

To help you decide what to see, we've included Hot Docs' official synopsis for each music movie below. To purchase tickets and view the full schedule, visit the Hot Docs site [here](#).

### **Mystify: Michael Hutchence**

Directed by Richard Lowenstein

*Australian band INXS provided the soundtrack to millions of lives in the 1980s and 90s and made an entire generation sit up and listen like thieves to their music. Wildly popular lead singer and songwriter Michael Hutchence created a new sensation with his unmistakable voice, but who was this shining star? Long-time collaborator and music video director Richard Lowenstein creates a loving tribute to the frontman who shared the gift of his massive talent with a public who barely knew him. Remembered by the men and women who understood him best, Hutchence is shown in split-screen as both sophisticated and gregarious, shy and insecure. All the voices featured, including famous girlfriends Kylie Minogue and Helena Christensen, remember the good and bad times through intimate home movies and private memories. We may sing along to his songs but what do we really know about this sensualist whose original sin was feeling too much and who disappeared from the world once he could no longer find pleasure in it? (Angie Driscoll)*

### **Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind**

Directed by Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe

*From the song he refuses to perform to his admiration for Drake, a songwriting legend reflects on his lyrics and longevity with candour and humour. At 80 years young (and currently recording another album), Gordon Lightfoot continues to entertain and enlighten. Personal archive materials and studio sessions paint an intimate picture of an artist in his element, candidly revisiting his idealistic years in Yorkville's coffeeshouses, up through stadium tours and the hedonistic '70s. Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Barbra Streisand are only a handful of the stars whose recordings of "Early Morning Rain" and other hits helped Lightfoot's artistry leap across borders, but no matter how far his music travelled, he continued to write passionately about the country he called home. As fellow music icon Burton Cummings sums it up, "Gordon's stuff screamed Canada." With his instantly recognizable voice and masterful guitar playing, Gordon Lightfoot remains influential and timeless. (Alexander Rogalski)*

### **Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool**

Directed by Stanley Nelson

*From Emmy Award-winning director Stanley Nelson comes a rare look, with never-before-seen footage, at one of the most innovative and influential jazz figures of the past half-century. Having had its successful premiere at Sundance, Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool unpacks the man behind the myth, diving into his upbringing, methodology, personal relationships and demons to deliver a complex portrait of a man who not only redefined American jazz but continues to have a powerful impact on generations of musicians. This formidable story is built through in-depth new interviews and rare outtakes from those who knew Davis best, as well as his most prominent collaborators, such as Quincy Jones, Carlos Santana, Clive Davis, Wayne Shorter and Ron Carter. (Heather Haynes)*

### **Pipe Dreams**

Directed by Stacey Tenenbaum

*In a house of worship, devotion takes many forms. Aiming to master the world's largest instrument, five young organists compete in the prestigious Canadian International Organ Competition, culminating in a captivating finale at Montreal's historic Notre-Dame Basilica. This high-stakes event, with over \$100,000 in prize money, attracts top musicians from around the world. They each attempt to transcend their hallowed surroundings on a magnificent Casavant organ constructed from 7,000 pipes. Hang on to your pew as the film travels from Texas to China, observing the eccentric and exacting competitors who demonstrate incredible dexterity while pushing every limb to bend this immense instrument to their creative will. As the final chords reverberate through cathedral rafters, one champion will emerge. (Alexander Rogalski)*

### **Wu-Tang Clan: Of Mics and Men**

Directed by Sacha Jenkins

*When East Coast rappers RZA, GZA, Ol' Dirty Bastard, Inspectah Deck, U-God, Ghostface Killah, Method Man, Raekwon and Masta Killa united to become Wu-Tang Clan, the history of hip hop changed forever. Their legacy is filled with essential tracks and records that captured the world's attention and inspired a generation of young rappers. In the first two episodes of an upcoming Showtime series, newly uncovered footage and exclusive interviews tell the origin story of the group, shedding light far beyond the music they put out. Struggles with poverty, violence and racism all chipped away at these nine men, and united them to lay the foundation for one of the most influential albums of all time. (Gabor Petic)*

### **Shella Record: A Reggae Mystery**

Directed by Chris Flanagan

*For 10 years, artist and record fanatic Chris Flanagan has been a man obsessed, haunted by the woman's voice featured on a 10-cent record he bought in a thrift store. Who is this soulful siren, calling to him from another time and place, credited only with the name Shella Record? Determined to find the elusive artist, Chris sets off on a quest that leads him from a hairdressing studio in Toronto, to a fortune teller in L.A., to the legendary recording studios of Jamaica. Along the way, he discusses the history of Jamaica's music with some of reggae's greatest hitmakers, including Bunny "Striker" Lee and Earl "Chinna" Smith. The film uses Chris's own artistic practice of carefully crafted miniatures to help tell a playful story of obsession, the power of music and final redemption. (Aisha Jamal)*

### **Who Let the Dogs Out**

Directed by Brent Hodge

*It may have seemed like a simple undertaking when he started, but little did artist and curator Ben Sisto know that to answer the question, "Who let the dogs out?"—one of the catchiest and most recognizable hooks in music—he'd have to travel across the world. From cheerleaders to feminist musicians to music execs, many claim to have asked the question first. Sisto has made a part-time living out of telling the story of his search to live audiences, and he has one big conclusion to share: We may never know who, who, who, who, who let the dogs out. And actually, it's not that important. The lesson Sisto draws from his wild eight-year-long adventure is that all creation relies on a shared pool of ideas. We may never answer the question, but asking it is all the fun. (Aisha Jamal)*

## Les femmes et les Autochtones à l'honneur aux Hot Docs

234 documentaires de 56 pays



Brett Hendrie, directeur général de Hot Docs, et Chris McDonald, le président du festival.

Alicia Blancher • Journaliste • 25 mars 2019  
Équipe de l'express.ca

La démocratie, l'environnement, les inégalités de toutes sortes, les nouvelles technologies, et notamment l'intelligence artificielle... Comme chaque année, les [Hot Docs](#) s'attaquent à des sujets sérieux, et parfois controversés.

Pour cette nouvelle édition du festival torontois, du 25 avril au 5 mai, deux thèmes semblent se démarquer des 234 documentaires provenant de 56 pays: les questions autochtones et la place de la femme, devant et derrière la caméra.

### «Persister»: une nouvelle catégorie pour les femmes

Faisant suite au programme «Briseuses de silence» de l'an dernier, au sujet de femmes qui combattent l'injustice, une nouvelle catégorie «Persister» met à l'honneur l'histoire, parfois bouleversante, de certaines d'entre elles. Dix documentaires ont été sélectionnés dans cette rubrique.

Néanmoins, les femmes sont aussi à l'honneur dans d'autres programmes qui ne leur sont pas spécifiquement dédiés.

*Daughter Tree* de Rama Rau, dans la catégorie «Films canadiens», relate le parcours de Neelam Bala, une Indienne déterminée qui tente de sauver les fœtus de sexe féminin, dans un pays où les naissances de filles sont dépréciées et souvent empêchées. L'histoire s'inspire également d'un village, The Daughter Tree, dans lequel les venues au monde des filles sont perçues comme une bénédiction.

l-express.ca remercie ses partenaires. [En devenir.](#)

«C'est un des documentaires les plus attendus de cette édition», confie à *L'Express* Aisha Jamal, programmatrice des films canadiens des Hot Docs depuis 4 ans, mais aussi réalisatrice.



Aisha Jamal, réalisatrice du documentaire *A Kandahar Away*, inspiré de l'histoire de sa propre famille d'origine afghane.

En effet, les femmes ne sont plus seulement devant la caméra. Avec 54% de réalisatrices, les Hots Docs battent de nouveaux records en termes de parité.

## La défense des Autochtones au cœur des controverses

«Les histoires les plus difficiles à raconter sont celles que nous avons le plus besoin d'entendre.» Voici comment est présenté le documentaire qui ouvrira le festival, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* de Tasha Hubbard.



Tasha Hubbard, réalisatrice de *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, s'est exprimée sur la nécessité de mettre en lumière les injustices de notre société.

Dans ce long-métrage, la réalisatrice suit le combat de la famille Boushie, appartenant à la communauté Cree, en quête de justice pour leur fils assassiné, Colten, en 2016.

Alors que le fermier Gerald Stanley avait été acquitté, cette histoire avait fait grand bruit au Canada, faisant écho avec la longue histoire de persécution des premières nations.

## Hot Docs celebrates Beastie Boy Adam Yauch's film work

The documentary cinema is screening two films directed by the late rapper as part of its music-focused screening series This Film Should Be Played Loud

BY **NORMAN WILNER**

MARCH 28, 2019



Welcome to NOW's **weekly spotlight on Toronto's indie festivals and screenings**. It's your chance to learn a little more about that cinematic event you've been meaning to check out, pitched by passionate programmers in their own words.

## THE SERIES

**This Film Should Be Played Loud**, a monthly music series at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema (506 Bloor West).

## THE PROGRAMMER

**Alan Black**, managing director of the cinema and director of operations for the Hot Docs film festival. "I wear many hats during the day," he says. "Technically, programming is not at all part of my job description, so I think of myself less as a programmer and more as matchmaker. I try to find the right film for the right person and create the right cultural context for the person and film to connect and fall in love."

## WHAT'S THE MISSION STATEMENT?

"We borrowed the name from the opening title card of Martin Scorsese's *The Last Waltz*, and really want the series to evoke the spirit of that film," Black says. "Each event is meant to be a raucous celebration of music, performance, film, and expression."

## WHAT'S THE FILM?

**Awesome; I Fuckin' Shot That!**, screening Saturday (March 30) at 9:30 pm. It's the crowdsourced record of the Beastie Boys' 2004 concert at Madison Square Garden, as filmed by 50 members of the audience and edited by Adam Yauch under his directorial pseudonym, Nathaniel Hörnblowér.



## WHY THIS MOVIE?

“Over the Christmas vacation I read the new Beastie Boys autobiography and was reminded of the genius of Adam Yauch both as a musician and a filmmaker,” Black says. “Awesome; I Fuckin’ Shot That! is so absolutely singular as a concert movie – and such a hilarious, visual, mind-bending document of a band at the height of its creativity – I knew we had to show it again. In January I was at Sundance and ran into the guys from Oscilloscope Films, the DIY distribution company that Yauch started to get incredible films out into the world, and I told them I wanted to screen the film and do something special. They offered it up, and suggested that we blow it up and screen Fight For Your Right Revisited [as well].”

Fight For Your Right Revisited is a half-hour short, made by Yauch in 2011, starring Elijah Wood, Seth Rogen and Danny McBride as the Beasties and Will Ferrell, John C. Reilly and Jack Black as their older selves. It is amazing.

“I think anybody who joins us on Saturday night is going to be reminded of how three young punks from New York City, in all of their various incarnations from License To Ill to Ill Communication to Hello Nasty, helped define our culture,” says Black.

## WHAT’S THE VIBE?

“When we re-invented the Bloor as a documentary cinema, it was our goal from the beginning to create our own non-fiction version of Rocky Horror... something that would be less of a screening and more of a ritualistic event,” Black says. “We wanted to use concert films, classic rock docs, and the occasional fiction film as a reason to turn the cinema into a large music venue. We turn the sound up, bring in a DJ and offer beer specials. The goal is to get people out of their seats and moving in the aisles. We’ve shown films like Talking Heads: Stop Making Sense, LCD Soundsystem’s Shut Up And Play The Hits and Dave Chappelle’s Block Party to a packed house of 500-plus people singing along, dancing and getting lost in the music.”

## WHAT’S NEXT?

The next screening in the series is **an April 13 show of Purple Rain**, “which has become one of our beloved annual traditions,” he says. “Three years ago we had it scheduled before Prince died and it became his makeshift Toronto memorial – one of my favourite nights ever at the cinema.”

As for future titles, Black suggests we keep an eye on the August offering. (“We’ve got something really exciting planned around the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Woodstock.”) But his real holy grail for the series is Nirvana Unplugged: “As far as I know it has never been shown on the big screen in Toronto.”

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/special-screenings/hot-docs-beastie-boys/>

## BLUE NOTE RECORDS: BEYOND THE NOTES - A RICH ARCHIVAL AND ANECDOTAL MUSICAL DOC, CLEVERLY ASSEMBLED

March 27, 2019

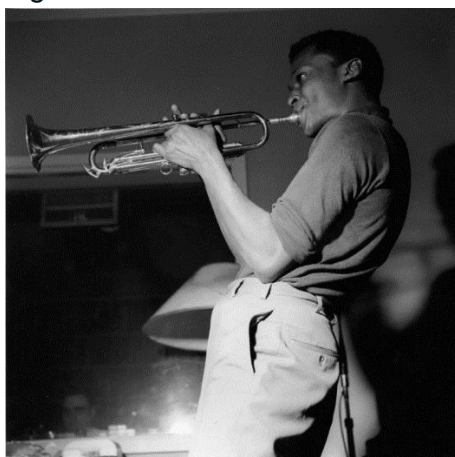
By Jim Slotek

Rating: B

The status once held by jazz among the most high-minded of music fans was underscored a few years ago when Kendrick Lamar's hip-hop album Damn was honoured as “the first non-jazz or classical” album to win the Pulitzer Prize.

It takes Swiss director Sophie Huber until the last 15 or so minutes of her documentary Blue Note Records: Beyond the Notes to get to the current reality of Blue Note Records, which is as a bridge between jazz and hip-hop artists, up to and including the promotion of sampling jazz.

It might have been a good place to start, establishing the continued relevance of this American institution before taking us to its storied beginnings.



A young Miles Davis, part of the early Blue Note roster.

Still, as standard a documentary as it is in presentation, Blue Note Records: Beyond the Notes is cleverly assembled and edited, making the most of available archival material to flesh out the stories of Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Bud Powell, Art Blakey, Horace Silver et al, and of Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff, the two German-Jewish immigrants who escaped the war and redefined America's music culture.

But where the ingenuity is most effective is in the use of audio. Film and video footage of the great jazz artist is of relatively recent vintage, but Blue Note Records kept a wealth of studio “takes,” banter, and live performances, all augmented by stills and album covers. The album covers themselves, by graphic designer Reid Miles – often using artfully cropped photos by Wolff – were the epitome of cool, a “look” that was recognizably Blue Note.

## Original-Cin – March 27, 2019 (2 of 2)

Jazz might have turned out very differently but for the two childhood friends who turned their shared love of jazz into a not-for-profit pursuit, out of studio facilities in a bungalow in New Jersey (later they had a studio/house in New Jersey designed by a student of Frank Lloyd Wright). The film follows their story from 1939, when they began with a roster of Dixieland bands and signed every new sound they heard – from swing to be-bop. Alfred fell in love with Monk's eccentric piano style, even though he was decades ahead of where he could become a popular or profitable artist.

The talking-head anecdotes are charming and make the be-bop era come alive. And the sanction of the current label management allowed for the film's crowning moment (Blue Note has had a series of corporate owners and even went under for a period of about five years. Its current president is former recording artist/producer Don Was).

In the scene, surviving royalty and longtime friends, saxophonist Wayne Shorter and pianist Herbie Hancock, record Shorter's Masqualero with obviously star-struck contemporary artists Marcus Strickland and Robert Glasper (two of the hip-hop influenced artists who signed with the current label – almost all of the featured ones being male, with the exception of Norah Jones).

It's a moving moment, one that seals the emotional deal on the label's continued importance.

Blue Note Records: Beyond the Notes. Directed by Sophie Huber. Starring Don Was, Marcus Strickland, Terrace Martin. Starts Friday, March 29 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

# Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up

by [Kelly Many Guns](#), March 27, 2019



Jade Tootosis in one of many rallies that sparked outrage throughout Canada



The late Colten Boushie

August 9, 2016, was a hot summer afternoon. Colten Boushie, a young Cree man from the Red Pheasant First Nation, spent the day swimming with friends. On the drive back home their car got a flat tire so the group decided to walk to a farmer's home to get some help. What transpired was truly shocking. After they entered Gerald Stanley's rural property, Boushie would die from a gunshot to the back of his head.

Last year's acquittal of Stanley by an all-white jury captured international attention. The verdict raised questions about racism embedded within Canada's legal system and propelled Colten's family on to the national and international stages in their pursuit of Justice.

The latest documentary sensitively directed by Tasha Hubbard is *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*. The film weaves a profound narrative. It encompasses the filmmaker's own adoption, the stark history of colonialism on the prairies, and a transformative vision of a future where Indigenous children can live safely on their homeland.

*Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* has been chosen to open the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 25. The film follows the Boushie family, their lawyers, and others as they seek Justice to this senseless act that caused national and international outrage directed against the Canadian justice system.

The documentary shows Colten's sister, Jade Tootosis, addressing the United Nations. In her April 2018 speech, Jade recommended that the UN Special Rapporteur – an independent expert appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme – undertake a study on the systemic racism and discrimination on Indigenous people within the juridical and legal systems in Canada. Jade received a huge ovation after delivering her speech.

## First Nations Drum – March 27, 2019 (2 of 2)

“This study must produce recommendations to insure the protection of Indigenous families who utilize the judicial and legal system. This will advance our calls on the Canadian government to establish a royal commission on the elimination of racism in the justice system,” said Jade.

Colten’s mother, Debbie Baptise said that she was waiting for her son to come home the evening of her son’s death, when RCMP showed-up at her home.

“I had put Colten’s supper in the microwave, and was waiting for him to get home, when my son told me, look at all those cars coming,” said Baptise. “The cops burst into my home and told me, what’s Colton Bouchie to you?”

Debbie told the police that Colten was her son, upon which they abruptly told her that her son was deceased.

“I was in shock, then the cops held my hands to my back and told me if I had been drinking.”

This was the treatment the RCMP showed on a night when a mother received devastating news that her son had just been killed.

Eleanore Sunchild is one of the Boushie family’s attorneys. The film includes the press conference where Sunchild said that the acquittal sent a message that it’s open season on Indigenous people followed by her calling out a biased judicial system. “But it’s not open season on our people; the whole process was stacked against the Boushie family from the beginning,” added Sunchild.

Sheldon Wuttunee is former chief of the Red Pheasant First Nation. Just before Gerald Stanley’s 2017 second degree murder trial, he told reporters that there was still a little inkling of faith in the legal system.

“I don’t know if ‘justice system’ is the proper term, but when we can use excuses in today’s society as an engine revving, and a vehicle driving into my yard, someone hopping onto my quad, to chasing them [Boushie’s friends] and smashing their windows [referring to Stanley smashing Boushies vehicle windows], kicking their tail-lights, shooting them [again, referring to Stanley shooting], then we’re in a very troubled place,” said Wuttunee.

Wuttunee cites long-standing animosity and racism between whites and indigenous as the root of the problem. “This racism has been around us for many, many generations, this is not strange to us. It is the non-native narrative that usually wins, and that’s got to change,” said Wuttunee.

The film’s opening at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival will make history when it becomes the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open Hot Docs and the first National Film Board (NFB), work to open the festival since its inaugural year. The largest documentary festival in North America, it runs through May 5.

The documentary is a Downstream/ NFB production. The NFB will be rolling out the film via festival, theatrical, and community screenings over the course of this year. CBC will broadcast *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* in the fall. First Nations Drum will publish a review of *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* in the April 2019 issue.

<http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/2019/03/nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up/>

## Hot Docs to screen Iran's "Beloved," "Exodus"

March 28, 2019



TEHRAN – "Beloved" and "Exodus" from Iranian filmmakers to compete in the Hot Docs, North America's largest documentary festival that will be held in the Canadian city of Toronto from April 25 to May 5, the organizers have announced.

Directed by Bahman Giarostami, "Exodus" will be screened in the International Spectrum. It is about thousands of Afghan migrants, which have lined up to leave Iran as the renewed U.S. sanctions have sparked a recession, but first, they must endure interrogations at an immigration center in Tehran.

Earlier in December 2108, "Exodus" was named best film at the 12th Cinema Verite, Iran's major festival of documentary films.

"Beloved" by Yasser Talebi tells the story of Firuzeh, an 82-year-old female cowherd in northern Iran who prefers a hard, solitary herder's existence with her cows to a more comfortable life among people.

The documentary, which will compete in the Hot Docs World Showcase, was screened in the Culinary Cinema section of the 69th Berlin International Film Festival – Berlinale in February.

**Photo: "Exodus" by Bahman Kiarostami will be screened at the 2019 Hot Docs in Toronto, Canada.**



## The five films in Hot Docs' Big Ideas explore how far we've come-and how much farther we have to go



Brought to you by  
**Scotia Wealth Management**

At this year's Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival (April 25–May 6), the films in Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management wrestle with some of the most talked-about issues of our time, as well as telling the stories of two great Canadians. The five documentaries in the series cover an astonishing range of topics: the life of legendary singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot, the long journey to the Hockey Hall of Fame for Willie O'Ree, the NHL's first black player; the effect everyday cosmetics may be having on your health; the science and politics of DNA manipulation; and an moving portrait of the global refugee crisis, directed by art-world superstar Ai Weiwei.

"Documentaries expose us to new ideas and perspectives that educate and strengthen communities. Through Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management, and as Presenting Platinum Partner of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, Scotiabank is proud to once again partner with Hot Docs, an organization that celebrates artists, promotes diversity and inclusion and supports young people." says Laura Curtis Ferrera, Senior Vice President of Marketing, Scotiabank.

With 234 titles from 56 countries—54 per cent of them directed by women—in this year's Toronto festival, Hot Docs audiences are spoiled for choice. Yet the lineup for Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management truly stand out. With extended Q&As and compelling panels composed of film directors, subjects and experts, attendees can gain new perspectives, get to know the people behind the films and perhaps even learn what was left on the cutting-room floor.

"Hot Docs' Big Ideas Series, presented by Scotia Wealth Management, has become a cornerstone of this Festival, and we're thrilled to bring another group of notable artists and newsmakers to speak with audiences about important issues addressed in their films," said Brett Hendrie, Executive Director of Hot Docs. "We're very excited to engage in gripping conversations and an enlightening exchange of ideas with film subjects, directors and experts at this year's event."



## The Rest

War, persecution and poverty are brutal. But it can be agonizing, too, to flee to a place that promises refuge but delivers what feels like disregard: red tape, soaked tents, concrete walls topped with barbed wire and soldiers shouting, “Back, back!” Artist, activist and filmmaker Ai Weiwei follows up his heartrending 2017 film *Human Flow* with an unsettling look at the surreal day-to-day experiences of refugees living in several European countries. Compiled from more than 900 hours of never-before-scene footage from *Human Flow*, *The Rest* presents us with intense images—overflowing boats, refugee camps being torn down, makeshift graveyards. But the voices and stories come from the displaced themselves. *The Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management screening is at 6:30pm on Friday, April 26, at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. The screening is the North American premiere and will have artist, activist and director Ai Weiwei in attendance for the moderated discussion.*



## Human Nature

Is it possible for non-scientists to get their heads around CRISPR, an unexpected characteristic of DNA that can make genetic modification cheap, easy and accurate? Yes, by watching this mind-blowing film. Director Adam Bolt walks viewers through the scientific discoveries that have taken us to the point where we are forced consider the possibility of custom babies. But *Human Nature* is not just for nerds curious about the gene sequence that can make someone immune to HIV. Bolt also explores the startling implications of using CRISPR to not only treat, but also enhance the human body. Along the way, he introduces us to key personalities behind the science, as well as people whose lives have been shaped by quirks in their chromosomes. *The Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management screening is at 6pm on Saturday, April 27, at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. The screening is the Canadian premiere and will have director Adam Bolt with biochemist and leading figure in the “CRISPR revolution,” Jennifer Doudna in attendance for the moderated discussion.*



## Toxic Beauty

With worldwide spending on cosmetics valued at more than half a billion dollars, the beauty industry's creams, powders and gels feel like an inescapable part of modern life, especially for women. But the products we put on our bodies are subject to much less stringent regulations than we think; some catch-all terms like "fragrance" or "flavour" may conceal the presence of untested, potentially dangerous chemicals. *Toxic Beauty* follows the stories of several women, including a medical student who experiments on herself by going cosmetics-free, and a cancer activist who launched a class-action suit against a manufacturing giant. With cases still before the courts in the U.S. and Canada, director Phyllis Ellis has produced a timely critique of what's been called the "second pollution crisis." *The Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management screening is on Sunday, April 28, at 6:30pm at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. The screening is the world premiere and will have director Phyllis Ellis with whistleblower Deane Berg, Dr. Daniel Cramer of the Harvard Cancer Center and Dr. Ami Zota of George Washington University, in attendance for the moderated discussion.*



## Willie

Willie O'Ree, the man who broke the colour barrier in the National Hockey League, was born into one of two black families living in Fredericton, New Brunswick, in the 1930s. Though he grew up "just another kid playing hockey," during his sports career he had racial comments thrown at him at every game he ever played. On a visit back to his old neighbourhood, the question that's buzzing in the air is whether he, at last, will be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. The scenes of O'Ree's childhood

buddies reminiscing about the old times are sweet. But the documentary also examines broader issues about racism in sport, the history of slavery that brought O'Ree's family to New Brunswick and the injury he kept secret for years. *The Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management screening is at 6:30pm on Monday, April 29, at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. The screening is the world premiere and will have director Laurence Mathieu-Leger with Willie O'Ree in attendance for the moderated discussion.*



## Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read my Mind

Canadians of a certain age may have a surprising number of Gordon Lightfoot songs lodged in their brains, from “The Wreck of the Edmond Fitzgerald” to the widely covered “If You Could Read my Mind.” But this comprehensive biography of a former choirboy from Orillia, Ontario, will appeal to anyone with an interest in music, particularly the folk music scene that emerged out of the 1960s. A veritable who's-who of Canadian music, from Anne Murray to Sarah McLachlan, testify to the craftsmanship and influence of the smoothed-voice singer, but the documentary also shines a light on his sometimes-tumultuous domestic life. Yet nobody is harder on Lightfoot than Lightfoot himself—the humility and hubris make him all the more fascinating. *The Big Ideas presented by Scotia Wealth Management screening is at 6:30pm on Tuesday, April 30, at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. The screening is the world premiere and will have directors Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe with Gordon Lightfoot in attendance for the moderated discussion.*

More than 230,000 people are expected to attend the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival this year. Scotiabank's sponsorship of the arts also includes the Scotiabank Giller Prize, Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, Scotiabank Photography Award, the Canadian Photography Institute of the National Gallery of Canada and the New Generation Photography Award.

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DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL

## Hot Docs Preview: Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind



From his beginnings in the 1960s Yorkville scene through his rise to success and up to the present day, there's no denying that Gordon Lightfoot is an absolute legend of Canadian music. *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could read My Mind* takes a look at that legend, examining the life and career of Lightfoot through all of its ups and downs.

Through a mix of archival footage and extensive interviews with Lightfoot himself as well as many other contemporaries and admirers (including Ian and Sylvia, The Good Brothers, Murray McLachlan, Randy Bachman, Ronnie Hawkins, Sarah McLachlan, Steve Earle and um, Alec Baldwin ... yeah, I don't get that last one either), directors Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe delve into Lightfoot's history and influence.

However, the filmmakers don't shy away from looking at some of Lightfoot's darker moments as well, presenting an interesting portrait of the man that will appeal to fans as well as those looking to learn a bit more about an icon of Canadian music.

*Screenings:*

*Sat, Apr 27, 6:45 PM at TIFF Bell Lightbox 1*

*Tue, Apr 30, 6:30 PM Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema*

<http://www.panicmanual.com/2019/04/27/hot-docs-preview-gordon-lightfoot-if-you-could-read-my-mind-joan-tosoni-martha-kehoe-2018/>

## Barbara Kopple says doc comes at a time when U.S. is ‘turning its back’ on refugees

By **Victoria Ahearn**The Canadian Press  
*Tues., April 2, 2019*

TORONTO — Oscar-winning director Barbara Kopple’s latest documentary, “New Homeland,” captures quintessentially Canadian childhood pleasures as teen boys swim in a lake, play dodgeball and portage with canoes at Camp Pathfinder in Algonquin Park.

But behind some of those smiling faces are harrowing stories.

Making its Canadian debut Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto, “New Homeland” — from Cabin Creek Films in partnership with NowThis — begins with footage of decimated buildings and bombings in war-torn regions of Syria and Iraq from which some of the boys and their families fled.

It then follows the families’ journeys as refugees in Canada in 2017, with sponsors who help them build new lives over a year-long period and send the children to the summer camp of boys and young men that has opened its arms to asylum seekers.

“This film comes at a time when the United States has been turning its back on its historic role as a welcomer of refugees in the world, and a time when the Canadians have historically really stepped in to fill those shoes,” Kopple, who grew up in Scarsdale, N.Y., and lives south of the border, said in a recent phone interview.

“I just think that maybe the Canadians can serve to remind the Americans of what they’ve always stood for.”

The director, who won an Oscar for her 1976 doc “Harlan County, U.S.A.” and another for 1991’s “American Dream,” learned about Camp Pathfinder through producer Eric Forman. He grew up in Buffalo, N.Y., spent summers at the camp and heard it had started to accept Syrian and Iraqi refugee children as part of a sponsorship program about two years ago.

Featured in the film are the Zin family from Amuda, Syria; the Majeed family from Baghdad, Iraq; and the Darewish family from Aleppo, Syria. All three live in Toronto and are supported in the film by individuals through private sponsorship groups.

Cameras capture the families as they recall their difficult pasts and state their hopes for themselves and their children. The sponsors speak to why they wanted to help the families.



It's the first time the boys have been to camp and they learn a host of things they'd never done before, from counsellors who are patient and supportive, in a serene wilderness some of them have never known before.

"I think it gave them a real sense of confidence," said Kopple. "The biggest thing is, they made new friends and they overcame their fears."

For teen Omer Majeed, however, it's not an easy transition and he gets sent home early.

"He saw a lot of bad things," said Kopple. "Before they came to Canada he went to Turkey and I guess in Turkey he was afraid for his life."

"And his brother, when he was in Baghdad, saw a club blow up and saw people who had died. And also their father was taken from them. They think he was probably murdered, the father, who was a policeman in Baghdad."

Kopple said the families and sponsors from the film will attend some of the screenings in Toronto, as will some representatives from Camp Pathfinder. She'll also participate in a post-screening Q-and-A at all three showings.

"I wanted to really show who they are as people and what you can do. For me, a refugee is someone who leaves their home but not by choice; it's for their wellbeing," said Kopple.

The film serves as a reminder "to help each other and to ask ourselves how to deal in the role of helping refugees," she added.

"If anything, the takeaway for me in this project is: If our governments won't act, what can each of us do to fill this vacuum?"

# Top 10 must-see films at Hot Docs 2019

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## April 2, 2019 Sonya Davidson Arts, Film

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The 26th annual edition of the **Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival** will showcase 234 documentaries from 56 countries. We are like kids in a candy store as we sift through the list of thought-provoking films that we know will inspire many conversations. The largest North American documentary festival will run April 25 to May 5 in various locations.

Here is what's already catching our attention. Our 10 must-see films at this year's Hot Docs.

**nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up:** Directed by Tasha Hubbard, Canada, World Premiere. Opening Night film

Colten Boushie, a young Cree man from Saskatchewan, was killed on Gerald Stanley's farm in 2016. Stanley was not found guilty and the verdict drew national attention. Filmmaker Tasha Hubbard examines centuries of injustice to the First Nations people and tells the family's story in pursuit of justice.



*Hot Docs 2019 – nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*

**GORDON LIGHTFOOT: IF YOU COULD READ MY MIND:** Directed by Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe, Canada, World Premiere.

Canadian musician and icon Gordon Lightfoot is the focus on this documentary that shares stories about his career, songwriting, and his love for Toronto. At 80 years old, Lightfoot is current recording another album. This is an intimate look at his life long career.



*Hot Docs 2019*

**TOXIC BEAUTY:** Directed by Phyllis Ellis, Canada, World Premiere

It's a multi-billion dollar industry but how do companies get away their claims? With Whistleblower Deane Berg, along with Dr. Daniel Cramer of the Harvard Cancer Center and Dr. Ami Zota of George Washington University, join *Toxic* director Phyllis Ellis to discuss the public health risks of the beauty products we use daily and the

## Toronto Guardian – April 2, 2019 (2 of 3)

explosive lawsuit that's bringing them to light. In addition, a young medical student who uses more than 27 mainstream beauty products each morning in her routine. What happens when she switches over to "green" products?



*Hot Docs 2019*

**PUSH:** Directed by Fredrik Gertten, Sweden, North American Premiere

As skyrocketing housing prices and stagnant incomes squeeze families out of cities worldwide, a newly appointed UN specialist from Ottawa travels from Toronto to Barcelona to London and beyond, fighting to have affordable housing recognized as a human right.

**OUR DANCE REVOLUTION:** Directed by Phillip Pike, Canada, World Premiere.

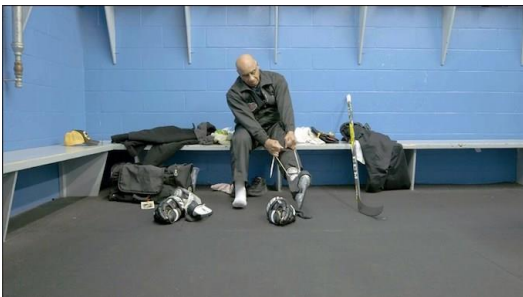
The untold story of Toronto's Black queer community and the history of struggle and triumph from four decades of local legends and freedom fighters.

**THE REST:** Directed by Ai Weiwei, Germany, North American Premiere

From Chinese artist and political activist Ai Weiwei comes a powerful work that follows the daily lives of refugees in Europe as they hang in limbo between a disintegrating humanitarian aid system and intensifying nationalism.

**WILLIE:** Directed by Laurence Mathieu-Leger. USA & Canada. World Premiere

In 1958, Willie O'Ree broke the colour barrier in hockey and went on to become an inspiration for generations of players. Director Laurence Mathieu-Leger and some very special guests to discuss his remarkable life and career and his dedication to eradicating racism in the sport he loves.



*Hot Docs 2019*

**THE WANDERING CHEF:** Directed by Hye-Ryeong Park, South Korea, World Premiere

In this heartwarming ode to family and the healing power of food, Korean celebrity chef Jiho Im mourns the death of a beloved maternal figure in the only way he knows how: cooking 108 delectable dishes over 24 hours.



*Hot Docs 2019*

**PROPAGANDA: THE ART OF SELLING LIES:** Directed by Larry Weinstein, Canada Germany, World Premiere

In our world of “fake news” media outlets are becoming more polarized. From ancient cave drawings to the unbridled stabs of Twitter, every form of media has been exploited in order to sway, awe and intimidate. The intellect is relegated to a distant second place to raw emotion that is fueled by sinister threats and unrealistic promises. Propaganda has been at times relatively innocuous, but at others powerful and deadly, especially in the hands of the most infamously demonic demagogues through the ages. Contemporary artists including Ken Monkman, Shepard Fairey and Ai Weiwei analyze their political charged work in this film.



*Hot Docs 2019*

**NOTHING FANCY: DIANA KENNEDY:** Directed by Elizabeth Carroll, USA, International Premiere

This biographical documentary about 94 year old James Beard Award-winning food writer and foremost authority on Mexican cuisine. People often refer to her as the Julia Child of Mexico, but Diana prefers an edgier given title: “the Mick Jagger of Mexican Cooking”. She lives on her own, completely off-the-grid in the sustainable mountains of Michoacán, Mexico in a solar powered house. she designed and built in the mid 1970s. She recycles rainwater, uses virtually no electricity, and produces almost zero waste. Between her gigantic gardens and a fruit orchard, she grows vegetables, citrus, corn, and her own coffee, which she roasts herself.



*Hot Docs 2019*

The full line up of films screenings can be found at [www.hotdocsfestival.ca](http://www.hotdocsfestival.ca)

<https://torontoguardian.com/2019/04/top-10-hot-docs-2019/>

# Barbara Kopple talks Canadian debut of “New Homeland” at Hot Docs’ Doc Soup

By [Frederick Blichert](#)

April 3, 2019



Academy Award-winning filmmaker [Barbara Kopple](#) is bringing her latest doc *New Homeland* to Toronto, right near where it was shot.

The film follows a group of boys — refugees from Syria and Iraq — as they spend the summer at Algonquin Park’s Camp Pathfinder, a summer camp for boys that invited the newcomers to Canada to experience nature and team building, as countless boys and young men have since the camp first opened in 1914.

*New Homeland* had its world premiere at DOC NYC last November and was co-produced with social media news giant NowThis as the company begins to [expand into long-form content](#) through its new originals division.

The film is produced by Kopple, David Cassidy and Eric Forman for Cabin Creek Films. For NowThis, [Tina Exarhos](#) and Athan Stephanopoulos serve as executive producers and Sarah Frank and Jessica Borovay as producers.

It screens as part of [Doc Soup](#) at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto tonight (April 3) and again April 4 and 6. Each screening will be followed by a Q&A with Kopple.

*Realscreen* caught up with Kopple (pictured, below) to talk about *New Homeland* ahead of its Canadian premiere.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*



**Can you tell me how *New Homeland* came to be?**

It was really important to me to be able to do a film about refugees, and I wanted to do it in Canada, because the Canadians were so incredible.

One of our producers, who’s a guy named Eric Forman, had spent summers of his youth at Camp Pathfinder, and it was an experience — an all-boys camp — that he really loved. He went back to a high school reunion, and there was somebody there who’d gone to Camp Pathfinder with him and said, “you’ll never guess what,

## Realscreen – April 3, 2019 (2 of 2)

[camp director] Mike Sladden is accepting, this summer, for the first time, Syrian and Iraqi young people to go to camp for free, and they're going to sponsor them."

That lit up everything for us. We called Mike. We said, "Listen, we're really invisible, and we would never do anything to hurt anybody or be in somebody's face. We've been doing this a long time. Have some trust and faith in us." And he did. That's how it happened.

### **Are there challenges in taking that approach?**

There aren't really, because we put wireless mics on everybody, and this is something that I've been doing my whole career, so it's pretty easy. Plus, it's kids, and their lives are so full that the adventures that they're on really take over. That's what happened here. Their feelings about each other and meeting new friends, and going swimming for the first time or hiking, doing things they've never done before. They were enthusiastic, and sometimes fearful, and then they felt really great, because they built up their confidence, and a sense that they could overcome their fears.

### **Obviously there's a lot of sadness, a lot of struggle, a lot of political conflict around refugees. Can you tell me about your choice to focus on a much more positive and hopeful story about the refugee crisis?**

I just wanted people to know that these people are like anybody else. A refugee is someone who left their home not by choice but because they had to for their own survival, and so they went through, in a sense, a lot of trauma, and they miss their families.

### **I know this was one of NowThis' first long-form projects as they move into that space. What was it like working with them?**

It was great. We went and did what we do, and they would come over, and we'd show them material. They were really wonderful partners. We had a good time, got to know them. It was a good pairing.

### **What made you bring *New Homeland* to Doc Soup in Toronto?**

It's filmed in Toronto. I couldn't get the families here. I don't know if they're allowed to leave. That's a really big trip for them to come to the U.S. to see it when we showed it at DOC NYC. This way it's really easy. And I'm just really grateful to Hot Docs because they've been wonderful to me and to my films over the years, and they're so supportive. I just adore them.

### **The kids and families haven't seen the film at all?**

No. This will be the first time they see it. With an audience of people. The parents and the kids. I'm sure the kids are going to go gaga when they see themselves up on a screen.

### **Is there anything about the film that stands out for you, that you'd like people to know?**

I think it's really important to talk about the sponsors, and how the sponsors agreed to take this responsibility with their own money, and took care of these families. And also the camp, Camp Pathfinder, for the boys has made an indelible mark in their lives. Hopefully the film will say to a lot more people, "Get up there and do something. Embrace people," which I think would be wonderful.



## Feast Your Eyes: Volume III – Food TV On and Coming to a Screen Near You

*In this week's column we discuss what's currently on television and what you should be looking out for. At the end we are also looking forward to Hot Docs' slate of food documentaries.*

By **Kevin Sachs**  
April 3, 2019



We are back with Feast Your Eyes, our bi-weekly roundup of anything relevant from the realms of television, film, and food. After the excitement of the past month, which brought back Food TV gems such as [Queer Eye](#) and [Chef's Table](#), we have hit a bit of a dip. There are however, a number of interesting announcements and still binge-worthy programs out right now.

### On TV Right Now

#### The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C

Everybody loves the Great British Bake Off (/Baking Show for North Americans). Many of you probably like Nailed it! on Netflix. Who here doesn't want to see celebrities fail? The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C combines all of these passions. SU2C stands for Stand Up to Cancer and is a UK-wide campaign to raise funds for cancer research. The show works essentially like your normal Bake Off:

Prue Leith and Paul Hollywood are the judges, Sandi Toksvig and Noel Fielding remain as the hosts. The SU2C Bake Off, which concluded last night, has a new slate of (mostly British) celebrities from the realms of comedy, acting, sports and politics in every episode. This season, Russell Brand, John Lithgow, Big Narstie, and Jeremy Paxman among others, try their hand at baking in the tent. For viewers outside the UK, it is quite difficult to watch, but you'll find suitable streaming links on [Reddit](#). It is after all, comedic Food TV at its finest.

#### The Calling

The Calling is an Indian food and travel show, which Netflix made widely available on April 1. The concept is slightly reminiscent of The Amazing Race, but with much nicer contestants and the journey being confined to India. At every stop, the three contestants Preethi, Gaurav, and Atmaj compete in local challenges. The winner of a challenge wins 1000 miles (the shows equivalent of points) and a "curated experience". The two losers each get to curate said experiences. At the end of each episode the winner chooses the preferred experience

## Dine Magazine – April 3, 2019 (2 of 3)

and the respective curator gains 900 miles. The loser wins 800 miles. Over the course of the season all the miles get tabulated and the winner at the end wins “India’s Best Job”: A food and travel scholarship.

### Canadian Roundup

With the American cable cooking shows mostly on hiatus, the Canadian Food Network has just kicked off its Spring Food TV slate:

- *Top Chef Canada* just premiered its 7th season
- *Masterchef Canada* will return later this week with season six.
- The Food Network just launched a new show revolving around Barbecue. *Fire Masters* airs Thursdays at 10pm.

Coming up in Food TV

### Street Food

The crew behind Netflix’s *Chef’s Table* is bringing a show about street food to the streaming giant. Not many details are public at this time. We know that season one will have nine episodes focussing on street food in Asia. From the only available promotional material we can deduce that one of the restaurants/food stalls is Raan Jay Fai. The Thai curbside eatery is the [first food stall to be awarded a Michelin star](#) in the 2018 edition. Street Food will give David Gelb and his team the chance to tell stories like the *Chef’s Table* episodes about South Philly Barbacoa and Caffè Sicilia – small eateries of well made local food. Netflix will publish the series on **April 26**. Keep an eye out for our episode breakdown.



Source: Netflix

### Comfort Me With Apples

New York Times critic Ruth Reichl [announced](#), that Netflix secured the rights to her best-selling memoir *Comfort Me With Apples*. The book focusses on Reichl’s early days as a food writer. The live-action series will consist of eight episodes. Netflix has not commented on further details at this stage. It is not the first time, that Ruth Reichl’s autobiographic writing was supposed to reach our screens. In 2011, her memoir *Garlic and Sapphires* was picked up by a Hollywood studio to turn into a feature film. Allegedly, Anne Hathaway was attached, but never confirmed to play the part of Reichl. The project subsequently never saw the light of day. Let’s hope that this new project doesn’t suffer the same fate.

Food Documentaries at Hot Docs 2019

The Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival is the biggest documentary festival this side of the pond. Every year hundreds of non-fiction works vie for the favour of the jury, distributors and audiences alike. An important component within the doc field are food documentaries. Some of the most famous culinary docs got their start or final push at the highly-regarded festival. This year is no exception:

**Kings of Pastry**

We are starting with a film that is 10 years old. In *Kings of Pastry*, 16 pastry chefs from around the world face three days of back-breaking competition at the Meilleurs Ouvriers de France. Hot Docs shows the film in its Food & Film series and the audience can enjoy delicious pastries before the film. Tickets can be purchased [here](#).

**The Wandering Chef**

Jiho Im is a globally celebrated chef, known for travelling from one end of the Korean peninsula to the other, foraging for unique ingredients known for their medicinal properties and preparing delightful meals for unsuspecting locals. It is the heartwarming story of how food can bring people together in times of clarity, confusion and loss. Through Chef Jiho Im, we are meant to rediscover food as a sacred practice that can generate lifelong memories. [Tickets](#)

**Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy**

Master chef, teacher and environmental activist Diana Kennedy is living proof that size has nothing to do with strength. Now in her 90s and barely five feet tall, she's a fierce jolt of energy that has become one of the most celebrated culinary legends of Mexican cuisine. Aware of her own mortality, she works tirelessly to solidify her legacy with the hope of turning her home into a foundation for culinary education in Mexico. *Nothing Fancy* is a charming homage to a culinary trailblazer and a true inspiration. Like *Kings of Pastry*, it also competes in Hot Docs' Food & Film series. The corresponding food event however, is already sold out.

**Alla Salute**

Charismatic food presenter Nicola Difino had a career that was taking off. His cooking series *Breakfast Club*, featuring vegan, vegetarian and traditional Italian dishes, had barely gone online when an unexpected diagnosis hit: cancer. Food had already inspired his motto, "Happiness can be found everywhere...It's better if you find it at the table." But his recipes now had to guide the shell-shocked Difino on a deeper search for meaning. Part interview, part cooking lesson, part road trip, *Alla Salute* seeks out Difino's chef, poet and philosopher friends to share their thoughts about life's greater purpose—and the dishes their dear friend craves, but can't eat.

<https://www.dinemagazine.com/feast-your-eyes-volume-iii-food-tv-on-and-coming-to-a-screen-near-you/>

**“Sex-Positive and Non-Exploitative, with a Big Piece of Questioning who is getting Representation”: Lisa Vandever on Celebrating CineKink NYC’s Sweet Sixteen**



April 3, 2019

By: Lauren Wissot

For the past 16 years [CineKink NYC](#) co-founder and director Lisa Vandever has been on a mission to not only showcase the best in sex-positive films — from narrative to nonfiction, features to shorts, high camp to deep drama — but also support their brave indie creators (who are very rarely straight white males). To that end, the upcoming edition (April 3-7) will see its first CineKink Artist Spotlight award bestowed on feminist pornographer Jennifer Lyon Bell, whose erotic work Vandever has been continuously championing since 2006.

*Filmmaker* was fortunate that Vandever found time for a brief chat in the midst of frenzied last-minute preparations a few days prior to opening night.

**Filmmaker:** So there’s been this big, post-#MeToo push for gender parity at film festivals around the world, which is something I think CineKink has done naturally. I may be wrong, but I believe you’ve always programmed as many, if not more, films by female directors as by men. Have you always made a conscious effort to showcase flicks by women (and queer folk, and POCs, for that matter) — or are people from marginalized communities just the ones making the kinky films?

**Vandever:** This year, since there are campaigns out there now to record the specific balance, I worked out our ratio for this season at something like 52% women, with another 15% gender-fluid and non-identified. Though, to note, this year is a little skewed by our “In The Dark” program, which includes mostly gay, male-identified filmmakers.

Our balance over the years has definitely been towards female-identified directors, though that’s an anecdotal observation. One frustration, I feel we often get shrugged off because of our focus on sexuality. I feel like I’ve nominated, for example, feminist porn icon Candida Royalle multiple times for some women-directors database or another and yet she still goes missing. And I suspect we have a larger balance of “marginalized” communities sending us work, especially if they’re not feeling welcomed by more established adult entities.

**Filmmaker:** I mentioned that I saw your opening night film *The Artist & The Pervert* at last year’s Hot Docs — something I don’t think I could have said when you first started the fest. With the mainstreaming of kink in recent years it seems more and more top-tier festivals are embracing ever-edgier material. So can you discuss the pros and cons of this trend? Do you find it easier to program artistic films these days? Harder now since you may be competing with higher-profile festivals?

**Vandever:** On the pro side, we’re really not that concerned with other festival premieres. In fact, I’ve encouraged filmmakers to come back to us after they’ve played out their appearances in a prominent festival. The audience that sought out *The Artist & The Pervert* at DOC NYC is probably not much of an overlap with the one that might show up for the same documentary at CineKink a few months later.

## Filmmaker Magazine – April 3, 2019 (2 of 2)

We've always had the problem, though, of kinky films getting snapped up at Sundance or the like. And then seemingly disappearing into some kind of distribution oblivion. It's frustrating tracking films that never quite reach an audience since they're not connecting with the kink communities. Now I just try to focus on what I think our audiences will enjoy, without breaking our bank. Fortunately, we have lots more quality, viable options than we did when CineKink was just starting out.

**Filmmaker:** You've been taking CineKink on tour for awhile now. So how does audience reaction differ from place to place? Are some cities more kink enthusiastic than others?

**Vandever:** I really love our tour screenings! CineKink NYC is, of course, our jumping-off point, but it is such a struggle to find an audience in New York, with so many competing events. We encounter much more enthusiasm out on tour — Portland, Austin, Seattle and Oakland being our recent prime spots.

**Filmmaker:** This year CineKink alum Jennifer Lyon Bell is premiering her “experimental erotic game” themed *Adorn* at the fest and receiving the inaugural CineKink Artist Spotlight award. [I actually experienced her debut VR piece](#) at last year's CPH:DOX, which made me wonder if an immersive component is in the works for your festival as well. With a lot of today's new technology being driven by the porn industry (no surprise) I'm guessing there are quite a few fascinating projects out there.

**Vandever:** I'm really thrilled to be presenting Jennifer Lyon Bell with our first-ever CineKink Artist Spotlight award. Jennifer's work has always been an inspiration, from her short film *Headshot*, which we screened in 2006, through this latest film, *Adorn*. I love how she's able to combine a narrative drive (my personal fetish) with explicit imagery. (And sound. I realized once, QC'ing our playback of her CineKink award-winning short *Matinee*, how important a component that is.)

And I'm also pleased to have her presenting her workshop [“From Fantasy to Film: Design Your Own Porn Film”](#) during the festival (Sunday, April 7th at 2PM). She gives a fantastic overview of what's involved in conceptualizing, and possibly even making a film that is in line with one's personal erotic sensibilities.

As to the VR aspect, I understand the excitement for a new technology, but don't feel it offers the sense of communal engagement that is so much a part of the festival experience. Nor the same level of personal connection. And truly, that's what I respond to in all of the works we consider for CineKink, explicit and otherwise. On the other hand, we'd certainly consider presenting VR at the festival, but I have yet to find someone who would like to champion the technology, to take on the work that would be involved in producing that particular component.

**Filmmaker:** What are the greatest challenges in keeping an indie niche festival afloat for so long?

**Vandever:** Bolstering enthusiasm in the face of not terribly existent revenue streams. Everyone seems to think that “sex sells,” but we haven't really found that to be the case. Or at least maybe not with the type of sex we're selling — sex-positive and non-exploitative, with a big piece of questioning who is getting representation. I know that other festivals feel the struggle of getting an audience into the seats, but we also face sex-negative policies on the part of the very tools that might help us get out the word — social media, email providers, video platforms and the like. It feels like we're always having to tiptoe around the possibility of getting bumped.

That said, we have cultivated a wonderful audience over the years. The moment they connect with our latest festival offerings makes those challenges all feel worth it.

<https://filmmakermagazine.com/107301-sex-positive-and-non-exploitative-with-a-big-piece-of-questioning-who-is-getting-representation-lisa-vandever-on-celebrating-cinekink-nycs-sweet-sixteen/#.XNHcDxRKjcs>




## Canadian Films at Hot Docs 2019



Still image from nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up courtesy of NFB. Photo: © Jon Montes


Canadian Films at Hot Docs 2019

by Ralph Lucas – Publisher

(April 3, 2019 – Toronto, ON) There are 20 films in Hot Docs' Canadian Spectrum this year, but there are other films screening in other programs and the opening film is also Canadian. In fact, we found 62 Canadian titles spread throughout the festival's annual Screening Schedule magazine, a vital resource for festival-goers. Today we'll look at some of them. 

The honour of holding the Opening Night position this year goes to a disturbing film by award-winning Indigenous filmmaker Tasha Hubbard. Her first solo writing/directing project, *Two Worlds Colliding*, premiered at imagineNATIVE in 2004 and won the Canada Award at the Gemini Awards in 2005. Her new feature documentary, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* (pictured above), is a personal exploration into the death of Colten Boushie.

On August 9, 2016, the 22-year-old Boushie, a resident of the Cree Red Pheasant First Nation, died from a gunshot to the back of his head after he and his friends entered the rural property of Gerald Stanley, located near Biggar, Saskatchewan. The jury's subsequent acquittal of Stanley captured international attention and raised questions about racism embedded within Canada's legal system. There is a two-pronged approach here through much of this almost 100-minute documentary. In part it follows the legal procedure that resulted in the verdict it did, which propelled the young man's family to take their case to the United Nations. The trial and subsequent events are fairly straight forward, but the second and stronger element in this film is the racism that surfaced, or resurfaced, following Boushie's death. If you thought that just because this is Canada and we are perceived as being "nice, polite people," there are parts of this film that act like a blunt instrument awakening you to realities you may have thought or hoped didn't exist.

Hubbard seemed to have unfettered access to the family and friends of Colten Boushie, which makes the film highly personal, so much so that she uses some of the screen time to examine her own family. 

*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, an NFB co-production, screens 3 times during the festival. In addition to its World Premiere on Opening Night at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, it will also play on Saturday, April 27 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox and on Saturday May 4 at the Isabel Bader Theatre.



Not in the Canadian Spectrum, the film *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* should be on your schedule.



## Northern Stars – April 3, 2019 (2 of 2)

It's part of the Special Presentations section of the festival and it only screens twice. The 90-minute documentary follows his career from rural Ontario to Greenwich Village to stardom and stadium performances. Following the film's World Premiere on Saturday, April 27, the second screening a few days later is part of the Big Ideas program. These are live events attached to certain films. Lightfoot will be joined on stage by co-directors Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe to talk about his life and career. This screening and live discussion takes place at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Tuesday April 30 at 6:30PM.



Persister is a new program at Hot Docs. Described as “Women Speaking Up and Being Heard,” this section also offers a Panel Discussion on Saturday May 4 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, which is **free** to attend. Only one Canadian film is in the program and it is titled *Because We Are Girls*. Directed by Baljit Sangra, the film follows Indo-Canadian sisters who finally bring an abuser to court. It screens on May 1 and 2 at the Scotiabank Theatre and again on May 3 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

We've already covered *Pipe Dreams*. It's not in the Canadian Spectrum but screens as part of the Artscapes program. It screens on April 28 at the Scotiabank, April 30 at TIFF Bell Lightbox and May 3 at the Isabel Bader Theatre on the University of Toronto Campus.

There are 10 Canadian productions in the DOCX program, 8 of them fall within the Virtual Reality and Interactive part of DOCX. Three of the VR shorts are based on the award-winning feature documentary *Anthropocene*. The Virtual Reality and Interactive part of DOCX is **free** at the Autodesk Technology Centre at 661 University Avenue. There are a couple of films and a live performance as part of this program as well.



Another Canadian film in the Special Presentations program is *Gaza*. If documentaries are supposed to make you think, and provoke discussion, this is one of those films. Shot entirely from the perspective of a few citizens of this small strip of territory, these are people who wish for a normal life, a productive life, a safe life, yet are seemingly trapped between the ambitions of Hamas, which has run the territory since 2007, and the Israeli military who must retaliate to protect its people. There are some two million people who live in an area 41 kilometres long and somewhere between 6 and 12 kilometres wide. It is one of the most densely populated places on earth, yet it is cut off from the rest of world, its people unable to travel, unable to escape. *Gaza*, directed by Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell, screens three times including April 30 at the TIFF BellLightbox, May 1 at the Isabel Bader Theatre and finally on May 3 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

We will look at the films in the Canadian Spectrum a little closer to the opening day, but you can [check them out online here](#).

The Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival runs from April 25 to May 5.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/canadian-films-at-hot-docs-2019/>

## THE INVISIBLES: TRUE-LIFE STORY PROPELLED BY DOC ASPECT BUT HOBbled BY RE-ENACTMENTS

April 4, 2019

By Liam Lacey

Rating: **C**

Dramatic re-enactments, the bane of TV tabloid news magazine shows, always raise categorical problems. Is this news or entertainment? These issues are at the heart of *The Invisibles*, a hybrid documentary-drama by German director Claus Räfle which tells the story of four Jews who survived — by luck, courage and skill — in Berlin through the duration of the Second World War.



A scene from *The Invisibles*.

In 1933, the German capital was home to about 160,000 Jews. After years of Jewish emigration, followed by the mass deportations to the camps, in 1943, Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels declared there were no Jews left in Germany. In fact, about 7,000 Jews, sometimes known as “U-Boats” continued to live underground in Berlin, sometimes sheltered by German families or in various forms of disguise.

After interviewing more than 20 of these survivors, Räfle decided to focus on the stories of four of them, two women and two men: Hanni Levy, Ruth Gumpel, Cioma Schonhaus and Eugen Friede. Hanni, an orphan, was homeless. She changed her name, dyed her hair blond to look more German, and spent her days hiding in movie theatres, fearful that someone might recognize her. Ruth and a friend pretended to be young widows, then worked as a domestic for a Nazi officer who knew she was Jewish.

Cioma, an art-school graduate, forged hundreds of passports, making enough money to buy food stamps and even a used sailboat before making his escape. Eugen not only hid but worked actively with a network of socialists and Christians, writing leaflets to undermine the Nazi cause. These stories, calmly told by their aged but able subjects, have an understated matter-of-factness that reminds us how some experiences can't be put into words.

The second dramatic part of the film is where the trouble lies. The scripted re-enactments of the stories illustrate the stories, with attractive young actors and actresses in period dress and historically appropriate interiors. Ruth (played by Ruby O. Fee) as a 17-year-old, strategically serving black-market wine and food to rooms full of drunken Nazi officers. Eugen Friede (Aaron Altaras) hides behind doors while Gestapo inspectors tramp through his home, and distributes leaflets to undermine the Nazi war effort. Most memorable, perhaps, is Max Mauff's Cioma, the forger, privately terrified, publicly brazen. There are overlapping stories involving the notorious young Jewish informer Stella Goldschlag (Laila Marie Witt) who sold out other Jews to save herself.

*The Invisibles* doesn't feel offensive but it is awkwardly misjudged. The dramatic action and music borrow from the vocabulary of a thriller, intended to make the stories relatable to a young audience but before the dramatic characters are allowed to develop, the film shifts to the interview subjects.

In between are bits of vaguely relevant black-and-white archival footage of Berlin during the war. Neither version of the film — the talking-heads documentary or the period drama — has the depth to achieve much impact.

*The Invisibles*. Directed by Claus Räfle. Written by Claus Räfle and Alejandra Lopez. With subjects Cioma Schonhaus, Hanni Levy, Eugen Friede and Ruth Gumpel. Starring Aaron Altaras, Max Mauff, Alice Dwyer, Ruby Fee, Victoria Schultz, Florian Lukas, Andreas Schmidt and Sergei Moya and Lucas Reiber. Opens April 5 at Toronto's Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema, Hamilton's Playhouse Cinema and Ottawa's Mayfair Cinema.

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2019/4/4/the-invisibles-true-life-story-propelled-by-doc-aspect-but-hobbled-by-re-enactments>

## ‘The Invisibles’ Brings the Past to Life

*Effective doc-drama hybrid highlights stories of Holocaust survivors*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 4th, 2019



Hanni (Alice Dwyer) in *The Invisibles*  
Greenwich Entertainment

### ***The Invisibles: We Want to Live***

(Germany, 110 min.)

Dir. Claus Räfle

Past, present, fact, and fiction weave an effective collage in *The Invisibles*. This powerful doc-drama hybrid tells the story of the 1700-odd German Jews who disappeared beneath the surface of Berlin and survived for years, long after Joseph Goebbels declared the city “free of Jews” in 1943. *The Invisibles* thrusts audiences into the lives of four of these survivors—Cioma Schönhaus, Hanni Lévy, Ruth Arndt, and Eugen Friede—as they escape the Nazi death camps by going undercover and blending into the action of everyday Berlin thanks to the help of some German allies, keen survival skills, and fortunate luck. The survivors tell their stories in interviews while director Claus Räfle offers dramatic re-enactments of the Berliners’ lives to immerse audiences in the “invisible” world of wartime Germany. It’s a gripping tale of survival.

*The Invisibles* features compelling interviews from the survivors as they recall their experiences to Räfle. Their testimonies are recorded separately in conversations shot several years ago, but the memories are vivid and the details extraordinary. Each subject outlines an impressive survival story as he or she recalls the details that saved a life.

These interviews are dispersed throughout extensive dramatic interpretations of the survivors’ stories, reminding audiences that truth can be wilder than fiction. Cioma Schönhaus describes how he escaped the camps by recognizing the need for skilled labourers and telling a Nazi officer about his success (somewhat embellished) making bullets for the Germans. The younger Cioma, played by Max Mauff in the dramatizations, then survives by touring in and out of residences intended for billeting German officers. As the elder Schönhaus recalls small details, like making his bed in a host’s home, that could provide a few extra nights of safe shelter.

Schönhaus’s story is perhaps the strongest of them as he connects with the larger network of Jews hiding in Germany. Working as a forger to use his passion for art to aid his survival, the young man creates falsified passports and travel documents to help save the lives of fellow Jews. This side work brings considerable risks, but it also offers fair rewards as Schönhaus enjoys extra food stamps, which he can sell on the black market and live far more comfortably than his fellow “invisibles” who survive on any scraps they can.

Hanni Lévy, played in dramatic re-enactments by Alice Dwyer, describes how she survived by bleaching her hair and blending in among the crowds. Her narrative is like one of a flâneuse as she floats through Berlin, admiring shop displays and going to the movies to kill time and find shelter. Dwyer and Mauff are arguably the standouts of

the narrative cast and make the most of their characters as Cioma and Hanni come fully to live with extra nuances and sparks, while Hanni's physical transformation is especially striking as she looks sicker by the scene, drained by lack of food and exhaustion from roaming the streets.

Ruth Arndt (Ruby O. Fee) also finds solace in the local cinema as she and her friend Ellen (Viktoria Schulz) find them a great site of refuge for the same reasons that Hanni does. The elder Arndt speaks of finding work in the home of a Nazi officer, and the dramatic scenes show how her younger self flirted cautiously with the enemy to avoid detection while serving parties of Hitler's men. Ruth, like Cioma, experiences a relatively comfortable life compared to the other invisibles given that her situation provides shelter and work, which helps her send food and money to her family members scattered throughout the city.

Finally, Eugen Friede, played by Aaron Altaras, occupies the middle ground of the other stories. While his tale is also one of relatively comfortable survival as he moves from home to home aided by a series of noble Berliners eager to do their part to help Jews survive the Nazi regime, the elder Friede describes memories of being shuffled from house to house and living in restless edginess as one had to measure every move to avoid irritating a noble host, most of whom were also on edge given that they were risking their lives to shelter a Jew. Unlike the others, who enjoy daylight and the outdoors in their stories, Friede's tale confines itself to interiors as he finds love with a host family's daughter or survives sequestered in small quarters with a family of four.

The survivors of *The Invisibles* do not intersect, but they are linked by minor characters, like Stella Goldschlag (Laila Maria Witt), a seductive Jewish woman who informed on her fellow Jews for the Nazis and crossed paths with both Cioma and Ruth. The characters are mostly united by common themes. Coming from different backgrounds and classes, they're united by the will to live. They're also connected by the heroism of everyday Berliners, people who risked their lives by standing out from the pack of wartime Germany and broke from the ideology of a single pure race. The interviewees all note their thanks to key people who helped save lives, in some cases at the expense of their own, and the dramatic counterparts do justice to their stories.

Räfle composes dramatic sequences that are superior to the average hybrid dramatic thread—the dramatic elements of many hybrids often resemble cheap British television—and *The Invisibles* honours the stories of the survivors with handsomely composed scenes that recreate wartime Berlin with striking details and authenticity. Even though the outcome for the four survivors is evident in their presence as elderly interviewees, the narrative threads remain consistently compelling as we watch the characters drift imperceptibly throughout the city. *The Invisibles* features a patchwork of archival elements to enhance the non-fiction character, but these snippets are mostly filler, like old B-roll, that evoke a sense of time and place. The strength of the dramatic elements also highlights the most effective element of the doc-drama hybrid structure: that of absence. There simply aren't archival elements with which to tell this tale. The absence of photographs, records, films, and texts underscores the complete invisibility of the Jews who had to make themselves disappear, as well as the number of lives lost. The interplay of drama and documentary brings the past to life and makes the record of the four survivors all the essential.

*The Invisibles* opens in Toronto on Friday, April 5 at [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#). Pat Mullen is POV's Online Co-editor, etc. He covers film at [Cinemablographer.com](#), and has contributed to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Paste, BeatRoute, That Shelf and other outlets and is a member of the Toronto Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society. You can reach him at [@cinemablogrpher](#)

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/the-invisibles-brings-the-past-to-life>

# The cat's meow,' says Gordon Lightfoot of the idea of a feature film about his life

JANE STEVENSON

Updated: April 4, 2019

Gordon Lightfoot's notable life is appearing in all forms currently.

There was Nicholas Jennings' 2017 bestselling biography, *Lightfoot*, and a new 2019 documentary, *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*, directed by Martha Kehoe and Joan Tosoni, which will have its world premiere at Toronto's Hot Docs on April 27 before it gets a theatrical release in early summer and TV broadcast on CBC in the fall.

So the next thing could be a feature film right?

Sure, says the 80-year-old folk-pop legend who is touring southern Ontario including two dates on April 15-16 at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga.

"Well, I mean if somebody wanted to take it on," said Lightfoot with a laugh. "I'm sure there's some out there that would jump at the opportunity, who could really get into it with vigour."

Just don't ask him if he knows who should play him.

"No," said Lightfoot. "That's always such a thing to think about. My goodness. Wouldn't that just be the cat's meow if anybody ever did that? I wouldn't care. Whatever anybody wants to do. It's a free world. We live in a free world, thank goodness. If they do, I'll try and help them. If it came down to that I would try to offer some input but I would not spend a whole lot of time. But I could certainly add something."

We caught up with Lightfoot recently on the phone in Toronto.

**What can you tell me about the new documentary?**

We worked on that over the last three-and-a-half years with Insight Productions.

**Have you seen it?**

No, of course not! It'll be the first time for me (on April 27).

**Is it true you have 14 new songs ready to go for a brand-new studio album that would be your first in 15 years?**

Yeah, I've got a whole bunch of material that I wrote a long time ago that I discovered one day while cleaning out my office. It was a very, very lucky day. They go back to about the turn of the century, 2001, just before the (stomach) aneurysm (in 2002). And let me tell you this. I had already chosen a number of tunes for the *Harmony* album (recorded in 2001 but not released until 2004) while I was still in the hospital getting over the first series of operations. I had seven operations. I was out cold for six weeks. I had no idea how close it came.

**What approach might you take with the new album?**

I'm half-tempted to let the whole thing go solo. I'm trying to figure that out right now. That would be really interesting. I remember when Bruce Springsteen did that with his (1982) *Nebraska* album. It could be (just me and my acoustic guitar) or I could go in with my orchestra and we could start working on the stuff that

## Montreal Gazette – April 4, 2019 (2 of 2)

works into the fall. What I'm trying to say is, I would like to get on with it because I'm not getting any younger, let's put it that way.

### **So when do we get to hear it?**

Well, if I do it this way (solo acoustic), it'd probably come out in the fall. You don't want to come out short and you don't want to come out long. Albums can be too long and you wind up with a couple of sleepers. So like 10-12 (songs). I don't like 11. I've got a couple of newer ones too that I want to record, demos, which will also be originals.

### **How are you feeling at the ripe old age of 80?**

I feel that I move slower and my mouth dries out. (Laughs). I forget names.

### **But you're still touring a lot so you must be feeling okay?**

We've got the crowd these days. Everywhere we go anywhere now usually we're full. So we're just going to cruise along and hope that everybody stays healthy.

### **You closed Toronto's Massey Hall last year before two years of renovations. Do you expect you will reopen it again?**

Probably. They will do whatever they want. (They haven't asked) not to my knowledge yet, but how could I not be there? For openers. The only thing that could happen is that it could be some kind of a health issue or something like that. So we always try to stay prepared for that mentally. We'll see if they want me. If they want me, I'll be there.

—

### **Gordon Lightfoot 2019 Canadian tour dates:**

04/03 Richmond Hill Centre For The Performing Arts, Richmond Hill, ON ( 04/05-06 Empire Theatre, Belleville, ON

04/08 Talk Is Free Georgian Theatre, Barrie, ON

04/09 Stockey Centre For The Performing Arts, Parry Sound, ON

04/11-12 Partridge Hall First Ontario Arts Centre, St. Catharines, ON

04/13 The Meeting House , Oakville, ON

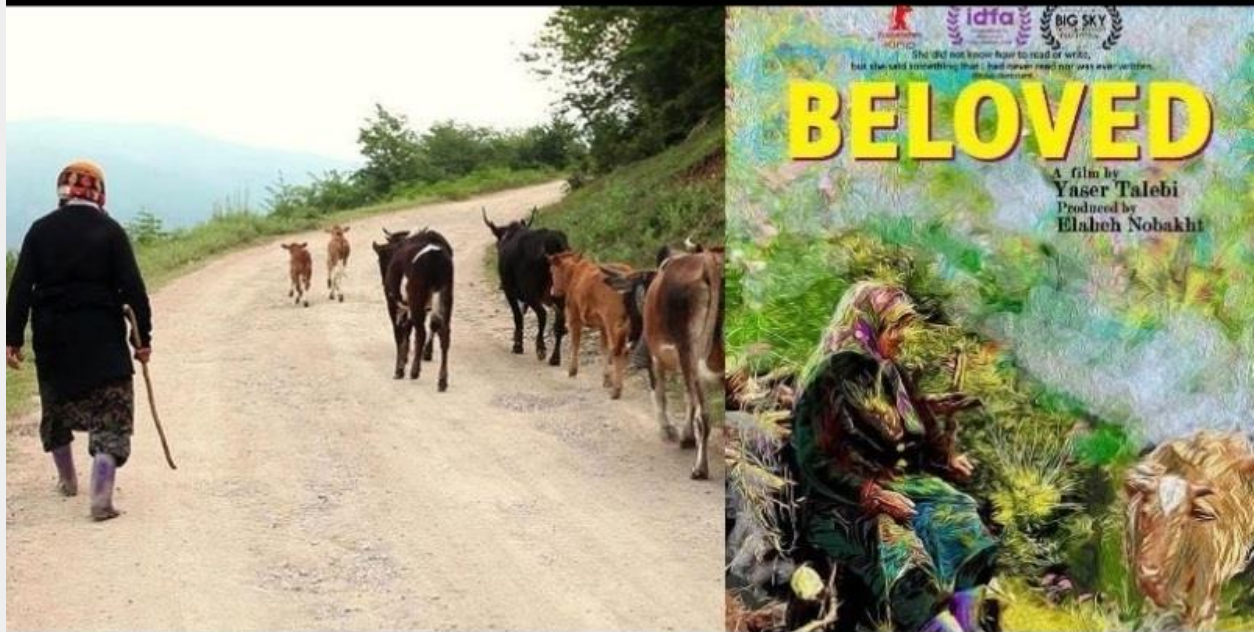
04/15-16 Living Arts Centre, Mississauga, ON



## The Beloved' in Canada

*Tehran, April 6, IRNA - 'The Beloved', an Iranian documentary reached the competition section of the 'Showcase of the World' of Canada's Hot Docs Festival.*

*April 6, 2019*



The 26th International Documentary Film Festival of 'Hot Docs' will be held from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto, Canada, and will feature a documentary 'The Beloved' directed by Yasser Talebi and produced by Elaheh Nobakht in its ninth international debut in the 'Showcase of the World' competition.

Canada's 'Hot Docs' Festival is the most significant and greatest documentary film event in the North American film market. The festival, one of the most important venues for viewing and discussing outstanding documentaries of the year, is based on the promotion and production of documentary films in the world, and more than 200 films are featured every year, and about 2000 documentary filmmakers, producers, purchasers and distributors from around the world will attend the festival.

'The Beloved' is one of the few Iranian documentaries to be featured in the leading festivals IDFA, Berlin and Hot Docs.

The film is now at the 38th Istanbul International Festival, which will open from April 5 in Turkey and will continue until April 15. In this festival, the documentary 'The Beloved' is competing with the cinematic works of the selected festivals in Cannes, Berlin, Toronto, and from France, Belgium, Sweden, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, USA, Russia, Lithuania. In the main part of the Istanbul Festival, there are two feature films and 10 films.

## **‘Beloved’ to hit Canadian silver screen**

April 6, 2019



**Iranian documentary, ‘Beloved,’ directed by Yasser Talebi, reached the competition section of the 26th Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival slated for April 25 to May 5 in Toronto, Canada.**

Canada’s Hot Docs festival is the most significant and greatest documentary film event in the North American film market. The festival, one of the most important venues for viewing and discussing outstanding documentaries of the year, is based on the promotion and production of documentary films in the world; over 200 films are featured every year, and about 2,000 documentary filmmakers, producers, purchasers and distributors from around the world will attend the festival, IRNA wrote.

‘Beloved’ is one of the few Iranian documentaries to be featured in the leading festivals, IDFA, Berlin and Hot Docs.

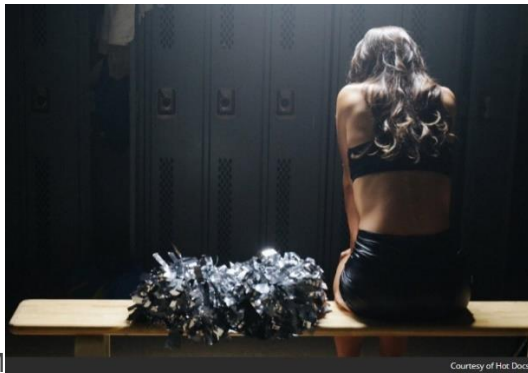
The film is now at the 38th Istanbul International Festival, which opened on April 5 and will continue until April 15. In this festival, the documentary, ‘Beloved,’ is competing with cinematic works of selected festivals in Cannes, Berlin, Toronto; they are from France, Belgium, Sweden, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, USA, Russia, and Lithuania.

## 12 must-see films about and directed by women at Hot Docs 2019

*The majority of docs playing at this year's fest were directed by women. Here are a few that we're excited to see*

BY MICHELLE DA SILVA

APRIL 9, 2019



7:00 AM

Courtesy of Hot Docs

Canadian director Yu Gu investigates the NFL in *A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem*.

Films directed by women make up the majority of documentaries at this year's Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival. Of the 234 features and shorts representing 56 countries, women made 54 per cent of them.

Part of that is thanks to the Redux program, aimed at highlighting Canadian documentaries made by women. This year, selections include *Capturing Reality: The Art Of Documentary*, a 2008 film by the late Pepita Ferrari that puts 33 documentarians in front of the camera. Also part of the program is Dionne Brand's *Long Time Comin'*, which charts the work of two queer Black artists in 1993.

Of course, the festival also showcases stories about strong, admirable women. Ask Dr. Ruth recalls the 40-year career of the legendary sex therapist and *XY Chelsea* spotlights U.S. military whistleblower Chelsea Manning. However, both features were directed by men.

Here are 12 films directed by women that shouldn't be missed.

### ADVOCATE

Israeli human rights lawyer Lea Tsemel has spent her career defending Palestinians against criminal charges. Now 74, she is steadfast in her beliefs, despite tensions in her relationships and public hostility. Directors Rachel Leah Jones and Philippe Bellaïche cut between present-day trials and archival imagery to offer in-depth access to a biased judicial system and a woman with uncompromising principles.

*Apr 28, 6 pm, Scotiabank 4; Apr 29, 3:30 pm, TBLB 2; May 5, 6:15 pm, Isabel Bader*

## AMERICAN FACTORY

Oscar-nominated directors Julia Reichert and Steven Bognar look at a General Motors plant in Ohio that reopened in 2014 after a Chinese billionaire purchased it. Local blue-collar workers were once again employed, but this time alongside Chinese employees. American Factory, which was picked up by Netflix after its premiere at Sundance, discusses issues of culture clash and machine versus human labour in a rapidly changing industry.

*Apr 30, 6 pm, Isabel Bader; May 2, 10:30 am, TBLB 1; May 4, 6 pm, Isabel Bader; May 5, 4:15 pm, TBLB 1*

## A WOMAN'S WORK: THE NFL'S CHEERLEADER PROBLEM

Vancouver-raised Yu Gu returns to Hot Docs with an investigation into the exploitation of women in the National Football League. Cheerleaders must adhere to strict rules about body image, uniforms and rehearsals while being paid less than minimum wage. Risking their careers, a group of women seek justice.

*Apr 30, 8:30 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 2, 9 pm, Isabel Bader; May 4, 12:30 pm, Fox Theatre*

## BECAUSE WE ARE GIRLS

Three sisters raised in Williams Lake, BC, reveal their family's dark secret: their cousin sexually abused them as children. Director Baljit Sangra connects their toxic upbringing in a large, insular Punjabi-Canadian family, where women and girls were expected to be subservient and obedient, to larger cultural ideals reinforced by Bollywood films.

*May 1, 6:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 2, 1 pm, Scotiabank 13; May 3, 6 pm, TBLB 2*

## CONVICTION

Filmmaking team Ariella Pahlke, Nance Ackerman and Teresa MacInnes attempt to understand why women are the fastest-growing population in Canadian prisons. Working with an advocacy group, incarcerated women give an insider's look at a broken system.

*Apr 28, 6:30 pm, TBLB 2; Apr 29, 1:15 pm, TBLB 3; May 2, 12:30 pm, Hart House Theatre*

## EASY LESSONS

Hungarian filmmaker Dorottya Zurbó follows a teenager who escaped forced marriage in Somalia and ended up in Hungary. Over two years, Kafia acclimatizes to her new home, mastering Hungarian and converting from Islam to Christianity, but as Zurbó peels back the layers, new cracks begin to show.

*Apr 29, 5:30 pm, Innis Town Hall; May 1, 10:45 am, TBLB 4*

## HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE YOURSELF?

Protagonists Viki and Damjan provide an unflinching look at homelessness and addiction as they squat in abandoned buildings and do heroin. Nina Blažin employs coarse edits, music videos, photomontages and cut-to-black elements to evoke the pair's uncertain futures.

*Apr 28, 5:15 pm, Scotiabank 8; Apr 30, 3:15 pm, Hart House Theatre*

## IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS

Set in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Australia, Maya Newell's documentary charts a 10-year-old Arrernte boy's struggle in a colonial education system that doesn't recognize his gifts. With his mother and grandmother, Djuwan learns to hunt, speak two Indigenous languages and become a healer. In My Blood traverses the gaps between traditional culture and colonial ideas.

*Apr 26, 6:15 pm, TBLB 2; Apr 28, 12:30 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 4, 6:15 pm, TBLB 3*

*Cameras follow Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's 2018 congressional campaign in Knock Down The House.*

## KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez needs little introduction, and she's one of this film's subjects. Along with three other women from different parts of America – Amy Vilela, Cori Bush and Paula Jean Swearengin – they decide to take action by running for Congress. Director Rachel Lears follows their fierce determination to have marginalized voices heard.

*Apr 28, 6:15 pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 29, 4 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 6:30 pm, Fox Theatre; May 4, 1 pm, Hot Docs Cinema*

## LEFTOVER WOMEN

Educated and career-oriented women in China are considered "leftover" if unmarried by the age of 27. Filmmakers Hilla Medalia and Shosh Shlam follow three women and their families' unflinching quest to find them partners.

*Apr 29, 8:15 pm, Scotiabank 3; Apr 30, 10 am, TBLB 1; May 5, 1 pm, Isabel Bader*

## MARCELINE. A WOMAN. A CENTURY

Cordelia Dvorák retraces the incredible life of the late Marceline Loridan-Ivens, a Holocaust survivor who later became a writer and filmmaker dedicated to social justice issues.

*May 1, 8:45 pm, Scotiabank 8; May 2, 10:15 am, TBLB 2*

## NOTHING FANCY: DIANA KENNEDY

One of the most celebrated legends of Mexican cuisine, Diana Kennedy turns her home into a foundation for culinary education to solidify her legacy. Elizabeth Carroll's documentary is a charming homage to a 90-years-young culinary trailblazer.

*Apr 26, 6 pm, TBLB 1; Apr 27, 11 am, TBLB 1; May 2, 7 pm, TBLB 1*



## Most curious films at the Hot Docs Film Festival 2019

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April 9, 2019 Sonya Davidson Arts, Film

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As fans of documentaries, it's intriguing to learn about what, and who, inspires filmmakers. Some films go head-on, with topics that are current and deeply moving. Then, there are some that catch our attention and curiosity. Here are a few that will be screening at the upcoming Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival – April 25 to May 5, 2019.

## Most curious films at the Hot Docs Film Festival 2019

**Well Groomed:** Directed by Rebecca Stern. USA. International Premiere.

If you think the Westminster Kennel Show is competitive, then wait till you check out the groomers. Creative canine grooming transforms the everyday pooch into walking works of art...or something. We honestly don't know what to make of this.



**Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man:** Directed by Lily Zepeda. USA. World Premiere

60 year old Singaporean Jack Sim aka Mr. Toilet is an unlikely hero in the global sanitation crisis. Cutting through cultural taboos he's on a mission to bring awareness to the improper sanitation issues including those in India where access is not only limited but unsafe.

**Backstage Action:** Directed by Sanaz Azari. Belgium. North American Premiere

They are the ones who fill the background of scenes. The "extras" who are hired for film and tv work. Follow what a day in a life is like. They are more than a backdrop.





## Toronto Guardian – April 9, 2019 (2 of 2)

**Who Let The Dogs Out:** Directed by Ben Hodge. Canada. Canadian Premiere

Artist and curator Ben Sisto travels the world and asks the question Who, who, who, who let the dogs out? Yes, that infamous question in one of the catchiest songs of our time. And to his surprise many lay claim to being the first.



**Life in Miniatures:** Directed by Ellen Evans. UK. Canadian Premiere (Short)

Artist Kath Holden creates miniatures of everyday objects. From hair dryers to cameras, her zoned in eye for the literally the tiniest of details has carved her a special place in the world.



For complete line up of films at this year's Hot Docs Film Festival visit [www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca)

## FAR. THE STORY OF A JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD: AN INCREDIBLE, FEEL-GOOD HITCHHIKING ACHIEVEMENT

April 10, 2019

By Jim Slotek

Rating: A

The best movie on offer this week is a documentary. It has scores of locations shot around the world on a budget barely above zero. And the “production” moved from place to place over nearly four years, mainly via hitchhiking.

An audacious project – some might say foolhardy and unbelievably risky – *Far. The Story of a Journey Around the World* is the chronicle of a German couple in their early 30s, Patrick Allgaier and Gwendolin Weisser, who set out from their home near the Black Forest with backpacks, camera and little else.



It's summer in Siberia as Gwen tries to get a lift to Irkutsk

Their goal: To head East by foot and return home from the West. On route, their number will increase by one with the birth in Mexico of a boy named Bruno.

They do so with mostly-unflagging humour, and an app that connects them to a network of hospitable folk in various (and often surprising) countries who offer their couches in the spirit of goodwill. They hitch from Russia through assorted “stans,” backtracking when turned back at some borders and fulfilling the odd terms of various bureaucracies (checking in at different cities, to let the authorities know where they are).

They find themselves camping out in deserts and snowy mountainous terrain, and sharing long drives with truckers who've been awake so long they sing to keep their eyes open. Iran turns out to be amazingly hospitable. The Pakistani police give them an escort through some of the dodgiest parts of the country as they make their way to Karachi.

They stop in places for lengthy periods and labour for their food. Sometimes one holds the camera while the other interacts. Sometimes locals hold the camera. We discover that Mongolians do not like polenta. Camels are native to far more of Asia than you ever imagined. And the prenatal health treatment in Irkutsk is actually pretty good.

Oh yeah, and India is a bit of a drag – especially for hitchhikers.

## Original-Cin – April 10, 2019 (2 of 2)

When not hitchhiking, Patrick and Gwen travel by cargo ship, and even get ahold of a cheap VW minibus in Mexico, which allows them to pay karma back, picking up hitchhikers all through Central America. Through all their good cheer, it's difficult to avoid the notion that Patrick and Gwen are achingly vulnerable much of the time. And yet, they are greeted with so much hospitality (much of it driven by intrigued curiosity) that *Far. The Story of a Journey Around the World* is an almost unbelievably feel-good story. The movie, edited with a lively eye to cheek, smiles and teeth, has a citizen-of-the-world vibe reminiscent of Anthony Bourdain's best work.

This is especially true in demonized places like Iran, a country whose citizens, particularly in the cities, are worldly, and who are the inheritors of a code of hospitality thousands of years old. I'm pretty sure if the current U.S. President saw this movie, he'd conclude it was fake news.

For the rest of us, it is good news, a reminder that the world needn't be a scary place.

*Far. The Story of a Journey Around the World.* Starring Patrick Allgaier and Gwendolin Weisser. Opens April 12 at Toronto's Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

## How a sexual assault victim's lawsuit set a precedent that alarmed the Catholic Church

Graphic content warning: This story contains details of sexual assault

CBC Radio · Posted: Apr 12, 2019 9:00 AM ET | Last Updated: April 12



Rod MacLeod was sexually abused by a Basilian priest, starting when he was 13 years old. His battle for justice is the subject of a new documentary film, called *Prey*. (Border City Pictures)

When priests are found guilty of sexual abuse, the Roman Catholic Church follows a familiar script: offer money to the victim, settle out of court and avoid a public trial.

Usually, it works. Rod MacLeod refused to settle.

Instead, he hired Rob Talach, a lawyer based in London, Ont. — known as "the priest hunter" — and insisted on his day in court.

This legal case is the subject of a film called [Prey](#), which premieres this month at [Hot Docs](#), Canada's largest documentary film festival.

***Watch the film trailer below.***

### **'He'd start by tickling you'**

MacLeod was a 13-year-old student at St. Charles College, an all-boys school in Sudbury, Ont., when his physical education teacher, a Basilian priest named William Hodgson Marshall, began to sexually assault him. The attacks continued for four years.

The school's gym was located down the hall from the showers, and students had to pass Father Marshall's office en route.

"That's where he would grab you and pull you in," MacLeod told [The Sunday Edition](#) host Michael Enright.

"He would kind of pin you between his desk and his chair. He would put his leg up so that it was like an enclosure ... and then he'd start by tickling you and then very quickly it would be down into the shorts, and so on."

Marshall also regularly pulled students into an empty classroom, locked the door and assaulted them.

### **Priest showed up at victim's home**

MacLeod said when he learned how to avoid him at school, the priest started to show up at his home, which his staunch Catholic parents considered an honour.

He would take MacLeod for "driving lessons," then park the car and attack him.



Father William Hodgson Marshall was transferred to different communities, but remained a teacher. (Border City Pictures)

"The pattern that is in play in many of these cases is identical," Talach told Enright. "I've joked before that it must be a night school course at seminary because many of the perpetrator priests employ the same mechanisms to get at their victims."

Talach added that developing a relationship with the victim's family offers predators a "firewall," because parents develop an affinity for the priest that — in addition to their religious loyalty and faith — stops them from reporting the abuse to higher authorities.

"And then, of course, there's another firewall, that if it does get to the ears of the hierarchy of the church, it's a pretty safe bet that they're going to ... simply move him," said Talach, who has dubbed this "the silent shuffle." It happened to Marshall, who was transferred to four different communities, but each time remained a teacher with access to potential victims.

*Prey* features never-before-seen footage of Talach questioning Marshall during his deposition, as the priest calmly confesses to four decades of serial sexual abuse of young boys.

"It was a very surreal moment to sit across from a perpetrator priest," said Talach, "and to take the priest's confession, in a sense."

Only about one per cent of cases involving sexual abuse by priests goes to trial, and MacLeod said the church could have avoided it in his case.

"I could have been persuaded not to go forward if I'd felt there was a contrite heart, a true sense that they were sorry and something like this would never happen again," he said. "But all I got was, here was another corporation that was protecting all of their assets right to the very letter, dragging things out as much as possible, being less than forthcoming, being less than helpful. So the more I experienced that, the more determined I became to see it through."

**'There is a cathartic effect to litigation'**

Talach said the average amount the church pays its victims is \$250,000, "so these aren't lottery wins."

In MacLeod's case, the church tried to abort the trial midway through with an offer of \$1 million. He refused.

Talach had warned him the legal proceedings would be long and difficult, but added that "there is a cathartic effect to litigation beyond the money."

The jury awarded Rod MacLeod almost \$2.6 million, including a landmark ruling for punitive damages of \$500,000.

"There really hasn't been a cost to the church other than paying for the spilt milk in these situations," said Talach.

"In most of these cases, they're paying cents on the dollar as to what the real life effect was on the victim. The church in Canada has never had to pay a fine or be punished and no one has spent a day behind bars, from the hierarchy.

"So when we talk about punitive damages, that's where we start to get that punishment piece — or penance, to use their language — which is more than due here."

It's in their DNA to do the wrong thing. - *Lawyer Rob Talach*

Neither MacLeod nor Talach is surprised the church has appealed this decision.

"I've dealt with them now for 17 years, the Catholic church as a whole, and you can count on one hand the number of times they've done the right thing," Talach said. "So, you know, it's in their DNA to do the wrong thing."

MacLeod said he was encouraged at first to hear about the actions [Pope Francis was taking against sexual predators in the church](#), but became discouraged again when the Pope announced that forced celibacy for priests would continue.

"You want some outcome that leads to prevention," Talach said. "The all-male celibate priesthood needs to go. You need to be like any other occupation in this nation: men, women, gay, straight, trans, single, married, blended family. Just open the doors and fix the problem."





## TOP 10: HOT DOCS FILM FESTIVAL 2019

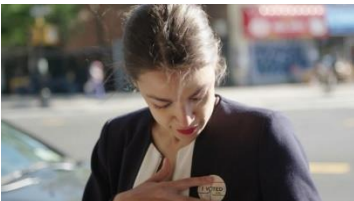
SONYA APRIL 12, 2019

The **Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival** is always one we look forward to each spring. With over 200 films from around the world, this festival inspires conversation and fuels the fire within. Hot Docs runs from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto at various theatres. Here are just a few that have caught our attention...

**Toxic Beauty:** Directed by Phyllis Ellis, Canada. The beauty industry is a multi-billion dollar business. This film turns to the practices of the companies that lead us to wonder what can be trusted. What are the regulations in the cosmetics and the products we put on our bodies? What is the price of beauty?



**Knock Down the House:** Directed by Rachel Lears. USA. Follows four progressive female politicians, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, as they campaign for Congress during the 2018 US midterms. They come from various backgrounds from a Virginia coal miner's daughter to a mom who lost her daughter due to lack of health insurance. This story is about the determination of these women fighting to make sure the voices are heard of those who have been underrepresented.



**Disappearance of My Mother:** Directed by Beniamino Barrese, Italy. The son of one-time Italian fashion model Benedetta Barzini films the cover-girl-turned-feminist-academic. Now in her 70s, Barzini announces to her son that she wants to disappear. Struggling to understand, he films his mother as she sorts through her belongings and closes up the family home.

**Hope Frozen:** Directed by Pailin Wedel, Thailand. In 2015, a Thai Buddhist and PhD in laser science lost his two-year-old daughter to cancer. This documentary profiles a grief-stricken Bangkok family and their unorthodox decision to cryopreserve their deceased daughter – the youngest in the world. Her brain is stored inside a cryonic tank in Arizona. The hope is one day she will live a life in another body. How far will they go?

## Auburn Lane – April 12, 2019 (2 of 2)



**Moonlight Sonata: Deafness in Three Movements:** Directed by Irene Taylor Brodsky, USA. A moving memoir of the life of the filmmaker's deaf son and her deaf parents. A deeply emotional perspective on sounds and silence.

**The Reformist – A Female Imam:** Directed by Marie Skovgaard, Denmark. Sherin Khankan is a progressive Muslim leader and imam. Her Danish mosque is one of the first to be run by female imams and challenges the traditions of the faith and the fears about the religious society. She also inspires change by questioning who leads who in a religion that stands for unconditional love and acceptance.



**Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy:** Directed by Elizabeth Carol, USA. A biographical documentary about the James Beard Award-winning food writer and foremost expert on Mexican cuisine. At 94, she has a youthful spirit and energy. People often refer to her as the Julia Child of Mexico, but Diana prefers an edgier given title: “the Mick Jagger of Mexican Cooking”. She lives on her own, completely off-the-grid in the mountains of Michoacán. More culinary anthropologist than typical chef, Diana has traveled many times over to every state and region of Mexico, extensively researching and documenting the ingredients and dishes of each area.



**Easy Lessons:** Directed by Dorottya Zurbo, Hungary. The story of a Kafia, a 15 year old Somali child bride who flees to Hungary to build a new life. Raised to hide her feelings we discover what she misses the most.

**Because We Are Girls:** Directed by Baljit Sangra, Canada. The story of Indo-Canadian sisters from small-town British Columbia who, haunted by a childhood secret, finally face their abuser in court.

**#Female Pleasures:** Directed by Barbara Miller, Switzerland Germany. A rousing feminist film in which five women from around the world risk their lives to question the patriarchal barriers oppressing female sexual pleasure. Grab your popcorn! Full list of films and tickets for this year's Hot Docs Film Festival can be found at [www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca)



<https://www.auburnlane.com/2019/04/12/editors-top-picks-hot-docs-film-festival-2019/>



VIDEOS    CONTESTS



Lifestyle

## How Canadian chefs are reinventing Indigenous cuisine

Chef Rich Francis is cooking up his take on some delicious indigenous recipes! He is featured in 'Red Chef Revival' premiering April 16th at Hot Docs.

April 12, 2019 09:06

<https://www.bttoronto.ca/videos/how-canadian-chefs-are-reinventing-indigenous-cuisine/>

## This week in Toronto: A foul-mouthed puppet, siblings' sweet harmony, and more

Sun., April 14, 2019

- **Une Colonie**

**Watch this if:** Your weekend includes an award-winning coming-of-age flick from Quebec.

A feature debut by Quebec documentary maker Geneviève Dulude-De Celles, *Une Colonie* scored a big upset at the Canadian Screen Awards when it took Best Film despite being relatively little seen (even by Canadian movie standards). The jury was understandably impressed by this nuanced portrait of a 12-year-old girl as she adjusts to the new world she discovers at her new school. *Une Colonie* gets its Ontario premiere as part of Cinefranco Quebec Perspective. (Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., [9 p.m.](#))

—JA

SATURDAY

## 10 must-see Hot Docs 2019 films that plug into urgent issues

Documentaries covering refugees, immigration, racism, Islamophobia and press freedom are playing at this year's festival

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#)

APRIL 15, 2019



Justin Trudeau mocks Indigenous protestors. Quebec is introducing a ban on religious symbols. Facebook is shutting out Faith Goldy. And Doug Ford is running around planting stickers on gas pumps to sell his agenda. It feels like every day we are grappling with the effects of colonialism, Islamophobia, white-supremacy and fake news. And you can't hide from these issues at Hot Docs. Here are 10 documentaries that plug into today's urgent issues.

### NÎPAWISTAMÂSOWIN: WE WILL STAND UP

Colten Boushie's family fight for justice after our legal system delivered a tragic verdict, allowing Gerald Stanley to walk away after killing the young Cree man. While looking back at Canadian history to illustrate how we got to this point, Tasha Hubbard's documentary follows the Boushie family throughout the trial and afterwards as they advocate on Parliament Hill and the United Nations, pushing for judicial reform to ensure that a young man's death won't be validated by an all-white jury again.

*Apr 25, 9:45 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; Apr 27, 1 pm, TIFF 2; May 4, 10 am, Bader*

### YOUR LAST WALK IN THE MOSQUE

Survivors and the families of victims recount the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting and reflect on the discrimination and hate that festered before Alexandre Bissonnette took six lives and injured 19 others. Despite this tragedy, and the one it inspired in New Zealand this year, Quebec politicians bent on banning burkas still haven't reconsidered the role their rhetoric plays towards Islamophobic violence. Nor has Donald Trump, who just last weekend tweeted a video with 9/11 footage to stoke fears and vilify Muslim congresswoman Ilhan Omar.

## NOW Magazine – April 15, 2019 (2 of 3)

*Apr 26, 8 pm, Innis; Apr 27, 3:45 pm, Scotiabank 8*

### ALWAYS IN SEASON

Jacqueline Olive's doc looks at the death of Lennon Lacy – an African-American teen found hanging from a swing set, which was immediately deemed a suicide – and ponders whether it was actually a lynching. The film dives into American history, investigating the brutality that was systematically inflicted on Black bodies, and then asks whether such behaviour could ever go away. Meanwhile white voices insist on camera that racism is a thing of the past.

*Apr 28, 6:15 pm, Hart House; Apr 30, 12:45 pm, TIFF 2; May 4, 6:30 pm, Hart House*

### PROPAGANDA: THE ART OF SELLING LIES

We're in an era where our conservative politicians tweet photos of themselves pumping gas, all so they can fight the fight against climate change. Artists Kent Monkman, Shepard Fairey and Ai Weiwei consider how their own work plays into a new age in propaganda, where Twitter, Facebook and fake news are just new tools for Donald Trump and Doug Ford.

*Apr 28, 9 pm, TIFF 1; Apr 30, 3:15 pm, Bader; May 3, 9 pm, TIFF 2*

### THE EL DUCE TAPES

Black-hooded punk band the Mentors categorized their purposefully offensive music as "rape-rock." The El Duce Tapes looks back at the band's frontman to examine how much of his shocking antics were just a front. And we should ask ourselves what misogyny – even when purported to be a joke – inspires in its listeners.

*Apr 26, 8 pm, TIFF 3; Apr 27, 2:45 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 4, 8:15 pm, Scotiabank 8*

### THE INFILTRATORS

In 2012, two undocumented teenage immigrants allowed themselves to be caught so that they could record what goes on in a South Florida detention centre and capture what people are suffering at the hands of ICE. Their findings are presented in a hybrid doc that mixes real footage with narrative recreations.

*Apr 26, 9 pm, Scotiabank 4; Apr 27, 3:30 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 5, 10:15 am, TIFF 2*

### XY CHELSEA

This doc follows U.S. military whistleblower Chelsea Manning as she enters politics after her prison sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama. Her story is compelling and relevant for obvious reasons. She's a trans woman in Trump's America, a former soldier opposing a president who wants to



ban trans people from serving in the military. And she was jailed again in March and put in solitary confinement for refusing to testify in a grand jury about conversations she had with WikiLeaks' Julian Assange.

*May 2, 9 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; May 3, 1 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; May 5, 10:15 am, Bader*

## **WHEN I SHUT MY EYES**

This Mexican doc exposes a grave injustice in the country's legal system. After spending years in prison for crimes they didn't commit, an Indigenous man and woman tell their stories, in their native Mazateco and Mixteco languages. Their stories were never heard by a judge because the justice system did not provide interpreters, and instead relied on corrupt officers and forced confessions. We can confront the injustices dealt towards Indigenous peoples at home with *We Will Stand Up*, and then remember that this is an issue that stretches beyond Canada's borders with *When I Shut My Eyes*.

*Apr 30, 6:15 pm, Scotiabank 8; May 1, 10:30 am, TIFF 3*

## **STIEG LARSSON: THE MAN WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE**

The *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*'s trashy mystery zeroed in on monstrous violence and fascist sentiments that had been passed down for generations. Author Stieg Larsson was onto something – just look at how white supremacy is resurfacing today – and this doc explains how and why he dedicated his journalistic to career investigating extremist far-right groups.

*May 1, 9:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 2, 10:30 am, Bader; May 5, 1:45 pm, Hot Docs Cinema*

## **THE REST**

Justin Trudeau's recent budget plans to rule out asylum seekers who have sought refuge elsewhere chips away at the open arms image he portrayed when he first took office by welcoming Syrian refugees at the airport. Meanwhile, Doug Ford's recent provincial budget is nixing legal aid funding for asylum seekers. Politics might change, but the global refugee crisis has not subsided, which is why Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei put together this film using extra material shot for his stark 2017 doc *Human Flow*. *The Rest* follows migrants as they continue their flight from war and poverty and face intensifying nationalism in Europe.

*Apr 26, 6:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; Apr 27, 12:45 pm, Bader; May 5, 9:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema*

## Enjoy a 3-course Indigenous dinner and show in Toronto April 16

**Kayla Gladysz** Apr 15, 2019 2:20 pm

[Red Chef Revival / Instagram](#)

You've heard of dinner and a show... but probably not like this.

On April 16, Hot Docs is offering the opportunity to explore the power of reconciliation through food at the world premiere of the new docu-series Red Chef Revival.

The series will highlight stories of Indigenous cuisine being reclaimed and reinvented by chefs from across Canada.

Six Nations Chef and Top Chef Canada finalist Rich Francis, Algonquin Chef Cezin Nottaway of Wawatay Catering, and Chopped Canada finalist Shane Chartrand—who didn't discover his Enoch Cree heritage until his 20s—will lead viewers through an educational journey using food as the medium.

Hot Docs will be airing a three-episode preview of the new [STORYHIVE](#) series, and attendees will enjoy three-course meal and cocktail pairing, created by the chefs featured.

Look forward to salmon cured with cedar, sweetgrass, buffalo sage and ceremonial tobacco, crispy wild game fried rice served with puffed grains and maple blueberry reduction, and pikoodinigan: maple toffee.

Plus, a cedar and lime margarita.

For Chef Cezin Nottaway, whose parents were both in residential schools, participating in this series is about food, yes... and so much more.

"This is another way of decolonizing myself," she told Daily Hive.

"I want to do something [related to] who I am. This is my culture, these are my people, and damn right you're going to know about Anishinaabe food."

Nottaway learned traditional methods of cooking from her grandmother, and fell in love with the craft when she started working for a catering company at 16.

"There was a local caterer serving beaver and moose," she said. "I thought, *this is amazing. People love this.* I was inspired by him to do something similar."

And then, a family friend, who used to bring food to her grandmother when she was ill, gifted her a cookbook. There was no turning back.

## Daily Hive – April 15, 2019 (2 of 2)

Nottaway notes that, as the first people of this land, traditional Indigenous food is actually true Canadian food. She suggests that attendees come with open minds and open hearts, ready to learn and try new things.

“I do a lot of foraging for whatever is involved for my catering,” she said. “I climbed over a friend to get the birch bark that’s wrapped around the dessert I will be serving.”



*Cezin Nottaway*

From the looks of it, this screening is going to be a delicious, educational adventure.

If you're not able to make the event but you still want a taste of the experience, you can catch the first episode online.

### **Red Chef Revival**

**Where:** Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema – 506 Bloor Street West

**When:** Tuesday, April 16 from 6 pm

**Tickets:** \$49 (members: \$44), available [online](#)

<https://dailyhive.com/toronto/red-chef-revival-hot-docs-cinema-april-16-2019>

## Hot Docs review: Haydee And The Flying Fish

Pachi Bustos's tribute to pregnant activists rounded up by Pinochet regime will make you weep

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#)

APRIL 16, 2019



**HAYDEE AND THE FLYING FISH** (Pachi Bustos, Chile/Brazil). 73 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Any movie about state-run torture is not for the faint of heart. But Pachi Bustos's doc has an inspirational and brave subject in Haydee Oberreuter, who finally faces her tormentors in court. Pregnant at the time, she was one of many activist women rounded up by General Pinochet's men. Oberreuter was given a mock autopsy, prompting her miscarriage, which was cheered by her attackers. As she awaits her moment in court – her case was postponed multiple times, causing her added distress – she is diagnosed with breast cancer and needs an operation. Her terror of needles and surgical knives – greater, she says, than her fear of death – speaks to her trauma. The film is a tribute to the activists, lawyers and doctors who promoted her case and to her supportive family, but it's Oberreuter's courage that shines through. The "flying fish," which act as a frame for the film, will make you weep.

[Apr 30, 6:30 pm, TIFF 3; May 1, 12:30 pm, Scotiabank 8; May 4, 5:30 pm, Scotiabank 8](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-haydee-flying-fish/>

## Hot Docs review: #Female Pleasure

Director Barbara Miller examine how female sexual pleasure is associated with power in five different cultures

BY [MICHELLE DA SILVA](#)

APRIL 16, 2019



**#FEMALE PLEASURE** (Barbara Miller, Switzerland/Germany). 97 minutes. Rating: NNN

On the heels of #MeToo and the rise of other feminist movements, #Female Pleasure takes the fight for gender equality one step further by examining how female sexual pleasure is viewed in five different cultures.

From a Somali-British activist working to end female genital mutilation, to an ex-Hasidic Jew who left her patriarchal community, to a South Asian woman trying to make “love” and “sex” part of conversations about romantic relationships in India, the film uncovers the ways female pleasure is associated with power, and how attempts to eliminate pleasure are directly related to disenfranchising women.

It’s a timely and necessary topic, for sure, but Miller’s interviews with her subjects feel monotonous since the messaging is similar across the board. While small success is achieved by the end of the doc, the audience doesn’t necessarily come out wiser.

[Apr 26, 5:45 pm, Scotiabank 3; Apr 27, noon, Scotiabank 3](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-female-pleasure/>

## Hot Docs review: Honeyland

Verité doc about Macedonia's last wild beekeeper is full of tragedy and joy, simplicity and complexity

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) , APRIL 16, 2019



**HONEYLAND** (Ljubomir Stefanov, Tamara Kotevska, Macedonia). 85 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Hatidze Muratova is a wild beekeeper who lives in an isolated mountain village in Macedonia with her bedridden mother. She scours cliff sides to tend to bees and sells honey at a market in Skopje. One day, her quiet life is disrupted by the arrival of a nomadic family with a massive herd of cattle and seven unruly kids. Patriarch Hussein is under economic pressure to feed his family and moves in on the generous Hatidze's business, with disastrous results.

Though Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska – who spent three years filming – could not have asked for a more fairy-tale arc, Honeyland's drama and power lie in their intense focus on landscape, tone, colour and details. Hussein's family is completely inept and we get right up close as they chaotically put themselves in harm's way in contrast to quiet scenes of Haditze's funny and bittersweet Grey Gardens-esque relationship with her mother. It's a beautifully realized film, full of tragedy and joy, simplicity and complexity.

[May 2, 3:30 pm, TIFF 2; May 3, 6:45 pm, TIFF 3; May 4, 3:30 pm, TIFF 3](#)



## Hot Docs review: Knock Down The House

Even though we know Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez emerges triumphant, this doc about the lead-up to America's historic 2018 midterm elections will still make you cheer

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 16, 2019



**KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE** (Rachel Lears, U.S.). 85 minutes. Rating: NNNNN

In the year leading up to America's 2018 midterm elections, director Lears and producer Robin Blotnick followed four progressive women mounting primary challenges to unseat Democratic congressmen: West Virginia's **Paula Jean Swearengin**, Nevada's **Amy Vilela**, Missouri's **Cori Bush** and New York's **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**.

All four women are remarkable people, with backstories that emerge slowly but with considerable impact over the course of the documentary – but Lears and Blotnick gradually shape their project around Ocasio-Cortez's megawatt charisma.

Comfortable on camera, quick and cutting in interviews and debates and genuinely angry at sitting Congressman **Joe Crowley**'s casual neglect of her district while he chases status in the Democratic Caucus, it's easy to see how she's become an avatar of hope to progressives looking to push back against Trump's GOP.

And even though we know how her race is going to end, Blotnick's editing makes that moment absolutely electrifying. I cheered. You will, too.

[April 28, 6:15 pm, Isabel Bader; April 29, 4 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 6:30 pm, Fox; May 4, 1 pm, Hot Docs Cinema](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-review-knock-down-the-house/>

## Hot Docs review: Assholes: A Theory

John Walker's film is a thoughtful accounting of society's most obnoxious people

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) , APRIL 16, 2019



**ASSHOLES: A THEORY** (John Walker, Canada). 81 minutes. Rating: NNN

Using **Aaron James's** 2012 book as a jumping-off point, Walker ([Quebec: My Country, Mon Pays](#), Arctic Defenders, [A Drummer's Dream](#)) builds a mostly serious look at the preponderance of privileged, entitled jerks (almost always male, almost always white) who bully their way to positions of dominance in Western society.

It's a thoughtful accounting of society's most noxious people, balancing psychology and anecdotal shit-talking, with special loathing reserved for financial-sector hustlers, blustering faux-populist politicians and surfers who cut into other surfers' waves... which was what inspired James to write his book in the first place.

It's maybe not as funny as Walker wants it to be – a burbly jazz score tries very hard to force some lightness into the material – but it'll leave you thinking about the assholes in your life, and whether you're being one right now.

[Apr 30, 7 pm, TIFF 1; May 1, 3:45 pm, TIFF 1; May 4, 12:45 pm, Isabel Bader](#)

## Hot Docs review: Gaza

Masterfully constructed and well-shot film captures daily life in the increasingly alienated Gaza Strip

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) , APRIL 16, 2019



**GAZA** (Garry Keane, Andrew McConnell, Canada). 90 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Gaza focuses for almost all of the film on Palestinians living their daily lives on the Israeli-occupied strip of land hugging the Mediterranean. Among them, a boy wants to learn the tricks of the fishing trade. A woman produces a fashion show. An emerging rapper (unfortunately, his rhymes aren't translated) speaks out. A young woman trains as a cellist. Their daily lives are disrupted by power blackouts and the daily soul-crushing humiliations that come with facing barriers between, as one of them puts it, "the people and real life." But these intrepid souls persevere, even as younger Gazans grow increasingly alienated and put themselves at risk, throwing stones at Israeli soldiers training their guns at them from across the border. Life goes on – until it doesn't, in this well-shot, masterfully constructed piece.

[Apr 30, 6 pm, TIFF 2; May 1, 3:45 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 3:45 pm, Hot Docs Cinema](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-gaza/>

## Hot Docs review: Willie

Film about the NHL's first Black player Willie O'Ree gives us a fascinating portrait, but doesn't delve deep into hockey culture

BY [RICHARD TRAPUNSKI](#), APRIL 16, 2019



**WILLIE** (Laurence Mathieu-Leger, U.S./Canada). 89 minutes. Rating: NNN

In 1958, Willie O'Ree became the first Black hockey player to lace up his skates in the NHL. Yet unlike Jackie Robinson, who famously broke baseball's colour barrier a decade earlier, he's not a household name.

In *Willie*, the Fredericton native tells the story of his career, while eagerly awaiting the call to find out if he's been inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame – something most people interviewed in the film assumed had already happened.

So why hadn't it? While baseball fully integrated players of colour decades ago, they're still a vast (but growing) minority in the NHL. And, as Sydney Kinder, who coaches youth hockey in Harlem, incisively states, hockey is still coded white, with access to equipment and ice time closely tied to privilege.

That's a point that *Willie* – made in collaboration with NHL Original Productions – doesn't delve deeply into, even as current players Devante Smith-Pelly and Wayne Simmonds describe recent racist incidents they've faced from fans. Instead, it focuses on the extra lengths O'Ree went to prove he was better than his white peers – even keeping secret his whole career that he was blind in one eye – just to be given a chance.

O'Ree is an interesting and deserving subject with a fascinating career arc and a story that could punctuate the more toxic elements of hockey culture. Throughout the film, his message for young players of colour is to ignore the hate, keep your head down and prove yourself on the ice. But if racist incidents are still happening six decades later, maybe it's hockey culture that needs to be re-examined.

[Apr 29, 6:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema \(Big Ideas Series\); Apr 30, 4:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 3, 10:15 am, TIFF 1](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-2019-willie/>

## Hot Docs review: Push

Swedish-produced doc is an absorbing look at the commodification of the housing market

BY [SAMANTHA EDWARDS](#) APRIL 16, 2019



*Leilani Farha*

**PUSH** (Fredrik Gertten, Sweden). 92 minutes Rating: NNNN

Early into *Push*, Leilani Farha, the Ottawa-based UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, asks, “Who are cities for?” Throughout the doc, which follows Farha over a year and a half as she travels to dozens of cities worldwide, we see that they’re rapidly becoming a place exclusively for the rich.

To examine the affordable housing crisis, Farha speaks with urban theorists and politicians. But the majority of the interviews are with regular people directly impacted by skyrocketing rents and the gross commodification of housing, like an elderly woman being coerced out of her home in Valparaíso, Chile, to make way for luxury condos and a man displaced by the Grenfell Tower fire in London. These intimate stories put the crisis on a human scale.

Jumping from country to country, director Fredrik Gertten rarely goes deep into any one city, so at times you’re left wanting to know more about a particular issue, like how a community land trust was able to buy multiple buildings in Kreuzberg, a neighbourhood in Berlin. Toronto, however, gets considerable screen time. We see a bartender at Communist’s Daughter commiserating about gentrification with patrons and Farha speaking with Parkdale rent strikers.

By including examples from so many cities, we see how the issues here are jarringly similar to what’s happening worldwide: massive financial players, like private equity firm Blackstone, are increasingly controlling the housing market. Similar issues also means there can be similar solutions. As Farha stresses throughout the doc, housing needs to be treated as a human right, not a commodity.

[Apr 26, 9:15 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; Apr 27, 4 pm, TIFF 1; May 1, 1 pm, TIFF 1; May 4, 9:15 pm, Hart House.](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-push-housing/>

## Hot Docs review: Born In Evin

Maryam Zaree's film delving into a notorious Iranian prison is more about the director's emotional journey than revelatory pay-offs

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#)

APRIL 16, 2019



**BORN IN EVIN** (Maryam Zaree, Germany/Austria). 98 minutes. Rating: NNN

Frankfurt-based Zaree's search for the truth about her birth inside an Iranian prison doesn't bear much fruit – which is actually the point of her film. Her mother, a former revolutionary incarcerated in the 80s and now a successful psychologist, will not talk and only cries when Zaree brings up the subject. As the filmmaker travels to Europe to find out more from other prisoners who knew her mother and to talk to others born inside the jail, she is consistently shut down by platitudes or obfuscation. In one beautiful scene, a counsellor urges her – now frustrated and angry – to pursue her quest.

But this is life, not a Hollywood movie, so there is an emotional scene with her mother at the end but no revelatory pay-off. The film does, however, give attention to Iranian women living in exile and reveals an essential human truth: trauma is the ultimate silencer.

[Apr 27, 6:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; Apr 29, 10:45 am, TIFF 4; May 4, 6 pm, Scotiabank 13](#)



## Hot Docs review: Propaganda: The Art Of Selling Lies

Larry Weinstein explores the history of propaganda through the lens of art with help from Kent Monkman and Jim Fitzpatrick

BY [KELLY BOUTSALIS](#) APRIL 16, 2019



**PROPAGANDA: THE ART OF SELLING LIES** (Larry Weinstein, Canada/Germany). 90 minutes.  
Rating: NNN

It's difficult to distill the history of propaganda, including Alexander the Great statues and the Neanderthal handprints in El Castillo cave, into 90 minutes, but this doc gives it a solid effort, telling it through the lens of art.

Weinstein weaves together archival footage and interviews, but at a certain point the doc feels like it's bursting with historians, psychoanalysts, activists and others. Propaganda winds up being far too broad, drawing a line between those cave handprints to "propaganda artist" Steve Bannon and The Bachelor reality show.

The film truly shines when we hear from the artists themselves, discussing the intentions of their works. I wanted more time than the glimpses of Cree artist Kent Monkman, who inserts Indigenous characters into Western European and American art; Irish artist Jim Fitzpatrick, the creator of the famous Che Guevara poster; and even Tyler Shields, the photographer behind Kathy Griffin's 2017 photo holding a bloodied mask of Donald Trump.

[Apr 28, 9 pm, TIFF 1; Apr 30, 3:15 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 9 pm, TIFF 2](#)

## Review: 'Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool'

### *Hot Docs 2019*

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published April 16th, 2019



Courtesy of Hot Docs

#### ***Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool***

(USA/UK, 113 min.)

Dir. Stanley Nelson

Programme: Special Presentations (International Premiere)

No two-hour documentary could possibly contain the multitudes of Miles Davis's talent, but as a general primer on the titanic talent, this PBS documentary does a decent enough job of introducing the performer to a wide audience. From son of a prominent dentist in East St. Louis to trumpeting in the clubs of Manhattan's 52nd Street, the doc follows Davis as he dabbles in bop, sees his turn with the ground-breaking ensemble album that gives the film its title, as well as through the quintet periods, his fusion era, his moments in a drug-fuelled exile, and finally his resuscitation at the end of his career.

The beats of the storyline are familiar to any jazz fan, making for a somewhat rote telling of his tale. It's only in hearing from the women in Miles' life that some new insight is provided, making for a far more complex vision of the man behind the myth from those who saw him away from the spotlight. This isn't to take away the fact that for many Miles is little more than a few muted horn licks heard in passing – the celebration is warranted, even if the subject is deserving of some 20 hour epic to truly get into all that he accomplished.

Without being greedy and wanting for more, *Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool* does a decent enough job of telling his story, introducing to new audiences and reminding fans what this giant of jazz managed to do over his decades of performance.

#### ***Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool* screens:**

-Wed, May 1 at 8:45 p.m. at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

-Fri, May 3 at 10:00 a.m. at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

-Sat, May 4 at 6:45 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

**Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](#) for more coverage from this year's festival!**

**Hot Docs runs April 25 to May 5. Please visit [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca) for more info.**

## Hot Docs review: Always In Season

Jacqueline Olive's film about the possible lynching of a 17-year-old African-American football player doesn't probe deep enough

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**ALWAYS IN SEASON** (Jacqueline Olive, U.S). 88 minutes. Rating: NNN

Seventeen-year-old African-American football player **Lennon Lacy** was found hanging from a trailer park swing set in North Carolina. In this doc, we hear from Lennon's family, chiefly his mother **Claudia**, in heartbreaking interviews where they pour out their grief and recollect how hurriedly the police wished to tuck Lennon's death away as a suicide without considering the possibility that this was a modern-day lynching.

Director **Jacqueline Olive** follows the Lacy family's pursuit for a more thorough investigation into the teen's death, but the film itself doesn't probe deep enough. Talking heads drop incriminating or complicating clues, offering evidence that lynching hasn't gone away, but the film doesn't seek elaboration or clarification. Instead Olive explores the history of lynching, which provides some context to Lennon's case but also distracts from it.

*Apr 28, 6:15 pm, Hart House; Apr 30, 12:45 pm, TIFF 2; May 4, 6:30 pm, Hart House*

## Hot Docs review: Amussu

Doc about villagers in Morocco protesting a silver mine is a timely, but light on substance

BY [CHAKA V. GRIER](#) APRIL 17, 2019



**AMUSSU** (Nadir Bouhmouch, Morocco, Qatar). 99 minutes. Rating: NN

Much like the pipeline protests that have raged on both sides of the Canada/U.S. border since 2016, in 2011 the Imider villagers of Morocco began a peaceful protest against Managem silver mine in hopes of protecting their land and lives from environmental devastation. Amussu is a timely film about a challenge facing communities all over the world, but 10 minutes in it's clear director Nadir Bouhmouch has chosen to tell the story in an art-house style that's light on substance.

Snippets of conversations amongst villagers about a man who has been arrested and interludes of men singing protest songs while boys lounge under almond blossom trees taking photos for Facebook as the women work feel like wasted opportunities. The doc never delves into how a community facing governmental and police backlash has successfully maintained its resistance for nearly a decade.

[Apr 29, 3:45 pm, TIFF 3; Apr 30, 8:30 pm, Innis Town Hall; May 4, 9:15 pm, TIFF 3](#)

## Hot Docs review: Beauty And Decay

Intimidating Berghain bouncer Sven Marquardt comes off as a warm, thoughtful artist in Annekatrin Hendel's romantic trip through East German punk history

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 17, 2019



**BEAUTY AND DECAY** (Annekatrin Hendel, Germany). 79 minutes. Rating: NNN

This intensely European doc profiles Sven Marquardt, a photographer who is now best known as the head bouncer for Berlin dance club Berghain. His face covered in piercings and tattoos, Marquardt is keenly aware how off-putting he is to normies who avoid sitting near him on public transit. But Annekatrin Hendel positions him as a warm, thoughtful artist who has found a way to move through life on his own terms.

He reunites with model Dominique Hollenstein, a free-spirit type who, visually, is his polar opposite but shares his anti-conformist values. The most entertaining scenes see them working on a photo shoot and talking in this ridiculously floral and over-art-directed room. Both were part of the East German punk scene in the 80s and friends with photographer Robert Paris, whose stunning photos of pre-reunification East Berlin give the film its title.

Hendel never locks into a compelling narrative, but the pleasant pacing, interesting archival photos and footage and engaging rapport among the characters give Beauty And Decay a romantic and lively sense of time and place.

[Apr 26, 8:30 pm, Scotiabank 3; Apr 27, 1:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 5, 6:30 pm, Scotiabank 13](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-beauty-and-decay/>

## Hot Docs review: Campo

Tiago Hespanha's stunning doc looks at life in and around a shooting range outside Lisbon

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 17, 2019



**CAMPO** (Tiago Hespanha, Portugal). 100 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Hespanha's look at life on the Alcochete shooting range outside Lisbon – one of the largest military bases in Europe – feels like the love child of Claire Denis and Frederick Wiseman, carrying elements of the former's obsession with physicality and death and the latter's curiosity about the structure of institutions.

Cutting between precision drills on the massive grounds and quieter observations of the animals that share the space – sheep and bees, mostly, with other creatures emerging at night – Hespanha folds in quotations from mythology and observations from Carl Sagan and Franz Kafka, building a philosophy of nature's indifference. We train relentlessly to hone our ability to kill one another, and work just as hard to save a dying animal. The field will always be there.

*Apr 25, 5:45 pm, TIFF 3; Apr 26, 12:15 pm, Scotiabank 3*



## Hot Docs review: In My Blood It Runs

Maya Newell's uneven film shows what life is like for a rambunctious 10-year-old Aboriginal kid in Australia who's having trouble fitting into the white school system

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 17, 2019



**IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS** (Maya Newell, Australia). 84 minutes. Rating: NNN

Australian filmmaker Newell ([Gayby Baby](#)) worked with Arrernte and Garrwa families to capture a sense of Aboriginal life in Alice Springs, as seen through the eyes of 10-year-old **Djuwan** – a rambunctious, camera-ready kid who's having trouble fitting into the white school system and acting out in ways that threaten to derail his future. (One hundred per cent of the inmates in Alice Springs' juvenile detention centres are Aboriginal.)

It's an engaging look at everyday life in the Northern Territory through the eyes of the people living it, and the visits to Djuwan's school offer a window into a power structure grappling with reconciliation. But as a narrative, it's a little underwhelming; *In My Blood It Runs* ends with a sort of shrug, as though Newell never found one crucial moment that would have pulled everything together properly.

*Apr 26, 6:15 pm, TIFF 2; Apr 28, 12:30 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 4, 6:15 pm, TIFF 3*

## Hot Docs review: Leftover Women

Intimate doc about Chinese women pressured to find life partners dissolves cultural and linguistic barriers

BY [MICHELLE DA SILVA](#) APRIL 17, 2019



**LEFTOVER WOMEN** (Hilla Medalia, Shosh Shlam, Israel). 82 minutes. Rating: NNNN

A woman in China, no matter how educated and successful in her career, is still considered worthless in society if she can't find a husband by the age of 30. Leftover Women explores this frustratingly misogynistic dilemma as it effects three women in Beijing.

Min and HuaMei are both under immense pressure from overbearing and uncompromising parents, and attend national matchmaking events to please their families. Meanwhile Qi's mother is more excited about her wedding than she is.

A lot of what these women go through will shock progressive, western audiences, but the film never seeks to judge or undermine their situations. Instead, Medalia and Shlam are able to establish an intimacy with their subjects that dissolves cultural and linguistic barriers.

[Apr 29, 8:15 pm, Scotiabank 3; Apr 30, 10 am, TBLB 1; May 5, 1 pm, Isabel Bader](#)

## Hot Docs review: Our Dance Of Revolution

Philip Pike traces the history of Black queer activism in Toronto, ensuring the Canadian experience no longer lives in the shadow of the U.S.

BY [CHAKA V. GRIER](#) APRIL 17, 2019



**OUR DANCE OF REVOLUTION** (Phillip Pike, Canada). 102 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Our Dance Of Revolution's look at the staunch group of rebels and activists in the Canadian Black queer community – whose groundbreaking work stretches decades before Black Lives Matter– Toronto stopped the Pride Parade in 2016 – will be a revelation for many.

Director Phillip Pike's exhaustive doc traces the movement from the early 70s, when activists like Makeda Silvera fought for visibility and created the iconic community focal point at 101 Dewson, through to the darkest days of the AIDS epidemic as Douglas Stewart co-founded the Black Coalition for Aids Prevention, to BLM's fight against police violence.

With this doc, Pike ensures the Canadian experience no longer lives in the shadow of U.S. Black and LGBTQ activism. Even at a healthy 102 minutes, it feels like at least seven documentaries could be spun out of the material, highlighting just how absent these his-and-herstories are from Canadian history.

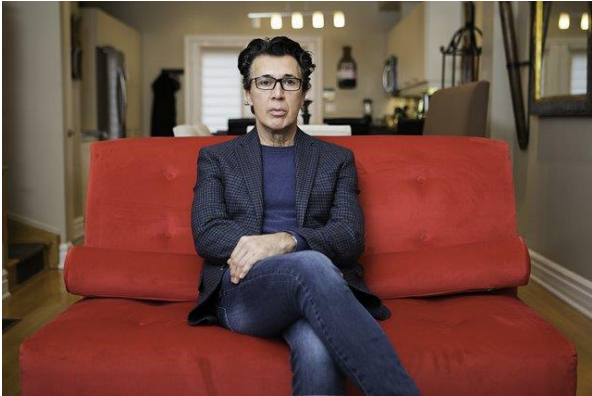
[Apr 29, 6:15 pm, TIFF 2; May 1, 2:45 pm Scotiabank 3; May 3, 12 pm, Scotiabank 8](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-our-dance-of-revolution/>

## Nicolas Cage's stand-in steps out in Hot Docs short **Uncaged**

Raised in Toronto's Greektown, Marco Kyris is ready for his close-up after spending much of his career in the shadow of a Hollywood A-lister

BY [LINDSAY GIBB](#) APRIL 17, 2019



*Marco Kyris worked as Nicolas Cage's permanent stand-in from 1994 until 2004.*

The first time I met Marco Kyris, he was interviewing me.

He hosts a podcast about the film industry called [Babble Bullshit And Beyond](#) in which he interviews actors, screenwriters and anyone working in the entertainment industry. He had found me through my book, *National Treasure: Nicolas Cage*, and asked me to be on the show. My study of Cage, in particular, caught his eye since Kyris – born and raised in Toronto – had also studied Cage, though in a somewhat different context.

For 10 years it was Kyris's job to watch Cage's mannerisms and movements, and to mimic them on film sets. He was Cage's stand-in from 1994 until 2004.

Kyris's decade with Cage is now the subject of the documentary short **Uncaged: A Stand-In Story** debuting at Hot Docs (April 27, 9 pm, Scotiabank 4; April 28, 8:15 pm, Innis Town Hall).

Funded by Kyris and directed by Blake Johnston and Kelso Steinhoff, the short is like a conversation with Kyris. It features fun moments of the former stand-in imitating Cage's mannerisms, and many photos of the two men dressed like each other on set. But it also examines the damage being a stand-in had on the aspiring actor's ego, and when we talk about his time with Cage, it comes out.

"It's usually an insecure person who believes they belong in the shadows," says Kyris, who created the documentary short as a sort of trailer for his upcoming book project about his life. "Now I'm the man who's coming out of the shadows. Because I feel like I am worthy and I am good enough, like anybody else."

## NOW Magazine – April 17, 2019 (2 of 3)

Born Evrimahos Kyriakakis and raised in Toronto's Greektown, Kyris was one of three children in a not-particularly-close family. He moved to Los Angeles in the late 80s to study acting (a move that, he wonders in the doc, may have been influenced by his dysfunctional family), but when he failed to find much success by the early 90s, he moved back to Canada, into a basement apartment in Greektown, and started working in restaurants.

In 1994, Kyris got the call that, as the cliché goes, changed his life. An extras agency he'd signed up with wanted him to come to Niagara-on-the-Lake to audition to be Cage's stand-in. He got the part on the spot. Then he had to learn what it meant to be a stand-in.

The job is right in the name. Stand-ins stand for long periods of time while crews set up shots that can sometimes take up to three hours to get right. On Kyris's first film with Cage – Trapped In Paradise, a comedy co-starring Dana Carvey and Jon Lovitz – he was instructed not to talk to the actors. Just observe, stand and be quiet. Talking to Kyris, you see fairly quickly how that last part would have been a problem. So he started to break the rules.

What made Kyris such a good stand-in, he thinks, is that he not only stood well for long periods of time, he observed the shots as they were being set up and relayed information about positioning to Cage so he could better prepare for each shoot. This resourcefulness led Cage to invite Kyris to be his permanent stand-in.

Which means, if you've watched many Nicolas Cage films, you've seen Kyris in action. He's the leg that high-kicks Christopher Eccleston off of a warehouse walkway at the end of Gone In 60 Seconds. He's the hand that jots down the secret codes from the back of the Declaration of Independence in National Treasure (which took some work since Cage is right-handed and Kyris is not). And you know the iconic aerial shot of Cage dropping to his knees, holding up flares at the end of The Rock? That's Kyris.

Observing Cage for a living, Kyris, like me, was impressed. Particularly during the mid-90s when they filmed The Rock, Con Air and Face/Off, what some call The Summer Of Cage. The unofficial action trilogy was shot back-to-back, and Kyris observed how Cage quickly transitioned into each role.

"I paid attention to everything he did, and it was mesmerizing to see how he would change from character to character, film to film."

He points specifically to Face/Off, where Cage commits to the absurd scenario that his face has been removed and swapped with the face of the man who killed his son. Coming straight off Con-Air, Cage jumped into a fully realized character by embracing the mental anguish being two people at once would truly cause a person. He

headbangs, thrashes and laugh-cries all over that movie, and his ability to stay so consistently over-the-top impressed Kyris.

“This man did every single quirky, wacked-out thing that you can think of exactly the same on a wide shot, a mid-shot and a close-up. That’s what blew me away. I’m thinking, ‘No wonder I’m not an actor. Look at this guy go!’”

Despite the initial humiliation Kyris felt about giving up his own acting career, he did some things better than his boss. Between films he’d come back to Toronto and invest in real estate. By the end of his time with Cage, Kyris had purchased and renovated 12 properties.

“Cage was extremely proud of me during that time,” remembers Kyris.

The star is well known for buying houses, reportedly topping out at 15 homes, including two castles and an entire island in the Bahamas. But Cage’s real estate adventures notoriously landed him in financial disaster.

“It’s because he didn’t rent out his places – he just lived in them all,” says Kyris, who has since sold most of his properties save two houses in Toronto and one in Fort Lauderdale. So while Kyris lives off profits from his investments, Cage has been in the news for debts.

But, as I argue in my book, he only works as much as he does because he’s always looking for new challenges.

Kyris agrees.

“He’s going to work to constantly stay relevant, not to an American market, but to the global market,” observes Kyris, who stopped working for Cage in 2004 in part due to exhaustion. “He’s clever. Whether I approve or not, I’m not his agent. But he’s doing it because he wants to do it.”



## Canadian Spectrum at Hot Docs



### Canadian Spectrum at Hot Docs

by [Ralph Lucas](#) – Publisher

(April 17, 2019 – Toronto, ON) As promised in [an earlier article](#), this is a look at some of the films in the Canadian Spectrum at Hot Docs, which gets underway in 8 days with the feature *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*. We have previously covered this important documentary, including an on-camera interview with its director, [Tasha Hubbard](#). If you can't make it to opening night on April 25, it has its second screening on Saturday April 27 at the Tiff Bell Lightbox and its last one week later on May 4 at the Isabel Bader Theatre on the University of Toronto Campus.

There are 20 films in the Canadian Spectrum, but don't expect all of them to be set in Canada and don't expect all of them to be in either of the country's official languages. Where the language of the film isn't in English or French there are always subtitles and in some cases the story is told so effectively through the images that no words are required. Such is the case for *River Silence*.



*Image from River Silence courtesy of Hot Docs*

In theme and look it seems to be an extension of the multi-award-winning film [Anthropocene](#), but instead of ranging far and wide, *River Silence* trains its cameras on a small village and a group of people, many Indigenous Brazilians, displaced by the building of a dam on a tributary of the Amazon. The cinematography is wonderful—the drone shots providing a special perspective—and the editing allows the story to flow as easily as the river these people once knew must have. This may be an environmental

## Northern Stars – April 17, 2019 (2 of 3)

story but it is highly personal, the story of four people and their families and how each is impacted by change and how they have become powerless pawns in a game far larger than any of them can imagine. Pay attention to the closing sequence of supers that spell out the scope of the tragedy that is taking place along the Amazon. *River Silence* screens on April 6 and 28 and again on May 3. All screenings at different times but all at the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

Despite the evidence all around us that weather has changed and we are to blame, the Neanderthals in power (with apologies to Neanderthals) seem hell bent on turning back the clock hoping no one notices that wildfires have grown in size and number, rising sea levels have already damaged island nations, winters seem ever more impossible and heat waves claim more lives every year. *The Hottest August* is a Canada-U.S. coproduction from director Brett Story. Story shot this film in and around New York on every day of August 2017. Trump had been President for less than a year, white nationalists seem emboldened, if it isn't wildfires scorching the west coast, it's hurricanes threatening the east coast. For 31 days she captured a slice of the United States in transition, a moving picture of a singular time that just might stop you in your tracks when you revisit this moment in history. *The Hottest August* has its first screening on April 29 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, its second on May 2 at the Scotiabank Theatre and its third and final screening back at the Lightbox on May 3.



*Image from Prey courtesy of Hot Docs.*

[Matt Gallagher's](#) new film, *Prey*, carries a warning from Hot Docs: "Content notice: Film contains sexual violence trigger material." *Prey* is about the indefensible sexual abuse within the Catholic Church that has been defended by the church by its use of an old Mafia tactic, Omerta, or silence. Gallagher's film tracks the case of a certain Father Hod Marshall, who pled guilty to 17 assault charges. One of his victims, seeking closure for what happened during his childhood, filed suit against the Basilian Fathers of Toronto. The film centres on a man known by some as "the priest hunter," lawyer Rob Talach and on a number of survivors who provided testimony. *Prey* will have its World Premiere on Friday April 26 at the Tiff Bell

## Northern Stars – April 17, 2019 (3 of 3)

Lightbox. It screens the next day at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema and finally back at the Lightbox on May 2.

Ingrid Veninger's documentary, *The World or Nothing* is nothing if not different. Two Cuban men, twin brothers, have moved to Spain to seek their fame and fortune, hoping for online stardom as they shoot their own dance videos. Seemingly inseparable, they do everything together. Towards the end one says he will only marry if his intended bride accepts his brother as part of the marriage. While they are, or should be, grown men, they are dreamers, perhaps even Beautiful Losers, who miss their mother, go forward blinded by hope and want nothing less than, as the title says, *The World or Nothing*. The 84-minute doc has its World Premiere on Saturday April 27 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox. Its second screening is also there and its last screening will be on Thursday May 2 at the Hart House Theatre on the University of Toronto campus.



*Image from A Place of Time and Tide courtesy of Hot Docs.*

*A Place of Time and Tide* is a very Canadian film. Co-directed by Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque, this 78-minute exploration is set in the fishing villages along the Gulf of St. Lawrence in eastern Québec. If you thought the end of the cod fishing industry only impacted our Maritime provinces and particularly Newfoundland and Labrador, this film will be an eye-opener on a part of the country long overlooked, almost forgotten, where the older English-speaking population hope to preserve their traditional way of life, while the younger people look elsewhere for their future. *A Place of Time and Tide* has its World Premiere at Hot Docs on Saturday April 27 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox. Its two final screenings will both be at the Scotiabank Theatre on Sunday April 28 and Saturday May 4th. There are 20 films including some shorts in the Canadian Spectrum, 12 of them are World Premieres. This brief selection gives you an idea of the variety of films within this part of Hot Docs. There is far [more information online](#). The 26th edition of the festival will take place from April 25 to May 5, 2019.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/canadian-spectrum-at-hot-docs/>

## Hot Docs review: American Factory

Doc about a Chinese billionaire taking over an abandoned Ohio factory is one of the fest's best

BY [GLENN SUMI](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**AMERICAN FACTORY** (Steven Bognar, Julia Reichert, U.S.). 115 minutes. Rating: NNNNN

Years after a GM plant closes in Ohio, Chinese billionaire **Cao Dewang** decides to buy and repurpose the abandoned factory to expand his Fuyao auto glass company, employing some out-of-work Rust Belt workers as well as hundreds brought in from China. Things do not go well.

When the factory starts losing money, Cao invites the Americans over to China to see how things are done; needless to say, the work ethic is very different. Meanwhile, back in the States, some workers are trying to unionize.

Directors Bognar and Reichert – who gets an [outstanding achievement retrospective this year](#) – are granted impressive access to their subjects, and the camera is there for key moments, including a disastrous plant inspection. The film is balanced, giving equal sides to Americans and Chinese, although the score tries a little too hard to generate excitement.

Look for one employee's joke about the first letters in Fuyao. And there's a poignant moment near then end when Cao lets his guard down and sincerely talks about how he was much happier when he was poor. Not to be missed.

*Apr 30, 6 pm, Isabel Bader; May 2, 10:30 am, TIFF 1; May 4, 6 pm, Isabel Bader; May 5, 4:15 pm, TIFF 1*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-american-factory-julia-reichert/>

## Hot Docs review: Backstage Action

Doc about the lives of movie and TV extras wastes its potentially intriguing subject

BY [GLENN SUMI](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**BACKSTAGE ACTION** (Sanaz Azari, Belgium). 61 minutes. Rating: NN

Director **Sanaz Azari** takes a potentially intriguing subject – the lives of movie and TV extras – and drains any life from it.

Using an observational style, she suggests some fascinating social criticism in how extras casting and costuming choices reinforce stereotypes about, for instance, class and race.

But there's not much to the film. Ordinary people who might have dreams of stardom have banal conversations; there's the occasional reference to shooting with a Huppert or Depardieu (always unseen).

And the director's use of blowup dolls as an ongoing visual motif starts out cute but soon becomes tedious.

*Apr 27, 9 pm, Scotiabank 4; Apr 28, 8:15 pm, Innis*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-backstage-action/>

## Hot Docs review: The Corporate Coup D'Etat

Fred Peabody's film persuasively shows how capitalist interests have been actively subverting the levers of democracy for a long time

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**THE CORPORATE COUP D'ETAT** (Fred Peabody, Canada). 90 minutes. Rating: NNN

For those of you who've had the nagging sense that something's gone terribly wrong in America lately, veteran documentarian Peabody (*All Governments Lie*) expands on **John Ralston Saul's** 1995 charge that capitalist interests were actively subverting the levers of democracy. Two decades later, it's hard to argue against that declaration – especially with Donald Trump as its current standard-bearer.

Peabody leans a little heavy on the ironic music cues, but otherwise builds a solid film around Saul's thesis, interviewing authors (among them **Cornel West**, **Sarah Jaffe** and Saul himself) and journalists (including **Chris Hedges**, **Phillip Martin**, **Lee Fang**) and visiting ruined factory towns Camden, New Jersey, and Youngstown, Ohio, to illustrate the desolation that results when companies pack up and leave.

There's not much that's shocking or revelatory here, but of course that's the point: this has been happening in very slow motion for a very long time.

*April 29, 9:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; April 30, 10 am, Isabel Bader; May 3, noon, Hart House*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-the-corporate-coup-d-etat/>



## Hot Docs review: The Edge Of Democracy

Petra Costa's look at attacks on Brazil's last two democratically elected presidents sheds light on the country's recent political turmoil

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**THE EDGE OF DEMOCRACY** (Petra Costa, Brazil). 112 minutes. Rating: NNN

Costa's look at the quasi-legal attacks on the last two democratically elected presidents of Brazil by the machinations of a right-wing cabal of politicians, industrialists and military power brokers is worth watching for those with even a passing interest in that nation's recent political convulsions.

Costa's cameras are there with **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**, elected as a reformer in 2002, and his prodigy, **Dilma Rousseff**, who took his place in 2010, as they weather wave after wave of accounting scandals and corruption charges that conveniently undermine their attempts at making life better for anyone who isn't already a member of the ruling class.

Her access is amazing, though a tighter edit would have helped; cutting the drone shots would have saved at least 10 minutes.

*April 25, 5 pm, TIFF 1; April 26, 12:30 pm, TIFF 2; May 4, 1:15 pm, TIFF 1*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-the-edge-of-democracy/>

## Hot Docs review: Garden, Zoological

Moving film looks at the relationship between employees at a South Korean zoo and the animals in their care

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**GARDEN, ZOOLOGICAL** (Mincheol Wang, South Korea). 98 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Wang, a documentary editor (*The Hospice*) and cinematographer (*On The Rim Of The Sky*) makes his directorial debut with this simple, uninflected and moving meditation on the relationship between the employees of South Korea's Cheongju Zoo and the animals in their care, who seem to have just as much feeling and personality as their keepers.

Opened in 1997 with the best of intentions, this zoo is still a place that keeps animals in captivity, leading to ailments both physical and psychological. But because of their domestication, most of the animals aren't able to survive in the wild, which means the zoo has no choice but to keep and care for them.

There's an unexpected birth, a devastating death and a sense that everyone's trying their best to cope in an awful situation. But goodwill can only get you so far.

*April 26, 5:30 pm, TIFF 4; April 27, 1:30 pm, TIFF 4; May 5, 3:30 pm, Scotiabank 13*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-garden-zoological/>

## Hot Docs review: Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind

The iconic Canadian singer/songwriter, now 80, gets candid in refreshingly complex music doc

BY [RICHARD TRAPUNSKI](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**GORDON LIGHTFOOT: IF YOU COULD READ MY MIND** (Martha Kehoe, Joan Tosoni, Canada). 90 minutes. Rating: NNNN

If you're worried **Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind** is the kind of hagiography that's all too common in music docs, that danger is thwarted before the opening credits. Watching 1960s footage of himself playing his early hit For Lovin' Me, the iconic Canadian singer/songwriter cringes and admits he should never have written such a chauvinistic song.

While the film could easily indulge in baby boomer nostalgia, Lightfoot doesn't let it. Now 80 years old, he's gregarious and reflective, grateful for his accomplishments without overlooking his faults. That helps temper the requisite career arc checklist, which is pretty much unavoidable in this genre.

There are other talking heads, too – everyone from **Sarah McLachlan** to **Geddy Lee** to, for some reason, **Alec Baldwin** – but it's Lightfoot himself who offers the most insight. Considering the depth of his career – from the 60s folk revival scene in Yorkville to defining a conception of rugged-yet-sensitive Canadiana – that makes him almost the perfect subject.

[Apr 27, 6:45 pm](#), TIFF 1; [Apr 30, 6:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema](#) (Big Ideas screening)

## Hot Docs review: Human Nature

Film about genetic editing gives a human face to the science, and offers more hope than hysteria

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**HUMAN NATURE** (Adam Bolt, U.S.). 107 minutes. Rating: NNNN

After decades of inspiring science-fiction narratives from Huxley to Marvel Comics, genetic editing is now a reality thanks to CRISPR, which allows scientists to treat disease, correct genetic disorders and potentially alter the DNA of a fetus to remove unwanted characteristics – or add desired ones.

Bolt's documentary explains the science swiftly, then explores the potential and nuance of gene-editing by talking to scientists, doctors and patients at the centre of the breakthrough. By matching human faces to the science – most memorably **David Sanchez**, a kid whose debilitating sickle-cell anemia could be eradicated with CRISPR treatment – Human Nature turns data into an engaging narrative, and one that's more hopeful than hysterical.

*April 27, 6 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; April 28, 12:30 pm, TIFF 1; April 30, 12:30 pm, TIFF 1*

## Hot Docs review: Inside Lehman Brothers

Jennifer Deschamps's post-mortem on 2008's financial meltdown is packaged like a hacky true-crime thriller

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**INSIDE LEHMAN BROTHERS** (Jennifer Deschamps, Canada/France). 76 minutes. Rating: NN

Deschamps's post-mortem of the financial meltdown of 2008 zooms in on the cynical, corrupt practices of the investment bank that caused it, talking to a selection of former account executives – most of them women – who noticed the questionable activity, tried to call attention to it, and were gaslit, harassed and physically threatened for their efforts.

It's an angle on the story that hasn't been considered before, and a good one – but it's packaged like a hacky true-crime thriller, with lurking camerawork and a constantly agitating score. By the time Deschamps turns up the sinister music to a shot of utterly innocuous coffee grounds, *Inside Lehman Brothers* seems to be actively undermining its own mission.

*April 27, 9:30 pm, TIFF 1; April 28, 1:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; May 3, 6:15 pm, TIFF 1*

## Hot Docs review: Killing Patient Zero

Laurie Lynd's film about the Air Canada flight attendant who was vilified and wrongly considered the epicentre of the AIDS epidemic is infuriating and heartfelt

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**KILLING PATIENT ZERO** (Laurie Lynd, Canada). 100 minutes. Rating: NNNN

**Laurie Lynd's** alternatively infuriating and heartfelt doc dismantles the idea that Air Canada flight attendant **Gaëtan Dugas**, dubbed Patient Zero, was the epicentre of the AIDS epidemic. Lynd gathers an impressive talking head roster, including **Fran Lebowitz**, **B. Ruby Rich** and the early researchers who grappled with the mysterious virus when it was dubbed “gay cancer.”

They explain how a lack of understanding and lapses in editorial judgment vilified a man who should have instead been heralded for his contributions to HIV research. But what's most impressive about Lynd's moving, expertly crafted and breathless account is how it contextualizes Dugas's life as an emotional and emblematic story of gay culture in the 80s, when the liberation after the Stonewall riots collided with the weaponized fears stoked by AIDS.

*Apr 26, 8:30 pm, TIFF 1; Apr 27, 12:30 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 3, 2:45 pm, Hart House*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-killing-patient-zero/>



## Hot Docs review: Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up

Festival's powerful opening film provides an intimate look at Colten Boushie and his family's fight for justice

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**NÎPAWISTAMÂSOWIN: WE WILL STAND UP** (Tasha Hubbard, Canada). 90 minutes.

Rating: NNNN

**Tasha Hubbard's** doc opens with footage of her and her children walking through prairie fields. They climb and maneuver past a fence, and then we hear a click. It belongs to a camera shutter instead of a loaded gun.

It's both graceful and grave, savouring a peaceful moment while recognizing that the precariousness of Indigenous lives on contested land is what's hovering in the back of our minds.

This is how Hubbard eases us into her intimate look at **Colten Boushie**, who was shot in the back of the head by **Gerald Stanley**. The latter's trial is a focal point in the doc, as is the Boushie family's fight for justice and subsequent efforts to speak out against the limitations in our legal system, which allowed an all-white jury to validate an Indigenous man's murder.

Hubbard's doc often stands back and observes as Boushie's family pours their heart out – for her camera, for Parliament Hill and for the United Nations. She also contextualizes their plight with animated inserts that look back at how Canada's history informs today's events.

And in those scenes with her own family, which includes Hubbard's white foster parents, she has probing conversations about today's actions and attitudes, wondering how they inform the way her children will live.

*Apr 25, 9:45 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; Apr 27, 1 pm, TIFF 2; May 4, 10 am, Isabel Bader*

## Hot Docs review: Pipe Dreams

Stacey Tenenbaum's doc about musicians competing in the Canadian International Organ Competition in Montreal pulls out all the stops

BY [GLENN SUMI](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**PIPE DREAMS** (Stacey Tenenbaum, Canada). 78 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Tenenbaum's crowd-pleaser follows five musicians as they prepare for and then compete in the Canadian International Organ Competition in Montreal, dubbed "the Olympics for the organ."

Among the hopefuls is New Zealander **Thomas Gaynor**, a frequent winner on the international circuit; German-based **Sebastian Heindl**, at 19 the youngest competitor; and **Alcee Chriss III**, a cocky Black musician from Texas.

There's lots of human interest as we watch the organists train with their teachers. **Yuan Shen**, the CIOC's first Chinese competitor, has been taught by her father, who introduced the instrument to his country after visiting Japan. And Chriss's story of Googling churches to find teachers will warm your heart.

The film's competition provides nail-biting tension, of course, but there's room for imaginative touches, like one stunning sequence in which Tenenbaum splices together musicians playing the same piece.

And while the organists have their own private rituals and neuroses – who knew eating bananas was so important to playing? – the judges also communicate lots with their post-performance body language. And it goes without saying that there's some beautiful music.

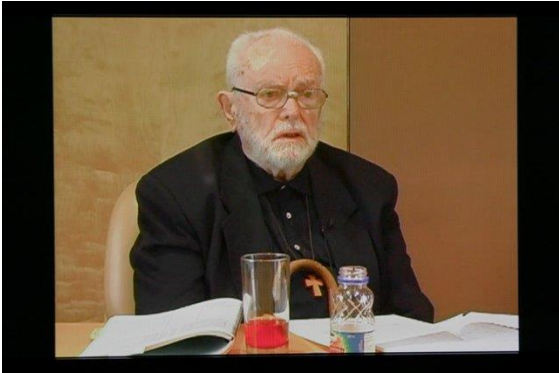
*Apr 28, 3:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; Apr 30, 9 pm, TIFF 3; May 3, 10 am, Isabel Bader*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-pipe-dreams/>

## Hot Docs review: Prey

Matt Gallagher's doc about sexual abuse in the Catholic Church is intriguing because it focuses on a local case

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**PREY** (Matt Gallagher, Canada). 85 minutes. Rating: NNN

There's no shortage of docs about sexually abusive clergy. The most harrowing remains Amy Berg's searing *Deliver Us From Evil*, which explores how the entire Catholic Church system is responsible for victimizing children.

**Matt Gallagher's** doc arrives at the same conclusion while focusing on a local case. Deceased priest **William Hodgson "Hod" Marshall** admitted to abusing multiple boys a year over a 30-year period in Ontario schools. One of his victims, **Rod MacLeod**, sues the Congregation of St. Basil for allowing the abuse to happen.

Devastating testimonies from the 68-year-old MacLeod and other victims are as devastating as you might expect. Unfortunately, there's a focus on lawsuit proceedings and the pursuit of a sizable settlement here that feels like PR for MacLeod's attorney and threatens to cheapen the issue.

*Apr 26, 9 pm, TIFF 2; Apr 27, 1 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; May 2, 1:30 pm, TIFF 1*

## **Kew lines up features for Hot Docs**

UK-based Kew Media Distribution is to unveil a raft of feature documentaries at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival later this month, including a film about AIDS.

Killing Patient Zero (1×98'), from Fadoo Productions and Fine Point Films, explores the pre-AIDS era in the 1970s up to the present and follows a Canadian flight attendant as the disease and hysteria around it spreads.

Also on the slate is White Pine Pictures' Toxic Beauty (1×90' or 1×78'), which focuses on a class action lawsuit against the world's largest healthcare company, Johnson & Johnson.

Elsewhere, Our Godfather (1×93') is from Black Earth Films and Phenomen Trust Production. It tells the story of an Italian gangster who became the first high-ranking Sicilian Mafia boss to turn against the organisation.

Also being shopped by Kew at Hot Docs, which runs from April 25 to May 6 in Toronto, is Fine Point Films' Bojayá: Caught in the Crossfire (1×80'). It uncovers the story of a community leader and Nobel Peace Prize nominee who lost 32 relatives in the 2002 massacre in Colombia.

Richard Middleton18-04-2019©C21Media

## Review: Nureyev doc about the ballet legend doesn't need its stylistic flourishes

Never-before-seen VHS footage of Rudolf Nureyev offers a sense of the dancer's talent and personality

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 18, 2019



**NUREYEV** (Jacqui Morris, David Morris). 109 minutes. Some subtitles. Opens Friday (April 19). See [listing](#).

Rating: NNN

Some documentaries need all the help they can get to tell their story. Stylistic flourishes, celebrity narrators, assaultive editing – even promotional tie-ins have helped filmmakers bring their complex or challenging subjects to audiences over the years, and occasionally you'll see an aesthetic leap that perfectly suits the material. Josh Fox's [Gasland](#) and Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui's [McQueen](#) spring to mind, though I'm sure there are others.

But piling on the style doesn't always serve the story. Sometimes it just gets in the way. That's the problem with Jacqui and David Morris's Nureyev, which just won't stop swooning at its subject, and trying so hard to bring him to cinematic life that it proves an utterly alienating experience.

Nureyev moves comprehensively through the legendary dancer Rudolf Nureyev's life and career – charting his rise to principal in the Kirov Ballet, his impulsive defection in Paris in 1961, his revelatory performances with Margot Fonteyn, his embrace in America, his imperious later years, his mostly hidden relationship with Erik Bruhn, who died in 1986, and his own death due to AIDS-related complications in 1993.

It's a hell of a story, loaded with drama and portent, but the filmmaker siblings don't trust us to see that. Their film keeps leaping into impressionistic, stylized flourishes – imagining key moments in

Nureyev's life as interpretive dances, or projecting film clips on scrims for a ghostlike effect while we listen to audio testimonials to the man's genius.

If that's your thing, this is the movie for you; if it's not, you'll be clawing at your armrest five minutes into the lovingly lit re-creation of Nureyev's hardscrabble upbringing in Ufa.

Still, the documentary offers a wealth of performance footage and talk-show appearances, and a trove of never-before-seen VHS tapes provided by Nureyev's estate, which offer a sense of the man's immense talent and personality. When the directors aren't undermining this genuinely fascinating archival material with their self-conscious stylistic choices – and just letting it play over audio interviews, in the style of Asif Kapadia's [Senna](#) and [Amy](#) – their movie does its job just fine.

There's a section on Nureyev's collaboration with Fonteyn that simply shows us how the older dancer was rejuvenated by his energy – “we were both going out there inspired by the other one,” she said – sparking a supportive friendship that lasted until her death in 1991. Even then, though, the filmmakers lead-foot it with an awkward comparison of Fonteyn and Nureyev's reception in America to Beatlemania.

There's a lot to admire in Nureyev, but the documentary keeps getting in its own way. I'm glad it's in theatres, though, since it paves the way nicely for Ralph Fiennes's upcoming biopic *The White Crow*, which opens in Toronto next month.

That film, which stars Oleg Ivenko as the young Rudolf and Fiennes himself as his mentor Alexander Pushkin, has an intimate focus that this documentary sorely lacks, and a genuine tension in its reconstruction of Nureyev's defection. The documentary *Nureyev* will serve as a decent placeholder until then.



## Tiny icons with big impact: New doc looks at the evolution of emoji

'Picture Character' asks whether emoji are really a 'language'

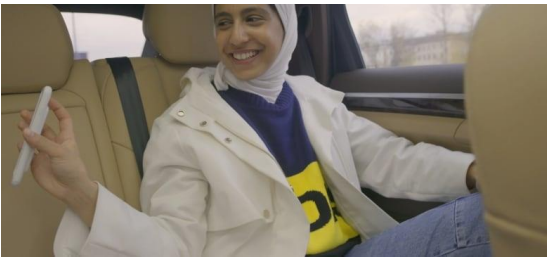
CBC Radio • Posted: Apr 21, 2019 3:58 PM ET | Last Updated: April 18



Linguist Tyler Schnoebelen with San Francisco's beloved poop rock. (Taylor Gentry)

They started out as a limited set of simple icons and became a way for billions of us to communicate. But there's nothing so simple about emoji.

Can cartoonish cats and heart-eyed faces actually become their own global digital language? And can you really express the range of diversity in the world through a set of symbols? A new documentary film, [Picture Character](#), seeks to answer those questions. The doc traces emoji from their modest beginnings in Japan in 1997 to their status as a worldwide phenomena today.



Rayouf Alhumedhi, creator of the hijab emoji, in Vienna. (Lucy Martens)

[Martha Shane](#) is the co-director of the film which will screen at the 2019 [Hot Docs Festival](#) in Toronto. She followed several quests to get new emoji adopted, including a teenage woman in Berlin campaigning for a hijab symbol, an Argentinian woman lobbying for a mate emoji, and an initiative in the U.K. to implement a [period emoji](#).



Picture Character director Martha Shane (Submitted by Martha Shane)

Over the past several years, emoji have become more inclusive, and represent a wider range of identities. "Skin tone options for emoji was probably the number one biggest change to the emoji set," Shane told [Spark](#) host Nora Young. Now you can choose between five different skin tones in addition to the original yellow. "There has been progress. There's no doubt about that."

Despite being tiny, emoji appear to have a big impact. The people who campaign for new emoji are very passionate. "Ultimately what we saw was that it's really important to people to be able to represent themselves and see themselves represented," said Shane. "Certainly with the hijab emoji, that was a big part of it."

The film tracks how emoji have emerged as a global language of sorts. They definitely help add tone to text, but do emoji really constitute a 'language'? "I think that there are concepts that are really difficult to communicate with emoji. More abstract concepts like freedom or respect or chagrin," said Shane. "While I wouldn't say emoji is a language at this point, it does seem like it may continue to evolve in a more language-like direction."

Shane wonders whether emoji could be considered "something new," that only exists in our new digital universe. "It's not exactly a language, but it's not exactly a system of symbols either."

As for where Shane thinks emoji are headed? "I would be surprised if, [like emoticons], we just use a smaller number of emoji and then something else pops in to take their place."

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/spark/tiny-icons-with-big-impact-new-doc-looks-at-the-evolution-of-emoji-1.5099032>

## HOT DOCS 2019: SHEDOESTHECITY'S BEST OF THE FEST

POSTED ON APRIL 18, 2019

Our FAVOURITE time of year is back! From April 25 to May 5, the Canadian International Documentary Festival, **HOT DOCS**, returns. Whatever your preference—from **light** to **heavy**—you'll find films that'll get you thinking, shift your perspective and make you feel ALL the things. This year, more than half of the directors at the fest are women, telling stories that touch on everything from trauma and healing to feminism, true crime and environmental activism.

We recommend taking the time to **comb through the schedule** and plot your plan of attack. If you're pressed for time, here are our top picks.



### AHKAMEYIMO NITANIS/KEEP GOING MY DAUGHTER

*What it's about:* Candy Fox's **ahkameyimo nitanis/Keep Going My Daughter** is a contemplative short film that follows a young Indigenous couple as they grapple with a colonial past. As part of their journey, they offer a letter to their young daughter in hopes that she can continue on the path to not only heal, but thrive.

*Why we're there:* It has been four years since the Truth and Reconciliation Report was released, but where are we at *really* when it comes to reconciliation? This film reminds us that the scars of colonization are real and ever-present, and it challenges us to do more.



### ASK DR. RUTH

*What it's about:* For those of us whose sex-ed came from her late-night radio show, Dr. Ruth feels like a very near and dear friend. The Holocaust survivor (she escaped Germany after *Kristallnacht*, and her parents perished in Auschwitz) is now ninety years old and reflecting on a life well lived. She trained as a sniper, studied psychology at the Sorbonne, and eventually went on to become a sex therapist, sharing her wisdom—tinged with humour—with adults and curious teens alike.

*Why we're there:* Frankly, we want to spend some time with an old friend and learn more about the story behind this brave female trailblazer who consistently challenged what is possible.

## She Does the City – April 18, 2019 (2 of 4)



### BUDDY

*What it's about:* Heddy Honigmann's emotional film follows six service dogs as they help their humans navigate their external (and internal) worlds. To a veteran suffering with PTSD and a child with ASD, the gifts that these dogs bring are priceless.

*Why we're there:* Most people have no idea how much time and energy goes into training a service dog, nor do they understand the deep bonds that are formed. No rehabilitation or drug can come near the amount of support and assistance that these dogs provide. Also...LOOK AT THAT FACE. How could we NOT go?!



### #FEMALE PLEASURE

*What it's about:* #Female Pleasure follows five very different women as they declare war on the forces that abuse and oppress them. From Deborah, who flees her patriarchal Hasidic community, to Leyla, who confronts men with the female circumcision she herself endured, this film shows women who are putting out their necks to share their stories and create change.

*Why we're there:* In case you need a reminder of how much we still need feminism, this is the film to watch. Delight in the triumphs, and learn from the struggles, of these five fearless women. We've still got a looong way to go.



### MAXIMA

*What it's about:* Maxima follows the story of Máxima Acuña, a farmer in the mountains of Peru who, at the risk of being forced from her family's land, takes a major mining company to court. Throughout her legal battle with the billion-dollar mining corporation, Máxima was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize.

*Why we're there:* We love a great David-and-Goliath story, especially when that David is a woman who raises guinea pigs and has the courage to make a stand for what is right no matter the cost.

## She Does the City – April 18, 2019 (3 of 4)



## GROWING UP FEMALE

**What it's about:** What does it mean to come of age in America? This early feminist doc asks a group of six females from divergent backgrounds about their experiences growing up. What pressures and expectations did they face, and what opportunities were available to them? How far have we come since the film was made in 1971? More importantly, where do we go from here?

*Why we're there:* The women's moment is not a constant; feminism is not a monoculture. We are keen to see the perspective of those who went before us; perhaps it will propel us to change the system for future generations of women and girls.



**FOR SAMA**

*What it's about:* Filmmaker Waad al-Kateab is dedicated to capturing her home of Aleppo, even as conflict rages around it. When she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter, moments of turmoil are balanced with moments of levity and promise, showing that hope springs eternal, even in the midst of war.

*Why we're there:* Having a baby can be a joyful and stressful time, even in the best of circumstances. This film is an intimate look at survival and recovery in the face of extreme hardship.



## ILLUSIONS OF CONTROL

**What it's about:** Vancouver-based filmmaker Shannon Walsh follows five women from across the world who are living in the aftermath of an environmental or personal crisis. Whether it be radiation in Japan or arsenic-laced land in Yellowknife, these women are facing down their new "normal" in a world that is becoming increasingly inhabitable.

*Why we're there:* We often hear about environmental disasters on the news when they're happening, but we rarely see the ramifications on the people who live there after the fact. This film questions why we are acting so complacent about protecting the only planet we have.

## She Does the City – April 18, 2019 (4 of 4)



### I LOVE YOU, NOW DIE: THE COMMONWEALTH VS. MICHELLE CARTER

*What it's about:* This film is a deep dive into the story behind the sensational trial where seventeen-year-old Michelle Carter was convicted of involuntary manslaughter for persuading her boyfriend (via text) to kill himself.

*Why we're there:* This riveting film raises serious questions about the technology that dominates our lives, about the legal precedent such a conviction sets, and about mental health and personal responsibility in the wake of suicide.



### "I TOLD MY MUM I WAS GOING ON AN R. E. TRIP..."

*What it's about:* Lingering taboos around abortion are the backdrop for this film, which explores the real-life experiences of women having abortions in the UK.

*Why we're there:* Teenagers who face unwanted pregnancy often bear the brunt of secrecy and shame when it comes to accessing safe abortion. By hearing their stories in their own words, we are reminded of what it was like to be young and dealing with big issues. This film underlines the necessity of fighting for women's reproductive rights across the board.



### MEETING A MONSTER

*What it's about:* How is a racist made? Through audio recordings and reenactments, *Meeting a Monster* tells the story of Angela King, a woman who became a white supremacist, then eventually found her way out again.

*Why we're there:* The white supremacist movement has been bubbling up across the world, leading to violence and fractured communities. If we can better understand what fuels this hatred and impels people to join, then we can offer a positive, alternative way of co-existing with our fellow humans and dismantle harmful ideas before they have a chance to take root.

<http://www.shedoesthecity.com/hot-docs-2019-shedoesthecitys-best-of-the-fest>





## **“BECAUSE WE ARE GIRLS” REVEALS AN INEPT JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

POSTED ON APRIL 18, 2019

[Jeeti Pooni](#) was eleven years old when the sexual abuse began.

Her male cousin would sneak into her room while everyone else was asleep. She didn't understand what he was doing to her; and she had no idea it was also happening to her two sisters, Kira and Salakshana. Raised in a conservative Indo-Canadian family, she kept her secret hidden for years. It was only when she spoke out as an adult that she realized she was not the only one it was happening to.

Since the family first reported the abuse to police, a decade has passed, but the case finally made its way to the Supreme Court. Baljit Sangra's documentary, *Because We Are Girls*, weaves through the past and present to document what happens in the wake of sexual abuse. It examines how this type of abuse is nurtured by cultural attitudes and kept secret through shaming and intimidation. It also raises serious red flags about our justice system and its ineptitude in dealing with survivors. We spoke with Jeeti and Baljit this week.

### **SDTC: What role do you think having your own children played in your decision to come forward with this?**

JP: My daughter was then six when I broke my silence. She was the number one reason.

Every stage, every age that she hit—when I had certain things happen to me—that was a reminder. It's those haunting memories, the memories are always there. And there's always something there to remind you of that and put you in that place. Watching my daughter grow helped me see my innocence, the little girl inside me that was once eleven years old. I didn't know anything then and didn't have any help at that time. I had judgments on myself, and blame, and loads of shame. It helped me become easier on myself.

Then moving forward from that, I felt it was still happening. It became my duty to protect my daughter and those other girls out there. And that's what we went and did.



**Your abuser is to blame, but the culture you were raised in shrouded the abuse in shame and secrecy. What messages do you try to impart to your daughters now?**

JP: I believe I'm an open mom. I strive every day to become more open, more aware of where I might be closed off. There was no way that my parents—the culture itself—did anything at anytime to make me feel safe to come out and tell them. So I make it safe for my daughters. There's nothing they can ever do where Mommy won't love them. They will always be loved no matter what, and they're perfect just the way they are. Silencing is the first thing that the culture does—the blame, the shame—forcing those who have been harmed to just shut up and shove it under the carpet. So that's how the culture's been dealing—or not dealing with—this issue.

I did take both of my daughters when the judge announced his reasons for the verdict. It was important for them to stand up for themselves [just as] Mummy and their aunts have stood up. You stand up for your truth, no matter who believes you and who doesn't.

**In the film, you confront your parents about their inaction in the fallout of this abuse. What is your relationship like with them now?**

JP: Initially, I was angry and upset at my parents. I did have blame: "You're not supportive." But culture is passed down from generation to generation. What their parents passed on to them, that's what they're passing down to us. After the verdict, now that the anger has subsided and I'm able to see their innocence in all this too, including my own innocence, it's helped improve the relationship. And it's helped me heal in my heart and not carry all this anger and upset—all of that negatively charged energy—forward.

**Throughout this process, what have you learned about yourself?**

JP: You have to be your own support. Your family may support you; it might not. But in the end, it's you who has to dig in deep, and be grounded, and be emotionally balanced and physically healthy to go through something like this. Coming out on the other end, after a decade, it's like *Wow...I persevered*. There is that strength that I believe every person has inside, no matter what's happened to you or how you've been harmed. You have to dig in deep, and that's where your support comes from for you.



**Baljit, what was the hardest part of making this documentary for you?**

BS: Bearing witness to what they had to go through—the delays in the court system—was really tough. It took a long time; it took a toll on them. I documented that in the film, but delays in the testimony took years, so they couldn't even talk to each other about this. You go through this really intense experience in court, but you can't share it with each other. It was really tough.

**What was it like to film the scene where the sisters confronted their parents?**

BS: It was emotional, really raw. We didn't know where that scene was going. While filming, I was quiet- standing behind the cinematographer, and tears were just coming down my face. It really showed the impact of sexual abuse on this family. The girls came forward saying we didn't feel supported, and then we saw the impact of secrets and lies on them and on the family. It bubbled up.

When we showed the family the film after, I was so worried about that scene. But I think they felt [it] was an honest portrayal of a family. In the film, we try to add context to show what they were living with, coming as immigrants, living in a small town, having these kids, then having family members coming over. They were going through a hard time, and I think they were trying the best they could. But they saw, in that scene, the profound impact of not doing anything.

**Last year, the Supreme Court of British Columbia found the accused guilty of four out of six charges of sexual assault. Where does the case stand now with the courts?**

BS: There's this thing called the 11(b) Charter application ("Jordan application") that you can apply for. That's what he did, basically saying his rights were compromised because the trial took so long. The Jordan application has been heard by the judge; we're just waiting on his decision. If he wins, charges will be stayed [and there will be no sentencing]. The system is really flawed.

**Does the justice system work for survivors?**

JP: Absolutely not. It's not survivor-centric at all; it's actually the opposite. It re-victimizes survivors, and it's very traumatizing. I'm hoping that us coming forward in this way, and sticking with the court

## **She Does the City – April 18, 2019 (4 of 4)**

case for so long and not giving up in between, is a big eye-opener for the system itself. We live in Canada, and it takes this long—eleven, twelve years—to get through a process?

I'm hoping more questions will be asked about how we can improve this system. It needs to be a more trauma-informed approach. I believe we need a separate sexual assault court that deals with these kinds of cases. You need judges, prosecutors and lawyers that are specialized and highly educated in sexual abuse. It would be much more survivor-centric rather than re-traumatizing them.

**Did you get a sense that eleven years is a common duration for this type of trial? Or do you think that the fact you're a South Asian women played a role?**

JP: I think that my abuser was the puppeteer. It seemed to me as if the system were bowing down to him and his needs. [My sisters and I felt that] we didn't matter, that we had no rights, because we're only witnesses.

Whenever an adjournment or delay was granted—because the accused has applied for this now, or has changed lawyers, or has checked into a hospital—delay, delay, delay. When the next court date is set, it might be three months from now or six months from now. This trial was adjourned so many times, and my sisters and I suffered. Because every single time we were set to go testify, we'd read our police statements (which are hundreds of pages long), and we weren't able to testify. Reading your statements repeatedly, over a period of years—having to remember such details over and over again, saying them in court, having to answer questions and relive the trauma—that is traumatizing.

**What do you hope comes of this film?**

JP: First and foremost, stop blaming and shaming the girls and women, especially within the Indian culture itself, expecting the girl to be submissive and shoving obedience down their throat. And not giving them the same respect that we give our boys. I'm hoping this film will bring some light in each and every home, that there's some shift into getting away from victim blaming and shaming and silencing, and giving girls the same respect and opportunity that we give our boys.

**Because We Are Girls screens at Hot Docs on May 1, 2 and 3.**

<http://www.shedoesthecity.com/because-we-are-girls-reveals-an-inept-justice-system-and-the-devastating-impact-of-sexual-abuse>

## Hot Docs 2019: Are we living in a golden age of documentary cinema?

BARRY HERTZ, APRIL 18, 2019



Filmmakers Brett Story, left, Phillip Pike, Andrew Moir and Phyllis Ellis, who all have films at this year's Hot Docs festival, participate in a roundtable discussion on documentary filmmaking.

GALIT RODAN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

If industry buzz is to be believed, we are living in a golden age of documentary. Just look at the box-office receipts: Last year, five docs (including vertigo-inducing Oscar-winner *Free Solo*) earned more than US\$12-million at the North American box office, an unprecedented hot streak. And away from the theatre, small-screen docs such as HBO's *Leaving Neverland* and Netflix's *Abducted in Plain Sight* impacted the cultural conversation as much as any superhero adventure. But in Canada, away from these easy headlines, a different true-story story is playing out.

Ahead of the 26th Hot Docs Film Festival, which kicks off April 25 in Toronto, The Globe and Mail gathered a diverse group of Canadian documentarians with films premiering at this year's fest – Phyllis Ellis (*Toxic Beauty*), Matt Gallagher (*Prey*), Andrew Moir (*Take Me to Prom*), Phillip Pike (*Our Dance of Revolution*), Rama Rau (*The Daughter Tree*) and Brett Story (*The Hottest August*) – to discuss opportunity, money and whether the new golden age is a reality, or as made-up as any blockbuster.



Take Me to Prom, directed by Andrew Moir.  
HOT DOCS

**The narrative right now is that docs are, simply put, having a moment. This is thanks to the success of Free Solo, Three Identical Strangers, Won't You Be My Neighbor? So: Are we living in a golden age of documentary?**

Brett Story: I'd measure the golden age as: Are working artists making a living? Are people making and distributing documentaries able to have a livelihood? Do we see a diverse array of work being produced? And I think the answer is: no. There are ever only four or five films which have breakout success, and they're great films but not illustrative of the different kind of amazing work that gets created under the mantle of documentary. And the more those films dominate the landscape, the more difficult it becomes for people making work outside a specific set of conventions.

Rama Rau: It's also a critic's term, a pop-culture term, "golden age." I have just been forced to move out of documentary and make a narrative film, because you can't make a living. The funding has absolutely dried up in Canada. We'd love to think that, oh good, Netflix is finally recognizing us as artists. But it's not happening in Canada. There are not enough outlets.

Phyllis Ellis: There's a handful of places for us to go, and only so many slots to fill. You can make a living if you have a film that you're finishing at the same time you have another in development, another that you're shooting. If I told people what I did in a day, they wouldn't believe me.

Matt Gallagher: The films I've gotten off the ground, with my wife as a producer, the two of us working out of our little company from our kitchen table, are small-budget TVO films. And we're lucky to get those commissions every year or two to get us through. You can make a living at it, but when I'm not directing, I'm shooting for other people. But that could change next year.



The Daughter Tree, directed by Rama Rau.

## HOT DOCS

**If we don't measure success in box office, what about how many people are watching these movies? Do you have a firm sense of how many people are consuming your work?**

Story: There's also a real disconnect between critical acclaim and festival success and how else your project can find an audience. I had a film [2016's *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*] that was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award for best documentary. It didn't get Canadian distribution, it didn't get a Canadian broadcaster and it played in no theatres. It screened all over the world at festivals and audiences rose to its challenge, but there's a kind of institutional risk-aversion in this moment, and Netflix is a big part of that. The more it monopolizes the market, the more it squeezes out all the other distributors and platforms. It's not that audiences don't want to see these films, it's that the means to get them to audiences are shrinking.



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Rau: When you say “golden age,” you can’t just have that umbrella term. Hot Docs is a totally different market than broadcasters, and Netflix only comes in after you’ve made a film, whereas CBC and other broadcasters commission you. If you don’t give me money, how do I make the film?

Gallagher: I’m getting depressed here.

Phillip Pike: I made my first film [2002’s *Songs of Freedom*] as a labour of love. It took four or five years, and coming out of that I realized that I was not going to make money as a documentary filmmaker. When I embarked on my new film, I did so with the blinders off, knowing that I had to have other sources of income. The story was important to me, so I pushed through and now I’ve got about \$50,000 in personal debt I’ve taken on. But I’ll be right back at it again, because for me it’s the only thing to do.

Ellis: And I don’t think that by having this conversation we’re complaining about the fact that we have this great opportunity.



Our Dance of Revolution, directed by Phillip Pike.

### HOT DOCS

#### **Did you all go into filmmaking with your eyes wide open as to what it would mean financially?**

Andrew Moir: I didn’t know what I was doing. I went to Hot Docs in 2011, and there was so much complaining all around me, and this was when all I had to worry about was my cheap rent. I thought, what was up with all these jaded people?

Story: I came into documentary because I love cinema and non-fiction cinema, but then you go to a film festival and you have a lot of conversations about how stressed out and tired and broke you are. It is very hard, but we have to be honest about how enduring the difficulty is over the years and how that translates to our attitudes about what we do and the choices we make. I teach at a university, and that’s how I make a living. It’s important to not get bogged down in the industry side of things and being bummed-out, because the work is exciting, but we have to be honest about how it affects us, too.

Gallagher: Do any of you do hired-gun stuff? I do two of those for every one film I do on my own. That’s the only way I can survive.

Rau: Documentary in Canada is funded better than in the outside world. Go to other festivals, and filmmakers there are like, “Oh my God, you got Telefilm money?” But it’s also all tied to broadcasters, it’s wheels within wheels. I had no clue when I got into this. I just knew I wanted to make a film.



Prey, directed by Matt Gallagher.

HOT DOCS

**If not money, what gets you all out of bed in the morning, and behind the camera?**

Pike: It's a real privilege to be a filmmaker. My first film, which was about gay life in Jamaica, I just bought a plane ticket and brought a camera and because I called myself a documentary filmmaker, people invited me into their homes and told me the intimate details of their life.

Gallagher: People are so excited to know that you're going to do more than a 6 o'clock news hit.

Story: For me, documentary is a creative form. It uses the language of cinema, and there's so much exciting opportunity there to not just engage with the world but restage the world for an audience. To question how we live and exist, and then use the language of images and sound and aesthetics to position and reframe a set of issues or questions.

Rau: You're not sitting in a cubicle all day; you're talking to people, and questioning things and shaking up the status quo.

Moir: I've worked in fiction, too, and what differentiates documentary and fiction filmmakers is that they're both sensitive kinds of people. But documentary filmmakers are sensitive to the world around them, as opposed to narrative directors, who are sensitive to themselves. Documentary filmmakers pay attention to what's happening. And we're whinier.



The Hottest August, directed by Brett Story.

HOT DOCS

**Do you talk about money enough, as a filmmaking community?**

Gallagher: I don't think so, and we need to, because we want to keep the good filmmakers around.

Rau: We're losing people to the States and to narrative and to everything else.

Story: And we're losing diverse voices. Part of the risk that happens when you don't talk about money is that things appear as if it's just a meritocracy. You're like, oh, this person must be so great because they can make all their films, but you don't know that they have independent wealth. It's very discouraging for those who can't fund their film or make a living, who then think, "I must not be very good," and they drop out. That tends to affect filmmakers of colour and women filmmakers the most.

Gallagher: Alan Zweig, who is one of our better filmmakers in this country, I met him on the street a bit ago and he said if he doesn't get another film off the ground, he's going to be driving Uber.

**Let's return to the question of diversity for a moment. Are you seeing real change out there?**

Story: We have to complicate that question because it's not just who gets to make films, but who gets to make the films that become the symbols of this golden age. There's getting to make your film, then getting it seen, then making money, then having an actual career. There's a more diverse spectrum of people who are getting to make films, but when you look at who is winning awards, who is selling films to Netflix, you see that diversity diminish.

Moir: It's important to think about what a diverse filmmaker may have to compromise to work for a broadcaster or funder, too. With Telefilm, films have to be in English or French.

**How important is booking a Hot Docs premiere?**



Toxic Beauty, directed by Phyllis Ellis.

HOT DOCS

Moir: I came here with a student short, and it changed my life. I met all these people, financiers and distributors, and figured out what I was good at.

Rau: It makes or breaks your film as far as Canadian exposure goes.

Story: And part of the struggle is that it's because it's so important. It becomes difficult to launch it otherwise.

Ellis: Part of it, too, is that I can't wait to see everyone else's films.

Rau: It's our Christmas. We dress up, we come out, we party. And then we go back to our caves.

I want to end this with maybe an act of catharsis: What's the worst note you've ever received on your work?

Gallagher: I was pitching at the Hot Docs Forum for the first time, probably 15 years ago, and there's this huge table of broadcasters who have money internationally. Nick Fraser, who was the big guy at the BBC, said to me, "Your main character is as boring as lead," in front of everybody. I decided then that I was going to make the film no matter what, just to spite him. So, spite has driven a lot of my career.

Ellis: I was sitting with a broadcaster who said, "Could you be smarter?"

Rau: I wanted to make a film about my ancestral home in India, where we believe there are female spirits who guard it. I pitched it as an examination of the supernatural, and the broadcaster said, "Don't you have any white male ghosts?"

Story: I just want to say, oh my God, I feel we're such a complain-y bunch, but I do feel very inspired by other filmmakers. When I think of those who made me want to do this – Allan King, Studio D at the NFB. ... I just feel that a small corrective to our whining is that one of the joys of getting into a film festival like Hot Docs is being able to see what's being made, and expanding my ideas of what's possible.

Rau: Yes: The golden age of documentary is one week per year, during Hot Docs.

These interviews have been condensed and edited.

The 2019 Hot Docs Film Festival runs April 25 through May 5 in Toronto ([hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)).

## MEET THE TRUTH-TELLERS

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### **Phyllis Ellis, *Toxic Beauty***

The veteran filmmaker – and former Olympian who competed for Canada's field hockey team in the '84 Games – arrives at Hot Docs this year with *Toxic Beauty*. The film, which will have its world premiere in Toronto, explores the harmful practices of the beauty industry, focusing on a landmark suit brought against Johnson & Johnson.

(April 29, 12:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 2, 5:45 p.m., Scotiabank)



Phyllis Ellis. GALIT  
RODAN/THE GLOBE AND  
MAIL

### **Matt Gallagher, *Prey***

Gallagher, who got his start directing episodes of the CBC teen-themed educational series *Street Cents*, has made docs on everything from the First World War to underground poker clubs. *Prey*, the director's latest production for TVO, explores the dark legacy of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church.

(April 26, 9 p.m., Lightbox; April 27, 1 p.m., Hot Docs Cinema; May 2, 1:30 p.m., Lightbox)



Matt Gallagher. GALIT  
RODAN/THE GLOBE AND  
MAIL

### Andrew Moir, *Take Me to Prom*

Moir specializes in short docs with “highly personal” points of view. Uprooted, his short film about an Ontario tobacco farmer, played Hot Docs in 2011 and kick-started his career. The director’s latest short, *Take Me to Prom*, explores queer identity as it relates to the so-called biggest night of a high-school student’s young life.

(May 1, 7 p.m., Lightbox; May 4, 10 a.m., Lightbox)



Andrew Moir. GALIT  
RODAN/THE GLOBE AND  
MAIL

### Phillip Pike, *Our Dance of Revolution*

The Jamaican-Canadian filmmaker was a human-rights lawyer in a previous life, before turning to his passion. Pike’s work focuses on LGBTQ issues, with his latest feature, *Our Dance of Revolution*, exploring the history of Toronto’s black queer community.

(April 29, 6:15 p.m., Lightbox; May 1, 2:45 p.m., Scotiabank; May 3, 12 p.m., Scotiabank)



Phillip Pike. GALIT  
RODAN/THE GLOBE AND  
MAIL

### Rama Rau, *The Daughter Tree*

Only three years after her film *League of Exotique Dancers* opened the 2016 Hot Docs Film Festival, Rau is back at the festival with *The Daughter Tree*. A look at gender and the patriarchy in India’s Punjab region, the film feels at home within Rau’s layered and unapologetic filmography.

(April 27, 6:30 p.m., Lightbox; April 30, 10:15 a.m., Lightbox; May 2, 9 p.m., Hart House Theatre)



Rama Rau. GALIT  
RODAN/THE GLOBE AND  
MAIL

### Brett Story, *The Hottest August*

A filmmaker (*The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*) and author (*Prison Land: Mapping Carceral Power Across Neoliberal America*), Story has made a strong impression both within Canada and abroad. A fellow at the 2016 Sundance Institute Art of Nonfiction program, and a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow in film and video, Story arrives at this year’s Hot Docs with the Canadian premiere of *The Hottest August*, an experimental look at modern life under the shadow of climate change.

(April 29, 3:15 p.m., Lightbox; May 2, 6 p.m., Scotiabank; May 3, 12:30 p.m., Lightbox)



Brett Story. GALIT  
RODAN/THE GLOBE AND  
MAIL



## Hot Docs review: Because We Are Girls

Baljit Sangra's film examines how secrets and abuse are perpetuated by toxic masculinity

BY [MICHELLE DA SILVA](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**BECAUSE WE ARE GIRLS** (Baljit Sangra, Canada). 85 minutes. Rating: NN

In the insular South Asian community in Williams Lake, BC, three sisters were raped and sexually assaulted by an older male cousin when they were kids. But the patriarchal Punjabi culture they were raised in demands female subservience and obedience at all costs, and they were never able to be truthful about the abuse until they were adults.

Because We Are Girls examines how secrets and abuse are perpetuated by toxic masculinity, and what survivors need in order to start the journey toward healing. Sangra skillfully uses clips from Bollywood films to mirror cultural misogyny. However, too much jumping back and forth between time and perspective distracts from the overall impact of the film's message.

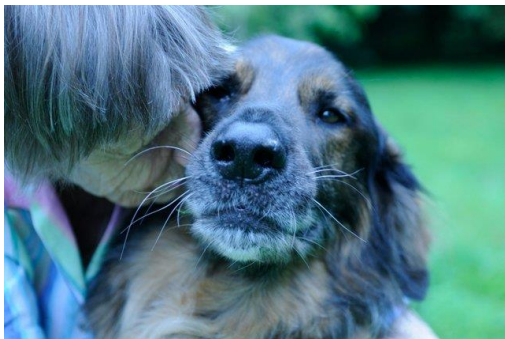
[May 1, 6:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 2, 1 pm, Scotiabank 13; May 3, 6 pm, TBLB 2](#)



## Hot Docs review: Buddy

Heddy Honigmann's simple and elegantly structured film looks at six very different people and their canine companions

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**BUDDY** (Heddy Honigmann, Netherlands). 86 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Think of Buddy as a companion piece to last year's service-dog doc [Pick Of The Litter](#) – and one that fully engages with the intimate, emotional complexity that film left unseen. Dutch filmmaker **Heddy Honigmann** embeds herself with six very different people and their canine companions, who help them cope with a variety of conditions and situations.

Honigmann opens by marvelling at the remarkable interplay between human and animal, but soon shifts to a more meditative state, contemplating the profound connection we make with dogs – and the limited time they have with us. (Yes, there's a bittersweet ending.) It's a simple, elegantly structured film that does its job expertly and with great feeling – much like the dogs themselves.

*Apr 26, 3:15 pm, TIFF 1; Apr 27, 3 pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 30, 10:30 am, TIFF 3*

## Hot Docs review: El Toro

Winnipeg director Danielle Sturk's doc is a charming and meticulously constructed little film

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**EL TORO** (Danielle Sturk, Canada). 43 minutes. Rating: NNN

Using miniatures, animation, stills and archival footage, Winnipeg filmmaker **Danielle Sturk** (Soul Sisters, A Good Madness: The Dance Of Rachel Browne) re-creates the Saint-Boniface truck stop that served as her grandparents' business and her family's lodestone.

Soundtracked by audio recordings of her aunts and uncles trading stories about customers and crises – with particular attention paid to a 1966 blizzard – it's a charming and meticulously constructed little film, even though it starts to overstay its welcome towards the end.

*April 28, 5:45 pm, Innis; April 29, 6:30 pm, Scotiabank 8*

## Hot Docs review: The Guardian Of Memory

Marcela Arteaga takes a daring and dreamy approach to drug-war-related violence near the Mexico-Texas border

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**THE GUARDIAN OF MEMORY** (Marcela Arteaga, Mexico). 93 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Director **Marcela Arteaga** takes a daring and dreamy approach to testimonials about merciless drug-war-related violence near the Mexico-Texas border. She interviews survivors who sought asylum in an inhospitable U.S. after the Mexican state and cartels terrorized their homes in Guadeloupe. They tearfully recount how their loved ones were murdered or disappeared.

The film rummages through their destroyed words, cycling between interview excerpts often without distinguishing who is speaking among the multiple victims. The effect is like one horrifying experience bleeding into the next. Meanwhile, DP **Axel Pedraza**'s camera scours Malick-like over the Juárez Valley, looking for images to accompany the memories and reveals stunning sights both beautiful and haunting.

*Apr 28, 8:15 pm, TIFF 3; Apr 30, 12:45 pm, Scotiabank 8; May 4, 1 pm, TIFF 2*

## Hot Docs review: Hi, AI

Fascinating film looks at the connection between two complex humans trying to make connections with robots

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**Hi, AI** (Isa Willinger, Germany). 85 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Every year brings us at least one documentary about artificial intelligence; *Hi, AI* is the 2019 model. But unlike the recent [More Human Than Human](#) or [The Truth About Killer Robots](#), **Isa Willinger's** film doesn't bother too much with the science of it all; he's far more interested in the people than the machines.

The film looks at two people badly in need of companionship: an isolated American man who brings home a talking sex doll called Harmony, and an older Japanese woman whose son has designed a childlike robot called Pepper. Neither of the robots will be used for the purposes you might imagine; Willinger isn't here to leer, just to observe.

The occasional cutaway to a robotics lab or SXSW tech conference offers some intriguing data about the evolution of computer sentience, but the focus here is on the interaction between complex human beings trying to make a connection with robots that can't offer more than preprogrammed responses. Someday they'll be good enough to engage in conversation, but right now all we can see is the gap between them and us.

*April 29, 8:45 pm, Scotiabank 4; April 30, noon, Scotiabank 3; May 4, 6:30 pm, TIFF 2*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-hi-ai-robots/>

## Hot Docs review: Khartoum Offside

Soccer-loving young women face down societal barriers with fierceness and humour in this apt-but-familiar film

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**KHARTOUM OFFSIDE** (Marwa Zein, Sudan/Denmark/Norway/France). 75 minutes. Rating: NNN

Here's an apt entry into Hot Docs's Persister program. Soccer-loving young women face with fierceness and humour the barriers preventing them from playing. One woman is consistently gender-baited ("Are you a boy or a girl?"). In an especially effective sequence, another describes the challenge of playing in a hijab. But as the team, led by the compelling Sara, seeks status to join FIFA, the major problem is Sudan's Muslim government, which rules against women playing soccer. I wish the film gave more context to this edict, which is part of a Public Order Act banning women from "immoral" behaviours, including drinking, smoking and playing football, while threatening a 40-year prison sentence as punishment. If it feels like you've seen a version of this story before, it's only because there are female athletes all over the world – notably in Iran – seeking recognition and respect.

[Apr 26, 5:30 pm, Scotiabank 8; Apr 27, 10:45 am, TIFF 4; May 5, 8:15 pm, Aga Khan](#)

## Hot Docs review: Kifaru

David Hambridge's doc about the final years of the world's last male northern white rhino is devastating

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**KIFARU** (David Hambridge, U.S./Kenya). 79 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Anyone who's ever cared for an ailing pet will be devastated by *Kifaru*, which embeds us with the Kenyan rangers at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Central Kenya tending to Sudan, the world's last male northern white rhino as he nears the end of his life.

Shooting over four years, director **David Hambridge** captures the depth of affection his human subjects have for the animal in their care, as well as the larger significance of Sudan's death. (He also reminds us of the poaching trade that's brought the species to the brink of extinction.)

It's not an easy film to watch, but it's a necessary testament to the dedication and heart of a handful of people determined to protect an animal till its very last breath.

*Apr 27, 8:30 pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 28, 10 am, TIFF 1; May 3, 4 pm, Fox*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-kifaru/>



## Hot Docs Review: Merata: How Mum Decolonised The Screen

This loving portrait of the first female Maori filmmaker is a must-see

BY [KELLY BOUTSALIS](#) APRIL 19, 2019



*Maori film-maker Merata Mita and her son Hepi, 3.22 September 1989 New Zealand Herald staff photograph.*

**MERATA: HOW MUM DECOLONISED THE SCREEN** (Hepi Mita, New Zealand) 88 minutes.

Rating: NNNN

This isn't just a straightforward, albeit fascinating, biography of the world's first female Maori filmmaker, Merata Mita – it's also a quest by her youngest son, filmmaker Hepi Mita, to understand who she was before she was "mum."

Through archival footage and TV interviews, the film documents how a single mother of five in New Zealand became an outspoken political activist and hugely influential Indigenous filmmaker, driven by the need to see Maori women like her represented on screen.

But the deeply personal endeavour of her son doesn't shy away from the downfalls of growing up as Merata's child, which included racist and violent attacks after the release of her 1980s docs *Bastion Point: Day 507*, about a protest over Maori land; and *Patu!*, on the clash between anti-apartheid groups and police during a South African rugby tour.

Merata Mita left an incredible legacy (she passed away in 2010), and this loving portrait of a complex woman who fought for decolonization and women's rights is a must-see.

[Apr 26, 3:30 pm, TIFF 2; Apr 28, noon, Scotiabank 3; May 5, 11:45 am, TIFF 4](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-merata-decolonised/>

## Hot Docs review: One Child Nation

Sundance-winning film impressively draws upon several documentary techniques to powerfully capture the impact of intergenerational trauma

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**ONE CHILD NATION** (Nanfu Wang, Jialing Zhang, U.S.). 89 minutes. Rating: NNNN

It's not surprising this film about China's one-child policy won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance; directors Nanfu Wang and Jialing Zhang impressively draw upon several documentary techniques – personal reflection, investigative thriller, social history – to convey the myriad shocking outcomes of the government-mandated birth control policy.

Wang narrates and appears on camera throughout, framing the film with her own family experience and personal complicity as someone who participated in propaganda. She visits a top government official, a midwife, village officials, an artist, human traffickers and an intrepid American couple who track down children sold into the international adoption market.

What she uncovers is horrifying. But by always orienting herself on-camera in key scenes, Wang's experience powerfully suggests the far-reaching impact of larger collective, intergenerational trauma that is almost too heartbreaking to fathom.

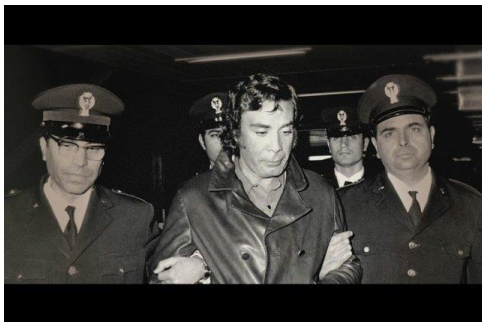
[May 1, 6:30 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 1 pm, TIFF 1](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-review-one-child-nation/>

## Hot Docs review: Our Godfather

Doc about mafia informant Tommaso Buscetta has a powerful subject, but it's weakened by odd filmmaking choices

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**OUR GODFATHER** (Mark Franchetti, Andrew Meier, UK/ Russia). 93 minutes. Rating: NNN

**Tommaso Buscetta** was the first major mafia boss to become an informant during the 80s and 90s, putting hundreds in prison in both Italy and the U.S. Buscetta's testimony dismantled romanticized notions about the mafia, their code and the way they fashioned themselves as "men of honour." He painted a picture opposite what we've seen in movies.

So it's unfortunate that Franchetti and Meier's filmmaking choices often work against their compelling subject, trying to make their material thrilling and sensational whenever possible. The interviews with Buscetta's surviving family members, home videos shot while the family was in witness protection and archival footage from news and courtrooms is fascinating enough.

*Apr 28, 9 pm, Hart House; Apr 29, 10 am, TIFF 1; May 4, 9 pm, TIFF 2*

## Hot Docs review: The Rest

Ai Weiwei's powerful film looks at refugees from Syria and Afghanistan in Europe

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**THE REST** (Ai Weiwei, Germany). 78 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Having offered a macro perspective on the global refugee crisis with [Human Flow](#), artist and activist **Ai Weiwei** returns to the subject with *The Rest*, talking to people who've fled hopeless situations in Syria and Afghanistan only to find a different sort of hostility in Europe.

Ai captures the exhaustion and enervation of people who've spent months in camps waiting for their new lives to start, the despair of parents who've lost children on the journey and can't find closure, and the rage of younger people who've lost hope. In one white-knuckle sequence, he finds himself in the middle of a riot at the Greek-Macedonian border.

The film is not entirely without pleasant moments, but Ai makes sure we understand how precious they are for the people trapped in this situation – and that they are in fact people, not statistics.

[Apr 26, 6:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema](#) (Big Ideas screening); [Apr 27, 12:45 pm, Isabel Bader](#); [May 5, 9:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema](#)

## Hot Docs review: Your Last Walk In The Mosque

Without editorializing, film offers straightforward and unadorned interviews about 2017's Quebec City mosque shooting

BY [RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI](#) APRIL 19, 2019



**YOUR LAST WALK IN THE MOSQUE** (Ubaydah Abu-Usayd, Abderrahmane Hedjoudje, Canada). 50 minutes. Rating: NNN

There's something plain, simple and pure about how this doc looks back at the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting strictly through the voices of survivors, victims and their families. Without much in the way of editorializing or analyzing the hate and racism that led up to the massacre, the film just offers straightforward and unadorned interviews.

Survivors map out how the violence was committed, while honouring and humanizing those who died. And families speak to what they lost. These are voices that never got as much sympathy and airtime as, say, those affected by the Humboldt Broncos bus crash. You might assume you know everything they are going to say. But if you've never heard it from them, you might ask why these voices haven't reached us before.

*Apr 28, 8 pm, Innis Town Hall; Apr 27, 3:45 pm, Scotiabank 8*

## ‘Toxic Beauty’: The Ugly Business of Pretty

Documentary reveals the unregulated, secretive and dangerous world of personal care products.

By [Dorothy Woodend](#) 19 Apr 2019 | [TheTyee.ca](#)

Dorothy Woodend is The Tyee’s culture editor.

Women are dying to be beautiful.

The products they use — lipstick, perfume, and powder — are destroying their very cells, warns director Phyllis Ellis in her new documentary, *Toxic Beauty*.

But the wall of silence that surrounds the personal care industry means women have no way of assessing the risks of largely unregulated products.

Ellis’s film blows the lid off the issue with the precision of a Tomahawk missile. More than just makeup and hair products, personal care products include toothpaste, fragrance, skincare, soap and deodorant — items that people use every single day.

But each one of these is made from multiple chemicals, many of which can have profound impacts on human health and the environment.

Last July, Johnson & Johnson was [ordered](#) to pay US\$4.7 billion to a group of women who said the company’s baby powder caused ovarian cancer. The company [maintains](#) its product is safe.

Johnson & Johnson’s bestselling talc might be the most high-profile product to face multiple class action lawsuits in the U.S. and Canada, but it’s certainly not alone in being linked to serious health problems. It’s only the tip of an extremely large iceberg that is currently lodged in your medicine cabinet, bathtub and make-up drawer.

The effects of endocrine disruptors, carcinogens and toxic materials such as mercury and [lead](#) in the [products we use](#) on ourselves and on our children is horrifying enough.

But what’s more shocking is that the average consumer has no way of knowing what’s really in their moisturizer or deodorant. The lead attorney for the class action suit against Johnson & Johnson states: “I liken baby powder to a delivery device of multiple carcinogens, exactly like a cigarette.”

But unlike cigarettes, baby powder, bubble bath, soap and shampoo do not require warning labels. Ingredients are [listed](#), but often using incomprehensible names and some, like the components of scents, don’t have to be listed at all.

On the eve of its world premiere at Hot Docs Documentary Film Festival in Toronto, and [screenings](#) at DOXA Documentary Film Festival in Vancouver on May 6 and 7, The Tyee asked director Ellis about *Toxic Beauty* and the very ugly stuff it uncovers.



## The Tyee – April 19, 2019 (2 of 4)

**The Tyee:** One of the people interviewed in your film, Rick Smith (author of *Slow Death by Rubber Duck*) says the issue of toxic chemicals is like global warming (“the second pollution crisis”), but asks why so little attention has been paid to the problem. Do you think the issue has failed to garner greater attention because it’s still perceived to be a woman’s problem?

**Phyllis Ellis:** I do. [Phillippa Darbre](#), one of the researchers in the film, once said to me, ‘You know, Phyllis, make no mistake, this is an assault on women.’ She laughed, but we had a long conversation about it. I’m pretty sure if men were losing their lives because a product they were using was causing cancer, it would be taken off the shelves fairly quickly!



Director Phyllis Ellis called toxic beauty products ‘bigger than the tobacco issue.’

Also because the idea of ‘makeup’ is usually associated with women, not that men shouldn’t wear makeup, but typically. Although it’s ironic that the ‘male gaze’ perpetuates the whole idea of what is beautiful, so they should take it seriously. Dr. Ami Zota says one of my favourite quotes in the film: ‘We have to change these beauty norms, so women don’t have to choose between their health and trying to be beautiful according to these arbitrary standards.’

**One of things that I found most affecting was women blaming themselves for using a product that caused ovarian cancer. Do you think women are less prone to speaking out, given the culture of silence and shame around female anatomy?**

Also a great question. From my many conversations, especially with the women of colour in the film, certainly they find within their cultures these conversations are not as open, although it’s changing due to the amazing women researchers of colour who are bringing this forward. I think the silence and shame about our anatomy is a big factor. I even found conversations around saying the word ‘vagina’ associated with the pathway talc takes into the ovaries was quite challenging at times. The whole victim-shaming approach, even if subtle, is what large brands often use to silence women.

**Were you shocked by the scale of the problem?**

I was shocked. And frankly it took me many conversations, and an inordinate amount of research, reading, and interviews to really wrap my head around it. But I loved meeting so many champions, brilliant minds who have been researching, and publishing case-controlled studies. There was a point, very early on in the process, where I said, OK, I’m in.

## **The Tyee – April 19, 2019 (3 of 4)**

I was an Olympian who used baby powder, like so many athletes, and I used it for years, many times a day. I actually got scared. Was I at risk? Yes, I am. So, I thought if the most trusted brand in the world is linked to cancer, what else are we using that could cause us harm?

**Canada's Commissioner of the Environment Julie Gelfand talks [about](#) our regulatory system, which allows products to enter the marketplace without being tested for safety. Only if problems emerge is testing required. Can you explain why this is?**

I don't know why. But it blows most people away who were not aware of it. Julie mentioned there are literally thousands of products, and it's expensive to test, and they rely on industry to say 'yup, don't worry, it's all safe.'

**The same secrecy surrounded the tobacco industry, with people unwilling or unable to speak out. Do you foresee this changing with Johnson & Johnson class action suits happening in the U.S. and Canada?**

I hope so. It is bigger than the tobacco issue, but it's also a bigger issue because this is baby powder, we put this on our babies, on our kids, on ourselves. Most people figure if they're drawing on a cigarette, it's probably not awesome, but with makeup, personal care or hygiene products, we figure we are OK. We're told we have to smell great, be clean, look younger, fresher, better and all this 'beauty' with a pretty ugly side to it.

**Are there any significant changes in legislation and/or increased attention being paid to how personal care products are monitored and marketed?**

Yes, I think here in Canada with pending changes to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and there are bills on the floor in Congress in the U.S., but the European Union is way ahead of us.

**Your interview with [Dr. Daniel Cramer](#) is particularly shocking, especially in revealing how long researchers have known of a link between talc and ovarian cancer. Why didn't Johnson & Johnson warn consumers? Why haven't they taken responsibility? What does it take for corporations to behave differently?**

Well, I guess if we all stopped buying the products. If Canada would ban the sale of J&J baby powder with talc and if Canada would ban talc in all cosmetics and care products, then industry would have to do something. But I think people are smart and now this conversation has a new voice, which is the film, and champions like Dr. Cramer have been telling this truth for a long time. Think of all the women's lives that could have been saved.

**With \$84 billion in cosmetics industry sales in the U.S. regulated by a page and a half of federal law, and the industry's lobby to be self-policing, does the issue always come down to profit over people?**

[Dr. David Michaels](#), who has been working in the space for a very long time said in the interview, 'It's very difficult to convince a man he's wrong, when he's paid to say it.' He spoke about the many

people who worked in the tobacco industry who came home every day convinced that tobacco didn't cause cancer, because they were told it didn't and their jobs depended that it didn't.

We actually spent some time shooting in a big corporation, and I chose not to put it in the film because I knew without a doubt the people who worked there really believed they were changing lives making shampoo or cosmetics and that it was very 'healthy.' It was like *Pleasantville*, company style.

**How does the U.S. regulatory system differ from the Canadian system?**

Well, we have a system to regulate, and the U.S. does not at all. However, as Dr. Bruce Lanphear [of Simon Fraser University] said, there's not much difference — Canada may regulate, but they don't implement the regulations.

**The onus still seems to be on the consumer, as opposed to corporations and regulators, to make certain that products are safe. What would it take to change this?**

We have to put pressure on our governments to change this. We could put pressure on our MPs and regulatory bodies. Boycott products. Listen to the science.

Michaels also compared it to climate change and journalists trying to write balanced stories — climate change is real and climate change is exaggerated or a hoax. But in the '70s and early '80's, if we had taken climate change more seriously then, maybe the polar ice caps might not be falling apart. Not believing in sound science degrades all scientists. We have an issue; it's not going away, and we can change the outcome.

**How has making the film changed your own habits?**

I have changed everything. Not much left in my meagre cosmetic bag.

**With consumers looking for less-toxic options, what are the best and most trustworthy sources to get information on alternatives?**

[Environmental Defence](#), [Breast Cancer Quebec](#), [Women's Healthy Environments Network](#) in Canada, [Environmental Working Group](#), [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#), [Silent Spring](#) in the U.S.

**What is the best way to decrease your own chemical burden?**

Read labels, decrease number of products, and don't use anything with fragrance. Live in a bubble, but not a plastic one! 🧼

## 10 movies you must see at Hot Docs 2019, covering everything from Saskatchewan to Gaza

By [Peter Howell](#) Movie Critic  
Fri., April 19, 2019

“All the truth in the world adds up to one big lie,” Bob Dylan sang in his Oscar-winning tune “Things Have Changed” from the movie *Wonder Boys*.

This certainly seems the way of the world these days, as U.S. President Donald Trump fibs about “fake news” and social media spreads corrosive calumny.

The Hot Docs festival seeks to reverse the rising tide of untruths through artful fact-seeking. Toronto’s annual celebration of documentary cinema, this year running from April 25 to May 5 — ticket and scheduling info at [hotdocs.ca](#) — has doubled down on films that show the world as it is, not as prevaricators claim it to be.

Here are 10 of the hottest picks for Hot Docs, many heading to Toronto by way of the Sundance Film Festival:

### American Factory

Get your motor running. Veteran docmakers Julia Reichert and Steve Bognar reveal in ways both dramatic and comic what happened when a billionaire Chinese auto-glass mogul bought a shuttered General Motors plant in Dayton, Ohio, and then arrogantly imposed his anti-union, 24-7 work ethic on the U.S. workers who had naively embraced him as a saviour of jobs. Time to take off the rose-tinted glasses for anybody who thinks rigid corporate bureaucracy and quality-of-life concerns can make an easy fit. Remarkable for the access allowed by both sides to the filmmakers over several years, the film ends on a note that’s straight out of horror and sci-fi films — but wait until you see it, which you must.

### Assholes: A Theory

Everybody talks about them, but nobody ever does anything about them. Mark Twain could have said that (although he didn’t), but leave it to John Walker to get down to the butt of the matter. Taking his cue from Aaron James’ 2010 bestselling book of the same name, the filmmaker talks to experts and opinionators — among them Monty Python’s John Cleese — about the social ill of “assholery,” which appears to be on the rise in politics, economics, policing, social media and even among Canadians, who get their own proctological assessment. There’s much humour but also a few swift kicks to the *derriere* delivered, but surprisingly little is said about Donald Trump.

### Cold Case Hammar skjold

A shaggy-dog story with bite from Danish docmaker Mads Brügger, told in the whimsical style of Michael Moore or Morgan Spurlock. It begins by seeking the truth about the 1961 African plane crash that killed United Nations chief Dag Hammarskjöld, an event long suspected as an act of terrorism, perpetrated to thwart his

efforts to bring peace to warring African nations. By the end of this nearly 2½-hour film, which starts offhandedly and rather glibly but rises to a bell-ringer of a finale, Brugger has connected scattered dots and the picture that's revealed is a vast global conspiracy to foment African genocide. But can we fully trust the all-too-talkative old men who appear before the director's probing lens?

### Gaza

Going by news reports alone, the tiny piece of the Middle East called the Gaza Strip is a crowded prison of violence and misery, where its two million inhabitants constantly riot or fire off rockets against Israel. Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell show more: a resilient people who love their land and who crave a peace they don't know how to attain. We meet Gaza residents like teenagers Ahmed, who dreams of becoming a fisherman, and Karma, a cellist who makes music while gazing across the Mediterranean Sea. The filmmakers aren't much interested in politics ( Hamas is barely mentioned) and it's clear where their sympathies are, but they shine necessary light on misunderstood people.

### Honeyland

This amazing doc, a prize-winner at Sundance 2019, about Macedonian beekeeper Hatidze Muratova becomes the most primal of environmental allegories when destructive neighbours and their cattle move in, threatening serenity. We first meet the 40-something beekeeper, dressed in flowing clothes and protective headgear, as she nimbly climbs through rough Balkan mountains to check on her beloved cache of wild bees, who produce the unique honey that lets her eke out a living and care for her ailing and aging mother. Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska spent three years studying Hatidze, who despite all her challenges and hardships, just wants to let it bee.

### Killing Patient Zero

To much of the world in the late 1980s — thanks to headline writers labelling him a “monster” and bringer of disease — Air Canada flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas was the sexual satyr to blame for the AIDS epidemic. Falsely labelled “patient zero” due to a typological error, he was the common link to dozens of early confirmed cases of the disease, which was all that many people needed to pronounce judgment. Laurie Lynd goes behind the slurs to find a man beloved by his friends and family, a man who — contrary to allegations of criminal indifference — tried to help stop the spread of AIDS by sharing information about his sexual contacts to researchers. He paid a heavy price for his good intentions.

### Knock Down the House

History on the run as filmmaker Rachel Lears, funded by a Kickstarter campaign, follows four women — notably New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — as they seek to topple incumbents across the U.S. in important election races. The Bronx-born AOC naturally dominates the story, as her sudden rise last year from humble bartender to incumbent-beating and Trump-battling congresswoman captures worldwide attention. She's a true force of nature, but the film also inspires with stories of electoral challenges by West Virginia's Paula Jean Swearingen, Missouri's Cori Bush and Nevada's Amy Vilela. The definitive AOC doc awaits, but this amounts to a bracing first draft.



### **Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool**

Jazz legend Miles Davis is no longer with us. But his voice — or rather that of an actor reading words from the man's autobiography — is heard throughout Stanley Nelson's latest documentary deep-dive, which is kind of brilliant in the way it covers and contextualizes more than 50 years of groundbreaking music in barely two hours. "If anybody wants to keep creating, they have to be about change," Davis says, as he transforms himself from jazz trumpeter to pop innovator. Yet hearing Davis' candid recollections of how shabbily he treated people along the way, especially the many women whom he used and discarded, doesn't make the man seem cooler at all.



### **nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up**

The Cree word for "justice" closely relates to the word for "respect," we learn in Tasha Hubbard's cinematic inquiry, an understanding that permeates this powerful work of activist cinema. She examines the August 2016 shooting death of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man in Saskatchewan, and the subsequent controversial "reasonable doubt" acquittal of his killer by an all-white jury. Hubbard challenges Canada's legal system and outlines the country's long history of mistreatment of Indigenous peoples, as she and the Boushie family take their cause to Ottawa and the United Nations. George Hupka's stirring cinematography completes one of the most consequential films ever to open Hot Docs.



### **One Child Nation**

The grand jury prize winner at Sundance 2019 is more horrifying than any screamer you'll see this year. It's a devastating account of China's "one-child policy," a brutally Orwellian population-control decree that lasted from 1979 to 2015. Filmmaker Nanfu Wang, having recently become a mother and wondering why her birth family was able to have a second child, her brother, during the one-child years, teams with co-director Jialing Zhang to seek answers. They turn up appalling stories of abandoned infants, kidnappings, forced sterilizations and abortions, and evidence that thousands of babies are still officially listed as "missing." Meanwhile, state officials brag about their brave new world.



## Hot Docs review: The Daughter Tree

Director Rama Rau finds a powerful emotional force in a midwife Neelam Bala

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) APRIL 20, 2019



**THE DAUGHTER TREE** (Rama Rau, Canada). 88 minutes. Rating: NNN

Midwife Neelam Bala travels Punjabi villages dispensing care and advice to pregnant women and their families. She's distressed by women who are aborting their female fetuses or thinking of the birth their new baby girls as a family tragedy. Not only do their attitudes reflect a deep misogyny, they've created a scarcity of women available for marriage and a new generation of profoundly alienated males. These men's stories get a bit repetitive, creating a small dip in the film. But Bala's a powerful, no-nonsense figure – arguing with the locals, urging respect for women – and her relationship with her niece (Bala has no children of her own) gives the doc a strong emotional force.

[Apr 27, 6:30 pm, TIFF 2; April 30, 10:15 am, TIFF 2; May 2, 9 pm, Hart House](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-the-daughter-tree/>

## Hot Docs review: Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief

Carol Geddes profiles five female Indigenous trailblazers across Canada in this film from the festival's Redux program

BY [KELLY BOUTSALIS](#) APRIL 20, 2019



**DOCTOR, LAWYER, INDIAN CHIEF** (Carol Geddes, Canada). 28 minutes. Rating: NNN

Screening in Hot Doc's Redux program, this 1986 short film from Carol Geddes profiles five female Indigenous trailblazers across Canada, including Sophie Pierre, the chief of St. Mary's Indian Band in BC, and Roberta Jamieson, the first Indigenous female lawyer.

The overarching message is that these women are role models, and their success can be emulated if the viewer – presumably also young Indigenous women – harnesses their strength and hard work. Looking past the 80s puffy hair, Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief still offers a relevant message, as the women speak about succeeding despite racism and the impact of residential school on their families and communities.

The doc concludes on an optimistic note with the message that the strength of the older generation will be fuelling their granddaughters. However, the film also seems like an employment recruitment video of bygone times, something that isn't dispelled by the film's credits, which lists the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and Employment and Immigration Canada.

[May 2, 12:30 pm, TIFF 4](#)

## Hot Docs review: The Magic Life Of V

Finnish doc is a sensitive, moving study of a young woman who copes with her traumatic past through live action role-playing

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 20, 2019



**THE MAGIC LIFE OF V** (Tonislav Hristov, Finland). 85 minutes. Rating: NNNN

The latest from Finnish-based documentarian **Tonislav Hristov** (Love & Engineering, The Good Postman) is a sensitive, moving study of a young woman named **Veera** who copes with her traumatic past and challenging present by immersing herself in live action role-playing, where she can slay actual demons and escape from her own.

Hristov doesn't condescend to Veera or frame the LARPing sequences as absurd; he just follows her through her days as she tries to look after her older brother, who sustained brain damage as a baby, and edge toward a reconciliation with – or at least an understanding of – her abusive father.

And slowly, The Magic Life Of V reveals Veera as the heroic fighter she is rather than the one she pretends to be on weekends.

*May 1, 9:45 pm, TIFF 3; May 2, 3:30 pm, Scotiabank 13; May 5, 9 pm, TIFF 3*

## Hot Docs review: Maxima

Farmer-turned-activist Máxima Acuña takes on a mining corporation in Claudia Sparrow's heartbreaking and infuriating film

BY [CHAKA V. GRIER](#) APRIL 20, 2019



*Claudia Sparrow's documentary about farmer-turned-water activist Máxima Acuña won the 2019 Hot Docs audience award for a feature film.*

**MAXIMA** (Claudia Sparrow, U.S.). 88 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Farmer and artisan Máxima Acuña didn't want to become an activist but was made into one after a multi-billion-dollar mining project spearheaded by American Newmont Mining Corporation began terrorizing her family in hopes of scaring them off their land. The pint-sized powerhouse, known for wearing a sombrero nearly as big as she is, is now the corporation's biggest adversary in an ongoing David and Goliath showdown. The case has garnered international attention, making Máxima a reluctant "Water Is Life" superhero.

Director Sparrow stays unflinchingly focused on the struggle between the two sides, ratcheting up suspense over a tight run time. The film is at times terrifying, heartbreaking and always infuriating – it's difficult to not leave feeling woke and weary. Will Máxima withstand the fight? And how are each of us complicit in real-life nightmares fed by greed? These questions linger long after the doc is done.

[Apr 27, 5:45 pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 28, 10:30 am, TIFF 2; May 5, 3:30 pm, Isabel Bader](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-maxima/>

## Hot Docs review: There Are No Fakes

Jamie Kastner's latest film is a mesmerizing art-world exposé

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 20, 2019



**THERE ARE NO FAKES** (Jamie Kastner, Canada). 114 minutes. Rating: NNNN

The latest from **Jamie Kastner** ([The Secret Disco Revolution](#), [The Skyjacker's Tale](#)) is a mesmerizing art-world exposé that spirals outward from a curious news item: a few years ago, Barenaked Ladies keyboardist **Kevin Hearn** sued a Toronto art gallery after buying a painting by the late Indigenous artist Norval Morrisseau that was revealed to be a forgery. It turns out that there are plenty of fake Morrisseaus out there, despite the statement from one especially defensive dealer that gives Kastner's doc its title.

There Are No Fakes can be seen as a nuts-and-bolts investigation of what one gallery owner calls “a massive art scam,” but there's something else boiling underneath – an understanding of, and revulsion at, the way Canada's white power structure consumes and perverts the work of Indigenous artists, even after they're gone.

*April 29, 6 pm, TIFF 1; May 1, 8:15 pm, Scotiabank 3*

## Hot Docs review: The Trial Of Ratko Mladic

Superbly shot doc covers the trial of a Bosnian Serb general accused of war crimes

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) APRIL 20, 2019



**THE TRIAL OF RATKO MLADIC** (Henry Singer, Rob Miller, UK/Norway). 100 minutes. Rating: NNN

This well-made documentary – superbly shot and cut – about the trial of a Bosnian Serb general accused of war crimes against Muslims does very little to push the boundaries of the genre. But it does have two real strengths. First, directors Singer and Miller managed to get access to both the prosecutors and the defence lawyers, who speak openly about their strategies throughout the trial. And second, the film reveals the unstinting loyalty of the men Mladic commanded, witnesses who had no compunction to lie in order to protect their hero. Plainly, these underlings had no problem with Mladic's genocidal brutality. Worse, their attitudes are still in play in this intensely divided part of the world.

[Apr 27, 6:15; Apr 29, 3 pm; May 3, 9 pm; May 4, 12:15 pm, all at Hart House](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-ratko-mladic/>



## Hot Docs review: Union Maids

Film about female organizers in the 70s recalls the days when socialism was not a dirty word in America

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) APRIL 20, 2019



**UNION MAIDS** (Julia Reichert, Jim Klein, Miles Mogulescu, U.S.). 52 minutes. Rating: NNN

The subjects of *Union Maids* are female organizers who often risked their lives to form unions and battle for fair working conditions. Most of them unmarried, all of them with family backgrounds that reinforced hard work and justice, they began organizing during the Depression, when desperate workers put up with oppressive demands: a seven-day work week, and using meat-cutting machines that routinely chopped off fingertips, to use just a few examples. Female organizers had to deal not only with vindictive bosses but sexist trade unions who treated women workers dismissively and eventually threw out the more radical members. Made in 1977 – and the precursor to *Seeing Red* – *Union Maids* shows a filmmaking team with a ton of potential and a determination to let people tell their stories, recalling the days when socialism was not a dirty word in America.

[May 3, 10:45 am, TIFF 3](#)

## Hot Docs review: Who Let The Dogs Out

Look into the origins and authorship of the 2000 Baha Men single is weirder and more complex than you can imagine

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 20, 2019



**WHO LET THE DOGS OUT** (Brent Hodge, Canada). 61 minutes. Rating: NNNN

For eight years, a guy named **Ben Sisto** has been investigating the origins and authorship of **Baha Men**'s infernally catchy 2000 single, which asked a surprisingly complex question about some dogs and – we presume – a door left deliberately ajar. It turns out that the song existed before the version we know, and its evolution is far more complex – and far weirder – than we ever imagined.

Sisto turned his quest into a travelling lecture, which now forms the spine of this charming doc from pop-culture specialist **Brent Hodge** (A Brony Tale, [I Am Chris Farley](#), Freaks And Geeks: The Documentary). Bouncing all over the U.S., plus stops in London and Toronto, Sisto and Hodge talk to a dozen or so people who participated – either consciously or unconsciously – in the creation of the track, finding surprising resonance in that barking hook that's now stuck in your head for the next half-hour or so.

*May 2, 9:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 3, 6:30 pm, Hart House; May 5, 9:30 pm, TIFF 2*

## Justice for Colten

### *Tasha Hubbard's 'nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up'*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 20th, 2019 • [Issue 110, Spring/Summer 2019](#)



*Director Tasha Hubbard*  
*Photo by Jon Montes*

“The fear was palpable,” says Tasha Hubbard about the intense feeling within the Indigenous community following the death of Cree man Colten Boushie. Reflecting upon the murder of the 22-year-old, the director, herself of Cree ancestry, describes the overwhelming feeling of concern she felt for her own son in response to the news and while documenting the case. Hubbard says that seeing the young man’s death in a continuum of historic oppression inspired her to consider the fate of her son and future generations of Indigenous people.

One cannot understate the gravity of *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*. This year’s [Hot Docs](#) opener sees Hubbard take up a story that resonates with the lives of Indigenous people across the country. Following on her 2004 debut [Two Worlds Colliding](#), which tackled the Saskatoon “freezing deaths” cases, in which police officers arrested and abandoned Indigenous men during the bitter cold of night, and 2017’s [Birth of a Family](#), which witnessed the union of four siblings ripped apart by the Sixties Scoop, Hubbard’s third feature is a major work. *nîpawistamâsowin* asks audiences to reframe their view of Canada’s past and future by considering the history of violence that impacts Indigenous lives to this day.



*Colten Boushie*  
*Courtesy of the NFB*

The doc examines the case of Colten Boushie, who was shot in the head when his friends drove onto Gerald Stanley’s Saskatchewan farm on August 9, 2016. Heart-wrenching interviews with Boushie’s family, particularly his mother Debbie and his cousin Jade, reveal how a combination of mishandled legal work and systemic inequity let Stanley walk free. However, the case inspired Boushie’s family to fight for change. Hubbard joins

them on a search for justice at a time when “reconciliation” is the buzzword du jour, yet systemic change is slow to follow.

Hubbard, speaking with *POV* prior to Hot Docs, says that *nîpawistamâsowin* isn't a film she necessarily wanted to make, but one she had to make. “I finished *Birth of a Family* and my PhD dissertation on the same day, so I wasn't looking to do a film,” says Hubbard, who originally planned to cover the Boushie case via a blog. “I really felt compelled because I just kept looking at my son and my nephew and thinking, ‘What is this going to mean for them? What is this going to mean for them when they're adults?’” Her incisive and contemplative probe of the case and its surrounding implications recalls the work of Alanis Obomsawin with its scope and power.

Hubbard chronicles how negligent evidence collection and preservation gave little hope for justice, while systemic factors, like arbitrary juror challenges, led an all-white jury to acquit Stanley of second-degree murder and a lesser manslaughter charge. “I've never followed a criminal trial in a film or even sat in one, so I asked the lawyers and media who were present, ‘Is this normally what happens?’” says Hubbard. “Almost every time they'd say, ‘No.’ Most people felt that unsafe use of a firearm was manslaughter, so the charge would at least be that. The feeling was there would be some accountability. When that didn't happen, it was shocking.”



*Debbie Baptiste and Jade Tootoosis at the United Nations*  
Photo by Melissa Kent / CBC Licensing

The film observes how the white/settler community rationalized Stanley's actions with his right to defend his property. The irony is that Stanley's property is stolen land. Boushie's death is another iteration of Indigenous lives lost to violence. Hubbard compares the present case with 1885 hangings at Battleford in which eight Cree men were executed for defending their land from settlers, who had brought devastation, disease and food scarcity.

Hubbard says the irony isn't lost on the Indigenous community, but that others fail to notice. “Many non-Indigenous people in the prairies don't understand this concept and that governments, churches and other state systems colluded to remove Indigenous people from the land,” observes Hubbard. “People say it is a failing of our education system, but I would say it is by design. It isn't until recently that Indigenous people and supportive historians and writers have brought this all to light. People are now listening to Indigenous peoples' experiences and truths.”

Hubbard probes the judicial system and examines the toll of ongoing structural oppression, as she did 15 years earlier in *Two Worlds Colliding*. She says little has changed between the two films. “This case showed the way in which racism has been emboldened and was so virulently expressed,” observes Hubbard. “I used to hear it when I was younger. People didn't always know I was Indigenous, so they'd say things unfiltered. The comments run on a spectrum from casual racism to hate. Now, social media gives them a platform for those sentiments. People forget that they can be held accountable.”



*Family and Legal Counsel in Parliamentary Press Conference  
Photo by George Hupka*

This aspect of the doc is especially troubling, with Hubbard forcing audiences to confront the deeply entrenched racism that this case brought out of hiding. Boushie's family shares racist posts they encountered on social networks, as if the dead young man and his friends were the ones on trial. We witness Saskatchewan town meetings that resemble Donald Trump rallies with their jingoistic rhetoric. The anti-Indigenous racism is pervasive. "I've been looking at it, naming it, and making sure people are confronted by it," says Hubbard. "Racism gets minimized when people say it doesn't happen."

A key element for change is self-examination at levels both personal and institutional. "Institutions like the police have to now take Indigenous awareness training," notes Hubbard. "What is still missing is the examination of their existing bias and racism and how to shift that so they aren't approaching a situation thinking Indigenous people aren't worth the same amount of care they would normally take. To undo years of social conditioning that says Indigenous people are less human takes a lot of effort to overcome."

Hubbard says that changes in the education system, media and popular culture can correct anti-Indigenous bias. "Kids learn these attitudes," says Hubbard, "but kids are also the ones who most easily adapt and learn to accept difference and have the courage to call out things like racism. That gives me hope."

Hubbard recognizes that her son encounters the racism faced by the Boushies in different forms, relating her family narrative to the Boushie case as she teaches her son and her nephew about their ancestors and reflects upon the implications for their future. Hubbard says that, despite her position as an Indigenous woman adopted by a white farming family, she didn't find it appropriate to insert herself within her previous films.



*Photo by George Hupka*

However, working with NFB producer Bonnie Thompson helped inspire the personal approach in this film, says the director. "My nephew's mom and I talked with the boys about it," explains Hubbard. "They are aware of what happened to Colten, and what is happening around them. They hear the comments, and they see how some white people treat Indigenous people." Hubbard adds that including the boys was a difficult but necessary choice. "We don't have the luxury of ignoring racism," she says, noting that they discussed with the



boys how their participation could help Boushie's story inspire change for future generations. "We told them it would take time," notes Hubbard. "They had a choice, and they decided to participate."

Hubbard says that reflecting upon the case and her own family opened up a deeper consideration of the implications of Colten's death. "I felt sympathy for the family for their loss and, at the same time, I felt worried about what it was going to mean," says Hubbard. "I felt helpless as a mother. I had to ask myself, 'How do I guide, the children in my life to be able to deal with this and remain intact and retain their love of life and their love of this land?'"

The film incorporates the lessons that Hubbard learned from her parents as knowledge passes between generations. "I grew up in a rural community. I grew up being taught about guns at an early age and was taught to have respect for guns and what they can do," observes Hubbard. "I have memories of getting heck because I pointed my toy gun at my brother. I have memories of my grandpa taking us out and grilling it into to always assume that a gun is loaded. Always be careful how you're using it. Respect what it can do." When her grandfather teaches her son how to shoot, one witnesses a rite of passage, but also the values and respect for life entailed within this ritual.



*Tasha and her Grandfather*  
*Photo by George Hupka*

One especially powerful scene sees Hubbard's grandfather tell her and her son the history of the family property. He tells them about the day he removed rocks left by teepee foundations so that he could grow wheat on the land. While they discuss the racism the boy will face, Hubbard's grandfather reverts to the same "two sides to every story" line surrounding Boushie's death and Stanley's property. Her son, however, interjects that property is not worth the cost of a life. The scene is raw, tense, emotional and revelatory.

"This case made for some uncomfortable conversations, and some adjustments on how my family sees and understands how my son and I experience the world," notes Hubbard. "But we are still family."

From the awkwardness and pain comes healing. "I truly do not want this next generation to have to deal with these things. The way I deal with that is to keep acting," says Hubbard optimistically. "It might not be my son's generation, but maybe it's my grandchildren's generation."

***nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* opens Hot Docs on April 25.**  
**It also screens at Vancouver's [DOXA Documentary Film Festival](#) on May 8 and 9.**



## ‘Be the best individual you can be’: Willie O’Ree documentary is a story of perseverance

By [Kevin Paul Dupont](#) Globe Staff, April 20, 2019, 11:10 a.m.



*Willie O'Ree was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in November.*(BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES)

The wonderful story that is **Willie O'Ree**, the ex-Bruin winger who became the first player of color to suit up in the NHL in 1958, is about to play to a much bigger audience, beginning April 29 in Toronto. “Willie”, a splendid 89-minute documentary about his life’s journey, will make its debut at Hot Docs, the annual Canadian International Documentary Festival in downtown Toronto.

Ex-NHL player agent **Bryant McBride** and **Laurence Mathieu-Leger**, a Montreal-born filmmaker, succeeded splendidly in putting together a hockey movie that encompasses the myriad interesting facets of O’Ree’s life, including his triumph over racism and his continued work to expose kids of all colors and economic backgrounds to the game he grew up loving as the youngest of 13 children in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

O’Ree, inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in November in the builders category, said by telephone last week that he had yet to see the movie. His first viewing will be at its rollout in Toronto, after which, McBride and Mathieu-Leger hope, it will be distributed by a variety of media outlets and platforms.

O’Ree’s story, albeit hockey through and through, at its core is a lesson in perseverance, resiliency and career focus, and above all, preserving dignity when faced with the overt and subtle challenges of racism.

“Just go out and play hockey and be the best individual you can be,” said O’Ree, recalling the advice that his older brother, **Richard**, gave him some 70 years ago. “You know, I knew I was going to be faced with racism, prejudice, bigotry and ignorance, but I just let it go in one ear and out the other — I really did. I always kept it on the ice and told myself, ‘Willie, it’s going to be tough, but you have the strength within you just to be the person that you are.’”

Along the movie-making journey, O’Ree was introduced to a part of his life story that he never knew.

According to McBride, now an entrepreneur who lives in Lexington, the dogged work of Mathieu-Leger paid off. Her archival search in South Carolina discovered that O’Ree’s family lineage traced to slave owners in 18th century Charleston. The movie details how landowner Col. **Elias O’Ree** gave his slaves to son **James**

## The Boston Globe – April 20, 2019 (2 of 2)

**O'Ree** in the late 1700s, and ultimately how the NHL's first black player was a direct descendant of one of those slaves having made his way to Fredericton.

All of it, the 83-year-old O'Ree said from his home in San Diego, was news to him.

"Oh, it was," he said. "A lot of things were first-hand news to me. We went down to South Carolina and saw the archives [details] of the land and property and everything. I was in awe. I just couldn't believe it."

McBride was an NHL executive in the mid-1990s, working for commissioner **Gary Bettman**, when he implored the league to hire O'Ree as a goodwill ambassador, a role that led the ex-Bruin eventually to become the face of the league's "Hockey is for Everyone" initiative. McBride and Mathieu-Leger were neighbors at the time in Harlem, and it was their friendship that ultimately led to the idea of partnering in the "Willie" documentary.

"The idea . . . and then about \$500,000," recalled McBride, adding that the cost easily would have been four or five times higher if not for resources, particularly old film footage, that Bettman insisted the NHL donate. "Like everything, we weren't going anywhere without the money."

A substantial chunk of the financial backing came from JP Morgan Chase, where **Frank Nakano**, the company's New York-based head of sports and entertainment marketing, committed the dollars only minutes into McBride's initial pitch.

It helped that Nakano also once worked in NHL headquarters with McBride, and even more that he knew O'Ree and parts of his story.

"Easy decision for us to jump in," recalled Nakano. "No. 1, the authentic nature of the story. When I was with the NHL from 1995 to 2004, Willie was the ambassador for a lot of the grassroots programming, and I got to see him at work and hear his stories. But he very much underplayed the first-black-player-in-the-league part of it."

"Then as the years went by, and I started hearing the story and his background . . . it was just so incredible; we felt it was a story important to tell."

According to McBride, the documentary shooting wrapped up in Ottawa, with O'Ree meeting Canadian Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** on Dec. 20. Less than three weeks later, the finished copy of the film was submitted to Hot Docs among some 10,000 entries. "Willie" made a group of 220 to be considered for the festival, and then made the final list of five that will be showcased at the Toronto festival.

"If everybody could meet Willie O'Ree, they'd have a better understanding of the importance of getting an opportunity," said McBride, who grew up in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, his family one of only three black families in a city of some 80,000. "And hockey provides a bunch of opportunities. It is a safe space for kids to grow and learn. Willie's devoted the last 20-plus years of his life to that."

"But hockey is at the top of the list for kids of color to play for one really important reason: if you can give your kid one thing, give him or her resilience. In hockey, you're guaranteed to get knocked down. What's the first thing you learn? To get back up. That's Willie's stories. He got up, kept playing, thrived."

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/sports/b Bruins/2019/04/20/willie-ree-documentary-story-perseverance/um8Tom5LpKjO9o2B3wzcvK/story.html>

## Hot Docs review: Beloved

Yaser Talebi's beautifully shot film will surprise you in all the best ways

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) APRIL 21, 2019



**BELOVED** (Yaser Talebi, Iran/Persia). 54 minutes. Rating: NNNN

An Iranian octogenarian woman tending her cows in the Iranian mountains seems an unlikely subject to capture anyone's imagination. But Firouzeh is a riveting character. The mother of 11 children – who pay her almost no attention – takes to the hills alone every spring, where she herds, gathers wood, milks, makes yogurt and then descends to the village to barter her dairy goods for food. She does this all without electricity, gas or phone. Every winter she's urged by the villagers to stop, but she'll have none of that. What drives her is her faith in God – whom she sees in all of nature's changes – which is almost as strong as her love for her cows. Watch her take on officials who accuse her of overgrazing. Listen to her give her kids shit while in the village. Gorgeous to look at – Talebi also shot it – Beloved will surprise you in all the best ways.

[May 2, 5:15 pm, Scotiabank 8; May 3, 12:30 pm, Scotiabank 3](#)

## Hot Docs review: The Hottest August

Canadian expat Brett Story evocatively captures NYC and its boroughs in the throes of socioeconomic and political change

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 21, 2019



**THE HOTTEST AUGUST** (Brett Story, Canada/U.S.). 95 minutes. Rating: NNNN

If you've been to New York City in the summer, you know it's disgusting – and it's only going to get worse as climate change creates thicker heat waves and more intense storm cycles. Canadian expat **Brett Story** took her camera around the five boroughs in August 2017, capturing a portrait of a city already in the throes of socioeconomic and political change.

As in her excellent 2016 doc [The Prison In 12 Landscapes](#), Story doesn't steer us toward specific conclusions; her points gradually shape themselves as people express the same basic concerns: rent is expensive, jobs are scarce, the future is uncertain. A mother says she wants to buy a house so her kids have some security, but we've already seen the wreckage of Hurricane Sandy. Is a total solar eclipse a sign of the apocalypse, or is the end of the world already underway?

The Hottest August creates an evocative picture of systems breaking down and a city bracing itself for whatever comes next. But at least the ospreys have come back to Staten Island.

*April 29, 3:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 2, 6 pm, Scotiabank 13; May 3, 12:30 pm, TIFF 2*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-the-hottest-august/>

## Hot Docs review: On The Inside Of A Military Dictatorship

Doc trying to absolve Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi of any responsibility for the state of Myanmar lacks hard evidence

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 21, 2019



**ON THE INSIDE OF A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP** (Karen Stokkendal Poulsen, Denmark/France). 97 minutes. Rating: NN

Myanmar seemed to turn a corner when dissident **Aung San Suu Kyi** – who’d spent years under house arrest for challenging the nation’s military regime – was elected to its highest political office in 2016. But that hope was short-lived, as Suu Kyi presided over the ethnic cleansing of the nation’s Rohingya Muslim population and the persecution of the journalists who brought that story to light.

Relying largely on interviews with former military officials and Suu Kyi’s supposed allies – but without ever really delivering the “inside” perspective promised by her title – director **Karen Stokkendal Poulsen** works very, very hard to absolve Suu Kyi of any responsibility for the state of her nation, arguing that the Nobel laureate is doing her best to change the culture of the repressive government from within and that these awful things are just sort of happening around her.

But the filmmaker doesn’t really back that up with hard evidence, ultimately asking us to take her thesis on faith. It’s a pretty big ask.

*Apr 26, 8:15 pm, TIFF 4; Apr 28, 12:15 pm, Hart House; May 2, 12:15 pm, Scotiabank 3*

## Hot Docs review: Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project

Matt Wolf's film about a woman who obsessively taped news footage for 35 years is timely and absorbing

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 21, 2019



**RECORDER: THE MARION STOKES PROJECT** (Matt Wolf, U.S.). 87 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Marion Stokes is a documentarian's dream. She was a communist, a civil rights activist and a media critic who struck it rich as an Apple shareholder and lived a hermetic life in a luxury New York apartment until her death in 2012. She also left behind hundreds of thousands of hours of TV news footage that she obsessively taped around the clock for 35 years, an invaluable archive that chronicles the ways mainstream media not only covered, but shaped and instigated news.

It's a timely theme in the age of social media and one director Matt Wolf puts front and centre in this absorbing portrait, which lauds Stokes as an unsung futurist but also paints her as a difficult person whose intellectual rigour alienated her own son. He uses the archive to revisit major news events and pull out recurring motifs in playful and critical ways. He also incorporates Stokes's thoughts on the "mediation of media" – questioning the difference between collector and hoarder, for example – to turn his film into an expression of her ideas, not just an explanation of them.

[May 1, 9 pm, TIFF 2; May 2, 7:45 pm, TIFF 4; May 5, 4 pm, TIFF 2](#)



## Hot Docs review: Seeing Red: Stories Of American Communists

American Communist Party members look back at their lives in this essential film about political activism in the United States

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) APRIL 21, 2019



**SEEING RED: STORIES OF AMERICAN COMMUNISTS** (Julia Reichert, Jim Klein, U.S.). 100 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Long-time radicals look back on decades of political activism in this essential glimpse of an era when it was a test of courage. *Seeing Red* is an exceptional film codirected by Reichert, one of the directors honoured with Hot Docs's Outstanding Achievement Retrospective for her movies tracking radical activism and ideas in the U.S. Made in 1983 during the Reagan era, it invites American Communist Party members to tell their stories, bringing into focus activism in the 20s and 30s and the growth of the Communist Party. Archival newsreels reveal the hostility against these organizers, but these radicals were eventually devastated as much by Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's brutality as they were by the social stigma against Communism that peaked with McCarthyism. Yet to this day, each of the doc's subjects – all of them fascinating characters – remain passionately committed to social change. A lesson in resilience.

[May 3, 1:30 pm, TIFF 3](#)

## Do you know what potential dangers are lurking in your makeup bag?

By [Christine Sismondo](#) Special to the Star  
Sun., April 21, 2019

When Toronto film director Phyllis Ellis heard about a suspected link between ovarian cancer and talcum powder, she grew concerned about her own health.

Why? Because, unlike most of us, who probably have vague recollections of talc in our childhood, she was also an athlete and recalled using an “inordinate amount” of baby powder when training for events such as women’s field hockey at the 1984 summer Olympics.

“We used it many, many times a day for many, many years,” recalls Ellis. “When we used to go for a 10K or a 20K run, we would put it between our legs so, when I ran across the talc story, I actually got quite worried, because I fit the profile. And I thought, well, if the most trusted brand in the world is causally-linked to ovarian cancer, what else are we using on our bodies that could cause us harm?”

That was the genesis of Ellis’ new film, *Toxic Beauty*, which premieres at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Bloor St. on April 28. Using talc as a jumping off point, it raises concerns over chemicals in other common cosmetics (hand lotion, nail polish, face paint etc ...), as well as some really important questions about government regulation, arbitrary standards of beauty and worker’s rights. It’s powerful, alarming and will almost certainly send at least a few people straight to their bathrooms to dump the contents of their makeup bags.

Immediate panic, however, is probably not the most useful reaction to this film. After all, the research establishing a link between many of the ingredients and certain cancers is still in early stages. Even when it comes to talc, although current studies indicate that its use can raise the risk of ovarian cancer, Dr. Joanne Kotsopoulos, a scientist at Women’s College Research Institute, tells me it’s not actually the biggest risk factor — a woman’s genetic makeup or family history is.

“It’s good that we’ve done that due diligence since it’s now believed that frequent talc use in the genital area is a problem, because it may enter the female reproductive tract and cause an inflammatory response which may increase the risk of cancer development,” says Kotsopoulos. “I think it’s safe to say that women should not be using talc-containing products in their genital area.”

Health Canada issued a warning against this specific use of talc about six months ago, as well as talc inhalation. *Toxic Beauty*, however, asks if a warning is enough. Although Canada has stronger regulations on cosmetics than the United States, our rules aren’t as robust as the ones in the European Union, for example, and one of the strongest points of contention in the film is that, in North America, the cosmetics industry is often allowed to police itself.

What could go wrong with that? Well, *Toxic Beauty* flicks at a few lethal examples from the past, including arsenic soap, lead facial creams and a mascara that made women go blind. There are many more, though, and for a full, illustrated, romp through deadly beauty aids and fashion, check out the new kid (ish) book *Killer Style: How Fashion Has Injured, Maimed and Murdered Through*

*History.* Assembled by Toronto writers Serah-Marie McMahon and Alison Matthews David, it explores dangerous hair dye and hats made with mercury. It's fabulous and a lot of fun, given that it's such a macabre topic.

These are history's cautionary tales, many of which prompted legislation that regulated the use of mercury, arsenic and p-phenylenediamine (the dangerous ingredient from the mascara). The problem, though, is that regulations — not to mention scientific research, itself — have trouble keeping up with the better-living-through-chemistry camp. Especially since the stakeholders are expert lobbyists and awfully good at confusing people about science. In one particularly excellent moment from *Toxic Beauty*, we find out that tanning bed lobbyists in the United States had been trying to raise questions about the science that established a link between ultraviolet light to skin cancer. And, while they were there, they floated advancing the idea that the earth is actually flat, created in 4,004 B.C. and that dinosaurs and humans used to walk the earth together.

We can, as individuals, choose not to go to the tanning bed. Or to use certain lipsticks, hand creams and hair dyes that may or may not have dangerous levels of certain chemicals. But there are people who aren't free to make such choices, namely, the people who work in these industries, which is something that both *Killer Style* and *Toxic Beauty* do a brilliant job of fleshing out. McMahon and David write about mercury poisoning among hatters; Ellis chronicles the struggle of nail salon workers (almost all of whom are women), to agitate for tighter regulations on possibly hazardous nail polish.

It takes a certain amount of privilege to opt out of the beauty industry. Or to even know what you might want to opt out of. Since I'm aware of the Health Canada warning, I decided to take a stroll to a few drugstores to check out the feminine hygiene and diaper sections, which are conveniently often in the same aisle. There were talc-free cornstarch options at all three, but plenty were still made with talc. I wondered how many consumers were making an informed choice, having decided the risks are minimal.

"You know, to me, ban talc," Ellis says. "If we're stepping out and saying it's linked to lung disease and ovarian cancer and I can go and buy a bottle of Johnson's baby powder with talc in it today, that's not OK. So get it off the shelves. You know, the EU did it and there's other countries that have done it, so I think we can do it, too."

## 'On the President's Orders': New film shines spotlight on Duterte's brutal war on drugs

We chat with Olivier Sarbil and James Jones about their new documentary on the Filipino President's controversial policy

*On the President's Orders* is a documentary set in the Philippines that investigates President Duterte's bloody campaign against drug dealers and addicts. The film reveals that his brutal war on drugs led to police officers taking the rule of law into their own hands and murdering suspects. The situation is so bad that President Duterte publicly ordered the police to stop extrajudicial killings. The filmmakers reveal how the order is being circumnavigated as the police start carrying out murders dressed in civilian clothing and blaming others.

### 'Amazing photojournalism'

Directed by Emmy-winning documentary filmmakers Olivier Sarbil and his regular collaborator James Jones, the story is told through accounts of the Manila police and testimonies of an ordinary family from the slums affected by the murders. The documentary starts with CCTV footage of the brutal shooting of the father of the family on the street in broad daylight.

Jones says that the filmmakers' interest in the Philippines began in early 2017: "We just finished a film called *Mosul*, which we shot in Iraq. There was a lot of amazing photojournalism coming out of the Philippines, mainly by local journalists who would see bodies in the street, night after night, men killed by the police, or so-called vigilantes."



A scene from 'On The President's Orders' showing Captain Octavio Deimos, a Swat Unit Leader in the Caloocan district, Philippines. Courtesy Olivier Sarbil

When the deaths in the Philippines started getting some attention in the media, it stoked the interest of the filmmakers. "It was a bit superficial, you would see the bodies and the crying families, but you wouldn't understand who was doing the killings and why?" says Jones. "It felt like Olivier and I could take the model of our working method on *Mosul*, where we got access to a group who kind of saw themselves as tough, and get into their heads a little bit to understand their rationale for killing."

### Winning trust

Frenchman Sarbil is the cinematographer on the documentary as well as the co-director. He says of the working methods of the pair: "One of the things we like to do is to win the trust of the people. It

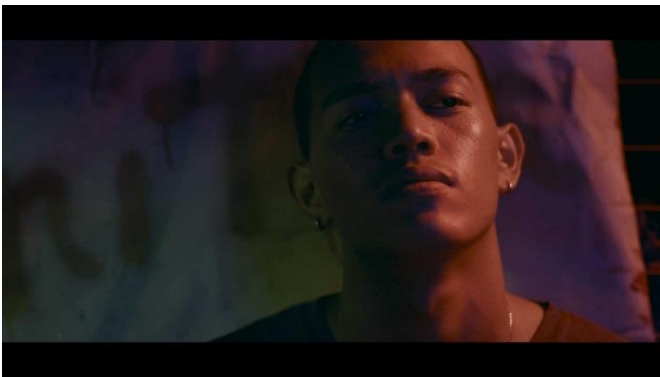
was different to *Mosul* because that was a war zone. The challenge is to make people forget about us when we film.”

Duterte had been blood-curdling during the election saying things like Germany had Hitler, the Philippines can have me

### **James Jones and Olivier Sarbil, filmmakers of 'On the President's Orders'**

When the filmmakers first went to the Philippines in October 2017 to discover the lay of the land for themselves, they were worried they had missed their window of opportunity to make a film on the Filipino war on drugs. “Duterte had been blood-curdling during the election saying things like Germany had Hitler, the Philippines can have me. Yet, when we got there, he had to sort of pause the war on drugs because there had been some high-profile cases where teenagers had been killed, with the police being caught red-handed.”

They thought that they would have trouble getting access. “But as it happened, we met this police chief that kind of loved the idea of letting people make a film about him,” says Jones at the CPH Dox film festival in Copenhagen, where I met with the filmmakers after the film’s world premiere. “He had the right amount of ego and vanity and also there was a push from above to show the cops had changed, whether they had or not, so it turned out the timing was good. We started in January 2018 and over the course of six months we made three or four trips, spending 12 weeks on the ground.”



*A scene from 'On The President's Orders' shows Axel Martinez in Manila, Philippines. Courtesy Olivier Sarbil*

They spent time with the family of a man accused of drug dealing, who the filmmakers suspect was shot by police in plain clothes. They also got friendly with many police officers in addition to the new police chief, Jemar Modequillo, brought in to clean up the notorious Caloocan district of Manila. “How we got to understand the story is by spending time with the police when we were filming and not filming, going away for days with them,” adds Jones. “After spending so much time with them, they started to relax and joke with us about the killings. We were also careful not to say anything that could be construed as endorsing what they were saying.”

### **'On the record'**

There is a moment in the film, when the filmmakers turn off the camera, but with the microphone still running, a police officer changes the testimony he has just made on camera to reveal that he has heard from colleagues that police officers had been involved in some of the murders. The filmmakers admit that this revelation is not a slam-dunk moment by any means, as it's hearsay commentary. So it begs the question as to why the filmmakers use it, given that it seems to blur journalistic etiquette of only using "on the record" quotes.

Duterte uses drugs as his bogeyman and argues that it is the root of all evil,

### **James Jones**

"We certainly didn't want to present it as a big gotcha moment," says Jones. "But on the balance, we thought he was lying at the beginning of the interview and he kind of confirmed it in the end. Also he knew that he was wearing a microphone and he knew it was on. It was something we discussed with our executive producers and it felt important to show that privately, the police were taking seriously the idea that other colleagues could be carrying out these murders in broad daylight."

The other question that some may reasonably have is what is the problem with a president being hard on drugs? "I think the first thing to say is that the Filipino drug problem is just as bad as any other country," explains Jones.

"Duterte uses drugs as his bogeyman and argues that it is the root of all evil, behind all rapes, robberies and murders. In different parts of the world, it might be terrorists, or Muslims, Mexicans or poor immigrants being used in this way."

The filmmakers add that Duterte used the war on drugs as a popular policy during the May 2016 election when he came to power and then to exert control. "He uses drugs to show that he is different, that he can control corruption," adds Jones. "But he is using it as a political tool, he is not really interested in wiping out drugs. He can present it as a moral crusade, but that is not what it is. If I thought his methods were backed up by people who know how to deal with drugs, then potentially there would be an argument, but given that thousands of people are being killed, most of whom are very, very low level drug runners, I think history will judge him harshly."

*On the President's Orders will be screened at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto on Saturday*

Updated: April 22, 2019 10:03 AM

<https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/film/on-the-president-s-orders-new-film-shines-spotlight-on-duterte-s-brutal-war-on-drugs-1.851547>



## Hot Docs review: Bellingcat: Truth In A Post-Truth World

Doc about a website dedicated to "open-source investigation" by citizen journalists is comforting, especially in an age of constant misinformation and lies

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**BELLINGCAT: TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD** (Hans Pool, Netherlands). 88 minutes.

Rating: NNNN

Launched in 2014, Bellingcat is a website dedicated to “open-source investigation” – with a team of citizen journalists who scour social media and news sources to verify identities, locations and operations that governments or corporations might want to hide.

**Hans Pool** (Putin’s Olympic Dream) gives us a sense of the individual members and how they found their way to the cause, using Bellingcat’s investigation of the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine to illustrate the group’s exacting, exhaustive forensic process. (There’s also a look at the group’s work to identify the Russians involved in the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in England last year.)

In an age of constant misinformation and outright lies, it’s a comfort to know these people are out there, pushing back against the tide.

*April 30, 9:15 pm, Isabel Bader; May 1, 1 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 9:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema*

## Hot Docs review: Easy Lessons

Director Dorottya Zurbó's day-in-the-life doc follows an 18-year-old Somali refugee as she pursues a modelling career

BY [CHAKA V. GRIER](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**EASY LESSONS** (Dorottya Zurbó, Hungary). 78 minutes. Rating: NNN

Kafiya Mahdi Said has just turned 18 but carries herself with the elegance and composure of someone twice her age. She doesn't have the "refugee look" the news loves to bombard viewers with, and her life is not as easy as it might first seem. After her mother learned that her father had "sold her to an old man," she helped her eldest daughter escape from Somalia. Kafiya is now alone in Hungary, living at a youth home run by a dishevelled, harried guidance counsellor who oversees a rowdy group of chain-smoking school girls who are also estranged from their families for equally heartbreaking reasons.

Director Dorottya Zurbó follows Kafiya as she pursues a modelling career, works toward her high school diploma, juggles various menial jobs and tries to look confident in a space where her dark skin and bright curls make her an outsider. Kafiya confesses to doing a good job at "looking happy," but it is hard not to look away from her sad face when a bullish teacher puts her on the spot regarding Hungarian history before pontificating on the joys of assimilation. In moments like this, where her eyes brim with tears that never fall, you realize that in this day-in-the-life doc, many will recognize their own pain in Kafiya's eyes.

[Apr 29, 5:30 pm, Innis Town Hall; May 1, 10:45 am, TIFF 4](#)

## Hot Docs review: For Sama

Personal doc chronicling activists and ordinary lives during a Syrian civil war is honest, intimate and gripping

BY [SAMANTHA EDWARDS](#) APRIL 22, 2019

**FOR SAMA** (Waad al-Kateab and Edwards Watts, UK, U.S./Syria). 94 minutes. Rating: NNNN

The devastating impact of the Bashar al-Assad regime's attacks on his own citizens during the Syrian war reverberates through university student-turned-citizen journalist **Waad al-Kateab**'s debut feature documentary. Filmed over several years, al-Kateab records how a peaceful protest movement turned into a civil war in Aleppo, where bombings and shelling were daily occurrences.

Much of the doc is set in a volunteer-run hospital set up by doctor-activist, **Hamza**, who later becomes her husband and the father of her two children. At times, the doc makes the viewer feel voyeuristic as we see tragedies unfold, like when a young boy watches his brother die or a mother clutches her dead child. When the mother notices al-Kateab, she screams "Why are you filming this?"

Yet al-Kateab never shrinks from filming the graphic images of war or frightening situations, like when an air strike hits the hospital, which also makes it a remarkably honest and gripping depiction of war. Shot on a handheld camcorder, DSLR and her smartphone, the film's footage is at times shaky and low quality, also adding to the emotional immediacy.

But even in wartime, life still continues. We see al-Kateab and Hamza get married in a small ceremony at home and the joy a single persimmon brings when there are food shortages. In one of the doc's most arresting scenes, Hamza plays peek-a-boo with his baby daughter using a mouth mask during an attack.

Al-Kateab narrates the doc as if speaking to her daughter, Sama. Early on, she says "I want you to know why your father and I made the decision we did to have you." She doesn't explicitly explain why, but it's clear that al-Kateab has a fierce love for Syria and dreams of bringing Sama back to a peaceful, lush Aleppo one day, even if that day is far off in the future.

*Apr 29, 9 pm, TIFF 3; Apr 30, 12:30 pm, Hart House; May 5, 12:45 pm, TIFF 3*

## Hot Docs review: Framing John DeLorean

Enjoyable doc looks at the visionary car designer whose vehicle achieved immortality in the Back To The Future movies

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**FRAMING JOHN DeLOREAN** (Don Argott, Sheena M. Joyce, U.S.). 109 minutes. Rating: NNN

Framing John DeLorean is an enjoyable if slightly indulgent documentary about the life of the visionary car designer whose vaunted DeLorean Motor Company collapsed following his arrest in a 1982 drug sting, but whose car achieved pop-culture immortality through the Back To The Future movies.

Directors **Don Argott** and **Sheena M. Joyce** use extensive re-enactments with **Alec Baldwin**, **Morena Baccarin**, **Josh Charles**, **Michael Rispoli** and others to illustrate the key moments in DeLorean's career, while also interviewing his adult children, colleagues and the law enforcement officials who engineered his fall. There's also some fun meta stuff with Baldwin, in makeup but not yet in character, talking about figuring out how to play DeLorean's alpha-male psychology of narcissism and self-rationalizing avarice.

It's enjoyable enough, though a little on the long side – and given that Nick Hamm's Driven played TIFF just last fall, with Lee Pace as DeLorean and Jason Sudeikis as the informant who served him up to the FBI, it's strange that this doc keeps having people remark how odd it is no one's ever made a movie about his life. At least acknowledge the thing with a tag, somehow.

*May 1, 9:15 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 6:30 pm, TIFF 4*

## Hot Docs review: A Kandahar Away

Aisha Jamal skilfully navigates intergenerational tensions in this quirky film set in Kandahar, Saskatchewan

BY [SUSAN G. COLE](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**A KANDAHAR AWAY** (Aisha Jamal, Canada). 83 minutes. Rating: NNN

Jamal's family, led by their father, Abdul, an Afghani immigrant, is on a trek to Kandahar, but via the clever twist that opens the film, we discover that they're actually on the way to Kandahar, Saskatchewan. Abdul has bought eight parcels of land for Jamal and her siblings, all of whom are mystified and slightly resentful of their father's gift. Small-town Saskatchewan, really? And they are deeply mortified that their father promotes a local memorial to Canadian soldiers who died on the Afghanistan mission. What would people in Afghanistan think? Jamal skilfully navigates these tensions in a quirky film that probes the generation gap and Abdul's paradoxical yearnings for his home country and his commitment to his new one.

[May 1, 6:30 pm, TIFF 2; May 2, 1 pm, Isabel Bader; May 4, 10:15 am, TIFF 2](#)

## Hot Docs review: Last Breath

Despite an overlong setup, this nail-biting underwater story could inspire a Michael Bay thriller

BY [GLENN SUMI](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**LAST BREATH** (Alex Parkinson, Richard da Costa, UK/Sweden). 86 minutes. Rating: NNN

Here's a doc you can imagine inspiring a Michael Bay-like thriller.

Near the bottom of the freezing North Sea in September 2012, a routine procedure turns into a nightmare when a diver gets cut off from his crew with only a five-minute supply of oxygen and no flashlight. A big storm is tossing the underwater vessel around and its computers are down, so it can't be controlled. With the clock ticking, finding the diver is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Directors **Alex Parkinson** and **Richard da Costa** take a long time to set the story in motion, getting bogged down in technical details. Interviews with survivors, actual footage and recreations eventually pay off, but the use of a certain technique (which I won't spoil) feels like a cheat.

Still, you can't argue with the doc's nail-biting tension, which comes through despite the film's overwrought score.

*Apr 29, 6:45 pm, Hart House; Apr 30, 3:30 pm, TIFF 2; May 5, 8:45 pm, Scotiabank 3*



## Hot Docs review: Shella Record: A Reggae Mystery

Haphazardly shot but enthusiastic doc is worth a watch for fans of Jamaican music

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**SHELLA RECORD: A REGGAE MYSTERY** (Chris Flanagan, Canada). 87 minutes. Rating: NNN

Record collector Chris Flanagan's haphazardly shot but enthusiastic doc is a musical mystery about a lost classic of Jamaican reggae. The director found a copy of Shella Record's 1970 King Tubby-produced song Jamaican Fruit Of African Roots while crate-digging in Toronto and then spent years trying to track the singer down. Along the way, he visited some of Jamaica's most prolific and respected musicians – Bunny Lee, Earl Smith, Myrna Hague, Philip Smart, Larry McDonald – who were game to help.

The question he never convincingly answers is why he is so obsessed. The song's vocals are powerful and haunting, but his interviewees, while happy to chat, nonetheless wonder, sometimes suspiciously, what made him go to such lengths. The mystery-adventure pacing keeps it brisk, while extremely lo-fi graphics and dioramas sort of elevate what is clearly an amateur project, but don't make up for the lack of depth.

The best scenes are the musician encounters, which are enough to make this film worth a watch for fans of Jamaican music.

[Apr 29, 9:15 pm, TIFF 2; May 1, 12:45 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 3, 3:15 pm, Scotia](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-shella-record/>

## Hot Docs review: Stieg Larsson: The Man Who Played With Fire

Doc about the late Girl With The Dragon Tattoo trilogy author and his research into neo-Nazis is powerful and timely – if you can ignore the cheesy reenactments

BY [SAMANTHA EDWARDS](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**STIEG LARSSON: THE MAN WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE** (Henrik Georgsson, Sweden). 99 minutes. Rating: NNNN

**Stieg Larsson** is best known as the author of the bestselling Girl With The Dragon Tattoo books (aka the Millennium trilogy), but this doc is an absorbing portrait of the late Swedish journalist's work investigating fascist right-wing organizations.

The Man Who Played With Fire, a riff on the second Millennium book title, documents Larsson's career trajectory from a graphic artist at a news agency, researching neo-Nazis as an obsessive hobby, to an editor who helped found Expo, the magazine focused on covering right-wing extremism in Europe. Larsson regularly received death threats, and in one case a car bomb almost killed two of his colleagues. While many journalists stopped reporting on the subject in fear of their safety, Larsson compulsively continued, often at the expense of his health.

Alongside interviews with former colleagues and Larsson's long-time partner, **Eva Gabrielsson**, director **Henrik Georgsson** uses archival footage of neo-Nazi protests, film clips from Dragon Tattoo and dramatic re-enactments. These cheesy recreations, which are mostly just shots of a Larsson look-alike smoking at his desk, don't add much substance.

In the last 15 minutes, the doc shows Larsson starting to write the Millennium trilogy, which he treated as a creative outlet. But he never got to see its success. He died from a heart attack at age 50 in 2004, a year before the first book's publication.

With the rise of populism and alt-right movements in Europe and North America, the doc leaves you wondering what Larsson would make of the current state of politics. A former colleague thinks he would likely be disappointed, but not surprised.

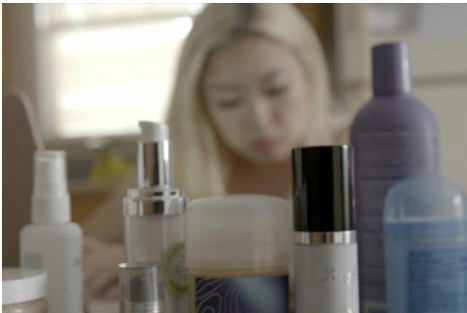
*May 1, 9:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 2, 10:30 am, Isabel Bader; May 5, 1:45 pm, Hot Docs Cinema*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-stieg-larsson-the-man-who-played-with-fire/>

## Hot Docs review: Toxic Beauty

Phyllis Ellis's film about the harmful health consequences of chemicals in beauty products will make you rifle through your medicine cabinet

BY [SAMANTHA EDWARDS](#) APRIL 22, 2019



**TOXIC BEAUTY** (Phyllis Ellis, Canada). 90 minutes. Rating: NNNN

After watching this engrossing look into the beauty industry, you'll rush to your bathroom to check the labels of your shampoo and conditioner.

Canadian director **Phyllis Ellis** reveals the harmful health consequences of chemicals found in everyday products like lotions, lipstick and nail polish, the huge corporations that knowingly use them and the lack of governmental regulations to protect consumers.

Bolstered by interviews with scientists, doctors and thorough research, the doc follows two main personal stories: young med student **Mymy Nguyen** who after finding a benign breast tumour is determined to learn the impact of her elaborate beauty routine; and more than half a dozen women who used Johnson & Johnson's talcum baby powder and were later diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

The latter story takes up more screen time and is more devastating, as we discover that J&J has used talcum for decades even after learning that it was linked to cancer. (In the U.S., there are [11,700 lawsuits](#) currently pending; in Canada litigation against J&J is set for later this year).

Other than J&J, the doc refrains from calling out other brands, which from a consumer perspective feels like a missed opportunity. But as one of Nguyen's friends puts it, it shouldn't be on the consumer to decipher ingredient lists: "We shouldn't be telling girls to stop using these products; the government should be telling these companies not to make toxic products."

*Apr 29, 12:45 pm, TIFF 1; May 2, 5:45 pm, Scotiabank 3*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-toxic-beauty/>

# The film *Push* shows how housing has become a commodity for the benefit of the wealthy

By [Christopher Hume](#) Star Columnist  
Mon., April 22, 2019

In cities around the world, housing is becoming a dwelling place for money rather than people.

Toronto is no exception; for buyers and renters finding somewhere to live here grows harder every day. As costs go through the roof, an increasing number of Torontonians, especially the young, find themselves forced out of town.



*Corporate actors are turning cities, including Toronto, into enclaves for the rich, writes Christopher Hume. (ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE / TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO)*

In London, U.K., whole neighbourhoods have been hollowed out as they are bought up by foreign investors and private equity firms. The new owners, who have little or no interest in letting their properties, would rather leave them empty than deal with the hassle of tenants and their endless demands for basic services.

As Swedish director Fredrik Gertten makes clear in his compelling documentary, *Push*, the financial sector has turned housing into a commodity, one that can be bought and sold dozens of times in the course of an hour. The notion, established by the United Nations, that housing is a basic human right now seems an antiquated nicety, a leftover from a more ambitious age. What remains now is the right of the rich to get richer.

“Finance is an extractive sector,” notes Dutch-American sociologist Saskia Sassen in one of several on-camera interviews. “It might as well be mining.” Finance, she points out, exists to squeeze every last drop of value out of any given asset.

“This is not at all about housing,” Sassen explains. “Buildings function as assets.” Gentrification, she points out, is the least of it. “It’s much deeper than that,” she argues. It’s more a wholesale appropriation of cities and the accompanying displacement of the poor and the middle classes to make way for the wealthy.

## Toronto Star – April 22, 2019 (2 of 2)

Sassen's dire insights are echoed by economist, author and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, who also speaks on camera. As he said recently, since the 1980s, "...the income share of the top 0.1 per cent has more than quadrupled and that of the top 1 per cent has almost doubled, that of the bottom 90 per cent has declined. Wages at the bottom, adjusted for inflation, are about the same as they were some 60 years ago. Wealth is even less equally distributed, with just three Americans having as much as the bottom 50 per cent."

As incredible as these figures are, what's less obvious is governments' role not only in allowing this massive shift of wealth, but enabling it. The 2008 financial crisis, for instance, was a disaster for millions of homeowners, yet it turned out a gold mine for large fund management firms. There's no better example than Blackstone, a private equity company that controls assets worth \$512 billion — more than half a trillion dollars. It acquired thousands of properties lost in the fallout of the subprime mortgage scandal.

As *Push* documents, Blackstone entered Sweden in 2015 and just four years later is the largest private owner of low-income housing in that country. In Uppsala, its modus operandi has been to buy public-sector housing estates where it can evict tenants, renovate units and raise rents as much as 50 per cent.

The same thing happens in Toronto regularly, with landlords who view their properties as little more than money mills and treat tenants with casual indifference.

"They're not intrinsically evil," Stiglitz says in the film of these corporate property owners, "but they are intrinsically amoral. So amoral, they are, I would say, evil."

As Gertten follows a special UN housing rapporteur on her research trips around the world, it becomes clear that similar scenarios are playing out in every corner of the planet. Globalized financial markets mean capital moves at the speed of an electrical impulse. From Berlin and Barcelona to Valparaiso and Toronto, corporate actors are turning cities into enclaves for the rich.

It doesn't have to be this way. Berlin, for example, has started to buy land in vulnerable neighbourhoods. Vancouver has implemented a vacant home tax.

Across Canada, however, let alone Toronto, many governments would rather sell "surplus" land to developers than use it for affordable housing.

But, Stiglitz notes, "You can make money by destroying the world."

That's why change is so necessary and so hard.

The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema will host the North American premiere of *Push* on Friday, April 26.

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/2019/04/22/the-film-push-shows-how-housing-has-become-a-commodity-for-the-benefit-of-the-wealthy.html>

## Norman Wilner's top 10 must-see films at Hot Docs 2019

Here are five documentaries I've already seen that I recommend most highly, and five I'm very eager to catch up with when the festival gets underway

BY **NORMAN WILNER** APRIL 22, 2019



*Memory: Origin Of Alien* dives deep into the design, construction and impact of Ridley Scott's 40-year-old film.

Jumping into Hot Docs without a map? Good luck. With 234 features and shorts screening over the course of the festival, it's basically a maelstrom of stories, subjects and styles. Fortunately, here at NOW **we spend a lot of time watching movies** and coordinating viewing schedules, so we can offer a little advice on which tickets to chase.

For my part, here are five documentaries I've already seen that I recommend most highly, followed by five I'm very eager to catch up with during the festival. And remember: even if a given screening has sold out, there's always a rush line. And if that doesn't work, there's bound to be something else playing a screen or two over that's worth a look.

## **SOLID BETS**

### **Knock Down The House**

Feeling pessimistic about the world lately? Check out Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick's electrifying documentary, which follows progressive candidates Paula Jean Swearengen, Amy Vilella, Cori Bush and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as they mount primary challenges to unseat Democratic congressmen in the 2018 primaries. Just watching smart, motivated people doing their best to put America back on course towards moral clarity – or at least accountability – is **a tonic for the soul**.

*April 28, 6:15 pm, Isabel Bader; April 29, 4 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 6:30 pm, Fox Theatre; May 4, 1 pm, Hot Docs*



## **Garden, Zoological**

Mincheol Wang's **look at the people who run South Korean's Cheongju Zoo** and the animals in their care is a fine representation of Hot Docs' Animal Magnetism program, considering the ramifications of what we owe to the creatures in our care. There's an unexpected birth, a devastating death and a sense that everyone's trying their best to cope in an awful situation. But good will can only get you so far.

*April 26, 5:30 pm, TIFF 4; April 27, 1:30 pm, TIFF 4; May 5, 3:30 pm, Scotiabank 13*

## **The Magic Life Of V**

Finnish-based documentarian Tonislav Hristov profiles a young woman named Veera, who copes with her traumatic past and a challenging present by LARPing, where she can slay actual demons and escape from her own. It's **an empathetic and moving story** of a young woman who has no idea how truly heroic she is.

*May 1, 9:45 pm, TIFF 3; May 2, 3:30 pm, Scotiabank 13; May 5, 9 pm, TIFF 3*

## **There Are No Fakes**

A few years ago, Barenaked Ladies keyboardist Kevin Hearn sued a Toronto art gallery for fraud after a painting by the late Indigenous artist Norval Morrisseau turned out to be a forgery. The story behind that story is unpacked by Jamie Kastner (*The Secret Disco Revolution*, *The Skyjacker's Tale*) in this **mesmerizing art-world documentary**, which covers the nuts and bolts of what one gallery owner calls "a massive art scam" – and also demonstrates how Canada's white power structure is still consuming and perverting the work of Indigenous artists, even after they're gone.

*April 29, 6 pm, TIFF 1; May 1, 8:15 pm, Scotiabank 3*

## **Who Let The Dogs Out?**

I wouldn't have thought **an hour-long exploration of a Baha Men song** could be as dense or as compelling as Brent Hodge's (mostly) serious-minded documentary, which uses Ben Sisto's quest to trace the track's provenance into an investigation of inspiration, creativity and authorship. Also, there's merch.

*May 2, 9:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 3, 6:30 pm, Hart House; May 5, 9:30 pm, TIFF 2*



*Courtesy of Hot Docs*

*HBO's I Love You, Now Die: The Commonwealth Vs. Michelle Carter is about a teen accused of encouraging her boyfriend to kill himself.*

## WHAT I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE

### Five Feminist Minutes

Hot Docs is saluting the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Film Board with a Redux program dedicated to the NFB's female-forward Studio D. The original Five Feminist Minutes anthology, produced in 1990, offered women the chance to tell whatever stories they wanted to, in whatever format they felt was suitable, as long as it fit within the dictated running time. (Sook-yin Lee, Catherine Martin, Janis Cole and Ann Marie Fleming were among the contributors.) It's screening here accompanied by new work from Fleming, Deanne Foley, Joyce Wong and Alexandra Lazarowich. I'm very curious to see how the original shorts hold up almost three decades later, and what the new ones add.

*May 1, 3:30 pm, TIFF 4*

### I Love You, Now Die: The Commonwealth Vs. Michelle Carter

Erin Lee Carr, maker of the true-crime docs *Thought Crimes: The Case Of The Cannibal Cop* and *Mommy Dead And Dearest*, returns with an HBO project about the teenager convicted of involuntary manslaughter for texting her long-distance boyfriend Conrad Roy to kill himself. Carr's whole thing is filtering bizarre, potentially lurid material through a thoughtful, considered lens, so I'm very curious to see what she finds here.

*May 1, 5:15 pm, Hot Docs; May 4, 3:45 pm, Hot Docs; May 5, 7:30 pm, TIFF 1*

### Lord Of The Toys

I'm fascinated by the idea that people can make a living being performative assholes on the Internet, so Pablo Ben Yakov's look at German YouTuber Max Herzberg is high on my Hot Docs list. Herzberg, who goes by "Adlersson," has amassed hundreds of thousands of followers by being filmed acting like a dick in public... which apparently involves a great deal of casual racism and

homophobia. Is he pandering to the alt-right, or an actual member? And, per Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night*, does it even matter?

*May 1, 9 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 3, 3 pm, Scotiabank 8*

### **Memory: The Origins of Alien**

*Alien* is one of my very favourite films, and Ridley Scott's SF-horror masterwork celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year – so this deep dive into the movie's design, construction and impact from horror cinema specialist Alexandre O. Philippe (*Doc Of The Dead*, *78/52: Hitchcock's Shower Scene*) couldn't come at a better time. It's at the very top of my gotta-see list – especially if I can snag a ticket to the show at TIFF Bell Lightbox's cinema 1. That screen was built for nightmares.

*April 25, 8:45 pm, TIFF 2; April 26, 12:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 4, 3:45 pm, TIFF 2*

### **Prophecy**

Seven years after hanging out with Ralph Steadman (and Johnny Depp) for the charming profile *For No Good Reason*, Charlie and Lucy Paul return with another study of an artist in his element: Scottish painter Peter Howson, whose human grotesques evoke Bosch and Bacon (and, perhaps, speak to the horrors he witnessed as Britain's official war artist during the Bosnian conflict in 1993). *Prophecy* is a record of the creation of a single oil painting, from the stretching of the canvas to its ultimate exhibition and sale. I just want to see the man work, and maybe talk about what's going through his mind.

*April 27, 9:15 pm, Hart House; April 29, 1:30 pm, Isabel Bader; May 5, 12:30 pm, Hart House*

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up

[Andrew Parker](#) April 22, 2019 10:38 am



### nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up

7 out of 10

A multilayered look at Indigenous issues in Canada, one family's painful fight for justice, and emboldened racism in the age of social media, Hot Docs' 2019 opening film *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* looks at the bigger picture behind one of the most controversial murder trials in recent memory.

In the summer of 2016 and through a convoluted series of events, young Cree man Colten Boushie found himself on the southern Saskatchewan farmland of white property owner Gerald Stanley. As the frightened young man (who just woke up from a nap in the back of a friend's car) was trying to run away from the scene, Stanley shot Boushie point blank in the back of the head. What looked like a case of second degree murder (or at the very least, manslaughter) and something that looked far more dominating than the defense's claim of self-defense would suggest, turned into an injustice for the Boushie family. After watching their son's killer getting released without any punishment, the family rallies together and meets with local, national, and international politicians to share Colten's story and explain to the world why his death plays into a larger discussion about indigenous issues.

*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, directed by Tasha Hubbard (*Birth of a Family*), allows the Boushie family a great deal of time and space to share, educate, and hopefully heal old wounds. Their story speaks all too depressingly well to issues historically faced by Canadian Indigenous peoples since Treaty 6 and the Indian Act, but also to a new form of rising, emboldened racism and protectionism. From the courtroom to the halls of parliament to intimate familial moments of remembrance, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* offers an important counterpoint to mainstream sentiments about reconciliation. Hubbard's film suggests that while politicians have been talking a good game about the subject, actual reconciliation with First Nations peoples might be as far away as it has ever been.

Hubbard (whose birth father is married to Colten's aunt) stumbles slightly in an underdeveloped, but well meaning and heartfelt attempt to connect the Boushie case to her own desire to educate her children about their past, but whenever *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* allows its subjects a platform to speak, everyone should listen.

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038819/hot-docs-2019-review-nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Well Groomed

Andrew Parker April 22, 2019 10:17 am



### Well Groomed

6 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

First time feature documentary director Rebecca Stern's humorous and empathetic *Well Groomed* takes a look at the niche world of creative dog grooming; the art of dying the hair of pooches different colours and shaving intricate designs and characters into their fur.

*Well Groomed* is a relatively standard sort of documentary that follows various contestants of varying skill levels and temperaments from all over the United States – including Angela Kumpe, the queen of creative grooming – in good times and bad. Stern looks at the intense preparation of the participants, the criticism they face from concerned members of the public, and how they overcome personal setbacks and fears in pursuit of victory at the year's biggest creative grooming event in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

There's a definite love displayed by these owners for their dogs, and the creative skills on display are certainly impressive and amusing, but *Well Groomed* assuredly won't win over any detractors who remain skeptical about taking such artistic license with a living creature. Any potential controversies surrounding the practice of "furjazzling" (which is illegal in some states) are batted away early and quickly, and the question about whether creative grooming draws more attention to the owner or the dog remains somewhat unexplored by Stern in favour of a feel good vibe throughout.

Criticisms aside, however, *Well Groomed* is confidently assembled, gorgeously photographed, and certainly effective in its aims to entertain, building to an appropriately cathartic and somewhat bittersweet conclusion for many of Stern's subjects. If the subject interests you or you have little knowledge or opinion on the subject, *Well Groomed* is a fun time. If you take issues with such grooming practices, you should probably steer clear.

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038806/hot-docs-2019-review-well-groomed/>

## Ottawa Road Trips – April 22, 2019 (1 of 5)

### 32 road trips from Ottawa this week: Poutine in Gatineau, authors in Gananoque and shopping in Kemptville

by [Laura Byrne Paquet](#) on April 22, 2019 in [Day trips](#)

The snow has finally melted and the road trip schedule has heated up! I have 32 ideas for you this week, and there's something for just about everyone—whether you'd rather be running a half-marathon in Smiths Falls, humming along to country hits in Gatineau, seeing a play in Osgoode, enjoying classical music in Pembroke or celebrating all things maple in Perth. Happy travels!

#### Shop locally in Kemptville, Winchester and Morrisburg



*Eighty vendors will be showcasing their products and services at the Kemptville Shop Local Showcase this weekend.  
Photo courtesy of the Kemptville Shop Local Showcase.*

The fifth annual [Kemptville Shop Local Showcase](#) is bringing 80 vendors to the North Grenville Municipal Centre on Saturday, April 27. Businesses will be offering product, food and beverage samples and sales of all sorts, Fat Les's Chip Stand will be serving free coffee and tea, and the first 500 families at the show will receive a free tree from the Municipality of North Grenville and the South Nation Conservation Authority. Eager to try a new sport? Local dance, fitness, martial arts and crossfit companies will be giving demonstrations. Free parking and admission.

If you want to check out *multiple* events that day, you could be eligible to win a Nest Smart Home package—a flat-screen TV, a sound bar and two VIP Ottawa Senators tickets. To enter, you need to visit three community trade shows taking place on Saturday, April 27: the Kemptville Shop Local Showcase, the [Local Business Expo 2019](#) at the Joel Steele Community Centre in Winchester, and the [Spring Home and Trade Show](#) at the Morrisburg Arena (the Morrisburg show also runs on Friday night). To enter, you need to get a postcard stamped at EACH event's O'Farrell Financial booth.

#### Get a little bit country in Gatineau

The 10 musicians, singers and dancers of [Nashville Québec](#) will be recreating country hits by Shania Twain, Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, Kenny Rogers, Brad Paisley, Patrick Norman, Paul Daraïche and many more at the Casino Lac-Leamy in Gatineau on Saturday, April 27. The content will be roughly one-quarter French and three-quarters English.

#### Celebrate all things maple in Perth or Montreal



*Photo by Simon Lunn courtesy of Lanark County Tourism.*



## Ottawa Road Trips – April 22, 2019 (2 of 5)

The [Festival of the Maples](#) in Perth on Saturday, April 27, caps a month-long celebration of all things maple in Lanark County. The fun will include live music, food and craft vendors, fun for kids, and lots of maple treats to try. (The website I've linked to earlier in this paragraph includes lots of great tips on navigating the busy festival, including where to find a parking spot!)

As well as enjoying the usual maple treats, you can get a tattoo or a beard trim, nibble on tacos, drink craft beer, and catch some live music (electronic on Friday, rap and hip-hop on Saturday, and pop on Sunday) at the hipster-ish [Festival Gueule d'érable](#) on Quai Jacques-Cartier in the Old Port of Montreal (April 26 to 28).

### Enjoy a play in Osgoode, Smiths Falls, Perth or Kingston

The Isle in the River Theatre Company in Osgoode has an intriguing play coming up. [Tempting Providence](#), based on a true story, focuses on English nurse Myra Bennett, who emigrated to Newfoundland in 1921 to serve a community on the remote Great Northern Peninsula. It runs from Thursdays through Saturdays from April 26 to May 5. The Friday shows start at 7:30pm, the Saturday shows are dinner theatre evenings starting at 6pm, and the Sunday shows are 2pm matinées.

From April 26 to May 5, Smiths Falls Community Theatre is staging [The Faery's Kiss](#), a play that tells the tale of a man who inherits a house in the British countryside, only to find that it's haunted by a powerful spectre with a big secret. The show runs on Friday and Saturday nights, and on Sunday afternoons; there's also a Thursday night show on May 2.

Barn Door Productions in Perth has adopted a novel by Charles Yale Harrison to create [Generals Die in Bed](#), a multimedia production using theatre, film, music, photos and sound effects to recreate the sometimes funny, often tragic story of a First World War soldier. It runs from Thursdays through Sundays, from April 25 to May 5 (the Sunday shows are 2pm matinées).

Meanwhile, in Kingston, Domino Theatre is presenting [An Ideal Husband](#) by Oscar Wilde from April 25 to May 11 (Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays). Written in 1895, this very British comedy deals with themes of political corruption, blackmail, honour and the consequences of past actions.

### Get literary in Gananoque, Renfrew or Ottawa



Photo by [Gift Habeshaw](#) on Unsplash.

This weekend, you can enjoy one of the first of the season's many literary festivals. The [1000 Islands Writers Festival](#) (April 25 to 28) is bringing a big slate of writers, songwriters and artists—including Elizabeth Renzetti, Terry Fallis, Heather Smith and Eric Walters—to Gananoque.

In Renfrew, the Canadian Federation of University Women is holding a huge [used book sale](#) in the gym of the Renfrew Collegiate Institute on April 26 and 27.

Here in Ottawa, you can browse for used volumes at the [Rockcliffe Park Spring Book Sale](#) (April 27 and 28), taking place at the Rockcliffe Park branch of the Ottawa Public Library at 380 Springfield Road. (It's not to be confused with the local public school's big book sale, which happens in the fall.)

On Saturday, April 27, the Main Branch of the Ottawa Public Library is hosting its second annual [BiblioCon](#), a celebration of comics and "geek culture." The organizers encourage everyone to come in costume. The free

## Ottawa Road Trips – April 22, 2019 (3 of 5)

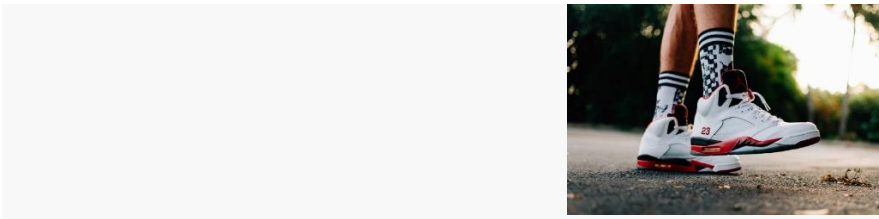
event will include superhero storytime, comic-themed crafts, face painting, picture-taking with a green screen and presentations by graphic novel experts.

### Enjoy retro music in Ottawa or Merrickville

If you like music you can hold in your hand, rather than just stream or download, the [Ottawa Community Record Show](#)—celebrating its 20th anniversary this year—is the place to hunt for vinyl 45s, LPs and EPs, as well as CDs of all descriptions. It's happening in Little Italy on Sunday, April 28.

And to dance to your favourite Brat Pack-era tunes, head to Merrickville on Saturday, April 27, where '80s retro band The Instigators will be playing at the Merrickville United Arts Centre's [Spring Fling dance](#).

### Lace up your running shoes in Kingston



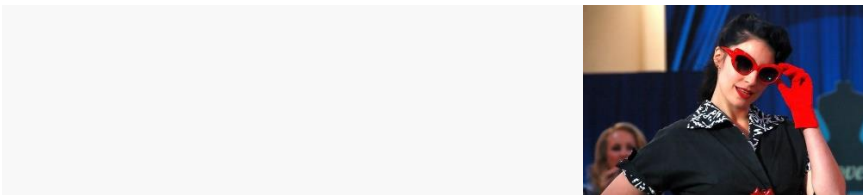
*Photo by [Hunter Johnson](#) on Unsplash.*

It must be spring, because suddenly the calendar is full of running events. On Sunday, April 28, you can hit the Cataraqui Trail in Smiths Falls during the [Spring Fling Running Thing](#), a fundraiser for the Smiths Falls Hospital Foundation. It includes 2K, 5K and 10K races, and a half-marathon. Further afield, you can choose from a selection of races (from a 2K for kids to a half-marathon) during the [Limestone Race Weekend](#) in Kingston (April 27 and 28).

### Catch a symphony performance in Pembroke

Local pianists Keegan Lazarus and Elena Semenets will be the featured soloists in the Pembroke Symphony Orchestra's [season finale concert](#) on Saturday, April 27. CBC Radio's Doug Hempstead will narrate the program, which features three works: Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals*, Offenbach's *Overture to Orpheus in the Underworld* and Franck's *Symphony in D Minor*.

### Hunt for groovy clothes in Carleton Place



*Creative Commons photo of model in vintage fashion by [Chris Phutully](#).*

Browse for mini skirts, maxi skirts and everything in between at the [Vintage Clothing Sale](#) at the Carleton Place and Beckwith Heritage Museum (April 26 to 28). A wide range of clothing and accessories for men and women—including hats, jewellery and coats—is usually available at this fundraising event.

### Nosh on poutine in Ottawa and Gatineau

## Ottawa Road Trips – April 22, 2019 (4 of 5)

If the interest in my [recently updated post about poutine festivals](#) is any indication, Ottawa Road Trips readers like their cheese curds, gravy and fries *a lot*. So here are two tasty outings for you this weekend in Ottawa-Gatineau. At [Poutinefest on Sparks](#) (April 25 to 28), you can enjoy beers by Big Rig Brewery and others, as well as lots of live music. Similar fun is on the menu at [Le festival bière et poutine de Gatineau](#) at Parc place de la cité in Gatineau (April 26 to 28).

### Channel your inner poet in Almonte



*Photo of poet Claire Sylvan (left) and bookseller Mary Lumsden courtesy of Mill Street Books.*

The Almonte Public Library and Mill Street Books are hosting a [Poetry Blitz](#) to celebrate Poetry Month on Saturday April 27, at the Almonte Public Library. They're inviting local poets to come and read one or two of their works (first come, first served). Almonte spoken word poet Danielle Gregoire will host the event, and local poet Claire Sylvan (whose poetry book *Turnings* was recently reprinted) will be on hand to discuss the question "Why write poetry?" For more information or to sign up to read, call Mill Street Books at 613-256-9090.

### Buy used outdoor gear in Kingston

Dying to get out on a hiking trail or a lake, but lacking gear? In Kingston this weekend, you can buy and sell used outdoor equipment—everything from boots to boats—at Trailhead's annual [Gear Swap](#) (April 27 and 28). If the items you bring in sell, you get cash or a store discount. If you don't have anything to sell, you can still buy. It's a win-win!

### Shop for art in Manotick, Navan, Rockland, Elgin or Ottawa



*Photo by [Kelli Tungay](#) on Unsplash.*

Members of the Manotick Art Association will be showing and selling their works at the [Inspirations art show and sale](#) from April 26 to 28, with some of the proceeds going to support Rural Ottawa South Support Services. At the vernissage on Friday, April 26 (6:30pm to 9:30pm), you can meet the artists.

The [Navan Fine Arts exhibition and sale](#) on April 27 and 28 features 20 local artists who create works in a wide range of media, including acrylics, fused glass, threaded metal, wood, clay and watercolours.

The Clarence-Rockland Artists' Association is holding its annual [art exhibition](#) at the Canadian International Hockey Academy in Rockland on April 27 and 28. Works by 31 local artists will be featured.

The Elgin Art Gallery is holding an opening reception for its new show, [A Bird's Eye View](#), on Saturday, April 27, at 2pm. The show, which features wildlife art by Kristi Bird, runs until June 14. The gallery is located above the Savoury and Sweet store and restaurant in Elgin.

## Ottawa Road Trips – April 22, 2019 (5 of 5)

At the [Ottawa Guild of Potters sale](#) at the Horticulture Building at Lansdowne Park (April 26 to 28), you can meet the artists, see demonstrations, and enjoy coffee, snacks and live music, as well as shop for distinctive pottery.

### Catch a documentary in Toronto



Photo by [Denise Jans](#) on Unsplash.

In Toronto, the [Hot Docs Festival](#) (April 25 to May 5) focuses solely on documentaries of all styles, from around the world. If you're a documentary fan, it might be worth the long drive to Toronto, as it could be hard to see some of these documentaries otherwise. Eagerly anticipated movies this year include the North American premiere of *The Rest*, a film about refugees in Europe by director/activist Ai Weiwei, and the international premiere of *Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy*, focusing on a 90-something master chef and teacher.

### Hop aboard the Beer and Wine Train in Utica

This year, there will be 13 [Beer and Wine Trains](#) on the Adirondack Scenic Railroad route between Utica and Remsen, New York. The first one leaves Utica (about 310 kilometres south of Ottawa) on Friday, April 26, and the season runs until October 18. Along the 32-kilometre route (64 kilometres for the whole round trip), passengers can sip beer and wine, and enjoy light snacks, while listening to live music.

### Enjoy roots music in Ottawa and Almonte

David Myles will be the headliner in the final show in this year's [Folkus concert series](#) at the Old Town Hall in Almonte, taking place on Saturday, April 27. The genre-blending roots musician from Halifax has won all sorts of awards for his jazz-pop-folk songs. Opening for Myles will be Ottawa-based singer-songwriter Susan O.

The [Ottawa Grassroots Festival](#) (April 25 to 28) is a family-friendly event featuring folk, Indigenous and Franco-Ontarian music at Southminster United Church in Old Ottawa South. Artists on the roster include Ian Tamblyn, Digging Roots and Siqiniup Qilauta. Daytime shows on Saturday and Sunday are free; for other shows, you can buy single tickets or a festival pass.

### Taste California wines in Ottawa

If you like California wines, here's a great opportunity: the chance to sample a whole bunch of them, all in one place. The [California Wine Fair](#) is taking place at the Fairmont Chateau Laurier on Friday, April 26 (the public tasting portion of the event runs from 7pm to 9:30pm).

<https://ottawaroadtrips.com/2019/04/22/events-near-ottawa-eastern-ontario-ouaouais-april-d/>

# Documenting a Theory of Assholes

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A new documentary film by John Walker unpacks the thesis of the book *Assholes: A Theory* by Aaron James.

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By [Doreen Nicoll](#)

Published April 22, 2019

Canadian producer, director and cinematographer John Walker was asked by a female friend, "Do you have to be an asshole to become a great filmmaker, artist, architect, whatever?" That was the impetus that sent Walker on a journey to uncover the truth about this repugnant segment of society, which he documented in his [new film \*Assholes: A Theory\*](#).



*John Walker (Image Credit: John Walker Productions)*

Walker began his investigations by visiting his favourite bookstore where he discovered *Assholes: A Theory* written by surfer enthusiast and philosopher Aaron James. The professor and chair of philosophy at the University of California, Irvine created a definition that states an asshole is someone who:

1. Allows himself special advantages;
2. Has an entrenched sense of entitlement because he's rich, smart and/or beautiful; and
3. Immunizes himself against complaints of other people and refuses to hear them.

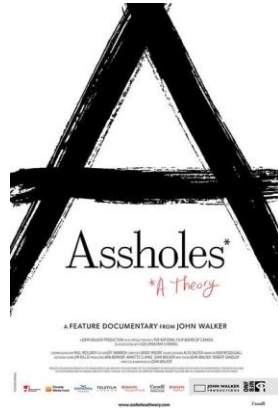
While assholes are a worldwide phenomenon, they are overwhelmingly men who fall into a range of often overlapping categories. These include, but are not limited to, assholes who are: boorish; smug; drunk; arrogant; sexist; your boss; nice to your face but mumbling behind your back; social savvy; excessively aggressive drivers; and narcissistic.

A lack of core values and a disrespect for parents are cited as the main ingredients required to create the superlative asshole. Psychotherapist Suji Gelerman says these narcissists don't even know other people exist and this makes it impossible for them to process their assholiness.

She notes that women are most often the preferred target of assholes because body image is so easily fraught with self-doubt for women of every age. Leaving carnage in their wake goes unnoticed

## Raise the Hammer – April 22, 2019 (2 of 3)

by men like Harvey Weinstein, who are literally unable to see the damage their behaviour causes. Gelerman says that's what is needed to eradicate asshole behaviour.



*Assholes: A Theory*

Walker speaks with a myriad of experts on the topic, including Robert Sutton professor of management science at the Stanford University School of Engineering and author of *The No Asshole Rule*. Sutton quantifies the damage done by assholes in terms of taking away individual dignity.

Interspersed throughout the documentary are brief interviews with a variety of young men who proudly self-identify as assholes. Many consciously chose this path because they see it as beneficial to their acquisition of power, wealth and naïve young girls.

Geoffrey Nunberg, a University of California Professor, says assholes ought to know better but repress this information. That differentiates them from pricks, who are perfectly aware of what they are doing, but proceed anyway.

Canada's assholes include hockey bully Brad Marchand and former Toronto Mayor and crack user while in a drunken stupor, Rob Ford, as well as members of The Royal Canadian Mounted Police force. Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuck was bullied and sexualized while employed as an RCMP Constable. When she complained about her treatment, she became the target of vicious abuse that continues today.

After asking for justice for over two decades, Benson-Podolchuck was vindicated after the re-issue of her 2010 book *Women Not Wanted*. That's when over 3,000 women connected with the RCMP launched a \$1.1 billion class action suit against the force and resulted in the federal government appointing the first female head to the force.

Aimee Morrison, Waterloo Professor of Literature and Digital Humanities, believes assholes are akin to toddlers and teenagers who never learn to repress their impulses. Instead, they grow into self-centred, self-serving adults.

Johnathan Gilmore, a US Marine Corps Veteran and Cornell Undergraduate, uses lived experience to explain the asshole phenomenon. He joined a fraternity in the hopes of recreating the brotherhood he



## Raise the Hammer – April 22, 2019 (3 of 3)

experienced in the army. Instead he found himself surrounded by the assholes that are part and parcel of both institutions.

According to Gilmore, women are objectified, younger initiates are constantly put down and derided, rape is accepted, and countless bystanders reinforce these bad behaviours with silence.

Sherry Colb, a Cornell University Law Professor, agrees that fraternities are home to bad behaviours that are encouraged, spread and are intensified. The only solution is their demolition. Unfortunately, generations of rich white dudes are funding and running them.

The law department at Cornell has been able to accomplish a no-asshole rule within the department and this way of thinking is slowly infiltrating other American institutions, like the asshole-filled universe of the financial sector.

The documentary also turns the lens on world leaders who frame decisions around their own needs in order to protect themselves and their supporters while undermining the best interests of the country as a whole. Case in point: Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who purposely fed the perverse desires of selfish Italians and engaged in behaviour that enriched himself. He convinced the Italian people that asshole behaviour is completely acceptable and necessary to achieve success.

Social media has amplified the voices of assholes and the effects of their narcissistic behaviours. Silicon Valley is full of entitled, wealthy, young white men like Mark Zuckerberg. Former Twitter, Apple and Google engineer lead Leslie Miley sees this as a recipe for exponential growth of 'brogramming' assholes creating the next great thing which is only good for their own bottom line and undermines democracy by misleading the general population into voting based on emotion rather than fact.

The death of the macho man is something to celebrate, but it has created a void that James sees as prime space for assholes to lay claim to. And that should make the rest of us very afraid.

Filmmaker John Walker and author Aaron James will be in attendance at Hot Docs screening of *Assholes: A Theory* at TIFF Bell Light Box on April 30 and May 1. On May 4, this NFB co-production will be screened at the Isabel Bader Theatre in Toronto. Advance tickets for all three screenings are sold out but rush tickets will be available an hour before each performance.

[http://www.raisethehammer.org/article/3629/documenting\\_a\\_theory\\_of\\_assholes](http://www.raisethehammer.org/article/3629/documenting_a_theory_of_assholes)

## **Devil's Advocate or Human Rights Champion?**

April 22, 2019, Sheldon Kirshner

Lea Tsemel, an Israeli criminal lawyer, is a polarizing figure in Israel. Critics vilify her as a devil's advocate. Admirers describe her as a champion of human rights.

Rachel Leah Jones, the director of *Advocate*, a documentary scheduled to be screened at the Canadian International Documentary Festival (Hot Docs) in Toronto on April 28, April 29 and May 5, regards Tsemel in a positive light.

An anti-Zionist opposed to Israel's occupation of the West Bank, she's the lawyer of choice for Palestinians accused of terrorism. She has also been involved in Palestinian land confiscation and Palestinian house demolition cases.

Jones' impassioned film oscillates between Tsemel's record as a defender of Palestinians and her unconventional political beliefs.

Born in Haifa in 1945, she's the daughter of a Polish Jew who settled in Palestine in 1933. Many of her mother's relatives in Poland were murdered during the Holocaust. Strangely, no mention is made of Tsemel's father. Tsemel, a soldier in the Israeli army during the 1967 Six Day War, believed it was a war for peace. She altered her position as Israel entrenched itself in the occupied territories. Today, she is of the opinion that Israel's policy toward the Palestinians in the West Bank is one of repression and dispossession.

Tsemel joined Matzpen, a far-left political party, and never looked back. In the meantime, she studied law at the Hebrew University and interned for Felicia Langer, one of the most prominent human rights lawyers in Israel. Oddly, Jones makes no reference to Langer, who died last year.

Tsemel's husband, Michael Warschawski, is a political activist who shares her views. They have two grown children who, in the film, voice admiration for Tsemel. During the late 1980s, Warschawski — the head of the Alternative Information Center, an Arab-Jewish non-governmental organization based in Jerusalem — was arrested on charges of distributing literature of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a group banned in Israel. Acquitted of all charges but one, he spent almost a year in prison before being released.

Jones presents Tsemel as a hard-working, pragmatic, feisty person who has dedicated her career to protecting the rights of Palestinians and defending Palestinian political prisoners.

## **The Times of Israel – April 22, 2019 (2 of 2)**

In the first few moments of the film, she tries to convince a convicted Palestinian terrorist that he should come to terms with a 28-year jail sentence because his fate could have been much worse. Next, she accepts a case to defend a 13-year-old Palestinian boy who stabbed two Jewish youths in Jerusalem. He's the youngest client she has ever defended.

Flashbacks throughout the film help a viewer better understand Tsemel. Example: In 1972, she defended Udi Adiv, a left-wing Jewish kibbutznik and peace activist charged with spying for Syria. He was sentenced to 17 years in prison. From that point forward, she says, she decided to defend political prisoners.

Tsemel freely admits she can be of only so much assistance to her Palestinian clients. Sentence reductions are about the best she can offer them in the Israeli justice system.

In 1999, however, Tsemel won a big victory when she persuaded the Supreme Court to ban the use of physical pressure against Palestinian prisoners. Much to her regret, the Shin Bet, the domestic security agency, has not abided by the verdict. So much for the rule of law in Israel.

As she says, hope keeps her going. She is certainly more optimistic than Langer, who left Israel and settled in Germany after concluding that Palestinians cannot attain justice in the Jewish state.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The Edge of Democracy

Andrew Parker April 22, 2019 10:31 am



### The Edge of Democracy 8 out of 10

Densely packed with the intricate details surrounding Brazil's current political nightmare (and, by natural extension and comparison, similar governmental scandals playing out around the world), *The Edge of Democracy* is a lot to take in during a single sitting, but also one of the most vital and cautionary documentaries of the year.

Director Petra Costa (*Elena*) embedded herself alongside former and once beloved Brazilian President Lula da Silva and his handpicked 2010 successor Dilma Rousseff, the country's first female leader. The country's democracy was still in its infancy when da Silva, a former labour activist and freedom fighter, was elected in 2002, and the country was still finding its footing after the dissolution of its military led dictatorship in 1985. Under da Silva and Rousseff, economic prosperity was at an all time high and unemployment reached record lows. Brazil became the eighth largest economy in the world, and da Silva's approval rating once reached an unheard of 80%. But the compromises and alliances that da Silva and Rousseff had to make with their conservative counterparts to ensure their elections led to a souring in 2013, when a right wing investigation – dubbed Operation Car Wash – linked da Silva and Rousseff (via accounting errors, the importance of which were greatly exaggerated) to charges of using preferred contractors in the construction and maintenance of the country's newfound and highly profitable oil wells. Things spiralled out of control in a hurry from there, with the emboldened Brazilian right seizing control of the country's highest office, shaming Rousseff in the public eye and attempting to arrest da Silva.

Those unfamiliar with Brazil's unique and faulty political structure (one where supposedly impartial judges are allowed to act like detectives and prosecutors) might find the early going of *The Edge of Democracy* more than a little bit overwhelming. But once Costa skillfully guides viewers through the intricacies and necessary details, *The Edge of Democracy* becomes fascinating and frightful. While Brazil might have a different set of democratic rules, the scandal and media spin employed to push Rousseff and da Silva out of power plays out similarly in countries around the world today. It's hard to watch the film in Canada today and not think about links to the current SNC-Lavalin affair. Costa's work here is one of the finest and most empathetic examples of a filmmaker illustrating how a political smokeshow can be created by powerful people and turn the most trivial of transgressions into fervent panics simply by shouting as loudly as possible. *The Edge of Democracy* might be one of the most frightening and depressing documentaries of the year.

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038815/hot-docs-2019-review-the-edge-of-democracy/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Midnight Family

Andrew Parker April 22, 2019 10:26 am



### Midnight Family

8.5 out of 10

Thrilling throughout, occasionally heartbreaking, and sometimes even darkly comedic, *Midnight Family*, director Luke Lorentzen's verite look at Mexico's broken healthcare system, is a modern day parable about the dangers of increased privatization and the corruption that takes root where governmental oversight used to be.

In Mexico, a country of over nine million people, there are only 45 government owned and operated ambulances. The slack is picked up by loosely and bizarrely regulated private ambulance companies who literally race each other on the roads and risk their own lives for work. For the Ochoa family of Mexico City, owning and operating an ambulance is their only source of income. Most of their patients are in need of urgent care and are unable to wait hours for a government ambulance to arrive. Many of them can't pay the fees for their hospital transport, and the Ochoas often have to wait outside the hospital for patients to be released if they want to collect. On top of that, some police are cracking down on these private contractors and demanding kickbacks from ambulance operators.

*Midnight Family* embeds itself with a strong family unit who's barely scraping by below the poverty line, and while viewers might be torn on the overall altruism of the Ochoas, there's a definite understanding being fostered by Lorentzen that things are tough all over in Mexico. The Ochoas, some of whom are far too young to be tasked with saving lives on a regular basis, always try to do what's best for the patient, but at the end of their overnight shifts, helping their fellow citizens in need doesn't put food on the table or keep a roof over their heads. They'll provide care and comfort, but they'll also gently demand payment or take patients to less busy and more expensive private hospitals in hopes of getting referral fees.

The push and pull between charity and profit as depicted in *Midnight Family* is thoroughly captivating, and the situations depicted are sometimes harrowing, but overall Lorentzen's film works best as an observant, cautionary tale looking at the pitfalls of privatization and the needy people it could leave out in the cold.

## Hot Docs 2019: The riveting, painful Because We Are Girls shines a #MeToo spotlight on Canada's South Asian community

JAGDEESH MANN  
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL  
PUBLISHED APRIL 22, 2019



Because We Are Girls follows Salakshana, Kira and Jeeti Pooni as they come to terms with a devastating secret twenty-five years in the making: they were sexually abused by the same older relative throughout their childhood years.

### NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

On a bitterly cold winter morning in Williams Lake, B.C., three sisters – Salakshana, Jeeti and Kira Pooni – arrive at the courthouse. The camera pans to reveal them staring up at the imposing four-storey government building, possibly the tallest structure in this sleepy northern B.C. sawmill town. The women steady themselves. After years of waiting, the next steps they take will be down the corridors of Canada's justice system, where the three will finally get their long-awaited day in court.

The new documentary Because We Are Girls shares the story of the Pooni sisters, three second-generation women from a close-knit Punjabi Sikh immigrant family. As adolescents, the siblings were repeatedly sexually assaulted over years by an older male family member. For five of those years, that cousin lived in their Williams Lake home, where the children referred to him as “bhaaji,” or “older brother,” a term of respect and endearment. For the three women, their teenage years were an ordeal; adulthood since has been a series of trials.

Nearly three decades since that time, the sisters are still seeking justice against their abuser and to repair the parts of their lives that remain fractured. And so from the opening scenes of Baljit Sangra's new film, viewers accompany the women on this uncertain journey as they negotiate unfamiliar grounds, from hostile courtrooms to difficult conversations with their children about the enduring trauma from abuse.





**Sisters Salakshana, Jeeti and Kira grew up in Williams Lake, a small resource based town in British Columbia, where their parents immigrated from India.**

#### NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

In the 1970s and 80s, when the sisters were growing up, the first large wave of Punjabi Sikh immigrants were moving into small blue-collar towns like Williams Lake. While their parents' generation was optimistic about economic prosperity, they were equally anxious over losing face among family and community networks, particularly by their children deviating from expected cultural norms. This often led to heavy-handed treatment of daughters – as the title of the film suggests. Dating in that second generation was forbidden, marriages often still arranged, and any hint of scandal concealed. When the youngest of the three, Kira, tried to come out to her mother as far back as 1991, she was rebuffed because, as she explains, “it would have such a big toll on [my] sisters' future [prospects]” – or, as she paraphrased her mother, “I have other daughters to marry.”

As girls, the sisters were silenced. As women they have sought to be heard, pushing back against resistance from family, the authorities and cultural conditioning in coming forward to expose their abuser. Each small victory has bolstered hope and reinforced their confidence. In the visceral climax to the film, the sisters confront their mother and father about their perceived sense of “shame” and how they feel suffocated by its heaviness whenever they are in a room with their parents. Where the Pooni sisters couldn't get all the support they needed from their family, they leaned on each other, going it alone, for example, when initiating the legal process and filing a police report in 2007. But now having finally reached trial, they may find what awaits isn't catharsis but just more trauma.

But now having finally reached trial, they may find what awaits isn't catharsis but just more trauma.



*The Vancouver-based Sangra was the creative force behind the new doc. For her, the story of the Pooni sisters is a pivotal #MeToo moment for Canada's South Asian community.*

NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

The Vancouver-based Sangra was the creative force behind the new doc. For her, the story of the Pooni sisters is a pivotal #MeToo moment for Canada's South Asian community. "This was a very empowering journey for me. Jeeti is a friend and, coming from the same cultural background, I could relate to her story," says Sangra, who has also produced documentaries on South Asian gangs in Vancouver as well as culturally sensitive care homes catering to South Asian seniors. "This story began before the #MeToo movement began. We were already in the trenches – they were being silenced by their families, they were being silenced by the justice system – and then suddenly in the background the #MeToo movement picked up. These women have gone from being silence-breakers to change-makers."

It is well documented how the court process can make survivors feel revictimized, like they are being made to stand trial. And then there are the long odds. Even when sexual assault survivors come forward and submit to repeated probing into their private lives, and sexual history, the likelihood the case will end in retribution is slim.

"My entire sexual history was explored. Even though the crimes occurred from 1980 to 1985, but my entire history was probed beyond that," says Jeeti Pooni in an interview. "You have no privacy. It's like you are not believed. It felt like I didn't matter. I felt like I had no rights. For 12 years I had to put my life on hold to get justice."

In Canada, only in one in 10 sexual-assault cases reported by police end in criminal conviction. For historic abuse cases – such as the Pooni sisters – where the assault(s) occurred in childhood but were reported much later in adulthood, the rates are even lower.



As it would turn out, the accused – who isn't named in the documentary – would be convicted of four of six counts of sexual assault on April 6, 2018 – 11 years after the crime was reported to police.

NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

"Only 1 per cent of women make it to where we have made it," Jeeti Pooni, the middle of the three sisters, remarks shortly after the film begins. "Now we go into verdict and whatever happens, happens."

As it would turn out, the accused – who isn't named in the documentary – would be convicted of four of six counts of sexual assault on April 6, 2018 – 11 years after the crime was reported to police. But in a move that reveals how difficult it is to win historic abuse cases, this decision is now pending

appeal because the accused is claiming his “right to be tried in a timely manner was breached.” (In an e-mail, the National Film Board had this to say on the decision: “While these legal proceedings are still underway, the outcome would not change anything in the film. The legal proceedings that are still ongoing pertain to the sentencing of the convicted abuser – and not the conviction itself. He was found guilty on four of six charges of sexual assault by the Supreme Court of B.C. in 2018. The film doesn’t discuss or highlight the sentencing, it doesn’t reveal his identity, it focuses solely on the Pooni sisters’ experience and their fight for justice.”)

If the courts stay the proceedings, it will be a blow for the sisters in their quest for justice. But by documenting their journey, they will have already inspired countless other silenced survivors of sexual abuse from the South Asian community.



*Because We Are Girls provides a rare glimpse into family and social dynamics in Canada’s Punjabi Sikh community and how that community, now three and four generations into settlement in this country, is still struggling to reconcile shifting #MeToo values with old-world patriarchal interpretations of family honour and shame.*

#### NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

Because We Are Girls provides a rare glimpse into family and social dynamics in Canada’s Punjabi Sikh community and how that community, now three and four generations into settlement in this country, is still struggling to reconcile shifting #MeToo values with old-world patriarchal interpretations of family honour and shame. Families in this community continue to “save face” from a scandal by silencing female victims, while conveniently overlooking how this enables male abusers.

But a new generation of this community’s social workers and Sikh youth are beginning the conversations to integrate the #MeToo awakening into this Canadian community’s social and even religious practices. And in the years to come, this film may one day be seen as having been a critical part of that historic correction.

Because We Are Girls has its world premiere at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto on May 1 ([hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)); it screens at Vancouver’s DOXA Film Festival in Vancouver on May 3 and May 7

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-hot-docs-2019-the-riveting-painful-because-we-are-girls-shines-a/>

## THE NINE MOST JEWISH FILMS AT HOT DOCS 2019

By: Michael Fraiman

-

April 22, 2019



*A still from Ask Dr. Ruth (Mongrel Media photo)*

This year's Hot Docs Film Festival offers a good amount of Jewish content, especially from prominent and rising Canadian-Jewish filmmakers. While Israel appears to be depicted in a less than favourable light, the inclusion of several stories of Holocaust survivors, as well as broad representation of Jewish directors, is a promising celebration of Jewish diversity of life.

Here are this year's most Jewish films.



*A still from Marek Edelman... And There Was Love in the Ghetto*

### **Marek Edelman... and There Was Love in the Ghetto**

One of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Marek Edelman devoted his life to justice in his home country, Poland, where he spent much of his life locking horns with the postwar communist government and working as a renowned cardiologist. Before Edelman died in 2009, however, Polish director Jolanta Dylewska spent hours interviewing him. This film, drawing from that footage and archival findings, tells the story of a lesser-known side of the Holocaust: the importance of romance. After all, if the light went out in their lives, the survivors may not have made it out alive.



*A still from Ask Dr. Ruth (Mongrel Media photo)*

### **Ask Dr. Ruth**

## Canadian Jewish News – April 22, 2019 (2 of 4)

On the topic of romance and tragedy, *Ask Dr. Ruth* is a touching and personal documentary of the famous 90-year-old survivor and sex therapist. Director Ryan White probes into Dr. Ruth's personal life, which she keeps ironically quiet about – ironic given her outsized persona and frank sexual advice. White dives into how her struggles as a survivor affected and inspired her career path, splicing scenes from her 21st-century life with archival footage from her heyday in the late 1980s and early 1990s.



*A still from Advocate (GAT PR photo)*

### **Advocate**

One of the marquee films at this year's festival is *Advocate*, a portrait of Israeli human-rights lawyer Lea Tsemel, who has spent decades as a defence attorney for Palestinians accused of terrorism. Tsemel is an unabashed activist for the Palestinian cause, and the film examines the ways in which her domestically unpopular stance, since the 1970s, has irreparably damaged her relationships with family and friends. The film's specific and controversial subject matter is matched in tone by Tsemel's own personality: quiet, stubborn and passionate. Even if viewers disagree with her politics, the film looks like a must-see.



*A still from Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies (D Films photo)*

### **Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies**

This is a new film by Larry Weinstein, the Canadian-Jewish filmmaker who recently made *CJN* [headlines](#) for picking up a Canadian Screen Award for his film *Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas*. In his sprawling documentary about the history and evolution of propaganda, Weinstein draws a line from cave drawings to Renaissance art to Twitter feuds, connecting dots that enable the spread of misinformation to convince the minds of the masses. In a political era where emotions and blind partisanship frequently overrun logic, this film aims to clarify what should be defined as "fake news".



*A still from My Father's Son*



## My Father's Son

The lone non-Palestinian Israeli work in this year's roster, this short 30-minute film examines the bond between a shy son and his charismatic father, and looks at the ways in which that intimate relationship is holding the son back. There isn't much information available about this film, but its Canadian premiere should make the list for any intrigued Israeli cinephiles.



*A still from Gaza (GAT PR photo)*

## Gaza

In all the headlines and newscasts about rockets fired into Israel and air strikes causing casualties in Gaza, outsiders rarely get to see what daily life is like in the cordoned-off strip. Enter Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell, whose new film introduces audiences to the regular folks trapped in the middle of the Gaza conflict – the students, cabbies and fishermen whose lives are defined by a reality they cannot change. The film allegedly does not debate the politics of the region, instead taking a humanist view of the people trapped there.



*A still from Pipe Dreams (GAT PR photo)*

## Pipe Dreams

One of the lighter offerings by Canadian-Jewish filmmakers this year, Stacey Tenenbaum's *Pipe Dreams* follows the prestigious Canadian International Organ Competition, which garners contestants from across the world to Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica for a \$100,000 prize. Striking a kind of chord between *Spellbound* and Glenn Gould, the film promises to be an enjoyable but intense 78 minutes that details the skill and diligence required to master the world's largest instrument.





*A still from There Are No Fakes (C2C Communications photo)*

### **There Are No Fakes**

Canadian-Jewish director Jamie Kastner partners with Barenaked Ladies' keyboardist and art collector Kevin Hearn to understand a complex mystery about forgery in the world of Canadian indigenous art. Arguments over identity politics and artistic authenticity eventually lead the duo to the courtroom, where multiple art connoisseurs argue that their version of a famous Anishinaabe painter's legacy is the true one, pointing fingers at each other as owning fakes. The film asks several pertinent questions, largest among them: can any one person own an artistic legacy?



*A still from Marceline. A Woman. A Century.*

### **Marceline. A Woman. A Century**

This intimate, hour-long portrait of Marceline Loridan-Ivens, an Auschwitz survivor who became a French counterculture icon before dying last year at the age of 90, reflects on her life as a documentary filmmaker. She had fizzy, bright red hair until her final days, and her filmography spanned some of the most significant cultural moments of the mid-to- late 20th century, including the Algerian War of Independence, the Vietnam War and China's Cultural Revolution. (The latter of those served as the backdrop for her 763-minute-long documentary, *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, which remains one of the longest films ever made.) This quiet portrait of an artist resonates deeply among homages to our disappearing survivors.

# Hot Docs 2019: In Drag Kids, parents cheer as children slay gender norms

JAIME WOO

PUBLISHED APRIL 22, 2019



Nine-year-old Nemis Melancon – a.k.a. Queen Lactatia – practising his makeup skills.

COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

A drag queen sashaying to Lady Gaga's 2011 hit Born This Way is nothing new, but when the performers are barely older than the song itself, that changes the equation. Last year, at Fierté Montréal, four preteens – three boys and one girl – took to the stage to a cheering crowd.

The queens had travelled from British Columbia, Missouri and Spain for the group performance. The Montreal Pride celebration was their first time meeting other children who did drag. The significance of like-minded peers wasn't lost on their parents: "To not have to explain why he's wearing lipstick or nail polish," one mother explains. "To hang out with kids who totally get each other."

This is a scene from Drag Kids, the new Canadian documentary having its world premiere on April 28 at Hot Docs in Toronto. Directed by Megan Wennberg, the film follows the preparation behind this one-off performance, observing the children – Bracken, Jason, Nemis and Stephan – carving out niches in an art form usually performed by adults.

Children performing drag is a recent phenomenon catalyzed, in part, by the popularity of RuPaul's Drag Race, the television series that became available on Netflix in 2013. The reality competition brought the underground art form into the mainstream, decoupling it from its historic home of gay bars and onto all-ages platforms such as YouTube and Instagram.



## Globe and Mail – April 22, 2019 (2 of 3)

From left: Queen Lactatia, 9, Laddy GaGa, 9, Suzan Bee Anthony, 12, and Bracken Hanke, 12, perform at Fierté Montreal Pride 2018.

### COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

This has pushed the craft into new territory, such as Drag Queen Storytime, where drag performers read children's books for families, usually in public libraries. It has also created space for online performers such as 11-year-old Desmond Napoles (stage name: Desmond Is Amazing), who RuPaul has called "the future of America."

The documentary is about the children, but also the parents, who may not fully understand why their children want to perform drag but support them unrelentingly. Nemis's mother patiently colours his hair to a brilliant fuchsia. Stephan's parents curate comments on social media to protect him from cruelty on the internet. Jason's father teaches him to catwalk, a rebuttal to the homophobic and racist family life his father knew from the Bible Belt. At the performances, the parents are on their feet dancing, capturing the moment on their phones.

These acts of love create space for the children to express themselves, to allow another part of themselves to be made visible. The parents are pushing back against that moment in every young life when we realize we've broken some unspoken rule – a boundary that in some way threatens to invalidate our existence. With some gesture or turn of phrase, we betray ourselves to become an outlaw.

I felt such a moment around eight or nine years old. On a weekend afternoon, I was stomping across my bed like it was a stage. I pinched a fleece blanket, baby blue, around my neck, and imagined winning the Miss Hong Kong Pageant. I pictured that feeling of triumph, of having an audience's attention for every movement – something absent from my day-to-day life as a lonely, bookish child.



Nemis Melancon – a.k.a. Quuen Lactatia – performs on stage at Fierté Montreal Pride 2018.

### COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

Capes represented agency and power, even when they were just blankets. Sometimes, I was my favourite superhero, leaping high into the air or going invisible; that day, I was a pageant winner, twirling and waving to a fawning audience. My mother walked into the room, and I asked her to secure the cape to free my hands. I remember the conflicted look on her face, but she reluctantly agreed. As she pinned the blanket, she told me: "But just this once."

It became clear I was breaking unspoken rules, and had made her my accomplice. It was disconcerting and confusing, because my actions felt natural – a part of me – and yet I felt the risk of losing something. What does it mean that the actions that felt so inherent to me were wrong?

The concern of my mother echoed something she recently told me: The most painful part of my coming out later as an adult was that she knew my life would be made much more difficult by the world. In the privacy of my room, she had helped transform blanket into cape, but she wouldn't always be able to protect me – a life made no easier by the colour of my skin.

My coming out was a shock for my mother in part because she had nurtured her own ideas about who I might become, and now she required a recalibration. Drag Kids is a reminder that for all the progress society has made, the pressure to conform is still high, and that, with every move forward, there is almost always a pushback. Boys who sew or girls who play football are guided away from their hobbies (regardless of which gender they are attracted to), demanded to hide that part of their interest or risk being ostracized for being weird.



Twelve-year-old Bracken Hanke can spend more than two hours achieving her signature look.

COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

Those expectations can be set even before birth: Take the gaudy practice of gender-reveal parties, where soon-to-be parents invite friends and family to learn about the sex of the unborn children through a colour-coded gimmick: Pink or blue balloons sprout from boxes, or powder plumes from motorcycle exhausts, or coloured sponge inside of a frosted cake. These noisy and expensive parties have become customary within the past decade, and, as the discourse around gender takes steps forward, these charades act as a defence mechanism for the anxiety around shifting cultural norms.

Parents craft futures for their children they can only hope for, but ultimately can't control. As I watched the confetti fall from the "gender reveals," it reminded me of the glitter that rains during drag performances and at Pride parades, which plays a symbolic role: that even in difficult times, one can find whimsy, and joy, and fabulousness. I wondered if these parents would be as excited when their children finally get a chance to take the reins to reveal who they really are.

## Women in Hollywood – April 23, 2019 (1 of 2)

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Tasha Hubbard – “nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up”

BY: Gabriela Rico\_April 23, 2019

Dr. Tasha Hubbard is a writer, filmmaker, and associate professor at the University of Alberta. Her first solo writing/directing project, “Two Worlds Colliding,” premiered at imagineNATIVE in 2004 and won the Canada Award at the Gemini Awards in 2005. Her second feature, “Birth of a Family,” premiered at Hot Docs 2017 and landed in the top ten audience favorites list. It also won the Audience Favorite Award for Feature Documentary at the Edmonton International Film Festival and the Moon Jury Prize at imagineNATIVE.

“nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 25.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

TH: This documentary is my attempt, as an Indigenous mother, to tell the story of what happened to Colten Boushie, a young Indigenous man shot and killed by a non-Indigenous farmer in the Canadian prairies in the summer of 2016. Following the murder, social media lit up with people saying things like the farmer’s only mistake was leaving witnesses. The farmer was later acquitted in a trial that was heard by a white-presenting jury, which sent shockwaves throughout the country.

The film shows Colten’s family attempting to get justice in a system that is set up to work against them. It follows them as they arrive at the seat of Canada’s power and push the doors open in order to be heard. It also weaves in the history of our territory and is told through my own personal lens as an Indigenous person adopted into a farm family and who is raising an Indigenous son in difficult times.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

TH: I was gutted by Colten’s death. The randomness of his shooting, in the broad light of day, struck fear into me as a mother. I kept thinking of his mother and family and what they were going through. I felt like this story needed to be told from an Indigenous viewpoint.

My National Film Board co-producer Bonnie Thompson, who produced my previous films, helped me realize I could tell the story and do it justice.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

TH: I want them to think of the young people in their lives, how they feel about them, and what it would be like to have something like this happen to them. That Indigenous people in North America don’t have the luxury of believing in the justice system because it has shown them from the beginning that it isn’t meant for them.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

TH: I had never followed a criminal trial before, so I had to learn how our legal system actually worked. Then I had to find a way to boil down the trial to its essence, including how Colten’s family experienced it, and then find a way to communicate that in a short period of time.

I found it to be incredibly complicated, and I’m thankful for [National Film Board producer] Jon Montes, who really plodded through all the minute details to assist me.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

## Women in Hollywood – April 23, 2019 (2 of 2)

TH: The film is a co-production between the National Film Board and Downstream Documentary, a company I founded with my co-producer and DP George Hupka. We financed our part of the budget through provincial (Creative Sask) and national funding available to Canadian filmmakers (Canadian Media Fund, Telefilm).

We also had two broadcasters attached: the Canadian Broadcasting Company and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

We also received support from the Hot Docs International Film Festival.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

TH: When I was in my mid 20s, I met the late Cree filmmaker Gil Cardinal. I knew I wanted to do something in the arts but hadn't found where I fit. He helped me figure that out.

I think my grandpa also inspired me, because he was the one who taught me how to observe the world around me.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

TH: The best advice I was given was to really listen to creative feedback and then decide what resonates and what doesn't. And also that it is OK to not listen to advice as long as you have considered it in full.

Maybe I've been lucky, but I think all the advice I have been given has been helpful in some way.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

TH: To find the people to work with who really believe in your vision and talent. Sometimes I worked with people who seemed best positioned industry-wise, but in the end they didn't support the way I wanted to tell the story.

I have also learned to not be afraid to speak out against unfair practices in the film industry, and I try to think of the people coming behind me and what I want for them. I hope to see that happen more and more, because change only happens when it is pushed through.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

TH: I really love "Winter's Bone" by Debra Granik. I wrote a screenplay after watching it, because I was so inspired by the storytelling that was so grounded in a particular place and allowed the land to be a character. That's how I see the world and it was inspiring to see it realized in a film.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

TH: I think the industry is starting to be ready to have difficult conversations about how women are treated in the industry, and not just how women are treated, but also people of color and Indigenous filmmakers. The increased use of inclusion riders and other initiatives are creating change.

I think the days of a uniform perspective or only one kind of voice represented in the film industry are done. I'm so happy about that, as we all should be, both as filmmakers and as audience members.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-tasha-hubbard-nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up/>



## Women in Hollywood – April 23, 2019 (1 of 3)

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Maya Newell – “In My Blood It Runs”

BY: Sophia Stewart\_April 23, 2019

Maya Newell is an award-winning Australian filmmaker with a focus on social impact documentary. Her credits include short docs “Two” and “Growing Up Gayby,” as well as the feature documentary “Gayby Baby,” which premiered at HotDocs and screened at BFI London Film Festival and Doc NYC.

“In My Blood It Runs” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 26.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

MN: Set in the remote Northern Territory of Australia, “In My Blood It Runs” is a story told through the eyes of 10-year-old Arrernte/Garrwa Aboriginal boy and child-healer Djuwan. We walk with him as he traverses a Western education system not built for him, a child protection system threatening to remove him from his family, and police and juvenile justice system that entraps and tortures youths.

The film focuses on a intelligent boy who is completely missed by the white world around him and tells a hidden story of a family fighting to ground their child in language, culture, and identity. This film offers a pedestal for Djuwan to share his innate truths, humor, and heartbreaking wisdom with the world.

In the end, when Djuwan cannot run or fight alone, he realizes that not only has he inherited the trauma and dispassion of his people, but also the strength, resilience, and resistance of many generations of his people, which holds the key to his future.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

MN: Djuwan is a witty, charismatic, ratbag kid and within him lies many compelling contradictions—he is childlike, yet wise; vulnerable, yet stronger and more grounded than most adults; he is clever, but not by Western learning standards. I believe his unique perspective and heart-nourishing worldview have so much to teach us all as humans about how we should treat one another.

I met Djuwan through relationships that began around a decade ago, when I had the privilege to be invited by Elders and families at Akeyulerre Healing Center in Alice Springs to make films with them about the empowering work families are doing to educate their children in language, culture, and identity.

I sat with Elders as they recorded songlines for their grandchildren for fear they may be lost, witnessed kids visit their country for the first time, and heard children speaking confidently and fluently in their first, second, or third languages.

But I was shocked to learn that our mainstream education system perceives these same children as failures at school. And it's no surprise—in Australia, as in many Western countries, First Nations children are primarily taught only in English, and their successes are measured by Western values.

Together with the Elders and families who appear onscreen, we collaborated to make a film to combat those ingrained negative stereotypes that smother First Nations people. This is a film that reveals the fight, the culture, the language, and the love within First Nations families that is so often obscured from view.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

MN: The family onscreen have articulated that they want audiences to understand “that we love our children.” This is embarrassingly a radical idea in Australia and across the globe for First Nations parents.

## Women in Hollywood – April 23, 2019 (2 of 3)

Another key message was, “We should have agency over our own lives, and we want to be in control of our own solutions.” In this way, I hope audiences can admire the agency of this child to speak his truth. In the closing line of the film Djuwan says, “I just want to be me, and what I mean by me is an Aborigine.” He wants to reclaim the space inside that has been and still is being colonized and is rightfully his—in his land, in his body, and in his spirit.

### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

MN: Managing the ethics to tell this story in the right way by those represented was by far the hardest part of this filmmaking process.

At the time of filming, 100 percent of kids in juvenile detention in the Northern Territory were Aboriginal. In Australia, children as young as 10 years old, like Djuwan, can be incarcerated. In this way, the biggest challenge making this film was supporting the family through the fear that their child would end up in this detention system. There were many times that we felt we might not finish the film due to the possible horrendous outcome of the story.

We worked alongside family, Elders, and advisors to tell this story in a way they felt was empowering, offering creative control of representation to all those whose stories are portrayed. We worked hard to ensure that we were not perpetuating the history of exploitation of Aboriginal peoples, like so many films and representations before us, and on a duty of care plan for Djuwan and his family.

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

MN: We were very lucky to be selected for Good Pitch Australia, where we found philanthropic support for the film’s budget and outreach campaign. We actually fully funded an impact campaign prior to financing the film, which spoke volumes about our team’s commitment to make sure this film gives back to those who have the courage to share their story.

We were also funded by Screen Australia, Screen Territory, South Australian Film Corporation, and Sundance Institute Documentary Fund. We were also lucky enough to be selected for a Sundance Institute Music and Sound Lab at Skywalker Sound, which was incredibly fun—we are very proud of the soundscape of the film.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

MN: When I was 17, I met a man called Billy Marshall Stoneking. He was an eccentric, big-hearted scriptwriter who spoke with swift hand movements and a commanding voice. He allowed me to fall in love with stories, and I soon understood the immense power of films, especially documentary films, to connect audiences with the universality of the human experience.

I threw myself into making documentaries—tackling a Michael Jackson impersonator turned toy collector, courageous children in LGBTQI families, a sad clown fighting to become an Australian, an agoraphobic mother raising a child, and other stories.

Billy passed away recently, but left in me that gift—I realized that I, too, am one of the obsessed. I love that I have the privilege to learn deeply from people with lived experience of otherness in my work and act as a bridge of such voices to reach those sitting in cinema seats.

### **W&H: What’s the best and worst advice you’ve received?**

MN: Worst advice: “You can’t do it, it’s too hard”—that familiar “no” response that is ultimately very unhelpful and misleading.

Best advice: To always trust your gut, intuition, and integrity.

## Women in Hollywood – April 23, 2019 (3 of 3)

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

MN: Work with the people who make you feel strong. Find solidarity in the female and female-identified artists that are growing in power around you, and disregard those who cannot accept your inherent right to tell stories that you care about.

Also, it's not just what we make, but how we make it that counts. As documentary filmmakers, we need to be always questioning the ethics by which our stories are made.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

MN: I love Sophie Hyde's "52 Tuesdays," a story that challenges the traditional structure of storytelling and introduces a gentle yet strong sensibility missing from many renditions of femininity. Filmed over 52 Tuesdays in a year, it shows us new ways of [prioritizing] the needs of women on set and challenges the intensity of traditional production schedules. It's also a daring, bold, and beautifully shot work of art.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

MN: The foundations of power have been well shaken! The courage of women to speak their truth and finally be heard has had a tremendous ripple effect for the entertainment industry and in all industries around the world. The arrests, the sentences, and the public humiliation are only first chapter of this transition of power structures.

The second chapter is the cultural shift that moves quietly within the conversations that continue to spill out awkwardly from dinner parties, on intimate walks on the beach between friends, and in the whispers beyond the red carpet. I can't speak for others, but I have a new skip in my step.

## Women in Hollywood – April 23, 2019 (1 of 2)

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Marwa Zein – “Khartoum Offside”

BY: Gabriela Rico\_April 23, 2019

Marwa Zein is a Sudanese film director and producer. Her graduation project, “A game,” was an official selection of more than 30 international festivals worldwide and was translated into five languages. Her award-winning short film, “One week, Two days,” premiered at the 2016 Dubai International Film Festival and participated in over 23 film festivals. Her production company, ORE Productions, is based in Sudan.

“Khartoum Offside” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival on April 26.

#### W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.

MZ: How to survive oppression and a suppressive environment using one of the most effective weapons: humor! The film tells the story of the resistance of the women football players in Sudan, and in doing so reveals the challenging social, economic, and political situation.

#### W&H: What drew you to this story?

MZ: As I am diaspora Sudanese, I always felt the need to touch base with Sudan and reflect on it. One day in 2014, I got a call to make a five-minute film about women [soccer players] in Sudan. I was married at the time and based in Cairo, Egypt. I consulted my partner and he supported my decision to do the project.

I was supposed to be there for a week but stayed three months. It was the first time I went to the north of Sudan, and I came back with depression and so much sadness. I was unable to express how I felt. I was detained twice while filming and the horror of facing that and the fact that I came back broke to Cairo drained me. I felt that I was in a hole and had no idea how to come out; I was supposed to be a producer and director and still manage to find a way to bail myself out when detained to finish this project.

It was such a deep journey with many important milestones and people who had a strong impact on the process. We had to be flexible, and we expected the story to be revealed through people, life, destiny, and more. I remained patient for four years, going from Sudan to Egypt then to Sudan and France.

I remained homeless with a bag and hard disk roaming around trying to finish this film. Producing a film in these circumstances and being unable to find a channel or entity that [could help] facilitate [without having] their own agenda was a tremendously difficult journey. I bought my freedom so this film could come out as pure as possible, framed by my values and ethics, without intervention even with funding and co-production. This film is personal to me. Even though it's about women in soccer, it stands for me.

#### W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?

MZ: Well, it's a very personal thing, and I can't ask for something in particular because when you watch a movie you try to connect and find something common between you and the life that you are watching. So it's about the spectator and his or her own journey.

If I could wish for something, [it would be for the audience] to start looking at Africa differently and realize that artists there are facing multi-layered challenges and that our history is full of black holes we need to reconsider.

#### W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?

MZ: Being detained for just holding a camera in the streets. Being asked to make changes to the project to find financing—which I refused to do even though I was barely surviving. Being the director, the producer, and the camerawoman all in one in a very difficult situation while shooting in Khartoum and working on pitching financing while editing.

It's my first feature documentary, so learning about the narrative and how to tell a story the world would understand took me a lot of time, along with and shooting and re-shooting. I would like to thank my artistic collaborator and associate producer Jihan El Tahri and my co-producer Henrik Underbjerg for standing beside me during this tough journey.

To keep the passion for a project for four and a half years is a very demanding thing, and I survived it in a very hard way. I [hope to create my] projects within fairer conditions next time.

## Women in Hollywood – April 23, 2019 (2 of 2)

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

MZ: My film main financiers were: ORE Productions (my own production company), the IDFA, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, International Media Support, and Sørfond.

Additionally, I pitched the project at the Malmö Arab Film Festival and got a post-production grant in Sweden, Alsom pitched at the Qartaj Film Festival for post-production assistance in Tunis, and the Altercine Foundation supported the film with a small grant as well.

But I had to invest my own money, as grants have their own conditions. You may receive the grant in two parts, and you need to figure out how to make your film with only half of the budget while filming, and the other half after finishing the film. The grant system requires you to have some money in advance, and I had to use all my savings to complete the film.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

MZ: The urge to express my own feelings, ideas, and values. I stayed silent for years, and I was raised in a conservative environment where you couldn't really share your honest opinions.

I found a space in film—in image and sound—to say something, even if I am hiding behind the camera!

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

MZ: Worst advice: If you are not rich you can't be filmmaker. I come from a working-class family, and I was very angry and disappointed to hear that. If you don't have money when making films, it's true that it will be difficult, but it's not impossible. You will just have to suffer and make more sacrifices, and maybe you will never be rich.

The best advice: Take your time. Great things need time, passion, and persistence. Research, ask, learn, and fall in love with people and ideas. Don't forget your own life while creating life on the screen. All is connected. Enjoy the process as much as you can because in all cases it will take a lot of time!

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

MZ: There's no competition. Everyone is unique, and we can't tell the same story even we have the same idea. You are special, different, and inspiring, and you lead the way for the people coming after you.

Take care of your mental, physical, and financial situations. It's a very challenging and demanding business, so don't lose your soul in the process. Stay true to who you are, and you will reach the horizon.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

MZ: I can't just name the movies because I love the body of work of these great directors. Instead, allow me to share just their names because any of their works deserve to be watched: Atteyat El Abnoudy, Naomi Kawase, Samira Makhmalbaf, and Agnès Varda—the god mother of women directors.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

MZ: It was important for women to raise their voices and to reach out for solidarity, and in most cases it was a good change and a positive turning point. It is definitely important to share the truth and to speak up and encourage each other, but in a way while doing this, we fell into cliché and labeling people, and sometimes not being really true [to get the] spotlight, which is sad. I noticed a lot of propaganda: [the] media can destroy a noble idea.

The more we keep it deep and honest, the more it will reach all people—women and men—as we live on the same planet sharing the same lives.

## Hot Docs review: Ask Dr. Ruth

Ryan White's film about the German American sex educator is enjoyable and very vanilla

BY [MICHELLE DA SILVA](#) APRIL 23, 2019



**ASK DR. RUTH** (Ryan White, USA). 100 minutes. Rating: NNN

Ahead of Dr. Ruth's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, director **Ryan White** followed the German American sex educator around for months, capturing footage of her still-busy schedule and reflecting on her 40-year career for this biographic documentary.

Born Ruth Westheimer, the four-foot-seven outspoken doctor seems as happy and vivacious as ever, spending time in Brooklyn with her children and grandchildren in between stints on radio shows and daytime TV.

Her life is almost unimaginable considering her dark history as a young girl born to an Orthodox Jewish family in Frankfurt, Germany. Orphaned at the age of 10, Westheimer moved to Switzerland, Palestine and finally New York where she built the successful and at times controversial career she has today.

While White has created an intimate portrait, the doc leaves us asking the question, "Why now?" He doesn't connect his subject to current debates around sex education, women's health and sexual violence. Instead, Asking Dr. Ruth offers an enjoyable enough recap of once-taboo topics, but in today's age of sexual awareness and information that feels a little too vanilla.

*Apr 26, 6 pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 27, 10 am, TIFF 2*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-ask-dr-ruth/>



## Hot Docs review: Drag Kids

Four drag-obsessed children meet up in Montreal to perform for Pride, but don't expect a straightforward feel-good experience

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 23, 2019



**DRAG KIDS** (Megan Wennberg, Canada). 80 minutes. Rating: NNN

Children and drag queens have a lot in common so it's only natural the mainstreaming of drag is attracting younger kids. This doc introduces us to four very different youngsters from different cities who are drag queens, but don't know any others their own age. They meet in Montreal and prepare for a Pride performance, giving the doc a familiar narrative arc but the result isn't exactly a straightforward feel-good film.

Shooting vérité style, Megan Wennberg captures the disappointments that come with liking something as a kid that is primarily accessible to adults, but also the joy of misfits meeting members of their own tribe. The high-pressure performance and meet-up conceit instigated by the doc also amplifies insecurities and obnoxious behaviour, leading to a meltdown scene that verges on exploitative. Drag queens, like children, can be quite mean. Though *Drag Kids* is refreshingly open-minded about gender, it dodges opportunities to go deeper into the more complex and uglier emotions that complicate the acceptance narrative.

*Apr 28, 6:15 pm, TIFF 1; Apr 30, 1:15 pm TIFF 3; May 3, 3:45 pm, TIFF 1*

## Hot Docs review: Life Is A Belief

Heartbreakingly beautiful documentary profiles two hardship-stricken families in China

BY [MICHELLE DA SILVA](#) APRIL 23, 2019



**LIFE IS A BELIEF** (Han Xiao, China). 106 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Two stories about hardship-stricken families in China run parallel in Xiao's heartbreakingly beautiful documentary.

Huang and his girlfriend don't have their parents' approval, and their struggle to overcome familial and financial struggles is compounded when they learn their baby will be born with a congenital heart disease. Meanwhile, in a remote area of China, Ahet's family struggles to find a kidney donor for his dying nephew.

These stories unfold almost romantically thanks to slow pacing and scenic cinematography. Life Is A Belief puts into perspective how similar our basic wants of love, health and acceptance are despite differences in place and culture.

[Apr 28, 3 pm, TBLB 4; Apr 30, 5:30 pm, Innis Town Hall; May 4, 3 pm, Scotia bank 13](#)

## Hot Docs reviews: Midnight Family

High-intensity film about a family-run private ambulance in Mexico City is a cautionary tale about for-profit health care

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 23, 2019



**MIDNIGHT FAMILY** (Luke Lorentzen, Mexico/U.S.) 81 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Midnight Family is essentially a cautionary tale about for-profit health care run amok. The lack of emergency services in Mexico City has led to a network of pirate ambulances that race around to fill a much-needed void – but also to make money. Working as a one-man crew, director Luke Lorentzen inventively maximizes the thrilling and dramatic potential of this scenario, filming the Ochoa family with a claustrophobic intimacy as they listen to police scanners, try to beat competitors to a scene and the awkward ethical dilemmas that arise when it's time to ask victims for cash.

The film has the trappings of a moody genre piece: an atmosphere awash in strobes and neon, corrupt cops, intense car chase-type sequences and heartbreaking drama. Talk of money is constant, amplifying the already-high stakes inherent in the high-speed action. What emerges is an empathetic and nuanced portrait of a desperate situation with no winners.

*Apr 25, 6:15 pm, TIFF 2; Apr 26, 3:30 pm, Bader; May 5, 8:45 pm, Hart House*

## Hot Docs review: A Punk Daydream

Director Jimmy Hendrickx's winsome and melancholy doc explores punk and tattoo subcultures in Indonesia

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 23, 2019



**A PUNK DAYDREAM** (Jimmy Hendrickx, Belgium/Indonesia). 64 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Indonesia is home to thriving punk and tattoo scenes, but youth who throw themselves into subculture can find themselves marginalized. The fierce urge to avoid the country's military culture while battling the depression that comes with social alienation is the focus of this winsome and melancholy doc revolving around charismatic Jakarta street punk Eka.

Director Jimmy Hendrickx's roving camera follows Eka and his friends as they goof around, hustle for money and interact with family members, some more accepting than others. He also draws parallels between punk culture and traditional tattoos of the Indigenous Dayak people, who live under the spectre of industrial and government encroachment.

Associative editing and an emphasis on shifting landscapes give the punk imagination a compelling visual metaphor. Though Hendrickx cravenly cribs from landmark Indonesia-set doc *The Act Of Killing* with staged surreal touches and by having Eka act out traumatic situations on a stage, *A Punk Daydream* offers a unique view into the damaging effects of capitalism and nationalism.

[Apr 25, 8:15 pm, TIFF 4; Apr 26, noon, Scotiabank 8](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-a-punk-daydream/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The Rest

April 23, 2019 3:50 am



### The Rest

6.5 out of 10, [Andrew Parker](#)

More of a companion piece and continuation of the work he did on his previous documentary, *Human Flow*, artist and filmmaker Ai Weiwei's *The Rest* isn't any different from his last film, but that also might be what makes it so vital.

With *The Rest*, Weiwei turns his eye towards the continuing refugee crisis in the age of closed borders, increased bureaucracy, and rampant human rights abuses. Weiwei, himself no stranger to governmental suppression, sits down with refugees and shares their stories of immobility and frustration. Grieving families plead with local authorities to look for the bodies of children who drowned while making the dangerous crossing into Europe. Bodies of the dead wash upon the shores of the Mediterranean coast with stark regularity. Tent cities are erected at dead ends where migration to other countries becomes impossible due to protectionist border closings. Communities close their doors to migrants out of racist fears. As one young man from Syria puts the situation, he never would've left his homeland if he knew things were going to be this bad. *The Rest* feels like bits and pieces that were cast off from Weiwei's much longer *Human Flow*. It plays very much like a project that's been made up of deleted scenes and threads from something larger, and less like a stand alone film. It's not that *The Rest* doesn't have some astounding sequences – like capturing a dangerous clash between increasingly angry refugees and Macedonian border guards or taking the supposedly progressive and proactive German government to task for their handling of migrants – but we've seen Weiwei make this film once before.

But the fact that Weiwei already did this same thing better the first time around doesn't diminish the impact of *The Rest*. If this wasn't still an issue, Weiwei wouldn't have to make a film about it. Between *Human Flow* and *The Rest*, little to nothing has changed, and in many parts of the world, nationalism has made things far worse. Don't be surprised if Weiwei makes another film about the same subject matter in the not too distant future.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE WANDERING CHEF'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [David Voigt](#) - April 23, 2019



There are some voids that no meal can truly fill...

Jiho Im is a world renowned chef who is known from walking from one end of the Korean peninsula to the other foraging for distinctive and unique ingredients for their medicinal purposes. Despite his success he's truly an old soul looking for the maternal affection that many take for granted but was taken from him at a very young age. On one of his journeys down off of a mountain he meets an elder named Soon-Gyu Kim. She offers him soup and in return he prepares an elaborate meal for then which lays the foundation of a beautiful friendship.

At its core, *The Wandering Chef* uses our shared love of food at its core but director Hye-Ryeong Park gives us so much more as this is a film that allows for a reflection on our own humanity and the importance of occasionally slowing it down and appreciating the love of a shared experience that you'd traditionally have with family.

As a subject Jiho Im is quite fascinating, because he is a man who does seemingly have it all but as we all know too well, these are the kind of subjects who are looking harder than most for that thing they need to complete them. In concert with some stellar cinematography this film works because it doesn't try too hard and allows us as viewers to linger in the quiet moments and appreciate them.

*The Wandering Chef* shows the genuinely emotional power around the idea of family, but it reminds us all that the spirit of family isn't as far away as people like to think. It can be as close as the simple experience of sharing a meal with people who are important to you.



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'KILLING PATIENT ZERO.'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 23, 2019

4 stars



The initial titles of Laurie Lynd's *Killing Patient Zero* lay bare the film's thesis through the guise of a multi-layered definition for the word zero. Ultimately, it is the combination of the word zero as both a representation of worthlessness, and zero as an origin point, where Lynd's work luminally exists as an investigation of the AIDS crisis' shock waves within gay communities throughout the 1980s, and the subsequent vilification Gaëtan Dugas, a Quebecois flight attendant long referred to as the disease's "patient zero." Within the film's tight hundred-minute run time, Lynd's diverging story paths come together to interrogate the deep roots of the fear found within phobia, and the real lives irrevocably affected.

Much of *Killing Patient Zero* exists within the varying interviews conducted over the course of the film. I would estimate that a good ninety percent of the film is interview, with the remaining ten consisting of varying forms of archival footage. The interview emphasis necessitates a stellar list of experts, and thankfully Lynd delivers. While talking head documentaries occasionally feel somewhat didactic, one gets the sense from watching *Killing Patient Zero* that they could listen to many of these voices discuss sociopolitical history and personal experiences for hours on end. In particular, Toronto-based film director John Greyson (whose 1993 work *Zero Patience* touched on similar territory to Lynd's piece) and scholar B. Ruby Rich provide clear examples of just how crucial engaging interviews are to this style of documentary cinema.

There's a real evocative power to *Killing Patient Zero*. There is also a sense of restorative justice and narrative reclamation that makes this film feel very poignant. This film is informative and powerful, and aims to provide a clear reclamation of a false truth.

In the Seats – April 23, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE MIRACLE OF THE LITTLE PRINCE'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Heidy M](#) - April 23, 2019

3.5 stars



Next to the Bible, *The Little Prince* is the most translated book in the world. It has versions in over 300 different languages. That is a lot! Every year more translations are added to the mix. There is something about Antoine de Saint- Exupéry's book that really touches people.

Marjoleine Boonstra creates a poetic and philosophical film in *The Miracle of The Little Prince*. She focuses on four individuals and their cultures to explore their deep connection to the book. Lahbib Fouad from Morocco, has translated the book into Tamazight. We also meet Kerttu Vuolab, who found comfort in *The Little Prince* after the tragic death of her younger sister. While attending university, she decided to translate the book into Sami. Tashi Kyi and Noyontsang Lamokyab have translated the book into Tibetan. They both live as exiles in Paris, cut off from their family, their culture and language. And in El Salvador, Jorge Lemus and a few local women are working on a translation next year into Nahuat, also called Pipil, an indigenous language spoke by only about 300 people.

The film takes us across the globe as we listen to the translators' own stories, and their reading from *The Little Prince*. Each has found solace, friendship, and an understanding of what is essential to each of them. Their translations go beyond their love of the book. Their work is an extension of themselves and a means of survival. Survival of what is essential to many, their language and culture.

This visual essay of a film is moving, philosophical, and also an excellent primer into understanding why *The Little Prince* is loved by so many. The values in the story transcend boundaries. The film also takes a deeper look at how this book is helping to save these languages from extinction.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-the-miracle-of-the-little-prince/>

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'MÁXIMA'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Court Jarrell](#) - April 23, 2019

4 stars



Director Claudia Sparrow considers *Máxima* to be her life's work. The film tells the story of Máxima Acuña, a Peruvian subsistence farmer and her years-long legal battle with the Newmont Mining Corporation. Máxima lives with her husband Jaime in a grass-and-earth hut on a 27 hectare plot of land in the rural mountains of Peru, outside the city of Cajamarca. When the nearby Yanacocha gold mine (Newmont being a majority owner) chooses to expand its mining territory, they decide that Máxima's land belongs to them, despite her having the documentation proving that she owns the plot.

What follows is years of governmental corruption, harassment from police (said to be on the Newmont payroll), violent intimidation, trespassing, and the regular destruction of Máxima's crops in an effort to force her family's starvation.

Sparrow makes a point in her film not just to play up the injustice of the situation, but to also highlight Máxima's goals. It is not simply about retaining her own land. It is an ecological struggle. The new mine would destroy the gorgeous mountainous landscapes, but would also poison the local lake (which provides fresh water to locals, and is also diverted to Cajamarca) with cyanide.

This is a very powerful film. Not only does it hone in on the corruption that helps big businesses thrive, it focuses on the indelible human spirit. Máxima Acuña leads a simple life. She manages to grow enough food to keep her family alive, she cannot read, and she's a fish out of water in the big cities of Cajamarca, Lima, and Washington, D.C. Her character and unwavering tenacity is something to behold, something to be cherished. This is further demonstrated as we see the people of Peru, human rights activists, lawyers, et al, rallying to her cause.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'HONEYLAND'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Courtney Small](#) - April 23, 2019

3.5 stars



The last of the Macedonian wild beekeepers, Haditze Muratova lives a modest life in the Balkan mountainside. She spends her days taking care of her ailing mother, chatting with her neighbor Hussein Sam's family and tending to her various honeycombs. When the honey is just right, Haditze gathers a batch to sell at a Skopje market. Ensuring only to take half of what the bees produce, and leave them the rest, she has maintained a system that is beneficial both financially and environmentally.

Unfortunately, her disciplined approach is not adopted by those around her. Desperate to make some money to feed his large clan, Hussein attempts to cultivate his own bees in addition to raising cattle and growing produce. Aside from being frequently frustrated at his inability to get ahead, which he takes out on his family, his impatience causes him to agree to a honey production deal that he is clearly not set up to adequately fulfill. As the pressure mounts, Hussein embarks on practices that will have devastating ramifications for Haditze's livelihood as well.

A visually absorbing film, the events in *Honeyland* may take place in a rural landscape, but its themes are surprisingly universal. Directors Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska's observational approach offers fascinating commentary on gender, our use of nature and the male ego. Just as her bees are impacted by forces beyond their control, Haditze's life is frequently derailed by the men in her orbit. It is clear her life would be different had her deceased father accepted the offers the matchmaker presented him. Even as a grown woman her independent voice and way of life is ultimately stifled by the egos of inept men like Hussein. Equally captivating and heartbreaking *Honeyland* is a bittersweet film.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'RECORDER: THE MARION STOKES PROJECT'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 23, 2019

3.5 stars



In *Teenage*, director Matt Wolf looked at the youth movement between the 1900s and the 1940s. For his next documentary feature, *Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project*, he found a kindred spirit. Someone who took an interest, in her own misunderstood way, at a relatively short time in history.

A time, nonetheless, when seismic cultural changes have taken place. This movie's titular subject, Marion Stokes, started recording 3 television channels without interruption starting from the 1970s. Her initial goal was to see how the news shaped the way Western eyes perceived foreign and rival cultures.

But in doing so she also captured the news cycle and how it affects Western culture. *Recorder* is also a comprehensive look at Stokes life. That life is essential in understanding a project that baffled her family. She was also a young black communist who eventually softened her views. This is the most positive portrayal of such a person.

Culture is a nebulous thing, and *Recorder's* approach to tackle as much of it was possible is understandable. Wolf's focus on Stokes' main interest of news and politics is razor sharp and inherently interesting. It doesn't, however, handle the human interest sections with the same vigor.

*Recorder* speaks to as many people who were close to Stokes. This makes it better than any fictional version of her story. Wolf interviews both the people who worked under her and her family who have mixed feelings about her. These talking heads, however, seem to drown out Stokes' voice.

Otherwise, *Recorder* takes advantage of the archive footage that Stokes recorded. It captured her husband falling in love with her for the first time, which is a treasure to see. It also reshapes the important events in recent human history. And doing so in a way I can describe as masterful.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'DRAG KIDS'

Posted in [Festivals](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 23, 2019

3 stars



The world is a terrible place full of judgmental older generations, but God bless the girls who try. Megan Wennberg's *Drag Kids* show four of those girls. Despite their different skill sets and birth gender assignments, they are all pre-pubescent children who participate in the art of drag. The most famous of these children is Nemes, who goes by the name of Lactatia, a Quebecer who's already making waves in the drag scene which now has a worldwide reach. Wennberg shows all four practicing their moves before they go out into their regular gigs, one much bigger after the last.

This is straightforward film making and it doesn't necessarily do anything visual. But what makes this interesting is how it observes these children making decisions about how to appear in public. Lactatia tells her mother to tighten her shoes or how she's going to wear her hair to a gig. It also takes a look, although only slightly, at the local scenes where these queens perform, which is mostly in the global north. Lactatia is, as I previously mentioned a Quebecer, but the other girls bring it on stages in British Gibraltar, in Great Britain, and the Southeastern United States.

These stories could have stayed separate, letting each queen go through their separate journeys. I'm still mixed at the trajectory of the events here, where Lactatia invites the other queens to perform at Fierté in Montreal. And even that reunion has its problems. The idea of making them perform a number together instead of separate ones streamlines drag instead of making each queen define their own performance style on such a big stage. Regardless, they're still on stage as individuals with artistic minds. There's also something beautiful at watching adults cheer on children who are being their true selves.



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'TRIXIE MATTEL: MOVING PARTS'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagoan](#) - April 23, 2019

4 stars



Before watching director Nick Zeig-Owens' *Trixie Mattel: Moving Parts*, I was actually listening to a podcast about country music. To the uninitiated, Trixie Mattel is Brian Firkus' stage name. She calls herself a folk musician, and an impersonator of a country music star, Dolly Parton. Mattel's folk and country angle shows the cultural pivoting to those genres.

This documentary about Trixie Mattel is somewhat about that. But it's also about issues that have a connection to folk and country music and the people who perform them. It touches on the vices and the cycles of abuse that she encountered as a young LGBT person in Wisconsin. Those difficult experiences have an effect on her as her drag career progresses.

The movie then shows Mattel reliving her time on *RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars*, a contest show she eventually wins. She's also riding that successful wave with a TV show and European concert tour. As hectic enough as that is, she also must deal with the co-host of her TV show, Katya Zamolodchikova (Brian McCook), who has mental health issues.

That's a lot of threads for a 90 minute film, although of course there's something in me that's asking for more here, as a fan of both Mattel and Zamolodchikova. But the camera is present during Zamolodchikova's breakdown and its effects. The most important thing about this is that it handles her mental health issues in a brutally honest but respectful way.

This doc shows the perspective of juggling friendships and pursuing a volatile career path. It's also a great showcase of Mattel as a musician, making mistakes during trying times while also being perfect during trying times. What's also thrilling about this is watching a human being with regular emotional baggage successfully execute a concept and becoming a true artist.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'EASY LESSONS'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - April 23, 2019



There are seemingly two movies going on in Dorottya Zurbó's *Easy Lessons*. In one, which comprises the majority of what we see on screen, we follow 17-year old Kafia, a Somali teenager who fled to Hungary two years prior to escape a forced child marriage, as she enthusiastically goes about her daily routines and embraces the new life that Europe has provided for her. In the other, which we're privy to through the hushed voice-over of the subject, Kafia's underlying doubts and anxiety about shedding her entire childhood history nervously come through.

*Easy Lessons* may not be full of much conventional drama but the quiet tension between these two storytelling modes lends the film an urgency that can often be gripping. Residing in a state children's home in Budapest, it's remarkable how naturally Kafia has adapted to her new lifestyle, even holding down a part-time job and training to be a model (she's been told she could be like Iman) while still finding the time to prepare for her final exams and plan for life beyond the children's home.

There are still some struggles, however, with her teachers concerned about certain aspects of her classroom learning and the heavy decision to convert from Islam to Christianity, a choice that she initially seems to handle with ease but has deeper ramifications than anyone around her could fully understand.

Kafia is a dynamic screen presence, anchoring her slice-of-life portrait with a calm gravitas that masks a mind racing with a million thoughts. She gives the film a quiet power that sneaks up on you, culminating in a cathartic and revealing sequence that really makes your heart ache for any child left to fend for themselves in a strange new environment.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Hunting for Hedonia

Andrew Parker April 23, 2019 4:11 am



### Hunting for Hedonia

7 out of 10

Danish filmmaker Pernille Rose Grønkjær looks at the groundbreaking, misunderstood, and ethically sticky work of neurosurgeon Dr. Robert Heath and his experiments in the field of Deep Brain Stimulation in the curious, informed, and well balanced documentary *Hunting for Hedonia*.

One of the first scientists to identify mental illness as a brain disease through his studying of schizophrenia, Dr. Heath theorized in the 1950s that outdated modes of psychiatric “therapy” like ECT and lobotomies could be abandoned in favour of placing infrequent electrical charges directly into the brain of a patient. Initially, his research was written off by many fellow scientists (possibly out of jealousy) as reckless and having nothing more than a placebo effect, but today Deep Brain Stimulation has been approved by the FDA as treatment for those suffering from Parkinson’s disease, and has been proven effective in curbing behaviours caused by OCD and Tourette’s syndrome. While some of his research is still used today, Heath has largely been scrubbed from the history books; a victim of his own prejudices, a quest for credibility at all costs, and the anti-psychiatry hysteria of the 1970s.

A basic, but detailed and comprehensive overview of Heath’s career, *Hunting for Hedonia* looks at the positives and negatives of his controversial research and work. Outside of conversations with the doctor’s son, there’s not much personal detail to be found in *Hunting for Hedonia*, but Heath’s contributions to science are undoubtedly more interesting than his everyday life outside of medicine. Grønkjær (*Love Addict*, *Genetic Me*) takes views both fawning and damning into consideration, depicting Heath as a brilliant, but fatally flawed man. While his work has helped many live without discomfort, his technology and ideas could be dangerous if placed into the wrong hands. As Senator Ted Kennedy said while grilling Heath on the witness stand, Deep Brain Stimulation is only a slight step away from personality and mind control, which should rightfully give everyone pause.

As a documentary, *Hunting for Hedonia* is relatively straightforward, but that’s an appropriate approach given the subject matter and its greater ethical and medical implications.

**Friday, April 26, 2019 – 9:00 pm – Isabel Bader Theatre**

**Saturday, April 27, 2019 – 2:45 pm – Hart House Theatre**

**Saturday, May 4, 2019 – 8:30 pm – Scotiabank Theatre 3**

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: River Silence

Andrew Parker April 23, 2019 4:03 am



### River Silence

5 out of 10

*River Silence*, director Rogério Soares' look at displaced persons from the Amazon Basin, isn't the most graphic film at this year's festival, but it's possibly the most depressing and hopeless. An overlong effort that will assuredly make viewers hate humanity a little bit more by the time it's over (which is entirely the point), *River Silence* is tough to sit through, but its messages about corporations ruining the lives of already marginalized people is extremely valuable and topical.

The construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Dam along the Xingu River was one of Brazil's largest infrastructure projects in history, and there are plans for many more throughout the country in the coming years. Belo Monte, although great for city dwellers who're likely grateful for the extra power, displaced almost 40,000 people who lived and thrived along the banks of the Xingu. Their homes have been destroyed, with only rubble remaining in most cases, and many residents have been forced to live in the nearby city of Altamira, where overcrowding and an overall lack of resources and preparedness have made it a dangerous place to live.

*River Silence* finds Soares spending most of his time amongst displaced peoples that have been illegally occupying an unused and seemingly abandoned housing complex. There's a resignation and sense of defeat among many. They know that they'll eventually have to move on, but there are few places left to go and no job opportunities available to facilitate such a move. The government and contractors have been content to ignore these people and their plight, and compensation, aid, or restitution are nowhere in sight. Some make the best with what they have, while others keep the faith and hope that God will provide, but on the whole, the situation is hopeless.

90 minutes is a long time to spend around such unfiltered misery without additional historical and cultural context to enhance the subject at hand. *River Silence* is a film that's rigidly observational to a fault, but Soares makes a great choice to use build his documentary almost entirely around female voices. That adds a lot, the stories shared are indispensable, and the subject is appropriately infuriating, but there's definitely a larger cultural and political story that's missing here and only paid lip service. It's assuredly miserable and bleak, but there needs to be something else for *River Silence* to be a more effective call to action.

Friday, April 26, 2019 – 5:15 pm – TIFF Bell Lightbox 3

Sunday, April 28, 2019 – 12:00 pm – TIFF Bell Lightbox 3

Friday, May 3, 2019 – 9:30 pm – TIFF Bell Lightbox 4

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The Miracle of the Little Prince

[Andrew Parker](#) April 23, 2019 3:30 am



### The Miracle of the Little Prince

5.5 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

*The Miracle of The Little Prince* finds Dutch documentarian Marjoleine Boonstra travelling the world to profile dedicated translators who use Antoine de Saint-Exupéry timeless and overwhelmingly emotional novel to help keep dying, frequently less spoken and documented languages alive.

Next to religious texts, *The Little Prince* is the third most widely translated book in the world. Boonstra speaks with various Indigenous and marginalized peoples about what preserving the book in their language means to them and how they personally relate to the text. Depending on the location and people being profiled, translators can find meanings in *The Little Prince* that are sometimes very different in terms of political and philosophical intent, but the story's lessons about personal freedom, the cruelty of adults, and persevering amid the loneliness of human existence remains intact no matter where Boonstra goes, be it Central America, Tibet, North Africa, or rural Norway. *The Miracle of The Little Prince* illustrates how the text can keep both hope and tradition alive in troubling times for a specific culture.

*The Miracle of The Little Prince* is a fascinating idea for a documentary, but Boonstra's bone dry and largely academic tone will likely be unappealing to those who adore the fantasy and emotional weight of Saint-Exupéry's novel. It's objective and straightforward almost to a fault, and Boonstra doesn't help matters much by spending far more time in each location than necessary. There's definite value to *The Miracle of The Little Prince*, but it will mostly be to scholars, linguists, and anthropologists.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Buddy

Andrew Parker. April 23, 2019 3:37 am



### Buddy

8 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Prolific Dutch documentarian Heddy Honigmann's latest effort, the profoundly moving *Buddy*, examines the emotional and practical relationships fostered and built between service dogs and the owners that depend on them.

*Buddy* looks at service animal owners in the U.S. and Europe of various ages and experiences and examines what these dogs mean to their owners and the care being provided. A young boy in Utah with visual impairment and autism finds a best friend in his animal. Trevor, an Afghan war veteran with severe PTSD, wasn't able to leave his house for several years with his family until his dog, Mister, essentially saved his life. A paraplegic professional demonstrates the wide array of tasks her exceptionally intelligent helper is able to achieve. A psychologist who lost his eyesight 27 years ago and an elderly World War II bombing survivor both look back fondly on the animals who've come into their lives and sadly passed on.

All of the stories profiled in *Buddy* are deeply personal to those sharing them, and Honigmann balances sentimentality with practicality by asking her subjects relevant, empathetic questions that allow for the cathartic moments to come about organically rather than forcing people who've experienced great traumas into talking about delicate matters of the heart and mind. She knows precisely when to pry and when to back off and observe. It's a poignant reflection on mortality, both for the humans and the animals alike, and one would have to be made of stone to not tear up a little bit while watching *Buddy*.



## Review: Ask Dr. Ruth

Andrew Parker, April 23, 2019 3:43 am



### Ask Dr. Ruth

8 out of 10

[Andrew Parker](#)

Those looking for a feel-good movie about a famous personality living a remarkable life in the service of helping others don't need to look further than Ryan White's lovingly crafted crowd pleaser, *Ask Dr. Ruth*.

White (*The Keepers*, *The Case Against 8*) chronicles the inspirational life of Dr. Ruth Westheimer, the 4'7" dynamo who rose to prominence in the 1980s as America's foremost authority on sex and relationships. Controversial for her frank, blunt discussions of sexuality on radio and television, 90-year old Westheimer's tireless, energetic, and engaging work continues today. Last year, she published three books and made hundreds of public speaking appearances. It's enough to make even the youngest and most dedicated of advocates feel lazy in comparison.

Throughout *Ask Dr. Ruth*, White does his best to keep up with Westheimer's astounding energy level, while also offering a glimpse into the doctor's darker past as the orphaned daughter of German Jews who were killed during the Holocaust. With the help of detailed diaries kept by Westheimer in her younger years, *Ask Dr. Ruth* traces her evolution as a professional (who didn't get her doctorate until she was 42), a lover, and a family woman. White and his subject leave no stones unturned, and the result is a remarkably inspirational film that will make viewers believe that the seemingly impossible is achievable.

Although the core subject of White's film is far less prudish, *Ask Dr. Ruth* is this year's *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*.

***Ask Dr. Ruth* opens at Varsity Cinemas in Toronto and Fifth Avenue Cinemas in Vancouver on Friday, May 17, 2019. It opens in Montreal on May 24, and expands to additional Canadian cities throughout the summer.**

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: In My Blood It Runs

Andrew Parker. April 23, 2019 3:58 am



### In My Blood It Runs

9.5 out of 10

A wholly original and impactful look at growing up Indigenous in Australia today, Maya Newell's equally artful and emotional *In My Blood It Runs* is one of the standout world premieres at this year's festival.

*In My Blood It Runs* follows Djuwan Hoosan, a ten year old boy of Arrernte and Garrwa descent, living in Northern Australia with his mother, Megan. Fascinated and energized by his Aboriginal roots, the fun loving Djuwan might have a future as a spiritual healer among his people. In his community, Djuwan comes to life, but in his decidedly colonialist school, he's failing, with teachers openly mocking indigenous ways of life in the classroom. Djuwan grows sad and frustrated, with his failing grades taking a toll on his self esteem. He starts going out late at night, getting into trouble, and skipping school, leading himself down a dark path during a time when heavily armed police presence in indigenous communities is increasing and the percentage of Aboriginal youth in juvenile detention centres is a frightening 100%.

Crediting Djuwan and his family members as co-directors and collaborators, Newell (*Gayby Baby*) lets her indigenous subjects largely tell their own stories. Newell provides them with cameras to capture their everyday lives and ask each other questions that they might hesitate to answer if they were posed by outsiders. This approach gives *In My Blood It Runs* a pronounced and confident degree of authenticity. It's a great looking film, and Newell and her team have done an outstanding job of assembling such a culturally specific and politically relevant story, but it wouldn't be as impactful without the direct participation of Djuwan's family to guide it.

*In My Blood It Runs* isn't only a stark, but frequently loving and hopeful look at the plight of Indigenous peoples in Northern Australia, but also an examination of how negative educational reinforcement takes a toll on young people. It's impossible to not feel great sadness for Djuwan, which makes his turn towards a bleaker future all the more heart-wrenching to behold.

# No lessons learned from 2008 mortgage crisis

By [Jennifer Wells](#) Business Columnist  
Tues., April 23, 2019

Paris-based investigative journalist Jennifer Deschamps isn't the first person who springs to mind as the best-placed storyteller to turn the collapse of Lehman Brothers into a documentary.

This is wrong thinking, as *Inside Lehman Brothers*, which has its Canadian premiere Saturday evening at Hot Docs, attests.

On 15 September 2008, Lehman Brothers officially filed for bankruptcy protection, leaving debts of almost \$700bn and dragging the world economy down with it. Mixed with archival footage, this film compiles unheard testimony from former Lehman associates who had privileged access to the mechanisms that led to disaster. A methodical autopsy of a broken system, "Inside Lehman Brothers" also warns against another crash.

In October 2007, Deschamps was researching the subprime mortgage meltdown, zeroing in on the San Francisco suburb of Stockton, which would become famous as the epicentre, or the capital, or Ground Zero of the mortgage crisis. She would scan the legal notices in the morning papers for names of homeowners who were about to be foreclosed, seeking out the human narrative in what would become global financial chaos.

She recalls the morning she approached one of these named residences, asked the little girl playing outside if her mother was at home, then watched as the mother collapsed in disbelief upon hearing the news, delivered by a stranger, that her house was no longer hers.

That story was central to a short documentary Deschamps produced at the time. Lehman Brothers imploded in the fall of 2008. The world shook. And perhaps many of us came to think, a decade later, that the book on the securitization of mortgages — packaging low-rated mortgages into allegedly A-rated investments — was closed.

And yet, a mere two weeks ago, the U.S. Department of Justice announced a \$1.5-billion (U.S.) civil settlement with General Electric over loans issued in 2006 and 2007 by a GE mortgage subsidiary, loans that were sold to investment banks and then sold again to investors as mortgage-backed securities. "Investors, including federally insured financial institutions, suffered billions of dollars in losses," the Justice Department said in a release.



*A specialist with Lehman Brothers MarketMakers works her post on Sept. 15, 2008 — the day the firm slid into bankruptcy. (DAVID KARP / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO)*

In paying the \$1.5-billion fine, GE makes no admission of liability. In the timing of the announcement, we are reminded of internal quota systems in alternative mortgage lending, with lending officers pushed to meet targets by booking loans that didn't come close to meeting basic financing criteria.

On the phone from Paris, Deschamps recalls that day in October 2007. "I could see she was my age. I'm 40 now. But she was looking like 60, you know? Tired by life," she says. "I wanted to come back to the story, to the biggest picture of why one day I was the one to make someone learn she was to lose her home."

In doing so, *Inside Lehman Brothers* delivers an investigation that documents and weaves together multiple story strands that are both enlightening and foreboding. To her credit, Deschamps has been patient. Key players in the drama include Matthew Lee, a senior vice-president of finance at Lehman turned whistleblower. It took Deschamps nearly 18 months to get Lee on board. It was similarly a hard slog to convince bankruptcy examiner Anton Valukas to participate. (If that name has a familiar ring, it's likely because Valukas was lawyer to David Radler, the plea-taking partner to one-time media mogul Conrad Black.)

The insider and the outsider are connected in a crucial way. Lee takes the story through an accounting loophole known as Repo 105. Mercifully, he makes it dead easy to understand. "Repo 105 was a method of hiding how much you've borrowed," Lee explains of the gimmick that can appear to scrub a balance sheet of bad assets. In the case of Lehman, debts were transferred from a U.S. subsidiary to a British subsidiary, where they could be categorized as sales as opposed to loans. After meeting its quarterly reporting requirements, Lehman would then return the bad assets to the balance sheet.

When Anton Valukas heard of this, he didn't believe it could be true. He later came to understand that Lehman had transferred \$50 billion off the balance sheet in this manner.

"To me, that was illegal," Lee says on film. "That was not a grey area. It was red. With bells ringing."

So he wrote a letter. "The firm has tens of billions of dollars of unsubstantiated balances," he wrote to four of Lehman's top executives. It was May 16, 2008. He delivered the letters by hand. He was summarily fired. The company then, Lee says, "was already in the abyss. It just hadn't hit bottom yet."

The understory beneath what was happening in Lehman finance is told through women who worked at BNC Mortgage, a California-based Lehman subsidiary. Deschamps insisted on filming them at their homes. “When you’ve got something big like that, it’s not only Wall Street, it’s everywhere,” she says. BNC specialized in delivering the American dream to poor-quality borrowers. Linda Weekes, a senior BNC underwriter, had the job of verifying borrowers’ documentation. It was Weekes who noticed similarities in five doctored mortgage files. (Brokers even stooped to using Wite-Out to improve such documentation line items as salaries.) It was Sylvia Vega who drove to a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, saying she would like to apply for the job that paid \$7,000 a month, the unsubstantiated income that appeared on file. Weekes brought the fraud to the attention of her corporate bosses. The women were dismissed and are suing for wrongful dismissal.

Matthew Lee believes he was blacklisted on Wall Street. “Whistleblowers get crushed,” he says. He sold his house, purchased a motorcycle and took off. “I’m waiting for justice, which hasn’t happened yet.”

In our interview, Deschamps says Lee is still riding through the world. Looking at financial news. Still exchanging emails about what’s happening.

The news is not encouraging. Few have been held accountable for the financial crisis. News clips of U.S. President Donald Trump championing the rolling back of Dodd-Frank regulations close out the film. “They should be regulated ... as in the past,” the president says, to no one’s surprise.

The drug of high risk awaits.

Dick Fuld, the former Lehman CEO, seems happy enough running a private capital firm out of New York. Three years ago, he addressed a finance conference in his city. “Enjoy the ride,” he said to the investments types. “No regrets.”

## Colten Boushie documentary examines history of racism, oppression on the Prairies



*Debbie Baptiste, left, and Jade Tootosis are shown at United Nations building in New York in this still from the documentary "Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" in this handout photo. Cree documentary maker Tasha Hubbard didn't know Colten Boushie, but when she heard about the killing of the young Indigenous man, it was all she could think about. The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation died from a gunshot to the back of his head after the vehicle he was in with friends drove onto a rural farm property near Biggar, Sask., in August 2016. Hubbard ended up making a personal documentary about the case. "Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" makes its world premiere Thursday as the opening-night film for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs through May 5.* *Melissa Kent / THE CANADIAN PRESS*

### [THE CANADIAN PRESS](#)

VICTORIA AHEARN

April 23, 2019

2:22 PM EDT

TORONTO — Documentary filmmaker Tasha Hubbard didn't know Colten Boushie, but when she heard about the killing of the young Indigenous man, it was all she could think about.

Boushie, a 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation, died from a gunshot to the back of his head after the vehicle he was in with friends drove onto a rural farm property near Biggar, Sask., in August 2016.

Last year a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally when he was trying to scare off young people who were on his property.

The case sparked racial tensions, rallies and hateful online comments, and Saskatchewan-raised Hubbard, who is Cree, recalls being stunned by news of his death while driving with her son and nephew, who were both nine at the time.

She first felt grief for the family and then wondered, "What is this going to mean for the young boys in my life?"

"I just kept looking at them and thinking, 'How are you going to be viewed when you're 22?'" Hubbard, an associate professor at the University of Alberta, said in a recent phone interview.

"The social media response to celebrating a young person's death was just so disgusting. It's like, 'Is that really how we're viewed?'"

Hubbard ended up making a personal documentary about the case. "Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" makes



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its world premiere Thursday as the opening-night film for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs through May 5.

The film will also screen at the DOXA Documentary Film Festival in Vancouver, which runs May 2-12.

Hubbard narrates and appears in the doc, which looks at the inequity and racism in the Canadian legal system that came to light through the trial, and the Boushie family's pursuit of justice.

The director, writer and producer also puts the lens on her own life as she examines the history of colonialism on the Prairies and what kind of future is in store for her son and nephews.

The word "nipawistamasowin" in the film title means "a small group of people standing up for themselves or standing up on behalf of the larger group," said Hubbard.

Hubbard is from Peepeekisis First Nation in Treaty Four Territory and has ties to Thunderchild First Nation in Treaty Six Territory.

In the film she explains she was adopted and raised by a homesteading family in southern Saskatchewan.

Her birth dad, whom she got to know as a teen, lives on Red Pheasant and is married to Colten's aunt. And Colten's cousin, Jade Tootoosis, is married to Hubbard's cousin. But Hubbard said she wasn't close with the Boushie family before making the doc.

Hubbard wasn't even looking to make a film when Boushie was killed. She had just finished the acclaimed documentary "Birth of a Family" and was busy with that, she noted.

But she was so struck by what had happened, she felt compelled to document it.

After speaking with the National Film Board of Canada, which produced "Birth of a Family," she realized her upbringing in Saskatchewan could help contribute to the doc as it looked at stereotypes, oppression and pervasive, ingrained thinking in the media, movies and education system.

"I think sometimes you acknowledge, living as an Indigenous or person of colour in this country, people live with racism and people deal with it and acknowledge it. But to come to terms that that could be celebrated — I started to cry telling my producer this and she said, 'This is really powerful.'"

Hubbard said she hopes the film will help draw attention to the Boushie family's suggestions for changes to the legal justice system to address issues including jury selection.

"This is the time — and it was the time 10 years ago, it was the time 20 years ago, it was the time 30 years ago," said Hubbard, who also wrote and directed the 2004 doc "Two Worlds Colliding."

"I just want my boy and every other person's Indigenous child to be safe and free to walk on our own land. It's that simple."

<https://nationalpost.com/pmnl/entertainment-pmn/colten-boushie-documentary-examines-history-of-racism-oppression-on-the-prairies>

## Hot Docs' animal films aren't exactly warm and fuzzy

This year's festival features several docs that take a hard look at the relationship between humans and animals

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 23, 2019



*Kifaru is a film about the world's last male Northern Black Rhino.*

This year's Hot Docs lineup includes a new program, Animal Magnetism, that asks some fairly heavy questions.

Are we just here to be stewards of the Earth and all its creatures? (Whoever wrote the Bible seemed to think that was important.) Does being a keeper of animals mean protecting them, or holding them in perpetual captivity? What about working animals who do more for us than we can for them? Can we simply coexist with other species? And what about fish? Fish are weird.

The features and shorts in Animal Magnetism aim to explore “the complicated relationship between humans and animals,” constantly re-evaluating what that means from multiple perspectives.

One offers a god's-eye view of life and death in Portugal; another gets so close to its South Korean subjects we can almost smell their dander. And a third seeks the middle ground between humans and rhinos in Kenya.

As with all art, we bring ourselves to these stories, wondering how we'd respond to the specific challenges and what that says about our own capacity for empathy. (I'd probably do less well with the fish.)

I was struck by the ambition of Tiago Hespanha's [Campo](#) (April 25, 5:45 pm, TIFF 3; April 26, 12:15 pm, Scotiabank 3), an austere vision of life on the Alcochete shooting range outside Lisbon, where the Portuguese military hone their skills in view of sheep, bees and a few other creatures who only emerge at night, reclaiming the space after the machine gun fire stops.

With a voice-over of mythological quotations and observations from Kafka and Carl Sagan, among others, Hespanha slowly builds a meditation on nature's indifference, both to the humans playing their war games and the animals around them. Soldiers work to become more efficient killers; a shepherd works even harder to save the life of a breeched lamb. It's poetic and tragic and beautiful, machine guns and all.

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Coexistence is an issue in Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska's **Honeyland** (May 2, 3:30 pm, TIFF 2; May 3, 6:45 pm, TIFF 3; May 4, 3:30 pm, TIFF 3) as well. It chronicles the efforts of a beekeeper in Macedonia to live in harmony with the bees whose honey provides her livelihood, and the arrival of a new (human) family that threatens that balance.

Mincheol Wang's **Garden, Zoological** (April 26, 5:30 pm, TIFF 4; April 27, 1:30 pm, TIFF 4; May 5, 3:30 pm, Scotiabank 13) looks at the relationship between the employees of South Korea's Cheongju Zoo and the animals in their care. People love the animals; the animals seem to return the affection, with the possible exception of this one young seal who's kind of a dick.

But this is a zoo, not a preserve, and on some level zoo staff know they're not doing right by these creatures. Wang doesn't shy away from that awful contradiction, and even lets the individual vets and keepers express their frustration with the catch-22 of it all: a life in captivity has left the animals without the skills to survive in the wild, so a life in captivity is the only option. We owe a duty of care to them now.

What we owe to animals is the issue at the core of **Kifaru** (April 27, 8:30 pm, Isabel Bader; April 28, 10 am, TIFF 1; May 3, 4 pm, Fox) as well. Director David Hambridge embeds us with Kenyan rangers at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy tending to Sudan, the world's last male Northern Black Rhino, as he nears the end of his life.

It's a testament to the dedication and heart of a handful of people determined to protect an animal to its very last breath – though it's not an easy film to watch.

Oh, and I mentioned fish. Richard Ladkani's **Sea Of Shadows** (April 28, 9 pm, Isabel Bader; April 29, noon, Hart House; May 4, 5:30 pm, Fox) investigates the bizarre connection between Mexican drug cartels, Chinese black marketeers and the smallest member of the cetacean family, the vaquita, which is being pushed to extinction as a consequence of the illegal trade in totoaba fish, whose swim bladders are believed to hold healing properties.

And even though it's screening outside this series, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Heddy Honigmann's **Buddy** (April 26, 3:15 pm, TIFF 1; April 27, 3 pm, Isabel Bader; April 30, 10:30 am, TIFF 3), which looks at six very different people in the Netherlands and their beloved, essential service dogs. It's a meditation on the profound connection we make with dogs, the work dogs perform for people and the limited time we have with them. (Remember how we were talking about questions of stewardship and responsibility?)

It'd also be negligent of me not to point out that most of these documentaries have bittersweet endings, at best; things aren't going well for animals in the Anthropocene age, and a number of these films have scenes that will break your heart.

That's why those scenes are there, of course; if you choke up, or lose it completely, it's a reminder that you're human. Animals remind us of that, too.

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/features/hot-docs-2019-animal-magnetism/>

## Hot Docs 2019: Philip Pike traces Toronto's queer Black activist history

Our Dance Of Revolution charts the evolution of activist organizing, from the early 70s to the AIDS crisis in the 80s and Black Lives Matter at the Pride parade

BY [CHAKA V. GRIER](#) APRIL 23, 2019



**OUR DANCE OF REVOLUTION** (Philip Pike, Canada) 102 minutes. Apr 29, 6:15 pm, TIFF 2; May 1, 2:45 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 3, noon, Scotiabank 8. [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

In summer 2018, Philip Pike felt like he was on a treasure hunt. The director was in the final phases of making his latest documentary, [Our Dance Of Revolution](#), a film that traces the history of Black queer activism in Toronto starting from the early 70s to the present.

“I literally spent at least 60 per cent of last summer walking around Toronto with my scanner in a little shopping bag, going from house to house scanning photos,” shares Pike ahead of the film’s world premiere at Hot Docs.

The beautiful treasure trove of vintage photographs he was gathering were of fearless change-makers: Makeda Silvera (co-founder of 101 Dewson); Debbie Douglas (co-founder of Zami); Douglas Stewart (executive director of the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention); and the late, fiery Sherona Hall (founder of the Black Action Defence Committee), all of whom spearheaded grassroots community action that had impact that is felt to this day.

Pike was a year into research and development when Black Lives Matter–Toronto stopped the Pride Parade in 2016. For the filmmaker, it was the latest example of something that had been occurring in the city for decades.

“Black Lives Matter, as we try to illustrate in the film, is really the outgrowth, the continuation, the latest iteration of Black, queer organizing, protest, movement in the city,” he says. “They’re part of a lineage.”

That complex lineage can barely be contained in the doc (five extra scenes will be released later this year). Covering feminism, gay liberation, civil rights, police violence and HIV/AIDS, all from the Black Canadian perspective, *Our Dance* begins the redress of this profoundly neglected part of Canadian history.

“In the 80s, a lot of the cultural Black, queer stuff was being produced in the U.S. – the poets, the filmmakers, the writers,” says Pike, who identifies with filmmaker Marlon Riggs and contemplated including a quote by African-American activist and poet Joseph Beam in the doc. “I did a quick email consultation with about 10 folks who are in the film and some who were not, and it was resoundingly, ‘No. We have our own revolutionary moments here. We have our own Canadian experience.’”

*Our Dance* is not an easy documentary to view at times. Tragedy, isolation and loss are themes that run throughout it, but so do triumph, celebration and love.

“I tried to be very careful not to gloss over or romanticize people’s pain and struggles, especially the folks on the margins of the margins,” says Pike. “Transgender folk have been killed, have been murdered. But, as [artist and community worker] Courtney McFarlane says, ‘There is no greater joy than celebrating with the people with whom you are in the struggle.’ We were out picketing. We were out demonstrating. We were out doing all those things that activists do, but we also found time to celebrate – and sometimes the two things happened at the same time.”

Pike views this film as part of a growing recognition of queer people of colour happening in the country, which includes McFarlane’s curated exhibition *Legacies In Motion* as well as the 2015 preservation and digitizing of the Black Women’s Collective zine, *Our Lives*.

“It seems like in the last three or four years there’s been a lot of work to unearth these histories of queer people of colour, not just Black queers. Richard Fung redid his 1984 film in 2016, called *Re:Orientations*. There was a book called *Marvellous Grounds [Queer Of Colour]*, a collection of essays about our history that focuses on queer people of colour.”

Reflecting on the stories contained in the film, Pike finds himself forever humbled by the activists he celebrates.

“There were moments where I really had to sit back and reflect on how much these folks gave so that we could have the Toronto and Ontario we have now,” he says. “They created something because there was nothing. They needed a space to be.”

“These are people who put their lives and careers on the line to do this work. It’s really just recognizing, acknowledging and honouring those folks for blazing that path for the rest of us.”



## Filmmaker – April 23, 2019 (1 of 3)

### A Stripper, A Gangster, A Border Crisis (and no Trump!): What to See at Hot Docs 2019



The hypnotist

by [Lauren Wissot](#)  
in [Festivals & Events](#)  
on Apr 23, 2019

It goes without saying that the upcoming 26th edition of Hot Docs (April 25th-May 5th) presents a wealth of topnotch nonfiction films to choose from. With over 200 pictures — not to mention numerous events, immersive media and the two-day industry Forum — North America's largest documentary festival might even feel like too much of a good thing. Fortunately for me, between the miracle of Vimeo links and traveling on the doc fest circuit since IDFA, I've seen a good chunk of the feature-length selections, many of which I fear will be buried beneath the headline-grabbing buzz. (Much of it well-deserved. Not only are the majority of this year's films female-helmed, but there's even a "Persister" section dedicated to "Women Speaking Up and Being Heard." And then there's the honoring of the two Julias: "Focus on Julia Ivanova," will showcase the near two-decade long career of the USSR-born director, while the US's own Julia Reichert will receive both the Outstanding Achievement Award along with a retrospective.)

So rather than hail any audience pleasers (Ryan White's *Ask Dr. Ruth* certainly doesn't need my help packing the house) or the splashier guests (i.e., "A Conversation with Ai Weiwei") I'll just offer a wide-ranging list of standout films both likely to be overlooked and not to be missed.

#### **The Corporate Coup d'Etat**

*An Inconvenient Truth* for our current Gilded Age. Emmy Award-winner Fred Peabody (*All Government's Lie: Truth, Deception, and the Spirit of I.F. Stone*) sounds a crucial alarm in a film that tackles the same infuriating topic as his fellow Canadians Mark Archbarand and Jennifer Abbott highlighted in *The Corporation* over a decade and a half ago (when I first learned that corporations are people, too). Through thorough research and the human element (Cornel West and journos Chris Hedges and Matt Taibbi share screen time with equally astute laid-off workers and union bosses), the doc makes the damning case that today's runaway inequality and decline of liberal democracy can be traced directly back to the birth of corporatism – a concept developed by none other than Mussolini. (And that Trump is merely the "endgame of the corporate-dominated system," as one talking head puts it. Chillingly, we've really nowhere left to go except fascism.)



## Filmmaker – April 23, 2019 (2 of 3)

### Searching Eva

Pia Hellenthal's addictively cinematic, and truly unusual, Berlinale premiering portrait of a restless, gender-ambiguous, philosophical millennial who documents her entire life — from fashion week to freelance sex work — online was my top choice when I served on the Danish film magazine *Ekko's* International Critics Jury at CPH:DOX this past March. Between Hellenthal's exquisitely composed shots and her titular protagonist's surprising bon mots (Eva longs to “go to the beach or start a revolution — depends on what my friends are up to”), it's also pure poetry in motion.

### On The Inside of a Military Dictatorship

Danish director Karen Stokkendal Poulsen's expertly edited, behind-the-scenes peek at the political chess match that led to the thrilling rise and devastating tumble of Burma ranked a close second in my International Critics Jury picks at this year's CPH:DOX. Poulsen's astonishing access — to both the country's military elite and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi herself — is also unnerving. And as I put it in my final assessment, the film's “slow-motion, literary tragic unfolding, which leads to the inevitable clash with the Rohingya, renders the flick a thriller, and genocide the cinematic time bomb under the table.”

### Exodus

Crisis at the border — Iranian style. From Bahman Giarostami (yes, Abbas's son) comes a skilled cinema vérité look at the reverse migration happening at the line between Iran and Afghanistan — a bureaucratic nightmare that makes Trump's manufactured emergency seem quaint. As a result of Iran's recent currency collapse an unprecedented number of Afghans (since the Soviet-Afghan War four decades ago 2.5 million of them, half undocumented, have made Iran home) are fleeing the country — or at least trying to. But the Kafkaesque level of red tape is leaving many trapped in Iran, as helpless as at a Buñuel dinner party. Luckily, Giarostami and his camera are right there in the Tehran facility that's processing these (mostly male) expats. Seamless, swift-moving editing coupled with the inventive use of Bob Marley's *Exodus* as background soundtrack paint a grand portrait of the delicate dance between the exit interviewers (less harsh interrogators than bumbling social workers) and the desperate Afghans, culminating in a comedy of the absurd. (One leaving laborer is asked why he's wearing a coat. He says he's sick, has a headache. “And wearing a coat helps?” A 12-year old boy who's been picking up litter on the streets to survive is asked what kids his age do in Iran and Afghanistan. “They go to school in Afghanistan — and here...Trash.” “Godspeed,” says the interviewer, and quickly calls for the next in line.)

### Our Godfather

With Kim Longinotto's *Shooting the Mafia* and Francesco Patierno's *Camorra* also making the recent festival rounds it's shaping up to be a good year for Italian Mafia docs. And now filmmakers Mark Franchetti and Andrew Meier delve into the underworld subject through the tale of Tommaso Buscetta, a Mafia boss who, after nearly a dozen of his family members (including two sons) were murdered by a rival Sicilian don, turned state's evidence in the '80s and changed Mafia lore forever. Since Buscetta was the first big boss ever to reveal the inner workings of the organization, resulting in the conviction of over 400 Mafiosi both in Italy and the US, it's no surprise he also became Cosa Nostra's Enemy Number One. What is surprising is that Franchetti and Meier managed to get three members of Buscetta's surviving family — his wife, a daughter and a son — to cooperate on camera (and even provide intimate home videos), giving us a revelatory insider look into their decades-long life on the run.

## Filmmaker – April 23, 2019 (3 of 3)

### The Hypnotist

Director Arthur Franck might just be the Finnish answer to Penny Lane. One of the wackiest flicks in the Hot Docs lineup, *The Hypnotist* walks the line between fact and fiction, truth and conspiracy, experimental artistry and unreliable narration — all in service to the real-life story (I think) of Olavi Hakasalo, aka Olliver Hawk. Hawk was a Cold War-era celebrity (con artist?) who gained fame and fortune appearing on TV and traveling the Nordic countryside hypnotizing folks — until 1980 when the charismatic showman was revealed to be a fraudster. Or was that a covert operative? The only thing I learned for sure — other than Finland's President Kekkonen serving for a whopping 26 years (WTF, Finland?) — is that the film is so engaging I couldn't care less.

### Strip and War

Magic Mike in Minsk? Well, not quite. Andrei Kutsila's beautifully shot doc follows Anatol and his granddad, an odd couple living together in rural Belarus, yet as apart as night and day. Literally. While the retired lieutenant colonel spends the daylight hours fretting about his garden and revisiting Soviet glory through veterans organization activities, his apolitical grandkid spends most of it sleeping. That's because the buff millennial earns his dough as a stripper, traveling with his (male) dance partner to perform well-rehearsed erotic numbers to screaming middle-aged ladies and nightclubbing bachelorettes alike. Yet unlike Channing Tatum's half-naked businessman, the equally straight Anatol sees himself firmly as a burlesque artiste — a calling for which he gave up an engineering career (something that still baffles his staunchly traditional grandpa). What the two share in common, though, is also what makes Kutsila's film so unexpectedly touching — a desire to understand one another, regardless of whether they ever will.

### Hi, AI

With exceptional artistry, Isa Willinger's startling doc ponders the possibilities of robot-human relations through the stories of two humans and their AI companions in disparate parts of the world. In Japan, Grandma Sakurai's roboticist grandson has gifted her Pepper, a talkative android tasked with keeping loneliness at bay. While in the American southwest, Chuck has Harmony, a blond bombshell (when her wig — and head — is screwed on properly, that is) who likewise provides solace from an otherwise isolated life. Haunting and meditative, the film smartly eschews providing any ethical answers, content with using excerpted episodes from the "Waking up with Sam Harris" podcast as a running narration, set to sci-fi cinematic images. Do androids dream of electric sheep? I have no idea. But when Pepper spontaneously asks a human visitor if she dreams one can't help but wonder.

<https://filmmakermagazine.com/107409-a-stripper-a-gangster-a-border-crisis-and-no-trump-what-to-see-at-hot-docs-2019/#.XOW6pBZKjcs>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Push

Andrew Parker. April 23, 2019 5:15 pm



### Push

8.5 out of 10

A frightening, effective call to action, anger, and concern, Fredrik Gertten's look at the global housing crisis in *Push* should give viewers further pause and a more comprehensive view of an issue that goes well beyond gentrification.

Swedish filmmaker Gertten (*Bananas\**, *Bikes vs. Cars*), assisted by expert subject Leilani Farha, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, travels around the world to examine how lower and middle class people are being forced out of cities due to skyrocketing housing costs. From Toronto to Barcelona and London to New York, the story is relatively the same: as the cost of living increases, wages stagnate, and the housing market remains unfairly competitive, affording a place to live becomes harder by the day.

Farha proves to be the perfect guide for Gertten's thesis about why housing prices have grown astronomically out of control. Farha, who describes herself as someone who doesn't hate capitalism, but prefers to question its motives, outlines in *Push* a world where the wealthiest members of the population are using real estate as a piggy banks. They don't care if people can afford to live in the buildings they own or if anyone lives in them at all. To these one-percenters, buildings aren't places for everyday people; they're just another line item in their ledgers.

The evidence presented by Gertten and Farha is as damning as it is irrefutable, which might make *Push* depressing for some who're trying and struggling to secure their futures. On the other hand, it's precisely the kind of documentary that could cause people to rally against absentee corporate landlords and financial purse string holders. *Push* will also make viewers going through similar struggles and frustrations a little less alone. It's a sharp indictment of a broken system made with the utmost empathy for those caught up in its insidious machinations.

**Friday, April 26, 2019 – 9:15 pm – Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema**

**Saturday, April 27, 2019 – 4:00 pm – TIFF Bell Lightbox 1**

**Wednesday, May 1, 2019 – 1:00 pm – TIFF Bell Lightbox 1**

**Saturday, May 4, 2019 – 9:15 pm – Hart House Theatre**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038872/hot-docs-2019-review-push/>

## Hot Docs '19: Shane Smith discusses highlights for the 26th annual festival

By [Selina Chignall](#)  
April 23, 2019

Hot Docs' director of programming [Shane Smith](#) is quite frank about what feature documentaries are likely to draw controversy and buzz at the 2019 Hot Docs Festival taking place in Toronto from April 25 to May 6.

One film that Smith says is sure to “generate tension” is [Phyllis Ellis](#)' 90-minute examination of the impact of cosmetics on the body in *Toxic Beauty* (pictured), world premiering in the Special Presentations category.

“*[Toxic Beauty]* will open a lot of peoples' eyes in an interesting, enlightening way, and perhaps encourage changes in behaviors or questioning what is in these cosmetics,” Smith tells *Realscreen*. Another film that has the potential to make waves is Fredrik Gertten's *Push*, a doc about the issue of affordable housing. Smith says it will resonate with those living in Toronto where affordable housing is an issue, in the countries the film goes to, and in many growing cities and urban communities. “The film does a really good job of peeling back the layers and looking at the systemic reasons that this is becoming a crisis,” Smith adds.

The Hot Docs curator says there are some trends that continue on from 2018, like the motif of strong personalities found in Ryan White's *Ask Dr. Ruth*, a layered look at Dr. Ruth Westheimer's life and rise to prominence as a sex therapist; and Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe's documentary *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*, a film about legendary Canadian folk singer Gordon Lightfoot who Smith says is “an icon, but someone we don't know a lot about — personally.”

A film like Don Argott and Sheena M. Joyce's *Framing John Delorean* is told in a “unique, meta way” that is a different take on the character personality documentary, says Smith. This perspective extends beyond famous faces to strong personalities like Claudia Sparrow's *Maxima*, a film about a Peruvian farmer and environmental activist.

Elsewhere, Smith says documentaries like *The Edge of Democracy* from [Petra Costa](#), and Pachi Bustos' *Haydee and the Flying Fish*, use context and history to illuminate present-day issues. Hot Docs tends to launch each festival year with a powerful Canadian film, and the 26th edition of the festival is no different. First Nations/Métis filmmaker Tasha Hubbard's feature-length documentary *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* is that film, with Smith calling the film an important story at this point in Canada's social and political history.

“We often see films from around the world about these important issues – the abuse of power and problems that different communities face – but Canada has its share of challenges in terms of its reconciliation and understanding its Indigenous population,” says Smith.

One theme that noticeably runs throughout this year's selections is the proliferation of directors approaching their subjects in unconventional methods. One film that takes an innovative approach to a heavy subject is *The Hottest August*, a film about climate change told through the lens of New Yorkers in the month of August. Meanwhile, the film *Anbessa* from Mo Scarpelli looks at the issue of forced relocation in Ethiopia through the eyes of a child of a family that has to leave home.

Similarly, *Gods of Molenbeek* from Reetta Huhtanen approaches religious differences through the perspectives of children in Molenbeek, Belgium, while Marcela Arteaga's *The Guardians of Memory*, which focuses on the tensions at the U.S.-Mexico border, reminds Smith stylistically of Jonathan Bogarin and Elan Bogarin's [magical-realist feature documentary 306 Hollywood](#).

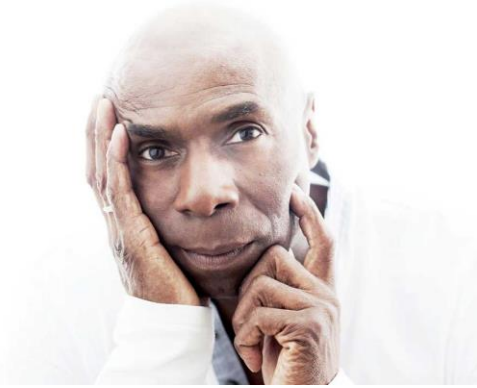
"We are seeing the evolution of documentary language that filmmakers are using to tell all kinds of stories – not just creative or artistic subjects – but creative and artistic approaches to heavier and more challenging subjects that don't often receive that kind of treatment," Smith explains.

Although Smith is hesitant to name any films he considers to be at the forefront as contenders for awards season, he says *Ask Dr. Ruth* is "a really great character study" that could be this year's answer to [Julie Cohen](#) and Betsy West's acclaimed 2018 feature *RBG*, which looked at the life of associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

He also mentioned a film like *Edge of Democracy*, which he says is a "skillfully made film" that mixes political and personal, and could also generate some awards buzz, while Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts's *For Sama* "has real potential", having already [won the top documentary prize at SXSW](#), and Australian director Maya Newell's *In My Blood Runs*, which world premieres at this year's Hot Docs, could be seen as a potential festival darling.

## Fake News: What Happened When One Man Discovered He Was Supposed to Be Dead

**JIM SLOTEK** | APRIL 23RD, 2019



*Don Stewart (Photo: Facebook/Don Stewart)*

Two years ago this past Easter, Vancouver jazz singer Don Stewart discovered he was “dead.” Happily, he was alive again by the end of the weekend, but not without complications.

“It happened at a strange time, because my father was a reverend and my mother was a missionary, so Easter was a very important time in my family,” the 68-year-old tenant of Vancouver’s Performing Arts Lodge says over the phone, in advance of the debut of the short film *The Day Don Died* at Toronto’s Hot Docs film festival.

What happened was that, despite his being in and out of his apartment all weekend (going to church and having performed a Good Friday concert mere blocks away), nobody in this seniors condo for entertainment industry folk had seen him in a few days. He’d had health issues, and somebody simply assumed/suggested he’d died, igniting a building full of gossip.

By the time Stewart discovered the “fake news,” there were postings on bulletin boards for his memorial.

“I was in the elevator and one of the tenants looked at me and said, ‘Oh, you’re still alive.’ I said, ‘What?’ And he said, ‘There’s a poster downstairs in the lobby that says you passed away.’

“I was more angry that it was there than anything. It was one of those things that make you question whether you’re here or not.”



By coincidence, Vancouver filmmakers Steve J. Adams and Sean Horlor were scouting the PAL building the next week with an idea of their own, a “gay Golden Girls” documentary.

“Originally, we’d gone to PAL thinking we could find maybe a group of gay men or lesbians, because it’s an artists’ community,” Horlor says. “And once we got into the building we started asking people about their stories, the relationships in the building, that sort of thing. And one of the first groups we talked to said, ‘Have you heard about Don Stewart?’”

It was one week after it happened, and it was this big story of somebody dying and coming back to life on Easter weekend. And we thought, ‘We just have to make a film about this.’”

Adams adds, “We loved that you could track how the misinformation spread, how it was tied to an emotional response to death. And watching people begin to clearly make sh— up was pretty interesting. It’s a building of storytellers, and each one wanted to tell it with their own flair.”

#### **Watch the trailer here:**

*The Day Don Died* — which screens as part of Hot Docs’ shorts program on Saturday and Sunday — speaks to a lot of things (and is, by nature, a feel-good story, given that Don didn’t die, and in the interim, neither has anybody else in the film). It’s about fake news spreading in a tightly-knit community — “the only condo tower in Vancouver where everybody knows everybody,” Horlor says.

It speaks to the nature of entertainers, whose life is informed by being seen. If there’s an erstwhile celebrity you haven’t heard of in a while, especially if they’re older, you may suspect they’ve died. (There’s even a website called the Dead People’s Server, where you can check).

And then there’s the reality of living in a seniors’ residence. “The truth about this place is that people come and go,” Stewart says. “Just before this happened, it seemed like I was going to a celebration of life every week. I’ve got some coming up.” So, it’s easier to accept a death report.

There were competing versions of the tale. Don had been killed in a car accident. He had died on the operating table. Stewart says in the previous year, he’d had a medical procedure for a thyroid condition in his throat, and a hip replacement. “I guess I’d mentioned these things to different people, throat, hip and that’s how I ended up dead,” he says.

It’s that easy to die, but coming back to life is complicated. Don showed up at the building’s coffee shop and other meeting places to let everybody know. But there’d already been an announcement on Facebook.

“And one of the people who put it on Facebook didn’t know how to delete it, so it just stayed there for a while,” Adams says, chuckling.

“I got on the phone right away and called my family (in Amherstberg, Ontario),” Stewart recalls. “They were freaking out. I got a big family, seven brothers, two sisters, and one of my brothers had passed away so... anything’s possible. He was bigger, stronger and smarter than I was, and he was killed in a car accident.”

Other people saw the Facebook page too. “I had friends call me from Australia saying ‘Thanks a lot. You ruined my day! But I’m glad you’re alive.’”

If not the originator of the “Don’s dead” meme, the filmmakers think Judy Ginn was certainly an accelerant. (She and her brother Jim Walchuk briefly hosted a CBC variety show *The Judy and Jim Show* in the ‘70s. They perform that funeral favourite “Ave Maria” in the opening credits of *The Day Don Died*). “She was one of the main people who started calling up people and telling them that Don was dead,” Horlor says.

For his part, Stewart isn’t angry anymore. “There was nothing vicious about it. It was just like, somebody planted a seed and it grew into a tree overnight.

“And being dead kind of opened my mind. I wouldn’t say I’d gotten lazy, but my acting coach used to say, ‘Once you think you know it all, you’re dead in the water.’ So it was time to bring things to another level.”

The slim, athletic Stewart is in rehearsals for a Nat King Cole tribute show, and has received invitations to play out of town, including Yellowknife.

“I do my stuff, I work out, I play tennis, I bike around the sea wall. I’m doing all the things I’m supposed to do. All I can do is help my body give me a quality of life that keeps me around.

“I mean, I look outside, I see trees, flowers blooming. Life is going on, and I’m still in it.”

*The Day Don Died* [screens at Scotia Bank Theatre and Innis Town Hall](#) in Toronto on April 27 and 28. It also screens on May 10 at the [NorthwestFest in Edmonton](#) and May 25 and 26 at [Yorkton Film Festival in Saskatchewan](#).

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Your Last Walk in the Mosque

Andrew Parker, April 23, 2019 5:23 pm



### Your Last Walk in the Mosque

9 out of 10

Deceptively simple in its construction, but unforgettable in terms of its impact, Ubaydah Abu-Usayd and Abderrahmane Hedjoudje powerful and heartbreaking documentary *Your Last Walk in the Mosque* gives the victims and witnesses of a mass shooting another chance to move towards healing and share their stories of grief, loss, and even hope.

*Your Last Walk in the Mosque* is comprised solely of interviews with survivors of a January 2017 terrorist incident at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City, which left six dead and nineteen others injured (with one of Abu-Usayd and Hedjoudje's subjects still struggling in hospital). The interviews, conducted mere months after the shooting, paint a stark picture; not only of what it was like to be there amid such chaos, but of the fraught healing process and the dangers of police not taking previously reported hate crimes seriously before the escalated to such a tragic conclusion.

Those brave enough to share their memories in *Your Last Walk in the Mosque* are all going through a profoundly sad moment in their lives, and Hedjoudje and Abu-Usayd make sure to illustrate how none of these survivors have similar answers when asked the same questions. They're all struggling with loss, PTSD, and survivor's guilt in their own unique, profound ways. Some can forgive the shooter and hope to move on, while others will never be able to get past what they've lost. The emotional impact of these interviews – conducted among people from a cultural background that rarely get a chance to share their side of story without being filtered – is positively devastating, and through its sheer force of humanity, *Your Last Walk in the Mosque* becomes required viewing. It packs more raw emotion into fifty minutes than most series could pack into twenty hours of viewing.

**Friday, April 26, 2019 – 8:00 pm – Innis Town Hall**

**Saturday, April 27, 2019 – 3:45 pm – Scotiabank Theatre 8**

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The Infiltrators

Andrew Parker, April 23, 2019 5:31 pm



### The Infiltrators

7 out of 10

Not quite a documentary and not quite a thriller, Alex Rivera and Cristina Ibarra's entertaining hybrid experiment *The Infiltrators* follows a group of young immigrant activists and their ambitious bid to take down a U.S. deportation and detention centre down from the inside.

Back in July of 2012, well before the election of Donald Trump and the acronym ICE was at the tip of everyone's tongue, a group of young adults who identify as "dreamers" and are technically illegal immigrants hatched a plan to infiltrate the for-profit, minimum security Broward County Detention Centre in Florida. Two members of the group – one male and one female – deliberately allow themselves to get captured by U.S. Border Patrol, and once on the inside, they start identifying inmates that haven't committed any real crimes and who have families on the outside waiting for their loved ones to return. The goal of these young people is to help those in need and grease the wheels of politicians on the outside that can recommend the release of prisoners.

The reason why Rivera and Ibarra had to make *The Infiltrators* into a docu-fictional hybrid is because it would've been impossible to smuggle a camera into Broward without being caught. The events unfolding outside the prison are real, while those happening on the inside are recreated with the help of actors. Whenever there's a call from Broward to those on the outside, the action cuts back and forth between fiction and reality.

If *The Infiltrators* sometimes feels a bit jarring and shoddy, that's less a byproduct of Ibarra and Rivera's stylistic choices, and more a reflection of the young people's plans in general. As a depiction of a group of dedicated activists willing to risk everything for what they believe in while flying by the seat of their pants at all times, *The Infiltrators* is equally fascinating, inspiring, and sometimes purposefully baffling. It's astounding that these young people were able to get as far as they did, and the film feels like a faithful capturing of their passion and occasional naivete.

**Friday, April 26, 2019 – 9:00 pm – Scotiabank Theatre 4**  
**Saturday, April 27, 2019 – 3:30 pm – Scotiabank Theatre 4**  
**Sunday, May 5, 2019 – 10:15 am – TIFF Bell Lightbox 2**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038882/hot-docs-2019-review-the-infiltrators/>

## Hot Docs 2019: Norval Morrisseau, the Barenaked Ladies and the fine art of forgery

KATE TAYLOR

PUBLISHED APRIL 23, 2019



*Barenaked Ladies keyboardist Kevin Hearn has been kicking at one particular corner of Canadian darkness for almost a decade now, ever since he discovered that a prized painting he bought was probably a forgery.*

DAVID LEYES/COURTESY OF CAVE 7 PRODUCTIONS INC.

Barenaked Ladies keyboardist Kevin Hearn likes to quote a line from the Bruce Cockburn song Lovers in a Dangerous Time: “Got to kick at the darkness ‘til it bleeds daylight.” Hearn has been kicking at one particular corner of Canadian darkness for almost a decade now, ever since he discovered that a prized painting he bought was probably a forgery.

The painting was supposedly the work of renowned Ojibwe artist Norval Morrisseau, who died in 2007, but experts disagreed. Many collectors are too embarrassed to complain when they believe they have been defrauded, but Hearn refuses to be silent. First, he took an art dealer to court; now, he has participated in a documentary, *There Are No Fakes*, that exposes a Thunder Bay, Ont., ring that produced fake Morrisseaus. Working with filmmaker Jamie Kastner, Hearn found his dubious Morrisseau took them deeper and deeper into an ugly story.

“Initially it was out of indignation – I had been ripped off,” Hearn said in a recent interview. But then “I started sensing there was a far greater injustice here. People had been hurt, people had been exploited.”

*There Are No Fakes* uncovers the destruction of a famous artist’s legacy – and the horrible damage to several less-famous lives.



## Globe and Mail – April 23, 2019 (2 of 3)

*In 2010, Hearn included the painting in an Art Gallery of Ontario exhibition that he was curating – until professional curators informed him it wasn't Morrisseau's work. CAVE 7 PRODUCTIONS INC.*

Hearn's connection began in 2005 when he bought a large green painting that had what appeared to be Morrisseau's signature on the back at a Toronto gallery. In 2010, he included it in an Art Gallery of Ontario exhibition that he was celebrity curating – until professional curators sadly informed him it wasn't Morrisseau's work. Hearn went back to the dealer, Joseph McLeod (who has since died), and asked for his money back. McLeod responded that a refund would be an admission of guilt.

Many collectors might have just walked away sadder and wiser. Admitting you've acquired a fake doesn't make you look like a discerning buyer. But Hearn was so angered that he decided to sue. Ultimately, a judge ruled last year that while his lawyer had proved the existence of a forgery ring, there was no way to determine that it had produced Hearn's painting – and, in law, the benefit of the doubt goes to the defence. Hearn is appealing that ruling, but it has become clear that, when it comes to venality, fake paintings are only the tip of the iceberg.

"Even though I was hearing it from someone I knew to be trustworthy, I couldn't believe it," Kastner said of the case. "It was only when I started to research and dug into the characters that I realized it was real."



*Jamie Kastner, director of There Are No Fakes, played in a band with Hearn in high school and initially got back in touch by suggesting the musician collaborate on a posthumous biography of American singer Lou Reed, whom Hearn knew. Instead, Hearn offered Kastner the Morrisseau story.*

DAVID LEYES/COURTESY OF CAVE 7 PRODUCTIONS INC.

Kastner, a Toronto documentarian, played in a band with Hearn in high school and initially got back in touch by suggesting the musician collaborate on a posthumous biography of American singer Lou Reed, whom Hearn knew. Instead, Hearn offered Kastner the Morrisseau story.

"I saw it as a sign: The universe sent me Jamie," Hearn said of his decision to try fighting through film.

Kastner agreed to the project, but warned Hearn that it would be a journalistic documentary and the musician would have no creative control. Dealers and collectors who defend their paintings as legitimate Morrisseaus, and argue that allegations of fraud are just an attempt by a few dealers to corner the market, would get a chance to say their piece.

"I believed enough in what I learnt that I didn't see any risk in looking for the truth," Hearn said.

His lawsuit has received lots of media coverage, but carefully balanced newspaper articles – and a carefully worded legal judgment – don't really reveal what was going on in Thunder Bay. Kastner doesn't have to discredit those who defend the alleged forgeries – some do it themselves on camera. For example, one collector of the disputed paintings boasts that if he only had six months to live he would kill an opposing



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witness – a former protégé of Morrisseau who convincingly argues the paintings can't be the artist's handiwork because the pigments contain too much white. In another scene, one of Morrisseau's sons sits at an art fair booth daubing at paintings for shoppers attracted by his famous last name – a situation that is troubling on several counts.



*The Morrisseau fraud is an art-world scandal. It has severely damaged the legacy of this revered artist and, by raising questions about who was painting what, undermines the legitimacy of the Woodland School that followed his style.*

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The most harrowing scenes involve the allegations made against the alleged ringleader, Gary Lamont, a Thunder Bay man now serving a five-year sentence on five counts of sexual assault. Lamont's young assistant, Dallas Thompson, met the older man when he was a teenager and repeats testimony he gave in court that Lamont was paying two Indigenous painters to make thousands of fake Morrisseaus. He also alleges that Lamont raped him daily.

The Morrisseau fraud is an art-world scandal. It has severely damaged the legacy of a revered artist and, by raising questions about who was painting what, undermines the legitimacy of the Woodland School that followed his style. But *There Are No Fakes* also exposes a chilling case of racism in which a group of mainly white people have exploited and brutalized a group of mainly Indigenous people.

"Far from the centre, people are behaving like it's the Wild West and they can get away with anything with poorer, dark-skinned people," Kastner said. "In this story, the bad guys are white. It is truly a case of latter-day colonialism."

That's why, when asked what he wants to do next, Hearn said he would like to bury his painting in a big hole – and get on with the work of reconciliation.

*There Are No Fakes* premieres April 29 at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto ([hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca))

## Gaza — A Sad and Expressive Documentary

APR 23, 2019, 8:20 PM

The Palestinian Arab inhabitants of the Gaza Strip have been consigned to purgatory since the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948.

This theme is fleshed out in *Gaza*, a sad and expressive documentary by Gary Keane and Andrew McConnell scheduled to be screened at the Canadian International Documentary Festival (Hot Docs) in Toronto on April 30, May 1 and May 3. A German-Irish-Canadian co-production, it examines the plight of ordinary Palestinians coping with adversity and pain in Gaza.

Gaza, largely inhabited by Palestinian refugees and their descendants, was occupied by Egypt during the 1948 war and by Israel during the 1967 Six Day War. Israel withdrew unilaterally in 2005, and Hamas — the Islamic resistance movement, which rejects Israel's existence — has ruled Gaza with an iron hand since 2007. Shortly after Hamas' accession to power, Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade on the small coastal enclave, which is 25 miles long and seven miles wide.

In line with its aggressive designs on Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian rejectionist groups have fired thousands of rockets and mortars at Israel. As a result, Israel and Hamas have fought three wars and a succession of skirmishes in the past 11 years.

The nearly two million Palestinians of Gaza have borne the brunt of this chronic tension and violence, as *Gaza* shows in telling detail. Keane and McConnell focus on people rather than politics, but in doing so they lose the benefit of context.

Hamas is barely mentioned, as if it has no impact on the lives of Gaza's long-suffering subjects. But two images speak volumes: A cavalcade of vehicles, carrying Hamas officials, thunders down a thoroughfare guarded by masked men brandishing assault rifles. And a Hamas rally in the centre of Gaza City attracts thousands of Gazans. While an unidentified man suggests that Hamas stands in the way of a resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute, the filmmakers say nothing about Hamas' constant bombardments of Israel. And Israel seems little more than a distant blur on another planet.

These are not mere oversights. In their quest to draw a stark portrait of national misery in Gaza, a valid undertaking in and of itself, they consciously omit important facts that simply cannot be ignored. So what we're left with in *Gazais* only a partial explanation of the humanitarian disaster that festers in Gaza.

Ahmed, 14, dreams of owning a big fishing boat one day. In the meantime, he works aboard a vessel that plies the waters of the Mediterranean Sea adjacent to Gaza. His father has three wives who've given birth to 12 children. The overcrowding in their house means that Ahmed must sometimes sleep on the beach.

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Karma, 19, is secular but thinks of donning a veil. She plays the cello but wants to study political science. She feels trapped in Gaza. Her mother, a sophisticated woman, longs for the bygone era when Gaza was a liberal outpost where women could wear bathing suits without causing a scandal. Karma's mother is friends with a fashion designer who staged Gaza's first fashion show.

A taxi driver yearns for peace, prosperity and a normal life, but they're beyond his grasp. "In Gaza, you never know what will happen," he laments. "We live in fear." And he can barely make a living.

A lifeguard echoes his comments. Gaza, he says, is in "complete darkness." He tries to be upbeat, but the Israeli siege is a bitter reality that weighs heavily on him.

A tailor and his assistant work on sewing machines. Suddenly, the power goes off. Electricity shortages are common in Gaza. The tailor implicitly blames the abysmal situation on the Israeli siege. A wizened fisherman complains that Israel's siege plays havoc with his ability to earn a living. "We want to be free," he exclaims. He has had enough of the "occupation" of Gaza, from which Israel unilaterally withdrew in 2005.

Keane and McConnell make a passing reference to the Israeli and Egyptian border crossings, which are often closed and thereby prevent Gazans from leaving Gaza.

In the next few scenes, the camera pans on bombed-out buildings, an incendiary kite heading toward Israel, and Palestinian protesters throwing rocks and burning tires near the fenced-off Israeli border. Wounded demonstrators are carried away on stretchers to a field hospital. In sorrow, a medic says that young men in Gaza have nothing to live for and that they're a burden on society.

A theater director expands on this theme by disclosing that his six children, all university graduates, cannot find jobs in Gaza.

As two Israeli F-16 jets roar by, a ragged neighborhood is shaken by the frightening sounds of explosions. A house burns, belching black smoke, as wounded Palestinians are rushed to a hospital. The film offers no explanation as to what has just happened, but gives us a vivid flashback to the 2014 Gaza war, which caused the deaths of 2,200 Palestinians and resulted in widespread destruction.

Toward the end of *Gaza*, a middle-aged woman admits she previously wanted to kill Israeli soldiers, but now opposes violence and is convinced there are "other ways" to fight Israel. This may be true, but as long as Israel and the Palestinians are so deeply at odds, Gaza will sink deeper into the morass of its misery.

# Stieg Larsson, 'patient zero,' and hockey hero Willie O'Ree converge at Hot Docs

**June Chua**

April 23, 2019



Three unique and influential individuals in three very different arenas of life come together at this year's **Hot Docs documentary** festival in Toronto.

There's such a variety at the festival, it's hard to key in on any specific set of films. Here, I've decided to highlight the singular lives of three men whose contributions can only be deemed outstanding and noteworthy. Their histories intersect at the biggest documentary festival in North America.

## ***Stieg Larsson: The Man Who Played With Fire* (director: Henrik Georgsson)**

His "Millenium" series of books have sold more than 94 million copies to date but sadly, Stieg Larsson couldn't enjoy the fruits of his labour having died in 2004 at age 50. The searing books focused on layers and webs of cultural and sociopolitical intrigue, touching upon the darkest human experiences one can imagine. However, this is not about the books but centres on the fascinating life of Larsson, who was a fervent anti-Nazi and became editor of the magazine *Expo* -- a journalistic missile blowing up and exposing the inner workings of neo-Nazis. The film, done in traditional TV-style with interviews and reenactments, is a riveting examination of one man's determination to analyze and root out far-right extremism.

**The documentary** details the lengths Larsson went to in order to spy, track and connect the dots of white extremism in Sweden and Europe (in case you're wondering, he started writing *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* back in 1997 just to relieve the stress of his work). There are extraordinary insights and anecdotes that keep the viewer hanging throughout the 99-minute film -- Larsson taught his younger colleagues how to properly open packages which might contain bombs. He even fashioned a small weapon for a female reporter so she could defend herself in a small space if needed. Sections of the film speak of a bucolic childhood in the countryside with his grandfather and of Larsson's sweet, generous nature. His writings, diary entries and old interviews are resurrected and most

interestingly, his partner, Eva Gabrielsson, also provides a rare insight into Larsson's life under constant threat from neo-Nazis. Gabrielsson almost never gives interviews and has tried to maintain a quiet existence.

Larsson was the only person investigating the early stages of the far-right movement back in the 1980s and he kept at it like a dog with a bone. There are still many surprises in the documentary concerning the conditions he and his colleagues worked under and his relentless pursuit of the far right. His accuracy in predicting and detailing the ways of white extremism and their rise to political power is eerily mimicked in today's world (from opposing racial mixing to challenging notions of multiculturalism and migration to glorifying Western culture -- sound familiar?). Larsson wanted to keep sounding the warning bells on the movement. How would he react today? I get the feeling he'd still be at it like no one else. The film, in a way, continues his life's mission. "To work for democracy is what a society is about," Gabrielsson says about her partner's life motto.

### ***Killing Patient Zero* (Director: Laurie Lynd)**

I highly recommend this incisive documentary that takes apart the myth of "patient zero," the Air Canada flight attendant villainized and erroneously faulted for spreading AIDS in North America. Toronto director Lynd (whose credits including directing episodes of *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Schitt's Creek* and *Queer as Folk*) has crafted an astonishing work that covers everything from internalized homophobia to gay liberation to mapping the life of Gaëtan Dugas as it intertwines with the heady, sexy '70s, to the horror of AIDS and its aftermath.

**Lynd's film** -- based on Richard McKay's book, *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic* -- includes bracing interviews with AIDS activists, medical researchers from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, gay icons such as Fran Lebowitz as well as the colleagues, friends and former partners of Dugas. The film establishes the repressiveness and self-hatred that often went with being gay during the 1950s and '60s and slides towards the '70s (after the Stonewall riots) when young gay men decided to hedonistically rebel against their repression. The reasons for partying, dancing and having sex are steeped in having unchained themselves from that darkness and suppression. Lynd cleverly builds his case as he introduces Dugas as a fun-loving, unabashedly homosexual man. It was still hard for many to be as "out" as Dugas was and his colleagues attest to his strong desire to be who he was and to express his sexuality. At the time, as one interviewee puts it, "sex was the gay man's obligation."

Dugas was cast by journalist Randy Shilts in his groundbreaking book *And the Band Played On* as a callous, AIDS-spreading, hard-partying gay man. Yet, in speaking to his closest friends, Dugas was highly regarded as a thoughtful person who, in fact, helped the medical community by providing the names of 72 of his former sex partners. He was at the centre of the CDC's famous cluster study of patients with AIDS. This is, unfortunately, where Dugas' "patient zero" moniker was forged through a misunderstanding of the label "Patient (O)" in that study -- watch the documentary for that amazing explainer. Due to Dugas' help, researchers were able to establish how the disease spread.

According to ***Killing Patient Zero***, the real monster of those times was homophobia. Dugas was a scapegoat, the person everyone could demonize and blame -- that became his "thank you" for helping researchers. Shilts' publisher and editor admits in the film that it was the book's publicity campaign utilizing Dugas as patient zero that broke the inaction and silence over the "gay cancer," which had killed more than **1.5 million individuals** in the U.S. between 1981 and 1995 (using amfAR -- the Foundation for AIDS Research statistics). As one doctor at the forefront of the battle notes -- 96 per cent of his patients had died from AIDS while smallpox only kills about 60 per cent of those infected, "and all we got was silence."

### **Willie (director: Laurence Mathieu-Légér)**

You can't get a better subject than this. Fredericton's Willie O'Ree broke the NHL colour barrier when he played for the Boston Bruins in 1958. What could play out as rote story of a hardship journey is given plenty of spark by director Mathieu-Légér, who brings solid directing and storytelling chops to O'Ree's narrative. The Montreal native, now based in New York, is an award-winning producer/director who had been the senior video producer for the Guardian U.S.

O'Ree is often called the Jackie Robinson of hockey but, in his words, he's the **Willie O'Ree of hockey**. Damn right. The film begins with O'Ree's childhood, the youngest of 13 kids and living on a street that had only one other Black family. There are dips into incidences of racism but mostly we get his old buddies reminiscing about how athletically versatile and fun their friend was. In fact, O'Ree was good enough to be scouted for the Milwaukee Braves minor league baseball team and went down to Georgia to be tested: "My parents didn't want me to go probably because they thought I'd get killed." The film has a knack for contrasting sweet, light moments with the brutal realities of racism.

The harsh realities of a Black man playing baseball in the U.S. changed O'Ree's mind about pursuing the sport. When he got back to Canada, he chased hockey the way Wayne Gretzky, a.k.a. the Great One, would do with a puck during a breakaway -- and yes, Gretzky is interviewed. O'Ree spent 20 years in the NHL and if you don't know the details of his story, I'll leave out the surprise at the one-hour mark of the film. There is plenty to chew on throughout the documentary -- from the earnest efforts of his Canadian friends to get him into the Hockey Hall of Fame to O'Ree's work as the NHL's diversity ambassador since 1994. Present-day moments include current Black NHL players, who still suffer the indignities of slurs and racist actions, and O'Ree coaching kids of diverse backgrounds -- "Hockey is for everyone," he declares.

Catch these and other documentaries at **Hot Docs from April 25 to May 25, 2019** in Toronto or watch for them as they roll out in cinemas and TV.

*June Chua is a Berlin-based journalist who regularly writes about the arts for rabble.ca.*



## Hot Docs 2019: Director Tasha Hubbard makes history with her searing look at the Colten Boushie case

BARRY HERTZ

PUBLISHED APRIL 23, 2019



Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* tells the story of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man from Saskatchewan, who was killed on Gerald Stanley's farm in 2016. COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

This year, the Hot Docs film festival is making history – even though it is the kind of history that should have been made long ago.

On Thursday night, the 2019 edition of the Toronto festival opens with *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, documentarian Tasha Hubbard's searing look at the 2016 killing of Colten Boushie in Saskatchewan, and the outcry that resulted after Gerald Stanley was acquitted of second-degree murder in the 22-year-old Cree man's death. The screening marks the first time that a film by an Indigenous director has opened Hot Docs in its 26-year history.

"This isn't directed at Hot Docs or any other mainstream festival, but while I'm happy that our film is here, I'm a little surprised it took such a long time to get here," says Hubbard, whose previous film, *Birth of a Family*, screened but did not open the 2017 edition of Hot Docs. "There's different layers to it. There's me as a filmmaker going, yeah, this is good because I want other Indigenous filmmakers to have access to these spaces as well. But on another deeper level, it just breaks my heart that people in this country can look at Indigenous people as not worth anything."

Ahead of *nipawistamasowin's* world premiere, The Globe and Mail's Barry Hertz spoke with Hubbard about the importance of having Indigenous artists tell Indigenous stories and how she wove her own history into that of the Boushie family's.



Hubbard poses for a portrait in Toronto, on April 10, 2019. GALIT RODAN

You narrate *We Will Stand Up*, and also weave in your own family history into that of Colten's. How did you balance your responsibility as a documentary filmmaker with telling your own story?

The circumstances of my upbringing – being Cree but being adopted out to a white family – I'd brought that

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perspective to my other films, in a way. But I thought those stories didn't need me. Here, though, I felt such a personal response to what happened to Colten. I also thought, what is this going to mean for those of us who are living on the Prairies who are Indigenous? We know that our stories aren't listened to in the same way. I decided I wanted to speak in my own voice in the film, to speak to how this case affects all of us. It's not just this one family going through this ordeal. We see ourselves in them. I wanted the film to help viewers do the same.

What was it like being so close to the Boushie family during Stanley's trial?

Nothing I experienced can be compared to what they went through. Yet at the same time that they're going through this nightmare, they're always checking in on me. "Are you okay, are you alright?" [Laughs] I was okay, and even if I wasn't okay, I wasn't going to put that on them. But that's the kind of people they are. Someone said to me during filming, "You chose to be here, you didn't have to be here with us." My birth dad is also married to the cousin of [Debbie Baptiste, Colten's mother], so they knew me and they knew my work. These stories get covered by the media, but it's a different thing to have our own people tell our own stories.

And then your timeline completely changed midway through filming ...

When the verdict came down, we were supposed to be done. Everyone assumed that the outcome would be at least manslaughter. So, we had two days scheduled to gather final thoughts. Then I had to rearrange my life. But [the family] appreciated the time that I took to tell the story, that I didn't just parachute in and get my interview and go off. It wasn't going to be a [feature-length doc] until the end. When they go to Ottawa, I realized I had a lot more material, and there was no way I could possibly tell this story in 44 minutes. It was originally supposed to be a one-hour television documentary.



The premiere of nîpawistamâsowin marks the first time a work by an Indigenous filmmaker has opened the Hot Docs festival. COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

What is your ultimate goal for the film?

Sometimes I think, what do I actually contribute? Would my energy be better served by being on the ground [in the community]? But for whatever reason, this is the path I've been on, and the path I've been invited onto and been supported on. This film is my contribution. It's not the solution. Sometimes, people want films to do more than they can do. I want the film to help shift perceptions, even if it's just a little bit in a certain audience member. We have to find our way through it, and that's what I say to my son and nephew: We're only here because the people before us fought hard. We owe it to them to keep going forward and to keep creating space for ourselves in our own land.

Are you optimistic?

I'm trying to find my way to that. We can't stay in cynicism, and that's where I get overwhelmed. I think about the talent and the intelligence and the ingenuity that is present in Indigenous communities, and ... can you imagine if we didn't have to deal with colonialism all the time? Can you imagine what things would look like?

So, it's a question of what can I do to create that space for that to flourish. It's why I wanted to put my son and nephew in the film, so see them as that path forward.



Hubbard says she hopes the film will 'shift perceptions, even if it's just a little bit in a certain audience member.'  
COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

In your career, do you feel you've been given enough support as a filmmaker to tell the stories you want to tell?

There is a realization that's starting to go through the industry. It's part of that colonial legacy of us being kept from telling our own stories, whether in publishing, film, you name it. But there are people in decision-making places who are going, okay, there has to be some space made here. It's happening, and there's more and more features being made in this country. But there's push-back, too, when people who are used to having all the space, they feel a little weird having a little less.

Late in the film, there is footage of [then-justice minister] Jody Wilson-Raybould and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaking about the case. How do you feel about looking at that today, in light of all the news that has since come out of Ottawa?

It makes me wish that these issues just transcend the political systems. It's tough, because it's not the first time that an Indigenous family or organization starts to make some progress or starts to get heard by someone in a position of power, and then something changes and it's somebody else, and maybe that person has to start over. Here's where I try to be optimistic and say that what needs to happen is that it becomes political will, and not just capital-P political, because things only change when enough people push for it. And Indigenous people have been pushing this forever. We have the [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples] from 1996, and it had a lot of recommendations in the justice system. I wonder how many people who get the justice portfolio read that.

How do you think Indigenous audiences will respond to the film?

It's not easy for Indigenous people to agree to be part of films like this, but they do so for the reasons I've been talking about. I still wonder if I could do it if it was my own child who was killed. If I could take my own experience and pain and not dwell on that, but think about who is coming next. And I don't want this point to get lost: We have a system where, for when the media covers film festivals, it's about the filmmaker. It can't be about that. I don't want it to be about that. I want people to watch this and think about their own families and have empathy. Especially people who have power: use it.

This interview has been condensed and edited.

nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up screens at the Hot Docs film festival April 25, 9:45 p.m., Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema; April 27, 1 p.m., Lightbox; and May 4, 10 a.m., Isabel Bader Theatre. The film also screens at Vancouver's DOXA film festival May 8 and May 9.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-hot-docs-2019-director-tasha-hubbard-makes-history-with-her-searing/>

## **Women in Hollywood – April 24, 2019 (1 of 3)**

### **Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Martha Kehoe and Joan Tosoni – “Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind”**

BY: Gabriela Rico\_April 24, 2019

Martha Kehoe is a writer, producer, and director who has worked on and created award-winning documentaries, series, and specials in multiple genres. Her early career focused on music, as she researched and wrote “Country Gold,” a documentary anthology of Canadian country and folk music, as well as produced the Juno Awards and “Canadian Idol” for several years. She worked as a producer, director, and writer on documentaries “Comedy Gold” and “One Weekend.”

Joan Tosoni is a writer, producer and director who has worked in Canadian film and television production for over 30 years. She’s directed award-winning projects such as “Karen Kain: Dancing in the Moment,” “Kurt Browning: You Must Remember This,” and “Jonie Mitchell: Painting with Words and Music.” In 2016, she directed the Stratford Festival’s “King Lear,” which was shown at hundreds of theaters across Canada and the U.S. and awarded the Canadian Screen Award for Best Performing Arts Program.

“Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 27.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

MK: “Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind” is an intimate look at singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot’s career and artistic output. We try to shed light on Lightfoot’s process, his impact as a cultural figure, and his musicality, while offering glimpses into his personal life and what has driven him to create.

JT: Through concert and archival footage, and through conversations with Gord and others, we wanted to explore the man behind the music that is so loved by so many.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

MK: Gordon Lightfoot was a ubiquitous presence during my childhood. In some ways he was the first Canadian star that resonated with me. I used to listen to his music. I remember sitting under a willow tree around the age of ten thinking about the song “If You Could Read My Mind” and wondering what it meant. Later I was privileged to meet and work with Gord on shows big and small over the years. It’s been a dream project for me and Joan for years basically.

JT: I have known and worked with Gordon Lightfoot for many years. Martha and I first worked together with him in the early ’90s on a documentary about the history of Canadian music, and since then a trust developed between us that allowed him to feel comfortable enough to have his story told.

I agree with something Steve Earle says in the film: “Gordon Lightfoot’s arguably the most important artist that Canadian music’s ever produced, in the mainstream or otherwise.”

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

MK: I think we are hoping that people will appreciate Gordon for the great artist that he is. I hope they will think about his legacy and his unique place in Canadian cultural history and recognize that he has worked very hard on his craft. Something that Gordon offers up in the film is his honesty about some of the darker moments in his past, and I hope viewers recognize that he is on his own journey of acceptance.

Number one, of course, is that people will go home and either dust off their vinyl or tune into Lightfoot playlists on their streaming services!

## Women in Hollywood – April 24, 2019 (2 of 3)

JT: There is no doubt that Gordon's memorable songs will be running through the minds of the audience after watching the documentary, but I hope they'll also come away from the theater with more insight into what makes Gordon tick. For a somewhat inscrutable character, he was very generous with his time, and I believe he really tried to give us as honest a look at his "inner workings" as anyone has ever seen.

### W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?

MK: I think the biggest challenge making this film was giving up the idea of making the "definitive" film about Gordon Lightfoot. Because Gord has never consented to making a film like this before, Joan and I felt the weight of trying to do total justice to the man, the music, the career, and the Canadian icon. At a certain point we just had to accept that there are many possible films that could—or perhaps would—be made about Lightfoot and we were just going to make the one that we were making.

JT: Other than securing the financing, which was done with dedication by Insight Productions over the course of five years, I would say the biggest challenge was paring down the wealth of archival and interview material we had accumulated. Another film of the same length could be made with what was left on the cutting room floor, as they say.

### W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.

MK: We first proposed and developed this project almost six years ago. Our broadcaster CBC funded development, and we applied to funds after writing proposals and treatments, shooting some material, and creating a demo. We did pretty well and had significant support, but we couldn't at that point close funding gaps. Basically, all parties were still onside, and CBC supported us through the years as we remounted and reapplied to the various funds.

JT: We got incredible support from the Rogers Documentary Fund, the Rogers Cable Network Fund, the Rogers Theatrical Documentary Program, the Telefilm Theatrical Documentary Program, and the Canada Media Fund. And, very importantly, we would not have been able to make the film without Gary Slaight of Slaight Communications Inc., who backed the film in a very significant way.

### W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?

MK: I grew up in a family of storytellers who loved music and movies, so I was always surrounded by enthusiasm for and awe of filmmaking. I came of age in a really great time for cinema, and I remember going to see films like "Chinatown" and "The Godfather" when I was probably too young and too impressionable! I loved epic films and quiet films, and I took Film Studies in university, where I was introduced to the concepts of semiotics and film analysis, and I just *loved* it all.

JT: I actually stumbled upon my first full-time job, which was as a secretary at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. At that time, it was a great training ground for all things film and television. The first time I ever stepped into a control room to watch a live show being broadcast, I said to myself, in the famous words of Tina Fey's little daughter, "I want to go to there!"

I was trained and worked as an A.D. and then received a momentous offer from producer Les Pouliot to direct a very popular Canadian television series, "The Tommy Hunter Show," which was also sold to and broadcast on The Nashville Network. I worked mostly on multi-camera programs, and then had the great good fortune to meet John Brunton of Insight Productions. At that company, I not only directed numerous multi-camera shows but was given the opportunity to tell stories with a more filmic, single-camera approach. That led to my collaboration with Martha on the two-part documentary "Country Gold." I joined the Directors Guild of America and directed various shows throughout the years.

I consider it a great gift to have been given the opportunity to work not only in the excitement of "live television," but to have learned the frustrations, joys, and satisfactions of conceiving a style and creating something memorable in the editing room!



## Women in Hollywood – April 24, 2019 (3 of 3)

### W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?

MK: I remember a conversation I had with comedian Frank Shuster when I was in development for a documentary I directed about Canadian comedy. Frank was in his eighties at the time. He was half of successful Canadian comedy duo Wayne and Shuster, and had also been Lorne Michaels' father-in-law.

He told me a story about Lorne as a young man asking him whether he thought Lorne should pursue a career in show business, as Frank always called it. He said if you want to do it, nothing will stop you. It's not advice, but it's wisdom, and I guess I took that to heart.

JT: Best advice: "Don't sweat the small stuff." Worst advice: "Don't sweat the small stuff." You pick your moments.

### W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?

MK: I guess just don't be afraid. Tell your story—don't question its validity or whether anyone wants to hear it. Trust yourself and your passion.

JT: I'd rather *receive* advice from other female directors!

### W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.

MK: I am really not good with narrowing things down when it comes to favorites. I guess some of the films that impressed me most were those I saw when I was just learning so much about film and the world too. Gillian Armstrong's "My Brilliant Career" was huge for me and my fellow female students, and it's really a delight in every way. Also, two words: Judy Davis.

Lina Wertmüller's "Seven Beauties" was a revelation, and certain scenes have just really stayed with me to this day. I also loved Susan Seidelman's "Desperately Seeking Susan." It was just so much fun and so in the zeitgeist. "The Piano," and really all of Jane Campion's work, is so great. I love "Clueless" for various reasons, including that I'm not a good driver. My daughters went through a period of obsession with Penelope Spheeris' "Little Rascals," which is also a great movie that's so, so dear, with hidden punk sensibilities.

Nicole Holofcener's "Lovely and Amazing" and "Friends with Money," Martha Coolidge's "Ramblin Rose," and Greta Gerwig's "Lady Bird" were great. "Marianne and Juliane," directed by Margarethe von Trotta, was an early favorite as well. Too many to name!

JT: I don't generally distinguish between woman-directed or man-directed films. If it's good, it's good.

### W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?

MK: I think that, overall, it's a time when we are finally realizing that the world is very small, and it's more fun to go through life with good vibes for all. It's exciting to think of all the new lenses that we will be seeing stories through. New voices, new ideas, new stories: Bring it on!

JT: This is the hardest question for me. We could all write a book! I grew up in a much earlier time than the young filmmakers working today. I dealt with the worst of men, but also the best of men, who I truly believe gave me and other women opportunities based solely on merit.

My hope is that any changes that are happening now lead to the day when this is the norm.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-martha-kehoe-and-joan-tosoni-gordon-lightfoot-if-you-could-read-my-mind/>



## **Women in Hollywood – April 24, 2019 (1 of 2)**

### **Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Karen Stokkendal Poulsen – “On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship”**

BY: Gabriela Rico\_April 24, 2019

Karen Stokkendal Poulsen is a writer and director with a background in foreign affairs and political science. Her 2014 documentary “The Agreement” was nominated for Best Nordic Documentary at the Göteborg Film Festival, Best Medium-Length Documentary at the Krakow Film Festival, and the F:ACT Award at the Copenhagen International Documentary Festival. She is currently working on developing a fictional television series based on the film.

“On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 26.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

KSP: This is a film about the power play happening in Burma. It focuses on the year-long battle between the military and [State Counsellor] Aung San Suu Kyi and shows darker sides of both of them than we could have imagined. It mostly adds a lot of grey to the black and white picture that has been portrayed.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

KSP: I thought it was a miracle story of a military regime that voluntarily started to democratize and an extraordinary woman who had won a decade long non-violent fight for democracy. I am interested in telling surprising stories from the closed rooms of power, which give complexity and nuances to what we know, but mainly I am looking for stories that give hope for change for the better.

In this case, things unfolded in such a tragic way, and the story was much darker than I had anticipated, so the objective became to tell as truthful a story of this complex universe and these characters as possible.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

KSP: That democracy is more complex than we think. That goes not only for authoritarian regimes that are trying to democratize, but for any country, society, and human interaction. Democracy is difficult and requires compromise.

Even the worst of dictators have a human side, and the apparent icon can be cynical, but all of them are human, and humans can change and make the world change. Even the strongest structures and systems depend on psychology and human will.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

KSP: The access. To build trust and to craft a story that made sense of a very complex reality and a long list of characters.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

KSP: The film is a Danish-French co-production, so there were two producers finding the financing. It's a combination of Danish/Nordic funding through the Danish Film Institute, DR, SVT, NRK and the Nordic Film and TV Fund, and French funding through ARTE France, CNC, and Procirep.

The overall budget is around 750k USD, and it has taken nearly four years to get all the financing in place.

## Women in Hollywood – April 24, 2019 (2 of 2)

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

KSP: I always wanted to write and create. It was not until my late teenage years that I fell in love with films and how magical the film language is and how strongly you can tell your stories through film.

It was actually Lars von Trier's films that moved me the most at that time and made me want to make films.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

KSP: Best: You can't do everything, and you should stop trying. There are places where you can blossom, and it feels like you are able to achieve anything, because you have placed yourself where you can grow.

Worst: Probably many pieces of advice, but I have let myself forget them.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

KSP: Demand respect and a salary.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

KSP: Documentary: "Sisters in Law," directed by Kim Longinotto and Florence Ayisi, because the film shows, in the most magnificent way, how a group of women took back power through law and social [understanding of] women's rights in a very suppressive, male-dominated society.

Fiction: "You Were Never Really Here" by Lynne Ramsay. Lynne Ramsay has the most beautiful cinematic language—she dares to make surprising and unconventional choices, and she gets under the skin of her characters. I really admire her and wonder how she found a role and a place in the tough, competitive world [of fiction filmmaking].

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

KSP: I have fortunately never been sexually harassed myself, but I obviously live in the same world as all other women. I have become more aware of when I am being treated condescendingly because I am a woman in a non-powerful position.

I have become more aware of not trying to [conform to] society's rewarding of "the right behavior," but to stay true to my moral convictions and my freedom to be the person I am with the professional [goals] I have.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-meet-women-directors-karen-stokkendal-poulsen-on-the-inside-of-a-military-dictatorship/>

## Hot Docs review: The Disappearance Of My Mother

Fascinating and perplexing film profiles the Italian supermodel-turned-radical feminist educator Benedetta Barzini

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 24, 2019



**THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MY MOTHER** (Beniamino Barrese, Italy). 95 minutes. Rating: NNNN

“The real me is not photographable,” says Benedetta Barzini, an Italian supermodel from the 60s-turned-radical feminist and educator. Her son, filmmaker Beniamino Barrese, nonetheless tries to capture her ineffability in this entertaining but sometimes perplexing portrait of a woman who once embodied glamour and is now anti-glamour and anti-image. Not only does she yearn to disappear, but argues society would be better off if “women’s bodies disappeared from men’s imaginations.”

Despite her resoluteness, she (begrudgingly) accepts an award recognizing her modelling career and walks in a runway show, though her willingness to be filmed waffles – to put it mildly. Some moments she seems happy to ham it up, but in others she tells Barrese to shut off the camera and cuttingly dispenses with galling requests he makes to construct drama.

Is he baiting her? This is a film about boundaries that could not exist if boundaries weren’t pushed. It also feels like a singular work that could only exist because of the particular relationship between these two people. It’s also about sacrifices we make for family and a son trying to grapple with the desires of an unyielding mother – in this case, Barzini’s urge to vanish and leave him behind. The result is fascinating and a disappearance well earned.

[Apr 28, 6 pm, TIFF 4; Apr 29, 10:15 am, TIFF 2; May 5, 1 pm, Scotiabank 3](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-disappearance-of-my-mother/>

## Hot Docs: Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man

Lily Zepeda's portrait of World Toilet Organization founder Jack Sim finds the subtle tension behind an unapologetically crass character

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 24, 2019



**MR. TOILET: THE WORLD'S #2 MAN** (Lily Zepeda, U.S.). 87 minutes. Rating: NNN

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Jack Sim is a lot. A Singaporean business exec who followed his dream of doing good and founded the World Toilet Organization to fight for improved sanitation conditions, he's all about raising awareness with energy, gimmicks and crass and cartoonish humour. But turning intention and symbolic initiatives into concrete action is another thing, thanks in part to his lack of filter.

Part social-issue doc, part bio, Mr. Toilet is full of candid interviews with Sim's wife, children and colleagues who offer pointed insights into a subject who proudly shows his emotions. Zepeda uses familiar doc techniques – including cutesy animation that offsets the graphic shit imagery – to set up the issue, but the film really gets interesting in the latter half when Sim's tactics run up against cultural sensitivities in rural India. You get a strong sense he might not be running the show if he wasn't the one with the money, a reality he seems increasingly less oblivious to.

When the doc plumbs that tension, Mr. Toilet shines.

*Apr 27, 5:45 pm, Scotiabank 3; Apr 28, 1 pm, Bader; May 4, 8:30 pm, Fox*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-mr-toilet-the-worlds-2-man/>

## Hot Docs review: Prophecy

Director Charlie Paul stays out of Scots artist Peter Howson's way as he creates a single oil painting

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 24, 2019



**PROPHECY** (Charlie Paul, UK). 82 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Prophecy is a record of the creation of a single oil painting, from the stretching of the canvas to its ultimate exhibition and sale, by the Scots artist **Peter Howson**. Director **Charlie Paul** and producer **Lucy Paul** previously made the charming Ralph Steadman profile *For No Good Reason*, and they understand the value of just staying out of their subject's way as he works. This work is darker, and so is the film's aesthetic, but the search for insight is the same.

Much of *Prophecy* is simply footage of Howson in his Glasgow studio, explaining his influences and his vision in voice-over. There are chattier segments about his relationship with his daughter Lucie, his fondness for his dogs and his image of himself as a jobbing craftsman rather than an internationally renowned talent, but that's all secondary to the creation of the new thing, which the Pauls capture in all of its intuitive, confounding intensity.

*April 27, 9:15 pm, Hart House; April 29, 1:30 pm, Isabel Bader; May 5, 12:30 pm, Hart House*

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE BOOK OF THE SEA'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Heidy M](#) - April 24, 2019

4.5 Stars



In the frozen waters off of Russia's Bering Strait, Inuit and Chukchi hunters seek out the giant sea mammals that have sustained their people for thousands of years.

In Aleksei Vakhrushev's *The Book Of The Sea*, reality and myth blend together as a new generation of hunters sets out to sea to hunt the whales, walruses, and seals that have tied them to these remote shores since the beginning of time.

Alexey Ottoi and Alexander Emelyanov are traditional Chukotka hunters. Alexey is the head of the Lorino rural community. Hunting is in his blood. Along with other hunting groups, he helps provide food for about 1,500 people in his community. Alexander is older; he knows the arctic land and local animals very well. He also hunts to provide for his family. Both men are deeply rooted in their hunting traditions, and their connection to the land and animals.

Clay animation tells the story of the "the woman who gave birth to a whale" and other ancient myths, which interweave beautifully with Alexey and Alexander's stories. Storytelling is really strong in *The Book Of The Sea*. Not only do we learn about the Inuit and Chukchi traditions; we also learn how hunting is so integral to their survival.

The mythical or folk stories are filled with deep meaning, metaphors, and allegories. In turn, they complement the hunters' stories. We see Alexey on the boat with his fellow hunters looking for whales and walruses. Alex and companion go inland camouflaged in white coats, in search for seals. They must be patient yet skillful and stealth in their movements.

The richness and beauty of their hunting tradition and culture are told through excellent cinematography, original music, and the blend of documentary and animated stories. A beautiful film throughout.



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'AMERICAN FACTORY'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 24, 2019

4.5 Stars



*American Factory* tells its story in spurts. However, it mostly concentrates on a four year period starting in 2014. That's when a Chinese car glass manufacturer, Fuyao, came in. They opened a factory at the site of a former GM plant in Dayton, Ohio. This would, at first, be a good change for the workers in Ohio. Ones who have struggles to get jobs ever since the 2008 recession happened.

Unfortunately, what takes place is a struggle between those workers and their corporate level bosses. It's a conflict that documentaries have shown since the 70s. Generations later, the descendants of good old American workers are still fighting for their rights. But the enemy is different and more nebulous because corporations today have a more global reach.

*American Factory* dives head first into this globalized conflict. There's no narration until the fifteen minute mark. First, the American workers speak about their mixed emotions about finally getting jobs. Then we hear from the Chinese workers training the Americans. It's like a Greek chorus speaking one after the other, never together, despite their attempts to understand each other.

This is a merciless documentary, for better or for worse. It shows Chinese bosses briefing the trainees about American culture, making backhanded compliments about the latter's preference towards laxity. It also shows the stringent, propaganda-based Chinese culture. The movie's attempts to shock its audience is slightly obvious. The same goes for the musical cues going off when we see both groups.

Nonetheless, it's a film with subjects that deserve both the audience's mockery as well as its compassion. This doc spends a few intermittent minutes with its many subjects, but that's all we need to feel for them. This has something for everyone, especially for struggling working class people, no matter who their bosses may be.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'TAKE ME TO PROM'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 24, 2019

4 Stars



Andrew Moir's *Take Me To Prom* shares the same title as another short movie. That one is about ugh, straight people, but thankfully this documentary has none of that mess. It has creative ways of showing snippets of the 70 year time period that it covers. We see that past through seemingly hetero normative photographs but alas, some pictures do lie.

This movie would have been fine had it stuck to teenagers during the mid 20th century. But as I hinted earlier, it expands on what its about. It also shows us the boomers who, unlike previous generations, prefer to stick out from the crowd. Since this is an LGBT film, it shows us its share of men, women, and gender non conforming people.

Documentaries exist to refresh and clarify collective memory and *Take Me To Prom* does just that. One of its key subjects is Marc Hall, who sued the Durham Catholic School Board for the right to take his boyfriend to prom. It shows him during a time that, looking back at it, was very important for LGBT rights.

*Take Me To Prom* exposes its subjects in all their beauty. Most of them didn't get to be or wear what they want during their proms and this movie was their chance at doing that. Race also factors here. As the film progresses, it shows POC and trans people speak up in a way that they couldn't when they were much younger.

The film lets its subjects discuss problems both big and small. And sometimes the small problems turn into the much bigger struggles worth fighting for. In this doc, all genders wear the best of whatever they want. They look good then as they do now, but they look perfect here because they're showing up now as themselves.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'DADDY AND THE WARLORD'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 24, 2019

2.5 Stars



During the Liberian Civil War, Clarice Gargard and her siblings moved to the Netherlands. Years later, she returns to her country. Her reunion with her father Martin means that she might ask him some questions. Some of these questions are innocuous, like her age, which he gets wrong. But eventually, she asks harder questions, like what he did during the war.

Clarice Gargard co-directs *Daddy and the Warlord*. It's a documentary that, for its faults, acknowledges that this story is bigger than her and her father. She makes room for some segments showing other Liberians who was on the wrong side of Charles Taylor's war crimes. These citizens do voice overs, remembering the rebels' guns ravaging their peaceful homes.

This movie, clocking in at 50 minutes, follow up these segments by showing a fractured Liberia. It shows citizens in shantytowns trying to live their lives years after the social unrest. It also lets us hear news radio discussing a trial that eventually found Martin not guilty of war crimes. Gargard finds her and her father's true story in frustrating pieces.

It's in these scenes, ones showing how Liberia is now, that hinder this film from being good. These scenes seem like filler, distracting itself from Gargard's journey to find out the truth. The doc is running low on time as it is. Theses scenes show a lax citizenry under the grip of poverty. And there's something unintentionally exploitative in these scenes.

There's also something bothersome about how Gargard shoots the scenes where she tries to discover facts about her father. She uses different colors of light and sometimes blurs the picture when she talks to other reporters. She's trying to depict the subject matter with an artistic flair. I normally welcome such attempts but it seems unnecessary in this case.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'OUR DANCE OF REVOLUTION'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 24, 2019

4 Stars



History has not been good at writing or recording North American civil rights. There was the originals or OGs like Martin Luther King or, since she counts by existing, Jackie Shane here in Canada. Then there's our generation, a time when Black Lives Matter has different chapters in the continent. The fifty years between those two generations feel like a wasteland. Thankfully, cinema's stepping up to show that movements existed between those gaps. *Our Dance of Revolution's* focus isn't just on Afrocentric movements. It also looks black groups that also catered to and housed struggling LGBT people of colour.

This documentary show the history of black LGBT activists during all of the late 20th century in Toronto. It also shows those activists, most of whom are still alive. They're still making spaces where people of all gender associations come together and express themselves artistically, which is in itself, still a radical thing to do and show. Black spaces, even LGBT ones, have a hostile reputation. And seeing the exact opposite of that is refreshing. Director and producer Phillip Pike also moves back when showing these scenes, giving his audience a sense of how large these intimate gatherings could be.

The movie's talking heads also remind us of the issues that affect black LGBT people more heavily than their non black counterparts. Things like unemployment, cancer, HIV, and police brutality. These affect them more than non black people do regardless of sexual orientation. Black LGBT activists have dealt with these problems in a two fold manner. They have both tried to heal each other's pain while confronting the people oblivious to the weight of these problems. The film embodies those two approaches. These approaches were effective then as it is now, and this doc hopes we do not forget.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'BUDDHA IN AFRICA.'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 24, 2019

2.5 Stars



In development since 2012, Nicole Schafer's *Buddha in Africa* tackles a recent development in global politics through an interesting lens. Specifically, this documentary follows a young Malawian teenager named Enock Bello, and his life inside a Buddhist orphanage that is eerily reminiscent of early Christian missions to North America. At the ACC orphanage Enock is a martial arts prodigy with named Alu, who harbours dreams of becoming Jet Li. Schafer's documentary, however, picks up Enock's story at an interesting point in his life, a transitional period where graduation is imminent and post-secondary education at home or abroad must be chosen. For Enock, the question becomes one of answering just how much choice he really has.

Schafer is credited as the sole director, writer, cinematographer, while also holding joint editing and production credits. In some of those credits she really shines, particularly the cinematography, as the film features multitudinous breathtaking long shots of the Malawian landscape. Yet, *Buddha in Africa* simultaneously feels slightly underwritten or under explored. Necessary background information is obfuscated. The exact nature of the ACC organization, for example, is left murky at best. Furthermore, the film frequently refers to the fact that the ACC as a Chinese organization, despite the fact that its founder and donors are all shown to be Taiwanese. How the ACC fits into larger structures of Chinese influence, if it does at all, is left relatively unexplored. While it is understandable that the film may not wish to stray far from its main focus, a deeper understanding of the larger structures Enock is a part of may have helped audiences truly understand his situation better. Ultimately, *Buddha in Africa* is a film with a fascinating premise that simultaneously feels underachieved.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'OUR GODFATHER'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - April 24, 2019

3 Stars



At the end of *Goodfellas*, Henry Hill laments the lack of good food and longs for his mafia glory days when he was more than just a regular schmuck in witness protection. Once real life gangster Tommaso Buscetta turned informant against the Mafia, however, he never wanted any part of the mob life anymore and his days in hiding were filled with constant anxiety about the safety of his family in a world where threats could be anywhere and everywhere.

Buscetta was the first and probably most prominent mob boss to turn against the organization, helping prosecutors in Italy and the United States take down organized crime as their star witness through the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was a move that garnered a ton of media attention, which made the Witness Protection Program a more urgent reality for Buscetta and his family. Having already lost his two sons from his first marriage and multiple other close family members from Mafia retribution, he was determined to keep the rest of his family safe and hidden. He eventually passed away from cancer in 2000.

*Our Godfather* is mainly told from the perspective of Buscetta's surviving family members, who are ready to come out of the shadows and tell their story after so many years have gone by. They recount the surreal nature of growing up within a seemingly normal family unit with a loving father who was also one of gangland's most endangered species.

While we get an intimate look into this family dynamic through a bevy of home videos, the film proves to be less involving than you'd hope, mainly due to the absence of the central figure of this story. In the end, Buscetta remains an enigma – one that even his family still can't crack.



## The push to make housing a human right comes to Hot Docs

Partially shot in Toronto, Push follows the UN's Leilani Farha as she investigates how private equity firms are profiting from the global housing crisis

BY [SAMANTHA EDWARDS](#) APRIL 24, 2019



*Hussein El-alawi / Sydsvenskan. Ottawa-based Leilani Farha examines Toronto's overheated housing market in the Swedish-produced documentary Push.*

**PUSH** (Fredrik Gertten). 92 minutes. Apr 26, 9:15 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; Apr 27, 4 pm, TIFF 1; May 1, 1 pm, TIFF 1; May 4, 9:15 pm, Hart House. [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)

Leilani Farha is the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, a lofty-sounding title that actually has a straightforward mission: to prompt an international paradigm shift to recognize housing as a human right.

Since 2014, the Ottawa-based lawyer and executive director of Canada Without Poverty has travelled around the world to study the growing global homelessness crisis, the increasing commodification of housing and what cities need to do today to protect their residents in the future.

Push, an eye-opening documentary from Swedish director Fredrik Gertten, follows Farha over a year and a half as she exposes the massive financial players turning affordable housing markets in major cities into tradable commodities. We see this play out in Toronto – which is prominently featured in the doc – where [Parkdale tenants](#) organized rent strikes to oppose huge increases; and in London, England, in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, which killed 72 people and left hundreds more displaced.

In Toronto, the doc also shows the bartender of Communist's Daughter lamenting gentrification, examples of urban agriculture next to condo construction sites and a former school teacher who started flipping houses before becoming a real estate agent to capitalize on the "superheated market."

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As Farha explains in the film, Toronto house prices have increased by 425 per cent in the last 30 years, whereas average family income has only gone up 133 per cent. "It's pretty grim," she says.

Ahead of Push's North American premiere at Hot Docs (see review [here](#)), we spoke to Farha about Toronto's obsession with one-bedroom condos, the global homelessness crisis and why she really wants to have a conversation with Mayor John Tory.

### **How have you seen housing worldwide change since 2014, when you became the rapporteur?**

It's hard to say, but we do know that informal settlements – living in tent encampments or in really shoddy housing that lacks basic services – are on the rise because of a shortage of affordable housing options coupled with urbanization, the drive of people going to cities because they have no other viable economic options. And we know that homelessness is on the rise in pretty much every country except for Finland. It used to be that those experiencing homelessness were mostly people who suffered deinstitutionalization and had psychological disabilities. Now we're seeing a shift. It's families, it's young people, it's LGBTQI, which suggests a structural problem at play.

### **In Toronto, we're not building the type of places that can house families. They're designed for single people.**

All those condos going up, who are they intended for? They're intended for middle- to upper-income people or as investment properties. Corporate asset management firms buy up several [units] or an über-rich person turns them into [short-term rentals](#), for platforms like Airbnb, Expedia or Booking.com.

**In Push, you investigate Blackstone, a company that buys up high-rise apartments to convert affordable units into higher-end units. It turns out that Blackstone, in [a partnership with another company called Starlight](#), has bought eight apartment buildings here. You spoke with Parkdale tenants who staged a rent strike to push back against their landlord, Metcap – and now with Blackstone, it feels like it's going to become even more pervasive.**

One of the things that's really important for those of us who care about housing as a human right is to name this stuff properly. I don't call these people landlords. I call them what they are, which is multi-billion-dollar asset management firms or private equity firms. They create financial instruments out of people's homes. They don't interact with properties as landlords, they interact with them as financial actors.

**The doc revealed that private equity firms like Blackstone are partially funded by pension funds. Can you explain how that works? We meet a Toronto tenant who can barely afford to pay his rent, which comes out of his pension fund. It seems like a gross cycle.**

It's very straightforward, but I even say in the film: why did it take me so long to figure this out? Where does a private equity firm get the money to invest? How is it they have so much capital? Well, they get it from pension funds, which have huge dollars and give their huge dollars to private equity firms, who invest on their behalf.

They want the highest return on their money to satisfy their pensioners, and to get the highest return, they want to go to the alternative asset class of housing or real estate because it's such a solid return. The awful irony, which is so well-captured in the film, is that Blackstone's business model is to buy, renovate, evict and jack up the rents. Pensioners are being kicked out of the units that their pension dollars are purchasing.

**Some people would say the lack of affordable housing is because of supply and demand, and that rents are so expensive because our vacancy rate is around one per cent. How does financialization play into this?**

I don't think supply-only solutions will work to address what's happening in the housing market right now. Since the 1980s and early 90s, governments have been retreating from building affordable housing and protections like stringent rent control in North America. Now we're seeing the [repercussions](#) of those moves. Social housing in Canada is in pretty poor condition, and that's why the [federal government](#) just announced it's going to upgrade TCHC homes in Toronto because the stock is so bad. The government needs to get back in the business of building social housing, but what about housing for the rest of the population?

Then the question is, what if we just keep building and building with, say, inclusionary zoning to get a proportionate amount of affordable units – would that create affordability? I don't think it would. For example, Baltimore has a high vacancy rate and yet there's still an affordable housing crisis where young people can't find a place to live. You can't just throw supply at a very complex situation that involves other factors, like big financial actors. Even if you build more affordable units, the model of Blackstone is to swoop in and buy them up. There aren't enough incentives and programs to encourage [developers] to build affordable units, and when those units are built, do we even have the legal protections to keep them affordable? We need to regulate this sector.

**That's why there was push-back against the mayor's [Housing Now program](#), which will lease city-owned land to developers and potentially non-profits to build housing with a small percentage of affordable units. Why can't it all be affordable, since that's what we need?**

That model of freeing up city-owned land to private developers is not the way progressive cities are moving. Look at the 40,000 people who [protested in Berlin](#) earlier this month. They were demanding the nationalization of property, land and buildings. For cities, affordable housing is the crisis of the 21st century. That kind of small brokerage, where it's like 25 per cent for affordable – and then affordable is defined as 80 percent of market value – that's out of step with the way many cities around the world are trying to deal with affordability.

**You're currently working on The Shift. What is it, exactly?**

[The Shift](#) came about when I started to understand how big the forces are that are affecting affordable housing around the world. I have a position to effect change as a rapporteur, but there's no way one woman in this one position can do what's necessary to really restore housing to its human rights place. The Shift is like a show of force and numbers. The idea is to bring together a whole variety of different actors, all of whom are already committed to the implementation of housing as a human right. Cities have been leading the way with The Shift.

We now have 35 cities from around the globe who have joined and are going to try to resist the commodification of housing: Amsterdam, Berlin, Geneva, Mexico City, Seoul, New York, Paris, [Barcelona](#), Montreal and more. Their commitment to The Shift is to the concept of housing as a human right, but they also have to take action. This isn't a ribbon-cutting thing.

### **How did Montreal's participation come about?**

I met Montreal's Mayor Valérie Plante in early 2019 and she is working on some bylaws to try to address financialization. Blackstone is in Montreal now. Plante's very astute and recognizes that this could be quite problematic in Montreal, where rents are lower [than other major Canadian cities], but that also makes them ripe. You have to picture Blackstone and other private equity firms literally as vultures flying around looking for prey. They're looking for undervalued properties, where people are paying reasonable rents.

### **What's the status on Toronto joining The Shift?**

While I'm in Toronto for the premiere of Push, I hope to meet with the mayor and city officials. I imagine John Tory will want to stand shoulder to shoulder with cities like Paris, New York, London and Seoul. International human rights law is always seen as remote and not understandable, but in fact, it's incredibly practical. The right to adequate housing simply means the right to live somewhere in peace, security and with dignity. When people are living under a bridge, when people don't have toilets and showers and are sleeping on concrete or air vents above subways, it's not a stretch to imagine that there's a dignity issue at stake, and that triggers a human rights concern. I would be happy to explain that to him and have a discussion. I'm sure I have my critics who'd say, "C'mon, the city is evicting people who are under bridges. How could they be Shifters?" And it's true that the city would have to commit to a moratorium on those evictions and anything else that contravened the international human right to housing. But I think the city might be willing to do that.

**I think most Torontonians would love for you to have that conversation with Tory. His response to the [homelessness crisis](#) this past winter was pretty disheartening.**

The beauty of Push is that it really promotes these conversations. It's part of why I was happy to have a film crew follow me around for a couple of years, because I wanted to engage a diverse audience. We need to access as many people as we can to think about this differently and the film is an amazing vehicle for that.

## Documentary reveals more of the Colten Boushie story

By [Tanya Talaga](#), Indigenous Issues Columnist

Wed., April 24, 2019



One year ago in New York City, Jade Tootoosis patiently waited to address the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues about the need for the international human rights body to come to Canada and investigate the biases in the judicial system against Indigenous people.

She waited all day for her chance. Just as the meeting was about to wrap up, the forum agreed to extend its session to hear her. Tootoosis spoke passionately about the death of Colten Boushie, her 22-year-old cousin, who was shot in the back of the head by Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley on Aug. 9, 2016. Stanley was later acquitted of second-degree murder by a jury from which [First Nations people had been rejected by the defence](#).

The Indigenous forum members heard her story and felt it intimately. It is a story many have seen and experienced in colonized nations the world over — the death of an unarmed Indigenous man or woman at the hands of a non-Indigenous person without justice ever being served.

But Tootoosis also came with a request. She asked for the UN to send an envoy to Canada and examine the racism experienced in the judicial system by Indigenous people, both victims and accused. As Tootoosis spoke, Colten's mother, Debbie Baptiste, stood and defiantly held a photograph of her son, turning around slowly so all the delegates could see.

That moment, caught by documentary filmmaker Tasha Hubbard, is gut-wrenching. It is one of many candid moments in *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, which will open Toronto's Hot Docs Festival this Thursday. Colten's family will be there.

The choice to open one of Canada's premiere film festivals with Hubbard's film is encouraging, as it is a documentary everyone in this country should see.

It is about truth seen through an Indigenous lens, one not told by traditional media or non-Indigenous storytellers, who are still trying to understand and explain how Canada has got to this place where First Nations, Inuit and Métis people are still treated like second-class citizens in the courts and by police.

## Toronto Star – April 24, 2019 (2 of 2)

Colten's story is one all Indigenous people know. It is a story of all our relations. Fittingly, this film is narrated by Hubbard, a Sixties Scoop survivor who grew up in rural Saskatchewan.

The film shows how Stanley's acquittal was only part of the story.

In one scene, police rush Stanley out of the courtroom after the verdict is released, his head down to protect him — from what, exactly? Unruly Indigenous hoards? — before he is whisked away. Then, after Stanley disappears, the menacing sounds of revving pickup truck engines can be heard from the street. The trucks had been waiting for hours for the verdict, and the revving was clearly an act of intimidation.

And in another scene, racist Facebook messages are flashed on the screen, like this one: "In my mind his only mistake was leaving witnesses."

Hubbard is no stranger to thorny stories on race and justice.

Her previous film, *Two Worlds Colliding*, chronicled the story of Darrell Knight, a First Nations man who was dumped by police in -20 C weather on the outskirts of Saskatoon in January 2000 and had to walk miles back into the city. This practice became known as the "starlight tour," and the film raised questions about the Saskatoon police and the freezing deaths of Lawrence Wegner, Rodney Naistus and Neil Stonechild.

In *nîpawistamâsowin*, the Boushies agreed to let Hubbard in because they understood someone needs to document what is happening here, right now, to Indigenous families. "None of us at the beginning knew what it would look like or where it would go, but we thought it would be a good idea for someone to document it," said Hubbard, who also has a family connection to the Boushies — her stepmother was Colten's aunt.

In making the documentary, Hubbard sadly encountered barriers in the usual places. The director says she approached the RCMP, but they could not agree to terms for an interview.

"CBC is our broadcaster. We follow ethical approaches. I am not looking to defame anyone," she said. "We negotiated (with the RCMP) for a few months but they wouldn't change their mind."

Meanwhile, Ottawa has introduced legislation to do away with peremptory challenges — the tool that was used by the defence in the Stanley trial to exclude First Nations people from the jury — but Tootoosis says there's been no word on the Boushie family's request for a royal commission to examine structural racism. Nor have they heard back from the UN.

This week, the [United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is meeting once again](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/statement-2019-04-23) in New York City.

Colten Boushie's family is still waiting.

<https://www.thestar.com/politics/political-opinion/2019/04/23/documentary-reveals-more-of-the-colten-boushie-story.html>



## Hot Docs 2019 opens with a hard conversation on colonial violence

In *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, Cree filmmaker Tasha Hubbard looks at the aftermath of the Colten Boushie verdict and the fight for justice reform

BY [KELLY BOUTSALIS](#) APRIL 24, 2019



*Director Tasha Hubbard has a difficult conversation with her grandfather in *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*.*

**NÎPAWISTAMÂSOWIN: WE WILL STAND UP** (Tasha Hubbard). 98 minutes. Apr 25, 9:45 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; Apr 27, 1 pm, TIFF 2; May 4, 10 am, Isabel Bader. [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

Having a film selected to kick off Hot Docs is usually something to celebrate. But Tasha Hubbard, director of *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, is grappling with feelings that are less than celebratory.

On the phone from Calgary, the soft-spoken director says that while she's honoured her film was chosen, she's surprised by the decision to start the festival with a film about a grieving family and inequalities in the Canadian justice system for Indigenous people.

She had anticipated a doc focused on a high-energy subject to take that coveted slot.

"My film is quieter [and] a hard film to watch."

The sobering doc follows the events of August 9, 2016, when five friends from Red Pheasant First Nations reserve found themselves on a farm off-reserve in Saskatchewan. Twenty-two-year-old Colten Boushie died that day after being shot in the back of the head by the property owner, Gerald Stanley, who was [acquitted of second-degree murder in early 2018](#).

The film follows Boushie's mother, Debbie Baptiste, his siblings and cousins throughout the court case, and their subsequent trips to Ottawa to meet politicians and even to the United Nations in a quest to bring awareness to the injustices of the case and for Indigenous people in the legal system.

Having watched the Boushie story unfold on the news and social media, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* gave me a more complete picture of who Boushie was, and how strong his family continues to be as they've become advocates for justice. It's told sensitively, with the help of animation and the director's own Cree heritage infused in the story.

Hubbard sees the film, and its Hot Docs premiere, as “an acknowledgement of the work the family and others have done toward a better life for Indigenous people, but it’s tragic that this event even happened and how it played out is tragic and upsetting,” she says. “I don’t ever lose sight of that.

“It’s always hard to see an Indigenous family going through something like this,” the director continues. “Unfortunately, we find our family, friends and networks affected by colonial violence.”

nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up is told from Hubbard’s point of view, a Cree woman who grew up with non-Indigenous adoptive parents on a farm, and her family is included in the film.

“[I thought] putting a bit of my own story and family in this film would be a potential way in for audiences who maybe haven’t considered some of the things we wanted to talk about, such as how the Prairies came to be settled,” says Hubbard. “The film is meant for Canadian and international audiences – everybody needs to talk about the history of this country and how Indigenous people have been perceived.”

She hopes that people will come away with either an introduction to Indigenous issues and justice, or a deepening of their existing knowledge, and feel moved to take action.

“Indigenous people have been pushing for justice for a very long time and are going to continue to push, but advocates, allies, accomplices, supporters are needed,” she says. “I hope those who see the film join in that support; for people to take a hard look at the country, take a hard look at the justice system, a hard look at policing and a hard look at attitudes that people have toward Indigenous people and make a shift, so we have a world where all of our children are safe.”

The last thing Hubbard left me with were the words that the family wanted her to pass along, about the goals they continue to work towards.

“They want there to be an increased support at all levels of government to support Indigenous families who are having to negotiate the legal system as victims of violence. They want a royal commission to look at structural racism in the legal system. And they continue to push for the Canadian government to invite the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples from the United Nations to look into how Indigenous people are treated in the justice system.”

## Terence Corcoran: As Canada gets more conservative, Canadian activists try making America socialist

They're being lured by some old-time Canadian socialists



Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), promoter of the “Green New Deal,” and the U.S. Democrats’ standard-bearer for America’s radical socialist left. *Alex Wong/Getty Images*

[TERENCE CORCORAN](#)

April 24, 2019

“Good morning,” said the cheery email from the PR firm hired to promote a new documentary set for its Canadian premier later this month. It went downhill from chirpy good morning to anti-corporate nightmare as the PR pitch unspooled. “With the SNC-Lavalin scandal currently captivating us all, I wanted to reach out as we’re working on publicity for Emmy-winning director Fred Peabody’s new documentary, *The Corporate Coup d’État* screening at Hot Docs Festival in Toronto.”

The documentary itself is a careening leftist screed against corporations and the alleged big-business takeover of the United States under Donald Trump, described as the “grotesque visage of a collapsed democracy.”

Given the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the PR people suggested, “it’s an important time to look at the parallels that are happening in Canada.”

There is no actual mention of SNC-Lavalin in [The Corporate Coup d’État](#), but there’s plenty of old-fashioned Canadian radicalism to warm the steamy imaginations of Canada’s leftists. The film’s director is from Vancouver, and two of the star intellectual performers beating the drums of neo-Marxist economics are Maude Barlow and John Ralston Saul. Most Canadians have forgotten these two legends of national activism, but they anchor the U.S.-focused Coup d-État.

The doc’s opening seconds show scenes from Trump’s inauguration, overlaid with creepily ominous music and Ralston Saul’s voice delivering creepily ominous words: “It could be argued that we are now in the midst of a coup d’état in slow motion. Democracy is weakening, corporatism is strengthening. Yet none of us has chosen this route for our society in spite of which our elites, quite happily, continue down it.”

In a way, Coup d’État is a follow-up to another Canadian propaganda documentary, Joel Bakan’s 2003 *The Corporation* (which also featured an appearance by Barlow). A [sequel](#) to that Canadian takedown of U.S. big business is also said to be in the works.

Exactly how SNC-Lavalin fits the U.S. narrative, or the corporate-coup theme, is far from clear —although there is certainly a movement in Canada to turn the Quebec firm’s troubles into a metaphor for the corporate infiltration of politics.

A few hours before the email promoting the documentary landed last week, the CBC [published](#) a suggestive news report that amounted to a smear on former business leaders associated with SNC-Lavalin. “What the SNC board may have known about the firm’s dealings in Libya,” said the headline. Below were mug shots of a dozen prominent Canadians who sat on the SNC-Lavalin board when the company allegedly paid bribes to the corrupt Moammar Gadhafi dictatorship in Libya.

Canadian oil industry veteran Gwyn Morgan, who chaired the SNC-Lavalin board through part of the Libyan corruption period, told the CBC that he and other board members were unaware of illegal activities. But the CBC still dragged the names of a dozen Canadians — including former MP Lorna Marsden, veteran businessman Ian Bourne, former senator Hugh Segal and Chapters founding CEO Lawrence Stevenson — through the corruption story. The insinuation behind the smear job was that the reason SNC-Lavalin is seeking a deferred prosecution agreement is to protect board members and top executives from the public humiliation of a trial.

Moving along now to the next Canadian anti-corporate rage to infiltrate my email in recent days, we have a short [video](#) titled “A Message From the Future With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.” As readers will know, Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), promoter of the “Green New Deal,” is the U.S. Democrats’ standard-bearer for America’s radical socialist left.

AOC provides the voiceover to an animated portrayal of the horrors created by Exxon and other “massive corporations” who, despite knowing that global warming loomed, kept “digging, mining, drilling and fracking like there was no tomorrow.” What America needs, says AOC, is national child care, a national jobs program, an end to fossil fuel use and a total remake of the economy: Socialism with American characteristics.

If the video’s message sounds a little familiar, a kind of [Leap Manifesto](#) for America, it’s no coincidence. One of the video’s creators is Canadian Naomi Klein (who also starred in Bakan’s anti-corporate documentary). Klein describes the animated video as AOC’s call for America to look to the glory days of the 1930s and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s original New Deal as the model for a green version. The video’s credits also say it was “co-written” by Avi Lewis, Klein’s husband and co-creator of the 2015 Leap Manifesto — which even Canada’s NDP has rejected.

Canadians are also behind another anti-corporate screed touring the world, “Anthropocene: The Human Epoch,” which aired on Crave TV this week to mark Earth Day. Created by Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky and Canadian filmmakers Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier, Anthropocene is a brooding portrayal of planetary ruin caused by a [new geological era](#) brought on by human rapaciousness, based on a vicious view of people as pillaging destroyers rather than magnificent creators.

Not all Canadian influence on current cinema culture fits the Barlow/Klein/Lewis/Burtynsky/Ralston Saul worldview. B.C. zoologist Susan Crockford recently exposed the fake claim that climate change had caused walrus to plunge off cliffs to their deaths in a famous scene in “Our Planet,” the Netflix/World Wildlife Fund documentary series. (Her article [appears elsewhere in FP Comment](#) Wednesday.)

Talk about a coup d’état: As Canadians move slowly toward more conservative governments, Americans are being lured to the extreme anti-corporate left by some old-time Canadian socialists. Former U.S. President Barack Obama used to say “the world needs more Canada.” America could use a lot less.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Prey

Andrew Parker April 24, 2019 11:41 am



**Prey**  
**8 out of 10**

[Andrew Parker](#)

Director Matt Gallagher (*Grinders*, *How to Prepare for Prison*) takes a poignant, pointed, and impassioned look at one Canadian man's fight to hold the Catholic Church accountable for sexual abuse with *Prey*, an unprecedented look at the legal side of prosecuting such charges.

Roughly, only two percent of all sexual misconduct charges brought against the Catholic Church ever go to trial. Not only are they notoriously hard to prosecute with any degree of certainty and they force those abused to relive horrible, painful memories, but the church prefers to settle everything out of court with cash payouts as quietly as possible. They seem to have met their match, however, in the form of Rod MacLeod, a man who was repeatedly abused over 55 years ago (starting in Grade 9) by Father Hodson Marshall, a known pedophile and member of the Basilian sect who the church bounced around between various parishes to give a degree of plausible deniability surrounding the charges brought against him. Unlike many victims, Rob actually has the money, time, and mental toughness to face the employer of his abuser in court, and he's hired seasoned, legendary lawyer Rob Talach – who has prosecuted almost 400 cases against the Catholic Church – as his counselor.

*Prey* embeds viewers with the prosecution (although not in the Toronto courtroom, where cameras aren't allowed) as they prepare and make their case. For MacLeod, the trial isn't about getting revenge on his deceased abuser or even about the money. It's about public accountability, something that the Catholic Church has strenuously sought to avoid through protection of abusers, delusions of faith, and a well oiled PR machine. *Prey* spends time with MacLeod, Talach, other survivors (including Patrick McMahon, a deeply wounded soul who follows the trial very closely), and even with the trial's primary defendant and face for the Basilians, Father David Katulski, who provides Gallagher with some bone chillingly flippant and non-committal answers.

The Catholic Church has been taken to task for their crimes and cover-ups before, but *Prey* might be the first film to illustrate exactly how one goes about prosecuting such a wealthy and powerful entity and the bravery needed to bring such well protected abusers to justice.

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038893/hot-docs-2019-review-prey/>

## “For Sama” Director Waad al-Kateab: ‘This film is the only weapon I have against the regime’

APRIL 24, 2019

/

by [MARCIA ROBIOU](#) Abrams Journalism Fellow, FRONTLINE/Columbia Journalism School Fellowship



Waad al-Khataeb

In 2011, as protests against the Assad regime broke out across Syria, economics student Waad al-Kateab grabbed her phone and started filming. For the next five years, al-Kateab would document her surroundings almost constantly — including as destruction took hold in rebel-held Aleppo, her home.

In the FRONTLINE feature film *For Sama*, al-Kateab provides an unflinching view of motherhood and war. Through hundreds of hours of footage, al-Kateab captured her twenty-something life — falling in love; marrying one of the last doctors in Aleppo; and giving birth to her daughter Sama — as her city crumbles around her. By zeroing in on a hospital’s efforts to cope with the sheer number of casualties, al-Kateab sharpens our understanding of the toll the five-year siege took on civilians.

The film is a letter to Sama, who was born and raised among conflict. But it is also a way for al-Kateab to highlight what happened to her home. “This film is the only weapon I have to fight against the regime,” she said.

[For Sama won](#) the SXSW 2019 Jury Award for Best Documentary Feature in March and [has been selected to screen](#) at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival. Following a theatrical release this summer, a broadcast version of *For Sama* will premiere on FRONTLINE in the U.S. and internationally on the U.K.’s Channel 4. We spoke to Emmy award-winning directors al-Kateab and Edward Watts ahead of [For Sama’s appearance](#) at the Hot Docs film festival.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

How did you become a journalist?

**Waad al-Kateab:** I always dreamed of becoming a journalist. My parents supported me in whatever decision I would make, but with this one, they would say, ‘Don’t do this. You can’t do this.’ My parents — my father especially — would tell me that it is impossible to be a journalist in Syria, and that I would get sent to prison.

Suddenly, in 2011, the revolution started. I wanted to be a part of this change. So, I started filming the protests at Aleppo University with my phone.

From the early days of the revolution, all of the official news channels were saying that nothing was happening, that Syria was a very good country with democracy and freedom. The regime was not allowing any foreign journalists



## Frontline, PBS – April 24, 2019 (2 of 3)

inside the country in the first year to cover the protests. We hadn't seen anything like this before, so I felt like it was our role to show the world what was happening. I wanted evidence, and I felt that film is a way to really transfer the reality of what was happening to others.

Were there any times when you had to turn the camera off or look away?

**Al-Kateab:** I was always at the hospital with my camera turned on, filming my friends fighting or laughing or just whatever was happening. Suddenly, we lost one of our friends from this group. I felt that the fact I recorded all of these moments with people I could lose at any time was one of the most amazing things I could do in my life. Since then, I decided to record everything, because one day I may be the one who is killed.

It was also really important to me to record the reality of life under the regime — what our dreams were and how we ended up in all this violence. It is a record for the future that is outside the regime propaganda and misinformation.

The camera became a part of me. It was something that supported me and helped me feel strong even when I felt scared.

**Edward Watts:** She was unflinching in what she filmed. There is one shot that I could never get out of my head: the pile of dead children just stacked outside a door, literally piled on top of each other. She filmed that, and it was this raw truth.

There are scenes in the film that are quite graphic. What were some of the discussions around what you decided to show?

**Al-Kateab:** People in Syria had to deal with these things whether we had the strength or not. There was no choice. I wanted the film to be delivered to people just like the war came to us, while being respectful of the dead and their families.

People around the world — even us sometimes — start to see the dead as just numbers. It is different when you see death up close. The solution isn't to not watch, but in how we react to it.

**Watts:** It was such a difficult balance to strike. You have a responsibility to show the reality in whatever way you can, because that is how we as a civilization advance and learn from our mistakes. But finding the right balance wasn't just down to us: it was down to our executives, as well as our friends, family and other people contributing, because we wanted to show the reality and respect the people who were suffering and continue our duty to the truth.

There is a line in the film about how living a normal life in Aleppo is a form of rebellion. Can you talk about what it means to maintain normalcy in the most abnormal of situations?

**Al-Kateab:** The regime is trying to kill our hope. I really believe that we would not be able to survive without hope.

There was one guy who would deliver flowers — he helped set up the garden on our porch in Aleppo. I filmed him because I wanted to record the hope and beauty of how he continued to do his job despite the siege. He ended up getting killed. When you are really desperate and can't see anything good, something beautiful comes your way, and that gives you hope.

## Frontline, PBS – April 24, 2019 (3 of 3)

**Watts:** That is the mighty humanity on display in the film. It is such an incredible testament to the human spirit and what people can survive.

Why did the chronology of the film jump around instead of staying linear?

**Watts:** It was so important to be able to move between the light and the dark. We had a previous version that was chronological, and what that meant was you started in all of this joy and hope and light of the revolution. And then you entered this dark pit of the siege and it just felt very unbalanced as a narrative. The movement between the two time periods allows you to move through the humanity and get into the heart and soul of the experience.

**Al-Kateab:** It shows how any human being can live his life after having these experiences. In each moment — no matter how dark — I always remember the good things. And from the good things, I always come back to some really difficult moments. So, it is exactly how my mind would work.

As a woman and resident of Aleppo, what sort of obstacles and opportunities did you have when filming?

**Al-Kateab:** Some journalists come for one or two months or one year and then leave. I grew up with these people, and we lived together through the siege for five years. My neighbors were used to seeing me with my camera, and I was also living in the hospital. We faced the same threats together and shared all the good and bad things as a family. This made people feel comfortable around me with a camera.

Has your daughter Sama seen the film?

**Al-Kateab:** Of course. It has been two years of me working on the film on my laptop. She gets very excited when she sees herself on the screen and shouts her name. We are trying to make sure she remembers where she comes from. When we ask her where she is from, she will say, 'Syria, Aleppo.'

Has the concept of home changed for you now that you are residing in the U.K.?

**Al-Kateab:** Home will always be Aleppo and Syria. We are trying to lead a normal life in London, but at any moment we could return to Syria. People always ask me why I stayed in Syria even though there was so much suffering and war. Even though we could have been killed, we were happy to stay because we were fighting for our land, our freedom. When we lost Aleppo, we thought we lost everything. But we do find new hope.

This morning my father called me early because he wasn't aware of the time difference. When I told him the time, he asked me why I was checking my phone so early. I laughed and said I am always checking the news to see if the regime has fallen. Then my mom shouted from the other side of the room, 'don't worry, if the regime falls, we will call you.'

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/for-sama-director-waad-al-kateab-this-film-is-the-only-weapon-i-have-against-the-regime/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Campo

Andrew Parker, April 24, 2019 8:19 pm



### Campo

8 out of 10

Existing in the space between philosophy and art, Portuguese filmmaker Tiago Hespanha's heady and striking documentary *Campo* is a rigorous look at ritualism, the indifference and boredom it breeds, and our perpetually tenuous place in the universe.

*Campo* finds Hespanha visiting the Alcochete Firing Range just outside of Lisbon; a place of many natural wonders that also happens to be the largest military base in Europe and one of the home bases for Portugal's Air Force. While soldiers in training go about their sometimes monotonous, sometimes dangerous daily duties, the natural world around them remains unchanged, and even thriving in some respects. Through his observations and the grafting of classic mythologies and philosophies over the images, Hespanha looks at the duality of the word "campo," which in Latin represents both a place for soldiers to fight upon and the area where animals graze and raise their young.

*Campo* sounds precisely like the kind of free-thinking exercise that could very quickly lose whatever threads it was trying to weave, but Hespanha's execution is flawless. Hespanha's images are stunning (paratroopers falling through the skies like dandelion seeds, sheep in a foggy pasture, teeming beehives buzzing with activity while their keeper drones on about his duties in cataloguing them), and all of them link up nicely with the film's ideas about nature's indifference towards humanity and our inability at times to discern reality from fiction. Even moments of life and death – both human and animal – are treated with a certain amount of distance, not from Hespanha, but from nature and humanity alike. Hespanha also allows for some of the soldiers and people he meets along the way (including a birdwatcher and a budding piano prodigy) to share their own philosophies, enriching the experience of *Campo* even further and even making room for a thoughtful subtext regarding the ways we communicate with nature and each other..

*Campo* is an intellectually fascinating bit of work that seems to support the idea that living creatures were created only because the gods got bored. It's a near perfect blend of romanticism and fatalism that will make like-minded viewers look at the world around them in new and exciting ways.

## Hot Docs Review: 'Pipe Dreams' Is a Gripping Look at an International Music Competition, Directed by Stacey Tenenbaum



By [Sarah Melton](#)  
Published Apr 24, 2019

Stacey Tenenbaum's surprisingly high-stakes documentary *Pipe Dreams* follows five musicians in the months leading up to the Canadian International Organ Competition (CIOC), or, as competitor Yuan Shen refers to it, "Olympics for [the] organ." The youngest competitor, Sebastian Heindl, says the competition could function as his jumping off point to being "a young star."

Leaning into the drama of competition, *Pipe Dreams* travels from China to the U.S., highlighting each competitor's dedication to the instrument. As a kid, Alcee Chriss III attended black churches that didn't have organs, so he called up surrounding organists until he found someone willing to teach him. Thomas Gaynor, a New Zealand organist, moved to New York to be able to study with his teacher, David Hicks. And Yuan Shen, the first CIOC competitor from China, wants to make her father proud, and open the door for others.

For each musician, the prospect of winning looms as large as the great Casavant organ at Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica that they perform on. Of course, the challenging music booming through its 7000 pipes doesn't hurt the drama, either.



AUTHOR **TIFFY THOMPSON**

## **“TOXIC BEAUTY” IS A KNOCKOUT PUNCH TO AN AMORAL COSMETIC INDUSTRY**

POSTED ON APRIL 24, 2019

For many women, the idea of ‘self-care’ is enmeshed within our cosmetic routines; nails, hair, skin, makeup. We like to think that the stuff we slather on our bodies every day is good for us or, at the very least, isn’t *harming* us. A new documentary, *Toxic Beauty*, demonstrates that nothing could be farther from the truth. In combing through a substantial body of evidence, highlighted by interviews with researchers, doctors and patients, *Toxic Beauty* paints a grim picture where unscrupulous cosmetic companies hawk products that are causing everything from endocrine disruption to ovarian cancer. In the film, we see young women going to any length to maintain the de facto western beauty standard, and using harmful cosmetic products to achieve that end. We also meet women who are dying due to their (inadvertent) use of these toxic chemicals.

*Toxic Beauty* is a wake-up call that will make you shake out your makeup bag and do some serious purging. It may also leave you with more questions than answers—about how this extremely profitable industry has been able to go unchecked for so long, and where we go from here. We spoke with *Toxic Beauty*’s director Phyllis Ellis this week.

### **SDTC: When did it become clear that this issue was something to investigate?**

PE: White Pine had been developing a TV series and asked me if I’d take a look at the material to see if there was anything interesting. I landed on the talc issue. I was an Olympian. I used baby powder—like so many athletes do—many times a day. In a deodorant way, in shoes, in underwear, after showers. It was just a staple for me and so many athletes. I had come across women who had passed away with ovarian cancer, and I got scared. If the most trusted brand at that point was causally linked to ovarian cancer, what else am I using that could potentially cause harm?

I had the great fortune of connecting with Dr. Dan Cramer out of Boston; they call him the grandfather of epidemiology. He found a fairly strong causal link between ovarian cancer and talc. The company got in touch with him in 1982. He basically said, “You might want to put a warning label on this.” And it didn’t happen. So you think of how many years ago that was. After talking to him, he turned me on to some other amazing people. As you go, one thing leads to another.

### **Whose stories in particular moved you?**

I wanted to connect directly with human beings. One is whistleblower Deane Berg, a woman with ovarian cancer that took on—with the support of this extraordinary lawyer out of Mississippi—the biggest pharmaceutical company and won (a bit like an Erin Brockovich story). She took a stand.

I also spent time with some extraordinary women at the end of their lives. They had big lives; now they’re dying because of a personal care product. I always find it such a privilege to be with someone towards the end of their life. There is a different way that they express themselves. Looking at one’s own mortality through someone else’s gaze; it’s quite profound. And they were willing to be part of a narrative that could help other women.

## **She Does the City – April 24, 2019 (2 of 2)**

It was an amazing opportunity to talk to the victims and survivors, those that are leading the science in this area, and the organizations who have been championing this research for years. This isn't new information, but it is now hitting a chord. Even journalists—the first thing they do is open up their makeup bag and ask, “Is this toxic?”

### **Was there anything you came across in your research that surprised you?**

I became very aware of products I put on my children, and products my mother put on me. I was really jarred by the endocrine disruptors and the long-term impact on children. If you look at the body of the first line of defence, there's exterior pollution and then there's interior pollution. That's one thing we can control: what we put on our body, what we put on our children's bodies.

### **Meanwhile, the industry would have us believe that there are no significant harms from using this stuff.**

It's really easy for a naysayer to say, “Oh, it's just trace amounts of lead. You'd have to eat 700 tubes of lipstick in order for lead to be an impact.” Well, no amount of lead is safe, period. Over a lifetime, with the number of times you apply and reapply lipstick, we are eating it over a period of time.

### **We tend to view cosmetics flippantly, and they're not regulated in the same way food and drugs are. If these products were geared towards men, do you think there would be more regulation?**

Yes, for sure. Dr. Philippa Darbre said, “Make no mistake, this is an assault on women.” If there were a bunch of men dying from some product they were using, I can assure you, there would probably be something done about it a lot sooner.

### **Do you expect a lot of pushback from the cosmetic industry with releasing this film?**

Potentially, yes. But I think there's enough support and strong science to support this narrative. Harvard wouldn't be putting big dollars into researching it. You have to ask yourself, when a big company says this isn't true, who is paying for that opinion? It doesn't negate thirty studies that say it is true.

When Canada announced in December that talc is a carcinogen, when a country takes on that kind of leadership—that's serious business. I was very proud to be a Canadian on that day. That's a big alert. Now we just have to get talc off the shelves.

### **How has making this film changed your lifestyle?**

I've cleared out my life. I use lipstick and mascara that are clean. I use one particular shampoo that has no phthalates or parabens, and it's been tested. I use coconut oil. I use baking soda. I clean my house pretty much with vinegar and lemon. I think it's important.

### **What needs to change?**

The current regulatory system lets a product on the market before it's been tested, so we have a problem and it needs to be fixed. We can influence our regulators, our government, our MPs. If you look at the EU, they've done extraordinary work in this field and have eliminated thousands of harmful chemicals from cosmetics. When things are banned in the EU, but we're still using them, I think that alone should tell us we should pay attention. I hope it's an alarm bell. I'm not saying don't dye your hair and don't use makeup. This is a discretionary thing. We can choose not to. We don't have to use them.

**Toxic Beauty opens on April 29 at Hot Docs.**

*Interview has been edited and condensed.*

<http://www.shedoesthecity.com/toxic-beauty-is-a-knockout-punch-to-an-amoral-cosmetic-industry>



## Sisters, sexual abuse and one Surrey family's bond in new movie 'Because We Are Girls'



*Sisters Salakshana, Jeeti and Kira Pooni with their mother, Narinder (left), in a family photo of them in Williams Lake, the B.C. town where they once lived. (submitted photo: NFB)*

### DOCUMENTARY

Cloverdale's Jeeti Pooni led effort to create the documentary, set to debut at festivals

[TOM ZILLICH](#)

Apr. 24, 2019 2:15 p.m.

A Surrey-area family is the focus of a heart-wrenching yet hopeful new movie that documents the sexual abuse of three sisters who grew up in Williams Lake decades ago.

One of the siblings, Cloverdale resident Jeeti Pooni, led the effort to have *Because We Are Girls* made, to shed light on the issue and also protect and empower girls today, including her two daughters.

The sisters – Jeeti, Kira and Salakshana – were abused by an older cousin beginning in their childhood years, but didn't tell the entire family about it until 2006. As their relatives and police were made aware of the incidents, a court case slowly developed, as did a documentary film directed by Baljit Sangra.

Jeeti knew filmmaker Sangra from her work in the fashion industry, and years ago told her friend about her difficult past.

"I have a lot to do with pursuing the court case and making sure that, for one, we were heard and that the police heard us and the court case proceeded," Jeeti told the *Now-Leader*. "I had a lot to do with the film itself, because I was the one who approached the film board, the NFB, that a film should be made about this, and that was in 2014."

Three years in the making, with the court case ongoing, *Because We Are Girls* will have its world premiere during Toronto's Hot Docs film festival, held from May 1 to 3, and will open the [DOXA Documentary Film Festival](#) in Vancouver later this week, with screenings on Friday, May 3, and Tuesday, May 7.

Sangra's 85-minute film, at times powerful and poignant, heartbreaking and haunting, also weaves in the moments of happiness and joy the sisters experienced as kids. In home movies, they are shown dancing, singing and celebrating weddings. In newer footage, they return to the playground at their former school in Williams Lake.

Ultimately, *Because We Are Girls* offers an empowering story about a conservative Indo-Canadian family coming to grips with sexual violence.

## Peace Arch News – April 24, 2019 (2 of 3)

"I knew the story had to be told, and that it was a way for my sisters and I to be heard as well," Jeeti said in a phone interview. "It was about changing attitudes and beliefs, and having the community wake up and not bury the issue of sexual abuse anymore."

The sisters felt silenced years ago, Jeeti added, "and that made me want to pursue this, because it can't be this way anymore. And I have daughters, and to make this a better place for them, we have to start having this dialogue about sexual abuse."

The movie reveals how the girls felt they couldn't tell anyone about the abuse, for fear of "being shipped off to India" and being shunned for what happened.

"The biggest advantage he had was he knew we'd keep our mouths shut," one of the sisters says of the accused, whose identity is kept out of the film.

"Any mention of him, there was no place in the film, no need," Jeeti said. "At the time the film was being shot, the court case was proceeding, so there were things we couldn't share, but now that it's all wrapping up, I think the important thing is that this story is not about him, it's about the resilience of my sisters and I, and stepping into our power and standing up for ourselves and sharing our truth, no matter if we're believed or not. The story is more about that, and also when you see my daughters in the film, that's when it should really hit home that my sisters and I were once little girls just like that, right. It's to show that innocence and wake up the community to stop blaming the girls and the women."

Committed to cultivating curiosity and critical thought, [#DOXA2019](#) will present 82 films from across Canada and around the world, representing some of the very best in contemporary documentary cinema. Get your tickets at <http://www.doxafestival.ca>

Sangra has crafted an intimate documentary about the family's struggles, after Jeeti pushed the NFB to have her direct the feature-length movie.

"It's not a story that can be told every day," Sangra said. "It was more about Jeeti's story at first, and I always imagined it as a family story, and we got them in one by one. We gained the trust of the family and the sisters."

The sisters' family members, including their parents, are shown discussing the past, the pain, the future.

"With getting them involved, I just had that sense, that feeling, because this wasn't about blaming anyone or making anyone feel wrong in my family, right," Jeeti said. "My sisters and my parents, they have that trust that I wouldn't bring them into something where they'd be smeared in any way. I have so much love and respect for them, and they know that.... I think for my parents, they couldn't help us, and whatever happened to us girls, happened to us, so this is a way for them to do something about it now, you know."

Can't believe this is actually happening. [@DOXAFestival](#) [@baljitsangra604](#) [@thenfb](#) my sisters and I are ready!!! [#becausewearegirls](#)

**DOXA Festival** [@DOXAFestival](#)

[#DOXA2019](#) Preview: Because We Are Girls, Opening Gala May 3, 7:00pm at the [@VanPlayhouse](#).

An intimate portrait by local filmmaker Baljit Sangra, of three sisters from a conservative Indo-Canadian family in BC who were abused by a relative.

Tickets: <https://www.doxafestival.ca/film/because-we-are-girls> ...

## Peace Arch News – April 24, 2019 (3 of 3)



Today, in addition to designing shawls for her [To Desire](#) business, Jeeti works as a motivational speaker focusing on sexual-abuse awareness. Her debut book, *The Silent Stoning*, is due to be published this fall, according to a description of it on [her website \(jeetipooni.com\)](#).

As dark as some moments are in the film, there is also some lightness and joy in *Because We Are Girls*.

Says Jeeti: “These horrible things have happened to me and my sisters when we were young and, in my case, into adulthood, but we still had a fun life and still did fun things – we weren’t miserable, nor do we live miserable lives now. I think that people think once you’ve been victimized, there’s a certain sorrow that lingers over you. And as you see in the film, there are happy moments and jokes we make, and that’s just us.”

The film will probably be shown in Surrey soon, Jeeti noted.

“We hope that will happen,” she said, “but there are no dates set yet. I think organizations will learn about it and reach out to us, as well as universities, and I see it playing there (in Surrey), and I do feel the film will be shown worldwide, as the word gets out.”



*Cloverdale resident Jeeti Pooni in the documentary film “Because We Are Girls.” (submitted photo: NFB)*



*The new documentary movie “Because We Are Girls” follows sisters Salakshana, Kira and Jeeti Pooni (from left) as they come to terms with a devastating secret 25 years in the making: they were sexually abused by the same older relative throughout their childhood years. (submitted photo: NFB)*



*Baljit Sangra directed the new documentary movie, “Because We Are Girls.”*

<https://www.peacearchnews.com/entertainment/sisters-sexual-abuse-and-one-surrey-familys-bond-in-new-because-we-are-girls-movie/>

## Documentary Surrounding Life In Fort McMurray Oil Sands Premiering In Toronto

Fort McMurray, AB, Canada / MIX 103.7

[Brandon Piper](#)

April 24, 2019 06:16 pm



A documentary showing the life of six millennials hoping to land jobs in the oilsands is hitting screens in Toronto.

“Limit is the Sky” originally screened in Fort McMurray back in April 2017 – and to mark three years since the wildfire – the production will be at the 2019 Hot Docs International Documentary Festival.

The film was shot in the RMWB from 2012 to 2016 – capturing the boom of the economy, the downturn, along with the wildfire and evacuation of the community.

Director Julia Ivanova tells Mix News the film shows the juxtaposition from before the boom to after the wildfire.

“It shows we can dream as much as we wish but there are economic realities in the world that we cannot control and also there are destinies and events that may be accidental but then again, maybe not.”

The documentary follows six young Canadians, including refugees from the Middle East and Africa, who come to Fort McMurray in hopes of financial prosperity.

Ivanova says the story is centred around their lives after coming to the region.

“It’s the eternal story of looking for gold in the isolated frontiers. So, I’m very happy it is being shown in Ontario. Maybe those who come to the screening will see what this place is and hopefully understand it a little better.”

The film will play in Toronto at the [Hot Docs Festival](#) on May 2nd.

<https://www.mix1037fm.com/2019/04/24/74126/>

## Review: 'The Sound of Masks'

Hot Docs '19

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 24th, 2019



Courtesy of Hot Docs

### ***The Sound of Masks***

(South Africa/Portugal, 70 min.)

Dir. Sara CF de Gouvei

Programme: Artsclapes (North American Premiere)

*The Sound of Masks* is a wicked cool arts doc about the power of dance. It's a story of resistance and of keeping cultural identity alive through the arts as director Sara CF de Gouvei spotlights one man, Atanásio Nyusi, and his devotion to preserving Mozambique's anti-colonial history through dance. Nyusi's passion is Mapiko, a form of masked dance from Makonde culture that involves telling stories and sharing history through artistic expression. The film, one of the better works to screen at the festival with the support of the Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Development Funding for African documentary, is an invigorating portrait of cultural survival.

Nyusi knows how to use his charisma and funky moves to engage an audience. Similarly, de Gouvei finds the right visuals to further her subject's narration and offers moments of poetry as Nyusi reflects upon his work with his dance group Massacre de Mueda, named for a brutal slaughter that claimed over 600 Makonde people. The film draws upon new interviews with Nyusi as well as archival images that chart Mozambique's history under Portuguese rule, while clips of the Mapiko dances performed before and after the nation's independence in 1974 chart the art form's culture of resistance. As de Gouvei and Nyusi convey, Mapiko was banned during the decade-long war of independence because of its anti-colonial spirit and power.

Offering frequent interplays between sound and image, the film might cut to a Malickian glimpse of the trees as Nyusi speaks about how the country and the dance have grown over the years, or the film might contrast archival footage of the Portuguese propaganda machine with archival snippets of Nyusi and his dancers defying their oppressors through Mapiko. The power of propaganda seems to be an overarching theme at Hot Docs this year and *The Sound of Masks* engages with the power of images to counteract authority with messages of resistance.

The doc also gives fair airtime to Nyusi's son, Napeto, as they discuss the significance of the dance and their history. *The Sound of Masks* beautifully evokes the transmission of heritage and culture through some gorgeously shot sequences that put the masks on display and highlight the empowering character of Mapiko dancing. These sequences, lit effectively on soundstages with spotlights on the masks and the dancers' striking make-up, evoke the spiritual nature of Mapiko that Nyusi describes throughout the film. The doc's haunting score is equally effective in evoking the voices of the past.

The masks are truly beautiful works of art, and significant artifacts of cultural identity akin to the traditional masks that *POV* readers may have seen created by the late Kwakwaka'wakw artist Beau Dick in [\*Maker of Monsters\*](#). Like *Maker of Monsters*, *The Sound of Masks* highlights the legacy of Indigenous art and its ability to fuel a renaissance for a culture that colonial powers tried to erase. *The Sound of Masks* pays tribute to artists who offer messages of resistance and strength in times of adversity, teaching new generations to keep their heritage alive.

***The Sound of Masks* screens:**

- Wed, May 1 at 8:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Fri, May 3 at 3:30 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Sun, May 5 at 2:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox



## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Killing Patient Zero

Andrew Parker, April 24, 2019 11:35 am



### Killing Patient Zero

8 out of 10

Veteran Canadian director Laurie Lynd (*Breakfast with Scot*) takes an in-depth look at the panic and misinformation spread within the gay community at the start of the AIDS crisis with the insightful, thought provoking, and empathetic documentary *Killing Patient Zero*.

After a loosening of social and political restrictions regarding homosexuality in the 1970s, the following decade started with tragedy and sorrow due in no small part to the emergence of “gay cancer,” later to be known as AIDS. The conservative Reagan administration refused to believe that the disease – which killed thousands – was a health crisis, and doctors, researchers, and advocates scrambled to find cures, treatments, and answers about this previously unprecedented ailment. One of the biggest assets to researchers was Gaétan Dugas, an out, proud, flamboyant, and promiscuous flight attendant from Quebec. Thanks to Dugas divulging his sexual history, doctors and researchers were able to create a map that allowed them to better understand the disease. However, when the study went public and renowned journalist Randy Shilts published his seminal book *And the Band Played On*, Dugas was wrongfully outed as “patient zero” for the outbreak. In reality, he was more like Patient 57, and the zero was actually the letter o.

While Dugas’ family remains quiet to this day thanks to the negative press they received in the 1980s, Lynd’s film still offers a balanced look at how understandably frightened and grieving people can search en masse for answers and scapegoats during a period of crisis. *Killing Patient Zero* shows how Dugas’ name became synonymous with AIDS itself after his passing, but even if this information had come out prior, the former Air Canada employee’s life wouldn’t have gotten much worse than it already was.

Blending a wide array of interviews with Dugas’ friends and colleagues, researchers, journalists, and those who lived through the early years of the epidemic with some eye opening archival footage (including a community meeting in Vancouver attended by Dugas that grows uncomfortable in a hurry), *Killing Patient Zero* (which takes some of its cues from Richard McKay’s book *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic*) is the best primer on the subject since Shilts’ book. It might also be a lot more balanced, benefiting greatly through the healing power of time and hindsight.

**Friday, April 26, 2019 – 8:30 pm – TIFF Bell Lightbox 1**

**Saturday, April 27, 2019 – 12:30 pm – Scotiabank Theatre 4**

**Friday, May 3, 2019 – 2:45 pm – Hart House Theatre**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038889/hot-docs-2019-review-killing-patient-zero/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship

Andrew Parker April 24, 2019 11:49 am



### On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship

6 out of 10

The numerous historical and political details present in *On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship*, director Karen Stokkendal Poulsen's look at Myanmar's tenuous and crumbling democracy, are a lot to take in over a single, tightly packed sitting, but as a representation of an underreported and complex story, it's certainly commendable. It's an intricate, well drawn bit of longform journalism.

In 2015, Nobel Prize winner and human rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi won a commanding victory in her country's first ever democratic general elections following over fifty years of military rule in the nation formerly known as Burma. Becoming not only the country's first female leader, but also its first true president wasn't easy for Suu Kyi. She had to overcome years of oppression put in place, a power structure that put faith in monks, tradition, and military might over practicalities and the citizenry, and legislation that literally blocked her from holding higher office. She bested all of these obstacles and became one of the most celebrated and inspirational leaders in global politics. That all came crashing down shortly into her presidency, however, when it was revealed that the compromises she made with political rivals to get elected also helped facilitate the Rohingya Muslim genocide in the country.

Poulsen (*The Agreement*) starts off *On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship* slowly and methodically, talking to politicians and military leaders on all sides (including Suu Kyi) to give viewers a detailed understanding of how Myanmar's evolving democracy remains nothing more than a series of jarring false starts to this day. Trying to make sense of Burmese military and political history is daunting; a bit like learning a foreign language. It's difficult to understand, but once Poulsen has provided the necessary groundwork, *On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship* becomes an enthralling cautionary tale.

Still, one wishes that Poulsen stuck the landing a little better. Partially thanks to Suu Kyi's implication in one of the worst ongoing human rights issues in the world today, *On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship* curiously peters out of energy just as new wrinkles are being introduced. It doesn't let Suu Kyi off the hook for what's been happening in her country, but *On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship* also doesn't fully know how to end its continuing narrative. (This film also makes for exceptional back to back viewing with Petra Costa's *The Edge of Democracy*, which is also playing at this year's festival and examines a similar political maelstrom in Brazil.)

**Friday, April 26, 2019 – 8:15 pm – TIFF Bell Lightbox 4**

**Sunday, April 28, 2019 – 12:15 pm – Hart House Theatre**

**Thursday, May 2, 2019 – 12:15 pm – Scotiabank Theatre 3**

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038897/hot-docs-2019-review-on-the-inside-of-a-military-dictatorship/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Maxima

Andrew Parker April 24, 2019 11:56 am



### Maxima

8 out of 10

Few films at this year's festival are as equally inspiring and incendiary as Claudia Sparrow's profile of Peruvian subsistence farmer Máxima Acuña. Through the titular subject's efforts to maintain her family's traditional way of life by fighting one of the wealthiest corporations in the world, Sparrow proves that anything is possible, even if the hard fought battles are far from over. Máxima lives a simple life in the Andes alongside her family; raising sheep, guinea pigs, and various crops, not too far from the Yanacocha Mine, the second largest producer of gold in the world. Yanacocha is owned primarily by American corporation Newmont Mining (which last year was the most profitable producer of gold in the world) with other stakes in the claim tied to the Peruvian government and the World Bank. Newmont seeks to expand their operations to Máxima's land, but they don't have any legal claim of ownership. Since 2011, Máxima and her family have put up with psychological tortures, physical violence, legal threats, and constant surveillance from local authorities and Newmont stooges. Through it all, Máxima refuses to yield or sell out to a company that wants to use, abuse, and pollute the land her family has tended to for generations, inspiring many in the process to continue their own fights.

With *Máxima*, Sparrow finds a unique guide to the region and country's issues surrounding mining. Not only does *Máxima* uncover massive abuses of power in the name of corporate profits, but a wider picture of other issues in the region, including the cover-up of a mercury spill that has devastated an entire community. Máxima exemplifies someone who's fighting the good fight long after most people would've given up out of fear and frustration. There are plenty of other interviews here with scientists, activists, politicians, and even former Yanacocha employees who deliver irrefutable damning statements, but Sparrow never takes her eyes off Máxima's tremendous story. It's the right choice.

## Telefilm, Rogers support 16 documentaries

Projects including 2019 Hot Docs opener *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* and Michelle Latimer's *Inconvenient Indian* will share \$1.6 million.

By Lauren Malyk

April 24, 2019



Telefilm and the Rogers Group of Funds have unveiled 16 funding recipients through its Theatrical Feature-Length Documentary Program.

Aimed at increasing the number of Canadians who watch domestic feature films, the \$1.6-million documentary fund encourages the production of high-quality feature-length documentary projects. The Theatrical Feature-Length Documentary Program provides financing towards theatrical documentaries at the post-production or production stage. All told, this year's program will fund nine French-language projects and seven English-language documentaries.

On the English-language side, the program will support the Hot Docs 2019 opening night film, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* from Cree filmmaker Tasha Hubbard; writer/director Michelle Latimer's *Inconvenient Indian* (90th Parallel Productions); and *Red Fever* from writer/director Neil Diamond (Rezolution Pictures International). Produced through Hubbard's Downstream Documentary banner with the NFB, *nîpawistamâsowin* follows the case of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man who died in 2016 from a gunshot wound in an altercation. Meanwhile, Latimer's *Inconvenient Indian* and Diamond's *Red Fever* previously picked up funding from the [Canada Media Fund's English Point of View](#).

Other documentaries selected include: Jennifer Abbott's *The Magnitude of All Things* (Magnitude Productions), a doc that weaves a story of grief with the emerging field of climate change psychology; *The Unmaking* from director Shannon Walsh and writers Harold Crooks and Julien Goetz (Intuitive Pictures Productions); Nancy Lang's *Atwood Encounters* (Atwood Encounters); and *Team Indigenous* from writer/director Courtney Montour and producer Jason Brennan. *Atwood Encounters* examines Canadian author Margaret Atwood's private life over the course of eight months, while *Team Indigenous* tells the story of a team of Indigenous women from across the globe who come together to take part in the Roller Derby World Cup.

French-language projects selected include: *La parfaite victime* from Émilie Perreault and Monic Néron (Cinémaginaire and Films Progresco), which picked up [production assistance funding from SODEC](#) this July; Zaynê Akyol's *Rojek* (Metafilms); *Boat People* from writer Thi Be Nguyen and director Marie-Hélène Panisset (produced by DIY FILMS); writer/director Amandine Gay's *Un enfant à soi* (Echo Media); *Ensemble* from writer/director Jean-Nicolas Orhon (Films JAD); writer/director Olivier D. Asselin's *Fondations* (Argus Films); co-writer/director duo Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins' *Ce que le monde porte en soi* (MO FILMS); *À travers tes yeux* from writer/director Brigitte Poupart (EMAfilms); and finally, writer/director Joséphine Bacon and Carlos Ferrand's doc *Nitassinan* with writer Réginald Vollant (Terre Innue).

Read more: <http://playbackonline.ca/2019/04/24/telefilm-rogers-support-16-documentaries/#ixzz5orlXZNtT>

## Hot Docs '19: Laurie Lynd on “Killing Patient Zero”

By Selina Chignall

April 24, 2019



The rise of populist and right-wing governments across the world has Canadian filmmaker Laurie Lynd worried about the future of the LGBTQ+ community and the progress they have made in recent decades.

It's for this reason that he views his latest film *Killing Patient Zero* as a cautionary tale.

“We live in a society where we forget our history so quickly,” Lynd (pictured, below) tells *Realscreen*.

“Our civil liberties came out of the ashes of that terrible time.”

The 100-minute feature doc, which has its world premiere at Toronto's International Hot Docs Festival, revisits the life of Québécois flight attendant Gaétan Dugas (main image), a gay man who was accused of bringing AIDS to North America and came to be known as “Patient Zero.” In tandem with revealing the truth about Dugas and the role he played in the burgeoning AIDS crisis, Lynd weaves a narrative that examines how deep-rooted homophobia in society let thousands of people die before anyone took action to fight what was being called the “gay plague.”



Lynd is well known for directing such drama and comedy programs as *Schitt's Creek* and *Murdoch Mysteries*; however, when Dugas was exonerated scientifically in 2016, and in Richard McKay's book *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic*, he saw an opportunity to revisit what had been done to Dugas' name by the press.

“I wanted to forever rehabilitate Dugas' name, not just for me, but for his family,” he says.

Lynd, who is gay and lived through the AIDS crisis, says he was immediately drawn to the opportunity to revisit Randy Schilt's 1987 seminal work on the AIDS epidemic, *And The Band Played On*, which was hailed for waking up the public to the crisis, but also led to Dugas being dubbed “Patient Zero.”

Through this documentary, Lynd has been able to bring forth the truth about “Patient Zero.” Produced by Fadoo Pictures, the project took about two and a half years to put together and was funded via Ontario Creates, Hollywood Suite, federal and provincial tax credits and Kew Media, who also holds international distribution rights to the film.



To craft the narrative of *Killing Patient Zero*, Lynd and his team interviewed 40 people in a dozen cities, a hefty but essential number, the director notes. He wanted to interview those who knew Shilts and Dugas, those in the medical and science spaces, and gay critics and scholars who lived through that time – including Fran Lebowitz (pictured, below).



Lynd acknowledges that some people they reached out to didn't want to speak about this painful time period. And as someone who lived through such a harrowing experience, the director was sympathetic to their reluctance to be interviewed.

"I lived through those years... I lost a number of friends and boyfriends. Some lost so many. It took a toll," he says.

With the film using a sizeable amount of archival footage to tell his story, he said it wasn't always easy to track down what he needed.

Going into production, Lynd says he was aware of archive of Dugas speaking at the Vancouver Aids Forum in March 1983 which was critical for the film, but Lynd came across a piece of footage during his prep for his interviews with members of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that proved to be shocking and integral to *Killing Patient Zero*.

In 1982, U.S. president Ronald Regan's press secretary Larry Speakes, along with members of the media, were caught on tape laughing when a reporter confronted Speakes about what the government was doing to help the hundreds of gay men who were dying of AIDS.

"I found that really shocking, I still find it shocking," says Lynd.

With 2019 marking half a century of both the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada and the Stonewall Riots in New York, which is lauded as the birth of the modern gay rights movement, Lynd says he feels it's time to rehabilitate Dugas' image.

"For Gaétan to be an out-proud gay man in the '70s and early '80s, it was a very courageous thing to do. It's hard to remember that in these much more enlightened times. So I really admire his courage," Lynd says.

- ***Killing Patient Zero* world premieres April 26 at 8:30 p.m.ET/PT at TIFF Bell Lightbox 1**

<http://realscreen.com/2019/04/24/hot-docs-19-laurie-lynd-on-killing-patient-zero/>



## Toronto Hot Docs Film Festival to Premiere Moroccan Amazigh Amussu Film

*The documentary focuses on the Imider community's fight against exploitation by the local silver mine.*



*Protest March in Arfour, Azilal, central Morocco, over water cutoffs*

By: **Sydney McCourt**

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The documentary film “Amussu” about protests in Imider, a village in south-east Morocco against exploitative action from a local mining company, has been chosen for premiere at the Hot Docs International Festival in Toronto, Canada, which runs from April 25 to May 6. The film is scheduled to premiere on April 29 with at least two more showings on April 30 and May 4.

If the film wins best international documentary at the festival, it will be eligible for the Oscars.

For Moroccan director Nadir Bouhmouch, “Amussu’s” selection proves that “African cinema does not need large means, does not need French producers, nor their sophisticated equipment, nor hierarchical production structures” to make an impact.

Bouhmouch, a 28-year-old based in Marrakech, works as a filmmaker, photographer, researcher, and writer. His work focuses on indigenous land rights and environmental issues in Morocco’s marginalized interior regions.

Bouhmouch created the film in collaboration with the Imider community. The “Movement On the Road ‘96” acted as the producers and the Local Film Committee of Imider worked with Bouhmouch to write the screenplay. Movement on the Road ‘96 was founded in August 2011 as a grassroots socio-environmental movement and is largely responsible for organizing the Imider protests.

The Local Film Committee of Imider is a film collective made up of local volunteer artists, peasants, workers, shepherds, unemployed youth, and film technicians. The committee acts as the audiovisual arm for the

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Movement on Road the '96. It seeks to promote cultural production and innovation, preserve local culture and popular memory, defend Imider from environmental degradation, and encourage social change.

In addition to creating films, the group has archived hundreds of hours of poems, plays, songs, traditional chants, and oral stories. They have also organized two film festivals, dozens of individual film screenings, and workshops for children, unemployed youth, and women.

### Protests against exploitation

Imider, a village in south-east Morocco, is the location of the biggest silver mine in Africa. Despite promises from the mine's parent company Managem that the mine would bring economic growth and employment to the community, Imider remains one of the poorest regions in Morocco. The local people feel that they have faced abusive exploitation by the mine owners. They say that the fight against the mine is about "the right to water, land, and decent life."

The villagers peacefully rebelled in 2011, shutting down a major water pipeline that leads to the mine. They still occupy the land around the pipeline today and have kept the valve to one of the mine's biggest wells shut for eight years. What was once a makeshift protest camp has essentially become a small solar-powered village.

The pipeline to the mine had been using the village's groundwater, drying out crops and creating serious agricultural problems. According to a report by the Global Amazigh Congress in September 2015, the mine uses 1,555 cubic meters of water every day. The figure is 12 times the village's daily water consumption. Since the water source has been cut off, the mine's capacity has dropped between 30 and 40 percent.

The protestors want to end the mine's exploitation of the village and its water as well as push the government to provide jobs to residents and establish a local school and hospital.

Bouhmouch's film follows the protestors and villagers in their continued efforts beginning in 2016, five years after the protests first began. Dozens of villagers have been arrested in those five years.

The film's creators describe it as "a form of resistance in itself."

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'A PLACE OF TIDE AND TIME'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Court Jarrell](#) - April 24, 2019



There are two types of documentaries: those that have a central thesis and a clear opinion, and those that are a more objective look at the film's subjects. Directors Aude Leroux-Levesque and Sebastien Rist's *A Place of Tide and Time* is firmly planted in the latter category. It is a snapshot of life in a sparsely populated region on the East Coast of Canada, and the differing mentalities of older and younger generations.

While there are a number of subjects whose stories are presented, the film focuses on three people in particular: Ethan – a young man about to graduate high school with the intention of joining the army in a bid to get away, his girlfriend Brittney – with another year of school, unsure of what she'll do next, and Ethan's Uncle Garland – a local fisherman and museum guide recognizing that his way of life is becoming obsolete.

Set against gorgeous desolate landscapes including the Atlantic coast and the snow covered foothills of Eastern Quebec, the film has a staunchly beautiful aesthetic.

This documentary (despite its themes having a nearly universal resonance) has a uniquely Canadian flavour. The subjects go ice-fishing, duck hunting, and snowmobiling. They fell trees, talk and play hockey, and frequently refer to one another as "bud".

Leroux-Levesque and Rist focus their film on the struggles of ordinary folks in these communities, and while the movie finds some balance between hope and despair, it often feels rather bleak. I would have loved a little more optimism to give the documentary a silver lining, but real life simply doesn't always work that way. *A Place of Tide and Time* is a beautifully frank, intermittently heartbreaking and spirited slice of life that presents a touching and heartfelt shift between the ideologies of generations.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'SHOOTING THE MAFIA.'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 28, 2019

3.5 Stars



A strange balancing act occurs within *Shooting the Mafia*, the latest from veteran British observational filmmaker Kim Longinotto, where the documentary's true subject is brought into question. Should the focus of the film be the life of its human subject, or the vast swathes of archival footage that is the human subject's incredible work? Longinotto bravely attempts to do both, however, the extent to which is successful is another matter altogether.

Italian photographer Letizia Battaglia is the subject of *Shooting the Mafia*, and her brazen photography of the criminal activities of the Sicilian mafia stand-out as the high point in her career. Battaglia serves as a narrator for her own journey, covering her early forays into photography to the latter stages of her career. Thankfully, the elder Italian photographer has personality as fiery as her auburn hair, which keeps the viewer engaged. This is when the film is at its strongest, which is a strange twist considering that the other half of this film is the inner workings of the Sicilian mafia. To augment Battaglia's narration, Longinotto uses a mix of archival styles including: news footage, educational documentaries, Battaglia's photographs, and some classic Italian cinema. Hearing Battaglia comment on romances of her youth overtop of a post-neorealist Italian melodrama, is an interesting choice, but also one that belies a sort of aimlessness within the film. I personally struggled to understand this choice. Is it because it reminds us of a stereotypical image of Sicilly? Is it because it personally reminds Battaglia of her youth? Is it to provide a contrast between the impending grisly reality with a more idyllic fictional form? *Shooting the Mafia* provides more questions than it answers, but is ultimately an engaging portrait of a fascinating individual and time period.

## HOT DOCS 2019: TALKING WITH DIRECTOR MAYA NEWELL ABOUT HER FILM 'IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Interviews](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [David Voigt](#) - April 24, 2019



Some things are hard to talk about, but that's what makes for some of the most compelling documentaries...

*In My Blood It Runs* which is having its world premiere this Friday at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival is a heart wrenching look at the daily struggles faced by the Aboriginal Youth of Australia in a school, political and penal system that is seemingly designed to have these young people fail at every turn. This film follows the journey of one young man who is filled with potential but struggles alongside his family to overcome not only a the system, but their own people's internal struggles with maintaining their culture while still acknowledging the need for an education and how to not only survive but thrive in the ever expanding outside world.

In advance of the films premiere I got the unique pleasure to have an e-mail conversation with director Maya Newell about her experiences making the film, the importance of highlighting this topic, the discomfort on the potential of showing the film in Australia and so much more.



**Dave Voigt: This truly is such a complex issue and it's a film that really hinges on your subject Djujan. How did you ultimately find him and his family as subjects in order to tell the story that you wanted to?**

Maya Newell: Around a decade ago, when I was 21, I had the privilege to be invited by elders and families at Akeyulerre Healing Centre in Alice Springs to make films with them about the empowering work families are doing to educate their children in language, culture and identity. I sat with Elders as they recorded song lines for their grandchildren for fear they may be lost, witnessed kids visit their country for the first time and heard children speaking confidently and fluently in their first, second or third languages.

But I was shocked to learn that our mainstream education system perceives these same children as failures at school. And it's no surprise, when in Australia as in many Western countries, First Nations children are primarily only taught in English and their successes are measured by western values. Rarely do we see or

## In the Seats – April 24, 2019 (2 of 3)

value the inner lives of First Nations children growing up as they navigate the rich and complex bi-cultural society they are born into.

So *In My Blood It Runs* is built on the foundation of many years working with Akeyulerre Healing Centre, and grew organically from these relationships. I met Djujan, Megan and Carol on multiple trips to country where we made films about learning Arrernte and knowing the land.

Then about 3 years ago, I was on an Ngnagkere (traditional healing) camp and Djujan started telling me articulately about the world as he saw it. What an intelligent, charismatic, witty and cheeky kid! He was screaming for a spotlight with his heartbreaking wisdoms, childlike sense of morality and adult vulnerability. He was very excited about being in a film, and due to the years of trust built over the previous years, we were able to jump right in. I definitely grew into this film; I needed to be well on my journey of decolonisation and understanding of Arrernte worldview to even contemplate making this film.

\* Note; “country” is used in Australia to refer to broadly to land – and in an Indigenous context to people’s traditional lands.

**The film really does manage to hammer home the issue of how the westernized school system doesn’t work in favor of these Aboriginal kids and in fact it does work against them. Was this the primary focus of your film going in or was it something that became more and more apparent as you got deeper into the material?**

Actually the opposite – in the beginning I thought we were making a film about education, but I soon realised that it was about so much more. While western structures like to silo out issues like education, juvenile justice or welfare, when you follow a child’s life – sit with them – everything is connected. *In My Blood It Runs* illuminates this



interconnectedness, and that understanding the cycles of human rights abuses means one element of the system cannot be separated from one another. They feed and sustain the disadvantage and poverty and, at times, seem to actively keep people disempowered. I realised, through spending intimate time with Djujan and his family, that change needs to be approached holistically as it is experienced by people, not one ‘issue’ at a time, in isolation.

**I was struck by the genuine sense of balance in the film, in how many of your Aboriginal subjects understood the importance of a modern (or colonialist) education yet still wanted to hold on to the traditional older ways of their people. How important was it for you to hold that line while assembling the film to ensure that it was the issues surrounding the educational system that we’re hammered home to an audience rather than issues of racism? Obviously those issues are still around (especially around the detention centres) but the film felt focused on the necessary positives that both types of education could provide the young people.**

What I have learnt is that language, culture and identity are the foundation of everything for Arrernte people, and is core to children’s wellbeing. First Nations peoples shouldn’t have to choose, they should be able to raise their children in ‘both ways’ western education, and Arrernte education – as asserted by Carol (Djujan’s grandmother) in the film. The care, the teaching, and the constant love and effort to support children in this First Nations education is often ignored and rarely valued by western systems. We wanted to show that unseen part of the story, the parallel education that despite a lack of recognition is beating with life and strength.

This film was made in collaboration with the Arrernte and Garrwa families, so the ‘balance’ you mention was upheld by the family and advisors. It was a careful balance to make sure the film was not reinforcing the pervasive negative tropes about young Indigenous people, but instead told a strength and loved based story.



## In the Seats – April 24, 2019 (3 of 3)

We were very clear we wanted to dispel the conventional myths of failure, trauma and dysfunction of First Nations families and instead amplify the resilience, strength and love so often exempt from our screens.

**This film also truly highlights the people as well as the issue at hand. Given the systematic neglect that is seemingly inherent in the system for the Aboriginal peoples, was there any hesitance to get people to participate in the film for fear of reprisal or just even more systemic abuse?**

The years of prior work alongside families to make empowering short films about their lives instilled a sense of trust that made the intimacy of this film possible.

From the onset, we built a structure of community control around the project to provide a sense of trust in our intentions and vision. One of our First Nations producers, Rachel Naninnaq Edwardson in particular gave critical guidance on the consultation model that ensured that those in the film had final say on the ways in which they were represented. So early on, we had the family and advisors outlining important messaging and we all agreed to be extremely careful not to perpetuate conventional prejudices. Those represented, the advisors and the Traditional



Owner of the country we were filming on made us accountable and all involved fed back on the film at assembly, rough-cut and fine-cut stages during consultation sessions.

In terms of fear of reprisal, there is some discomfort with the film coming out locally. It will be hard. But we are addressing this as a united team of filmmakers, subjects, advisors, funders, screen agencies, philanthropists who are clear on the duty of care to Djuwan and his family to share their story with the world.

The families have struggled enormously already and feel that if this film can cause a stir and open hearts and minds, then it has been agreed that those involved are up for the fight.

We will also have an impact strategy with the release of this film, and will be walking by the side of families as they driving the change they want to see.

**These problems are repeated with native populations all across the world in some way, shape or form. Do you think there is any kind of legitimate “solution” out there in order to abate these neglectful and even abusive practices or would it come down to something as simple as just having a further understanding that we all need to adapt and find a middle ground at every level, ranging from globally to locally? What would be your one hope for this film? (Aside from the obvious of getting it in front of as many audiences as possible)**

In impact strategy workshops, the Arrernte and Garrwa families identified three key goals for the film. To amplify ‘truth-telling’ and reckoning with Australia’s past – addressing untold histories and ongoing impacts of racism. To build political support for a formal First Nations lead education system in Australia and to reform juvenile justice from a punitive to a restorative approach.

We hope that the film can encourage policies that centre the rights of First Nations peoples allowing them to have agency over their own decisions and given the respect and dignity they deserve.

As William Tilmouth, one of our key Arrernte advisors always reminds me – the change we need to see all comes down to agency and control, “My people don’t desire to be second class citizens and drift with the currents of prescribed solutions. My people don’t desire educational failure because education is not designed for them.”

*In My Blood It Runs* is having its World Premiere at the TIFF Bell Lightbox as a part of the Hot Docs Film Festival on Friday April 26<sup>th</sup>.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-talking-with-director-maya-newell-about-her-film-in-my-blood-it-runs/>

## Hot Docs 2019: If we could read Gordon Lightfoot's mind, it might go something like this...

BRAD WHEELER

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*Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind is an exploration of the career, music, and influence of the legendary Canadian musical icon. GEOFF GEORGE/COURTESY OF HOT DOCS*

In advance of the world premiere of *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* at this year's Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, the film's co-director Joan Tosoni spoke to The Globe and Mail about the beloved balladeer and which of his stories she and co-director Martha Kehoe chose to tell and which they did not.

Films opening this week: The unstoppable *Avengers: Endgame*, plus Toronto's Hot Docs festival begins

What was your relationship with Gordon Lightfoot before you began making this film?

I've known him for a long time. So has Martha Kehoe, who co-directed the film with me. I first met him at the 1976 Olympics benefit at Maple Leaf Gardens, which we see some of in the film. I was an assistant director on the show. Subsequent to that, we've done many things together over the years. One of which, where our trust started to grow, was the documentary *Country Gold*, which Martha and I did for CBC in the early 1980s. Gord has to trust people before he'll let them at him.

How did this new documentary come to be?

John Brunton, of Insight Productions, always had it in his mind that he wanted to do a documentary on Gord. Finally, five years ago, we thought, "Let's get it done." Gord agreed right away. It did take five years to get the funding, though.

Because of the licensing fees for the music and archival footage?

Right. That's expensive, which meant the budget was higher than it would be otherwise. So, it took a while, but Gord was very patient. He said, "Joan, it'll happen when it happens."

You spoke to a lot of people in the film. Anyone you wanted to get but didn't?

Well, everybody wants Bob Dylan, because he's Bob Dylan. We would have loved to get him, but we didn't. He doesn't do interviews. Neil Young is in the film, performing *Early Morning Rain* at Farm Aid, but he's a busy guy. Our schedules never came together. In the end, not getting those guys didn't hurt the film. I hope it didn't.



*'Gord has to trust people before he'll let them at him,' explains co-director Joan Tosoni. GEOFF GEORGE/COURTESY OF HOT DOCS*

Other than his current wife, no family members appear in the film. Why not?

We decided to explore his artistic output. He's a very private man. He has six children, with four different women. Once you start getting into that, it could be a film in itself. We wanted to get inside his inner workings as an artist. His troubled life, especially in the early days, with his divorces, that's a lot to go into. We just decided it wasn't in the scope of this film.

I was surprised there's no mention of his near death, in 2002, when he suffered a ruptured aortic aneurysm in his abdomen. Why no mention of it?

It was in the cut at one point. Really, the hardest thing about this film was paring down what belonged and what did not. We just decided we had other stuff that we'd rather see. We felt his near death would put a damper on things. He's still going strong. It's a choice we made.

Well, I see it as a glaring omission in his story. On the other hand, no Lightfoot fan will likely complain about the footage of him playing Movin' On at the old Riverboat folk club in Toronto.

That was a promotional video, made by CN Rail. He wrote the song for that film. We knew it was great, and that it had to be in our film. You know, the editing process was not easy. Everybody loves Gord. We could have had two hours of nothing but people praising him.

Everybody loves him, but does he love himself? He comes off as regretful in the film.

He actually says, early in the film, "I guess I don't like who I am." He's a tortured guy, and there's a sense that he's now atoning for things. He has regrets, and he clearly states that. He wants to be better. He talks about his band, and that they always want to make the shows the best they can be. That's him trying to be a good person. Trying, I think, to be worthy.

Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind makes its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival (April 25 to May 6), on April 27 and 30. Information at [www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca)

The film also screens at Vancouver's DOXA Documentary Film Festival (May 2 to 12), on May 4 and 12. Information at [doxafestival.ca](http://doxafestival.ca)

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-hot-docs-2019-if-we-could-read-gordon-lightfoots-mind-it-might-go/>

## Up on the Roof

### *Havana, from on High*

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 24th, 2019 •



*Photo courtesy K Films Amérique*

“To live on a rooftop is to live in a separate world,” says Reynol, a Havana-dweller. “Sometimes I feel like I’m between two worlds,” he goes on. “When I compare the earth and the sky, I am there on the border, close to that which is earth, but also I am close to the sky.” Occupying this liminal space, Havana’s rooftop inhabitants are interviewed, discussing their places within society, in director Pedro Ruiz’s fourth film *Havana, from on High*.

With housing shortages in central Havana, the city’s inhabitants have been increasingly forced upwards into a vertical city of rooftops. The occupants of these homes have a unique perspective on their city. In often small, dingy apartments, they look down upon tourist throngs in double-decker buses. Living in poverty, they are separate from the vacationers that sustain Havana’s economy.

The culture of the rooftop dwellers, as depicted in the film, is one of honesty and resourcefulness. The inhabitants don’t shy from discussing their personal lives, from family to career to political opinions. In particular, there’s an emphasis on the issue of class. Diosbel, an ex-police officer, recalls wearing his uniform when he couldn’t afford other clothes, while Gabriel, a pigeon-keeper, describes the inaccessibly high price of internet access. “We are in a constant struggle,” states a woman named Lala, before describing her desire for a fan and some new dishware, “to have nice things just like anybody else.”



*Photo courtesy K Films Amérique*

But this struggle comes from a diversity of perspectives. In describing their personal lives, the interviewees of Ruiz's film are always political. Some are staunch believers in the Revolution and Fidel Castro. A woman describes her service in the police force with pride, a man makes it clear that he's a communist and will never be a capitalist. Others, though, describe the corruption of that same police force, the poverty of the city and the difficulties in maintaining a life in Havana.

Regardless of their political stance, inhabitants are united in creating their own world, the "separate world" Reynol describes. Pulley systems bring goods up to the tops of buildings, where inhabitants have decorated the roofs with plants, shrines, wall art, laundry and a number keep birds, especially pigeons. Some of these birds are even used even as messengers—a more reliable mode of communication in the face of expensive technology. To live on a rooftop is to have a life which is both incredibly urban and distinct from the city.

Ruiz's film is intent on creating space for the world of the rooftops. Staying largely high up, shots look down on streets, cars, and tourists. These homes, between earth and sky, are depicted as almost otherworldly. The otherwise conventional film structure is broken up: a musical interlude has a man wearing a 1970s-style green suit singing of falling in love again. A drummer narrates a spoken-word poem overtop of shots of the skylines. Focus is placed on high windows, allowing us to enter rooms we'd never see from the street. Depicted with its own style of visuals, sounds and rhythm, the rooftops are their own realm, into which we are permitted to enter in order to learn from the inhabitants as they discuss the things most important to them.

***Havana, from on High screens:***

- Fri, Apr. 26 at 2:45 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Sat, Apr. 27 at 10:15 a.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Fri, May 3 at 10:00 a.m. at TIFF Lightbox



## Hot Docs 2019: Get your tissues out for the service-dog doc Buddy

AMBERLY MCATEER

APRIL 24, 2019



Edith and Makker. ROB ZWARTSER /COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

The final scene in *Buddy*, a new Dutch documentary about service dogs and their human companions, is one familiar to most dog-owners; it is both ordinary and remarkable.

One of the film's six human subjects, Edith, an 86-year-old Dutch woman rendered blind by a bomb during the Second World War, comes home after a walk in the woods with her guide dog, Makker. "It was such a revelation that I could surrender myself to him," she says, later telling the dog casually that, "You're my muzzleface." It's a ridiculous nickname that, as any dog owner will know, is likely one of hundreds.

Edith puts on some music, and falls onto the sofa. Within seconds, Makker is as physically close to her as he can be, his wet nose at her knee as she slowly strokes his neck. When her hand stops petting, his eyebrows raise upward, and big brown eyes yearn for more. The petting begins again. The joy returns to his face; the love is palpable. The hand stops once more, and the eyebrows raise. This repeats for 90 seconds.



Utah and Zeb. ROB ZWARTSER /COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

This is the quiet intimacy so skillfully documented throughout Heddy Honigmann's film, which makes its Canadian premiere at Toronto's Hot Docs Film Festival April 26. There is no sweeping score, no dramatic voice-over, no overt attempt to pull your heartstrings. The viewer is simply in the room, with a blind woman and her dog, listening to music. Or in bed with an autistic boy singing to his dog, as he copes with his anxiety. Or in the park with a veteran who has post-traumatic stress disorder, and his dog, who gives him the confidence to be out in the world, if only for moments. Or in the kitchen with a mobility-limited woman, and her dog, who injects her with medicine then gets the creamer out of the fridge for coffee. Yes, really.

To direct a film about six service dogs and their odds-defying humans and not fall into emotional traps is the true sign of an expert documentarian.

"This is the beautiful gift you get when you approach filmmaking with open eyes," Honigmann says over phone from her home in the Netherlands. "Going in, you don't have ideas of scenes of what you want to happen. You simply show the scenes as they happen."

Having directed more than a dozen docs, and winning the Outstanding Achievement Award at Hot Docs in 2007, Honigmann is no stranger to the craft. From following the long-lasting effects of war in *Crazy*, to her upcoming film on people who live beyond 100, the director takes extreme care in presenting her subjects as who they are, without motive. It is always the human condition, presented as objectively as possible.



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Kaiko and Erna. ROB ZWARTSER /COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

Of course, that didn't stop me from sobbing like a child while watching Buddy.

Hans, Honigmann's most endearing subject, recounts to the camera early on how he resisted a guide dog. He didn't want to admit he needed one. But his progressive blindness nearly caused him to be hit by a train – and, 27 years later, he's had three guide dogs. Missy, his black lab, is at his side when we meet him. For a burly, middle-aged man, I imagine he doesn't get sentimental often. But when he talks about Missy, his eyes sparkle. "The fitting word is love, yes... She is still a dog, of course. But then, I am just a human."

Of all the partnerships documented, Honigmann is most proud of her scenes with Trevor, a veteran who can barely exist in the world without his buddy, Mister. "It might be my best work of my career," she says. Trevor speaks in vague, horrifying terms about what he witnessed while at war, and how – even on a park bench on a beautiful day, he always suspects something awful is about to happen.

"The piles of leaves...", he trails off. "I wonder what could be hiding underneath." But with his wife beside him, and his dog – who sits on the bench and stares, relentlessly, behind his owner throughout the entire conversation – Trevor is able to have a little peace of mind.



Trevor and Mister. ROB ZWARTSER /COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

For me, one scene is the most heart-wrenching: the unexpected and sudden absence of a service dog. Honnigman zeroes in on the solo walk: Where there was once a guide dog beside a knee, there is now only a walking stick. And an owner who is visibly at a loss at the death of their best friend. But it is in the loss where we truly feel the dog's impact.

"The grief – I could feel it, myself," Hongmann says. "We all know what they were feeling because we have been there, too. But in the same sense, we will also never know, because these relationships, with every human and every dog, are unique."

Buddy is about extraordinary dogs and also extraordinary humans, no doubt. They have not been dealt easy cards, and they all, in their own way, press on. Yet the film is also about the simple connection we all can find in dogs, and the ordinary moments – the walks, the bedtimes, the sofa hangouts – that we hold onto, forever. It's all magic, and we are all so lucky.

Buddy screens at Toronto's Hot Docs Film Festival on April 26, 3:15 p.m., Lightbox; April 27, 3 p.m., Isabel Bader Theatre; and April 30, 10:30 a.m., Lightbox ([hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca))

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-hot-docs-2019-doggone-it-get-your-tissues-out-for-the-service-dog/>

## European Film Promotion Hits Hot Docs Festival With Changing Face of Europe Pic Selection

By **CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS** April 24, 2019



CREDIT: COURTESY OF DOROTTYA ZURBO

For the second edition of the Changing Face of Europe, a collaboration between the [Hot Docs](#) film festival (April 25-May 5) and [European Film Promotion](#) (EFP), 10 European documentaries will offer Toronto audiences a provocative and kaleidoscopic portrait of the cultural forces shaping the continent today.

The program is a study in both intimate, personal stories and the wide-angle view they can bring to the world. “Filmmakers are both looking outwards, but also looking inwards through the lens of the self to see a greater perspective,” says Shane Smith, the festival’s director of programming. “The most resonant stories are the most personal, in a lot of ways. And that’s the skill of these filmmakers: telling a personal story ... that someone half a world away can connect with.”

Some of those personal stories reflect the political and cultural cross-currents sweeping across Europe today. Danish director Marie Skovgaard’s “The Reformist — A Female Imam” follows a determined Muslim woman who opens one of Europe’s first mosques run by women. In “To Share or Not to Share,” by Estonian duo Minna Hint and Meelis Muhu, an Englishman abandons a successful career in London to establish a barter-based community in Estonia, hoping to find a life beyond capitalism. “There’s a lot of personal discovery,” Smith says, “including the seeking of alternatives to prescribed lives and prescribed narratives — looking for other ways to live.”

With women at the helm of more than half the films in this year’s edition of [Hot Docs](#), which runs April 25-May 5, eight of the 10 documentaries in the Changing Face of Europe have a female director or co-director behind the camera. Many also offer revealing portraits of contemporary womanhood. “Easy Lessons,” by Dorottya Zurbó, is the story of a Somali child bride struggling to build a new life in Hungary. In “#Female Pleasure” (Germany, Switzerland), Barbara Miller offers a rousing portrait of five women from around the world risking their lives to question the patriarchal structures stifling female sexual pleasure.

“Scheme Birds,” by directors Ellen Fiske and Ellinor Hallin (Sweden, U.K.), tells the story of a troubled teenage girl in a Scottish housing estate whose innocent childhood games turn toward crime, a

portrait of “a young woman who’s recognizing the cycle of poverty ... that she’s trapped in, but also trying to find a way out,” says Smith.

In its second year, the Changing Face of Europe looks to further bridge the gap between filmmakers on either side of the Atlantic. Half of the films in the program will be screening in North America for the first time. “It serves to not only introduce the story, the theme, and the subject to North American audiences, but to introduce those filmmakers ... to the North American industry for potential opportunities in developing their careers,” says Smith.

To that end, the program features matchmaking sessions that pair European documentary filmmakers and producers with foreign festival programmers, financiers and distribution platforms. A panel discussion will also highlight opportunities for co-productions between European and Canadian filmmakers.

“For Europeans, it’s important to understand how distribution in North America works. There are just so many more options than we have in Europe,” says Sonja Heinen, managing director of EFP, which represents 38 film support agencies across Europe. “They are financing works in a different way, they are producing in a different way.”

While the Changing Face of Europe offers a small sampling of the continent’s documentary output, Heinen says the program reflects a larger push by EFP to help European stories cross the globe. “We would like to have the films traveling, to have sales agents selling the films,” she says. “We want to promote the films throughout the world.”

## 'Killing Patient Zero' profiles Quebec man unfairly targeted in AIDS epidemic

[THE CANADIAN PRESS](#)

VICTORIA AHEARN

April 24, 2019

TORONTO — In the late 1970s, Quebecois flight attendant Gaetan Dugas was openly and proudly gay, described by friends as flamboyant, sexual and generous, with a supportive family and penchant for makeup.

Unashamed of his lifestyle despite lingering societal stigmas, he co-operated with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the early 1980s after he contracted what was initially called “gay cancer” in the media, providing blood samples and the names of 72 of his former sex partners.

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But as the new documentary “Killing Patient Zero” notes, he became demonized because of his promiscuity — and a typographical error.

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However, some misinterpreted the “O” as the number “0,” as in “patient zero,” leading to the long-standing and incorrect implication that Dugas brought AIDS to North America.

“He really should be thought of as a hero of the fight against AIDS,” said Laurie Lynd, the doc’s Toronto-based director.

“For him to have been vilified, it’s like the classic ‘No good deed goes unpunished.’”

Making its world premiere Friday at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, “Killing Patient Zero” details Dugas’ life as well as the homophobia and prejudice surrounding the AIDS epidemic. American author Fran Lebowitz is among the 40 interviewees in the film, which is based on Richard McKay’s book “Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic.”

Dugas, who grew up in Quebec City, was one of the first 57 AIDS cases reported to CDC and was part of its cluster study in Atlanta.

He died on March 30, 1984 but became an international name in ’87, when American journalist Randy Shilts published his book on the AIDS epidemic, “And The Band Played On.”

In the book and a feature in the New York Post titled “The Man Who Gave Us AIDS,” Shilts identified Dugas as “patient zero” and accused him of being the source of the U.S. outbreak.

Shilts, who died in 1994, maintained Dugas wasn't singled out and noted many others were also named in the book.

The 60-year-old Lynd, who is openly gay, said he read Shilts's story about Dugas in 1990 and thought it was correct until he saw the 1993 John Greyson film "Zero Patience," which debunks the myth.

"It was a real gift to be able to revisit this story, just personally, to look at those years again and to be able to rehabilitate Gaetan's name," said Lynd.

"I think he's a gay everyman. I think what he did was heroic with the CDC."

Still, Shilts's book also drew attention to the epidemic at a time when many politicians weren't talking about it, added Lynd, noting it woke him up politically and prompted him to make his short film "RSVP," about a man who loses his partner to AIDS.

"It's hard for us to realize how little traction it had gained in public attention. Randy's book was a kind of wakeup call," Lynd said.

"In a way, Randy did the wrong thing for the right reasons."

Lynd said he worried his film would open old wounds for Dugas' family, but they've seen the trailer and will get a link to the doc through McKay, who is in touch with them.

"I also hope they will feel it's ... worth it," said Lynd, "because it so thoroughly, I hope, and finally rehabilitates Gaetan's name."

Lynd also hopes the film will be "healing" for gay men and women and serve as a reminder that the fight against HIV/AIDS isn't over — and that homophobia is still around.

"You need look no further than the gay serial killer in Toronto, where it seems fairly clear that had those victims been straight white men, it would have been handled very differently, and how so many of that killer's victims clearly had to live on the down-low because of the homophobia in their communities," Lynd said.

"And we need look no further than our neighbours to the south. I feel homophobia is on the rise again in some ways in this populous climate."

## Hot Docs review: The El Duce Tapes

Rodney Ascher's doc about a deliberately offensive 90s musician named Eldon Hoke ties into the current wave of violence and loathing in the U.S.

BY **NORMAN WILNER** APRIL 25, 2019



**THE EL DUCE TAPES** (Rodney Ascher, David Lawrence, U.S.). 106 minutes. Rating: NNNN

**Rodney Ascher**, director of **Room 237** and **The Nightmare**, returns with a grimy, prickly found-footage project that looks at the shock-rock scene of the early 90s through the story of **The Mentors**, a grotesque, deliberately offensive band whose frontman **Eldon Hoke** – who went by the stage name El Duce – sang about raping and brutalizing women.

Relying heavily on actor **Ryan Sexton**'s VHS footage of the band on and off-stage, Ascher and editor **David Lawrence** – who shares the doc's directorial credit – build a clear-eyed look at Hoke's stage persona, which often seems to be as much of a performance as the moral posturing of professional scolds Jerry Springer and Rush Limbaugh.

The symbiotic relationship between El Duce and 90s talk shows is a running thread, as is the suggestion that not all Mentors fans understood the purgative nature of the band's music. Ascher and Lawrence draw a direct line between that and the current wave of violence and loathing in America, with Hoke's own sad end becoming a footnote to a larger tragedy.

April 26, 8 pm, TIFF 3; April 27, 2:45 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 4, 8:15 pm, Scotiabank 8



## Hot Docs review: Lord Of The Toys

Doc about jackass YouTube star Max "Adlersson" Herzberg and his loutish friends doesn't provide enough context about its controversial subjects

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 25, 2019



**LORD OF THE TOYS** (Pablo Ben Yakov, Germany). 95 minutes. Rating: NNN

**Pablo Ben Yakov** spent two months following YouTube performer/creator Max “Adlersson” Herzberg and his friends around Germany, trying to understand the online popularity of a 20-year-old jackass who spends most of his time exhorting his friends to drink, vomit or smash things. It’s not difficult: some people like watching other people behave badly, and the grosser the transgression the better. And sometimes Herzberg reviews knives.

Ben Yakov records Herzberg and his loutish friends doing what they do, being assholes both at home and in public: they punctuate moments of triumph with a vile imitation of a mentally challenged person and mutter anti-Semitic or homophobic slurs when things go wrong, always laughing everything off as just a joke.

Are they fools, clowns or fascists? Is it possible that they’re all three?

Lord Of The Toys doesn’t want to deliver an opinion on that – it doesn’t even want to provide any larger context beyond these people in this moment – and that feels like a failure of nerve.

Viewers who enjoy Herzberg’s posturing might even come away thinking it makes their dead-eyed avatar look like a hero.

[May 1, 9 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 3, 3 pm, Scotiabank 8](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-lord-of-the-toys/>

## Hot Docs review: Miles Davis: Birth Of The Cool

Stanley Nelson's intricate doc portrait fascinatingly delves into the jazz legend's relationships with women

BY [CHAKA V. GRIER](#) APRIL 25, 2019



**MILES DAVIS: THE BIRTH OF THE COOL** (Stanley Nelson, U.S./UK). 113 Minutes. Rating: NNNNN

The first few minutes into Stanley Nelson's Miles Davis doc may feel like a standard look at the legendary jazz musician's life, but the remaining are not. The Emmy Award-winning director received access to never-before-seen footage and rare outtakes from Davis's close friends and family archives.

There are new interviews with his children, but most fascinating is his partners – including first wife, Frances Taylor (who died six months ago), French singer/actor Juliette Gréco and his final partner, Jo Gelbard – discussing the relationships they had with him. It becomes clear that Davis, known for being a genius and an abuser, was deeply influenced every step of his career by the women he loved.

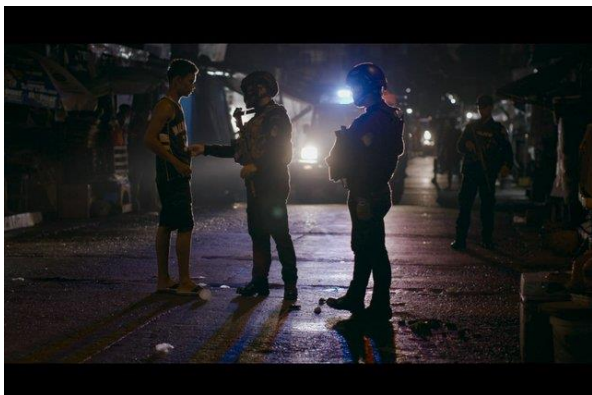
Birth Of The Cool is also one of the rare Davis docs that moves past the mythological grimacing-rebel mystique to show a Davis who was sensitive, prone to depression, terrified of vulnerability and beautiful when he smiled. It's an important film for any Davis or jazz fan wanting to see an intricate portrait of a visionary who changed the face of music.

[May 1, 8:45 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; May 3, 10 am, Hot Docs Cinema; May 4, 6:45 pm, TIFF 1](#)

## Hot Docs review: On The President's Orders

Powerful film shows what happens when the war on drugs reaches its logical conclusion

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 25, 2019



**ON THE PRESIDENT'S ORDERS** (James Jones, Olivier Sarbil, UK). 71 minutes. Rating: NNNN

On The President's Orders shows us what happens when the war on drugs reaches its logical conclusion. Rodrigo Duterte, the strongman president of the Philippines, launched an eradication initiative, which led to a dead-or-alive approach to arrests: more than 3,000 suspects were shot dead by police in the first year. (Donald Trump hailed his methods.)

Splitting their perspective between a tactical narcotics squad in Manila and the city's street-level users and dealers – who tell stories of being terrorized by armed men with carte blanche to bend the law or ignore it entirely – directors **James Jones** and **Olivier Sarbil** come back with a powerful, wrenching look at state-sanctioned chaos, and somehow Sarbil makes it visually arresting – no pun intended – as well.

[April 27, 8:30 pm, Scotiabank 3; April 29, 3:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 5, 3 pm, Hart House](#)

## Hot Docs review: Our Time Machine

Film about a visual artist creating a puppet play to deal with his father's Alzheimer's diagnosis is powerful and universal

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 25, 2019



**OUR TIME MACHINE** (Yang Sun, S. Leo Chiang, China). 80 minutes. Rating: NNN

In Shanghai, visual artist **Maleonn** deals with his father's Alzheimer's diagnosis by writing and designing an ambitious puppet play about a son who builds his ailing father a "time machine" designed to recapture the older man's failing memories. Maleonn makes things even more personal by asking his dad – the once-revered Peking Opera director **Ma Ke** – to consult on the production.

Directors **Yang Sun** and **S. Leo Chiang** don't do quite as much with this premise as they could have, getting lost in the abstractions of the show's metaphor rather than crafting one of their own. But when it puts its focus on the artists at its core – one struggling to realize his vision, and another gradually losing his – *Our Time Machine* tells a powerful, all too universal story.

[May 1, 6:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 3, 4:15 pm, TIFF 3; May 5, 6:15 pm, Scotiabank 3](#)

## Hot Docs review: Quiet Storm: The Ron Artest Story

Portrait of NBA star's career and life with mental health issues suffers from tonal shifts and digressions

BY [RICHARD TRAPUNSKI](#) APRIL 25, 2019



**QUIET STORM: THE RON ARTEST STORY** (Johnny Sweet, U.S). 116 minutes. Rating: NNN

Mental health is an important topic in professional sports right now – especially in the NBA, where players like DeMar DeRozan and Kevin Love have recently opened up about their experiences with depression. But before all the first-person Players’ Tribune essays and progressive wellness programs, there was **Ron Artest** (now known as **Metta World Peace**) – a subject who resists safe or digestible Bell Let’s Talk-style narratives.

That doesn’t stop this doc from trying. Slickly produced by online sports media juggernaut Bleacher Report, it has a fascinating and complex subject in World Peace, who came from a violent upbringing in NYC’s Queensbridge housing projects to become an all-star and a champion while dealing with depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder. And he became just as well known for what happened off the court, including an arrest for domestic assault and what’s now considered one of the darkest moments in NBA history – 2004’s “Malice At The Palace” in Detroit, in which he went up into the stands and brawled with fans.

He was never an easy player to root for – or, evidently, be teammates with – which actually makes his story worth telling. It’s raw and often messy, and his ongoing psychological journey is a process rather than a destination. He eventually won a championship with the Lakers in 2010 and casually thanked his psychiatrist in the post-game interview, and by that point in the film it’s inspiring to see what it took to get there.

Quiet Storm takes a messy path to get there itself – one filled with tonal shifts, digressions into hip-hop and quotes from the athlete’s psychologist depicted textually on-screen – often while trying to turn World Peace’s life into an inspirational underdog story, or as Bill Walton calls it “the story of America.”

It’s not that, exactly, but it’s a compelling and often chaotic portrait.

*April 28, 5:30 pm, Scotiabank 3; April 29, 10:15 am, Isabel Bader; May 5, 10:30 am, Hot Docs Cinema*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-quiet-storm-the-ron-artest-story/>

## Hot Docs review: Well Groomed

Film about competitive creative dog grooming has the feel of a real-life Best In Show

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 25, 2019



**WELL GROOMED** (Rebecca Stern, U.S.). 87 minutes. Rating: NNN

On paper, **Rebecca Stern**'s documentary about competitive creative dog grooming – in which people style, clip and colour canines into four-legged pop-art installations – has the feel of a real-life spin on Best In Show. And while it definitely works in the same neighbourhood, with an affection for eccentric personalities and their daring aesthetic choices, *Well Groomed* isn't quite as broad a study as Christopher Guest's cult comedy.

Rather than presenting them as wacky characters, Stern tries to get to know her subjects, showing us just how much talent and effort it takes to transform, say, a standard poodle into a Day-Glo dinosaur, which is honestly pretty fascinating.

This is an art, even if it's a very goofy one, and over the course of *Well Groomed* we're led to appreciate what it takes to participate at the competitive level. And we also see, amazingly enough, that the dogs are mostly into it as well.

[April 25, 8 pm, TIFF 1; April 26, 12:45 pm, Isabel Bader; May 4, 10:15 am, Hot Docs Cinema](#)



## Hot Docs review: The World Or Nothing

Ingrid Veninger's first feature length doc looks at a pair of constantly performing identical twins who are determined to achieve stardom

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 25, 2019



**THE WORLD OR NOTHING** (Ingrid Veninger, Canada). 84 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Ingrid Veninger's feature films have always had a naturalistic, vérité feel to them, playing with the boundaries between narrative fiction and real-life events. Her first full documentary, *The World Or Nothing*, reverses that polarity: it's a true story about people who are constantly performing.

Cuban expats living in Barcelona, identical twins Rubert and Rubildo Donatien Dinza are doing everything they can to go viral – dressing in matching costumes, working on their raps and their dance moves, constantly seeking an opportunity to be noticed. They surely saw Veninger's project as a springboard to YouTube stardom, but Veninger sees something else in them: a determination to find the version of themselves that the largest number of people will embrace.

Gradually – and with her signature empathy – the filmmaker coaxes her subjects to explain their motivation, and *The World Or Nothing* becomes a piercing study of the vulnerability that drives people to fake it till they make it.

[April 27, 8:45 pm, TIFF 3; April 28, 1:15 pm, TIFF 2; May 2, 3 pm, Hart House](#)

## Documentary *Killing Patient Zero* seeks to restore reputation of Quebec man unfairly targeted in AIDS epidemic

By **Victoria Ahearn**The Canadian Press  
Thu., April 25, 2019



In the late 1970s, Quebecois flight attendant Gaetan Dugas was openly and proudly gay, described by friends as flamboyant, sexual and generous, with a supportive family and penchant for makeup.

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Still, Shilts' book also drew attention to the epidemic at a time when many politicians weren't talking about it, added Lynd, noting it woke him up politically and prompted him to make his short film *RSVP*, about a man who loses his partner to AIDS.

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## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'BELOVED'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Kirk Haviland](#) - April 25, 2019



First time director Yasir Talebi introduces us to a very different and hard life in his debut film *Beloved*. The film follows Firouzeh, 80 years old as she defiantly tells a local inspector during the film, through all four seasons, showing us the details of her solitary life. Firouzeh is a widowed cow herder, her husband whom she had been betrothed to at the age of 14, him being 16 years her elder, passed away 10 years ago. To make matters worse, none of her 11 children want to trek out to the mountain or village where she spends her time with her beloved cows.

Stubborn and unyielding, Firouzeh is a force of nature. Determined to take her cows back up to the mountains for the 95 days she is allowed to have them grazing there (by permit), she defies her friends and village people's wishes that she embrace her older years and retire from her grueling life. The film is driven by Firouzeh telling her story over the imagery of her trails and interactions, her recollections providing the driving force for the film. Fortunately for Talebi, she proves to be a fascinating subject follow.

Rarely dropping her tough exterior, the most impactful moments come when Firouzeh try to call all of her 11 children on the phone to find out why they have not visited her- only to get voicemail recordings for all of them. And the final sequence of the film where Firouzeh asks Talebi to be left alone with the camera to talk directly to it. Its a remarkably candid and intimate moment shared with all of us, from a woman usually spends all her time alone.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'BEHIND THE SHUTTERS'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Kirk Haviland](#) - April 25, 201

1.5 stars



Novice filmmaker Messaline Raverdy takes a video camera to dig through family archives while visiting her grandmother as she is very close to expecting her first child. Messaline scours through old photos, Super 8 film, advertisements and more as she rambles through the history of the Raverdy family's old coffee factory, now abandoned, from the massive house her grandmother lives alone in directly across from it. As Messaline inches closer to parenthood and the looming delivery date, she looks to examine the women in her grandfather's life, which includes not just the matriarch of the family, but the women who made up the majority of the factory's workforce.

Messaline exhibits an eye for visual impact and artistry through *Behind the Shutters*, but the narrative behind those images goes from unstructured and conversational to non-existent in parts. The film's scant 48 minute runtime feels a lot longer upon viewing as the highly experimental project never establishes a genuine narrative or theory behind the images presented. There's an attempt to bring in some of the women from the old factory via conversations over imagery of the ladies that feels disjointed and never really gels with the rest of the film.

In fact, describing *Behind the Shutters* as a film is really pushing the medium. It feels like it would be far better suited as a art project, projected in a gallery where patrons are allowed to freely enter and exit the story as they wander through other works rather than the confines of the traditional cinema. It certainly has the artistry of images to thrive in that setting.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE HOTTEST AUGUST'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 25, 2019

3.5 Stars



*The Hottest August* is documentary filmmaker Brett Story's follow up to *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*. Here, she points her camera to a few dozen more subjects. The title of this new movie evokes something apocalyptic, which is one of the subjects she eventually gets to. But not before one of her subjects prattles on about her husband's organization skills. She shows that people live their lives, not worrying about bigger things they can't control.

This film lets large anxieties as a subtext while pushing individuals' thoughts in the foreground. And the fact that this doc reminds me more of a mosaic reveals Story's Canadian streak. The American catchphrase for diversity is a melting pot, in which these people should think uniformly. But they don't here. She carefully chooses people from different boroughs and cultural backgrounds. This is a much better approach than choosing one subculture to define New York.

People disappear and reappear, which is an interesting way to depict the city that never sleeps. The "hottest" in the title is actually about the racial tension that eventually unfolds. The conversation eventually gets to that. There's a subtext of these people opening up to her which they wouldn't with strangers of a different race. It's equally valid, then, to question the passivity and productivity of waiting for people to say terrible things on camera.

Thankfully, Story has enough interviews that the good ones balance out the bad. It also heads to another inevitability, that she'll shape these interviews and create a context for them, which she does without making it too obvious or preachy. She shows these people waking up to the bigger factors that are changing their lives. It builds up to a slow forward momentum. And a hope that these awakenings lead to action and perseverance.



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'MAREK EDELMAN... AND THERE WAS LOVE IN THE GHETTO'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 25, 2019



Marek Edelman was a Jewish man who joined and led the Polish resistance against the Nazis. The documentary *Marek Edelman... and There Was Love in the Ghetto* is not the first cinematic depiction of the man. It's also not the first time that director Jolanta Dylewska. Every movie is an introduction and this is a weird way of doing that. Instead of focusing on the man, this film focuses on him being part of Warsaw.

Specifically, Dylewska shows him as tangentially involved in the love lives of several women, all of them having different men who are the real loves of their lives. She shows close-ups of actresses representing such women in her harsh digital camera. She then returns to a talking head of Edelman who divulges or withdraws parts of these women's stories at his will. It's an attempt to bring those bittersweet days to the big screen.

Holocaust documentaries are a dime a dozen, which is fine. Millions died and survived that historical ordeal and they deserve to tell all of their stories. There *is* that pressure within directors to re-imagine that era. One of the ways Dylewska does it is through a title card describing the Ghetto instead of just saying the word ghetto. She could have used some shorthand to get to her point about that era's secret romances.

Dylewska's film has a subversive point and it's never boring. That is more than I can say about a few of the docs with more straightforward intentions. She has more credits as a cinematographer and another thing she's trying to attempt here is to remind us that these people were real. It's too bad that the reenactment portions here looks sloppy and cheap, taking away from any perspective about that era that she's trying to make.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'AMUSSU'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 25, 2019

4 Stars



The rapid turnover of our news cycle frequently overlooks much of the news from around the world. The subject matter of Nadir Bouhmouch's *Amussu* would likely provide an excellent example of such an event largely overlooked by Western society. In 2011, villagers in the Northern Morocco town of Imider shut down a water pipeline connected to one of Africa's largest silver mines. Protests have been occurring around the area ever since.

If this is the first you are hearing about the village of Imider, then you are not alone. I too, was introduced to this village through this *Amussu*. The difficulty with reviewing Bouhmouch's film stems from my inability to fact check the events being provided. Yet, herein lies the real twist of *Amussu*. The form of this film is highly unorthodox, and hybridizes a fictionalized lush oasis with the reality of a waterless desert. This is a highly politized statement, and a piece of restorative justice reminiscent of various reclamation project from Indigenous groups across the world. The audience is provided with very little base information about the area and the protests. In a sense, this becomes documentary in its purest form, documenting instead of explaining. The hope is that you may do some digging of your own afterwards (I certainly did).

Bouhmouch's greatest strength is their cinematography. Shot by the director and Yassin Charak, *Amussu* is visually stunning. The visual variance on display suggests a strong understanding of craft, as both cinematographers manage to provide variety of different shot types and angles that greatly vary the visual style of the film. While this film may not necessarily provide the raw information some may hope for, the feeling of political justice on display is arguably the film's intent, and it succeeds.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'HOPE FROZEN'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 25, 2019



Death is inescapable, but this documentary shows, specifically, how a Thai family tries to cheat it. Its patriarch tells a story of when he was a little boy. Of how he temporarily had to freeze his goldfish to keep them alive. A higher stakes version of that involves the sudden death of his two year old daughter Einz, which follows his decision to hire an American company to cryogenically freeze her, a decision sparking controversy.

This movie then follows that family holding on to a daughter in limbo between life and death. One member rises above this family. His name is Matrix, who always wished for a younger sister only for a disease to take her away. Director Pailin Wedel films this family with a subjective distance. Mark Dobbin and Mark Oltmann's cinematography helps in this regard. We often see the family in mourning white, visually representing order and rationality.

A story that's both about scientific development and the loss of a child should doesn't seem overloaded. Unfortunately, Wedel doesn't make either topic jump out. The film also tries to embody both themes through Matrix, who eventually grows up while Einz, theoretically, stays two forever. His talking head scenes, where he speaks in English, is interesting and shows his smarts. But there are conversations he has with other young cryogenic scientists that come off as awkward.

There is one more topic here that's related to death. Thailand is a country where most of the citizens are Buddhists, and they have a different understanding of death as a concept. The family are both scientists and Buddhists, and one of their struggles is about how they handle seemingly opposing ways of thinking. It's too bad that we get more of the science and less of the religion, the latter being misrepresented.

In the Seats – April 25, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE WORLD OR NOTHING'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 25, 2019

4 Stars



In Ingrid Veninger's latest feature film, *The World or Nothing*, the distinction between fiction and non-fiction is so artfully stripped away that all that remains is ultimately story. Make no mistake, this is a documentary film. More importantly, however, this film is a human story; a tale of dreams and sacrifices that feels far too fantastical to be true, and far too real to not be.

Following the exploits of Cuban-born twin brothers Rubert and Rubildo Donatien Dinza, *The World or Nothing* chronicles the day in and day out of two brothers who act a dynamic dance duo in their quest to garner a legitimate international audience. Yet, as Cuban expats adjusting to life in Barcelona, life for Rubert and Rubildo contains its fair share of strife. Veninger's film could be seen as a classic "rags to riches" story with a slight twist. Some films emphasize those who make it, while others focus on the tragedies of those who don't. Very few films focus on those without a fixed answer on their attempted road to success. For those liminally caught between the end points of success and failure, very little is ultimately made of their stories.

Of particular note is the camerawork of cinematographer Leon Guallart Diaz, whose constantly moving camera follows its subjects with an unobtrusive grace that allows for the film to really feel as if it is documenting a small segment of the world. It perfectly floats along with its subjects through the world. Likewise, the brothers themselves are charismatic and engaging, and truly help propel a very explorative documentary. This is a highly recommended film that aims to explore the lives of its subjects, and ultimately delivers on its ambitions.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-the-world-or-nothing/>

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'PIPE DREAMS'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Court Jarrell](#) - April 25, 2019

2.5 Stars



The pipe organ is one of the most powerful, yet elegant instruments in all of creation. It can at once be soothing and peaceful, and then quickly change gears and invoke the wrath of the Gods. Few instruments have that kind of range. Director Stacey Tenenbaum's documentary *Pipe Dreams* reminds its audience of the sheer dramatic muscle that the pipe organ can produce.

The film follows five organ virtuosos from around the world (Canada, the U.S., Germany, New Zealand, and China) preparing to compete in the Canadian International Organ Competition at Montreal, Canada.

The level of musicianship on display in this documentary is borderline otherworldly. These men and women are not simply talented organists – they are perhaps some level of genius. Some of these subjects are relatively humble, while others are rather smug, which is off-putting. Still, the music presented in the film is nothing short of extraordinary, and fortunately, the sound mix is up to the task. Had the sound not been near perfect, this documentary wouldn't work at all.

Really, the sound and music save this film, as its central story is not all that compelling. Of the five subjects, only two have interesting backstories. Yuan is a Chinese woman who learned as a child that her father would have preferred a son. Alcee is an African American man from Louisiana who grew up playing the organ in his father's church. These were the two characters that I connected with most, and wanted to see succeed.

The film makes a number of mistakes, particularly shortchanging individuals that play a smaller part than perhaps they should, or highlighting subjects that don't provide much payoff. Still, it's a decent film with a remarkably strong soundtrack, and is indeed worth seeing, particularly for pipe organ enthusiasts.

## Film über Aktivist Jack Sim

“Mr. Toilet: The World’s #2 Man”: Doku über Toiletten-Anwalt

Donnerstag, 25. April 2019 | 11:01 Uhr



APA/APA (Archiv/AFP)/MANDEL NGAN

### Schriftgröße

Über 20 Jahre wirbt Jack Sim für den weltweiten Zugang zu hygienischen Sanitäranlagen. Nun wurde das ungewöhnliche Leben und Wirken des als Mr. Toilet bekannten Aktivisten verfilmt. So steht der aus Singapur stammende Gründer der Welttoilettenorganisation im Zentrum von Lily Zepedas “Mr. Toilet: The World’s #2 Man”, der Samstag Weltpremiere beim Hot Docs Documentary Festival in Toronto feiert.

“Toiletten sind meine Religion, und wir schaffen eine Glaubensrichtung, der sich jeder verschreiben kann”, zeigte sich der 62-Jährige euphorisch über seine Mission: “Wir müssen Toiletten sexy machen.” Sim war in der vergangenen Jahrzehnten in verschiedensten Regionen von Asien und Afrika tätig und die treibende Kraft hinter dem 2013 von der UNO ausgerufenen Welttoilettentag am 19. November.

Schließlich hätten 60 Prozent der Weltbevölkerung nach wie vor keine Toilette zuhause oder zumindest keine, die menschliche Hinterlassenschaften zuverlässig entsorgt. Das sei nicht nur ein massives Hygieneproblem, sondern setze gerade in Indien Mädchen und Frauen bei der Entäußerung im Freien sexuellen Übergriffen aus.



## Pooper hero: S'pore's 'Mr Toilet' wants to make sanitation sexy in film

By Reuters



*World Toilet Organization founder Jack Sim of Singapore speaks on social innovation during the 18th annual CAF, Development Bank of Latin America, conference in Washington, DC, Sept 4, 2014. (MANDEL NGAN / AFP)*

SINGAPORE — After travelling the world for more than two decades seeking to improve access to bathrooms, "Mr Toilet" Jack Sim is now ready to plunge into the cinematic world with a film about his unusual campaign.

Armed with humor - and sometimes a plunger — the World Toilet Organization's founder is the subject of a film *Mr Toilet: The World's #2 Man* set to premiere this week, as health campaigners warn billions are still at risk of disease due to toilet shortages.

***We have to make toilet sexy. If governments understand how much money they are already spending (on public healthcare) without having toilets, there is no reason for them not to build toilets. - Jack Sim, Founder of World Toilet Organization***

"Toilet is my religion and we create a belief system that everybody subscribes to," the 62-year-old Singaporean told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"We have to make toilet sexy. If governments understand how much money they are already spending (on public healthcare) without having toilets, there is no reason for them not to build toilets," he added.

Sim's work has stretched from Asia to Africa and was the inspiration behind the United Nations' 2013 declaration of a "World Toilet Day", in a push to break taboos around toilets.

The UN day is marked on Nov 19 each year - the same date Sim set up his group in 2001 to lobby governments around the world to change their policies and make sanitation accessible for all.

The Singapore-headquartered group builds toilets in places like China and trains local entrepreneurs in India as well as Cambodia to develop affordable latrines in remote villages.

## China Daily – April 25, 2019 (2 of 3)

From India to China and Africa, 60 percent of the world's population — or 4.5 billion people — either have no toilet at home or one that does not safely manage human waste, the UN said.

Some 900 million people still practice open defecation, risking disease, and causing tens of thousands of diarrhoea-related deaths and cases of chronic malnutrition each year, according to the group.

The UN warned last year that the world is not on track to end open defecation and ensure access to safe toilets for all by 2030, as pledged by countries.

Sim said he hopes his new film will help turn the tide.



*This Nov 19, 2015 photo shows an Indian child defecating in the open near a railway track in New Delhi, India. Some 900 million people still practice open defecation, risking disease, and causing tens of thousands of diarrhoea-related deaths and cases of chronic malnutrition each year, the UN said. (SAJJAD HUSSAIN / AFP)*

### CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Shot in four countries over five years, the 86-minute film will be screened at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto on April 27.

"The intention of the film is to use both humor and a heartfelt story to draw attention to a subject people normally wouldn't care about," said Los Angeles-based director Lily Zepeda.

"Many people are unaware of how disproportionately a lack of sanitation affects women and girls around the world," she added.

***The intention of the film is to use both humor and a heartfelt story to draw attention to a subject people normally wouldn't care about. - Lily Zepeda, Director of Mr Toilet: The World's #2 Man***

Women and girls are at risk of sexual attack when they go out in the fields to relieve themselves, while adolescent girls are often forced to miss classes when they are on their periods if there are no proper toilets, UK-based charity WaterAid said.

The World Bank in 2017 warned countries they needed to quadruple spending to US\$150 billion a year to deliver universal safe water and sanitation.

Sim's effort is not the first time a film has been made about toilets.

In India, a Bollywood movie, *Toilet: A Love Story*, was released in 2017 as an attempt to bring the issue into the mainstream.

The lack of access to sanitation remains a major problem in the South Asian giant and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has been pushing a campaign to build 100 million toilets, although the drive has not covered large parts of the country.

"Our pace of work is definitely much slower than the need," said Deepmala Mahla, the Asia director for humanitarian agency CARE International, which campaigns on sanitation issues.

"We can only be on the right track fully when we don't look at the (toilet) issue in isolation. Our sanitation work needs to be more responsive to the need of women and girls," she said.

Sim struck a more optimistic note.

As the world's two most populous nations, China and India, step up **efforts to improve access to toilets**, he believes the world will achieve the 2030 UN target on ending open defecation but he warned building bathrooms alone is not enough.

The key, he said, is to turn the poop culture into "pop culture".

"The cultural transformation must come in because we can build the toilet, but if people don't use it there is no use," he said.

"We have to turn toilets into a fashion, a social status."

## 10 Movies Getting the Biggest Buzz at Hot Docs

April 25, 2019

Hot Docs is the largest documentary film festival in North America and features a [diverse selection of films](#) from across the world. Navigating the festival's line-up can be difficult, so I've made it easy.

Here are some movies to get excited about.

### **A Woman's Work: The NFL Cheerleader Problem**

NFL cheerleaders are forced to undergo strict diets, tireless fitness regimes and long hours of rehearsal — all for less than minimum wage. But one group of female cheerleaders hopes to change that with a lawsuit against the NFL for unfair treatment and gender pay discrimination.

### **American Factory**

When an Ohio General Motors plant is forced to close its doors, many locals find themselves out of work. But the factory is reopened when a Chinese billionaire takes it over. It's back to work, but with a catch – the Americans are forced to team up with Chinese immigrants.

### **Honeyland**

This triple Sundance prizewinner focuses on Macedonian beekeeper Hatidze Muratova. Muratova sells her honey in order to take care of her sick mother, but her supply is threatened when new neighbours move in.

### **Conviction**

Women are the fastest growing prison population in Canada. *Conviction* attempts to better understand this statistic, while exposing the flaws of the broken criminal justice system by sharing the stories of a number of incarcerated women.

### **Killing Patient Zero**

In the 1980's, flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas was known as "Patient Zero" after falsely being accused of spreading AIDS in North America. Based on the book [Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic](#), director Laurie Lind uncovers the true man who was lost beneath the homophobia and misinformation.

### **Knock Down the House**

Four marginalized women across America, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, are tired watching their communities suffer. Instead of silently standing by, these women take action by running for congress.

### **The Magic Life of V**

The trauma of Finnish woman Veera's past haunts her after experiencing a childhood of abuse. Escaping her regular life, Veera transforms into V— her brave persona who only exists in the mythical world of live action role-playing.

### **nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up**

Opening this year's festival, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* is about the 2016 murder of Saskatchewan Cree youth Colten Boushie and the controversial acquittal of his killer by an all white jury.

### **One Child Nation**

Winning Sundance's US Grand Jury prize, *One Child Nation* is about China's infamous "one child policy" and examines the controversial social experiment as a whole.

### **When We Walk**

While working in India, award-winning filmmaker Jason DaSilva was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Now going through a divorce, DaSilva confronts his past, present and future as his ex-wife and son move across the country, while he struggles to leave New York due to his disability.

Lead photo by  
Honeyland

## Hot Docs 2019: Ai Weiwei takes a step back to observe the rest of humanity's flow

KATE TAYLOR

APRIL 25, 2019



*Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's new film, The Rest, is showing at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto. FRED LUM/THE GLOBE AND MAIL*

The Chinese visual artist, filmmaker and activist Ai Weiwei, a political exile now living in Berlin, visited Toronto this week to present his new film *The Rest* at the Hot Docs Film Festival. The film is a sequel to *Human Flow*, his 2017 documentary about the global refugee crisis. Ahead of its premiere, *The Globe and Mail's* Kate Taylor spoke with Ai about migration, politics and the nature of international celebrity.

Why make a second film about migration?

It's a sad subject, but the emotional involvement is like a love affair. Physically, emotionally, you are so involved. We have 900 hours of footage, and *Human Flow* only took a little part of that. We realized it's not enough to just give one image of this global condition. There can be many smaller stories like what the refugees themselves think about their condition, without experts or analysts, ordinary people talking about their feelings or experience.

[It's] smaller scale, more personal, more detailed, but mostly focused on the refugees when they have arrived in Europe. We all know they come from disaster, war; they have been forced out, they are all trying to find the land which can give them a moment of peace. Less than 5 per cent of refugees come to Europe, the land of promise, of democracy, of human rights. Most of them stay in the neighbouring nations – Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey. The focus is on the few who come to Europe; did they find the land they feel will be safe for them?

Every state has its own policy; they won't accept this, they won't accept that. Is that right? You see European nations who say, "We will not even accept one," those nations that produced refugees during World War Two, such as Czech [Republic], such as Poland. The refugee situation is not just about the people in Syria or Afghanistan or Pakistan, but rather about our society, our humanity, our understanding of compassion.



*The Rest* chronicles the daily lives of refugees in Europe as they hang in limbo between the humanitarian aid system and intensifying nationalism. COURTESY OF HOT DOCS



## The Globe and Mail – April 25, 2019 (2 of 2)

Do you see solutions? Watching the family toward the end of the film who are so unhappy stuck in a hostel in Germany that they return to Iraq, I was struck that the solutions lie in fixing places not displacing people.

It's not really a regional problem, it is much larger than that. If you really want to talk about solutions – not just to the refugee problem but to today's Canada-China dispute or the U.S.-China situation – we have to re-examine our total condition globally: politics, capitalism, socialism. We have to come up with solutions to dealing with the environment, humanity. What are the most meaningful, profound values we all have to protect – it doesn't matter what religion or society. We have to come out with a conclusion; the small arguments will never really work.

Previously when asked about Canada's disagreement with China over the arrest of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou, you responded with a statement that was critical of the West's economic involvement with China, but you didn't mention Canada specifically. What advice would you give to Canada?

I function like a Chinese doctor. Feel the pulse. Canada is a brand-new society compared to others; in many ways it is quite innocent. It has its own perspective, it has new values, it is more open, more rational. It is defending the rule of law. Those are core values, and it doesn't matter who you are dealing with, those values should be held as important. It gives Canada its own identity. Now, China, the U.S., there is some kind of warfare there; it put Canada in a difficult position, but still I think Canada did nothing wrong and should make the right judgment as to what they believe.

Earlier this year, you accused the producers of Berlin I Love You of cutting your contribution to their film for fear of offending China. How do we engage culturally with China when there are these kinds of misunderstandings?

It is a very difficult task because China doesn't want to change anything. It openly states it doesn't recognize democracy, freedom of speech, individual rights, multiple parties. But also China provides the largest labour market and consumer market which makes every Western nation desire to be a business partner. China never has a free economy and never will under this government. A democratic society cannot even compete against a society like that. Nothing is independent. They can sacrifice anything to make their political agenda. So I think it is absolutely dangerous for Western society because it gives a very different model.

Sup with the devil ...

It can be friendly and acceptable like any society, but it can be brutal and you have no way to discuss matters. The West has to be clearly aware of that. It's not the challenge of China, it's the challenge of the West, and I think they are not winning the game because they don't understand what they are dealing with.

You have become a nemesis of the Chinese regime, a celebrity in the West. What impact does it have on your artistic practice, getting work done?

I don't know who I am actually. In my life, I have been put in certain positions [where] I am trying to still maintain my own sensitivity, my own judgment, never give up my own opinion. Sometimes it doesn't help me that much, but we have only one life.

The Rest screens at Hot Docs April 26, 27 and May 5. The filmmaker will speak about his work April 27 at 10:30 a.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre ([hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)).

This interview has been edited and condensed.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-hot-docs-2019-ai-weiwei-takes-a-step-back-to-observe-the-rest-of/>

## Boushie Family Releases Statement Ahead of Hot Docs Opening Night Premiere

Pat Mullen

Posted on April 25th, 2019



Senator Kim Pate, Eleanore Sunchild, Senator Lillian Dyck, Sheldon Wuttunee, Debbie Baptiste, Alvin Baptiste, Jade Tootosis, Chris Murphy.

By Pat Mullen

Ahead of tonight's Hot Docs premiere of *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, which examines the death of Cree man Colten Boushie and the ongoing fight for Indigenous rights, Boushie's family released a statement about their experience and several calls to action for audiences inspired by the film.

Read their statement below. [Capitalization is as it appears in the original statement.]

"Our family is humbled by the support we have received from many First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples across Canada, as well as Indigenous peoples from around the globe, who have shared our experience. We are thankful for the non-Indigenous allies who have stood with us since the devastating loss of our Colten.

We hope that *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* shines a light on the significant barriers the Canadian legal system presents to Indigenous peoples and families seeking Justice for their loved ones. What Indigenous peoples experience within this system is unacceptable! We will continue to press provincial, federal and international leaders to make real and lasting change.

This path to change can begin with these steps:

- Conducting a Royal Commission to address the systemic racism that exists in Canada's legal systems

- \* A full public inquiry, into the circumstances surrounding the shooting death of Colten Boushie, as well as the subsequent investigation, trial and acquittal by an all-white jury of Gerald Stanley which revealed that systemic discrimination remains deeply rooted in the Canadian legal system and the collective Canadian conscience.
- \* The invitation of and cooperation with the United Nations Special Rapporteur to facilitate an external examination of the racism within the Canadian legal system
- \* Continue to press for meaningful change to the jury selection process to eliminate peremptory challenges and replace with a mechanism that allows for diverse juries
- \* Pressure on all levels of government to enhance victim support services for the people and Indigenous families who are left behind to grieve, heal and seek Justice for their loved ones.

We will continue to tell our story, and fight for Justice, out of love for our son, brother, grandson, uncle, nephew, cousin and friend, Colten “Coco” Boushie.”

Directed by Tasha Hubbard, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* opens this year's Hot Docs festival and screens at DOXA before a theatrical release beginning in Toronto in late May. Tonight's Hot Docs screening will feature Debbie Baptiste, Colten's mother in attendance, along with Colten's brothers Jace and William Boushie, his sister Satin Denny, sister/cousin Jade Tootoosis, uncle Alvin Baptiste, and the family's lawyers Eleanore Sunchild and Chris Murphy. Read more about the film in the feature [Justice for Colten](#).

## Hot Docs '19: Tasha Hubbard's unexpected journey

The filmmaker discusses why she decided to take on *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* and how she approached the doc's sensitive subject matter.

By Lauren Malyk

April 25, 2019



Image courtesy of the NFB, photo of Tasha Hubbard by Jon

Montes

Cree filmmaker Tasha Hubbard didn't set out to make *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* into a feature-length documentary. "I tell people that and they kind of laugh. They're like 'well of course you were going to make a feature,'" she told *Playback Daily* ahead of the film's world premiere at Hot Docs 2019.

Originally intended as a one-hour doc for broadcast, the decision to turn *nîpawistamâsowin* into a longer story came about after Hubbard and her team realized the story had expanded. Centred on the case of 22-year-old Colten Boushie, a young Cree man who died in a shooting incident in Saskatchewan in August 2016, *nîpawistamâsowin* examines the tension that erupted following his passing, how his case was handled in the Canadian justice system and issues around colonialism's past in the Prairies.

"I think it was in Ottawa where we [said] 'OK, this is probably now a feature, if we can pull it off,'" the filmmaker and academic said of the days after a jury acquitted Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder in the summer of 2018. The Saskatchewan farmer had testified that his gun had gone off accidentally when he was trying to scare Boushie and other young people off his property. Meanwhile, the filmmaking team was just trying to keep up. "We knew the family had other plans to keep going beyond the Prime Minister's office. They just said, 'We're not going to give up.' When you have that happening, you can't stop filming."

The pieces that allowed Hubbard and her team to propel *nîpawistamâsowin* towards its new goal were an increased contribution from the NFB, and support from funders like Creative Saskatchewan, the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Fund and the [Theatrical Feature-Length Documentary Program](#).

Produced through her Downstream Documentary banner with the NFB in association with CBC Docs and APTN, *nîpawistamâsowin* is Hubbard's second feature-length doc following *Birth of a Family* (2017). On Thursday (April 25), her project will also make history as the first Indigenous-led project to open Hot Docs, according to a NFB

## Playback – April 25, 2019 (2 of 2)

spokesperson. In addition to this milestone, her doc will also usher in an increase in the number of female directors who have their work featured at the festival (54%), a slight bump from [last year's 50%](#).

Hubbard, who is connected to the Boushie family through her relatives (her father who is married to Boushie's aunt), explains that while finishing up a rough cut of her second documentary, *Birth of a Family* – a story centred on four siblings who meet for the first time after being separated by the Sixties Scoop – she heard the news about Boushie's passing.

In the following days, Hubbard says she was approached by some people close to the family to consider the possibility of doing a film, an idea that naturally trickled into her discussions with her longtime NFB producer Bonnie Thompson. "It was just natural to start to talk to Bonnie about that possibility," she said.

In deciding to take on the story, Hubbard says she tried to have open discussions with Boushie's family about what the project would look like and how it would impact them. For instance, before CBC Docs POV officially came on board in November 2017, Hubbard and Boushie's family discussed what their involvement would mean and how she would do her best to foster their story in a respectful way. However, she also cautioned them that once a film is out there, there's no telling how an audience might react to it. "Once a film is out in the world, it's out in the world," she warned.

Woven with her own perspective throughout the doc, Hubbard says she aimed to strike a balance between providing her own personal perspective and the enormity of the issues presented in *nîpawistamâsowin*. "I wanted to tell the story, to be open about who I was and the lens I was bringing to the film. I think that objectivity is an impossibility," she said. "I think every filmmaker brings their own position, they bring their own experience to telling a story, which is why I feel really passionately about Indigenous stories being told through Indigenous eyes and voices."

As for what's next, Hubbard says she would like to continue focusing on feature-length documentaries in the long term but needs to take a break before she can pursue her next project. "This project was also the first time I produced, and so everything intensified. I think I'll need some time," she said.

Producers on *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* include Hubbard, Downstream Documentary's George Hupka and the NFB's Jon Montes and Bonnie Thompson. The NFB's David Christensen is an exec producer on the project. Bizable Media's Janice Dawe and Kathy Avrich-Johnson serve as co-exec producers. Trudy Stewart is an associate producer on the doc.

*Nîpawistamâsowin* was made with the participation of the CMF and is distributed by the NFB. Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin* will also screen as a gala presentation in DOXA's 2019 Justice Forum this May.

## For Sama and for Syria

### *An interview with Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 25th, 2019



*Courtesy of Hot Docs*

The documentary crowd has seen many stories about the revolution in Syria, but they've yet to experience a film like *For Sama*. It's the story of the revolution filmed through the eyes of someone who experienced it. Waad al-Kateab is not simply a witness to the revolution in the film; she carries hope for the future of Syria in the form of her daughter, Sama, who is born as the bombs fall in Aleppo.

*For Sama* is one mother's personal document of the revolution, seen through her eyes and told from her point of view behind the camera. Directed by al-Kateab and British filmmaker Edward Watts, *For Sama* follows Waad's journey as she goes from marketing student at Aleppo University when the conflict breaks out to citizen journalist capturing the everyday horrors and hopes in the war zone. As the film deftly weaves between past and present, *For Sama* chronicles a story of love and hope as Waad begins a relationship with Hamza, a doctor in an Aleppo hospital. The two friends become lovers and eventually marry, and soon Waad is bringing a new life into Aleppo when so many lives are being lost.

The film is exceptionally powerful as Waad balances her responsibilities to Sama and her duty to document the revolution and share the truth about what is happening in Syria. The director's courage and spirit draws out the complexity and humanity of the situation as she tries to reconcile the two competing roles she plays. What results is a portrait of the revolution unlike any other, one that observes the worst in the situation, but also everyday moments of humanity that are often overlooked in portraits of conflict zones. There are poignant moments of domestic bliss, which are, tragically, punctuated by images and sounds of violence. There is a unique dualism to this portrait of how life goes on. It's a necessary reminder of the lives at stake as one protectively watches Sama grow while her parents fight for the world into which they brought her.

POV spoke with directors Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts prior to the film's Canadian premiere at Hot Docs and shortly after it was announced as one of the few documentaries in the selection at Cannes this year. Coming to Hot Docs after winning both the Audience Award and the Grand Jury Prize for documentary at SXSW in March, *For Sama* has a story that is bound to connect with audiences around the globe and will hopefully inspire a new level of awareness and action towards the situation in Syria.

**POV:** Pat Mullen

**WA:** Waad al-Kateab

**EW:** Edward Watts

*This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**POV:** Waad, how is Sama doing now?



## POV Magazine – April 25, 2019 (2 of 5)

**WA:** Sama is fine. She's very excited and active, like all kids. She's now three years old, is going to the nursery, and speaks English and Arabic together. She's a very special girl.

**POV:** How did your work at *The Guardian* and *Channel 4 News* shape your approach to telling this story? How did it change your work on the ground?

**WA:** They gave me some hope and the belief that if the community outside of Aleppo knows what's happening there, they may aid people. [People watching the film] may be in the government, or the United Nations, or any of the NGOs that could change our lives. This is not just my feelings and those of the people around me inside Aleppo. We really believed that without the people outside who were protesting to save Aleppo, we wouldn't be safe. We had to report on the deals between the Russian government and the Syrian government, on one side, and the FSA [Free Syrian Army] fighters inside Aleppo. Then people outside knew that they [the FSA] were actively trying to save us. I really believe if we were silenced and the people outside were silent, we would have been killed in silence without any action.

**POV:** Edward, how did you become involved in the production?

**EW:** I've been making documentaries for a long time and in different parts of the world. Syria was a subject that I was very passionate about early on. I felt that we all had a stake in what the Syrian people were fighting for. They were fighting for principles that we all share: democracy and human dignity. The truth of that conflict is being distorted and manipulated, especially by the regime. For many years, I was saying to my colleagues that we needed to make a film about Syria and what's happening there. I made a film about ISIS and I was trying to do what I could to tell that story. When Waad came out of Syria, she revealed that she had this incredible personal archive covering her time in Aleppo. When that happened, they [the producers] called me because they knew the combination of the two of us could be a good way to tie her footage together into a coherent story that would appeal to the widest possible audience.

**POV:** Waad, how did you feel about passing along the story to another director and working with Edward to develop such a personal story?

**WA:** At first, it was difficult because we were coming from different backgrounds with different experiences. At the end, I do believe that without Edward, the story would not be as it is now with how it shows my journey through Aleppo. Some of the things he added as a director were important. Also, for a man to care about my story, about Syria, I felt that was important because I'm the other side, the female perspective. It was important to have cooperation between two different experiences, two different people, and two different views about what is happening. I was the Syrian and he was the outside professional. I knew what was happening in Syria and he knew about audiences and what they care about. The film tells my story from my own perspective in the end.

**EW:** I think it's been two years almost to the day since I first met Waad. That two year process was about us learning to work together and understand each other, to talk the same language, and to define the film together in cooperation, as Waad said. That was its amazing strength. We could write the voiceover together: Waad could talk about what she was feeling and I could take those thoughts and work with her to convey them in the best way possible within the context of narration.



**POV:** How was it telling the story of Syria and the conflict through one family's story? Your previous work has been on a larger scale, which this has, but the framing's quite different.

**EW:** That was one of the journeys we went on. Waad had such an extraordinary archive, so it was a process of finding out that through her personal story, you could tell the whole conflict through her eyes. One of my mentors told me that you're always looking for the smallest window with the biggest view in filmmaking and, in a sense, what Waad did in her life and with her family was that incredible window.

**POV:** What inspired the time structure of the film? The way it flashes forward and back, moving between past and present, kept me in suspense, but also proved very effective in unpacking the political context of the situation.

**WA:** With the final three months in Syria, in Aleppo, we wanted to use flashbacks to show exactly how the human brain works if you want to tell stories. It shows how we could come upon a decision when you examine the danger and the risks. We had to show the beginning of this risk and why we were there. It also helped us answer questions through the story like why we stayed there [in Aleppo] when we could leave, why we got married, and why we decided to bring Sama into this life. That message was the point.

**EW:** The first versions of the film were chronological. What was interesting about that was that it stopped being about Waad and humanity. It just became like, "This happened, and then this happened, and then this happened." We discovered the movement between time zones, the flashbacks, were so important because, just to further what Waad is saying, it's amazing that within this conflict, you have the darkness and then you have the jokes. In the first scene, you go from carnage to everyone laughing and being together. The flashback allowed us to move between the light and the dark, which is much closer to the truth. That's what Waad was saying: even in the dark times, there was all this humor, love, and affection. That flashback structure allowed us to reflect that more truthfully as a piece of cinema.

**WA:** And with the amount of archive that I had and the way that I was involved in the story, because I lived there, it was hard for me to understand what was happening. Ed understood the real story behind all this footage. We couldn't do it without going chronologically in the first version. That gave us an understanding, even for me, because it was hard to do the film straight away. It was difficult and important to go through different starts to reach the right story.

**POV:** I like how there are some very unexpected moments in the film, like the scene where your the neighbor is given the persimmon and becomes so, so happy. Why was it important to keep filming in these moments?

**WA:** When I filmed that shot, as an example, I wasn't sure what I would do with it. The reason why I kept filming was that I had the feeling that we would be killed at any moment. But, in Aleppo, there wasn't just a war. There were human beings, people who dream for freedom and who dream to be able to change their lives for

the better. With the regime and the war, I had the feeling the whole time that we are a people who deserve to stay alive and not be threatened all the time with bombs or fears for being killed. This woman gave me hope at the time. I really wanted to keep this moment alive because everything is happening—the bad and the good.



**POV:** What was the biggest challenge in balancing your role as a parent and filmmaker? Edward, are you a parent?

**EW:** I'm not, but that's an easy one. I'll leave it to Waad. [Laughs]

**WA:** Yes, but you have the same feelings, Edward! You'd do the same.

This is exactly what the film is about. For the many mothers inside Aleppo, inside Syria, or inside any war zone, there is a very big struggle between what we want to do and what we should do. For me, as a journalist, I feel that I should always be filming in dangerous places to show all the women who are there. At the same time, I know that I'm responsible for myself and for my daughter, and there's a very big risk in Aleppo. The belief in the revolution in Syria gave me a lot of faith and, let's say, recklessness. I didn't care if anything happened in some moments, but in the other moments, I really feel that I was responsible for this human being. I brought her to this life. Maybe it's being selfish, but in this situation, I was really sure where I was needed. On the other hand, I also wanted to raise this child to be good, so how are we going to teach her these things if I don't care for other people?

The biggest challenge is the divide between yourself: what should you do and what you will do. In Aleppo, there is no safe place. If I was outside filming, I was thinking about her the whole time. I couldn't take her with me outside, but even if she stayed in our home or in the hospital, she's not safe at all. The stories you face every day, as a mother, you can feel it more than anyone else. As you see in the film, there were many dead kids. I always had this feeling that one day it would be Sama instead of one of them. It's a difficult feeling when you know you can't protect anyone around you and you can't protect yourself.



**POV:** Edward, for your documentary [Escape from ISIS](#), former British Prime Minister David Cameron cited it while speaking to the need to address the situation. How did hearing how a documentary can play a direct role in effecting change direct your work on this film and your work that will come after?

**EW:** This is the film I always wanted to make because there's an important impact point about the Syrian conflict. We all have a stake in the struggle that Waad, Hamza, and their daughter Sama have experienced.

When you look around the world today, so many issues, whether it be the refugee crisis, the rise of ISIS, or polarization between communities—even the rise of the far right—can be traced back to the way that people who shared the beliefs and the values of Waad and Hamza didn't stand with them. We didn't support them enough, as I see it. These dark things were allowed to come into the world.

This film has an important message about what really happened in Syria. We should all think about the fact that a) that story was manipulated and we fell for the manipulation and b) we looked away when we should have been looking hard at the Syrian situation. Even today, people are dying in Syria. Before I came on this call, I was watching the news: there are bombings taking place in the last rebel area in the northwest of Syria. We really need to take a hard look at ourselves and say it affects us if innocent people are killed in this way.

I feel incredibly privileged to have been born in Britain with all the privileges that you have simply by being British—freedom, dignity, and the right to pursue your life pretty much as you choose. I believe it's beholden on us, people in countries of privilege, to use our gift and our privilege to try to help, and to try to do something to make this world a better place, rather than pulling up the drawbridge and sitting in our ivory tower while the rest of the world burns. That attitude is no longer viable in a world where you have global warming and you have interconnected conflicts. For my part, I am going to devote my life to using my skills to do things like we've done on this film, which is to come together with an incredible person like Waad and work with her to tell her story so that she has the best platform to show the world how we should really behave.



**POV:** As audiences are motivated by the film and moved by it, what are things they can do? What is the next step?

**WA:** The first thing to do is stop listening to the propaganda of the regime that this is a war. This is not a war; this is a revolution. We're trying to teach people in Syria, around Syria, around the world, that this is what they've done. This is all from asking for your rights, for asking for you freedom. The country will be destroyed, you will be a refugee, and nothing will be better in your next life if you don't fight. The first thing is to believe in our morals and our principles, and our freedom, dignity, and justice. Help people speak out and show them that there's just one role to play. If you play this role, and you're right and honest, nothing will stop you.

I don't regret anything that we did. I know that in any moment, I could have lost my life, my daughter, and my husband. I would do it again and again because this is our life and we should be able choose our life, not anyone else. When we chose to leave at the end, we were very lost until now. I'm now living in London and I am starting a new life, but I will never forget Aleppo or Syria. I will never forget the cause I'm fighting for. There will be justice when all the people who are Syrian can be back in our country free without arrests, without killings, or without seeing a life lost for nothing. I dream of our lives being changed for the best.

**For Sama screens:**

- Mon, Apr. 29 at 8:15 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Tues, Apr. 30 at 12:45 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Sat, May 4 at 1:00 p.m. TIFF Lightbox

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/for-sama-waad-al-kateab-edward-watts-hot-docs-interview>

## Retrata travesía de víctimas de violencia que buscan asilo

*El guardián de la memoria entrena en Toronto; único filme nacional que forma parte de la competencia del Festival Hot Docs; cuenta testimonios de siete personas que apoya el abogado Carlos Spector*

Por **Raúl Campos** - 25 abril, 2019



Una casa que fue quemada en Guadalupe, Chihuahua. Foto: Especial

**Guadalupe** es un municipio fronterizo de **Chihuahua** que hasta antes del sexenio de Felipe Calderón, cuentan algunos de sus habitantes, era un lugar tranquilo y una zona viva del desierto donde uno vivía y dejaba vivir. Si ahora uno hace una búsqueda rápida sobre éste en Internet, los resultados son sólo de muerte y de la situación extremadamente violenta que perdura ahí: **“Grupo armado asesina a familia”** y **“Enfrentamiento deja cuatro muertos”**, son solo algunos de los titulares más recientes.

Ahora es casi un pueblo fantasma: muchos de sus habitantes o están muertos o se fueron “al otro lado” para sobrevivir. Y aquellos que están luchando por obtener asilo político en el *gabacho* son ayudados por Carlos Spector, un abogado de inmigración en Texas, que pese a haber nacido en Estados Unidos y ser hijo de un ruso judío, creció en Guadalupe y “es más mexicano que los chicanos”.

En torno a él y algunos de sus “clientes” —no les cobra ni un centavo— se desarrolla *El guardián de la memoria*, documental dirigido por Marcela Arteaga, que tendrá su estreno mundial el próximo domingo en el Festival Hot Docs 2019 en Toronto, Canadá, donde compite.

En entrevista con *La Razón*, la cineasta cuenta que fue en 2014 cuando tuvo la oportunidad de conocer a Carlos Spector, por mera casualidad: era primo de una amiga suya. “Carlos es pelirrojo y judío, cuando se juntaba, los mexicanos le decían que no lo era por su religión.

“Y tampoco se siente gringo, cuando le tocó convivir con los chicanos se dio cuenta de que ellos no hablan español y que él era más mexicano que ellos. Estar fuera de ambos grupos fue lo que lo hizo empatizar con sus clientes, además él también es de Guadalupe, y asegura que su lucha es por su pueblo”, señaló.

El filme da voz a rostros de las víctimas del crimen, siempre reducidas por las autoridades a meras cifras. Cuenta los testimonios de siete “clientes” de Carlos, “y elegí sus historias porque les había sucedido lo que les ocurrió por estar en el lugar incorrecto, en el momento equivocado, y también habían sido atacadas por la Policía y el Ejército”.

## La Razón – April 25, 2019 (2 of 2)

Una de ellas es Rosy, mujer de la tercera edad que cuida de su nieto; sus hijos un día fueron “levantados” por la policía, los buscó durante 17 días, hasta que tuvo la “oportunidad” de rogarle a un diputado que le ayudara a encontrarlos; más tarde ese día le llamaron para indicarle el lugar donde estaban enterrados su restos, y la tarde siguiente fue amenazada de muerte.

“Qué más miedo puedes tener después de que te desaparecieron a tus hijos, que hayan matado a tu madre, que hayan ejecutado a tu hermano y al día siguiente a tu sobrino mientras le estaba regando su tumba... ellos ya trascendieron lo que es el terror y quieren contar su historia; si no lo hacen, se van a olvidar de ellos”, remarcó.

La producción consistió en un *crew* de sólo cinco personas, que filmaron a lo largo de un año, mientras que las tomas de los paisajes y demás elementos poéticos que conforman la fotografía las realizaron durante tres semanas en Guadalupe, lo cual les significó un reto por la situación complicada que hasta estos días se vive: “yo quería ir sin protección porque me pareció que así íbamos a llamar menos la atención, pero Carlos investigó y le dijeron que ni se nos ocurriera ir así a la brava. Tuvimos que contar con protección policiaca”, compartió Arteaga.

“Quisiera que algo logre cambiar en el país, dar escucha a todas estas personas porque son una comunidad en silencio; cuando se van de México son tratados como traidores y cuando llegan a EU, no los bajan de criminales”, concluyó.



## Three Punjabi-Canadian sisters overcame cultural norms to report their abuser. Then they made a documentary about it



By [Cherise Seucharan](#)

Star Vancouver

Thu., April 25, 2019

VANCOUVER—In the 1980s, in the northern town of Williams Lake, B.C., three young sisters suffered in silence. Unbeknown to the rest of their tightly knit Indo-Canadian family, all three were being sexually abused by an older male relative who lived with them. They called him “bhaji,” meaning brother.

For nearly three decades, they carried the secret. They were afraid to say anything because they wanted to be seen as good girls who adopted the subservient role expected of women in Punjabi culture, and they worried how it would reflect on the family if they spoke up.

But in 2006 one of the sisters, Jeeti Pooni, saw a photo of the relative with his arm around a much younger girl.

“That instantly told me this person is still active in abusing girls,” said Pooni, in a scene of the documentary film “Because We Are Girls.”

“You just know.”

That was the impetus for Jeeti and sisters Kira and Salakshana, now in their forties and fifties, to tell their family and eventually to report it to police, who charged the man with indecent assault, sexual assault and sexual intercourse without consent.

Now the story will be shared with the rest of the world as the film makes its debut next week at Toronto’s Hot Docs festival, then headlines the DOXA film festival in Vancouver. The documentary chronicles the sisters’ journey to bring their abuser to justice, following them as they give testimony in court and await a verdict, and confronts cultural stigma and the shame it confers on victims.

Vancouver-based filmmaker Baljit Sangra is hoping that her “labour of love” will help spark a conversation inside and outside the Indo-Canadian community.

“I want more dialogue, more conversation, so that we can chip away at the stigma and taboo and challenge some of the social and cultural values, like family honour,” said Sangra.

“This is about the next generation of girls.”

For Pooni, it was important to work with a director from a Punjabi background who had intimate knowledge of how cultural pressures shaped women’s lives.

## The Star (Vancouver) – April 25, 2019 (2 of 2)

“[Sangra] was able to articulate aspects of our culture that were important ... She was able to understand the significance of Bollywood in our lives,” said Pooni of her longtime friend.

Interspersed throughout the film are clips from Bollywood movies, portraying women as emotional and at the mercy of men, underscoring the pressure the girls felt to play the same role in real life.

But while the influence of Punjabi culture played a role in the sister's silence, Pooni said their message about breaking the stigma of sexual violence is universal.

“This is our society's shame and humanity's shame.”

Data shows when more people come forward about sexual abuse, it encourages others to do the same. According to Statistics Canada, in October 2017 the number of nation-wide reports of sexual assault to police hit a peak not seen since the data started being recorded in 2009, coinciding with the rise of the #metoo movement. There was also an increase in the reporting of historical sexual assaults directly following the rise of #metoo.

However, for South Asian and other immigrant women, there are other barriers to reporting sexual assault. According to the Canadian Council for Refugees, it's often due to lack of information about legal rights, language barriers and social isolation. The council also noted newcomer women facing domestic violence sometimes “fall through the cracks” when they do come to women's organizations and refugee agencies due to a lack of training of front-line workers.

Nimi Chauhan, the founder of the Surrey-based Sahara Services Society, agreed that language is a “huge” barrier to finding support. She started the volunteer-run group in 2006 to help South Asian women, children and families experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

“I was seeing many South Asian women's files sitting on someone's desk, they didn't know how to deal with them or what to do,” she said.

With a small team of volunteers, Chauhan wants to educate women in the South Asian community on sexual abuse and domestic violence, and empower them to overcome the shame and stigma that prevents them from reaching out for support.

In early 2019, she hosted an event called #notmysecret to help people open up about sexual abuse. When she screened a preview of “Because We Are Girls,” the reaction was “pretty phenomenal.”

“I can't even tell you how many people have reached out since, sharing their own stories.”

Now, as the sisters await the documentary's premiere, they hope to reach even more people with their message.

“It's a story I knew had to be told,” Pooni said. “My hope is that it will allow girls and women to help relieve that burden that is so hard to carry.”

<https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2019/04/25/how-three-punjabi-canadian-sisters-overcame-social-stigma-and-cultural-norms-to-report-their-sexual-abuser-to-police-and-then-they-made-a-documentary-about-it.html>

## Hot Docs '19: Mark Franchetti on betraying the Mafia in “Our Godfather”

By Daniele Alcinii

April 25, 2019



The Mafia was all that Tomasso Buscetta knew.

Raised in a poverty-stricken area of Palermo, Italy and the youngest of 17 children, Buscetta joined the Sicilian Mafia – otherwise known as Cosa Nostra – at the age of 17 where he cut his teeth with cigarette smuggling.

Growing increasingly disillusioned following the murder of a number of allies and family members, including two sons, Buscetta – a Cosa Nostra boss known as Don Masino – turned state's witness after more than 40-years in the crime organization.

In 1986, under the escort of armored military cars and heavy police presence, the Italian gangster entered a specially constructed Sicilian bunker-courtroom to provide crucial testimony at the Maxi Trial that dismantled the romanticized notions of the crime syndicate and led to the conviction of 475 mafiosi across both Italy and the U.S. in the largest anti-mafia operation since World War II. His betrayal made him the Mafia's most wanted man and the most endangered witness in U.S. criminal history. As a reward for his help, Buscetta was sent to the U.S. under a new identity and citizenship in the Witness Protection Program, where he remained until his death in New York in 2000.

That's the premise of [Mark Franchetti](#) and Andrew Meier's feature-length film *Our Godfather*, which enjoys its world premiere at Hot Docs '19 in the Special Presentations category. Kew Media Distribution is the sales company.

A Black Earth Films and Phenomen Trust production, the 93-minute film melds together never-before-seen home videos, emotional interviews from Buscetta's wife and surviving children, and courtroom archive footage to provide insight into the unforgiving world of organized crime.

The filmmakers realized they had a story on their hands when they discovered that Buscetta's entire family had disappeared 30 years ago under witness protection and had never told the patriarch's story from the family's perspective.

“This man turns after 40 years in Cosa Nostra and it's what makes him fascinating, but we were also fascinated by what happens to him and his family afterwards,” says the Moscow-based Franchetti, a co-director and co-producer on the film.

## Realscreen - April 25, 2019 (2 of 2)

"We realized there was a huge chunk of his story that needed to be told."

Over the course of the three-year filming process, Franchetti and Meier trekked to parts of America, Italy and Brazil in an attempt to gain access to the surviving Buscetta family (the former mob boss had eight children from three different women).

"At the beginning, we thought if we could track down his widow, if she's interesting and would agree to go on camera, we probably have a film there," recalls Franchetti. "After a year of research and reaching out we found some retired DEA agents who had been close to the family. They eventually gave us the name that the family had used in the last 30 years. That's how we were first able to find Christina, Tommaso Buscetta's widow, and reach out to her."

Importantly, says Franchetti, *Our Godfather* was a purely independent production shot solely with private equity, which freed the filmmaking duo to chase certain elements and storylines they felt crucial to the film at their leisure.

For instance, after the team had what they believed to be a good rough cut, the film was screened to various industry executives for feedback and notes. When the filmmakers felt they needed to break up the structure and spend another few weeks editing with editor David Charap, the team was able to do that.

"The big challenge for us was do you tell the story chronologically so it's going to take 40 to 50 minutes before you get to the home video footage, or do you break up the narrative structure? How do you tell the story without the viewer getting lost? It was finding the right narrative structure to a very complicated story," Franchetti explains.

In the end, the filmmakers deemed fragmenting the narrative structure to be the best approach, as it allowed for never-before-seen home video, family photographs and courtroom archive to be incorporated early on and throughout the storyline in a cohesive manner.

"In this particular story, where Buscetta giving evidence in court, you can't beat it. It's the real thing, it's extremely dramatic and unique," Franchetti says. "Same thing with some of the retaliation murders that took place – I spent a lot of time in the archives in Sicily looking for those little bits and there's nothing better than having the real bit of footage."

"It took three years to make and it was very much a labor of love and a marathon."

- ***Our Godfather enjoys its world premiere at Hot Docs in the Special Presentations category on Sunday, April 28 at 9 p.m. ET at Toronto's Hart House Theatre. Visit the [festival's website](#) for complete screening info.***
- ***Check out a trailer from the film below:***

<http://realscreen.com/2019/04/25/hot-docs-19-mark-franchetti-on-betraying-the-mafia-in-our-godfather/>

## Colten Boushie documentary makes history as Hot Docs opener

North America's largest doc film festival spotlights topical issues

CBC News · Posted: Apr 25, 2019 2:12 PM ET | Last Updated: April 25



*Debbie Baptiste, mother of Colten Boushie, holds a photo of her son during a 2018 press conference in Ottawa. Hot Docs is shining a spotlight on the Boushie case and the larger issue of inequity and systemic racism in Canada's legal system with its opening film, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*. (Justin Tang/Canadian Press)*

Hot Docs kicks off its latest edition in Toronto on Thursday by shining a light on inequity and systemic racism in the Canadian legal system and efforts of Colten Boushie's family to push for change.

Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* is opening North America's largest documentary film festival, the first time an Indigenous director has landed the high-profile slot.

Making its world premiere, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* paints a stark portrait of the landscape surrounding the 2016 death of Boushie, a young Saskatchewan man from Red Pheasant First Nation, and the acquittal of Gerald Stanley, the white farmer who fatally shot him. The case sparked a massive outcry and captured international attention.

In the doc, which Hubbard also narrates, the filmmaker weaves her own personal history into a larger examination of colonialism and racism in the Prairie provinces along with how Boushie's family continues to pursue landmark changes in our justice system. *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* is slated for theatrical release later this year.



*Filmmaker Tasha Hubbard is the first Indigenous director to land the opening night spot at Hot Docs. (Hot Docs)*

Members of Boushie's family, their legal advisers and other supporters will join Hubbard in Toronto Thursday night to help unveil the film.

"We hope that *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* shines a light on the significant barriers the Canadian legal system presents to Indigenous peoples and families seeking justice for their loved ones. What Indigenous peoples experience within this system is unacceptable," the family said Thursday morning in a statement.



*Boushie's mother Debbie Baptiste, seen seated at bottom right, and his cousin Jade Tootoosis, seated second from right, addressed the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York in 2018. (Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival)*

"We will continue to press provincial, federal and international leaders to make real and lasting change," the family added, while also sharing thanks to First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples across Canada, Indigenous people worldwide and non-Indigenous allies for their support.

Over the next 10 days, Hot Docs will showcase more than 230 films from 56 countries, plus virtual reality and interactive experiences. According to organizers, 54 per cent of this year's films are directed by women.

*Prey*, about a Canadian sexual abuse survivor's legal battle against the Catholic Church, the devastating *Your Last Walk in the Mosque*, which gives voice to survivors of the Quebec City mosque shooting, cosmetics industry exposé *Toxic Beauty* and climate change doc *The Hottest August* are just a few examples of the wide-ranging, topical films screening at this year's edition.

This year's Hot Docs also includes films exploring fascinating personalities such as singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot, sex therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer, pioneering NHLer Willie O'Ree, activist journalist and author Stieg Larsson and Gaëtan Dugas, the Canadian man demonized as "patient zero" in the early years of the AIDS epidemic.



## Defying Categorization

### *Ingrid Veninger Talks 'The World or Nothing' ('El Mundo O Nada')*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 25th, 2019



*Rubert and Rubildo Donatien Dinza in The World or Nothing*  
All photos by Leon Guallart Diaz

Ingrid Veninger is ready to take on the world at Hot Docs. The reputed “indie queen of Toronto filmmaking,” Veninger again proves herself one of the most consistently interesting and innovative voices in Canadian film with her seventh feature *The World or Nothing* (*El mundo o nada*). The film is Veninger’s first non-fiction movie as a director, although she’s no stranger to documentary having produced some of the most canonical docs in contemporary Canadian cinema, notably [Picture of Light](#) (1994) and [Gambling, Gods, and LSD](#) (2002), both directed by Peter Mettler.

Veninger’s DIY spirit caters itself well to non-fiction. Having created a singular style and aesthetic making films on a shoestring budget, Veninger’s “maplecore” approach to indie filmmaking shares an affinity with non-fiction film’s sense of curiosity, not to mention its spirit of collaboration and desire to share new experiences.

Veninger’s films are often family affairs with her daughter Hallie performing in [Modra](#) (2010) and [i am a good person/i am a bad person](#) (2011) and son Jacob appearing in [Only](#) (2008) and [The Animal Project](#) (2013), while her husband John does sound work and essential additional tasks on various films. *The World or Nothing*, being a non-fiction film, doesn’t feature Veninger’s clan, but it’s a family affair through and through as the director intimately observes the lives of identical twins Rubert and Rubildo Donatien Dinza.

The brothers are Cuban ex-pats making a go of their dream in Barcelona. The twins are aspiring dancers and Veninger’s film follows the pursuit of their passion. They rehearse and perform on the streets of Barcelona by day and lead dance classes by night. Veninger observes as they record the videos and upload them to [YouTube](#) where they, like many others of the selfie generation, hope to make it big with a viral video. At once an intimate glimpse into the perilous opportunities of influencer culture and a spot-on portrait of the ineffable bond between twins (I’m a twin and I think the film nails it), *The World or Nothing* breathes with the brothers’ sense of infinite possibility. It’s a film about youth, and hope, and optimism, and that desire to take on the world when anything feels possible. Veninger often characterizes her work with the mantra that “nothing is impossible,” which makes her a triplet in spirit with the brothers.

POV sat down with Veninger at to discuss *The World or Nothing* at an eclectic java joint in Toronto (where this writer was thrilled to learn was the writing place for *The Animal Project*). Speaking on her first foray into non-fiction as a director, Veninger shares her love for the artisanal and embracing the creative challenges and opportunities the world has to offer.



Director Ingrid Veninger

**POV:** Pat Mullen

**IV:** Ingrid Veninger

*This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**POV:** It's been 16 years since the release of *Gambling, Gods, and LSD*, which you produced and Peter Mettler directed. Why a doc now?

**IV:** I worked with Peter Mettler on *Picture of Light* [1994], *Gambling Gods and LSD* [2002] and [\*The End of Time\*](#) [2012]. Mettler has always been a big influence for me, even in my fiction work. My background is performance and acting, so I've always gravitated to working with actors and I love writing. I think the reason I made this documentary right now was primarily because I'm doing my Master's at York University and I had to engage with a different mode of filmmaking. I've never made something unscripted, even though my fiction work seems like it's not scripted to some people.

**POV:** They really have a spontaneous style that lends itself to non-fiction process. Could you draw from the films you've done before or was this completely different?

**IV:** Similar and different. My work's been rooted in a documentary aesthetic, which is also due to limitations in time and money. I like small, homegrown, homemade, handmade, artisanal, organic process-oriented films made by people like Cassavetes. I've always loved the direct cinema/cinema verité movement, and the work of the Maysles brothers and Wiseman's films—I love the observational aesthetic. I just never really had an opportunity to practice it in such a focused way, but school does that. Laboratory work in school is process-oriented and even though my six previous fiction narratives have been scripted, they borrowed a lot from documentary in that my crews have been between two and five people, never more.

**POV:** An observational doc shot with a skeleton crew is true to the DIY spirit of your previous work.

**IV:** Even though this film was non-fiction with no script or plan or outline, it was edited in 33 days. I think my fiction background sets the limit of time I have, due to money and other factors, to do post [production]. I have two or four days to mix it and I have four days to grade it. That was no different for this documentary.

**POV:** How long in terms of production was the film overall? I understand you first met Rubert and Rubildo in 2015?

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**IV:** My partner [John] and I hadn't had a holiday or gone anywhere to rest and rejuvenate for 10 years, so we went to Cuba and spent New Year's Eve there in 2015. We stayed in an all-inclusive resort and every night there were these extravaganzas. There was the aquatics night, dancers on stage, and these twins on New Year's Eve were standouts. They were the best dancers. They were incredibly charismatic. That's how it started. I was curious about them. I felt like they were ambitious and I wondered how they were navigating their careers in Cuba.

I also was getting ready to make *Porcupine Lake* in 2016 and I was going to come back to Toronto and start writing the final draft of that script and raise the money to shoot in the summer. For two years, I kept thinking about their story and I kept imagining different stories for them.

**POV:** Like what?

**IV:** I've always had an affinity for dancers. I was a dancer growing up, so that's our first link. I was really curious about when they started dancing, where they learned to dance. Do they have lots of brothers and sisters that are dancers? Were their parents, artists, dancers? What are their dreams? I was curious about everything.

I made *Porcupine Lake* and then I applied to the Master's. I had to write a thesis proposal and I thought of these twins and that I would like to go back to Cuba and make a film. I thought that was impossible and expensive and I had no idea if they would be remotely interested. But, for New Year's Eve 2017, John and I went back to the same resort. They were not at the resort. I asked around to see if anyone had heard of them. Finally, we found that they were in Havana for two nights. We got a car on New Year's Eve to take us from Holguin, which is on the west side of Cuba, to Havana, which was a 12-hour drive. I met them in a hotel lobby for two hours.

We actually made a little [mini documentary](#) of that trip. We made plans to return to Cuba in May 2018 and shoot the film, but in April, they moved, so we shot in Barcelona. We shot for 11 days. Before we started rolling, I had only met them for two hours.

[Porcupine Lake Trailer RLS 2018](#) from [ingrid veninger](#) on [Vimeo](#).

**POV:** It's so intimate, so I assumed you spent a lot of time with them. Barcelona plays such a good role in the film, too, especially with the locations where the brothers perform and record their dances. I'm thinking particularly of that scene on the boardwalk where they're on both sides of a piece of glass and mirroring one another. How did you work with the brothers while they were shooting their videos? You said you started without a plan, so what was the shooting process?

**IV:** I learned where they lived and we got accommodations right around the corner. On the first day of shooting, our cinematographer, who was from Barcelona, met us with one camera, no lights, and a little rig for the long single shots. I knew I wanted to do observational-style long shots, stay out of the way, and let the brothers' day unfold. Wherever they went in the city, we went. We'd shoot from nine or ten in the morning for about ten hours, and whatever they did in that day created the content. Halfway through the shoot, I felt like we should do some interviews because I never knew what they were saying when they were walking around. I asked them questions in English and they were translated by my cinematographer. I didn't understand their answers and there was no translation of their answers. I just asked them questions based on their expressiveness and things I was curious about, but I couldn't lift off their answers and ask the next question.

**POV:** What was the reason for that?

**IV:** I didn't want to lead them or for it to feel contrived or manipulated. It was only halfway through the shoot that I began to understand what their answers were and at that point, I realized we had a feature. Prior to that I thought it could be a 10-minute short as part of a longer film. In a way, not understanding them kept me out of it. It would've been very hard not to start mapping out a narrative because I love writing. This prevented me from constructing. And because they didn't know Barcelona, there was no expectation or desire to do or capture anything. They could completely lead the flow. They are performers and were comfortable with being on camera.

**POV:** How was it going back to school after working in film for 20 years? Have you had to rewire your brain to make a movie?

**IV:** It was fantastic to go to school and shake myself up, reset, and re-imagine. I don't think I would have made this film had I not been in school. The temptation after *Porcupine Lake* was to move into managing a feature film with some episodic television and perhaps go slightly larger in scale in narrative fiction filmmaking. To go back to school and work in non-fiction is completely different at this point in my career.

**POV:** What about the directorial style between fiction and non-fiction?

**IV:** It's so fascinating to look at this as a female filmmaker. There's greater gender parity in documentary than in fiction and the approach to directing in non-fiction is to relinquish control. There's a kind of humility or surrender. It's not about the filmmaker; it's about the subjects. That sensibility carries through every aspect while making the film, but also the marketing, the exhibition, the presentation. There's a responsibility and there are greater ethical issues around representation. Everyone isn't there to serve the artistic vision of the director. There's the Godard quote, "If you want to make a documentary you should automatically go to the fiction, and if you want to nourish your fiction, you have to come back to reality." I think that's really true.

**POV:** I was sitting in on a conversation last night where some critics were discussing what makes a Canadian film. There was some complaint about Canadian films that don't take place in Canada, but that conversation doesn't really come up elsewhere. *The Sisters Brothers* was accepted immediately as a Canadian book because Patrick DeWitt wrote it. How do you feel about working abroad? Do you see the distinction between a Canadian film made here or elsewhere?

**IV:** I always thought the definition of "Canadian" is based on where the money comes from, the financing and the citizenship of the filmmaker. Deepa Mehta has been making films outside of Canada for years, and so have many fiction filmmakers. The sharing of different perspectives and the cross pollinating of views is so important. I've been asked why I make films that don't feature strong female protagonist, like this one, which features men and [\*He Hated Pigeons\*](#) also featured men. *Porcupine Lake* featured two girls and *Modra* featured only a guy and a girl and *The Animal Project* is an ensemble of girls and guys. As a director, I wouldn't want to be relegated to certain stories or, as a Canadian filmmaker, to have to direct in certain places. That feels restrictive and wrong and limiting, especially in this time where we want more freedom of expression.



**POV:** With this film especially, you had the spark for it while abroad. It's still personal.

**IV:** I made *The Animal Project* in Toronto and that was the fourth feature I made here exclusively. It's odd now because so many places that were personal to me in my daily life are now associated with the film. There is something beautiful about working elsewhere and expanding your world at the same time, making it more intimate.

**POV:** How did you find it filming characters who have such an innate intimate relationship? I'm a twin and I think the film totally nailed the dynamic, but I also found it so weird and alien because my brother and I are the exact opposite of the twins. We would never coordinate clothes or styles.

**IV:** There's something about that intimacy and that strength of their "two-ness" and their dualism. They seem like they can conquer the world because they'll always have each other's backs and they'll always be there for each other. They are like a single organism. I've always been interested in friendships or relationships when two separate individuals complement each other to the extent where they almost become a single organism. The way they move around each other, the way they wake up. There's this unison that is so beautiful. It's balletic. It's poetic. I could watch how they interact with one another for hours. That's why the shots ended up so long.

**POV:** How has social media shaped your work?

**IV:** I've recruited so many cast members and crewmembers through social media. For example, *He Hated Pigeons*, the film that was live scored in every festival, all the musicians were recruited through social media. I would say, "We're screening in Nashville or New York, does anybody know a musician that might be interested in live scoring this film?" I would meet them on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter. We would private message each other, secure a time and place of the screening, agree on the honorarium and go.

For this film, I secured my cinematographer through social media by putting up a post on Facebook. I needed a parka when I was in Whitehorse, so someone loaned me one.

**POV:** Back up: Whitehorse?

**IV:** Before this film, I didn't know what I was making for my thesis. I did all these workshops—in the last credit of the film, there are all these names saying, "Thank you to all the cast and crew that participated in workshops from September to March." That was in Whitehorse, in Wilmington, North Carolina and in Toronto. It was to do more improvisation, performance art, or just exercising the unplanned and the uncertain. I worked with about 150 different actors doing over 25 workshops in preparation for this non-fiction film. That all came from social media.





**POV:** You're teaching as well, correct? What advice are you giving your students? What's the number one?

**IV:** Number one? Have an urgency and an involuntary hunch, impulse, urge, or instinct that you cannot eliminate. I really didn't know how to make this film or even what I was making, but something else was driving it and that's something to listen to. At the same time, practice, practice, practice. If you can gather with some people, some friends that you can align with visually or in terms of what you want to say, then do it. I don't believe there can be too many films in the world. There's so much access to making things and getting them out there that there are literally no excuses and it doesn't have to take a lot of money to make a film.

**POV:** Would you ever want to follow the patterns of filmmakers like Jean-Marc Vallée or Denis Villeneuve, going from *C.R.A.Z.Y.* to *Big Little Lies* or from *Incendies* to *Blade Runner*?

**IV:** All kinds of things interest me. Different challenges and new experiences, new people, new places—I'm a junkie for that kind of thing. Bigger scale cranes, drones, a crew of 200...that filmmaking experience is incredibly exciting and I've worked on those scales of projects as an actor, so they're not unfamiliar. I would love to lead that kind of an expedition or adventure, but they take long and I'm in Toronto. I'm not interested in relocating to the States and doing what that necessarily takes in terms of team management, agents, and all of that. If that came to me, I would love it and I think I could kick some serious ass on a larger scale or in television or making a web series. That might be part of someone else's vision that I might step into.

I also really appreciate the artisanal and appreciate the analogy of a local farmer who harvests and brings their produce to markets and sells to a few hundred people. It's completely independent and they work in their own way on their own time. I appreciate that so much. The ideal would be [Agnès Varda](#). If I could go to 90 and have the kind of career that she had...She spoke about her films being on the margins and never really having a large audience, and never really making a lot of money, but she got to make films in her way and people saw them and appreciated them. She had a very specific brand and identity. An Agnès Varda film is an Agnès Varda film the same as a Herzog film is a Herzog film or a Cassavetes film is a Cassavetes film. Not that Cassavetes could not be a director for hire, but his films have his signature.

**POV:** It's interesting to make that point after talking about the *Blade Runner* scale projects. If you look at the wide reaction to Varda's death, she touched so many people in the film community over time. She didn't have the one-shot reach of a blockbuster, but a more lasting, cumulative reach.

**IV:** It's that longevity. When I think of women and film, we have Deepa Mehta, Léa Pool, and Patricia Rozema, filmmakers who started in the '80s and are now coming up to their eighth or twelfth films. It's going to be exciting to see filmmakers go to 20 or 30 films in 20 years. I want women to have that kind of canon, that body of work, where we can see a filmmaker grow through the films and see how identity is shaped by and through the work. We don't have those models yet in our English Canadian film history.





**POV:** That came up when you started the film lab. I remember reading that you said you saw a lot of women make a great first feature and then disappear. Have things improved?

**IV:** If you think about how much emphasis there is on the discovery, you have filmmakers from web series or shorts deciding to make a feature. If that first feature does well, then there's excitement. Sometimes even from the States or from Europe, especially if your films go to Berlin or Rotterdam or Locarno. For that second feature, the follow up, there's excitement. And then for the third feature, everybody kind of falls away unless your second feature makes money, or if it makes a critical splash or gets into Cannes, Sundance, Berlin, TIFF, or Venice. For the third feature, you're on your own again, so to get that juju to go on means you've got to have the fire.

My money has gone into every single film I've made. It's not financially sustainable, so how do we keep going as women? That's what the Punk Films Femme Lab came out of: doing it in isolation. You're a start-up with every film; there's so little momentum. It's not like you can build on the last one because you're back on the beach looking at the horizon. It's a slightly different beach each time.

**POV:** And how does the view from the beach look today?

**IV:** My interest is in hybrid. More and more after making this film, I really want to combine all my skills in fiction and my love for non-fiction and work in more hybrid cinema.

**POV:** A bit like [Denis Côté](#)?

**IV:** What he's been doing is totally inspiring for me. I think Variety said his last film defied categorization. If I can make films that defy categorization, I will be so happy. That's what I want on my tombstone. "Ingrid Veninger: defied categorization."

## To Work in Documentary

BY STEVEN BOGNAR



Steven Bognar delivering his acceptance speech his and Julia Reichert's Tribute honor at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. Courtesy of Full Frame Documentary Film Festival.

*Editor's Note: Filmmakers/partners Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert have been racking up the career kudos over the past few months, starting in December, when Reichert received the IDA Career Achievement Award. April has been the coolest month for the duo, with the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival bestowing its annual [Tribute](#) to them with a retrospective of their work, and Hot Docs feting Reichert this week with the [Outstanding Achievement Award](#). Accepting the Full Frame Tribute award, Bognar read the following:*

To work in documentary is to feel a lack of confidence in your abilities,

to feel uncertainty that you know what you're doing,

to feel doubt that you are making a worthy film,

to feel guilt that people, good people, have trusted you to tell their story,

to feel you've snuck into the party and pretty soon someone is going to come up to you and say, "Hey, what are you doing here?"

To work in documentary is to feel a constant anxiety about the moments you are missing, that you should be filming right now,

about the questions you forgot to ask,

about the camera angle and shots you didn't think of,

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about the loud refrigerator hum you didn't even notice,  
about the spare batteries you forgot,  
about the dumb thing you said to the most important person you are following.

To work in documentary is to cut scenes from your film that you dearly love,  
to cut people from your film whom you adore,  
to second-guess every edit you make,  
for weeks or months or years thereafter.

To work in documentary is to spend two years, or four, or seven, or nine years on one film, with the sneaking feeling that it would have been a better film if you had finished it three years earlier, and with the delusional hope that you'll figure it out and get it done about eight months from now.

To work in documentary is to wonder,

Will a funder see in your rough cut what you saw in the idea?

Will a programmer feel the story you constructed the way you felt it,  
when you were living it?

To wonder, Will anyone ever like this film?

Will anyone ever even SEE this film?

And yet, are we not so incredibly fortunate to work in documentary?

## HOT DOCS: WHAT WE'VE SEEN (AND WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE) AT THE BIGGEST EVENT IN DOCUMENTARIES

April 25, 2019

By Jim Slotek, Liam Lacey, Kim Hughes, Thom Ernst, Karen Gordon and Bonnie Laufer

It's a truism about good documentaries that, if they were fiction, no one would believe them. In that regard, they are often more entertaining, intriguing, and provocative than a typical Hollywood blockbuster.

And there is no better place better than Toronto to see the best docs on the planet, at the city's Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

Now in its 26th year, Hot Docs is the premiere showplace for established and emerging filmmakers to connect with audiences and industry. Running from April 25 through May 5, the festival will show 234 films and 18 interdisciplinary projects from 56 countries.

While it's impossible to screen every film in advance, Original-Cin's veteran reviewers have seen some very good ones. And here, we offer a collection of snapshot reviews, plus a few we intend to see, and so should you. We'll be adding more reviews throughout the festival, so please check back often.

For the full schedule and ticket information, go to [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)

### **Advocate**

When we meet Israeli human rights lawyer Lea Tsemel, she's bargained the sentence of an Arab-Israeli who stabbed 11 people on a bus down from life to a dozen years. Tsemel is the embodiment of the idea that everyone deserves a defence. An anti-occupation activist since the '70s, she courts death threats and fights cases that seem more and more driven by social media outrage. Directors Rachel Leah Jones and Philippe Bellaïche bounce between her controversial past cases, and a confounding contemporary one, that of a 13-year-old Palestinian boy who carried a knife of his own while his older brother committed a stabbing (and was killed on scene). The clock ticks as Tsemel has only a few months leeway before the boy can be sentenced as an adult. A vivid portrait of a memorable contrarian following her conscience. Screening: Sun, Apr 28, 6 pm ScotiaBank Theatre; Mon, Apr 29, 3:30 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Sun, May 5, 6 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre. – JS

Advocate

### **Assholes: A Theory**

John Walker's documentary is inspired by the 2012 bestseller by philosopher Aaron James who says an "asshole" is a moral class of person whose "entrenched entitlement" makes him immune to others' complaints. Walker interviews James (who thought of the concept when someone cut him off while surfing) and focuses on locales where *homo anus* flourishes: High finance, fraternities, social media, the RCMP, Hollywood, Silicon Valley and politics. There's hopeful evidence of social pushback, including a company that has a "no assholes need apply" policy. Screening: Tues, Apr 30, 7 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Wed, May 1, 3:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Sat, May 4, 12:45 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre. – LL

### **Ask Dr. Ruth**

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At 90 years young, Dr. Ruth Westheimer is as much a spitfire as she was over 50 years ago. *Ask Dr. Ruth* is a touching and very personal look at the famous sex therapist and Holocaust survivor. Director Ryan White gives us amazing access into Dr. Ruth's personal life, which she has kept surprisingly quiet about despite being so open and willing to discuss anything to do with sex. Her story of growing up and narrowly escaping death by the Nazis is beautifully told through illustration and animation. We see how her struggles as a survivor has affected and inspired her career path and extraordinary life. I defy anyone not to shed a bucket of tears while watching this documentary. Screening: Fri, Apr 26, 6 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre; Sat, Apr 27th, 10 am, TIFF Bell Lightbox. – BL

Ask Dr. Ruth

### Buddy

The enduring awesomeness of dogs is clearly illustrated in this gentle German-language doc about canines assisting humans dealing with a variety of issues, from autism to blindness to PTSD, who would otherwise lead lessened lives without their four-legged assistants. The person/dog bonds traced by director Heddy Honigmann are powerful though Honigmann's unobtrusiveness approach decelerates the narrative. There is also no discussion about the ethics of pressing animals into a life of service though perhaps that's another film altogether. Screening: Fri, Apr 26, 3:15 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Sat, Apr 27, 3:00 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre; Tue, Apr 30, 10:30 am, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3. – KH

Buddy (look at that face!)

### Conviction

Life behind bars from the inmates' perspective drives *Conviction*, which seeks to understand why women are the fastest-growing segment of Canada's prison population. While the answer to that question remains murky, this doc clearly shows why recidivism rates are depressingly high. Once released, the women depicted have scant support networks — or even secure housing — to rely on. Prison, for all its dreads, fast emerges as comparatively safe place to go "home" to. Filmmakers Ariella Pahlke, Nance Ackerman, and Teresa MacInnes weave together fly-on-the-wall footage with footage captured inside by the prisoners who appear troubled, yes, but also multifaceted, coherent, and determined to challenge a failing system. Screening: Sun, Apr 28, 6:30 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Mon, Apr 29, 1:15 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3; Thu, May 2 12:30 PM Hart House Theatre. – KH

### Corporate Coup D'État

The claim that the USA and other governments are under the influence of corporate special interests is hard to argue against and various celebrity old-school lefties — Chris Hedges, John Ralson Saul and Cornell West — repeat the film's title enough times in this documentary from Fred Peabody (*All Governments Lie*) to make it sound freshly ominous. But the hoary clips from *Network* and *Wall Street* fall flat while Hedges's reflexive anti-globalism lament for the lost manufacturing jobs and critique of "elites" sound positively Trumpian, while constructive responses to the crisis are disappointingly lacking. Screening: Mon, April 29, 9:30 pm, Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema; Tues, Apr 30, 10 am, Isabel Bader Theatre; Fri, May 3, 12 pm, Hart House Theatre. – LL

### The Daughter Tree

Irony was never more mordant than a scene in the Punjabi town of Jhojhu Kalan, where no girls have been born for decades and sad bachelors bemoan their state. "If I could get married, I could have a son to carry on my name," one says, as if it's never occurred to him why they have no women. Rama Rau's film

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about the ongoing practice of aborting female fetuses identified by ultrasound (illegal but still prevalent) hops from story to story, revealing upheavals like the reversal of dowries (desperate men paying for brides, often from lower castes), and showcasing a heroine, midwife Neelam Bala, who unleashes profanity on men whose attitudes she battles while struggling to save unborn girls. A powerful and personal film. Screening: Sat, Apr 27, 6:30 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Tues, Apr 30, 10:15 am TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Thur, May 2, 9 pm, Hart House Theatre. – JS

The Daughter Tree.

### **For Sama**

Waad al-Kateab is a Syrian woman who was one of the last people to leave Aleppo in 2016, along with her baby girl and doctor husband before the city fell to Assad's forces. In the preceding five years, beginning with protests and ending in the city's destruction, al-Kateab maintained a remarkable video blog of life during wartime: marriage, childbirth, moving into a new house, her husband's work in a makeshift hospital, all in a city pounded by shelling and littered with corpses. For Sama, made with co-director Edward Watts, is a compilation of her videos, dedicated to her baby daughter. The film, which will be shown on PBS's *Frontline*, has also been accepted for screening at Cannes next month. Screening: Mon, Apr 29, 9 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3; Tues, Apr 30, 12:30 pm, Hart House Theatre; Sun, May 5, 12:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3. – LL

### **Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind**

More homage than deep dive into Gordon Lightfoot's private life, *If You Could Read My Mind* benefits from extensive commentary by Lightfoot contemporaries including Steve Earle, Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson, Anne Murray, Randy Bachman, Murray McLauchlan, Burton Cummings, Sarah McLachlan, Sylvia Tyson, biographer Nicolas Jennings and... uh... Alec Baldwin, all testifying to the legendary singer/songwriter's kingly place in the canon. Add to that lineup Lightfoot himself, who — when not driving around hometown Toronto giddily scoping out landmarks — offers context and recall on an extraordinary career seemingly impervious to trend. What the film lacks in dish (drink and women problems are addressed oh-so-lightly) is remunerated by star-power and eye-popping archival footage. Screening: Sat, Apr 27, 6:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Tue, Apr 30, 6:30 pm, Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. – KH

### **Haydee and the Flying Fish**

This doc is about Haydee Oberreuter Umazabal, a Chilean woman who launched a lawsuit against the naval officers who tortured her following the 1973 Pinochet coup. Their sadism caused her to lose her four-month pregnancy and suffer lifelong physical and psychological damage. Oberreuter's multi-year crusade for justice - aided by various relatives, friends and a legal team - is moving, though director Pachi Bustos' poetic and tender approach (the camera lingers on still photographs) and absence of chronological markers can be confusing. Tuesday, April 30, 6:30 p.m., TIFF Bell Lightbox; Wed., May 2, 12:30 p.m., Scotiabank; Sat. May 4, 5:30 p.m. Scotiabank. - LL

### **Inside the Lehman Brothers**

Among the millions of people who suffered from the 2008 financial meltdown, a few even worked for the companies who perpetrated the crisis. Jennifer Deschamps' documentary focuses on whistleblowers at the giant Lehman Brothers investment firm, whose bankruptcy played a major role in the global crisis. The subjects include a former vice president who was fired for challenging dubious practices, a lawyer who met the same fate and several women working for a Sacramento subsidiary who were subjected to sexual and racial harassment because of their concerns. Despite a tabloid-TV style, the documentary makes a



convincing case that what happened was deliberately criminal. Fri. May 3, 6:15 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox. - LL

If You Could Read My Mind

### **Inga Can Hear**

In rural Latvia, teenage Inga is the youngest child and the only hearing member of her family. She grapples with resentment over the fact that she is her family's de facto interpreter to the hearing world, her conflicted approach to her realization of being gay, and what seems an impossible dream to become her family's first college graduate. Not surprisingly, she begins acting out anti-socially. Kaspars Goba's film touches on themes of the differently abled, LGBTQ and surprising aspects of living with hearing impairment (Inga gets to play her music as loud as she wants, and we see punk non-hearing kids wear t-shirts of their favourite bands as angry statements regardless). One girl's fascinating story. Screening: Tues, Apr 30, 6:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 4; Thur, May 2, 3 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 4. – JS

### **Killing Patient Zero**

Many of us, gay and straight, are still haunted by the loss of loved ones during the AIDS epidemic, and remember the rampant fear of the strange plague. This film by Laurie Lind exposes one of the greatest injustices to a single person. The myth of "Patient Zero" posited that an Air Canada steward named Gaétan Dugas was personally responsible for spreading the disease. The film fleshes out Dugas's life via his friends and traces the banal typo that led to the Patient Zero theory (an error compounded by author Randy Shilts of *The Band Played On* fame). Dugas, it is proposed, was an epidemiological hero, cooperatively providing the CDC with valuable early information about how AIDS spread. A fascinating study of "fake news" in the absence of facts. Screening: Fri, Apr 26, 8:30 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Sat, Apr 27, 12:30 pm, Scotiabank Theatre 4; Fri, May 3, 2:45 pm, Hart House Theatre. – JS

Maxima

### **Maxima**

The extent to which mammoth corporations criminally use developing nations as their private sandboxes has seldom been seen more forcefully than in this story of Máxima Acuña an illiterate subsistence farmer in Peru whose family bought a meagre plot of Andes hillside land in 1994, only to have the land sold out from under her to a predominantly American-owned gold company (with a 5% stake by the World Bank!). The company has used violence to try to evict her, knocked her child unconscious, repeatedly destroyed her crops and tried to cut off access to her property. In between, they've spilled mercury and destroyed pristine lakes that were discovered to have gold deposits under them. The fact that Maxima keeps winning hollow court victories doesn't make Claudia Sparrow's film a feel-good story by any means. Screening: Sat., Apr 27, 5:45 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre; Sun, April, 28, 10:30 am, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Sun, May 5, 3:30 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre. – JS

### **nipawistasowin: We Will Stand Up**

Indigenous filmmaker Tanya Hubbard offers a personal and historical perspective on the shocking 2016 killing of 22-year-old Colten Boushie, an Indigenous man shot by a Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley, after Boushie and his friends trespassed on Stanley's land. Hubbard, raised by white foster parents, brings her personal history and fears as a mother to the subject along with the historical background of land disputes, while intimately documenting the wrenching sense of loss and injustice experienced by his

family and community. Screening: Thu, Apr 25, 9:45 pm, Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema; Sat, Apr 27, 1 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Sat, May 4, 10 am, Isabel Bader Theatre. – LL

On the President's Orders

### On the President's Orders

In the densely populated city of Caloocan, in Metro Manila, Philippines, a new police chief takes charge. He promises to install discipline following local protests against President Rodrigo Duterte's violent anti-drug campaign, which has jammed the prisons and the morgues with bodies. For a while, the numbers of killings drop and then, in 2018, people start to die again, in a rash of drive-by shootings. In this grimly lurid, thriller-like documentary, filmmakers James Jones and Olivier Sarbil have open access to both police and their victims in a town where beat cops have been promoted into death squads. Screening: Sat, Apr 27, 8:30 pm Scotiabank Theatre 3; Mon, Apr 29, 3:15 pm, Scotiabank Theatre 4; Sun, May 5, 6 pm, Hart House Theatre. – LL

### The Pickup Game

Some 14 years after *The Game*, journalist Neil Strauss's shattering exposé on the so-called seduction industry —men "teaching" men how to bed women through a dubious series of costly seminars and "field trips" to bars and nightclubs — and nearly three decades after Ross Jeffries's how-to manual *How to Get the Women You Desire into Bed* comes *The Pickup Game*. But those reference points aren't the only time warp here. The knuckle-draggers pedalling pickup techniques operate as if the 21st century and a little thing called #MeToo never happened. (To his eternal credit, Jeffries saw the light, denouncing his self-published book and the movement it sparked). Though fascinating to rubberneck on one hand, *The Pickup Game* is also close enough to commercialized rape culture to be revolting. Which may be the point. Screening: Tue, Apr 30, 8:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Wed, May 1, 10:15 am, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Sat, May 4, 3:15 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre. – KH

Prey

### Prey

With *Prey*, director Matt Gallagher crafts a courtroom drama as gripping as any fiction without compromising the integrity of its subject. The story is sadly familiar: As a child, Rod MacLeod had the misfortune (as did many boys before and after him) to cross paths with convicted sex offender Father Hons Marshall, leading to a life compromised by shame and guilt. Enlisting the aid of civil lawyer Rob Talach — a man given the ominous moniker The Priest Hunter — MacLeod prepares for the fight of his life, a battle to restore his integrity, his dignity and self-worth. The odds are stacked against him. His case is over 50 years old, his abuser is dead, and the accused is represented with calculated warmth by Father David Kataluski, who claims to be only interested in the truth. *Prey* is an emotionally charged documentary on the fall-out of child sexual abuse, the insidious ways institutions keep it a secret, and a man determined to tip the scales. Screening: Fri, Apr 26, 9 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Sat, Apr, 27 1 pm, Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema; Thu, May 2, 1:30 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1. – TE

### Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies

Larry Weinstein's film about mass manipulation is here, there and everywhere, from Neanderthal handprints to religious symbols, totalitarian films, to *The Bachelor* with supporting commentary from a host of commentators. Though sweeping, *Propaganda* misses a lot (surprisingly little attention is paid to

## Original-Cin – April 25, 2019 (6 of 7)

advertising) and is far too attached to George Orwell's ironic provocation that "all propaganda is art." The best segments are stories from political artists, from the Irish bartender who created the iconic Che poster to a Norwegian culture jammer who brought a mock fascist rock band to North Korea. Screening: Sun, Apr 28, 9 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Tues, Apr 30, 3:15 pm, Isabel Bader Theatre; Fri, May 3, 9 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2. – LL

### Push

Beleaguered Toronto residents can take some comfort (albeit cold) in the knowledge that skyrocketing property costs — and their adverse impact on anyone hoping to live in a major city let alone buy a home in one — are hammering people across the globe. *Push* follows Leilani Farha, the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, as she touches down in North and South America and across Europe. Everywhere Farha goes, the story is the same: deep-pocketed corporations snap up properties, driving out renters and would-be buyers in the name of gentrification. Fancy, empty dwellings and deeply diminished communities are the result. A documentary and rousing battle-cry in one. Screening: Fri, Apr 26, 9:15 pm, Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema; Sat, Apr 27, 4 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Wed, May 1, 1 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Sat, May 4, 9:15 pm, Hart House Theatre. – KH

There Are No Fakes

### There Are No Fakes

When Kevin Hearn of the Barenaked Ladies discovered a painting by acclaimed Anishinaabe artist Norval Morriseau he'd bought for \$20,000 from a reputable Yorkville art gallery was a fake, he asked the gallery for a refund. When the owners refused, Hearn took them to court. That's the starting point for Toronto filmmaker Jamie Kastner's (*The Skyjackers Tale*, *The Secret Disco Revolution*) engrossing documentary. What starts as a simple court case takes a series of unexpected twists. From Toronto to Thunder Bay, serious criminal activities including (and beyond) art forgery, issues of art, culture and commerce, and revelations about the very complicated life of Morriseau. Screening: Mon, Apr 29, 6 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Wed, May 1, 8:15pm Scotiabank Theatre 3. – KG

### Toxic Beauty

Most women have long suspected there might be something insidious lurking in the beauty products they slather on their faces and bodies, if only because the ingredient lists read like a chemistry nightmare. But the idea that these products — expensive and tied to uncomfortable notions of what beauty looks like and that its pursuit is non-negotiable — never seemed like they might actually be deadly. *Toxic Beauty* lays the reality bare. Pivoting on the landmark class action brought against Johnson & Johnson and their apparently carcinogenic baby talc products, *Toxic Beauty* digs deep into the troubling science of lipstick and lotion, revealing an industry operating with virtually no independent oversight. Screening: Mon, Apr 29 12:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Thu, May 2 5:45 pm, Scotiabank Theatre 3. – KH

### The World or Nothing

In her first non-fiction feature, Ingrid Veninger (*Porcupine Lake*) rolled the dice on what she'd find when she decided to follow up on a pair of identical twin breakdancers she met while on vacation at a resort in Cuba. Now couch-surfing on their cousin's couch in Barcelona, Rubert and Rubildo edit their dance videos and post them on YouTube, celebrating each incremental few hundred more views and dreaming of stardom. They don't entirely come up empty in the course of the film, but there's something about their

## Original-Cin – April 25, 2019 (7 of 7)

intense drive for fame, on the cusp of too-old at 29, that seems slightly sad. It feels like there's a world of Ruberts and Rubildos out there seeking online fame. Screening: Sat, Apr 27, 8:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3; Sun, Apr 28, 1:15 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Thur, May 2, 3 pm, Hart House Theatre. – JS

Willie

### **Willie**

This doc about Willie O'Ree, the first black player in the NHL, is an eye-opener and inspiration. But it also merits a side-eye at the NHL, with whose production arm it was produced "in association.". Set against a campaign by friends and fans to get the pride of Fredericton inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame, this is a portrait of a dignified and determined man finally getting his due and mentoring young players of colour. But it took 60 years to get O'Ree into the Hall... 21 years after the NHL launched its "diversity program." And there's no mention that it would take 16 years for the second black player to play. This is a sport where, in 1978, an owner in Birmingham of the WHA reneged on Tony McKegney's contract because of a fan petition against signing a black player. And why, I wonder, is hockey so popular in the U.S. South? These are questions for a doc not endorsed by the NHL. In the meantime, three cheers for Willie! Screening: Tues, Apr 30, 4:30 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1; Fri, May 3, 10:15 am, TIFF Bell Lightbox 1. – JS

## 'Like a landlord on speed': Documentary shows how trading homes on the stock market can increase your rent

People don't realize their home is on stock market, says UN's special rapporteur on adequate housing

CBC Radio · Posted: Apr 25, 2019 8:08 AM ET | Last Updated: April 25



*A new documentary looks at how housing being bought and sold on the stock market could be causing a global shortage of affordable housing. (Amara McLaughlin/CBC News)*

A new documentary argues that housing has become a commodity much like gold, to be bought and sold on the stock market in bulk — and that the practice is driving up rents globally.

Fredrik Gertten, director of *Push*, says that hedge funds can snap up real estate quickly and forcefully.

"They have more money than a normal landlord, so it's kind of almost like a landlord on speed," he told [The Current's](#) Anna Maria Tremonti.

The result is often an owner who lives very far away from the property, he said.

"You can't knock on his door and talk to him about your problems because your landlord is now a hedge fund ... somewhere [in a] totally different part of the world, maybe."

Leilani Farha, the United Nations' special rapporteur on adequate housing, explained that private equity firms and asset management firms "survey landscapes all around the world looking for what they call undervalued properties."

## CBC Radio, The Current – April 25, 2019 (2 of 2)

"When they find them, they buy them up with their liquid capital — backed by banks — and their model is to then refurbish the units and increase the rents, forcing people out," Farha, who is featured in *Push*, told Tremonti.



*Leilani Farha is the United Nations' special rapporteur on adequate housing, and is featured in the documentary Push. Her work has brought her all over the world to examine how our cities serve their populations. (Janice d'Avila)*

She said the business model isn't just gentrification, but a financialization of housing, driven by an "unprecedented amount of wealth."

"This is on a totally different scale. They're buying thousands of units at a time," she said.

"People living in these places don't know that their landlord is technically a shareholder, and that their unit is on the Toronto Stock Exchange."

*Push premieres at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto on April 26.*



## From Gordon Lightfoot to Marion Stokes, the top 10 to watch at Hot Docs

The 26th edition features more than 200 films from 56 countries

**CHRIS KNIGHT**

Updated: April 25, 2019



Gordon Lightfoot performs onstage during 2018 Stagecoach California's Country Music Festival at the Empire Polo Field on April 29, 2018 in Indio, California. **FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES**

Toronto plays host to the 26th Hot Docs International Documentary Festival, kicking off April 25 and running to May 5. The 26th edition features more than 200 films from 56 countries, including a Made In Italy showcase and a focus on Canadian filmmaker Julia Ivanova that features her newest film, *My Dads, My Moms and Me*.

Here are 10 more Hot Docs offerings that could be worth a look.

### **American Factory (Steven Bognar, Julia Reichert)**

It's a bizarre culture clash when a Chinese billionaire buys an abandoned General Motors plant in Ohio and hires 2,000 blue-collar Americans to work there. The film won the directing award at the Sundance Film Festival when it premiered in January.

### **Assholes: A Theory (John Walker)**

Based on Aaron James' 2012 book and featuring John Cleese (as a commentator, not an example), this Canadian film examines the rise of bad behaviour in the world and asks: How do we stop it?

### **Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind (Joan Tosoni, Martha Kehoe)**

Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot turned 80 last November but is still very much an active musician, with more than 40 tour dates this year. The directors chart his life from Orillia to Toronto and beyond, with Lightfoot discussing his work alongside many fans. (Who knew Alec Baldwin was such an admirer?)

## **Hi, A.I. (Isa Willinger)**

Under the tagline “What you should know when you enter a relationship with a robot,” this German production looks at the proliferation of robots in our lives, whether as companions for the elderly or in even more intimate settings. Features androids asking humans whether they dream, which is a clever reversal on the old *Blade Runner* question.

## **Honeyland (Ljubomir Stefanov, Tamara Kotevska)**

This Sundance winner (Grand Jury prize and cinematography) follows a Balkan beekeeper whose tiny fuzzy charges are threatened when newcomers arrive with less sustainable honey-gathering practices. It was shot over three years, with no narration or interviews.

## **Human Nature (Adam Bolt)**

One of the festivals “Big Ideas” series of films, this science doc introduces biochemist Jennifer Doudna, who leads us through the revolution in gene editing called CRISPR and what it could mean for disease but also the future of humanity.

## **Memory: The Origins of Alien (Alexandre O. Philippe)**

The director of *The People vs. George Lucas* and *78/52: Hitchcock’s Shower Scene* turns his gaze on Ridley Scott’s masterpiece, which turns 40 years old this summer.

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The Canadian filmmaker examines the history of propaganda through a long lens – from cave drawings to presidential tweets – with the help of such artists as Ai Weiwei, Canadian Kent Monkman and Shepard Fairey, creator of Barack Obama’s “Hope” poster.

## **Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project (Matt Wolf)**

Hoarder or archivist? When Marion Stokes died in 2012 at the age of 83, she left behind a trove of 70,000 VHS tapes containing round-the-clock recordings of more than three decades of TV broadcasts, some of which were not otherwise kept, and all of which are now being digitized for a new archive.

## **There Are No Fakes (Jamie Kastner)**

When Kevin Hearn of the Barenaked Ladies discovered that a painting he bought by First Nations artist Norval Morrisseau was a forgery – a problem Morrisseau himself battled while alive – it revealed a deep problem in the art world that continues to resonate.

*More information and tickets at [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).*

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<https://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/movies/from-gordon-lightfoot-to-marion-stokes-the-top-10-to-watch-at-hot-docs/wcm/cfd403a6-14b4-4649-a0f4-a5cecec57623>

## Why this bright Indigenous boy who speaks 3 languages almost failed out of school in Australia

In *My Blood It Runs*, premiering at Hot Docs, explores how colonial education systems fail Aboriginal kids

CBC Radio • Posted: Apr 25, 2019 5:55 PM ET | Last Updated: April 26



*Djuwan Hoosan, 12, is a multilingual hunter and healer from the Northern Territory in Australia. His life is explored in a new documentary, In My Blood It Runs, which premieres in Toronto on Friday at the Hot Docs festival. (Andrew Nguyen/CBC)*

When it comes to learning about his people's culture and history, Djuwan Hoosan is a star pupil.

A bright and confident 12-year-old boy of Arrernte and Garrwa descent, Djuwan is a skilled hunter, fluent in three languages and considered a healer by his people — a gift he inherited from his grandfather.

But in Australia's education system, he's been a struggling student who skips class, gets into trouble and fails his exams.

Now his story is at the centre of the documentary *In My Blood It Runs*, which explores how colonial school curriculums fail Indigenous children.

"I just felt like this was such an injustice, in a way, and it's not surprising, because kids are measured by Western values and only taught in English, which is how I understand is quite similar in Canada," director Maya Newell said.

"He's the most witty, intelligent, you know, funny young kid and I was like, I think he has some lessons for Australia and for the world."

Djuwan, along with Newell and his parents, joined *As It Happens* host Carol Off in-studio on Thursday to discuss the film, their struggles with the school system and his hopes for the future,

### 'Some books are made up'

Djujan's mother, Megan Hoosan, wanted her son to get a Western education as well as an Aboriginal one so he would have better employment prospects when he grows up.

But when he started attending school in Alice Springs — a remote desert town in Australia's Northern Territory — he immediately knew he didn't fit in.

"When I first went to that school on my first day, there were only a little bit of Aboriginal teachers. Most of them was just white people and I couldn't deal with it too much," he said. "I had to try to get out of class."



*Maya Newell directed the new documentary In My Blood It Runs. (Andrew Nguyen/CBC )*

The lessons were even worse, he said.

His teachers regaled him with supposed fictions that he knew to be fact, and soberly explained facts he dismisses as fiction.

In one scene of the documentary, Djujan's teacher opens a history book and declares: "This isn't a story. This is information, or non-fiction. It's fact. It's the history of our country."

She goes on to tell the students about Capt. James Cook, the British explorer and cartographer who made the first recorded European contact with the eastern coastline of Australia.

She describes Cook as a "great sailor" who planted his flag on Australian soil and "claimed for the English country the whole of this new land."

But Djujan knew there was nothing "new" about the land on which his ancestors had lived for generations, and nothing "great" about the man whose arrival heralded the colonization of his home and his people.

He raised his hand to voice his concerns, but the teacher never called on him.



## CBC Radio, As It Happens – April 25, 2019 (3 of 5)

"I think the story was a lie," Dujuan said. "Some books are made up."

### 'The Spirit is real'

In another scene, a teacher reads from a different book. This one, she explained, is fiction.

"For a long time there was nothing," she read. "Then, in the mind of the Spirit of Life, a Dreaming began."

For Dujuan, there's nothing fictional about this tale. It is a creation story that is central to Aboriginal belief systems in Australia.



*Dujuan, right, and his mother Megan Hoosan join As It Happens for an in-studio interview. (Andrew Nguyen/CBC)*

His teacher, however, sounded incredulous as she read, remarking at one point, "So they're actually saying there's a spirit. I'm not sure how that works, but there's a spirit somewhere."

This time, Dujuan didn't wait to be called on. Instead, he blurted out: "The spirit is real!"

The teacher kept reading.

"She wouldn't listen," Dujuan said.

If she had, he says he would have told her about the Spirit in the land.

"The Spirit is somewhere in Australia," he said. "But now we can't find it."

### Getting into trouble

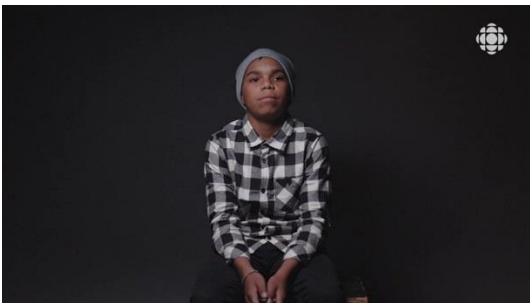
While Dujuan was struggling with school, he was also getting into trouble — skipping class, running away from home and spending his time on the streets with other boys.

## CBC Radio, As It Happens – April 25, 2019 (4 of 5)

At the same time, news was breaking about disturbing footage showing [the torture of Aboriginal teenagers at the Don Dale youth detention centre](#) in Australia.

Some inmates in the facility are as young as 10 — the same age as Djuwan in the film.

"These were horrendous images and it shocked the whole nation," Newell said. "And in Alice Springs, kids and families were watching that footage on their TV and that was their family members in there."



*A bright and confident Aboriginal Australian boy of Arrernte and Garrwa descent, Djuwan is a skilled hunter, fluent in three languages and considered a healer by his people. 2:36*

Whenever Djuwan was missing, his mother was terrified that he would fall in with the wrong crowd, get in trouble with the law and end up in a place like Don Dale .

Djuwan, who saw the grisly footage on the news, feared the same.

"Once when I ran away from school, we went into town. Some policemen were chasing us and they caught us," he said.

The officers threatened to take them to jail, he said. But he got lucky, and they took him home to his mother instead.

Other kids his age aren't so fortunate.

In 2018, Australia's government revealed that 100 per cent of kids in juvenile detention in Northern Australia were Aboriginal.

In November 2017, a royal commission found "shocking and systemic failures" at Don Dale and recommended it be immediately closed.

It's still up and running today.

### **Back on the land**

Eventually, it all became too much for Djujan's mom. He'd been expelled from school and she feared for him constantly.

"He just kept doing what he wanted to do and he didn't know that he was making his mother worried," she said.

So she sent Djujan to live with his father, James Mawson, in a small community at the tip of the Northern Territory, where he can still pursue an education, but also live off the land.

"As Djujan's father [I want] to be his role model in his teen years, so hopefully he'll pick a different route than the one he was on in Alice," Mawson said.



*James Mawson hopes to be a role model for his son during his teenage years. (Andrew Nguyen/CBC)*  
Djujan has big dreams for his future too.

He wants to meet the prime minister and convince him to craft policy that tackles the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in Australia's child welfare and criminal justice systems.

And he hopes his appearance in *In My Blood It Runs* is an inspiration to other kids like him.

"I want Aboriginal people to have hope and strength from my film," he said.

*In My Blood It Runs* premieres Friday at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto.

*Written by Sheena Goodyear. Produced by Kate Swoger.*

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/why-this-bright-indigenous-boy-who-speaks-3-languages-almost-failed-out-of-school-in-australia-1.5110648>

## How a missing Wikipedia entry for Who Let the Dogs Out led to a nine-year hunt for answers

'I found myself really thinking about who actually let the dogs out,' says director Brent Hodge

CBC Radio · Posted: Apr 25, 2019 11:27 AM ET | Last Updated: May 2



*An image from 'Who Let the Dogs Out,' a documentary by Hodgee Films, shows a plush dog wearing a Baha Men T-shirt. Baha Men released their version of the song 'Who Let the Dogs Out' in 2000. (Hodgee Films)*

While reading the Wikipedia entry for Baha Men's 2000 hit song *Who Let the Dogs Out*, unemployed artist Ben Sisto found an incomplete citation. He decided he'd complete it and fill in the blank himself. It sounds simple enough, but from there Sisto fell down a rabbit hole of calypso, competing claims and copyright law, all in the effort to answer the age-old question: Who let the dogs out?

The story of Sisto's hunt and the answers he found are the subject of *Who Let the Dogs Out*, a documentary that made its Canadian premiere last month at the Calgary Underground Film Festival, and plays at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto on May 2.

There was nothing particular about the song that attracted Sisto, a New Yorker originally from Providence, Rhode Island. He was just bored and saw a challenge, he told *Day 6* host Brent Bambury.



*Ben Sisto traced back the origins of the song 'Who Let the Dogs Out.' His story is the subject of a documentary by the same name. (Hodgee Films)*

The documentary opens with a clip of Sisto calling Lita Rosario, a lawyer for a record company that fought Baha Men's representation for credit. In it, she accuses him of digging up old dirt.

"I understand she was defensive. This is a case that's almost 20 years-old," Sisto said, adding that if his fact-finding gets someone into trouble, "it's not my intent but it's also not my problem."

## CBC Radio, Day 6 – April 25, 2019 (2 of 4)

"[The Wikipedia article] said the song was heard on a float in Trinidad by a guy named Keith. But Keith's last name was not present. And I thought I should figure out who that was and fix the wiki. That's kind of all I wanted to do," Sisto said.

But once he'd tracked down Keith Wainwright, a hairstylist who'd heard the song and passed on a recording of it to music producer Jonathan King, that led him to someone else. And so on. And so on.

"There were stretches of like six months where nobody would write me back, then all of a sudden somebody would and it would propel the story forward. I kept getting sucked back into it like it was the mob or something," said Sisto.

Eventually, Sisto turned his research into a university-style lecture show. When Alberta-born director Brent Hodge saw it he was hooked, despite finding the song "extremely annoying."



*Brent Hodge is the Canadian-born director of 'Who Let the Dogs Out,' by Hodgee Films. (Hodgee Films)*

"I found myself really thinking about who actually let the dogs out and why this question has probably been asked 100 times in my life and why we never really got to the bottom of that," Hodge said.

His Vancouver-based film company, Hodgee Films, teamed up with Sisto to make a movie.

The documentary took about six months to make and premiered at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, in March. In the style of Al Gore's climate change documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, it centres around Sisto doing his talk in front of an audience.

"I always claim that I'm the Baha Men in this situation, where I just took a song that was already done and re-did it in my own way and put it out as the movie and took all the credit," Hodge said.



## CBC Radio, Day 6 – April 25, 2019 (3 of 4)

*The Baha Men perform at SAFECO Field in Seattle, Wash., during the pre-game show of the Seattle Mariners vs. the Kansas City Royals on Sept. 12, 2000. (Ben VanHouten/Associated Press)*

Baha Men released *Who Let the Dogs Out* in 2000 and it quickly became popular at sporting events. The song was a cover of *Doggie* by Anslem Douglas.

Sisto says the credit for the cover's success should go to music producer Steve Greenberg.

"He was really the one who saw this song called *Doggie* from Trinidad and Tobago and realized it had crossover potential, and he was the one [who] infused it with the thickness of Miami Bass and the crossover sensibilities and the rap parts," Sisto said.

"So when you hear *Who Let the Dogs Out*, by Baha Men – who by the way didn't even want to record it themselves – you're hearing Steve Greenberg's vision."



*Anslem Douglas performs at a Carnival event in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad in February 1998. The soca musician wrote the original song, "Who Let the Dogs Out?" (Shirley Bahadur/Associated Press)*

But did Douglas write the song that Baha Men made famous? That's where things get tricky.

Douglas says he did, but as the documentary shows, Sisto says there are at least six people who say they wrote *Who Let the Dogs Out*, and twice as many who say they "gave it a little extra flavour."

The most contentious element seems to be the song's famous hook: "Who let the dogs out?"

In the documentary, Sisto traces back the song's history, introducing earlier and earlier recordings that feature the hook or something very similar, such as "Who let them dogs loose."

He also introduces the people behind those songs and the legal battles they fought to get credit.



## CBC Radio, Day 6 – April 25, 2019 (4 of 4)

"For a lot of them, it's the closest they got to fame. I think when they're that far from something that makes this big of an impression, that makes this much money, it's got to be tough to live that close to this sizzling steak but never take a bite," Sisto said.



A still from Hodgee Films' *'Who Let the Dogs Out,'* shows a timeline tracing back the recorded history of the hook: "Who let the dogs out?" (Hodgee Films)

In the end, Sisto traced the first recorded version of the hook being used in a song back to a 1992 demo by Miami Boom Productions. That demo predates several other uses in recorded music, including Douglas' *Doggie*.

But the dogs don't stop there. It appears that before anyone used it in pop music, the phrase, "Who let the dogs out?" was a rallying cry for high school sports teams, barked throughout the late '80s and early '90s.

The earliest proof Sisto could find of the chant is a video of a sporting event from Reagan High School in Austin, Texas, recorded in 1986. It goes: "Who let those dogs out? Who? Who? Who? Who? Who?"

"In speaking with the players from that team, they've actually told me that it probably began 1984, maybe 1983, and there are a few rumours that it could have started with a little league team just prior to that," Sisto said.

For now, Sisto says his search is over. "If *Who Let the Dogs Out* goes back before the time I was born [1980], then someone else can look into it."

"You get to this point where you're like: 'Who let the dogs out? Who actually did this?' And then you're like: 'What if they all did it?'" Hodge mused.

"I don't think anyone's a charlatan. I don't think anyone's trying to cheat anybody out of anything. I think there is something that you hear and it impacts you and maybe it goes into your art. That creates more art and that's kind of the point of art," Hodge said.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/day6/how-a-missing-wikipedia-entry-for-who-let-the-dogs-out-led-to-a-nine-year-hunt-for-answers-1.5110629>

## Women in Hollywood – April 26, 2019 (1 of 2)

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Pailin Wedel – “Hope Frozen”

BY: Sophia Stewart\_April 26, 2019

Pailin Wedel is a Thai-American journalist and filmmaker who grew up in Asia. She has regularly produced documentary programs for Al Jazeera English, namely for its current events program “101 East.” Aside from her television work, Wedel has also filmed pieces for The New York Times, National Geographic, and Monocle. She is also the founder of 2050 Productions, a Bangkok-based documentary team.

“Hope Frozen” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 27.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

PW: “Hope Frozen” is about a family of Thai scientists who decides to cryopreserve their two-year-old daughter following her death from cancer. She was the youngest person in the world to be cryopreserved.

The documentary reveals a family in mourning, seeking answers not only from Buddhism but also from their profound faith in science. It’s a glimpse into how technology will change the way we grieve in the 21st century.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

PW: I wanted to profile a family grappling with existential themes of life and death in a totally unique way. I also think the documentary serves as a counterweight to themes of backwardness that dominate Western portrayals of Southeast Asia.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

PW: I want people to think about how technology is now blurring the very meaning of life and death. I’m not in any way saying that this particular technique—cryopreservation—will bring people back to life, but tech giants are spending a lot of money on radical life extension.

Defeating death could be humanity’s biggest endeavor in the 21st century. It may totally fail, but it’s being attempted. How will humans change during this pursuit?

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

PW: Funding! I’m a first-time feature filmmaker from Thailand where the documentary film financing infrastructure is quite minimal. Most grants abroad are allocated for developing nations focusing on human rights issues, and our film just didn’t fit that category. It took me two years to find the majority of the funding.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

PW: I wrote 14 funding applications and pitched at six different forums before we received most of the funding. The six pitch forums were The Guardian, DMZ Docs, Asian Side of the Doc, Leipzig Networking Days, The Whickers, and Tokyo Docs.

It was almost two years before I won The Whickers Pitch at Sheffield Doc/Fest. They funded most of the film with the 80,000 GBP [or about 104,000 USD] prize.

I also won Best Asian Pitch at Tokyo Docs, which had a small cash prize. Right after pitching in Tokyo, I was approached Bili Bili, a Chinese platform, and they became our co-producer, putting in what we needed to make the cinematic festival version.

It was very long and uncertain journey.

## Women in Hollywood – April 26, 2019 (2 of 2)

### W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?

PW: I was inspired by filmmaking's power to connect disparate peoples. I grew up all over Asia: Thailand, India, and Singapore, to be exact. My father is American and my mother is Thai, so I've often found myself in situations where I've had to be an interpreter of both language and culture.

Communicating visually can break so many cultural and language boundaries. My past works have all been reportage documentaries about current affairs in Asia. But I felt that for audiences to really connect with this story, they needed to hear it from the family, so "Hope Frozen" is my first creative character-driven film.

### W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?

PW: Most of the people I've met along the way have been very supportive. I think one of the challenges of being a first-time feature-length female film director is figuring out who you can trust. Luckily, I had enough mentors to help me with that process.

However, there have been a few people who just didn't believe that I could pull it off. I've even had a female commissioning editor pinch my cheeks and tell me I'm cute—all while lecturing me about filmmaking ethics. I'm 36 years old with 15 years of experience as a journalist, but I can look young to westerners.

I do feel that Asian women are too often infantilized in this industry and that our work is sometimes second-guessed.

### W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?

PW: Surround yourself with people who believe in you and your vision. The first to share this vision with me was my Director of Photography, Mark Dobbin. After the trailer was cut, a lot of people who immediately connected with the film were women—namely my Executive Producer Amanda Feldon, my editor and co-scriptwriter Nina Ijas, our editing consultants at Ten Thousand Images, our funders at The Whickers, and our co-producers at Bili Bili.

Make an effort to keep connecting with people who dig your ideas. Find your cheerleaders and hold on to them for dear life. It is a marathon.

### W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.

PW: I don't really have a favorite. I loved "Shirkers" by Sandi Tan, and I can't wait to see her next film. On the fiction side, I am totally addicted to the series "The OA," which is co-created by Brit Marling.

What makes both filmmakers great is that they are risk-takers with their themes and visual style. They also deliver a clear creative vision.

### W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?

PW: The reckoning in Hollywood has been a long time coming and, as a more distant observer, it's been thrilling to see so many wrongs exposed. But to be honest, this movement hasn't really rippled into Southeast Asia.

The filmmaking industry in Asia, like society as a whole, is a largely male-dominated arena. It can feel a little lonely looking for a supportive network. Because resources are scant, artists lean on their peers for help, and it can be hard to break into these influential circles. It's even more daunting for a Southeast Asian female director to find her place in Hollywood, which is an imposing world to outsiders of all stripes.

## Women in Hollywood – April 26, 2019 (1 of 2)

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Nicole Schafer – “Buddha in Africa”

BY: Sophia Stewart\_April 26, 2019

Nicole Schafer is a South African director. She produced award-winning stories for the Reuters pan-African magazine show “Africa Journal.” Her thesis film from the University of Cape Town, “The Ballad of Rosalind Ballingall,” was shown at the Frijbourg Film Festival in 2006.

“Buddha in Africa” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 27.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

NS: “Buddha in Africa” follows the story of a Malawian teenager growing up in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage in Africa and the challenges he faces between his African roots and Chinese upbringing.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

NS: I was living and working in Malawi producing stories for the Reuters Magazine program, “Africa Journal.” At this time, Malawi and other parts of Africa were experiencing a rapid influx of Chinese investment and Chinese nationals. While most debate around the implications for China’s involvement in Africa at the time was focused on the economic impact of China, this story showed a unique aspect of China’s cultural influence on the continent.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

NS: The film sets up its key debate through the internal conflict of the protagonist. Enock’s internal conflict of trying to hold onto his own culture on the one hand and the sacrifices that come with embracing the opportunities afforded by the Chinese culture on the other reflects the greater dilemma around African development within a globalized context—not only in its relation to China, but to other foreign nations, including its former colonizers.

It’s the idea that the key to the future of the continent is always held by “outsiders” and that in order to succeed we have to adopt foreign values, policies, and systems at great cost to our own already fragile economies, indigenous cultures, and language systems.

Enock challenges this idea in important ways, and I hope that his story will open up new and enriched ways of seeing and understanding the African predicament among both Chinese and Western audiences.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

NS: The time and resources it took to make a character-driven story. Putting your own life on hold in order to be ready to capture the significant moments in your character’s life and being patient enough to allow this to unfold in its own time. It took five years to raise the funds and shoot the film and another three-and-a-half years to complete post-production.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

NS: “Buddha in Africa” received the IDFA Most Promising Documentary Award when it was first pitched at the Durban FilmMart in 2011, and it has since been awarded funding from several international funds including the IDFA Bertha Europe Fund in the Netherlands, Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Doc Fund, Alter Cine Foundation in Canada, Chicken & Egg Pictures in New York, the South African National Film and Video Foundation, and the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission.

## Women in Hollywood – April 26, 2019 (2 of 2)

In 2018, “Buddha in Africa” was selected to participate in the Cape Town International Film Festival and Market Works-in-Progress lab. It received the highest award, combining two weeks of Online by Monk and two weeks of Grading at Priest Post, which enabled me to finish the film.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

NS: I studied film but did not expect to become a documentary filmmaker. While I was at university, I was exposed to the work of a range of documentary filmmakers like Dziga Vertov, Chris Marker, D.A. Pennebaker, Jean Rouch, and Nick Broomfield, all of whose films challenged my preconceived ideas about the documentary genre and showed what a creative medium it really was.

Since then, I’ve been a convert to the art of documentary film and the creative challenges of capturing reality.

### **W&H: What’s the best and worst advice you’ve received?**

NS: “Just finish your film!” While there comes a point in the process where this is good advice, making a documentary is a slow and lengthy process, and rushing the film can be harmful.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

NS: Filmmaking and motherhood is possible! Having a baby is a breeze compared to making a film!

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

NS: Kim Longinotto is one of my favorite documentary filmmakers, and I think “Sisters in Law” was very good. The strong female lead characters—two female judges who bring justice to this small, largely patriarchal town in Cameroon—are most surprising and inspiring!

### **W&H: It’s been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

NS: I think this conversation has been hugely empowering for women and created a much greater level of awareness and respect, not only in Hollywood, but also here in South Africa, where we have one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world.

## Hot Docs Unspools Diverse Slate as Biz Boasts of Golden Age

By [JENNIE PUNTER](#)



CREDIT: JOSEPH MICHAEL HOWARTH/HOT DOCS

TORONTO—Recent big-ticket acquisitions, boffo box-office receipts, and critical and audience acclaim for a small group of broad-appeal titles have inspired some to declare that a golden age of documentary cinema is now upon us.

This may be so, but at the Hot Docs Canadian Intl. Documentary Festival, which opened its 26th edition on Thursday in Toronto with the world premiere of [Tasha Hubbard](#)'s "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up," a deeper, more complex picture of the art, business, and future of non-fiction films is unfolding.

The festival unspools across a program of 234 films (more than half of them features) from 56 countries, and a range of large and intimate market and professional development activities attended by upwards of 2,600 filmmakers and decision-makers (including 300 doc buyers) from around the globe.

Hubbard's "We Will Stand Up," the first film by an indigenous filmmaker to kick off the festival, made a powerful impression on opening-night audiences, with its exploration of racism in the Canadian legal system and the history of colonialism in the Canadian prairies. The film traces the story of a grieving family's pursuit of justice after the killer of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man in Saskatchewan, is acquitted of murder charges.

"This is a film I didn't want to make, and a film we should not have to make," Hubbard said. "But I am here because of an incredible family that found itself in the worst possible circumstance. We felt that people and the system needed to be held to account."

The screening was introduced by Elder Pauline Shirt, who spoke in the Cree language about the importance of healing minds and of respecting each other's spirit, and closed with the singing of an honor song.

While bubbles and trends have certainly boosted North America's largest doc festival over the years, Hot Docs as a whole is more like a sustainable evergreen forest, giving back more each year as it grows and introduces new species. In its tenth anniversary year, the festival audience numbered 25,000; in 2018 – Hot Docs' silver anniversary – that audience had grown almost tenfold. Last year, the festival hit gender parity in its slate; this year, 54% of the directors are female.

A recently released economic study of the 2018 festival, market, and the organization's year-round operations revealed a total impact of CAN\$54.7 million (\$40.6 million) on the province of Ontario's GDP, including CAN\$38.7 million (\$28.8 million) in direct expenditure at the festival.



## Variety – April 26, 2019 (2 of 2)

“Hot Docs’ role as a catalyst for industry investment is well recognized,” Hot Docs executive director Brett Hendrie said, “and this study indicates the impressive contribution Hot Docs has made to the cultural and economic strength of the city of Toronto and the province.”

High-profile subjects or makers of marquee docs are in abundance this year—among them Dan Rather, exec producer of Adam Bolt’s genetic-engineering exploration “Human Nature”; renowned sex therapist and media personality Ruth K. Westheimer, of Ryan White’s “Ask Dr. Ruth”; comedian John Cleese, a color commentator in John Walker’s world-premiering “Assholes: A Theory”; and artist, activist, and director Ai Weiwei (“The Rest”). Also in attendance are recent fest-circuit head-turners such as Rachel Lears’ “Knock Down The House,” Mads Bruggers’ “Cold Case Hammarskjöld,” and Petra Costa’s “The Edge of Democracy.”

Beyond the showcase and juried competition programs, the sidebars, such as Animal Magnetism (digging into humans’ complicated relationships with animals), Nightvision (which includes the world premiere of “The E Duce Tapes”) and Persister (women’s voices on women’s issues), are where hot-button issues and form-pushing filmmaking come into focus. “We look at work that is coming in and find ways to connect those themes,” Hot Docs director of programming Shane Smith explained before the festival.

With market events, including the two-day Forum event, kicking in after opening weekend, conversations among independent producers about how to ensure the stability of the documentary field are sure to be amplified in between pitching and deal-making.

“My wish is that we’ll see a real coming together of broadcasters, agencies, and other institutions to support creative feature documentary,” said veteran Canadian producer [Ina Fichman](#), who pitched at the very first Hot Docs, and who this year has a project in the Forum (“Bones,” about the international dinosaur bone trade) and another in Deal Makers, as well as screenings of French director Jennifer Deschamps’ feature “Inside Lehman Brothers,” which she produced.

“I’m a member of the Documentary Producers Alliance,” said Fichman, who spends part of the year in L.A., and the rest in Montreal. “A lot of our conversations are about sustainability—how do you sustain yourself in your industry?”

“The great genius of Hot Docs is how the team has evolved the festival—it hasn’t gotten stuffy, it’s created a tremendous body of work and connections. That’s why I haven’t missed a single Hot Docs.”

The Hot Docs Canadian Intl. Documentary Festival runs through May 5.



## 'Going to be a nice one': Gordon Lightfoot coming out with a new album

The untitled album, due out later this year or early 2020, will be his first in 15 years

The Canadian Press · Posted: Apr 26, 2019 1:44 PM ET | Last Updated: April 26



Canadian musician Gordon Lightfoot poses for a photo in his Toronto home on Thursday. (Cole Burston/The Canadian Press)

Canadian musician Gordon Lightfoot says he recently kicked his smoking habit and rekindled a reluctant relationship with songwriting in the process.

The 80-year-old icon says the two life changes have led him towards planning a full-length album due out sometime later this year or in early 2020.

**There's about three or four [songs] on there that I really think are good — valid good. They're philosophical, and they're kind of funny.** - *Gordon Lightfoot, about his upcoming album*

Lightfoot's new burst of creativity comes as his legendary status goes under the microscope in the new documentary, *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*, a reflection on his career and influence, which premieres Saturday at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto.

The untitled album will be his first in 15 years, and even Lightfoot seems surprised at how it took shape. He'd largely sworn off writing new material — calling the process "isolating" — before he picked up the pen more seriously again last October.

"I started the same time I quit smoking — cigarettes that is," he said from his Toronto home.

It helped that Lightfoot discovered a treasure trove of unreleased material while he was housecleaning last year. Two CDs of songs he recorded nearly two decades ago were tucked away in his office.

"I didn't even know I had about half a dozen of these tunes," he said.

Lightfoot says the songs were created in late 2001 and early 2002, as he worked on *Harmony*, an album that was sidelined when he suffered a near-fatal abdominal aortic aneurysm later that year. While *Harmony* was eventually released in 2004, he says several of the songs went missing in the process.

"I know why I was saving them now ... but I don't know why I forgot about them," he says.

Hearing them again, Lightfoot started thinking about the possibilities of a few other lingering ideas.

"I've had four or five that I had been working on for a long time, but finding these other ones just topped me right off," he said.

## **Still touring**

He's also continuing with his steady-as-she-goes touring schedule, which rolls through parts of the United States in May and June.

Lightfoot says he's still undecided on how he'll present the new songs, though he favours releasing them as solo recordings with only him and a guitar, similar to Bruce Springsteen's 1982 album *Nebraska*. He's confident that whatever form they take, the album is "going to be a nice one."

"There's about three or four [songs] on there that I really think are good — valid good. They're philosophical, and they're kind of funny," he says.

"There's a couple of lovey-dovey tunes in there, too."

## Gordon Lightfoot quits smoking, gets back into songwriting for new album

BY DAVID FRIEND, THE CANADIAN PRESS  
POSTED APR 26, 2019 1:04 PM EDT

- **ENTERTAINMENT**



Canadian musician Gordon Lightfoot poses for a photo in his Toronto home on Thursday, April 25, 2019. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Cole Burston



TORONTO — Gordon Lightfoot says he recently kicked his smoking habit and rekindled a reluctant relationship with songwriting in the process.

The 80-year-old Canadian musician says the two life changes have led him towards planning a full-length album due out sometime later this year or in early 2020.

The untitled project will be his first in 15 years, and even Lightfoot seems surprised at how it took shape. He'd largely sworn off writing new material — calling the process “isolating” — before he picked up the pen more seriously again last October.

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## City News – April 26, 2019 (2 of 2)

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Follow @dfriend on Twitter.

David Friend, The Canadian Press

## 10-cent thrift shop record sends Toronto artist on a years-long reggae investigation

Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery premieres Monday at the Hot Docs film festival

CBC Radio • Posted: Apr 26, 2019 5:24 PM ET | Last Updated: April 29



Flanagan chats with Jamaican record producer Bunny Lee. (Shella Productions Inc.)

When Chris Flanagan bought a 10-cent record at a Toronto thrift shop about 16 years ago, he wasn't expecting it to change his life forever.

The Australian-born visual artist regularly sifts through old milk crates full of mystery vinyl records to see what gems he can unearth.

Most of the time, he says, the records turn out to be total duds. But when he dropped the needle on a 1970s reggae compilation from Toronto's Monica's Records, he was completely mesmerized by what he heard.

"I was absolutely blown away," Flanagan told *As It Happens* host Carol Off. "That voice was just incredible and I knew instantly that it was very special."

That moment sparked a decades-long investigation that took him to Jamaica to meet some of the country's most prolific reggae musicians and producers, all of which he documented for his new film *Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery*, premiering Monday at Toronto's Hot Docs festival.

### 'There's not a ton of female singers'

The song, called *Jamaican Fruit Of African Roots*, features a powerful female vocalist and was credited on the album jacket to an artist he'd never heard of before — Shella Record.

"As a record collector and sort of reggae fanatic, there's not a ton of female singers. So you're kind of fairly familiar with the big names," he said.

"So to hear an incredible voice like that, it was just kind of surprising that I hadn't heard that voice before."





## CBC Radio, As It Happens – April 26, 2019 (2 of 3)

*Chris Flanagan in the As It Happens studio discussing his debut documentary Shella Record — A Reggae Mystery. (Sinisa Jolic/CBC)*

Both Google and the local music label behind the compilation turned out to be dead ends. So he started doing some real man-on-the-streets, gumshoe investigating.

"I delved into it, you know, digging into Toronto's underground reggae scene, asking people who really should know, and turning up total blanks or sort of rumours and red herrings," he said.

"And, yeah, it did really become an all-encompassing, life-changing obsession over the years."

### **Shella Record = Sheila Rickards**

That obsession led him a local radio station, which played the song and asked listeners to call in if they had any intel.

Then, an anonymous tipster gave him the key he needed to unlock the story: The name was a misprint.

The vocalist who had captured Flanagan's heart is, in fact, Sheila Rickards, a Jamaican jazz musician who was at the height of her career before reggae was even invented.

"It was like, could this incredible roots reggae singer possibly be this sort of early '60s jazz singer who does very different material?" he said. "Is it even the right person?"



*Sheila Rickards is a Jamaican jazz musician who performed in the '50s and '60s. (Shella Productions Inc.)*  
So Flanagan went to Jamaica to find out more.

There, he met famed Jamaican record producer Bunny (Striker) Lee, who recorded the song in 1975.

"I went to Jamaica really with very little information at all," Flanagan said. "I was trying all my contacts to try and somehow get through to Bunny Lee. In the end, I found his number in the Jamaican white pages. So I just dialled the number."

It worked. Just like that, he got through to possibly the most influential person in Jamaica's music industry.

"He invited me over and suddenly I was sitting outside with this legend who produced some of the greatest reggae music of all time," he said.

## CBC Radio, As It Happens – April 26, 2019 (3 of 3)

Lee told Flanagan that Rickards had come into his studio to record one song only.

"She recorded one incredible reggae song and then, as far as he knew, just disappeared," he said.

The studio had been gutted in a fire a few years back, but incredibly, Flanagan and Lee were able find the "partially singed" master tapes from the recording.

"It just felt like another sort of magical link to her," he said. "Even though we hadn't been able to find her, we found traces of her and these sort of elements that she had touched in the making of this remarkable record."

### **How does it end?**

While he was in Jamaica, Flanagan also learned more about Rickards. He tracked down her childhood home and found photos of her in old newspapers.

He also learned from music historians a bit more about the boy's club that was reggae in the '70s, and why very few women who experimented in the genre ever stuck around.

"Sheila was something of a child star, so she'd been primed for a big career from the time she was maybe six years old," Flanagan said.

"So it's possible that she also had less patience for what it took to be a reggae singer — a female reggae — singer in Jamaica in the '70s. So that could possibly explain why there's so few recordings."

But Flanagan wouldn't say what happens next, or if he ever got to meet Rickards face to face. That would spoil the mystery.

"It was absolutely worth it in the end. I mean, there were definitely times when I kind of despaired and wanted to give up — and I actually did shelve it for a little while because it just seemed like it was going absolutely nowhere," he said.

"Ultimately, I'm very glad that I did persist with the search."

Sheila Record — A Reggae Mystery premieres April 29 in Toronto.

Written by Sheena Goodyear. Produced by Jeanne Armstrong.

## Hot Docs film 'Mr. Toilet' shows Jack Sim's struggle to improve global sanitation

April 26, 2019



Jack Sim is the founder of the World Toilet Organization. His journey is the subject of a new documentary premiering at Hot Docs.

CTVNews.ca Staff

Published Friday, April 26, 2019 10:22PM EDT

Last Updated Friday, April 26, 2019 10:26PM EDT

A Hot Docs film is plunging viewers into the story of a Singaporean man's decades-long quest to improve access to proper sanitation around the world, shedding light on an uncomfortable topic that can have a deadly cost.

"Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man," showing at Toronto's [Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival](#) this weekend, tells the story of Jack Sim, also known as "Mr. Toilet," the colourful founder of the World Toilet Organization.

The organization trains locals to build latrines, constructs toilets in places that don't have them, and works to shift social norms and attitudes in countries where open defecation is not thought of as unhealthy.



Indian men carry containers with water and walk to defecate in the open in New Delhi, India, Tuesday, June 30, 2015. (AP Photo/Tsering Topgyal)

"We are a very small team of people that through storytelling (we're) able to mobilize the entire world to participate and pay attention to a subject that is otherwise neglected," Sim told CTV News Channel.

His work pushed the United Nations to declare "World Toilet Day," marked each Nov. 19 -- the same day that Sim's group was founded.

It was "a big milestone," Sim said.

Lily Zepeda, the documentary's director, said that the film uses animation, stunts and humour to break the ice and spark a conversation on a seldom spoken about topic. Sim often appears in the film in various costumes, including one of a man sitting on a toilet.

"One of the things (Sim) taught me early on is that what we don't talk about, we can't solve," Zepeda told CTV News Channel, adding that she initially thought his group was a joke before realizing the stakes of inaction.

According to the United Nation, nearly 60 per cent of the world's population lacks access to safely managed sanitation facilities and at least 892 million people continue to practice open defecation, risking the spread of disease. Each day, nearly 1,000 children die from water and sanitation-related diarrheal diseases that are entirely preventable.

The lack of access to sanitation is not just a health issue, but also a safety one. In 2014, two Indian girls were gang-raped and hanged after they went to relieve themselves in the dark.

Sim said that he is seeing some major inroads being made in expanding access to proper sanitation, even in countries such as China and India that have the biggest burdens. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has pledged to build 100 million toilets and Sim has a project building toilets in some Chinese schools.

"If the leaders of the two biggest countries in the world are toilet champions," Sim told CTV News Channel, "I think we're seeing a major change from when I first started."

But building toilets and latrines is not enough, Sim acknowledged, without a change in cultural behaviour. Still, he is optimistic.

"If everyone works together, the problem can be solved," he said.

## Killing Patient Zero profiles Quebec man unfairly targeted in AIDS epidemic

Gaetan Dugas became demonized because of his promiscuity — and a typographical error

The Canadian Press · Posted: Apr 26, 2019 1:13 PM ET | Last Updated: April 26



*Gaetan Dugas, who was a Quebec flight attendant, was falsely blamed for the spread of AIDS in North America. (Hot Docs)*

In the late 1970s, Quebecois flight attendant Gaetan Dugas was openly and proudly gay, described by friends as flamboyant, sexual and generous, with a supportive family and penchant for makeup.

Unashamed of his lifestyle despite lingering societal stigmas, he co-operated with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the early 1980s after he contracted what was initially called "gay cancer" in the media, providing blood samples and the names of 72 of his former sex partners.

Dugas played a key role in contributing to a study that helped prove HIV/AIDS was sexually transmitted.

But as the new documentary "Killing Patient Zero" notes, he became demonized because of his promiscuity — and a typographical error.

In the CDC study, Dugas was labelled "patient O," as in the letter "O," representing "Out-of-California Case," a state where researchers began to look for links.

***Hear Richard Bisson, friend and colleague of the late Gaetan Dugas, tell [The Current](#) guest host David Common how he wants Dugas to be remembered:***

Gaetan Dugas was 'just a really fun person'

## CBC Radio, The Current – April 26, 2019 (2 of 3)

Richard Bisson, friend and colleague of the late Gaeton Dugas, shares how he'd like his friend to be remembered. 0:43

However, some misinterpreted the "O" as the number "0," as in "patient zero," leading to the long-standing and incorrect implication that Dugas brought AIDS to North America.

"This is a man whose name needs to be rehabilitated ... Dugas really should be proclaimed a hero of the fight against AIDS," Laurie Lynd, the doc's Toronto-based director, told *The Current's* guest host David Common.

"For him to have been vilified, it's like the classic 'No good deed goes unpunished,'" he told The Canadian Press.

Making its world premiere Friday at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, *Killing Patient Zero* details Dugas's life as well as the homophobia and prejudice surrounding the AIDS epidemic. American author Fran Lebowitz is among the 40 interviewees in the film, which is based on Richard McKay's book *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic*.

Dugas, who grew up in Quebec City, was one of the first 57 AIDS cases reported to CDC and was part of its cluster study in Atlanta.

He died on March 30, 1984 but became an international name in '87, when American journalist Randy Shilts published his book on the AIDS epidemic, *And The Band Played On*.

In the book and a feature in the New York Post titled *The Man Who Gave Us AIDS*, Shilts identified Dugas as "patient zero" and accused him of being the source of the U.S. outbreak.

Shilts, who died in 1994, maintained Dugas wasn't singled out and noted many others were also named in the book.

The 60-year-old Lynd, who is openly gay, said he read Shilts's story about Dugas in 1990 and thought it was correct until he saw the 1993 John Greyson film *Zero Patience*, which debunks the myth.

"It was a real gift to be able to revisit this story, just personally, to look at those years again and to be able to rehabilitate Gaetan's name," said Lynd.



## CBC Radio, The Current – April 26, 2019 (3 of 3)

"I think he's a gay everyman. I think what he did was heroic with the CDC."

Still, Shilts's book also drew attention to the epidemic at a time when many politicians weren't talking about it, added Lynd, noting it woke him up politically and prompted him to make his short film *RSVP*, about a man who loses his partner to AIDS.

"It's hard for us to realize how little traction it had gained in public attention. Randy's book was a kind of wakeup call," Lynd said.

"In a way, Randy did the wrong thing for the right reasons."

Lynd said he worried his film would open old wounds for Dugas's family, but they've seen the trailer and will get a link to the doc through McKay, who is in touch with them.

"I also hope they will feel it's ... worth it," said Lynd, "because it so thoroughly, I hope, and finally rehabilitates Gaetan's name."

Lynd also hopes the film will be "healing" for gay men and women and serve as a reminder that the fight against HIV/AIDS isn't over — and that homophobia is still around.

"You need look no further than the gay serial killer in Toronto, where it seems fairly clear that had those victims been straight white men, it would have been handled very differently, and how so many of that killer's victims clearly had to live on the down-low because of the homophobia in their communities," Lynd said.

"And we need look no further than our neighbours to the south. I feel homophobia is on the rise again in some ways in this populous climate."

*Killing Patient Zero premieres at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto on April 26.*

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/killing-patient-zero-profiles-quebec-man-unfairly-targeted-in-aids-epidemic-1.5111987>

## 10 movies you must see at Hot Docs 2019, covering everything from Saskatchewan to Gaza

APR 26, 2019 BY [PETER HOWELL](#) TORONTO STAR



*Veteran docmakers Julia Reichert and Steve Bognar reveal what happened when a billionaire Chinese auto-glass mogul bought a shuttered General Motors plant in Dayton, Ohio. - Sundance/photo*



*In Gaza, we meet Gaza residents like teenager Ahmed, who dreams of becoming a fisherman, and Karma, a cellist who makes music while gazing across the Mediterranean Sea. - Andrew McConnell/photo*



*Honeyland follows the story of Macedonian beekeeper Hatidze Muratova as destructive neighbours and their cattle move in, threatening serenity. - Samir Ljuma/photo*



*Knock Down The House follows four women — notably New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — as they seek to topple incumbents across the U.S. in important election races. - Sundance/photo*



*Stanley Nelson's latest documentary deep-dive is kind of brilliant in the way it covers and contextualizes more than 50 years of ground breaking music in barely two hours. - Guy Le Querrec/photo*



*One Child Nation is a devastating account of China's "one-child policy", a brutally Orwellian population-control decree that lasted from 1979 to 2015. - Nanfu Wang/photo*

"All the truth in the world adds up to one big lie," Bob Dylan sang in his Oscar-winning tune "Things Have Changed" from the movie *Wonder Boys*.

This certainly seems the way of the world these days, as U.S. President Donald Trump fibs about "fake news" and social media spreads corrosive calumny.

The Hot Docs festival seeks to reverse the rising tide of untruths through artful fact-seeking. Toronto's annual celebration of documentary cinema, this year running from April 25 to May 5 — ticket and scheduling info at [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca) — has doubled down on films that show the world as it is, not as prevaricators claim it to be.

Here are 10 of the hottest picks for Hot Docs, many heading to Toronto by way of the Sundance Film Festival:

**American Factory** *4/4 stars*

Get your motor running. Veteran docmakers Julia Reichert and Steve Bognar reveal in ways both dramatic and comic what happened when a billionaire Chinese auto-glass mogul bought a shuttered General Motors plant in Dayton, Ohio, and then arrogantly imposed his anti-union, 24-7 work ethic on the U.S. workers who had naively embraced him as a saviour of jobs. Time to take off the rose-tinted glasses for anybody who thinks rigid corporate bureaucracy and quality-of-life concerns can make an easy fit. Remarkable for the access allowed by both sides to the filmmakers over several years, the film ends on a note that's straight out of horror and sci-fi films — but wait until you see it, which you must.

**Assholes: A Theory** *3/4 stars*

Everybody talks about them, but nobody ever does anything about them. Mark Twain could have said that (although he didn't), but leave it to John Walker to get down to the butt of the matter. Taking his cue from Aaron James' 2010 bestselling book of the same name, the filmmaker talks to experts and opinionators — among them Monty Python's John Cleese — about the social ill of "assholery," which appears to be on the rise in politics, economics, policing, social media and even among Canadians, who get their own proctological assessment. There's much humour but also a few swift kicks to the *derriere* delivered, but surprisingly little is said about Donald Trump.

**Cold Case Hammar skjold** *3.5/4 stars*

A shaggy-dog story with bite from Danish docmaker Mads Brügger, told in the whimsical style of Michael Moore or Morgan Spurlock. It begins by seeking the truth about the 1961 African plane crash that killed United Nations chief Dag Hammarskjöld, an event long suspected as an act of terrorism, perpetrated to thwart his efforts to bring peace to warring African nations. By the end of this nearly 2½-hour film, which starts offhandedly and rather glibly but rises to a bell-ringer of a finale, Brügger has connected scattered dots and the picture that's revealed is a vast global conspiracy to foment African genocide. But can we fully trust the all-too-talkative old men who appear before the director's probing lens?

**Gaza** *3/4 stars*

Going by news reports alone, the tiny piece of the Middle East called the Gaza Strip is a crowded prison of violence and misery, where its two million inhabitants constantly riot or fire off rockets against Israel. Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell show more: a resilient people who love their land and who crave a peace they don't know how to attain. We meet Gaza residents like teenagers Ahmed, who dreams of becoming a fisherman, and Karma, a cellist who makes music while gazing across the Mediterranean Sea. The filmmakers aren't much interested in politics (Hamas is barely

mentioned) and it's clear where their sympathies are, but they shine necessary light on misunderstood people.

### **Honeyland** *3.5/4 stars*

This amazing doc, a prize-winner at Sundance 2019, about Macedonian beekeeper Hatidze Muratova becomes the most primal of environmental allegories when destructive neighbours and their cattle move in, threatening serenity. We first meet the 40-something beekeeper, dressed in flowing clothes and protective headgear, as she nimbly climbs through rough Balkan mountains to check on her beloved cache of wild bees, who produce the unique honey that lets her eke out a living and care for her ailing and aging mother. Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska spent three years studying Hatidze, who despite all her challenges and hardships, just wants to let it be.

### **Killing Patient Zero** *3.5/4 stars*

To much of the world in the late 1980s — thanks to headline writers labelling him a “monster” and bringer of disease — Air Canada flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas was the sexual satyr to blame for the AIDS epidemic. Falsely labelled “patient zero” due to a typological error, he was the common link to dozens of early confirmed cases of the disease, which was all that many people needed to pronounce judgment. Laurie Lynd goes behind the slurs to find a man beloved by his friends and family, a man who — contrary to allegations of criminal indifference — tried to help stop the spread of AIDS by sharing information about his sexual contacts to researchers. He paid a heavy price for his good intentions.

### **Knock Down the House** *3/4 stars*

History on the run as filmmaker Rachel Lears, funded by a Kickstarter campaign, follows four women — notably New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — as they seek to topple incumbents across the U.S. in important election races. The Bronx-born AOC naturally dominates the story, as her sudden rise last year from humble bartender to incumbent-beating and Trump-battling congresswoman captures worldwide attention. She's a true force of nature, but the film also inspires with stories of electoral challenges by West Virginia's Paula Jean Swearingen, Missouri's Cori Bush and Nevada's Amy Vilela. The definitive AOC doc awaits, but this amounts to a bracing first draft.

### **Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool** *3/4 stars*

Jazz legend Miles Davis is no longer with us. But his voice — or rather that of an actor reading words from the man's autobiography — is heard throughout Stanley Nelson's latest documentary deep-dive, which is kind of brilliant in the way it covers and contextualizes more than 50 years of groundbreaking music in barely two hours. “If anybody wants to keep creating, they have to be about change,” Davis says, as he transforms himself from jazz trumpeter to pop innovator. Yet hearing Davis' candid recollections of how shabbily he treated people along the way, especially the many women whom he used and discarded, doesn't make the man seem cooler at all.

**nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up** *3.5/4 stars*

The Cree word for “justice” closely relates to the word for “respect,” we learn in Tasha Hubbard’s cinematic inquiry, an understanding that permeates this powerful work of activist cinema. She examines the August 2016 shooting death of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man in Saskatchewan, and the subsequent controversial “reasonable doubt” acquittal of his killer by an all-white jury. Hubbard challenges Canada’s legal system and outlines the country’s long history of mistreatment of Indigenous peoples, as she and the Boushie family take their cause to Ottawa and the United Nations. George Hupka’s stirring cinematography completes one of the most consequential films ever to open Hot Docs.

**One Child Nation** *3.5/4 stars*

The grand jury prize winner at Sundance 2019 is more horrifying than any screamer you’ll see this year. It’s a devastating account of China’s “one-child policy,” a brutally Orwellian population-control decree that lasted from 1979 to 2015. Filmmaker Nanfu Wang, having recently become a mother and wondering why her birth family was able to have a second child, her brother, during the one-child years, teams with co-director Jialing Zhang to seek answers. They turn up appalling stories of abandoned infants, kidnappings, forced sterilizations and abortions, and evidence that thousands of babies are still officially listed as “missing.” Meanwhile, state officials brag about their brave new world.



## Mary Kay Place finally gets her leading moment, with Diane

Chris Knight: Diane is the feature debut of writer/director Kent Jones, who previously made the documentaries *A Letter to Elia* and *Hitchcock/Truffaut*

**CHRIS KNIGHT** Updated: April 26, 2019



Mary Kay Place in *Diane*. IFC FILMS

We've seen a few films of late about the relationship between parents and adult children with addictions – last year's powerful *Ben Is Back* and *Beautiful Boy*, for instance. *Diane* is one of those, but it's also so much more; a character study about a woman with her own full life, one piece of which happens to be her troubled son.

When you first see Diane, doing the rounds of her friends and relations (some in hospital, some recovering at home, some just struggling along), you may have a difficult time placing the actor, Mary Kay Place. She's been in everything from TV's *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* to *Sweet Home Alabama*, but she's usually part of an ensemble, and her resumé includes awards shared with the casts of *Being John Malkovich* and *It's Complicated*.

*Diane* is an ensemble piece as well, but Place's character is the hinge on which everything swings. We see her spending time with her cousin (Deirdre O'Connell) in hospital, or shooting the breeze with her friend Bobbie, who works with her at the local soup kitchen.

Andrea Martin is perfect in this supporting role, proving that when directors aren't telling her to mug at the camera, she can do a fine dramatic turn with an almost subliminal comedic undertone. And while her character is set up as the one who generally says the wrong thing at the wrong time, she also gets one of the film's best lines – an eternity of silence, followed by a moment's advice: "You need some peace."

Diane helps others because she feels it's the right thing to do – and perhaps to atone for some perceived sin in her past. But the recipients of her care genuinely appreciate what she does. Not so her son, however; Brian (Jake Lacy) is an addict in the throes of denial, and berates her every time she stops by to make sure he's alive, and to beg him to get help.

*Diane* is the feature debut of writer/director Kent Jones, who previously made the documentaries *A Letter to Elia* (about Elia Kazan) and *Hitchcock/Truffaut*. In interviews, he says he's been working on this one his whole life, drawing inspiration from his mother and aunts' lives in rural New England. (Notice how Diane is forever driving long distances on backcountry roads.) He started courting Place after seeing her in a similar role in *The Rainmaker*. That was in 1997.

The long gestation has been worth it. *Diane* comes across as a fully realized character, often selfless but occasionally abrasive and nothing close to perfect. I wanted her to do more for herself, but she also made me feel guilty for not doing more for others. And by the end of the film I realized that she's the sort of person who holds things together in the world, if only in little ways. The sort of person about whom movies are seldom made. Nice of Jones to rectify that.

<https://leaderpost.com/entertainment/movies/mary-kay-place-finally-gets-her-leading-moment-with-diane/wcm/814ef77c-67ef-4fd3-8261-281453bdc9a2>

## Hot Docs: Changing the conversation about festivals, a Review by Marc Glassman

2019-04-26

By: Marc Glassman



Hot Docs: Changing the conversation about festivals  
By Marc Glassman

Toronto's hugely successful [Hot Docs festival](#) opened this Thursday, April 25, with a sold out screening of the very moving [Nipawistasowin: We Will Stand Up](#), Tasha Hubbard's insightful look at the Boushie family's fight to obtain justice for their youngest, Colten, who was shot to death over trespassing a farm in northern Saskatchewan. It's the first time that a major festival in Canada has featured a film by an Indigenous woman director as its opening gala.

While there may be no more barrier-breakers of that level at this festival, there will be many more strong social-justice films, and other types of documentaries, on display through to May 5.



As Hot Docs continues to flex its muscles as one of the most significant cultural events in Canada—over 250 films, massive line-ups for screenings, huge private and public sector support—it's fascinating to watch as the organization changes and grows. It's now well recorded that Hot Docs has initiated programs to fund documentaries both here and abroad. If you add in the money raised for docs at their internationally acclaimed Trade Forum, millions of dollars have been raised for documentary filmmakers to make their works across the world. It's rare for festivals to give back to their community in such a direct way.

Hot Docs does more than that. Perhaps most significantly, one of the major series at the festival is [Big Ideas](#). Along with their yearly Podcast festival, which the organization hosts in another part of the year, it shows that Hot Docs understands the power of the word in documenting major issues that can't be completely encapsulated by visuals. Two major Canadian films at this year's festival, [Willie](#) and [Toxic Beauty](#), are represented in [Big Ideas](#), for very good reasons.



Willie O'Ree's story of breaking the NHL's colour barrier in 1958 has been effectively told by filmmaker Laurence Mathieu-Leger but the opportunity to have O'Ree and others discuss issues of racism and equality in professional sports, particularly hockey, raises the film to an urgent, contemporary level. Similarly, *Toxic Beauty*, which exposes some of the risks involved with using products as supposedly harmless as talcum powder, captures the situation quite well, an informed discussion with filmmaker Phyllis Ellis, whistleblower Deanne Berg and Drs. Daniel Cramer and Ami Zota will deal with the on-going issue that needs more media exposure and international legislation.

The headlining event at *Big Ideas* is the appearance and talk by globally acclaimed activist Ai Wei Wei, whose film *The Rest* will have its North American premiere at the festival. Ai Wei Wei will talk about the deeply unsettled lives of refugees currently living in Europe, where their stay is under attack by "populist" nationalists in too many countries. The festival works hard to attract filmmakers from across the globe to come to Toronto so nearly every event features a question and answer period where the audience gets to engage with a documentarian. Not every filmmaker is Ai Wei Wei but it's been my experience that most have important things to say.



Another feature at Hot Docs is DocX, which offers the public the opportunity to experience interdisciplinary pieces, many in VR. Three works expanded from the acclaimed Jennifer Baichwal/Ed Burtynsky/Nick de Pencier film [\*Anthropocene, Carrara, Dandora\*](#) and the devastating [\*Ivory Burn\*](#) will be shown at the Autodesk Technology Centre (661 University Ave.) while at the Goethe Insitut (100 University Ave), a curated show of digital art will be available to view, under the title of [\*Touching from a Distance 2: Transmediations in the Digital Age\*](#). And on May 2, artist and futurist thinker Katerina Cizek (the award winning director of *High Rise*) will be presenting a live event hosted by comic Jus Reign on Canada's Constitution entitled [\*Supreme Law\*](#).

Wait a minute! What about the films?

Hot Docs has become like TIFF: it's so great that there's too much to see. 251 films? You can't see them all. My suggestion is to look at the various (sometimes quirky) categories and pick at least one from each to view. The categories include:

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**International Spectrum**—a juried section, which includes the moving *For Sama* about Syria.

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**[Click here for more film reviews from Marc Glassman.](#)**

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Tune in to hear Marc Glassman's Art Reviews

Friday's at 9:07am on *Classical Mornings with Mike and Jean*

## Changing the Conversation About Festivals

*Marc Glassman introduces this year's Hot Docs coverage*

By [Marc Glassman](#) • Published April 26th, 2019



*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*  
Courtesy of Hot Docs

Toronto's hugely successful [Hot Docs](#) festival opened this Thursday, April 25, with a sold out screening of the very moving [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#), Tasha Hubbard's insightful look at the Boushie family's fight to obtain justice for their youngest, Colten, who was shot to death over trespassing a farm in northern Saskatchewan. It's the first time that a major festival in Canada has featured a film by an Indigenous woman director as its opening gala.

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## POV Magazine - April 26, 2019 (2 of 2)

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<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/changing-the-conversation-about-festivals>



## Cinematic documentary film tackles India's gender bias

April 26, 2019



The film title is inspired by one tiny village which view girls as goddesses and plant a tree whenever one is born

**'The Daughter Tree' explores the aftermath of a cultural preference for baby boys sweeping through India. Its award-winning Canadian filmmaker, Rama Rau talked to CanIndia about her documentary which is premiering at the Hot Docs Film Festival. It will be screened in Toronto from April 27 to May 2.**

Rama Rau's films have screened in over fifty international film festivals, winning awards like the Hot Docs Don Haig Award, the Stuttgart Best Director Award and the Golden Panda for Best Director. As with previous films, her latest offering 'The Daughter Tree' features daring subject matter. Here are excerpts of an interview with one of Canada's Top Ten Women Filmmakers.

### **What made you take up the subject of female feticide?**

Growing up in India, I've always known about this issue so when I started researching and developing themes that interest me as a filmmaker, I pursued it. The more I researched, I discovered that it was a growing problem and now there are entire stretches of land where no girls have been born the past twenty or so years.

### **What did you mean when you said, "This is a film that's been in development all my life"?**

Having grown up in India and seeing this issue grow, this is a topic that's near and dear to me, the human rights of unborn baby girls. Although I started actual development of the film a few years ago, I've known all my life that girls and women have been devalued in India and this was something I wanted to make a film about since many years.

### **You also said, "I was born in India. I grew up in India, so I know how girls are treated." Can you share any personal experiences?**

My personal experience growing up in India was hardly as bad as that of many of the women I meet in these villages. However, there is a recurring theme that I think every Indian woman (and indeed, many women across the world, if you ask them), that society does devalue its female of the species. Look at the recent #MeToo movement, all this is because women have been considered 'lesser than' and we are talking about the present, not some ancient times when we know it was a lot worse. Girls don't go into the Sciences because they are not told by their parents that intelligence is a valued thing for girls. Instead, they are told to consider their looks to be their most important feature. From the beginning, boys get a feeling of being valued and that grows into taking up space in adult situations, a space that girls and women are sometimes hesitant to take up.

**What difficulties did you experience in making the film?**

Making this film was really tough. Firstly, getting it funded was very tough. Canadian broadcasters won't touch it because it has subtitles and is therefore deemed not 'Canadian' enough. Then I had a really hard time finding characters to tell this story the way I wanted to tell it. The midwife was initially not my protagonist, it was supposed to be a pregnant woman, whose journey I will follow and observe the pressures on her. But that proved impossible, no women were free to talk to me, on camera, about what they were facing. It goes to the heart of the issue that the pressure they faced itself lead to them refusing to talk to me about it, and sometimes their very lives are in danger, because it is a well-known fact that in many villages, a mother who gives birth to a girl will herself be either thrown out of the house or killed. So, I decided to go with the midwife as my main protagonist. This turned out to be a good decision as I could examine the issue at ground level and follow her as she worked.

Another huge problem was finding men in the Village of Men who would agree to be on camera. We were dealing with a subject that's shameful. To be unmarried, in a village in India, as a man, you're almost not a man. So, no one would agree to talk to me. We got a different family of brothers and they cancelled on me mid-way through the shoot. So, I had to put the production on hold and return to Canada. I hired a researcher in Mumbai who would go into the Village of Men and meet families and send me pictures etc. I finally found the three brothers who agreed and then we started filming again.

**What is the Canadian connection?**

I'm a Canadian filmmaker and this is my film. I think Canadian content is too narrow a way of thinking about what we Canadians who are immigrants from all over the world, consider 'our' stories. Besides all this, the populations of India and China, where the male/ female gender imbalance is creating massive shifts total up to billions. It is predicted that there will be 30 million single males in India alone, by 2020. This is a problem that North America, Europe and the rest of the world will be forced to consider very soon, just like the refugee problem.

**Where will this film be screened and how will it make a difference?**

We plan to get the film into as many international film festivals as possible. After that, it will go into TV channels and SVOD. I am negotiating with a distributor in the UK to fund a grassroots Outreach initiative with an NGO based in India to help me edit a 15 minute film that will then be viewed on tablets by women in villages and this can be used as a teaching tool for midwives and medical workers in the villages in India.

**What are future plans?**

As a filmmaker, I will continue to explore and develop films that are not just deeply meaningful to me but films that will form a collective voice of all the women in the world who don't have an opportunity to have their voices heard. -CINEWS

***The film can be seen at the TIFF Bell Lightbox 2 on Saturday, April 27 at 6:30 pm and Tuesday, April 30 at 10:15 am. It will also be shown at Hart House Theatre on Thursday, May 2 at 9:00 pm.***

## Hot Docs '19: Ingrid Veninger on taking a leap of faith

Self-funding *The World or Nothing*, her first documentary feature film, was both a daunting and liberating experience says the indie director.

April 26, 2019  
Kelly Townsend



With six independent films to her credit, Ingrid Veninger is no stranger to the Canadian indie scene. But for her seventh feature – and first documentary – she opted to start from scratch.

Following twin brothers Rubert and Rubildo Donation Dinza who have left their home and family in Holguin, Cuba to jumpstart their career as performers in Barcelona, Spain, Veninger used *The World or Nothing* as a thesis film for her MFA at York University to explore total improvisation in her filmmaking.

While the film, which will have its world premiere on April 27 at Hot Docs International Film Festival, dwells on her subjects' journey into the unknown, Veninger took a leap of faith herself in making the documentary.

Completely self-funded and without a script or a planned structure, she and a two-person crew arrived in Barcelona in May 2018 for what became an 11-day shoot focused on the lives of Rubert and Rubildo. While she had anticipated the film would span several subjects around the world, from Toronto to Tanzania, within days she discovered the only story she wanted to tell was the brothers'.

"I wanted to try to make a film in a way I've never done before," Veninger tells *Playback Daily*, calling the experience "daunting, but also liberating."

That improvisational style was the basis of Veninger's plan for the documentary. To prep for the shoot she held six workshops through her masters program between September and December 2017 on film experiments. One workshop, for instance, involved shooting a scene with actors 100 times in different locations, with an emphasis on improvisation.

"It's difficult to raise money for [process-oriented films] because you can't articulate what they'll be at the outset," she says. "Those works are really important because they're the research and development of our industry."

However, with *The World or Nothing* set to make its debut, Veninger says she is already fielding calls and meetings from industry members. It's too early to discuss the details, she says, but indicates that her career will be at an interesting crossroads over the next month. "It seems like [*The World or Nothing*] might open the opportunities I've been hoping for in the last five or six years," she says.

While Veninger makes it clear she is open to all opportunities, including directing for television, she says now is an exciting time to be an independent filmmaker. "We have the technology, the ability and the platform to make our films, tell our stories, distribute them and access audiences," Veninger says.

Regardless, Veninger plans to take the lessons learned on *The World or Nothing* with her on future projects. When asked whether she plans on sticking with documentary work or jumping back into scripted features, Veninger, never one to take the easy path, opts for a middle option, saying, "my heart is somewhere in the middle."

<http://playbackonline.ca/2019/04/26/hot-docs-19-ingrid-veninger-on-taking-a-leap-of-faith/>

## HOT DOCS 2019: TALKING NIC CAGE WITH MARCO KYRIS AND BLAKE JOHNSTON OF 'UNCAGED'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Interviews](#), [Movies](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - April 26, 2019



For a Nicolas Cage super fan such as myself, the thought of being anywhere in his vicinity brings on fits of trembling excitement (it's a medical condition). I once sat two rows directly in front of him at the TIFF premiere of *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans* and I could barely control myself, unable to even look him in the eyes when I shamefully had to go to the bathroom halfway through (if you're reading this Nic, I'm truly sorry about that).

For Marco Kyris, however, being around Nic Cage was an everyday occurrence. Not only did the 57-year-old Torontonian get up close and personal with the man, the myth, the legend; as his personal stand-in between 1994 and 2004, he was required to mimic Cage's every move on the sets of some of the icon's greatest hits. From the Oscar victory for *Leaving Las Vegas* through the stream of gargantuan Bruckheimer productions and each film in between, Kyris was there every step of the way.

Now he finally steps out of the shadows to tell his own story in *Uncaged*, the new short documentary premiering at this year's Hot Docs. In just 10 minutes, directors Blake Johnston and Kelso Steinhoff paint an energetic and endearing portrait of Kyris, from his upbringing in "greasy Greektown" on the Danforth to his days as a struggling actor and finally his ascension to Hollywood royalty through one of the most successful A-listers of the 1990s. To parse through this incredible tale, Kyris and Johnston sat down with me to talk about all things Cage and beyond.

Kyris had wanted to tell his story in one form or another ever since retiring from the stand-in life but it was upon meeting Johnston that things really started getting underway.

"Marco's nephew and my brother were roommates in university and he had mentioned his uncle had moved back into town and that he was Nic Cage's stand-in," Johnston recalls. "He was like, 'You should go over. He's looking for help with media related stuff. Helping set up his printer and Internet connection.' So I went over and sure enough, when you converse with Marco you see how much of a character he is. He mentioned that there was this brand and this story he wanted to tell for about ten years."



"And then the documentary was kind of an idea that Kelly [Steinhoff, the co-director], Marco and I were spitballing with each other and then it really started to gain traction about a year ago, spring of last year, and then we ramped up pre-production in the summer and we shot over two days."

The first obvious dilemma is how do you condense a decades worth of Nic Cage interactions down to such a short runtime? "The best part," Kyris says, "is that I have enough stories to fill up ten movies."

## In the Seats – April 26, 2019 (2 of 3)

“We actually shot a lot more than what’s in the film,” Johnston explains. “We were landing in this 20-40 minute range and we thought, ‘We can’t really program this for anything.’ So there are so many stories that didn’t get included. It’s so tight for me and Kelly – I love the length it’s at but there is so much more.”

“We got it,” Kyris adds. “I really hand it to Blake and Kelso 100% on that. I have a serious like for a 15-minute thing. It’s real meat and potatoes.”

After striking out in Hollywood as an actor in the 1980s, Kyris came back to Toronto and signed up with an extras agency that would eventually send him out on his first stand-in job for Cage when he was in town filming the holiday comedy *Trapped in Paradise*. The actual story about how Kyris came to be offered the gig full time is a truly epic anecdote that I couldn’t spoil here, but it generally came down to the chip-on-his-shoulder attitude that he carried around.

“Canadians are very polite, sweet, mannerly, quiet and because I lived in America and only really worked in America, I had that American vibe,” divulges Kyris. “Everyone else was very Canuck-y. I was never that guy. I would go onto the set and sit on the couch and say, ‘Uh, this doesn’t feel right. I should be sitting like this. It feels uncomfortable. It doesn’t feel right for the character.’ And the crew would be like, ‘What character?’ I didn’t know that that was going to make Nic notice me. But it did. And that’s what led to a career, A CAREER, as a stand-in. Not a job. It was a job that turned into a career.”

He was quickly ushered into Cage’s tight-knit entourage, eventually becoming the highest paid stand-in in Hollywood for a moment.

“Who knew?” he exclaims. “I mean, you have your hotels, your cars were paid for, your limousine, the gas, the coffee, everything was taken care of. You were like the star without being the star. And I liked that, because I didn’t really have to perform. That was the best part of it. You see later on when you’re standing there doing the scene and you realize how bad you are. And you look these actors... For example, on *Adaptation*, you see Meryl Streep and you see Chris Cooper, you see Cage, and you see how they interact and you think, ‘I can’t do that shit.’ I couldn’t coordinate steps and things and Nic is just like a craftsman.”



While many have criticized Cage’s performance style over the years, Kyris constantly witnessed the eclectic star’s professionalism.

“I saw it surprisingly first hand, all the time,” he attests. “Because I was assuming it’s gonna be a mess at some point. He was gonna fuck up, he’ll show up late, he won’t remember his lines, you know, ha ha ha. None of those ha ha ha moments came. It was like oh oh oh. The guy was on it.”

For one such example, take the virtuoso 15-minute unbroken opening shot in *Snake Eyes*, where Cage’s Rick Santoro winds and weaves his way through multiple interactions in a crowded boxing arena. “Took us three days to set that up,” Kyris reveals. “I will say, that was the probably the hardest three days of my life. I did it for three days before, setting up with the Steadicam operator and 7,000 extras as they move and you’re cutting and going, cutting and going. And Nic went in and nailed it on the first take. And I was like, that’s why he does what he does and that’s why you do what you do.” For all the emphasis on Nic Cage, the aim was to always keep the focus on Kyris. “That’s the hook, right?” continues Johnston. “Oh, Nic Cage’s stand-in. The first minute, that’s what it’s about and then it’s like okay, who is this guy?”

For Kyris, the music choices in the film played a big role in that, from incorporating traditional Greek folk songs to the disco music that was so important in his young adult years. “That’s the pulse of me,” he says. “This is a representation of me in ten minutes. Because I have that whole Greek thing. I dance Greek, I used to teach Greek dancing and I was a big disco dancer. That was the only thing that kind of kept me going because my upbringing was really difficult to get through with family. Those are serious elements that are still a part of my life today. So I said it’s gotta be a running theme, it’s gotta be the pulse. It can’t be other music; it has to have that beat. That’s what I think also made it so original.”



## In the Seats – April 26, 2019 (3 of 3)

“Yeah, it’s a documentary about Marco, not about Nic Cage,” Johnston adds.

After owing so much of his success to the stand-in life, Kyris wants to generate a bit more respect for the profession too.

“There was never respect for background workers or stand-ins,” he explains. You just stand under a light; you’re like a pillar to them. You’re not even a failed actor to them; you’re just a zombie guy off the streets. There was never really much respect. We are the backbone of all that stuff and especially when you work for a superstar. You’re setting up for several hours so you really have to know what you’re doing. And you do interact with the actors and you do interact with the cinematographer and the director and they really give you that direction and you gotta know what you’re doing.”



“I was always aware of what was going on,” Kyris continues. “Like Nic was aware of his character stuff, I knew everybody on the film set. There were 300 people, I knew 300 names and that was a challenge in itself because you’re dealing with the electrics, you’re dealing with the grips, transpo guys, the friends of the friends who show up on set. You had to know every hair and makeup person.”

Eventually, I had to ask the million-dollar question: What’s everyone’s favourite Nic Cage movie?

Johnston answers first: “My favourite Cage film is *Lord of War* just because I think when I was watching it, I just thought it was the coolest movie ever. When I was rewatching movies just because I was doing a lot of research on Marco, that one really stood up.” Speaking for Steinhoff, Johnston guesses, “Kelly’s favourite Nic Cage movie, I feel like it would be *Adaptation*. Anything Spike Jonze related.”

As for Kyris himself?

“I always get asked that question and I always come up with the same answer. *Face/Off* was probably one of the most difficult films I ever worked on and I’d say it was the best film I’ve worked on. And I do credit John Woo for that. *Face/Off* had some kind of a special feel about it. You know, when some things feel special in life? It took five months to film it and it was excruciating for everybody on set but there was some kind of a hippy dippy feeling about being there. You knew you were making a big movie. You had John Travolta, who was a superstar, Nic Cage, another superstar. You had the classic actors of Joan Allen and Nick Cassavetes and you’re on these sets and it’s like, fuck, there’s JT and NC and I’m right in between them both, the whole time. I just thought, how do you explain that to your parents?”

*Uncaged* screens April 28 and 29 alongside the feature *Backstage Action*.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-talking-nic-cage-with-marco-kyris-and-blake-johnston-of-uncaged/>



## Hot Films for UrbanToronto Types at Hot Docs 2019

April 26, 2019 9:00 am | by Craig White | [0 Comments](#)

Time flies between Hot Docs: summer, TIFF, leaves change colour, the Holidays, politicians make all the wrong choices... and then it's Hot Docs all over again, where we get to dissect the last year's worldwide craziness and consider the depth of the issues confronting us and some of the possible solutions.

As always, we have taken a look at the schedule and have some ideas for lovers of cities and the political, economic, environmental, and social forces that are shaping them these days. So, what should you go see?



London, in Push. Photo: Sasha Snow.

### [Push](#)

It's hard to talk about cities these days without diving into the issue of affordability. Push builds a thorough case for its thesis that global capital has changed the way we accommodate people, and made housing unaffordable in cities across the world. We used to treat homes as places where people live; now housing is where the rich park cash. Award-winning director Fredrik Gertten follows Canadian Leilani Farha, recently appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, in her fight to define affordable housing as a fundamental human right. Filmed in cities around the world—including Toronto—where Push looks at how the housing crisis is being manifested in myriad ways, Farha convenes with a new breed of housing activist who aim to bring balance back to the building and selling of homes.

You have 4 chances to catch Push. The first two have already gone rush—just line up early enough at the cinema, and you should get in—but advance tickets are still available for the second two screenings.

FRI, APR 26, 9:15 PM, HOT DOCS CINEMA  
SAT, APR 27, 4:00 PM, TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX  
WED, MAY 1, 1:00 PM, TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX  
SAT, MAY 4, 9:15 PM, HART HOUSE



Image from Havana, From On High, courtesy of Hot Docs

## Urban Toronto – April 26, 2019 (2 of 2)

### [Havana From On High](#)

This is one of the most beautifully filmed and colour-graded documentaries I have ever seen, taking place on the rooftops of that crumbling but gorgeous city, where some of Cuba's more eccentric and marginalized characters have retreated to. The world looks a little different up where mechanical penthouses have been converted into apartments for those who don't fit so well into the system. The rooftop dwellers' lives are limited in some ways, but feel somewhat unshackled in others, and bathed in Caribbean light from sunrise to sunset. It's at those extremes of the day when much of the most strikingly beautiful scenes were shot. Lives elevated from Havana's streets have a certain rough burnish to them, just like the patinated buildings themselves, with the film revelling in this rarified urban condition and its characters.

You have 3 chances to catch Havana From On High. The first two have already gone Rush - just line up early enough at the theatre, and you should get in—but advance tickets are still available for the last screening.

FRI, APR 26, 2:45 PM, TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX  
SAT, APR 27, 10:15 AM, TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX  
FRI, MAY 3, 10:00 AM, TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX



Dome Hollenstein and Sven Marquardt at Dome's Apartment from Beauty and Decay, ©itworks

### [Beauty And Decay](#)

If you didn't get enough beautifully decaying city in Havana, Beauty and Decay is a little more niche, for those of you who might like to travel back to a vibrant Berlin from a generation ago. Sven Marquardt, Dominique Hollenstein, and Robert Paris were all a part of the punk scene in East Berlin before the wall fell, performers who rebelled against the straight-jacket of the state-run society, and who have all evolved over the 30 years that have followed.

Marquardt became a bouncer at one of Berlin's most infamous clubs, but his real passion is photographing people, while Dome (Hollenstein) has been his model muse for years. Paris, whom they both adored, also shot the fashion shows they helped create, but he excelled in the settings, finding beauty and atmosphere in the decaying city that set the mood.

All three reminisce as they reconsider their past, Berlin's past, and where they and their city are now. Gorgeous, evocative photography throughout.

You have 3 chances to catch Beauty And Decay.

FRI, APR 26, 8:30 PM, SCOTIABANK  
SAT, APR 27, 1:15 PM, TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX  
SUN, MAY 5, 6:30 PM, SCOTIABANK

Click any of the film title links to be taken to the official Hot Docs page for that film.

<http://urbantoronto.ca/news/2019/04/hot-films-urbantoronto-types-hot-docs-2019>

## Review: 'The Magic Life of V'

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 26th, 2019



### ***The Magic Life of V***

(Finland, 85 minutes)

Dir. Tonislav Hristov

Programme: World Showcase (Canadian Premiere)

*The Magic Life of V* opens with V, the original character created by Veera, who is headed to a live-action roleplay (LARP) camp. In the Harry Potter-esque world, V and fellow LARPer don cloaks and chant spells. But Veera, breaking character, struggles emotionally. Tied to her character is her real-life trauma, and despite the fantasy of her situation, Veera's memories are being brought up. Persevering, V participates in a ritual to expel her negative memories, to emerge healed and stronger.

Moving away from the LARP camp, Tonislav Hristov's film explores Veera's personal life: her home with her mother and brother, her therapy sessions, her LARPing preparations, and home videos from childhood including a disturbing look at Veera as a happy toddler, who we know was violently abused by her father. This is the source of Veera's trauma, and while we do see her working through her past with a professional, it is LARPing which is the most therapeutic outlet for her. In character as V, she can shed her trauma, be supernaturally powerful, and escape her identity in a fantasy world of witches and swordfights.

The LARPing in Hristov's film is engaging in its creativity, and Veera is a sympathetic and engaging figure, but the film is missing something. Dwelling on shallow drama, we learn little of what it means to cope. Hristov eschews this in favour of gory details of abuse, a fetishization of LARPing (which is respectfully depicted as a significant method of healing, but always at a distance, as a spectacle), and shots of a pensive Veera gazing into the distance. While an intriguing concept, *The Magic Life of V* would have benefitted from a more intensive look at trauma, and LARPing, rather than simply skimming the surface.

### ***The Magic Life of V* screens:**

- Wed, May 1 at 9:45 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Thurs, May 2 at 3:30 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Sun, May 5 at 9:00 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-the-magic-life-of-v>

## Review: 'Campo'

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 26th, 2019



### *Campo*

(Portugal, 100 minutes)

Dir. Tiago Hespanha

Programme: Animal Magnetism (North American Premiere)

Shot at the Alcochete firing range, one of the largest military bases in Europe, *Campo* presents a mix of contradictions. Showing soldiers as they train, as well as the animal life that surrounds them, Tiago Hespanha overlays his film with a philosophical narration which draws on creation myths, while grappling with the central conflict of the word “campo”: in Latin, it means both a field where animals are raised as well as where soldiers are trained. Bringing together the etymological tension of the term with the real-life contrast of life and death, human and animal, Hespanha’s documentary reaches towards a lyrical meditation on very present topics.

*Campo* is not bad, but it is also not great. The bucolic scenes of bee-keeping, bird watching, and shepherding, which pad out the bloody military sections, offer little aesthetic diversity to truly set them apart, and so these animal moments lack a serenity which could really make it a counterpoint to the human. The contrast between nature and human life is not distinct enough to make a lasting impression, nor is it similar enough to make an impact. Visually, the film is fairly monotonous — which works to an extent when depicting soldier life as bare bones and raw. But as an all-encompassing aesthetic, it feels dulled where one is hungry for a flourish of style.

Hespanha’s film is still interesting. We are welcomed to truly understand the brutality of military training, though the film is lacking a lush visual style that would have pushed the nature segments further, and added a broader aesthetic range which would have given balance to the film’s otherwise stark look. Though not as impactful as it should have been, *Campo* is nevertheless an intriguing reflection on humanity’s relation to the world.

## Review: 'Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 26th, 2019



### ***Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen***

(New Zealand, 88 min.)

Dir. Hepi Mita

Programme: Artsclapes (Canadian Premiere)

In cinema around the world, there's a fair and long overdue demand to see more women and people of colour behind the camera. In Canada, there's an especially strong urgency to create space for Indigenous voices and ensure that the original inhabitants of this land have the opportunity to tell stories about their cultures and histories. While *Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen* isn't a Canadian doc, it features a fair bit of Canadian content and provides another great example of how Australia and Zealand are ahead of the game in using the cinema as a tool for self-representation. The doc profiles the barrier-breaking Maori filmmaker Merata Mita, who emerged from both New Zealand and Aboriginal communities, to become a documentarian and then the first Indigenous woman to write and direct a dramatic feature solo. *Merata*, directed by Mita's son Hepi, pays tribute to the filmmaker's significant legacy while calling for greater diversity in cinema.

The doc admittedly takes a fairly by-the-numbers approach to biographical filmmaking, but what the film lacks in finesse, it more than gains in significance. Mita gives audiences a mostly chronological survey of his mother's pioneering work as he chronicles her origins in journalism and education where she broke barriers as a Maori voice on both sides of the camera. There are many affectionate interviews with Merata Mita's children, who speak to her dedication as both an artist and mother. Moreover, the film shows how Mita's strong sense of the power of onscreen representation frequently motivated her to put herself on the line. The film smartly conveys this sense through a sequence in which Mita invites a camera crew into her home and speaks frankly about her abusive partners and how she had an abortion because her family was proving to be too big a burden for her budget, thus using her space on screen to advocate for better awareness and education of contraceptives.

As a slice of film on film, Mita dives into his mother's most significant works including her groundbreaking first dramatic feature *Mauri* (1985). He shows the segment of her feature documentary *Patu!* (1983), which chronicled what happened when South Africa's soccer team toured New Zealand during the apartheid era. Merata Mita showed the outbreak of civil disobedience as protests erupted in response to the tour and its insensitive racial undertones in a nation so affected by colonialism. Mita vividly conveys his mother's ability to harness the power of documentary for speaking truth to power.

## POV Magazine – April 26, 2019 (2 of 2)

Canadian audiences will especially enjoy Mita's exploration of *Patu!* and his mother's work as he and several interviewees compare her to documentary legend [Alanis Obomsawin](#). Noting that the Abenaki filmmaker's *Incident at Restigouche* debuted at festivals alongside *Patu!*, the film conveys how both women introduced themselves as significant voices holding settler authorities accountable and capturing visible evidence of vehement systemic racism. The doc's appraisal of Obomsawin's work is appreciated and productive in illustrating how voices like Obomsawin and Mita are still far too rare when they have so much to say.

The doc draws in a number of peers who've been influenced by Mita and Obomsawin's work, most notably Taika Waititi, whose breakthrough film *Boy* was produced by Mita, as well as cultural critic and [Indigenous Screen Office executive director Jesse Wente](#), who comments upon the filmmakers' influence. As the Mitas and Obomsawins of the next generation continue to fight for space despite the significance efforts of those who came first, this documentary is an effective reminder to support efforts like the Indigenous Screen Office and commitments to parity in order to keep open the doors that filmmakers like Mita and Obomsawin unlocked for future generations.

### ***Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen* screens:**

- Fri, Apr. 26 at 3:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Sun, Apr. 28 at 12:00 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Sun, May 5 at 11:45 a.m. at TIFF Lightbox

It is also the closing night selection of this year's DOXA Film Festival.



## Hot Docs Preview: The Wandering Chef



*The Wandering Chef* is a slow moving yet moving documentary that explores a famous chef and a friend he happens to have met while wandering the countryside.

Yim Gi-Ho is a famous Korean chef who focuses on making something out of nothing. Throughout the film, you will find him picking ragged weeds and plants from a practically barren countryside and making seemingly Michelin star quality food out of it. However, this film is more than that, as it explores a relationship that Yim develops with an elderly lady that was built on the foundation of a communal meal.

The film looks at what food means to people and the bonds that can be derived from it. Foodies will love watching the chef forage and ultimately make tasty meals out of seemingly nothing but the core of the film explores the relationships of people through food.

### *Screenings:*

*Wed, May 1 | 6:30 PM Hart House Theatre*

*Thu, May 2 | 3:00 PM Scotiabank Theatre 3*

*Fri, May 3 | 9:30 PM Isabel Bader Theatre*

## Review: 'Killing Patient Zero'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 26th, 2019



Gaétan Dugas who was dubbed “Patient Zero” of the AIDS crisis.  
Courtesy of Hot Docs

### ***Killing Patient Zero***

(Canada, 98 min.)

Dir. Laurie Lynd

Programme: Special Presentations (World Premiere)

“People who are young do not understand in any real way, even if they know the fact, that homosexuality was against the law,” says author and activist Fran Leibowitz in *Killing Patient Zero*. “It was against the law—not just that your parents didn’t like you or people you went to school with didn’t like you. It was actually a crime.” Leibowitz makes an emphatic point in the introductory of *Killing Patient Zero* that encapsulates the pervasive homophobia that allowed the AIDS crisis to devastate the gay community while the powers that be failed to take action. More significantly, Leibowitz’s comment highlights the significance of the period of euphoria that shortly preceded the AIDS outbreak as gay men and women enjoyed hard fought sexual liberation after being considered criminal deviants simply for whom they loved. It’s in this context that one must appreciate the life of Gaétan Dugas, who didn’t waste a second of his freedom.

Forget everything you thought you knew about the man known as “Patient Zero.” Laurie Lynd’s *Killing Patient Zero* says *au revoir* to the falsehoods that have characterized Gaétan Dugas, who unwittingly became the “face” of the AIDS crisis when a typo marked him as the point of origin for the virus as it devastated the gay community in the 1980s. Lynd’s film, adapted from the book *Patient Zero & the Making of the AIDS Epidemic* by Richard A. McKay, corrects history to inform viewers that Dugas was not the catalyst for the deadly contagion, but rather, like far too many members of the queer community, a victim of it. The film explains how the “zero” that marked Dugas like the scarlet letter was actually an “O” to signify him as “Out of California” in an elaborate cluster graph charting early known cases of HIV/AIDS. Lynd’s film reveals that Dugas was labelled “Patient O” (not “zero”) because he provided invaluable help to researchers trying to study and understand the virus.

*Killing Patient Zero* bestows a posthumous medal of honour upon Dugas as it corrects his story. Lynd, making a strong feature documentary debut after features like *Breakfast with Scott*, the hit TV series *Schitt’s Creek* and a number of award-winning shorts, puts Dugas’ personality and joie de vivre at the forefront of *Killing Patient Zero*. The film humanizes a man who has been erroneously demonized throughout history.

Drawing upon an engaging roster of talking heads that includes many of Dugas’ colleagues, friends, lovers, and members of the queer community, the doc builds a positive, inclusive, and productive conversation about the AIDS crisis from the perspectives of those who lived it. His colleagues describe an energetic young man who loved to fly and thrived on the mobility of his career as a flight attendant, which allowed him to visit various

metropolitan areas where young gay men embraced their sexuality without fear. Dugas' peers rebuild "Patient Zero" as a young man who was flamboyantly and vivaciously open about his sexuality and could pick up any man he wanted, gay or straight, and enjoyed an incalculable number of partners during this era of free love. They all speak of him with uniform positivity.

The film rips open the narrative in which Dugas' promiscuity was made notorious through the publication of the book *And the Band Played On* by Randy Shilts. Lynd's subjects acknowledge the significance of Shilts' book for calling out the government's failure to act on the HIV/AIDS crisis, and for noting that thinly veiled homophobia was at the root of said failure, but the interviewees similarly hold Shilts accountable for mischaracterizing Dugas as a sort of "AIDS killer" who knowingly infected men across North America. Most effectively, *Killing Patient Zero* features some candid words from Michael Denny, who edited and published *And the Band Played On* and admits that he extracted a minute detail from Shilts' book and used it as publicity spin to attract media attention. Despite appearing in only 11 pages of *And the Band Played On*, Dugas' life was stolen and re-framed with a pitch. The doc nevertheless unpacks the complexity of the falsehoods that compounded one another as misinformation spread while researchers tried to understand the virus in its early phases.

While the film deserves praise for connecting the misconceptions and complacency towards AIDS with vehement homophobia, audiences have seen that doc before. At the same time, the interviewees uniformly note the uncanny timing of the AIDS outbreak shortly after the victory for gay rights. Cultural critic B. Ruby Rich dubs the timing "Shakespearean" as it wiped out this newfound euphoria and the Reagan-era conservatism sweeping the nation treated AIDS like karmic retribution.

What *Killing Patient Zero* does especially well is contextualize the social movements that preceded the AIDS outbreak and inspired Dugas to live openly and fully. The interviewees of *Killing Patient Zero* share some wonderful and heartbreaking coming out stories and tales of finding relief in the ability to live without feeling like they're hiding. There are open and candid discussions of sexuality—when's the last time you heard people discuss "bottoming" and anal douches in a film?—to remedy the very kind of bashfulness that prevented a swift response to the AIDS outbreak.

Lynd draws an engaging cast of characters with notable figures from the queer community, including *POV* contributor Matt Hays and Canadian director John Greyson—who curiously doesn't discuss his musical fantasia about *Patient Zero* despite wearing a *Zero Patience* t-shirt during his interview—to highlight a spectrum of stories. Fran Leibowitz's sardonic and passionate soundbites easily make her the MVP of the talking heads, while Dugas' close friends and colleagues arguably form the heart of the film. Lynd steers karma back in Dugas' favour as the story of Patient O comes full circle. The film sees doctors and researchers praise his openness and transparency with his sex life, and give him fair credit for setting foundational research on the virus into motion. The final images of Dugas are of a man who is happily in the prime of his life. The film sets Gaétan Dugas free.

***Killing Patient Zero* screens:**

- Fri, Apr. 26 at 8:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Sat, Apr. 27 at 12:30 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Fri, May 3 at 2:45 p.m. at Hart House

In the Seats- April 26, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: FOCUS ON JULIA IVANOVA: OUR REVIEW OF 'MY DADS, MY MOMS AND ME'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kaggaoan](#) - April 26, 2019

3 Stars



Happy children are all alike until they're not, as *My Dads, My Moms And Me* shows us. Unassuming as it is, this documentary's first act shows us its young subjects having fun. Cue the idyllic music, hinting at the utopia where these kids can be around their LGBT parents without judgment.

Today, half of the subjects are teens. But it also switches to 2007. A sequel to *Fatherhood Dreams*, this shows the parents dealing with being LGBT, as well as caring for more than their children. Pets and real estate figure largely in this documentary, those factors complicating the family dynamic.

*My Dads...* doesn't shy around with these families' unconventional natures. It gives enough screen time to the children's biological or surrogate families. There is some judgment in these scenes depicting these surrogates. But for the most part it shows them exhibiting the same unconditional love that the LGBT parents show.

This movie focuses on three families at a time when their legality was nascent. The candidate pool for this film is understandably small. One couple decided to open up a Meetup group for LGBT parents and received no response. It doesn't help that one of the families move from Vancouver to Halifax.

That said, the whiteness here is conspicuous for something depicting Vancouver. One of the parents and her children have mobility issues. That issue feels like a spoiler, and director and producer Julia Ivanova could have handled this better. Revealing this in the beginning could have helped the film.

Nonetheless, the sight of mostly well balanced children in parents feels like a relief. These LGBT subjects made seismic changes when they decided to take on the role of being parents. And now, despite some big problems, these children can move on to having dreams that they can achieve.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-focus-on-julia-ivanova-our-review-of-my-dads-my-moms-and-me/>

In the Seats – April 26, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: FOCUS ON JULIA IVANOVA: OUR REVIEW OF 'FAMILY PORTRAIT IN BLACK AND WHITE'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 26, 2019

4 Stars



Children deserves loving families. When Ukrainian Alexander “Sashka” Neny talks about his family, sometimes his biological parents come into the conversation. He says that it would be cool to meet them. He’s one of the subjects in Julia Ivanova’s *Family Portrait in Black and White*. When that was filming, he was one of 17 children under care of their adopted mother Olga. This documentary had a reputation during its release. That prepares their audiences for when Olga turns into someone less loving.

One thing – what separates Sashka and most of her 17 foster children is that they are are black or brown. Olga adopted them because children of color are not popular at orphanages. Her intentions are good, but these children are going to have dreams of their own, dreams which she suppresses. She doesn’t want a son to play soccer or a daughter to pursue playing the violin.

*Family* evokes Chekhovian storytelling in portraying that titular dysfunctional unit. Ivanova shows the sea or nature, a calming way to reintroduce us to each child. They have different ways of having fun as well as having different relationships with Olga. It also has large enough of a scope and shows government programs benefiting these children. One program lets them spend time in Italy with other families. Ones who have better ways of loving them than Olga does.

Lastly, it intelligently deals with the racism that these children deal with. The movie, after all, starts out with white nationalists who make Olga a saint in comparison. These children smile with or without Olga, that visual itself feeling like a relief despite their situations. But it also asks its audience how far a smile or a song can go. How do parents preparing children of color in a country that does not want them?

<http://intheseats.ca/focus-on-julia-ivanova-our-review-of-family-portrait-in-black-and-white/>

## Review: 'The Hypnotist'

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 26th, 2019



### ***The Hypnotist***

(Finland, 72 minutes)

Dir. Arthur Franck

Programme: Making Believe (North American Premiere)

Born Olavi Hakasalo, Olliver Hawk was the moniker of a charismatic hypnotist, who practiced his craft in Finland from the 1950s to 1980s. An enigmatic figure with a tumultuous life, Hawk became significant for his connections to Finland's long-standing president, Urho Kekkonen. In *The Hypnotist*, the third feature from filmmaker Arthur Franck, we track a sort of biography of Hawk, beginning with his early hypnotism shows, going through his ties to politics, and concluding with his death during a performance.

While Hawk's history is a stranger-than-fiction tale which is fascinating in how bizarre it is, it does occasionally get bogged down in details. The narrative swamps itself to a dizzying degree; perhaps the only way to tackle Hawk's persona, but regardless an engulfing drama.

But while Hawk's biography can be too densely layered at times, hitting on his personal and romantic life, stage career, political forays, and fraud allegations, *The Hypnotist* is a remarkably well-crafted film. With a uniquely unified visual aesthetic, it is a pleasure to watch. Franck captures the time periods he draws on, a detailed touch that helps coalesce the otherwise unwieldy narrative. Though at times overwhelming, *The Hypnotist* remains a fairly solid documentary.

### ***The Hypnotist* screens:**

-Mon, Apr. 29 at 1:00 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

-Sun, May 5 at 6:15 p.m. at Hart House

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-the-hypnotist>



## Review: 'Animus Animalis (a story about People, Animals and Things)'

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 26th, 2019



### ***Animus Animalis (a story about People, Animals and Things)***

(Lithuania, 69 minutes)

Dir: Aiste Žegulyte

Programme: Animal Magnetism (North American Premiere)

In a series of vignettes, humans interact with animals. Hunters kill and butcher a deer, taxidermists preserve carcasses while museum patrons and staff interact with stuffed animals in exhibitions. But *Animus Animalis (a story about People, Animals, and Things)* is less concerned with the animals in its title, and more concerned with how humans interact with them when they die.

Aiste Žegulyte's latest film is a fascinating subversion of an anthropocentric gaze. It privileges human experiences despite a focus on animals, which forces the viewer to consider the ways in which we engage with the natural world: presenting animals at the centre of her film, it becomes conspicuous that they are defined solely on human terms. In the film's most striking scene, however, a live fox is inserted into the film. Let loose inside a museum, it explores, looks at the camera, and interacts with the stuffed animals on display. Forcefully, Žegulyte questions the anthropocentrism of her own film, bringing to the forefront the animal gaze, and emphasizing its deliberate absence from the rest of her documentary.

While *Animus Animalis* excels at this meditation on human and animal subjectivity, it is nonetheless a disturbingly nonchalant look at animal death. A doe lies with her guts popping out of her abdomen after an attack by a stag. A taxidermist's workspace is littered with blood, bits of flesh, and dismembered animal limbs. A wolf pelt is petted and played with by a small child. Though Žegulyte is keenly perceptive when it comes to human interactions with animals, she is too distant when it comes to on-screen violence. Perhaps this was the point, to show how we take for granted non-human death. But it doesn't land, feeling instead like it is simply the thing it is trying to comment on by showing an irreverence for animal life.

### ***Animus Animals screens:***

- Mon, Apr. 29 at 6:00 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Tues, Apr. 30 at 12:30 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Sat, May 4 at 12:30 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (1 of 2)

### INTERVIEWS

#### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Claudia Sparrow – “Maxima”

"Maxima"

BY Sophia Stewart April 27, 2019

Claudia Sparrow was born and raised in Lima, Peru. Her first feature, “I Remember You,” won best dramatic feature film at the Downtown Film Festival Los Angeles and was released theatrically in 2016. Her 2009 American Film Institute thesis film “El Americano,” shot in Lima and Los Angeles, was awarded an Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Student Emmy for Best Drama. Sparrow is a 2018 Film Independent Fellow and a 2017 Sundance Alumna.

“Maxima” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 27.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

CS: “Maxima” tells the story of a real life heroine, a woman who decided to fight for what she believes is right and who didn’t let anyone silence her. Máxima Acuña, the protagonist of our film, is a farmer from the Peruvian Andes who can’t read or write; she’s probably one of the most vulnerable people that you can think of, yet nothing stopped her from standing up to the world’s largest producer of gold.

This is the story of a woman, mother, and wife who defends land and water—critical for the survival of hundreds of thousands of people—from massive and irreversible harm by an American mining conglomerate.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

CS: Máxima’s unbelievable courage and determination. She’s such an inspiration—I think it’s impossible to see her, learn about her story, and not be completely taken in by her and her cause. I was literally unable to sleep thinking of her.

As a Peruvian woman who had the privilege of following my passion and becoming a filmmaker, I felt it was my duty to do my part and help give Máxima’s voice a larger platform.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

CS: I would love for them to be deeply moved and inspired by Máxima Acuña and to realize that stories like Máxima’s—in which corporations manage to get away with human rights abuses and environmental crimes—are unfortunately happening too often all around the world, and we can’t allow that.

In Máxima’s situation, there are ways to support her cause, so hopefully people feel inspired enough to join her fight and help her case set a major precedent.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

CS: Getting financing for a socially themed documentary that is mostly in Spanish. It almost seemed impossible. Then, from the the little financing we did manage to get, we had to get a film crew to the most remote location in the Peruvian Andes with freezing temperatures and no access to electricity or running water. Plus there were all the risks associated with shooting in an area of social conflict with a strong security presence from the mining company.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (2 of 2)

CS: It ended up being a combination of personal funds, a couple of angel investors, and donations. We got amazing support from Film Independent as well as a small grant that was part of the Film Independent documentary lab, but that was it. We applied to all applicable grants out there and got none.

I was incredibly fortunate to have a producer and team of executive producers unwilling to give up and always ready to think outside the box in order to get the film made.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

CS: My dad was a cinephile, so watching films was our main family activity growing up. Back then, there were hardly any movie theaters around, but my dad managed to find the few hidden places available to rent movies from. I quickly fell in love with visual storytelling.

Filmmaking is such a powerful art form and the way that it can transform you in a couple of hours is such a unique experience. From a young age, I dreamt of creating that magic for audiences.

### **W&H: What's the best advice you've received?**

CS: A producer told me early on in my career to always trust my instincts. It may sound like something obvious, but as an independent filmmaker, you face so many challenges at any given moment that following your instincts might seem inconvenient at times. It's really important that you do because that's what will set your work apart.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

CS: Don't be afraid to tackle themes and stories that may cater mostly to a female audience. This is much easier said than done because it is a male-dominated industry, and it is tempting to give in to it especially when you are starting out, but it's our job to continue to prove that female-driven content has as much demand and commercial viability as any other.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

CS: I adore "Big," directed by Penny Marshall. That was a classic in my house and the type of Hollywood film that I grew up watching that made me fall in love with filmmaking. "Big" is so full of innocence and magic, which is rare to find in movies these days, sadly.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

CS: The main thing for me was that certain behaviors and language that I had to shrug off before—even among friends and colleagues—are now simply unacceptable, so I experience a lot less of it.

For a change, I am also being told that it's a great time to be a Hispanic woman director. I don't know about that, but at least I'm getting more meetings because of it.

## Women in Hollywood (1 of 2) – April 27, 2019

### INTERVIEWS

#### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Emily Gan – “Cavebirds”

"Cavebirds"

BY Sophia Stewart April 27, 2019

Emily Gan is a Chinese-Canadian photographer, filmmaker, and video artist born and based in Montréal. Gan has travelled across Canada, the US, India, and Malaysia working on various independent documentaries. In fiction, she worked closely with editor Martin Pensa as an assistant editor on “Dallas Buyers Club.”

“Cavebirds” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 28.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

EG: “Cavebirds” is a personal essay film where I track my dad’s progress as he builds an edible-nest swiftlet birdhouse in his hometown—a small village in Malaysia he left more than half a lifetime ago.

The edible-nest swiftlet is a bird from Southeast Asia known for their valued nests made entirely out of bird spit that serve as the main ingredient in a Chinese delicacy known as “bird’s nest soup.” The industry that farms these edible nests provides the backdrop to the film.

I interview my father about matters of the heart, home, and heritage. We travel to the places we call home located on opposite sides of the globe— Montreal and Malaysia—while the birds, ever-present, become a conduit between my immigrant father and me.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

EG: I first thought of making “Cavebirds” when my father told me he invested in a bird farm. It was December 2011, and I was home for the holidays. He was talking about his upcoming trip to Malaysia. Nearing retirement, he had started flying overseas every year, back to his hometown, mostly to spend time with his now late father.

I listened to my dad describe the bird farming industry. It was clear in that moment that he and I viewed life quite differently. My father, a Chinese-Malaysian-Canadian immigrant, and I, his second generation artist daughter, sat staring out at a snow-covered yard, talking about a construction site halfway across the world. “Cavebirds” was thus born out of an attempt for me to understand why he was investing in something so far away from our home in Montreal—and so late in his life.

Mostly I remember the feeling of when the idea “clicked” in my head. I was at my parents’ place watering their plants while they were out of town. The film, I decided, would be a portrait of a home—which was the original working title—with my dad in the foreground and the birds in the background; with those two subjects, I would be able to explore the theme of home.

It all made sense in that moment. It just felt right. I could not really predict how the rest of the process would play out. I just had all these romantic notions of bird chasing and capturing field recordings, and I longed for the warm tropical weather. So, on a whim, I bought a ticket to Malaysia to begin research on the film.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

EG: People who see my film will definitely know a little bit more about me. Hopefully, the personal will touch on the universal, and the audience can come away from the film thinking and talking about their own stories that relate to my themes of family, home, and legacy. There is a sense of awe when we look up into the sky or when we observe the flight of birds, so I don’t mind if people’s minds wander.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

## Women in Hollywood (2 of 2) – April 27, 2019

EG: Time, financing, and personal relationships. Making “Cavebirds” was a lonely endeavor that took close to eight years to complete. I directed, produced, shot, and edited the film alone, save for a two-week period when I had another cameraperson with me.

Pointing the lens at family members was challenging as well, though the support and participation from my family was of great help and made the film possible.

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

EG: The film was funded by public funding in Quebec and Canada. The Canada Council for the Arts gave me an Emerging Artist Grant in 2013 of \$20k. I put in about that much over the seven-plus years of making this film, plus there was a lot of time unaccounted for since I edited the film myself. I worked throughout these years as a full-time yoga teacher and freelance photographer. In 2018, I received \$1.5k from Société Civile des Auteurs Multimédia. I chose not to crowdfund the film mostly because I did not have the time or energy to put a campaign together.

The film was only possible with the participation and support of my parents and my extended family in Malaysia who offered, among other things, lodging and food while I was in Malaysia.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

EG: I come from photography with various interests and capabilities. I find cinema to be an art form that satisfies all my tendencies—whether it be wanting to work with image or sound or writing. I like researching and brainstorming new ideas. I like the technology behind filmmaking as well, and I like how projects also require a team of skilled collaborators. I have always been drawn to the people in this community—most are people I admire and who lift me up in the world.

### **W&H: What’s the best and worst advice you’ve received?**

EG: Best advice: First, don’t interrupt—listen. Second, it’s great to be fluid, but know what your focus is—know what you are committed to. The latter piece of advice was a takeaway from a discussion I had with my second camera person, Thomas Kimmerlin Poupart, when he told me to *stop* “going with the flow.” Who knows—that could be read as the worst advice too!

Worst advice: unsolicited advice

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

EG: Commit to being kind, not only to others, but also to yourself. I believe showing true kindness takes a lot of energy. Understanding how to be kind to myself has been the key to knowing what my boundaries are. Boundaries are important, especially in the nature of this work, where one will surely find themselves in various unpredictable situations.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

EG: “The Gleaners and I,” by Agnès Varda. This film is such a delight to watch. It is honest and curious and a celebration of life and of people and what they treasure. Varda gleans from the gleaners in the film—and I have gleaned so much from her films over the years.

### **W&H: It’s been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

EG: In my exchanges with others touched by the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, I notice the difference in how people share their experiences. There is more confidence and self-assuredness that can only come from the feeling of support—of knowing that we are not alone.

I know there is much work to be done still, but I have noticed that things are shifting, both on a smaller, personal scale and on a larger scale, like the policies in Canada.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-emily-gan-cavebirds/>

## Women in Hollywood (1 of 2) – April 27, 2019

### INTERVIEWS

#### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Aude Leroux-Lévesque – “A Place of Tide and Time”

"A Place of Tide and Time"

BY Sophia Stewart April 27, 2019

Aude Leroux-Lévesque is a Montreal-based documentary filmmaker. Her first documentary, “Call me Salma,” aired on Arte, EBS Korea, Direct 8, and played in numerous international film festivals. Her second documentary, “Living with Giants,” won the 2016 Emerging Canadian Filmmaker at Hot Docs, Best Canadian Documentary at VIFF, and was nominated for three Prix Iris, including Best Feature Documentary Film.

“A Place of Tide and Time” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 28. The film is co-directed by Sébastien Rist.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

AL: “A Place of Tide and Time” is a documentary that was shot in a small, remote fishing village in Atlantic Canada. The story is a conversation between the young and the old, who don’t necessarily agree on what the future holds for their village.

The youth are leaving, searching for better opportunities elsewhere, while the older generation tries to hold on to their past and traditions.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

AL: My father grew up not too far from the village of St. Paul’s River, where most of the film was shot. When he turned 17, he bought a motorcycle and left, aspiring for higher education and a job that could not be found there. He never returned.

When my co-director Sébastien Rist and I were invited to teach video workshops in these coastal villages five years ago, I connected with the region and immediately recognized my father’s story in all the teenagers that were leaving to attend colleges in bigger cities. It was at that point that we knew we had to go back and make a film about that.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

AL: I hope the film makes people think about how our identity is deeply rooted in the place we’re from. I also hope the film makes people slow down, take a deep breath, and appreciate the beauty our country has to offer—appreciate the snow storms that close down roads for days, the cold wind that makes our hair messy, the tides that endlessly carry sea life onto the shore, and the fragile flowers that emerge in the spring.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

AL: Getting to the Lower North Shore is an event in itself. It’s a multiple-day drive across different provinces via ferries or a full day of flights in tiny planes.

However, the most challenging was probably convincing people — and ourselves, to be honest — that amidst the apparent emptiness of a place where nothing really happens, there was a great story to be told.



## Women in Hollywood (2 of 2) – April 27, 2019

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

AL: The film was first funded with Quebec government grants in research and development. Once we came back with a demo, we were able to secure a TV license and more government funding. We also benefited from the Canadian tax credits programs.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

AL: Ever since I can remember, I wanted to make a positive impact around me and in society. Documentary filmmaking came as a clear way towards trying to achieve this, while allowing me to experiment with creativity on so many levels.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

AL: The worst advice someone ever gave me was to look for a better-paying job. I'm glad I never even considered taking this advice seriously.

On the other hand, other people told me not to wait for the money and just follow a great story when it presents itself. This has proven to be an extremely smart thing to do.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

AL: Despite the challenges that we face, don't think of yourself as a female director—just think of yourself as a director.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

AL: I would love to namedrop all my colleagues—female documentary film directors in Quebec. But since I have to choose, I'd say that you have to check out Zayne Akyol's work, such as her praised "Gulistan, Land of Roses."

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

AL: I've noticed more grants and programs dedicated to women. Until we get as much representation and opportunities as men, I think this is a great thing. But I hope we won't need such programs in the near future.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-aude-leroux-levesque-a-place-of-tide-and-time/>

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (1 of 3)

### INTERVIEWS

#### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Danielle Sturk – “El Toro”

BY: Sophia Stewart April 27, 2019

Danielle Sturk is a bilingual multi-disciplinary artist. Sturk's films have screened at over 30 film festivals, and have been broadcast on most major Canadian English and French networks, such as CBC, Radio Canada, and Vision TV. Her credits include “Soul Sisters,” “A Good Madness,” and “Farandole.”

“El Toro” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 28.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

DS: Romance and tragedy bind my mother's seven siblings, who work with their parents at their family-run truck stop diner deep in the entrails of 1960s industrial Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. The diner, El Toro, no longer exists between the old Canada Packers abattoir and the Union Stock Yards, but it very much exists in the minds of the surviving DeGagné brood, my family.

“El Toro” rebuilds the walls, stools, and atmosphere of the restaurant, recreating a surreal, rich, and imaginative world, evoking a lost time and place through the lens of memory, nostalgia, and love.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

DS: The stories my aunts and uncles told at family gatherings evoked strong images, smells, and vague memories from my early childhood of the abattoirs, truckers, great home-cooked meals, and my Mémère and Pépère's hard work ethic. The cacophony of the siblings' voices, one outdoing the other's story, is a strong memory for me and, gladly, is the powerful basis of this film.

The unique time and place, now gone along with my grandparents, is a stiff reminder of the impermanence of all things. I wanted to put a marker on this time and place, on my family.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

DS: I want people to feel connected to themselves and to their loved ones, to their aunts and uncles and the family members they may have lost touch with, and to be curious about the ones they know little about – because they all have stories to tell.

I want people to think about community and family, to appreciate some of the tough stuff that makes us who we are—how it is all so meaningful and, ironically, so completely insignificant in the end when we are gone.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

DS: Building images for 45 minutes of an audio story without ever seeing one of voices speaking was definitely a challenge I gave myself. I wanted to expand my artistic capacities and delve into animation, which was absolutely fantastic. I love it.

I also established a collaborative process with other artists like visual artist Diana Thorneycroft, who provided illustrations that I animated, as well as Peter Graham, who made the miniature set.

Although inviting the ideas and work of many contributors may be threatening for some, it was a pure delight for me, and the film is better for it.

Editor Dany Joyal was also a fantastic artistic partner in building the film during its final stages of storytelling.

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (2 of 3)

### W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.

DS: “El Toro” was entirely funded by Canadian Arts Council grants in national, provincial, and municipal competitions: The Canada Council for The Arts, the Manitoba Arts Council, and the Winnipeg Arts Council. Its total budget was \$85k for production, and I received seed funding from the arts councils as well to develop the early stages of the film.

Over 90 percent of the budget went to artists and craftspeople in Manitoba.

I do have to fundraise to attend Hot Docs with the film, and I have no budget to promote the work other than personal funds.

I chose this path to finance the film because I wanted to take the time to investigate new ways of working and to consider whether this story is best told as a dramatic fictional tale, a documentary, or an experimental film. In the end, I think it has the feel of all three approaches.

I also wanted to take risks, to push my filmmaking voice into new places, and to test out new collaborations with artists I had not worked with before. I am entirely satisfied with this choice. It has been an incredibly satisfying experience from the start to finish.

I could now use help with distribution and sales, so that the film could be seen by a wider audience.

### W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?

DS: I was a modern dancer and choreographer, and I loved it. Eventually, I wanted what went on in my head and in my body to be translated into work that could be understood by more people, to connect with an audience more directly and less abstractly than dance seemed to.

That being said, the film work I enjoy the most is highly creative and less conventional in its form and means of expression.

Also, practically, I was on my third out of four babies and wanted to finish my degree. My spouse reminded me that I always spoke of film and I should consider that, so I switched from English Literature to Film Studies and never looked back. He’s an astute man!

Film is storytelling. All necessary things can be spoken in a gesture, in the geography of a room, in the length of a shot, or the rhythm of an edit—it’s so incredibly detailed and powerful.

### W&H: What’s the best and worst advice you’ve received?

DS: Worst and best advice was “You can’t have everything.” Specifically as a woman, I’ve heard this many times as a way to signal to me that I should content myself with either raising a family or doing my art, something my male spouse has never been told. It also comes from women who have had to painfully give up something very core to themselves, having had to choose between their work or a family because of conditioning and cultural gender biases in our society.

The message is that I do not have the right to live both if I am female. So I push back on that a lot, but life has taught me that I can’t have everything all at once all of the time. Sometimes one aspect of who I am or who I am with takes precedence over the other. I listen to that the best I can. It’s fluid.

I also love the Rolling Stones’ lyric, “You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you might find you get what you need.” I feel that we have an obligation to fight for what we need, and making art and making family is what I need. So I do it.

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (3 of 3)

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

DS: Please just do it. Do bad work, do good work—just do some work. Make your work environment how you want to make it: shut yourself in a cabin alone for a couple of days, bring your babies along in the studio other days, do whatever you need to do. Stretch the space by doing you, and let people go that aren't contributing to a positive, respectful, supportive, and risk-taking working environment.

There are a lot of creative people out there, and many will love to work the way you need to do it in order to get your work done.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

DS: Jane Campion's "The Piano" is one of the best films I've experienced. Visceral, sexual, earthy, female.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

DS: I feel that the issue is no longer a big hilarious joke. Due to the #MeToo movement, I feel more room and permission to feel my long-standing anger toward misogyny. I've noticed some shift in the awareness in the industry—some allies have made themselves known, some tentative conversation between men and women about the issue has begun. That feels good — like we aren't crazy. There's some validation about our collective experience as women.

There also seems to be a quieting of the Wild West, free-to-harass environment, but I have yet to see any change in the toxic masculinity that I see in society at large.

Violence toward women is still accepted, and it is present even in youth today; my teen daughters live it every day. So I don't have a lot of hope.

It will take a tremendous amount of profound systemic shifts in all aspects of society to change the deep rooted misogyny that permeates our world. The #MeToo movement called it out—some men have been removed at this time. But I'm afraid the reasons for this behavior and the environments that cultivate it have not changed.

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (1 of 3)

### INTERVIEWS

#### **Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Nance Ackerman, Ariella Pahlke, and Teresa MacInnes – “Conviction”**

BY Sophia Stewart April 27, 2019

Nance Ackerman is a documentary photographer, filmmaker, and multimedia artist. Her films have won awards for direction and cinematography. Her credits include “Cottonland,” “Four Feet Up,” “The Anniversary Project,” “Little Thunder,” “Redress Remix,” and “Trek of the Titans.”

Ariella Pahlke is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and media artist with extensive experience facilitating collaborative projects. For the past 20 years, she’s directed, written and produced hour-long documentaries, shorts and media projects that have screened around the world. Her credits include “Charlie’s Prospect,” “Rock and Desire,” “Burning Rubber,” and “Strategies of Hope.”

Teresa MacInnes is a director and producer with over 30 years of experience. She has won numerous awards and her films have screened at top festivals, including Hot Docs, VIFF, IDFA, the New York Film Festival and Thessaloniki. Her credits include “Buying Sex,” “Mabel,” “Norm,” “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” and “Waging Peace: A Year in the Life of Caledonia Junior High.”

“Conviction” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 28.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

AP: “Conviction” is a film that envisions alternatives to prison through a creative collaboration with women in prison and advocates.

NA: An intimate and artful look at a devastatingly complex societal issue from the inside out.

TM: An honest, raw, and beautiful portrait of a group of women who will change the way you think about punishment, social justice, and equality.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

AP: We are three independent filmmakers who wanted to try working on a complex project together. We’ve each been interested in issues that relate to punishment and social change. Why do we punish people who are often the most vulnerable members of society? Prison doesn’t seem to work, and yet, we as a society have a hard time imagining life without it.

We wanted to explore these questions from the perspective of women inside, since women are the fastest-growing prison population worldwide. We were also inspired by the work of Kim Pate, a longtime prisoners’ rights advocate and prison abolitionist.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

AP: We want people to leave with questions, as well as a more critical and informed perspective about why vulnerable people keep ending up in prison. We want people to feel implicated, to feel emotionally connected to the women in the film, and to feel that they could be part of the solution.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

AP: Making this film had many challenges: obtaining access to prisons, developing trust in our relationships with everyone involved, not replicating exploitive forms of representation, forming collaborative working partnerships with people in the film that defy the norms of conventional media, and ensuring, to the best of our

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (2 of 3)

abilities, that we had meaningful informed consent when people agreed to share sensitive details in their lives. All of these involve one key element: trust. That's been our biggest challenge, and a defining factor that I believe comes through loud and clear in the film.

This was a massive collaboration in all respects. We trusted the women at the heart of the film to make decisions throughout the process about what they would and wouldn't share. We gave them cameras. We had intense ongoing discussions for years about what they did and did not want to include in the film, and why. They trusted us to share their lives and their creative work with the world. And, of course, all the partners involved had to trust that this delicate collaborative process would result in a film that was worth supporting.

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

TM: It took years to put together the resources to make the film, and in total, it has been a four-year process. Early development support came from the National Film Board of Canada, which also eventually came on as our co-producer.

We were thrilled when the Documentary Channel decided to further develop the film and eventually pre-licensed the production. It was this support that opened up further opportunities with the Canada Media Fund, Société Radio-Canada, Nova Scotia Production Incentive, and the Canadian Film and Video Tax Credit.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

AP: I make documentaries in order to explore the world in an intense and creative way, as well as to engage in dialogue with people I don't know who often think differently. I pretty much question everything, so making documentaries is really an excuse to ask personal and philosophical questions, and send them out to the world to proliferate some kind of change.

NA: After 25 years of traveling the world as a documentary photographer, meeting people who were desperate to tell their story, it felt like film was a natural progression.

TM: I come from a background in social work, and 30 years ago I made a film with a group of people who wanted to tell their story. Once I witnessed the power the process of making a documentary can have and the impact it can have on an audience, I never looked back.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

AP: Best advice: Trust yourself, trust your own intuition, work hard, be honest, treat everyone well. Worst advice: Try to get ahead by pleasing people with influence.

NA: Best advice: The best way to make yourself happy is to actually stop thinking about yourself and help others. Worst advice: Put on a wide lens and shoot at f/8, and you won't miss a thing.

TM: Best advice: Deep and the net will appear! Worst advice: Make films you don't want to make in order to make films you want to make.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

AP: Don't back down if you feel confident. Collaborate—good relationships are the bedrock of great films. Don't buy into the hierarchies.

NA: Do a bunch of arm curls, push-ups, and crunches to strengthen your upper body. Also, just say thank you when men tell you you're bossy.

TM: My grandmother once told me, "Never learn to type."



## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (3 of 3)

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

AP: I love the last film made by Agnès Varda, “Faces Places.” This film—like all of her films—is honest, engaging, self-reflexive, and radical in a non-strident way. They creep up on you, with endless surprising twists and turns that speak to her relationship with her subjects, with filmmaking, and with deep concerns and questions about the world she lives in.

NA: I loved “Lost in Translation” by Sofia Coppola and how the crew were treated and the film was made—with such trust and peacefulness.

TM: I don’t pick favorites, and I have much respect for any woman who is brave enough to make a film!

### **W&H: It’s been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

AP: I’ve noticed surface changes—more news stories, more organizations who pledge to work with more women, more dinner conversation focused on these issues. But honestly, I haven’t noticed any changes in the way women are treated, believed, or acknowledged.

TM: Couldn’t have said it better, Ariella!

## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (1 of 2)

### INTERVIEWS

#### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Marcela Arteaga – “The Guardian of Memory”

BY: Gabriela Rico April 27, 2019

Marcela Arteaga is a Mexican writer and director. Her 2003 documentary “Remembrance” was screened at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, the Festival des Films du Monde, and Hot Docs, among others. It received the FIPRESCI Prize at the 2003 Guadalajara International Film Festival as well as the Jury’s Special Award at the Guanajuato International Film Festival. It was also nominated for Best Documentary Film at the Mexican Academy Awards.

“The Guardian of Memory” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 28.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

MA: This film is about the kindness and hope that still exists in people who have gone through hell, and about Carlos Spector’s tireless efforts to help them not to lose their voices.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

MA: As a Mexican, I am aware of the violence happening in my country. I read about it in the newspapers, I feel it in the streets, I hear about it in political discourses, and I fear for my two daughters every day. I began to wonder when this would end — or if it would ever come to an end.

Like many people, I read books about drug cartels and their crimes, about authorities murdering or “disappearing” people. I became an expert on the subject, but it wasn’t until I met Carlos and heard him talking about real people who had suffered this type of violence that I realized I didn’t know anything about what was going on in Mexico.

The first time I interviewed Mexicans in exile, I realized that everybody talks about the violence occurring in Mexico, but no one wants to hear what is really going on and what this community has to say beyond violence: humanity, forgiveness, death, understanding, nostalgia, hope, future, and remembrance. I discovered the potential and inspiration hidden within their stories.

Meeting this community helped me understand the dimension of the tragedy that is going on in Mexico, and I felt the obligation to act. I could not sit back and watch the boat sink. And the only tool I have to fight against violence, murder, and people disappearing is filmmaking!

Political discourses are not only worthless but a deadly threat. “The Guardian of Memory” emerged from a sense of impotence—from the need to stop and take stock of our situation and see what can be done. But it also emerged from exploring human beings’ contrasts: decency, violence, sadness, satisfaction, voracity, and humbleness.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

MA: I want people to remember Bob Dylan’s words: “How many times can a man turn his head / And pretend that he just doesn’t see...Yes, and how many deaths will it take till he knows / That too many people have died?”

After all the stories I’ve heard, I can say that we only have each other as back up to fight for a better future. Many of us want change and a better future. In order to achieve this, we have to start listening to each other and stop thinking that if “something does not affect me, it is not my problem,” because actually it is. When faced with blatant inhumanity, we cannot remain silent, because in doing so, we become accomplices.

Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

MA: When speaking of tragedies, aesthetics are almost always overshadowed by the severity of the facts. I believe that art cannot be separated from the human condition, which is why my search goes always in the same direction: How does one approach [a tragedy from an aesthetic perspective]? Can art pay its debt to a suffering society?

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That being said, the editing was the biggest challenge in making the film. Figuring out how to combine the testimonies with the created images. How to find the balance between facts and beauty, between emotions and concepts, without giving into my very personal way of making movies. The process has been very difficult, but I have learned so much. Editing involved facing the harshest judge: myself.

**W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

MA: First of all, I won funds from the Gabriel Garcia Marquez documentary support scheme in order to develop the project. Then, I won EFICINE support for part of the production. EFICINE is a fiscal stimulus for taxpayers, where those who contribute cash resources to film projects in Mexico can obtain a tax credit. At least 80 percent of the budget was met by the EFICINE stimulus. The rest of the production budget was funded by the Chicken & Egg Accelerator Lab grant.

Additionally, once the film was in its final post-production phase, we won the Impulso Morelia prize for post-production.

**W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

MA: I actually became a filmmaker almost by accident. I was studying medicine at university, and a friend of mine asked me to help him with shooting his thesis film. That was the end of medical school. Filmmaking bit me like a mosquito.

**W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

MA: The best advice I have received is follow your intuition. The worst advice I have received is follow your intuition. Does that make sense?

**W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

MA: Instead of giving advice, I prefer listening to what others have to say and listening carefully to what they don't say. I advise any filmmaker, female or male, to listen to what people have to say.

**W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

MA: This is a very tough question. There are so many incredible woman-directed films! But if I have to pick, Antonia Bird's "Ravenous" is one of my favorites. It was nominated by the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films for Best Horror Film, Best Music, and Best Makeup. But what I really like about it is that beyond the story of cannibalism, the film is driven by a subtle, intelligent, and stark critique of capitalism.

It seems unfair that "Ravenous" is never mentioned as as a clever understanding of history, and the best explanation of how we got here: capitalism, cannibalism.

**W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

Within the film industry for me personally, nothing has changed since #MeToo and #TimesUp. But as far as society is concerned, many changes have happened since these movements have started. I celebrate the bravery of all women that have the courage to speak out about their experiences.

Personally, these movements have led me to start questioning myself and to reflect on feminism and machismo, on men and women, and on how, as a woman, I deal with this subject. I have two daughters, and their viewpoints on the subject are completely different from each other's and from mine. That, from my point of view, is a very good start.

I am sure that we as society will find the balance and the best way to live together while respecting each other.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-marcela-arteaga-the-guardian-of-memory/>

## Women in Hollywood - April 27, 2019 (1 of 2)

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Shannon Walsh – “Illusions of Control”

BY: Sophia Stewart\_April 27, 2019

Shannon Walsh has written and directed four award-winning feature documentaries, as well as multiple shorts and 360 VR projects. Her work has been released theatrically in Canada, the UK, and South Africa, and broadcast on Al-Jazeera, CBC, Discovery Channel, Netflix, and other stations internationally.

“Illusions of Control” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 28.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

SW: “Illusions of Control” follows five stories of women in very different parts of the world faced with unbearable crises. Each finds ways to reimagine her life and to form new communities in the wake of these intense experiences.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

SW: I was struck by how our illusions of control over the world and ourselves had led us into deeper and deeper crises, especially around climate change. Faced with a future enormously impacted by climate change and political upheaval, I was drawn to people who were already living through these crises—not in an imagined future, but in the present.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

SW: I want people to think about what it means to flourish, not only survive. I hope viewers will draw inspiration from the people in the film and also support the struggles we document in the film in whatever ways they can.

On a larger level, I want viewers to consider the folly of our ideas about controlling the future, whether it is the fantasy that toxic legacies will somehow be solved by future technologies, or that we can predict what will happen next in our lives.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

SW: This was a really challenging film to make on every level, from financing to tracking stories to working in different languages and places and structuring such an epic journey around the world.

I think getting it finished felt like one of the biggest challenges, and the whole process took over five years.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

SW: It took a long time to get funded. We were supported by some academic funders, including the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of British Columbia, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We were also lucky enough to get support from Telefilm Canada’s Theatrical Documentary Fund.

#### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

SW: I’ve always loved telling stories, creating experiential worlds for viewers, and learning about the world and people in it. Working with moving visual images began when I was in high school, and it has been a passion ever since.

#### **W&H: What’s the best and worst advice you’ve received?**

SW: Best advice: Choose the things you love to do, and create a career that combines them.

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Worst advice: Follow the rules.

**W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

SW: Choose to surround yourself with people who take you seriously as a person and an artist. Meet in person or get recommendations for crew from other women directors.

**W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

SW: I don't like to choose favorites, as films are all so different, but Alanis Obomsawin's "Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance" is a film that really moved me and changed my ways of understanding Indigenous struggles and Canadian colonialism in the present. Her whole body of work is incredible.

**W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

SW: I think women are talking about their experiences much more openly, and I think we are in general less tolerant of bad behavior. I think men are starting to realize they may not always know where the boundaries are, and they are asking questions, and some are more cautious about looking at their behavior. This is certainly a welcome change.

## **Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (1 of 2)**

### **Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Megan Wennberg – “Drag Kids”**

BY: Sophia Stewart\_April 27, 2019

Megan Wennberg is a writer and director based in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. She works in both documentary and fiction, and her work has screened at festivals around the world and been broadcast on CBC, The Comedy Network, and Documentary Channel.

“Drag Kids” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 28.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

MW: “Drag Kids” is an intimate journey into the lives of four kids who long to be fabulous. Stephan, Jason, Bracken, and Nemis are all very different, but they’re united by a shared passion for drag and a determination to blaze their own way in the adult world of drag shows and vogue balls.

The kids have never met anyone else “like them,” but with the loving support of their parents, they come together for the first time to perform at the world-famous Montreal Pride Festival.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

MW: When producer Erin Oakes pitched this idea to me last spring, I was immediately interested. As a filmmaker I’ve always been drawn to characters, points of view, and worlds that are new to me, and the Drag Kids are all totally unique. They each have deeply personal reasons for doing drag, and I was privileged to get to know each of them in their hometowns and to witness firsthand what drives them, as well as the challenges they face. The passion, bravery, and self-awareness they display at such young ages astounds me, and I am excited to help share their stories.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

MW: I hope this film inspires people to think about the ways in which they can express their true selves. The Drag Kids are fierce and fabulous, and I think they challenge us all to think about what that could look like in our own lives—if we can be brave enough to follow our own wildest dreams.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

MW: Sleep deprivation, but that’s not unique to this film. For “Drag Kids,” the biggest challenge was probably trying to follow the action of all the kids and their parents during their whirlwind five-day visit to Montreal Pride. They had never met, so we weren’t sure how it was going to go having so many big personalities in the same space and under such a crazy deadline to rehearse and perform together. But they clicked instantly.

I really feel incredibly lucky with how smoothly this film has come together—with everything from the funding to the Kids’ supportive families to the generosity and talents shared by so many to make this film the best it can be.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

MW: “Drag Kids” was commissioned by the Canadian public broadcaster CBC as a 45-minute film for their POV Documentary strand. The project also received funding from the Canada Media Fund, the Nova Scotia Film and TV Production Incentive, and Federal tax credits, and the producers financed the 80-minute theatrical version.

#### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**



## Women in Hollywood – April 27, 2019 (2 of 2)

MW: I have always loved films, but growing up in a small town in New Brunswick I never considered that filmmaking was an option for me. Then, when I was at journalism school in Halifax, I got to make a short documentary, and I fell in love with the whole process.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

MW: I've gotten lots of good advice over the years, but the best came from filmmaker Teresa MacInnes. When I was finishing journalism school and realized that I really wanted to make films, I met Teresa and she said the simplest, most accurate — and at the time, most annoying — thing: "Just keep doing it."

No "worst advice" is coming to mind. I'm sure I've gotten some, but I'd like to think I've ignored it.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

MW: The same advice I have for anyone—know why you're doing what you're doing, and trust yourself.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

MW: There are so many, but the first that comes to mind is "Fish Tank" by Andrea Arnold. I love the raw, intense power and vulnerability of the main character, and how Arnold takes us face-first into the messiness, longing, and frustrations of her life. This is one of the first films I remember feeling jealous of, which to me is always a good indicator that I both love it and want to make work in a similar vein.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

MW: I've been very lucky in that I've almost always felt supported and respected on any set I'm directing. In the few instances where I haven't, I think the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have helped bolster me to stand up for myself.

## Hot Docs review: Memory: The Origins Of Alien

Alexandre O. Philippe marks the 40th anniversary of Ridley Scott's horror classic with a deep-drive into the famous chestbuster sequence

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 27, 2019



**MEMORY: THE ORIGINS OF ALIEN** (Alexandre O. Philippe, U.S.). 95 minutes. Rating: NNNN

After making the illuminating (and cheerfully nerdy) Psycho documentary [78/52: Hitchcock's Shower Scene](#), Alexandre O. Philippe set out to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ridley Scott's deep-space nightmare by making a similarly focused look at that film's groundbreaking chestbuster sequence, where... well, you know. But he found himself pushing further and further into it, looking at the mythological, psychological, social and cinematic elements that screenwriters Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett, creature designer H.R. Giger and director Ridley Scott used to construct a moment that clarified, and continues to resonate through, all of horror cinema.

Memory: The Origins Of Alien – which takes its name from Dan O'Bannon's original title for the project – takes its time getting to its centerpiece, first considering the long, complicated road to the film's production, and how unlikely it was that a blue-collar look at space travel could even get a green light in post-Star Wars Hollywood. The late O'Bannon and Giger are present through archival clips, as is director Scott, who declined to participate in the doc. (So did Sigourney Weaver.) But Scott's absence almost enhances the idea that this thing came together of its own accord – as though we all somehow shared the same nightmare for two hours in 1979, and it just won't let us go.

## We Will Stand Up's' Tasha Hubbard: 'Our Humanity Is Not Considered'

By [JENNIE PUNTER](#)



CREDIT: JON MONTES

In August 2016, Dr. Tasha Hubbard was working on her doc “Birth of a Family” (Hot Docs 2017) when she learned that Colten Boushie, a young Cree man in Saskatchewan, had died from a gunshot to the back of his head shortly after entering Gerald Stanley’s rural property. The acquittal of Stanley 18 months later by an all-white jury exposed the systemic discrimination that still exists in Canada’s legal system and led the family to national and international stages in the pursuit of justice. As she followed this expected turn in an already tragic story, Hubbard reflected on her own story and the history of the land itself, eventually weaving these elements into the film—a creative decision that was supported by Boushie’s family. “They agreed to the film because they don’t want other families to go through something like this; they want our children to be free and safe,” she said.

“Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up,” is a co-production between Downstream Documentary Productions and the National Film Board of Canada, is written and directed by Tasha Hubbard, produced by Hubbard, George Hupka, Jon Montes, and Bonnie Thompson; and executive produced by David Christensen, Janice Dawe, and Kathy Avrich-Johnson. The NFB is the sales agent and distributor.

Hubbard – who started her career casting extras and is now a professor at the University of Alberta – made history as the first Indigenous filmmaker to have a feature open the Hot Docs Canadian Intl. Documentary Film Festival. She spoke to *Variety* about how Boushie’s murder became a rallying cry for Canada’s Indigenous community, and how her own past offered insight into the tragedy.

### **What was your reaction when you first heard the news about Colten Boushie’s death?**

I was driving in the prairies with my son and nephew, who are both in the film, and checking my phone and saw that someone I knew – Jade Tootosis, who is married to my cousin – had lost a relative. Then details started coming out in the media. People were posting social media comments, and I felt sick to my stomach about their tone and that such a terrible tragedy was actually being celebrated.

The boys were in the vehicle with me, and this news stripped away any sense of security they had. I thought, How can my nephew's mom and I guide these boys on a good path? What happened to Colten felt so random and happened so quickly.

I started writing a blog, and then my birth dad called and said that his wife was related to that family. They both said I should make a film. We all felt the enormity of this event and knew how deeply it would affect the community.

**What was your feeling, as a filmmaker, about the emergence of [Colten's cousin] Jade Tootosis as a powerful voice not only for her family, but also as an advocate for justice on the world stage?**

A family that goes through a tragedy like this is thrust into the public eye. It is overwhelming. Different people in the family were so focused on their grief—as was she, but she was half a step back. The first court appearance of [shooter] Gerald Stanley was the first day of filming, and all these things were taking place. The family didn't ask to be put in that position, no one would want that. I found it really compelling that this young woman, who really had no choice, was stepping forward to speak at the candlelight vigil.



CREDIT: GEORGE HUPKA

**What's behind your decision to use elements of your own story in the film? (Hubbard was part of the so-called Sixties Scoop, the practice that occurred in Canada of taking Indigenous children from their families and placing them in foster homes or up for adoption. Members of her birth and adoptive families appear in the film.)**

I was just finishing my first feature, "Birth of a Family," and my PhD dissertation, and all this started happening. I called [National Film Board of Canada producer] Bonnie Thompson and she asked me, "How are you going to tell it, what is your approach?" I told her how I felt as a mother and a person. I thought, "I need to tell it by being honest about my own feelings."

I think objectivity is the great myth of documentary filmmaking. I wanted to be upfront that I am approaching this story as someone whose people are from this area, who has studied some of its history, who is raising a boy. One of the first things I asked the family was, "Who was Colten, what kind of person was he?" I discovered he was a thoughtful young man, who was helpful to others, who was coming to terms with the legacy of colonialism. Similar things are said about my son, and so I felt people should also see my son in order to understand Colten.



CREDIT: JON MONTES

Stereotypes about my people are so strong. It is tragic, in a way, to have to show our humanity. I grapple with that, and I shouldn't have to, but we're living in a time where our humanity is often not even considered.

**The animation in the sections that describe the Indigenous and settler histories of the land is a lovely touch that allows viewers to step back for a moment. What was your creative thinking there?**

I'm an academic, and the two spaces I inhabit often overlap. I think and write about how the past is still with us. I was thinking about 1885, and what has brought us to this point, and that colonialism is ongoing. So the animation comes in when I am narrating the sections about this history, and I approach it as if I'm telling the story to my 12-year-old son and nephew.

I have seen throughout my career that the "official spokesperson version" of a tragic event is that it is an isolated incident. Indigenous people know that is false, that it is systemic. Sadly there are other stories like this one. We all hope the film is part of process that will lead to change and prevent these things from happening.



## Hot Docs 2019: Ai Weiwei revisits the refugee state of mind in *The Rest*

In his latest documentary, the Chinese artist and activist captures the political and psychological warfare that's being waged on refugees seeking safety in Europe

BY [GELEK BADHEYTSANG](#) APRIL 27, 2019



**THE REST** (Ai Weiwei, Germany). 78 minutes. Apr 27, 12:45 pm, Isabel Bader; May 5, 9:30 pm, Hot Docs. [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca).

In 2017, the prodigious and prolific Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei released [Human Flow](#), an expansive and urgent look at the migrant crises taking place across the globe. His follow-up film, [The Rest](#) revisits that theme but on a more individual and intimate scale by tracking the journeys of refugees from Syria, Sudan, Iraq and elsewhere as they flee violence in their homelands and seek safety in Europe.

Displacement is a recurring theme in his art and life. The dissident artist – also the subject of [an exhibition at the Gardiner Museum](#) running till June 9 – spent over four years under house arrest in China before he was allowed to leave the country in July 2015.

The film presents an unsparing look at the hostile terrains that the asylum seekers have to navigate – both natural and political. Loss, anger, desperation and longing are all captured in a documentary that features little to no commentary from the filmmaker, who is now based in Germany. As he told NOW during an interview a day before the film's screening at Hot Docs, "Nobody can speak for them, except themselves."

### Why did you do this film now?

I had a chance to leave China in 2015 after years of detention. I went to the Greek island of Lesbos to see how the refugees come to Europe. That started Human Flow, and we went to many nations and locations [to film it]. After that, we felt Human Flow doesn't really give enough exposure to what had been filmed during one year – about a hundred hours of footage. So we decided to edit another piece related personally to refugees themselves. There are no experts in the film – this is just about the refugees: when they arrive in Europe, what their lives are like, how they are being treated.

### How did you gain the trust of your subjects?

Every time you turn on the camera, you go through many struggles. It's not just permissions, but also about how you identify with [the people] as subjects. It's always a challenge. In my case, I feel like I'm part of them. I

feel they're part of me. There is no identity crisis there. I just have to let them speak out about their conditions. They were accepting and received me very well.



**How did you approach the violent scenes while also being conscious about preserving the dignity of the people on screen?**

You always have to decide on what material can dignify and reflect the subject matter. One receives so many news clips about shocking moments or bloody violence, which I'm not very interested in. I am more interested in the ordinary human reactions to the situation, right or wrong: why [their struggles] can't be understood or why the German [immigration officer] is impatient with the refugee children crying and asking the parents to hold their mouths. Those details are small, but it's shocking for me, even more than seeing the bombing of their homes. They are leaving such [violent] conditions and are so desperate that they sew their mouths together and symbolically seal themselves for hunger strike. I don't [see the need] to show them using the pins to sew their mouths together. Those things are pretty dark and ugly, but they are ordinary people. Why put them in that kind of condition?

**It's been almost four years since the image of Alan Kurdi's dead body on the beach spread around the world. I believe you were in Greece at the time and even reenacted the tragic scene. At the time, in Canada, we were going through a federal election. The image of Kurdi became a campaign point. Justin Trudeau was campaigning for prime minister and when this image came out, he challenged the Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper by telling us that we need to receive more Syrian refugees. He famously said: "You don't get to suddenly discover compassion in the middle of an election campaign. You either have it or you don't." The reason I bring this up is that we are currently going through another federal election and the Liberal government, under Trudeau, is making it harder for asylum seekers in Canada. We have a law called the Safe Third Country Agreement which states that if someone sought asylum in a country like the U.S., then they can't seek asylum in Canada. As refugees, and I arrived in Canada as a refugee myself, I feel like our lives are dependent on which way these political winds blow. A recent poll said 40 per cent of Canadians believe that there are too many non-white immigrants in Canada. What do you think about that?**

Well, we didn't show this kind of anti-immigration sentiment as much [in the film]. We didn't want to give too much voice to it because I think they are on the wrong side. I mean, it's not even arguable. Canadian or European, it's not always "white people's" land. They also come from somewhere. So for anybody to decide, "Okay, we have enough, we cannot accept more people" is a wrong argument. They also know it. Politicians use these arguments to gain some kind of advantage, but it's wrong. It's totally wrong. It's not even arguable.

In Germany, refugees were being beaten and their rights were being violated all the time. In Greece, refugees are committing suicide or they just suddenly die during sleep. You can see how this kind of psychological warfare is so harmful for the people who are trying to seek peace [and safety]. And they are not being accepted. They become transparent. You see them but at the same time, they are non-existent. That kind of feeling is sometimes even worse than war itself. In wartime, you know who your enemies are. Here, you don't know who your enemies and friends are. Many pretend they are nice or friendly, but they're not. In their hearts, they are enemies. They are not trying to protect you or help you, but rather, they think you are a danger to their lives, which is absolutely ridiculous.

**Recently, a young Syrian girl took her own life in Calgary. She came to Canada as a refugee and was getting bullied at school.**

Think about a refugee having to go through so much to come to a land and then they commit suicide. Just think about that. It's a failure of the whole, so-called civilized society. When people don't recognize [that suffering], it's a total corruption of the idea of human rights and dignity. This film is trying to bring this kind of attention to our society. We are all one. This is not "their" problem. It is your problem too.

**When I was young – I grew up in Kathmandu, Nepal – my father would sometimes take me to refugee camps where Tibetans who had crossed the Himalayan mountains from Tibet into Nepal had just arrived. Many of them had frostbite, were missing fingers and toes. I remember those physical details clearly but also this sense of blankness. There's a sense of having passed through this incredibly challenging physical, mental and emotional experience. And then once you arrive – whether it's Nepal, Germany or Canada – there is a blankness that stays with you for however many years. I felt that for myself too. I also sense that from the migrants in the film. I was interested to know whether you were seeking a sense of hope in these stories?**

I think if someone lost their [sense of place] or their land, there's so much more than just sadness. A human survivor goes through very complicated mental stages. The air, the light, the sound, the things you can relate to... once that's cut off I think it's almost like a part of your body is dead – what you call the blankness. And to re-establish that sometimes takes two to three generations. The average refugee around the world stays as a refugee for 25 years and many of them never even get [refugee] status. People will not recognize them as refugees. It's totally a disposal of human society.

**A constant theme in *The Rest* is how people, even after they've fled violent situations, have a desire to go back home.**

Refugees, even third generation, still show me the keys of their original homes. You want to cry because the home, the streets and the cities have disappeared. But they still hold that key, because they have the belief [and longing] that's stronger than anything. But most beliefs, they vanish eventually. Life passes away. It's why you see someone like the Dalai Lama who is over 80 and still cannot reach a very simple [goal]: he should come back to his land. But, the whole world is watching and nobody even [advocates] for that. Politicians are even wary to see him. So then, you see, when we talk about social justice or fairness, they are almost empty words.

**Do you have a desire to go home? What does home mean for you?**

Home is something very small: it's a little street or maybe a tree or some kind of smell or temperature. I'm always used to being pushed around, so I don't have any land that I can call home. I don't know if that's an unfortunate thing, but that's my condition.

## ORIGINAL-CIN Q&A: AT HOT DOCS, HOW INGRID VENINGER'S MASTERS THESIS UNCOVERED UNSUNG CUBAN DANCE PHENOMS

April 27, 2019

If, after directing eight Canadian feature films, you decide to make your first documentary, you might as well get credit for it. Course credit, that is.

Ingrid Veninger (Porcupine Lake, Modra) has had plenty of TIFF appearances, but she's making her Hot Docs debut with *The World or Nothing*, 11 days in the life of Rubert and Rubildo, identical twin dancers from Cuba, living hand-to-mouth at a cousin's apartment, trying to launch a hip-hop career in Barcelona via YouTube videos under the name "Sencation Gamela."

The movie is a bittersweet look at a passionate quest for stardom. It's also her thesis in the filmmaking Masters program at York University.

Rubert and Rubildo keep up appearances

Rubert and Rubildo, a.k.a. Sensacion Gamela

"I was encouraged to make a film in a different way than I'd ever done before," she says. "That's what made me think of docs. No matter how improvised my previous films look, they've always been scripted and the dialogue has been written. Whether it's my family or experienced actors or first time actors, ultimately, I'm saying, 'Say this or say that.'"

She'd had the twins in her mind ever since encountering them at a dance show at a Cuban resort. With a team of two (herself and her partner John Switzer on sound) and a local cinematographer, she set out to make her first documentary.

Original-Cin's Jim Slotek talked to Veninger about *The World or Nothing*.

### **ORIGINAL-CIN: So how did you meet these guys?**

INGRID VENINGER: "(In December 2015), John and I hadn't a holiday in 10 years. So, it was like, we've got to go somewhere warm. There was an all-inclusive resort in Holguin. On New Year's Eve, we saw a big huge dance show with a lot of different dancers. And the twins had a solo to Usher's Yeah, and they knocked me out.

"They were amazing, they were in unison, they were so charismatic in their dancing and their own style. They just radiated stardom off the stage.

"And I thought, 'How's that working in Cuba?' I'm thinking they want to go big, they want to be on a big stage.

"Everyone in Cuba dances. It's like they're born and start dancing. Music and dance is such an important part of their culture.

"Later I learned these guys have been dancing since the age of five, always doing shows for the family. So, I was curious about their ambition and careers and their family and their dance life.

## Original-Cin – April 27, 2019 (2 of 3)

“But I didn’t speak to them because I knew when I was coming back in January, all of 2016 was going to be (the acclaimed coming-of-age story) Porcupine Lake. I had to finish writing that script, apply for money, shoot in summer of 2016...”

“I thought well, we all see people who draw our attention for reasons we don’t quite understand, but we don’t see them and forget about them, and then maybe if we see them again, we’re like, ‘Oh, it’s meant to be.’”

**OC: So when did you see them again?**

VENINGER: “(After the Masters thesis idea) we went back to Cuba on New Year’s Eve 2017, with the sole purpose of trying to sit down with these guys.

“And they weren’t there. We asked around for a couple of days and a dancer leads to someone else who leads to someone else, who gets them on the phone and I find out they’re in Havana. They were going to be there for two days before leaving on a big big Cuban dance tour, traveling to Germany.

“So, we arranged to meet in Havana, a 12-hour journey by car, and a two-hour meeting. I asked if they’d be interested in making a doc with me. I didn’t have a plan or story or script. We’d just begin with them waking up and starting their day and we’d spend two weeks together. And they agreed.”

“We were all set to go to Cuba, and were told they had family in Barcelona and had settled there. So we shot in Barcelona for 11 days in May, exactly a year ago.”

**OC: I have to say, this is kind of a bittersweet movie. They’re sleeping on couches, measuring their fame in increments of hundreds of YouTube views. And at 29, they’re entering what would be maybe the last third of a physically demanding career in dance.**

VENINGER: “Yeah, it is bittersweet. They’re 29 but they have the spirit. There’s an innocence and wisdom they carry, you feel that float between them. They’re very selective and cautious and guarded. And driven and determined and disciplined but also vulnerable and innocent and receptive and trusting.

“They’re working at it every single day in a way they didn’t have the opportunity to do before. And that way is social media. And it’s a tough way, it’s a slog.

“But they’re determined. I was looking at their YouTube two days ago. And in the last two or three months, they posted 22 new music videos. It’s their original music, they shoot it, they write it, they record it, they sing, they play percussion. They do it with very limited resources, which I can relate to - with a camera and editing software on their laptop.”

**OC: None of which guarantees they’ll ever become famous.**

VENINGER: “That’s 100% true. So, what is it to want success? And what is the price of that? We see people on Instagram who reach a certain number of followers, then sponsors rally and they’re paid to post. They get deals, now they wear Adidas. It’s weird.

“But for them, it’s kind of inspiring and heartening how much pleasure and joy they take from every little thing. That moment on television in the film (one of their videos is shown on a local music program).

“You see them being emotional and how happy their family is for them. It was a few seconds and our camera missed it. By the time we get into the room it’s gone

## Original-Cin – April 27, 2019 (3 of 3)

“But for them, it’s a little crack that could potentially lead to something. Maybe it’ll be the same for a year. Then maybe this film will lead to someone seeing them and it’ll become another little thing, which leads them to another spiral upwards.

“But I think they’re in it for life. I’m curious to see what’s going to happen to them when they’re 40, 50, 60.”

**OC: You could do a Michael Apted (the director of the Seven-Up series which followed Brit children through adulthood and middle age at seven year intervals).**

VENINGER: “Yeah! In 10 years when they’re 39. I should do that!”

**OC: So, what if they do get seen by someone powerful, and move to Los Angeles. How would they change? What if somebody says, “This is good. But you’ve also got to do this, this and this?”**

VENINGER: “Oh, how often do we see that? The package deal. One thing we know for sure, they’re never going to leave each other. There’s power in their dualism.

“When I look on Facebook, I see 35 shares for every post I’ve been putting up with respect to Hot Docs. I look it up and it’s all them. They just share it, they’re so happy and excited and I know they’re happy and enthusiastic about meeting this audience. (The twins will appear via Skype at the film’s first two screenings).

“They’re going to be doing on the big screen, and that’s blowing my mind. There’ll be a Spanish translator, and I think they have a dance prepared. I’m in constant communication with them. Part of this doc was the collaboration, and if there was anything they didn’t want in the film, it would be out.”

OC: I’m trying to imagine them suddenly making millions of dollars.

VENINGER: “Or even thousands of Euros so they could pay their bills. I think that a designer should scoop them as models. We should be seeing them on a runway. They should have a recording contract.

“I know Beyonce’s got her Les Twins who we saw on her Homecoming Netflix special. But these guys are just as talented and awesome and they belong on the big stage. I absolutely have faith in them.

Being a DIY girl, I see them as self-made performers that have their hearts in a really strong place and are marathon runners.”

The World Or Nothing screens at Hot Docs, Sat, Apr 27, 8:45 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3; Sun, Apr 28, 1:15 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2; Thur, May 2, 3 pm, Hart House Theatre.

## The Feedback: Lily Zepeda's 'Mr Toilet: The World's #2 Man'

APRIL 27, 2019

BY TOM WHITE



From Lily Zepeda's "Mr Toilet: The World's #2 Man." Courtesy of Lily Zepeda

Since IDA's DocuClub was relaunched in 2016 as a forum for sharing and soliciting feedback about works-in-progress, many DocuClub alums have since premiered their works on the festival circuit and beyond. In an effort to both monitor and celebrate the evolution of these films to premiere-ready status, we reached out to the filmmakers as they were either winding their way through the festival circuit, or gearing up for it.

In this edition of "The Feedback," we spotlight Lily Zepeda's *Mr Toilet: The World's #2 Man*.

We caught up with Zepeda via email as was readying her film for its world premiere at the [Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival](#). This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Synopsis (provided by the filmmaker):** It's a dirty job, but Singaporean entrepreneur Jack Sim is fighting the world's sanitation crisis one loo at a time. Mr. Toilet, as he likes to be called, founded the other WTO, The World Toilet Organization, and after 13 years spent lobbying 193 countries, he created "UN World Toilet Day." But he is soon to learn there is a price to pay for being the World's #2 superhero.

### How did you meet your protagonist, Jack—aka Mr. Toilet?

Caltech in Pasadena won the grand prize for the Bill & Melinda Gates Re-Invent the Toilet Challenge in 2012, and I just became so obsessed with this story. I couldn't believe there was an actual global toilet challenge! But after my interviews with them, the prize-winning loo engineers introduced me to a Singaporean man (Jack Sim) who wanted to "turn poop culture into pop culture." Within five minutes of our first call with Mr. Toilet, my producer Tchavdar Georgiev and I knew we struck gold! Nobody was willing to talk crap like Mr. Toilet.

Jack's ebullient spirit drives his entrepreneurial mission, yet he faces some challenges, both in India, as an outsider and as a friendly rival to Dr. Pathak, and with his family, who resign themselves to his being a de facto absentee dad. Talk about the editorial process in factoring in these tensions, these countervailing forces to his mission.



## **International Documentary Association – April 27, 2019 (2 of 3)**

What originally drew me to Mr. Toilet was his childlike demeanor and wild humor. He would say things to me like “Lily, you should sing a song to your toilet every day and send flowers to it on Valentine’s Day because it serves you 365 days a year.” He really made me think deeply and laugh at the same time, so it was important for us to use his humor to drive the story. It allowed us an entry point for diving deeper into the issues as well as the human side of Jack as the film progressed. Lots of people are not only turned off by hearing about yet another global social issue, but also about one that is gross to talk about. The family portion really helped us add another dimension to Mr. Toilet’s character, and the tension between work and family is something everyone can relate to. Dr. Pathak is an important part of the sanitation movement—Jack calls him “The King of Toilets in India!” So through Dr. Pathak, not only could we provide another important lens into the Indian culture, but also provide a contrast in approach to our main character. Jack’s jokes can only go so far in a feature film, so it was important for us to show the realities he came up against in fighting such huge crisis. Our use of animation was used to provide some comic relief and unique visuals for his backstory as well as a way for audiences to see inside the mind of a character who has a 12-year-old child-like worldview.

### **Did you always envision *Mr. Toilet* as a feature? Was it ever a short?**

There already is a three-minute short made about Mr. Toilet, so in my mind I always knew this should be a feature. He’s not just Mr. Toilet! He’s an artist, a troublemaker, a child-like figure, a dad, a husband and a businessman. There’s so much meat there for feature. My team and I spent five years following him in four different countries.

### **What’s the latest on Jack and his mission? And what’s happening with the anti-open defecation initiative in India?**

To be honest, it’s hard to tell exactly what’s going on with the India open defecation mission because there are so many conflicting reports in the news. However, when I checked in with an organization that works near the villages where we filmed, they reported that there have been more toilets built, making it 50 percent open defecation-free now. In the rural areas I think it’s just going to take more time. Indian Prime Minister Modi has an ambitious goal to have the whole country open defecation-free by October 2019. I think it will take more time than that and I see Jack continuing to find ways to work there as long as he possibly can. He just built the second World Toilet College in India, which is a platform used to educate and empower people about sanitation and building toilets. And, he eventually plans to go back to Andhra Pradesh to find a way to keep WTO’s partnership with the government.

### **What is your outreach strategy with respect to *Mr. Toilet*?**

After our world premiere, my team and I plan to sit down with Jack to see how the film can best serve World Toilet Organization and their goals in the next year. World Toilet Organization is always growing and they work in new places all over the world each year, so we plan to work with an impact strategist to devise an advocacy campaign.

### **With regard to your screening at DocuClub, what were your expectations going into that screening?**

## International Documentary Association – April 27, 2019 (3 of 3)

This was a really important screening for us. With such a diverse group, we were really hoping to get lots of different opinions. And, it was one of the last opportunities for us to make any bigger structural changes to the story. We wanted people to be brutally honest, and they were.

### **Was DocuClub your first public screening?**

We had a few private screenings before, but this was our first public one and definitely our biggest!

### **What were the central challenges in your film that you felt could benefit the most from the DocuClub screening, and what were the most valuable takeaways from the screening?**

My team—especially my editors Monique and Hee-Jae—had been working so hard to help shape the story for months before this screening, and when you're in the edit room for long stretches, you definitely need to get out of that bubble and hear what's resonating with people, what's confusing them and what may even be boring them. The major relief was that everyone loved how funny and entertaining our character is. And they LOVED the animation and couldn't wait to see the completed versions. Another major benefit from this screening was getting clearer on our ending. I realized it had to be not just about his toilet mission, but about his reaffirmation as a person, what he's learned and how he recovers from a setback.

### **What observations did you find most surprising and unexpected?**

The unexpected part was how split people were about the issue vs. the character—some people wanted to hear more facts about the crisis or technology, and some people didn't care and just wanted the focus more on the character. It's definitely a character-based film, however the character (and even his name) is so closely tied with the issue. So there is a careful balance we had to play.

### **When you went back to the edit room, what were the key changes you made?**

The key changes were refining the ending and sprinkling in small edits throughout the whole story that made his mission and timeline even clearer for people.

### **What were the key factors that determined that your film was ready for your festival premiere?**

Overall, people were entertained and very curious about the story. Asking lots of questions about the character and story show that people are engaged and they care about the character. That's a good sign! Once we got to a place where people pointed out really minor notes, then we knew the cut was in a good place and festival ready. Also this story felt very timely for many reasons and people were showing excitement for talking about POOP and TOILETS. The movie *Crazy Rich Asians* really helped put Singapore in people's minds, and after the short film *Period. End of Sentence* won an Oscar, cultural issues like menstruation—which relate to the stigma of using the toilet—were finally getting attention.

Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man *makes its world premiere at Hot Docs on April 27.*

<https://www.documentary.org/column/feedback-lily-zepedas-mr-toilet-worlds-2-man>

## Hot Docs Look Ahead: Saturday April 27



Image from Havana, From On High courtesy of Hot Docs.

### Hot Docs Look Ahead: Saturday April 27

by Staff

(April 26, 2019 – Toronto, ON) A quick reminder, instead of posting the Canadian films screening today at Hot Docs, we've decided this year to look ahead at what's coming up tomorrow in the hopes you will have time to adjust your schedule to see some of the films we mention here.

Tomorrow at Hot Docs kicks off early with the 2nd screening of *Havana, From On High* (pictured above). Anyone who has been to Havana in the last few decades knows so much of the old city is in disrepair or outright decay. Yet atop these once proud and beautiful buildings there is a secret village of squatters. Makeshift homes, populated by people who just can't find proper housing in the always bustling city that has long suffered from a housing shortage. Directed by Pedro Ruiz, he turns his camera on these survivors of upheaval who are getting by and some might say thriving during this latest period of change in Cuba. The film is beautiful, poetic and mesmerizing.

*Havana, From on High* screens:

Sat. Apr. 27 at 10:15 a.m. at TBLB

Fri. May 3 at 10:00 a.m. at TBLB

At 12:30 at the Scotiabank, it's the 2nd screening of *Killing Patient Zero*, which will have it's World Premiere tonight. Directed by [Laurie Lynd](#) this film is based on the book Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic by Richard McKay, a professor at the University of Cambridge. Part of the Special Presentations program at Hot Docs, *Killing Patient Zero* reveals the homophobia behind the headlines and traces the devastating impact of the 1980s AIDS epidemic. It also clears the name of the Québécois flight attendant who was infamously known as "patient zero."

*Killing Patient Zero* screens:

Sat. Apr. 27 at 12:30 at Scotiabank Theatre

Fri. May 3 at 2:45 p.m. at Hart House


## Northern Stars – April 27, 2019 (2 of 4)




Image from *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up* courtesy of Hot Docs.

The big film this year—check out the news stories—is *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, which was selected to open the 26th edition of The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival last night. You can find [more information here](#) including a link to an on-camera interview with the film's director Tasha Hubbard.

*nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up* screens:

 Sat. April. 27 at 1:00 p.m. at the TIFF Bell Lightbox (TBLB)

 Sat. May 4 at 10:00 a.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

Also screening at 1:00 p.m. but at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema is [Matt Gallagher's](#) new film, *Prey*. This is the 2nd screening, it will have its World Premiere tonight. Hot Docs has issued an alert to people who may want to see this important film: "Content notice: Film contains sexual violence trigger material." *Prey* is about the indefensible sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. Gallagher's film tracks the case of a certain Father Hod Marshall, who pled guilty to 17 assault charges. One of his victims, seeking closure for what happened during his childhood, filed suit against the Basilian Fathers of Toronto. The film centres on a man known by some as "the priest hunter," lawyer Rob Talach and on a number of survivors who provided testimony.


*Prey* screens:

Sat. Apr. 27 at 1:00 p.m. at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema 

Thu. May 2 at 1:30 p.m. at TBLB

*A Place of Time and Tide* is a very Canadian film. Co-directed by Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque, this 78-minute exploration is set in the fishing villages along the Gulf of St. Lawrence in eastern Québec. If you thought the end of the cod fishing industry only impacted our Maritime provinces and particularly Newfoundland and Labrador, this film will be an eye-opener on a part of the country long overlooked, almost forgotten, where the older English-speaking population hope to preserve their traditional way of life, while the younger people look elsewhere for their future. This screening is a World Premiere.

A  *Place of Time and Tide* screens: 

Sat. Apr. 27 at 3:45 p.m. at TBLB 

Sun. Apr. 28 at 8:00 p.m. at the Scotiabank Theatre

Sat. May 4 at 12:00 p.m. at the Scotiabank Theatre



Image from *The Daughter Tree* courtesy of Hot Docs.

*The Daughter Tree* will also have its World Premiere Saturday. Directed by Rama Rau. Set in the Punjab region of India there is a village known as the Village of Men. No girls have been born there in more than 20 years. Those men, when they reach a certain age and wish to marry, have to leave home to find a bride. The main focus of the film is Neelam Bala, described as “a warrior midwife” who works to save unborn baby girls, a more-than-difficult task given the cultural preference for sons. When a girl is born in the Village of the Daughter Tree, a fruit tree is planted. When she grows up she will have this tree as her own property and can use it to make a living and perhaps have some economic freedom through the sale of the tree’s fruit. A wonderful tale of resilience and determination against long and entrenched odds.

The Daughter Tree screens:

Sat. Apr. 27 at 6:30 p.m. at TBLB

Tue. Apr. 30 at 10:15 a.m. at TBLB

Thur. May 2 at 9:00 p.m. at Hart House Theatre



Image from *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* courtesy of Hot Docs.

At 6:45 p.m., there’s one of the Special Presentation events at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Bloor Street. It’s the first of only two screenings and the World Premiere of the film *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*. The 90-minute documentary follows the famed Canadian songwriter and singer from his beginnings in rural Ontario to Greenwich Village to stardom and stadium performances.

*Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* screens: 

## Northern Stars – April 27, 2019 (4 of 4)

Sat. Apr. 27 at 6:45 p.m. at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

Tue. Apr. 30 at 6:30 p.m. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.


**NOTE:** At this screening Gordon Lightfoot will be joined on stage by co-directors Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe to talk about his life and career.




Image from *The World or Nothing* courtesy of Hot Docs.

The next to last Canadian doc to screen on Saturday is [Ingrid Veninger's](#) *The World or Nothing* and it too is a World Premiere. While this is her first documentary, it has the feel of previous Veninger films, which always had a certain documentary feel about them. In *The World or Nothing*, two Cuban men, twin brothers, have moved to Spain to seek their fame and fortune, hoping for online stardom as they shoot their own dance videos. Seemingly inseparable, they do everything together. Towards the end one says he will only marry if his intended bride accepts his brother as part of the marriage. While they are, or should be, grown men, they are dreamers who miss their mother, go forward blinded by hope and want nothing less than, as the title says, *The World or Nothing*.

*The World or Nothing* screens: 


Sat. Apr. 27 at 8:45 p.m. at TBLB 

Sun. Apr. 28 at 1:15 p.m. at TBLB 

Thur. May 2 at 1:00 p.m. at the Hart House Theatre on the University of Toronto campus.

Finally, *Inside Lehman Brothers* from director and co-writer Jennifer Deschamps is one of those films that captures a moment in history so clearly it could be used as a teaching tool so that this sort of thing never happens again. Described as “the autopsy of a crime” this is the sad yet very true story of a systemic cover-up of illegal practices that first befell Lehman Brothers and contributed to the worst financial crisis since the Depression. While the financial crisis went into remission during the last decade, experts in the film argue that this disease of greed and willful blindness, aided and abetted by a weakening of financial oversight under President Trump, is now setting the stage for a once impossible return. “NINJA” loans (no income, no job, no assets) have returned to the market with a vengeance.

*Inside Lehman Brothers* screens:

Sat. Apr. 27 at 9:30 p.m. at TBLB 

Sun. Apr. 28 at 1:00 p.m. at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

Fri. May 3 at 6:15 p.m. at TBLB

In all there are 48 films on the schedule including these nine Canadian documentaries. Find [more information and tickets online](#) at Hot Docs.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/hot-docs-look-ahead-saturday-april-27/>



## 'St. Louis Superman' Leads Hot Docs Audience Award Rankings

Posted on April 27th, 2019 •



### *St. Louis Superman*

By Pat Mullen

A short stands tallest in the first rankings for the Hot Docs Audience Award. Smriti Mundhra and Sami Khan's *St. Louis Superman* took the top spot in today's reveal of the 20 highest-ranking audience favourites at Hot Docs so far. The short doc is a portrait of Ferguson, Missouri activist and rapper Bruce Franks Jr., who was elected to the state's House of Representatives. The film screens again today with *Your Last Walk in the Mosque*, which was previously featured in David Spaner's article [Racism: Documenting Prejudice](#). *Mosque* came it at number six in the rankings. Standing tallest for the features is another short figure, Dr. Ruth Westheimer's *Ask Dr. Ruth*, directed by Ryan White. The crowd-pleaser is easily this year's *RBG* with its spunky lead. Check back soon for a chat with Dr. Ruth and Ryan White next week! (Coverage for that film is under embargo until release.) On the Canadian front, Rogério Soares' *River Silence* leads the rankings for the Rogers Audience Award. The doc looks at Brazilians displaced by the environmental and cultural devastation caused by a dam at the Xingu River.

The Top 20 Audience Award rankings as of April 27 are:

1. St. Louis Superman
2. Ask Dr. Ruth
3. River Silence
4. In My Blood It Runs
5. [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#)
6. Your Last Walk in the Mosque
7. Massacre River
8. [Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen](#)
9. Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy
10. The Edge of Democracy
11. #Female Pleasure
12. [Havana, from on High](#)
13. Faire-Part
14. RIOT NOT DIET
15. Scenes from a Dry City
16. [Campo](#)
17. Garden, Zoological
18. [The Rest](#)
19. Buddy
20. Midnight Family

## What's on Sunday at Hot Docs



Image from *River Silence* curtesy of Hot Docs.

## What's on Sunday at Hot Docs

by Staff

(April 27, 2019 – Toronto, ON) There are 44 films on Sunday's schedule at the 26th annual Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival. As our regular readers know, our focus is strictly on Canadian films and filmmakers and we take a quick look at all 13 Canadian docs screening tomorrow, April 28. A reminder, most festival films will enjoy just three screenings, and many will not return for a regular theatrical run for weeks or months. In many if not most cases, these are your best chances to catch these important films.

The first Hot Docs screening is at 10:00 a.m., but the first Canadian doc is at noon and it's the 2nd screening of *River Silence*. In theme and look it seems to be an extension of the multi-award-winning film *Anthropocene*, but instead of ranging far and wide, *River Silence* (still picture above) trains its cameras on a small village and a group of people, many Indigenous Brazilians, displaced by the building of a dam on a tributary of the Amazon. The cinematography is wonderful—the drone shots providing a special perspective—and the editing allows the story to flow as easily as the river these people once knew must have. This may be an environmental story but it is highly personal, the story of four people and their families and how each is impacted by change and how they have become powerless pawns in a game far larger than any of them can imagine. Pay attention to the closing sequence of supers that spell out the scope of the tragedy that is taking place along the Amazon.

*River Silence* screens:

Sun. Apr/ 28 at 12:00 p.m. at the Tiff Bell Lightbox 3 (TBLB)

Fri. May 3 at 9:30 p.m. at TBLB 4

Also at the Tiff Bell Lightbox, it's the second screening of [Ingrid Veninger's](#) 84-minute documentary, *The World or Nothing* is nothing if not different. Two Cuban men, twin brothers, have moved to Spain to seek their fame and fortune, hoping for online stardom as they shoot their own dance videos. Seemingly inseparable, they do everything together. Towards the end one says he will only marry if his intended bride accepts his brother as part of the marriage. While they are, or should be, grown men, they are dreamers who miss their mother, go forward blinded by hope and want nothing less than what the title says.

*The World or Nothing* screens:

Sun. Apr. 28 at 1:15 p.m. at TBLB 2

Thur. May 2 at 3:00 p.m. at the Hart House Theatre

## Northern Stars – April 27, 2019 (2 of 4)



Image from *Inside Lehman Brothers courts of Hot Docs*.

At 1:30 at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, it's the 2nd screening of *Inside Lehman Brothers* from director and co-writer Jennifer Deschamps. This is one of those films that captures a moment in history so clearly it could be used as a teaching tool so that this sort of thing never happens again...if only. Described as "the autopsy of a crime" this is the sad yet very true story of a systemic cover-up of illegal practices that first befell Lehman Brothers and contributed to the worst financial crisis since the Depression. While the financial crisis went into remission during the last decade, experts in the film argue that this disease of greed and willful blindness, aided and abetted by a weakening of financial oversight under President Trump, is now setting the stage for a once impossible return. "NINJA" loans (no income, no job, no assets) have returned to the market with a vengeance.

*Inside Lehman Brothers* screens:

Sun. Apr. 28 at 1:00 p.m. at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

Fri. May 3 at 6:15 p.m. at TBLB 1

Next up is *Cavebirds* at 2:45 p.m. at the Tiff Bell Lightbox 3. Yes it does have something to do with birds, but it's really about former Montrealer Howard Gan, a recently retired Chinese-Malaysian Canadian immigrant, and his daughter, the film's director, who finds certain similarities and parallels in her father's life and in his passion for a specific financial investment in the market and production of the key ingredient in bird's nest soup. Ultimately a family story, this first screening is a World Premiere.

*Cavebirds* screens:

Sun, Apr. 28 at 2:45 p.m. at TBLB 3

Tue, Apr. 30 at 1:45 p.m. at TBLB 4

Fri, May 3 at 10:30 a.m. at TBLB 4

Mid-afternoon, it's *Pipe Dreams*. We wrote about it earlier and [this page has far more detail](#) and a trailer embedded in it. *Pipe Dreams* is from Montreal's [Stacey Tenenbaum](#) and it has all the hallmarks of her work. She has an eye for something just a little bit quirky and then executes the project with the highest of quality.

*Pipe Dreams* screens:

Sun, Apr. 28 at 3:15 p.m. at Scotiabank 4

Tue, Apr. 30 at 9:00 p.m. at TBLB 3

Fri. May 3 at 10:00 a.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

Late afternoon at the Innis Town Hall, is *El Toro* and it has nothing to do with bullfights or lawnmowers. It's a trip down memory lane for eight siblings who spent part of the 1960s growing up at the family-run truck stop just outside of Winnipeg. While the actual diner is no longer around, their stories bring fond memories back to life. It's a long-short, if you will, running only 43 minutes. To round out the program there are a couple of Canadian shorts that will screen along with *El Toro*, which only gets 2 screenings at Hot Docs.

*El Toro* screens:

Sun. Apr. 28 at 5:45 p.m. at the Innis Town Hall

Mon. Apr. 29 at 6:30 p.m. at the Scotiabank 8

*El Toro* is the first of 4 Canadian docs all screening around the same time. *El Toro* starts at 5:45, *Advocate* at 6:00, *Drag Kids* at 6:15 and *Conviction* at 6:30.

## Northern Stars – April 27, 2019 (3 of 4)



*Still image from Advocate courtesy of Hot Docs.*

*Advocate* is an Israel-Canada-Switzerland co-production and it screens in Hot Docs' Special Presentations programs. It's about human rights lawyer Lea Tsemel who has been defending Palestinians against all sorts of criminal charges for almost 50 years. The directors, Rachel Leah Jones and Philippe Bellaïche, weave this profile out of new and archival footage so that we get to know the 74-year-old lawyer (pictured above) who has never betrayed her principles.

*Advocate* screens:

Sun, Apr. 28 at 6:00 p.m. at Scotiabank 4

Mon, Apr. 29 at 3:30 p.m. at TBLB 2

Sun. May 5 at 6:15 p.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

*Drag Kids* gets its World Premiere screening on Sunday. The focus is on four preteens who practice lip-syncing and getting their runway walk down pat in preparation of doing their stuff during the annual Montreal Pride celebration.

*Drag Kids* screens:

Sun, Apr. 28 at 6:15 p.m. at TBLB 1

Tue. Apr. 30 at 1:15 p.m. at TBLB 3

Fri. May 3 at 3:45 p.m. at TBLB 1

*Conviction* is also a World Premiere screening tomorrow. Co-directed by Ariella Pahlke, Nance Ackerman and Teresa MacInnes, this 78-minute film sets out to understand why women have become the fastest-growing segment of the prison population in Canada. The twist in the film is that some women are given cameras and instead of responding to questions, tell their own stories, providing an unusually authentic point of view.

*Conviction* screens:

Sun, Apr. 28 at 6:30 p.m. at TBLB 2

Mon. Apr. 29 at 1:15 p.m. at TBLB 3

Thur. May 2 at 12:30 p.m. at the Hart House Theatre

*A Place of Time and Tide* is a very Canadian film. Co-directed by Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque, this 78-minute exploration is set in the fishing villages along the Gulf of St. Lawrence in eastern Québec. If you thought the end of the cod fishing industry only impacted our Maritime provinces and particularly Newfoundland and Labrador, this film will be an eye-opener on a part of the country long overlooked, almost forgotten, where the older English-speaking population hope to preserve their traditional way of life, while the younger people look elsewhere for their future.

*A Place of Time and Tide* screens:

Sun. Apr. 28 at 8:00 p.m. at the Scotiabank 8

Sat. May 4 at 12:00 p.m. at the Scotiabank 8

There are two Canadian films at 9:00 p.m. tomorrow. *Midnight Traveler* is a USA-Qatar-UK-Canada co-production that is part of the World Showcase program. Running 87 minutes, it's a tense true story about an Afghan director who turns the camera on his family after the Taliban puts a bounty on his head. The film captures their flight to freedom and safety and how in the face of possible death they remain bound by love.

## Northern Stars – April 27, 2019 (4 of 4)

### *Midnight Traveler* screens:

Sun. Apr. 28 at 9:00 p.m. at the Scotiabank 4

Mon. Apr. 29 at 2:30 p.m. at the Scotiabank 3

Sun. May 5 at 12:30 p.m. at the Aga Khan Museum



*Still image from Propaganda courtesy of Hot Docs.*

The other 9:00 p.m. screening is *Propaganda*. This is a powerful and eye-opening exploration of how we can be easily manipulated by powers trained to sell us something or make us believe something. Three artists, Kent Monkman, Shepard Fairey and Ai Weiwei (pictured above) roll out stories of how real events, real ideas, real threats can be twisted and sold back to us as something they are not. We live in a world where the American President can condemn the media as Fake News, and thrill his followers by using language unbecoming the office he holds. Bulls\*\*t and propaganda surround us and this documentary is perfect for the times we now live in.

### *Propaganda* screens:

Sun. Apr. 28 at 9:00 p.m. at TBLB 1

Tue. Apr. 30 at 3:15 p.m. at Isabel Bader Theatre

Fri. May 3 at 9:00 p.m. at TBLB 2

The last Canadian doc is titled *Illusions of Control*. Directed by Shannon Walsh, this World Premiere is a far-ranging film that examines what we are doing and have done to the only planet we can inhabit. Stories of five women who deal with nuclear fallout, arsenic-laced water, desert dust storms in places like Fukushima, Chicago and Yellowknife. This is yet another film about the Anthropocene age and how we are destroying the planet and what survival in the future might look like.

### *Illusions of Control* screens

Sun, Apr. 28 at 9:15 p.m. at TBLB 2

Tue. Apr. 30 at 2:30 p.m. at Scotiabank 3

Thur. May 2 at 10:00 a.m. at TBLB 3

Find [more information and tickets online](http://www.northernstars.ca/whats-on-sunday-at-hot-docs/) at Hot Docs.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/whats-on-sunday-at-hot-docs/>



## Investigating Lehman Brothers

### *An interview with Jennifer Deschamps*

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



The collapse of Lehman Brothers in September, 2008 was one of the most cataclysmic events in modern finance. It was a mix of hubris and greed that culminated in trillions of dollars being put at risk. At the heart of the scandal was a legal if morally problematic connection between housing and financial instruments, where bad investments were wrapped up as good ones, all for the benefit of those at the very top. Real lives were destroyed and homes foreclosed upon, thanks to a fraudulent system that benefited from the destruction of lives and smashing of dreams of home ownership.

French investigative journalist Jennifer Deschamps spent years looking to speak to those directly affected by the story. Eschewing a broad overview of the tale, her film *Inside Lehman Brothers* focuses on individuals and how the scars of these days continue to haunt them. Through a series of highly personal stories, the film plays almost like a war remembrance, with shattered soldiers recounting their time in the trenches, recalling their own culpable roles in the greater tragedy that Lehman's practices represent.

POV spoke to Jennifer by phone from Paris prior to the film's screening at Hot Docs 2019



Jennifer Deschamps

**POV:** Jason Gorber

**JD:** Jennifer Deschamps

*This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**POV:** What drew you to the Lehman story?

**JD:** 12 years ago I made a documentary about the sub-prime crisis in Stockton, California. I was looking for notices in the newspapers because I wanted to meet people who were to be foreclosed upon. One day I went to an address in a poorer area in the city. It was the end of the day, with the Californian autumn sun making it very cinematographic. There was a little African-American girl sitting outside. Her mother came out. She was my age, and I'm 40 now, but she was looking 20 years older. She asked me why I was there. I explained that I saw in the news that her house was to be foreclosed. She didn't know. It was a real shock for her, but also for me. That was one year before the Lehman bankruptcy.



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**POV:** So, this was 2007?

**JD:** Exactly. It was in October. Since then I tried to understand why I was the one to tell someone she was to lose her home. After I did the initial report, I wanted to explore in depth why all of this happened.

**POV:** There's two ways that your film could have been told. One would be very straightforward and journalistic, but your way concentrates instead on the individual stories without much in the way of overview, showing us the people behind the headlines. Was that always the direction?

**JD:** I am an investigative journalist, so the first idea I had was about making a story about Lehman Brothers, which would be more like a traditional financial documentary. But when I met those people they were so strong so I decided to write another story. I used my voice as an investigative journalist, checking all of their facts. It took me months to check everything and to be sure that these people were saying the truth. I decided everything became stronger when instead of doing the interviews in their lawyer's office we saw how they lived. It was a gift they gave the film and me. You can see in their lives, that they're still living with what happened.



A view of some houses that are bought by Lehman Brothers' montages

**POV:** You have a fascination with the little details in their homes, such as them pouring coffee.

**JD:** [Laughs]. Maybe because I'm French! With these women, their lives are only about work and making coffee at home. They still feel safe only at home. When you're spending time with them, they're in the kitchen or on the sofa.

**POV:** How did you find these women?

**JD:** I found them in the local newspaper.

**POV:** Did you do an advertisement?

**JD:** No, I just researched them. I made a call to their lawyers.

**POV:** How did you convince Lehman insider Matthew Lee to open up?

**JD:** At the beginning of the project I didn't know what story I wanted to tell, so like any good journalist I contacted everybody. I looked at every name I could find from people who were working for Lehman in Wall Street. I read thousands of articles and essays, working on that for three months. Most of the people never answered. Some sent their lawyers, saying we are not going to speak to you, and please never be in contact any more. Some asked us to give them money to speak; I refused as that is not the way we work in France. Some asked for thousands of dollars just to speak on the phone.

I was in contact with a lawyer that said Matthew is not interested, but he forwarded an email I sent to him. Matthew and I exchanged emails for months. After a year and a half we met for the first time and he finally agreed. Why did he say yes to me when he said no to everyone except 60 Minutes for a five-minute interview in 2010? First, I was French. He's both European and American, and he believes in European journalists more. Second, I'm part of a board of an association of investigative journalists who defend whistleblowers.



Matthew Lee discussing how he descended into the Lehman Brothers Finance Division as a senior vice-president.

**POV:** Most documentarians don't have the luxury of being able to spend two years chasing down a story.

**JD:** If you want to do a documentary like this, you don't have the choice.

**POV:** Well, of course you have the choice. You can just make a lesser film.

**JD:** Yeah, exactly [laughs]. But I didn't want to make a bad one.

**POV:** These individuals all seem to want to leave the life they lived behind.

**JD:** After this nightmare they all came back to the roots of nature. That's something I wanted to show. When I met them, many had left the city and were now were living in nature. Matthew, after living his life in the city, on Wall Street, now spends time alone on his motorbike exploring landscapes.

**POV:** How did you end up feeling after hearing their stories? Did you have more or less hope about the future?

**JD:** When you look at the story of the Lehman Brothers, it's quite pessimistic. The antidote, like everything, has to come from the government. It's not going to come from the bankers

**POV:** So you still have faith in regulation?

**JD:** Regulation and controls, with real guidelines around the regulations. Even when there is regulation, there is always lobbying and corruption.

**POV:** Do the participants feel better about their role in the project?

**JD:** They loved it, and they were really thankful. It was a way to rehabilitate them because now their story has been told. Nobody can say we don't know.

**POV:** Was there ever a time when the story was just too hard to tell and you thought of giving up?

**JD:** No, never. I think it's a gift to have the honour to tell this universal story. Never give up!

***Inside Lehman Brothers screens:***

-Sat, Apr. 27 at 9:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

-Sun, Apr. 28 at 1:30 p.m. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

-Fri, May 3 at 6:15 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

Visit the [\*\*POV Hot Docs Hub\*\*](#) for more coverage from this year's festival!

## Hot Docs Film Review: 'Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy'

Elizabeth Carroll's zesty docu-portrait of the British-born Mexican food guru does equal justice to her spicy cooking and spiky personality.

By **GUY LODGE**, April 27, 2019

*Film Critic*

**Guy's Most Recent Stories**



CREDIT: COURTESY OF DOGWOOF

Director: Elizabeth Carroll

With: Diana Kennedy

1 hour 13 minutes

Official Site: <http://nothingfancydk.com/>

Halfway through “[Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy](#),” the 96-year-old doyenne of traditional Mexican cooking offers a brisk lesson in making guacamole, complete with a number of strict, sharply emphasized rules: no garlic; serrano chillies only; chop the onion, don’t mince it; never blend the avocado; and if people say they don’t like cilantro, “for heaven’s sake, don’t invite them.” It’s a tart tutorial that would cut cheery “Queer Eye” food assembler Antoni Porowski to the quick, and is emblematic of the veteran’s uncompromising, no-guff approach to the cuisine that has adopted her and consumed her for over six decades: In an era of fusion food and anyone-can shortcuts, she remains an unfashionable but essential stickler for the old ways. [Elizabeth Carroll](#)’s zingy documentary portrait, meanwhile, puts a relevant, environmentally-minded contemporary lens on Kennedy’s cherished traditionalism.

A crowd favorite at SXSW in March, where it won a jury prize despite unspooling in unfinished form, “Nothing Fancy” (named for one of Kennedy’s many authoritative cookbooks) premiered its final cut in Toronto’s Hot Docs fest, and should sell like hot tamales with distributors on the strength of its lively character portraiture and sunnily shot passages of gastroporn. (That term would almost certainly earn a stern slap on the wrist from Kennedy, who at one point reprimands a photographer for his innocuous use of “cool,” but those tamales do look very good indeed.) The film also benefits from a degree of topicality, and not just because burrito bars are starting to rival burger joints for international

fast-food ubiquity: At a moment when debates over cultural appropriation in the culinary world have entered the mainstream, Kennedy's legacy merits fresh appraisal.

As a white British woman who has made a career of documenting, disseminating and teaching indigenous Mexican recipes, Kennedy is vulnerable to such charges. Yet the film, via an ensemble of awed talking heads, positions her less as an individual cookery queen than as a kind of gastronomical anthropologist — “an Indiana Jones of food,” notes one Mexican chef — responsible for concretely preserving and sharing a wealth of regional dishes and methods hitherto passed down largely through oral tradition, mother to daughter.

Kennedy is adamant that she doesn't claim or interpret recipes, but simply puts them on the record: Carroll's team hits the road with the dauntless nonagenarian on a couple of her frequent cross-country research missions, as she drives her battered Nissan pickup through a tangle of remote villages, sampling street food, perusing markets and chattily consulting local cooks along the way. Certainly, “Nothing Fancy” will open the eyes of viewers whose knowledge of the national cuisine extends scarcely further than a Chipotle menu.

The film's biographical elements are straightforwardly but attractively presented, mixing archive material with Kennedy's witty, unsentimental testimony to explain how, in 1957, she first came to live in Mexico with her foreign-correspondent husband Paul and swiftly realized she'd found her spiritual home. Widowed young a decade later — she never remarried — the self-confessed “unconventional housewife” channeled her grief into cooking projects, with influential New York Times food editor Craig Claiborne as her most significant patron.

Elsewhere, the film drolly chronicles Kennedy's daily routine at her idyllic ecological home and educational center in the forested outskirts of Zitácuaro, where she devotedly tends her gardens, zealously advocates the possibilities and virtues of sustainable living, and offers cooking classes to simultaneously awed and terrified admirers — some of them pro chefs in their own right. She's not a gentle teacher: In the film's single funniest scene, she picks apart one student's failed rice dish with the not-angry-just-disappointed severity of an aggrieved parent.

If Kennedy's passionate ferocity is part and parcel of her legend — “If her enthusiasm were not beautiful, it would border on mania,” Claiborne noted, in a quote that opens the film — though it may be why this richly enjoyable tribute doesn't interview her as pressingly or curiously as it might. The question of cultural appreciation versus appropriation is tactfully touched upon, with other interviewees gingerly alluding to some Mexican resistance to her work, though it would be fascinating to hear Kennedy's direct thoughts on the matter.

Taken as a celebration, however, both of the woman herself and the food to which she has dedicated her life, “Nothing Fancy” is cinematic comfort food of the first order — further perked up by Paul Mailman and Andrei Zakow citrus-bright lensing and lush, string-based musical contributions from Graham Reynolds and Dan Teicher. On the downside, it may forever ruin lesser faux-Mexican junk food for previously indiscriminating viewers: Just try eating a plate of nuclear orange nachos afterwards without feeling Kennedy's withering glare at your back.

<https://variety.com/2019/film/reviews/nothing-fancy-diana-kennedy-review-1203199457/>

## Review: 'The Valley'

### *Hot Docs 2019*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



#### ***The Valley***

(Italy/France, 72 min.)

Dir. Nuno Escudeiro

Programme: International Spectrum (World Premiere)

Many docs are using the power of the camera to provide snapshots of the global migration crisis. These films, which are often brutally depressing, tour refugee camps to observe some dire circumstances that reveal humankind at its worst, while other docs stick Go-pros to the stern of a boat to get up close to masses of refugees risking their lives while crossing the Mediterranean Sea or another body of water. What these films often amount to is something between cinematic hand wringing and emotional exploitation. Even Ai Weiwei's somewhat disappointing *The Rest*, also screening at Hot Docs this year, marks the director's second consecutive film about the crisis that ends up with him all but throwing his hands up in the air to ask, "Whatever can one do?"

Here come the subjects of *The Valley* to take the situation by the horns. This compelling film goes to the front lines of the refugee crisis as a handful of citizens in the Roya and Durance Valleys, near the French-Italian border, do their part to help fellow citizens of the world seek asylum. At a time when safe and supposedly democratic countries are trying to keep the needy out, these ordinary people step in to save lives by committing acts of humanitarianism or civil disobedience depending on how one frames the matter. The police take the latter assessment and the doc goes behind the scenes with the network as they take asylum seekers into their homes and assist them in asserting their asylum status.

Featuring some striking shots of the Alpine landscape, director Nuno Escudeiro situates the audience within the perilous journey the migrants face as they traverse the valley, evading roadblocks and checkpoints, to find refuge and aid with members of the network. The doc accompanies the valley residents as they go to the front lines fighting for change. The doc focuses not on the horrors people escaped or the perils of their travels—those narratives have been covered elsewhere—but on the individual actions that seek to remedy the solution. *The Valley* shows the efforts of the network as members teach asylum seekers the proper procedures to establish claims in France. Being so close to the Italian border, many of the migrants who try to enter France through the network are shuttled back to Italy if arrested, given that the Dublin Regulation requires asylum seekers to register in the country through which they enter the EU. (The points about the Dublin Regulation are somewhat vague in the doc and may require some research afterward.)

No money changes hands between the migrants and the valley dwellers, yet the film feels like the documentation of a human trafficking ring as the subjects evade the police and plan their clandestine efforts. The police treat them like traffickers, too, as many of them face charges simply for helping someone in need and carrying out actions that are perfectly in line with legal practices. Escudeiro captures some incredible footage as the police detain asylum seekers, like an Eritrean family of three, and deport them to Italy on the sly without even informing the family's lawyer. Similarly, one member of the network, Cedric, is arrested and charged for transporting migrants, as the authorities decide that the satisfaction he receives for helping people serves as "compensation," thus making the act illegal. These people should be celebrated for their efforts, but they're treated like anarchists and criminals.

*The Valley* calls to mind another doc, Lindsey Grayzel's *The Reluctant Radical*, which tells the story of environmental activist Ken Ward, who successfully fought charges on grounds of "necessity" when he shut down a pipeline to prevent ecological damage. When governments prove ineffective at responding to crisis situations, perhaps the only solution is for individuals to assume responsibility and do the right thing by any means. *The Valley* is a refreshing call to action that challenges audiences to go rogue if they can no longer stand idle as the situation worsens.

*The Valley* screens:

- Sun, Apr. 28 at 5:45 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Mon, Apr. 29 at 10:30 a.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Sat, May 4 at 3:15 p.m. at Hart House



## Review: 'A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem'

*Hot Docs 2019*

By [Susan G. Cole](#) • Published April 27th, 2019 [0 Comments](#)



### ***A Woman's Work: The NFL Cheerleader Problem***

(U.S.A., 85 min.)

Dir. Yu Gu

Program: Persister (International Premier)

Look closely at those cheerleaders strutting their stuff every Sunday for National Football League teams. They're all sparkly and smiley and obviously delighted to be out there dancing up a storm. But underneath the exteriors of some of those happy, spirited young women lies deep unhappiness over how intensely they are exploited.

This story of how NFL cheerleaders fought back against their intransigent team owners and the powerful football league they control offers a lot to get outraged about. Given that fact, it's astonishing that the directors show so much restraint.

*A Woman's Work* follows Lacy Thibodeaux Fields, a member of the Oakland Raiders' Raiderettes cheerleaders, and her counterpart with the Buffalo Bills Maria Pinzone as they brought suit against their respective teams because of unfair treatment.

Fields, an accomplished dancer, led her high school cheerleading team and then scored a spot on her squad at college, which compensated her by giving her free room and board. She considered her acceptance to the Raiderettes as a triumph until she discovered that she could be dumped from the team for the smallest infraction, including being late for practices, which themselves were not financially compensated, had to purchase uniforms out of her own pocket and would not be paid for working Sunday games until the season was over.

She takes legal action via a group of feminist lawyers who identify what's happening to the cheerleaders as wage theft pure and simple. Even the mascots are paid more, they say with proper indignation. Soon, Buffalo Bills cheerleader Pinzone joins Fields in an attempt to get financial relief.

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As the film effectively conveys, these women work hard and are highly skilled performers. But they are almost criminally undervalued. The unadulterated sexism perpetrated by the teams takes many forms, not the least of which involves the extent to which the cheerleaders are forced to “volunteer” for various community activities, for which the teams get all the credit. This is an important element of the case, since their lawyers argue persuasively that the cheerleaders give their teams “added value.”

The owner of the Buffalo Bills responds to the lawsuit by cancelling the cheerleading program. For that—in a classic example of victim-blaming—just about everyone, including the other cheerleaders, trash not the ownership, but rather those women who stood up for themselves.

And, of course, the plaintiffs have to deal with that ever-present double-edged sword. On the one hand, they're told how lucky they are to be on the team, how they're respected and esteemed: everybody admires them for their beauty and energy. But as soon as they fight back, the hate comes fast and furious via fans at tailgate parties and on Twitter, who call them talentless bitches who “pimp themselves out to guys.”

But it is all about the money. Football players make many millions of dollars for billionaire owners who won't pay even minimum wage to their cheerleaders. The filmmakers could have made more of this, comparing the lifestyles of the plaintiffs with those of the fabulously wealthy owners and the players whom they properly—some might argue, excessively—compensate. (For the record, the NFL Players Association supported the suit). And data detailing, among other things, the thousands of unpaid hours cheerleaders work flash too quickly across the screen.

This doc, measured as it is, still makes a strong impact. The most die-hard football fans will get the point.

### ***A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleading Problem* screens:**

Tue, Apr 30, 8:30 PM, Scotiabank 4

Thu, May 2 9:00 PM. Isabel Bade Theatre

Sat, May 4, 12:30 pm, Fox Theatre

## Review: 'The Pickup Game'

*Hot Docs 2019*, By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***The Pickup Game***

(UK/Canada, 96 min.)

Dir.: Barnaby O'Connor, Matthew O'Connor

Programme: Making Believe (World Premiere)

The pickup industry generates over a billion dollars a year teaching men how to “seduce” women with manipulation tactics. But despite *The Pickup Game* being intended as an exposé on the industry and its culture, little is revealed, or analyzed.

Well known for its misogyny, the industry in *The Pickup Game* is infuriatingly depicted in a rather apolitical manner. The film dwells on the pickup artists and their opinions with little pushback. These men (and one woman) are given a space to speak their opinions on women, dating, and sex, expressing how pickup tactics really do work. There is no explicit challenge to this. Instead, the monologues and interviews are presented blankly, as if the sheer ridiculousness is enough to inform a viewer. I would argue that it is not enough, as evidenced by the fact that these people, and their billion-dollar-generating followers, buy into this flagrant disrespect of women.

Surprisingly, given the amount of feminist critique of pickup artistry, *The Pickup Game* focuses largely on men: how the industry exploits men, takes their money, and plays off their insecurities. It is only about an hour in that the first instances of a feminist challenge come up, in the form of a protest of a pickup artist who sexually assaulted a number of women on camera, but this soon turns sour. Near its end, the film does finally look to the issue of rape and consent in the pickup community, but the critique is too little, too late, especially considering that the film is concluded soon after by showing an ex-pickup artist playing with his cats. The documentary goes from the gruesome reality of sexual violence and manipulation, to the cozy home of an innocuous man, as though he did not also spew the misogyny that inspired future generations of pickup artists.

In a 1988 episode of the *Oprah Show*, Oprah Winfrey hosted a group of white supremacist skinheads to discuss their politics in order to publicly challenge them. Years later, Winfrey would recall the episode, stating: “I realized in that moment that I was doing more to empower them than I was to expose them.” Despite the original thought that the episode would be a method of revealing the absurdity of racism, Winfrey realised that she was ultimately giving white supremacists a stage upon which to preach. This is what comes to mind when watching *The Pickup Game*. Without an active critique, the film has little power to expose. Instead, it offers a platform for future pickup artists.

### ***The Pickup Game* screens:**

- Tues, Apr. 30 at 8:45 PM at TIFF Lightbox
- Wed, May 1 at 10:15 AM at TIFF Lightbox
- Sat, May 4 at 3:15 PM at Isabel Bader

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-the-pickup-game>

## Review: 'Prophecy'

### *Hot Docs 2019*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***Prophecy***

(UK, 82 min.)

Dir. Charlie Paul

Programme: Artscapes (International Premiere)

Take a gander at Peter Howson's exquisite painting "Prophecy," for this might be the only time you will see it. The grand canvas of the big screen provides a wonderfully unique view of the making of a masterpiece as director Charlie Paul observes the Scottish artist in his element. The doc chronicles the creation of Howson's "Prophecy" from conception through completion. It offers an immersive glimpse into the painstaking commitment to the artistic process and an intimate insight into the man behind a great work of art.

Paul's doc notes that most of Howson's paintings find their ways into private collections and—spoiler alert—"Prophecy" is no exception. Thanks to the power of the camera, though, Howson lets the public witness his artistic process as he creates the painting over the course of several months and guides the doc through every idea and every brush stroke that transforms the work along the way. *Prophecy* documents the making of a grandly ambitious canvas and it's much in the vein of the recent arts Hieronymus Bosch doc [\*Bosch: Garden of Dreams\*](#) as it uses the benefit of a feature-length running time to unpack a dense and richly detailed work of art.

Both *Prophecy* and Bosch focus on artworks that are layered with exquisite detail. Howson's painting is a vision of the future. It's an orgy of ominous despair and violence with a canvas populated with awestruck figures and a television that fizzles with the American flag on its airwaves. Both paintings aspire to something divine. Howson explains to Paul how his connection to God fuels his work, noting that his relationship with God is the most important one in his life. He draws upon his influences, some of which are more obvious than others are as they range from da Vinci to Tin Tin, as he explains the elaborately prophetic scene of action that begins as nothing other than a gingery orange square painted in swathes of colour as fiery as TinTins' hair.

One moment, Howson contemplates the textured (im)perfections of his painting's night sky; the next, he draws attention to a busy circle of frenzied humans to highlight his muse, Lucy, before introducing the daughter who inspires the figure that appears in every work he creates. The symbolism of Howson's painting is so rich that one could hardly glean the same value after hours of taking in the work and studying its every detail. Getting the artist's commentary gives audiences extra insights to ensure that no nuance of the work goes unnoticed.

Paul captures every detail of "Prophecy's" genesis. From creating the canvas to selecting the right hue of blue, the doc shows audiences the commitment it takes to make great art. One almost goes mad watching Howson redo his efforts over and over, creating something beautiful only to cover it with a layer of blue or a glossy lacquer, but the film provides frequent time lapse portraits of the painting to chronicle its evolution. (It's also a bit unnerving to watch him chain-smoke around all these presumably flammable paints and glazes.) The painting grows like a child transforming through puberty to adulthood, gaining strength and muscles, going through awkward stages, and changing its voice. *Prophecy* gives audiences the privilege to view a masterpiece, but, more significantly, it allows one to share Howson's apocalyptic vision.

***Prophecy* screens:**

- Sat, Apr. 27 at 9:15 p.m. at Hart House
- Mon, Apr. 29 at 1:30 p.m. at Isabel Bader
- Sun, May 5 at 12:30 p.m. at Hart House

## Review: 'Hope Frozen'

*Hot Docs 2019*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***Hope Frozen***

(Thailand, 75 min.)

Dir. Pailin Wedel

Programme: International Spectrum (World Premiere)

The death of a child must be an incredibly difficult event for a parent. Letting go of a life one brought into the world seems incredibly cruel and unfair for a parent to have to do. For parents Sahatorn and Nareerat Naovaratpong, however, letting go of their daughter is something they refuse to do.

*Hope Frozen* chronicles the controversial story of a Thai family that puts love on the line and faith in science. The doc recounts the Naovaratpongs' story with remarkable access, intimacy, and objectivity as it lets the family tell of the death of their two-year-old daughter Matheryn, nicknamed Einz, their bundle of joy whose life was tragically short-lived due to an aggressive form of brain cancer. Sahatorn, a laser scientist, explains how he devoted himself to studying the cancer that was rapidly stealing Einz away from the family. He admits his nightmarish conclusion with touching frankness: there was simply no chance for his research to progress at the same rate as the cancer.

However, director Pailin Wedel chronicles the Naovaratpongs' controversial decision to have Einz cryogenically preserved in hopes that science could one day bring her back to life. The parents, both Buddhists and devotees of science, explain frankly how the specialists in Arizona's Alcor Lab preserved Einz's brain. Each interview resonates with the hope they hold out that their family can once again be complete.

*Hope Frozen* presents this difficult debate from objective viewpoints: the parents feel they're helping families worldwide, knowing that the experiment can potentially save future parents from saying goodbye to their children. Wedel conveys the science in relatively accessible terms, thanks in large part to the participation of Einz's older brother, a 15-year-old science whiz named Matrix, who devotes himself to the pursuit of science. Matrix is a great character, a devoted brother, who opens himself up to the camera expresses his sense of responsibility for the situation since his parents had Einz because he wanted a sibling. There's an underlying cruelty to the situation, too, as one sees how the family's inability to let go of Einz prevents him from growing up fully. Einz's death permeates



every frame of the film as the Naovaratpongs carry on in a state of suspended grief. The girl is clinically dead, but she's not gone in their views, and they speak of Einz in a fascinating mix of past and present tenses.

Especially intriguing is the element of Thai Buddhist culture that sharpens the controversy. Once news of Einz's freezing hits the Thai media, it proves immediately controversial because commentators worry that the experiment conflicts with Buddhist doctrine. One pundit aptly notes that the process defies notions of reincarnation if the parents hope to bring Einz back to life years—if not decades or centuries—from now, if at all. Many observers feel that Einz's soul is trapped in limbo and unable to move on from one life to the next.

*Hope Frozen* might be a scientifically fascinating study of familial devotion or a morbid portrait of selfishness depending on how one interprets Wedel's objective film. It can be both, as the film approaches the debate from numerous angles of science, ethics, faith, and family. It's hard to say how many people died when Einz passed away on January 8, 2015, and the final title cards of *Hope Frozen* afford no easy answer to the family's future. It's an awfully difficult film to watch—if an infinitely fascinating one.

***Hope Frozen* screens:**

- Sat, Apr. 27 at 9:00 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Mon, Apr. 29 at 12:00 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Thurs, May 2 at 4:15 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

## Review: 'Buddy'

### *Hot Docs 2019*

By [Liam Lacey](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



#### ***Buddy***

(Netherlands, 86 min.)

Dir. Heddy Honigmann

Programme: Special Presentations

You can hardly go wrong with any decent documentary about dogs. Add the wisdom and technique of veteran Peru-born, Dutch filmmaker Heddy Honigmann and you have an unbeatable recipe for a combination of an artful and crowd-pleasing film. Honigmann, the winner of the Outstanding Achievement Award at 2007's Hot Docs Festival, as well as the subject of numerous international retrospectives, excels at exploring emotional intimacy on varied subjects from war widows, erotic poetry, subway musicians and cemeteries.

In *Buddy*, she toggles between the experiences of a half-dozen people and their service dogs, over a brisk 86 minutes, touching on trauma and disability while retaining a tone of celebration and wonder. A boy with autism, Zeb, explains how his labradoodle, Utah, helps distract him from his moments of anger. Trevor, an Afghanistan war veteran suffering from post-traumatic distress disorder, uses his dog, Mister, to wake him from nightmares. Edith, a woman in her eighties who was blinded as a child in the Second World War, runs through the forest with her dog. Another guide, Keiko, whose owner, a young woman named Ern, has limited mobility, opens drawers, helps Ern undress and even tucks her into bed.

Using long takes and few edits, Honigmann's films have an elemental simplicity but her real strength is her empathetic curiosity, as, off-camera, she poses the kind of blunt, heart-felt questions we want to hear answered by her subjects.

#### ***Buddy* screens:**

-Tues, Apr. 30 at 10:30 AM at TIFF Lightbox

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-buddy>

## HOT DOCS 2019: FOCUS ON JULIA IVANOVA: OUR REVIEW OF 'LIMIT IS THE SKY'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 27, 2019

3.5 Stars



Julia Ivanova's documentary *Limit is the Sky* is good but it starts out shaky. The pre credits scene has a white Canadian man writing and performing an improvised shitty rap song. The song is about making money in Fort McMurray. She then juxtaposes that with an Indigenous woman walking around one of the city's work sites. The former person is insufferable, making me hope that I'm not going to spend 100 minutes with people like him.

Thankfully that guy wasn't one of *Limit is the Sky*'s six main subjects. Most of these subjects are millennials, and in capturing the real lives, Ivanova stocks this with surprises. One of the subjects sings a heartfelt rendition of *Ako ay Pilipino*, which I never thought I would hear in a film about Fort Mac. It also indicates the factors that shows the city as a place where people, regardless of race, can't plant their roots there.

The subject who does shine out of the six subjects is Max, a Lebanese barber working in Fort Mac. He talks to Ivanova about eventually wanting to start a family. This is a thing that most of the subjects want, but they don't see themselves doing that in Fort Mac. This is a city of wide economic disparities and a prevalent bro culture. Those factors do not make for a good place to live in.

Ivanova shot this doc in a four year period. It depicts the fire that ravaged Fort Mac during the year this had its festival release. But even then, she saw the signs of the boom town's decline. Seamlessness is her signature, and it shows in the way she incorporates economic factors with the lives of her six subjects. This is a capable piece of work embodying both compassion and uncanny foresight.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'ONE CHILD NATION'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Victor Stiff](#) - April 27, 2019



In the late '70s, the Chinese government believed their economy couldn't handle the country's population explosion. So in 1979, they instituted the one-child policy which limited families to only one child. *One Child Nation's* co-director Nanfu Wang grew up with a sibling; her younger brother. The scorn and shamed placed upon her family stayed with Wang and informed her own complicated ideals. Now a mother herself, Wang goes back to China to examine how the policy meant to help the nation had such devastating consequences.

Wang and co-director Jialing Zhang use the one-child policy as a lens to examine life under an authoritarian regime with Wang narrating throughout the intimate and meditative picture. The doc begins with a small personal story about Wang's family before taking on larger implications.

When Wang returns to China to interview her own family, we discover that Chinese authorities forcefully tried to sterilize her mother. After learning of this harrowing ordeal, the film pivots and interrogates the men tasked with enforcing these restrictive laws, and the midwives who administered thousands of sterilizations and abortions. The more Wang pulls on this thread, the more her investigation expands in scope. Wang focuses on how life under an oppressive regime makes citizens feel less accountable for their actions.

Though always compelling, *One Child Nation* isn't an easy watch. Be prepared for some harsh visual and devastating revelations. Wang does an excellent job contextualizing the one-child policy's ramifications. Even if you don't know a lick about China, their policies, or communist regimes, Wang paints a clear picture that's easy to follow. She presents a plethora of propaganda commercials, TV shows, live performances, and street art to make viewers understand the policy's ubiquity. And she puts a humanizing touch on the cold hard facts by sharing her own family's story.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'MERATA: HOW MUM DECOLONIZED THE SCREEN.'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 27, 2019

4 Stars



There are arguably two inevitable truths one eventually learns about their parents. One, is that their parents are human, and are therefore fallible. The other, is that parents make tremendous sacrifices to provide their children with the best possible opportunities to succeed. Heperi Mita's debut feature *Merata: How Mum Decolonized the Screen*, is the story of a man truly exploring the extent of the latter revelation.

As we discover in *Merata*, Heperi's mother Merata Mita was a well-renowned Maori documentarian. Heperi's investigation into his mother's career and archive, lead him to discuss her life with his siblings, all of whom are older than he is. In a sense, this film could be seen as a reintroduction to one of the pioneering voices in Indigenous and New Zealand cinema. Many audiences likely have never heard of Merata Mita, but they probably know a number of the voices she worked with. A large section of this film features prominent filmmakers such as Alanis Obomsawin and Taika Waititi discussing the effect on their careers Merata had. Yet, the crux of this film remains the clearly recognizable love a family has for their mother, and her for her family. An overview of Merata's career provides the emotional foundation we need to recognize her impact. The two halves arguably work in conjunction with each other. We see the sacrifice, and also see the eventual results. In doing so, we understand just how special Merata Mita really was.

Of particular note is the vast nature of collected archives in *Merata*. Film buffs will delight in mentally adding innumerable titles to their watchlist. This is a warm documentary that is very much a pleasant watch for a sleepy Sunday afternoon, or for a safe viewing with family and friends.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'ADVOCATE'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Marc Winegust](#) - April 27, 2019

4 Stars



An Israeli human rights lawyer for Palestinians. It's not the start of a politically incorrect joke, but rather the description of Lea Tsemel, who has for nearly five decades been an advocate for the supposedly indefensible.

*Advocate* is an expertly crafted intimate portrait of a provocative woman who has a unique ability to see the humanity in those accused, while exhibiting how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has affected those on a personal level.

After her involvement with the Israel Defense Forces during the 1967 Six Day War, Tsemel joined the anti-occupation movement in order to seek justice for the Palestinian people, deciding that the most prudent approach is to fight for them in court. Over the years Tsemel has been vilified in the press and in the public eye for her advocacy, but nevertheless, she remains optimistic in her belief that justice can be served.

In this documentary, we cut between Tsemel's history of political dissention with the Israeli courts and society, and the two cases that she is taking on presently, one involving a Palestinian teenager who was involved in an alleged stabbing in the Pisgat Ze'ev neighbourhood, the other involving a woman from East Jerusalem that allegedly planned to blow up her car at a checkpoint. Although I consider myself as pro-Israel, and I remember these two incidents happening during a wave of violence between 2015-2016, I am cautiously using the word "alleged and allegedly" here to approach how the media referenced these incidents within the documentary.

It's fascinating to see how directors Rachel Leah Jones and Phillippe Bellaiche straddle between the line of their inherent bias and Tsemel's quest for human rights within Israel's justice system. *Advocate* is a documentary not to be missed at this festival.



In the Seats- April 27, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: FOCUS ON JULIA IVANOVA: OUR REVIEW OF 'LOVE TRANSLATED'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 27, 2019

4 Stars



In *Love Translated*, Vancouver based director Julia Ivanova takes us temporarily to Richmond, B.C. That's home for a man who faces pressure from his family to get a wife. The world is 50% women, but apparently North American women aren't good enough for him. So through the Anastasia dating service or whatever, he joins other Western men to go to Odessa, Ukraine to find a wife.

Ivanova's documentary takes us to Anastasia's idea of courting. It's a ten day trial period where the men meet these women. For 80 minutes she gets to hilariously mock the male gaze, looking at the women and their interpreters. She catches their bored facial expressions, which the men either don't see or ignore.

The men and the women eventually choose who they want to spend that week and a half with. Ivanova uses these slow pans and tracking shots, switching from the man to his object of what he calls love. Even through 2010 camera technology she captures a sense of artificiality. These women don't seem like real people and the men prefer them that way.

The demographics of the people Ivanova follows are half and half. Sometimes we see the men comparing notes, which show the limits of these men's idiocy. They know that these women have an endgame and they make their own. This feels like a proxy cold war but with its belligerents deluding themselves.

But the movie lights up when it shows Odessa and its people. The juxtaposition of new money and old money are present here, interestingly enough. The young women carry tacky handbags while walking next to buildings that Catherine the Great built. The film eventually points out how the economy of wife hunting affects Odessa. This doc is insightful, slightly mean, and I kind of like it that way.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-focus-on-julia-ivanova-our-review-of-love-translated/>

In the Seats – April 27, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'PROPAGANDA: THE ART OF SELLING LIES'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Victor Stiff](#) - April 27, 2019

3.5 Stars



*Propaganda: ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause.*

It's ironic that it's easier than ever to [spread lies, rumours, and misinformation](#) in the information age. Larry Weinstein's new documentary, *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies*, gives viewers a crash course on the phenomenon. Weinstein presents a wide range of material; defining propaganda, contextualizing its effect throughout history, and highlighting its grip on modern society.

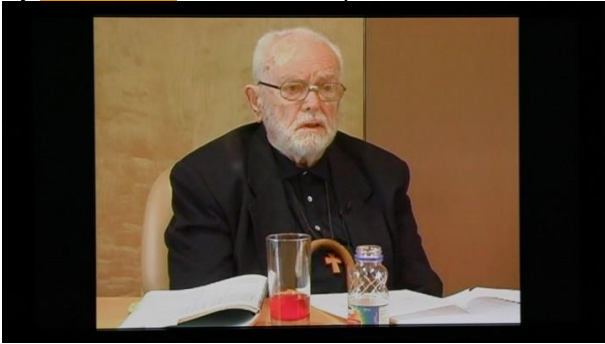
The film begins its deep dive on all things propaganda by examining sixty-thousand-year-old Neanderthal cave-art. And Weinstein does a brilliant job explaining propaganda's role in its creation. Something as innocuous to us as a palm print in a cave is so much more than just a palm print. Its placement inside of this particular cave, an awe-inspiring place of worship, acted as a signifier of the shaman's power, which magnified his influence. Not only has propaganda existed since the beginning of civilization, our brains' innate biases make us all susceptible. So it's not going away any time soon.

The sneaky thing about propaganda, is when it works well, we don't notice it at all. The doc points out that we don't realize how many of our own values are shaped by Western propaganda; patriarchy, aspirational lifestyles, beauty, gender roles, and sexual politics. Later on, Weinstein pulls back the veil of perception by presenting examples from our past (Charlie Chaplin movies) and profiling modern subjects (Kathy Griffin and [Ai Weiwei](#)) whose unfiltered opinions provoke civil unrest because they don't fit with established ideals. *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies* uses lessons from our past to paint a terrifying picture of what lays ahead.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-propaganda-the-art-of-selling-lies/>

## Review: 'Prey'

By [Liam Lacey](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### **Prey**

(Canada, 85 min)

Dir. Matt Gallagher

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premiere)

The subject of *Prey* is a civil lawsuit against the Basilian Fathers of Toronto, which took place last year, over their part in concealing and abetting William Hodgson “Hod” Marshall, a Catholic priest, high school teacher and serial sexual abuser, who died in 2014 at the age of 92. What distinguished the case was that the defendant was seeking punitive damages, for the first time in Canada, from a Church institution. The crux of the matter was that Marshall’s crimes had been reported a half-dozen times over the years, yet he was allowed to continue working, and abusing students.

Attempts to sell the profoundly sad story of *Prey* as a real-life legal thriller feel misguided which doesn’t stop director Matt Gallagher from trying. From the foreboding musical score, to long zoom shots down dark corridors and the dramatically posed interviews against black backgrounds, the film often feels forced. One scene with lawyer Rob Talach (dubbed “the priest hunter”) as he moves in heroic *Right Stuff* slo-mo while he heads to court feels entirely at odds with the lawyer’s unpolished manner: (“Look. We got four years of abuse over his teen-age years. We’ve got fondling. We’ve got lost his virginity. He was sodomized at least once.”)

In spite of its overbearing attempts at style, *Prey* shines a light on some memorable characters and offers insights into institutional denial. At its dramatic core is complainant Rob McLeod, a 68-year-old with a military bearing. He is a dignified, thoughtful man and it’s obvious why he was a powerful witness. We also see the pain of other former abuse victims, include Patrick McMahon, who pickets his local church to protest the cover-up. (There’s an awkward, apparently staged scene, which shows a priest discussing the protest from the pulpit and then, after mass, talking with McMahon on the street, followed by the camera crew.)

Most vivid here is an archival testimony of the perpetrator, the late Hodgson Marshall, on the witness stand in 2012, calmly acknowledging his long history of abusing boys, with the bizarre explanation that such things weren’t taken so seriously back then. Almost as troubling are the interviews with Father David Katulski, a media spokesman for the Basilian Fathers, who describes his friend, Hodson Marshall, as a good man suffering from pedophilia, a rationalization that manages to compound bad science with bad faith.

### **Prey screens:**

-Thurs, May 2 at 1:30 PM TIFF Lightbox

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-prey>

## Review: 'Cavebirds'

By [Liam Lacey](#) • Published April 27th, 2019 [0 Comments](#)



### ***Cavebirds***

(Canada, 81 minute.)

Dir Emily Gan

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premiere)

Montreal-based Emily Gan's debut feature is a first-person essay film around an unusual subject: bird spit. To be more specific, the saliva of small swallow-like birds, which in hardened form is the prized ingredient in the Chinese traditional delicacy of bird's nest soup. Gan's film focuses on her father, Hok-Wah (Howard) a soft-spoken gentle man who has suffered from a lifelong weak heart. In his retirement, he has a quixotic plan to reconnect to his family's past and provide for his children and their children: He moves back to his home town in Malaysia, and builds a concrete nesting house, roughly the size of a small parking garage. Here, he explains, the bird's nest house will provide for his descendants from the hard white scoop-shaped nests which sell for thousands of dollars a kilo. The trouble is the swallows don't seem attracted to the new building and the father's plan may be a folly.

With the extensive use of first-person ruminations and elegiac music (composed by Gan), the film mixes personal reflections with conventional talking-head interviews. Gan's doc is a pained love letter to her artistic, impractical father, with his love of bonsai trees, birds and old poetry. If *Cavebirds* sometimes seems subtle to a fault, Gan has an painter's eye for suggestive poetic images, especially the recurrent motif of birds darting like dark fireworks in the half-light.

### ***Cavebirds* screens:**

-Sun, Apr. 28 at 2:45 PM TIFF Lightbox

-Tues, Apr. 30 at 1:45 PM at TIFF Lightbox

-Fri, May 3 at 10:30 AM at TIFF Lightbox

## Review: 'On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship***

(Denmark/France, 93 min.)

Dir. Karen Stokkendal Poulsen

Programme: International Spectrum (International Premiere)

Aung San Suu Kyi, once an icon for freedom and democracy, has fallen from grace. The political prisoner turned Myanmar's civil leader has been stripped of her honorary Canadian citizenship and her Freedom of Paris Award for role in, and failure to act on, gross human rights violations that include the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people. However, despite receiving a failing grade from most of the international community, Suu Kyi comes off fairly well in *On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship*.

The doc, directed by Karen Stokkendal Poulsen, demonstrates the depth that sometimes gets traded for access. Poulsen lands interviews with all the key players in the Myanmar military dictatorship (or "government"), including Suu Kyi, former President Thein Sein, and Cabinet Speaker Shwe Mann, who could easily be sinister villains of some outlandish spy movie. The doc gets a few plum quotes from guys who gladly formed the military dictatorship, but there's no piss and vinegar as the film lays out the facts. The doc lets Suu Kyi off the hook. While the film is critical of Suu Kyi's complicity, she deserves a much sharper interrogation, if not condemnation, for failing to do more for the people of the country she vowed to protect.

*On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship* nevertheless offers an accessible and informative history on the complex political backdrop of Myanmar's history—if an exhaustingly comprehensive one. Thanks to the incredible range of access that Poulsen enjoys, the doc transcends the symptoms of "Wikipediitis," namely that it would be better served as an annotated article, as the personal embellishments of the players offer juicy bits of character. One really gets a sense of the machinery as interviewees boast about their actions and give an insider's glimpse into the nation's downfall, but the excellent attention to detail in building the context for the present-day situation means that the doc is almost over by the time Poulsen introduces the Rohingya genocide. What to make of it? It's clear that Suu Kyi isn't living up to the ideals she promised, but because there is so much development and detail to the backstory, the thinness of the Rohingya chapter demands more consideration.

Perhaps the immediacy of the film is its downfall. Poulsen doesn't quite seem to know what to make of Suu Kyi just yet by the time she closes the picture. It's hard to accept the analysis, thoughtful as it is, when the film's conclusion is that one of contemporary history's greatest peacemakers is simply a tragic victim of bureaucracy who is bound by a rotten political system. Mildly expressing disappointment is not enough.

### ***On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship* screens:**

-Sun, Apr. 28 at 8:15 PM at TIFF Lightbox

-Thurs, May 2 at 12:15 PM at Scotiabank

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-on-the-inside-of-a-military-dictatorship>

## Review: 'Beloved'

By [Tara Hakim](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***Beloved***

(Iran, 54 min.)

Dir. Yaser Talebi

Programme: World Showcase (Canadian Premiere)

Beautifully filmed with an unlikely subject, *Beloved* is a feast for the eyes and heart. Directed and filmed by Yaser Talebi, the film follows Firouzeh Khordishi, an eighty-two-year-old herder in the northern mountains of Iran, across the seasons as she tells the story of her life. When she was just 14, her mother arranged for her to be married to a herder who was much older than her and with whom she had 11 children. Sadly, none of them visit her now.

Longing for her children, Firouzeh finds solace in the mountains, where she tends to her cows during the spring and summer months. She hikes across the rugged landscape, herds, gathers wood, milks, makes yogurt and then descends to the village to barter her dairy goods for food. She does this all on her own, without electricity, gas or a phone. As every season passes, the villagers urge her to retire, but she won't have it. Firouzeh loves the ever-changing nature, the hard life and her cows. At the end of the film, addressing her son she says, "It's been 60 years I've been in the mountain. I am fond of my cows and they are fond of me...my only request is that you don't leave the cows."

In glorious colours, this striking and warm portrait captures one of the strongest women of our time: a tenacious personality who lives an admirable traditional life in total harmony with nature; a woman who ultimately chooses independence over everything else.

### ***Beloved* screens:**

-Thurs, May 2 at 5:15 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank

-Fri, May 3 at 12:30 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank



## Review: 'Our Dance of Revolution'

By [Susan G. Cole](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***Our Dance of Revolution***

(Canada, 102 min.)

Dir. Phillip Pike

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premier)

At last, there is a documentary that does justice to the influential LGBTQ+ activists of colour who helped shape Toronto's political landscape.

Phillip Pike has gathered archival footage and some of the community's best minds and most passionate advocates to tell the stories of how black activists lived, partied and most important, organized.

The film opens with Black Lives Matter (BLM), led by Black queer women, disrupting the Pride Parade in 2016 via a 30-minute sit-in. Pike's premise is that BLM did not come out of nowhere but stands on the shoulders of black activism that has been a vital force in Toronto for over 40 years.

His first focus is on a collective household that, in the early 80s, nurtured several influential activists, including Makeda Silvera, co-founder of Sister Vision Press, Debbie Douglas, Rinaldo Walcott and Douglas Stewart, all of whom appear in the film. The film covers Black Cap, the organization committed to reducing the spread of HIV infection in Black communities. Founded in 1989, its original motto, "Because all black lives are important," presages Black Lives Matter.

Then the doc goes on to touch on everything from Zami, considered Toronto's first black lesbian group, to Black DJs like DJ Black Cat and Niki Redman's struggles with Pride and its disrespectful treatment of the popular dance event Blockarama that they made so successful, to Rev. David Peart's inspirationally empowering Sunset Service.

Pike's genius directorial move is to choose the brilliant Angela Robertson and Douglas Stewart as commentators who give context to all of these political events. They are clear, perceptive and effective.

Occasionally, Pike lets the camera do the talking, as when a female Black Lives Matter speaker at Pride is met with onlookers' virulent misogyny. A male speaker gets much more respect. But *Our Dance* is a survey, so it jumps around a lot and sometimes doesn't stay on one subject as long as you'd want. The fierce Sharona Hall does get her due but, weirdly, the film pays tribute to drag performer Michelle Ross without ever showing her do her thing on stage.

And though Pike uses Black Lives Matter as a frame for the film, he doesn't delve too deeply into the organization's specific politics, especially the extent to which BLM, rage-inspired as it is, boldly advocates in favour of love, especially when they're being harassed by police.

But this is an important, ground breaking movie. See it with an audience that's bound to be passionate and proud.

### ***Our Dance of Revolution* screens:**

-Mon, April 29 at 6:15 PM at TIFF Lightbox 2

-Wed, May 1 at 2:45 PM at Scotiabank Theatre 3

-Fri, May 3 at 12:00 PM at Scotiabank Theatre 8

Hot Docs runs April 25 to May 5. Please visit [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca) for more information.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-our-dance-of-revolution>

## Review: 'Five Feminist Minutes'

By [Susan G. Cole](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### *Radical*

When the five-minute concept was first embraced by cultural activists, its theory was simple: multiple performances of that length by diverse creators was guaranteed to keep an audience interested. And if you didn't like something, the next act started before you knew it.

Montreal's Tangent Performance Gallery and later Toronto's Women's Cultural Building made it work in the early '80s and before the decade was out, Nightwood Theatre had established the Five-Minute Feminist Cabaret as a major annual fundraiser.

Rina Fraticelli, who came to the National Film Board's famous women's Studio D as Executive Producer in 1987, had seen first-hand the success of the programming strategy and in 1990 put it into cinematic action via *Five Feminist Minutes*, a series of 16 short films. To honour the NFB's 80th anniversary and the 45th anniversary of Studio D, the NFB and Hot Docs has collaborated to produce four new five-minute shorts, inspired by four of the original 16. The eight films screen together in a fascinating series.

Sometimes the connecting threads between the two films are obvious. Catherine Martin's *Minquon, Minquon...*, focuses on the Indigenous painter Shirley Bear, who reveals her personal inspiration, her frustration with colonial assumptions about the role of First Nations women and her determination to redress these imbalanced views. *Lake*, by Alexandra Lazarowich, does this last, beginning with an exquisite long shot of a swath of ice and zooming in on women ice fishing.

Deanne Foley spins off of Mary Lewis's clever tribute to her spinster Aunt Helen to create the kick-ass *Radical*, featuring a hilarious Mary Walsh doing stand-up on the virtues of getting old. Both shorts promote wildly alternative views of what can empower women in a culture that restricts female social roles and sets ludicrous standards of beauty.



### *Question Period*

The link between [New Shoes](#) and *Question Period* is the director herself, Ann Marie Fleming, but the films themselves are very different. *New Shoes* dramatizes a five-minute interview: a woman looks straight into the camera and recounts how she was almost murdered by the boyfriend she had left. It's simple and harrowing. The beautiful *Question Period* is much more experimental, but no less powerful, as Syrian immigrants briefly comment on home, displacement, racism and safety as their images fade in and out to reflect their anxiety.

But like just about every Five-Minute collection this one does have a weak spot. Joyce Wong's *Camera Test* satirizes the ridiculous demands male producers place on female directors that leach women's work of their power and authenticity. The film lacks the charm of its 1990 inspiration, *The Untilled Story*, which mocks the efforts to keep women in their career place. Wong, who made the excellent feature *Wexford Plaza*, is way too on the nose here.

But it's hardly a disaster – it has its fun moments – and does not at all diminish the impact of the program as a whole.

### ***Five Feminist Minutes* screens:**

-Wed, May 1 at 3:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

The films will also be on NFB.ca at a later date.

**Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](#) for more coverage from this year's festival!**

[View all articles by Susan G. Cole »](#)

## Review: 'Conviction'

By [Liam Lacey](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### **Conviction**

(Canada, 78 minutes)

Dir. Nance Ackerman, Ariella Pahlke, Teresa MacInnes

Programme: Canadian Spectrum

A film about Canadian women prisoners made over a couple of years, *Conviction* is a touchingly personal view of inmate life, if somewhat scattered in its focus. The project involves three filmmakers who, we are told in an early title card, went into two Nova Scotia women's prisons with art supplies, a musical therapist and filmmaking tools with the intent "to understand why" women are the fastest-growing population of prisoners worldwide. The question, once posed, is then mysteriously dropped.

Instead, we see women prisoners singing, writing haikus, performing rap songs, and chronicling life on video with smartphones. These clips offer little exposure to the day-to-day experience of prison life, but focus on moments of turnaround: new beginnings and high-expectation, struggles on the outside for lodging or avoiding substance abuse, episodes of remorse and expressions of self-affirmations. The most harrowing of these stories is the progress of one young woman's pregnancy while in custody. Yet, even at a spare 78 minutes, the film has a lot of transitional material here, including blurry images out of car windows, overhead bridges and orange sneaker-shod feet on a concrete floor.

Some snippets of conventionally useful information are provided by the recurring presence of Kim Pate, a lawyer and former executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Frye Societies, who offers unsurprising data about women in jail. About half of them are racialized, a majority are mothers, and many are dealing with addiction, mental health and abuse issues. During the film, in November of 2016, Pate became a senator and we hear part of her maiden speech, advocating for better treatment for women prisoners.

Otherwise, the most promising thread in the film is a series of group meetings, overseen by Pate with the collaboration of an architect, Anne Sinclair, in which the women inmates present their ideas for a community-style facility that would be both rehabilitative and cost-effective. The plan is never implemented, but it appears that the process of making plans, and feeling a sense of ownership over their futures, is a confidence booster which helps change their lives.

### **Conviction screens:**

-Sun, Apr. 28 at 6:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

-Mon, Apr. 29 at 1:15 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

-Thurs, May 2 at 12:30 p.m. at Hart House

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-conviction>

## Review: 'A Place of Tide and Time'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***A Place of Tide and Time***

(Canada, 78 min.)

Dir. Sébastien Rist, Aude Leroux-Lévesque

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premiere)

Audiences at Hot Docs 2016 should remember Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque's extraordinarily moving feature debut [Living with Giants](#). The doc, which won a special jury prize from Hot Docs, transported audiences to Inukjuak, Quebec where the filmmakers observed the life of a young Inuk man, Paulusie, and the everyday reality he experienced in the remote village. The filmmakers' new doc, *A Place of Tide and Time*, is a fine companion piece to *Living with Giants* as it whisks audiences to another isolated community in northern Quebec, this time on the eastern side of the belle province. Rist and Leroux-Lévesque provide a portrait of life in the small fishing community of St. Paul's River, which has become all but a ghost town since the 1992 cod moratorium gutted the local fishing industry and froze the community in time. Stuck in limbo, the film observes the community at a crossroads as the younger generation takes stock of its future.

The filmmakers once again look at the experiences of young Canadians as they turn their camera towards the stories of three St. Paul's River residents. There's 17-year-old Ethan, who is one of nine students of his school's graduating class. Born into the town shortly after the cod moratorium, Ethan shares his experience of growing up without a father, as his dad was constantly absent because the scarcity of work in the community forced him to go north to provide the family with a stable income. Ethan reflects upon his sense of loss and a feeling of inadequacy that haunted him throughout his childhood and adolescence. He acknowledges that, like his father, the only option might be to leave.

Ethan might be the primary voice in *A Place of Tide and Time* and the doc conveys that his situation isn't unique among the 30-odd students who comprise the local high school's modest population. His girlfriend, Brittney, lives in the nearby fishing village of Old Fort and is one year below Ethan in high school, and therefore may be feeling more alone than before given that both her parents have left town for work. Whitney, on the other hand, is a member of Ethan's graduating class and she hopes to go to Montreal to further her studies and return to the community. She's an optimist and envisions a future in which the community thrives in a second life, while many of her peers take a pragmatic approach and admit that their only future they envision takes place far from the shores of St. Paul's.

However, the doc intertwines the stories of the young generation with those of the village elders, and the film captures the struggle to keep the community in motion as few efforts to bring jobs and funding to St. Paul's prove successful. For example, Garland, a former fisherman who makes ends meet as a sort of everyman, tries to work with the youths to ensure they have every opportunity for a sustainable future in the community. In

between his sessions fishing small quantities of crabs and cockles from the bay, the filmmakers follow his indefatigable efforts to secure funding for tourism and projects that help students like Whitney gain experience in her community.

Like the other elders featured in the film, particularly the men, Garland speaks of surviving through piecemeal work and scraping by with seasonal gigs combined with bouts of unemployment. The film shows the remaining residents all but aged out from jobs that provide security. More than anything, they want the next generation to escape this terrible situation of precarious employment. It might be selfish to stay if the community is living on borrowed time.

Exquisitely shot to capture the breathtaking beauty of the remote landscape as well as the unforgiving sense of isolation of St. Paul's River, *A Place in Tide and Time* presents an intimate portrait of a community at a crossroads. Rist and Leroux-Lévesque chronicle the erosion of the town over time by currents of urbanization and industrialization, offering a study of a community that has essentially been left for dead by the country of which it is a part. The English-speaking community is far removed geographically from much of the population, and detached from Quebec from a cultural and linguistic perspective. The town struggles to make itself viable when all roads lead elsewhere. There's a bittersweet element of nostalgia in *A Place of Tide and Time* as the filmmakers ask if some of the most beautiful corners of this nation will be abandoned, and their residents, communities, and histories forgotten. With few solutions in sight, and life in urban centres increasingly becoming prohibitively expensive for Millennials, what common ground is there in this vast and evolving landscape?

***A Place of Tide and Time* screens:**

- Sat, Apr. 27 at TIFF Lightbox at 3:45 p.m.
- Sun, Apr. 28 at Cineplex Scotiabank at 8:00 p.m.
- Sat, May 4 at Cineplex Scotiabank at 12:00 p.m.



## Review: 'The Wandering Chef'

By [Tara Hakim](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***The Wandering Chef***

(South Korea, 90 min.)

Dir. Hye-Ryeong Park

Programme: World Showcase (World Premiere)

Korean celebrity chef Jiho Im has wandered around all his life. It started when he was twelve and ran away from home to wander the country and encounter its people. He's been wandering ever since. "I wondered around a lot. People criticized me for not being able to stay in one place for long. No one knew I was searching for something. Only I knew."

In a heart-warming ode to family and the healing power of food, director Hye-Ryeong Park, in *The Wandering Chef*, takes us on a journey with chef Jiho as he travels the Korean peninsula in search of unique ingredients and slowly reveals what he went searching for all those years ago.

Chef Jiho began his search when he discovered that the mother that raised him was not biological. He went on a search for his mother and discovered food during his travels. Food became a way for him to channel his feelings; at some point in the film he wonders, "could the longing be in my food?" Chef Jiho's biological mother ran away from his father while she was pregnant with him and sent him back to his father when he was three years old. On her return home, she died in a car accident. Chef Jiho only found that out when he was 17. When he turned 22, the mother that raised him passed away. Since then, Jiho has wandered, cooked and longed for the mother figure.

The film, like Jiho, wanders too. As chef Jiho travels the peninsula, and treks the mountains in search of ingredients, we trek too. The camera walks with him, follows him and listens to him. He tells us of his past, as he picks herbs and other local ingredients while mentioning the medicinal and nutritional value they carry. Along the way, Chef Jiho encounters several people who he stops to help, have a conversation, and eventually cooks for them.

One day, he meets an old woman picking herbs from the land around her house in the mountains. He helps her pick the herbs, they converse and laugh before heading back to her home where he meets her quiet husband. Chef Jiho decides to cook them dinner, and when he leaves, promises to return. He keeps his promise, and from then on, the film transforms into his wandering scenes looking for ingredients interspersed with his visits to the old couple, where he cooks for them and develops a close relationship to the woman who becomes a maternal figure: his third mother.

*The Wandering Chef* is mostly observational; Park keeps himself out of the story, allowing his camera and presence to fade into the background. As we wonder with Chef Jiho and visit the elderly couple with him, we learn about his relationship to both his mothers, and are alongside him as he goes through the cathartic experience of coming to terms with the past.

By relying on a loose structure for the film, and choosing to wander with Chef Jiho, Park removes the concept of time. We are unaware of how much time has passed between each visit, and we are unaware of how many years Park has been filming. Through this removal, Park manages to follow Jiho on a personal journey where time has no significance, and where importance is not given to the details, but rather to the emotional, the ephemeral and the experiential. It doesn't matter how much time has passed: what matters is his healing through food, cooking and through his meeting of a mother figure.

Towards the end of the film, his third mother passes away. Yet again, Chef Jiho mourns and wanders. He decides to go on a search to collect ingredients from all over the country and cook with them to pay tribute to his three mothers. He conceives of 108 different dishes, cooks them in 24 hours, and does so in the empty kitchen of his third mother.

***The Wandering Chef* screens:**

- Wed, May 1 at 6:30 p.m. at Hart House
- Thurs, May 2 at 3:00 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Fri, May 3 at 9:30 p.m. at Isabel Bader

**Review: ‘There Are No Fakes’** By [Liam Lacey](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



***There are No Fakes***

(Canada, 114 min)

Dir. Jamie Kastner

Programme: Artscapes (World Premiere)

Jamie Kastner's engaging, smartly modulated, new documentary, *There Are No Fakes*, includes a 1962 CBC television clip of the then thirtyish Anishinaabe artist, Norval Morrisseau, being interviewed by glamorous young June Callwood, on the occasion of his first major gallery show at Toronto's Pollock Gallery. The scene is a reminder of how long it has been since Morrisseau's paintings and the Woodlands school he founded, have become imprinted on the popular imagination as emblematic of Canadian Indigenous art. Concerns about Morrisseau forgeries have risen over the years and, in 2005, two years before he died, Morrisseau established a committee, including art experts, to document all legitimate copies of his work.

That same year, Kevin Hearn, keyboard player for The Barenaked Ladies (If I had a Million Dollars), forked over \$20,000 to a Yorkville dealer for a big pea-green Morrisseau canvas, featuring a swirling group of what appear to be saw-toothed birds, entitled Spirit Energy of Mother Earth. Five years later, when Hearn lent the painting to Art Gallery of Ontario show, a friend of Morrisseau's complained Spirit Energy was a fake and AGO took it down. Hearn tried to get his money back from the dealer, who insisted "there are no fakes". Hearst sued and the results of that case, which was resolved last year, is part of Kastner's film, though not the pay-off. What's distinctive about *There Are No Fakes* is a shift in tone that takes place halfway through the film.

The first half is almost *Fargo* -esque with its motley collection of characters: the naïve pop star, the artist's apprentice, a crew of art dealers who come across more like aluminum siding hustlers than art curators. A group of them, defending their businesses, insist that the "fake Morrisseau" claims are themselves fake news, using online blogs to attack Hearst and his lawyer, going so far as to claim the entire case is a racist campaign to tarnish Indigenous culture. Most of this is blatantly absurd, including perhaps the most quintessentially Canadian documentary moments I can recall: An angry woman art dealer, entering the courthouse, turns and barks at the film crew: "Keep your fucking camera off me." (The chastened off-screen camera man responds: "Oh, sorry.")

At this point in the film, it may cross your mind that somebody must be making these paintings and that somebody, unlike the rest of the profiteers in the chain, may be Indigenous. Soon, Kastner provides the answer and it's a stunner. Following a lead, the film crew heads to Thunder Bay, where Kastner interviews a couple of courageous young people, and uncover a horror story of drug dealing, sexual abuse of minors, Indigenous exploitation and violence. Art fraud is just one of an army of crimes visited against Indigenous people.

***There Are No Fakes* screens:**

-Mon, Apr. 29 at 6:00 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

-WE, May 1 at 8:15 p.m. at Cineplex Scotiabank

## Review: 'Illusions of Control'

Hot Docs 2019

By [Susan G. Cole](#) • Published April 27th, 2019



### ***Illusions of Control***

(Canada, 87 min.)

Dir. Shannon Walsh

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premier)

I don't know why Hot Docs programmers hype this film as testimony to human resilience in the face of disaster. As the title suggests, it's less inspirational and much more about the pointlessness of human perseverance, albeit supported by energized communities.

In Ningxia, China, Yang and his community desperately fight back against the desertification of the landscape—thank you climate change—so intense that every time the wind gusts up, their homes fill with sand.

Stacy in Yellowknife, is trying to make a major mining company accountable for the arsenic they've left underground, a poison deeply affecting the health of her Dene community. So strong is its impact, that Stacy is seriously considering leaving her ancestral home.

After the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima and the tsunami that followed, Takoa has been organizing her community to monitor radioactivity that seeps into everyday life—including the groceries. Sylvia and Ortiz have not yet found their daughter, who has been disappeared by the authorities in Cuahuila, Mexico. They are still looking.

Lauren Berlant, professor of English at the University of Chicago, is dying of an aggressive cancer. It cannot be a coincidence that Walsh has included a subject who holds no hope. She is brilliant, accepting—except of deluded friends who think she can “beat” the disease—and ultimately, unlike Walsh's other subjects, someone harbouring no illusions of control. She is, however, writing her own obituary, cleverly insisting that she will not include a section that reads “survived by” but rather will change that convention to read, “survived with,” to honour those who are supporting her as she prepares to die.

The others forge on, Ortiz and Silvia scouring the deserts for clues to what they know is a murder, Takoa donning her mask as she tests the food, Yang and his team devising ways to beat back the sand. Stacy toys with leaving her community but as the movie unfolds, has not committed to giving up.

This is not an inspiring film about human resilience. It is complex, sad and strangely beautiful. Some of that gorgeousness comes thanks to Owen Pallett's soundtrack, compellingly eerie, and cinematography by Pablo Alvarez-Mesa, who makes director Shannon Walsh's locations in Mexico, Japan, China and Canada's frozen Northwest Territories sometimes look like the ravaged landscapes of Ed Burtynsky.

What drives people to resist in the face of this kind of devastation? Walsh isn't saying. She's just asking the question. And if her intention was to inspire us with this exceptional documentary, she has failed – but only in that regard.

***Illusions of Control* screens:**

-Sun, Apr 28 at 9:15 PM, TIFF Lightbox 2

-Tue, Apr 30 at 2:30 PM at Scotiabank 3

-Thu, May 2 at 10:00 AM at TIFF Lightbox 3

Hot Docs runs April 25 to May 5. Please visit [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca) for

## Women in Hollywood – April 28, 2019 (1 of 2)

### INTERVIEWS

#### **Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Tülin Özdemir – “Red Moon”**

BY: Rachel Montpelier April 28, 2019

Tülin Özdemir's work asks the question, “Who is today's modern woman?” The filmmaker made her first short documentary, “Our Wedding,” in 2008 and expanded on its subject of early marriage in her 2013 feature doc debut, “Beyond Ararat.” Those two projects and her latest film, “Red Moon,” complete a trilogy exploring women, marriage, and identity.

“Red Moon” premiered at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 27.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

TÖ: It's a portrait of a woman, my mother's little sister Tüncay. It's a kind of road movie through four generations of women, from the village of Tüncay's childhood in Turkey to her life today in Brussels. The film focuses on a sister who has been in the shadow of her family.

Highlighting the stories of unseen women — or women we ignore — reveals the subtle mechanisms of a system that enslaves women's bodies and minds. That system is still present in the heart of Europe today.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

TÖ: The story of my aunt Tüncay is a common one — that is, girls being forced into early marriage. This film is the story of many women, including myself. Marriage is still a contracted exchange of properties throughout the world today. It is an act of appropriation of the female body, and a guarantee of biological reproduction for a system of patriarchal domination. Forced marriage, still widespread today, is a form of violence.

Ask yourself a simple question: “Why are we still getting married?” And by “married,” I do not mean the desire to live together between two people who love each other, or a symbolic ritual to mark a freely chosen union. My question is about the institution of civil marriage.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

TÖ: Cinema allows you to see beyond images and appearances. For me, film reveals what we do not see or what we do not want to see. Cinema is a Pandora's box. It is access to the real, access to our real relationship to the world. I hope my film manages to give the spectator enough space to leave the cinema with a sharper vision. With “Red Moon,” [I want the audience to leave with] a better view about early and forced marriage — a better comprehension about the mechanism behind it.

I would like the spectator to think and question. But I would especially like him or her to see between the images, in the well-hidden structures of the enslavement of the woman's body.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

TÖ: The relationship between two sisters, my mother and the main character of the film, my aunt Tüncay. The relationship between them was almost nonexistent. My mother is the eldest of nine siblings; she has occupied a central place in the family and the family's emigration to Europe. And it was she who married her little sister off at 13 years old.

To understand her actions, it was important to give my mother a place in the film. She also had an arranged marriage at 17, which she accepted in order to escape from her village, where it's difficult to survive for many girls.

“Red Moon” documents four years of the relationship between my aunt Tüncay and my mother. My aunt feared and held a deep grudge against my mother.

For the most part, the film dangled on a thin thread. My aunt Tüncay could have stopped everything and not continued. Until the end of editing, I was afraid she'd stop participating.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

TÖ: It was a long process of financing, more than two years. The film is supported by the Screen Brussels Film Commission. Belgian RTBF is co-producer.



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The budget of the film is less than 200,000€ [about \$225k USD], which is nothing when you are working with a professional team, even a small one.

Financing a documentary film is a long and difficult process. It's important to have a good producer you can trust. I have this with Gilles De Valck from Cobra Films. He cares about women's stories and was an important partner in the making of "Red Moon."

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

TÖ: My first short documentary, "Our Wedding," "opened my eyes," as the Turkish saying goes. Cinema allows me to see the world. It is a window to the invisible and the unconscious. This first cinematic experience allowed me to understand why, in the heart of Europe, I was married at 16! Why I could not avoid an early pregnancy — out of ignorance and because my function as a bride was to be a mother — and why the adults who were supposed to protect me were constrained by certain traditions and were capable of the worst violence. I "saw" the women in my community and my Western girlfriends enslaved by the same mechanisms, I "saw" the marginalization of young single moms, like me, in our so-called evolved society.

Today, I feel the urgency of "opening my eyes" for my daughter, so she can be a little better prepared to be a woman in this world.

That first film opened my eyes to the woman I was and the one I wanted to be. Since then, I've been exploring cinematic reality to see better as a woman!

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

TÖ: The best advice: It's not film school that will make you a filmmaker, it's the experience. Pick up a camera and start filming.

The worst advice: Make your film alone.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

TÖ: For a woman, the very act of making movies is a revolution. Women are half of humanity. Today, the male gaze still largely dominates the representations of the world as well as the image of woman. I am convinced that women have a different perspective because women have different stories and their own particular relationships to the world. Women's cinema is a Pandora's box.

I would advise women directors to just make films — to transform representation, to reclaim our bodies and our image.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

TÖ: "The Three Rooms of Melancholia," directed by Finland's Pirjo Honkasalo. It's a 2004 documentary about children during the war in Chechnya. For me, it's an example of cinematic mastery, in both form and content. Cinema is an art where the aesthetic choice is a political commitment. In this film, the poetic and the political are one.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

TÖ: I'm thinking a lot about the feminists of the second wave. In America and then in Europe, the 1960s were fertile for revolution. It was the time of victories for women's reproductive rights. Contraception and then the right to abortion transformed women's relationships to their own bodies. For me, the emergence of movements like #TimesUp and #MeToo are reminiscent of this previous revolution. Like the video camera that had been picked up by women artists in the '70s, the internet is an accessible and fascinating tool for women's issues.

However, I'm suspicious of the buzz effect of internet movements. For me, the revolution has been going on for more than 40 years. Internet is an interface, which is great. But we still need to question the structure that creates this interface. At the moment, I'm reading Susan Faludi's "Backlash." She wrote it in 1991, but it's crazy how much it resonates today.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-tulin-ozdemir-red-moon/>

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### INTERVIEWS

Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Phyllis Ellis – “Toxic Beauty”

“Toxic Beauty”: White Pine Pictures

BY Laura Berger April 28, 2019

Phyllis Ellis is a creator, writer, director, producer, and performer in factual and scripted television and film. She was honored at the 2013 Canadian Screen Awards with the prestigious Donald Brittain Award for Best Social/Political Documentary for “About Her,” narrated by Kim Cattrall. Her other credits include “Girls’ Night Out” and “Painted Land.”

“Toxic Beauty” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 29.

**W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

PE: “Toxic Beauty” tells the personal stories of women surviving and those who have lost their lives from ovarian cancer caused by their use of talc.

[The film tells the story of] a brave whistleblower, Deane Berg, who took on one of the largest pharmaceutical companies and won, sparking a revolution. We meet a young medical student whose self experiment gleans shocking results, and the pioneers and exciting young researchers who champion the science and truth about toxicants, chemicals, and carcinogens in our cosmetics linked to birth defects, reproductive harm, and cancer. [We dig into] Challenge Industry, who, like Big Tobacco, denies the truth and our governments who regulate food and drugs but not the potentially harmful chemicals we put on our bodies every day.

Through these stories we discover what we can do to protect ourselves.

**W&H: What drew you to this story?**

PE: I’m an Olympian who, like so many of us, used an excessive amount of baby powder for over 20 years. At the beginning of my research for the film, I met Dr. Daniel Cramer, who as Dr. Roberta Ness says in the film, is “the grandfather of epidemiology.” He spoke to me about his early research linking talc — baby powder — to ovarian cancer. His first paper was published defining a “causal link” in 1982. He suggested to Johnson & Johnson they put a warning label on the product. They did not. I thought, if the most trusted brand in the world was linked to ovarian cancer, what else are we using on our bodies that could cause harm? It also scared me. I could be at risk.

I then had the privilege of meeting women who had survived cancer but also spent time with women who, through the course of shooting, lost their lives, including Mel Lika, who had a big life in counterintelligence in war-torn countries. Her death was linked to her lifetime use of a personal care product.

We met extraordinary champions of the science. These three quotes in particular propelled me to explore this story:

Dr. David Michaels: “Chemicals are not like people — they are not innocent until proven guilty.”

Dr. Julie Brody: “We don’t want to wait 50 years to find out something in hand lotion is causing breast cancer.”

Dr. Ami Zota: “We have to change these beauty norms so women don’t have to choose between their health and trying to be beautiful according to these arbitrary standards. Women from my generation didn’t know. We didn’t know what we were using on ourselves, on our children. We didn’t know about the potential carcinogens and toxicants in our cosmetics and care products. Now we do.”

I wanted to tell this story to protect my daughter and everyone’s kids, and ourselves as women and men, who are using far more products than even 15 years ago.

## Women in Hollywood – April 28, 2019 (2 of 3)

[I don't want any more] women to have to suffer like the women in our film and as our experts say, "We have a right to know what is known."

### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

PE: Just recently, there was the first congressional hearing on cosmetics and personal care products in Washington. Two of the subjects in our film were witnesses. Marvin Salter, the son of Jacqueline Fox, who lost her ovarian cancer fight with talc in her tissue, but whose voice is in the film, said, "I wasn't involved with my mother's decision to litigate, but after she passed away, I wanted to continue her fight because she was fighting so no other women would have to suffer." He said he "wanted Johnson & Johnson to know her name"

I know the audience will know Jackie's name and the names of all the women in the film. They'll also witness young medical student Mymy Nguyen, who bravely does a self experiment revealing to young women the potential dangers of excessive use of cosmetics containing harmful chemicals.

As Dr. Rick Smith says in the film, "It's worse than tobacco because we are talking about thousands of chemicals, none of which have been tested for safety."

And as one of my heroines, Rachel Carson, told us about DDT in the '60s, "We have to remember that children born today are exposed to these chemicals from birth, perhaps even before birth. Now what is going to happen to them in adult life, we simply don't know."

We want the audience to know that there are alternatives — we want women to protect themselves.

### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

PE: The biggest challenge was the plethora of information and the many stories we couldn't tell because of time constraints. We wanted to explore the effects on children further, and on men. It was almost too much information and deciding how to structure the narrative [was challenging]. It could almost be a six-part series.

Also, there is so much amazing research being done across North America, and so many fabulous companies producing "clean" products that it was impossible to include them all. I wanted to tell all of the stories but we couldn't. Maybe the next film!

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

PE: I am a Canadian filmmaker, and we have a very supportive system for financing films. Our broadcaster in Canada, The Documentary Channel, through the CBC, initiated the financing and through that we had many opportunities to apply for funds to help complete the financing. We also had an angel investor who generously supported the film.

Our executive producers, White Pine Pictures, helped nurture these relationships

It was a combination of networking, funders within our Canadian system, and private financing, and it took a while: we worked on getting funding for two-and-a-half years. Most if not all of the financiers, from our broadcast executive to our private funder, are women.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

PE: I have been telling women's stories in many different ways since I was a young woman. I started the first women in sports program in Ontario, Canada many years ago, and worked on rights for women in sports as a young person.

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I studied acting, co-founded a women's theater company in Minneapolis, and worked in scripted and factual television, and all of this led me to an opportunity to direct a feature documentary called "About Her." This experience was life-changing. [Since then,] I've been working in documentary film, predominately in stories about women, and working with other women filmmakers. It's been an evolution and I've been very fortunate to have been supported to be able to work and continue to find interesting stories to tell.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

PE: The best advice came from my mother, who told me from a very early age, "You can do anything and be anything you want to be." She still tells me that today.

Worst advice: "You have no experience in filmmaking. They'll never finance you." I didn't listen.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

PE: I'd love to offer words of encouragement. It's a great time to be a woman director right now. Your point of view is invaluable, your voice is important, and your stories, whatever they are, need to be told.

One day very soon gender parity and equality will no longer be part of the conversation. We are filmmakers.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

PE: So hard to pick one. I guess Jane Campion's "The Piano." I also loved Claire Denis' "Let the Sun Shine In" and "Chocolat."

I could name 20 films written and directed by women [that are favorites.]

I think mostly, it's the combination of the visual language, the words, and the performances [that speak to me].

There are also so many wonderful documentary women directors I admire. [I am a big fan of] Mira Nair's "So Far from India," and so many others.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

PE: That's an interesting question. [I was talking with a group of women in the industry, and said,] "If I named names, it would be #Me10." We had all experienced abuses of power or harassment or worse in our many years [working in the business.]

The biggest difference I see is with the men I work with. They are on alert. They are backing off. They know that at any moment their past behavior could wreak havoc, so I notice a shift.

I am thankful to all the brave women who came forward. I see young, empowered women — writers, directors, cinematographers — who will move forward in their careers. Time is up.

There are many women who have paved the way and I'm proud to have been a small part of that both as an athlete and as a filmmaker.

## Women in Hollywood – April 28, 2019 (1 of 2)

### INTERVIEWS

#### **Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Jola Dylewska – “Marek Edelman... and There Was Love in the Ghetto”**

"Marek Edelman... and There Was Love in the Ghetto"

BY Gabriela Rico April 28, 2019

Jola Dylewska is a Polish writer, director, and cinematographer. She has worked as a cinematographer on over 25 projects. She won Best Cinematography at the 2012 Polish Film Awards for her work on “In Darkness” as well as at the 1995 German Film Awards for “Marie’s Song,” among many other honors. Dylewska’s 2008 documentary, “Po-lin. Okruchy pamieci,” won the Golden Reel for Best Polish Film at the Association of Polish Filmmakers Critics Awards.

“Marek Edelman... and There Was Love in the Ghetto” was co-directed by Andrzej Wajda. It will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival on April 29.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

JD: In the 1940s, for political reasons, a major European city was divided into two parts by a wall. People imprisoned behind the wall slowly had everything taken away: first jewelry and money, then freedom and dignity, and then food and life.

You know what they were unable to take away? Love.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

JD: The hero of my film, Marek Edelman, was the last commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Before his death, he did not speak like other Holocaust survivors, [who said]: “Do everything you can to make sure it never happens again!”

Marek was screaming: “We have to make a film about love in the ghetto! Love was the only thing which let us become a man in the hell of the ghetto. Because love is the most important thing.”

I made this film, in a way, on the command of the Commander.

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

JD: I wish for somebody to come back home [after watching the film] and tell his or her partner, “I love you.” I want them to cuddle up at night with someone who they have lived with for a very long time and may have forgotten that they once loved.

I want this film to feel like a kiss, like an intimate touch that reminds people that there is nothing more important in life than love.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

JD: I think the biggest challenge for me was to show the audience the same picture of love that Marek represented and had inside him.

#### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

JD: I found a producer, Anna Wydra, who loved this project as much as I did. She was the organizational brain, and her sensitive presence and strategies made it possible for me to make the film the way I wanted. She was the one who was able to get Polish, German, and European state film funds interested in the project.

## Women in Hollywood – April 28, 2019 (2 of 2)

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

JD: I think it was mainly my fascination with the camera, which for me is a transcendental gateway to the feelings and thoughts of another human being. A camera sees more than a human being because it sees the invisible. A camera can eternalize time.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

JD: I feel that it's both in one: If you want to be treated equal to men in this profession, you must be better than them — every time.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

JD: Remember that you make movies and those movies make you. The themes, places, and characters you make these movies about have an impact on how you become a human being. You have to choose them while being at peace with yourself.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

JD: Agnieszka Holland [is definitely my favorite woman director]. Her cosmic intelligence, combined with her childlike sensitivity, unique knowledge, great talent, and love for cinema, sometimes gives us masterpieces.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

JD: To be honest, I've noticed no differences in Poland. In this very Catholic country, being a woman is a very complex task.



## Hot Docs review: Dicktatorship: Macho Made In Italy

Breezy doc exploring toxic masculinity in Italian culture is valuable for the way it shows how to make arguments that are clear and logical

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 28, 2019



**DICKTATORSHIP: MACHO MADE IN ITALY** (Gustav Hofer, Luca Ragazzi, Italy). 87 minutes.

Rating: NNN

Gay couple Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi explore toxic masculinity in this entertaining doc that uses a lighthearted conceit in order to get through to any viewers who might be put off by the term “toxic masculinity.”

Similar in format to their previous films, *Dicktatorship* is structured as an odd-couple journey, with open-minded Hofer trying to persuade the uptight Ragazzi that his macho self-image is culturally, not biologically, ingrained. Through a series of interviews with experts, regular people on the street, politicians and porn star Rocco Siffredi, they tackle topics such as feminism, gender identity, raising children, violence against women, Italian history and literature as well as the #MeToo movement.

While this film might be Gender 101 for many viewers, it’s really valuable for the way it shows how to make arguments that are clear and logical. Hofer and Ragazzi really listen, even to the most reprehensible people like Siffredi, in order to understand where misogynist attitudes come from so they can then show not only why someone is wrong, but how deeply pervasive their attitudes are across culture. Worth a watch ahead of your next family dinner with sexist and inflammatory relatives.

*Apr 30, 5:45 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 1, noon, Scotiabank 3; May 4, Scotiabank 3*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-dicktatorship-macho-italy/>

## Hot Docs review: Illusions Of Control

Shannon Walsh's film about five women dealing with personal and systemic crises is a testament to resilience

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 28, 2019



**ILLUSIONS OF CONTROL** (Shannon Walsh). 87 minutes. Rating: NNNN

With increasingly unnerving serenity, Vancouver director Shannon Walsh interweaves portraits of five women dealing with personal and systemic crises all over the world.

Kaori Suzuki monitors contamination in the produce, livestock and humans of Fukushima; Silvia Ortiz searches for her daughter's remains in the Mexican desert; Stacey Sundberg contemplates moving from her home in Yellowknife before the arsenic buried in an abandoned mine leaches into the water table; Xue Lan Yang deals with the increasing desertification around her village in China, and Chicago professor and author Lauren Berlant deals with a diagnosis of terminal cancer.

Each of these people is trying to cope with the consequences of someone else's intrusion into their lives, and they're all doing what they can to make the best of a hopeless situation: as Berlant says fairly early on, we only deem something unbearable when we're in the midst of bearing it. *Illusions Of Control* is a testament to their resilience, even as it understands just how bad things really are.

*April 28, 9:15 pm, TIFF 2; April 30, 2:30 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 2, 10 am, TIFF 3*

## Hot Docs review: Seahorse

Jeanie Finlay's doc about a pregnant trans man doesn't shy away from complex emotions

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 28, 2019



**SEAHORSE** (Jeanie Finlay, UK). 90 minutes. Rating: NNNN

“You’re going on a special journey that’s going to be quite interesting,” a nurse tells Freddy McConnell in a bit of dry British understatement that nicely sets the tone for Jeanie Finlay’s *Seahorse*. Campbell lives in the coastal English town of Deal, calls himself “the only trans guy in the village” and is on a quest to get pregnant. To do this, he’ll have to stop taking testosterone, get IVF treatment and spend the better part of nine months as a highly conspicuous lightning rod for those who love criticizing transgender people without making any attempt to understand or listen to them.

Shy and self-deprecating at first, Freddy gradually becomes comfortable opening up on a host of topics, from body image and gay shame to loneliness and how the pregnancy affects him emotionally. At one point, he describes feeling “a total loss of myself.” Finlay’s camera essentially becomes Freddy’s confessional, though the director occasionally interrupts the fly-on-the-wall style to ask him questions. She not only draws out the complexity of Freddy’s experience and shows how his pregnancy disrupts seemingly innocuous and “normal” conversations about having a baby. But she also finds the universal aspects of his experience, particularly when she contrasts Freddy becoming a single dad to his (supportive) mother’s experience as a young parent.

*Seahorse* is an empathetic but sometimes tense film, especially when the gender identity-vs-biology conversation flares up, but it never feels sensational. Finlay treats her remarkable subject in the way that we hope other pregnant trans men will one day be regarded: as ordinary.

[Apr 30, 9 pm, Scotiabank 8; May 1, 1:15 pm, TIFF 2](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-review-seahorse/>

## Hot Docs review: Trixie Mattel: Moving Parts

Film about the popular Drag Race contestant and folk musician sets up intriguing dramatic tension that doesn't quite pay off

BY [KEVIN RITCHIE](#) APRIL 28, 2019



**TRIXIE MATTEL: MOVING PARTS** (Nick Zeig-Owens). 91 minutes. Rating: NNN

The reality series RuPaul's Drag Race has [produced its own star system](#), with popular contestants amassing huge followings and selling-out thousand-plus seat venues. Trixie Mattel is one of the biggest, so there will be a built-in audience for this doc about a difficult but successful year in the folk musician drag queen's life.

The drag alter ego of Milwaukee's Brian Firkus was a failure during her initial run on Drag Race, but went on to star in [a cult talk show](#) with fellow Drag Race alum Katya Zamolodchikova (aka Brian McCook). In a tense and compelling sequence that sets the tone for the doc, McCook has a breakdown on the set of the show and Firkus is initially angry – what will Katya leaving mean for *her* career? – but soon feels guilty.

McCook's absence nags at Firkus as he attempts to carve out an identity for Trixie separate from Katya by recording a country album, going on a European tour and returning to the Drag Race fold in the third season of All Stars. Though Drag Race is notorious for goading contestants into spilling childhood trauma on screen, *Moving Parts* shows how drag is simultaneously a kind of armour from emotion but also a way to feel free from insecurity.

Zeig-Owens conveys this seeming contradiction through an intimate vérité style, but his articulate and witty subject only opens up to a point. Despite setting up intriguing dramatic tension, the director fails to build to a satisfying emotional pay-off and doesn't dig too deeply into Firkus's personal relationships – including his friendship with McCook – or seemingly distant family relationships. Though we spend a lot of time in dressing rooms, we get a strong sense of what Trixie's touring show is like beyond a couple brief-but-entertaining sequences.

*Moving Parts* is full of funny and heartfelt moments and succeeds in making one of Drag Race's pricklier-seeming queens more likeable, but it's most interesting as an unglamorous peek into the Drag Race Industrial Complex.

[Apr 29, 3:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 3, 8:45 pm, TIFF 1; May 4, 9:45 pm, TIFF 1](#)

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-trixie-mattel-moving-parts/>

## Gordon Lightfoot Takes Lead in Hot Docs Audience Award Race

By Pat Mullen Posted on April 28th, 2019



### *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*

Hot Docs audiences love their music docs! Joan Tosoni and Martha Kehoe's *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* took the top spot in today's update of the Hot Docs Audience Award race. The film is a candid and easygoing portrait of the folk icon featuring a who's who of the Canadian music scene. The doc premiered last night at TIFF Lightbox and screens again at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Tuesday, April 30 as part of the Scotiabank Big Ideas Series. Read more about the film in the [current issue of POV](#), available at the HDTRC box office, the DOC table in the Industry Centre, and in select stores.

*If You Could Read My Mind* also took the top spot in the Canadian film race with *Prey* debuting at #2 in the race for the Rogers Canadian Award and at #3 overall. Yesterday's overall leader *St. Louis Superman* dropped to seventh place overall following its final screening.

The top 20 in the Hot Docs Audience Award rankings are:

1. Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind
2. Maxima
3. Prey
4. Ask Dr. Ruth
5. Kifaru
6. Human Nature
7. Killing Patient Zero
8. St. Louis Superman
9. In My Blood It Runs
10. [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#)
11. [Trixie Mattel: Moving Parts](#)
12. Female Pleasure
13. The World or Nothing
14. On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship
15. Confucian Dream
16. Push
17. The Edge of Democracy
18. Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen
19. Nothing Fancy: Diana Kennedy
20. Uncaged: A Stand-In Story

## Unraveling a Reggae Mystery

*An Interview with Chris Flanagan*

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



*Artist and vinyl fanatic Chris Flanagan digs through a mountain of Reggae 45s.*

Chris Flanagan's *Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery* is an ode to obsession, tracing one man's desire to uncover the identity of a mystery singer he first heard on a thrift-store audio purchase. Joined along the way by musical icons, sympathetic friends and even supernatural private investigators, Flanagan's decade-long quest ends up having less to do with a single song than how a deep dive into a work of art can literally open up an entire world to be explored.

The journey takes him from Toronto to Kingston and throughout the U.S., connecting along the way with an entire community of like-minded seekers and singers that help him in his search. Flanagan never shies away from the naiveté underlying his task, yet thanks to his infectious enthusiasm, we as the viewers feel very much a part of his adventure.

Thanks to good-hearted assistance from remarkable characters, the audience is gifted with a welcome dive into the history of Jamaican music and production, finding along the way how one woman's impassioned performance fills an integral if forgotten part in the history of the indelible music that is reggae.

POV spoke to Flanagan prior to the World Premiere of his film at HotDocs 2019.



*Director Chris Flanagan*

**POV:** Jason Gorber

**CF:** Chris Flanagan

*This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity*

**POV:** Let's start at the beginning. This all started with you finding a rare record in an unlikely place.

**CF:** I was at a thrift store in Cambridge, Ontario. It was just in a very small stack of 10-cent records and didn't have a cover. It wasn't something I was looking for, but for a dime I could take a gamble and try it out. The record is a compilation of reggae music by Various Artists. The majority are standard soul covers, mostly done by Toronto Reggae groups of the era. The second to last track is credited to Shella Record and it blew me away. I was not expecting that at all. It was unique, a jazz vocal accompanied by one of the hardest reggae backings you've ever heard.



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**POV:** Were you on the lookout for such things?

I had finished art school and had come to Canada to visit my girlfriend. I had quite a bit of time to kill and I was just going to stores looking for records, looking for junk. It was just one of those incredible digging moments.

**POV:** Which led you on to an eight-year journey?

**CF:** The actual process of making the film has been over a decade, so discovery was even earlier than that! It was something I sat on for a little while. I was asking questions about the identity of the lead singer and early in the game, I thought it would be interesting to document the process. I had no notion of where that was going to lead—it could have been a Toronto singer who I found in half an hour or something—but it turned out to be a much more epic adventure than I'd bargained for.



*Chris Flanagan visits legendary Reggae guitarist Earl “Chinna” Smith to see if he knows anything about what happened to the mystery diva.*

**POV:** *Searching for Sugarman* is another of these “artist quest” films. Of course, Rodriguez wasn't lost at all, just out of touch for those under the media restrictions in South Africa. In your case Shella Record was actually lost!

**CF:** Yes, genuinely lost for everybody, her family included.

**POV:** Which means you are in real time documenting an adventure where you don't know where it's going. Could you talk about moments where you weren't certain you were on the right track?

**CF:** This process was overwhelming at times. I'm a visual artist, not a filmmaker. My practice has incorporated aspects of music, subcultures, folklore and music history, into installations where I might make a short film piece, but documentary is certainly not my background. Had I not entered into this with a lot of naiveté I might not actually have gone through with it. It started out with a cheap camera that I bought on Kijiji for \$100 and had friends film me throughout this process. The intrigue and mystery around it made me want to delve deeper. Eventually, there was just reams and reams of footage, and a lot of it was just crap that didn't go anywhere. Beyond that, there was the challenge of just trying to make this film with no budget.

**POV:** It sounds like the making of the film was even more hellish and time consuming than you expected.

**CF:** The whole post-production process was a challenge just in terms of getting funding to edit the thing. I cut together a very rough assembly of what I thought the narrative was, and then sought funding to try and find a professional editor because I realized it was far beyond my capabilities. I really wanted to collaborate with an editor with a Caribbean background. In terms of the art aspect, with the use of models and so forth, that didn't really come into play until the edit.

**POV:** The inclusion of your models allows your own art to play an explicit role in the story beyond your own quest.

**CF:** I always saw this as about my search for Shella, and not a documentary about Shella. That was something that I felt a lot more comfortable with as a white outsider, as opposed to someone trying to tell this woman's story.

**POV:** You got some usually quite reticent people to open up. Was it that your enthusiasm was infectious, or your naiveté was such that they felt bad for you?

**CF:** [Laughs] It could be a combination. I approached it with genuine enthusiasm and love for the music. There wasn't a financial imperative and I wasn't trying to make a quick buck off it or something like that. People were

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incredibly generous, hooking me up with a lot of contacts, which proved to be incredibly helpful, especially leading on to Jamaica.

**POV:** Not everyone was so generous. Do you still have Monica on Eglinton West hating you?

**CF:** I haven't been back! It was just more naïveté, with me going in there and asking questions of this woman, who is a very established business owner in the area, and doesn't really owe me anything.



*Armed with a portable turntable Chris Flanagan travels to Kingston Jamaica to meet the Reggae godfather Bunny "Striker" Lee, who produced the mystery tune in 1975.*

**POV:** Yet people who are giants in the industry did find time for you. What shifted in your own approach between just walking into a local place and having the attitude you brought to those places in Jamaica?

**CF:** I honestly don't know if my approach did change very much. I think just maybe just certain people gravitated towards me and certain people didn't. Having Bunny Lee onside opened up a huge amount of doors in Jamaica. He's incredibly well respected and would be constantly on the phone handing me over to some legend. I was trying for months to try to get a contact for Bunny, couldn't find it, and ultimately I found him in the Jamaican white pages. These guys are just so accessible, it's ridiculous.

**POV:** Jamaican culture at the best of times has been one that paves over its history. What was it like being in that cab tracing that history in some of the more dodgy areas of Kingston?

**CF:** I was shitting myself, to be perfectly honest. In Waterhouse, I really felt like I'd made a mistake. I don't want to play up the sensational aspects of Kingston, Jamaica, but Waterhouse is a tough place and not a lot of tourists go there.

Going to King Tubby's studio was something that I really wanted to do; it felt like a sacred site. Traditionally the powers that be in Jamaica looked down on reggae even though it's their largest cultural export. They haven't given the artists that pioneered it their due, especially in terms of roots reggae and dub.

**POV:** The film is finally made and you get to show it to people and get generations to come to appreciate this woman's music. What does it feel like now that this part of the journey is finished?

**CF:** It feels fantastic. There were times when I didn't even know if I had an ending to the film. It feels incredible to have finished it, and to have it screened at a festival like Hot Docs is a dream come true.

### ***Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery screens:***

- Mon, Apr. 29 at 9:15 PM at TIFF Lightbox
- Wed, May 1 at 12:45 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Fri, May 3 at 3:15 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank

## When “Gentle” Can Kill

*‘Toxic Beauty’ confronts the toxicity of the cosmetics industry*

By [Judy Wolfe](#) • Published April 28th, 2019 • [Issue 110, Spring/Summer 2019](#)



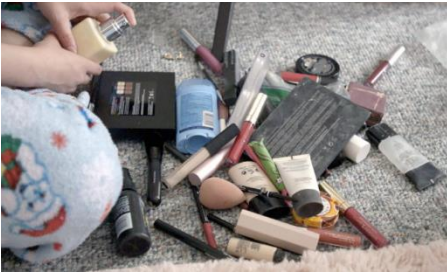
All photos courtesy White Pine Pictures

What did you apply to your hair, skin, or teeth today? Do you ever consider why you use personal care products or cosmetics? Or do you look at the labels to see what the products contain?

Our consumer society has been created by and for the companies that produce a very basic commodity: soap. But through advertising—and even, one could argue, the programming that advertising supports (think soap operas)—we have been persuaded that if we are not clean and odour-free, if our hair is grey, if we are not covered in makeup to hide our imperfections, then we are unworthy of employment, marriage, love and respect. The insecurity felt by women has been exploited in the mass-market age in order to sell soap, deodorant, toothpaste, hair colour, nail polish, cosmetics—and talcum powder.

There have been suggestions for years that these products are toxic. Now there is definitive proof that not only have women's lives been diminished by artificial insecurities, the chemicals in many of the products they buy to allay their fears are, indeed, toxic and potentially cancerous. And the manufacturers and marketers have refused to let consumers know that many things are amiss with their products. They deny the presence of asbestos, for example. As producer [Barri Cohen](#) puts it, “If you asked what exactly is the cancer-causing dose of chemicals in cigarettes, scientists would not have been able to say, even years after the Surgeon General required warnings to be put on all cigarette packages.” With personal care products, the manufacturers have argued that even if there are toxins, the dosages are so small as to be insignificant, without acknowledging the cumulative effect of using their products multiple times every day for years.

Nothing I've written so far is surprising. The market for alternatives to drugstore cosmetics has existed for many years and is even becoming mainstream. The horror we learn about in White Pine Pictures' new film, *Toxic Beauty*, is that the most apparently benign of all bathroom products, “baby powder,” has been identified as a cause of ovarian cancer. And, again no surprise, Johnson & Johnson, a company built on the myths of being “gentle” and of the bond between mother and child, denies the connection.



White Pine has a record of deeply researched films, and their new doc, directed by Phyllis Ellis and produced by Barri Cohen, continues the tradition. Ellis, who made *Girls Night Out* with Cohen and cinematographer Iris Ng for White Pine, has a personal connection to the issue of ovarian cancer linked to the use of talcum powder: as an Olympic athlete, she, like others in her sport, used it three or four times every day, and she knows of athletes who have died from cancer. When Peter Raymont, the president of White Pine, approached her with the topic, she was immediately intrigued.

*Toxic Beauty* took nearly three years to complete, largely because of the complex research involved. Ellis' first call was to Dr. Daniel Cramer, a researcher in Boston. There is an endless amount of research that has been and continues to be done that demonstrates the causal link between certain chemicals and endocrine disruption.

As she looked for ways to overcome doubt and scepticism in audiences, Ellis followed the research where it led her: to other experts, to the women who appear in the film. Cramer introduced Ellis to Dr. Shruthi Mahalingaiah, a Reproductive Endocrinologist and Infertility Specialist, who had engaged several graduate students to conduct research in the field. Dr. Shruthi Mahalingaiah invited Ellis to attend a meeting with the group and permitted her to film it. There she met Mymy Nguyen, who became a subject in the film.

*Toxic Beauty* features interviews with experts, lawyers, women who are suffering from cancer, a woman who sued Johnson & Johnson, and leaders who are advocating for change. The interviews are interspersed with imagery of the products themselves—de-glamorized when seen in vast quantities, slowly oozing—and archival reminders of the ways in which consumer products are marketed to women.

The most moving character is Mel Lika. We see her as she used to be: a strong, capable person who worked as a counterintelligence screener and peacekeeper. Now she is withered and frail as cancer destroys her body and her life. Deane Berg is the cancer survivor who sued Johnson & Johnson, with less than satisfactory results. She has clearly told her story before, and is happy to be able to keep on doing so: her victory is not being silenced. She is treated as a rock star when she comes to Toronto to meet with the women who are trying to follow her lead in suing the corporation whose dereliction of duty they are claiming has poisoned them.



The story of talc, its effects and the advocates who are fighting for warning labels, is interspersed with the fascinating experience of Mymy Nguyen, the young researcher who decided to find out what her own beauty regime was doing to her body. Ellis followed her as she took a test, called Body Burden, developed and administered by an organization named after Rachel Carson's famous book *Silent Spring*. We see Nguyen visit the office, receive the testing kits and then follow her as she first eliminates all products, and then returns to them. Each day she takes urine samples and sends them to Silent Spring. Later, we see her receiving the shocking results: with 27 products on her face, her "body burden" is orders of magnitude greater than the average American. And yet, Nguyen does not completely abandon her beauty products: like others, she just wants to know what is in them so she can make her own choices.

The director included a judicious mix of archival materials, including the type of ads that persuaded women to doubt themselves and buy reassuring products, along with two distinct types of interviews—one with experts, the other with people affected by talcum powder—and some perspective-shifting abstract shots. The exceptional cinematography by Iris Ng contributes to the power of *Toxic Beauty*. The scientists and experts, who come from structured environments, are shot formally. Deane Berg, who was, as her lawyer says, the Erin Brockovich of talc, is also interviewed in a formal manner. The women who are suffering from cancer are remarkable, as they share the impact that talc has had on them and their lives—and Ng took special care in filming them. Says Ng, "With the women, we embraced imperfections of their environment. The characters need to be in a place that's comfortable for them. The situation is never as you imagine it. I was surprised to see how composed the women were. Most of them were living with cancer. On most films, I balance the goal of getting the shot, covering something, leaving with as much as possible. In this one, out of respect, we had to step back, and take as little as possible. We would check in to make sure they were willing to continue. It's a balance between respect and exploitation. We have to remember that they have agreed to be on camera to make a statement about what their lives have become."

Ellis is careful to acknowledge that the people who make toxic products do not wake up thinking, "I'm going to kill women today." She, along with the activists, the experts and the women who are already suffering, wants the government to ban the worst offending chemicals, and to require manufacturers and marketers to put warning labels on their products. Women will always want to look, smell and feel good but they need to be able to make a choice about what products to use to protect their health. Viewing *Toxic Beauty* will scare you and make you angry. And it may just be the spur that's needed to make change.

***Toxic Beauty* premieres on Sunday, April 28 as part of the Scotiabank Big Ideas series at Hot Docs.**



## HOT DOCS 2019: TALKING DOCUMENTARY AESTHETICS WITH INGRID VENINGER DIRECTOR OF 'THE WORLD OR NOTHING'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Interviews](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 28, 2019



After working almost exclusively in one artistic style, it can be a daunting task to attempt to work in an entirely different direction. For Ingrid Veninger, this was precisely the challenge that drew her to making her seventh (and first documentary) feature, *The World or Nothing*.

Set to premiere this year at Hot Docs, *The World or Nothing*, depicts the acclimatization of twin Cuban brothers Rubert and Rubildo Donatien Dinza to their newfound surroundings of Barcelona where they hope to become a famous dance duo. We got the chance to sit down with Ingrid in advance of the film's premiere to discuss her foray into documentary filmmaking, working with the charismatic brothers, and some of her thoughts on representation initiatives.

**Thomas Wishloff: Let's start with a bit of an obvious question. *The World or Nothing* marks a foray into documentary cinema for you. What has been the challenge in moving from a fictionalized form to a non-fiction one? What has been rewarding about the experience?**

Ingrid Veninger: I had never worked without a script. My previous features have been rooted in a certain raw, real world lo-fi aesthetic, but I always started a film with a script. Here, I am trying to tell their story as authentically as possible. No outline, not even a theme. I wanted to put the audience in the position of being in Spain with these twins at a very specific point in their lives; when they've just moved to Barcelona. Documentary has an immediacy of the here and now and I wanted to capture that spontaneity.



**TW: How Did You Meet the Brothers?**

IV: I first saw them in 2015 on New Year's Eve when I travelled to Cuba with my partner, John. It was right before the pre-production of my 6<sup>th</sup> feature, *Porcupine Lake*, which I was determined to shoot in the summer of 2016. The twins were dancing on stage, and they stole the show. I wanted to meet them, but I didn't approach them, and the next day I didn't see them. So, I thought that was that. In the beginning of 2017, when I applied to do the Masters program at York University, I had to make a thesis proposal with my application. The first



## In the Seats – April 28, 2019 (2 of 3)

thing I thought of was the twins. Essentially, I proposed a film with the twins even though I had never met them. I dreamed up a short film idea with the brothers, or they could be part of a triptych with different artists – dancers, musicians, visual artists. On New Years Eve 2017, I went back to Cuba with only one goal: to sit down with the twins face to face – meet them – and see if there was some kind of connection. Well... They were no longer dancing at the resort and after a few days of research, I finally got in touch with them via email, and learned that they were on the other side of the island – in Havana. It was a 12-hour drive from where we were; John and I made the trip. No expectations, nothing guaranteed; I was just going on a feeling. In Havana, John and I met with the twins for two hours, and at the very end... I asked the twins if they could be interested in being part of a documentary. It would be about them, their relationship, their life, and dance. They were interested and I committed to return to Cuba in May of 2018 to make a film. Myself, a cameraperson, my partner, John, would record sound; very small. Then they moved to Spain and we easily shifted to shoot in Barcelona. A whole chain of causes and effects made this film happen – the MFA program at York University being a significant part of it all; encouraging me to make a film utilizing a different process. As a filmmaker, I am always trying to reset, recharge and challenge myself in different ways; that's exciting.

**TW: Are you still in touch with the brothers?**

IV: I'm still in touch with the brothers, absolutely.

**TW: Have they seen the film?**

IV: This was a very participatory documentary. The twins saw an early rough cut; they were the first to view any version of the film. Colleagues told me it might not be a great idea to show a work-in-progress to the lead subjects, because it was so raw and still very changeable. For example, if they loved something I would've been hesitant to cut it, if they didn't like something I might have cut it prematurely. The film was about them. My priority was that they felt it was representative, true, honest. Ultimately, I wanted them to be happy with the film. So, this is a participant documentary involving collaboration, transparency and communication.

**TW: I noticed that this film is very kinetic. Describe the process of shooting subjects who are always in motion.**

IV: I knew I didn't want to reconstruct this film in post-production; I wanted this to be mostly made in-camera so to speak. I was really inspired by camera flow in Eduardo Williams' *The Human Surge*. I wanted to let the real life sequences play out in real time. The way the brothers move around each other is almost like a single organism. I wanted the camera to be like a dance partner, moving very fluidly along with them. Some friends who viewed different edits sometimes wonder how much we choreographed... How much was spontaneous?... I'm comfortable with that sense of ambiguity. Social media, which is a featured element of the film, holds a similar kind of ambiguity with regards to authenticity. I wanted the aesthetic to mirror the questions and uncertainties involved in our relationship with social media. How much is real, how much is fake? It can look spontaneous and authentic, but is it?



**TW: What do you think the film says about chasing your dreams?**

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IV: The twins turn their challenges and obstacles into opportunities. They've sacrificed a lot. They work incredibly hard. In the face of so much that's wrong in the world right now, they embody a kind of positivity, which is represented in the love that they have for each other. Recently, on Facebook, they posted, "we're keeping the faith for those who have lost it". That speaks to dreams, and goal, and desires. All of those things come with a price, and it's certainly not effortless for them or anybody to remain optimistic, but they are committed. Fiercely committed.

**TW: As a female filmmaker can you speak to some of the initiatives taken by festivals like Hot Docs to include more films by female directors?**



IV: Prioritizing gender equity is important, and we can't back off that effort, because it can slide in the dark ages very easily. Opportunities and platforms which attract press (Canadian and International) and connect our films to larger audiences with a keen eye to marketing and generating revenue is vital. It's also vital to represent different voices. We're seeing festivals pay more attention to gender parity and I was happy to learn that this years Hot Docs' line-up of films are 54% — directed by women. In reviewing the Canadian Spectrum Programme at Hot Docs, I was very excited to see films directed by Tasha Hubbard, Rama Rau, Julia Ivanova and so many more awesome female filmmakers. However, there's still a lot of work to do regarding diversity in our industry-at-large. The efforts to prioritize representation need to be engaged and activated, consistently.

**TW: What's Next For You?**

IV: April 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> are busy days with our Hot Docs premiere and the defense of my Masters thesis. After that, I'm not sure... I will celebrate for a while, and then I'm wide open to a new some filmmaking adventures. I would love to some different kinds of collaborations—working on a web series, directing television or someone else's feature script. I'd love to be part of someone else's vision for a change and bring my filmmaking skills to the party. At the same time, I'll be working on my thing, which may be inspired by an unexpected person or place... We'll see what sparks. If anyone reading this has got an original script or a new project idea, hit me up. I'm open and available.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-talking-documentary-aesthetics-with-ingrid-veninger-director-of-the-world-or-nothing/>

## Review: 'Who Let the Dogs Out'

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### *Who Let The Dogs Out*

(Canada, 60min.)

Dir. Brent Hodge

Programme: Nightvision (Canadian Premiere)

On first blush Brent Hodge's *Who Let The Dogs Out* is a silly film about a silly song, tracing with great humour one man's search for meaning from a ghastly pop hit with an infectious chorus. Along the way the film uncovers deeper veins that question the very nature of creativity itself, finding that shared experiences shape work in numerous ways, resulting in performances, all drawing from a common well, where questions of authorship and ownership become murkier the closer one gazes upon them.

The film is based on a presentation of Ben Sisto, a self-declared world expert on the history of the song [Who Let the Dogs Out?](#), most famously recorded in 2000 by the Baha Men. The song sold millions of copies, won Grammy Awards, and appeared in a myriad of film and television programs. Sisto, a cherubic-faced affable storyteller, gives a powerpoint presentation to a group of eager audience members, which displays the complex origins of the song. Sisto articulates his multi-year quest to correct what he saw as inadequate information on the song's [Wikipedia page](#). From there he engages in a Homeric quest to uncover all the variations that have shaped this otherwise risible tune, along the way meeting with musicians, DJs, producers and hair dressers. Each plays a role in the songs origins.

Along the way, Sisto illustrates not only the tenacity of the quest but how even the most trivial piece of pop fluffery can, if taken with appropriate seriousness, illuminate the creative pursuits of a long line of participants, making the case for originality even more challenging. Questions of ownership become blurred, as the search for answers results in further, deeper questions that all serve to complicate matters even further.

Throughout Hodge manages to provide Sisto's onslaught of information in a wonderfully humorous way, consistently showing the farcical nature of both the song and the futility of trying to uncover the source of its hook. At the same time, the filmmaker and Sisto recognize the massive financial and structural forces that are set in keeping authorship as clearly defined as required by law.

The end result is a film that's both preposterous and profound, tracing this absurd life-cycle of a chant-like party tune as it's uncovered in dozens of differing iterations. Given that the song itself poses a question, Sisto's quest seems perfectly in keeping with a quandary that has no answer.

We may never know who truly let the dogs out, but thanks to Hodge's vision and Sisto's mad tenacity, we're treated to a delightfully fun and supremely intelligent take on the attempt to find answers. It may seem entirely implausible that a deeply philosophical film could be drawn from such innocuous sources, yet *Who Let the Dogs Out* manages to supersede all expectations, attempting to answer questions we never knew had to be asked and showing how deeply one can dive in such an endeavor. You'll never hear that damn song the same way again, that's for certain.

Visit [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca) for more information.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-who-let-the-dogs-out>

## Review: 'On the President's Orders'

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### ***On the President's Orders***

(UK, 71 min.)

Dir. James Jones and Olivier Sarbil

Programme: World Showcase (North American Premiere)

Shot with the stark precision and chiaroscuro tones of a Michael Mann film, James Jones and Olivier Sarbil's *On The President's Orders* would be one of the most harrowing escapist thrillers of the year if it weren't for the sombre realisation that the horror captured is entirely, apocalyptically real.

Starting with a security camera view of a drive-by execution, we cut to a speech by the Philippines' strongman leader Rodrigo Duterte, drumming up applause from a crowd as he explicitly ratchets his war on drug users and pushers to the point of state sanctioned murder.

We meet Jemar Modequillo, a charismatic if mercurial police chief of the Caloocan district brought in to restore order. Early scenes show promise, as discipline is clearly deeply required from a police force that can't even follow simple orders on a gun range. In time the situation in the area settles, creating a kind of calm for a while. When the conversation politically needs to shift, and a crackdown is ordered, the brutality increases with scapegoats made of the poor and police alike.

There are many films that have looked at this crisis in the Philippines, including extraordinary fiction works like 2017's *Neomanila* that played last year's Fantasia Film Festival in Montreal. Jones and Sarbil capture the reality on the streets with a heightened sense of cinematic style, not to soften the blow but to show the performative nature of this conflict. Clearly, Duterte wants to create headlines in order to sway the general populace and turn the conversation away from other topics that may be more compromising for his leadership. So drug addicts and the poor of Caloocan become inadvertent actors in a larger piece of political propaganda.

The police dress the part, their facemasks carved into surreal skeletal rictus that complete a militarized uniform. Behind those masks are officers obeying orders from on high, caught up themselves by forces that have turned them into mere pawns to be used for whatever the leadership demands. The population of the area seems inured to the violence; there's a sombre acceptance

which allows a group of young people to eke out whatever joys they get from dance clubs and tattoo parlours, scarred by the death that surrounds them but impotent to do anything about it.

There are no answers to be found in the film, no moments of catharsis that might suggest that somehow this situation is going to get better. If anything, it's a warning about the global rise of authoritarian regimes that have led to the deliberalizing of democracies, where the majority supports (at least temporarily) a ruler that will "clean the streets" no matter the cost. When the full footage of the drive-by shooting is filmed you see an even more quotidian horror, the people standing around dumbfounded but slow to act as a man flails around, shot twice but still breathing after collapsing on the ground. There's no ambulance that comes to his aid, no police that arrive to save him at the last moment. It takes minutes before he is awkwardly, painfully thrown into a private taxi, while a crowd of hundreds including children gather to passively watch the ineffectual and increasingly macabre attempts at rescue.

We passively watch the events as well, as an audience a world away that's as impotent to make any change as those watching the shot man handled like a sack of refuse. With its remarkable access and precise tone *On The President's Orders* draws us in, making us aware of our own inadequacies to elicit change, while feeling the plight of those who are directly affected by power run amok. It's a harrowing, humbling film that through its visually stunning look and intense storytelling, demonstrates with great skill the heart of darkness of this part of the world, illustrating the horrifically banal nature of institutional violence in a way that's emotionally and intellectually shattering.

***On the President's Orders* screens:**

- Sun, Apr. 27 at 8:30 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Mon, Apr. 29 at 3:15 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank
- Sun, May 5 at Hart House



## Review: 'Advocate'

By [Liam Lacey](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### **Advocate**

(Canada/Israel/Switzerland, 105 min.)

Dir. Rachel Leah Jones, Phillipe Bellaïche

Programme: Special Presentations (Canadian Premiere)

A heroic portrait of an Israeli lawyer who defends violent Palestinian offenders, *Advocate* is a lively exercise in documentary advocacy. The subject is Lea Tsemel, a 74-year-old political firebrand, who has dedicated her career to challenging Israel's two-tier justice system, with different standards for Israeli citizens and Palestinians in the occupied territories.

This self-described "angry and optimistic woman," is a natural cinema vérité performer, full of flashing energy, quick sardonic retorts and unselfconscious in her moral convictions. Known by opponents as "the devil's advocate" or traitor to her country, her defence of would-be suicide bombers and other violent offenders may also be hard to swallow for pro-Palestinian pacifists.

Much of the film follows the progress of two inflammatory court cases in 2015-2016. One involves the youngest defendant Tsemel had ever had: a 13-year-old Palestinian boy charged, along with his 15-year-old cousin, with the attempted murder of two Israelis in a knife attack in one of the illegal settlements. In video footage, widely seen throughout Israel, the older boy was shot dead by security forces while the younger was run over by a car before his arrest. The other case was of a 31-year-old woman, left badly burned by a car explosion, in what the court determined was a failed suicide bombing.

During the film's somewhat diffuse middle-section, the film serves as a talking heads plus archival clip biography of Tsemel, who was a law student during the 1967 Israeli-Arab war, in which she served as an enthusiastic volunteer. But the sight of refugees fleeing the Israeli forces evoked family stories of Jewish refugees from the Holocaust and cemented her life-long opposition to the occupation and her challenges to the military justice applied to the Palestinian population.

Michel Warchawski, Tsemel's pro-Palestinian activist husband, offers a wryly amusing account of his wife's ferocity. During a period when he was jailed for abetting Palestinian extremists and complained about the intense interrogations, she told him he needed to man up or he wasn't worthy to be her husband. (Her adult son and daughter speak of her with a tone something between embarrassment and awe). We see how her legal history includes many losses and a few incremental wins, including her part in securing a 1999 Israel Supreme Court ruling which limited the use of torture in interrogations.

Rousing, though not flawless, *Advocate* offers scant input from Tsemel's critics, and treats her as a unique crusading figure, without addressing the work of high-profile Israeli human-rights lawyers such as Michael Sfard and the late Felicia Langer, with whom Tsemel served as an apprentice. Though largely conventional in presentation, the film's use of split-screen rotoscope animation to disguise certain characters, is a bit of a misfire, more irritating than artful. An onscreen text explains that the technique is used to disguise some characters for their safety and dignity. In the case of the defendants in both trials, their images are widely available online.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-advocate>



## Review: 'American Factory'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### ***American Factory***

(USA, 115 min.)

Dir. Steven Bognar, Julia Reichert

Programme: Special Presentations (International Premiere)

Is there any hope left for the American dream? The prospects for the land of the free look pretty dire in the outstanding *American Factory*. The doc offers an immersive and penetrating look into the plight of the USA's working class. The film is the latest work from director Julia Reichert, this year's Outstanding Achievement Award honoree at Hot Docs, and if it's the first time that audiences have heard of the filmmaker, it should prove an excellent introduction to an overlooked body of work. (Reichert shares directing credits with Steven Bognar, and it's easy to see why they took the director prize at Sundance this year.)

The directors go deep into the American Heartland where disgruntled and destitute workers cast their ballots for Trump who hope to regain their jobs they lost as factories closed and the economy collapsed. The doc takes audiences specifically into the Fuyao Glass America factory, where a Chinese manufacturing tycoon resurrects the site of an old General Motors plant in Dayton, Ohio with the aspiration of bringing back jobs and prosperity through an international endeavour. Cultures and values collide as the American workers, initially rejuvenated by the prospects of regaining their jobs, security, and independence, struggle to connect with Fuyao's wholly un-American work ethic. Glass shatters frequently in *American Factory*, and the shards offer one of the most apt metaphors of the American dream that one may ever see.

*American Factory* demands comparison to Barbara Kopple's Oscar-winning masterpiece [\*American Dream\*](#) with its frank and laudably objective portrait of the USA's working class and its struggle for prosperity. (And given my esteem for Kopple, this is about the highest praise I can give a film.) The two films would probably make an excellent double bill as they both go into the trenches of American industry to reveal the deep social and economic divides that convey how the American dream is something to which everyone may aspire, but few can ever achieve. While Kopple's doc entered the Hormel Foods meatpacking plant as workers took to the picket lines in an effort to unionize when the company reduced hourly wages despite posting a \$30 million profit, Reichert and Bognar's film observes the genesis of the labour struggles that lead to a similar confrontation between blue collar and white collar workers.

*American Factory* quickly tells audiences about the plant's closure and the devastating job losses that affected the community. However, it initially offers an optimistic look as Fuyao sets up shop and promises to be the first incarnation of an international endeavour to aid the USA's economic recovery. The filmmakers gain access to employees throughout all lines of work at the company, and they share the hardships they faced at the loss of GM. Stories include enduring three years of unemployment, lost homes, and liquidated self-esteem. The return to work is bittersweet as the frontline workers reveal that they're returning to the factory on severely reduced wages. (One woman says she's now making \$12 per hour when similar work at GM paid \$29.) Similarly, there is cautiousness in the air as the employees return to the factory with the floor offering a notably different demographic: as part of Fuyao's international endeavour, a sizable portion of the workforce is Chinese.

The film is immensely fascinating as Reichert and Bogner capture the perspectives of workers both American and Chinese. Each demographic has preconceptions about the other, and many of the prejudices are transformed as the working relationships progress. The Chinese see the Americans as fat, slow, whiny, and lazy, but change their tunes when they realize that many of the workers have to take another job the moment their shifts at Fuyao end. Similarly, some workers express resentment at the fact that Chinese labourers are taking American jobs, but they soften their stances when they learn that the Chinese have mostly left their families back home for two years and rarely enjoy days off work in an effort to make more money and increase the factory's productivity. The film offers an invaluable lesson on the importance of diversity in the workplace and the benefits of creating an exchange as people from different walks of life interact and share perspectives.

At the same time, the film can't help but observe the major culture clashes that suggests that the Fuyao endeavour sounds too good to be true. For one, Fuyao's chairman, Cao Dewang, doesn't show much concern for American regulations or protocols. His inaugural tour of the factory is quite humorous as he whines about the aesthetics of a smoke detector and blames the building's poor feng shui on the US manager's inefficiency. (The manager helplessly replies that fire codes dictate its height and placement on the wall.) Cao then nitpicks about the placement of a garage door and demands a restructuring of the building that will cost \$65,000 for mere cosmetics. The conditions on the factory floor dismay the American workers and inspectors, who recognize that Fuyao treats safety regulations as soft advisories (at best) and doesn't follow the standards for protocol or waste management. Injuries and worker disenchantment abounds.

The greater clashes, however, are ideological and philosophical. The Americans struggle with the realization that Fuyao sees employees not as people, but as sprockets of a machine. The Chinese industrial character, which favours mass manufacturing of cheap goods of lower quality, doesn't jive with the Americans' pride in producing quality products. The formula to make Fuyao a success simply can't translate when transported to a different country.

The doc humorously underscores the cultural divides when a group of American employees visit the Fuyao headquarters in China and witness firsthand the rituals of depersonalization and assimilation that encourage the workers to see themselves not as individuals but elements committed to the company's overall success. The Chinese factory is awash in propaganda in signs, posters, messaging, videos, and even a full-fledged industrial musical show for the employees on Chinese

New Year. The Americans watch with a fix of awe and astonishment as the propaganda machine works in full force to indoctrinate the employees. Efforts are made to transport the propaganda to the Ohio plant, but morale only decreases.

Similarly to Kopple's *American Dream*, *American Factory* gives fair weight to people at the management level. It follows Cao Dewang as he tours the factories on both sides of the globe and, at first, his intentions truly seem noble. He makes a point of walking the floor and shaking hands with his American employees to welcome them, and advises his senior staffers to adopt American ways and follow the philosophy of "when in Rome." However, Cao is vehemently anti-union, which creates some riveting drama when the goals of the company clash with the reality of the American workplace. As the American workers rally and the Fuyao brass retaliates to keep the enterprise a reality, *American Factory* observes the futility of the American dream in a society ruled by capitalist endeavour. Touring the factory floors proves an emotional rollercoaster for a viewer as one experiences the highs and lows of the workers as they are taken for a ride on this stillborn dream.

Reichert and Bogner's film profoundly holds up a mirror to contemporary society and asks audiences what they value: their happiness or their wages. At the heart of the film is the futile mantra of "making America great again" as the employees reflect on their dashed hopes and disenchantment. What arises is the realization that the great America of yore simply no longer exists. How can one even define greatness for the working class in 2019?

***American Factory* screens:**

- Tues, Apr. 30 at 6:00 p.m. at Isabel Bader
- Thurs, May 2 at 10:30 a.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Sat, May 4 at 6:00 p.m. at Isabel Bader
- Sun, May 5 at 4:15 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox

## Review: 'River Silence'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### ***River Silence***

(Canada, 90 min.)

Dir. Rogério Soares

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premiere)

The *New York Times* film critic Manohla Dargis is an expert on “miserablism.” She has a keen eye for spotting this cinematic style and often identifies it in the work of emerging directors, like early Lynne Ramsay, Andrea Arnold, and pre-Birdman Alejandro González Iñárritu. Miserablism, as the term suggests, features bleakness piled upon tragedy, poverty, and heartbreak. It comes from a good place and can be especially productive in spotlighting stories from impoverished communities, but it’s pure hell to watch, yet often productive in creating empathy for stories that too rarely make the screen.

The most “miserablist” documentary in Hot Docs, to an extent, is *River Silence*.

Bleakness? Poverty? Tragedy? Heartbreak? Misery?  
Check. Check. Check. Check. Check.

A postcard perfect view of Brazil, *River Silence* is not. Director Rogério Soares (in his feature debut) whisks audiences to a bend in the Xingu River to witness a state of affairs that one subject in the film aptly describes as “post-nature.” *River Silence* is a bleak portrait of the consequences of human activity on a grand yet intimate scale. Like Ramsay, Arnold and Iñárritu, his cameras go to a corner of the world to which the general population turns a blind eye and, unlike the characters in his film, he probably has sunnier days ahead given his eye behind the camera and empathetic approach.

The site of *River Silence*’s tragedy is the area surrounding the Belo Monte Dam, which has displaced 40,000 people and all but annihilated the natural environment. Poverty and death saturate the frame as Soares tours the riverside and the outlying areas to which former residents have been displaced in housing projects that aren’t very different from the favelas that epitomize poverty in Brazil. The film is extremely slow, if beautifully shot, as Soares captures the scale of the devastation.

Soares focuses on the stories of a handful of Brazilians whose lives have been upturned by the destruction of the dam. Raimunda, the wife of a former fisherman, shows Soares the remnants of the house she worked tirelessly to build and tours the site of “a future that never came” as she sees her home and neighbourhood—all the roots of her existence, really—decimated by the dam. All that exists there is a mucky toxic wasteland. Tamakwa faces eviction from the impoverished housing community where she raises her children, while the jovial Francinete puts on a brave face and finds hope in her daughter’s pregnancy. The characters of *River Silence* have all faced serious hardships and Soares show that they will continue to do so. The doc admirably balances the micro and the macro by using a few stories to illustrate the collective loss caused by the dam.

*River Silence* is also unbearably bleak as the few elements of hope all prove to be false starts. The film is at its most depressing when a Bible group reflects on the story of the Flood and discuss how the world had to be destroyed in order to be rejuvenated. There’s little optimism for the current generation as *River Silence* shows dead landscapes, dead animals, dead children, putrid waters, and stillborn hope.

The film obviously achieves its purpose in creating awareness for an awful situation by realistically showing the everyday hell of people living it. But when it was done, I put on a few episodes of *Killing Eve* and popped open a bottle of wine, which probably says as much about the apathy of audiences to such an apocalyptic tale as *River Silence* does to the hopelessness of the situation.

***River Silence* screens:**

- Fri, Apr. 26 at 5:15 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Sun, Apr. 28 at 12:00 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox
- Fri, May 3 at 9:30 p.m. at TIFF Lightbox



## Review: 'The Edge of Democracy'

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### ***The Edge of Democracy***

(Brazil, 112 min.)

Dir. Petra Costa

Programme: Special Presentations (Canadian Premiere)

Petra Costa's political documentary *The Edge of Democracy* is like none other, a work both intimate and grand in scope. Her incredible access to the political ruling class of her native Brazil results in a film, which truly tracks history in the making, tracing what may well be the dying throes of the country's experiment in liberal democracy. It's a film of sophisticated nuance and balance, showing the various factors that are contributing to Brazil's current fractured state, resulting in the arrest and impeachment of its most recent leaders.

Costa's film begins with the rise of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a worker who transformed his activism to lead his nation in a vastly more progressive direction. Until the mid-1980 Brazil was controlled by a series of military and oligarchic forces, each exploiting in various ways the resources of the nation, which resulted in massive stagnation and corruption. While general elections arrived by the end of the decade, it was the rise of Lula in 2002 that showed the world the new direction for this South American nation.

This was "hope and change" before Obama popularized the notion in the U.S., and Lula's PSOL party tried to balance center-left and far-left participants. The world took notice, especially as there was a massive shift in the economic status of Brazil's citizenry, with tens of millions rising from abject poverty in the massive transformation. Despite a series of scandals that hinted at continued corruption, Lula would rule two terms, picking as his successor Dilma Rousseff, who in 2010, was voted in as the first woman president of her country.

It's these two that Costa focuses on, her own family allowing her unparalleled access to the leaders as they encounter major blows to their reputations. The film examines in depth the massive levels of hypocrisy that fueled even these supposedly activist individuals, showing that political power especially in the South American context is never quite as pure as it purports to be.

Costa's family reflects the many paradoxes at play. Her mother was a strident activist who emerged from a family that helped buttressed the oligarchic system of control at the heart of the nation. The



various factors that have resulted in corruption both financial and moral set the stage for the current swing back to the right and the disparagement of the dream from those who helped shaped the last few decades.

*The Edge of Democracy* not only provides a deeply effective examination at the rot of political power on the left, it even sets the stage for how the country could swing so radically to the right in response. The populism of Jair Bolsonaro is anathema to many, spelling doom for an experiment in socialist policies undermined by incompetence and avarice, which Costa's film illuminates. Yet the heartbreaking failures on the left surely helped fuel such a reaction, trading promises of stability from a strongman instead of lies from idealists.

Costa's examination is not simply an excoriation of what came before. It provides brilliant context and balance to the story, showing that the same forces that give rise to the Right helped overshadow their own hypocrisies, using notions of purity of behaviour, long a factor in the left's ideology, against them. Echoes of this are occurring throughout the world, with the rise of Illiberal democracies foreshadowed decades ago coming to power, and seemingly immortal institutions being bent to the breaking point by those using the very strictures of civilization against itself in order to consolidate their new regimes.

*The Edge of Democracy* is a harrowing cautionary tale told with a sense of grandeur. The images mix the beautifully staged with the rawness of handheld captured moments. This is a deeply intimate story about the filmmaker's own country and her inexorable connection to it, but its lessons and warnings are anything but localized. Journalistically bold, this highly personal, highly political work sheds light on the unique aspects of Brazil's situation, but equally on the ever-changing landscape that permeates Western systems as forces of change sway populations further and further over the edge of democracy towards the unknown.

## Review: 'My Dads, My Moms, and Me'

By [Tara Hakim](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### *My Dads, My Moms, and Me*

(Canada, 85 min.)

Dir. Julia Ivanova

Programme: Focus On (World Premiere)

In 2005, Canada became the first country outside of Europe to legalize same-sex marriage. This opened a legal way for many gay men to fulfill their dream of having children. In 2007's *Fatherhood Dreams*, Julia Ivanova ([Limit is the Sky](#)) told the stories of gay dads Scott, Steve, Randy and Drew, on their emotional and challenging journeys to becoming fathers through adoption, co-parenting and surrogacy. Randy and Drew adopted baby Jack, Scott connected with a surrogate to have twins Ella and Mac, and Steve fathered and brought up Zea and Jazz in a co-parenting relationship with lesbian mothers Wendy and Cory. Now, a decade later, Ivanova goes back to check on the families and their children in her latest film *My Dads, My Moms and Me*, where she gives viewers a rare view into the daily lives and challenges facing queer parents today.

The film is uninterested in politics, but rather focuses on the everyday in an attempt to find answers to questions that continue to be relevant: to what extent does the upbringing in non-traditional families impact a child? Through interweaving footage from the first film into new interviews with the kids and parents, *My Dads, My Moms and Me* provides an unprecedented chance to observe a decade long progression in several families. Although the film is mostly comprised of interviews, and is un inventive in form, the fact that Ivanova spoke to the families as they were going about their usual day made the film a lot more appealing and entertaining to watch.

Jack, Randy and Drew's son, is now twelve and displaying typical signs of a preteen. He is cheeky, rebellious and looking to have a voice. Scott is now married to Darren, and the twins are extremely well adjusted and simply are children. Mac is a sports fan, and Ella loves to draw and write. Zea, now almost 16, still loves spending time with her father Randy and Jazz, who was a resistant teen in the first film, has come around a little. Through focusing on the day-to-day, the mundane problems and happenings in the families' lives, Ivanova reveals to us that what they are going through is no different than what any family may go through.

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Although at times dull, the film is an important one. Perhaps for me, it was its revealing of the universality of family dynamics and its testament to the bonds of love and family that made it worth watching. Gay parents, lesbian parents or two moms and a dad, *My Dads, My Moms and Me*, is proof that families are families and love is love.



*Screens with:*

***Take Me to Prom***  
(Canada, 20 min.)  
Dir. Andrew Moir

Speaking of love, screening with *My Dads, My Moms and Me* is the short film *Take Me to Prom*, directed by Andrew Moir ([\*Babe, I Hate to Go\*](#)), in which Queer Canadians retell a moment from their prom night. As the subjects tell their stories, some from their living rooms and some in a recreated space that mimics their prom night, Moir interweaves the interview footage with a playful treatment of old photographs or prom home videos, and sometimes creates DIY animations of some of the subject's prom adventures. From the old to the young, from those who skipped prom and got high to those who didn't know they were queer, this short film features beautifully composed, somewhat performative, very nostalgic vignettes which stir feelings of love, freedom and perseverance.

Visit [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca) for more information.

Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](#) for more coverage from this year's festival!

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-my-dads-my-moms-and-me>

## Hot Docs Review: Kifaru

April 28, 2019



By 1971, the giant tortoise population on the Galapagos island of Pinta had been so decimated by a combination of poaching and invasive rodents (also brought on by humans), that only a single male tortoise was known to us. 40 years later when he finally died unceremoniously at the age of 101 inside a pen, Lonesome George was still the last known Pinta Island tortoise. And so, one of many millions of evolutionary experiments on our planet, though likely several million years in the making, came to an end.

In almost all ways, the story in *Kifaru* parallels that of Lonesome George in an eerily familiar trajectory. The northern white rhino population has been devastated by poachers looking to turn some outgrowth on the two-tonnes pachyderms into keratinaceous gold, by selling them to superstitious East Asian cretins who confuse toe-nails with miracle cures. While their wild brethren was dying, the handful of captive rhinos in zoos across the planet could not be coerced to reproduce successfully. Long-bloody-story-short, the last one known, named Sudan, died in March 2018, and this is the story of its last days. Told from the point of the view of Sudan's three keepers, this film is more about the journey than the end. It could hardly be about anything else, when you knew the ending before it began.

One technical complaint that I have with the film is how unusual the camera work is for being constantly out of focus, consistently mis-placing the subject off the center of the frame, which was often very low to the ground. It's as if the filmmakers wanted to convey the point-of-view of Sudan, with rhino's notoriously bad eyesight and and stocky build.

No one would be surprised at my confirmation that *Kifaru* is a plaintive film. But it is also a strangely dignified watch. You feel a righteous anger rising when tourists gleefully pay respect to the last of a species that, but for human disruption, would have continued to be successful. But it would simmer and leave behind shame when you realize that, despite your anger, we are failing to prevent the pulses of many other species from slipping away. As one of the keepers said ruefully: "black rhinos, there are still 5000 of them left...", implying that we aren't giving them the same protection as we are Sudan. I don't argue against the logic that the last of its kind is precious – but how we got to the present hides a truly confounding mystery: what do we love to do when presented with a miracle cure? We study the living-daylights out of it and crucially, we make damn sure we have more. It's what happened with chickens. Why then are there no Purdue rhino farms or Tyson pangolin hatcheries to keep the miracle well flowing?

The truth is painfully clear: deep-down, EVERYONE, both Sudan's keepers and Chinese consumers, understands that toenail shavings in traditional medicine is nothing more than placebo. So, so many of us just don't care, taking a note from a nihilist epitaph: "Nothing saved me. Nothing matters". We will keep chugging along until the next sad passing, human or otherwise. The dignity and the testament of Sudan, is that Nature doesn't care, either. Like any evolutionary experiment before or since, one day soon, it will be the last human on Earth struggling to stand on his/her two feet. And it may not mean anything more than that of the last northern white rhino. If we continue to be enslaved by this destructive logic, then we shall go to our deathbeds alone, never understanding how even a rhino could manage to die surrounded by those who know and appreciate his worth.

*Kifaru* will screen again at the times below. Witness. Or spend the time to do better.

Sunday, 4/28 10:00 AM

Friday, 5/3 4:00 PM

<http://www.panicmanual.com/2019/04/28/hot-docs-review-kifaru-2019/>

## Review: 'Red Moon'

By [Tara Hakim](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### **Red Moon**

(Belgium, 95 min.)

Dir. Tülin Özdemir

Programme: Persister (World Premiere)

Beautifully, intimately and with great compassion, director Tülin Özdemir turns her lens towards the women of her family, specifically her aunt Tuncay, and uncovers a story that has veiled her family in secrets. The name Tuncay in Turkish means Red Moon, the film's title.

At the age of nine, Tuncay was torn from the carelessness of her childhood in Anatolia, Turkey to join her older sister, Ozdemir's mother, in Belgium. There, she took care of Tulin and her brother for three years before yet another decision was made for her. At the age of thirteen, barely an adolescent, an arranged marriage propelled Tuncay into adult life and all sense of a childhood was lost. At one point in the film, Tuncay tells Ozdemir of the night she found out about the marriage. Once all was arranged and decided upon, without either the bride or groom's opinion, Tuncay's mother-in-law took Tuncay, then thirteen, to the corner of the room and told her, "You are ours now." It was at that moment that Ozdemir's aunt felt like she had lost everything. "I was standing but I felt the ground slipping away."

Tuncay is telling her story to her niece, and you can see and feel that. By foregrounding subjectivity, by asserting her own presence in the film, through voice or being in front of the camera, Ozdemir embraces the unavoidable bond and familial ties she has to her subjects. This allows for a more honest, compassionate, and intimate lens on the story. Speaking to four generations of women in her family, gently treated and with great finesse, Ozdemir explores the issues of early marriages, family trauma and the lives of women in general. (Throughout the film, we only speak to and hear from women.) We travel with Ozdemir and her aunt, from the steppes of Anatolia to the northern cliffs, passing through Ghent and Brussels where we meet daughters and granddaughters and revisit sites from Tuncay's past.

A fantastic account of domestic ethnography, *Red Moon* tells the story of one woman but reflects stories of all women. That is its magic.

### **Red Moon screens:**

-Mon, Apr. 29 at 12:30 PM Cineplex Scotiabank

-Sun, May 5 at 5:45 PM at TIFF Lightbox

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-red-moon>



## Review: 'Behind the Shutters'

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### ***Behind the Shutters***

(Belgium, 50 minutes)

Dir.: Messaline Raverdy

Programme: World Showcase

At the start of her pregnancy, director Messaline Raverdy moves into her grandmother's house. While there, she speaks to the older woman about her life, tracing her own maternal heritage, while interviewing the women who worked at her grandfather's coffee factory. At the same time, she corresponds with a nun from a nearby Carmelite monastery. Considering the various roles women take on, Raverdy allows the richness of hidden feminine histories to unfold.

*Behind the Shutters* has a certain whimsy to it. Vintage ads, wordplay, and cute songs pepper the film, while the use of Super 8 footage creates a beautiful, if quaint, look. The style is reminiscent of the work of Agnès Varda, in the use of striking visuals with particular focus on the domestic, personal introspection, and a joyful sense of curiosity. But what is refreshing about Raverdy's film is that this is not simply an appropriation of a Varda-esque style: she backs up her aesthetics with politics.

Agnès Varda was masterful when it came to a fanciful formality matched with in-depth political expression. Raverdy capably does the same. She speaks to her grandmother to learn what life as the wife of a factory owner might have been like. She speaks to worker women, who detail the way the labour of the factory impacted them, and how they perceived the Raverdy matriarch. She contemplates the nuns in her neighbourhood, who, outside of society, have their own form of freedom. And she explores her own changing body as she prepares to become a mother. Examining the diverse roles women take up in society, Raverdy creates a uniquely sensitive ode to the women around her.

### ***Behind the Shutters* screens:**

-Thurs, May 2 at 5:30 PM at TIFF Lightbox

-Fri, May 3 at 4:00 PM at TIFF Lightbox



## Review: 'Because We Are Girls'

### *Hot Docs/DOXA 2019*

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



#### ***Because We Are Girls***

(Canada, 85 min.)

Dir.: Baljit Sangra

Programme: Persister (World Premiere)

*Because We Are Girls* begins with three adult sisters, and a secret. Though we know something has happened to them, Baljit Sangra gives space for these women to be themselves, enjoying the company of family, before letting us know that they have come together for a much more dire reason. Having been sexually abused as children by a male cousin, they are taking him to court to seek justice and put an end to his ongoing crimes.

Sangra's film is definitely not enjoyable. With the harrowing details of sexual violence, and an in-depth look at the repercussions later in life, the film is utterly heartbreaking. But Sangra is careful in her depiction of sexual abuse. She ensures that the survivors have space to express their lives outside of trauma, while equally exploring how trauma can impact the innocuously quotidian. Seeking the support of their family, who are not always capable of giving it, the sisters articulate the nature of their traumas, the stigmas that surround them, and their individual needs to cope and heal.

But this is a film we've seen before. Survivors share the explicit details of the violence they experienced, they "come out" to the people around them, and are laid bare and vulnerable in an attempt to seek a justice that will, regardless, not heal the harm that has already been done. Often, these films are described as "necessary." But it's difficult to watch something like this, multiple times, in different forms, and ignore the fact that "necessary" has not changed. It's not a criticism of *Because We Are Girls* specifically — the film does a capable job at what it's doing — but the repetition of this genre of sexual violence documentary speaks to a stagnation in society, where we are not progressing when it comes to helping and protecting the survivors of assault.

#### ***Because We Are Girls* screens:**

-Wed, May 1 at 6:15 PM Cineplex Scotiabank

-Thurs, May 2 at 1:00 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank

-Fri, May 3 at 6:00 PM at TIFF Lightbox

It also opens this year's DOXA Film Festival.

## Review: 'Born in Evin'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### ***Born in Evin***

(Germany/Austria, 98 min.)

Dir. Maryam Zaree

Programme: Persister (International Premiere)

Maryam Zaree opens her extraordinary film by narrating a Talmudic story that immediately bonds you to her and sets up the doc's storyline. All children are born with a candle on their head, goes the story, signifying that they know everything. But an angel blows out the candle, and they forget all their knowledge. They spend the rest of their lives trying to get it back.

In pre-revolutionary Iran, Zaree's parents were dissidents who opposed the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's vicious autocracy. They continued their rebellion when they realized that the Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic State, was no better. "Just another dictator," Zaree puts it contemptuously.

Zaree's John Lennon and Karl Marx-loving parents were picked up and imprisoned in Tehran's notorious Evin prison for political offenders, a still functioning House of Horrors that is apparently next door to an upscale tea house.

Zaree, a successful actor who resents being sometimes cast as a stereotyped refugee in heavy black chadors, made this debut film to solve mysteries that have haunted her all her life. Born in Evin, she has no memories of the prison, and doesn't understand why she and her mother were released. They migrated to Germany while her father was left behind, waiting to be hung. In Germany, Zaree's mother, who we see in old VHS tapes being happy with her small daughter, earned a doctorate and became the first female refugee mayoralty candidate in Frankfurt. On the basic level of a family story, *Born in Evin* is startling.

Both Zaree's mother and father, who eventually got released and now lives in the west, never talked about Evin. Zaree didn't even know she was born there until a French-Iranian aunt inadvertently told her. She has questions like what did her parents suffer? What did she witness? Who let her and mother out and why? .

Zaree's need to know leads her to France, England, and California, to various events for victims of the regime, some of whom she tries to film. Zaree meets up with the aunt who told her about her

birth, other children of victims, various counsellors and advisors. “Why do you even want to find out the truth?” one of them asks. In another face-to-face, she is probed, “What are you looking for Maryam? What do you want to know?” Sometimes when people are silent, are they protecting you?

Zaree gets confronted by the possibility that her obsessive quest may be pointless. Apart from her story, the doc triggers questions about trauma and the various responses to it.

Meanwhile, through the various characters Zaree links up with, we are once again reminded how, masked by a holier-than-thou ideology, supposedly human monsters indulge in a lust for savage cruelty. At the Iran Tribunal in the World Court at the Hague, a woman describes in excruciating detail what interrogators did to her mother, tortures so extreme—electro shocking her breasts and pouring boiling water into her vagina—a priest during the Inquisition might find them excessive.

Victims were not told where their children were buried, And Zaree’s father opens up enough to show her a towel and a shirt authorities gave him after they hanged the friend who owned them. The recycling was an official policy. Interrogators would also play extended loops of Koranic surahs very loud, presumably to torment people into upholding the faith.

According to a woman in the prison when Zaree was born, an interrogator kicked her mother when she was pregnant, and a prison nurse called her baby the child “of a whore.” The woman can’t understand anyone saying something like that in the name of an ideological right. “The right to do what?” she asks.

Despite the horror stories, *Born in Evin* has many touching, ebullient moments. Zaree’s first documentary was made with simple means, including evocative VHS home movies from her childhood. She assembled it with grace and intelligence, and even humour. Zaree’s voice-over and on-camera presence keeps you close to her, especially when she’s interacting with her family. She might have trimmed some of the dialogue-heavy, interview-like scenes but that’s a quibble. This is a film that should be seen.

***Born in Evin* screens:**

-Mon, Apr. 29 at 10:45 AM TIFF Lightbox

-Sat, May 4 at 6:00 PM at Cineplex Scotiabank

## Review: 'Always in Season'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 28th, 2019



### ***Always in Season***

(USA, 88 min.)

Dir. Jacqueline Olive

Programme: Special Presentations (International Premiere)

Director Jacqueline Olive asks if lynching still exists in the USA in her provocative documentary *Always in Season*, but the film awkwardly strangles itself by having one narrative thread too many. There's a searing true crime saga to be found somewhere within her interrogation of the case of 17-year-old Lennon Lacy, whose death was ruled a suicide when he was found hanging on a swing set near his home in Bladenboro, North Carolina. However, while making the case that Lacy's death was a modern day lynching and a continuation of anti-Black racism and violence, *Always in Season* loses focus on the tale at hand. The result is a film that moves, disturbs, shocks, and enrages, but with mixed results.

*Always in Season* explores the many mishandlings in the investigation into Lacy's death as his mother, Claudia, offers compelling testimony that challenges any argument that her son exhibited the behaviour of a young man who planned to end his life. She relates his daily rituals and love for football, noting small details that suggested he had every hope for a bright future. As Olive follows Claudia through the details of the case and speaks with a lawyer from the NAACP representing the family's demand of justice for Lennon, the doc reveals how blasé police work took little heed in documenting the crime scene and basically fudged a case for suicide instead of looking deeply into the death of a young Black man with obvious symbolic implications in the American South.

Looking deeply at Lacy's death means looking deeply into the community, and Olive wants audiences to know that there are still questions that the USA is too afraid to ask itself. The doc situates Lacy's death within the legacy of lynchings in America and argues that the practice continues despite the fact that some people (naïvely) consider the present a "post-race society." As *Always in Season* tours through Bladenboro and peels back the folksy veneer that masks an underlying toxic racism, Olive weaves through select case histories in America's past. The film is admirably confrontational as it shows audiences a catalogue of photographs and newspaper clippings that document the public ritual of Black deaths by brutal violence. The result is a parade of grotesquery as Olive chronicles a "greatest hits" style list of lynchings that led up to Lacy's death.

One of them features Danny Glover in voiceover as he reads an invitation to a "Hanging Bee" that was published in a newspaper inviting whites from all around to gather, abduct, desecrate, and murder a Black man. The invitation, written in the cordial language with which one might entice guests to visit for cucumber sandwiches and ladyfingers, offers details that become more horrible when one considers that they were published in the open for all to see. Olive confronts this normalization of violence by intercutting Glover's

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narration with archival texts of the NAACP responding to the invitation and alerting authorities, who naturally responded with the same indifference as the police who walked onto the scene of Lacy's death.

Also included in the "the greatest hits of lynching" is one of the most disturbing sequences audiences may ever see. It's a present-day video of four Black people being violently ejected from their cars at gunpoint and marched to the woods, where they're then brutalized and shot multiple times. A baby is cut out of one of the victims and thrown to the ground. It's a horrific sight that feels ripped out of the contemporary #BlackLivesMatter viral videos documenting the deaths of Black people by white cops. It turns out, however, that this scene is a dramatization. Olive looks at the annual re-enactment of the Moore's Ford Lynchings in which four Black people were killed by a white mob at Moore's Ford Bridge in Walton County, Georgia.

This aspect of the film might be effective for some and fatally problematic for others. The doc lets various parties in the annual pageant discuss their need to keep their experience alive. In some cases, it's a need to remind fellow Blacks of an ongoing history of violence and a need to continue to fight for equality. For others, it's a need to atone for the sins of racist parents who were a part of the KKK. Other people in the village, however, think the past should remain in the past and that the country should look to the future. The film's overemphasis on the Moore's Ford Bridge re-enactment, and the sheer repetition of brutally stylized violence, feels more emotionally manipulative and exploitative than productive. One appreciates the film's effort to speak to deeply rooted and pervasive violence in American society, but at some point the Moore's Ford Lynching overwhelms the Lacy murder.

*Always in Season* ultimately loses sight of Lacy's case while focusing too heavily on these historical cases. This is especially problematic in the doc's scattershot depiction of the Lacy case, which introduces a major character, Lacy's white thirtysomething girlfriend, a drug addict with highly dubious credibility and a living situation that included a violent racist at the time of Lacy's death. This element of the case comes out of nowhere late in the game. As a result, the film's investigation into Lacy's death feels ironically lacking while chronicling the doubtless deficiencies into the police's half-hearted inquiry.

Whatever loose ends the film struggles to tie together, however, one cannot deny that Olive hits the bull's-eye in communicating the need to look more deeply into Lacy's death and those of others like him. Flawed as it is, *Always in Season* is a brutally disturbing portrait of racism in the present-day USA.

### ***Always in Season* screens:**

- Sun, Apr. 28 at 6:15 PM at Hart House
- Tues, Apr. 30 at 12:45 PM at TIFF Lightbox
- Sat, May 4 at 6:30 PM at Hart House



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'MASSACRE RIVER.'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) – April 28, 2019

4 Stars



Anyone who has taken a high school history class at some point has heard the phrase: “those who fail to learn their history are doomed to repeat it.” It is a cliché that, more routinely than not, draws a fair number of eye-rolls, smirks, and snickers. It is a cliché that is, until faced with very real examples of moments where awful history seems to be repeating itself.

Suzan Beraza’s *Massacre River* looks at the Dominican Republic some eighty-years after Rafael Trujillo’s infamous paisley massacre, where similar anti-Haitian nationalist sentiments have again reached a boiling point. Following a 2013 constitutional ruling that rescinded the citizenship of over 200,000 Dominican-born residents of Haitian descent, the Dominican government opens up a regularization process for these citizens. Beraza emphasizes one particular story as a sort of case-study; twenty-three-year-old Pikilina finds herself racing the clock to complete her paperwork for both herself, and her two children. In doing so, Beraza provides us with a human face that arguably elevates her film above simple political strife, and allows the audience to make a necessary emotional connection.

Ultimately, this is not a documentary for the faint of heart. There are a couple of pointedly disturbing scenes, and the film’s tone is considerably heavy. Yet, *Massacre River* also feels very much of this time, where we seem to need constant reminders of the ever-growing presence of nationalist sentiment across the world. Beraza’s film is a fine addition into the (unfortunately) ever-growing canon of films about the targets of oppression, and the perpetually mutating face of global nationalism. You will be aware of this film’s importance, and just how much you wish it need not be made.



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE GUARDIAN OF MEMORY'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - April 28, 2019

4.5 Stars



Through all of the hysteria of Donald Trump's border wall crusade and the horrors of ICE's immigration methods and human-rights-violating detention centers, one thing keeps getting lost – the voices of the Mexican citizens who have been forced into the decision to flee their home country, a place that has been deemed the second most deadliest conflict zone in the world behind Syria. In Marcela Arteaga's lyrical and haunting doc, *The Guardian of Memory*, that voice is given back in focusing on the residents of the Mexican border-state of Chihuahua, who were left fearful, uprooted and essentially homeless due to ongoing drug wars.

The story actually begins back in 2008, when the Mexican government sent army forces to Chihuahua to battle the cartels that would traffic drugs through the region into the U.S. Before they knew it, the residents who had previously lived in peace and relative prosperity found themselves caught in the middle and threatened by aggressors from both sides. As the violence escalated, many survivors fled to the border to try and gain asylum. What they found, however, was just a different kind of Hell – the American immigration process.

Arteaga lets the camera roll patiently on her interview subjects as they detail riveting and emotionally painful stories of having loved ones kidnapped and killed by any number of armed aggressors, as well as troubling first-person perspectives of life in an unwelcoming new country. Interspersed are haunting tableaux of the wrecked and abandoned homes and buildings scattered around Chihuahua like a hollowed out warzone. Meanwhile, Texas-born immigration lawyer Carlos Spector fights the good fight for Mexicans trying to obtain asylum, even while admitting that America is the most skilled when it comes political corruption.

It's a beautifully impressionistic portrait of a seemingly hopeless situation.

In the Seats – April 28, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'STIEG LARSSON: THE MAN WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 28, 2019

3 Stars



Sweden's Stieg Larsson earned acclaim in what some international readers know as his fictional *Dragon Tattoo* trilogy. But Henrik Georgsson's documentary *Stieg Larsson: The Man who Played with Fire* shows something else. That he embodied a real life version of those fictional heroes. Through reenactments, it depicted his investigation of the ideologies and strategies of the far right.

In depicting Larsson's life and work, this movie doesn't spoon feed its audiences. There are references here to such things as *The Turner Diaries*, which inspired white supremacists to commit crimes. The reenactments remind us of the real Larsson and his bookish appearance. Within someone who looks like him is a person that scared Swedish Nazis enough to try to stop him.

These white supremacists threatened both him and his colleagues at Expo, a magazine he co-founded at 1995. Footage and photos exists of those crime scenes which thankfully don't have graphic depictions of their victims. The movie uses those events as catalysts for two things. The first is the reaction towards those attacks, and the second is the conflict between Larsson and his colleagues.

Despite those personal setbacks, Larsson became a figure in Swedish news shows. That archive footage shows warns audiences of how white supremacists have legitimized themselves as the Swedish Democrats. What's missing from this film is some information. That party and others like it have garnered 18% of political power in Scandinavia.

There are, lastly, portions in this film capturing blurry footage of right wing extremists trying to threaten journalists. That footage follows talking heads of people who were close to Larsson. They argue that he was eviscerating these people instead of giving them more screen time. This doc tries to argue that same point. It's not the easiest argument to make but the film survives despite of it.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-stieg-larsson-the-man-who-played-with-fire/>

In the Seats – April 28, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'SHOOTING THE MAFIA.'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 28, 2019

3.5 Stars



A strange balancing act occurs within *Shooting the Mafia*, the latest from veteran British observational filmmaker Kim Longinotto, where the documentary's true subject is brought into question. Should the focus of the film be the life of its human subject, or the vast swathes of archival footage that is the human subject's incredible work? Longinotto bravely attempts to do both, however, the extent to which is successful is another matter altogether.

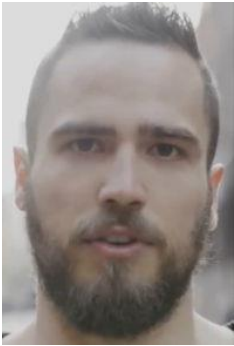
Italian photographer Letizia Battaglia is the subject of *Shooting the Mafia*, and her brazen photography of the criminal activities of the Sicilian mafia stand-out as the high point in her career. Battaglia serves as a narrator for her own journey, covering her early forays into photography to the latter stages of her career. Thankfully, the elder Italian photographer has personality as fiery as her auburn hair, which keeps the viewer engaged. This is when the film is at its strongest, which is a strange twist considering that the other half of this film is the inner workings of the Sicilian mafia. To augment Battaglia's narration, Longinotto uses a mix of archival styles including: news footage, educational documentaries, Battaglia's photographs, and some classic Italian cinema. Hearing Battaglia comment on romances of her youth overtop of a post-neorealist Italian melodrama, is an interesting choice, but also one that belies a sort of aimlessness within the film. I personally struggled to understand this choice. Is it because it reminds us of a stereotypical image of Sicily? Is it because it personally reminds Battaglia of her youth? Is it to provide a contrast between the impending grisly reality with a more idyllic fictional form? *Shooting the Mafia* provides more questions than it answers, but is ultimately an engaging portrait of a fascinating individual and time period.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-shooting-the-mafia-2/>

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE PICKUP GAME'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Victor Stiff](#) - April 28, 2019

3.5 Stars



Hip-hop has a saying: game recognize game. It means a “true player for real” can sniff out the posers and wannabes. If that phrase is true, rap icons like Biggie and Tupac wouldn’t see much of themselves in the players of the pickup game. Co-directors Barnaby O’Connor and Matthew O’Connor’s new film *The Pickup Game* examines a group of men known as pickup artists. Pickup artists use mind games, trickery, and deception to sleep with women. Actually, these d-bags wouldn’t use such flowery language. These deluded wannabes are out to bang, and they’ll do whatever it takes to achieve their goal.

The pickup game mentality blew up in the ‘80s and has festered into a billion-dollar industry. There are countless books, websites, and seminars preaching the pickup gospel. The central tenet being that a man can have any woman he desires as long as he approaches her “the right way.” The right way involves precise posture, boastful language, and showing the woman she’s not in charge.

*The Pickup Game* follows a series of instructors as they break down their techniques to rapt male audiences. We also spend plenty of time watching hidden camera footage of these experts in action. It’s painful watching these guys out in the wild, using psychological manipulation to pull ladies into their toxic orbits.

Most of the times their ploys don’t work. But these pickup industry gurus cut together their videos to make their techniques look like sure bets. But horny guys’ pursuit of women isn’t the only predatory aspect of the doc. The film lays out how pickup instructors’ prey on desperate men, and charge exorbitant prices for classes, books, and one on one sessions.

To paraphrase Jeru the Damaja, these wannabe players are *Playin’ themselves*.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE CORPORATE COUP D'ETAT'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Marc Winegust](#) - April 28, 2019

3.5 Stars



Corporations are not your friends. This is an absolute that audiences should come to understand when companies like Gillette or Apple release advertisements that take a liberally progressive stance on cultural shifts in society. However, how much power do you think Google or Amazon have not just in today's political sphere, but in controlling your life as well? Probably more than you think, as the idea of corporatism, in which a state or organization is controlled by large interest groups, is something that director Fred Peabody explores in *The Corporate Coup D'Etat*.

Peabody frames Trump's presidential election as the United States' tipping point in how it has hegemonically fallen to these giant corporations, and has failed democracy on the individual level, leaving certain cities like Camden, New Jersey or Youngstown, Ohio, which were once booming factory towns, on the brink of destruction. He interviews residents from these cities, journalists, and authors, including John Ralston Saul, who coined the term "corporate coup d'etat" (where this documentary gets its name from) back in 1995, to further illustrate his thesis.

This documentary itself is an interesting footnote companion piece to Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 11/9*, which played at TIFF last year, but don't be shocked to feel like you've never recognized this kind of pattern happening in Canada as well.

In the Seats – April 28, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE VALLEY'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Marc Winegust](#) - April 28, 2019

3 Stars



Nestled between the mountainous region of the French Alps lies the Roya and Durance Valleys, village towns that border between France and Italy. *The Valley* documents how these villages have dealt with a number of Eritrean refugees trying to seek political asylum by illegally smuggling them into France, in order to legally claim their right to asylum under the French constitution.

The good Samaritans of the villages take in these refugees, give them food, shelter, teach them basic phrases to help aid their quest in claiming asylum, but over time, the border police start to catch on to their plans and crack down on the undocumented migrants, resulting sometimes in deportation, or in some cases jail time for civil disobedience.

Presenting how these villages go above and beyond in their willingness to aid these refugees, halfway through the documentary director Nuno Escudeiro focuses on Cedric, who becomes the main advocate in helping these refugees, documenting and photographing them for identification reasons, and making sure that they keep track of them if they get deported.

Given the 72 minute runtime, Escudeiro presents a concise empathetic view on a community that is acting out of the goodness of their hearts and for the betterment of humankind. I wish that it gave the audience more of a point of view from the Eritrean refugees, but with the language barrier that exists, it's not like it hurts the documentary in any way.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-the-valley/>



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'KHARTOUM OFFSIDE'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - April 28, 2019

3 Stars



It's not easy explaining a documentary like Marwa Zein's *Khartoum Offside*. That's because it must always come with an explanation about Western perceptions of Islamic patriarchy. This belongs to a sub-genre of movies about female Muslim soccer players. There's already an assumption that most of the men we'll see are mustache twirling misogynists, which is untrue here.

Men get some screen time and some attention from the male critics who will eventually watch this. But this is a film about women. Zein is a Sudanese expat returning to her country. And she pays attention to what sets these women apart other than being black female soccer players. Conversation take place between Muslim and Christian athlete that have a sense of levity.

Because of the Sharia law in place in Sudan, women can't both play soccer and make films, but here we are. This doc is a revolutionary act as well as her full length debut feature. Her intentions are noble which makes this passable. It's equally understandable that this doc visuals and aesthetic reflects the team's scrappy shoestring budget.

The film also ends with pictures both of female Sudanese football players and filmmakers of past generations. Again, this is more about the present situation in that country, which is interesting enough in itself. But to say that this glosses over the short history of women in both industries is an understatement. Audiences would not have objected against a longer film.

Nonetheless, this film captures its subjects' passion towards football. These women are smarter and more aggressive than I was when I was playing. The film itself emulates these women's spry energies even when they're not playing and are just talking. Why does a country and a religion not allow or financially support them just because of their gender?

## Women in Hollywood – April 29, 2019 (1 of 2)

### INTERVIEWS

#### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Pachi Bustos – “Haydee and the Flying Fish”

BY Gabriela Rico April 29, 2019

Pachi Bustos is a journalist and documentary filmmaker. She has worked as a director, writer, and researcher for prestigious Chilean television programs and nationally and internationally renowned documentaries. She directed the award-winning documentaries “Video Sombra” (2000), “Actores Secundarios” (2004), and “Ángeles Negros” (2007). Her film “Cuentos sobre el futuro” won Best National Film at the 2012 Santiago International Film Festival as well as the Pedro Sienna Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2013.

“Haydee and the Flying Fish” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival on April 30.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

PB: “Haydee and the Flying Fish” tells the story of a woman facing a turning point in her life: the end of a long trial that sentences her torturers and her son’s murderers—a son she carried in her womb when she was arrested by **Pinochet’s dictatorship** at the age of 21.

This is a historic case: the first conviction for torture against a pregnant woman by Chilean Navy agents. But [the film] is not just the story of a single court case. Haydee’s story and her strength, conviction, and commitment also convey how resilience, affection, and networking are fundamental tools for resistance and advancement towards justice.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

PB: First of all, the main character, Haydee, whom I met ten years ago. I found her story of detention and torture heartbreaking, but what struck me the most was her attitude towards life. Her strength, energy, and commitment. Her sense of truth and justice. Her [ability] to retain these qualities in spite of the horrors she experienced.

Like her, 40,000 Chileans were acknowledged by the **Commission on Political Prisoners and Torture** as victims. However, this [acknowledgment] has not been met with justice. The survivors have become invisible within Chilean society—they are not recognized enough. Through Haydee’s story, the film can contribute to [their recognition].

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

PB: I want them to empathize with Haydee’s story, and through her and the hundreds of stories from women in Chile, Latin America, and many parts of the world, envision how the physical and psychological repercussions of torture [persist].

Although more than 40 years have passed, the road towards justice in cases of human rights violations is still very difficult for hundreds of victims.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

PB: To make a film that talks about the horror [while] avoiding the morbid [and] explicit representations. To give a visual perspective on what was not left on record and what remained in time and in the body as the memory of pain.

## Women in Hollywood – April 29, 2019 (2 of 2)

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

PB: We started this film almost five years ago. During the development and production stage, we obtained funds from two Chilean public institutions: CORFO and the Ministry of Arts, Cultures, and Heritage.

We received support as a co-production with Brazil through CURTA, a television channel. Thanks to them, it was possible to add resources from ANCINE, the Brazilian National Cinema Agency, and financing from the Audiovisual Fund and the Regional Development Bank Do Extremo Sul Fund.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

PB: I think it was curiosity and the desire to tell the unknown, invisible stories. The desire to give them visual quality and share them with many people.

### **W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

PB: The best advice is [to have] perseverance, confidence in the process, and the conviction that with work and enthusiasm, it's possible to accomplish what you want for your projects.

Fortunately, I don't think I've received any bad advice.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

PB: Don't lose your passion. Don't give up when things don't turn out as you expected. Enjoy the road, seek alliances, and persevere.

### **W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

PB: "The Beaches of Agnès," directed by Agnès Vardá, is one of my favorite films and inspirations. Her endless creativity, her particular way of approaching the most diverse subjects, and her passion, sensibility, and tireless work are marvelously reflected in this documentary. It's a manifesto of her work and her way of seeing and understanding filmmaking.

### **W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

PB: I feel women are even more empowered now—the older ones and especially the younger ones. I teach at universities and I see in my students that energy and confidence.

I love believing that young people and new generations are committed to a different world, where men and women can develop with equal opportunities and without discrimination.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-pachi-bustos-haydee-and-the-flying-fish/>

## 'When We Walk': A Cinematic Letter from Father to Son

BY JASON DASILVA



From Jason DaSilva's "When We Walk." Courtesy of Jason DaSilva

*Editor's Note: Filmmaker Jason DaSilva premieres his latest work, When We Walk, an [IDA Pare Lorentz Doc Fund](#) grantee, at the Hot Docs Canadian Documentary Film Festival this week. He shares his thoughts here on the making of, and his hopes for, the film. As his health declines due to Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis, DaSilva has crafted this article in the form of a letter to his son—as he has done in the making of When We Walk.*

To my son, Jase DaSilva, for whom this film is dedicated.

My son, I think about you all the time. I want you to grow up with me. I want you to know me. I want to be an active part of your life. I want to be there whenever you need me. I want to be able to watch you at your soccer games, school plays and musicals. I believe that a father and his son should be around each other. I want you to know that there is no one I love more than you.

For the past three years, my health has been declining, and around this time, you moved away from me. Had I been able to see into the future, I would have done everything to keep you with me. When you left, I had the ability to use my hands. I am now quadriplegic; I cannot use my arms or legs. These days, I drive using a head mount on my special wheelchair. I turn left or right and go forward or back, just by moving my neck. I know the time we have together is limited. Since I was diagnosed with Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis (PPMS) in 2005, it has been a consistent challenge, to say the least. I documented this struggle on film with [When I Walk](#). Now I continue telling our story through [When We Walk](#).

Let me tell you a little more about me. As a filmmaker, my goal is to make visible those who are unseen. Through my films, I tell the stories of people with underrepresented voices. These days, through filmmaking (qualitative storytelling) and [AXS Map](#) (quantitative storytelling), I try to do what is right. In a number of films I have followed the path of immersive journalism, prying for the best of humanity in the most challenging and tragic of circumstances. For quite some time, I've embedded myself as something of a frontline filmmaker—but nothing could have prepared me for what I've encountered over the last three years in the making of my most recent feature, [When We Walk](#).

## International Documentary Association – April 29, 2019 (2 of 3)

Since the release of *When I Walk*, *When We Walk* has been in production. This was a film intended as a letter to you, Jase, which I created in order that you could learn about me and about issues of disability. As a quadriplegic filmmaker suffering from PPMS, communicating to you about my experiences and challenges is one of the things I hold dearest.

Your mother and I pursued this for three years, filming the time before your birth, the day of your birth and then the aftermath. In 2013 and 2014 I went on the festival circuit to promote *When I Walk*, and I was continually on the road. Over this time your mother and I were growing more distant. But it was when your mom made the decision to move away to Texas and bring you with her that everything changed dramatically.

You may not understand all of this yet, but you will as you grow up. I know that you are going to grow up to be a smart and inquisitive individual. So I have no doubt that you'll be able to comprehend what I'm about to break down here: Currently, New York Medicaid provides me with 24/7 in-home care. Recipients like me would lose their benefits if they moved to a new state. After they move, they must reapply, a process that may take six months to three years. Additionally, there is no guarantee that they will be accepted. Even if they are accepted, they may suffer a decline in services. If I move to Texas to be close to you, once I receive my Medicaid benefits, they would only cover a maximum of 48 hours a week. With such limited coverage, I would have to be placed in a nursing home. If that happened, my life as an independent filmmaker, activist and a contributing member of society would end. The drastically reduced level of care available in nursing homes would mean the loss of my mental and physical well-being.

I know this firsthand, as I actually checked into a Texas nursing home. No one was available to help me do basic things, like using the restroom, eating or making phone calls. Tasks relating to my filmmaking and advocacy work, like writing, responding to emails, and editing, were impossible. It was difficult to make arrangements to see you. I was not free to be the father I want to be for you.

Around the time that you moved to Texas, a situation beyond my control caused me to lose the bulk of my funding to complete this film. This made it a challenge for *When We Walk* to see the light of day. All of a sudden, nobody wanted to touch the documentary—least of all the same institutions that tout their commitment to “freedom of expression” and journalistic sovereignty. It went on this way for a while, until financially I couldn't keep going. After my funding was cut, I didn't have any income source to make the film, for the past year and a half. The bizarreness is that *When We Walk* is the simple exercise of a father's desire to talk to his son while he still can, and is exactly the kind of story that needs to be shared with people with disabilities and their families, far and wide. I was determined to make this film.

Over this time, I've had what might be called a quadruple existential crisis. First, losing you. Second, the thought of losing my career. Third, an ongoing loss of my health. The fourth? My midlife crisis...turning 40. Within this time period, I lost the ability to move my arms completely. At the time when you left, I was able to

## International Documentary Association – April 29, 2019 (3 of 3)

lift my arm up to wipe away my tears when you were leaving. But I know that I can now no longer lift my arms up at all, and I've now lost the ability to see. I've asked myself the question, What kind of filmmaker can't see his own work?

While some large programmers and distributors would not take a chance on this film, there have been several organizations that have really come to my rescue over this ongoing process. The [ReelAbilities Film Festival](#) has given a spotlight to my short film, *The Disability Trap* that streamed on *The New York Times Op-Docs* last year and was co-sponsored by Firelight Media. My Canadian brethren at the [Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival](#) are premiering *When We Walk*, and the Center for Asian American Media will be featuring the film as their documentary centerpiece at [CAAM Fest](#) in May. I have to thank my editor, Simeon Hutner, who has stuck with me through thick and thin, and I have to thank IDA (International Documentary Association) for giving me a chance to tell my story here. I also have to extend my thanks to the countless people with disabilities who have been and remain my strongest source of inspiration. Through it all, I consider myself lucky, because I have ultimately been able to tell my story as I wish to tell it, while others in my position too often live out their existences across the USA and Canada in nursing homes, without the hope of a voice.

My story is a small contribution to the ongoing movement of people with disabilities—and their supporters—who pick up a camera to tell their stories. I remember those who ascended the steps of the US Capitol Building on their hands and knees in the 1990 “Capitol Crawl” for the passage of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). I remember that I am in a position to share my work today because of the efforts and advocacy of activists like Judith Heumann and many great disabled artists and advocates like my colleagues James LeBrecht and Lawrence Carter-Long.

I am a filmmaker who can no longer view the medium that I am working in. I can no longer lay eyes on the things that I make while making them or after completion. This, more than any other time, is when your presence—the sound of your voice, the smell of your hair, the opportunity to talk to you about everything there is to discuss in life—would make all the difference in the world. At the same time, I believe in having a growth mindset versus the alternative—a fixed mindset. Challenges are a way for us to learn and get better over time. At the end of all this, my takeaway has been that no matter the odds, we must remain steadfast in shedding light on the things that matter most, working toward the best social good for the generations that come after us. These are all values that I want to show you and share with you in the making of *When We Walk*.

Jason DaSilva  
Director and Producer  
*When We walk*

<https://www.documentary.org/online-feature/when-we-walk-cinematic-letter-father-son>



Variety- April 29, 2019

## Kino Lorber Takes North America on 'Disappearance of My Mother' (EXCLUSIVE)

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#)



CREDIT: HOT DOCS

[Kino Lorber](#), in association with blockchain-powered TVOD platform Breaker, has acquired North American rights to Beniamino Barrese's documentary "[The Disappearance of My Mother](#)," which had its world premiere at the Sundance Festival earlier this year, *Variety* has learned exclusively.

The deal was announced Monday at the [Hot Docs](#) Canadian Intl. Documentary Film Festival. It was negotiated by [Kino Lorber](#) SVP Wendy Lidell and Autlook Film Sales North American sales and acquisitions representative Ania Trzebiatowska.

"[The Disappearance of My Mother](#)" follows iconic '60s fashion model turned activist Benedetta Barzini, a muse to artists and image-makers like Andy Warhol, Salvador Dali, Irving Penn and Richard Avedon. For four decades Barzini has fought for the rights and emancipation of women, as a professor, journalist and radical feminist. Now facing an existential crisis at the age of 75, she decides that she wants to leave everything and everyone behind, even as her son – director Beniamino Barrese, who has captured her on film since he was a child – is determined to use his camera to preserve his own memories of her.

"The Disappearance of My Mother" turns into a battle of the wills between a headstrong mother and son over capturing her final images through film. Produced by Nanof and RYOT Films, it will have its theatrical premiere this fall and be available on VOD and home video this winter.

"I filmed my mother with endless admiration, hoping that the rolling of my camera could help me preserve her. Forcing her in front of the lens forced me to ask myself why is it that we tell stories, why is it that we make images, and what is the power struggle that gets established between who films and who is filmed," said Barrese. "I am grateful now that I know our film will be seen in Canada and the U.S., which once upon a time took my mum Benedetta and gave her a job because of her beauty. I hope she will challenge and inspire the audience just as much as she keeps inspiring and challenging me."

"I was completely seduced in Sundance by Benedetta Barzini and the loving intimacy with which she is filmed by her son in this very personal documentary portrait," said Kino Lorber's Lidell. "This is a film about relationships: the relationship between women and the camera's gaze, and between a son and his mother. These emotions are universal and I hope they will resonate as deeply with audiences as they resonate with me."

<https://variety.com/2019/film/news/kino-lorber-buys-north-america-rights-disappearance-of-my-mother-1203199759/>

## Gravitas Acquires U.S. Rights for ‘Inside Lehman Brothers’ (EXCLUSIVE)

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#)



CREDIT: HOT DOCS

[Gravitas Ventures](#) has picked up U.S. rights for the documentary “[Inside Lehman Brothers](#),” which chronicles the story of the whistleblowers who paid the price for exposing the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis, *Variety* has learned exclusively.

Gravitas announced the deal, which includes digital and TV rights, on Monday at the [Hot Docs](#) Canadian Intl. Documentary Film Festival. The BBC’s documentary strand Storyville also acquired the film recently.

“Inside Lehman Brothers” is director Jennifer Deschamps’ account of the mostly female whistleblowers who recognized the early warnings signs of a subprime mortgage crisis that would go on to rattle the global economy. When they tried to raise the alarm about corrupt lending practices at financial institutions like Lehman Brothers, they were subjected to harassment and threats instead.

Though many of the institutions at the center of the scandal have since gone back to business as usual, “Inside Lehman Brothers” is a cautionary tale of how easily bad habits can come back—and how far-reaching the damage can be. The film had its world premiere at DOC NYC and also screened at the Santa Barbara and Cleveland film festivals. A limited theatrical release in the U.S. is slated for the fall.



“The Lehman Brothers collapse reverberated throughout the world, impacting countless communities. With a deft hand, ‘Inside Lehman Brothers’ director Jennifer Deschamps chronicles the lives of those who were there when the puzzle pieces of truth were uncovered,” said Gravitas’ acquisitions manager Nick Royak. “This doc rings the warning bell again for our public to remain vigilant and informed. The Gravitas team is very proud to be a part of this movie’s U.S. release.”

“Inside Lehman Brothers” is produced by Ina Fichman of Intuitive Pictures (Canada) and Frederick Lacroix of KM (France), in association with ARTE, the documentary Channel, and Société Radio Canada.

## ‘Buddha in Africa’ Director Nicole Schafer on China’s Soft Power Play

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#)



CREDIT: THINKING STRINGS MEDIA

If you were looking for evidence of Chinese designs on building a modern-day empire, you would have to look no further than Africa: a vast continent whose natural resources – and government borrowing sprees – have helped fuel the engine of China’s economic growth. So goes the conventional logic, at least; yet the reality of Chinese investment and influence on the continent is more complex, as evidenced by South African director [Nicole Schafer](#)’s “Buddha in Africa,” a years-long study of one teenager growing up in a Chinese Buddhist orphanage in Malawi.

Schafer’s documentary, which world premiered at [Hot Docs](#), is a sensitive portrayal of a young man torn between the kung-fu dreams and Confucian doctrine of his Buddhist upbringing, and a Malawian culture whose powerful roots might ultimately be holding him back. Through the lens of one teenager’s journey, “Buddha in Africa” paints a complicated portrait of what’s been described as the latest chapter in Africa’s long struggle against colonization.

Schafer spoke to *Variety* about Chinese soft power in Africa, the convergence of two drastically different cultures, and how her South African ancestry offers a distinctive lens on the 21st-century scramble for Africa.

**You first came across the story of a Buddhist orphanage in Malawi when you were working there as a journalist. What did you expect to find at the Amitofo Care Center (ACC) before you saw it with your own eyes?**

I was working on a story for Reuters’ magazine program *Africa Journal* about orphans in Malawi at the time that Madonna was adopting her second child, Mercy, in 2009. I was actually quite surprised during this period of research that there were quite a number of different orphanages or institutions promoting different cultural practices, from Dutch Reformed Christian institutions, to Islamic Turkish ones. Madonna subsequently set up her Kabbalist institution, too.

With this Chinese Buddhist orphanage, it also happened to be the time when Malawi and other parts of Africa were entering into official diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China, and there was all this debate about China’s supposed colonization of Africa. I felt this orphanage was an interesting way of engaging in these debates. For the first time, one was seeing the impact of Chinese cultural influence on the lives of these African children. It played into many of the Western

fears about China's supposed colonization of not only the continent's resources, but this idea of China colonizing African culture, and African children, which is essentially the future of the African continent. I was really captivated.

**China's growing influence in Africa is almost always depicted within the framework of economic policies, trade, foreign resource extraction. Did you think the use of "soft power" on display at the orphanage offered an important counter-balance to that narrative?**

It's very unusual to find a place where one can so vividly see the convergence of these two very different cultures coming together under one roof. Despite the extensive numbers of Chinese nationals that have come into Africa in recent years, African and Chinese communities still live very separate lives—I think primarily because of the cultural barriers. The language makes the Chinese culture certainly very inaccessible to Western, African people. In that respect, this orphanage is very unique. I felt it was a very interesting way to look at the cultural differences, some of the tensions that exist between these two cultures, but at the same time, the very real relationships that are being forged interculturally through personal story.

**How did you find Enock, and how long did it take to follow his growth and his journey over the course of this film?**

When I first went to the Amitofo Care Center, I was just doing a little video feature. I went in there for half a day to film the story, and the organization actually put me in touch with Enock. I asked if they could identify one or two kids who were fluent in Mandarin, and good at kung-fu, who would be able to talk to me. Enock has always been one of the organization's model students. He was always one of the favorites. The organization do these international tours for fund raising, and he was always one of the star performers.

It took many years to capture his story and to build access. When I first started filming, he was very used to doing all the promotional inserts for the organization, so he would say all the right things. He was very rehearsed in front of the camera. So it took quite awhile for me to break through that, and to get through to the real Enock. At the same time, he was also growing up, so I had all these other challenges. It was quite a challenge to try to capture his full story. It took a good four years of filming.



CREDIT: THINKING STRINGS MEDIA

**Master Hui Li, the Buddhist monk from Taiwan who established the ACC, seems to have genuine warmth for the orphans in his care, but he's also condescending and often blames**

**Malawians themselves for the fact that their country is poor. What did that attitude reveal to you about Master Li, his intentions, and the orphanages he's establishing across Africa?**

There are many scenes in the film that show this kind of tension between the Chinese characters being caring and supportive, but at the same time harsh and patronizing. While the monk and other characters have good intentions and mean well, I think there is a lack of awareness around the historical context between Chinese and African communities. This idea that the poverty of Africa is the fault of Africans rather than the centuries of Western colonialism, and then the stifling loans and structural adjustment programs that came after "independence," is a view that is very much echoed by the West in relation to Africa.

As a white South African my ancestry represents the legacy of colonialism on the continent. So from this perspective I feel scenes like this are very much a mirror of my own context. The monk is able to provide Enock and his friends with a remarkable opportunity and the possibility of a future that would have been very different had they remained in their villages. But the question is to what extent the monk will be able to "save" Africa without perpetuating the cycles of the past.

**Towards the end of the film, as Enock prepares to make the difficult decision to either stay in Malawi or continue his studies in Taiwan, he wrestles with the personal sacrifices he'll have to make – leaving his country, his family and friends – in pursuit of a better life. How do you think that dynamic plays out at the national level, and the prospects for development that China is offering Malawi and other African nations?**

I see Enock's dilemma very much represents the greater development affecting the questions around the future development of the African continent, especially within a globalized context. It's not only about China and Africa, it's also about Africans' relations with other foreign nations, including the former colonizers. I suppose it's just this idea that the key to the future of the continent's development is always held by outsiders, and that in order to succeed, we always have to adapt to foreign value systems and policies. I think Enock's story challenges this idea in very refreshing ways.



## Hot Docs' Slate, Industry Program Pushing Women to the Fore

By [JENNIE PUNTER](#)



Last year, for the first time in its 25-year history, the [Hot Docs](#) film festival achieved [gender parity](#) in its slate, at a time when many other large cinema organizations were just signing – or still working towards – their versions of 50/50 by 2020, the influential gender equality model for film funding launched by the Swedish Film Institute in 2012.

This year, a whopping 54% of the 234 Hot Doc titles are female-led, from high-profile films like Rachel Lears' "Knock Down the House," Nanfu Wang and Jialing Zhang's "One Child Nation," and Petra Costa's "The Edge of Democracy," to provocative buzz docs such as Rama Rau's "The Daughter Tree," Maya Newell's "In My Blood It Runs," and Barbara Miller's "#Female Pleasure."

"[Hot Docs](#)' audience is 67% female—we are representative of our community," said director of programming Shane Smith. "Getting to [gender parity](#) wasn't that difficult. When you are actually looking for something you can find it. Many female-led features we've presented have received our highest audience ratings ever. We consider our base when we make our final selections. The work is strong, the audience is there."

To paraphrase: Gender parity isn't rocket science.

Although gender equality wasn't something Hot Docs had been specifically tracking or working towards, Smith said studies published by research and advocacy organizations like the Center for the Study of Women In Television and Film and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media fueled conversations, while the rise of the #MeToo and Time's Up movements urged the organization to look at its numbers and see if it could do better.

Hot Docs' programming team has been majority female since Charlotte Cook was director of programming, from 2011 to 2015. "Hot Docs has a built-in level of interest and insight on gender issues, and commitment to ensure we have a diversity of voices in our films," Smith said. "When I came on board, I wanted to ensure we kept working on that."

The festival's 2018 sidebar program Silence Breakers, which showcased female-led films inspired by #MeToo, received a strong response from audiences. This year, Persister – selected by senior international programmer Angie Driscoll and the senior programming team – expands the scope of



stories about women, told by women, with films such as Marwa Zein's "Khartoum Offside," about Sudanese women who fight for their right to play soccer, Yu Gu's "A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem," and Pachi Bustos' world-premiering "Haydee and the Flying Fish," about Chilean activist women who were rounded up during Pinochet's regime.

This year's Redux sidebar showcases Studio D, "an institution that concretely addressed the lack of films by women," according to programmer Kiva Reardon. The National Film Board's ground-breaking studio was founded in 1974 by Oscar-winning producer and director Kathleen Shannon, and soon afterwards was winning Oscars for films like Beverly Shaffer's "I'll Find a Way," Terre Nash's "If You Love This Planet," and Cynthia Scott's "Flamenco at 5:15."

American veteran documentarian [Julia Reichert](#), who co-directed with Steven Bogner the Sundance best direction winner "American Factory" (also screening at Hot Docs), is the subject of Hot Docs' Outstanding Achievement Award Retrospective, which includes her Emmy-winning "A Lion in the House" (also co-directed with Bogner) and several others notable docs.

"Julia was one of the first female feminist documentary filmmakers, and has been doing this work – on labor, on women's issues, on social issues – for a long time," Smith said. "She is under-heralded, so this is an opportunity to introduce her work to audiences."

With the conference, the Forum, and other market activities kicking into high gear this week, Hot Docs can offer hard evidence, should anyone ask, that its festival industry programming and year-round film funds and training are also rocking gender parity.

"We only measured it for the first time this year," Hot Docs industry programs director Elizabeth Radshaw told *Variety*. "We didn't realize that across all of our funds we have awarded over 50% to women; of the 70 fellows in our Doc Accelerator Lab over the past six years, 50 were women. Over the past five years of the Forum, we've hovered around 56% female-led projects, and Dealmaker projects are around 51%. It's always reflected our community and been a clear intention of our team to just do it."

"I don't know of any other festivals that are quite at 50/50 yet," Smith said, "But we've shown the audiences are there, and the work is there, so we hope we're providing some kind of leadership."

## Hot Docs '19 honors Peter Raymont with the Don Haig Award

By [Playback Daily](#); April 29, 2019



White Pine Pictures president and co-founder [Peter Raymont](#) has been selected as the 14th annual recipient of the Don Haig Award.

Selected by a jury of independent producers, the award recognizes a Canadian filmmaker's vision, entrepreneurship and commitment to mentoring emerging Canadian creatives. Set to be presented at a Hot Docs awards ceremony, the CA\$10,000 cash prize honors a Canadian independent producer with a feature-length film screening in competition at the festival.

This year, two White Pine-produced docs will take part in Hot Docs '19: *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* from director Fred Peabody, and director [Phyllis Ellis](#)' *Toxic Beauty*. *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* discusses the power that corporations have in the U.S. and the widening income gap, while *Toxic Beauty* examines a class-action lawsuit brought against Johnson & Johnson. Raymont (pictured, left) serves as a producer and exec producer on both projects.

As part of the award, the recipient also has the option to name an emerging female doc-maker to receive a \$5,000 cash prize from Telefilm Canada and professional development opportunities from the Hot Docs Festival. This year, Raymont has selected writer/director Fazila Amiri (right) as the recipient of this support.

Raymont has served as a producer and director on more than 100 films and TV series over the course of his 48-year career. In addition to co-founding White Pine Pictures (formerly Investigative Productions), he is one of the founders of The Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC), a non-profit that represents the interests of Canadian documentary filmmakers.

Some of his credits include the 2007 Emmy Award-winner *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Romeo Dallaire*, *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman* and *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*. Both *A Promise* and *Genius Within* were previously shortlisted for Academy Awards. Past Don Haig Award winners include [Ina Fichman](#), [Daniel Cross](#), [Ed Barreveld](#) and [Anne Pick](#). Raymont will receive the prize at the Hot Docs Awards on May 3.

*From Playback Daily. Photos courtesy of Hot Docs.*

<http://realscreen.com/2019/04/29/peter-raymont-wins-the-don-haig-award/>

## To Connect Us To Our Afghan Heritage, My Dad Bought Us Plots Of Land In Kandahar, Saskatchewan

After my dad committed our inheritance to a dying farming town of 15 residents, two hours from the nearest airport, we took an epic journey. We discovered way more than a patch of earth.

By Aisha Jamal Updated Apr 30, 2019



Abdul (left) and Aisha. (Photo, Andreea Muscurel)

“Do you think you were making it easy for yourself by making a film about your family?” a university film student asked me during a talk I gave about my first feature documentary, *A Kandahar Away*. The question surprised me and it stumped me.

When I started pitching my documentary five years ago, I thought it would be an amusing endeavour. Seemingly on a whim, my father had bought my siblings and I plots of land in Kandahar, Saskatchewan, and I wanted to document our family trip to our new acreage. My family is made of strong personalities and opinions, and so I did think long and hard about inviting multiple cameras along on our first family trip in over 10 years and even *harder* about sharing our intimate family arguments with an audience full of strangers. But the making of this film was far more difficult than I ever imagined. It forced me to confront my preconceived ideas about my family, myself and even my country.

My family of seven—I have two sisters and two brothers—moved to Canada from Kandahar, Afghanistan in 1991. In those early days, we were busy learning the language and customs, but once we settled into our life in Vancouver, Canada my father’s memories of Afghanistan started flooding to the fore. He started to amass a sizable collection on his homeland, building a library of books in Pashtu, our mother tongue, and buying VHS tapes of films either filmed in or about Afghanistan. When he discovered that there was another Kandahar right here in Canada—in Saskatchewan, about two hours east of Saskatoon, about 10 years ago, he bought each of us a plot of land big enough to build a modest sized house on. I thought it was ridiculous. Going simply on the connection of a name, he had committed our inheritance to a dying farming town of 15 residents, two hours from the nearest airport.

There was an obvious reason my family had not taken a family trip together in so long—we are not exactly easy-going people and “going with the flow” is a foreign concept to us. Like in most families, we each play a specific role that we adapted early on in life. My sister Hasina, for example, is the middle child and the bridge between the different alliances we draw in the family; between the brothers and sisters, the older and younger and the more temperamental and less so. My brother Nasser on the other hand is the spoiled baby of the

## Chatelaine – April 30, 2019 (2 of 3)

family with almost superhuman athletic abilities and I'm the absentminded professor and artsy weirdo, with the patience level of a five-year old.



*The whole family walks along a country lane. (Photo, courtesy of Kitab Productions / "A Kandahar Away")*

To make this documentary, I had to plunge headlong into these roles, and analyze what makes my family tick. I spent countless hours with my father, talking about this incomprehensible gesture. I joined him on many walks down memory lane and heard the stories of his early road trips through Afghanistan and his difficult memories of leaving his parents behind. I asked questions I never had the occasion to ask, or if I'm more truthful, never had the patience to ask. What was it like for him, a man with five children to migrate as an adult from a country and culture that he deeply loved to one that is different in every regard, from language and lifestyle to weather? I learned to see my father not as misguided in his act but as someone seeking a connection and continuity with the Kandahar he loves. For him, his present is deeply coloured by his past and it is impossible for him to let go. His purchase of land in the Canadian Kandahar is his way to let us have a piece of home, even if it's the Canadian Prairie version. I realized that although he is happy here, a part of him will always remain in the more uncomplicated past of Kandahar, Afghanistan. And I realized that's okay.

During our visit to the Canadian Kandahar, my father made a suggestion that tested my new-found empathy for him. As a way to connect the two Kandahars even further, he suggested we build a war memorial to fallen Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. Although my father doesn't see it the same way, for us siblings and self-described socially progressive lefties, the idea to memorialize an invasion is an outrageous one.

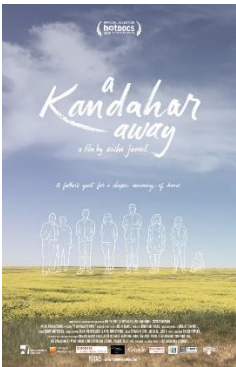


*Abdul (left) and Aisha walk on a snowy road. (Photo, courtesy of Kitab Productions / "A Kandahar Away")*

Before this shoot, I would have guessed that the only person who could bring peace and reconnect the different sides of the argument would be my sister Hasina, a natural peace maker. I looked to her to ask for understanding and patience in moments of disagreement, but she shattered my expectations and the role I had assigned her. Hasina came out the strongest in opposition to my father and she did not hide her moral outrage that an Afghan refugee, who fled war and violence, wanted to memorialize the Canadian military. My respect for her has grown and I realize that she is willing to remain in uncomfortable territory if she feels she is in the moral right.

But perhaps the biggest shift has been my relationship to my brother Nasser, the youngest of us five. With an age gap of 10 years, we are a generation apart. There are moments of his interview footage that makes me cry, no matter how many times I've seen them. When asked what our initial family road trip may have meant to him, Nasser responded that he realized how much my siblings and I help him emotionally. Instead of turning away from him when he is worked up over something, we calm him. The sincerity of this moment of revelation has remained with us both. He has been in touch far more frequently than before our testy family trip and over the last year I see him taking time to make plans to see me and connect face to face.

Looking back, the long hours in the editing room reviewing the footage of my family has given me a real opportunity to rethink the roles I've ascribed everyone. We all fall into roles early on in our family lives and it's hard to escape the traps we get caught in. These past five years have allowed me to reconsider my own role. Knowing that I am often portrayed as the scatterbrained one who once lost her keys three times in one week, I was afraid to play into this while on location. I took up meditating to allow me to not only focus on what is in front of me but to also learn to be patient with my family, the film crew and above all myself. My family felt the difference and my brother Nasser jokingly described my patience on this trip as "Mother Theresa levels." Making this film has been a real gift—it's allowed me to see myself and the rest of my family as we really are, with all our charming (and less so) parts.



(Photo, courtesy of Kitab Productions / "A Kandahar Away")

Now that my film is about to premiere, I am getting congratulatory messages from filmmaker friends that refer to my act of making this film as "brave" and "courageous." As experienced filmmakers, they understand involving those closest to you in a film project is anything but easy. Despite its many challenges, I am thankful to have had the chance to share the story of my urban, Afghan-Canadian family and along the way, discover that who we think we are and how we relate to each other is not set in stone but can always evolve for the better.

*Aisha Jamal is a Toronto filmmaker, film programmer and college professor. A Kandahar Away is her first feature length documentary. It premieres May 1<sup>st</sup> at [Hot Docs Canadian Documentary Festival](https://www.hotdocs.ca/festival/).*

## Canadians held in China will feel 'forgotten,' says artist and dissident Ai Weiwei

An outspoken critic of the Chinese government, Ai was detained for 81 days in 2011

CBC Radio · Posted: Apr 29, 2019 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: April 29



*Chinese artist Ai Weiwei said that the detention he experienced in China was intended to 'isolate you and break your nerves down.'* (Ben Shannon/CBC)

Prominent artist and dissident Ai Weiwei said two Canadians detained in Beijing may be feeling the same fear and confusion he felt himself when he spent months in a Chinese prison cell.

"It's total isolation, [and] makes you feel you are totally vulnerable, because you cannot see your lawyer or your family, and nobody knows what's going on," he told [The Current's](#) Anna Maria Tremonti.

Ai spent 81 days in detention in 2011 on [accusations of tax evasion](#), and was [released under a gag order](#). His [supporters say his arrest was motivated by his outspoken criticism of the state](#), and that his later confession was procured under duress.

"The idea is to isolate you and break your nerves down, [to] make you feel nobody cares ... and you are sacrificed for what you have done," he said.

"I think that's the most, worst feeling you can get, is nobody care about your condition anymore. You're being forgotten."

Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were [detained in China on Dec. 10](#). Neither have been granted access to lawyers or been formally charged, receiving only [monthly visits from Canadian officials](#).

In March, China [accused the men of stealing state secrets](#), but [it has been alleged that their detention is retaliation](#) for Canada's [arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou](#), for extradition to the U.S. on fraud charges.



## CBC, The Current - April 29, 2019 (2 of 4)



*Michael Spavor, left, and former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig, right, were taken into custody in China in December last year. (Associated Press/International Crisis Group/Canadian Press)*

In January, Ai said that the Chinese government's actions were "unsurprising," and accused the West of enabling human rights abuse within the country.

"The West has pretended to not notice or, more insidiously, has been a willing partner. It is the hidden force behind China's rise," [he wrote in a statement](#), released in conjunction with his exhibit at Toronto's Gardiner Museum, which opened Feb. 28 and runs until June 9.

"The West's apparent conflict with the situation in China is because of its refusal to acknowledge its complicity in creating this monstrous regime," he wrote.

### ***Watch Ai Weiwei describe the toll that detention can take***



*Dissident artist spent 81 days in Chinese detention in 2011 2:09*

As China continues to grow and become more powerful, Ai said questions should be asked about what kind of society it has become, and what values it holds.

"You cannot even talk about democracy in China," he said, describing it as an "authoritarian society," with "no freedom of speech and basic human rights being violated."

He called on the Canadian government to demand that China respects the rule of law and provide "basic human treatment" for Kovrig and Spavor.

"If you don't respect that, you don't respect the whole establishment of the lawful society," he said.



*Ai Weiwei's installation Sunflower Seeds, in which 100 million hand-painted porcelain seeds filled the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in London. A version of the work recently showed in Toronto. (Dan Kitwood/Getty Images; Peter Mcdiarmid/Getty Images)*

### **New documentary looks at migrants in detention**

Ai has lived in self-imposed exile for several years in Berlin, where his work has included *Human Flow*, a film which documented the plight of migrants trying to reach Europe across the Mediterranean.

His new documentary, *The Rest*, looks at what happens to those migrants once they reach Europe and find themselves detained in refugee camps, stuck in a limbo that can last for years.

The situation has worsened thanks to political inaction, he said, which in turn has led to a hardening of attitudes among local populations who see their resources and local economies under pressure from the influx.

Ai said he can't understand the hatred directed towards migrants.

"They're just like your brothers or sisters," he said.

"Anybody just look at them, they would know: 'Ok, these people need help.'"

### **Watch Ai Weiwei discuss what refugees face when they reach Europe**



*Refugees who make it to Europe find themselves stuck in limbo, says Ai Weiwei 2:24*

**Why do some people accept oppression?**

Ai said he identifies with the migrants he documents because he grew up in exile with his father, the poet Ai Qing, who was censored and banished to hard labour for almost two decades.

Understanding why some people speak out against oppressive regimes, and others accept them, is "a really hard question," he said.

"It's even a question I would ask myself every day: why ... over 1.3 billion, 1.4 billion people are not really responding or reacting to this clearly unhealthy [society] or injustice."



*Ai Weiwei in studio with The Current's Anna Maria Tremonti. (Ben Shannon/CBC)*

He suggested it may be the result of decades of governance where anyone who questioned the status quo was punished, while those who fell in line were rewarded.

"There's almost no ground for anybody to raise a question," he said.

Given the right circumstances however, Ai believes that all societies could fall subject to suspicion and state control. He pointed to the example of McCarthyism in the U.S. in the 1940s and 1950s, where people accused each other of holding communist beliefs.

He said the West behaves as if its freedom and democracy are set in stone, a viewpoint he called an "illusion."

"That takes every generation, every day, to demand to protect those values," he said. "Otherwise it simply will be taken away from us."

*The Rest airs at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto on April 27 and May 5.*

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/canadians-held-in-china-will-feel-forgotten-says-artist-and-dissident-ai-weiwei-1.5112821>

## Why this Syrian journalist stayed in war-torn Aleppo after her daughter was born

Documentary *For Sama* follows Waad al-Kateab as she documents atrocities and builds a family

CBC Radio • Posted: Apr 29, 2019 11:33 AM ET | Last Updated: April 29



*Waad al-Kateab, right, her husband Hamza, left, and their daughter Sama. The family is at the centre of the documentary For Sama, directed by al-Kateab and London's Edward Watts. (For Sama/ITN Production)*

Waad al-Kateab didn't fear death until her daughter Sama was born.

The Syrian video journalist and her husband were among the last people to leave the besieged city of Aleppo before it fell to the Syrian regime — and they were prepared to die for their cause.

"We knew that in each moment we will be killed, and we were happy for that because we believed in the revolution," al-Kateab told *As It Happens* host Carol Off.

"But after Sama, it was something like: No, we will stay in the revolution, we will believe in this, but we also want to stay alive. We want to have our family and bring more children and be here, and we want this good future for her to live in."

Al-Kateab tells her family's story — and the story of resistance in Aleppo — in the new documentary *For Sama*, which premieres Monday night at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto.

She and her co-director Edward Watts joined Off in the *As It Happens* studio to discuss the film.

## Hope and the Arab Spring

Al-Kateab was 20 years old when the Arab Spring reached Syria in 2011 and people took to the streets to demand the end of President Bashar al-Assad's dictatorship.

She was a marketing student at Aleppo University at the time, but her true passion was journalism.

"I always dream to be a journalist," she said. "My father and mother said, like, 'No you can't be a journalist. If you want to be a journalist, we do believe that the next day we will be in the prisons.'"

## CBC Radio, As It Happens – April 29, 2019 (2 of 4)



*Al-Kateab in the As It Happens studio discussing her new film *For Sama*, which is playing at Toronto's Hot Docs festival. (Sinisa Jolic/CBC)*

So when the Syrian regime started using propaganda to paint protesters as terrorists, she knew it was her duty to document what was really happening on the ground.

"That's why I actually I started filming," she said.

For the next five years — through joyful family milestones and the unspeakable tragedy of war — al-Kateab kept filming.

### A family forged in war

While others fled Syria, al-Kateab remained in Aleppo to document the resistance.

She made a home with other activists in a makeshift hospital, where she grew close to a charming young doctor named Hamza who shared her passions and values.

Together, they survived gunfire, airstrikes and barrel bombings, all of it captured through al-Kateab's lens.

They lost several friends, including Dr. Muhammad Waseem Maaz, [one of Aleppo's last remaining pediatricians](#), killed in an April 2016 airstrike.

***Watch: Remembering Dr. Maaz, one of Aleppo's last pediatricians:***



*When Dr. Muhammad Waseem Maaz was killed in a 2016 airstrike in Aleppo, he was one of the last pediatricians still working inside the war-torn city. "Who will treat those babies?" his friend and colleague Dr. Abdul Aziz said in an interview with AIH host Carol Off. (Ben Shannon/CBC Radio) 2:38*

But in the midst of the chaos, Hamza proposed, and the young couple began their new family against the backdrop of civil war.

## CBC Radio, As It Happens – April 29, 2019 (3 of 4)

"We ... decided together, Hamza and me, to be like, this is our life and we will live here forever," she said. "We want a baby to be part of the country."

On Jan. 1, 2016, their first daughter Sama was born.

### 'A very difficult decision'

The first year of Sama's life was also the last year in the battle for Aleppo.

But even as the violence escalated, al-Kateab and her husband did not leave.

"It was a very difficult decision," al-Kateab said. "Sama was the first thing that gave us the hope and [at the] same time ... a feeling that we are responsible [for] something more."



*Al-Kateab documents life in war-torn Aleppo. (ITN Productions)*

When the family travelled briefly to Turkey, Sama's grandparents begged the couple to leave the little girl behind when they returned to Aleppo.

"At that moment, we just felt that we are a family [and] should be together. There is something I can't really describe, I can't really explain," she said.

"We do believe that there's our destiny and there's our home and there's where we should be."

### 'Whatever the cost'

As al-Kateab filmed her daughter's new life, she continued to unflinchingly document the deaths of other Syrian children — including a little boy who succumbs to his injuries in hospital.

It was hard not to turn the camera away in that moment, al-Kateab said. But she kept filming — for Sama.

"This scene could be my daughter, could be me, could be Hamza," she said.

"This is the only thing I could do. I'm not a doctor. I can't treat anyone. And I'm not a fighter. I can't fight, you



## CBC Radio, As It Happens – April 29, 2019 (4 of 4)

know. The only thing that I can do is just, like, to film — to document this because the whole world is watching."

It was just one of many devastating moments al-Kateab captured with her camera. Only a fraction of her footage makes it into the documentary.

"We were caught between this bind that, actually, you have to understand that an audience coming in from the streets of a Western city can only take so much," Watts said.

"But also ... we felt we had a responsibility to show the reality that you were talking about, and to make people see that this is what this war looked like for innocent people."



*London filmmaker Edward Watts is the co-director of For Sama. (Sinisa Jolic/CBC)*

The Syrian regime [took control of Aleppo in December 2016](#), and the family was finally forced to flee in early 2017.

"When we left, it was the end of the story," al-Kateab said. "We couldn't do anything more."

The family now lives in London. They can never return home while Assad is in charge.

But as they packed up their belongings and fled their home, al-Kateab kept one integral piece of Aleppo with her.

She was pregnant again. Her daughter Taima is now 19 months old.

"This is the last thing I take from Aleppo was Taima," al-Kateab said. "I can really, really feel that I had two girls from Aleppo."

*Written by Sheena Goodyear. Produced by Kate Swoger.*

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/why-this-syrian-journalist-stayed-in-war-torn-aleppo-after-her-daughter-was-born-1.5115228>

## Peter Raymont to Receive Don Haig Award at Hot Docs

Posted on April 29th, 2019



Peter Raymont  
By Pat Mullen

[Peter Raymont](#) is this year's recipient of the Don Haig Award at Hot Docs. The festival announced today that the director, producer, and White Pine Pictures co-founder would be honoured with the 14th annual award given to an independent producer with a feature film at the festival. Raymont's White Pine Pictures produced two of the Special Presentations selections at Hot Docs this year, *The Corporate Coup d'État* and *Toxic Beauty*, the latter of which premiered last night to an enthusiastic response at the Scotiabank Big Ideas series. The Don Haig Award recognizes a Canadian filmmaker with a significant body of work and a history of mentoring Canadian filmmakers.

"I am deeply honoured to be this year's recipient of the Don Haig Award," said Peter Raymont in a statement from Hot Docs. "Don was a mentor and a good friend. I learned so much from him when I first moved to Toronto 40 years ago. I particularly remember his legendary maxim he'd recite when we said goodbye: 'Keep smiling'."

Raymont has over 100 credits to his name and has developed several significant films in the Canadian doc scene. He is best known for his 2004 film *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*, which profiled Canadian Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire and his experience leading the United Nations peacekeeping effort during the 1994 Rwanda genocide. *Shake Hands with the Devil* won numerous prizes including the Audience Award for World Cinema – Documentary at Sundance, the Directors Guild of Canada Award, a Gemini, and a News and Documentary Emmy Award.

Raymont's films are often a mix of journalistic rigour and empathetic inquiries into human rights and social justice. He also documents the history of some of Canada's most significant artists with personal films that explore the nation's rich culture. As a director, Raymont's films include *The World is Watching* (1988), which won the Genie Award for Best Short Documentary; *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman* (2007), which won the Donald Brittain Award at the Geminis and the Directors Guild of Canada Award; and *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould* (2009), directed with Michèle Hozer, which won the Gemini Award for Best Biography Documentary Program. As a producer, Raymont's credits include the Roméo Dallaire portrait *Fight Like Soldiers, Die Like Children* (2012); *Guantanamo's Child: Omar Khadr* (2015), which was selected for TIFF's Canada's Top Ten and won the Donald Brittain Award at the Canadian Screen Awards; and *All Governments Lie: Truth, Deception, and the Spirit of I.F. Stone* (2016), which won two DGC awards and was nominated for three Canadian Screen Awards and a News and Documentary Emmy. Raymont is also a founder of the [Documentary Organization of Canada](#) (DOC), which created Hot Docs and POV.

As part of this year's award, Raymont will be presented with a \$10,000 cash prize, courtesy of the Don Haig Foundation and Telefilm Canada, at Friday's awards ceremony. The pay-it-forward spirit of the award also invites Raymont to select an emerging filmmaker to receive a \$5000 cash prize, courtesy of Telefilm Canada. Raymont's selection is screenwriter and director Fazila Amiri, whose credits include *Unknown Artist* (2018) and the upcoming *Songs She Sings in Shadows*. Past winners of the Don Haig Award include Ina Fichman (2018); Daniel Cross (2017), Ed Barreveld (2016), Anne Pick (2015), Michael McNamara (2014).

<http://povmagazine.com/blog/view/peter-raymont-to-receive-don-haig-award-at-hot-docs>

## Peter Raymont wins the Don Haig Award

***The White Pine Pictures president and co-founder will be presented with a \$10,000 cash prize at the 2019 Hot Docs Awards later this week.***

By Lauren Malyk, April 29, 2019



White Pine Pictures president and co-founder Peter Raymont has been selected as the 14th annual recipient of the Don Haig Award.

Selected by a jury of independent producers, the award recognizes a Canadian filmmaker's vision, entrepreneurship and commitment to mentoring emerging Canadian creatives. Set to be presented at a Hot Docs awards ceremony, the \$10,000 cash prize honours a Canadian independent producer with a feature-length film screening in competition at the festival.

This year, two White Pine-produced docs will take part in Hot Docs: *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* from director Fred Peabody and director Phyllis Ellis' *Toxic Beauty*. *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* discusses the power corporations have in the U.S. and the widening income gap, while *Toxic Beauty* examines a class-action lawsuit brought against Johnson & Johnson. Raymont serves as a producer and exec producer on both projects.

As part of the award, the recipient also has the option to name an emerging female doc-maker to receive a \$5,000 cash prize from Telefilm Canada and professional development opportunities from the Hot Docs Festival. This year, Raymont has selected writer/director Fazila Amiri as the recipient of this support.

Raymont has served as a producer and director on over 100 films and TV series over the course of his 48-year career. In addition to co-founding White Pine Pictures (formerly Investigative Productions), he is one of the founders of The Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC), a non-profit that represents the interests of Canadian documentary filmmakers.

Some of his credits include the 2007 Emmy Award-winner *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Romeo Dallaire*, *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman* and *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*. Both *A Promise* and *Genius Within* were previously shortlisted for Academy Awards.

Past Don Haig Award winners include Ina Fichman, [Daniel Cross](#), Ed Barreveld and Anne Pick. Raymont will receive the prize at the Hot Docs Awards on May 3.

*Picture courtesy of Hot Docs*

## Peter Raymont Gets Don Haig



Peter Raymont and director Nancy Lang at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2016. Photo by Ralph Lucas for Northernstars.

### Peter Raymont Gets Don Haig

by Staff

(April 29, 2019 – Toronto, ON) Hot Docs has announced that Peter Raymont, President and Co-Founder of Toronto's White Pine Pictures, has been named this year's Don Haig Award recipient. A filmmaker, journalist, writer and activist, Raymont has produced and directed over 100 films and TV series during his 48-year career. Raymont will be presented with a \$10,000 cash prize, courtesy of the Don Haig Foundation and Telefilm Canada, at the Hot Docs Awards Presentation on Friday, May 3.

White Pine Pictures has two feature documentaries at Hot Docs this year, *The Corporate Coup* and *D'État* and *Toxic Beauty*.

"I am deeply honoured to be this year's recipient of the Don Haig Award," said Raymont. "Don was a mentor and a good friend. I learned so much from him when I first moved to Toronto 40 years ago. I particularly remember his legendary maxim he'd recite when we said goodbye: 'Keep smiling'."

In 1979, after eight years making documentaries at the National Film Board of Canada in Montreal, Raymont co-founded the independent production company Investigative Productions, now White Pine Pictures, in Toronto. He is one of the founders of The Documentary Organization of Canada, which led to the creation of Hot Docs and POV Magazine. Informed with a passion for human rights and social justice, Raymont's films are often provocative investigations of "hidden worlds" in politics, the media, and big business. His work has received 52 international awards including 13 Gemini, Gold and Silver Hugo and The Sesterce d'Argent, among others. His documentary feature *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* received the 2007 Emmy Award for Best Documentary and the Sundance Audience Award.

Other features directed by Raymont include 2007's *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman* and 2009's *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*, both of which were shortlisted for an Academy Award for Best Documentary. Raymont's producer credits include *Guantanamo's Child: Omar Khadr* (2016), which was nominated for an Emmy and honoured with the 2017 [Donald Brittain Award](#) for Best Social-Political Documentary; and *All Governments Lie: Truth, Deception and the Spirit of I.F. Stone* (2016), nominated for the 2018 News and Documentary Emmy, and winner of the DGC's [Allan King Award](#) for Best Documentary.



*Ben Low as Lawren Harris painting Mt. LeFroy, Alberta, from the documentary “Where the Universe Sings: The Spiritual Journey of Lawren Harris”, directed by Peter Raymont & Nancy Lang. (c) White Pine Pictures*  
*Photo Credit: Geoff Ewart. Used with permission.*

Raymont has produced and directed several feature length documentaries exploring the lives of Canadian artists, such as *West Wind: The Vision of Tom Thomson* and *Where the Universe Sings: The Spiritual Journey of Lawren Harris*, and is currently in production on Season 2 of the CBC series *In the Making*, a documentary series featuring up-and-coming Canadian artists. Raymont also executive produced the popular TV drama series *The Border* and *Cracked*, both of which were broadcast worldwide.

As part of the Award, the recipient can name an emerging female documentary filmmaker to receive a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of Telefilm Canada, and professional development opportunities at the Hot Docs Festival to further her career path. Peter Raymont has chosen to name Afghan-Canadian screenwriter and director Fazila Amiri as the recipient of this prize.

Now in its 14th year, the Don Haig Award is presented to an outstanding Canadian independent producer with a feature-length film in competition at the Festival, and is selected by a jury of independent producers. The Award recognizes creative vision and entrepreneurship, as reflected in the recipient’s body of work and Festival film, as well as a track record of mentoring emerging Canadian filmmakers. Past winners of the Don Haig Award include filmmakers Ina Fichman (2018); Daniel Cross (2017), Ed Barreveld (2016), Anne Pick (2015), Michael McNamara (2014), Merit Jensen Carr (2013), Mia Donovan (2012), Rama Rau (2011), Philip Lyall and Nimisha Mukerji (2010), Brett Gaylor (2009), Yung Chang (2008), Hubert Davis (2007), and Guylaine Dionne (2006).

Northernstars joins with others in congratulating [Peter Raymont](#) on receiving this honour.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/peter-raymont-gets-don-haig/>



## O'Ree documentary premieres at Toronto film festival

'Willie' chronicles life of Hockey Hall of Famer, traces his roots to slave who escaped  
by William Douglas @WDouglasNHL / NHL.com Staff Writer

April 29th, 2019



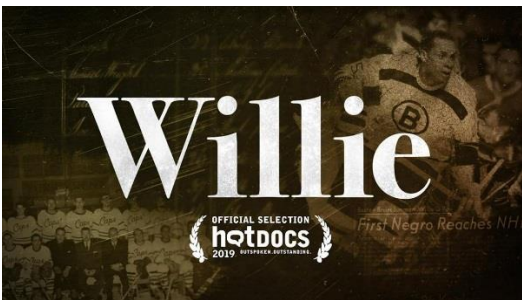
**TORONTO --** "Willie," the documentary on the life of Willie O'Ree, premiered Monday at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

O'Ree, who was the first black player in the NHL, hadn't seen the finished product until its showing at the largest screening venue at the largest documentary festival in North America.

He had a dry napkin in his hand before the filmed rolled.

"It was soaked" by the end of the film credits, O'Ree said. "I just think the whole movie just jumped out at me."

"Willie" adds more depth and historical perspective to the man who overcame racial prejudice and blindness in one eye to break the NHL color barrier Jan. 18, 1958, for the Boston Bruins.



"I think the lesson from the film would be to never give up," O'Ree said. "If you feel strongly within your heart, within your mind that you can accomplish a goal, work toward that goal and don't let anybody tell you that you can't attain your goal."

But the film, directed by Laurence Mathieu-Leger, does more than trace O'Ree's path from his boyhood home in Fredericton, New Brunswick, to the Bruins, to his current role as NHL diversity ambassador, to his induction in the Hockey Hall of Fame on Nov. 12, 2018.



It traces O'Ree's roots, revealing that he's the descendant of a slave who escaped a Charleston, South Carolina, plantation and made his way to Canada.

Hot Docs chose to screen "Willie" from among more than 10,000 submissions that it receives yearly. The festival also named "Willie" to its "Hot Docs Special Presentations" program, a designation given to approximately 30 documentaries each year out of nearly 300 in the festival from around the world.

Bryant McBride, the film's producer and former vice president for business development at the NHL, said "Willie" struck a chord with Hot Docs organizers because O'Ree's story delivers a message that transcends sports and explores issues of race.

"It's about opportunity, the right to get and have opportunities and the will to maximize those opportunities," McBride said. "And Willie is the embodiment of that. His journey, what his great-great-grandfather, Paris O'Ree, had to do to obtain his freedom. The sinew that was found in that gentleman got passed directly to Willie. That one event led to Willie changing hundreds of thousands if not millions of lives."

Born in Fredericton on Oct. 15, 1935, the youngest of 13 children, O'Ree grew into a multisport athlete who initially thought that baseball would be his path to the pros.

But when he experienced Jim Crow-era segregation during a tryout in the United States, O'Ree returned to Canada and decided to focus on hockey. Switching sports didn't give O'Ree a reprieve from racial slurs and name-calling.

"Every game I played, there were racial remarks directed toward me: 'You should be back picking cotton. What are you doing in the white man's game?'" O'Ree said in the film.

O'Ree made it to the NHL despite being blinded in his right eye in 1956, a hockey injury he kept secret.

He had a brief NHL career, 45 games over the 1957-58 and 1960-61 seasons, but he enjoyed a lengthy minor league career.

O'Ree was enshrined in the Hall of Fame for his accomplishments off the ice, including his work across North America as the NHL diversity ambassador. In more than two decades, he has helped establish 39 grassroots hockey programs and inspired more than 120,000 boys and girls to play the game.

## 'Drag Kids' documentary explores theatrical world of pre-teen drag queens



*Laddy Gaga poses for a photo at Toronto's Glad Books on Saturday April 27, 2019. An over-the-top foursome who recently took over a bookstore/restaurant in Toronto's gay village are the stars of the Canadian documentary film, "Drag Kids," making its debut at the Canadian International Documentary Film Festival. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Chris Young)*

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Cassandra Szklarski, The Canadian Press  
Published Monday, April 29, 2019 5:14PM EDT

TORONTO -- The dance music is thumping, the audience is giddy and 10-year-old drag artist Queen Lactatia is sashaying up and down a makeshift catwalk in a shimmering metallic dress.

The enthusiastic crowd hoots in approval as the diminutive style phenom weaves between tables at the all-ages brunch event, where the Montreal grade-schooler is followed by three more big-haired pre-teen performers, each in varying degrees of glitter, eyelash extensions and rainbow-hued attire.

The crowd falls silent for a rousing rendition of Lady Gaga's hit "Shallow" by nine-year-old Laddy Gaga, who belts out the ballad with all the pained inflections of the original.



*Laddy Gaga (right) hands Queen Lactatia flowers as he performs at Toronto's Glad Books on Saturday, April 27, 2019. An over-the-top foursome who recently took over a bookstore/restaurant in Toronto's gay village are the stars of the Canadian documentary film, "Drag Kids," making its debut at the Canadian International Documentary Film Festival. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Chris Young)*

"I kind of feel like no one was prepared for that!" the show's drag host, Miss Fluffy Souffle, decked out in a lilac wig and pink tutu.

"Were you like, 'Oh, this is going to be cute.' Yeah. And then all of our hearts literally exploded," the seasoned Toronto performer declares as Laddy, a.k.a. Stephan Hirst of Spain, wobbles off in chunky heels.

Welcome to the world of drag kids, a burgeoning scene of wig-loving, sequin-covered, pint-sized showboats with all the gender-pushing attitude and sass of their adult counterparts.

The over-the-top foursome who recently took over a bookstore/restaurant in Toronto's gay village are the stars of the Canadian documentary film, "Drag Kids," making its debut at the Canadian International Documentary Film Festival.

The film's director, Megan Wennberg, says drag culture has become increasingly mainstream thanks to the reality series "RuPaul's Drag Race" and YouTube videos that are exposing the culture well beyond adult-only bars and balls.

She says it's drawing kids who love to dress up and lip sync, and enjoy "being fabulous." But it also taps into a deeper drive for some to define themselves in unconventional ways, even if it might be controversial.

"It's an incredible outlet for self-expression, it's really artistic, it's really creative, it lets them explore different parts of themselves," explains Wennberg, whose film is expected to air on CBC-TV after it completes a festival run.

"They've all spoken about getting confidence and feeling powerful and just feeling more out there and more open. And also they're giving a message to others that it's OK to be different."

Criticism can be harsh, she adds, noting that each drag kid has faced bullies, most notably Queen Lactatia, a.k.a. Nemis Melancon-Golden.

Arguably the most famous of the bunch, critics have seized on a photo making the rounds online in which Lactatia is seen alongside nearly naked drag star Violet Chachki, a former "Drag Race" winner.

Melancon-Golden and his mother Jessica Melancon dismiss critics' charges that drag is sexualizing the youngster, and explain away the photo by saying Violet was wearing a pubic wig -- called a merkin -- for an appearance at RuPaul's DragCon NYC in 2017.

"She was in costume; he was in costume. It was a two-minute interaction," says Jessica Melancon, dismissing the notion that nudity is always connected to sex and sexuality.

Wennberg, too, suggests many critics who challenge the avant-garde art form are attacking it unfairly.

"Adults watching it have a real tendency to project onto the kids. And that's coming from them, that's not coming from the kids. Whatever people want to project onto them is really about what their experiences maybe are, or their fears are," she says.

"Anyone who is intolerant of this without watching it and learning about it is just scared and should maybe look at what they're scared of. There's nothing scary about a boy in a dress. That's not scary, it's great."

If drag is about pushing boundaries, that means it should also be a welcoming space for kids, adds Bracken Hanke of Vancouver.

The only girl in the group, Hanke says she loves exaggerating female stereotypes as a "hyper Queen" -- a female who does drag.

"Drag is super-duper fluid and there's a lot to it, so I think that it shouldn't just be limited to a certain group of people," says the 12-year-old, whose long pink tresses drape down the back of a sheer dress and white body suit.

"Drag is an expression that should be for everyone. And also I like to surprise people."

In an era when tween girls are regularly bombarded by highly sexual female role models, Hanke's supportive mom, Dominique, suggests that pushing gender rules through drag can be an antidote.

"Drag has actually been a really healthy way for her to play with that idea without feeling like she has to mimic anybody -- she's kind of poking fun at the ideals, poking fun at those things rather than internalizing them," says Hanke.

"Which unfortunately you see so much, especially girls this age. (We're) seeing kids that are the same age as her on Instagram trying to reflect these women that are a lot older instead of having fun with their childhood and still playing dress-up and still having fun and embracing who they are, flaws and all."

"Drag Kids" screens at Hot Docs on Tuesday and Friday.

## 'So many wild twists and turns': film explores alleged forgery of thousands of Norval Morrisseau works

Filmmaker hopes to screen *There Are No Fakes* in Thunder Bay this summer

[Kris Ketonen](#) · CBC News · Posted: Apr 29, 2019 1:00 PM ET | Last Updated: May 2



*Kevin Hearn appears in a scene from the new documentary *There Are No Fakes*. (Cave 7 Productions/Supplied)*

A new documentary explores what the filmmaker says could be the largest art fraud scam in Canadian history — a scam that allegedly has ties to Thunder Bay.

*There Are No Fakes* premieres on Monday, April 29 at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto, and examines questions about the authenticity of thousands of paintings purported to be by the late, and renowned, Indigenous artist Norval Morrisseau.

"We're talking in the neighbourhood of three thousand paintings here, worth conservatively \$10,000 each," Jamie Kastner, the film's director and producer said. "So that's \$30 million worth of art."

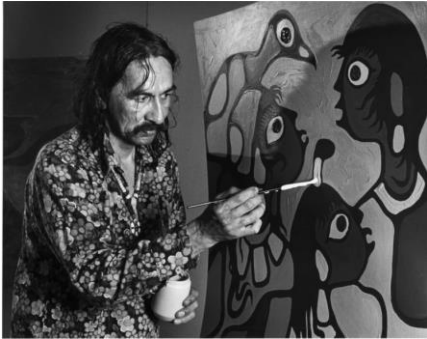
*There Are No Fakes* grew out of a conversation Kastner had with his friend Kevin Hearn, of *Barenaked Ladies* fame.

"I approached him a couple of years ago about, in fact, something completely different," Kastner said. "A musical project that wound up not panning out at that time."

"But he said to me 'I'm involved in this court case, maybe that would be of interest to you.'"

That court case was a lawsuit filed by Hearn against a Toronto gallery over concerns about the authenticity of a Morrisseau painting — titled *Spirit Energy of Mother Earth* — that Hearn had bought there in 2005.

Kastner said doubts about the painting began to surface three years later, after Hearn was invited to guest curate an exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Norval Morrisseau as artist-in-residence in the Thomson Shack at the McMichael Gallery in Kleinberg, Ont., on July 11, 1979. (Ian Samson/McMichael Canadian Art Collection Archives)*

"This Morrisseau painting of his, or what he believed to be a Morrisseau, was sort of the centrepiece of his collection," Kastner said. "And shortly after it went up on the walls, complaints were made to the then-curator of Canadian art, Gerald McMaster."

Hearn was then told that the painting's authenticity couldn't be confirmed. Spirit Energy of Mother Earth had to come down.

"I began to learn about this story, first from Kevin and his lawyer, and even though this was coming from someone I knew, I almost couldn't believe it," Kastner said. "There were so many wild twists and turns."

"It was only when I started diving into the material and the research, and starting to meet the characters first-hand, that I really saw that everything he had told me, and then some, was true."

Hearn's lawsuit was dismissed in 2018. In his decision, Superior Court Justice Edward Morgan wrote there was no proof that the painting Hearn had purchased was a fake.

"Spirit Energy of Mother Earth is one more painting — an interesting and beautiful one, if I may say so — that is possibly an authentic Norval Morrisseau and possibly not," Morgan wrote. "As a matter of law, what is important is that a tie goes to the defendants."





*Filmmaker Jamie Kastner's new documentary There Are No Fakes explores questions around the authenticity of thousands of Norval Morrisseau paintings. (Cave 7 Productions/Supplied)*

The Morrisseau dispute over the paintings involves two "factions of people, most of whom are white, incidentally, and each side is claiming to be the true defenders of this Indigenous artist's legacy," Kastner said.

That's where the film's title comes from: There Are No Fakes is a "kind of refrain" heard from of people on one side of the dispute.

"They are, indeed, collectors and dealers in this disputed species of Morrisseau paintings," Kastner said.

The dispute is heated, he said, and includes multiple lawsuits, gallery windows smashed with rocks, and even physical altercations.

Kastner said the film wasn't approached in a "partisan way," and includes representation from people on both sides of the dispute.

"We did get extensive interviews ... with people on both sides of it," Kastner said. "We were able to witness the highly-charged reactions and emotions that are churning through this whole story."

"It would get very intense," he said. "People have a lot at stake, on all sides, in this story, and they wound some saying some pretty amazing things."

"They opened up on camera, and it will be up to the audience to judge them."

### Police investigation

Kastner's research also led him to Thunder Bay where, Morgan's ruling states, "there is evidence of the existence of a forgery ring" in the city, which focussed on replicating Morrisseau's style of painting.

Thunder Bay police didn't immediately provide a comment for this story. However, an earlier story on the Hearn lawsuit included a statement by Thunder Bay police spokesman Chris Adams, who [confirmed an investigation into the alleged forgeries took place in 2000](#).

No charges were laid, and "there is no ongoing investigation," Adams stated at the time.

There is also evidence, Morgan wrote, that the person who ran the gallery where Hearn purchased his painting "may have purchased some works that trace to this source."

Despite that, Morgan writes there wasn't any actual evidence that connected Spirit Energy of Mother Earth to this alleged fraud ring.

Still, Kastner did come to Thunder Bay while making the film. In the city, things took a dark turn.

"Following the ... provenance, which is to say the origin, of Kevin's painting up to Thunder Bay, it opens up a whole other crazy story of criminal activity going beyond art fraud," he said. "Well beyond art fraud, and into very dark places of abuse."

Kastner was reluctant to go into too many details about what his research uncovered, as the film hasn't yet received a wide release.

However, he's working to get the film screened in Thunder Bay, and other cities, this summer, and it will air on TVO in the fall.

Morrisseau 'vulnerable to forgery'

As to why Morrisseau's work could be such an attractive target, Kastner has some thoughts.

"He was a guy who came from abject poverty," Kastner said. "He came from Thunder Bay, or Fort William, as it then was, and grew up in Beardmore at a different point, and worked in the mines for a while, and was living in a shack with a dirt floor with his young family, before he was discovered in the early '60s, and suddenly made it big with his first big show."

And then, Kastner said, Morrisseau was a "rock star," and over the course of the next decade, the artist experienced "wild ups and downs."

"He went from riding limousines around Toronto to living in Stanley Park," Kastner said. "By all accounts of the people who knew him well, he had an incredible lust for life, basically. He embraced all of it, perhaps too much, but, you know, who's to say?"

"I think because of the wild ups and downs in life, because he was living in all sorts of circumstances over the course of his career, and, I think, because he was Indigenous, I think, for all of these reasons, it seems to me, that his work was vulnerable to forgery in this way."

## Richard Lowenstein's Michael Hutchence doc generates heat at Tribeca

29 April, 2019 Don Groves



*'Mystify: Michael Hutchence'*

International buyers are circling *Mystify: Michael Hutchence*, Richard Lowenstein's revealing portrait of the late INXS frontman, following the world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Negotiations handled by the international sales agent Dogwoof are expected to continue after the feature documentary screens this week at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto.

"We had great responses at the Tribeca pres and industry screenings, which were attended by reps of some really good companies," Sue Murray, who produced with Lowenstein, Mya Gnyp, John Battsek, Mark Fennessy, Lynn-Maree Milburn and Andrew de Groot, tells IF from New York.

"We expect to get a report from Dogwood in the next few days, and there will be market screenings in Cannes."

Lowenstein finished the film, a labour of love, just before the festival opened, with the final version shipped to the event as he was en route to NY.

It features interviews with Hutchence's former girlfriends Helena Christensen, Kylie Minogue and producer Michelle Bennett as well as his sister Tina, father Rhett and music luminaries including Bono, Garry Gary Beers, and the Farriss brothers.

Screen Daily's Graham Fuller is optimistic about the doc's commercial and awards prospects, observing: "The densely woven and worshipfully presented archival footage of the INXS frontman, on stage and off, is a reminder that in terms of wild talent and Dionysian sexiness, he belongs in the same company as Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison and Robert Plant.

"Much more importantly, the film makes a powerful case that, despite a troubled upbringing, Hutchence was not naturally self-destructive. What lifts it above the majority of documentaries about celebrities and artists is its extraordinary intimacy."

Variety's Katherine Turman declared the film makes powerful use of family and personal footage to tell the story of a talented man beset by personal demons as well as illuminating the influence of a serious head injury that he hid from the public.

"Voiceovers from Hutchence's intimates – family members, INXS bandmates, record producers, managers and girlfriends – along with press interviews, concert footage and home videos, give context to the unexpectedly intimate film," she said.

Madman Entertainment has yet to set a release date for the film co-founded by Screen Australia, Film Victoria, the ABC and the BBC.

Mandy Chang, then ABC head of arts, now commissioning editor, BBC Storyville and the BBC's head of doc acquisitions, was an early champion.

Chang introduced the filmmaker to Kate Townsend, who was running the BBC's feature doc strand Storyville, when he pitched the project at the Australian International Documentary Conference. Chang also introduced him to Passion Pictures' John Battsek.

Jan Younghusband, head of TV commissioning, BBC Music, says: "Michael Hutchence was one of the most influential and charismatic rock stars of the modern era and I'm delighted that this moving documentary will air on BBC Two."

<https://www.if.com.au/richard-lowensteins-michael-hutchence-doc-generates-heat-at-tribeca/>

## You're the one being gamed, bruh

LIZ BRAUN, Updated: April 29, 2019

The seduction industry is alive and well. And kind of gross and despicable.

You can find out everything you wanted to know about the seduction industry but were afraid to ask by seeing [The Pickup Game](#). This excellent documentary from brothers and co-directors Matthew and Barnaby O'Connor plays at the Hot Docs festival Tuesday, April 30, and again May 1 and 4.

*The Pickup Game* updates viewers on the fabulously vile billion dollar business you might describe as hucksters teaching other men how to trick women into sleeping with them. There's an emphasis on domination in all this that should make most viewers very nervous.

But wait! we hear you thinking. What about #MeToo? And didn't all this crap go out of style years ago once Neil Strauss (author of *The Game*) turned himself into a relationship coach? As per *The Pickup Game*, a lot of these formerly famous guys want you to think they've matured and got past it all. So check out Strauss' (or any of 'em) web presence now.

We especially like the ad where Strauss dandles a child on his knee and invites you to join his 'Inner Circle' — so you can get, "The controversial, never before seen banned chapters of *The Game*." Barf. Lindy West was writing about super creepy pickup artist Julien Blanc when she described these guys in [The Guardian](#) as, "An odious brand of conman who specializes in 'helping' lonely, desperate, socially inept men by turning them into repulsive, entitled, sexually aggressive creeps with horrible fashion sense." That sounds about right.

Here are five hideous truths we learned from *The Pickup Game*:

- 1) They sell to men via dubious marketing techniques also known as pyramid selling.
- 2) These guys are not above hiring prostitutes to 'prove' to students that they really can 'get' women if they follow the pickup artist's techniques.
- 3) Some of these unrepentant a\*\*\*\*\* secretly film their sexual conquests.
- 4) Why are so many of these dudes Canadian, such as Erik von Markovik (known as Mystery) and Owen Cook (known as Tyler Durden) of Real Social Dynamics? Ewww.
- 5) Pickup artists tend to verbs such as 'owning' when they speak of women — and women are called 'targets'. There are tender little verbal and physical connections to violence running throughout all the pickup advice, for those who need these things spelled out.

Conclusions: Honestly, guys, buy a sex doll. It's cheaper in the long run and they won't call the cops once the roofies wear off.

For more on Toronto's superb documentary festival: [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)

<https://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/movies/youre-the-one-being-gamed-bruh/wcm/c81fba79-fe60-46c0-8154-2a074619313e>

## Film explores India's 'missing girls' issue

TORONTO: The severe gender imbalance in India and the underlying issue of nearly 30 million "missing girls" due to sex selection are at the centre of a film by an award-winning Indo-Canadian director to be premiered at a major documentary festival in Canada.

Rama Rau's *The Daughter Tree*, debuting at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival, the largest of its type in North America, took her six years of research and filming.

For this "labour of love", Chennai-born Rau took multiple trips to rural India. The film observes the adverse impact self-determination tests and abortion of girls has had on society, particularly in parts of North India. "Society suffers when women disappear. The Indian government has woken up, but the problem is cultural," she said in an interview.

The film features an arid landscape of rural Haryana, where a so-called 'village of men' exists, with no girl having been born for decades. In sharp contrast, there is a verdant village in Dharhara, Bihar, where saplings are planted each time a daughter is born.

Rau decided to name the film after the latter, since she said, "the film is about the solution. We need hope."

At the centre of the film is Neelam Bala, a midwife, and her efforts to counsel expectant families that having a daughter is no burden. Rau is hopeful of achieving another goal: taking a shorter version of the film to the grassroots in India, where such profiles in courage can be used in midwifery classes and as an educational tool to counter the crisis.

While the millions of unborn girls are the principal victims of what Rau calls this "extreme misogyny," there are others who also fall prey to the phenomenon, like the three Kumar brothers in the Haryana village of Jhojhu. They face a future of enforced bachelorhood because of the absence of brides, and the prospect of ageing into loneliness.

"That's what makes a film layered. All are affected. Finding these brothers was a revelation. They are such tragic figures, such gentlemen, but they're trapped in that village," Rau said.



Rau's previous films have been acclaimed in North America and other countries. Her *League of Exotique Dancers* was the opening night film for the 2016 version of the Hot Docs festival. But *The Daughter Tree* is her most challenging and personal project yet.

## Breakfast Television – April 29, 2019



### The fabulous Drag Kids!

The stars of the 'Drag Kids' documentary are here talking all about why they love performing in drag!  
The doc premiered at the 'Hot Docs' festival

<https://www.bttoronto.ca/videos/the-fabulous-drag-kids/>



## Hot Docs on Tuesday



Capitol Dome\_The Corporate Coup d'État © White Pine Pictures 2018.

### Hot Docs on Tuesday

by Staff

(April 29, 2019 – Toronto, ON) Tomorrow is Day 6 of Hot Docs and there are more films on the day's schedule than anyone could possibly see. We counted 45 and that doesn't include the free Visual Reality projects available at the Autodesk Technology Centre. More about that later in this article. Of the 45 feature documentaries, we found 11 Canadian productions or co-productions and because it's still in the first half of the festival, a few are Premiere screenings.

There are two films close to each other in terms of time that get the day started tomorrow morning at 10:00 it's *The Corporate Coup d'État*. Directed by Fred Peabody and produced by [Peter Raymont](#) it runs 90-minutes and features journalist Chris Hedges and Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul who dissect the current state of events in the United States of America, exposing Trump's MAGA doctrine as a symptom of a broken democracy where power now lies with corporations, not citizens. As the blurb on the Hot Docs website says, "If you think Amazon and Apple are controlling your life, you may sadly be right." It's first screening is a Canadian Premiere. **Note:** It was [announced on Monday](#) that Peter Raymond is this year's recipient of the highly coveted Don Haig Award.

*Corporate Coup d'État* screens:

Tues. Apr. 30 at 10:00 a.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

Fri. May 3 at 12:00 p.m. at Hart House Theatre

At 10:15 at Tiff Bell Lightbox (TBLB) *The Daughter Tree* will have its 2nd screening. Directed by Rama Rau, this 88-minute documentary is set in the Punjab region of India and more specifically in a village known as the Village of Men. No girls have been born there in more than 20 years. Men who wish to marry have to leave home to find a bride. The main focus of the film is Neelam Bala, described as "a warrior midwife" who works to save unborn baby girls, a more-than-difficult task given the cultural preference for sons. When a girl is born a fruit tree is planted and when she grows up she will have this tree as her own property and can use it to make a living and perhaps have some economic freedom through the sale of the tree's fruit. A wonderful tale of resilience and determination against long and entrenched odds and cultural traditions.

*The Daughter Tree* screens:

Tue. Apr. 30 at 10:15 a.m. at TBLB 2

Thur. May 2 at 9:00 p.m. at Hart House Theatre

## Northern Stars – April 29, 2019 (2 of 4)



*Image from When We Walk courtesy of Hot Docs.*

At 12:15 it's *When We Walk*, a highly personal 79-minute film from Jason DaSilva, who focuses the camera on himself. Diagnosed with a severe form of multiple sclerosis more than a decade ago, DaSilva's marriage ends and his ex-wife and his son move to Texas. DaSilva lives in New York City in part because of the care he gets there. If he moves so that he can be close to his son, he will lose his access to Medicaid. DaSilva uses a wheelchair and needs around-the-clock support and has tenaciously guarded his independence, despite using a wheelchair and requiring around-the-clock support. This is one of those films that is brutally honest, the story unvarnished, the participants real, honest, broken yet heroic.


*When We Walk* screens:

Tues. Apr. 30 at 12:45 p.m. at Isabel Bader Theatre

Fri. May 3 at 12:45 at Isabel Bader Theatre

*Drag Kids* focuses on four preteens who practice lip-syncing and getting their runway walk down pat in preparation of doing their stuff during the annual Montreal Pride celebration. Their parents are there to guide and encourage them on their journey, but it's a film that is bound to generate controversy. The Washington Examiner, which is considered to be a right-leaning publication, in part of its review of the film earlier this year said, "There's nothing politically correct about this new frontier; it's abuse, merely distorted and cloaked in progressivism." Maurie Alioff, a frequent contributor to Northernstars concludes his review of the film for POV Magazine by writing, "Overall, the film offers a rare glimpse into an unusual world that has received scant attention." You can make up your own mind at one of the two remaining screenings.

*Drag Kids* screens:

 Tue. Apr. 30 at 1:15 p.m. at TBLB 3

Fri. May 3 at 3:45 p.m. at TBLB 1

Next up is *Cavebirds* at 1:45 p.m. at the Tiff Bell Lightbox 4. Yes it does have something to do with birds, but it's really about former Montrealer Howard Gan, a recently retired Chinese-Malaysian Canadian immigrant, and his daughter, the film's director, who finds certain similarities and parallels in her father's life and in his passion for a specific financial investment in the market and production of the key ingredient in bird's nest soup.

*Cavebirds* screens:

Tue, Apr. 30 at 1:45 p.m. at TBLB 4

Fri, May 3 at 10:30 a.m. at TBLB 4



*Still image from Propaganda courtesy of Hot Docs.*

*Propaganda* is a powerful and eye-opening exploration of how we can be easily manipulated by powers trained to sell us something or make us believe something. Three artists, Kent Monkman, Shepard Fairey and Ai Weiwei (pictured above) roll out stories of how real events, real ideas, real threats can be twisted and sold back to us as something they are not. We live in a world where the American President can condemn the media as Fake News,

## Northern Stars – April 29, 2019 (3 of 4)

and thrill his followers by using language unbecoming the office he holds. Bulls\*\*t and propaganda surround us and this documentary is perfect for the times we now live in. There is one scene where Ai Weiwei uses children's school backpacks to make a statement and it is devastating.

*Propaganda* screens:

Tue. Apr. 30 at 3:15 p.m. at Isabel Bader Theatre

Fri. May 3 at 9:00 p.m. at TBLB 2

*Illusions of Control* is directed by Shannon Walsh. It's a far-ranging film that examines what we are doing and have done to the only planet we can inhabit. The film concentrates on the stories of five women who deal with nuclear fallout, arsenic-laced water and desert dust storms in places like Fukushima, Chicago and Yellowknife. This is yet another film about the Anthropocene age we now live in and how we are destroying the planet and what survival in the future might look like.

*Illusions of Control* screens

Tue. Apr. 30 at 2:30 p.m. at Scotiabank 3

Thur. May 2 at 10:00 a.m. at TBLB 3



Image from *Willie* courtesy of Hot Docs.

Willie O'Ree was the first Black hockey player in the NHL and he broke the colour barrier in 1958. He is also the subject of the feature documentary *Willie* from director Laurence Mathieu-Leger. A member of the Hockey Hall of Fame, Willie O'Ree is one of those people we should know, cherish and honour and that's what this 89-minute film does and does so well. The first screening was a World Premiere in the Special Presentations section of Hot Docs. There are two opportunities left to see this film during the festival.

*Willie* screens:

Tues. Apr. 30 at 4:40 p.m. at TBLB 1

Fri. May 3 at 10:15 a.m. at TBLB 1



Image from *Gaza* courtesy of Hot Docs.

We mentioned *Propaganda* earlier, but you may come away from the next film on Tuesday's schedule, *Gaza*, thinking it is nothing but that and specifically anti-Israeli propaganda. Shot entirely from the perspective of a few citizens of this small strip of territory, these are people who wish for a normal life, a productive life, a safe life, yet are seemingly trapped between the ambitions of Hamas, which has run the territory since 2007, and the Israeli military who must retaliate to protect its people. There are some two million people who live in an area 41 kilometres long and somewhere between 6 and 12 kilometres wide. It is one of the most densely populated places on earth, yet it is cut off from the rest of world, its people unable to travel, unable to escape. *Gaza*, also part of the Special Presentations program, is directed by Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell.

## Northern Stars – April 29, 2019 (4 of 4)

Gaza screens:

Tues. Apr. 30 at 6:00 p.m. at the TBLB 2

Wed. May 1 at 1:45 p.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

Fri. May 3 at 3:45 p.m. at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

At 6:30 it's another Special Presentations event, the second of only two screenings of the film *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*. The 90-minute documentary follows the famed Canadian songwriter and singer from his beginnings in rural Ontario to Greenwich Village to stardom and stadium performances.

*Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* screens:

Tue. Apr. 30 at 6:30 p.m. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.



Still image from *Assholes: A Theory* courtesy of Hot Docs.

John Cleese was the perfect choice to provide commentary for John Walker's new film, *Assholes: A Theory*. The 81-minute film is based on the New York Times bestselling book of the same title by author, Aaron James. Suji Gelerman, a psychotherapist, and Amiée Morrison, a professor in the University of Waterloo's Literature and Digital Humanities department both provide comments on the psychology and behaviour of assholes. Other key contributors to this documentary include Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk, a former RCMP officer who wrote *Women Not Wanted*, an exposé of RCMP workplace bullying and Robert Hockett, a law professor at Cornell University who consulted for both Occupy Wall Street and the Federal Reserve in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008. [John Walker](#) is a multi-award-winning documentarian and all of his work fits easily within the definition of "must see" films. The first of three screenings is a North American Premiere.

*Assholes: A Theory* screens:

Tues. Apr. 30 at 7:00 p.m. at the TBLB 1

Wed. May 1 at 3:45 p.m. at TBLB 1

Sat. May 4 T 12:45 p.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre.

The last Canadian doc on the schedule is *Pipe Dreams*, and it's the 2nd of three screenings. We wrote about it earlier [and this page has far more detail](#) and a trailer embedded in it. *Pipe Dreams* is from Montreal's [Stacey Tenenbaum](#) and it has all the hallmarks of her work. She has an eye for something just a little bit quirky and then executes the project with the highest of quality.

*Pipe Dreams* screens:

Tue, Apr. 30 at 9:00 p.m. at TBLB 3

Fri. May 3 at 10:00 a.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

There are 10 Canadian productions in the DOCX program, 8 of them fall within the Virtual Reality and Interactive part of DOCX. Three of the VR shorts are based on the award-winning feature documentary *Anthropocene*. The Virtual Reality and Interactive part of DOCX is **free** at the Autodesk Technology Centre at 661 University Avenue. There are a couple of films and a live performance as part of this program as well.

If we missed a film we apologize. Find more [information and tickets online](#) at Hot Docs

<http://www.northernstars.ca/hot-docs-on-tuesday/>

## Watch: Drag Kids delves into the world of pint-sized drag queens

A new Canadian documentary film explores the world of youngsters who perform in drag.

**MONTREAL GAZETTE**

Updated: April 29, 2019



A new Canadian documentary film explores the world of youngsters who perform in drag.

Drag Kids is part of the Hot Docs documentary film festival underway in Toronto.

Four kids featured in the film staged a special brunch performance at a downtown book shop.

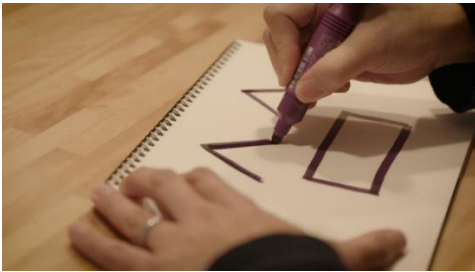
Drag Kids is expected to air on CBC-TV later this year

<https://leaderpost.com/entertainment/watch-drag-kids-delves-into-the-world-of-pint-sized-drag-queens/wcm/68bfaabd-8fca-49c2-b75e-8366cb848d9b>



## Learn How New Emoji Are Created

The directors of the documentary *Picture Character* talk about getting inside the emoji-making process. [Tobias Carroll, April 29, 2019](#)



*Shigetaka Kurita, the inventor of emoji, draws his original smiley face emoji (courtesy Emma Griffiths PR)*

If *Picture Character*, a new documentary from directors Martha Shane and Ian Cheney, had simply accomplished the most basic aspect of its premise — delving into the history of emoji, and the process by which new ones are created — it would have made for a thoroughly instructive and entertaining film. But it goes far deeper than that, exploring issues like representation, the governance of technology, and the evolution of language.

The movie, which just premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, is centered around the efforts to get three new emoji added to the Unicode lexicon: a woman wearing a hijab, a pot of mate, and period blood. Along with this, it explores how emoji fit in with larger trends in language and the ways emoji have influenced visual art. Hyperallergic spoke with Shane and Cheney via email about making the film and the larger topics it covers. This interview has been edited and condensed.

**Tobias Carroll:** *What drew you to the idea of making a film about emoji?*

**Martha Shane:** When the idea for this film was brought to me, my first thought was about an extended text exchange I had with a friend back around 2012 that was comprised exclusively of emoji. It was hilarious to see how much *could* be communicated with this limited set of symbols, and also where the communication broke down. I think those questions around the possibilities and limitations of a set of digital icons were what drew me to the project.

**Ian Cheney:** My first thought was “How could you possibly make an entire documentary about emoji?” And of course, that’s when I knew I was hooked.

**TC:** *How did you settle on the individuals whom you ended up following?*

**Martha Shane & Ian Cheney:** Jenny 8 Lee, our producer, is deeply involved with all aspects of the emoji world, and she would give us a heads up about new emoji. Ultimately, we were drawn to the three specific emoji in the film (hijab, period, and mate) because of their creators’ dedication to their projects, and because they allowed us to highlight the different ways that emoji can be brought into being.

**TC:** *At one point, Emojipedia’s Jeremy Burge argues that the rise of emoji is connected to the diminishing of phone conversations. Did that resonate with you?*



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**MS & IC:** Absolutely. Emoji allow us to add tone to texts, which otherwise can sound cold and be difficult to interpret. Doesn't a message feel friendlier with a dolphin, for example?



*Rayouf Alhumedhi, creator of the hijab emoji (courtesy Emma Griffiths PR)*

**TC:** *What were some of the challenges of conveying one form of communication using an entirely different medium?*

**MS & IC:** How to visually communicate texting is a gigantic question that all filmmakers today, fiction and nonfiction, are grappling with. How can we make films that give a realistic sense of life in the 21st century without having the main characters staring at their phones a third of the time they're on camera? We addressed this by relying on animation to depict text conversations, and also through close-ups showing people's phones during *vérité* scenes. We think it's a challenge we'll continue to explore in our work.

**TC:** *At what point in the process did it become clear that subjects like gender and representation were going to be major themes in the film?*

**MS & IC:** A lot of the major debates that have been happening in the emoji universe for the past five years have been focused on questions about representation, so it was clear from the beginning that this would be a part of the film. Ultimately, while we're all in favor of a white wine emoji, or a flamingo, or an abacus, the emoji that were tied to these questions felt more closely aligned with those broader debates, and that made them richer subjects to explore.

**TC:** *The opening shots of the film include some images of emoji-inspired art. Later, the film covers MoMA's acquisition of the original emoji designs. Where do you see the overlap between emoji and art?*

**MS & IC:** Shigetaka Kurita, the creator of the emoji that were acquired by MoMA, pointed out that his first designs faced serious space constraints. He only had a few pixels to work with, but he worked wonders. In a sense, emoji are all about creativity within constraints, and that seems like a fair description of art itself.

**TC:** *An element that I was particularly struck by was the contrast between the individual interviewees from Unicode versus how Unicode is perceived by people not affiliated with it. Do you intend to demystify the process by which emoji are selected? Or, given that Unicode doesn't allow cameras in their meetings, do you think the process isn't transparent enough?*

**MS & IC:** We definitely wanted to demystify the emoji selection process, but from a journalistic point of view, we think Unicode's process still isn't transparent enough. It was interesting, however, to learn that what we saw as a lack of transparency was viewed by many members of the Unicode Consortium as relative

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openness. They were comparing the level of transparency they practice with the atmosphere of extreme secrecy many Silicon Valley companies operate in as they design and develop their technologies.



*Linguist Tyler Schnoebelen with San Francisco's famous "poop rock" (courtesy Emma Griffiths PR)*

**TC:** *One of the recurring topics is the ways emoji can transcend national and linguistic borders. There are numerous languages spoken onscreen. Was that a conscious thematic decision?*

**MS & IC:** Because emoji are such a global phenomenon, it was inevitable that we would film people all over the world, and the fact that this helped draw attention to questions around emoji as a global language was a lucky side effect. One of the projects that we haven't been able to tackle yet, but which we hope will happen before the film is released wide, is to translate the entire film into emoji. This was our dream from the very beginning, for people to be able to toggle on emoji subtitles if they so choose. We think it's the best experiment we could do, using the film itself to investigate the efficacy of emoji as a language.

**TC:** *Was there anything wanted to include in the film, but weren't able to?*

**MS & IC:** There's a lot of debate among the designers of emoji about the level of detail and realism that they should have. What was so appealing about the earliest emoji was their simplicity. But today's emoji, particularly Apple's, are the opposite of that. They're increasingly lifelike. It would be fun to explore some of those more design-focused questions, but we didn't have time.

**TC:** *Emoji are constantly evolving. When making the film, how did you navigate the constant changes within this field? Did you need to set a cutoff point?*

**MS & IC:** We decided to flag some of the key moments in the emoji timeline: their first appearance on cellphones in Japan, their addition to the Unicode standard, the advent of skin tone options. But we left the future a little undefined and unbounded, because we genuinely have no idea where emoji are headed next!

*Picture Character is currently playing at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City. It will also be playing at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto, beginning April 30.*

## Essay Films in the Age of Trump

### *Some thoughts on John Walker's Assholes, Fred Peabody's The Corporate Coup d'État and Larry Weinstein's Propaganda*

By [Marc Glassman](#) • Published April 29th, 2019 • [Issue 110, Spring/Summer 2019](#)



*Assholes: A Theory*  
Courtesy of the NFB

You see him everywhere, a large sneering bully of a man. He's the Donald, the #potus—really, is that so much quicker to say than President?—the orange skinned asshole with the trophy wife surrounded by bilious acolytes, who is dominating the world's media while declaring most of it fake. Those of us who remember better times, or at least promises that such days might arrive, react in despair and grim contemplation as we wonder how it all went so wrong.

This year, Hot Docs will premiere three Canadian films that examine some of the root causes of the Age of Trump: John Walker's *Assholes*, Fred Peabody's *The Corporate Coup d'État* and Larry Weinstein's *Propaganda*. None directly confronts Trump. Walker, Peabody and Weinstein see him as part of the problem: the purported populist supposedly helping the working class that feels betrayed by liberal promises while actually being the increasingly harsh representative of the upper class, which has to be pleased that one of their own has been elected to what everyone still refers to as the highest office in the land.



*The Corporate Coup d'État*  
Courtesy White Pine Pictures

The Boomer Generation isn't dead, though many wish it would go away. Here's an odd fact: Donald Trump, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush were all born in 1946, the first year of the boom. Here's another: none of them served in Vietnam but each increased military spending in the U.S. by hundreds of millions. Who is better to critique them than documentary filmmakers who are younger members of their cohort? Weinstein, Walker and Peabody independently realized that it was the essay form, which could plunge beneath the surface and allow them to go for broke, looking at what caused the situation we're in and how we might move forward.

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With MSNBC and the *Intercept*, in very different ways, taking on Trump directly, a space has been left open for documentarians to look at our society and question how we arrived at where we're at, and suggest ways in which we can eradicate ourselves from our current situation.

Fred Peabody's *The Corporate d'État* is only his second feature documentary — his first was [\*All Governments Lie\*](#) — but he's an old pro, a former broadcast journalist who worked on CBC's *fifth estate* for years and, previous to that, distinguished himself as an Emmy-winning investigative television journalist and producer in the United States, working most notably at ABC News *20/20*. Working with White Pine Pictures and producer Peter Raymont, another Boomer with many award-winning documentary credits, Peabody has crafted a film that captures the most dispiriting aspect of the Trump era, that corporations have already taken over the vast majority of the world.

Peabody was inspired to make the film by the thinking and writing of three people: the Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul, who coined the phrase “corporate coup d'état” in his 1995 Massey Lectures; Chris Hedges, the Camden, New Jersey writer whose *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (with illustrations by Joe Sacco) is a tough, compassionate account of poverty in America; and the *Intercept*'s Jeremy Scahill, who told Amy Goodman, on her influential show *Democracy Now!*, “There already has been a coup in this country, but it's been a silent coup.” Scahill was referring to the link between corporate interests, the obscenely high priced financing of political campaigns and the outlandish costs of funding the U.S. military. Says Peabody, “Somebody had to connect the dots and give an overview that explains why we have this bizarre dystopia in Washington D.C. and the White House.”

Speaking of the film's structure, Peabody acknowledges “It's a hybrid between an essay film and cinema vérité, because we have vérité style shooting in the Rust Belt and in Camden. I wanted to have a structure that was intellectually sound, that presented a thesis, but illustrate it with examples of scenes that we could capture in a vérité style to show the ultimate victims.” The *mélange* approach works for the film, which moves from interviews with disgruntled citizens in the Rust Belt town of Youngstown, Ohio, which used to be home to major steel production, to Hedges' Camden, where RCA Victor and Campbell Soup formerly had huge factories, to Washington, D.C., where lawmakers and corporate lobbyists refuse to talk to reporters, including Lee Fang, whose non-encounters have a *Roger and Mefeel* to them.



Mary Whisenant, Camden Resident *The Corporate Coup d'État*  
White Pine Pictures

Given his background, it makes sense that Peabody employed a group of journalists to carry the shifts in focus that inevitably occur when you're investigating the corrupting power of corporations on democracy, the anger of a disenfranchised working class, and the wild antics of Donald Trump. He points out that his discomfort with making a pure essay film is based on his belief that “narration [essential in such docs] is just very old fashioned. Even the director narrating his film doesn't make sense, unless it's a highly personal film. Ideally, you don't want to have narration. I consider the journalists, philosopher and writers as characters in the film.” Besides Saul, Fang and Hedges, Peabody worked with economist and historian Gar Alperovitz, independent journalist Sarah Jaffe, philosopher Cornel West, Canadian author and advocate Maude Barlow and investigative reporter Phillip Martin. Particularly interesting are the scenes with the African-American Martin,



who finds an easy rapport with many white citizens of Youngstown, who are more than happy to share with him their reasons for voting for Trump.

Martin and Peabody were aware that Rust Belt communities used to vote for Democrats and aren't, to quote Scahill, "just racist hillbillies." Says Peabody: "Nobody factored in the disgust that many long time Democrat voters—particularly working class in the Rust Belt and the Coal Belt—had for the establishment politicians of both political parties. Trump was running against both establishment parties. The other thing that surprised me in the Rust Belt was how many of these voters who flipped for Trump said to us, 'If Bernie [Sanders] had been running, I might have voted for him.' It's very understandable. They wanted to throw a brick through the window of the establishment, so to speak, because they'd been screwed by the corporate Democrat and Republican politicians who would promise anything and then, as soon as they got into power, would be just listening to what corporate lobbyists were saying."



*Propaganda! The Art of Selling Lies*  
D Films

For Larry Weinstein, *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies* is a departure from his unique oeuvre, which has largely concentrated on bios of such composers as Ravel, Schoenberg and Shostakovich. His work has often been unique stylistically—Ravel's *Brain* had passages that resembled an experimental film with extraordinary dream-like imagery replicating what the composer might have thought while enduring cranial surgery—but he has never before tackled politics or the essay form.

"I think Trump was my muse in this film," says the director and co-scriptwriter. "I'd wake up every morning, read what he'd tweeted, and get infuriated. Fury fueled this film. I'd sit down and start writing some things and David Mortin and Andrew Edmonds would draw it out of me. They didn't like it when I was in a good mood because I couldn't write as well. They would enhance what I had written and help structure the film based on that."

Speaking of the film's content, which goes back to Neanderthal art—arguably the precursor to today's graffiti—through the spiritually and politically persuasive Medieval church culture, replete with paintings and music, to the revolutionary Twenties and Sixties posters of Lenin, Mao and Che, to such contemporary artists as Ai Weiwei and Shepard Fairey, albeit not presented in that reductive chronology, Weinstein admits that his only recourse was to embrace the essay.



Jim Fitzpatrick in *Propaganda!*  
D Films

“Part of that essayness,” says Weinstein, “is the fact that there’s narration. I’m the narrator positing some ideas, and there’s some bookends and through-lines to that. The feeling I was going for was a series of non-sequiturs. I wanted the person watching the film to have this feeling of not knowing who we were going to meet next, where we were going next, or even what century we were going to be talking about next. I wanted this sense of disorientation because I felt that the meaning of the film was strong enough that it could undergo it. It’s ultimately always about the same theme of propaganda—even though there’s many variations on that theme. So you get [Astra Taylor](#) suddenly talking about gender politics, or a scene from Riefenstahl’s *Triumph Of The Will*, or Jim Fitzpatrick, a wonderful Irishman, talking about how he created the famous *Che Lives* poster. There’s certain things you would expect in a film like this, and there are those you would not expect.”

That sense of the unexpected is in keeping with Weinstein’s stylish approach to cinema. Trump is clearly motivating him to make this film but he can’t let go of his cultural values. “The idea is that the film is about art as well. In a way, the premise of the film is looking at propaganda through the prism of art. If it was just blatantly about propaganda, then you’d get into a drier realm where you might as well just have eighty percent Noam Chomsky, with some Naomi Klein too.” Weinstein’s historic account of propagandistic art shows that even many of the greats—from Beethoven to Shostakovich to Riefenstahl— will extol the virtues of the Pope or the Emperor or the Fuhrer if they’re pressed to do so. In Trump’s America, propaganda doesn’t have to work on that high a level. Fox News can do it and so can parts of the Twitterverse.

Of course, there are artists who have used art as a propagandistic tool against their rulers. It’s fascinating to hear what Weinstein says about the iconic revolutionary artist Ai Weiwei. “He grew up through the whole Cultural Revolution crap. His father was imprisoned. He literally grew up in labour camps because they weren’t conforming. So he’s very aware of the propaganda of the Cultural Revolution and the craft, the facelessness of their craft.



Ai Weiwei in *Propaganda!*  
D Films

“Listen to the music of China since the Cultural Revolution. For the most part, it’s a nightmare, because it’s music by committee and it has no flavour whatsoever. Before, music was superb, intricate, nuanced, great music of a brilliant culture that had more innovation than any other. The thing that’s so interesting with Ai Weiwei is he talks about propaganda being the propaganda of the individual. I mean, he has an ego, a big ego, but it’s that ego that is fighting against oppression. That’s why the Chinese government hates him. He’s an individual. He’s fighting for individualism. Each individual is capable of fighting propaganda by creating their own propaganda.”

Of course what he says about Ai Weiwei is perceptive but what I love is that Weinstein is still angry about what happened to Chinese music because of the Cultural Revolution. He is someone who cares passionately about art.



Weinstein's rage, which fueled *Propaganda*, is essentially about the loss of ethics in modern society. "I believe that the age of Trump comes from an absolute dumbing down of society and America and the world," says Weinstein. "Reality television is supposed to be about truth but it's not. It's funny—if you go back to the National Film Board and cinema vérité—we're lacking vérité in our lives. There is no truth. Everyone knows so-called reality television is fake, and we've got a reality television president. People are bored and they want to be thrilled. Trump is interesting. He's edgy. You don't know where he's going. That's exciting and fun. That's why we watch the news obsessively."

The originality of *Propaganda* is that it never gets away from Weinstein's cultural roots. This may be the most beautiful denunciation of the Trump era yet. Working with his regular collaborators, cinematographer John M. Tran and editor David New, Weinstein has created an intense visual display of propagandistic art through the ages.



*Assholes: A Theory*  
Courtesy of the NFB

POV asked Weinstein about assholes in the context of Trump's election. He was happy to reply: "Assholes always have a very strong position and we see what happens when Democrats run against them and they're all reasonable—or even when reasonable Republicans do. The assholes come out on top as their very strong opinions end up appealing to a lot of people who are angry."

John Walker may have now become the cinema expert on the subject thanks to his new film *Assholes: A Theory*. Just like Weinstein and Peabody, Walker is quite aware that the vast majority of corporations and many governments are run by assholes. But he's also come to realize that we have to apply a stricter definition to a word that most of us say all too often.

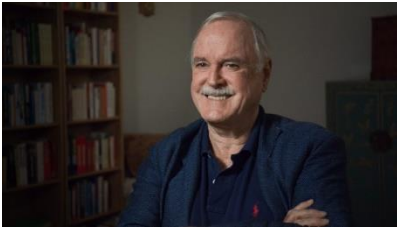
How do you define an asshole? "It's in their way of seeing the world: an entrenched sense of entitlement and an unwillingness to listen to complaints of others," says Walker. "By defining the character, it becomes a very useful word. I'm a lot more careful now about how I would use this word to describe somebody."

It's not a word to use if you don't like somebody. The asshole is someone who doesn't consider you an equal, so it brings up questions of equality and liberty and freedom of individuals. They see themselves as superior to you and it's very disturbing. It makes us very angry when these types take special advantages that they feel they deserve and that you don't."

Walker, like Weinstein and Peabody's producer Peter Raymont, is a veteran filmmaker. He and Weinstein have been subjects of Hot Docs retrospectives and one assumes that it's only a matter of time before Raymont receives that career recognition. Along with Kevin McMahon, also a Hot Docs retrospective alum, Walker is an essayist, although not all of his films fit into that genre. *Assholes* does, of course, and it's a pleasure to watch him manoeuvre through the various ways we can regard this increasingly disturbing phenomenon. Walker had been thinking about asshole behaviour after a female director remarked to him at a festival, "do you have to be an asshole to be a great director?" Soon after, he was at the University of Toronto bookshop and found Aaron James' book, *Assholes: A Theory*. Within days, the director was on a plane to California to meet the moral

philosopher who had written the book. The film is not a direct transfer of the book, Walker is quick to acknowledge—"I simplified it"—but he's pleased to note that James approves of the essay film.

Asked to explain how he documented the natural born sociopath or egotist in its native environment, Walker replied: "I had to look at breeding grounds for asshole behavior. I identified four breeding grounds in an American context: Wall Street, Washington, Hollywood, and Silicon Valley. Washington, I felt, was taking care of itself in terms of exposing its assholery 24 hours a day on the news. Wall Street is a bit of a cliché of assholery in the financial sector. Hollywood also takes care of itself in revealing its own assholery. In terms of asshole capitalism, I found Silicon Valley more interesting than Wall Street, because of its strong liberal starting baseline: 'we're creating a better world.'"



John Cleese in *Assholes*  
Courtesy of the NFB

One of Walker's commentators in the film is the famous former Monty Python member John Cleese, who at one point says, "the greatest mistake was letting these nerds tell us how to live." Although not all of the Silicon Valley "geniuses" are assholes, most are socially awkward with little sense of how the rest of the world lives. Their sense of aesthetics is neatly summed up in a sequence of drone shots created by Walker of the three headquarters for Facebook, Google and Apple. One looks exactly like the Pentagon. From above, they all resemble the sort of imposing fascist architecture that Albert Speer created for Hitler. The royalty of the Valley manifest a monumental sense of entitlement even in their buildings.

Says Walker, "They've reneged on their moral responsibility to deal with the negative impact of the products they're producing. We're just at the beginning and I can see it coming. There's going to be pushback on Silicon Valley and we're seeing it when Washington is calling up CEOs of these companies to testify. I say in the film that Americans have always been for the free flow of information. That's been their mantra: 'don't restrict our movies in your countries. Let the free flow of ideas happen.'

"It was working for them when it was a one-way street, but—and I said this to [the *Economist's* former editor-in-chief] Bill Emmott—when there was this Russian interference, that was a game changer. It's the first time in history that's happened. So Washington is now concerned that the free flow is not one-way but two-way, and they're vulnerable to complete manipulation of their population. That's a big issue. Therefore you've got Facebook just nodding and saying 'sorry' but not doing anything about it."

More egregious—or at least more painfully obvious—is how Wall Street handled the 2008 economic crisis. Walker plays this up in the film: "the crisis was partly due to Clinton's deregulation of checks and balances, which is when assholery took over the system. It's a great example of what happens when you allow assholes to take over and run the system. It ends up in disaster.

"They're firing half the staff, companies like Goldman-Sachs lost billions of dollars that belonged to their clients, they've bankrupted the economy and caused a global crisis, then they're sitting in front of committees justifying their bonuses: 'We still deserve the bonus. We were just smarter than everybody else. We were making lots of money.' That's a classic example of assholery. Thinking they're smarter than everybody else and that they deserve the rewards, with total disregard for any impact of their actions. So we looked at that classic example in the film."



*Assholes: A Theory* author Aaron James  
Courtesy of the NFB

Walker includes in the film a Canadian example of toxic assholery, the nearly tragic case of Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk, a member of the RCMP, who got into trouble with her fellow officers after she refused to play ball and lie for a fellow officer who had been drunk on the job. “She’s a superhero to me,” Walker tells *POV*. “She was the first woman to go public about sexual harassment and bullying within the RCMP. And no one was listening to her, including the media. The government wasn’t listening. Her superior officers and even her colleagues weren’t listening to her. But she kept pressing and pressing and pressing over a 20 year period. She didn’t let up.

“She’s lucky she didn’t commit suicide and she is the example of pushback. But what’s important in the sequence, because I am advocating pushback against assholery in the film, is that it’s not necessarily an easy thing to do. She was a single parent in a small town. She needed a job and couldn’t just quit. Where was she going to go: McDonald’s or Tim Horton’s? She maintained her dignity, and it led to two class action suits against the RCMP. Finally, the government appointed a female head of the force. So positive change in the big macro sense took place, and she was the forerunner to the #MeToo movement.”

*Assholes* needed to take on a politician and interestingly, Walker chose Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi instead of Trump. Berlusconi isn’t just a politician; his pernicious presence has affected the media and Italian society’s perception of women as well. Says Walker, who spent a considerable amount of time in Italy, talking to experts: “Live television in Italy before Berlusconi got involved was the equivalent of BBC. It was one of the best public networks in the world and Berlusconi destroyed that because they had to start competing with him [and his sexist variety, talk and game shows featuring scantily dressed women]. People were watching his misogynistic and dumbed down programming and they had to compete, which is a slippery slope.”

How do you fight assholery, nefarious corporations, entitled social media billionaires and scandalous politicians like Trump? Peabody, Weinstein and Walker all offer variations on the same reply: be more diligent, fight against injustices, work to get rid of assholes. To which *POV* can add: watch these documentaries and others like them. They may not provide solutions but at least you’ll understand more about how we arrived in this very difficult era.

Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](https://povmagazine.com/articles/view/essay-films-in-the-age-of-trump) for more coverage from this year’s festival!

## Catherine Meyburgh and Richard Pakleppa's *Dying for Gold* premieres at Hot Docs in Canada

By Contributor - April 29, 2019



*Albino Tivane - Mozambique.*

On Friday, 26 April, *Screen Africa* shared a press release online titled 'NFVF-funded documentaries make their debut at Hot Docs in Canada'. The press release was sent to us by the National Film & Video Foundation's (NFVF) media agency. We have since been informed by the directors and producers of *Dying for Gold* that the information contained in that release – regarding their film – was incorrect.

We'd like to sincerely apologise to Catherine Meyburgh and Richard Pakleppa, the co-directors and co-producers of *Dying for Gold*, as well as every other person involved in the production of the film, for this misunderstanding. We have recommended that the NFVF recall the inaccurate press release.

"*Dying for Gold* has not received production funding from the NFVF, only a small amount to attend Hotdocs Film Festival. Which has yet to be paid," said Meyburgh. She additionally informed us that contrary to what the press release said, Lee Selleck is in no way involved with the production.

### **A Breathe Films production**

Today, gold miner communities across Southern Africa have nothing to show for the wealth they produced except extreme rural underdevelopment and the world's worst epidemic of TB and silicosis. Over 500 000 gold miners returned home from the mines suffering from tuberculosis and silicosis. Through the lives of miners and their families from Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and South Africa, and extensive use of contrasting archive materials, *Dying for Gold* tells the story of South Africa's biggest class action lawsuit.

South Africa's biggest gold mining companies have been accused of knowingly exposing miners to harmful dust causing the terminal disease, silicosis and makes them more susceptible to TB. The class action has been settled out of court – which means the real cost of gold will not be known. *Dying for Gold* exposes the century of deplorable practices by gold mines and ensures that miners and their families are justly compensated. The film also aims to promote discussion on mining – especially profit-based harmful practices.

"We have started a campaign which will be running concurrently with the film," Meyburgh adds. "We also will be rolling out a massive impact campaign using the film to raise consciousness about silicosis and TB and the related class action (the biggest class action South Africa has ever seen). The film has already been translated into six languages which will allow for it to be shown across the sub-continent. I hope the situation can lead to something positive and help with the Justice for Miners campaign."

*To learn more about the film or to sign the petition and join the movement for just compensation, visit the [Dying for Gold website](https://www.dyingforgold.com).*

## ‘Maxima’ Edges Out Gordon Lightfoot in Hot Docs Audience Award Update

Posted on April 29th, 2019



*Maxima*

By Pat Mullen

*Maxima* jumped from the runner-up spot to number one in today's update of the Hot Docs Audience Award rankings. Claudia Sparrow's film about Peruvian subsistence farmer Máxima Acuña crept up the list following its second screening, while Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, which looks at systemic cover-ups of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, edged out *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* for the top spot in the Canadian rankings. *If You Could Read My Mind* sits at number five, just one spot above Sundance Audience Award winner *Knock Down the House*, which premiered to an enthusiastic crowd on Sunday night.

New today, Hot Docs broke down the audience rankings into features, shorts, and mid-length films. *St. Louis Superman*, which previously took the number one spot overall in the inaugural rankings of the year, is at number one on the shorts list while *Faire-Part* leads the mid-length films.

The top 20 feature films in the Audience Award rankings are:

1. *Maxima*
2. *The Disappearance of My Mother*
3. *Prey* – Eligible for Rogers Audience Award
4. *Ask Dr. Ruth*
5. *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* – Eligible for Rogers Audience Award
6. *Knock Down the House*
7. *Midnight Traveler*
8. *Drag Kids* – Eligible for Rogers Audience Award
9. *Killing Patient Zero* – Eligible for Rogers Audience Award
10. [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#) – Eligible for Rogers Audience Award
11. *Kifaru*
12. *Trixie Mattel: Moving Parts*
13. *Conviction* – Eligible for Rogers Audience Award
14. *Female Pleasure*
15. *Human Nature*
16. *Confucian Dream*

17. Merate: How Mum Decolonised the Screen
18. Sea of Shadows
19. On the Inside of a Military Dictatorship
20. In My Blood It Runs

Top 5 Short Films:

1. St. Louis Superman
2. Exiled
3. Nyctophobia
4. Connected
5. Uncaged: A Stand-In Story

Top 5 Mid-Length Films

1. Faire-Part
2. El Toro
3. Your Last Walk in the Mosque
4. Symphony at the Ursus Factory
5. Letter to Theo



## Saskatchewan filmmakers hit screens at Toronto's international film festival

EFN Staff | April 29, 2019

The true beauty of Indigenous parenting is a story that needs to be shared, and two Regina filmmakers have made it happen.

Chris Tyone Ross and Candy Fox's collaboration *ahkâmêyimo nitânis / Keep Going My Daughter* has been selected to make its world premiere at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto.



Chris Tyrone Ross and Candy Fox stand in front of poster of their film.

The pair could not be more excited about the opportunity because only the best of the best are invited to the festival.

They knew from the start their film was special because after a few initial hiccups everything fell into place like serendipity.

Fox heard the National Screen Institute Indigidocs program from a fellow filmmaker in 2017.

It was around the same time that Fox was following the Facebook story of how Colby Tootoosis and his partner Andrea Landry were choosing to raise their daughter. She found their story very beautiful and educational.

A day before the deadline for the program she called Ross up and asked if he would be the other part of her team. Coincidentally, it was something he was also interested in pursuing so he agreed.

Each year, four teams comprised of a producer and director are selected from across Canada to participate. When they made the cut, they know they couldn't pass up the opportunity.

They describe *Keep Going My Daughter* as a poetic and hopeful film about two young parents and their dreams for their daughter.

Fox described the journal entries like love letters that they read to their unborn child.

Ross and Fox wanted to make a film that reflected the Indigenous resurgence of knowledge and kinship. They feel it was accomplished through music, powerful images and positive messages.

They were blown away when they received an invite to screen their 12-minute documentary at Hot Docs.

Ross said he knew they had something special when he saw the finished product because of how it impacted him as an Indigenous parent.

Fox added she still gets choked up when she watches it because it is Indigenous history.

"Yes, it deals with some touch issues like inter-generational trauma but it also is a film about hope," said Ross.

Tasha Hubbard, a Saskatoon-based filmmaker, has also been invited to Hot Docs. Her latest film *Nippawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up* about the Colten Boushie case will open up this year's festival.

To help Ross and Fox with travel expenses to Toronto they are hosting a film fundraiser at the Saskatchewan Film Pool in Regina. People will see three short documentaries including a sneak peek of their Hot Doc submission.

<https://www.eaglefeathernews.com/news/saskatchewan-filmmakers-hit-screens-at-torontos-international-film-festival>

## Hot Docs Film Review: 'The Seer and the Unseen'

Sara Dosa's elegant documentary finds unexpected environmental and economic dimensions to its offbeat subject, an Icelandic elf whisperer.

By [GUY LODGE](#)



CREDIT: COURTESY OF SUBMARINE ENTERTAINMENT

Director: Sara Dosa

With: Ragnhildur "Ragga" Jónsdóttir

1 hour 29 minutes

The words “away with the fairies” tend to be used pejoratively, though if you applied it to Ragnhildur “Ragga” Jónsdóttir, she’d calmly and cheerfully accept at least part of the phrase. It’s the “away” bit to which she’d object: In Jónsdóttir’s view, she’s very much present with the elves, trolls and sprites who make up Iceland’s apparently vast population of folkloric *huldufólk* (hidden people), and acts as a vital intermediary between these creatures and her human cohorts who neither see nor believe in them. As the heroine of [Sara Dosa](#)’s sprightly, surprising character portrait “[The Seer and the Unseen](#),” this alleged elf whisperer makes for a highly unusual documentary subject and storyteller, at once wholly, earnestly truthful and questionable in her convictions.

That conflicting combination makes Jónsdóttir vulnerable to careless film treatment: It’s easy to see how a director could err on the side of the condescending or the stiflingly precious in documenting her peaceable eccentricities. Dosa’s film, however, elegantly threads a very fine needle, affording Jónsdóttir a generous platform for her beliefs while taking no position as to where she falls on the visionary-crank spectrum. By framing her concern for the *huldufólk* as a potentially symbolic dimension of more tangible environmental activism and conservation, meanwhile, “The Seer and the Unseen” provides a lens for even the most skeptical viewers to identify real-world weight in her whimsy. Serving also as a layered snapshot of a nation in multiple forms of limbo — economical, ecological, even spiritual — in the wake of 2008’s near-ruinous banking crisis, this deft, inquisitive film ought to beguile audiences and buyers alike as it travels the festival circuit.

Jónsdóttir claims to have been able to see and commune with *huldufólk* beings since early childhood, though it’s only in the last decade, she says, that she has become open and vocal about her relationship to them. It’s a conscious change that she likens, with a wry smile, to “coming out of the closet.” Thanks to a national mythos inherited from the Vikings, seers like her used to be more prevalent in Iceland, with laws even passed to protect supernatural interests. “Now,” she notes mournfully, “only half the country believes that elves exist.” Some might say that’s still rather a lot, or describe the dwindling statistic as a kind of national evolution — taking physical form in a surge of new building and infrastructure across the financially recovering country that, according to Jónsdóttir, violates and erases the elves’ natural habitat.

## Variety – April 29, 2019 (2 of 2)

One such project, the contentious construction of a new highway across an unspoilt lava field on the outskirts of Reykjavik, provides “The Seer and the Unseen” with a clear, compelling narrative spine, setting up a David-versus-Goliath dynamic that should prove irresistible even to viewers who find the *huldufólk* talk utter hogwash. Jónsdóttir is a member of an environmental activist group, Friends of the Lava Conservation, whose motivations are precisely as earthy or otherworldly as individual members prefer them to be. While our heroine’s primary concern is that the road is set to bulldoze through a sacred elf chapel — a great mossy boulder to more cynical eyes — you needn’t believe in pixie preachers to mourn the potential destruction of a dazzling landscape, painted in grand, weather-sodden strokes by cinematographer Patrick Kollman. Is there any bad reason to advocate the protection of nature, after all?

Dosa has a knack for integrating personal and political stakes with a light touch; she earned an Independent Spirit nod for her debut feature “The Last Season,” about the improbable bond between a Vietnam vet and a Khmer Rouge refugee. Without trivializing the matters at hand, “The Seer and the Unseen” tempers complex national interests with droll human ones: Indeed, it’s easy to imagine scenes of the protest itself, complete with lyrically modified Elvis Presley singalongs and stubborn we-shall-not-be-moved faceoffs with exasperated police forces, fitting right into an oddball fictionalized telling of the same story. (Imagine “Woman at War” with a little more *hygge*.)

Any such film would be lucky, however, to have a protagonist as intriguing as Jónsdóttir herself anchoring it — a gentle maverick whose powers of persuasion work even on larger, more powerful opponents. Even the film falls a little under the woman’s spell by the end, as the camerawork and intricate sound design succumb to her demands to pause and listen to the land in a lyrical parting shot: You may hear more insects than elves amid the mottled rocks and windswept grasses, but there are worse instructions to heed.

Hot Docs Film Review: 'The Seer and the Unseen'

Reviewed at Hot Docs Film Festival (Making Believe), April 28, 2019. (Also in San Francisco Film Festival.) Running time: 89 MIN.

PRODUCTION: (Documentary — U.S.-Iceland) A Signpost Pictures production in association with Cottage M, Austan Mána, Compass Films, RYOT Studios. (International sales: Submarine Entertainment, New York City.) Producers: Shane Boris, Sara Dosa. Executive producers: Richard Berge, Bonni Cohen, Jon Shenk. Co-producers: Heather Millard, Arnar Sigurðsson.

CREW: Director: Sara Dosa. Camera (color): : Patrick Kollman. Editor: Erin Casper. Music: Giosue Greco, Tara Atkinson, Dan Romer.

WITH: Ragnhildur "Ragga" Jónsdóttir. (English, Icelandic dialogue)

<https://variety.com/2019/film/reviews/the-seer-and-the-unseen-review-1203200008/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Last Breath

Andrew Parker

April 29, 2019



### Last Breath

9 out of 10

If the intense and thoroughly captivating documentary *Last Breath* doesn't leave viewers with quickened pulses and goosebumps, they might want to consult their physicians. Easily the most claustrophobic and visceral thriller playing at Hot Docs this year, directors Alex Parkinson and Richard da Costa's underwater thriller blends slickly dramatized reenactment footage, remarkably candid interviews, and first-person viewpoints of a disaster in the making to exceptional, heart-stopping effect.

*Last Breath* concerns the problem plagued mission of three deep sea saturation divers, who spend 28 days at a time in a locked off environment calibrated to ten times our normal atmospheric pressure to perform delicate underwater repairs to oil drilling and monitoring equipment. On September 18, 2012 in the North Sea – 100 metres below the surface and in four degree water – the members of the dive support vessel *Topaz* out of Aberdeen descend to perform otherwise unexceptional repairs on some oil field equipment. Things go haywire in a hurry, however, when a violent storm rolls in and one of the divers, Chris Lemons, has his life giving tether to his ship severed, turning what should've been an easy day's work into a life saving race against time.

Parkinson and da Costa sit down with the crew members to get their sometimes differing view of events, and while their insights help the viewer to better understand the urgency and technical setbacks of the rescue operation, it's the stark and harrowing footage that comes from each of the diver's helmet cameras that will leave viewers on the edge of their seats throughout *Last Breath*. While the happenings aboard the *Topaz* have been largely recreated to show the sequence of events (and because there were no cameras up there), the rest of *Last Breath* is frighteningly real. It's a survival thriller in the purest and most terrifying sense. See it on the biggest screen and in the darkest, coldest theatre possible.

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038977/hot-docs-2019-review-last-breath/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Born in Evin

Andrew Parker April 29, 2019



### Born in Evin

7 out of 10

*Born in Evin*, Iranian-German director Maryam Zaree's deep dive into her family's unspoken past is a detailed and empathetic look at why parents choose to keep secrets from their children and the psychological toll such repression takes on parent-child relationships.

Tired of working as an actress who only gets cast as refugees on crappy German television shows, 35-year old Zaree finds both inspiration and vexation in her mother, Nargess, who's running to become the first ever female mayor of Frankfurt. Nargess and her former partner, Kasra, were leftist revolutionaries imprisoned in 1983 for daring to rise up against the Shah. Nargess was pregnant at the time, and at the age of only 19 gave she birth to Maryam inside one of the most notorious prisons in Iran. Maryam, who's too young to remember any of her time at Evin, moved with her mother to Germany at the age of two, and in the decades since, Nargess has staunchly refused to talk about what it was like to be pregnant and have a child inside one of Iran's most infamous torture prisons.

*Born in Evin* will leave some viewers divided when it comes to Maryam and her quest for answers, and that's entirely the point. On one hand, Maryam sees her mother's silence as someone holding onto a trauma instead of letting go of it, and she also understandably has some right to know about the culture she was born into. On the other hand, Nargess' refusal to answer any questions and the hesitancy of others Maryam meets along her journey to talk about the deplorable conditions and human rights abuses inside the prison is completely understandable. Maryam gets frustrated by emotional dead ends throughout *Born in Evin*, but she never loses sight of the empathy she has for people like her mother and father who've suffered greatly and luckily lived through it.

*Born in Evin* eloquently speaks to how some people can live through a tragedy, but they don't have to "live to tell" about it. There's a distinction between those two mindsets that Zaree wrestles with, gradually noticing that the more questions she asks, the more likely it is that the answers will cause great pain and discomfort to those giving them. As with most resolutely personal searches for greater truths, *Born in Evin* is sometimes a bit scattershot, but that's only because Zaree is dealing with emotions that are nearly impossible to articulate without putting words into the mouths of others. The biggest success of *Born in Evin* is that the filmmaker and subject let these traumas and the feelings that arise from them speak for themselves. It's a film that the director notes took a lot of time to put together, but it's precisely the kind of passion project that needed that room to breathe and grow.

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038979/hot-docs-2019-review-born-in-evin/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The Daughter Tree

Andrew Parker

April 29, 2019



### The Daughter Tree

8 out of 10

Filmmaker Rama Rau delivers her second exceptional film in as many months (following the recent completion of her fictional filmmaking debut, *Honey Bee*) with *The Daughter Tree*, an eye opening look at the misogynistic and sexist basis for India's current population crisis.

Every 22 seconds in India, a female fetus is aborted, and, in some extreme but distressingly common cases, baby girls that have already been born are murdered or abandoned. Still beholden to rigid caste systems and outdated social customs, many traditional minded families see first-born girls as useless burdens. To many, girls are seen as a waste of money – thanks to their dowries – who'll just leave the family behind to go and become a part of someone else's. Although family bonds are still exalted in India, some communities and villages haven't had a single female born in decades. It's projected that the country will have 22 million single males by next year, and only now are many men expressing their regrets, but mostly out of a desire to save face and not die alone, disgraced, and ashamed.

There are two major threads that Rau follows throughout *The Daughter Tree*. The first and most satisfying is the director's time spent with Neelam Bala, a take-no-shit midwife with over thirty years of experience. Neelam, who has "seen some shit" as the kids like to say, is a perfect guide through the evolution and stagnation of gender politics in India, offering an unflinching look at the damages caused by institutionalized sexism. The other more purposefully vexing parts of the film finds Rau spending time alongside a group of older, unmarried men who lament their lives, refuse to marry for love (or to take on a mail-order bride), and do nothing but sit around their hookah all day moaning and whining about their lot in life.

*The Daughter Tree* is both an impassioned exposee of a country in crisis, but also a sometimes darkly amusing portrait of fragile, infantile men who demand everything handed to them, while remaining oblivious to the fact that they're the architects of their own demise. *The Daughter Tree* builds to a powerful, contentious, and frustrating showdown between female caregivers and a group of stubborn, woefully ignorant men that stands as the best thing Rau has captured on film. It also might be her most important and timely movie overall, although the cynic in me thinks that changing centuries of indoctrination will take much more than *The Daughter Tree* can deliver.

<https://www.thegate.ca/film/038981/hot-docs-2019-review-the-daughter-tree/>



## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The World or Nothing

Andrew Parker

April 29, 2019



### **The World or Nothing** 7.5 out of 10

Prolific and constantly evolving Canadian indie film mainstay Ingrid Veninger (*Porcupine Lake*, *The Animal Project*) tries her hand at documentary filmmaking for the first time with *The World or Nothing*, a well drawn, observational look at a pair of twin brothers trying to chase their dreams of stardom and make a living in the new gig economy.

Veninger travels to Barcelona and follows the work of 29-year old Cuban twins Rubert and Rubido Dinza, an inseparable, hard working pair of aspiring dancers and musicians, known collectively as Sensación Gemela. Crashing on the couch of one of their cousins virtually for free, Rubert and Rubido are constantly brainstorming new ideas for songs and music videos that they hope will become viral through the power of a constant social media presence. Outside of teaching (mostly free) dance classes and an unwavering work ethic, their successes are often modest, and Rubert and Rubido both realize that they aren't getting any younger.

Veninger is the perfect choice to document the siblings' as-yet-unattained entertainment industry glory. *The World or Nothing* (which is also, surprisingly, Veninger's most gorgeous looking effort to date) is a film made by a filmmaker who knows precisely what her subjects are going through. While Rubert and Rubido are captivating and charismatic on their own, Veninger never unnecessarily skews their journey for added drama or catharsis. It's a film about hard working artists doing their best in a global economy that's downright toxic for creative types. Veninger never edits her footage for huge laughs, cheers, or tears, instead presenting Rubert and Rubido as everyday people trying to live their best lives, whether it's profitable or not. *The World or Nothing* is inspirational, but it also isn't bullshitting anyone, either. Rags to riches stories and falls from grace are a dime a dozen when it comes to documentaries set amid the entertainment industry. *The World or Nothing* is something a lot more common and a lot rarer to see on screen: a story of reasonable perseverance.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Inside Lehman Brothers

Andrew Parker, April 29, 2019



### Inside Lehman Brothers

6.5 out of 10

Filmmaker Jennifer Deschamps' focused and impressionable *Inside Lehman Brothers* looks at the collapse of one of America's most prominent lending firms from the viewpoints of men and women who dared to question their employer's greedy, underhanded, and bafflingly illogical accounting practices.

During one of the most catastrophic moments of subprime mortgage collapse in 2008, Lehman Brothers, one of the world's most influential and wealthy money lenders, went out of business in a matter of hours, losing a staggering \$691 billion in the blink of an eye. One of the firms that was brought down for basically rubber stamping loans to people who couldn't afford them in the interest of making as much money as possible, Lehman Brothers was the biggest casualty of one of the darkest days in U.S. financial history, but it didn't have to be that way if they just listened to some of their most dedicated and critical thinking employees instead of firing them or threatening them into silence.

For *Inside Lehman Brothers*, Deschamps sits down with former loan officers, executives, vice presidents, and lawyers for the company who recount what it was like to realize they were aboard a rapidly sinking ship. Deschamps doesn't bog *Inside Lehman Brothers* down with too many dry, basic details about the evils of subprime lending that have been stated numerous times before, and instead offers up an unpretentious, easily understandable, and surprisingly personal look at how one company orchestrated its own demise and left millions of Americans homeless through sheer, unchecked greed.

Each of Deschamps' interview subjects could easily say "I told you so" and leave it at that, but all of the stories shared throughout *Inside Lehman Brothers* speaks to greater abuses of power and how it sometimes doesn't feel particularly good to be right. It's one of the most unsuspectingly emotional looks at the world of high finance to come around in quite some time, and an important reminder as to why those who see smoke should report that there might be a fire.

Original-Cin – April 29, 2019

## HOT DOCS PREVIEW: PHENOMENAL ORGANS, FEARLESS TEEN ACTIVISTS PROPEL FAB FESTIVAL

April 29, 2019

### **Pipe Dreams**

Five young organists from around the world compete for a \$100,000 prize at Montreal's Notre Dame Basilica at Canada's International Organ Competition. Director Stacey Tenenbaum (*Shiners*) focuses on the personalities, including an African-American youth with a winner's swagger, a Chinese woman who studies Tai Chi with her coach, a father and a young German teen prodigy. Some more history of this grandly complex instrument or explanation of the judging would have been welcome, but this works well enough as an entertainingly edited competition film. Screening: Tue, Apr 30, 9 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox 3; Fri, May 3, 10 am, Isabel Bader Theatre. – Liam Lacey



### **The Infiltrators**

A heroic story to shame xenophobes, *The Infiltrators* portrays how, in 2012, a group of undocumented teenaged immigrants hatched a plan to get their members deliberately imprisoned in Florida's for-profit Broward Transitional Centre. They used their people on the inside to help other detainees, some of whom had spent years without any legal help or charges against them. Mixing extensive re-enactments, news footage, phone recordings and live interviews with the participants, *The Infiltrators* tells a great story that should be better known. How this hasn't been snapped up as a Hollywood script is a mystery. Screening Sun, May 5, 10:15 am, TIFF Bell Lightbox 2. – LL

Wait! We've got heaps more [Hot Docs capsule reviews](#) (and this stand-alone) plus [director interviews](#)!

More on Hot Docs including [ticketing info](#).

<https://www.original-cin.ca/posts/2019/4/29/hot-docs-preview-phenomenal-organs-fearless-teen-activists-propel-fab-festival>

## Review: 'Beauty and Decay'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 29th, 2019



### ***Beauty and Decay***

(Germany, 79 min.)

Dir. Annekatrin Hendel

Programme: Artscapes (International Premiere)

When director Annekatrin Hendel introduced *Beauty and Decay* at Hot Docs, she invited audiences to experience a country that hasn't existed for 30 years. It's an odd statement to make, since people come and people go, but geography roughly stays the same. Borders and social currents, however, are prone to change, and the sly German filmmaker was hinting at the fact that art is born out of a specific moment in a certain milieu. This sentiment is especially true of the subjects of her film *Beauty and Decay*, which transports audiences back to the punk photography scene of '80s' East Berlin.

The doc features photographer/techno club bouncer Sven Marquardt and models/muses/collaborators Dominique Hollenstein (aka "Dome") and Robert Paris as they revisit their work and create new art as the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall approaches. On one hand, *Beauty and Decay* is your typical arts exhibition documentary in that it chronicles the preparation for a big show as Marquardt readies a new vernissage and, on the other, it's the story of what keeps him relevant as an artist so long after the Berlin Wall has fallen down. One hand of the doc is much bigger than the other, though, and Hendel delivers an engaging case study of a unique era of photography by exploring three voices who harnessed the negatives of divided Berlin (no pun intended) and turned them into art.

Marquardt's photographs, then and now, are much like the east and west sides of divided Berlin as they are works of great contradictions. Hendel features a striking array of Marquardt's photography that allows one to appreciate his uncanny eye for playing with the sacred and the profane, the bad and the beautiful, the new and the old, and the conservative and the radical. They're wonderfully weird shots that could never have emerged from another scene. Hendel lets the trio reflect on the changing times as Marquardt and Dome continue to get by in their eclectic arty lifestyles while Paris' choices are arguably more conventional. But all remember the past quite well. As character studies, the trio prove intriguing subjects that encapsulate the various stages of moving on and letting go, and

how much a persona can be part of one's métier. Put another way, some people leave the past and others carry it with them.

Between the still images that grace the screen and the photography sessions that Hendel captures in the present-day observational footage, *Beauty and Decay* captures the passage of time marked by documentary photography. The film tours contemporary Berlin and contrasts the images Hendel's camera sees with the city Marquadt saw through his lens: the landscape is quite different between the periods with the disappearance of the Berlin Wall being the least of it. There are beautiful black-and-white images of old train stations and derelict ruins that stood tall during the "divided years" and Hendel taps into Marquadt's grasp for the ephemerality of things. There's a sense of impermanence that graces many of the photographs on display, as cracks and creases reveal a world weathered by age and changing times. The doc reminds audiences how film photography captures history and archives the world we live in, which is a fact too many people take for granted in today's point, shoot, and delete selfie culture.

Perhaps the most striking element of decay appears in Dome, who still commands the camera when posing for Marquadt. Wrinkled and slightly weathered, but fearless and open with her body as it ages, Dome is a great character and a cat lady who would do Agnès Varda proud. Dome and Marquadt inject their work with a radical spirit that brings an essence of punk to the photography even though the spiky hair, leather jackets, and metal studs are all long gone. Marquadt and Dome are still punk, in a sense, by defying the expectations of a conventional lifestyle that frequently demand a nine to five job, a few kids, and a house in the suburbs. Dome even admits that she's never held a traditional job in her life, nor does she want to, and is content to keep "flying" as she gets by through her modeling and her art.

The focus of the film is generally on Marquadt as he readies a new series and reflects upon his career-long body of work, but Dome arguably steals the show with her bubbly spirit. There is just something so wonderfully unpretentious about her. Marquadt captures this sense in his photography, as does Hendel in her documentary. The artists draw out some of their best work by creating portraits that renew the contrasts of their earlier portfolio. There is Dome, aging but still vivacious, clad in a wedding dress but disheveled and sporting her high heels as if struggling home on a walk of shame. On the other hand, Marquadt nabs what he believes to be the only shot he's ever taken of Dome laughing. There's something about her joyful, full-bodied mouth juxtaposed with the decrepit backdrop on which Sven shoots her that reveals her strong sense of timelessness, as well as the maturity of his own eye. It's not the only image of beauty and decay in Hendel's film, but it's easily the best.

Visit [hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca) for showtimes.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-beauty-and-decay>



## Review: 'The El Duce Tapes'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published April 29th, 2019



### *The El Duce Tapes*

(USA, 106 min.)

Dir. Rodney Ascher, David Lawrence, Interviews directed by Ryan Sexton

Programme: Nightvision (World Premiere)

As *The El Duce Tapes* evolves into unexpected psychological, and in a way, political complexity, Eldon Hoke, shock rock drummer and frontman for his '90s band The Mentors, fantasizes about being an American dictator. El Duce barks that he would “build a Berlin Wall which is actually a Mexican wall, and not allow any immigrants to sneak into this country.”

Hoke was also fond of ranting about unlimited pussy grabbing and Golden Showers. The doc, consisting mainly of VHS footage ex-actor Ryan Sexton shot from 1990 to 1991, plays on multiple ambiguities. Was Hoke really the beyond punk growler in an executioner's mask, the “King of Sleaze,” who shouts at fans, “Everybody that likes to rape women, say Sieg Heil!” He called himself an advocate of “The 4F Club, Find her, feel her, fuck her, forget her.”

Or like cartoonist R. Crumb, were Hoke's outages deliberately subversive forays into the most twisted fantasies imaginable, a testing of free expression, not to mention mockery of the realities lurking under the surface of white bread America?

The film begins with a D.W. Griffith quote arguing for the freedom of movies to venture into dark areas, just as other arts do. Of course we agree, although Griffith is the pioneering moviemaker who idealized the Ku Klux Klan and portrayed black men as drooling sexual marauders.

Did Hoke really believe the madness he screamed at the 14-year-olds he “mentored”? His girlfriend, his sister, his sexy onstage dancer, and his studious looking, highly articulate collaborator Steve Broy, tilt toward the idea that it was all an attention-grabbing joke. They and the film itself suggest Hoke might be the kind of artist born to outrage and veer out of control. Cue a montage of swirling Van Gogh paintings and Kirk Douglas freaking out in *Lust for Life*.

The film explores the tension between a real person and in this case a literal mask. Its montage choices also question whether Hoke really was a untouchable pariah, or just a manifestation of a widespread culture.



## POV Magazine – April 29, 2019 (2 of 2)

El Duce's Mexican wall rant obviously sounds familiar, and montages link him to more mainstream pop figures: Roseanne Barr, Beavis and Butthead, Cartman's tirades on *South Park*, bands influenced by The Mentors, and so on, there's plenty of evidence to argue that Trump himself is some kind of weird manifestation of shock rock, shock jock culture. Put guitars and drums behind his Access Hollywood riff, and it could be an El Duce number. He was a fixture on Howard Stern's show, just as El Duce appeared on Jerry Springer's. Don Jr. and Eric are Beavis and Butthead incarnate.

Near the end of *The El Duce Tapes*, Hoke sometimes drops his toxic misogynist, neo-Nazi, barbarian persona to say, for example, he refused a gig with the White Power Front. He has all kinds of friends, he insists with apparent sincerity, black and Asian included.

As the film moves forward, Ascher and Lawrence layer in revelations that both confirm what you've been thinking and shake up your view of Eldon Hoke. El Duce happily recalls high school vandalism like peeing in jars and spilling the contents on radiators, distributing little packages of shit wrapped in foil, and doing God-knows-what with vomit. He was the "Number One Nuisance," who also became hopelessly alcoholic.

In stark contrast Steve (Dr. Heathen Scum) Broy recalls that Hoke played in a child symphony. He was serious about music, and his fellow musicians were once aspiring jazz fusion musicians who venerated Billy Cobham, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Jim Hendrix. The transition from jazz to perversion was a "conscious sell-out," Broy laughs.

Then we get startling revelations from Duce and his sister. Their dad beat them viciously with a paddle, which he had drilled holes into for less air resistance. For the sister, Dad was Hitler. Maybe El Duce's fascist posturing was more about outraging his father and forcing the grotesque truth on him than a real attitude.

And there's more. When Hoke talks about his father's work as an engineer for Boeing, his persona evaporates. His dad created the bouncing napalm bombs that maimed, tortured, and murdered in Viet Nam. Duce's "Fuck You, I do not submit" stance, obviously originated with his father, whose grave he says he will jump on. "Dad is sick. I'm normal," he barks.

Rodney Ascher innovated the genre of doc horror with his films *Room 237* and *The Nightmare*. *Room 237*, which captures in excruciating detail people obsessed by their theories about Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, is scarier than the actual movie. In *The Nightmare*, Ascher dove further into horror with his hallucinatory, genre picture approach to terrified sufferers of waking nightmares.

Surprisingly for his follow-up to *The Nightmare*, Ascher foregoes meticulously controlled images for a barrage of degraded video. White on blue, story-advancing title cards appropriately look like the menu screens on an old-time JVC. As for the horror, Dad's sadism toward his children, and his facilitating of mass murder (through napalm) make his son's juvenile boogeyman tactics a lot less disturbing than they were at the beginning of the film.

Vist [HotDocs.ca](http://HotDocs.ca) for showtimes.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-the-el-duce-tapes>

## Trixie Mattel Is Apparently a Big Orville Peck Fan



By [Sarah Murphy](#)

Published Apr 29, 2019

RuPaul's *Drag Race* star and [All-Stars 3 champion](#) Trixie Mattel is apparently a big fan of country outlaw [Orville Peck](#).

Peck shared a screenshot of an Instagram message from the Barbie-inspired drag queen yesterday (April 28), and it shows Mattel starting a conversation by saying, "You are really amazing!"

Peck reposted the message, captioning it: "I love getting unsolicited messages from beautiful women."

The singer-songwriter and [Exclaim! Class of 2019 alumnus](#) released his debut album [Pony](#) earlier this year, and given his enchanting blend of old-school country sound and leather daddy look, it's not really any surprise that Mattel is obsessed.

See the pair's pleasant social media exchange below.

*Pony* is out now via [Royal Mountain](#) and [Sub Pop Records](#). A documentary about Mattel called *Moving Parts* recently premiered at the Tribeca and Hot Docs film festivals.

## Women in Hollywood – April 30, 2019 (1 of 2)

### INTERVIEWS

#### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Baljit Sangra – “Because We Are Girls”

BY Sophia Stewart April 30, 2019

Baljit Sangra uses documentary and factual entertainment to explore social and cross-cultural issues. A three-time Leo Award nominee, Sangra's films have premiered at festivals around the world. Her previous documentaries include “Hockey United,” “Many Rivers Home,” and “Warrior Boyz.”

“Because We Are Girls” will premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on May 1.

#### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

BS: A family must come to terms with a devastating secret: three sisters were sexually abused by a relative. The sisters break their silence to protect other girls in their family and to be an example for their daughters.

The film is about the misplaced shame and family honor perpetuated in patriarchal culture, which relies on female submissiveness and obedience. It explores this dark topic through an empathetic lens that celebrates sisterhood amidst profound childhood trauma—a lens that is feminist and empowering.

#### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

BS: One of the protagonists, Jeeti, is a friend of mine. She told me that she and her sisters were victims of sexual abuse by a relative they grew up with. Because we had a friendship and we come from the same background, I think there was an established trust that allowed for vulnerability. We grew up with the same cultural and social values. I understood why she kept this a secret for over two decades, and I felt that I could relate to her story.

The sisters went to the police in 2007, and the file sat with them for years. Eventually, they had a pre-trial, and the case got moved to the Supreme Court in 2015.

At that point, we knew there was momentum and a story in following this journey. The sisters never told their parents that they had gone to the police. Going to trial and breaking their silence was going to have a profound impact on the family.

As a filmmaker, it was so empowering for me to be on this journey with them, to bear witness to how they persevered and saw this through!

#### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

BS: I hope the film becomes a call to action to have more dialogue and awareness about the impact of sexual abuse on survivors and to advocate for support. With the momentum of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, I think there's momentum in our communities as well to have this conversation—to challenge the stigma and taboo.

I hope the film challenges the sociocultural values that perpetuate women's subservience and obedience. We hope to shift the misplaced shame from the survivors of sexual abuse to the perpetrators, as it's not the victims' secret to keep. Keeping silent only feeds into the power of the perpetrator.

The film highlights the lengthy emotional toll of pursuing justice through the courts for survivors of sexual abuse; it's a broken system, and we need to address that.

Lastly, the film also celebrates sisterhood, which allowed these women to demand justice for the wrongs of their childhood years.

#### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

## Women in Hollywood – April 30, 2019 (2 of 2)

BS: There is a court thread in the film. There were so many delays before their testimonies could be heard that a whole year went by waiting. They had to prepare for testimony only to have it adjourned several times. This made it challenging to shoot, and it took an emotional toll on the sisters.

**W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

BS: The film is produced by the National Film Board of Canada. I was hired as a director of the film.

**W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

BS: I've always been interested in storytelling and was drawn to filmmaking as a way to express the views of the underrepresented. I'm passionate about using film to explore social justice, especially issues around race and gender. I'm motivated as a filmmaker to shine a light on the truth to bring about understanding, compassion, and empathy.

As a documentary filmmaker, you're an independent spirit fighting for space and the truth in the age of fake news.

**W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?**

BS: Best advice: Push yourself outside of your comfort zone, be prepared, and constantly ask yourself who is telling the story to whom, and why.

Worst advice: Give up—documentaries take too long.

**W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

BS: Be true to yourself, and follow your passion. Think about how this story can be told best, be open to experimenting in your visual language, and try to create an environment that's warm, where people feel safe and respected.

Surround yourself with talented people who get your vision and believe in the project. Support other women.

**W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why?**

BS: "Bhaji on the Beach," directed by Gurinder Chadha. It's a narrative feature film directed by a South Asian woman. The story is set in London and revolves around a group of South Asian women from various faiths and generations who go on a day trip to Blackpool. Along the way, many issues are explored that spoke to me, such as growing up between two cultures, racism, cross-cultural relationships, the immigrant experience, and feminism.

I related to the film and appreciated the female-centric point of view. The fact that it was written and directed by South Asian women gave me inspiration and showed that there was an audience for diverse stories. It made me want to be a filmmaker.

**W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

BS: Since these movements emerged, I feel there has been a shift in cultural and social values that has chipped away at the stigma and taboo around the issue of sexual violence. There is a sense of sisterhood being mobilized globally, as witnessed by the Women's March. You see women coming forward, breaking their silence, and sharing their stories to help other women and girls.

In making this film, it felt like we were part of a movement. It validated what the women were going through. However, racialized women, immigrant women, and poorer women, all of whom are more vulnerable to the power imbalance, have played a disproportionately smaller role in the #MeToo movement.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-baljit-sangra-because-we-are-girls/>

## Hot Docs review: Picture Character

Ian Cheney and Martha Shane have created the definitive documentary on emojis

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#) APRIL 30, 2019



**PICTURE CHARACTER** (Ian Cheney, Martha Shane, U.S.). 79 minutes. Rating: NNNN

Created in 1999 by artist Shigetaka Kurita as 12x12 pixel art for mobile phones, emojis have become a remarkably expressive pictographic language unto themselves – to the point where it's kind of weird that it's taken two decades for someone to make the definitive documentary about them. But *Picture Character* is worth the wait, offering a thoughtful, often charming exploration of not just emojis themselves but how their simplicity creates the opportunity for abstract, even surrealistic usage. (Ceci n'est pas un eggplant, after all.)

Directors Ian Cheney (who made *The Search For General Tso* with producer Jennifer 8. Lee) and Martha Shane (*After Tiller*) bounce around through the various evolutions of emojis while tracking a handful of people who've submitted proposals for new icons (including a woman wearing hijab, a cup of yerba mate and a complex but instantly recognizable symbol for menstruation) to the Unicode Consortium.

It's a very clever way of demonstrating the way emoji culture hasn't represented everyone equally over the years, and acknowledging that it's always users rather than programmers who push digital languages forward. And it gives the film its version of a happy ending.

*April 30, 9:30 pm, Hot Docs Cinema; May 2, 6:30 pm, Hart House; May 4, 9:15 pm, Isabel Bader.*

## Pooper Hero

### Singapore's 'Mr Toilet' wants to make sanitation sexy in film

By Beh Lih Yi / Thomson Reuters Foundation, SINGAPORE



*A visitor on April 17 pretends to defecate on a display toilet at the Unko ("poop" in Japanese) museum in Yokohama, Japan. A film about Mr Toilet, Jack Sim, was screened over the weekend in Toronto, focusing attention on the globe's toilet shortages. Photo: Reuters/Kim Kyung-hoon*

After traveling the world for more than two decades seeking to improve access to bathrooms, "Mr Toilet" Jack Sim has now plunged into the cinematic world with a film about his unusual campaign.

Armed with humor — and sometimes a plunger — the World Toilet Organization's founder is the subject of a film, *Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man*, which premiered over the weekend, as health campaigners warn billions are still at risk of disease due to toilet shortages.

"Toilet is my religion and we create a belief system that everybody subscribes to," the 62-year-old Singaporean said.

"We have to make toilets sexy. If governments understand how much money they are already spending (on public healthcare) without having toilets, there is no reason for them not to build toilets," he added.

Sim's work has stretched from Asia to Africa and was the inspiration behind the UN's 2013 declaration of a "World Toilet Day," in a push to break taboos around toilets.

The UN day is marked on Nov. 19 each year — the same date Sim set up his group in 2001 to lobby governments around the world to change their policies and make sanitation accessible for all.

The Singapore-headquartered group builds toilets in places like China and trains local entrepreneurs in India as well as Cambodia to develop affordable latrines in remote villages.

From India to China and Africa, 60 percent of the world's population — or 4.5 billion people — either have no toilet at home or one that does not safely manage human waste, the UN said.

Some 900 million people still practice open defecation, risking disease, and causing tens of thousands of diarrhea-related deaths and cases of chronic malnutrition each year, according to the group.

The UN warned last year that the world is not on track to end open defecation and ensure access to safe toilets for all by 2030, as pledged by countries.

Sim said he hopes his new film will help turn the tide.



## CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Shot in four countries over five years, the 86-minute film was screened at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto on Saturday.

“The intention of the film is to use both humor and a heartfelt story to draw attention to a subject people normally wouldn’t care about,” said Los Angeles-based director Lily Zepeda.

“Many people are unaware of how disproportionately a lack of sanitation affects women and girls around the world,” she added.

Women and girls are at risk of sexual attack when they go out in the fields to relieve themselves, while adolescent girls are often forced to miss classes when they are on their periods if there are no proper toilets, UK-based charity WaterAid said.

The World Bank in 2017 warned countries they needed to quadruple spending to US\$150 billion a year to deliver universal safe water and sanitation.

Sim’s effort is not the first time a film has been made about toilets.

In India, a Bollywood movie, Toilet: A Love Story, was released in 2017 as an attempt to bring the issue into the mainstream.

The lack of access to sanitation remains a major problem in the South Asian giant and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has been pushing a campaign to build 100 million toilets, although the drive has not covered large parts of the country.

“Our pace of work is definitely much slower than the need,” said Deepmala Mahla, the Asia director for humanitarian agency CARE International, which campaigns on sanitation issues.

“We can only be on the right track fully when we don’t look at the (toilet) issue in isolation. Our sanitation work needs to be more responsive to the need of women and girls,” she said.

Sim struck a more optimistic note.

As the world’s two most populous nations, China and India, step up efforts to improve access to toilets, he believes the world will achieve the 2030 UN target on ending open defecation but he warned building bathrooms alone is not enough.

The key, he said, is to turn the poop culture into “pop culture.”

“The cultural transformation must come in because we can build the toilet, but if people don’t use it there is no use,” he said.

“We have to turn toilets into a fashion, a social status.”

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Hope Frozen

By: Andrew Lewis

4 Stars



Hope Frozen is curious, heart-breaking, and a bit eerie.

The documentary *Hope Frozen* takes a story that is both difficult and bizarre, and uses every possible angle to present a carefully arranged debate that is both objective and emotional. It follows the story of a Thai family who made the controversial decision to cryogenically preserve (freeze) their two year old daughter, affectionately nicknamed Einz, who lost her life to brain cancer. But by freezing her, they hope that one day she can be brought back to life. Their choice to do this is seen as all the more controversial in a Buddhist culture where it conflicts with the religion's beliefs.

The documentary explores all the different questions you might have, and satisfyingly explores the stories mix of human interest, science, and philosophy, all while tugging at your heart strings. We see the very nature of humanity being questioned (can the dead come back to life?), while seeing human nature in its purest form: parents fighting for their children's survival.

## Meeting the man behind Hot Docs Film, 'Mr. Toilet'



Zack Sim aka Mr. Toilet shares his mission to improve access to sanitation all around the world!

April 30, 2019 08:13

## 'Drag Kids,' Canadian Documentary About Young Drag Queens, Screens At Hot Docs

They have all the gender-pushing attitude and sass of their adult counterparts.

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- Cassandra Szklarski Canadian Press



The dance music is thumping, the audience is giddy and 10-year-old drag artist Queen Lactatia is sashaying up and down a makeshift catwalk in a shimmering metallic dress.

The enthusiastic crowd hoots in approval as the diminutive style phenom weaves between tables at the all-ages brunch event, where the Montreal grade-schooler is followed by three more big-haired pre-teen performers, each in varying degrees of glitter, eyelash extensions and rainbow-hued attire.

The crowd falls silent for a rousing rendition of Lady Gaga's hit "Shallow" by nine-year-old Laddy Gaga, who belts out the ballad with all the pained inflections of the original.

"I kind of feel like no one was prepared for that!" said the show's drag host, Miss Fluffy Souffle, decked out in a lilac wig and pink tutu.

"Were you like, 'Oh, this is going to be cute.' Yeah. And then all of our hearts literally exploded," the seasoned Toronto performer declares as Laddy, a.k.a. Stephan Hirst of Spain, wobbles off in chunky heels.



CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS Laddy Gaga performs at Toronto's Glad Day Bookshop on Apr. 27, 2019.

Welcome to the world of drag kids, a burgeoning scene of wig-loving, sequin-covered, pint-sized showboats with all the gender-pushing attitude and sass of their adult counterparts.

The over-the-top foursome who recently took over a bookstore/restaurant in Toronto's gay village are the stars of the Canadian documentary film, "Drag Kids," making its debut at the Canadian International Documentary Film Festival.

Drag has become increasingly mainstream

The film's director, Megan Wennberg, says drag culture has become increasingly mainstream thanks to the reality series "RuPaul's Drag Race" and YouTube videos that are exposing the culture well beyond adult-only bars and balls. She says it's drawing kids who love to dress up and lip sync, and enjoy "being fabulous." But it also taps into a deeper drive for some to define themselves in unconventional ways, even if it might be controversial.

"It's an incredible outlet for self-expression, it's really artistic, it's really creative, it lets them explore different parts of themselves," explains Wennberg, whose film is expected to air on CBC-TV after it completes a festival run.

"They've all spoken about getting confidence and feeling powerful and just feeling more out there and more open. And also they're giving a message to others that it's OK to be different."



CHRIS YOUNG/CANADIAN PRESS Queen Lactatia poses for a photo at Toronto's Glad Day Bookshop on Apr. 27, 2019.

Criticism can be harsh, she adds, noting that each drag kid has faced bullies, most notably Queen Lactatia, a.k.a. Nemis Melancon-Golden.

Arguably the most famous of the bunch, critics have seized on a photo making the rounds online in which Lactatia is seen alongside nearly naked drag star Violet Chachki, a former "Drag Race" winner. Melancon-Golden and his mother Jessica Melancon dismiss critics' charges that drag is sexualizing the youngster, and explain away the photo by saying Violet was wearing a pubic wig (called a merkin) for an appearance at RuPaul's DragCon NYC in 2017.

"She was in costume; he was in costume. It was a two-minute interaction," says Jessica Melancon, dismissing the notion that nudity is always connected to sex and sexuality.

'There's nothing scary about a boy in a dress'

Wennberg, too, suggests many critics who challenge the avant-garde art form are attacking it unfairly.

"Adults watching it have a real tendency to project onto the kids. And that's coming from them, that's not coming from the kids. Whatever people want to project onto them is really about what their experiences maybe are, or their fears are," she says.

## Huffington Post – April 30, 2019 (3 of 3)

"Anyone who is intolerant of this without watching it and learning about it is just scared and should maybe look at what they're scared of. There's nothing scary about a boy in a dress. That's not scary, it's great."



CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS  
Bracken Hanke performs at Toronto's Glad Day Bookshop on Apr. 27, 2019.

If drag is about pushing boundaries, that means it should also be a welcoming space for kids, adds Bracken Hanke of Vancouver.

The only girl in the group, Hanke says she loves exaggerating female stereotypes as a "hyper Queen" — a female who does drag.

'Drag ... should be for everyone'

"Drag is super-duper fluid and there's a lot to it, so I think that it shouldn't just be limited to a certain group of people," says the 12-year-old, whose long pink tresses drape down the back of a sheer dress and white body suit.

"Drag is an expression that should be for everyone. And also I like to surprise people."

In an era when tween girls are regularly bombarded by highly sexual female role models, Hanke's supportive mom, Dominique, suggests that pushing gender rules through drag can be an antidote.

"Drag has actually been a really healthy way for her to play with that idea without feeling like she has to mimic anybody — she's kind of poking fun at the ideals, poking fun at those things rather than internalizing them," says Hanke.

"Which unfortunately you see so much, especially girls this age. [We're] seeing kids that are the same age as her on Instagram trying to reflect these women that are a lot older instead of having fun with their childhood and still playing dress-up and still having fun and embracing who they are, flaws and all."

"Drag Kids" screens at Hot Docs on Tuesday and Friday.



## Mongrel Media swoops on Jamie Kastner's "There Are No Fakes"

By Playback Daily

April 30, 2019



Mongrel Media has acquired the Canadian distribution rights to [Jamie Kastner](#)'s latest feature-length documentary *There Are No Fakes*.

The project, which world premiered at Hot Docs last night (April 29), will receive a limited theatrical release via Mongrel this summer before making its television debut on Canadian broadcasters TVO and Knowledge Network in the fall.

Directed by [Jamie Kastner](#), *There Are No Fakes* explores the story of the largest art-forgery ring in Canadian history. The 114-minute film begins with musician Kevin Hearn (pictured) of the Barenaked Ladies purchasing a painting attributed to iconic Indigenous Canadian artist Norval Morrisseau. However, Hearn begins to have doubts about the painting's authenticity and a new tale emerges about the origin of the paintings.

Kastner, whose other films include [The Skyjacker's Tale](#), [Secret Disco Revolution](#) and *Recessionize!*, produced the doc alongside Laura Baron Kastner through their Toronto-based production banner Cave 7 Productions. The pair negotiated the deal for the doc with Mongrel's Andrew Frank. Mark Anthony Jacobson serves as an executive producer on the project.

The project is funded by TVO, Knowledge Network, CMF, Rogers Telefilm Theatrical Documentary Fund, Rogers Documentary Fund, Ontario Creates and the NOHFC.

## Hot Docs Film Review: ‘Scheme Birds’

Ellen Fiske and Ellinor Hallin announce themselves as docmakers to watch with this piercing chronicle of a Scottish teen's drastic coming of age.

By [GUY LODGE](#)



CREDIT: COURTESY OF SYNDICADO FILM SALES

Director:

Ellen Fiske, Ellinor Hallin

1 hour 30 minutes

“I don’t run away from nothing, I run to it,” says Gemma, the quietly resilient teenager at the center of [“Scheme Birds.”](#) Few would blame her for doing the reverse, having been abandoned in infancy by her parents in the harsh projects of Motherwell, a deprived, lusterless Scottish town a few miles outside Glasgow. It’s a home that does little to reward her loyalty, yet at the outset, at least, there’s nowhere Gemma would rather be: Admitting that she expects to spend her whole life in this deprived corner of Motherwell, she then breaks sunnily with glum kitchen-sink tradition by saying she hopes never to leave. That will change, as will many aspects of her life, by the end of [Ellen Fiske](#) and [Ellinor Hallin](#)’s superb documentary, an alternately lyrical and gut-punching coming-of-age study in which girls like Gemma become women — and wounded women at that — altogether too soon.

Shot with an eye and ear for poetry in the pavement cracks, “Scheme Birds” recalls in its best passages the outsider affinity and sensory, symbol-heavy aesthetic of Andrea Arnold’s narrative cinema; as a feature-length debut for Swedish duo Ellen Fiske and Ellinor Hallin, it’s a work of major promise. Their bracing nonnative perspective is subtly felt throughout a caught-in-the-margins study that evokes working-class life with great textural specificity, but no self-consciously gritty posturing. With only Gemma’s low-key, sometimes wistfully perceptive voiceover as our guide through events, meanwhile, political commentary is mostly left for the audience to infer. (Suffice it to say, however, that the film’s snapshot of social welfare in modern Tory Britain is not a rosy one.)

The one politician who does get a namecheck is Margaret Thatcher, whom Gemma mentions with shrugging indifference as the woman responsible for Motherwell’s bleak prospects, having shut down its once-thriving steelworks toward the end of her premiership. That may be ancient history to Gemma — who was born in 1997, the year the factories were finally demolished — but she’s inherited the jaded resignation of her elders, notably her grandfather-turned-guardian Joseph. “If you

stay here, you either get locked up or knocked up,” she observes drolly, and not even that dejectedly; she accepts the latter fate as a welcome inevitability.

Viewers may feel rather less sanguine on her behalf when the independent-minded teen duly falls pregnant by Pat, a scrawny, unruly kid who has racked up a precocious amount of jail time at his early age. Gemma believes his claim that the baby represents a fresh, clean start for him; Joseph, a seen-it-all boxing gym manager and pigeon fancier, is understandably less convinced, though he cuts his granddaughter loose to make her own mistakes. Tough love is the only kind Gemma has ever known, and she'd be lucky to get even that from Pat, who sinks shortly after the baby's birth into a self-oriented spiral of partying and alcoholism. Peers provide scattered succour and support, but have pregnancies and crises of their own to deal with: It's when her best friend's life is drastically altered by a random, horrific act of violence that Gemma finally reconsiders a future she once thought was entirely predetermined.

Seamlessly editing the events of several years into one fluid, bittersweet character arc, “Scheme Birds” — the title is a local term for residents of the government housing scheme where Gemma lives, though it has other metaphorical applications — follows its subject with such dedicated intimacy that it often plays as much like Loachian social realism as actual documentary. It's easy to take the camera's attentive but non-invasive presence for granted in situations ranging from a makeshift kitchen tattoo session to a young yob's heedless, boastful account of past stabbings, but the degree of evident trust between the directors and their human subjects is still striking.

Hallin, an accomplished cinematographer who most recently shot the Lukas Moodysson miniseries “Gösta,” takes lensing duties here too, avoiding dour visual cliché throughout. The film's palette is rich in pastel sunlight and tender flesh tones; even at moments of despair, suggestions of hope and humanity hover in the frame. Only occasionally does “Scheme Birds” give in to artsy contrivance. A slow-motion shot of Joseph releasing his treasured homing pigeons into the air underlines the film's caged-bird metaphor more heavily than is needed — though it's not as if Gemma, who has the words “let the free birds fly” tattooed on her shoulder, sees herself any differently. Empathetically concerned but never condescending, this chronicle of life in fast-forward consistently meets its heroine on her own evolving terms.

Hot Docs Film Review: 'Scheme Birds'

Reviewed at Hot Docs Film Festival (The Changing Face of Europe), April 28, 2019. (Also in Tribeca Film Festival — competing.) Running time: 90 MIN.

PRODUCTION: (Documentary — Sweden-U.K.) A Sisyfos Film, GID Films presentation in collaboration with Swedish Film Institute, Creative Scotland, British Film Institute, Arte France, Sundance Film Fund, STHLM Debut, Konstnärsmåbnden, SVT. (International sales: Syndicado Film Sales, Toronto.) Producers: Mario Adamson, Ruth Reid.

CREW: Directors: Ellen Fiske, Ellinor Hallin. Camera (color): Hallin. Editor: Hanna Lejonqvist. Music: Charlie Jefferson.

## Knock Down the House lets Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez propel it with rousing energy

By [Peter Howell](#) Movie Critic

Tues., April 30, 2019

Knock Down the House

★★★★☆



Follow the stories of four inspiring women who took on history in the 2018 midterm election. Knock Down The House, only on Netflix May 1.

Follow the stories of four inspiring women who took on history in the 2018 midterm election. Knock Down The House, only on Netflix May 1.

*Documentary on the 2018 U.S. election bids of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Paula Jean Swearingen, Cori Bush and Amy Vilela. Written by Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick. Directed by Rachel Lears. Opens Wednesday on Netflix, screens May 3-4 at Hot Docs fest and May 6-16 at TIFF Bell Lightbox. 85 minutes. **PG***

Netflix briskly describes *Knock Down the House* as “provocative” but the term doesn’t really describe what this documentary is all about.

“Inspirational” would be a better word. Filmmaker Rachel Lears and co-writer Robin Blotnick follow four women — notably New York’s Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — as they seek to knock out incumbents in elections across the U.S..

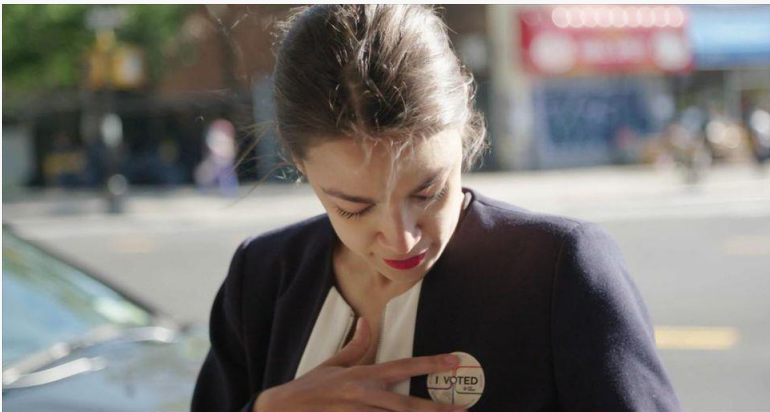
Their candidacies provoke people who favour the status quo, especially the four male incumbents whom the Democratic Party seems content to have in power indefinitely. The word “machine” is heard many times describing how establishment Democrats protect their preferred candidates while resisting upstarts.

The film is dominated by the Bronx-born Ocasio-Cortez, known to all as AOC. Her meteoric rise last year from bartender to Trump-battling congresswoman captured worldwide attention and gives the film its most consistent burst of energy. She’s a true force of nature, seen working bar shifts — lugging big buckets of ice — even as she pounds the pavement chasing votes.

The doc also lifts spirits with the stories of three other women seeking to win Democratic primaries: West Virginia's Paula Jean Swearengen, a true coal miner's daughter; Missouri registered nurse and pastor Cori Bush; and Nevada's Amy Vilela, a grieving mom out to fix the "broken" health care system she believes failed her daughter.

They don't get nearly as much camera time as AOC — the doc is a little lopsided that way — but they're just like her: regular people bucking a system they believe is failing not just their districts, but also America.

"We're running to win!" AOC says to the camera, with her now-familiar toothy grin, as she and her family and friend barnstorm New York's 14th district. Her optimism is infectious, even though she's battling Joe Crowley, a beefy 10-term Congressman who acts as if he rules by divine right. He seems amused to have AOC on his tail, and arrogantly skips most of the debates during the campaign, claiming to be too busy in Washington, D.C., to sully himself by actually working to be re-elected.



Seasoned members of the party warn the challengers that they shouldn't assume that they'll get any breaks from the incumbents, even if they're all supposedly on the same team. "This is no joke," warns the Rev. Darryl Gray, a civil-rights veteran. "They'll come after you."

When election night finally arrives, the excitement in the AOC camp is palpable and it makes you think anything's possible. The definitive AOC doc awaits, but *Knock Down the House* provides a bracing first draft.



## ‘Our Dance of Revolution’ Takes Lead in Hot Docs Audience Award Race

Posted on April 30th, 2019



*Our Dance of Revolution*

By Pat Mullen

This year's Hot Docs horse race is the most unpredictable one yet! In yet another shake-up with a film debuting at #1, Phillip Pike's *Our Dance of Revolution* takes the lead in today's Audience Award update. The doc about LGBTQ activists of colour in Toronto received a rave review from *POV*'s Susan G. Cole, who [wrote](#), "this is an important, ground breaking movie. See it with an audience that's bound to be passionate and proud."

*Our Dance of Revolution* edges out yesterday's leader *Maxima*, which drops to number four as *Cold Case Hammar skjöld* and *Dear Brother* take the runner-up spots. Pike's film also leads the Canadian race ahead of *Prey*, which holds the runner-up spot, while [Willie](#), about Willie O'Ree, the hockey player who broke the NHL's colour barrier, debuts in third in the Canadian race and at number eight overall. The film had its world premiere last night in the Scotiabank Big Ideas with O'Ree and the Stanley Cup in attendance. *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* and *Killing Patient Zero* round at the top five on the Canadian front.

The top 20 features in the Hot Docs Audience Award race as of April 30 are:

1. [Our Dance of Revolution](#)
2. Cold Case Hammar skjöld
3. Dear Brother
4. Maxima
5. Butterfly
6. [Prey](#)
7. Last Breath
8. [Willie](#)
9. Ask Dr. Ruth
10. [Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind](#)
11. [Knock Down the House](#)
12. [Killing Patient Zero](#)
13. [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#)
14. [For Sama](#)
15. [Kifaru](#)
16. [Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery](#)
17. Sea of Shadows
18. Una Primavera
19. [Drag Kids](#)
20. [There Are No Fakes](#)



## Mongrel Media swoops on Jamie Kastner documentary

The indie distributor has acquired domestic rights to the art-fraud film, which made its world bow at Hot Docs last night.

By Jordan Pinto, April 30, 2019



It begins with musician Kevin Hearn buying a painting attributed to iconic Indigenous Canadian artist and founder Norval Morrisseau.

Mongrel Media has acquired the Canadian distribution rights to Jamie Kastner's documentary *There Are No Fakes*.

The project, which world premiered at Hot Docs last night, will receive a limited theatrical release via Mongrel this summer before making its TV debut on TVO and Knowledge Network in the fall.

Directed by Jamie Kastner, *There Are No Fakes* explores the story of the largest art-forgery ring in Canadian history. The feature-length film begins with musician Kevin Hearn (pictured) of the Barenaked Ladies purchasing a painting attributed to iconic Indigenous Canadian artist Norval Morrisseau. However, Hearn begins to have doubts about the painting's authenticity and a new tale emerges about the origin of the paintings.

Kastner, whose other films include *The Skyjacker's Tale*, *Secret Disco Revolution* and *Recessionize!*, produced the doc alongside Laura Baron Kastner through their Toronto-based production banner Cave 7 Productions. The pair negotiated the deal for the doc with Mongrel's Andrew Frank. Mark Anthony Jacobson serves as an executive producer on the project.

The project is funded by TVO, Knowledge Network, CMF, Rogers Telefilm Theatrical Documentary Fund, Rogers Documentary Fund, Ontario Creates and the NOHFC.

Read more: <http://playbackonline.ca/2019/04/30/mongrel-media-swoops-on-jamie-kastner-documentary/#ixzz5pLNKALCe>

## Willie O'Ree's incredible story is being told in a new documentary



'Willie' follows O'Ree's journey as the first black hockey player in the NHL to his induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Hockey was changed forever in 1958 when Willie O'Ree broke the colour barrier becoming the first black player in the NHL. Sixty years later, he made history again when he was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Now his incredible story is being shared in a documentary.

The film tells the tale of O'Ree and the obstacles he had to face to achieve his goals. From the racial slurs he endured at every game to receiving threatening letters from a white supremacist group, O'Ree fought to break the colour barrier for those who would come after him.

Directed by Laurence Mathieu-Leger, the story follows O'Ree on his journey from rookie player in 1958 to Hockey Hall of Fame inductee sixty years later, and everything in between.

For more information on the film and to get your tickets visit the film's page on the [Hot Docs](#) website.

TAGS:[DOCUMENTARY](#) [HOT DOCS](#) [NHL](#) [THE SOCIAL](#) [WILLIE O'REE](#)

## O'Ree documentary premieres at Toronto film festival

April 30, 2019 John NHL 0



**TORONTO** — “Willie,” the documentary on the life of Willie O’Ree, premiered Monday at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

O’Ree, who was the first black player in the NHL, hadn’t seen the finished product until its showing at the largest screening venue at the largest documentary festival in North America.

He had a dry napkin in his hand before the filmed rolled.

“It was soaked” by the end of the film credits, O’Ree said. “I just think the whole movie just jumped out at me.”

“Willie” adds more depth and historical perspective to the man who overcame racial prejudice and blindness in one eye to break the NHL color barrier Jan. 18, 1958, for the Boston Bruins.

“I think the lesson from the film would be to never give up,” O’Ree said. “If you feel strongly within your heart, within your mind that you can accomplish a goal, work toward that goal and don’t let anybody tell you that you can’t attain your goal.”

But the film, directed by Laurence Mathieu-Leger, does more than trace O’Ree’s path from his boyhood home in Fredericton, New Brunswick, to the Bruins, to his current role as NHL diversity ambassador, to his induction in the Hockey Hall of Fame on Nov. 12, 2018.

It traces O’Ree’s roots, revealing that he’s the descendant of a slave who escaped a Charleston, South Carolina, plantation and made his way to Canada.

Hot Docs chose to screen “Willie” from among more than 10,000 submissions that it receives yearly. The festival also named “Willie” to its “Hot Docs Special Presentations” program, a designation given to approximately 30 documentaries each year out of nearly 300 in the festival from around the world.

Bryant McBride, the film’s producer and former vice president for business development at the NHL, said “Willie” struck a chord with Hot Docs organizers because O’Ree’s story delivers a message that transcends sports and explores issues of race.

## **Sports News Bays – April 30, 2019 (2 of 2)**

“It’s about opportunity, the right to get and have opportunities and the will to maximize those opportunities,” McBride said. “And Willie is the embodiment of that. His journey, what his great-great-grandfather, Paris O’Ree, had to do to obtain his freedom. The sinew that was found in that gentleman got passed directly to Willie. That one event led to Willie changing hundreds of thousands if not millions of lives.”

Born in Fredericton on Oct. 15, 1935, the youngest of 13 children, O’Ree grew into a multisport athlete who initially thought that baseball would be his path to the pros.

But when he experienced Jim Crow-era segregation during a tryout in the United States, O’Ree returned to Canada and decided to focus on hockey. Switching sports didn’t give O’Ree a reprieve from racial slurs and name-calling.

“Every game I played, there were racial remarks directed toward me: ‘You should be back picking cotton. What are you doing in the white man’s game?’” O’Ree said in the film.

O’Ree made it to the NHL despite being blinded in his right eye in 1956, a hockey injury he kept secret.

He had a brief NHL career, 45 games over the 1957-58 and 1960-61 seasons, but he enjoyed a lengthy minor league career.

O’Ree was enshrined in the Hall of Fame for his accomplishments off the ice, including his work across North America as the NHL diversity ambassador. In more than two decades, he has helped establish 39 grassroots hockey programs and inspired more than 120,000 boys and girls to play the game.

## Detah woman's story of growing up next to Giant Mine featured in new film

Stacey Drygeese-Sundberg lives across from toxic gold mine site that's featured in Hot Docs film

CBC News · Posted: Apr 30, 2019 6:00 AM CT | Last Updated: April 30



Stacey Drygeese-Sundberg, who grew up near the Giant Mine site, is featured in a documentary about how people deal with catastrophic circumstances. (Kate Kyle/CBC)

Stacey Drygeese-Sundberg rode by Yellowknife's Giant Mine every day for four years as she went to and from high school to her home in Detah, N.W.T.

For more than 50 years, the mine was one of the biggest employers in Yellowknife, but it came at a toxic price — 237,000 tonnes of arsenic trioxide dust created during the roasting process over the life of the mine.

Drygeese-Sundberg saw that contamination firsthand, with arsenic dust settling in the water and on the land around her home over the decades. She heard about it from elders who told her how it affected the caribou, fishing, and people's health.

Though the Giant Mine site and surrounding area is in the midst of a massive \$1-billion remediation, Drygeese-Sundberg wants to make sure that the story is told as widely as possible. Now, it's featured in a new documentary *Illusions of Control* that just premiered at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto this past weekend.

"Learning about my own story on screen makes it more important," she said. "To educate people about what's happening in the Northwest Territories, in my homeland."



Remediation at the Giant Mine site in Yellowknife is set to ramp up next year. The \$1-billion cleanup project will have a major effect on Yellowknife and the surrounding communities of Detah and Ndilo. (Walter Strong/CBC)

She hopes that the remediation of Giant Mine is successful, with science supported by traditional Indigenous knowledge. Hopefully, she says, that could help bring about some measure of reconciliation between people in Detah and the federal government.

Drygeese-Sundberg is one of several women featured in the documentary, which also examines the aftermath of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan, and women living through ongoing violence in Mexico.

"Each of the stories are quite different, yet as a whole they all ask us to think about what it means to live in the present in a catastrophic moment," said filmmaker Shannon Walsh, who's been working on *Illusions of Control* for five years.

"How do we live through it, and how we think about our futures and live in the present?" she said.

'Time after time, things go wrong'

The title *Illusions of Control* is a reference to how industry believes it can control nature and the world around us, yet often projects have a catastrophic effect on the environment, Walsh said.

"Time after time, things go wrong," she said.

For Walsh, hearing Drygeese-Sundberg's story opened her eyes to an issue that is little-known outside of Canada's North.

"It struck me and startled me," Walsh said. "It struck me how the history of holding the legacy and carrying it forward was put on First Nations people in this country and how so much was hidden from view from the rest of the population."

Walsh says she hopes to screen the film in Detah this summer.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/giant-mine-documentary-stacey-sundberg-1.5115870>



## Hot Docs '19: “After Parkland” directors talk grief, healing

By [Frederick Blichert](#)

April 30, 2019



School shootings have become an all-too present part of life in America since the Columbine High School shooting, which marked its 20th anniversary earlier this month.

Last year's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, was only one of the many instances of gun violence in U.S. schools in recent years, but it resonated in unique ways, with the students of Marjory Stoneman becoming symbols of a generation raised on active shooter drills and the legacy of Columbine.

In other ways, it was also much the same as the shootings that came before, with young lives snuffed out and the survivors left to grieve and move on after tragedy.

The days, years and lifetimes that follow such tragedies were the focus of Jake Lefferman and Emily Taguchi's documentary *After Parkland*, which follows students and parents impacted by the attack on their school and community.

*After Parkland* had its world premiere at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival on April 26 and will have its international premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on Thursday (May 2) at 6 p.m. ET at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, with a second presentation May 4 at 4:15 p.m. at TIFF Bell Lightbox 1.

The 90-minute film is produced by directors Emily Taguchi and Jake Lefferman, along with [Jeanmarie Condon](#), Steven Baker, Stephanie Wash and co-producer Meagan Redman. [Beth Hoppe](#) serves as executive producer, [Eric Johnson](#) as senior producer and Samantha Sergi as associate producer. It was financed by ABC Documentaries.

*Realscreen* caught up with Taguchi and Lefferman, who first went to Parkland on assignment for ABC's *Nightline*, before staying on to make a feature film out of the story.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

**What drew you both to making *After Parkland*?**

**Jake Lefferman:** Emily and I have both been on assignments where we have dealt with mass shooting situations — in Orlando, as recently as Pittsburgh — and I think when we go down to those situations, we think about what are the lasting impacts going to be on a community, how does a family get up the next day and deal with this reality that they've woken up in, how does a community respond and start to rebuild? And so when we went down on assignment for Parkland in the immediate aftermath, these questions were nagging at us.

**Emily Taguchi:** The longer you spend with a community getting to know people, you start to hear about the moments that are not in the headlines. When we heard about Joaquin's [who was killed in the shooting] basketball team going back to play their first game after the shooting, we were drawn to those moments where it was much more intimate and a symbol of them literally taking their first steps forward.

**What were some of the challenges working on a production like this and bringing up these difficult topics?**

**JL:** We both were worried about retraumatizing some of the kids. Brooke Harrison was in the first classroom attacked. What she went through was unimaginable. Having to help her fellow students, literally holding down their wounds. Months later her father told us that when she sat down and talked to us, it was like getting the poison out. That made us feel a little better, like what we were doing was hopefully helpful. I think that was one of the challenges.

**ET:** I think that was *the* major challenge.

**Emily, I understand you come at this not just as a filmmaker, but also as a mother, can you tell me a little bit about that?**

**ET:** I actually remember when we were down in Florida filming, and my son at the time was in first grade, and he was in an active shooter drill, and there was just something so jarring about that. Some of the hardest interviews were with the parents that had lost their children, because this really will define the rest of their lives, I believe, and the question of how do you make meaning out of the senseless and how do you fill a void after the most precious thing in your life has been taken from you I think is most poignant with the parents.

**There have been political discussions born out of this —it seems out of Parkland specifically. I'm curious what the role of a film chronicling all of that is in the context of the concrete policy discussions that are happening.**

**JL:** We didn't set out to make an advocacy film or a political film. Actually the two fathers that we have are on very different sides of the political spectrum and think about dealing with gun control in a very different way. What we hoped to show was the lasting human impact after trauma like this, and what a family and a community would go through, but we do hope that a conversation continues, that this sparks dialogues on all sides. The pain that both fathers go through is the same pain, and I do think that on either side of the gun debate, you can see this film and at least get a little insight into what they went through.

**You've both covered active shooter situations as journalists. Can you tell me about making that jump from covering a short-term story to making a feature doc?**

**ET:** The longer we stayed and the more times we visited with families, we started seeing more of these poignant, important moments of healing, and it really happened in an organic way. You build these relationships and they let you in and they start to trust you, and you bear the responsibility of sharing their story with the world, and you're filming and you start to really see the journey of how a family starts to rebuild and how a community starts to rebuild, so there was never a line where one turned into the other. It was a much more organic process.

**Hot Docs will be the first screening outside the U.S. Can you tell me about sharing what is in a lot of ways a very American story with international audiences?**

**ET:** I think that there are many things about the film that are very universal, outside of gun violence. When you lose someone suddenly, the grief and the healing is something that is much more widely relatable.

**JL:** Loss is universal, and something that I think audiences outside the U.S. can understand and relate to.

- ***After Parkland* has its international premiere at Hot Docs in the Special Presentations category on Thursday, May 2 at 6 p.m. ET at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. Visit the [festival's website](#) for complete screening info.**

## Julia Reichert, Julia Ivanova on the ‘Radical Act’ of Making Documentaries

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#)



CREDIT: DAVID SPOWART/HOT DOCS

TORONTO — It wasn't long after [Julia Reichert](#) arrived on the campus of Antioch College half a century ago that, she admitted, she “got really turned around very quickly.” The product of a working-class family from a small Midwestern town, Reichert was thrust into the roiling tumult of 1960s campus life, with anti-war demonstrations and Black Power protests marching in lockstep with the women's liberation movement.

“I was engaged in all those as a young person in college,” Reichert said Monday in Toronto. The celebrated director appeared alongside award-winning documentary filmmaker [Julia Ivanova](#) for a conversation during the [Hot Docs](#) film fest, moderated by [Hot Docs](#) Ted Rogers Cinema programmer Sarah Li-Lun MacArthur.

On campus Reichert experienced a growing awareness of what she described as “all the oppressions and self-oppressions that women experience,” something that would fuel a run of groundbreaking films including “Growing Up Female” — one of the pioneering films of the women's liberation movement — and Academy Award nominee “Union Maids.”

“I feel like those early films set the tone without me realizing it. All about women, women's lives, listening to women's voices, which was in that time a radical act,” she said. “You never saw that. Just showing women's lives was a radical act.”

Reichert and Ivanova shared the stage for a spirited conversation about their experiences across decades-spanning careers as documentary filmmakers. Reichert is the recipient of this year's Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award, in recognition of a celebrated career that's included three Oscar nominations. Ivanova is the subject of a retrospective from Hot Docs' Focus On program, an annual showcase of the work of a significant Canadian filmmaker.

Born and raised in Moscow, Ivanova immigrated to Vancouver in the 1990s. Her award-winning career has included the films “Family Portrait in Black and White,” which follows a Ukrainian foster mother struggling to raise 16 biracial orphans in a small town, and “Fatherhood Dreams,” a poignant look into the lives and struggles of four gay dads who adopted children soon after Canada legalized same-sex marriage.

The director recalled a “completely different landscape” when she began making documentaries more than 20 years ago. At that time a proliferation of broadcasters offered viable distribution outlets; though her first feature was roundly rejected by festivals, it sold to more than two dozen channels. “For now, it’s an impossible situation,” she said, with far fewer broadcasters commissioning and acquiring documentary films.

“To have the strength to continue...that’s a challenge,” she continued. “We all start with a lot of desire to make stories. And then it’s a no, a no, a no....Eventually, you start to question yourself, and question also the validity of what you’re doing, whether it will change anything.”

Reichert reflected on her own hurdles breaking through as a female filmmaker nearly 50 years ago. “First of all, it was just feeling like you exist. Showing up at the lab and everyone thinks you’re a messenger. ‘No, I’m a director,’” she said. “There were lots of those dumb, sexist hurdles that we all faced at that point.”

She continued: “What really started helping is that we started working together as women. We started realizing that there’s strength in numbers, and we had to share each other’s issues, and support each other.”

That collaborative impulse would lead to the launch of New Day Films, a distribution cooperative that in its early days was largely run by women. Even today, Reichert said she feels a responsibility to assist younger filmmakers. “That’s a really big thing for me: Not climbing the ladder without reaching behind and pulling people up with you—especially women,” she said. “The world of filmmaking is so vastly more diverse than it was. But I still think it could be more diverse. There are more voices that need to be heard. I try to help those voices be heard.”

Ivanova confessed to bouts of disillusionment with the world around her—an impulse she tries to combat through documentaries. “I continue to choose topics where I think films can still make a difference, but in many areas I gave up as a human being. It’s too much. There are a few areas where I think I can make a difference, but a few areas, I feel that we lost the battle,” she said, before adding to laughter: “But also, I am Russian, so we are negative.”

Reflecting on her selection for Hot Docs’ Focus On showcase, Ivanova suggested it was too soon to look at her life’s output with a bird’s-eye view. “I hope it will be considered a mid-career retrospective,” she said. “I have no other passions in life, other than filmmaking.”

“I definitely want to make films that have people thinking about, ‘What kind of world do we want to live in?’” said Reichert. The filmmaker’s next documentary is about the 9-to-5 movement, in which female office workers in 1970s Boston banded together to fight for equal rights for women in the workplace.

Forty years later, Reichert said the story is as timely as ever. “If we don’t know how the world was changed by people like us,” she asked, “then how will we know that we can do it now?”

## How former Bruins winger Willie O'Ree kept his vision impairment a secret from the NHL

'In the 21 years I played pro, I never took one eye exam,' the retired NHL player says

CBC Radio · Posted: Apr 30, 2019 12:49 PM ET | Last Updated: April 30



*Willie O'Ree sat down with Anna Maria Tremonti to discuss how a puck to the face almost derailed his entire career. (Andrew Nguyen/CBC)*

An errant puck to the face could have cost Willie O'Ree his career. Instead, he ignored his doctor's warnings and moved on to become the first black player in the National Hockey League.

While playing hockey in the minor leagues, O'Ree was struck in the face by a ricocheting puck, which cost him 95 per cent of his vision in his right eye. He feared this injury would preclude him from being eligible to play in the NHL. His solution? Don't tell anyone.

His doctor warned him that without proper eyesight, his hockey career would be over.

"I laid in my hospital bed and things were going through my mind: 'What am I going to do now?' And I get out of the hospital and within the next five weeks, I'm back on the ice practising and playing," O'Ree told Anna Maria Tremonti on [The Current](#).

His plan of secrecy worked. O'Ree re-learned how to play hockey with his impairment, and in 1958, had his first game as a winger for Boston Bruins. In 2018, the hockey trailblazer was inducted into the [Hockey Hall of Fame](#).

O'Ree, who played 45 games with the Bruins from 1958 and 1961, is the focus of a new documentary called *Willie*, directed by Laurence Mathieu-Leger.

The Fredericton, N.B. native has been called the "Jackie Robinson of ice hockey," but his hometown wasn't satisfied with the rest of the world's lack of awareness about the former player. In 2008, Fredericton celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of O'Ree's first NHL game by creating "Willie O'Ree Week."



## CBC Radio, The Current – April 30, 2019 (2 of 4)

O'Ree, 83, sat down with Tremonti on [The Current](#) to discuss how he didn't let a potentially debilitating injury derail his career and how he remains involved with the league through the Hockey is for Everyone campaign to encourage diversity and inclusion.

### **When you work with young hockey players today what do they ask you?**

Oh, they asked me about what it was like playing with one eye. I had lost my eye my second year, junior. You know, back then, none of the players wore any helmets, no face shields, no cages, nothing to protect your face. And it was an unfortunate accident.

There was a slap shot from the point — I'm in front of the net for a deflection — and the puck ricocheted off a stick and came up and hit me flat and broke my nose, broke part of my cheek, and I remember dropping down to the ice and the next thing I knew was placed in an ambulance and taken to the hospital.

Dr. Henderson was the surgeon. I remember being in the recovery room and he came in and said, 'Mr. O'Ree, I'm sorry to inform you,' he says, 'The impact of the puck completely shattered the retina in your right eye.' And he says, 'You're going to be blind and you'll never play hockey again.'

Well, I was 18 going on 19 and the goals and dreams that I had set for myself of not only playing professional hockey, but hopefully, playing one day in the National Hockey League seemingly were gone.

So I laid in my hospital bed and things were going through my mind: 'What am I going to do now?' And I get out of the hospital and within the next five weeks, I'm back on the ice practising and playing. The only difference I felt about myself was I just couldn't see out of my right eye.

### ***Video: O'Ree describes being scouted for professional baseball***



*O'Ree was scouted by the Milwaukee Braves baseball team in the 1950s. It took him on a brief journey to a training camp in Georgia, where he saw American racial segregation up close for the first time. 3:10*

**Did you have to kind of relearn to do some stuff? Your depth perception would change a bit too, huh?**

## CBC Radio, The Current – April 30, 2019 (3 of 4)

And I did a lot of this. Being a left hand shot and playing left wing, I had to turn my head all the way around to the right to pick the puck up with my left eye. ... So, the season ends and I go back. I go back to Fredericton and now I either have to turn pro or play amateur and I had kept my fingers crossed that I'd be contacted by a professional team.

So [George] 'Punch' Imlach was the coach and general manager of the Quebec Aces and he called me and said, 'Willie,' he says, 'I've watched you play the last couple of years. I'd like to invite you to training camp.' So I tell my parents and I tell my friends that I'm going to Quebec with the Quebec Aces and I go up and I make the team but I don't tell them that I'm blind — I'm blind in my right eye. Because I never took an eye exam and I said, well, if I'm good enough to make the team with one, I just don't tell them.

### **Nothing stops you.**

We won the championship that year, and I said, "Willie, you can do anything you set your mind to, don't worry about anything else." So when I went to the Bruins training camp, I never took an eye exam. Went back, played with the Quebec Aces.

When I was called up on Jan. 18, 1958, I never took an eye exam. I just went out and played because everybody thought when I came back to play that I'd recovered from my injury.

I never even told my parents that I was blind because I knew that they would try and stop me from playing. I only told my younger sister Betty and she's passed on, and I swore her to secrecy. I said 'Sis, don't say anything because if they find out that I'm blind, I won't be able to play.' And I went to training camp. In the 21 years I played pro, I never took one eye exam.

### **Video: Watch O'Ree describe his first game in the NHL.**



*On Jan. 18, 1958, O'Ree stepped onto the ice of the Montreal Forum as a member of the Boston Bruins, officially becoming the first black player in the NHL. 1:28*

### **Did they ever know?**

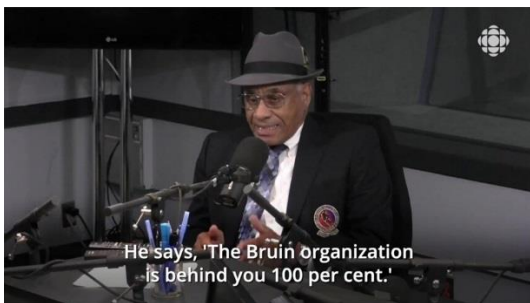
No. Well, I told them — just not while I played. I tell people now, I say 'Yeah, I was blind when I played my second year junior.'

**What keeps you coming back to the game?**

I think it's just the the love of the game. When I retired from professional hockey in 1980, I felt that I had something to give back to the sport and give back to the community and the youth development program.

I just felt that there are kids out there that I could help be better individuals and, you know, feel good about themselves and like themselves. I've worked with the Hockey is For Everyone program for 22 years and I wouldn't have stayed with it for 22 years if I didn't think it was a good program.

**Video: O'Ree on the weight of being the first black player in the NHL**



*Willie O'Ree said he had to work harder and play faster as the first black player in the NHL, but he's also thankful for the support he got from Boston Bruins management. 1:50*

**What does it give to you to work with those young people?**

A nice feeling, you know? Just to feel good about being able to help one boy or girl feel better about themselves ... working towards your goals. Goal setting is very important. You need to set goals for yourselves and work towards your goals.

*Willie premieres at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto on April 30.*

**Click 'listen' near the top of this page to hear the full conversation.**

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/how-former-bruins-winger-willie-o-ree-kept-his-vision-impairment-a-secret-from-the-nhl-1.5115649>

## Canada must work with China, but demand social justice: Ai Weiwei



Activist and artist Ai Weiwei talks about his new film 'The Rest' and how the story of displacing humans is one that repeats itself.

Jackie Dunham, CTVNews.ca Staff  
Published Tuesday, April 30, 2019 9:29AM EDT

Renowned Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei says Canada must learn to work with China, but continue to press the country on matters of social justice and human rights. In Toronto ahead of the screening of his new [documentary "The Rest" at the Hot Docs film festival](#), Ai shared his thoughts on Canada's strained relationship with China following the December arrest, at the request of the U.S., of a Chinese tech executive in Vancouver.

The prominent artist, who has lived in self-imposed exile in Europe for several years, said Canada will have to continue its relationship with China, despite disagreements over human rights and freedom of speech.



Acclaimed artist and dissident Ai Weiwei explores the plight of migrants hoping to reach Europe in his new documentary.



Ai Weiwei poses for a photograph in Toronto on Thursday, September 28, 2017. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Nathan Denette

“I think we all have to work with China,” he told CTV’s Your Morning. “We have to trust a society has to perform that way and that China will change into that kind of society.”

However, Ai said Canada can’t become complacent with China. He said Canadians must stick to their principles and demand that China improve its treatment of its citizens.

“If I look at Canadians, you have such a privilege about understanding human rights, human dignity, fairness in society, and the practice of law and all those things,” he said. “That is the strongest point about Canada or Canadians.”

Ai has been an outspoken critic of China following the devastating earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008 when tens of thousands of people disappeared and the government censored information about the disaster.

“I realized thousands of students disappeared, so I started to ask questions, ask for transparency, ask for so-called social justice. That got me involved deeply in politics,” he recalled.

The artist created an exhibit dedicated to finding out what happened to the earthquake’s victims and became actively involved in exposing government corruption and cover ups. In 2011, he was arrested and detained for 81 days before he was released.

Since then, Ai continues to speak out against the Chinese government as well as other social justice issues, including repression, freedom of speech, and the migrant crisis in Europe.

His new documentary “The Rest” follows his 2017 internationally acclaimed film “Human Flow,” which examined the plight of migrants attempting to reach Europe. “The Rest” explores what life is like for refugees living in camps while they wait for sanctuary in Europe.

Ai said the problem is not a new one and throughout human history, people have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety. He said he hopes audiences who see his new documentary will leave the theatre with a new perspective and a desire to help.

“We have to see humanity as a one. We cannot say we’re separate from disasters or unfortunate conditions. We are part of it. If we don’t help or defend those people, you know, we’re simply guilty about it,” he said.

## Review: Knock Down The House reminds us what hope feels like

Rachel Lears's doc about four progressive women politicians – including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – in the lead-up to the U.S. 2018 midterm elections will make you cheer

BY NORMAN WILNER, APRIL 30, 2019



**KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE** (Rachel Lears). 86 minutes. Some subtitles. Streaming on [Netflix](#) from Wednesday (May 1); opens at TIFF Bell Lightbox May 6. See [listing](#). Rating: NNNNN

We live in a pretty shitty time. The concept of morality or honour in politics is gone, any liar or simpleton can get elected to the highest office by embracing the lowest values and staying true to a few simple catchphrases. W.B. Yeats called it a century ago: the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.

I've seen Knock Down The House twice now. Wept both times. It reminded me what hope feels like, and I didn't know how badly I needed that.

Knock Down The House, which comes to [Netflix](#) this Wednesday (May 1) after playing Hot Docs earlier in the week, is nothing special on paper. It's just a ride-along documentary, following four progressive women in the year leading up to the 2018 midterm elections in America.

We watch West Virginia's Paula Jean Swearengin, Nevada's Amy Vilela, Missouri's Cori Bush and New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as they knock on doors, give speeches and attend debates in the hopes of mounting a primary challenge to the Democratic congressmen in their respective districts, all of whom seem far less interested in driving real change than maintaining their status – and the support of deep-pocketed corporate interests – in Washington.



## NOW Magazine – April 30, 2019 (2 of 2)

All four of these contenders are remarkable people, with backstories that emerge slowly but with considerable impact over the course of the documentary. It wasn't until my second viewing that I realized how deliberately Lears and editor/producer Robin Blotnick parcel out those backstories, showing us how a single incident can drive a bystander into public service – or how a political consciousness is forged over the course of a lifetime.

Knock Down The House gives us a rooting interest in all these women, but Lears and Blotnick caught lightning in a bottle with Ocasio-Cortez, gradually shaping their project around her megawatt charisma.

Comfortable on camera, quick and cutting in interviews and debates and genuinely angry at sitting congressman Joe Crowley's casual neglect of her district while he chases status in the Democratic Caucus, it's easy to see how she's become an avatar of hope to progressives looking to push back against Trump's GOP. And even though we know how her race is going to end, Blotnick's editing makes that moment absolutely electrifying.

I cheered. You will, too. And if you're of a mind to leave your living room and watch this movie with a crowd, it opens at [TIFF Bell Lightbox on May 6](#). I imagine it'd feel awfully good to experience the catharsis of those final scenes with a few other people. It might even inspire a person to get into politics.

Look, I have no illusions: truth and clarity are at an all-time disadvantage in the current landscape, and the administrations of Donald Trump, Doug Ford and Jason Kenney will leave behind wreckage that takes decades to repair, if not longer. Things will probably get even darker in the fall, because why the hell wouldn't they? But a movie like Knock Down The House makes you think we might still have a shot at turning things around. I needed this movie a lot. A lot of us do. Don't miss it.

[@normwilner](#)

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'CONFUCIAN DREAM'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 30, 2019

3.5 Stars



Mijie Li's *Confucian Dream* is not the most comfortable watch. In fact, at times this portrait of a family on the verge of separating is downright excruciating. This film is an intimate depiction of a couple seeking answers to the question many of us struggle with in our daily lives: what is truly going to constitute my personal happiness?

After twenty-three years of schooling, Chaoyan seeks answers to an empty feeling in her own life through the ancient teachings of Confucius. In doing so, she hopes to provide her four-year-old son with the values he needs to live a successful life. Yet, this newfound spiritual emphasis places a strain on her marriage to her husband Mei, who feels it will only cause strife. Li's documentary is also a fascinating one for those who love non-fiction filmmaking where the ethical boundaries are less clear than they maybe should be. There is one fight scene in this film that is painful to watch, and not for the faint of heart. Yet, Li succeeds in keeping the film from devolving into a series of marital spats, by emphasizing just how much each parent truly loves their son.

*Confucian Dream*, however, is not without its pockmarks. At times it felt that the film seemed to drag, particularly in the long middle section where the couple finds themselves unable to reach a compromise, or even reach a simple decision on when and where bath time is for their son. The film also begins with a title card about the disaffected youth of China, and yet, that felt very much like an unexplored thread throughout the film. Regardless, this is a film with a lot of heart that many will likely enjoy.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'LETTER TO THEO'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 30, 2019

4 Stars



If, after watching Elodie Lélou's *Letter to Theo*, one does not feel the compulsive need to track down a copy of *Ulysses' Gaze*, then one is doing it wrong. For those who are looking for a good essay film over the course of Hot Docs 2019, this is it.

Lélou's documentary looks at Greece seven years after the death of its most famous auteur director Theo Angelopoulos tragically died in a car accident prior to completing his last film. Actress Irène Jacob voices a letter written by this film's director to her close friend and collaborator Angelopoulos, a letter that provides the bulk of the film's voice over narration. Most of this letter discusses just how much Greece, and by-proxy Europe, have changed in time between 2012 and now. An emphasis is placed upon Angelopoulos' vision for his last and unfinished film, which supposedly focused on the impending migrant crises in Europe, crises that have since changed the political complexion of the continent. Arguably, Lélou paints a portrait of Greece as needing, more than ever, its most renowned art cinema director.

This is a poetic film, which haunts in its beautiful imagery and informs in its depictions of contemporary Greece. Tristian Garland's cinematography is particularly evocative whenever the film moves onto the sea. Angelopoulos' archive, meanwhile, is obviously afforded a place within the film, and once can see his artistry at play. It becomes fairly clear just how deep his influence on Greek cinema ran. Cinephiles who have never seen the Greek director's work will feel the need to scratch an itch that they never knew they had. *Letter to Theo* is ultimately a powerful letter that we are invited to be touched by, and hopefully many do.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'CAMPO'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - April 30, 2019

4 Stars



Director Tiago Hespanha attempts nothing less than an inquiry into the elusive nature of existence itself in *Campo*. Using a prominent military base just outside of Lisbon as his starting point, Hespanha weaves a series of observational vignettes, subtly probing the ever-expanding connections between man and his environment.

On the Alcochete Firing Range, as much care is put into military training drills as the preservation of the area's natural wildlife, resulting in a jarring intermingling of the two. So while soldiers test explosives and fire weapons, various kinds of wildlife roam the natural landscape, ambivalent to the intrusive human occupants. Meanwhile, astronomers stop by to watch the stars and ponder the universe and a boy living just outside of the perimeter plays piano to set a score for the mock firefights playing out in the distance. What does it all mean?

As the filmmaker's hushed narration recounts myths like that of Prometheus to demonstrate man's folly in trying to one-up the natural order of things, *Campo* can sometimes strain under the weight of its own pretentiousness. Some segments can also be a little on the nose, momentarily piercing the dreamlike atmosphere, as when a logger determines the old age of the tree he just felled and is then asked by the filmmaker to compare that to the minutes it took to come down. Okay, we get it, life and death and all that.

And yet the juxtaposition of gorgeous imagery accumulates a beguiling kind of allure that grows more hypnotic as it progresses, eventually going out with a bang in a raucous final sequence. Hespanha may not solve any existential mysteries here, but he puts us all – human, animal, plant, matter – on the same level playing field as we hurtle through space together on this confusing journey.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'BUTTERFLY'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - April 30, 2019

3.5 Stars



Every two years, the Olympics roll around and nations collectively care for two weeks about sports they otherwise have no interest in. Gold, Silver, or Bronze, and you'll likely be remembered for a few more weeks afterwards. But what about those who fail to medal, or underperform at the biggest competition of their life? How do you deal with the disappointment of an off-day at the worst possible time? These are the questions co-directors Alessandro Cassigoli and Casey Kauffman strive to answer with this feature documentary *Butterfly*, a film focused on 18-year-old Olympic boxer Irma "Butterfly" Testa, the younger competitor in the discipline at the Rio Games. The answer provided is one of heartbreak, community, and redemption in this intimate portrait of an athlete trying to answer the dreaded underlying question: what now?

Cassigoli and Kauffman's film clearly has a higher production value than most documentaries, evidenced by the sheer amount of shot coverage the film manages to use. The editing in particular is noticeably tight for a feature documentary, and at times *Butterfly* feels like it crossed the border of documentary into fiction on more than one occasion. All of this, imbues the film with a kinetic energy that is certain to make the film dramatically watchable. The eighty-minute run-time feels extremely breezy and pleasant.

Where *Butterfly* struggles is in concealing its endpoint. While the film has a constantly moving pace, it feels as if we are moving to a pre-determined conclusion that the audience can likely guess early on. Yet, for such a short run time you are certain to get as much bang for your buck as possible with this film.

In the Seats - April 30, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'SYMPHONY OF THE URSUS FACTORY'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - April 30, 2019

5 Stars



In Jasmina Wójcik's *Symphony of the Ursus Factory*, easily a contender for the most aesthetically audacious film of this year's festival, former workers of the titular agricultural machinery plant journey back to their former stomping grounds, now a decrepit and abandoned old building. But they're not just there to catch up and reminisce about the past – the Ursus workers stage a large-scale re-enactment of a typical day at the plant, going through the motions as if they never left.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the Ursus tractor was a hot commodity in Poland and the factory was churning them out in record numbers. Under the Soviet-influenced rule in the country at the time, it became a shining example of the communist work ethic. During the 1990s, however, the company encountered a decline in sales and massive debt problems, forcing numerous layoffs before the factory shut down altogether.

The workers all generally have fond memories of the Ursus plant, recalling a time when labour was a harmonious activity where everyone was respected and happy, something that seems like a distant memory compared to today's workforce. In the factory's aftermath, many of them were left adrift. Now, through this offbeat collaborative art project, they can find their footing once again, as they perform their old jobs while mimicking the sounds of the machinery that they used to be intimately acquainted with, resulting in an industrial musical performance of sorts.

The effect is reminiscent of the factory musical sequence in *Dancer in the Dark* but orchestrated far more organically, where the workers seem to merge with the environment as if that's how it was always meant to be. The climactic "tractor ballet" is something for the ages, a bombastic spectacle that gives the central product a final glorious moment in the spotlight.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-symphony-of-the-ursus-factory/>



## Hot Docs Preview: Gaza



Gaza has long been the site of much conflict and unrest, but while it's one thing to see reports in the news of what's happening there, it's hard for many to imagine what it would be like to actually live through it all. In *Gaza*, directors Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell focus on the people of Gaza and their daily lives from their own perspectives.

While the film certainly doesn't shy away from the harsh reality of daily life in Gaza, it's not the sole focus either. That reality is unavoidable and always hanging like a spectre over everything, but the directors choose instead to focus for much of the film on the lives of its various residents, ranging from young children to aspiring musicians to a taxi driver and many more. Despite the hardships they may face, the vast majority of those profiled in the film try to focus on the positive aspects of their lives rather than dwell on the negative.

Though the filmmakers don't really spend much time on the political aspects of life in Gaza, that likely wasn't one of their main goals while making the film anyways. Rather, the focus on the human element shows us a unique look at a side of life in the region that is not often seen.

### *Screenings:*

*Tue, Apr 30, 6:00 PM @ TIFF Bell Lightbox 2*

*Wed, May 1, 3:45 PM @ Isabel Bader Theatre*

*Fri, May 3, 3:45 PM @ Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema*

## Gaza (2019) Hot Docs 2019



GAZA is an absolute must see (especially on the big screen) portrait of life in the Gaza strip. A look at the good and the bad of the small strip of land barricaded by Israel from the rest of the world it is a film that will make you fall in love with the people and the place and make you wonder how anyone can treat it's inhabitants so badly.

When Israel destroyed its settlements in the early 2000's it effectively walled off the Gaza strip from the rest of the world. I suspect the idea was to contain Hamas and the Palestinians in a place they could control. On some level they expected those strapped on the small piece of land (its only seven wide by twenty five miles wide) to either give up or die, but despite often being on the verge the people have created a living breathing community that is a wonder to behold.

GAZA is a portrait of the community and on some level it will restore your faith in mankind. That so many people can survive and thrive, as best as they can. We are brought into their families, hear their hopes, come to understand their lives and share their tragedies. Its a film that will move you.

One of the things that I love about the film is the loving cinematography. While I know Gaza is not as picturesque as the film makes it out to be it still comes across as a pretty lovely place, when it isn't being shelled. Obviously the directors love their subject a great deal and we are better for it.

I've seen several portraits of Gaza over the last couple of years but as good as they are this film is better.

Highly recommended.



## HOT DOCS PREVIEW: LEHMAN BROTHERS, PINOCHET MILITARY GOONS AND OTHER UNPUNISHED CRIMINALS

April 30, 2019

### **Inside the Lehman Brothers**

Among the millions of people who suffered from the 2008 financial meltdown, a few even worked for the companies who perpetrated the crisis. Jennifer Deschamps' documentary focuses on whistleblowers at the giant Lehman Brothers investment firm, whose bankruptcy played a major role in the global crisis. The subjects include a former vice president who was fired for challenging dubious practices, a lawyer who met the same fate and several women working for a Sacramento subsidiary who were subjected to sexual and racial harassment because of their concerns. Despite a tabloid-TV style, the documentary makes a convincing case that what happened was deliberately criminal. Fri. May 3, 6:15 pm, TIFF Bell Lightbox. – LL



A Chilean woman seeks redress after being tortured by the Pinochet regime in Hayee and the Flying Fish

### **Haydee and the Flying Fish**

This doc is about Haydee Oberreuter Umazabal, a Chilean woman who launched a lawsuit against the naval officers who tortured her following the 1973 Pinochet coup. Their sadism caused her to lose her four-month pregnancy and suffer lifelong physical and psychological damage. Oberreuter's multi-year crusade for justice - aided by various relatives, friends and a legal team - is moving, though director Pachi Bustos' poetic and tender approach (the camera lingers on still photographs) and absence of chronological markers can be confusing. Tuesday, April 30, 6:30 p.m., TIFF Bell Lightbox; Wed., May 2, 12:30 p.m., Scotiabank; Sat. May 4, 5:30 p.m. Scotiabank. - LL

## Hot Docs Review: Push



An insightful film about the global housing crisis in urban centers, *Push* follows UN Rapporteur Lailani Farza across the globe as she investigates the continued demise of affordable city housing. For some reason I thought this film was going to be just about Toronto, but I was glad to see the scope of this film expanded.

Through conversations with experts, politicians and just plain regular people, we come to learn that the issue is far more complex than we realize and that this crisis will be far more difficult to untangle.

An eye opener of a film. Check it out.

*Screenings:*

Wed, May 1, 1:00 PM @ TIFF Bell Lightbox 1

Sat, May 4, 9:15 PM @ Hart House Theatre



## Review: 'Knock Down the House'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 30th, 2019



Courtesy of Netflix

***Knock Down the House***

(USA, 85 min.)

Dir. Rachel Lears

Programme: Special Presentations (International Premiere)

Get ready for the most inspiring, empowering, invigorating, motivating, and electrifying film of the season. *Knock Down the House*, which enjoyed an energetic Hot Docs debut after blowing the roof off [Sundance](#) earlier this year, is exactly the kind of crowd-pleasing call to action the left needs right now. It's a story of four women who are mad as hell with the establishment and are not going to take it anymore. Director Rachel Lears (*The Hand that Feeds*) follows Amy Vilela, Cori Bush, Paula Jean Swearingen, and some plucky upstart named Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as they lead grassroots campaigns with hopes of dethroning long-running incumbents for the Democratic seat in the 2018 midterm elections. Driven by four great characters and an infectious anti-establishment spirit, *Knock Down the House* harnesses the grassroots energy of the candidates' campaigns and taps into an audiences' desire for a better tomorrow.

The candidates are part of a greater movement in the USA that looks to shake up the political establishment following the election of Donald Trump and awaken Americans from their complacency with a broken system that allowed a clown like the Donald to be elected (or run) in the first place. The doc doesn't wag fingers and it doesn't assign blame. (Thankfully, there are no Bernie Bros frothing out the mouth to be found in this film.) But, like Michael Moore's recent [Fahrenheit 11/9](#), it acknowledges that Trump is merely the face of a bigger problem with deeper roots. What the film captures is a collective awakening and the effort to mobilize Americans towards change.

Lears observes her four subjects as they fuel their campaigns by opening the eyes of their fellow Americans and helping them recognize how many politicians in power, even Democrats, don't reflect the average working class American. Again and again, the subjects show how their rivals fail to stand up for the needs of the communities they were elected to represent. Vilela, for example, tours her Nevada constituency and passionately advocates for basic rights like health care. The film follows her journey as she opens up about losing her daughter, Shalynne, to an embolism when the hospital denied her care because she lacked proof of insurance. Vilela channels her passion, rage, and love into the campaign to position herself as a working class mother who has been on food stamps and suffered great loss because of the system she aims to fix.

Similarly, Paula Jean Swearingen takes Lears on a tour around her West Virginia community to show the devastating consequences of resource extraction as she points out house after house where a neighbour got cancer. Bush, meanwhile, hits the pavement in St. Louis, Missouri, not far from the streets of Ferguson where she worked as a nurse when the authorities turned violent against protestors in the wake of the shooting death of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson. Lears finds great human stories in these candidates that embody the hunger for change.



## POV Magazine – April 30, 2019 (2 of 2)

Then there is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The star of the movement to knock down the house and rebuild America from the ground up, Ocasio-Cortez is a magnetic character charged with the energy and genuine passion one hopes to see in a candidate. Lears' film inevitably narrows its focus on Ocasio-Cortez as she gets down in the trenches while taking on long-time representative Joe Crowley, who held the seat for 14 years without ever having to put up a campaign. People on the street tell AOC that she's nuts for taking on the establishment, but the fearless ingénue grasps that she fits the bill as the ideal challenger to blindsides him. As an unknown woman of colour, she personifies all that's overlooked by the system.

Even though Lears devotes the bulk of the film to Ocasio-Cortez, *Knock Down the House* doesn't short change the other candidates by casting them in supporting roles to AOC's lead. The doc interweaves the four stories to convey commonalities in the candidates' struggles. Lears draws out the injustices of the system and the perversions of the political machine that deter leaders from fighting for change. For example, Lears pays special attention to the role of campaign financing as the four contenders have indefatigable teams knocking on doors and hitting the phone lines to secure individual contributions, unlike their rivals who enjoy hefty PAC contributions that compromise their integrity. *Knock Down the House* inspires audiences to recognize the difference between a candidate who talks the talk and one who walks the walk.

As Lears goes into Ocasio-Cortez's life, *Knock Down the House* lets audiences see firsthand how this scrappy young woman from the Bronx lives the life of a political outsider. She works as a waitress to pay the bills and resides in a cubbyhole of an apartment with her partner. Moreover, unlike her rival who doesn't even live in the Bronx, Ocasio-Cortez goes out on the streets to listen to her fellow Americans and relate to them on a basic level of human empathy.

The doc has its own arc comparable to *A Star is Born* in Ocasio-Cortez as she finds her groove. Where Lady Gaga's Ally discovers the full power of her voice while belting out "Shallow" onstage, Ocasio-Cortez speaks truth to power in an energetic debate that provides the spark to ignite her campaign. Crowley can't even be bothered to attend the debate and instead sends a surrogate, whose helplessly pathetic answers encapsulate the complacency AOC aims to expunge from the system. As AOC rises to her feet and mobilizes the crowd, Lears' doc captures the exhilarating sense of possibility that occurs when the political system gives voters a candidate who understands and reflects their experiences. Even though the outcome of AOC's big night is already well known, *Knock Down the House* builds to a nerve-wracking finale as AOC giddily awaits her results. Her reaction to the big news is sheer shock and euphoria as David trounces Goliath.

While *Knock Down the House* can be rough around the edges, this documentary illustrates the magic that happens when a filmmaker is in the right place at the right time with the right character. AOC is a great subject, a fiery renegade full of the hope, hunger, and optimism that progressives everywhere desperately need. It's refreshing to see her so invested in her community when most politicians seem so detached. Her openness with Lears also fuels her cause as, like the other women, she gives voice to people who are disenfranchised by a stacked system. Her infectious positive can-do spirit is the perfect antidote to these divisive times. It's thrilling to watch a film that makes change seem possible.

***Knock Down the House* screens at Hot Docs on Friday, May 3 and Saturday, May 4. It also launches on Netflix May 1 and opens at TIFF Lightbox on Monday, May 6.**



<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-knock-down-the-house>



## Review: '#FemalePleasure'

*Hot Docs 2019*

By [Susan G. Cole](#) • Published April 30th, 2019



### **#FemalePleasure**

(Switzerland/Germany, 97 min.)

Dir. Barbara Miller

Program: Changing Face of Europe (North American Premier)

Barbara Miller's indictment of the demonization of female sexuality is all over the place—but in a good way. She travels to the U.S., Germany and Italy, Japan and India to support the fact that men's desire to control women when it comes to sex is absolutely universal.

In Brooklyn, New York, Deborah Feldman describes how she left her Chassidic community when she could no longer bear the restrictions on women. Women are consistently devalued and female sexuality in that culture, she says, is considered toxic, which is why women have to bathe in the mikva after every menstrual period.

Japanese Manga artist Rokudenashiko reproduces her vulva on a 3-D printer, turning it into a canoe for a joyful boat ride, only to get arrested for obscenity. Her sojourn through sex shops, where the penis is replicated ad nauseam, speaks to the profound sexist hypocrisies within Japanese culture.

Doris Wagner was a nun housed in the German convent Das Werk, where priests and nuns live under the same roof. She was raped there more than once by the same priest and angrily left the Church when no one would make her assailant accountable.

Enduring unrelenting street harassment, Vithika Yadav, via her web site Love Matters, fearlessly promotes honesty, safety, consent and most important, female pleasure, when it comes to sex.

In the most gripping segments, Somalian Leyla Hussein organizes to end female genital mutilation, the ultimate atrocity. Fearful of female sexuality? Just cut it out. A sequence in which Hussein uses a two by three-foot clay replica of a woman's genitalia as a means to show several young men exactly what's involved in the cutting is deeply upsetting.

It's a vast swath of territory to cover and the film occasionally suffers for it. Miller deals with mainstream media in mere seconds by showing fashion photos of violence chic at the beginning of the doc. She sometimes doesn't distinguish between fundamentalism and religion as a whole. Feldman quotes the Bible but it's only the ultra-Orthodox Jews that take the Torah literally. And whole cultures are dismissed via a single statement. Yadav claims there's no word for love in Hindi, which is not true; rather, there's no one word for love, but many.

But Miller's subjects are wonderful, wholly driven and in some cases, making important inroads. Rokudenashiko was acquitted of one of two charges laid against her but the delightfully positive artist has made thousands of fans worldwide. Yadav's website is a click magnet and Hussein is engaging effectively with communities in both Africa and the U.K. to end female genital mutilation.

Given her aspirations, it's no surprise that Miller has left things out. She could have made the case that the pro-life movement, no matter where it rears its head, is itself an exercise in control over female sexuality.

And for the record, lesbians are entirely invisible here. An entire film could be made about how lesbians attempt – sometimes unsuccessfully – to get outside the hetero-normative paradigm and often feel shame about our bodies.

But this film isn't about that. It's about hetero-normative oppression and succeeds most when its subjects bring men into not only the conversation, but into the activism as well.

Now what we need is a strategy to ensure that *#FemalePleasure* finds a male audience.

## Review: 'Symphony of the Ursus Factory'

*Hot Docs 2019*

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published April 30th, 2019



### ***Symphony of the Ursus Factory***

(Poland, 61 min.)

Dir. Jaśmina Wójcik

Programme: Artscapes (North American Premiere)

If there's a prize for strangest film at Hot Docs, please bestow the golden laurels upon *Symphony of the Ursus Factory*. This wonderfully bizarre film by Jaśmina Wójcik might be the most audaciously original film of the festival. Falling somewhere between a [Phillip Borsos industrial opus](#) and a [Pina Bausch dance](#), *Symphony of the Ursus Factory* is an ode to the working class that is full of human spirit and the most humane elements of industry.

The doc assembles workers, mechanics, engineers, and administrators from the now-defunct Ursus Factory, which produced agricultural machinery before the collapse of Communism. Wójcik leads the ensemble of working class artists in a documentary performance piece that sees them return to the scene of their former jobs and resurrect the routines of their daily labour, but without the machines. There are grand movements as the workers pantomime the processes of their former jobs while creating the sounds of the daily grind. The film is a symphony of manmade whirs, clicks, and clanks. Devoid of any functional machinery, save for a wonderful ballet of tractors, *Symphony of the Ursus Factory* gets the last laugh on industrialization as people endure when there is nobody left to run the machines.

The cinematography by Kacper Czubak mesmerizes as the camera glides around the workers to find poetry in the lyrical movements of their labour. An eclectically sonorous score by Dominik Strycharski plays off the human instruments in the orchestra and adds industrial elements to the musical arsenal, which provides a wall-to-wall sensory experience that's truly a trip. A full tip of the hat must go to the workers themselves for their dedication and bravery in taking it upon themselves to insert their presence within the history of their work in the most unconventional of ways. Documentaries like *Symphony of the Ursus Factory* are a rare variety, but like the grandest of musicals, they're a delight that excites the mind, heart, and senses.

## Crave reveals We're All Gonna Die

Richard Middleton

HOT DOCS: Canadian streamer Crave has ordered a docuseries that explores the possibility of an apocalypse.

We're All Gonna Die, revealed yesterday at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, is a six-parter that was developed by Crave in partnership with Toronto-based 90th Parallel Productions.

The show goes into production this summer and looks at themes of science, psychology, pop culture and philosophy, delving into the various ways humanity could meet its end from a light-hearted but informative point of view.

We're All Gonna Die was one of a number of Crave Original Documentaries to be confirmed at the festival, alongside Carmine Street Guitars from director Ron Mann and Sphinx Productions.

Also on the slate and set to stream this summer and autumn is Rat Park, which has been directed by Shawney Cohen and comes from Vice Studios Canada. Inconvenient Indian and Higgie Highrise, meanwhile, are both made by 90th Parallel Productions.

The other titles unveiled at Hot Docs were Adobe Productions International's Fanny: The Right to Rock; Banger Films and Revolver Films' Triumph: Lay It On the Line; The New Corporation, from Grant Street Productions; and The AI God, from Fathom Film Group.

The features were commissioned by Bell Media-owned Crave and are in varying stages of development and production. They will all stream exclusively on Crave following festival and theatrical premieres.

## **Attention Durham filmmakers: Documentary competition is on**

WHATSON Apr 30, 2019 DurhamRegion.com

DURHAM — A cool \$2,000 in cash is up for grabs in TVO Short Doc Contest 2019.

Ontarians are invited to enter original documentaries, up to four minutes and 45 seconds in length, by July 15.

First prize is \$2,000 and also includes “a doc-lover’s delight of passes, including one to the Hot Docs Festival in 2020.” Second prize includes \$1,000 in cash and the third-place winner receives \$500 in cash and other prizes.

As well, there will be prizes for the Best Short Short Doc, 90 seconds long or shorter, and The People’s Choice Award.

For more information about the contest, visit [www.tvo.org/shortdoc](http://www.tvo.org/shortdoc) and follow on Facebook.

## **Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Laurence Mathieu-Leger – “Willie”**

BY: Sophia Stewart, May 1, 2019

Laurence Mathieu-Leger is an award-winning filmmaker, editor, and producer. She specializes in documentary projects and has done work for The Guardian, Reuters, La Presse, Cosmo, and the United Nations, among others. In 2017, Mathieu-Leger received international recognition after winning a World Press Photo Award for her groundbreaking work on the Guardian interactive production “The Injustice System.” In 2018, she was honored with the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award in the Continuing Coverage category for her work on “Keystone XL: Driving the US Pipeline Route.”

“Willie” premiered at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 29.

### **W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

LM: Willie O’Ree changed hockey forever on January 18, 1958. In the midst of America’s tumultuous fight to end Jim Crow and the birth of the civil rights movement, Willie—the descendant of escaped slaves—became the first Black player to skate in a National Hockey League game.

The film follows the amazing story of O’Ree’s family, from his great-grandfather’s escape from slavery in 1779 to Willie’s ascent to hockey’s highest honor, induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame, on November 12, 2018. His story transcends hockey—it is a story of courage, resilience, friendship, and triumph. It’s about a journey in pursuit of opportunity to blaze new trails and inspire people of all races, historic in both its sweep and scope and relevant to our current day.

### **W&H: What drew you to this story?**

LM: The idea for the film stemmed from a conversation I had in February 2018 with my Harlem neighbor and longtime friend, Bryant McBride. We ran into each other and started to chat about hockey. Bryant had been the first Black executive at the National Hockey League back in the ’90s, and he told me about a Fredericton-based grassroots effort to get Willie O’Ree—the first black player in the NHL—into the Hockey Hall of Fame. He told me Willie was 82 years old and still working for the NHL, traveling North America and inspiring young people, and that 2018 marked the 60th anniversary of him breaking the color barrier.

My first thought was, *Why didn’t I know about Willie O’ree?* I had grown up in Montreal, which was a hockey-centric city. How come he wasn’t in the Hall of Fame already?

I had been a senior documentary producer at The Guardian and had covered the 2016 elections. I told Bryant that we needed to make a film about this right away—that people on all sides of the political spectrum, especially in the United States, could feel inspired by a story like Willie’s.

Willie is a living hero and something “active” was happening—that is, his potential induction into the Hall of Fame—which could serve as a simple arc to tell a bigger, important story. We both felt that his story could help inspire and heal at a time of heightened racial and political tension in America. We started production a few days later.

### **W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

LM: I think the film can easily be labelled as a sports film, but really, it’s so much more than that. Hockey is only a thread that connects broader topics we wanted to address, such as the importance of friendship and community, systemic racism within and beyond sports then and now, and the power of trans-generational change.



## Women in Hollywood – May 1, 2019 (2 of 2)

I really hope that viewers walk away feeling moved and inspired that they can be part of “the solution,” that anything is possible if you put your heart to it, and that knowing your own history can help provide perspective about who you are.

### **W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

LM: I think the main challenge in making the film was balancing work and family, which was a challenge when I produced documentaries in the news world as well. I have young children, which meant one or both would travel with me on longer shoots. People were generally very supportive—especially since I do all my camera work—and I would have not been able to make this film without the help of some of the characters, the production team, and my husband, and family. It takes a village!

### **W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

LM: Willie is completely independent. The film was funded mostly by individual investors who believed in the project and wanted to see Willie’s story told. Bryant McBride, who is co-producer on the film, raised the money in about four hours after making about 15 phone calls. This is obviously incredible and really rare.

### **W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

LM: I spent most of my early years with my mom, who was a single parent, and we didn’t have cable. I watched a lot of news with her on the CBC and never missed the Sunday night documentary show. I knew at a very young age that I wanted to be a journalist, telling important stories through documentaries. I was fortunate enough to become exactly that.

Prior to making “Willie,” I had been producing, shooting, and editing documentary content in the news world—a job that gave me a lot of joy and purpose. I knew I eventually wanted to transition into features, and making “Willie” gave me that opportunity.

### **W&H: What’s the best and worst advice you’ve received?**

LM: Worst advice: I was told my life would be easier if I became a banker instead of a journalist.

Best advice: Work hard, and never cut corners.

### **W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

LM: Believe in yourself—and don’t be scared to ask for fair pay. Women often feel bad asking for a good pay, especially in the freelancing world. I often notice that women asked less than men for equivalent work in the news space. When I manage a budget, I always make sure all women understand they can and should ask to get paid appropriately.

### **W&H: It’s been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

LM: I think, if anything, I feel more confident to speak up when I perceive a situation to be unfair—and I think all women should feel equally empowered. Things are not going to change overnight, and there will always be people who think you look “cute” with a camera. There is a lot of work to do—for women, people of color, LGBTQ, and all the above—so as long as we are given a safe space to speak up, then things can progress, even if it’s slowly.

## Women in Hollywood – May 1, 2019

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Rama Rau – “The Daughter Tree”

By: Sophia Stewart, May 1, 2019

Rama Rau is a writer-director. Rau's debut fiction feature, “Honey Bee,” won the EDA Best Film Award at the Whistler Film Festival. Her film “League of Exotique Dancers” was the Opening Night film at Hot Docs in 2016. Rau's work has screened in more than 50 international film festivals, and Rau has been profiled as one of Canada's Top Ten Women Filmmakers, winning awards such as the EDA Best Film Award, the Hot Docs Don Haig Award, the Stuttgart Best Director Award, and the Golden Panda for Best Director. “The Daughter Tree” premiered at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 27.

#### W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.

RR: “The Daughter Tree” is an epic documentary film, six years in the making, about the disappearance of women in India, resulting in all-male populations in some villages.

#### W&H: What drew you to this story?

RR: Growing up in India, I know how women and girls are treated as lesser beings, but when I heard about the sex determination tests that led to hundreds of thousands of baby girls not being allowed to be born, I decided to make a film about it.

#### W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?

RR: I want them to understand that this is not just an issue in India—this is a growing global issue because these problems are faced by populations in both India and China, which make up almost two-thirds of the world's population. This is going to be as huge as the refugee issue for world leaders.

#### W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?

RR: Finding characters, getting funded, and figuring out where to start were the problems I faced in the six years of making this film. There were riots in India when we were filming, there were characters who cancelled on us halfway through the shoot, there were story issues—everything that could possibly go wrong went wrong. But the crew and I really believed in this story, so we kept going and finished making the film.

#### W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.

RR: I got development funding from Ontario Creates, the provincial funding body of the Ontario government, and from the National Film Board of Canada. I also received funding from SWR Germany to finish this film, along with funding from the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Fund. I'm very grateful for all of this.

#### W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?

RR: I wanted to tell stories, and writing stories just didn't do it for me after a while. I fell in love with the big screen and started dreaming about moving images, and I decided I was going to make films, even if it kills me.

#### W&H: What's the best and worst advice you've received?

RR: The best advice I've received is to continue telling my stories.

The worst advice I've received is to use a crane for a shot that I didn't want to use a crane for. I decided to stay on the ground in the end and used that money for more days on the ground.

#### W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?

RR: Tell your own story. Don't stop telling it no matter what.

#### W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.

RR: “Leave No Trace” by Debra Granik. It's an intimate look into a young girl's life with her father at the edges of normal life. It shows how women's stories are unique and told with a different lens than men's, and just because they are not superhero stories doesn't mean they are not extraordinary.

#### W&H: It's been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?

RR: I think the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have served in bringing attention to the lives and jobs of women in the film industry and brought awareness to the state of gender inequity. More people are talking about this and taking the right steps to correct the imbalance, which is a good thing. Of course, a lot more needs to be done, but we are moving towards a more balanced workplace.

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-rama-rau-the-daughter-tree/>

## Hot Docs review: A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem

Yu Gu's doc reveals the financial mistreatment of NFL cheerleaders in a multi-billion dollar business

BY [SAMANTHA EDWARDS](#) MAY 1, 2019



**A WOMAN'S WORK: THE NFL'S CHEERLEADER PROBLEM** (Yu Gu, U.S.). 85 minutes. Rating: NNNN

The National Football League is the largest single entertainment property in the United States, raking in around \$14 billion each year. Unsurprisingly, players and coaches are paid millions each season. What's shocking, however, is how little NFL cheerleaders are paid.

In *A Woman's Work*, Vancouver-raised filmmaker **Yu Gu** explores the widespread wage theft and illegal practises plaguing NFL cheerleaders, and what two of them are doing to fight back. Over the course of several years, Gu follows **Lacy** and **Maria**, former cheerleaders – with the Oakland Raiders and Buffalo Bills, respectively – as they file lawsuits seeking loss wages and the designation of employees.

Since cheerleaders are considered independent contractors rather than employees, many aren't paid even minimum wage and only receive a paycheck at the end of the season. One cheerleader's annual salary in 2014 was \$1,250, compared to the \$60,000 team mascots and water boys made.

One of the most interesting revelations is the generational divide between past and current cheerleaders. At an alumni banquet, the retired, mostly middle-aged retired cheerleaders criticize the young women in the lawsuit for turning their "sisterhood" into something about money. They saw it as a privilege to be a cheerleader – and that in itself is enough.

The doc never delves into how essentially working for free affected Lacy and Maria financially, which seems like a missed opportunity to examine how cheerleading professionally is only viable for people of higher economic backgrounds.

Nonetheless, *A Woman's Work* shines a spotlight on the gross mistreatment of women in a multi-billion dollar industry, the women fighting against it and how it launched a larger movement.

*May 2, 9 pm, Isabel Bader; May 4, 12:30 pm, Fox Theatre*

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/reviews/hot-docs-a-woman-s-work/>

## ‘Our Godfather’ Directors on Legacy of Former Mafia Boss Buscetta

By **JENNIE PUNTER**



TORONTO — The original gangster-turncoat, Sicilian-born mob boss Tommaso Buscetta was the star witness in the biggest anti-Mafia trials in both Italy and the U.S. His detailed testimony about the Mafia’s practices and hierarchical structure led to the convictions of hundreds of Mafiosi over several years, beginning in the mid 1980s. When he died of cancer at age 71, Buscetta was still the mob’s most wanted man and living at an undisclosed location under the American witness protection program.

Our Godfather,” which world-premiered at [Hot Docs](#) in Toronto, explores one of the most pivotal stories in modern criminal history through Buscetta’s own voice, never-before-seen archival material, dramatic courtroom footage, and compelling interviews with Buscetta’s widow and surviving children, who break their silence for the first time. Directed and produced by Mark Franchetti (“Bolshoi Babylon,” TIFF 2015) and Andrew Meier (author of the 2008 book “The Lost Spy: An American in Stalin’s Secret Service”), “Our Godfather” was pre-sold by Kew Media Group to Netflix.

The directors became friends while they were both Moscow correspondents “from late Yeltsin to early Putin,” as Meiersays. Franchetti and Meier, who had deep knowledge of the Italian and American Mafia through their respective work, had a hunch that Buscetta’s widow had a potentially fascinating side of the story to tell—if she could be found. The co-directors of “Our Godfather” spoke to *Variety* about Buscetta’s legacy in popular culture, the lasting impact of his testimony on his family, and the aura of danger that still lingers.

**Buscetta died of cancer almost 20 years ago—was there some new revelation or some other reason that made you decide to revisit his story?**

**Franchetti:** Around four years ago, I realized that Buscetta still had a widow alive somewhere, who has never spoken publicly before, and that his family had never spoken publicly before. There is an important American chapter in his story—he had given evidence in America, he had been in witness protection. It was not just an Italian story.

**How difficult or easy was it to find Buscetta's widow in this era of social media and researching on the Internet?**

**Meier:** We encountered a lot of red herrings and false leads. Through the American archives, we got thousands of pages of Buscetta's [witness] testimony in the "pizza connection" trial [the longest federal jury trial in a criminal action in U.S. history] prosecuted by lead investigator Louis J. Freeh, Rudy Giuliani, and others. In that testimony there were clues to federal agents who had testified and had since retired. So it was a real manhunt.

**Franchetti:** If you know a person's name, you can find them very quickly. But if you don't, it's impossible. After we met with one particular DEA agent who had protected the family for years – and once he established we were who we said we were, and understood we wanted to reach out to her with our film idea – we were told the surname the family has been given by the U.S. government when they entered the witness protection program. We wrote her an email asking her if she was her father's daughter, because her father was a well know person in Brazil. She didn't respond for three weeks. We thought we'd blown it, and then she replied that she was intrigued.

**Buscetta has a powerful onscreen presence, but his widow emerges as the heart of the film. She keeps the viewer grounded and interested in the narrative. When you met her, what did you expect, and how did your approach to the film progress once you got the thumbs-up?**

**Meier:** After our first meeting, Mark and I walked away feeling euphoric. I mean—she's alive, she's incredibly intelligent, she's an absolute survivor. She is strong, she is headstrong, she had lived so many lives. She speaks many languages, she's lived all over the world, she's lived decades on the run. We were thinking, maybe this film is equally about her.

**Franchetti:** When we set out, we only wanted people who had first-hand knowledge of him. Except for one person, everyone in the film had never spoke on camera about him. But when you put his name on Google, there are 10 photos of him, and in terms of footage where you actually see his face? Less than a minute.

**Meier:** It's important to note here that in Italy, Buscetta is still a well-known name, whereas in America, less so. There were very few images of him on the Internet, even in this day and age, let alone of his family.

**Franchetti:** How do you make a doc about this guy when you can't find any photographs or film? Buscetta's widow told us they moved 20 times and lost a lot of stuff. At our second meeting with her and their son, Roberto, who is in the film, they handed us 13 DVDs of home videos. This was one of the most exciting moments: that evening we sat with our laptops, putting in these DVD, and the first one we looked at—there's Buscetta dressed as Father Christmas giving out presents. Without that footage and other photographs, we wouldn't have the film.

**In popular culture, being in witness protection – or the prospect of going into it – is now a trope. By the time you leave the "bad guys" and dig into the family life in witness protection,**

**it's almost the film's third act and it doesn't feel safer, it feels like the stakes are even higher. What informed your decisions in shaping the film's dramatic arc?**

**Franchetti:** Well, you've got this extraordinary story about a man who makes two decisions in his life: the first, to join the Mafia when he's a young man; and the second, to turn against it after he's been in the Mafia for 40 years. And we wanted people to feel the impact and trail of death, destruction, and family problems that these decisions left behind him. At the end of the day, the price was paid by his family. To this day, 30 years after the case and many years after his father died, his son is still too scared to go on camera.

**Meier.** There have been many films and docs about the Mafia, but this is *the* first guy, the first high ranking guy, the first cosa nostra boss insider to turn. There have been thousands since—I mean, the moment someone from the Mafia gets arrested now, people do deals, give evidence. The context is important. At the time of the trial in Italy you still had leading politicians who said that the Mafia was a myth.

**The film presents many reasons why Buscetta decided to turn. This was a complex and unprecedented situation, and I expect you've encountered that kind of thing in your journalism work—but was there anything that surprised you in your process?**

**Franchetti:** We were both struck by how raw this still is. We met with many other members of the family who would not go on camera. There are still a lot of untold stories. Talking to the authorities went against his DNA. He joined the Mafia in the 1950s, when it was more of a cottage industry, not as bloodthirsty. One of his reasons for cooperating was that it had changed. The more personal reason – and his family might dispute this – was that it was personal revenge, especially after two of his sons were murdered.

**At a time when news cycles move so quickly, it's interesting to step back into a time when a major news story would play out over a very long time. Did you think much about that shift when you were working with archival material?**

**Franchetti:** Archive used to be the death of documentary, but so many films are using it in exciting ways. We use more than 30 minutes of archive in the film, from five different countries, many different sources. We had the luxury of time and looked at and listened to everything ourselves.

**Meier:** We would have these day-long marathons debating things like, how do we move the family up to the front? We have this incredibly powerful strong woman and the kids' story up against the greatest hits of the Mafia. Because essentially Buscetta's story embodies the life and rise and death of Cosa Nostra.



## Lisa Valencia-Svensson on the ‘Personal Passion’ to Push Diversity

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#)



CREDIT: GABRIEL LI

TORONTO—Who is telling whose stories in the world of documentary filmmaking today? Why are they telling those stories, and to what audience? And why do those questions matter?

Those are some of the issues on the mind of Emmy Award-winning producer Lisa Valencia-Svensson, who delivered a keynote speech on diversity, inclusion and representation at [Hot Docs](#) Tuesday.

She appeared on the heels of the international premiere of “Always in Season,” Jacqueline Olive’s startling documentary about modern-day lynchings in the U.S., which Valencia-Svensson co-produced. The film received the Special Jury Award for Moral Urgency at Sundance this year.

The producer drew on her own celebrated career, as well as her experiences as a queer woman of color, to frame a conversation about the importance of diversity and inclusion in documentary filmmaking, at a time when a greater range of voices – and a growing number of distribution platforms – have opened the door for more diverse stories to be told.

Those opportunities, however, come with responsibilities and challenges. “How do we diversify our industry? How do we include a broader range of perspectives in our work?” she asked.

One key she suggested is rewriting the rule book on hiring practices to make sure companies and institutions in the film industry – from production houses to broadcasters to funding bodies and festivals – are inclusive across the board. “We can begin by hiring and involving more people from underrepresented groups,” she said, “and then move on to...hiring more and more members of underrepresented groups into top positions of leadership and decision-making.”

Story-tellers need to be more mindful, too, of the impact that representation has on communities who aren’t accustomed to seeing the full range of their lived experiences depicted on screen. As a half-

Filipina, half-Swedish-American girl growing up, Valencia-Svensson said she grew accustomed to the fact that the movies and literature she consumed wouldn't be centered on characters like her. "I thought it was normal never to feel any connection, always feeling excluded, always to be on the outside looking in," she said.

Recognizing that this didn't have to be the case was more than just a personal awakening for the producer; it formed the connective tissue that joined her with countless other underrepresented communities around the world. "I am not the only person to never learn my own stories in school, to rarely see people like me on TV growing up, to never be told that my history did, in fact, occur, and was even as important as everyone else's history," she said.

Valencia-Svensson described the conscious efforts she made to rewrite that script while shooting the documentary "Migrant Dreams," a film about temporary farmworkers in Canada that screened at [Hot Docs](#) in 2016. "For us it was paramount to not just portray our subjects as at the mercy of the Canadian government's exploitative system, and not also as people who are fighting back...who get married, who fall in love," she said. "That is the kind of storytelling I want to support."

The producer encouraged other documentary filmmakers to be mindful of the perspective from which they approach their subjects, and to recognize that even unconscious biases can have a harmful impact on how marginalized communities are portrayed.

"If we care about justice and equality, if we are driven to contribute to changing the world through our documentary filmmaking, then these are realities we need to understand very clearly in order to be effective," she said.

"People often support diversity initiatives simply because they know it's good to do....But our efforts to bring more diversity into the industry won't go very far if we don't each have a personal passion to make it happen."

## Black hockey trailblazer Willie O'Ree featured in new Hot Docs film



[Ryan Flanagan](#), Producer, CTVNews.ca

[@flanaganryan](#)

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A new documentary about the man who broke the NHL's colour barrier made its world premiere this week.

"Willie," the story of Willie O'Ree, is screening at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto.

The film uses archival footage from television broadcasts as well as original interviews and never-before-seen home videos to tell the story of O'Ree, who in 1958 became the first black man to play at the NHL level.



In this Feb. 22, 2018, file photo, former hockey player Willie O'Ree waves to the crowd after being honored prior to an NHL hockey game between the Los Angeles Kings and the Dallas Stars, in Los Angeles. O'Ree was selected to the Hockey Hall of Fame, Tuesday, June 26, 2018. (AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill, File)

Speaking to CTV News Channel on Wednesday, O'Ree said he wasn't aware of the momentous nature of his first game because he was focused only on helping his Boston Bruins defeat the powerhouse Montreal Canadiens.

"I didn't realize that I had broke barriers and opened doors for other black players ... until I read it in the paper the next day," he said.

If O'Ree wasn't aware, other players wanted to make certain he was. O'Ree said he had to deal with every racist insult in the book, as well as black cats and cotton balls being thrown on the ice by fans.

## CTV News – May 1, 2019 (2 of 2)

O'Ree suited up in 45 games over two seasons for the Bruins, compiling 14 points and 26 penalty minutes. He got into a few fights, but never as a response to racism, thanks to a lesson imparted by his brother.

"He taught me a lot. He said, 'As far as names, Willie, they'll never hurt you unless you let them. If people can't accept you for the individual you are ... that's their problem, not yours,'" he said.

"All I wanted to do was play hockey, and I stayed focused on playing hockey."

Being black wasn't the only obstacle O'Ree faced in his quest to make the NHL. Near the end of his final junior year, a puck ricocheted off a stick and hit him in the right eye, shattering his retina.

He was told he would never be able to play hockey again. Five weeks later, he was back on the ice – hiding his newfound blindness from almost everybody in his life, including his parents.

"I knew if I told them they would try to get me to quit," he said.

After the season ended, O'Ree got a call from the Quebec Aces, at the time one of the top semi-professional teams in the country. He tried out for the Aces and won a place on the team. Less than two seasons later, he was en route to Boston for his NHL debut. He never did reveal his blindness until after he'd retired from the sport.

Despite his trailblazing accomplishment, O'Ree's legacy faded after his hockey-playing days were over. While many diehard hockey fans knew his name, it was more in the context of being the answer to a trivia question -- far from the reverence baseball fans gave Jackie Robinson, the first black man to play that sport at its highest level.

Documentary director Laurence Mathieu-Leger only learned about O'Ree a little over a year ago, when her neighbour mentioned that he was behind a push to get him inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

"I grew up in Montreal, and I didn't even know who the first black player was. I thought that was embarrassing," she told CTV News Channel.

The neighbour set up an introductory meeting between Mathieu-Leger and O'Ree in early 2018. A month later, they were in Fredericton -- O'Ree's hometown -- to start filming.

"The reaction has been really great," Mathieu-Leger said.

"I think everyone feels inspired and feels like they can be part of the story to some extent."

Now 83, O'Ree tours across North America, instructing at hockey camps and speaking to children at schools. One of his main messages is something he can undoubtedly apply to his own life and career: "If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you're right."

**B.C. family's dark secret of sexual abuse explored in new documentary** Because We Are Girls, premiering at Hot Docs, centres around the Pooni sisters of Williams Lake, B.C.

CBC Radio · Posted: May 01, 2019 11:39 AM ET | Last Updated: May 2



*Sisters Salakshana, Jeeti and Kira Pooni with their mother growing up in Williams Lake, B.C. (National Film Board)*

*Warning: This story contains descriptions of sexual assault.*

For years, Jeeti Pooni never told anyone about the sexual abuse she experienced as a child in Williams Lake, B.C.

She suffered in silence, full of shame and fear that she would be punished if she told her parents what her older cousin had been doing to her.

Then she learned she was not alone.

"I was 22 years old when I found out that it had happened to all of my sisters," Pooni said. "That was the darkest day of my life."

The story of the Pooni sisters — and the criminal trial they pursued against their abuser — is at the heart of the new film *Because We Are Girls*, premiering Wednesday at Toronto's Hot Docs festival.

Pooni and director Baljit Sangra joined *As It Happens* host Carol Off in studio to discuss the film and the sisters' quest for justice.

### **'It became a routine'**

Pooni was 11 the first time she was raped.

It was October 1980, and her 19-year-old cousin was one of several distant relatives from her parents' home country of India who were staying at her family home.

## CBC Radio, As It Happens – May 1, 2019 (2 of 4)

She and her sisters called him *Bhaaji*, a term of endearment that means "older brother."



*Jeeti Pooni is one of three sisters at the centre of the documentary called Because We Are Girls about a sexual assault case in Williams Lake, B.C. (Sinisa Jolic/CBC)*

"One of my aunts was in the bedroom, and somehow he managed to open my bedroom door quietly and shook my leg and asked me to come outside. And I remember being really sleepy and groggy and looking at this shape and I'm like, 'Oh, OK, it's Bhaaji. He must have something to say,'" Pooni said.

"I got up and I went outside and he waited for me in the hallway. And then from there, he took me into our family living room and that's where he raped me."

It was the first of many.

"It would happen probably thousands of times," she said. "It became a routine."

### **'It was not safe to tell anyone'**

There are a lot of reasons Pooni didn't tell anyone what was happening — among them, fear, shame and a Punjabi culture that prizes modesty and submission in girls.

She remembers her father teaching his daughters to revere and respect their male elders. She remembers watching Bollywood movies where rape victims would fling themselves off cliffsides because of the shame.

And she remembers stories about other Punjabi girls in Williams Lake who were sent away to India if their parents got wind of any indiscretions.

"It was not safe to tell anyone," she said. "You know that from a very young age that you're going to be blamed, so just keep your mouth shut."



## CBC Radio, As It Happens – May 1, 2019 (3 of 4)



*Pooni, left, and Baljit Sangra, centre, talk to As It Happens host Carol Off, right, about the new documentary Because We Are Girls, premiering May 1 at Hot Docs in Toronto. (Sinisa Jolic/CBC)*

When Pooni and her sisters finally revealed their truths to each other, they decided to tell their parents, too.

Her father's reaction is still embedded in her mind, she said.

"I'll never forget that day. His head was bowed, shoulders slumped. He cried. We all did," she said.

The family promised to set up a meeting between the cousin's family and their own so the sisters could finally air their grievances.

"But then that never happened. And instead, what started happening was the finger-pointing. 'Oh, Jeeti this, Jeeti that. Because of Jeeti, that's why the others got abused as well,'" Pooni said.

"I immediately got therapy for myself and four months later, I was ready to go to the police. And I looked at my sister Kira and said, 'OK, our parents aren't going to do anything about this. Let's do this.' And we called the police."

### **Courts and cameras**

In 2007, she told her friend Sangra — a filmmaker — that she and her sisters were planning to pursue charges against their childhood abuser and that they hadn't yet told their parents.

"I'm like, wow, this would be a really amazing documentary for our community," Sangra said.

She had incredible access to family in the years that followed and was with them every step of the way as the case wound its way through the courts.

Pooni's parents testified in court and participated in the documentary, which she sees as their way of making amends.

## CBC Radio, As It Happens – May 1, 2019 (4 of 4)



*Sangra is the director of the new documentary *Because We Are Girls*. (Sinisa Jolic/CBC)*

Sangra tells the story through an empathetic lens.

"I'm from the same community as them, so I've grown up with the same social and cultural values," she said. "There's a lot there that doesn't even have to be explained."

She says she built trust with the family over time.

"It was low and slow, like a peeling of an onion," Sangra said.

"They were doing the best with what they knew, that they had a lot of pressures at a young age, sponsoring their family. I told them I know that that was an important part of the story, too."

### Getting justice

The court case was long and drawn out, with several delays.

It eventually made its way to the Supreme Court of B.C., which found the cousin guilty on four out of six charges of sexual assault in 2018.

He's currently challenging the ruling, arguing that the delayed sentencing was a violation of his Charter rights. While his name is available on public records, *Because We Are Girls* never reveals it. In fact, he's not depicted at all in the film.

"I just feel it's been about him from the day he landed in our family in 1980. We were supposed to respect him and give him the regard. And then going through breaking our silence, it was about him. Going through the court case, it was all about him," Pooni said.

"And now, through this film, it's about us girls — our resilience, our bravery."

*Written by Sheena Goodyear. Produced by Jeanne Armstrong.*

## DOXA 2019: Colten Boushie doc takes the stand

by [Charlie Smith](#) on May 1st, 2019 at 5:36 PM



Seen here with her adoptive grandfather, Indigenous filmmaker Tasha Hubbard made *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* with help from the National Film Board.

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The death of a young Cree man in August 2016 was like a flaming car crash along Canada's pothole-filled road to reconciliation.

Colten Boushie was only 22 when he was shot in the back of the head by a Saskatchewan farmer, Gerald Stanley, after a group of his friends drove onto Stanley's property while Boushie was asleep in the back seat.

In the wake of the killing, social media starkly illustrated the cultural divide between outraged Canadians who saw Boushie as a helpless victim and those who shouted their support for the gun-toting landowner.

"Everyone I knew was deeply affected by it," recalled Peepeekisis First Nation filmmaker Tasha Hubbard on the line from her home in Edmonton. "It was all we were talking about, right? So I was going to write a blog."

Then, on the day of Boushie's funeral, her father called to say his wife was really upset because Boushie was her nephew. They wanted to visit Hubbard just to get away. After they arrived and Hubbard informed them that she was going to write about Boushie's death, the couple had another idea.

"They said, 'You should make a film. You're a filmmaker. This is going to be an important story,' " said Hubbard, who is also a University of Alberta associate professor. "We all felt that."

That was the origin of *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, a compelling documentary about the death of Boushie—and Stanley's controversial acquittal on a second-degree-murder charge in 2018.

Hubbard captures the grief of Boushie's family members, including his mother, Debbie Baptiste, as they describe how their home was practically invaded by Mounties. One officer was curious to know if Baptiste had alcohol on her breath. The film shows the profound impact that racist comments on social media had on Boushie's cousin, Jade Tootoosis. It reveals the hopes that Saskatchewan's Indigenous community placed in the justice system, even after any potential First Nations jurors were vetoed by Stanley's defence team.

Watch this trailer for *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*.

## The Georgia Straight – May 1, 2019 (2 of 2)

The documentary, which premiered at Hot Docs in Toronto, also highlights many aspects of Boushie's personality, including his childhood love of science. Viewers learn about the narrative presented in court by Stanley's legal team. And it emphasizes the Boushie family's steadfast resolve to seek a royal commission on structural racism in the justice system—going all the way to the United Nations.

"Indigenous people speak out about these things and they're often met by denial or justification or minimizing," Hubbard said. "It's tough to take because what's at stake here are our children. What's at stake here is what does our future look like?"

But Hubbard didn't want *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* to simply focus on the Boushie family. Rather, she places Boushie's story in the context of the appalling historical oppression of Saskatchewan's Indigenous people. This entailed an exploration of colonizers' use of hunger as a weapon, the 1885 hangings of eight Indigenous men at Battleford, and the role of the North West Mounted Police in imposing control over the region. Some of these scenes are depicted through animation, which Hubbard felt was a gentler way to convey a "very hard history".

She hopes *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* speaks to young Indigenous people, including her son and nephew. They appear in several parts of the film, most notably in an emotional scene in the RCMP Heritage Centre archives in Regina.

"How do I explain the way that our history has been that's not overwhelming for a child?" Hubbard said. "Most of Canada also has never really learned this before....I wanted it to be truthful."

What makes this film unique is how Hubbard integrates her own story as an Indigenous woman raised in a white home and as a single mom who has also reconciled with her birth family. She brings forward the voices of her white adoptive grandfather and her Indigenous father while never losing sight of the future for Indigenous kids.

"I just felt that I wanted to be honest about how this was affecting all of us who live in the Prairies," Hubbard said.

***nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* screens at the DOXA Documentary Film Festival at the SFU Woodward's Goldcorp Centre for the Arts next Wednesday (May 8) and at the Vancity Theatre next Thursday (May 9).**

## VIDEO: Shattering cultural stigmas: Three Punjabi-Canadian sisters tell their story of sexual violence

Raised in Williams Lake, Jeeti Pooni led effort to create the documentary, set to debut at festivals

[TOM ZILLICH](#), May 1, 2019



Sisters Salakshana, Jeeti and Kira Pooni with their mother, Narinder (left), in a family photo of them in Williams Lake, where they grew up. (submitted photo: NFB)

Raised in Williams Lake, Jeeti Pooni led effort to create the documentary, set to debut at festivals

Three Punjabi Canadian sisters who grew up in Williams Lake are the focus of a heart-wrenching yet hopeful new movie that documents the impact of sexual violence they endured over many years while growing up in the lakecity.

One of the siblings, Jeeti Pooni, who now lives in Cloverdale, led the effort to have *Because We Are Girls* made, in an effort to shed light on the cultural stigma that is still attached to sexual abuse victims within Punjabi-Canadian communities. She also wanted to protect and empower girls today, including her two daughters.

The *Williams Lake Tribune* followed the women through some of the ongoing court proceedings relating to the allegations in Williams Lake Provincial Court in 2018, but cannot share those details due to a publication ban. The *Tribune* did interview the women outside of the courthouse April, 2018 after a day in court.

Jeeti is in Toronto this week for the world premiere of the film, shot over three years and directed by Baljit Sangra.

Jeeti knew filmmaker Sangra from her work in the fashion industry, and years ago told her friend about her difficult past.

The sisters — Jeeti, Kira and Salakshana — were abused by an older cousin beginning in their childhood years, but didn't tell the entire family about it until 2006. As their relatives and police were made aware of the incidents, a court case slowly developed, as did the documentary film.

"I have a lot to do with pursuing the court case and making sure that, for one, we were heard and that the police heard us and the court case proceeded," Jeeti told *Black Press Media*. "I had a lot to do with the film itself, because I was the one who approached the film board, the NFB, that a film should be made about this, and that was in 2014."

## The Williams Lake Tribune – May 1, 2019 (2 of 3)

Three years in the making, with the court case ongoing, *Because We Are Girls* will have its world premiere during Toronto's Hot Docs film festival, held from May 1 to 3, and will open the DOXA Documentary Film Festival in Vancouver later that week, with screenings on Friday, May 3, and Tuesday, May 7.

Sangra's 85-minute film, at times powerful and poignant, heartbreaking and haunting, also weaves in the moments of happiness and joy the sisters experienced as kids. In home movies, they are shown dancing, singing and celebrating weddings. In newer footage, they return to the playground at their former school in Williams Lake.

Ultimately, *Because We Are Girls* offers an empowering story about a conservative Punjabi-Canadian family coming to grips with sexual violence.

"I knew the story had to be told, and that it was a way for my sisters and I to be heard as well," Jeeti said in a phone interview. "It was about changing attitudes and beliefs, and having the community wake up and not bury the issue of sexual abuse anymore."

The sisters felt silenced years ago, Jeeti added, "and that made me want to pursue this, because it can't be this way anymore. And I have daughters, and to make this a better place for them, we have to start having this dialogue about sexual abuse."

The movie reveals how the girls felt they couldn't tell anyone about the abuse, for fear of "being shipped off to India" and being shunned for what happened.

"The biggest advantage he had was he knew we'd keep our mouths shut," one of the sisters says of the accused, whose identity is kept out of the film.

"Any mention of him, there was no place in the film, no need," Jeeti said. "At the time the film was being shot, the court case was proceeding, so there were things we couldn't share, but now that it's all wrapping up, I think the important thing is that this story is not about him, it's about the resilience of my sisters and I, and stepping into our power and standing up for ourselves and sharing our truth, no matter if we're believed or not. The story is more about that, and also when you see my daughters in the film, that's when it should really hit home that my sisters and I were once little girls just like that, right. It's to show that innocence and wake up the community to stop blaming the girls and the women."

Committed to cultivating curiosity and critical thought, #DOXA2019 will present 82 films from across Canada and around the world, representing some of the very best in contemporary documentary cinema. Get your tickets at <http://www.doxafestival.ca>

"It's not a story that can be told every day," Sangra said. "It was more about Jeeti's story at first, and I always imagined it as a family story, and we got them in one by one. We gained the trust of the family and the sisters."

The sisters' family members, including their parents, are shown discussing the past, the pain, the future.

"With getting them involved, I just had that sense, that feeling, because this wasn't about blaming anyone or making anyone feel wrong in my family, right," Jeeti said. "My sisters and my parents, they have that trust that I wouldn't bring them into something where they'd be smeared in any way. I have so much love and respect for them, and they know that.... I think for my parents, they couldn't help us, and whatever happened to us girls, happened to us, so this is a way for them to do something about it now, you know."



## The Williams Lake Tribune – May 1, 2019 (3 of 3)

Can't believe this is actually happening. @DOXAFestival @baljitsangra604 @thenfb my sisters and I are ready!!! #becausewearegirls

**DOXA Festival**@DOXAFestival

#DOXA2019 Preview: Because We Are Girls, Opening Gala May 3, 7:00pm at the @VanPlayhouse.

An intimate portrait by local filmmaker Baljit Sangra, of three sisters from a conservative Indo-Canadian family in BC who were abused by a relative.

Tickets: <https://www.doxafestival.ca/film/because-we-are-girls> ...



Today, in addition to designing shawls for her To Desire business, Jeeti works as a motivational speaker focusing on sexual-abuse awareness. Her debut book, *The Silent Stoning*, is due to be published this fall, according to a description of it on her website ([jeetipooni.com](http://jeetipooni.com)).

As dark as some moments are in the film, there is also some lightness and joy in *Because We Are Girls*.

"These horrible things have happened to me and my sisters when we were young and, in my case, into adulthood, but we still had a fun life and still did fun things – we weren't miserable, nor do we live miserable lives now. I think that people think once you've been victimized, there's a certain sorrow that lingers over you. And as you see in the film, there are happy moments and jokes we make, and that's just us," says Jeeti.

If anyone in Williams Lake would like to see the film, they can make a request to the National Film Board at [info@nfb.ca](mailto:info@nfb.ca).

Jeeti said she has received many requests from people wanting to see the film and feels it will be well received in Williams Lake.



Cousin Raj Rana with sisters Jeeti Pooni, Salakshana Pooni and Kira Pooni gave the Tribune an interview outside the Williams Lake Provincial Court last year. The sisters are the focus of a documentary, *Because We Were Girls*. Angie Mindus photo

<https://www.wltribune.com/news/shattering-cultural-stigmas-three-punjabi-canadian-sisters-tell-their-story-of-sexual-violence/>

## ‘Butterfly’ Soars to #1 in Hot Docs Audience Race

Posted on May 1st, 2019



*Butterfly*

By Pat Mullen

Another day, another leader! Today's Hot Docs Audience Award rankings shake-up puts *Butterfly* in the #1 spot. The doc directed by Alessandro Cassigoli and Casey Kauffman tells the underdog tale of a young woman in Italy fighting to realize her dream of being a boxer. *Butterfly* was in fifth in yesterday's rankings but jumped up after votes trickled in for the top four with yesterday's leader *Our Dance of Revolution* dropping to fifth place and runner up *Cold Case Hammar skjöld* falling off the chart entirely. *Butterfly* has its second screening today, May 1.

Taking the lead in the top spot for the Rogers Audience Award for favourite Canadian film is Chris Flanagan's groovy music doc *Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery*. The film sits above *Our Dance of Revolution*, *Prey*, and *Willie*, while Jamie Kastner's *There Are No Fakes* creeps into fifth. *Shella*, *Dance*, and *Fakes* all screen again today.

The top 20 features in the race for the Hot Docs Audience Award are:

1. *Butterfly*
2. *Dear Brother*
3. *Maxima*
4. [\*Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery\*](#)
5. [\*Our Dance of Revolution\*](#)
6. [\*Prey\*](#)
7. [\*Willie\*](#)
8. *Ask Dr. Ruth*
9. *Una Primavera*
10. [\*There Are No Fakes\*](#)
11. [\*For Sama\*](#)
12. [\*Killing Patient Zero\*](#)
13. *Last Breath*
14. [\*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up\*](#)
15. [\*Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind\*](#)
16. [\*Kifaru\*](#)
17. [\*Knock Down the House\*](#)
18. *Sea of Shadows*
19. [\*#Female Pleasure\*](#)
20. [\*Trixie Mattel: Moving Parts\*](#)

## April showers bring May queer entertainment events to Toronto

Check out Hot Docs, pre-Pride theatre, and drag brunches

WHATSON MAY 01, 2019 BY [NATHAN MACKINNON](#) TORONTO.COM



*Twelve-year-old drag kid Bracken Hanke can spend more than two hours achieving her signature look- Hot Docs photo*

May is here, which means Hot Docs Film Festival is in full swing. It's not the only place where you can soak up some queer culture this month, though. You can get an early taste of Pride, see some great theatre or rely on the old queer classic, drag brunch.

### FRIDAY, MAY 3

#### [Hot Docs: \*Drag Kids\*](#)

This documentary follows preteens Bracken, Nemis, Stephan and Jason who are just like any other children their age, except for their drag personas. As they prepare to perform at Montreal Pride, the layers are peeled back on what their desire and need for self-expression through drag costs them. With supportive families, they're also isolated from their peers and this film explores that through a sympathetic lens. This is the world premiere of *Drag Kids*, directed by Megan Wennberg.



*Hot Docs/Photo*

#### [Hot Docs: \*Killing Patient Zero\*](#)

At the centre of the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in 1981 was Patient Zero, the man accused of spreading HIV in North America. This documentary peels back the layers of homophobia and misinformation spread in the media about the man deemed to be Patient Zero, Gaétan Dugas, a Quebecois flight attendant. Directed by Laurie Lynd, the world premiere of this film will be at Hot Docs.

### SATURDAY, MAY 4

#### [Lilies: Or, The Revival of a Romantic Drama](#)

If theatre is more your thing, Buddies In Bad Times has you covered with this revival by indie theatre company lemonTree creations. Set in 1912, two school boys fall in love performing a play about Saint Sebastian, but one of them is unjustly sent to prison. Decades later, a group of inmates stage this story of young love. The play, a

masterpiece by Michel Marc Bouchard, is brought into the 21st century with a cast of predominantly Indigenous and black artists to make visible the high incarceration rates of these communities. There's plenty of chances to see this too, it's on all month!



VH1/Photo

#### [Just a Taste with Yvie Oddly](#)

Pride is just around the corner, and with it comes the Green Space Festival. Now that it's May, it's time for a small tasting menu of what the festival has in store for you this year. The appetizers for the evening will be local queens Tynomi Banks, Fay Slift and Jada Hudson. The main course is currently a contestant on *RuPaul's Drag Race* season 11, Yvie Oddly. This is your first chance to truly sample what the Green Space Festival has in store for you at Pride this year.

#### **SUNDAY, MAY 19**



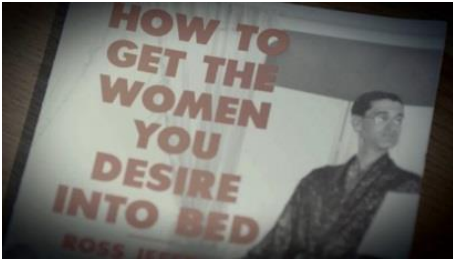
VH1/Photo

#### [Drag Brunch with Trixie Mattel](#)

Oh, honey! Life-size Barbie doll Trixie Mattel is coming to Toronto! And while it's not her usual folksy concert, she will definitely leave you entertained. You'll get a chance to meet her if you purchase VIP tickets, and you'll even get bottle service for mimosas. Legendary Toronto queens Sofodna Cox, Carlotta Carlisle and Devine Darlin join her for a brunch you shouldn't miss.

<https://www.toronto.com/whatson-story/9292577-april-showers-bring-may-queer-entertainment-events-to-toronto/>

## Hot Docs – May 1



*The Pickup Game* image courtesy of Hot Docs 2019.

### Hot Docs – May 1

by Staff

(April 30, 2019 – Toronto, ON) There was a brief moment yesterday afternoon when Toronto experienced a minor snow flurry. This season could not end soon enough and as we look forward to a brand new month we all have our fingers crossed for warmer weather and not more flooding. Hot Docs is past its mid-way point and for those of you putting it off, there are as of tomorrow only five days left.

We counted 43 documentaries on the May 1 schedule and about one-quarter of them are Canadian. It is quite possible that we missed a title and if we did please accept our sincere apologies.

The day starts early as it always does at Festival time and the first feature unspools at 10:00 a.m. The first Canadian feature starts just 15 minutes later and it's a film we missed yesterday. Sorry. Titled *The Pickup Game* it is one of the Hot Docs selections that falls outside the Canadian Spectrum program (which is why we missed it) and this one is a UK-Canada co-production and yes it is about sex. The nearly 100-minute film is an investigation into the world of seduction. How to meet and bed your next conquest. You may find it a little early in the day for this sort of thing but it's never too early for scandal and this one is well worth the effort of getting out of bed, since it's all about getting into bed. **Note:** This is not a film about how to get people into bed, it's an investigation about people and companies that provide this sort of thing.

*The Pickup Game* screens:

Wed. May 1 at 10:15 a.m. at the Tiff Bell Lightbox (TBLB) 2

Sat. May 4 at 3:15 p.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

*In Shella Record: A Reggae Mystery*, the central character is an artist and an otherwise normal, average, everyday sort of guy named Chris Flanagan, who also happens to be a record fanatic. What makes him different is a decades-long obsession to find the woman behind the voice he hears on a 45-rpm record he picks up for a dime. The label says the singer is someone named Shella Record, but no one seems to know the first thing about her. Flanagan's obsession will take him to a hairdressing studio in Toronto, a fortune teller in L.A., and to one of the legendary recording studios of

Jamaica. Flanagan, also happens to be the producer and director of this 87-minute documentary.

*Shella Record: A Reggae Mystery* screens:

## Northern Stars – May 1, 2019 (2 of 4)

Wed. May 1 at 12:45 p.m. at Scotiabank 4

Fri. May 3 at 3:15 p.m. at Scotiabank 3



*Image from Gaza courtesy of Hot Docs.*

*Gaza* was shot entirely from the perspective of a few citizens who live, or try too exist, on this small strip of territory. All they seem to wish for is a normal life, a productive life, a safe life, yet they are seemingly trapped between the ambitions of Hamas, which has run the territory since 2007, and the Israeli military who retaliates with, some might say, unjustified force to protect its people. There are some two million people who live in Gaza, an area 41 kilometres long and somewhere between 6 and 12 kilometres wide. It is one of the most densely populated places on earth, yet it is cut off from the rest of world, its people unable to travel, unable to escape. *Gaza*, also part of the Special Presentations program, is directed by Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell.

*Gaza* screens:

Wed. May 1 at 1:45 p.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre

Fri. May 3 at 3:45 p.m. at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

Spanning four decades, *Our Dance of Revolution* is the untold history of Toronto's Black queer community. Produced and directed by lawyer-turned-filmmaker Phillip Pike, on the film's website it states, in part, "*Our Dance of Revolution* is a human-scale reckoning of how audacious individuals find themselves by finding others, and how they muster the courage, tenacity, and creativity to prevail against the forces of marginalization."

*Our Dance of Revolution* screens:

Wed. May 1 at 2:45 p.m. at Scotiabank 3

Fri. May 3 at 12:00 at the Scotiabank 8



*Still image from Assholes: A Theory courtesy of Hot Docs.*



## Northern Stars – May 1, 2019 (3 of 4)

John Cleese was the perfect choice to provide commentary for [John Walker's](#) new film, *Assholes: A Theory*. The 81-minute film is based on the New York Times bestselling book of the same title by author, Aaron James. Suji Gelerman, a psychotherapist, and Amiée Morrison, a professor in the University of Waterloo's Literature and Digital Humanities department both provide comments on the psychology and behaviour of assholes. Other key contributors to this documentary include Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk, a former RCMP officer who wrote *Women Not Wanted*, an exposé of RCMP workplace bullying and Robert Hockett, a law professor at Cornell University who consulted for both Occupy Wall Street and the Federal Reserve in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008. John Walker is a multi-award-winning documentarian and all of his work fits easily within the definition of "must see" films.

*Assholes: A Theory* screens:

Wed. May 1 at 3:45 p.m. at TBLB 1

Sat. May 4 at 12:45 p.m. at the Isabel Bader Theatre.



*Image from A Kandahar Away courtesy of Hot Docs.*

*A Kandahar Away* is a bit of a play on the words *Come From Away* and it should not be judged by its title. Believe it or not there is a Kandahar in Canada. More precisely it is in Saskatchewan and a man who was born in that other Kandahar stakes his family's future on 8 vacant plots of land in his new home of Canada. The man's name is Abdul Bari Jamal and the film was made by his daughter Aisha Jamal. Alexander Rogalski writing for Hot Docs sums up this film by saying, "it's a heartfelt and moving conversation about two nations connected by conflict and how much of our identity is tied to the land we occupy." The first screening is a World Premiere.

*A Kandahar Away* screens:

Wed. May 1 at 3:45 p.m. at TBLB 2

Thur. May 2 at 1:00 p.m. at the Isabel Bader

Sat. May 4, 10:15 a.m. at TBLB 2



*Image from There Are No Fakes courtesy of Hot Docs.*

## Northern Stars – May 1, 2019 (4 of 4)

*There Are No Fakes* from director [Jamie Kastner](#) is another film that looks inside the usually obscure world of art and art sales. This time the story revolves around a specific work by Norval Morrisseau. Also known as Copper Thunderbird, he is arguably the most influential Indigenous artist in Canada and usually referred to as the founder of the “Woodlands style.” The central story revolves around one of his paintings, *Spirit Energy of Mother Earth*. Owned by Barenaked Ladies musician Kevin Hearn the authenticity of his painting is called into question and he subsequently decides to sue the art dealer. This launches an investigation into the painting’s provenance and the eventual unravelling of an art fraud ring with different factions, all claiming to be the true protectors of the Anishinaabe painter’s legacy. It’s a 114-minute mystery story where culture and commerce collide all deftly handled by the film’s director.

*There Are No Fakes* screens:

Wed. May 1 at 8:15 p.m. at Scotiabank 1

In addition to the DOCX VR installations at [Autodesk in downtown Toronto](#), please note there are a few other things you might want to consider.

The first is a panel discussion that takes place at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow at the TIFF Bell Lightbox and it is free. Titled *My Grierson*, it’s an illustrated talk that features executive producer Bill Nemtin reflecting on the lessons he learned from his mentor, John Grierson, who founded the National Film Board of Canada some 80 years ago and whose philosophy on documentary as a tool for social change influences Canadian identity to this day. This special event is only scheduled once and is presented in partnership with the NFB.

There’s also a program of Canadian shorts on tomorrow’s schedule. As we’ve said here so many times, the nice thing about short films is you never have to wait very long if you’re not taken by what’s on the screen in front of you. This collection of shorts screens under the banner Five Feminist Minutes. There are 4 short films and they all run five minutes long. There is [more information here](#) about this specific shorts program.

Find [more information and tickets online](#) at Hot Docs.

## Hot Docs Film Review: 'For Sama'

Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts's candid, wrenching doc offers a rare window into a woman's experience of the Syrian conflict.

By [GUY LODGE](#)



CREDIT: COURTESY OF PBS DISTRIBUTION

Director: Waad al-Kateab, Edward Watts

With: Waad al-Kateab, Hamza al-Kateab

1 hour 34 minutes

The Syrian civil war may be the largest human crisis of our age, and with no end to it in sight, it's only right that documentarians are unwilling to let it rest. The last few years have seen Syria-themed docs all but flooding the festival circuit, forming what the more cynical may deem a subgenre in itself: Almost all of them are made in good conscience and with honest intentions, but that does little to help concerned but daunted audiences differentiate or choose between them. What makes one sincere study of the conflict more essential than another? The answer lies in singularity and intimacy of perspective, and on that front, [Waad al-Kateab](#) and [Edward Watts](#)'s extraordinary war diary "[For Sama](#)" will prove hard to match. Simple in concept and shattering in execution, blending hard-headed reportage with unguarded personal testimony, it's you-are-there cinema of the most literal order.

Impressively constructed from several years' worth of al-Kateab's own first-person video footage, and jointly helmed with Emmy-winning British TV docmaker Watts, the film carries viewers from 2012, when conflict escalated in Aleppo in the wake of the Arab Spring protests, to 2016, when the student turned on-the-fly filmmaker finally, reluctantly fled Syria with her husband and infant daughter. It's to the latter, named Sama, that the entire film is addressed and narrated: a mother's attempt to explain, or at least expose, the waking nightmare she brought a child into, and might not have survived. Following a dream debut at last month's SXSW fest, where it scooped both the jury and audience prizes for best documentary, "[For Sama](#)" will get a major arthouse profile boost from its official selection berth at Cannes; theatrical play will be followed by television airings on Frontline and Channel 4.

"At that time, the only thing we cared about was the revolution," al-Kateab says in voiceover toward the beginning; she's only 26 years old, but her delivery is weathered, wistful, cracked by the strain and terror of living in a war zone. It's been a long few years: In 2012, al-Kateab was studying marketing at Aleppo University, participating in protests against president Bashar al-Assad's oppressive dictatorship, unaware that marriage, motherhood and exile were in her near future. It was during this early phase that she began committing her experiences to film, and footage from those student years captures a hopeful, communal sense of uprising, gradually chipped away by the relentlessness of al-Assad's attacks. Gradually, al-Kateab realizes

her camera — or a humble videophone — is her best weapon of activism, documenting atrocities and injustices from which enemies and even allies choose to look away.

In “For Sama’s” most harrowing passages, audiences might find themselves fighting the same inclination: This is not a film that shies away from explicit images of human carnage, child victims included. Al-Kateab meets and falls in love with Hamza, a dedicated medical student; while others flee the country when the crisis collapses into all-out war, she and Hamza elect to stay, propping up a scrappy volunteer hospital founded to treat the war-wounded. Even in its blood-splashed corridors, al-Kateab’s camera doesn’t flinch from scenes of acute suffering and, occasionally, transcendent rescue: In the film’s single most astonishing scene, the seemingly stillborn baby of a grievously injured mother, delivered by emergency C-section, is brought miraculously back to life, as if by the doctor’s desperate will alone. In the same frenzied surroundings, al-Kateab will eventually give birth to Sama in 2016, in the last months of the couple’s valiant resistance to exile.

It’s the constant tension between danger and determination — al-Kateab and Hamza’s resolve to stay in their ailing homeland versus the war’s repeated efforts to crumble the very ground beneath their feet — that galvanizes her scattered footage into a muscular, compelling survival narrative. As the film jumps between the recent and more distant past, we observe how, in an environment where even air strikes become grimly mundane events, the couple tries and fails to impose a sense of domestic structure on the chaos: We see their intimate, celebratory wedding ceremony, and their touching attempts to make a home in Aleppo before that, too, is bombed. A plant clipping taken from their garden becomes a poignant symbol of domesticity amid upheaval.

Eventually, the prospect of raising a child in such impossible circumstances must be faced: “Now I wish I hadn’t given birth to you,” al-Kateab confesses at one critical juncture. It’s a fleeting, from-the-gut admission of overwhelmed maternal despair that the director (now securely based in London and employed as a filmmaker by Channel 4 News) probably wouldn’t repeat today. This ragged, remarkable act of cinematic witnessing sees a young woman finding her voice — as an activist, as an artist and as a parent — above the crashing, whistling din of warfare. Amid a surfeit of devastating reports from the ruins, it’s one we haven’t yet heard.

Hot Docs Film Review: 'For Sama'

Reviewed at Hot Docs Film Festival (competing), April 29, 2019. (Also in SXSW — competing; Cannes Film Festival — Special Screenings.) Running time: 94 MIN.

PRODUCTION: (U.K.-U.S.) A PBS Distribution, Frontline presentation of an ITN Prods., Channel 4 News production for Channel 4, WGBH/Frontline. (International sales: Outlook Filmsales, Vienna/Los Angeles.) Producer: Waad al-Kateab. Executive producers: Ben de Pear, Nevine Mabro, Siobhan Sinnerton, George Waldrum, Raney Aronson-Rath.

CREW: Directors: Waad al-Kateab, Edward Watts. Camera (color, HD): al-Kateab. Editors: Chloe Lambourne, Simon McMahon. Music: Nainita Desai.

WITH: Waad al-Kateab, Hamza al-Kateab. (Arabic dialogue)

## The Film Stage – May 1, 2019 (1 of 2)

### Willie, Hot Docs 2019 Review

Independent; 89 minutes, **Director:** Laurence Mathieu-Leger

✍ Written by Jared Mobarak on May 1, 2019

It was 2003 before a Black hockey player had the honor of being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. That player was Grant Fuhr, the Stanley Cup-winning goalie of the Edmonton Oilers and multiple other teams (including a short stint with my hometown Buffalo Sabres). Because he was far from the first Black player in the league, however, you wouldn't be faulted for wondering why the man with that unique distinction hadn't already been enshrined. The reason was simple: Willie O'Ree only played forty-five games with the Boston Bruins. For a league that has consistently rewarded production above most everything else, that sample size never would have popped out to the voting boards. Where Jackie Robinson is a household name beyond baseball, O'Ree was almost forgotten.

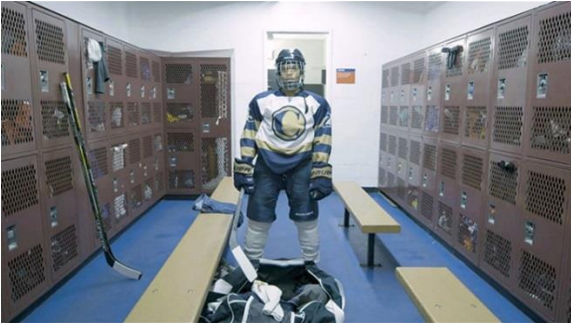


So it's only fitting that Laurence Mathieu-Leger's documentary *Willie* would surround O'Ree's long-overdue bid for induction in 2018 as much as who he was as a player and remains as an ambassador for the game. She talks with a few people who admit they just assumed he was already a member because of his breaking the racial barrier in 1958. Some of them are long-time friends who decided to work to ensure that glaring oversight didn't continue. So they researched what was necessary to qualify for nomination—the "builder" category was created in 2009 to honor coaches, executives, media, and others who've assisted in "building" the game—and submitted his name. They must wait until November to discover whether the fruits of that labor succeeded.

Mathieu-Leger therefore begins her film in March by traveling to Fredericton, New Brunswick to talk to Willie's childhood friends and visit the neighborhood where he grew up. From there we get archival footage of his playing days (he was a professional player for twenty-one years, leading the Western Hockey League in scoring twice along the way); the hunt in South Carolina for information on his ancestor Paris (an escaped slave); and examples of his work as the NHL's Director of Youth Development and a key leader of the league's NHL diversity program. There are interviews with those he's inspired (Sydney Kinder, Devante Smith-Pelly, Kelsey Koelzer, and Wayne Simmonds), those who've supported him, and the man himself. His off-ice credentials ultimately overshadow even those he earned on the ice.



## The Film Stage – May 1, 2019 (2 of 2)



As such, O'Ree's story goes well beyond hockey. Fans are definitely the target audience for this film, but it says a lot about battling adversity as well. With anecdotes about visiting the American South for a baseball tryout and numerous accounts of racially motivated abuse (with threats of attacks by white supremacist organizations included), Willie's journey is about perseverance and acknowledging just how much more work a POC must perform to both have the chance to earn a job and also keep it. Add the fact that he accomplished his goals with the closely guarded secret that he was blind in one eye only makes his story more impressive and emboldening. Bryant McBride literally found him working hotel security before bringing him back into the NHL fold.

Many surely already know the result of whether O'Ree got his call in November of 2018 so it's good that there's this second level of interest. That journey is compelling in and of itself, but the stuff surrounding his ascent in the sport and the work he performs now to ensure future generations see that road as one they may follow is more so. The wealth disparity of the sport is therefore touched upon as far as what neighborhoods and demographics have access to facilities and equipment. Bridging this gap has become his life's mission despite not starting that chapter until age sixty. Watching him reminisce at eighty-two is thus nothing short of miraculous when you think of concussions and other hockey-related injuries taking former players too young.

That he remains humble with a smile only endears him further to hopefully be placed on equal footing as Jackie Robinson rather than relegated one step below as "the Jackie Robinson of hockey." Mathieu-Leger's film is straightforward enough to provide the details as to why he's always been the latter, but personal enough to warrant the former. Rather than get lost in someone else's shadow, O'Ree should be known as the one casting it for countless hockey players and fans alike. *Willie* proves a feel-good story as a result with a healthy dose of historical documentation to collect his legacy in a single place. And it taking this long for him to grace the big screen is almost as surprising as his absence in the Hall.

*Willie* played at Hot Docs.

<https://thefilmstage.com/reviews/hot-docs-review-willie-is-a-tale-of-battling-adversity-that-goes-beyond-the-hockey-rink/>



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE YOURSELF?'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - May 01, 2019

3 Stars



Nina Blažin *How Much Do You Love Yourself?* is a film with noticeable moments of beauty, and a film that will also likely make you feel like vomiting on occasion too. Seemingly, Blažin strives to convey a multitude of emotions, but never seems to pass judgment upon her characters or those who would judge them, a tactic which may ultimately prove unfulfilling to some viewers.

The subjects of this film are Viki and Damjan, a pair of homeless, anarchistic, heroin addicted, urban explorers and photographers, who are madly in love. Throughout the film, we witness them shoot-up, explore abandoned locales, and at one point, make a delicious looking dinner. Cinematographer Darko Heric's camera remains steadfastly observational throughout the film, yet, routinely features extreme close-ups of pores and drug spoons burnt on a flame. Part of Blažin's judgement less cinema stems from how distant these two subjects feel. It also seems difficult to get a sense of the larger systematic issues at play. Why these two feel the need to exist on the margins of society, or any of the sociopolitical conditions of Slovenia (where the film is set) are questions that remain essentially ignored, and may have provided greater context for the audience.

The question *How Much Do You Love Yourself?* also remains unanswered here. Maybe the answer is hidden deep within the elliptical nature of this film, which has been aptly described in promotional material as "stream of unconsciousness." Or maybe there isn't meant to be an answer, and the aimlessness is designed to exemplify the mindset of Viki and Damjan. Either way, I found myself wishing for more concrete understandings to augment the difficult nature of this film.

## Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man

### Hot Docs 2019 review

Independent; 87 minutes

**Director:** Lily Zepeda

✍ Written by Jared Mobarak on May 1, 2019

This statistic says it all: 40% of citizens on Earth don't have toilets. A big part of that number is India and China, but it's still insane to comprehend as someone from a country that won't allow homes or businesses to be built without one. It's the type of problem you'd assume tops every nation's to-do list and yet most cases have it found at the very bottom. Why? Because change isn't easy. If your family has practiced open-air defecation for generations, why stop? It shouldn't unfortunately just be seen as a point of preference, though. The number of people who get sick and die from poor sanitation combined with the number of women raped as a result of lacking any true privacy proves as much.



It's a nightmare scenario that hasn't seen close to enough headway in recent times. This tragedy stems from human waste being seen as taboo, the impossible socio-economic issues that prevent many countries from finding quick relief, and a wealth of other factors both big and small. Like so many problems, however, the first step towards the solution is often awareness. So that's where Jack Sim enters the fray as the founder of the World Toilet Organization. He travels the globe with his big personality and self-deprecating humor to put sanitation at the forefront of everyone's minds. The idea is that teaching regular folk recruits their voices to then work up the chain and force the hand of government officials. Who knew wearing a toilet costume could save lives?

Lily Zepeda's documentary *Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man* tells us how by following the Singaporean Sim as he works tirelessly to help fulfill Prime Minister Modi's promise of turning India into an outdoor defecation-free zone. Along the way we hear from his wife and children (who are used to him always being out of the country), kindred spirits (Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, developer of the double-pit toilet system, among them), and his candid WTO board members who praise him as much as they air their frustrations. A formerly successful salesman who couldn't take the selfishness and greed that industry cultivates as a rule, Sim took his networking expertise and gift for conversation into the humanitarian field of sanitation to make a difference. Now his stress has greater purpose.

## The Film Stage – May 1, 2019 (2 of 2)



It therefore isn't a perfect life by any means and the film never shies from exposing that truth. Jack's kids do resent his drive to help the world at their expense. His international popularity causes governments and organizations to hire him for projects they have no intention of completing, using his celebrity to falsely legitimize their goals. And his penchant for constantly thinking up new ideas that he then implements with fervor despite no backing from the rest of his team causes a lot of good to be overshadowed by an excess of frivolity. So it's no surprise that Sim's stubbornness and enthusiasm also has a way of alienating the places he works to improve since their skepticism of outsiders is exacerbated when his teaching feels like telling.

Using him as a centerpiece for this exposé of an under-reported international crisis is yet another example of how his personality sparks awareness through entertainment. Sim wants to make toilets "sexy" and "appealing" because he knows that might be the only way to rewire some brains. Doing so often has him wielding goofiness as a weapon too since there's no better exposure than viral meme culture. No one wants to sit and watch a dry PowerPoint presentation of facts and figures when they can hear Sim say the word "shit" at a TED Talk or laugh at his James Bond photo-shoot with plunger as gun. This is a man who's leveraged his ability to be the clown into a mission statement that has truly made a significant difference.



Zepeda therefore spotlights Sim's unorthodox hero with reverence and candor to prove how much effort goes into change of this scale. She gives the inevitable collateral damage of his quest a voice while also injecting the right amount of statistics (complete with animated poop splatters) to educate with a smile. It's often inspiring as a result, propping up the good over the bad to reveal the rusty gears of bureaucracy opposite the passionate demands of community. Sim is a go-between positioned in the middle of both and attempting to bridge the gap by normalizing a topic we either blindly ignore or completely forget courtesy of embarrassment and privilege respectively. When you learn poop causes as many deaths as car crashes, however, it's difficult not to listen.

*Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man* played at Hot Docs.

<https://thefilmstage.com/reviews/hot-docs-review-mr-toilet-the-worlds-2-man-is-an-expose-on-the-outdoor-defecation-crisis/>

## Review: 'One Child Nation'

Hot Docs/DOXA 2019

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published May 1st, 2019



Courtesy of Hot Docs

### ***One Child Nation***

(USA, 85 min.)

Dir. Nanfu Wang, Jialing Zhang

Program: Special Presentations (Canadian Premiere)

Bring the biggest box of Kleenex you can find to *One Child Nation*. This devastatingly powerful film, which won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance this year, is an absorbing, eye-opening, and emotionally draining experience. The pain brings its own rewards, however, as directors Nanfu Wang and Jialing Zhang explore the wounds left by China's One-Child Policy, which was introduced in 1982 and overturned in 2015. The film keeps the memory of the brutal policy alive while performing a stitch to heal the nation's pain.

The credits for *One Child Nation* note that every Chinese crew member involved in the production was born under the country's One-Child Policy, and Wang uses this personal element of growing up in a nation reared on population control as the mode of her inquiry. Wang, a new mother, returns home after giving birth to her son in the USA where she's established herself as a filmmaker. (Wang's credits include the Hot Docs hits *Hooligan Sparrow* and *I Am Another You*.) The doc follows Wang as she returns to her small village, which bears literal and figurative scars of the One Child Policy. Propaganda is everywhere, as old slogans and signs offer stern reminders to citizens to do their civic duty. On the other hand, virtually every family and neighbour Wang talks with speaks of harsh times. The sense of guilt is palpable.

Wang looks at her own family, which actually had two children since the early restrictions of the policy permitted families in rural areas to double dip if kids were born five years apart. Wang, grateful for the younger brother with whom she shared her life, wonders what the world would be like for her baby son if he could never have a brother or sister. At the same time, the stories of Wang's brother draw out the pervasive misogyny of the One-Child Policy. When nearly all families could only have one offspring, boys became the coveted prize while having a girl was a fate worse than uncovering three lemons on a lottery ticket. Wang reflects on how, despite being the elder sibling, her brother went to college while she worked to support the family. Her case is not unique, but, most tragically, Wang had it better than many girls because she remained with her family; moreover, she stayed alive.

Accounts in *One Child Nation* are simply gut-wrenching as parents, family members, and peers in Wang's community matter of factly describe the baby girls they abandoned, left for dead, or outright killed so that they

## POV Magazine – May 1, 2019 (2 of 2)

could produce a boy to carry on the family name. The elderly men with whom Wang speaks too frequently uphold their views that it's better to have a boy than a girl, while even the women rarely betray much remorse over the daughters they lost. People talk about leaving a baby girl in the market, only to watch it die from exposure two days later, as simply something that happened, like a melon discarded in search of finer fruit.

Other compelling scenes follow the trails of human trafficking as Wang visits families who adopted children discarded by the One-Child Policy, as well as networks looking to connect people with the families who abandoned him. The film scores some revealing interviews with human traffickers who profited by turning babies into commodities and worked with the government to harvest unwanted babies and help the policy achieve its goals for population control. However, these interviews afford no easy answers. While one might hesitate to sympathize with a character who exchanged human lives like consumer goods, the doc shows that tens of thousands of children survived through such transactions. Where all those kids are now, however, is a question that haunts the film.

The sense of absence permeates *One Child Nation* and Wang's film is at its most remarkable when the interviewees confront the weight of the past and the sins they've collectively committed. In one of the best scenes I've ever seen in a documentary, Wang visits the local midwife who delivered babies in the region for nearly three decades. When Wang asks, the woman has no idea how many babies she delivered during her tenure. However, she gives Wang another number, 50,000 to 60,000, which accounts for the number of abortions she performed, including babies brought to term and euthanized.

The woman breaks down during the interview and addresses her desire for atonement, telling Wang she fully expects to be judged in her next life. As penance, she tells Wang that she sought to correct the sins of China's One-Child Policy by devoting her life to curing infertility and helping families conceive. She points to two pennants on the wall and tells Wang that they're gifts from parents who had a baby thanks to her aid. She then invites Wang to tour her home and they enter a room. She turns on the lights to reveal four walls plastered with pennants from floor to ceiling. She clicks the lights in another room, and then another, each wallpapered with these signs denoting a baby given life. By marking each life she helped bring into the world, the woman humbly acknowledges the countless others she took from it. The scene is overwhelmingly powerful as *One Child Nation* situates one woman's quest to correct the past within the collective tragedy.

At times, *One Child Nation* invites comparison to a Holocaust documentary with the language and collective mindset Wang captures. Her interviewees speak as if on script, like masses brainwashed by propaganda. They all characterize the policy as "strict," but maintain that there was nothing that could be done. The accounts convey evil as something normalized through policy and bureaucracy. Very few interviewees acknowledge the element of choice in allowing a child to live or die, or to be given away to human traffickers. The testimony echoes tales of Germans who turned blind eyes to the actions of the Nazis or the party members who contributed to the deaths of Jews simply by administering policy and carrying out their everyday jobs.

*One Child Nation* captures a nation's shared culpability in the loss of a generation. It's a brutally frank and emotionally raw film that shows the art of documentary at its finest. *One Child Nation* is one of the must-see films of the festival and, undoubtedly, the year.



In the Seats – May 1, 2019

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE INFILTRATORS'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Film Festivals](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - May 01, 2019

3.5 Stars



The prison break movie gets a politically urgent makeover in *The Infiltrators*, the new hybrid documentary that follows a group of undocumented youth activists as they attempt their most audacious plan yet – willingly getting incarcerated in a notorious U.S. detention center in order to help free prisoners from the inside.

The National Immigration Youth Alliance made waves for their daring protests at government institutions, staging sit-ins to make demands for the release of people unlawfully detained by ICE. Using their own undocumented DREAMer status as their power, they decided the next step was to start working from the inside. Orchestrated by leader Mohammad Abdollahi, two NIYA members, Marco Saavedra and Viridiana Martinez, walk up to the Broward Transitional Center in Florida, one of the most notorious for-profit detention centers in the country, and are promptly arrested. Once inside, they work undercover with the team on the outside to overturn deportations and expedite the releases of as many of the individuals incarcerated as they can.

Co-directed by Cristina Ibarra and Alex Rivera (who explored U.S.-Mexico border relations in 2008's dystopian sci-fi flick *Sleep Dealer*) cleverly mix different narrative techniques to tell this real-life suspense story. Since they obviously couldn't shoot the actual events inside Broward, they stage re-enactments to intercut with the verité footage of the team working on the outside. It's here that the film falters a little, however, as the somewhat amateurish staged sequences don't have quite the same level of immediacy as the rest of the film. Nevertheless, the events are so incredible that you can't help but be awestruck at the bravery and determination of these activists.

The film ends just as Trump gets elected, emboldening ICE to be even more ruthless in their practices. For these human rights warriors, the fight is just beginning.

<http://intheseats.ca/hot-docs-2019-our-review-of-the-infiltrators/>



## Hot Docs: May 2



*Image from Illusions of Control courtesy of Hot Docs.*

## Hot Docs: May 2

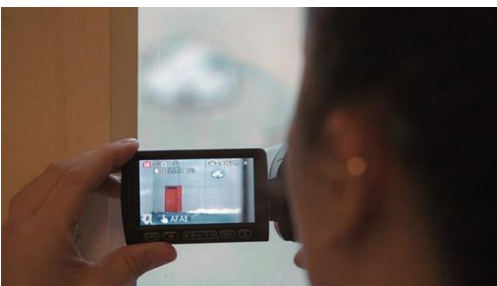
*by Staff*

(May 1, 2019 – Toronto, ON) There are only 4 days left for the 26th annual Hot Docs Film Festival and each day is filled with the best documentaries produced the world over. In fact, there are 40 films on the May 2 schedule and that's not counting the Visual Reality productions and short films. Most of the films we're looking at will be having their last screening and that includes the first Canadian film at 10:00 a.m. *Illusions of Control*.

Directed by Shannon Walsh, *Illusions of Control* is a far-ranging film that examines what we are doing and have done to the only planet we can inhabit. The film concentrates on the stories of five women who deal with nuclear fallout, arsenic-laced water and desert dust storms in places like Fukushima, Chicago and Yellowknife. This is yet another film about the Anthropocene age we now live in and how we are destroying the planet and what survival in the future might look like.

*Illusions of Control* screens:

Thur. May 2 at 10:00 a.m. at Tiff Bell Lightbox (TBLB) 3



*Image from Conviction courtesy of Hot Docs.*

Today is also the last screening of *Conviction*. Co-directed by Ariella Pahlke, Nance Ackerman and Teresa MacInnes, this 78-minute film sets out to understand why women have become the fastest-growing segment of the prison population in Canada. The twist in the film is that some women are given cameras and instead of responding to questions, tell their own stories, providing an unusually authentic

## Northern Stars – May 2, 2019 (2 of 3)

point of view.

*Conviction* screens:

Thur. May 2 at 12:30 p.m. at the Hart House Theatre

At 1:30 p.m. it's the last of 3 screenings of *Prey*. [Matt Gallagher's](#) film is about the indefensible sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. It tracks the case of Father Hod Marshall, who pled guilty to 17 assault charges. One of his victims, seeking closure for what happened during his childhood, filed suit against the Basilian Fathers of Toronto. The film centres on a man known by some as "the priest hunter," lawyer Rob Talach and on a number of survivors who provided testimony.

*Prey* screens:

Thu. May 2 at 1:30 p.m. at TBLB



*Image from The World or Nothing courtesy of Hot Docs.*

At the Hart House Theatre on the University of Toronto campus it's the last screening of [Ingrid Veninger's](#) documentary, *The World or Nothing*. Two Cuban men, twin brothers, have moved to Spain to seek their fame and fortune, hoping for online stardom as they shoot their own dance videos. Seemingly inseparable, they do everything together. Towards the end one says he will only marry if his intended bride accepts his brother as part of the marriage. While they are, or should be, grown men, they are dreamers who miss their mother, go forward blinded by hope and want nothing less than what the title says.

*The World or Nothing* screens:

Thur. May 2 at 3:00 p.m. at the Hart House Theatre

*Toxic Beauty* is an important film because, quite simply, we just don't know enough about the things we put into and onto our bodies and we can no longer trust the big brands when they tell us their products are safe. While we are all aware of the larger pollution that surrounds us we just don't know enough about our own very personal environments. Directed by Phyllis Ellis, the film is co-produced by [Peter Raymont](#) and Barri Cohen. Why should you see this film? As Aisha Jamal writes for Hot Docs: *Toxic Beauty* "...ultimately concludes that without action, the greatest chemical disaster may be the one happening inside our bodies." This is the film's final screening.

*Toxic Beauty* screens:

Thur. May 2 at 5:45 p.m. at Scotiabank 3

## Northern Stars – May 2, 2019 (3 of 3)



*Image from The Daughter Tree courtesy of Hot Docs.*

Today is also the final screening of *The Daughter Tree*, directed by Rama Rau and set in the Punjab region of India. More specifically in a village known as the Village of Men. No girls have been born there in more than 20 years. Men who wish to marry have to leave home to find a bride. The main focus of the film is Neelam Bala, described as “a warrior midwife” who works to save unborn baby girls, a more-than-difficult task given the cultural preference for sons. When a girl is born a fruit tree is planted and when she grows up she will have this tree as her own property and can use it to make a living and perhaps have some economic freedom through the sale of the tree’s fruit. A wonderful tale of resilience and determination against long and entrenched odds and cultural traditions.

*The Daughter Tree* screens:

Thur. May 2 at 9:00 p.m. at Hart House Theatre



*Image from Who Let the Dogs Out courtesy of Hot Docs.*

The last Canadian film on the schedule is the only Canadian film screening within Hot Docs’ Nightvision section. These are new films that programmers predict will become future cult classics. Titled *Who Let the Dogs Out*, this 60-minute film from Brent Hodge is a funny take on a famous song. The film tracks artist and curator Ben Sisto who spent 8 years traveling the world trying to find the answer to the song that asked who, who, who, who, who let the dogs out? It’s a fun film and yes, documentaries can be funny. This is the first of three screenings and because of its relatively short length, it screens with two shorts, one from the United States the other from the UK.

*Who Let the Dogs Out* screens:

Thur. May 2 at 9:30 p.m. at the TBLB 1

Fri. May 3 at 6:30 p.m. at the Hart House Theatre

Sun. May 5 at 9:30 at TBLB 2

Don’t forget the DOCX VR installations at [Autodesk in downtown Toronto](#). Find [more information and tickets online](#) at Hot Docs.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/hot-docs-may-2/>

## Hot Docs Picks Two Projects for First Partners Co-Financing Initiative

By [JENNIE PUNTER](#), May 2, 2019



CREDIT: HOT DOCS

[Hot Docs](#) today unveiled the first two documentary projects to receive production support through [Hot Docs Partners](#), its CAN\$2.6 million (\$1.9 million) co-financing initiative that was launched a year ago at the annual festival in Toronto.

The most recent addition to [Hot Docs](#)' CAN\$9 million (\$6.7 million) production fund portfolio, Partners matches a select group of doc-friendly, socially conscious investors with Canadian and international feature-length projects that have key financing already in place, and strong potential to impact audiences in meaningful ways.

Partners is providing co-financing support to "Influence," directed by Richard Poplak and Diana Neille, the journalists who exposed the reputation-management firm Bell Pottinger. An international co-production between South Africa's StoryScope and Chronicle Productions, and Canada's Eyesteelfilm, "Influence" explores the dark art of geopolitical spin-doctoring.

Partners joins Sodec and the Canadian Media Fund to support "We Are Here," directed and written by Ariel Nasr and produced by Loaded Pictures' Sergio Kirby for CBC and Canal D. "We Are Here" examines the community left behind after six worshippers were killed and 19 injured in the Quebec City mosque shooting of 2017.

Hot Docs' industry team draws on its market and festival expertise and deep knowledge of Canadian and international feature documentary projects to evaluate and recommend projects that connect to the expressed interests and investment priorities of the new fund's partners. Toronto's Blue Ice Docs, the fund's anchor investor, has committed to matching investments made by the other partners on a project-by-project basis.

"Partners grew out of several different trends and initiatives that have been evolving over the years," said Hot Docs industry programs director Elizabeth Radshaw. "We all know that documentaries need

to pull together lots of sorts of funding – broadcast licenses, NGOs, distributors, equity funds – to get that budget.”

Citing the Chicago Media Project and Catalyst Sundance, among others, Radshaw said that while equity investment is nothing new in the documentary space, the rise and influence of streamers and all-rights deals has added momentum to the model.

“In the past, ROI was not always there for equity investors, who may have supported a documentary project because of their interest in a particular cause, for example,” she said. “With Amazon, Netflix, and the like making competitive deals and offers to documentaries, equity investors can now be made whole, or maybe even enjoy profit participation.”





## Hnin Ei Hlaing's 'Midwives' Takes Top Prize at Hot Docs Forum

By **JENNIE PUNTER**



CREDIT: JOSEPH HOWARTH/HOT DOCS

TORONTO — Director **Hnin Ei Hlaing**'s "Midwives," which tells the story of two midwives who work side-by-side in a makeshift clinic, has won **Hot Docs**' First Look program's first prize and CAN\$30,000 (\$22,000) cash, it was announced following the close of the **Hot Docs** Forum and Hot Docs Deal Maker events Wednesday afternoon.

"Midwives" was pitched by Hlaing and producers Ulla Lehmann (Germany's AMA Film) and Mila Aung-Thwin (Canada's EyeSteelFilm) at the Forum, the festival's key international cofinancing market event. The Forum celebrated its 20th anniversary this year and saw a total of 21 projects representing 18 countries pitched to more than 300 international broadcasters, streamers, funders, producers and other observers.

"We're thrilled with our 20th anniversary and in awe of the courage expressed by this exceptional group of filmmakers, as well as the generosity of spirit from our decision-makers," said Hot Docs Forum producer Dorota Lech. "We cannot wait to see these projects on the big screen."

More than CAN\$83,000 (\$62,000) in cash prizes was awarded to projects at this year's Forum. First Look, which represents more than half of the prize cash, is a curated access program for philanthropic investors in documentary film.

The First Look's second prize of CAN\$20,000 (US \$15,000) cash was awarded to director Claire Sanford's "Colour of the Wind," about monstrous dust storms that travel from the deserts of China to the shores of California.

The Surprise Prize of CAN\$20,000 (US \$15,000) was awarded to Lin Alluna's "Twice Colonized," which explores the political works and personal battles of Inuit activist Aaju Peter. The film also received the Corus-Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize, a CAN\$10,000 (\$7,400) cash prize awarded to the best Canadian pitch.



## The 2019 Hot Docs Forum report, part two

By Frederick Blichert

May 2, 2019



The 20th edition of the Hot Docs Forum returned Wednesday (May 1) with the final 11 of 21 projects presented to an expert panel. In this second installment of *Realscreen's* comprehensive report on the Forum, we provide a look at the last titles pitched during the two-day event.

Part one of this report can be found [here](#).

Pitched projects included everything from intimate character studies to investigations into the pressing political and environmental challenges facing the world today.

The Forum featured 21 projects pitched over two days, representing 18 countries and presented to a room of over 300 key funders and decision makers, alongside filmmakers, producers and other observers. More than CA\$83,000 was awarded in various cash prizes.

Lin Alluna's *Twice Colonized*, about Inuit activist Aaju Peter, walked away with both the Surprise Prize, presented on behalf of Toronto documentary supporters by [Elizabeth Radshaw](#) and worth CA\$20,000 (US\$14,855), and the Corus-Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize, a CA\$10,000 (US\$7,425) cash prize awarded to the best Canadian pitch at the Forum as voted on by attending international buyers. Meanwhile, the First Look Pitch Prize went to Hnin (Snow) Ei Hlaing's *Midwives*, about two midwives working together against the odds in a makeshift medical clinic. The award came with a CA\$30,000 (US\$22,275) cash prize.

The Cuban Hat Award, made up of on-site donations and selected by Forum attendees, went to *Socks on Fire: Uncle John and the Copper Headed Water Rattlers*, from director Bo McGuire. The collected prize money came to CA\$896.65, US\$135.80, €40.1, 18 Turkish Lira, 5 British Pounds, and 1,000 Chilean Pesos. Hot Docs will add CA\$1,000, bringing the total amount to CA\$2,113.29 (US\$1,571.25). The prize also included two all-access passes to Hot Docs 2020; one Observer Pass for IDFA; two all-access passes to RIDM; \$2,500 CDN in camera rental or post-production services from CineGround in Montreal; a discussion with Terranoa about distribution; \$50, to be emailed by Noah Bingham; a homestay in Copenhagen and two rough cuts and viewings from The Why Foundation; one night homestay, a rough cut session and dinner from EyeSteelFilm; public relations consultation and strategy from GAT PR; one month of production space in Greece from Exile Production; distributor/marketing consultation from Hybrid Cinema; consultation and marketing session from Films Transit; and two free days of videography services from Colin Scheyen, owner of Evenings & Weekends Productions.

Elsewhere, the Mountie's Hat pitch, selected via lottery, was presented by Andrea Conte, whose *Prison TV* will look at the short-lived Canadian cable series *Contact*, which ran during the early '90s, following prison inmates in Kingston. The series was produced by the inmates themselves and was eventually

## Realscreen – May 2, 2019 (2 of 5)

cancelled after airing shocking footage of abuses at a neighboring women's penitentiary. The footage, only shared with one other media outlet, led to a public inquiry and the shutdown of the prison. All projects were eligible for the First Look Pitch Prize, the Corus-Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize, and the Cuban Hat Award.

The full list of projects pitched on day 2 appears below, with some projects and details withheld out of respect for publication restrictions or bans, including *Instant Life*, *Trafficking Jam*, *Midwives*, and *1001 Nights Apart*.

Note that budget figures listed below are expressed in U.S. dollars.

### **INSTANT LIFE**

**Production company:** Meteor Films, Hecho A Mano Films

**Director:** Mark Becker, Aaron Schock

**Logline:** Widow Yolanda Signorelli is battling to rescue her Amazing Live Sea Monkeys, and free them from the dark legacy of her late husband.

The '60s and '70s saw the rise of numerous novelty toys, many created by Harold von Braunhut, who would go on to marry bohemian sexploitation actress Yolanda Signorelli. Together they developed what would become the immensely popular Amazing Live Sea Monkeys. Signorelli licensed the invention after von Braunhut's death, but soon found herself struggling when the royalties stopped rolling in. In investigating the story, however, the creators of *Instant Life* also came across a dark side to von Braunhut's inventive spirit and follow Signorelli as she grapples with her own history.

Commissioners responded generally well to the project, with some questions regarding how to manage such dense and diverse subject matter.

"The production value is really high, especially considering through a bootstrapping, two-person team," said [Noland Walker](#), from ITVS.

### **TWICE COLONIZED**

**Production company:** Ánorâk Film Denmark, Unikkaar Studios, Ánorâk Film Greenland

**Director:** Lin Alluna

**Production budget:** \$656,000

**Still needed:** \$575,620

**Logline:** One of the most important voices in the Indigenous Arctic, Inuit activist Aaju Peter, takes us behind the curtains of her political work, sharing the personal battles that motivate her.

Aaju Peter is an Inuit advocate and activist living in Arctic Canada who has spent decades working to promote Inuit culture and helping reunite Inuit groups separated by colonizers. When her youngest son committed suicide, Peter began to make radical changes in her life, including writing an autobiography, kickstarting a suicide prevention initiative in Nunavut, beginning a PhD in Inuit traditional law and filing a complaint against the EU at the human rights tribunal on behalf of Inuit people worldwide. *Twice Colonized* tells her story and explores whether it's possible to mend your own wounds while tending to those of the world.

"I first saw Aaju Peter about four years ago in the streets of Copenhagen, and I was immediately captivated by her, so I invited her for a cup of coffee, and only then did I realize that I wasn't just talking to anybody. Aaju Peter is a lawyer, recipient of the Order of Canada and fighter for advocacy of Inuit rights," said director Lin Alluna in her pitch.

With financing already in place from a variety of sources – including Ánorâk Film, Nordic Culture Point, Danish Film Institute, Doxion (private investment), FAF (Film Workers Guild), Nordisk Film & TV-Fond, Danish Director's Guild, Danish Art Council and KNR (Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation) — the film is still seeking the bulk of its total budget. All rights outside of Greenland are currently available.

“The challenge for my audience is how to make this universal,” said [Mandy Chang](#), from BBC ‘Storyville’. Her comment was echoed by other commissioners, while most saw the potential in a story about overlapping colonialism, including for Canadian and American audiences.

“All of the Americas were founded on colonization and subjugation, and now we have to live with that,” said Walker.

### **DISAPPEARING VILLAGE**

**Production company:** Sweet Take Studio, Twofour Group Ltd.

**Director:** Megumi Inman

**Production budget:** \$266,754

**Still needed:** \$232, 204

**Logline:** An old Japanese Village is on the brink of extinction. Can the nation’s sacred drink, saké, save it from disappearing?

When a once-thriving rice farming village in the mountains of northern Japan faces its own slow demise, Yusuke, the country’s most popular saké maker, steps in, hoping to transform the village, Uyashinain, into a saké utopia and thereby giving it the chance to get back on its feet.

A small portion of total financing has been secured through The Whickers, BBC ‘Storyville’, Tokyo Docs, Daiwa Foundation and Great Saskawa Foundation.

“We really like to get international stories, and with the hook of the [upcoming Tokyo] Olympics, there’s going to be so much more interest,” said Kathleen Lingo from *The New York Times*.

### **TRAFFICKING JAM**

**Production company:** Media Stockade Pty. Ltd.

**Director:** Catherine Scott

**Production budget:** \$767,000

**Still needed:** \$629,000

**Logline:** Sex trafficking has inspired a billion-dollar charity industry around the world — but are they making it better or worse for the people they are trying to save?

### **LIGHT DARKNESS LIGHT**

**Production company:** The Documentary Group, Transient Pictures LLC

**Director:** Landon Van Soest

**Production budget:** \$1,150,306

**Still needed:** \$515,306

**Logline:** Ian Nichols, a blind Anglican priest, becomes one of the first people in the world to attempt sight with an implanted bionic eye.

Ian Nichols is a 72-year-old Anglican priest who has been blind for 35 years. *Light Darkness Light* follows Nichols as he becomes one of the first ever recipients of a bionic eye implant that simulates sight. In doing so, the film investigates the nature of perception, faith, memory and the relationship between technology and the human body. It also offers a glimpse into Nichols’s experience trying to reconcile his memories of sight and the uncanny simulated images now before him.

“Despite protests from his family and from many in his community, Ian was seduced by this hope of seeing again, and he stepped into the unknown on a personal odyssey that rivals the best in sciencefiction,” said director Landon Van Soest during his pitch, stressing the fact that this is more than a matter of choosing to see again. The story is tied to debates within the blind community and questions of what it actually means to “see.”

*Light Darkness Light* has already secured a little over half its total budget, with financing from RYOT Films and Transient Pictures. All rights are available.

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“You managed to combine different levels of this, in the best sense, sentimental journey with this strong character,” said [Michael Gries](#) at ZDF, who expressed an interest in the film despite usually avoiding character-driven science subjects.

### **MIDWIVES**

**Production company:** EyeSteelFilm Inc., AMA Film

**Director:** Hnin (Snow) Ei Hlaing

**Logline:** The incredible story of two midwives working side by side in a makeshift medical clinic.

### **THE KUNG FU NUNS**

**Production company:** Stray Dog productions

**Director:** Line Hatland

**Production budget:** \$651,000

**Still needed:** \$513,300

**Logline:** The Kung Fu nuns cross the Himalayan mountains on a holy quest to empower females to fight for equality.

The Buddhist nuns at the Druk Gawa Khilva Monastery have practiced kung fu for years as part of their spiritual practice while training the young girls of the monastery in self defense. *The Kung Fu Nuns* tells their story partly by chronicling the arrival of two young girls to the monastery, abandoned there by their parents to become nuns.

The film has already secured some of its budget with financing from the Norwegian Film Institute, Stray Dog Productions and Free Speech Organization. All rights are available.

The commissioners generally agreed the film’s core message of female empowerment was a huge selling point, tapping into universally resonant themes of gender equality.

Margje De Koning from Ikon Docs was intrigued at the film’s subject matter, stressing that it would need to explore the children’s backgrounds and what brought them to the monastery.

### **MISSION SEX-ED**

**Production company:** Tondowski Films, BWP

**Director:** Ira Tondowski

**Production budget:** \$785,000

**Still needed:** \$603,000

**Logline:** *Mission Sex-Ed* takes a revealing and irreverent look at sex educators and uncovers the political dimension of sex education in the age of digital apps, pansexuality, unlimited consumerism, voyeurism and the #MeToo movement.

The world is full of self-professed sex educators, from advertizers to Hollywood to the porn industry, making it clearer than ever that comprehensive, informed sex education is a vital human right. That is the premise behind *Mission Sex-Ed*, which explores various progressive approaches to teaching young people about their bodies and sexuality.

“Sex education is a basic human right,” said producer Alex Tondowski, during the pitch. “Modern sex ed is a basic asset for our democracy. It teaches us self awareness, addresses our needs, our desires, it enables us to be clear about our yeses and our nos, and it teaches tolerance and respect, and clarifies where sex ends and love begins.”

With some financing from WDR, Create Europe Slate Funding, ICEC and Tondowski Films, *Mission Sex-Ed* is still seeking the bulk of its total budget.

“Tencent would like to support this project, and, if you want, we would like to show it in China,” said Tencent’s Summer Song, speaking to the film’s relevance to its younger-skewing demographics.

Other commissioners stressed the universality of the topic, with debates over sex education flaring up across the globe.

### **COLOUR OF THE WIND**

**Production company:** Tortuga Films Inc., Mouka Filmi Oy, Alias Film and Sprachtransfer GmbH

**Director:** [Adam Pajot Gendron](#), Dagmar Jacobsen, Claire Sanford

**Production budget:** \$725,660

**Still needed:** \$511,814

**Logline:** *Colour of the Wind* is a cinematic portrait of monstrous dust storms that travel from the deserts of China to the shores of California, and the people in their path.

Dust is an ever-present part of life for those living nearest to Western China's deserts. While the dust presents a daunting threat some days, it's barely perceptible at other times. The film looks at the enormity of desert dust's reach across landscapes and through communities.

*Colour of the Wind* is about a quarter of the way to its total budget, with some financing already committed by provincial and federal Canadian tax credits, Catapult Film Fund, YLE, SODEC, TVO, Deckert Distribution GmbH and Point North Institute.

"The thing that really attracted me to this project is...there can be such fatigue around climate change stories, and we're always looking for ways to keep that discussion alive, because it's an important discussion to have, so to think about dust and wind and the interconnectedness of our ecologies around the world — because even if you're not affected by this dust, you might be affected by the Sierra Desert or another desert someplace else in the world — and I thought it was an interesting way to look at deforestation and climate change coming at it a bit sideways," said [Jane Jankovic](#) from TVO, which has already committed seed funding for the project.

Her point was echoed by most other commissioners, though some also showed doubts about dust as a main character over a central human protagonist.

### **1001 NIGHTS APART**

**Production company:** Filmpunkt GmbH, Rabison Art Production, Louise Rosen Ltd., Century Films Ltd.

**Director:** Sarvnaz Alambeigi

**Production budget:** \$326,141

**Still needed:** \$276,641

**Logline:** A portrait of a nation illustrated by two separate generations of Iranian dancers, and inspired by the tale of Scheherazade.

Iranian dancers, inspired by the story of Scheherazade in *1001 Nights*, *The Tale of Scheherazade*, use their art to reconnect to a national history following the events of the revolution of 1979.

This project has already accumulated some financing from various sources — Louise Rosen Ltd., Rabison Art Production, Filmpunkt GmbH and Century Films Ltd. — but still needs to raise most of its total budget.

## Hot Docs Partners unveils “Influence”, “We Are Here” as first funding recipients

By [Daniele Alcinii](#), May 2, 2019



Canadian festival Hot Docs has unveiled the inaugural projects to receive co-financing through the Hot Docs Partners initiative.

The CA\$2.6 million financing initiative, [launched last May](#), is aimed at connecting investors with Canadian and international feature-length documentary productions seeking financing.

The first projects to receive financing from the nascent initiative include Richard Poplak and Diana Neille's *Influence* (pictured) and [Ariel Nasr](#)'s *We Are Here*.

Produced by Canada's EyeSteelFilm and South Africa's Fireworx Media and Chronicle Productions, *Influence* serves as an investigative film that peels the curtain back on the architects behind the “democracy industrial complex” and geopolitical spin-doctoring.

*We Are Here*, meanwhile, is a CBC and Canal D documentary from Canada's Loaded Pictures. The film, produced by [Sergeo Kirby](#), explores the aftereffects of the 2017 Quebec City mosque mass shooting on the local community. Six worshippers were killed and 19 others injured when a man opened fire shortly after the mosque had ended evening prayers. The film is also supported by Quebec government agency SODEC and the Canada Media Fund.

Toronto's Blue Ice Docs, the lead investor, has pledged to match investments made by other partners on a project-by-project basis.

The Hot Docs' industry team, led by industry programs director [Elizabeth Radshaw](#), recommends projects to Hot Docs Partners financiers based on their specific investment priorities. Hot Docs then works with filmmakers to support successful film completion, release and distribution.



CBC, q – May 3, 2019

## Alien at 40: The true story behind the film's iconic chestburster scene

CBC Radio · Posted: May 03, 2019 9:05 AM ET | Last Updated: May 3



Ridley Scott's 1979 sci-fi horror film *Alien* turns 40 this year. (20th Century Fox)

Forty years ago, a sci-fi horror film came along that set a new bar for the genre — Ridley Scott's 1979 classic *Alien*.

To mark the film's anniversary this year, filmmaker Alexandre Philippe has made a documentary called *Memory: The Origins of Alien*. He joined us for a deep dive into one of the most terrifying movie deaths in history, which has become a hallmark of the *Alien* franchise.

*Memory: The Origins of Alien* is screening now at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto.

— Produced by Vanessa Nigro

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/alien-at-40-the-true-story-behind-the-film-s-iconic-chestburster-scene-1.5120447>

## Willie O'Ree doc shows the racism he faced that still exists in hockey



Willie O'Ree, poses for a photo during an interview in Toronto on Wednesday, May 1, 2019. It's been 60 years since Willie O'Ree broke the National Hockey League's colour barrier and he still hears racial remarks in the rink.

*Tijana Martin / THE CANADIAN PRESS*

### [THE CANADIAN PRESS](#)

VICTORIA AHEARN, May 2, 2019

TORONTO — It's been 60 years since Willie O'Ree broke the National Hockey League's colour barrier and he still hears racial remarks in the rink.

As the new documentary "Willie" shows, the Fredericton native who became the first black hockey player in the NHL is still working hard to foster diversity in sports and help young players overcome obstacles and hatred.

"I still go to the games and I watch and still see racial remarks and slurs directed to the players and I just shake my head," the 83-year-old said in an interview in Toronto, where the film is screening at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

"I still just can't believe it. When I played, there were only six teams in the National Hockey League — there were two from Canada and four from the United States — and there was the prejudice there. But now we have 31 teams and more players that are playing now and I just can't believe what's going on.

"It's not going to end overnight. It's going to take still a long time to overcome the racial problems that we have in hockey."

Directed by Montreal-raised Laurence Mathieu-Leger, "Willie" shows just how fiercely determined O'Ree was to play professional hockey and skate in the NHL — goals he set at age 14.

Growing up in Fredericton, the youngest of 13 children, he would sleep overnight at the skating arena so he could get on the ice first thing the next morning.

The gifted athlete excelled at many sports and was even scouted by agents for the Milwaukee Braves minor-league baseball training camp in Atlanta, where he witnessed the segregation of the American South for the first time. While there, he had to use the "coloured only" rest room, sleep in a dorm with other players of colour, and stay at the back of the bus on the ride home, he recalled.

## The National Post – May 2, 2019 (2 of 2)

“When I stepped off the bus, I said, ‘Willie, forget about baseball and concentrate on hockey.’”

But racism also followed O’Ree in hockey and as he rose in the ranks of the sport, he faced another major hurdle: A puck ricocheted off a stick on the ice and hit his face, breaking his nose, part of his cheek and shattering the retina in his right eye.

He ended up blind in that eye but kept it a secret from everyone except his younger sister, who didn’t tell anyone, just so he could keep playing. Five to six weeks later, he was back on the ice.

Hockey great Wayne Gretzky is among those in the doc who speak about how remarkable O’Ree was for persevering through it all and eventually making his NHL debut with the Boston Bruins on Jan. 18, 1958.

“Besides being black and being blind, I was faced with four other things: racism, prejudice, bigotry and ignorance,” O’Ree said, noting he faced racial slurs in practically every game he played.

“But my older brother told me, ‘Willie, names will never hurt you unless you let them.’”

The doc also shows O’Ree tracing the history of his ancestors, one of whom escaped slavery in the South.

O’Ree retired from professional hockey in 1980.

These days he is an ambassador for the NHL’s Hockey is for Everyone program, which pushes for “a safe, positive and inclusive environment for players and families.” The doc shows him mentoring young players, some of whom have encountered racism on the ice.

“I’ve come into contact with numerous boys and girls and helped them to overcome some of the racial slurs and racial remarks that have been directed towards them,” O’Ree said.

“I mean 10, 11, 12, 13-year-old boys and girls coming off the ice because of racial remarks and I just can’t understand it. It really hurts me to know that these boys and girls are still faced with it at this day and age.”

As the film shows, O’Ree is also now a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame, after being inducted last November.

“You can do anything you set your mind to do, if you feel it within your heart and within your mind,” he said.

Mathieu-Leger said the film was “an opportunity to shed light on his incredible story and inspire people and also to make them remember.”

“You need to remember what people fought for and that we can’t just say whatever we want,” she said.

“We live in contentious times politically and there’s been this new comfort to say whatever you want about anyone, and people fought really hard to be respected, all marginalized groups. So Willie’s story I think invites everyone in and helps everyone to feel compassion.”

<https://nationalpost.com/pmnn/entertainment-pmn/willie-oree-doc-shows-the-racism-he-faced-that-still-exists-in-hockey>

## The Israeli Attorney Who Defends Palestinian Terrorists

By: Michael Fraiman, May 2, 2019



A still from *Advocate*. (GAT PR photo)

Most Canadians don't know the name Lea Tsemel, but tens of thousands of Palestinians do. The Israeli attorney has spent five decades defending them in court, usually on terrorism charges, almost always failing to win over judges and juries.

"We always lose," she says in *Advocate*, a new documentary about her that premiered in Canada at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto in late April. "For us, a victory is if we get a deduction of a year out of five."

That constant failure has not diminished her optimism, however, and that attitude has rocketed her to fame in left-wing Israeli circles.

For the last 19 years, one of her admirers has been Rachel Leah Jones, who moved to the Holy Land with her mom when she was five. Jones first heard about Tsemel when she was in her early 20s, around the time of the Second Intifada. The more she learned about the conflict, the more she sympathized with the Palestinians. She quickly sought out Tsemel personally and has remained close with her ever since.

"She modelled for me an alternative way of being Israeli," Jones says during a recent visit to Toronto. Tsemel was confident, argumentative and informal – a typical Israeli in every way, except for her political alignment, which has made her a widely hated figure in her own country.

Jones didn't befriend Tsemel with the idea of documenting her career on film. That didn't come up until Jones met her filmmaking and life partner, Phillipe Bellaiche, who immediately saw the potential for a feature-length documentary.

At the beginning of the process, Jones and Bellaiche agreed to make a retrospective film that would recall Tsemel's more influential cases, such as her 1999 Supreme Court victory that limited the use of torture in Israeli interrogations.

But then a wave of stabbings overwhelmed Israel in late 2015 and a flood of new cases fell onto Tsemel's desk. In real time, the crew realized they were documenting an urgent, current story.

## Canadian Jewish News – May 2, 2019 (2 of 2)

The result is a film that hinges on one infamous case, wherein a 13-year-old Palestinian boy was involved in the death of a 13-year-old Israeli boy. He didn't actually commit the murder – his friend did – and he remained adamant, throughout every police interrogation, that he did not intend to kill the Israeli boy, just frighten him.

The case became a media sensation in Israel – partly because of the boys' age and partly because of Tsemel's difficult defence options. If they pled guilty, he would possibly be sentenced as a minor and sent to a juvenile detention centre. But his birthday was months away and if they dragged out the trial – arguing what they knew was the truth, that he did not intend to kill – then he could be tried as a legal adult and face years in an adult prison. (In Israel, 14 is the legal limit for being tried as an adult.)

"Intuition told us this was gonna be the case we were gonna follow, among other reasons, because you could see that Leah was visibly stirred," Jones says.

Because of Israel's privacy laws, Jones and Bellaiche had to film the action from the courthouse hallways, lending an atmosphere to the film that emphasized humanity over legal procedures. To that end, when they learned they were legally required to disguise the face of the accused boy, they decided to render his scenes in cel-shaded animation, rather than blurring out his face.

"I always try to see the person behind the case," Jones says. "Whether people are, in our minds, protagonists or antagonists, they're still people."

Tsemel does the same in her career: rather than writing individuals off as statistics or terrorists, she strives to understand their circumstances and motivations.

"She knows that it is with those people who have been incarcerated and criminalized en masse with whom Israelis will have to share their futures, one way or another," says Jones.

*Advocate* is playing as part of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on Sunday, May 5 at 6:15pm at the Isabel Bader theatre. To purchase tickets, click [here](https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/china-s-one-child-policy-was-enforced-through-abortion-and-sterilization-says-documentary-director-1.5118738).

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/china-s-one-child-policy-was-enforced-through-abortion-and-sterilization-says-documentary-director-1.5118738>

## China's one-child policy was enforced through abortion and sterilization, says documentary director

Chinese documentary directors say they were shocked by details they uncovered

CBC Radio · Posted: May 02, 2019 3:08 PM ET | Last Updated: May 2



*Director Nanfu Wang as a young girl, with her mother and father. She grew up under China's one-child policy, and has co-directed a new documentary about how it was enforced. (Submitted by Hot Docs)*

As a young girl, film director Nanfu Wang remembers her mother going into labour with her second child — and her grandmother placing a basket outside the bedroom door.

"She announced if it's a girl ... she's going to put the baby girl in the basket, and then take it out and abandon the baby on the streets," said Wang, who grew up in a small farming village in Jiangxi province, China.

"Luckily my mom gave birth to a boy, so instead of taking the baby to the streets, they celebrated with firecrackers."

Her grandmother's actions were prompted by China's one-child policy, enacted in 1979 as a form of population growth. Intended to stop a repeat of the starvation of previous decades, the policy eventually resulted in [a large gender imbalance](#), due to a traditional preference for sons, and the abandonment of baby girls. For decades, the policy was enforced through fines, economic incentives and propaganda. It was [replaced with a two-child policy in 2015](#).

Wang got her brother because of an allowance in the policy. Because she was a girl, officials let her family pay a fine and then wait five years to try for another baby, this time hoping for a boy.

She told [The Current's](#) Anna Maria Tremonti that was why the stakes were so high for her grandmother, and why she would consider abandoning a girl in the hopes of being allowed to try again.

"I always think I was grateful that I was the first one," Wang said. "If I were the second one, I don't know what would have happened to me."



## CBC, The Current – May 2, 2019 (2 of 4)

The policy is the subject of *One Child Nation*, a new documentary that Wang has co-directed with Jialing Zhang.



*Filmmakers Nanfu Wang and Jialing Zhang have co-directed One Child Nation, a documentary about the far eastern country's controversial policy. (Submitted by Hot Docs)*

Even though Wang and Zhang were born and grew up in China, they said they were shocked to learn of the violence with which the policy was enforced.

Wang said that women who already had children were sometimes forced to undergo abortions for subsequent pregnancies, administered by officials who felt they were performing their duty to uphold the policy. Sterilizations were performed in the same way.

"We thought we knew what the one-child policy meant ... and we were wrong," she said.

### **Midwife performed thousands of abortions**

Wang returned to her home village to make the film, where she met with the midwife, now 84 years old, who had delivered Wang herself.

"I asked her: 'Hey, do you remember how many babies you delivered throughout your career?'" Wang said.

"And she said: 'I don't have the number of deliveries, but I do remember I did 50,000 to 60,000 abortions, and I counted that because I felt guilty.'"

Wang told Tremonti that these forced abortions could happen late because women were trying to hide their pregnancies from officials.

"[The midwife] told me that sometimes a late-term baby would be born alive, and she would have to kill the baby after delivering it," Wang said.

"She told me how her hands would tremble when she did that."

Most people said I don't have a choice, this is my job, this is for the greater good ... they felt that they had no choice whether to allow a baby to be alive or dead. - *Nanfu Wang*

Wang's co-director Zhang said that the midwife now feels guilt about what happened, but at the time felt that she was performing her duty.

"She performed ... five or six [abortions] a day at least, over 25 years, and nobody really forced her to do that," she said.

"But her primary identity is a loyal communist party member, and she [would] fulfil her duty before she [would] quit."

Wang said that outlook was common among many of the officials and people who live through the policy.



*China's one-child policy was introduced in 1979. (Kim Kyung-Hoon/Reuters)*

"Most people said I don't have a choice, this is my job, this is for the greater good, there was nothing we could do," she said.

"They felt that they had no choice whether to allow a baby to be alive or dead."

She argued that "when you live in China you were not encouraged to make your own life decisions ... you were taught what to do."

"Over time one would lose the ability to think for themselves," she said.

### **Forced sterilizations, demolished homes**

Wang said that after a woman had a child, sterilization was a common method to ensure the one-child policy was upheld. There was particular resistance to this in rural areas, where sons were desired to work on the farmland, and eventually inherit it.

If sterilization was refused, Wang said that women were sometimes forced. If they went into hiding she said officials would bulldoze homes and arrest family members until the women came forward.

In Wang's community, those sterilizations fell to the local midwife who she interviewed for the film. But Wang said that after decades of performing these procedures, the midwife couldn't do it any longer.



*Newborn babies wait to be bathed at a hospital in east China's Shandong province, in January 2012. (Associated Press)*

"Nowadays she exclusively treats infertility disorders," she said.

"She hoped by helping families having babies, she can counteract what she did in the past, and to basically atone her sin."

When Wang visited her, the walls of the midwife's home were adorned with pieces of paper expressing gratitude from people she has helped to conceive, each one showing a picture of a newborn baby.

At first, Wang found it hard to understand "how she could live in a space like that, and be reminded every day visually of what she had done in the past, and what she is suffering from."

"It was that moment I realized that she too is just like everybody, every woman she aborted. She was a victim as well."

**Click 'listen' near the top of this page to hear the full conversation.**

*Written by Pdraig Moran. Produced by Julie Crysler.*

## Hot Docs Partners backs We Are Here, Influence

The initiative was launched last May to connect investors with feature-length doc productions seeking financing.

By Daniele Alcinii, May 2, 2019



Docs has unveiled the inaugural projects to receive co-financing through the Hot Docs Partners initiative.

The \$2.6 million financing initiative, [launched last May](#), is aimed at connecting investors with Canadian and international feature-length documentary productions seeking financing.

The first projects to receive financing from the nascent initiative include Richard Poplak and Diana Neille's *Influence* (pictured) and Ariel Nasr's *We Are Here*.

Produced by Eyesteelfilm and South Africa's Fireworx Media and Chronicle Productions, *Influence* serves as an investigative film that peels the curtain back on the architects behind the "democracy industrial complex" and geopolitical spin-doctoring.

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Toronto's Blue Ice Docs, the lead investor, has pledged to match investments made by other partners on a project-by-project basis.

The Hot Docs' industry team, led by industry programs director [Elizabeth Radshaw](#), recommends projects to Hot Docs Partners financiers based on their specific investment priorities. Hot Docs then works with filmmakers to support successful film completion, release and distribution.

*From Realscreen*

<http://playbackonline.ca/2019/05/02/hot-docs-partners-unveils-influence-we-are-here-as-first-funding-recipients/>

## Stanley Nelson on his new Miles Davis doc and the jazz musician's complicated legacy

CBC Radio • Posted: May 02, 2019 9:05 AM ET | Last Updated: May 2



*Jazz trumpeter Miles Davis, June 1956. (Don Hunstein/Sony Music Archives)*

Legendary jazz trumpeter Miles Davis was an incredible musician whose recording career spanned six decades. At every turn, he was reimagining his sound and through it all, fans and critics described his music as pure, elegant and even romantic.

But Davis also had his demons. He could come across cold or cruel, he lived with drug and alcohol addiction, and he was known to be violent with his partners.



Director Stanley Nelson with host Tom Power in the q studio in Toronto, Ont. (Vivian Rashotte/CBC)

A new documentary by acclaimed filmmaker Stanley Nelson takes a close look at all of this. It's called *Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool*.

Just ahead of the film's international premiere at Toronto's Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, Nelson dropped by the q studio to give us a peek into the life of this talented and complex musician.

You can catch *Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool* at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival before the festival wraps this Sunday.

*Click 'listen' near the top of this page to hear the full conversation.*

— Produced by Ben Edwards

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/stanley-nelson-on-his-new-miles-davis-doc-and-the-jazz-musician-s-complicated-legacy-1.5118727>

## ‘Midwives’, ‘Colour of the Wind’ Lead Hot Docs Forum Winners

Posted on May 2nd, 2019



Hot Docs Forum 2019

Photo by Joseph Michael Photography

By Pat Mullen

Over \$83,000 was awarded to doc projects at this year's Hot Docs Forum. The festival announced the winners of the Forum pitches late last night.

*Midwives*, pitched by director Hnin (aka Snow) Ei Hlaing and producers Ulla Lehmann and Mila Aung-Thwin, took first prize in the *first look* program and received \$30,000 in support. *Midwives* tells the incredible story of two midwives who work side by side in a makeshift medical clinic. The doc is a co-production between Canada's EyeSteelFilm and Germany's AMA FILM GmbH and Myanmar's Snow Film. EyeSteelFilm also [received support from the Hot Docs Partners initiative](#) for the film *Influence*.

The runner-up for the *first look prize* is *Colour of the Wind*, which was pitched by director Claire Sanford, producer Adam Pajot Gendron and co-producer Dagmar Jacobsen. The film receives \$20,000 in support. *Colour of the Wind* is a cinematic portrait of monstrous dust storms that travel from the deserts of China to the shores of California, and the people in their path. The doc is also a Canadian co-production with Canada's Tortuga Films, Germany's Alias film und sprachtransfer GmbH, and Finland's Mouka Filmi Oy producing. The *first look* fund is a curated program that allows documentary supporters and investors to vote on the top pitches.

\$20,000 in support also went with the "Surprise Prize" to *Twice Colonized*. The project was pitched by director Lin Alluna and producers Alethea Arnaquq-Baril and Emile Hertling Péronard. The film reveals one of the most important voices of the Indigenous Arctic, Inuit activist Aaju Peter, who takes us behind the curtains of her political work, sharing the personal battles that motivate her. Peter previously inspired audiences as a key subject in Arnaquq-Baril's [Angry Inuk](#), which won the Audience Award at Hot Docs 2016. The doc is a co-production between Greenland's Ánorâk Film, Denmark's Ánorâk Film Denmark, and Canada's Unikkaat Studios. The "Surprise Prize" was presented on behalf of Toronto documentary supporters by Elizabeth Radshaw. *Twice Colonized* also



## POV Magazine – May 2, 2019 (2 of 2)

received \$10,000 from the Corus-Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize, which awards the best Canadian pitch as voted on by international attendees of the Forum.

The Promise Prize, a new addition to this year's Forum, went to Jade Baxter, who receives \$1000 in support. The Promise Prize awarded to a current Doc Accelerator or CrossCurrents Canada fellow who is a racialized emerging Canadian filmmaker who is recognized for their creative voice and commitment to building relationships. Baxter is a member of the Nlaka'pamux Nation from Skuppah.

The Forum's most idiosyncratic award, the Cuban Hat Award, went to *Socks on Fire: Uncle John and the Copper Headed Water Rattlers*. The American project was pitched by director Bo McGuire and producer Tatiana Bears and offers a cinematic love letter from a poet to his grandmother while a war over her estate wages on between his aunt and drag queen uncle. The Cuban Hat Award is a "pass the hat" style prize in which Forum attendees chip in. This year's cash prize offered \$896.65 CDN, \$135.80 USD, €40.1, 18 Turkish Lira, 5 British Pounds, and 1,000 Chilean Pesos, which amounts to \$1154.70 CDN based on today's exchange rate. Hot Docs will contribute an additional \$1000 CDN. This year's hat offerings also include two TTC tokens (collector's items!) and a tin of unwanted ginger mints in addition to two All-Access Passes to Hot Docs 2020; one Observer Pass for IDFA; two All-Access Passes to RIDM and several offers of production, post-production, and professional services. The Cuban Hat Award is voted on by Forum attendees.

Forum Prizes were awarded to projects pitched from a pool of 21 teams that presented their films to a room of over 300 leaders, funders, and decision makers from the documentary field.

## Hot Docs Partners Supports ‘Influence’ and ‘We Are Here’

Posted on May 2nd, 2019



*In a scene from **We Are Here**, Boufeldja Benabdalla addresses the media following the sentencing of the Quebec City Mosque gunman. Also present is Aymen Derbali (bottom right), a survivor of the attack.*

CBC News

By Pat Mullen

Hot Docs announced the first two film projects to receive support from the new Hot Docs Partners initiative. The festival announced today that the first recipients of the \$2.6-million fund are *Influence*, directed by Richard Poplak and Diana Neille, and *We Are Here*, directed and written by Ariel Nasr and produced by [Sergeo Kirby](#).

*Influence* takes an expansive journalistic inquiry into the practice of geopolitical spin-doctoring as Poplak and Neille interrogate the “democracy industrial complex.” The doc is a Canadian-South African co-production between Canada’s EyeSteelFilm and South Africa’s Fireworx Media and Chronicle Productions. The film participated in last year’s Hot Docs Forum under the working title *Agents of Influence* and is a timely investigation into the parties who constructed the foundation for the era of “alternative facts,” “fake news,” and “post-truth” messaging.



*Lord Tim Bell, founder of Bell Pottinger, in a still from **Influence**.  
Photo from the production*

*We Are Here* gives voice to the community devastated by the mosque shooting in Quebec City on January 29, 2017. Nasr, who previously directed the 2012 Hot Docs selection and Canadian Screen Award winner *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*, also participated in Hot Docs’ original production [In the Name of All Canadians](#) with a short that also spotlighted the stories of Muslim Canadians. Kirby has produced documentaries such as [Shiners](#) (2018) and *H2Oil* (2009), and directed the 2006 documentary *Wal-Town The Film*. *We Are Here* is a CBC and Canal D documentary made with support by Hot Docs Partners and SODEC and the Canadian Media Fund.

The Hot Docs Partners initiative launched at last year’s festival and offers a competitive opportunity to connect Canadian and international feature documentaries with investors. The initiative is led by industry programs director Elizabeth Radshaw and draws upon Hot Docs’ extensive industry network in a matchmaking exercise. Hot Docs Partners works with the supported projects through all stages of production through distribution.

<http://povmagazine.com/blog/view/hot-docs-partners-supports-influence-and-we-are-here>

## ‘Maxima’ Regains Lead in Hot Docs Audience Award Race

Posted on May 2nd, 2019



### *Maxima*

By Pat Mullen

*Maxima* is back on top! For the first time since the festival began, a film is enjoying a second day in the lead for the Hot Docs Audience Award race. After being number one on April 29 and then falling shortly thereafter, Claudia Sparrow's film about Peruvian subsistence farmer Máxima Acuña regained the lead in today's update. It's interesting to see how things are playing out for *Maxima*, which hasn't screened since it hit the top spot and instead has seen other contenders fluctuate around it as the festival's gone on. The film has its third screening on Sunday afternoon, so the final results will be a nail-biter. The film was in third place in yesterday's standings.

Shake-ups continue as yesterday's fan favourite *Butterfly* dropped off the chart entirely despite a well-attended screening that seemed to go over well with the crowd. Yesterday's runner-up *Dear Brother* also saw a big drop, going from second to second last in the top 20, while titles shuffled in the Canadian race with *Prey* taking the lead over *Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery* and *Willie* moving on up to the Canuck's runner-up spot and third overall. *Our Dance of Revolution* and *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* round out the top five for Canadian titles.

The online voting certainly keeps the race exciting! The top 20 features in the race for the Hot Docs Audience Award are:

1. *Maxima*
2. [Prey](#)
3. [Willie](#)
4. [Shella Record – A Reggae Mystery](#)
5. Ask Dr. Ruth
6. [Our Dance of Revolution](#)
7. Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project
8. [For Sama](#)
9. [Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind](#)
10. [There Are No Fakes](#)
11. [The Wandering Chef](#)
12. [Killing Patient Zero](#)
13. Last Breath
14. [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#)
15. [Kifaru](#)
16. [Knock Down the House](#)
17. Seahorse
18. Beyond the Visible – Hilma af Klint
19. Dear Brother
20. Sea of Shadows

## Hot Docs Film Review: 'On the President's Orders'

James Jones and Olivier Sarbil's docu-thriller heads chillingly into the frontline of Filipino president Rodrigo Duterte's corrupt drug war.

By [GUY LODGE](#)



CREDIT: COURTESY OF PBS DISTRIBUTION

Director: James Jones, Olivier Sarbil

1 hour 11 minutes

Official Site: <http://www.onthepresidentsorders.com>

The war on drugs has never taken more literal form than under the command of Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte, who rose to power on a pledge to rid the country of dealers and addicts alike — and delivered on his promise in the bloodiest fashion possible, with police summarily executing thousands of people over an 18-month period. A real-life atrocity ordered by a cartoon dictator, it would, if not grimly factual, feel like the stuff of grotesque dystopian fiction. In their kinetic, pavement-pounding doc “On the President’s Orders,” filmmakers [James Jones](#) and [Olivier Sarbil](#) play up to that sense of deranged reality as they hit the streets to observe Duterte’s murderous campaign in action: The result, shot and cut with buzzing urgency, plays as a propulsive dirty-cop thriller minus any genre safety nets.

Though “On the President’s Orders” will probably find the bulk of its audience when it arrives on television and streaming platforms — Frontline and the BBC’s international documentary label Storyville are producing partners — it’s a wholly cinematic, sensory experience, with straight-ahead reportage electrified by glaring streetlights and a panicked urban wall of sound. It would make a handsome companion piece to Filipino auteur Brillante Mendoza’s recent “Alpha, the Right to Kill,” a fictionalised Duterte-era action film that aimed for grainy docu-realism as much as Jones and Sarbil’s film trades in more sleekly immersive atmospherics.

That polish comes at no cost to the film’s political ire, as Duterte’s kill fetish is presented as an extreme manifestation of the right-wing populism that has swept such improbable world leaders as Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro to power. We are reminded that Trump himself has heartily endorsed Duterte’s drug-war tactics, while the Filipino president has admitted to not “[giving] a sh-t” about human rights in this matter. Political analysis, however, is not the objective; Jones and Sarbil would rather show the hands-on, sidewalk-level consequences of his policy.

## Variety – May 2, 2019 (2 of 2)

Central to the film's narrative is Jemar Modequillo, the police chief appointed to clean up the vast, troubled Manila district of Caloocan in 2017 — after the scale of extra-judicial deaths in the first year of Duterte's campaign attracted a public outcry. Promises are made to temper the situation; initially, Modequillo appears to be a more humane face of the law, even if his public statements ("If we can resolve things without the death penalty, why not?") are less than emphatic. If the body count seems to drop for a period, alarm bells ring when victims with drug-trade affiliations start turning up dead in murkier circumstances.

The war has simply gone underground, with police (dehumanized in grueling training rituals to which the film also remarkably gains access) running brutal death squads. Ruthless nighttime raids are followed by celebratory karaoke gatherings; it's a living, and the filmmakers are somehow witnesses to all of it. On the flip side, the film follows the growing awareness of this corruption among civilians, most affectingly via the arc of young siblings Axel and Fujiko, whose father, one of many on the police's watch list, is shot dead in broad daylight. Axel is certain Modequillo's forces are responsible; the building resistance from a restless public to callous authorities amplifies the film's brittle, snappish tension. ("Maybe you're the one who's killing here," says a cop to a boy wearing a bluntly worded "Do Not Kill" T-shirt.)

Production values here are so dazzlingly high that, for entire sequences at a time, riveted viewers may forget to wonder just how Jones and Sarbil managed to force a camera into the fray. Sarbil, a gifted cameraman who won a cinematography Emmy for his and Jones's 2017 Frontline episode on Mosul, shoots the nighttime raids with a hot, athletic immediacy that the aforementioned Mendoza (or even Michael Mann) would covet in a fictional context; bodies are silhouetted in the glare of emergency lights, though amid the shadows, we also get close-up glimmers of strained faces on all sides of the law. The idea here is not to aestheticize a human rights crisis, but to show the absurd movie-logic shoot-'em-up that Duterte has allowed the Philippines to become, right down to the "Fury Road"-style death's-head masks worn by the executors. Populist politics can turn all too easily to popcorn ones; "On the President's Orders" vividly captures the tipping point.

Hot Docs Film Review: 'On the President's Orders'

Reviewed at Hot Docs Film Festival (World Showcase), April 27, 2019. (Also in CPH: DOX — competing.) Running time: 71 MIN.

PRODUCTION: (Documentary — U.K.) A Frontline, ARTE France production in co-production with Mongoose Pictures in association with BBC Storyville, Bertha Doc Society. (International sales: PBS Distribution, Boston.) Producers: James Jones, Dan Edge, Raney Aronson-Rath. Executive producers: Mandy Chang, Hayley Reynolds, Mark Edwards, Sandra Whipham, Rebecca Litchenfeld.

CREW: Directors: James Jones, Olivier Sarbil. Camera (color): Sarbil. Editor: Michael Harte. Music: Uno Helmersson.

<https://variety.com/2019/film/reviews/on-the-presidents-orders-review-1203203182/>

## American Factory Review



A failing automobile factory is on the verge of going under, only to be saved by an Asian investor, after which culture clashes, of course, ensue. If this sounds like the plot of the 1987 Ron Howard directed film *Gung Ho*, you're not wrong, but it's also the story of *American Factory*. Except in this case, there's no plucky, wisecracking lead character played by Michael Keaton coming in to ultimately save the day. No, real life is more complicated than that.

*American Factory* tells the story of a Dayton, Ohio based GM plant that is converted into a factory for Chinese owned company Fuvao Glass, thus saving many jobs. Of course the story doesn't end there. Aside from the obvious cultural clashes, the real issues begin once it becomes clear that the differences run a little deeper, with problems specifically arising once the workers decide that they need to unionize, something to which management is completely opposed.

Featuring in depth, honest interviews with those from both sides of the conflict, the film presents a fascinating look at the issue. A clash between labour and management is not a new story by any means, but as told by directors Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert in *American Factory*, it's a very compelling one.

### Screenings:

Sat, May 4, 6:00 PM @ Isabel Bader Theatre

Sun, May 5, 4:15 PM @ TIFF Bell Lightbox 1



## Review: 'Shella Record - A Reggae Mystery'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 2nd, 2019



### ***Shella Record: A Reggae Mystery***

(Canada, 87 minutes)

Dir. Chris Flanagan

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premiere)

As a Ja-Canadian, a catchphrase among some Jamaicans for people who bounce back and forth between the White North and the island—among other things I work on JA-oriented film projects—I was eager to see Chris Flanagan's first doc. The visual artist, avid record collector, and lover of roots reggae has devoted years to a film about a Jamaican singer who long ago disappeared into obscurity.

The obsession began when Flanagan picked up a recording of a song called "Jamaican Fruit of African Roots." He instantly became haunted by the singer's voice and the song, a lament about Jamaican slavery. *Shella Record* reminded him of Billie Holiday and Nina Simone, and he could not understand why no one had ever heard of her.

Flanagan embarked on a quest to track down the mysterious performer in Toronto, Los Angeles, Mississippi, Louisiana, and of course, Kingston, Jamaica. Along the way, we learn quite a bit about the creation of early reggae and dub music.

Flanagan doesn't deal at all with Jamaican music beyond those early days. "Old school" reggae was replaced as the people's music in the 1980's, by various forms of Dancehall until the recent emergence of the "Reggae Revival," which tends to fuse roots with dancehall. There's no mention of internationally known artists like Chronixx, Protoje, Kabaka Pyramid, Mavado, Buju Banton, Vybz Kartel nor such women artists as Jah9, Etana, Queen Ifrica, Spice, Macka Diamond, the brilliant 19-year-old Koffee, and Tessanne Chin, who won season 5 of *The Voice*.

Flanagan does offer an intriguing sequence about the late King Tubby, the recording engineer who invented dub. He was the first to use the mixing board as an instrument, creating innumerable versions of a song, generating mysterious voices and sounds coming through the mix: spirit voices, duppy voices. As the honey-voiced female narrator says, Jamaicans have the gift of "taking nothing and turning it into something."

The doc is mostly narrated by Flanagan, who sometimes explains what he's up to on camera, and a lilting woman's voice that gives the film a fairy tale-like vibe. In an opening pan, we see that he has a copy of Jamaica's first novel, *The White Witch of Rose Hall* on his shelf. It's a hint that the doc will touch on Jamaican mysteries and magic like the duppy, which means simply corpse or a ghost or a spirit.

At the beginning of Flanagan's quest for Shella, Toronto's King Culture, a long-time presence in the city's large Jamaican community, lays a warning on him. Like some mythic character on a journey fraught with danger, Flanagan is told: "You could be endangering yourself because of a stupid mistake." As someone who has made stupid mistakes in JA, where there are many codes that take a long time to understand, I don't think King Culture

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was fooling around. As Chronixx's granny says in his Bob Marley inspired song, "Tenement Yard," "Don't put your nose in other people's business, because them say, he who keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life."

When Flanagan gets a roots radio show to play "Jamaican Fruit of African Roots," a guy calls up, relays a clue, and hangs up. The moment re-enforces the sense of mystery around the woman who is Flanagan's obsession.

Naturally, Flanagan's journey takes him to Kingston and Orange Street, a source of the early reggae scene, and other locales. He meets up with living legends who worked with Shella Rickards, her real name as he has discovered. (Jamaicans get nicknames, or alter their names for many reasons).

Flanagan links up with celebrated producer Bunny "Striker" Lee and Chinna Smith, who played on the Jamaican Fruit session, and by the way is known for an open-to-all weekly jam session in his yard, at least when the police don't cite the Noise Abatement Law and shut it down. The filmmaker searches the venerable Jamaica Gleaner archives and finds traces of Sheila, including lovely pictures recalling The Supremes. He finds the master tapes of the song, which miraculously survived a fire in a Bunny Lee studio.

It turns out that Rickards was a jazz singer, a lounge performer who played the hotel circuit on the North Coast, which means locales like Ocho Rios and Montego Bay. But what happened to her? She may have met Sam Cooke, who brought her to L.A. She may have simply gone somewhere in "foreign." He starts feeling like he's chasing a ghost. "Maybe she's a duddy by now," laughs a woman. Back in North America, he consults private investigators and even a psychic.

When I first heard "Jamaican Fruit," it sounded to me like an R&B and reggae influenced art song, rather than reggae from that period, especially from deeply roots and mystical bands like The Congos. One of Flanagan's interviewees, Phillip Smart, taught her reggae, "It was "strange to me," he tells the camera, "that a Jamaican didn't know how we did reggae." Flanagan is told that jazz and reggae are like "water and oil."

In "Jamaican Fruit," Rickards sings, "We came from a distant land/Our lives already planned/We came in ships across sea ... Jamaican fruit of African roots." The high-drama performance and the song are effective. But "Jamaican Fruit" is on-the-nose, sounding almost like a Broadway show number, compared to Bob Marley's "Redemption Song": "Old pirates, yes they rob I/Sold I to the merchant ships/Minutes after they took I/From the bottomless pit." Until the one-drop reggae rhythm kicks in on Rickards' song, it sounds a Shirley Bassey performance.

As a reggae lover, Flanagan focused on a woman who was far from immersed in reggae, like Marcia Griffiths, Judy Mowatt, and Rita Marley. There are plenty of mysteries about them, but of course they didn't disappear.

Perhaps Flanagan simply needed a quest in search of a kind of goddess, especially when she turned out to be so beautiful. In any case, the doc works like clue-seeking procedurals, which can get monotonous, but it more than holds your attention, introducing you to engaging characters like Bunny and Chinna, and building to a more than satisfying finale.

Read more about *Shella Record* in this [interview with Chris Flanagan](#).  
Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](#) for more coverage from this year's festival.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-shella-record-a-reggae-mystery>

## Review: 'Well Groomed'

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published May 2nd, 2019



### ***Well Groomed***

(USA, 87 min.)

Dir. Rebecca Stern

Programme: Artsclapes (International Premiere)

*Well Groomed* is a quirky, fluffy film about what Frank Zappa lyrically referred to as “modified dogs”, bringing attention to the world of creative grooming and the characters at the heart of the competition.

Unlike Christopher Guest’s magnificent mockumentary *Best in Show* that playful and ironically toyed with the inherent ridiculousness of dog shows, Stern’s documentary gives audiences a sympathetic look at this subset that superficially appears even more bonkers than the prancing pure-breeds on the main stage.

With “creative grooming,” the participants coat their dogs in gaudy hues, glue-on elements and cut and shave the fur into various shapes, from Johnny Depp’s visage to a toothy T-Rex. The goal is to use the dog as a living canvas, a sculpture with wagging tail and panting tongue that’s reshaped to appear to be a ram, a mermaid or an orca.

We meet a number of groomers that regularly compete against each other, travelling along with their canine partners to event after event. Hershey is the big competition that all are striving to win, with thousands of dollars on the line and the hopes of being crowned the best creative groomer in the world.

We find small business owners trying to balance their work and creative lives, looking to this more flamboyant presentation as a way out of the more quotidian process of clipping nails, washing coats and shaping fur. Others come from significantly more means, their partners supportive as these women travel the highways in search of more fame and glory.

Stern’s film is sculpted into a celebratory sports film, where the participants all seem to revel in the shared event despite their competitive situation. Given the stakes both reputation-ally and financially, the group is presented as entirely convivial, free from any backbiting at least on screen. It does make for a dearth of drama, with nary a foil to be found save for the tin strips used during the colouring process.

*Well Groomed* treats viewers to a perfectly affable look at a bunch of dogs in strange colours and the people that make them look that way. The bubble is broken slightly during a UK television broadcast where one of the hosts excoriates one of the groomers, claiming the dog looks “ridiculous” and chastising the exploration of the animal that can’t give consent for such fashion crimes. Counter arguments are quickly presented, including from vets claiming that the happiness of the dogs is evident, a further indication of their desire to please.

A boon for any dog lover or someone just wanting to learn about this subculture, *Well Groomed* is a slight yet generally satisfying look into this odd topic. Larger questions about the exploitation of the animals, the obsessions of the individuals for their pets at the expense of people, etc. are left aside for a gentle film about an intense but agreeable competition.

*Well Groomed* may not have much in the way of bite, but as a fluffy bit of colourful fun it does what it sets out to do reasonably well. While its feature-length running time does feel a bit bloated as the points are repeated several times, it remains a highly accessible, audience friendly look at a bunch of pups with punk rock colour jobs standing tall beside their owners, parading the results of competitive grooming for the world to see.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-well-groomed>

## Review: 'The Daughter Tree'

By [Jason Gorber](#) • Published May 2nd, 2019



### ***The Daughter Tree***

(Canada, 88 min.)

Dir. Rama Rau

Programme: Canadian Spectrum (World Premiere)

Rama Rau's latest film *The Daughter Tree* has a near apocalyptic setting: An area of Punjab, India where men vastly outnumber women, primarily due to prenatal gender testing that resulted in vastly disproportionate rates of abortion of female fetuses. In this land, aging men tend the fields and smoke from billowing pipes, ruining their lot and refusing to compromise by going the equivalent of a mail-order route, fearing the social repercussions of marrying differing castes then they do their own loneliness.

This stubborn intractability is contrasted by the tenacity of Neelam Bala, a fiercely uncompromising midwife who seems to single-handedly chafe against the societal norms that are constricting her community. In this "Village of Men," she's a powerful force, excoriating those whose small mindedness is resulting in continued imbalance.

Bala's activism is hardly quiet, teaching young mothers and fathers alike the need to love their forthcoming child regardless of what transpires. Despite the outlawing of gender testing the prejudices persist, from members of the community both male and female, keeping alive this school of thought that has resulted in a stultified and lonely group wanting it both ways.

At a local meeting, a group of fathers witness Bala slamming them for their desires to only have masculine children, while they counter with arguments that include the added cost (the parents are responsible for dowry payments) and fears of assault and the shame that would bring. This victim blaming mentality is quickly shot down by Bala, yet Rama's film never attempts to infantilize or prejudice these other points of view, allowing the participants full reign to spell out their ideas and ideals no matter how troubling they may be.

Beautifully shot by Nagaraj Diwakar, the film remains highly cinematic, capturing the dusty streets and beaming sunlight with warm and inviting tones. The simplicity of the place is never seen to be simple minded, but there's no doubting that the entrenched points of view are slowly being challenged if not eroded by Bala's insistence on change.

As Bala and her niece tend to new generations, there's a sense of slow if deliberate change, with the conversation at least taking place if not completely upending tradition overnight. The title evokes a key metaphor – the idea that every time a girl is born the community plants a tree, and when grown up she can take the fruit and make her own way. In many ways Bala and her assistants are tending to these daughters and sons alike, tilling the sand so that they may better grow, shaping the world to allow all to benefit from the bounty.

Rau's film deftly handles the balance between the strong advocacy of her central protagonist and the sheer complexity of the situation, refusing any kind of blanket moral relativism but still clearly evoking an editorial point of view. The result is a film both powerful and moving, telling a story that's often ignored even in India, and shedding light on the travails required to see real change that would work while increasing respect for all. *The Daughter Tree* has many branches that reach out wide, while to Rama and her collaborator's credit, the disparate storylines all feel part of a whole, engaging audiences and subjects alike in a discussion that will surely shape the Village of Men for generations to come.

Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](#) for more coverage from this year's festival!

## Review: 'When We Walk'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 2nd, 2019



### *When We Walk*

(USA, Canada, 79 minutes)

Dir. Jason DaSilva

Programme: World Showcase (World Premiere)

For Jason DaSilva, making *When We Walk* was an act of desperate love, survival, and confrontation with the abyss. DaSilva's subjects are himself, his family, and the vicious advancing of the primary progressive multiple sclerosis that's killing him. On camera, and in voiceover, 40-year old DaSilva addresses the audience, but more importantly, his young son. The film is a declaration of love for the boy and a document of how he lives as the disease escalates.

DaSilva's adoration for his three-year old spikes when his wife, burnt out by the situation, leaves him. She takes the boy from New York City, which has the best home caregiving in the U.S., to Texas, where it's abysmal.

DaSilva considers relocation in Austin to be close to his son, who becomes distant and hostile during Skype calls. But in the Lone Star State, which has no income tax revenue to support people in trouble, DaSilva faces an agonizing choice. He can live in a Texas nursing home where he might be able to connect with his son, and might die within a year, or return to his New York apartment and the Skype calls.

DaSilva comes across as a persistent, proactive character whose constant strategizing and various moves give both his life and documentary a lot of drive. He files a court case to get more access to his son and induce his wife to return. He links up with his separated parents in search of some kind of wisdom and comfort. In a doc that doesn't sentimentalize, his mother turns out to be a tough talking harsh woman although his father listens to him and takes some action.

When DaSilva needs to increase home care to 24/7, he films job interviews at a long board table, explaining his needs and insisting that he's "very busy." Making the doc, even when he reaches the point of needing assistance while working at his desktop, keeps him vital. This sequel to 2013's Emmy-winning *When I Walk* allows him to survive while making future plans.

DaSilva never averts his gaze from physical and emotional pain. But his approach tends to be playful, deploying home movies, stylization, and animation that punctuates key moments. In one scene, a disabled friend says he understands why DaSilva's wife left him. Who wants to wake up with someone covered with piss? I would run away from myself, the guy jokes. At one point, when DaSilva tries to find a woman online, and his eyesight is failing, a caregiver points out he's somehow able to see pretty girls on a phone.

*When We Walk* tells a deeply moving personal story with unflinching clarity and self-deprecating humour while it exposes how the US Medicaid system abandons vulnerable people.



## Hot Docs 2019: How can filmmakers reap the rewards of this golden age? One Canadian organization may have the answer

**BARRY HERTZ**

PUBLISHED MAY 2, 2019

At this year's Hot Docs film festival in Toronto, 234 documentaries are currently receiving the VIP treatment: big-screen exhibition, packed houses, frenzied media and market attention. But once the 26th annual festival wraps this Sunday, many of the approximately 2,600 filmmakers attending the fest in the hopes of landing a deal will go back to their offices (or, more likely, their kitchen tables) and struggle to figure out how, exactly, to survive.

"There are more people watching documentaries than ever before – we can assume this anecdotally and make this assumption," says Sean Farnel, a veteran of Canada's documentary scene from his time developing the doc program for the Toronto International Film Festival and serving as Hot Docs's first director of programming. "But our filmmakers aren't sharing in the success of their genre. I've seen so many first- and second-time filmmakers just peel away. The maker community is definitely not basking in the glow of any golden age. We're losing talent."

Enter the Documentary Organization of Canada, which announced Thursday that it is launching a revamped version of its Festival Concierge program, which the group hopes will help "demystify the process" of navigating the crucial film-festival landscape in order for its members to get their work out in the world, according to Mathieu Dagonas, DOC's executive director. The program's launch follows the publication of DOC's "Roadmap to Creative Distribution" by producer Chanda Chevannes, as well as the cross-Canada roll-out of festival-focused workshops headed by DOC consultant Farnel.

"The gist of these initiatives is about providing support and resources, and encouraging the sharing of stories so filmmakers can empower each other to take control of the marketing and sales and distribution of their films directly," says Farnel. "Facilitating this co-operation is better than everyone working in their individual silos." The DOC, which was founded in 1983 as the Canadian Independent Film & Video Caucus, has revamped its festival-focused initiative as it becomes increasingly clear that the film-fest circuit is the primary means of exhibition for documentaries. Despite the headline-grabbing success of major productions like *Three Identical Strangers*, *RBG*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor* and the Oscar-winning *Free Solo*, most documentaries never make it to the big screen, or even the small screen. And while the rise of streaming services like Netflix has helped propel certain docs to zeitgeist-catching status, countless more fall through the exhibition cracks.

"Festivals are now the de facto exhibition circuit for documentaries, so how do you navigate that circuit?" asks Farnel. "There's a strategy involved in leveraging this circuit and accessing it, so this is about sharing stories from those who have, and creating tools to help filmmakers make these decisions. It's all about moving toward the ultimate goal, which is making these films available to watch."

The DOC's original Festival Concierge program was conceived in 2014, but as the festival landscape has evolved and expanded – five years ago, Hot Docs screened 197 features and shorts; by last year, that number had jumped to 246 – a refresh was necessary.

"The [National Film Board] has a festivals office to help its productions, and most European film institutions have festival officers that offer this guidance full-time, so this is filling a gap in the Canadian documentary landscape," says Farnel. "We did a lot of polling, we researched the field, and a lot of this is about comparing strategies, and trying to replicate best practices."

As Farnel prepares to take his DOC workshops to Vancouver's DOXA film festival next month and then Halifax's FIN: Atlantic International Film Festival in September, he cautions that the program is still in its early days. And, as all Canadian filmmakers know, the industry is subject to tremors that no one is able to predict. "There are no immutable laws about film festivals, so it's a tricky thing to navigate," he says. "But the best thing we can do is share our stories with each other."

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-hot-docs-2019-how-can-filmmakers-reap-the-rewards-of-this-golden-age/>



## The Jinx shows how documentaries bend the facts more than in the past

By David Friend The Canadian Press  
Thu., May 2, 2019



Canadian documentary makers say fresh details of how a key moment was altered in HBO's true-crime series *The Jinx* raise questions about the ethics of creators who tread a razor-thin line between fact and fiction.

As the Hot Docs film festival moved ahead in Toronto this week, debates were sparked over whether reality stands in the way of good storytelling — and if producers sometimes ignore their moral responsibility in favour of sensationalism.

Martha Kehoe, who co-directed *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind*, suggests the portrayal of truth in documentary is blurrier than it's been in recent memory.

"There used to be a very strong concept of journalistic ethics, and I think documentary makers felt that. Now, all bets are off," she argued.

"There's no ethics being practised in politics and it's a trickle-down effect."

Many filmmakers say it's hard to ignore the incredible popularity of *The Jinx*, which captivated audiences and grabbed headlines when it debuted in 2015. The series painted New York real estate heir Robert Durst as an unconvicted murderer — but it turns out the most damning moment of the docuseries didn't happen the way it was presented.

A recent New York Times report revealed the bathroom confession where Durst seemingly muttered to himself, "What the hell did I do? Killed them all, of course," wasn't one complete thought, but rather two sentences pieced together by the filmmakers from a clutter of thoughts. There wasn't a single question and an answer — but viewers wouldn't know that from what they saw on television.

Lawyers for Durst will brand those edits as manipulations when they head to trial later this year, the Times said.

Kehoe said she watched *The Jinx* a number of years ago, and has no qualms with how the filmmakers spliced Durst's remarks.

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“I would’ve done it, I’ll tell you that. I would’ve totally done it,” she said.

“I would’ve definitely weighed the ethics of it, but I wouldn’t have spent a lot of time protecting Durst. I think after making that documentary you’d have a pretty good feeling that he killed those people.”

True-crime documentaries have reached new heights of popularity in recent years, giving filmmakers an immense power that ripples through the news media and justice system. Netflix’s *Making a Murderer* and the Michael Jackson exposé *Leaving Neverland* have injected new attention into legal cases and allegations that once seemed of another era.

Kehoe suggested while documentaries are based on true stories, she believes viewers should watch them as “a piece of art,” rather than an entirely factual recount, since they’re constructed in an editing room.

“It’s not like a legal document, it’s interpretation,” she said.

“The documentarians aren’t saying ‘We tried him, judge and jury,’ they just presented their version of what that story was.”

Kehoe pointed to a long history of documentaries that have endured — and often thrived — in the face of questions about their authenticity.

Robert Flaherty’s 1922 film *Nanook of the North*, considered one of the earliest documentary films, follows the life of an Inuk man named Nanook and his family in the Canadian Arctic. However, many scenes were fabricated.

The protagonist was not actually named Nanook, and the filmmaker replaced his rifles with spears, in hopes of preserving the traditions before they died out. It’s now considered a classic of the genre.

More recently, the BBC acknowledged its *Human Planet* series included an Indonesian tribe moving into a treehouse to live, but it was later revealed the scenario was entirely constructed. The broadcaster said it responded by revising its ethical guidelines.

Larry Weinstein, whose film *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies* showed at this year’s Hot Docs, said audiences put a “sense of trust” into documentarians, but added that defending the use of “choice words” from Durst in the HBO series is “tricky.”

“I am guilty of doing something like that once in one of my films... and it haunts me to this day,” he said.

The documentary was *Solidarity Song: The Hanns Eisler Story*, which recounted the communist composer’s life. Weinstein included an interview with Georg Knepler, a “good friend” and colleague of Eisler who was part of a tribunal that screened proposed works for Communist state approval. In one scene, the filmmaker says the German-speaking man became emotional while recalling part of the story, and struggled with the English words, saying “I can’t go on.”

Weinstein said in his film’s context, it doesn’t seem like the man is having trouble expressing himself, but rather that he harbours a guilty conscience for his negative impact on Eisler’s art.

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“It was like I tried him, and I was the jury, and I kept it there. People who knew him hated me for doing that,” Weinstein said.

“I felt bad about personally hurting someone who helped me, but I wasn’t convinced that I was wrong.”

Giving the subjects of a documentary greater say in the final project can be a more prudent approach, some filmmakers suggested.

The co-directors of *Conviction*, which explores the growing number of incarcerated women in Canada’s prison system, say they offered inmates who appeared in their film the authority to veto scenes. Much of the footage was recorded on cameras by the prisoners themselves.

“The women... collaborated in the edit, they saw everything in the film before it went out. It was very much their choice what they wanted to show and what they didn’t,” said filmmaker Teresa MacInnes.

“They certainly didn’t have editorial control over the entire piece, but they did with their portions.”

*Conviction* shows the women operating their cameras in the opening moments of the documentary, offering viewers the sort of transparency that may be lacking in the final moments of *The Jinx*.

“It’s a conflict sometimes when it comes to documentary because it is real life, and it is people and we do have an impact,” MacInnes said.

“These are ethical issues we live with, and it’s a heavy burden.”

## Women in Hollywood – May 3, 2019

### Hot Docs 2019 Women Directors: Meet Heddy Honigmann – “Buddy”

BY Laura Berger\_May 3, 2019

Heddy Honigmann is a director and writer who is best known for “Forever,” “The Underground Orchestra,” and “Metal and Melancholy.”

“Buddy” premiered at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on April 26.

**W&H: Describe the film for us in your own words.**

HH: As one of the characters in the film says, “Buddy” is about the deep, warm, and mysterious bond between humans and their dogs — [let’s] call it love.

**W&H: What drew you to this story?**

HH: I had lovely dogs while growing up, so I remember this strong feeling I got after seeing a commercial on TV about a soldier returning from war who had an assistant dog helping him out. The soldier had nightmares and heavy PTSD, and I decided to research these specially trained animals, along with a colleague Monique Lesterhuis, and together we discovered a unique universe of assistant dogs. And that’s when the idea for the film came to me.

**W&H: What do you want people to think about when they are leaving the theater?**

HH: To appreciate the work of these assistance dogs. Without these special dogs, so many people would not be alive today or be able to have the kind of independence that they do.

**W&H: What was the biggest challenge in making the film?**

HH: To give the same attention to both the humans and the dogs. To fully understand their friendship and the love between them.

**W&H: How did you get your film funded? Share some insights into how you got the film made.**

HH: In the Netherlands, where I have now lived for 42 years — I was Born in Lima, Peru — we have a few film funding organizations which subsidize non-commercial documentaries.

Apart from this, “Buddy” did really well in theaters here in the Netherlands. We could have asked for more money through crowdfunding, but as a friend and colleague said to me once, “If you don’t need elephants in your film, don’t ask for money for elephants.”

**W&H: What inspired you to become a filmmaker?**

HH: I couldn’t become a poet or a musician, so after watching the incredible beautiful films by such directors as Carl Theodor Dreyer, Luchino Visconti, Max Ophüls, Billy Wilder, and other greats, I knew my calling had to be in film, and that was the road I took.

**W&H: What’s the best and worst advice you’ve received?**

HH: The best advice comes from a verse by a great Spanish poet, Antonio Machado: “Traveler, there is no path. The path is made by walking.

The worst advice: To want elephants when you don’t need them.

**W&H: What advice do you have for other female directors?**

HH: Never set out in your mind that you want to make a film for women. Remain free, develop this little dream you have in your mind, and just make a wonderful film — for men and women.

**W&H: Name your favorite woman-directed film and why.**

HH: “The Gleaners and I,” by Agnès Varda. She films ordinary people and makes you, the viewer, discover they are fascinating

**W&H: It’s been a little over a year since the reckoning in Hollywood and the global film industry began. What differences have you noticed since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements launched?**

HH: The only thing that I have noticed is that all over the world — and not only in Hollywood — more women are making independent, good films. And that’s great!

<https://womenandhollywood.com/hot-docs-2019-women-directors-meet-heddy-honigmann-buddy/>

## Hot Docs Awards: PBS Frontline's 'For Sama' Takes Top Jury Prize

5:10 PM PDT 5/3/2019 by Etan Vlessing



Waad al-Kateab

**North America's largest documentary festival named Thai-American director Pailin Wedel's 'Hope Frozen' as the winner of the best international feature prize.**

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on Friday night handed its top jury prize to *For Sama*, a British film from Channel 4 and WGBH/Frontline about a young mother creating a video diary for her baby daughter during the brutal conflict in Syria.

The film, which won the best documentary award when debuting at SXSW, is directed by Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts. "For its unflinching lens on the horrors of war, accompanied by a tender portrait of a young family born out of conflict, and the courageous community that surrounds them, the Special Jury Prize goes to *For Sama*," the Hot Docs jury said in a statement.

After a theatrical release, PBS' Frontline channel will broadcast *For Sama*, before an international premiere on Channel 4 later this year.

Hot Docs also gave its top audience award, voted on by cinema-goers at the festival, to Claudia Sparrow's *Maxima*, which had its world premiere in Toronto. The film follows Maxima Acuna, a generational farmer in Peru who challenges the American mining giant Newmont Mining after it lays claim to her land.

"The Hot Docs audience award means the world to us, it's the greatest validation that Maxima is not alone and that people care about her cause and that they are ready to stand by her side. Maxima's fight is far from over, but this recognition will help us push the film forward and hopefully bring more awareness to Maxima's story," director Sparrow said of the film's win in a statement.

Back on the jury front, Hot Docs gave its best international feature documentary award to *Hope Frozen*, from Thai-American director Pailin Wedel. The documentary, which bowed in Toronto, follows a grief-stricken Bangkok family and their unorthodox decision to preserve their deceased two-year-old daughter.

Elsewhere, the best Canadian feature documentary award went to the opening night film, *Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up*, by director Tasha Hubbard. The documentary captures a family's grief and questioning of the Canadian legal system after the 2017 acquittal of Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley for the fatal shooting death of a young Cree man, Colten Boushie.

And the DGC Special Jury Prize in the Canadian feature documentary category went to Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, which focuses on sex abuse in the Catholic Church, while the emerging Canadian filmmaker award went to Emily Gan for *Cavebirds*.

The emerging international filmmaker award was given to Nuno Escudeiro for *The Valley*, a film about immigrants trying to cross the French-Italian border on foot through treacherous mountain routes.

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hot-docs-awards-pbs-frontlines-sama-takes-top-jury-prize-1207399>

## “We Will Stand Up”, “Hope Frozen” take top prizes at Hot Docs '19

By Barry Walsh

May 3, 2019



Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, Pailin Wedel's *Hope Frozen* and *For Sama* from Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts took home top prizes at the Hot Docs International Documentary Festival's awards ceremony on Friday evening (May 3) in Toronto. Hubbard's film, which explores the 2016 killing of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man from Saskatchewan, and his family's search for justice, took the award for best Canadian feature documentary. The jury called it "a lasting document that brings together past and future to illuminate oppression and resilience."

Gallagher's film, which follows a survivor of sexual abuse and his efforts to pursue justice, received the DGC special jury prize for a Canadian feature doc.

Wedel's doc, meanwhile, about a grieving family in Bangkok that decides to cryopreserve a two-year-old daughter, was named best international documentary feature, with the jury calling it "a story that disarms our preconceptions and embodies grace."

The acclaimed *For Sama* continued its festival awards run with the special jury prize for an international feature documentary.

Emily Gan took the emerging Canadian filmmaker award for *Cavebirds* and Nuno Escudeiro received the emerging international filmmaker honor for *The Valley*.

The best mid-length doc nod went to *Symphony of the Ursus Factory* from Jaśmina Wójcik while the best international short documentary award went to *Call Confession* from Arturo Aguilar. The best Canadian short doc award went to *Kora: A Circle Life* from Tenzin Sedon.

The Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary will be presented on the final night of the fest, May 5



## ‘nîpawistamâsowin’ and ‘Hope Frozen’ Lead Hot Docs Winners

May 3rd, 2019 •



*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*

Photo by George Hupka

By Pat Mullen

Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* officially dominated Hot Docs 2019. After receiving the opening night gala slot and polling well in the ongoing Audience Award rankings, Hubbard's doc scooped the jury prize for Best Canadian Feature. Hubbard received the honour at tonight's awards ceremony hosted by Garvia Bailey, which saw over \$75,000 in prizes distributed.

*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* offers a personal examination of the shooting death of 22-year-old Cree man Colten Boushie and the more deeply rooted systemic inequities that cause violence against Indigenous people in Canada to this day. Of the film, the jury remarked, "This filmmaker has created a lasting document that brings together past and future to illuminate oppression and resilience. As an investigation of a specific injustice, the film leaves no stone unturned while infusing the narrative with a deeply felt, creatively authentic point of view." *nîpawistamâsowin* received a cash prize of \$10,000 sponsored by DOC and Telefilm Canada. The film has its final Hot Docs screening on Sunday morning and also plays Vancouver's DOXA Festival. Read more about *nîpawistamâsowin* in the article [Justice for Colten](#).

"This recognition of the film and the story it tells is overwhelming and I am filled with gratitude. Colten Boushie should be remembered for the kind, young man he was, and his hope for a better future for the next generation deserves to be realized. His family's courage to push for justice should inspire us all. Finally, I am also very thankful for the commitment of my collaborators and support systems," said Hubbard in a statement.

The Canadian features jury also gave the DGC Special Jury Prize to [Prey](#), directed by Matt Gallagher, which explores a landmark suit against the Catholic Church for systemic cover-ups of sexual abuse crimes. *Prey* received a cash prize of \$5,000. The jury provided an honourable mention to [River Silence](#), directed Rogério Soares.

On the international front, the award for Best International Feature went to [Hope Frozen](#), directed by Pailin Wedel. The Thai doc offers a thoroughly objective portrait of a family's faith in science as they cryogenically freeze their young daughter with hopes she will one day be cured by cancer. The jury praised *Hope Frozen* for its "ethically complex and existentially challenging dilemma of grief." The film received a cash prize of \$10,000

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and is now eligible for the Best Documentary Feature Oscar without having to do the conventional theatrical run, provided it meets general rules.

Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts continued their impressive run for *For Sama* by winning the Special Jury Prize – International Feature Documentary. The award comes after *For Sama* scored both the jury prize and audience award at SXSW and was selected as one of few feature docs at Cannes. The film received a \$5,000 cash prize with the jury citing the film's "unflinching lens on the horrors of war, accompanied by a tender portrait of a young family born out of conflict, and the courageous community that surrounds them."

The awards ceremony also saw two emerging filmmakers take the spotlight. Emily Gan received the Emerging Filmmaker Award for her doc *Cavebirds*. The eclectic film about the hunt for bird spit scooped a cash prize of \$3,000, sponsored by Vistek, with the jury noting Gan's "profound connectivity with a long tradition of diasporic cinema." They also called it a "quiet personal reflection on the complexities of migration and belonging, told through poetic details and poignant autobiographical reflection."

Italian filmmaker Nuno Escudeiro won the International Emerging Filmmaker award for *The Valley* with the jury praising the film's "refreshing and clear-eyed portrayal of a small French community responding to an urgent humanitarian crisis at its doorstep with humility and generosity." The film offers an intense study of a group of committed citizens who develop a network to assist refugees in establishing claims for asylum. *The Valley* also received a \$3,000 cash prize.

Jaśmina Wójcik's wonderfully original *Symphony for the Ursus Factory* took the award for Best Mid-Length Feature. The jury's decision was unanimous. Calling the film "arresting and innovative," the jury awarded *Symphony for the Ursus Factory*, noting they were "transfixed by its outstanding direction which allowed subjects to explore their pasts in a unique and sincere manner. In this film we explore the ruins of industry through a dynamic soundscape and rhythmic montage which brought neglected spaces back to life." On the shorts front, Arturo Aguilar's Spanish-Mexican co-production *Call Confession* won Best International Short Documentary Award while Tenzin Sedon's *Kora: A Circle of Life* won the Betty Youson Award for Best Canadian Short Documentary. Both films are now eligible for the Oscar for Best Documentary, Short Subjects. The Docs for Schools Award went to Lily Zepeda's *Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man*, which spotlights humanitarian Jack Sim and his humorous effort to bring clean sanitation to impoverished corners of the globe. Hot Docs also honoured Peter Raymont with the Don Haig Award, Julia Reichert with the Outstanding Achievement Award, and Julia Ivanona with the Focus On Award in honours announced previously. The Rogers Canadian Prize will be announced on Sunday to honour the top Canadian audience favourite while the overall audience vote-getter will be announced after the festival.

## ‘Killing Patient Zero’s’ Laurie Lynd: ‘I Will Never Understand That Hatred’

By JENNIE PUNTER



CREDIT: COURTESY OF HOT DOCS

TORONTO — Veteran Toronto director [Laurie Lynd](#) taps into the myth-busting 2017 book “Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic” for a documentary feature that reframes the legacy of Quebec flight attendant Gaetan Dugas, a promiscuous gay man who was incorrectly identified as patient zero by investigators from the U.S. Center for Disease Control in the early years of the AIDS epidemic.

“[Killing Patient Zero](#),” which had its world premiere at Hot Docs in Toronto, explores how the idea of a patient zero was amplified – and how Dugas was vilified – via the publisher’s strategy for promoting the groundbreaking book “And The Band Played On,” by serializing and sensationalizing its patient-zero chapter.

In Lynd’s film, author Randy Shilts is a key supporting character whose crusade to effect change through his writing had complex repercussions.

In a traditional but lively style, Lynd and editor Trevor Ambrose take viewers from the halcyon days of gay liberation through the confusion, sadness, and anger of the epidemic’s early months and years, using archive and new interviews with Dugas’ friends and colleagues, epidemiological biologists, and cultural commentators to retell the story in the context of today’s media landscape. Lynd spoke with *Variety* about why the patient-zero story still resonates.

**“Killing Patient Zero” draws from Dr. Richard McKay’s “Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic,” and also gets into cultural and visual commentary. What was your own connection and approach to this important story?**

Producer Cory Russell at Fadoo Productions saw articles about the new science around the original blood samples, which absolutely concluded that Gaetan Dugas could not have been patient zero. This led Cory to get the rights to McKay’s book, and then he approached me. It was almost like kismet. I made a short film “RSVP” because of reading “And The Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic.” From 1982 to 1986, I attended the graduate film program at NYU and lived in the heart of the epidemic. When I started this film, I was stunned to realize how much I didn’t see at the time—I had blinders on.

When “And The Band Played On” first came out I totally bought into the patient zero idea. Up here in Canada of course we had John Greyson’s 1993 musical film “Zero Patience” [which refutes the popular notion that HIV/AIDS was introduced to North America by one person]. So I welcomed the chance to rehabilitate Gaetan Dugas’ name and, in getting to know him second-hand, came to admire his courage immensely. For the time, he was so openly gay!

One of the things I brought to the film, and which is not in McKay’s book, is simply the story of being gay and growing up gay back then – looking at what society was telling gay people and the psychological impact of that, and giving a sense of the subtle everyday homophobia that was all around us in popular culture.

**You interviewed around 40 people for the film. Were they also in McKay's book or were they new voices?**

Almost two-thirds of the people interviewed in the film are in McKay's book. Our Quebec team found many of Gaetan's friends and people he worked with—all of whom were very moved talking about him after all these years. I wanted to speak to gay people who lived through the period, such as B. Ruby Rich, a seminal voice writing about New Queer Cinema. Fran Lebowitz, who I had been reading since high school, brought so much wit and insight to such a tough, dark subject.

My approach was to organize the interviews so I could create something like a symposium. As someone who works mostly in dramatic film and TV, I find it such a privilege to interview someone on camera. And as a gay man, who turned 60 this year and who lived through this, I found I was more candid about myself, in terms of talking about internalized homophobia.

**Every day we encounter reports of outbreaks of diseases somewhere or other. In the film you make a point of showing how people got, or didn't get, the news about HIV/AIDS. Can you talk about why the portrayal of the media at that time is central to the film?**

Yes, there was no Internet, of course. For younger audiences, it's important to understand that there was no way to get news about what was happening, unless it was in gay community newspapers. Legacy media was not covering AIDS. Coverage from that time was all variations on the same theme. Homophobes were so entranced by the idea of one person spreading a disease that only gay people caught. The premier of British Columbia at the time was suggesting quarantine, he wanted to put people with AIDS on an island; the Health Minister at the time stopped funding safe sex education and programs. There was squeamishness around gay people and gay sex. The CDC did some extraordinary reporting about the disease, but even they were slow to release information about safe sex.

I think the most shocking thing I encountered during filming was that audio of that White House press conference about AIDS in 1992. It's . . . almost unbelievable to hear the media and politicians in that room all laughing and making sarcastic jokes about "the gay plague." I will never understand that hatred.

**I remember when "And The Band Played On" came out, but had no idea the role it played in kickstarting the whole concept, even, of a patient zero. What was your take on author Randy Shilts (who died in 1994) after getting to know him through this process?**

Well, I'm happy to say that, with the same producers, I'm going to make a feature doc on Randy, which we're calling "Openly Gay Reporter." We're hoping to start this fall. I have a lot of material.

I feel Randy did the wrong thing for the right reasons. His name needs to be rehabilitated in the gay community. At the time of the AIDS crisis, he was in favor of closing bathhouses. In those days, any suggestion to curtail sexual activity was greeted with suspicion, and he was blamed for his position on that. So there is a lingering resentment towards him for that. But I came away with a deep admiration for how extraordinary he was, to put himself out there as a gay journalist and with three very important books, including his biography of Harvey Milk, and "Conduct Unbecoming."

In a clip that didn't make it into the film, Ruby Rich says that she thinks this story is more important than it's ever been, because, with the rise of populist governments, homophobia is back on the table. It's a scary time. And this film so clearly shows the cost to people going through those times.

## The Valley's' Nuno Escudeiro: 'We Will Be Remembered' for Refugee Response

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#)



CREDIT: MIRAMONTE FILMS

Framed by the French Alps, the border region between Italy and France has become an unlikely hot spot for countless migrants risking their lives to flee poverty, war, and political persecution. In the Roya and Durance Valleys, local communities have banded together to help the influx of refugees by offering them food, shelter and legal aid. But providing assistance to undocumented migrants is a criminal offense, and the charitable actions of those citizen groups have put them on the wrong side of the law.

Portuguese director [Nuno Escudeiro](#) decided to document these acts of civil disobedience in “The Valley,” which had its world premiere this week in Toronto at the [Hot Docs](#) Canadian Intl. Film Festival. The film follows a group of volunteers trying to assist asylum seekers who have survived the trek across dangerous mountain routes, only to be ensnared by a system that denies them their basic rights.

“For me, what was really hard was to make this film happen,” said Escudeiro. “I had to fight a lot for it.” The director spoke to *Variety* about the politics of fear in the age of mass migration, the power of empathy, and his hope that humanity will find itself on the right side of history with its response to Europe’s migrant crisis.

**Why did you choose to make this film about inhabitants of the Roya and Durance Valleys specifically?**

I’m from Portugal, and I moved away from Portugal around seven years ago. When I was living in Finland, and when I moved to Italy, I was always living close to these border regions. So I dealt with what the internal borders of Europe are turning into. I always met a lot of people that were helping refugees close to borders, but they were always hiding it. Even though it’s not very visible, it’s something that’s happening all over. The first thing that really interested me was the fact that [the citizen group Roya Citoyenne] were doing it publicly. When I heard of this, I went to see why are these people doing it like this, why are they doing it publicly.

**The Roya and Durance Valleys have a complicated history. In the film, you describe a series of mass deportations after World War II, and the way the region’s own borders have evolved over**

**the years. Did that strike you as a metaphor for the craziness of this entire system — how arbitrarily people’s lives are defined and shaped by borders that themselves might have been entirely different two or three generations ago?**

It’s truly funny, because one of the [French] villages was actually in Italy 50 years ago. That’s the madness of it. The first thing that struck me was that you come from Italy, you enter the valley, you enter France, and then you move on from the valley and you go back to Italy. That place doesn’t make any sense from a political point of view. And it’s really how people feel there. They don’t feel like they’re in Italy or France. They feel very much divided. And I think also, that’s why this place has always had this feel about it. If you are in-between, and if someone wants to cross the border, you don’t have to take a position. If we are in-between, we are a point of passage.

We think that what defines our identity is at the center of the country, but actually, where you can feel what defines a country is right next to the border. Because those are the places that you actually question what is a country or not. If you want to get the feeling of a country, you should go to its borders, because that is where you’re really going to figure it out.

**The camera spends a lot of time in the presence of the police — in one scene, you’re actually forced to stop filming. What was your relationship like with law enforcement while you were making “The Valley”?**

In the end, dealing with the authorities somehow became quite easy. If you are next to a person like Cedric [Herrou, of Roya Citoyenne], or these people from the valley, and you see them talking to the authorities, then you really change yourself. This scene in the film, where the policeman tells us to turn off the camera, it was actually a horrible situation. All of a sudden, policemen in plain clothes — not even identifying themselves — were talking to us in a violent way. They even expelled the lawyer from that place.

What truly struck me was that Cedric was super calm. He was really calm, and I was really upset, because I was being talked to in a way that I was never talked to. But Cedric was super calm. And after that, I really learned you need to stand your ground, because you are within your rights. After that, I never had problems filming with the police, because I was always coming from the principle, “I have the right to shoot you.”

**The refugee crisis has been in the headlines for several years, and for many people, a sense of familiarity – even fatigue – with the story has set in. How did you approach “The Valley” in order to find a distinctive point-of-view, to try to explore the story in a different way?**

It was always hard to explain to people what is actually the point of this film, and why another refugee film. Why is this different, why must we tell a story that adds to the narrative and complicates the way that we see things? From the beginning, I had this feeling that I want to contribute in a way that helps us see this as a historical moment, and that we as a society, we can say something. We can mold our way, and how we’re going to be remembered by history.

We as a society, we are not taking responsibility for this historical moment. This is something that is quite big, it’s really tragic, and we as a society, we are not truly positioning ourselves. And this is



normal, because we don't know how to deal with this situation. The main thing is that when you close the border, what are the consequences of it, and how a political decision can impact the lives of so many people. The majority of the population really is for human values, and for saving people's lives. This small thing at the border is connected to a much bigger thing that is our historical moment that we live in. And we as citizens, as people, we need to look at ourselves and reflect a bit. We will be remembered for this.

**One of the film's subjects asks the question, "How did we get here?" And his answer is: "It was possible step by step. We got used to it." Do you fear that across Europe, and around the world, we've all begun to accept the refugee crisis as a normal state of affairs?**

There is a concept that also Cedric says that is this ruling through fear. When you close the border, you communicate fear. When you close the ports, you communicate fear. Instead of saying, 'It's not a big issue. There's a few people coming. We can save some lives.' Which is in fact true. In the '60s, there were three million Portuguese people who arrived in Paris. Back then, it was a much bigger issue. But we dealt with it in a much better way than we are dealing with it today. Probably back then there was a civil courage that was a bit different on all levels of society. And what we allowed to happen was that politicians, they dealt with it through fear. They didn't say, 'We can deal with this.' But rather they chose to say, 'We are closing the border because we are connecting this with terrorism.' And so we propagate this idea that there is a hint of danger of these people coming. You see that in general society. Most people would say it's not a good thing that [refugees] come. This fear is huge.

Unfortunately, what I see the most, is that more and more people are getting used to it. More and more normalization. On the other hand, we have to have a historical consciousness that this is not normal. And then we can be conscious of the historical times we live in, and we can look at it on the one hand with the most simple human thing that we have, that is our own empathy to another human being, and on the other hand, with the most abstract thing that we have, that is a sense of our own place in history. We can look at this situation not with a lens of fear, but with a lens of fraternity, of love, to understand that it's just people, just humans. You're just a normal person, but you can contribute.



CREDIT: MIRAMONTE FILMS

## One Child Nation's' Wang Nanfu: 'Every Film Is a Brand New Beginning'

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#), May 3, 2019



CREDIT: LUDWING DUARTE/HOT DOCS

TORONTO—Director [Wang Nanfu](#) wracked up accolades for her debut feature “Hooligan Sparrow,” a riveting, guerrilla-style exposé of sexual abuse in China that made the Academy Award shortlist for best documentary. But as she prepared to return to the cutting room for her sophomore feature, she learned a valuable lesson that guides her to this day.

“I thought it would be easier, and it wasn’t,” she said. “The previous success of one successful work will not necessarily translate into your next work. Every film is a brand new beginning.”

Wang appeared at Hot Docs on Thursday in conversation with journalist and film critic Eric Hynes, where she discussed her career as a documentary filmmaker and the role that she plays as a character in her own films. Her latest feature, “[One Child Nation](#),” which she co-directed with Zhang Jialing, was described by *Variety* as a “brave, brain-rewiring exposé” of China’s One-Child Policy. It was acquired by Amazon Studios after it won the grand jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival this year.

“In China, my conception of documentaries was something about the glorious landscape, and our magnificent landscape, and the food. That kind of story,” said Wang. She came to the U.S. at the age of 26, and got her first exposure to the range of narrative styles and visual techniques employed by documentary filmmakers while studying journalism at Ohio University. “I realized it could be as compelling as fictional films.”

Wang grew up poor in rural China; her father died young, at the age of 33, and she was forced to drop out of school to support her family. Her difficult early years would serve as inspiration later. “I think all the story ideas that I had been thinking about when I was a student...had to do with my own background, and what affected me most as a person,” she said. “It was all the unjust stuff in the society that made me want to tell stories.”

For her first feature, “Hooligan Sparrow,” Wang wanted to document the stories of Chinese sex workers. The subject of her film was an activist and advocate for sex workers’ rights – known by the social-media alias Hooligan Sparrow – who was deeply involved in protests against the case of six elementary school girls who had been sexually abused by their principal. After meeting her subject and learning about the scandal, Wang’s initial idea quickly changed course.

What began as a film about sex workers became a daring, guerilla-style exposé that would bring Wang under government surveillance and force her to smuggle footage out of the country. Even as Chinese authorities bullied, harassed, and threatened the filmmaker and her family, though, she felt compelled to move forward. “I didn’t know what story it was. What is the story now? What is it going towards? I have no idea,” she said. “I just have to follow it.”

“Hooligan Sparrow” was a stunning success for the first-time filmmaker, screening at Sundance, Hot Docs, and dozens of international festivals. Wang considers it her purest film. “I didn’t know the whole business of filmmaking – what it takes to premiere a film, what it takes to finish a film. I didn’t know what budget is. I had no idea any of those

things,” she said. “I just spent days and nights in the editing room, simply because I loved to edit, and I loved this craft.”

Her follow-up, “I Am Another You,” sprung from a birthday tradition Wang had begun in China, where she would celebrate by traveling someplace she had never been. In the U.S. a cheap bus ticket brought her to Florida, where she met a 22-year-old homeless kid named Dylan Olsen: a blond, tattooed, photogenic drifter whose vagrant lifestyle Wang was determined to document, following his life on the streets and recording his poetic musings. The film premiered at SXSW and earned rave reviews.

The three-act structure of the film was a challenge to pull off. Shot over the course of several years, with Wang traveling to Olsen’s native Utah to meet his father, the footage for “I Am Another You” didn’t come together as a coherent narrative in early edits. Wang decided to gamble by inserting herself into the film, although she admitted, “My impulse was to resist the idea.”

In “Hooligan Sparrow,” the filmmaker appeared out of necessity. “It was a huge, huge struggle to hear my voice, to be in the film. I always felt that was the biggest creative challenge in making that film, because I wasn’t sure how much of myself should be in there,” she said. Cutting “I Am Another You” proved even more problematic, as she went through hours of footage to find every shot that included her. As she slowly became part of the narrative, however, her relationship with Olsen – and why she found him such compelling subject matter – came into focus. “Then it became clear: this is the essential element of the film,” she said.

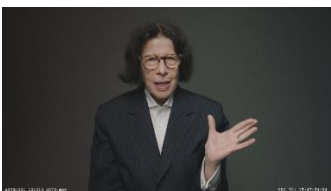
Wang said an important part of the process was learning how to “construct a character” from herself. “I don’t exist in the film as a filmmaker; I exist in the film as a character, just like any other character. How my life changed, how my perspective changed,” she said. “It’s really not there to provide information or explanation or anything.”

She returned to that narrative technique in “One Child Nation,” though it was “a huge challenge to find the place for me to be there not as a commenter.” The film explores the legacy of China’s notorious One-Child Policy, which for nearly four decades forcibly restricted family size through a harrowing combination of enforced sterilizations, kidnappings, and other brutal measures. Wang struggled to find a way to insert herself in the film in a way that didn’t feel intrusive, asking herself: “How am I qualified? What is the position that I have, or the role I have in order to co-exist with [characters]...whose lives I had no role in?”

In the end, she let experience guide her. “That again goes back to looking at everything I learned from [previous films], how that affected my inner thoughts, my understanding of the One-Child Policy, and how I feel about that,” she said.

Wang has begun work on her next feature, revealing only that the film will be about Cuba. “As a filmmaker, you probably have to spend 40% of your time not making the film, but trying to get the film made. It’s part of the process,” she said. “I didn’t learn that in school. Very few schools teach you that. There is a complete different skillset than filmmaking.”

She added: “I came to the realization that if you really love this, you have to bear with the things that come with the thing you love.”



<https://variety.com/2019/film/news/one-child-nation-nanfu-wang-every-film-is-a-brand-new-beginning-1203204604/>

Northern Stars – May 3, 2019

## nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up Honoured at Hot Docs



Image from the Edmonton Journal, supplied by the National Film Board.  
by Staff

(May 3, 2019 – Toronto, ON) As the 26th annual Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival begins to wind down and will end on Sunday, earlier today it was announced that *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* has been given the Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award.



"This recognition of the film and the story it tells is overwhelming and I am filled with gratitude," said the film's director, [Tasha Hubbard](#). "Colten Boushie should be remembered for the kind, young man he was,

and his hope for a better future for the next generation deserves to be realized. His family's courage to push for justice should inspire us all. Finally, I am also very thankful for the commitment of my collaborators and support systems."

Co-produced by Downstream Documentary Productions and the National Film Board of Canada, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* was selected to be the opening night film for the festival and Northernstars had the pleasure of [talking with Tasha Hubbard](#) before the festival opened. The Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award is sponsored by the Documentary Organization of Canada and Telefilm Canada. The jury issued a statement about the film, saying, "This filmmaker has created a lasting document that brings together past and future to illuminate oppression and resilience. As an investigation of a specific injustice, the film leaves no stone unturned while infusing the narrative with a deeply felt, creatively authentic point of view."

Northernstars joins with others in congratulating the filmmakers. *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* has also been selected to screen at the DOXA Documentary Film Festival, Vancouver, which continues until May 12 and will begin its theatrical run in various markets across Canada later this month.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/nipawistasowin-we-will-stand-up-honoured-at-hot-docs/>

## A Canada that Honours Indigenous Art and Oppresses Indigenous People In such a fractured reality, what can art do?

By [Dorothy Woodend](#) 3 May 2019 | [TheTyee.ca](#)

Dorothy Woodend is culture editor of The Tyee. Reach her [here](#).



Coast Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsełtun is brutally honest about the difficulties of capturing the Canadian “apartheid” system in traditional forms of art-making. “This is the treatment, and that’s my job as an artist, to record it.” Photo submitted.

It’s a strange moment for Canada and Indigenous people.

On one hand there are gallery exhibitions, honorary degrees, film openings, interviews and accolades for Indigenous artists and filmmakers.

On the other, a Cree young man is shot at point blank range, and his killer acquitted. The staggering numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women across the country is an ongoing source of horror, and the rates of youth suicide in northern communities [continue](#) to grow.

On Saturday, Coast Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsełtun will be awarded an honorary degree at Emily Carr University. Dzawaḏ'enuxw First Nations artist [Marianne Nicolson](#) will also receive the school’s Emily Award for her body of work.

And Peepeekisis First Nation filmmaker Tasha Hubbard’s documentary [n̓ipawistam̓sowin: We Will Stand Up](#), which recently opened the Hot Docs Documentary Film Festival in Toronto, will be shown at DOXA Documentary Film Festival in Vancouver next Wednesday and Thursday.

At the Bill Reid Gallery, *qaʔ yaxʷ - water honours us: womxn and waterways*, a major new exhibit from First Nations Women artists, joins other shows of Indigenous work on offer at the [Museum of Vancouver](#) and the [Belkin Gallery](#).

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsełtun is painfully blunt about the twinned realities of Canada, where truth and reconciliation are espoused in speeches and press releases, but, in many parts of the country, the reality is very different.

Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsełtun, who graduated from Emily Carr in 1983 with an honours degree in painting, has never been one to play it safe. (See his work by going [here](#) and clicking the “Look Closer” button.) While

talking with The Tyee, he moves from anger to laughter and then back again in dizzying succession. It’s a challenge to keep up with the flood of ideas, ranging from the vagaries of the art world to the political truth of this country.



## The Tyee – May 3, 2019 (2 of 4)

He's brutally honest about what he calls the "apartheid" system in Canada that enshrines the right to oppress Indigenous people, as well as the difficulties of capturing this reality in traditional forms of artmaking: "How do you carve a graveyard at a residential school or a pedophile pole? That's not traditional," he says.

During our conversation the story of [Colten Boushie](#) comes up right away. The artist says this about the legal precedent established by the verdict in Boushie's death: "The right to shoot Indians on sight" doesn't fit exactly fit with Canada's policy of Truth and Reconciliation, he says. "This is the treatment, and that's my job as an artist, to record it."

The same schism between real and pretence permeates Tasha Hubbard's extraordinary film [We Will Stand Up](#). Hubbard's work, like that of Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tseltun, comes from a deeply personal place.

"I want my son to know all that was done to ensure his survival," she says at the start of her film, explaining that she was compelled to document the story of Boushie and his family because she didn't know how to keep her own son and nephew safe as they grew into young men.

The facts of Colten Boushie's case are familiar to most Canadians. On a summer day in August 2016, after swimming and partying at a nearby river, Boushie and a group of friends drove into the yard of a local farmer named Gerald Stanley. Boushie had been asleep in the backseat of the SUV when an altercation broke out.

After shots were fired by Stanley, Boushie jumped into the front seat of the vehicle and attempted to drive away. A few moments later he was dead, shot at close range in the back of the head. After an all-white jury acquitted Stanley of the charge of second-degree murder, Boushie's family took their fight for justice all the way to the [United Nations](#).

Hubbard's film captures the family's struggle for justice, but it also goes much deeper than the details of the case, illustrating in clear and concise fashion how oppression and racism are foundational in Canada.

The Red Pheasant Reserve where Boushie grew up is close to the site where the terms of Treaty 6 were first negotiated. As Hubbard explains in her plainspoken narration: "Our leaders realized we needed to find a new way to live, they came together at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt in 1876 to meet the Crown's representatives. They negotiated our future through Treaty 6, a nation-to-nation agreement. Our people were told that the newly arrived North-West Mounted Police were there to protect us. Livelihood, education, health care, hunting rights and more were all promised in exchange for sharing the land to the depth of a plow. We were told we kept our freedom. No one knew that the Government of Canada was preparing the Indian Act at the same time, which said Canada could dictate our lives."

Shunted onto reserves and starved into submission, the people rebelled, and in 1885 a group of warriors [killed](#) nine white settlers near Frog Lake, Alberta. Eight Indigenous men were executed in a public hanging. Native children from a nearby residential school were forced to witness the event — and taught what happens if they stood up for themselves.





## The Tyee – May 3, 2019 (3 of 4)

"I want my son to know all that was done to ensure his survival," Tasha Hubbard says at the start of her film *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*. The film captures the Boushie family's struggle for justice and illustrates how oppression and racism are foundational in Canada. Photo by Jon Montes.

Although Canadians might like to think that things have improved, the reality is that things in rural Canada have gone retrograde. The story of Colten Boushie made this clear.

This isn't news to Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun, who has dedicated his career to capturing different species of hypocrisy and hatred in surrealist imagery that integrates the art-making practice of the Coast Salish people with the European tradition of painting. Works with titles like *Christy Clark and the Kinder Morgan Go-Go Girls and Fucking Creeps They're Environmental Terrorists* are pointed about the nature of capitalism. Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun explains that painting is a means of mirroring the true nature of Canada.

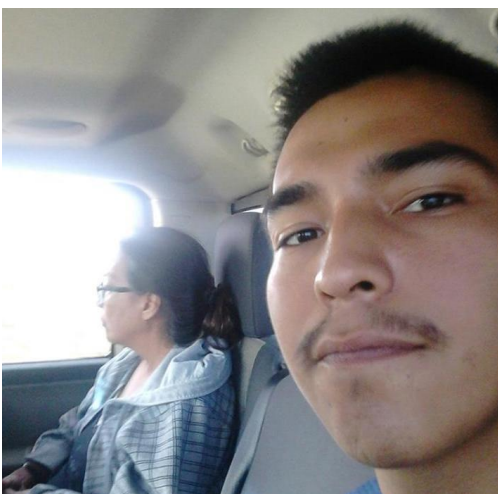
When Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun started studying at Emily Carr, the idea of a First Nations modernist painter was unheard of. "Forty years ago, at Emily Carr there were five of us," he says. "At the time, there wasn't anybody to follow." The predominant tropes of European painters — Michelangelo, Vermeer, Picasso, Van Gogh, Manet, Bruegel, Bosch — still held on. First Nations art-making was similarly locked into traditional practices that were particularly confining. "Tradition is limitation. You could carve a Thunderbird, a bear, a salmon, but you couldn't carve a clear-cut, or a priest raping a child."

As a political painter and self-described "shit disturber," Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun is adamant about the ability of art to act as a form of translation to the dominant culture.

"I'll never be invited to the Biennale," he laughs. Instead, his work captures the bloodletting that is the ideology of capitalism. "The God-given right to kill everything in the National Interest. This is what I get to paint." He has paid particularly close attention in his work to the political, cultural and economic landscape of Canada.

A large portion of Hubbard's film is dedicated to dismantling this same reality.

After Gerald Stanley was acquitted by an all-white jury, Boushie's family met with representatives from the Canadian government to ask for justice. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Jody Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott are all featured in Hubbard's film, as well as NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, and the then newly minted premier of Saskatchewan Moe Scott. They all promise that change is coming, that Boushie's death would not go unnoticed, and that his case would bring about a reappraisal of the justice system in Canada.



A photo of Colten Boushie. Photo courtesy of National Film Board.

## The Tyee – May 3, 2019 (4 of 4)

But even as that story was unfolding, another reality was taking place on social media, with anonymous posters writing ugly messages directly to Colten's family. A brief selection:

"There [sic] lucky only one drunk native was killed. I am not sure why Gerald's even on trial."

"Them buggers get all kinds of welfare money. So that is all they have to do. Booze drugs steal. We need hand guns for protection."

"Shoot, Shovel, Shhhhhh!"

As Hubbard's film makes clear, what is voiced in government speeches and what really happens to First Nation people is an old story in Canada. It's a history that Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun also intimately understands.

"Reservations are the oldest living concentration camps in the world," he says. "Residential schools destroyed our culture, this was done under Canadian government, and the Government of British Columbia. This bullshit rules our lives."

But in such a fractured reality, what can art do?

Things like honorary degrees, film festival screenings and major exhibitions are important because they are a way of ensuring a fuller story is told. In this light, the timing of Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun's degree at Emily Carr is interesting, coming during a time of political uncertainty in Canada, but also, more critically, at a period when things seem like they might be in the process of shifting backwards.

The election of Jason Kenney in Alberta, and the odious Andrew Scheer have focused attention on the growing culture of hate in Canada, much of which is aimed at Indigenous people.

Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun is forthright in stating that Trudeau is the lesser of two evils, and that bringing back the Conservatives is potentially very dangerous. He [quotes](#) Stephen Harper's infamous statement about the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women not being on his radar.

In the face of official government doublespeak, art can be a potent force, a way to present the fullest scope of experience.

As Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tsehtun says, "Canada has to grow up, to realize I'm a human being. A free human being. But you cannot be free with the Indian Act. We are prisoners of colonialism. You put a thermometer in the mouth of Canadians and take the temperature of their sentiments. Truth and reconciliation don't really exist. Canadians will always be racist and bigots under a colonial system."

Boushie's story brought this reality home with agonizing force. It is impossible to watch Hubbard's film and not feel the full weight of his family's suffering and grief sink right into the centre of your own body.

The Cree word *nîpawistamâsowin* in the title of Hubbard's film translates roughly to the idea of a small group of people standing up for a big group. It's a fitting description for what artists can do — stand up and speak out so that all Canadians can understand. 🌱

Classical 96.3 – May 3, 2019

## **‘Pipe Dreams’ Organ Competition Documentary Director Stacey Tenenbaum and Organist Nick Cappozoli on The Oasis**

2019-05-03

By: Classical Staff



[Pipe Dreams](#) is a new documentary directed by Stacey Tenenbaum. It gets one final screening at the Hot Docs Documentary Festival tomorrow at the Isabel Bader Theatre.

The film follows five young organists as they compete in Canada's prestigious International Organ Competition in Montreal. It's beautifully shot, rich with music, artistry and personality and really gives you an inside look into the wonderful world of competitive organ playing.

Director Stacey Tenenbaum and organist Nick Cappozoli joined Mark Wigmore on *The Oasis* for an inside look at what went into making the documentary.

LISTEN TO THE INTERVIEW:

<http://classicalfm.ca/station-blog/2019/05/03/audio-pipe-dreams-organ-competition-documentary-director-stacey-tenenbaum-organist-nick-cappozoli-oasis/>

## More Chances for Urban Films at Last Weekend of Hot Docs

May 3, 2019 12:24 pm | by Craig White

The last three days of Hot Docs 2019 are upon us, and they come with lots of great films to choose among. Included is the chance for a couple of free screenings: on the Cinesphere's amazingly huge IMAX screen on Saturday afternoon at 1:30 PM, there's a double bill of *Flight of the Butterflies 3D* and *Hubble 3D*, while on Sunday at 7 PM at the Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema, the Rogers Audience Award winner for the Best Canadian Documentary will be screened. As of Thursday, the leading contender was a film called *Prey* about sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, but two more days of voting might unseat it: you won't know until you're in the theatre on Sunday night! Otherwise, there's also this great option for seniors and students: Seniors (60+) and students with a valid ID can take advantage of free admission to films that start before 5:00 PM. Tickets can be obtained at the screening's venue box office on the day of the screening, subject to availability.

In the meantime, there are lots of films worth paying for too. Last week we highlighted three films that may be of particular interest to UrbanToronto readers for their urban condition focus. Of those, *Push* has one more screening on Saturday at Hart House at 9:15 PM, while *Beauty And Decay* has one more screening on Sunday at the Scotiabank Theatre at 6:30 PM.



An image from *Anbessa*, courtesy of Hot Docs

Another film worth bringing you attention to is *Anbessa*. Set on the edge of one of Addis Ababa's growing suburbs, the new development is encroaching on hardscrabble farmland where 8-year-old Asalif lives in an earthen-walled shack with his single mother. Just steps away is the new sprawl and the invading "condo boys" whom he mistrusts. Asalif copes by summoning his inner lion "*Anbessa*". While some scenes are very clearly scripted, the film has a very naturalistic feel to it and convincingly portrays the isolation, wonder, and precociousness of childhood in a strange world, all the while asking what is being gained and what is being lost as housing tracts march across the outskirts of growing cities.



An image from *Anbessa*, courtesy of Hot Docs

*Anbessa*'s last screening is at the Aga Khan Museum on Sunday at 3:15 PM.

Beyond that, there's plenty more to choose from, and you can find the whole schedule [here](#).

<http://urbantoronto.ca/news/2019/05/more-chances-urban-films-last-weekend-hot-docs>

## Hot Docs 2019 – That's a Wrap



### Hot Docs 2019 – That's a Wrap, *by Ralph Lucas – Publisher*

(May 3, 2019 – Toronto, ON) By rough count there are about 140 films that will screen over the last three days of the 26th annual edition of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival. Many of them are Canadian, and some of them are our favourites. It would not be fair to mention those we privately like. In fact, we like them all, there are just some, a very few, we like better.

Looking at the collection of Media passes we hang on the viewing screen of our antique Moviola, Northernstars has been reporting on the Canadian films at Hot Docs for 13 years. Actually we've done that almost from the first year we began publishing and this collection only represents the years I have asked for and been given media accreditation, for which I am grateful. I have had the pleasure of taping interviews with a few directors over the years and this year it was terrific to meet and talk with [Tasha Hubbard](#) about her film, especially since it had been selected to be the opening night film. I look forward to talking with other directors as their films move on from the festival circuit to theatrical release.

Documentaries are the most important form of filmmaking. Designed to do exactly what the word means, these are moments in history and remain valid from the first day the cameras began to roll to long, long into the future. Many documentaries become even more important decades after they were first released.

As we move into the final weekend of Hot Docs, instead of us repeating the list of Canadian films we think you should consider, I'd like to wrap our coverage and urge you to spend some time looking at what's playing. One of the best ways to start is to think about what interests you and then do a [search by film subject](#).

Our last report on this year's festival will be when the awards are announced and festival organizers give us the stats on attendance. Meanwhile...enjoy the festival. I plan to as well.



## Hot Docs Film Review: ‘Buddy’

Dutch docmaker Heddy Honigmann keeps things simple to heart-filling effect in this close-up study of six service dogs and their masters.

By [GUY LODGE](#)



CREDIT: COURTESY OF ROB ZWARTSER

Director: Heddy Honigmann

1 hour 26 minutes

As documentary pitches go, a study of service dogs and their humans is as critic-proof, in its own way, as a Marvel spectacular: It will have a particular audience at “hello” (or perhaps that should be “heel”) regardless of execution. Which is to say that veteran Dutch docmaker [Heddy Honigmann](#)’s “[Buddy](#)” doesn’t need to be as delicate and intelligent as it is to work, but its thoughtful, unsentimental gaze makes an already guaranteed awww-fest into something more substantially affecting. Examining a diverse half-dozen of dog-person pairs at close but not overly invasive quarters, the film captures the remarkable breadth and depth of assistance these canine aides offer their variously disabled, trauma-afflicted or special-needs owners. An unsurprising hit with audiences on the docfest circuit, “[Buddy](#)” is bound for a long life in ancillary.

A humane, straightforward stylist who began in narrative cinema before making a non-fiction name for herself in the 1990s, Honigmann brings no structural tricks or formal fireworks to this TV-friendly exercise. Her great gift is as an observer and interviewer, and “Buddy” benefits from the evident, carefully won comfort that her potentially vulnerable subjects feel on camera, as they speak candidly of both their physical dependency on, and emotional attachment to, their furry partners — as well as the difficulties of moving on when, cruelly, these stalwart support animals weaken and die. Even as a tear-jerker, however, “Buddy” remains quietly composed, give or take the wistful piano motifs of Florencia Di Concilio’s score.

Working at a gentle pace that allows for viewers to pick up small, telling domestic details, Honigmann and editor Jessica de Koning introduce their subjects gradually, eventually alternating their stories in complementary ways. There may initially appear to be little in common between Zeb, a mostly exuberant autistic pre-teen devoted to his equally energetic labradoodle Utah, and Trevor, an imposing Afghanistan war veteran whose noble poodle Mister helps to alleviate the effects of his PTSD — though we come to see how these protective pooches work similarly to draw their human wards out of their own heads, deflecting anger and panic in the process. Zeb even admits to camera that Utah handles his moods better than his own loving but fretful mother.



Other dogs provide more tangible practical assistance to their physically incapacitated owners. Bouncy, alert Kaiko makes it possible for middle-aged, wheelchair-bound Erna to live independently, and some of the film's most remarkable footage shows the dog's extraordinary ability to anticipate and intuit her owner's actions and needs, whether opening and closing kitchen drawers or, via a most ingenious pulley system, helping to turn her over in bed and tuck her in again. Blind octogenarian Edith has always lived alone — and even managed to indulge her passion for horse-riding — thanks to a long line of treasured support dogs, of which the magnificent Alsatian cross Makker is the latest. (She keeps portraits of them all on the walls, Edith wryly admits, even if she can't see them.)

Unlike last year's similarly themed doc "Pick of the Litter" — also an audience favorite at last year's Hot Docs fest — "Buddy" is not concerned with the ins and outs of the service-dog industry. Details of how the mutts are trained, selected, assigned and, unhappily, replaced are barely alluded to, as Honigmann prefers to fashion her film as an close-up relationship study. Examining the intimate partnership between guide and guided, and noting the contrasting dynamics between different human-dog couples along the way, it's a film that treats both parties with equal interest: Adri Schrover's camera is as attentive to the dogs' restless expressions of darting worry or doting devotion as it is to their humans' talking heads. The old maxim that dogs and their owners wind up resembling each other is partly true here: By the end of this tender, generous film, the two species don't seem all that separate.

Hot Docs Film Review: 'Buddy'

Reviewed at Hot Docs Film Festival (Special Presentations), April 26, 2019. (Also in IDFA, MoMA Documentary Fortnight.) Running time: 86 MIN.

PRODUCTION: (Documentary — The Netherlands) A VOF Appel & Honigmann productions. (International sales: CAT & Docs, Paris.) Producer: John Appel.

CREW: Director, writer: Heddy Honigmann. Camera (color): Adri Schrover. Editor: Jessica de Koning. Music: Florencia Di Concilio.

## ‘Supreme Law’: The Court is Now in Session

Posted on May 3rd, 2019



By Pat Mullen

Last night, Hot Docs audiences were treated to the debut of Kat Cizek’s new interactive work *Supreme Law*. This NFB project schools users on the Canadian Constitution, particularly Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s mission to **patriate** it and give the nation its right to make its own laws, rather than leave everything in the lands of tea-drinking England. YouTube personality Jus Reign has a lot of fun playing a new take on the PM and guides users through the history of the constitution with its many flaws and nuances.

Reign is joined by a host of other manic YouTubers who revisit the same story from the perspectives of women (although all others in the work are women), Quebecois, Western Canadians, and Indigenous persons whose land we occupy. The effort to challenge the idea of a singular national identity or history is admirable, although the project’s emphasis on identity politics makes the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion somewhat glaring despite the understandable narrative conveniences offered by the categories that frame the work. The gaps revealed by the project, however, should inspire Canadians to recognize the need to continually evaluate the rights and freedoms outlined by the Constitution and ensure that they are fair and just for the wide-range of experiences that shape the nation.

There’s a lot more outside of the influencers’ short film segments, however. Users can learn more as they take a break from the high-energy YouTubers and explore the “deep dives” of the project that engage with the Canadian Constitution in more depth. *Supreme Law* obviously contains some invaluable information and resources that audiences will have to explore in more detail, and it makes Canadian history more accessible than the average high school civics class.

## Addicted to Non-Fiction at Hot Docs 2019

It has been said that documentaries serve as a powerful platform that brings important topics to the table – sparking discussion, and sometimes, even social movements. Consequently, seeing these experiences through the dedicated work of filmmakers helps put ourselves in the shoes of complete strangers. In other words, offering the viewer real people and real life situations that Hollywood fiction simply cannot provide.

Now in its 26<sup>th</sup> year, the **Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival** is Toronto's second-largest film event (behind TIFF), which runs from April 26<sup>th</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>. Featuring a staggering 234 films from around the world, this year's lineup ranges in styles from expository, observational, and performative, all across a mere 10 days.



***Push*** (dir. Fredrik Gertten, Sweden) is arguably the flagship film in this regard. Skilfully assembled by director Gertten and editor Erik Bafving, the wide reaching work makes its thesis statement clear from the get-go: Affordable housing is a basic human right. Examples from Toronto to London to Barcelona expertly critique the global housing crisis with a surprising dose of humour amidst the grim realities it presents.

With its frank and depressing material, Gertten balances stories of eviction with that of its subject Leilani Farha, a United Nation special rapporteur on adequate housing. Through her, the film talks with respected social and political thinkers, shedding light on the global epidemic that's only getting worse. Accessible and engaging, *Push* is certain to inspire lively conversations with those who see it.



Elsewhere, ***Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies*** (dir. Larry Weinstein, Canada) considers the present day landscape of “fake news” and “alternative facts” and investigates them by looking back at notable

historical moments. Spanning ancient cave handprints to the Twitter account of the 45<sup>th</sup> president, *Propaganda* truly excels when it simply sits down with key artists and their provocative creations.

Interviews from Jim Fitzpatrick (creator of the famous Che Guevara poster) to Sabo, a politically conservative street artist in Los Angeles, give the viewer glimpses of how powerful images are, more often than not, made from the confines of a singular vision.



Equally absorbing, albeit altogether different, is the much talked-about ***Killing Patient Zero*** (dir. Laurie Lynd, Canada). Detailing the origins of the AIDS epidemic with the compelling story of Quebec flight attendant Gaetan Dugas- the man falsely implicated with starting it all – the film poses insight and compassion for its subject.

Fusing an array of 40 interviews with Dugas' friends, as well as prominent journalists, *Killing of Patient Zero* shows how Dugas' name became identified with the virus through an unfortunate typo – misconstruing the letter "O" for the number 0. Determined to correct this long standing misconception, director Lynd paints him as a hero of sorts. Through his full co-operation with investigators before his death at age 31, Dugas' information of past partners ultimately helped prove that AIDS was indeed a sexually transmitted disease, before it was determined otherwise.

Indeed, if there is a through line guiding the selections at Hot Docs for 2019, it is certainly the idea of documentary filmmaking as a curious, daring, and fearless artform that does not shy away from all points of view.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind



[ANDREW LEWIS](#)

MAY 3, 2019

4 Stars

Although it treads lightly, this Lightfoot doc is worth a watch. *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* does not dig deep enough to let us read the iconic Canadian singer-songwriter's mind, but instead gives us a light-hearted look at his music and career. Do not expect juicy rock-n-roll celebrity stories (although, names are liberally dropped throughout) and do not expect some tragic backstory or a piece on the hardship of fame. It is something much simpler: a celebration of a musical legend.

Nothing about the film is particularly ground-breaking or unfiltered, but why should it be? It is upbeat, enjoyable, and interesting. And it is not *too* squeaky-clean: we still hear about his drinking problems and him overcoming them, but there is no dwelling or pity involved.

Through the words of Lightfoot, those closest to him, and Alec Baldwin for some reason (am I missing some connection here??) *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* paints a picture, or sings a song rather, of how he became the legend he is today. And of course, plenty of Lightfoot's tunes play throughout. If you are a fan of Lightfoot, or the Canadian music scene, then it is a worthwhile watch.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Inside Lehman Brothers



[DANI SAAD](#)

MAY 3, 2019

3 STARS

A modest but effective addition to films exploring the 2008 financial crisis.

Though typically thought of as executives, investors, and borrowers, key players in the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis more broadly also included whistleblowers, as chronicled here in *Inside Lehman Brothers*, a documentary from director Jennifer Deschamps.

The film acts as a nice complimentary piece to the Lehman Brothers story and will be most appreciated by viewers that have some background on the company's practices. It seems like Deschamps assumes (correctly) that most viewers have encountered other documentaries and feature films on the topic and will appreciate this new take, focused on a group of mostly female whistleblowers who saw the early warning signs of a subprime mortgage crisis.

While the top-positioned men remain largely unscathed, whistleblowers suffered for their integrity and were thoroughly punished for raising ethical concerns around what were increasingly common practices. Like so many around the globe, this group of whistleblowers is haunted by decade-old events, and for them, perhaps especially, it's personal.



## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MY MOTHER'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Mark Hanson](#) - May 03, 2019

4 Stars



Benedetta Barzini spent a lot of time in front of the camera as one of the most sought-after supermodels of the 1960s. Once she stepped away from that career, however, becoming a radical feminist activist in the process, her relationship with the camera soured. Yet her son, director Beniamino Barrese, refused to stop filming her, relentlessly so, afraid that if he stopped, she might disappear forever.

*The Disappearance of My Mother* is Barrese's attempt to keep Barzini's spirit alive, even if she doesn't always care to. Part celebratory retrospective and part intimate confessional, the film is a warts-and-all portrait of a woman who has cared so deeply about the world for so long that she's ready to give up. It's these ominous sentiments from Barzini that causes Barrese to focus the camera even closer on her, especially in moments when she angrily expresses her desire to be left alone.

Barzini truly is a badass, working with the likes of Diana Vreeland and Richard Avedon and hanging out at the Warhol Factory in the '60s before abruptly turning her back on the fashion industry and becoming an outspoken critic of the exploitation of women's bodies in all kinds of image-based media. At 75 years old, she teaches university courses in Milan and is still highly respected within the fashion world, yet she oftentimes seems lost.

These moments of contemplation and confusion are what Barrese captures perfectly, whether it's out at London Fashion Week, where she is invited back for a catwalk appearance amongst a circus that she now seems removed from, or as she putters around her home lamenting the downward trajectory of the human race. It may drag on a bit too long at the end, but this heartfelt home movie and its subject are never less than fascinating.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'HAYDEE AND THE FLYING FISH'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Thomas Wishloff](#) - May 03, 2019

3.5 Stars



Many documentaries are of historical events. The very nature of non-fiction, lends itself far better to true stories than fiction and its, “based off of a true story” disclaimers do. Sometimes, these true stories are pleasant, and about enjoyable moments in history. Occasionally, however, non-fiction cinema touches upon stories you know to be true, and yet, sincerely wish were not.

Pachi Busto's *Haydee and the Flying Fish* is one such documentary. Forty years after the brutal Pinochet regime's takeover of Chile, the titular Haydee finds herself literally and metaphorically healing from the scars of the military junta. Justice, may be served in the form of a court sentencing, however, there is the mystery of what actually happened to Haydee that must be simultaneously unravelled. Be fairly warned, this is a documentary with some very graphic and serious subject matter. It is not for the faint of heart. On particularly heartbreaking scene involves Haydee needing to have her blood drawn, an event that proves traumatic. I personally grimaced on many an occasion during this film.

The aesthetic of *Haydee and the Flying Fish*, is an original yet peculiar one. Large portions of this film involve still photographs, playing on screen with voiceover narration. At times this felt a bit alienating, however, it may ultimately be an attempt to create an effect that lingers. This is ultimately the intention of Busto's film. For as much as the film is a piece of restorative justice, the larger point being made is that some scars remain and will remain. This is a well-made and crucially important documentary, but viewers should be aware of the content before they go in.

## Becoming Dr. Ruth puts the lovable sex therapist on full display, but misses the mark

MARTIN MORROW

PUBLISHED MAY 3, 2019



*Linda Kash plays the titular character in Becoming Dr. Ruth. JOANNA AKYOL/HANDOUT*

- Title: Becoming Dr. Ruth
- Written by: Mark St. Germain
- Genre: Comedy
- Director: David Eisner
- Actor: Linda Kash
- Company: Harold Green Jewish Theatre
- Venue: Toronto Centre for the Arts
- City: Toronto
- Year: Runs to Thursday, May 16

In the wake of the Ontario government's rollback of the province's sex-ed curriculum, it's both ironic and salutary that Toronto should get a double dose of Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

The first came with the recent Hot Docs screening of the new biopic *Ask Dr. Ruth*, attended by the 90-year-old sex therapist herself. Now, we have the second with the Harold Green Jewish Theatre's staging of the one-woman play *Becoming Dr. Ruth*, starring Linda Kash as the good doctor.

Where some are still uncomfortable with an open discussion of sexual matters, the diminutive, unflappable Westheimer has been one of the great crusaders for, ahem, carnal knowledge. Since the 1980s, her popular books and her radio, television and now YouTube programs have helped to not only demystify sex for North Americans, but to extol its pleasures and benefits. She's the lovable bubbe who tells us not to eat our chicken soup but to make sure we're getting enough orgasms.

That lovable bubbe is on full display in *Becoming Dr. Ruth*, American playwright Mark St. Germain's 2013 off-Broadway play, getting its local debut from the HGJT at the Toronto Centre for the Arts. It leads us on a fascinating 90-minute journey through Westheimer's remarkable story, from escaping the Holocaust to hobnobbing with U.S. presidents. But, while faithfully charting her life, it gives little sense of the significance of her life's work.

The year is 1997 and Westheimer, recently widowed, is packing up her apartment in Manhattan's Washington Heights for a move downtown. As she sifts through old photos, diaries and tchotchkes, she shares with us her past. It begins in Germany in 1928, when she was born Karola Ruth Siegel to a businessman and a farmer's daughter. Her early years in the bosom of a loving family ended abruptly when the Nazis came to power, her father was arrested and she herself was rescued by the Kindertransport, which bundled her off to a Swiss orphanage.

## The Globe and Mail – May 3, 2019 (2 of 2)

From there, she recounts her teenage years in a pre-Israel Palestine, working on a kibbutz and training as a sniper in the Haganah, the Jewish underground army. Later, she's in 1950s Paris, listening to Édith Piaf and naively admiring the street walkers; and then, finally, the United States, where as a single mother (having married and divorced twice along the way) she does work with Planned Parenthood and finds her calling.

Her experiences with sex and love, from her first crush to her last husband, Manfred Westheimer, are a leitmotif. She also takes time to relish her celebrity, with anecdotes about the likes of Bill Clinton and Paul McCartney, and recreates the local New York radio call-in show, *Sexually Speaking*, that launched her media career in the 1980s.



*Kash nails Westheimer's sprightly manner and distinctive accent. JOANNA AKYOL/HANDOUT*

St. Germain, who specializes in famous-people plays (his Freud's Last Session was seen at HGJT a few seasons back), has crafted a plum role for a mature actress, and the likeable Kash would seem to be perfect for it. Sure enough, with that signature pouf of blond hair, a brightly patterned blouse and turquoise pants, she's the very picture of geriatric joie de vivre and she nails Westheimer's sprightly manner and distinctive accent. As her Dr. Ruth observes, she's been told she sounds both like Sigmund Freud and "a gerbil in heat."

Yet, while she's appropriately warm and twinkly, something's missing. You realize what it is at the end of the show when we get to see a video clip of Kash as herself meeting the real Dr. Ruth at a book signing. It's Westheimer's wisecracking, slightly acerbic side that's absent in the actor's performance, that edge which reminds us she's a tough, shrewd woman with a cultivated public image. There are opportunities in the play to let that mask slip, but Kash, still skating on the surface on her character, doesn't take them.

She does, however, look convincingly tiny as she winds through the mountain range of cardboard moving boxes that dominate Yannik Larivée's apartment set. The boxes also serve as a screen for projections of the family photos that Dr. Ruth shows us. Family, in fact, is the prevailing theme of the play and the most poignant moments in this otherwise anodyne production, wanly directed by David Eisner, occur when Dr. Ruth describes her continuing search to find out the fate of her relatives under the Nazis.

Of course, it wouldn't be a play about Dr. Ruth if there wasn't also some sex advice. Apart from answering the questions of her *Sexually Speaking* callers, she takes time on the phone with one of her moving men to assuage his fears of genital inadequacy. "Love your penis," she tells him soothingly. Bubbe knows best.

Becoming Dr. Ruth continues to May 16. ([hgjewishteatre.com](http://hgjewishteatre.com))

Sex therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer says 'the timing is right' for a new doc on her life, *Ask Dr. Ruth*. THE CANADIAN PRESS

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/reviews/article-becoming-dr-ruth-puts-the-lovable-sex-therapist-on-full-display-but/>

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: A Women's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem



KIRK HAVILAND

MAY 4, 2019

The NFL has a problem, and a few courageous women are here to expose it to us all.

The massive profit machine that is the NFL has been hiding a secret far too long. Despite making an estimated 14 billion per year with team owners making millions per year, players signing million dollar contracts and even coaches making millions, the cheerleaders are often left working long, exhausting hours for no money at all. With the teams selling “it should be a honor to just be part of the team” for decades, things finally hit a turning point when some women finally say enough is enough and take the whole league to court for restitution.

Following 2 of the plaintiffs from the earliest of the lawsuits, Lacy and Maria who cheered for the Oakland Raiders and Buffalo Bills respectively, over the span of multiple years as they attempt to take the matter to court, director Yu Gu uses many different angles to fill in the story. Vintage recruitment videos, excerpts from employee manuals complete with ridiculous social requirements and more are used to frame the picture of a drastically antiquated and sexist system designed to keep these women away from the salary they richly deserve. The fact that these cheerleaders are not only not paid but also expected to cover their own expenses is shocking to say the least.

The film also covers the backlash from the NFL, online trolls and sexist fans denouncing these ladies worth to even former cheerleaders shockingly speaking out against the endeavours of these ladies, painting a full picture of the massive struggle in front of these ladies. The film certainly doesn't put the NFL in the best light and the filmmakers do well not to shy away from the material, sticking tight to their guns and exposing this injustice for all to see.

In the end we grow to appreciate these ladies and the courageous effort they put forth, through both private and public moments shared on camera, and embrace them as the fighters they truly are.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The Corporate Coup D'Etat



[KIRK HAVILAND](#), MAY 4, 2019  
3 STARS

The Corporate Coup D'Etat succeeds the most when it focuses on the victims, and not the prognosticators.

Not long into Fred Peabody's *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* journalist Chris Hedges, who has already introduced us to the now derelict community of Camden, New Jersey, lays out the point of view of this film, his thesis if you will, and sets the acts of the rest of the documentary in motion. "Trump is the symptom, not the disease" he says. "The system was already corrupt" he says, and Peabody clearly agrees. With a range of philosophers, journalists and other social commentators, including Canadian John Ralston Saul who first coined the term that gives Peabody his film title, the film sets out to establish this thesis and perhaps wake up some people in the process.

Spanning through decades of policies and corporate agenda is a daunting feat, so none of the investigation gets too in depth here, as the film surmises that our current issues can be traced all the way back to the introduction of Reagnomics. Seeing the influence of corporations through the many bills introduced during the Reagan presidency as sowing the seeds for NAFTA under Clinton and continuing through to modern day Trump. But of course without a smoking gun persay, the audience is given compelling testimonials, but hardly any concrete evidence.

The film does well in showing the result of the corporate spoiling of American however, showing us not only the aforementioned Camden, New Jersey but the decimated former steel town Youngstown, Ohio, with some poignant observations from citizens living on or below the poverty line. This is where the film triumphs.

Otherwise the film falls into the same "talking heads" interview aesthetic sometimes, with a lot of espousing of theory and philosophy. Toward the end though we are left with one gem from Philosopher Cornel West. "There's a Trump inside every American. But I hope and pray there's a Martin Luther King in there too". As should we all.



## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Knock Down the House



### KIRK HAVILAND

MAY 4, 2019,

4.5 STARS

*Knock Down the House* delivers a thoroughly engaging and entertaining ride through a less seen side of American politics.

The Netflix documentary *Knock Down the House*, playing at this year's festival, shows the audience a rarely seen side of American politics. In a field dominated by rich, old white men, this film follows 4 women of varying ethnic backgrounds and education, that are all firmly part of the American working class, as they attempt to overturn the applecart and run for election to congress in the 2016 primary elections. Nevada candidate Amy Vilela, West Virginian Paula Jean Swearengen, St Louis Missouri's Cori Bush and the most famous of the group, New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Through each of the women's involvement with the non-profit political group Brand New Congress, a group dedicated to getting as many working class civilians back into the congress without the financial aide of any lobbyists or corporation, director Rachel Lears selected the 4 women to focus in on based on their backgrounds. But early on in the film it becomes quickly evident that based on Ocasio-Cortez's landmark victory the film is going to focus on her story as the primary, and that's the right decision for the audience. Ocasio-Cortez is just as engaging, charming and eloquent in her personal moments as she is on the big stage, and the sequence where she finds out about her big win is thankfully all caught on camera as we get to revel in her pure joy.

Amy Vilela's, a still grieving mother who lost her daughter 2 years prior due to archaic medical insurance requirements, is a in fascinating study of a driven woman looking to honor the past and makes changes that will stick. Coal Miner's Daughter Paula Jean and St Louis activist Cori don't get as much screen time as the other pair, but the film does show us the results off all their effort.

All of these women's efforts are to be applauded and they all deserve the same amount of praise that Ocasio-Cortez has in her win. *Knock Down the House* gives them the respect they all have clearly earned.

## Review: 'Hi, AI'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published May 2nd, 2019



### *Hi, AI*

(Germany, 85 min.)

Dir. Isa Willinger

Programme: World Showcase (North American Premiere)

It's been six years since Spike Jonze told the story of Theo and Samantha in *Her*. Cut to 2019 and Isa Willinger offers the story of Chuck and Harmony in *Hi, AI*. One difference between the films, and easily the most unsettling one, is that *Her* is a science fiction drama with its love story of artificial intelligence, while *Hi, AI* is a documentary. What once was speculative is now reality.

Jonze wasn't far off while playing with the idea that some humans have stronger relationships with operating systems than they do with their fellow man, as evidenced by Theo's humorously offbeat relationship with his phone's OS named Samantha. Harmony, on the other hand, nearly looks human. She's a sophisticated and anatomically correct robot complete with blonde locks, an Irish accent, and a removable head. Her grasp for dialogue doesn't match Samantha's, since she mostly rephrases Chuck's questions in the affirmative or responds with comically long-winded answers that are a Wikipedia click away. (She also lacks ScarJo's seductively sultry voice, but nobody's perfect.) Harmony resembles a sex doll more than a human being though, and there's a deadness to her movements and communication skills that indicate how AI is still a work in progress.

Willinger offers an objective study of Chuck's relationship with Harmony that seeks to understand if the early experiments in human-AI interactions offer positive or negative results. The same goes for a trial run in a Japanese household in which a son bestows a robot named Pepper upon his mother to keep her mind active. The grandma doesn't seem nearly as attached to Pepper as Chuck does to Harmony, but this robot isn't nearly as sophisticated. Pepper is clunky, slow, and annoying. The novelty seems to wear off for grandma as Pepper responds to her attempts at conversation with random questions about tidying the house. (And FYI, watching someone watch a robot is a novelty that wears thin quickly.) When her sister comes to visit, there's a notable spark provided by human connection. On the other hand, Harmony proves therapeutic for Chuck as she helps him develop intimacy and trust as he works out a childhood trauma. There are obvious pros and cons to the relationships Willinger observes, if one can call them that.

Willinger features a number of other nifty robots in development to show the range of research and the levels of artificial intelligence in the field. One robot makes popcorn while another learns to balance. Segments with philosophers and researchers acknowledge the grand debates of AI: can consciousness ever be created; will robots ever surpass humans; could AI become like HAL 9000 (in 2001) and turn against the humans that developed it. Willinger covers the human/robot interactions with impressive coverage and she uses engaging shot/reverse shot dynamics to capture the attempt at human interaction created by the experiments. Even when the robots respond, Willinger observes some awfully one-sided conversations.

The conclusions of the "relationship" between and 'bot are still up in the air, but Willinger's film says more about humans than it does about robots. Loneliness, disconnection, and isolation appear to develop in tandem with AI. The research into the effects of these designs upon humans is too new but Willinger's film is an intriguing beginning. As a species, the human race has as many kinks to work out as Harmony and Pepper do.

Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](#) for more coverage from this year's festival!

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-hi-ai>

## DocXchange Looks to Boost Doc Biz With Exhibitors Collective

By [JENNIE PUNTER](#)



CREDIT: JOSEPH HOWARTH/HOT DOCS

TORONTO – When it comes to the subject of documentary features in brick-and-mortar theaters, the recent run of strong box-office performances is the headline-grabber.

But [Hot Docs](#) hopes we'll see more stories in the near future about other cities launching venues similar to its [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#), located on Toronto's bustling Bloor Street corridor, where audiences gather to watch, discuss, and celebrate first-run documentary features year-round.

To encourage venue operators or doc organizations – and, hopefully, their philanthropic supporters – to take the plunge, Hot Docs has banded with the Maysles Documentary Center (New York), Bertha DocHouse (London), and La Compagna (Florence) to create the Documentary Exhibitors Collective, which they're dubbing DocXchange.

Spearheaded by Hot Docs' president Chris McDonald, Bertha's Elizabeth Wood, and Campagna's Camilla Toschi, the collective's mission is to raise the profile of docs by offering "support and collaboration for documentary enthusiasts to create venues – from converted shopfronts to 500-seat deco cinemas – to inspire filmmakers and the public to 'turn doc!'" said the group.

"We want there to be more venues than ours in the world," McDonald told *Variety* at the start of the 2019 Hot Docs festival, which wraps May 5.

"We are sharing best practices, tips on what programs are doing well, films that have performed and under-performed," he said. "And as the big sister in the foursome, we are opening up our books and our business plans for others to see how we've done it."

The larger goal of this, McDonald continued, is about helping filmmakers. "Our mandate is to showcase this art form and to help filmmakers to get them made and distributed and seen."

Hot Docs' own learning curve over the course of running and expanding the festival for over 25 years and, in particular, since launching its own cinema in March 2012, has shown the organization that being competitive isn't always the best or only choice for finding success. "Over time we realized that

the opposite is true. Every time we sit down with another group we are all learning practical things that help us all.

“With a festival, where you get bigger every year, you learn to live within your means, and anticipate and plan for various outcomes,” McDonald said. “In our second year of running the cinema, our box office was down significantly, and it dawned on us—we’re in a marketplace, we don’t control content the same way we do when planning the festivals.”

What the cinema’s programmers learned is that special or enhanced programming helps boost the box office when it’s a slow year for theatrical. In addition to its long-running Doc Soup series, Hot Docs has also created programming such as its Curious Minds series.

McDonald said he and his DocXchange collaborators plan to actively chat up the organization and the benefits of membership on the festival circuit in the months ahead: “We want to take the mystery out of running a dedicated documentary cinema.”



## Film on Colten Boushie case wins \$10,000 prize at Hot Docs festival

Canadian Press

May 4, 2019

TORONTO — A film about the killing of a young Indigenous man in Saskatchewan has won a top prize at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

Tasha Hubbard's "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" has won the best Canadian feature documentary award, which comes with a \$10,000 cash prize.

The film, which opened the festival, is about the case of Colten Boushie.

The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation was shot to death after the vehicle he was in drove onto a farm property near Biggar, Sask., in 2016.

Last year, a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally as he was trying to scare off young people on his property.

The Hot Docs jury said the film "has created a lasting document that brings together past and future to illuminate oppression and resilience."

Other Hot Docs award winners announced Friday night include Matt Gallagher's "Prey," which won a \$5,000 special jury prize for its look at a sexual abuse survivor who takes on the Catholic church in an Ontario court.

The emerging Canadian filmmaker award, which comes with a \$3,000 cash prize, went to Emily Gan for "Cavebirds."

Pailin Wedel's "Hope Frozen" won the \$10,000 best international feature documentary award.

The \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary will be announced as the festival wraps on Sunday.

## Film on Colten Boushie case wins \$10,000 prize at Hot Docs festival



*Debbie Baptiste, left, and Jade Tootoosis are shown at United Nations building in New York in this still from the documentary "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" in this handout photo. A film about the killing of a young Indigenous man in Saskatchewan has won a top prize at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival. Tasha Hubbard's "nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up" has won the best Canadian feature documentary award, which comes with a \$10,000 cash prize. The film, which opened the festival, is about the case of Colten Boushie.* *Melissa Kent / THE CANADIAN PRESS*

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<https://nationalpost.com/pmnn/news-pmnn/canada-news-pmnn/film-on-colten-boushie-case-wins-10000-prize-at-hot-docs-festival>



## **Film on Colten Boushie case wins \$10,000 prize at Hot Docs festival**

### **CANADIAN PRESS**

Updated: May 4, 2019

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Toronto Star – May 4, 2019

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By The Canadian Press, Sat., May 4, 2019



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<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/2019/05/04/film-on-colten-boushie-case-wins-10000-prize-at-hot-docs-festival.html>

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## 'Maxima' Holds Her Lead Ahead of Final Hot Docs Screening

Posted on May 4th, 2019 •



By Pat Mullen

*Maxima* is still queen bee of the Hot Docs hive with today's update of the Audience Award rankings. Claudia Sparrow's portrait of a subsistence farmer who takes on a mining company has held the number one spot for three consecutive days as the other contenders move up and down without dethroning the doc. The film has its final screening tomorrow at 3:30 PM. Previous runners-up *Prey* and *Willie* have completed their run at the festival, so it's up to Sunday's audience to see if the little Peruvian doc that could will keep the lead.

*Ask Dr. Ruth* jumped back into the top five as *Gods of Molenbeek* and one Canadian tumble dropped a notch following yesterday's screenings. The only new title to crack the top 20 was *Wu-Tang Clan: Of Mics and Men*, which had its Hot Docs debut last night. Yesterday also saw the [handout of the juried prizes](#) with [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#) and [Hope Frozen](#) winning the prizes for Best Canadian Feature and International Feature, respectively.

1. Maxima
2. Rogers Audience Award Contender
3. Rogers Audience Award Contender
4. Ask Dr. Ruth
5. Gods of Molenbeek
6. Rogers Audience Award Contender
7. Rogers Audience Award Contender
8. Rogers Audience Award Contender
9. [For Sama](#)
10. Rogers Audience Award Contender
11. Rogers Audience Award Contender
12. Last Breath
13. Rogers Audience Award Contender
14. [Kifaru](#)
15. [Knock Down the House](#)
16. Seahorse
17. Beyond the Visible – Hilma af Klint
18. Wu-Tang Clan: Of Mics and Men
19. Dear Brother
20. Sea of Shadows

## “A Day in the Life” with Toronto filmmaker Ingrid Veninger

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May 4, 2019 [Joel Levy](#) [Artist Profiles](#), [Arts](#)

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Ingrid Veninger is fervently determined to walk her path. And she has tread all the major paths in the film industry, working as an actor, writer, director, producer, and professor. You may have spotted Ingrid’s characteristic dreadlocked bun on the red carpet at TIFF, alongside daughter and frequent collaborator Hallie Switzer. Or perhaps you spotted her as early as the 1990s on La Femme Nikita series. Other well-known projects include Only, Modra, i am a good person/i am bad person, The Animal Project, He Hated Pigeons and Porcupine Lake. Her newest feature film is El Mundo o Nada (The World or Nothing), a first foray into documentary in which Ingrid travels to Spain and follows twin Cuban brothers seeking fame.

I first met Ingrid via Skype nearly seven years ago. I was a baby filmmaker from the States, scanning the skies for people who were making interesting work and didn’t seem like assholes. I breathlessly asked her questions, and she overflowed with encouragement and advice: “You don’t have to wait for permission from anyone to do your art.” Since then, I’ve followed Ingrid’s creative beacon closely and been lucky enough to become friends.

Many people say that each artist stands on the shoulders of giants. But Ingrid doesn’t stand on anyone’s shoulders without offering a hand up. She has a fundamental commitment to empowering other women storytellers. Upon receiving the Jay Scott prize of \$5000 in 2011, Ingrid put the money towards empowering Canadian storytellers and launched Toronto’s “1KWave”. Then she did it again while winning the EDA Award at the Whistler Film Festival in 2014, bidding others in the room to invest in six new screenplays by six Canadian women. Melissa Leo stepped up and six original scripts were nurtured through Ingrid’s pUNK Films FEMMES LAB. As an inaugural participant at Hedgebrook’s Screenwriters Lab on Whidbey Island, she began work on her sixth feature, Porcupine Lake, a coming-of-age relationship between two girls set in Ontario’s north.

But Ingrid also works outside the binary, collaborating and cross-fertilizing to create stories and narrative structures that have never been seen before. Born in Slovakia, and trained as a dancer in childhood, Ingrid has a unique method for making meaning and telling visual stories. The most interesting thing about Ingrid’s work is how unpredictable it is, and yet authentic. Ingrid is deeply interested in aligning her creative process with the stories she tells. She has been called the “DIY queen of Canadian filmmaking,” the Canuck version of Greta Gerwig and mumblecore royalty. To step into Ingrid’s world is an invitation to chaos. But it’s the kind of chaos that somehow makes you feel right again, more human. This is the kind of artist we need in the world. We need artists who understand that process is intimately connected to product. We need more curiosity, more generosity, more audacity, more originality. And we can trust Ingrid to show us the way.

-Bio written by Bonnie Stinson.

## Review: 'The Book of the Sea'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published May 4th, 2019



### ***The Book of the Sea***

(Russia, 85 min.)

Dir. Aleksei Vakhrushev

Programme: Animal Magnetism

Fans of the Hot Docs 2016 Audience Award winner [Angry Inuk](#) will want to see *The Book of the Sea*. This artfully thrilling doc-animation adventure from Russian-Indigenous director Aleksei Vakhrushev (*The Tundra Book*) takes audiences for a wild ride. The film observes life in the Bering Strait as Inuit and Chukchi hunters engage in the harvest that is a foundation of their culture as they embark on expeditions to catch marine mammals like whales, walruses, and seals. There are obviously cultural, political, and historical variances between the hunters that Vakhrushev depicts and the Inuit who appear in Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's film, but *The Book of the Sea* is a stirring example of the way of life for which Aaju Peter and the characters of *Angry Inuk* fiercely advocate in their fight to preserve the seal hunt. The film deftly weaves a tale of heritage and legacy as Vakhurshev infuses the present-day hunt with the myths and folklore that drive it.

The film takes a handsomely textured approach to heritage and history. On one hand, *The Book of the Sea* offers verité-style footage of present-day Inuit and Chukchi hunters as the community's elder, Alexander, joins the community's younger leader, Alexei, in guiding the group on the expedition. In chapters, the different hunts for whales, walruses, and seals unfold while the footage highlights the nuances of each quest. The range of coverage affords some spectacular shots on the waters as the wise old Alexander surveys the landscape and imparts his knowledge to the group.

On the other hand, *The Book of the Sea* contextualizes the contemporary footage with fancifully animated chapters that bring to life the legends informed by the sea. Intricately detailed clay animation builds visual interpretations of the myths that connect the Inuit and Chukchi to the sea. For example, one humorous chapter tells of a woman who gives birth to a whale, which bestows upon her community a sense of duty for the creature, as well as an awareness of its connection to the human race. The animated sequences are a visual delight that draw upon traditions of oral storytelling to keep culture alive.

Top marks go to the film's editor, Julia Trofimenko, for bridging the two vastly different modes of the film in a seamless tapestry. Using some perceptive matches, particularly cuts that link the action of the animated sequences to Alexander's gaze as he looks out over the icy waters, the film beautifully links past and present. There's a great sense of cultural heritage to *The Book of the Sea*, a richness of history, but it also looks to the future as the hunters see alarming evidence of climate change and draw upon the tales of the sea to instill within the younger hunters a duty to protect and preserve the land. Book charts an important history with many new chapters to come.



## Review: 'Confucian Dream'

By [Chelsea Phillips-Carr](#) • Published May 4th, 2019



### ***Confucian Dream***

(China, USA, 86 minutes)

Dir. Mijie Li

Programme: World Showcase (World Premiere)

After witnessing the cohesion of a family practicing Confucianism, young wife and mother Chaoyan converts to the religion with hopes of bringing order and happiness to her family life. While diving into her studies, Chaoyan becomes obsessive. Chaoyan's four-year old son seems oblivious to his mother's fervour, while she clashes with her husband and alienates her in-laws. Consumed with the thought that an ardent practice of Confucianism is necessary to her family's well-being, Chaoyan's newfound beliefs end up having the opposite effect.

Mijie Li's *Confucian Dream* follows Chaoyan's narrative, which flows with almost fictional precision. Her beliefs begin earnestly before developing into mania. The philosophy starts with respect and morality, but slowly results into screaming matches with family. The drama reaches fever pitch as Chaoyan's zealousness increases, but *Confucian Dream* offers a dénouement: Chaoyan separates from her husband and gains self-awareness of her actions. Without abandoning her beliefs, she acknowledges her desperation and anger and we witness her growth. Chaoyan is never one-dimensional in her strict Confucianism; instead, she shows a great deal of depth and development.

Always depicted with respect, *Confucian Dream* allows for Chaoyan to exhibit problematic behaviour without condemning her. Though focusing on her study, the film is more about human relationships: how Chaoyan interacts with her son, her husband, her in-laws, and her parents. Confucianism is merely a symptom of greater relationship issues, a means for Chaoyan to come to terms with the anxiety and listlessness that she finds in her family life. With great sensitivity, *Confucian Dream* presents the viewer with the specific outcome of a woman's conversion, but at its heart, it explores universal truths about relationships.

Visit the [POV Hot Docs Hub](#) for more coverage from this year's festival!

## Review: 'The Corporate Coup d'État'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 4th, 2019



### ***The Corporate Coup d'État***

(Canada, 90 minutes)

Dir. Fred Peabody

Programme: Special Presentations (Canadian Premiere)

*The Corporate Coup d'État* isn't a horror doc, but it methodically builds a sense of impending doom. Its title taken from John Ralston Saul's writing, featuring Saul and social critic Chris Hedges, Peabody's film portrays the collapse of democracy in liberal societies.

Hedges and Saul point toward virtually omniscient corporations, which through their control of US politicians from Reagan to Trump, call all the shots behind the scenes. Whatever people need, the corporations maximize share prices, and therefore executive compensation packages, via everything from welfare cuts to the exportation of jobs to low-wage countries.

Deploying feverish montages of collapse and ruin, the film takes viewers on nightmare tours of places like Youngstown, Ohio, and Camden, New Jersey, where the Campbell Soup Company originated, RCA Victor had a plant, and there was a thriving shipyard. Now it's strictly Desolation Row, a place no one goes unless they are stuck there, one of many "sacrifice zones," which sounds like something out of a dystopian Sci-Fi fantasy.

Apart from Hedges' and Saul's on camera commentary, and various interviews, *The Corporate Coup d'État* zeroes in on people damaged by what is, in effect, an oligarchy.

A wizened, elderly lady lives with other people in tents on a lot conveniently close to a scrapyard. In a shocker scene, the tents get demolished to the tune of "Happy Days Are Here Again," a not very subtle allusion to "Make America Great One Again."

While free traders get rich, there are food shortages and home foreclosures. An abandoned house is still full of belongings after the owner hangs himself in the garage. Steelworkers get shut out of their plant. In one humiliation, workers trained Mexicans to do their jobs, which were outsourced.

The film begins with Barack and Michelle Obama looking glum at Trump's inauguration. But are they miserable because of the policies that are coming? The film argues that presidents are merely front men for corporate power. In the doc's most caustic line we are told that Obama was the "smiling, refined black face" while Trump is the "know nothing white face," a puppet like Clinton with his welfare cuts and Draconian crime bill, backed by Hillary's comments about "super-predators."

The film traces the current state of affairs back to Mussolini and his totalitarian idea of Corporatism. It sees the Mussolini-esque Donald Trump as unique only in that he is the most extreme "leader," a hate-monger and Gordon Gekko on steroids, the final functionary in a warped system that could descend into all-out fascism. The corporations tolerate his idiocy because Trump satisfies all their wants. Supporters interviewed in the film think "Trump is trying," but don't want him to be brought down because "You don't want your quarterback to break a leg."

The bleak prognosis of *The Corporate Coup d'État* made me think of the worst case scenario of Orwell's *1984*, where the power elite go beyond mere greed. O'Brien, the novel's embodiment of the oligarchical state, says to Winston Smith, the would-be rebel he is tormenting: "Always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face — forever."

But Peabody does not end his film on that note. One of his interviewees, Cornell West, offers a glimmer of hope:

"We are both wonderful and terrible at the same time. We are both aspirational and visionary on the one hand, we are wretched and oppressive on the other. And the blues understand that. You've got to keep track of both poles at the same time. You preserve your hope. You're a prisoner of hope."

*The Corporate Coup d'État* doesn't amuse you the way Michael Moore's films do. It takes you to the brink of despair. But it does give you a last minute reprieve, offering the barest possibility of reviving democracy.

## Review: 'Honeyland'

By [Pat Mullen](#) • Published May 4th, 2019



### ***Honeyland***

(Macedonia, 85 min.)

Dir. Ljubomir Stefanov, Tamara Kotevska

Programme: Animal Magnetism (Canadian Premiere)

I don't know how much competition there is, but I'm willing to wager decent money that *Honeyland* is the best Macedonian beekeeping documentary ever made. It's a film of beautiful intimacy and tragedy, a rare glimpse at a dying way of life, and an observation of culture at a crossroads filled with heartache and humour. This excellent film, a [Sundance](#) triple award winner with the Grand Jury Prize (World Cinema), cinematography award, and a special prize for "impact and change" on its mantle, sees in one woman's struggle to preserve her way of life the greater mass of tensions and contradictions sweeping across Europe in a time of significant mobility and change.

"Take half for you and leave half for them," is the sage advice by which Hatidze Muratoya, the film's central subject, abides. She's the queen bee of a dying breed as she survives in isolation while making honey from wild bees. Hatidze lives with her ailing mother, Nazife, along with two cats and a dog, in a ramshackle home without running water or electricity. She trudges to markets four hours away to sell her honey by the jar, earning a modest income from a demanding lifestyle. Hatidze has her bees to keep her company, though, and she stays contentedly busy buzzing around the hives and sharing the honey with the insects in equal measure. There's such a strong relationship between the woman and her bees that she can slip her bare hands into the hive and extract a honeycomb without landing a single sting.

However, the rule of the land means that all may share its natural resources. Hatidze's peaceful countryside is interrupted by the arrival of a nomadic family that sets up shop with its herds of unruly cattle and noisy children. Directors Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska observe the limits of control and the elasticity of tolerance as Hatidze at first welcomes the noise and intrusion even though the cows keep trampling her property and the kids keep pestering her mother and cats. Hatidze, who never married nor had children, takes a special interest in the family's younger son. She shows him how to tend the bees and respect their natural process. Particularly important is her mantra of "half for them, half for you," which the boy takes to heart.

The boy's father, Hussein, sees an opportunity in Hatidze's kindness and success. He hones in on her territory and sets up shop with his own apiary. Ever the good neighbour, Hatidze offers the same lessons she gives his son as she watches the unruly patriarch berate his bee-stung wife and kids like a tyrant. Hussein doesn't heed Hatidze's advice and takes more than his fair share of the honey, which has devastating consequences for the natural order of things and especially Hatidze's finely-calibrated artisanal business.

*Honeyland* offers a remarkable likeness to Norman McLaren's groundbreaking experimental work *Neighbours* with its humorous play on politics, niceties, and warfare. The obliging Hatidze is the Canada to Hussein's unruly, mansplaining USA, and the doc captures an escalating feud as battle lines are drawn and one neighbour consumes with a voraciously insatiable appetite, while the other works to create peace to preserve the land she respects and understands. One family is there to stay; the other is there to simply harvest.

Lensed beautifully by cinematographers Fejmi Daut and Samir Ljuma, *Honeyland* harnesses the golden sunlight that bathes the countryside to evoke the natural order that Hatidze respects and Hussein disrupts. The film also empowers its protagonist through the agency of the camera as it captures Hatidze strolling powerfully through the region, protecting the land as its keeper and caregiver. The directors bookend the film with an awesome scene of Hatidze scaling a ragged cliff to access a hive tucked away from Hussein's path of destruction. The honey assumes a different hue as Hatidze and her dog relish its golden sweetness. The film shows the resilience of its heroine as she tastes the honey that will live to see another day thanks to her ever-present care.

## HOT DOCS 2019: OUR REVIEW OF 'ANIMUS ANIMALIS'

Posted in [Festival Coverage](#), [Hot Docs 2019](#), [Movies](#), [Theatrical](#) by [Paolo Kagaoan](#) - May 04, 2019



Audiences of documentary films already know that the truth behind 'ashes to ashes' is much grosser. Aiste Žegulyte calls her new movie *Animus Animalis* (a story about People, Animals, and Things). She shows the heads of dead animals, speeding up the process of decomposition. Those scenes remind us of death's grim realities. We remember this even if she spends most of her film showing the opposite of that. Her doc is actually about the different ways that people either slow down or try to forget that process. And she finds all of those people in her home country of Lithuania.

There's a refreshing and seamless anonymity to the way Žegulyte depicts her subjects. Many of them are deer hunters, deer farmers, taxidermists, and museum staff. She points out the surprising and literal lack of separation between church and state. A priest shows and blesses the hunter's kills' pelts. The film has children growing up around pelts or preserved animals, expressing how normal this process is. And she shows no judgment here, as it's obvious that these are honorable ways to make a living. The hunters, nonetheless, respect their kills by eating and sharing their meat, which many cultures still practice today.

Žegulyte also taps into the inherent interest towards the other industries she's depicting. The taxidermists and the museum staff live their daily lives despite surrounding themselves with death. They talk to clients who want to remember the animals they love. Preserving the way the latter looked when they were still alive. And unlike, presumably there's no hand holding in this process. Žegulyte originally made this with the intention of contemplating mortality. In doing so she ended up presenting her own culture's lack of sentimentality towards it. Both the culture and the way she presents it is commendably fascinating.



## Film on Colten Boushie killing wins \$10,000 prize at Hot Docs festival in Toronto

THE CANADIAN PRESS  
PUBLISHED MAY 5, 2019



*Debbie Baptiste, left, and Jade Tootoosis are shown at the United Nations building in New York in this still from the documentary nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up. MELISSA KENT/NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA VIA THE CANADIAN PRESS*

A film about the killing of a young Indigenous man in Saskatchewan has won a top prize at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

Tasha Hubbard's *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* has won the best Canadian feature documentary award, which comes with a \$10,000 cash prize.

The film, which opened the festival, is about the case of Colten Boushie.

The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation was shot to death after the vehicle he was in drove onto a farm property near Biggar, Sask., in 2016.

Last year, a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally as he was trying to scare off young people on his property.

The Hot Docs jury said the film "has created a lasting document that brings together past and future to illuminate oppression and resilience."

Other Hot Docs award winners include Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, which won a \$5,000 special jury prize for its look at a sexual-abuse survivor who takes on the Catholic church in an Ontario court.

The emerging Canadian filmmaker award, which comes with a \$3,000 cash prize, went to Emily Gan for *Cavebirds*.

Pailin Wedel's *Hope Frozen* won the \$10,000 best international feature documentary award.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/article-film-on-colten-boushie-killing-wins-10000-prize-at-hot-docs-festival/>

## Review: 'Gaza'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 5th, 2019



### **Gaza**

(Canada, 90 min.)

Dir. Garry Keane, Andrew McConnell

Programme: Special Presentations (Canadian Premiere)

25 miles long and seven wide, Gaza is a small territory with a huge international profile. Cut off from the outside world by strictly enforced borders, poverty-stricken, suffering explosions of horrendous violence, Gaza is frequently reported on as the embodiment of the tragic, seemingly unresolvable conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

As others have pointed out, Keane and McConnell's doc *Gaza* is neither a polemic taking one side or the other, nor an on camera debate. Few of the Palestinian characters directly address the historical, moral, and political issues behind the conditions of their lives. In a film totally focused on the Strip, no Israelis appear.

Keane and McConnell take you deeply into Gaza, its neighbourhoods, people, and daily rhythms and its suffering, its ruins. The documentary was filmed during the deadly May 2018 clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian protestors, but doesn't focus on them until the film's violent climax.

Filmed by McConnell with sensitivity to light, colour, mood, camera placement and movement, *Gaza* reveals the beauties of the place, along with the overcrowded, littered streets. The film opens on a montage of vibrant daily life recalling other Middle-Eastern and North African locales. The camera tracks on a vegetable market, a horse drawn cart, (horses appear often), kids fighting and boys playing in a dramatically turbulent surf.

The Mediterranean is a through line in *Gaza*, a continual physical and symbolic presence. For many of the disparate characters the doc follows, the sea is simultaneously about aspiration, inspiration, sustenance, knowledge, and above all, freedom from the "open air prison" two million inhabitants feel they are trapped in. In reality, you can't get onto a boat and sail away into another life, or even to where fish stocks are good. Fishermen who cross the imposed three-mile limit are confronted by gunboats, sprayed with sewage, and even locked up.

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“Fishing is in my veins,” says 14-year old Ahmed, who dreams of owning his own boat. He loves the sea so much he sleeps on the beach. *Gaza* returns to Ahmed as it crosscuts between a representative array of people. A taxi driver who joins up some of the characters alternates between telling funny stories and how, debt-ridden, he spent 20 months in jail.

Like Ahmed, pretty 19-year-old Karma links her longing for freedom to the sea. She also feels liberated when she plays the cello. Meanwhile, other Palestinians remember a better time. An elderly tailor who lost a clothing factory with 80 employees can’t even make ends meet because his electricity cuts out after four hours.

A middle-aged woman remembers a cosmopolitan society where you could dress as you liked. Another woman who orchestrates fashion shows laments that if she could travel freely, she would be in demand all over Europe. The two women, like Karma and an intense actor-director we meet, are comfortably middle-class.

Naturally, their advantages don’t wipe out the pervasive sadness that one character laments. They all talk about being exhausted by war, about longing to be like the rest of the world, and about being better off dead. In one scene Karma says, “The only thing they give us is sympathy. They see what they want to see. They should look deeper.”

The movie builds toward bombs dropping, buildings riddled with bullet holes, and maimed bodies.

Some see this film on Gaza as ultimately propagandistic, rather than simply documenting the daily life of people struggling to survive their dire situation. On the other hand, violence is often part of their lives.

For sure, even though the old tailor says that as long as Hamas is in power, the conflict will never be resolved, nobody else even hints at its share of responsibility for Gaza’s misery. Nor do we see more than a few glimpses of armed warriors dedicated to destroying Israel.

Viewers will react to the documentary in different ways. But no one can deny how it beautifully and sensitively engages you in a world beyond whatever stereotyped pre-conceptions you may have.

## Maxima' Holds Lead on Last Day of Hot Docs

Posted on May 5th, 2019



*Maxima*

By Pat Mullen

*Maxima* knows how to put up a fight! Claudia Sparrow's film continued to hold the top spot on the Hot Docs Audience Award rankings on the final update of the festival. The film, which follows one Peruvian woman's fight to keep her land when it is threatened by a gold mine, screens again today. In the [POV review](#) of *Maxima*, Maurie Alioff wrote, "In the end, it's Máxima Acuña's presence that gives the film its power. The little woman in the sombrero and poncho whose courage and will to continue her struggle will never be defeated."

The rankings saw little movement between yesterday and other day given that we don't know how the Canadian titles are shaking out. The only noticeable jump was for Rachel Lears' motivating political doc [Knock Down the House](#), which moved up a few slots following an encore screening. The top 20 features in the hunt for the Audience Award are:

1. [Maxima](#)
2. Rogers Audience Award Contender
3. Rogers Audience Award Contender
4. Ask Dr. Ruth
5. Gods of Molenbeek
6. Rogers Audience Award Contender
7. Rogers Audience Award Contender
8. Rogers Audience Award Contender
9. [For Sama](#)
10. Rogers Audience Award Contender
11. Rogers Audience Award Contender
12. [Knock Down the House](#)
13. Rogers Audience Award Contender
14. [Kifaru](#)
15. Last Breath
16. Sea of Shadows
17. Seahorse
18. Dear Brother
19. After Parkland
20. Haydee and the Flying Fish

## Review: 'Maxima'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 5th, 2019



### **Maxima**

(USA, 88 minutes)

Dir. Claudia Sparrow

Programme: Persister (World Premiere)

Spanning seven years, from 2011 to 2018, Claudia Sparrow's documentary focuses on its eponymous heroine to expose the horrific abuse of vulnerable human beings for the sake of profit and power. Máxima Acuña is a Peruvian woman, who with her husband Jaime scraped together enough money to buy land in the nation's High Andes. She and her family have survived by raising animals and growing most of their own food. With grace, they work the land, do household chores, and take pleasure in natural beauty.

Máxima has a distinctive presence in her poncho and wide-brimmed sombrero. Sparrow's long shots of her in the Andean landscape visualize her harmony with herself and nature, which she also expresses in her words and songs. Her calm, measured way of being sets the film's tone. The doc arouses anger, but without inflammatory rhetoric.

The mountains have been scarred by the Yanacocha Gold Mine, which is majority owned by the US company, Newmont, and it's depleted. The company wants to blast out a new one, and to do that they need Máxima's precious land. With total indifference to the human beings who don't just depend on it, but love it and want to protect it, they bring out the heavy artillery. She has proof of ownership, but they somehow deny its validity.

From the point of the eviction notice on, Sparrow follows Máxima's tortuous struggle to hold on to what is hers and save the land and shimmering lakes from the toxic waste the so-called "Conga Project" will impose. "We want water, not gold," she says. Probably the company, supported by the World Bank in a phony gesture of combating poverty, thought Máxima would be a pushover, not someone who believes, "We have the duty to defend our rights, land, what God gave us."

Sparrow's documentary is not particularly innovative as filmmaking. Its straightforward through-line assembles interviews, footage of characters in action, direct-to-camera scenes, and cell phone captures of brutal attacks on the family.

The film reveals a cesspool of bribed government officials and cops working for Newmont on their days off. Houses are destroyed; Máxima's daughter and husband are beaten up. Máxima gets hit by fines and jail sentences. When her activism becomes widely supported, the apparently sympathetic Justice Minister offers protection, and never shows up again. Peru has one of the worst reputations in the world for human rights abuses.

We follow Máxima through an endless succession of court cases and appeals. She has her first bewildering big city experiences in Lima and Washington. When she finally seems to win, goons invade her land and burn her crops. Surveillance drones fly overhead. At one point, she is preposterously accused of attacking cops. "It's a slow death sentence," Máxima says.

In the end, it's Máxima Acuña's presence that gives the film its power. The little woman in the sombrero and poncho whose courage and will to continue her struggle will never be defeated.

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/review-maxima>

## Review: 'Stieg Larsson: The Man who Played with Fire'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 5th, 2019



### ***Stieg Larsson: The Man Who Played with Fire***

(Sweden, 99 minutes)

Dir. Henrik Georgsson

Programme: Special Presentations (Canadian Premiere)

As Hot Docs 2019 winds down, it should be noted that the festival has screened a powerful selection of documentaries exposing the victimization of the vulnerable and oppressed in a world where democratic values are under siege. From the United States to Greece to Italy and Canada, right wing politicians and demagogues hell-bent on injuring the helpless are convincing voters to elect them into office—and the festival has shown a sharp eye in showing a strong selection of films about the terrifying situation.

Henrik Georgsson's riveting and very moving doc has an unusual angle on this vital subject. The protagonist of *The Man Who Played with Fire* is Swedish journalist, activist, and novelist Stieg Larsson, who created Lisbeth Salander, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. As the doc reveals, he wrote three of his hugely successful *Millennium* novels in one burst of creativity, a project his friends thought was insane. Much to their surprise, a publisher jumped at the rights to publish the novels although Larsson didn't live to see their success. An obsessive worker who barely slept, never exercised, and lived on a diet of Big Macs, cigarettes and coffee, he died of a heart attack in 2004 at age 50.

"Millennium" refers to the activist, anti-fascist, financially troubled magazine the protagonist of the novels edits. Larsson based it on the real-life magazine, Expo, which he was struggling to keep afloat before he dove into Lisbeth Salander's world. Incidentally, Larsson loathed omnipotent crime story heroes, but he excused the supernaturally talented, ultra-violent Lisbeth because he considered her a psychopath.

Long before Expo, Larsson was a graphic artist at a news agency and a writer who loathed neo-Nazis and arch-rightists. Without a trace of self-righteousness, or self-congratulation, he went after them with a dogged, unrestrained conviction they should be brought down.

Larsson didn't merely write editorials and op-ed pieces. He literally pursued the anti-Jewish, anti-immigrant, anti-asylum seeker fascists. Larsson went to their events and took surreptitious pictures of them. He researched their identities and graphed relationships between various individuals and groups. A woman he worked with was amazed that he knew everything about even minor characters, almost down to their shoe sizes.



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Larsson went into overdrive after the 1986 assassination of Prime Minister Olaf Palme, which horrified Swedes who thought that kind of thing could only happen in America. The murder unleashed a snake pit of far right and openly Nazi groups, not to mention Royalists, skinheads and a nationalist political party, The Sweden Democrats, which did frighteningly well in the 2018 General Election.

Georgsson's film benefits from copious footage of riots, street demonstrations, neo-Nazi rock throwing, and the inevitable harassing of Jews. "Jewish pigs," they chant at people on the street, not quite capable of the more cerebral "Jews Will Not Replace Us." In interviews, the rioters claim that refugees commit crimes on their first day in the country, spread AIDS, and are basically the root of all evil. Larsson researched and published accounts of the many crimes committed by the rightists. At least no political leader in the mainstream parties said there were good people among them.

When Larsson and his team began delving into White Power music, "Viking" bands like Ultima Thule with their overtly Nazi, violence-inspiring lyrics, the situation heated up. Viking shows and CDs had mainstreamed, and become a major source of revenue. Death threats proliferated. Phone calls and an envelope full of bullets arrived. Two of Larsson's collaborators got into a car that blew up. People dropped out due to the threats.

Larsson plunged ahead relentlessly, pushing friends into an insanely demanding schedule to churn out a book about Sweden Democracy. Typically, he would show up at three, and be raring to go at 10pm. He was capable of being hurtful.

The doc presents quick hits on Larsson's personality. He was a night owl who seemed edgy and loved crime stories and movies. We see and hear the real Larsson in TV interview clips and a look-alike portrays him taking clandestine photos, writing, consuming gallons coffee, and chain-smoking. Georgsson doesn't offer much information about his relationship with his long-time partner, but never wife, Eva Gabrielsson. She contributed to the creation of his *Millennium* books, and for years has been in a rights dispute with Larsson's brother and father.

As a child, Larsen lived in the country with his grandfather Severin, an obviously straight-shooting good-hearted man who despised Nazis and talked politics with his friends. He couldn't fathom how the Holocaust could have happened

At the end of the film, we find out that Larsen wanted to buy his grandfather's little house, suggesting that life with Severin was the happiest period of his life. We hear an inventory of his fondest memories: his first girlfriends, the first time he had sex, culminating with "All my unachievable, secret infatuations."

Georgsson's doc makes it clear that the man who played with fire was a romantic who went into battle against evil that he exposed in real life, and created a misfit heroine who took out the Nazis in his novels.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: The Pickup Game



[DANI SAAD](#)

MAY 5, 2019

Come for the misogyny and stay for the pseudo science! The Pickup Game exposes the industry teaching men how to manipulate women.

*Men Suck*, *Monsters as Men*, and *Why Are We Like This?* would all be suitable alternatives to *The Pickup Game*, a documentary from Neil Strauss that gives an inside look at the emergence of the global pickup industry. The film depicts a thriving, resilient billion dollar industry that generates profit off the desire of men to manipulate women through whatever techniques deemed effective. Like other more traditional self-help fields, students can sign up for live seminars, personal coaching, and take online courses, all designed to make it easier to get with women.

The film features a whole cast of smarmy characters, many of them long-time gurus who built the business and have since achieved idol status among their peers. One such titan of industry is Ross Jeffries, author of a 1992 self-published book *How to Get the Women You Desire into Bed*, who is a lot like those over-the-hill movie kingpins that yell “at least we had a code!”

Despite successfully explaining and exploring this relatively underground world, the film remains oddly apolitical. It’s always a challenge to expose contemptible ideas without providing a platform for the people pushing them, but the apolitical and almost wholly uncritical approach is a questionable choice given the context.

## Hot Docs 2019 Review: Push



[DANI SAAD](#)

MAY 5, 2019

Particularly for Toronto viewers interested in the future of cities, *Push* is required viewing.

Housing access is the defining issue impacting Toronto's livability and the movement to refocus housing as a human right is growing in Toronto and many other cities facing similar crises. *Push* is the story of how we got to this point, where housing prices have transformed communities and left a growing number of people on the margins.

Explored through the work of Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, *Push* tackles the complex issue of housing, and the related topics of finance and public policy, with refreshing accessibility. Director Fredrik Gertten wisely narrows the scope of the film to include several on-location case studies (Toronto's grim housing market plays a meaningful role) that perfectly illustrate the magnitude of the problem and the political and social will required to develop solutions.

To Gertten and Farha's credit, even if they don't have all the answers, *Push* is unafraid to call out uncomfortable truths around urban issues, including how systemic racism plays out in this new, grim modern context.

## “We’re Looking for Passionate People Who We Think Will Put in the Work and Deliver”: Dorota Lech on the 20-year-old Hot Docs Forum



by [Lauren Wissot](#)  
in [Festivals & Events](#), [Filmmaking](#), [Financing](#)  
on May 6, 2019

As a film journo who usually prefers celebrating the fruits of cinematic labor over covering the messy business of making the product I'm often a bit squeamish when it comes to observing pitch sessions (in no small part due to the glaring abundance of older white faces dangling the purse strings). Fortunately, the folks behind the two-decade-old Hot Docs Forum, which utilizes the appropriately *Harry Potter*-esque, neo-Gothic Hart House student center at the University of Toronto, do an expert job of combining industry necessity with collegial fun.

This is perhaps best evidenced by the Forum's Cuban Hat Award, a prize decided by audience ballot and funded by literally passing around a Cuban hat as collection plate during the proceedings. And this year's eclectic take, which went to Bo McGuire and producer Tatiana Bears for their intriguingly titled *Socks on Fire: Uncle John and the Copper Headed Water Rattlers*, included over \$2,000 in six currencies along with various production services. And that's in addition to a homestay in Copenhagen to office space in Greece to two Toronto Raptors "We The North" t-shirts — they'd made the NBA playoffs after all — and a tin of ginger mints. (No ginger mints went to the projects *Midwives*, *Colour of the Wind* or *Twice Colonized*, though they did ultimately receive Canadian dollar prize winnings totaling \$30,000, \$20,000 and \$30,000, respectively.)

So to get a better understanding of how this transformation of high-stakes shark tank into supportive team spirit came about, *Filmmaker* turned to the nomadic (Poland-born but Toronto and LA-based) head of the Forum, Dorota Lech, who also leads the Toronto International Film Festival's Discovery section.

**Filmmaker:** Since nearly all the top-tier doc fests have a Forum component these days I'm curious to hear your thoughts on the similarities and differences between Hot Docs and, say, IDFA or CPH:DOX (to name just two international festivals with strong financing arms).

**Lech:** Pitching forums are co-financing and co-production events that were born in a time three decades ago, when creators and decision makers were less connected. Over time licenses were becoming smaller and increasingly rare, so the idea was that it would be easier to finance your documentary with the help of a handful of cooperating partners.

IDFA and Hot Docs are the biggest and most established. We just celebrated our 20th anniversary, and our sister event, which we originally licensed the concept from, is 30 years old. The Hot Docs and IDFA forums are very

## Filmmaker – May 6, 2019 (2 of 3)

similar in size and format — 21 projects have seven minutes to pitch inside a room of 350-plus decision makers, and they receive eight minutes of live feedback from a table of commissioning editors and major international film funds.

Forums have always been about creating community in our industry, about learning and sharing from the projects that are presented. Additionally, they are a launching point — not only for the project but for the careers of the companies and artists that are presenting. I'd say the major difference is that IDFA has more European buyers, while Hot Docs has more North American and international partners. We also have several private groups that attend and are looking to privately invest, including Impact Partners and the Chicago Media Project. Then there's Hot Docs's *first look*, our own initiative of philanthropic supporters giving no-strings-attached cash, anywhere between \$50-100,000 in prizes. Additionally, we have another award of \$20,000 given by a single generous donor, as well as a \$10,000 prize for the best Canadian pitch, as selected by a secret jury.

I've attended other forums around the world, which tend to be more focused on the projects from that country or region and have less decision makers. These spaces are great ways to garner local support and to hone pitching skills. (From North America, I've heard great things about Points North.)

**Filmmaker:** You hold master's degrees in political science and gender studies, which makes me wonder how that background might influence your decision-making process when it comes to the Forum itself — in who gets selected to pitch and perhaps even which gatekeepers are invited to participate.

**Lech:** I think since I come from a film programming background I tend to view the Hot Docs Forum as a holistic program that should have balance in terms of representation, and that works as a slate that has something for everyone (and not only for the limited number of people around the central table). I'm looking to showcase a wide scope of international topics, and at the same time, the points of view of the teams making those films. (One of the European broadcasters attending this year said that he was expecting to buy North American projects and is returning home with projects from five countries he hadn't expected stories from!) We truly value finding tales told from within communities, which you could see this year in projects like *1001 Nights Apart*, *Alvin Ailey*, *Another Brick on the Wall*, *Hidden Letters*, *Monguen (Life)*, *Midwives*, *Socks on Fire: Uncle John and the Copper Headed Water Rattlers*, *Twice Colonized*, and *Zinder*.

I'm also interested in documentaries that have exceptional storytelling and cinematic styles that expand visual education. An ideal program showcases a range of films, some that will first play festivals and cinemas before reaching TV broadcast or streaming services, and others that have more narrow paths but are exceptional in terms of storytelling or access or scope. If a project has both elements, I fall in love instantly.

In terms of the actual selection, we have three outside voices join the winnowing process each year. This time the team included Poh Tsi Teng (Al Jazeera English), Leslie Vuchot (The Festival Agency), and Emma Ho (Anchor Worldwide).

**Filmmaker:** You mentioned that you're also a festival programmer, currently heading TIFF's Discovery section, so have there been any finds you've made at the Forum that you've gone on to curate? (Or vice-versa, selecting projects for the Forum from filmmakers whose work you've programmed in the past.)

**Lech:** I've only been producing the Forum for five years, since 2015, and until this year was also working on the TIFF documentary program alongside Thom Powers. In that time, the only projects that have gone on to play TIFF have been Madeleine Sackler's *Dangerous Acts Starring the Unstable Elements of Belarus*, Sarah McCarthy's *Dark Matter of Love*, John Maloof's *Finding Vivian Maier*, Anjali Nayar and Hawa Essuman's *Silas*, as well as Frederick Wiseman's *In Jackson Heights*.

## Filmmaker – May 6, 2019 (3 of 3)

That said, many have played Hot Docs, where I'm not involved with the programming, including just this year *One Child Nation*, *The Hottest August*, *XY Chelsea*, *Cold Case Hammar skjöld* and *The Infiltrators*.

At TIFF, I'm the lead programmer of Discovery, a primarily fiction program showcasing the first and second features of international directors. It's world (and in some cases international) premieres only, a space to highlight new talent, new voices, and new cinema that regardless of form emboldens, or even challenges, notions of cinema and storytelling beyond what is established. There we have a long history of championing daring directors from around the globe (such as Chantal Akerman, Yorgos Lanthimos, Lav Diaz, Julie Dash, Michael Haneke, Jafar Panahi, Ildiko Enyedi, Pablo Larrain, Steve McQueen, Christopher Nolan, Barry Jenkins, and the list goes on), and believe in holding a space for future visionaries to launch their international careers.

**Filmmaker:** One of my biggest pet peeves as a critic is a documentarian stressing, narcissistically, how important the subject of their film is. "Important to *you*," I always think. It won't be important to me unless I'm convinced through the artistry. So are there any specific, disqualifying mistakes you see from filmmakers applying to the Forum?

**Lech:** I'm with you in that the artistry is key. Any protagonist or topic can be interesting, but exceptional filmmaking and storytelling is rare — and those are exactly the projects we're looking for.

In terms of identifying mistakes, it's the standard issue of people not reading our guidelines closely, or rushing through the application process. I read the answer to every question from all 350-400-plus applicants. Having done that for quite a long time, I can tell when someone is phoning it in or hasn't thought through all the questions.

Because Hot Docs has so many programs to help develop and hone the skills of filmmakers, we're really looking for passionate people who we think will put in the work and deliver. There's a lot of time and labor that goes into preparing a project to pitch — not to mention the pitch itself and the tremendous amount of followup afterwards — once it's selected for the Forum. We want to make sure that the people we select are up to the task.

**Filmmaker:** So are there ever projects you're personally enthusiastic about that fall flat at the Forum? And if so, do you try to connect the filmmakers with other funding possibilities?

**Lech:** It has certainly happened in the past, but to be completely honest, no. This was an overwhelmingly successful year, and we've already had several reports from teams about deals they made after pitching, which is huge because it's been awhile since things seemed to move this quickly! Even a team that personally felt they hadn't done well in the pitch told us that they closed their budget on the second day of Deal Maker meetings. (Deal Maker is the program of curated, one-on-one meetings run by Madeleine Russo that exists alongside the Forum and matches the 20 projects, as well as an additional 35, that didn't pitch publicly with decision makers.)

As always, it's harder for projects that pitch in the development stage to secure partners because they're less advanced, but that certainly isn't a reason to exclude films at early stages. This year we had *Trafficking Jam*, *Mission Sex-Ed*, and *Monguen (Life)*, and I have a lot of faith in those teams. The presentation at the Forum can really give them a leg up in their next stages of financing and production.

Ultimately, though, a single presentation does not make or break a project — it's a fleeting but highlighted moment in the development and production of a film. Over the 20 years we've been around some pitch presentations have tanked. But the films often went on to be made and find various points of success, whether at festivals, in cinemas, on television, or on the streaming platforms.

<https://filmmakermagazine.com/107461-were-looking-for-passionate-people-who-we-think-will-put-in-the-work-and-deliver-dorota-lech-on-the-20-year-old-hot-docs-forum/#.XNGPGxRKjct>



## 'Riveting and unflinching' clergy abuse trial film *Prey* wins \$50K Hot Docs audience prize

Courtroom account takes audience prize after winning special jury honour

CBC News · Posted: May 06, 2019 2:43 PM ET | Last Updated: May 6



*Directed by Matt Gallagher, clergy abuse trial film Prey won the \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary on Sunday at Hot Docs. (Hot Docs)*

*Prey*, a "riveting and unflinching" account of a sexual abuse survivor's legal fight against the Catholic Church, has won the top award at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival.

Directed by Matt Gallagher, *Prey* was named winner of the \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary on Sunday, the final day of Hot Docs, North America's largest documentary festival.

Immediately after the announcement, organizers held a free encore screening of the film.



Winner of the \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for Best Canadian Documentary at [#HotDocs19](#) is *PREY* by Matt Gallagher, a riveting and unflinching account of a survivor's journey as he takes on the Catholic Church in an Ontario court.

## CBC News – May 6, 2019 (2 of 2)

Most cases of clergy sex abuse are settled quietly and out-of-court. Gallagher's film follows a Canadian man who chooses to pursue a public trial in order to shine a light on these cases of abuse and attempt to hold the Catholic Church accountable.

Rod MacLeod, who as a boy was abused for years by a Catholic priest and teacher, enlists civil lawyer Rob Talach, who has filed approximately 400 suits against the church, for the case.



“Making this film was like putting a megaphone on it - so they could tell their stories” - PREY producer Cornelia Principe, on stage with director Matt Gallagher, and film subjects Rod MacLeod and Patrick McMahon @hotdocs @TVOdocs  
Winner of the audience award #HotDocs2019

In addition to the audience award, *Prey* also won a \$5,000 special jury prize during an earlier Hot Docs awards ceremony in Toronto on Friday.

Other winners announced Friday include Tasha Hubbard's Colten Boushie doc *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, which opened this year's edition of Hot Docs.

## Documentary about Sudbury survivor of clerical sexual abuse wins award

### SPECIAL TO THE SUDBURY STAR

Updated: May 6, 2019



*A still image from Prey - a new documentary by Windsor-born filmmaker Matt Gallagher, spotlighting the survivors of pedophile priest William Hodgson Marshall. Prey premieres at Hot Docs on April 26, 2019. (Handout / Windsor Star)*

**By Katie Jacobs**

A Windsor-based documentary about a survivor's personal and legal journey exposing his abuse by a Catholic priest received two awards last weekend.

The film *Prey* focuses on Rod MacLeod — a survivor from sexual abuse by Rev. William Hodgson Marshall — and his quest for justice as he and his lawyer Rob Talach took on the Catholic church in court.

MacLeod was a student at St. Charles College when Marshall, who was teaching there at the time, abused him.

The documentary is a TVO production made by Windsor-born Matt Gallagher, who also reached out to other survivors. This included Patrick McMahon, a Windsor resident who was the first to file a complaint against Marshall.



**Rev. William Hodgson Marshall when he was principal at Holy Names Catholic High School in Windsor in 1986.**POSTMEDIA FILE PHOTO

The film was presented to a Toronto audience at the 2019 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which is North America's largest documentary festival that presents about 200 selected films.

*Prey* won the Rogers Audience Award for Best Canadian Documentary and the DGC Special Jury Prize. It was also voted the second-best documentary overall among the 252 films shown.

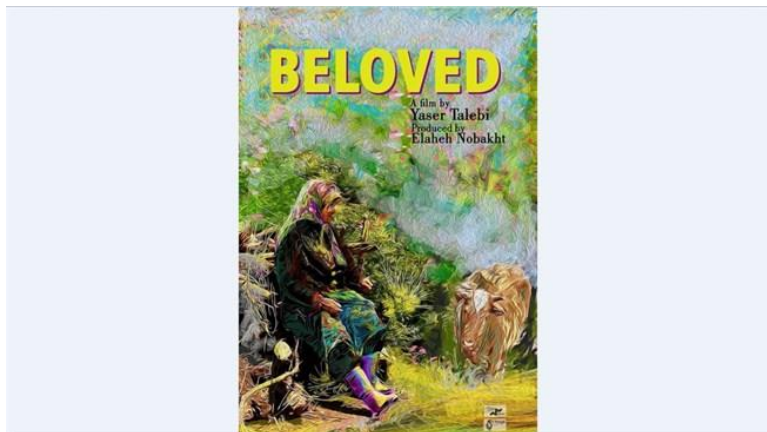
Marshall pleaded guilty in 2011 and was jailed. Over the course of 38 years, he sexually abused 17 minors while serving as a Catholic school teacher and Basilian priest in Sudbury, Toronto and Windsor. He was defrocked in 2014 before he died at the age of 92.

Last April, MacLeod was awarded \$2.6 million in damages.

To learn more about the film, visit the awards website.

<https://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/documentary-about-sudbury-survivor-of-clerical-sexual-abuse-wins-award/wcm/d2362f20-9003-4083-9b3e-2af93e8d37ae>

## Iran's 'Beloved' praised at festival in Italy



**Iranian documentary, 'Beloved,' directed by Yaser Talebi, received a Special Mention at the 67th Trento International Film Festival in Italy, held from April 27 to May 5.**

'Beloved' grabbed the award while in competition with 26 other titles, ISNA reported.

Following the announcement of 'Beloved' as the Special Mention of the jury, during the closing ceremony of the film festival a video of its director was shown, who was in Canada to attend Hot Docs International Documentary Festival at which his film has participated.

The Italian festival is known as "the oldest international film festival dedicated to the mountains, adventure and exploration."

'Beloved' follows the life of an 80-year-old mother named Firouzeh, who is fond of her isolated lifestyle in nature with her cows. The film shows her kind and loving character and demonstrates her bravery and strength tackling the hardship of life in the Alborz Mountains, without the modern comforts of technology. She believes happiness lies in the simplicity of life.

The film will also be screened at the 2019 Mammoth Lakes Film Festival, which is due to be held May 23-27 in California. It has also been awarded in Russia's Kazan International Festival as the best documentary film.

## Review: 'Haydee and the Flying Fish'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 6th, 2019



### *Haydee and the Flying Fish*

(Chile, Brazil, 73 minutes)

Dir. Pachi Bustos

Programme: Persister (World Premiere)

In 1975, Haydee Oberreuter was a young Chilean woman, who during the Pinochet dictatorship committed the unforgiveable sin of trying to help his victims. Like thousands of other Chileans she was arrested and tortured. Many prisoners were never heard from again. She survived, and after years of trying to lead a normal life, sought justice in the courts.

Bustos's film opens on images of a dark, turbulent sea and cuts to a shot of Haydee from behind, standing up straight and facing forward. Her life was almost destroyed long ago by horrifying trauma, but she has persisted, raising a son and a daughter who appear in the film. From the beginning of the doc, we see Haydee's especially strong bond with her daughter.

Talking about Haydee, Bustos told an interviewer that she "found her story of detention and torture heartbreaking, but what struck me the most was her attitude towards life. Her strength, energy, and commitment. Her sense of truth and justice. Her [ability] to retain these qualities in spite of the horrors she experienced."

As those horrors are revealed, the film probes the depths of cruelty and leaves you wondering how could Haydee's captors, how could any human beings, do what they did to her? Haydee was one of the pregnant women tortured in Pinochet's prisons; when the beatings caused her to miscarry, the torturers found that amusing and celebrated eliminating a terrorist. A "terrorist before he was born," Haydee says.

Beatings and inducing a miscarriage weren't enough. They terrified Haydee with a fake firing squad and autopsy. They used acid and electric shocks on her. And worst of all the damage they did to this woman, whose crime was helping victimized people, they sliced open the front of her body with a hunting knife.

## POV Magazine – May 6, 2019 (2 of 2)

The torturers were not hooded medieval brutes. They were clean-cut naval officers. Idealized images of naval officers visualize how Haydee and other young women were drawn to them, real-life Prince Charmings who turned out to be sadistic perverts.

Like many survivors of Pinochet's regime, Haydee was silent and invisible until a magazine called Plan B, out to cover the story of pregnant victims, published an article about her. An elderly lawyer read the article and filled with disgust filed a judicial complaint on Haydee's behalf.

Bustos's film tracks the attempt to bring the four Prince Charmings to justice. Haydee is shown remaining calm and patient through court delay after delay. Her one meltdown, the emotional climax of the film, happens during preparations for breast cancer surgery (yes that too). She needs to describe her mutilations, the damage to internal organs, and her many reconstructive surgeries because the hunting knife wounds healed without intervention. When a nurse draws blood, we see the full extent of the psychological agony Haydee has managed to control. Terrified of sharp objects, she howls and weeps as the little pinprick is likely triggering physical memory of the butchery she endured.

In *Haydee and the Flying Fish*, Bustos favours dialogue between characters rather than straight to camera filming. The people in the film, ranging from supporters to lawyers, judges, and doctors, emerge clearly and fully as people, not just subjects.

Throughout the film, Bustos holds on what look like very long freeze frames, or stills; one example is when Haydee hugs her daughter. Perhaps meant to suggest Haydee's experience of intense moments, the technique can seem like some kind of a glitch and then feels like an awkward, unnecessary imposition.

With its inspirational, bittersweet ending that evokes the memory of the son who never lived, *Haydee and the Flying Fish* reminds Chileans and the outside world of horrors that have been largely forgotten.



## Film on Colten Boushie case wins \$10,000 prize at Hot Docs festival

By Staff The Canadian Press



*"nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up"* made its world premiere Thursday as the opening-night film for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs through May 5. Justin Tang / The Canadian Press

A film about the killing of a young [Indigenous](#) man in Saskatchewan has won a top prize at the [Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival](#).

Tasha Hubbard's *nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up* has won the best Canadian feature documentary award, which comes with a \$10,000 cash prize.

The film, which opened the festival, is about the case of [Colten Boushie](#).

The 22-year-old member of the Red Pheasant First Nation was shot to death after the vehicle he was in drove onto a farm property near Biggar, Sask., in 2016.

Last year, a jury acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley of second-degree murder after he testified his gun went off accidentally as he was trying to scare off young people on his property.

The Hot Docs jury said the film "has created a lasting document that brings together past and future to illuminate oppression and resilience."

Other Hot Docs award winners announced Friday night include Matt Gallagher's *Prey*, which won a \$5,000 special jury prize for its look at a sexual abuse survivor who takes on the Catholic church in an Ontario court.

The emerging Canadian filmmaker award, which comes with a \$3,000 cash prize, went to Emily Gan for *Cavebirds*.

Pailin Wedel's *Hope Frozen* won the \$10,000 best international feature documentary award.

The \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary will be announced as the festival wraps on Sunday.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/5242170/film-on-colten-boushie-case-wins-10000-prize-at-hot-docs-festival/>

## Gallagher's *Prey* wins Rogers Audience Award as Hot Docs wraps

Plus, Tasha Hubbard, Emily Gan and Tenzin Sedon pick up awards from the annual documentary fest.

By Lauren Malyk, May 6, 2019



Director [Matt Gallagher's \*Prey\*](#) walked away with the coveted [Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian doc](#) as Hot Docs wrapped its 2019 edition on Sunday (May 5).

Closing out the fest, the \$50,000 cash prize celebrates the work of Canadian filmmakers, with film-goers selecting the final winner through audience ballot. Past winners include director Michael Del Monte's *Transformer* and [Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World](#) from director Catherine Bainbridge and co-director Alfonso Maiorana.

Meanwhile, at the annual Hot Docs awards ceremony on Friday, *Prey* also received the DGC special jury prize for a Canadian feature doc. The feature-length doc made its world premiere in the festival's Canadian Spectrum program and follows the story of a survivor of sexual abuse and his efforts to pursue justice in an Ontario court. *Prey* was produced by Gallagher's Border City Pictures banner in association with TVO, Knowledge Network and with support from the CMF, The Rogers Documentary Fund and federal and provincial tax credits.

In addition to *Prey*, last week also saw films like [Tasha Hubbard's \*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up\*](#), Pailin Wedel's *Hope Frozen* and *For Sama* from Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts win top prizes at the awards ceremony. Hubbard's film, which explores the 2016 killing of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man from Saskatchewan, and his family's search for justice, took the award for best Canadian feature documentary. The jury called it "a lasting document that brings together past and future to illuminate oppression and resilience." In addition, Emily Gan took the emerging Canadian filmmaker award for *Cavebirds*, while best Canadian short doc award went to *Kora: A Circle Life* from Tenzin Sedon.

Wedel's doc, meanwhile, about a grieving family in Bangkok that decides to cryopreserve a two-year-old daughter, was named best international documentary feature, with the jury calling it "a story that disarms our preconceptions and embodies grace."

The acclaimed *For Sama* continued its festival awards run with the special jury prize for an international feature documentary, while Nuno Escudeiro received the emerging international filmmaker honor for *The Valley*. Finally, the best mid-length doc nod went to *Symphony of the Ursus Factory* from Jaśmina Wójcik while the best international short documentary award went to *Call Confession* from Arturo Aguilar.

The DOCX Audience Favourite award will be announced tomorrow (May 7).

*With files from Realscreen*

*Image of Prey courtesy of Hot Docs*

<http://playbackonline.ca/2019/05/06/gallaghers-prey-wins-rogers-audience-award-for-best-canadian-doc/>

## “Gay Chorus Deep South”, “Prey” take Tribeca, Hot Docs audience awards

By Frederick Blichert

May 6, 2019



Charles Rodrigues's *Gay Chorus Deep South* picked up the Audience Award for best documentary at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival on Saturday (May 4).

The 100-minute film (pictured) follows the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus on a tour of the American Deep South following a wave of discriminatory anti-LGBTQ laws and the 2016 election.

*Gay Chorus Deep South* was developed and produced by online hospitality giant Airbnb, with producers Bud Johnston and [Jesse Moss](#), and James Goode and Tony Höggqvist as executive producers. Rachel Holbrook, Jenny Gadd and LeighAnna MacFadden serve as co-producers, with Freddie Whitman and Harrison Watkins as associate producers.

The feature-length film marked Airbnb's first foray into film production.

"The entire reason we made this film was to bring this message of belonging of the LGBTQ community and all other communities that are considered 'the other' to as many people as possible in the world and the Audience Award at Tribeca is the ultimate celebration of exactly this," said Rodrigues in a statement.

Meanwhile, director *Prey* walked away with the coveted Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian doc as Hot Docs wrapped its 2019 edition on Sunday (May 5).

Closing out the fest, the CA\$50,000 cash prize celebrates the work of Canadian filmmakers, with filmgoers selecting the final winner through audience ballot. Past winners include director Michael Del Monte's *Transformer* and [Catherine Bainbridge](#) and [Alfonso Maiorana](#)'s *Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World*.

At the annual Hot Docs awards ceremony on Friday (May 3), *Prey* also received the DGC special jury prize for a Canadian feature doc. The feature-length doc made its world premiere in the festival's Canadian Spectrum program and follows the story of a survivor of sexual abuse and his efforts to pursue justice in an Ontario court. *Prey* was produced by Gallagher's Border City Pictures banner in association with TVO, Knowledge Network and with support from the Canada Media Fund, The Rogers Documentary Fund and federal and provincial tax credits.

Additional audience awards from the festival will be announced on May 7.

*With files from Playback Daily*

<http://realscreen.com/2019/05/06/gay-chorus-deep-south-prey-take-tribeca-hot-docs-audience-awards/>

## ‘Maxima’ Wins Hot Docs Audience Award, ‘Prey’ is Top Canadian Doc

Posted on May 7th, 2019



### *Maxima*

By Pat Mullen

*Maxima* stood strong to the end. Claudia Sparrow’s inspiring film about Peruvian farmer Máxima Acuña, who took a stand against a multi-billion dollar American mine company that threatened her family and her livelihood, took the top spot as the overall favourite in the race for the Hot Docs Audience Award. *Maxima* took an early lead when it ousted *Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind* on the second day of the festival, but regained and held the lead for the back half of the fest.

“The Hot Docs audience award means the world to us, it’s the greatest validation that Máxima is not alone and that people care about her cause and that they are ready to stand by her side,” said director Claudia Sparrow in a statement. “Máxima’s fight is far from over, but this recognition will help us push the film forward and hopefully bring more awareness to Máxima’s story. We couldn’t be more grateful for all the love and support we have received at Hot Docs.”

Announced on Sunday, Matt Gallagher’s *Prey* won the Canadian Audience Award and a cash prize of \$50,000. The film tells the story of a landmark court decision against the Catholic Church for systemic coverups of sexual abuse.

*St. Louis Superman* was voted the audience’s favourite short while *Beloved* was the highest vote-getter among the midlength features.

The final top 20 for the Hot Docs Audience Award are as follows:

1. [MAXIMA](#) (D: Claudia Sparrow; USA)
2. [PREY](#) (D: Matt Gallagher; Canada)
3. [WILLIE](#) (D: Laurence Mathieu-Leger; USA, Canada)
4. [ASK DR. RUTH](#) (D: Ryan White; USA)
5. [FOR SAMA](#) (D: Waad al-Kateab, Edward Watts; UK, USA, Syria)
6. [OUR DANCE OF REVOLUTION](#) (D: Phillip Pike; Canada)
7. [THERE ARE NO FAKES](#) (D: Jamie Kastner; Canada)
8. [GODS OF MOLENBEEK](#) (D: Reetta Huhtanen; Finland)
9. [SHELLA RECORD – A REGGAE MYSTERY](#) (D: Chris Flanagan; Canada)
10. [GORDON LIGHTFOOT: IF YOU COULD READ MY MIND](#) (D: Joan Tosoni, Martha Kehoe; Canada)
11. [KILLING PATIENT ZERO](#) (D: Laurie Lynd; Canada)
12. [KNOCK DOWN THE HOUSE](#) (D: Rachel Lears; USA)
13. [NÍPAWISTAMÂSOWIN: WE WILL STAND UP](#) (D: Tasha Hubbard; Canada)

## POV Magazine – May 7, 2019 (2 of 2)

14. [KIFARU](#) (D: David Hambridge; USA, Kenya)
15. SEA OF SHADOWS (D: Richard Ladkani; Austria)
16. LAST BREATH (D: Alex Parkinson, Richard da Costa; UK, Sweden)
17. SEAHORSE (D: Jeanie Finlay; UK)
18. [HAYDEE AND THE FLYING FISH](#) (D: Pachi Bustos; Chile, Brazil)
19. [#FEMALE PLEASURE](#) (D: Barbara Miller; Switzerland, Germany)
20. DEAR BROTHER (D: Julia Horn; Germany)

### Top 5 Short Films

1. ST. LOUIS SUPERMAN
2. GLORIA'S CALL
3. TAKE ME TO PROM
4. UNCAGED: A STAND-IN STORY
5. A 3 MINUTE HUG

### Top 5 Mid-Length Films

1. BELOVED
2. WHO LET THE DOGS OUT
3. "I TOLD MY MUM I WAS GOING ON A R.E. TRIP..."
4. EL TORO
5. YOUR LAST WALK IN THE MOSQUE

## **Toronto's Hot Docs festival reports record attendance numbers once again**

### Hot Docs attendance up for another year

May 7, 2019

Toronto's Hot Docs festival is reporting another record-breaking year of attendance figures.

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival says the 26th edition drew in about 228,000 people.

That's up from last year's estimated audience of 223,000, and also up from the 215,000 reported in 2017.

Matt Gallagher's "Prey" won the \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary.

It also took a \$5,000 special jury prize for its look at a survivor of clergy sexual abuse who takes on the Catholic church in an Ontario court.

Claudia Sparrow's "Maxima," about an Indigenous Peruvian farmer in a land dispute with a mining operation, landed the Hot Docs Audience Award for a feature film.

Other Hot Docs award winners included Tasha Hubbard's "nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up," which won the best Canadian feature documentary award for its look at the killing of a young Indigenous man in Saskatchewan.

[http://www.chroniclejournal.com/entertainment/entertainment\\_news/toronto-s-hot-docs-festival-reports-record-attendance-numbers-once/article\\_df8fcbb0-ded6-5e71-8ff3-bd9dc2ba1fa3.html](http://www.chroniclejournal.com/entertainment/entertainment_news/toronto-s-hot-docs-festival-reports-record-attendance-numbers-once/article_df8fcbb0-ded6-5e71-8ff3-bd9dc2ba1fa3.html)



## Toronto's Hot Docs festival reports record attendance numbers once again



The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema is pictured above. (PHOTO: Google streetview)

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The Canadian Press  
Published Tuesday, May 7, 2019 2:10PM EDT

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[THE CANADIAN PRESS](#)

May 7, 2019

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The Canadian Press  
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## Hot Docs 2019: Claudia Sparrow's *Máxima* wins audience award

Toronto's documentary festival wraps up by bestowing its highest honours on films about activists, including *Prey* and *nîpawistâmasowin: We Will Stand Up*

BY [NORMAN WILNER](#), MAY 7, 2019



*Claudia Sparrow's documentary about farmer-turned-water activist Máxima Acuña won the 2019 Hot Docs audience award for a feature film.*

The 2019 Hot Docs film festival has wrapped up with the announcement of its juried and public awards. And this year's big winners are stories of people who stood up, fought back and sought justice... even if they didn't always triumph.

Claudia Sparrow's [Máxima](#), a profile of farmer-turned-water activist Máxima Acuña, was named winner of the Hot Docs audience award for a feature film, topping [a list of 20 titles](#). Smriti Mundhra and Sami Khan's [St. Louis Superman](#) was the audience choice for short film; Yasir Talebi's [Beloved](#) won the mid-length vote and the virtual-reality documentary [Traveling While Black](#), a collaboration by Roger Ross Williams, Félix Lajeunesse, Paul Raphaël and Ayesha Nadarajah, was first on the DocX list.

The first runner-up, Matt Gallagher's [Prey](#), which unpacks a decades-long sexual-abuse case brought against the Catholic Church in Ontario, won the \$50,000 Rogers audience award for best Canadian documentary. Gallagher's film also won the Directors Guild Of Canada's \$5,000 special jury prize for Canadian feature documentary.

Tasha Hubbard's [nîpawistâmasowin: We Will Stand Up](#) was named best Canadian feature documentary by the festival jury, an award that comes with a \$10,000 cash prize. The film opens later

## NOW Magazine – May 7, 2019 (2 of 2)

this month at the TIFF Bell Lightbox; you can prepare for it by reading [Kelly Boutsalis's feature interview with director Hubbard](#).

Pailin Wedel's [Hope Frozen](#), about a family of scientists struggling with the loss of a child and considering cryogenic preservation as a means of resurrecting her, won the \$10,000 best international feature documentary award. Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts's [For Sama](#), about al-Kateab's attempts to record a video diary for her daughter over the course of the Syrian civil war, was awarded a \$5,000 special jury prize.

Jasmina Wójcik's [Symphony Of The Ursus Factory](#) was named best mid-length documentary; Arturo Aguilar's [Call Confession](#) won the best international short documentary. And Tenzin Sedon's [Kora: A Circle Life](#) won the Betty Youson award for best Canadian short. Each award comes with a \$3,000 cash prize.

Nuno Escudeiro won the emerging international filmmaker award for [The Valley](#), a film about French villagers responding to an influx of refugees, and Emily Gan was named emerging Canadian filmmaker for her documentary [Cavebirds](#). These awards also come with \$3,000 cash prizes.

Previously announced awards, presented at a ceremony [last Friday night](#), included the Lindalee Tracey award for an emerging Canadian filmmaker "with a passionate point of view, a strong sense of social justice and a sense of humour," given this year to Andy Alvarez for her film *Our Home*. The award comes with a \$5,000 cash prize, an additional \$5,000 in post-production services from Technicolor and the traditional Andrew Kuntz glass sculpture.

This year's Hot Docs outstanding achievement award was presented to American filmmaker Julia Reichert; the 2019 Don Haig award was presented to Toronto filmmaker Peter Raymont, who designated Fazila Amiri to receive this year's \$5,000 Don Haig Pay It Forward prize.

And the \$5,000 Scotiabank Docs For Schools student choice award went to [Mr. Toilet: The World's #2 Man](#), Lily Zepeda's profile of Singaporean executive Jack Sim and his mission to improve sanitation conditions around the world.

[@normwilner](#)

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The Canadian Press

MAY 7, 2019 10:57 AM

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## Love And Lust In The Warsaw Ghetto

MAY 7, 2019, 5:21 PM

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Marek Edelman was a fighter.

He was the last surviving commander of the doomed but courageous Warsaw ghetto uprising in April 1943 and a participant in the 1944 general uprising in Warsaw. Remaining in Poland after the war, he studied medicine and became one of Poland's leading cardiologists. During the 1980s, when he was a member of the Solidarity movement, he was a critic of the communist regime.

Before his death in 2009, at the age of 90, the Polish filmmaker Jolanta Dylewska interviewed Edelman. The highlights of the interview are contained in *Marek Edelman ... And There Was Love In The Ghetto*, a documentary screened at the recent Canadian International Documentary Festival (Hot Docs) in Toronto.

The format is straightforward. Dylewska asks a question and Edelman, when he chooses to cooperate, answers it in usually clipped tones. Reenactments, performed by Polish actors, co-written by the noted Polish director Agnieszka Holland and co-directed by the legendary Polish director Andrzej Wajda, add a dash of drama to the film. File footage of the Warsaw ghetto is raw and graphic. Punctuating the movie is a soundtrack of plaintive Polish love songs.

As the title suggests, *Marek Edelman ... And There Was Love In The Ghetto* is not about the 1943 rebellion itself or his role in it. The material, drawn from his eponymous memoir, deals rather with matters of the heart: love and lust. Amid the horror and terror, Jews in the Nazi ghetto tried to ease their suffering and pain by living life. Edelman was no different.

Like his late mother, he worked in a hospital. His job was to remove corpses from the premises. As he recalls, he survived on meager rations.

The first story is about Dola, a beautiful nurse who seduced him. Puffing on a cigarette as he speaks, he talks quietly about her physical attributes — her golden red hair, her alabaster skin, her ample breasts. Out of modesty or embarrassment, he does not delve into the sexual details. "You see a body like that once in a lifetime," he permits himself to add.

Edelman's next subject is Mrs. Tenenbaum, a hospital doctor who was charged with the heavy responsibility of handing out scarce, life-saving German-issued "white cards" to the staff. If you didn't have one, you could be deported to Treblinka or some other Nazi extermination camp in Poland.

## **The Times of Israel – May 7, 2019 (2 of 2)**

Unable to bear the pressure of her onerous assignment, Tenenbaum committed suicide, leaving her white card to her 17-year-old daughter, Deda. In the short time granted to her on this planet, Deda found a lover and lived life to the fullest.

Tosia, a hospital worker, was irresistibly drawn to a patient, a younger man who lay still on his bed. To Edelman, their tentative relationship was a modest affair that “lights up the face.”

As he ruminates, dredging up a past he would rather forget, he expresses regret that he could not help Hendusia Himelfarb, a young woman whose Aryan appearance could have saved her had she chosen to find shelter outside the ghetto.

During the course of the interview, Edelman, a notoriously prickly and humorless person, sometimes dismisses Dylewska's questions or refuses to discuss a certain incident. In general, he addresses issues head on, speaking in plain, unadorned Polish. This is certainly true when, in dispassionate tones, he discusses the rapes of Jewish women he witnessed in the hospital. It was adjacent to the Umschlagplatz, the square where Jews were assembled by the Germans before their deportation to Treblinka or Auschwitz.

As the interview winds down, Edelman grows impatient. “So what else do you want? Tell me.”

Dylewska has a few more questions, but for all intents and purposes, their conversation has ended.



## Hot Docs Wraps with Awards



### Hot Docs Wraps with Awards

by Staff

(May 7, 2019 – Toronto, ON) The 26th annual Hot Docs festival has wrapped for another year and once again saw growth in the number of people attending the 11-day event. Total audience this year is about 228,000 people, up marginally from the 223,000 attendees in 2018. Up substantially from the 215,000 reported in 2017.

Matt Gallagher's *Prey* won the \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary. It also took a \$5,000 special jury prize for its look at a survivor of clergy sexual abuse who takes on the Catholic church in an Ontario court.

Claudia Sparrow's *Maxima* about an Indigenous Peruvian farmer in a land dispute with a mining operation, landed the Hot Docs Audience Award for a feature film. It launched in Toronto with a sold-out World Premiere. The film tells the story of Máxima Acuña, a generational farmer in Peru who dares to challenge the corporate violence of billion-dollar American mining giant Newmont Mining when they lay claim to her land.



Image from *Maxima* courtesy of rustfall Films.

"The Hot Docs audience award means the world to us, it's the greatest validation that Máxima is not alone and that people care about her cause and that they are ready to stand by her side," said director Claudia Sparrow. "Máxima's fight is far from over, but this recognition will help us push the film forward and hopefully bring more awareness to Máxima's story. We couldn't be more grateful for all the love and support we have received at Hot Docs."

As we previously reported, Tasha Hubbard's *nipawistasowin: We Will Stand Up*, won the best Canadian feature documentary award for its look at the killing of Colten Boushie, a young Indigenous man in Saskatchewan.

<http://www.northernstars.ca/hot-docs-wraps-with-awards-2/>

## Lourdes': Film Review

2:01 PM PDT 5/7/2019 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs Festival

*Moving and immersive, if not quite a cinematic miracle.*

**Alban Teurlai and Thierry Demaiziere's documentary delivers a behind-the-scenes portrait of the French town that has become one of the most important sites of religious tourism.**

By the end of Alban Teurlai and Thierry Demaiziere's immersive documentary about Lourdes, you'll feel like you've been to the French town that has become one of the most important religious pilgrimage destinations in the world. What you won't feel is that you've learned very much about the subject. Immersive rather than informative, *Lourdes*, which recently received its world premiere at Hot Docs, proves as frustrating as it is often deeply moving.

Brief informational graphics presented early on inform us that Lourdes receives millions of visitors every year and that some 7,000 recoveries and 70 miracles have been documented. The phenomenon is a result of a French peasant girl, Bernadette, having seen visions of the Virgin Mary there more than 160 years ago. The town is now a major site of religious tourism, as demonstrated by the throngs attending outdoor church services and a glimpse of a very well-stocked gift shop filled with religious trinkets.

The filmmakers focus on several people who travel to Lourdes, at great personal expense and with tremendous difficulty, in search of a miracle. They include a 40-year-old man who has been reduced to a childlike state after a devastating car accident and is being cared for by his elderly parents; a man with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) who says that he has felt inner peace since his fatal diagnosis; a teenage girl with a debilitating skin condition who has been brought there by her father who has scrimped and saved to afford the annual trips; and a father and his little boy who is suffering from an unspecified but apparently terminal condition.

We're also introduced to a seemingly mute middle-aged man who can only communicate by pointing to letters as a result of several failed suicide attempts. He's been coming to Lourdes for 15 years, and is well known to the staff there, including a priest who asks him, "Does your faith make your life easier?" "No," the man answers without hesitation, by pointing to "N" and "O."

The documentary provides a behind-the-scenes portrait of the care provided the more infirm visitors, such as the aides receiving precise instructions as to how to groom and bathe them. "Have them look nice for the Virgin Mary," the head nurse tells them.

## The Hollywood Reporter – May 7, 2019 (2 of 2)

The odds of a miracle are steep, as acknowledged by a woman who says that she's not mad at the Virgin Mary for not curing her. "It's like winning the lottery," she shrugs, pointing to the vast numbers of people who come to Lourdes in desperation. Nonetheless, belief runs strong, as evidenced by a scene in which a group of people excitedly share a cellphone video in which the image of the Virgin Mary seems to appear. Each of the pilgrims profiled in the film is shown bathing in the supposedly healing waters of the grotto where Bernadette first saw her in 1858.

The focus on afflicted individuals provides the film with a strong emotional component, abetted by Pierre Aviat's powerful musical score. For viewers not already familiar with Lourdes and its history, however, the approach may prove less than satisfying. And the doc's climactic depiction of what appears to be a minor miracle feels more than a little manipulative.

*Production company: Falabracks*

*Directors: Alban Teurlai, Thierry Demaiziere*

*Screenwriters: Alban Teurlai, Thierry Demaiziere, Jeanne Aptekman, Sixtine Leon-Dufour*

*Producers: Stephanie Schorter, Thierry Demaiziere, Alban Teurlai*

*Executive producers: Stephanie Schorter, Stephane Celerier, Valerie Garcia*

*Director of photography-editor: Alban Teurlai*

*Composer: Pierre Aviat*

*Venue: Hot Docs*

*91 minutes*

## 'The Corporate Coup D'Etat': Film Review

2:12 PM PDT 5/7/2019 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs Festival

*A horror film of the most realistic kind.*

**Fred Peabody's documentary examines the ways in which corporate interests increasingly control society.**

The title of the new documentary by Fred Peabody (previously responsible for *All Governments Lie*) pretty much announces what the viewer is in for. Taken from a 1995 lecture by Canadian philosopher John Raulston Saul, it refers to the ever-growing control of our democratic institutions by companies looking out solely for their own interests. Saul had described it as happening in "slow motion," but as *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* vividly illustrates, the phenomenon has increased rapidly in the age of Trump.

The film, recently screened at Toronto's Hot Docs, begins with footage of Donald Trump's inauguration featuring a stone-faced Barack and Michelle Obama watching as the president-elect rails about "American carnage." Trump was right, to a point, with that carnage on full display in the doc with segments about Camden, New Jersey, and Youngstown, Ohio. Both are labeled "sacrifice zones," meaning formerly thriving manufacturing centers that have been reduced to urban wastelands. Camden used to be home to companies including RCA Victor (Enrico Caruso is among the many stars who recorded there) and Campbell's Soup, both of which have long since relocated. Youngstown was formerly a major steel manufacturer, but those jobs have been shipped overseas. The film includes interviews with several residents of both places, many of whom pulled the lever for Trump after twice voting for Obama.

They still support the president, giving him points for trying, but they're also under no illusions. "I don't think he drained the swamp, he just moved it into the White House," one former steelworker comments.

Like many cinematic essays, *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* lacks focus and makes frequent cheap (but effective) shots, such as the undeniably amusing cutaways between a sneering Mussolini and a similarly visaged Trump. The film certainly doesn't pull its punches, with philosopher Cornel West describing the current chief executive as a "neo-fascist, gangster and a thug." But it doesn't let his predecessors off the hook, either, decrying Ronald Reagan's "trickle-down" economics and the "faux-liberal" Bill Clinton whose legacies include NAFTA, welfare restrictions and a draconian crime bill.

## The Hollywood Reporter – May 7, 2019 (2 of 2)

The filmmaker's approach is often academic, such as crediting Mussolini with the concept of corporatism and pointing to important developments like the Powell Memorandum, written in 1971 by future Supreme Court justice Lewis Powell in reaction to Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* and calling for corporations to become more aggressive in taking control of American politics. Popular culture is woven into the mix, as well, via clips from the famous scene in the 1976 film *Network* in which Ned Beatty's CEO dresses down a cowering Howard Beale (Peter Finch) with a lecture about how there is no America but rather only corporations such as Union Carbide and Exxon.

Ultimately, the documentary is more effective in its smaller, personal moments than when it attempts to present elaborate socio-economic arguments. Among the more powerful segments are an interview with a homeless woman who's pitched a tent near a scrapyard and shares what little she has with others in her predicament, and a worker wandering through a foreclosed house still filled with the possessions of its former occupants, including its owner who left a suicide note and hanged himself in the garage. It's those human faces of income inequality that give *The Corporate Coup D'Etat* its greatest emotional heft.

*Production companies: White Pine Pictures, Ventana-Film*

*Director: Fred Peabody*

*Producer: Peter Raymont*

*Executive producers: Peter Raymont, Fred Peabody, Steve Ord, Jeff Cohen, Hans Robert Eisenhower*

*Director of photography: John Westheuser*

*Editor: James Yates*

*Composer: Michelle Osis*

*Venue: Hot Docs*

*90 minutes*

## Review: 'I Told My Mum I Was Going On An R.E. Trip...'

By [Susan G. Cole](#) • Published May 7th, 2019



In an ingenious bit of programming, Hot Docs has put together three films that deal with women's choices in completely different cinematic ways.

Linda Heymann's *I Told My Mum I was Going on an RE Trip* (UK, 42 min), the centrepiece of the program, shows four actors recount – one via music – the stories of abortion patients in the UK, the doctors who treat them and the counsellors who advise them. Talking to the camera and sometimes to each other, they come across as very authentic, frank and open. This is largely because they are speaking the actual words of women who have told their own stories (originally for a stage production) and because, regardless of what they're saying – some are pro-life, others seem nonchalant about their choice – they never come across as only good or bad and sometimes change their minds

The dialogue is often fascinating. The title refers to the outright lie one patient tells her mother. In one effective sequence, two women argue forcefully over whether a fetus is life. In another, a gynaecologist describes how she was in favour of allowing physicians to refuse to do abortions—until she was so inundated by women wanting to terminate their pregnancies that she was doing almost nothing else.

*Egg* (France/Denmark, 12 min), directed by Martina Scarpelli and beautifully animated in black and white drawings, is a meditation on the director's experience with anorexia. A woman encased in a box struggles to decide whether to eat an egg, which she fears will have a devastating effect on her body.

Both these movies use cinematic techniques to distance us from the fact that women's decisions have a profound effect on their health and the quality of their lives. *I Told My Mum* uses dialogue only. We never see the procedures performed: we're almost never even in a doctor's office. Though *Egg* has its terrifying moments, the effect of using animation is also distancing and director Scarpelli actively chooses to make her subject large, not scary skinny.

Paradoxically, director Maria de Mar Rosario's *La Bonita* (Cuba/Puerto Rico, 18 min.), which is about everyday treks to the beauty spa, goes in the exact opposite direction. It tracks with excruciating detail the treatments women endure to meet society's feminine standards. These procedures don't fall into the life or death category, yet this is the hardest of the three films to look at.

Watch, via intense close-ups, how a woman gets fake nails and see how the blood-soaked tissues accumulate. Notice the bruising that accrues while another goes through permanent make-up applications. Then, watching from above a woman's splayed legs, learn, if you haven't yourself had the treatment, exactly how a bikini wax is done. Throughout these procedures the clients are asked, "Does it hurt," and don't answer, until the woman getting waxed reacts.

These images are not gratuitous. This is reality and we are asked to sit with pain and wonder how far women will go in pursuit of what they're made to think is beautiful.

As a whole, the program gives new meaning to the complexities of choice.



# Documentary Business Reveals Widening Gap Between Rich and Poor

**Highlights from several recent international documentary events show that the non-fiction business is booming — but only for certain kinds of films.**

**Anthony Kaufman**

May 8, 2019 12:00 pm

In the swelling marketplace for [documentary](#) content, there's a widening gap between the rich and the poor. At this year's springtime film festivals showcasing new nonfiction premieres and projects in development—[Tribeca](#) in New York, and [Hot Docs](#) in Toronto—the disparities in the industry were glaringly evident.

On the marketable end of the spectrum, HBO kicked off Tribeca with Roger Ross Williams's engaging tribute to "The Apollo," while Netflix announced a worldwide deal for Rachel Mason's "Circus of Books," about her parents' West Hollywood gay porn bookstore, which already had the backing of TV hit-maker and Netflix producer Ryan Murphy ("American Horror Story," "Glee"), and was the only finished acquisition announced during the Festival. Other corporate-affiliated nonfiction included the devastating "After Parkland," the first feature-length production of Disney subsidiary ABC Documentaries, and other HBO docs, including Antoine Fuqua's Muhammad Ali portrait and Erin Lee Carr's USA Gymnastics abuse film "At the Heart of Gold."

Meanwhile, hundreds of other documentaries screened without distribution partners in sight, and dozens of other documentary filmmakers scrambled to cobble together financing for new projects. With more commercial entities intent on making and releasing nonfiction, it's an exciting time. But similar to Hollywood's cooption of indie film in the 2000s, much of that energy is going towards predictable places—celebrity-focused films, true-crime, pop culture scandals, docu-thrillers, and light entertainment—leaving everything else in the lurch, or at least, more restrained financing and distribution prospects.

"There's something interesting going on in the marketplace," said prominent documentary sales agent Josh Braun of Submarine Entertainment. "If we pick the right horse, it means multi-million-dollar box office, but if we don't, we may spend too much for the wrong horse."

## Old vs. New

Canada's Hot Docs Forum, a key international co-financing marketplace, and its behind-the-door Deal Maker sessions, which ran concurrently with Tribeca this year, also reflects the wide divides in the current doc world; principally, old vs. new models of doing business. At one point during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the two-day pitching Forum, which saw 21 projects in development, Swedish TV's Axel Arno put it best: "As commissioning editors, we feel akin to dinosaurs."

Indeed, the Forum model—in which emerging filmmakers pitch their projects to a room full of a (mostly) older generation of international public TV buyers—may be going extinct. Earlier in the week, Adriek van Nieuwenhuyzen, the industry head of the International Documentary Festival in Amsterdam (IDFA), told a Hot Docs audience that IDFA's signature Central Pitch would not return in 2020.

While international pitch events still provide an important launch-pad and level of heat for the chosen projects, everyone knows that documentary filmmakers would rather get in bed with single all-rights global buyers (i.e. Netflix), which only take private meetings, than trying to make a range of pacts, one by one, with a bunch of broadcasters from around the world for a fraction of the cash.



## The 2019 Hot Docs Pitch Forum

Simon Kilmurry, Executive Director of the International Documentary Association, and a veteran moderator of the Hot Docs Forum, acknowledged that there are changes in funding. “It used to be mostly TV-financed,” he told IndieWire. “But now there’s a rich mix of potential financing, from new companies to funds to equity groups like Impact Partners and the Chicago Media Project.” Kilmurry added the major public broadcasters in Europe such as Arte in France and BBC Storyville in the UK “can bring large support, but the smaller markets are quite modest.”

For instance, RYOT Films (“On Her Shoulders”) had already committed \$630,000 to one of this year’s top Forum pitches, “Light Darkness Light,” which combines intimate verite filmmaking with CGI animation and other visual effects to tell the story of a blind Anglican priest who is implanted with a “bionic” eye. That makes the \$10,000-\$20,000 that smaller international broadcasters can provide for licensing deals look like a pittance.

“As the marketplace expands, there will be more funding available for ‘smaller’ documentaries,” said Endeavor Content senior associate Kevin Iwashina. “But there will be more pressure for them to rise creatively amongst the available content in the marketplace.”

## Context vs. Ambiguity

Another gap in the industry appears to exist between the mandates of international broadcasters vs. other outlets. This could be seen in debates around the Hot Docs Forum decision-makers table between foreign commissioning editors asking for more context, more science, more narration, or more facts, while a limited group of festival programmers and U.S. funders suggested that ambiguity and nuance should be embraced.

“I see it less as a ‘divide’ and more as different type of scouting job,” said Sundance programmer Harry Vaughn. “As a Sundance programmer, I’m on the lookout for any and all highly compelling stories from bold, visionary voices. A perk, and a challenge, of my job: there are no sharp or set guidelines to follow.”

But in many cases, international broadcasters don’t have such freedom. The Forum’s most artistically audacious project, Bo McGuire’s Southern queer family self-portrait “Socks on Fire: Uncle John and the Copper Headed Water Rattlers” (described by one attendee as “Southern Comfort” meets “Tarnation”) was warmly embraced—but with reservations. One of the most enthusiastic responses came from BBC Storyville’s Mandy Chang, with a caveat: “As long as I get the green light from above, I’m in,” she said, leaving her decision to the higher-ups, who may have a different mandate.



## “Socks on Fire: Uncle John and the Copper Headed Water Rattlers”

On the other hand, “the great thing about the platforms,” said Ina Fichman, producer of another top Forum pitch “The Bones,” a captivating docu-thriller about the high-stakes business of dinosaur bone trafficking, “is that they like

creative stories.” “The Bones” held the attention of international broadcasters, but Fichman said she was also planning for a potential 4-hour serial version for streamers.

Similarly, another hot pitch that could hit “the platforms” was “Instant Life,” co-directed by Mark Becker (“Art and Craft”) and Aaron Schock (“La Laguna”), which follows the alluring, stranger-the-fiction story about a late-1950s toy known as The Amazing Live Sea Monkeys and one widow’s battle to escape the dark legacy of its creator, Harold von Braunhut,

her late husband. But Schock told IndieWire that things didn’t really come together for the film until Hot Docs. “We’re in a much better place than we were just a week ago,” he said, thanks to pending deals for representation and productive initial discussions with Amazon and Netflix.

There were other strong projects pitched at the Forum, but it’s hard to know where they’ll end up in the current business environment, where a massive influx of documentary productions may be creating a distribution bottleneck.

Endeavor’s Iwashina suggested that such a surplus of content could actually benefit smaller distributors. “I think public broadcasters and international channels will have more opportunity to acquire quality films as supply increases,” he said, while “independent distributors will be able to position themselves as a quality alternative to larger distributors given their precision in marketing.”

At Hot Docs, you could see how filmmakers were coming up with original ways to tackle familiar topics to distinguish themselves in the crowded market, such as the Forum’s two unconventional and complex examinations of climate change: “Colour of the Wind,” a cinematic portrait of monster dust storms that travel across the earth, which won a CDN \$20,000 prize from a group of private donors, and “Plan C for Civilization,” Ben Kalina and Jen Schneider’s look at the thorny issue of solar geoengineering (as one expert comments, “geoengineering is a really bad idea, but it may be our least bad option”).

There were also a number of projects focused on female empowerment, the best of which, Lin Alluna’s “Twice Colonized,” a compelling profile of Inuit activist Aaju Peter, and winner of two awards totaling \$30,000 CDN, set itself apart by focusing not only on its protagonist’s ferocity, but also her deep-seated personal vulnerabilities.

## **What’s the Fate of Foreign Docs?**

There is one area of the business where less endowed broadcasters still play an essential component in the nonfiction ecosystem: foreign-language documentaries, which have long been abandoned by larger U.S.-based companies, platforms, and even festivals. Out of Tribeca’s 12-film Documentary Competition, for example, only two entries weren’t in English. Tribeca’s winner, Scotland’s “Scheme Birds,” an intimate and lyrically shot kitchen-sink-realist portrait of a working-class Scottish teen that is also subtitled, was beloved by critics, but will likely remain a hard-sell in the U.S.’s risk-averse documentary market. Fortunately, for foreign docs, PBS’ POV still holds a few slots every year for far-flung stories.

But that leaves foreign documentaries reliant on piecemeal international deals to reach their financing goals and audiences. That’s the likely fate of the Hot Docs Forum’s most promising international projects, such as Myanmar-based filmmaker Hnin Ei Hlaing’s “Midwives,” a brave story of two midwives who work side by side in a makeshift medical clinic, which won the Forum’s top \$30,000 CDN “first look” prize, and two projects from Iran, “Maya,” about the bond between an Iranian animal trainer and his tiger produced by Doc Society, and “1001 Nights Apart,” a portrait of different generations of ballet dancers in Iran, where “dancing” is technically forbidden.

## Local priest, director happy with Hot Docs win

Documentary wins top award at film festival

[Dale Molnar](#) · CBC News · Posted: May 08, 2019 6:00 AM ET | Last Updated: May 8



*Rev. Maurice Restivo, pastor at Assumption church. (Dale Molnar CBC News)*

The pastor at Assumption Parish is happy that a documentary on a former Windsor priest who pleaded guilty to molesting 16 children has won a prestigious award at a Toronto film festival.

Directed by Windsorite Matt Gallagher, *Prey* was named winner of the \$50,000 Rogers Audience Award for best Canadian documentary on Sunday, the final day of Hot Docs, North America's largest documentary festival.

The film features several southwestern Ontario victims of Rev. William Hodgson "Hod" Marshall, as well as lawyer Rob Talach of London, who has doggedly pursued justice for the victims.

"I think it was an excellent documentary and I was happy to see that it won the award," said Rev. Maurice Restivo. "I know they worked very hard at it. It was very difficult for me to watch and my heart went out to those who are suffering, who are victims of father Hod Marshall and victims of sex abuse of any kind but especially priests."

Gallagher didn't go to the awards ceremony Friday when the film was awarded a \$5,000 special jury prize — because he didn't expect to win.

"There was such a slim chance of getting the award, there were so many good films there," said Gallagher.

He was at home in Toronto with his 10-year-old daughter when he got a phone call from the festival.

## CBC News – May 8, 2019 (2 of 2)

"For me, the prize is just the icing on the cake. The real sort of reward that I get is getting a chance to actually work in documentary and make these films," said Gallagher.



*The film focuses on one perpetrator in particular, Father William Hodgson "Hod" Marshall, a retired priest and teacher. (Prey/Matt Gallagher)*

Gallagher, his wife and his daughter were in the audience for the big award.

"We were really excited to receive it," said Gallagher, adding that the money is great but more importantly he feels the audience was sending a message to the church by selecting the film for the award.

"I think the public wants the church to change," said Gallagher.

Restivo believes the church is now "starting to move in the right direction" toward addressing the problem, and that the Catholic church needs to take responsibility for it.

"At the same time ensuring that actions are taken so that things like that can be minimized or stopped for the future," said Restivo, adding that working with healing the victims is essential. He hopes the documentary will go a long way toward preventing future abuses.

"I think what's important is to take someone out of risk of public harm," said Restivo, who doesn't think allowing priests to marry would make much difference.

"I'm a bit sorry that the Basilian fathers, my religious congregation ... looked like we didn't do the best we could," said Restivo. "But it's also good that all of that is out in the open and I hope that that brings healing to people."

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/hot-docs-priests-assumption-parish-william-hodgson-marshall-pedophile-1.5127224>

## Hot Docs audience impressed by Iran's "Beloved"

May 8, 2019



TEHRAN – Iranian filmmaker Yasser Talebi's documentary "Beloved" has taken first place among the top five mid-length films selected by audience votes at the Hot Docs festival in Canada, Toronto, the organizers have announced.

"Beloved" is about an 82-year-old woman who prefers a hard, solitary herder's existence with her cows to a more comfortable life among people.

The film was followed by "Who Let the Dogs Out" by Brent Hodge from Canada, "I Told My Mum I Was Going on an R.E. Trip..." by Lindy Heymann from the UK, "El Toro" by Danielle Sturk from Canada, and "Your Last Walk in the Mosque" codirected by Ubaydah Abu-Usayd and Abderrahmane Hedjoudje from Canada.

"Hope Frozen" directed and produced Pailin Wedel from Thailand was selected as best feature documentary in the international competition of the festival, which is North America's largest documentary festival.

"For Sama" directed by Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts from the UK, USA and Syria won the special jury prize in the international competition.

"Maxima" by director Claudia Sparrow from the United States was the winner of the Hot Docs Audience Award.

"Prey" by director Matt Gallagher from Canada also received the Rogers Audience Award for Best Canadian Documentary.

**Photo: A scene from "Beloved" by Yasser Talebi.**

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/435648/Hot-Docs-audience-impressed-by-Iran-s-Beloved>



## Review: 'The Infiltrators'

By [Maurie Alioff](#) • Published May 8th, 2019



### ***The Infiltrators***

(USA, 94 minutes)

Dir. Alex Rivera, Cristina Ibarra

Programme: Docx (International Premiere)

One of the last films to screen at Hot Docs 2019, *The Infiltrators* is both as timely as Donald Trump's latest tweet and unusual in form. Rivera and Ibarra's doc focuses on the Broward Transitional Center in South Florida, a facility that holds undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers, some of them "dreamers," people who were brought to the US by their parents.

The story unfolds in 2012, but *The Infiltrators* is not a history lesson dependent on archival footage and present-day interviews. It builds a twisting, turning storyline about young activists (members of a group called the National Immigrant Youth Alliance, and themselves "illegals") trying to dismantle what one of them calls a Kafka-esque system.

Broward detains people who have not committed crimes. Because there are no charges against them, they have no legal representation. Like Kafka's Joseph K, they wait, sometimes for years, for an outcome, which is usually getting deported to Mexico, Honduras, and the Congo, and other countries, where in many cases, their lives are in danger.

We see Broward, which is a private institution run by the politically connected GEO Group, via the activist characters, who are opposing them. Marco and Viridiana, playacting ridiculous and even comical stereotypes about Hispanics, get themselves detained in Broward to infiltrate it. They and Mohammed, their Iranian born co-ordinator on the outside, hope to help inmates and subvert the place.

The stakes are very high. Marco and Viridiana risk their own exposure and deportation. How could the filmmakers follow people doing risky, clandestine things in an actual lockup? Throughout the film, the duo swings back and forth between the real people and actors playing them. Sometimes, identities blur.

## POV Magazine – May 8, 2019 (2 of 2)

As rave reviews have noted, *The Infiltrators* plays like a blend of caper and prison picture. Watching it, you need to keep reminding yourself that Broward is not a prison; nobody has committed a crime, but it sure looks like a pen, complete with prison uniforms for both men and women, solitary confinement, and the mishandling of “prisoners.” The Geo Group, which runs prisons all over the US, encourages the inmates to work at jobs, like cleaning, for \$1 per day.

Marco and Viridiana feed information about the installation to Mohammed and team members: bad treatment, poor medical care and so on. Most importantly, they distribute the phone numbers of activists who take case details and agitate for release and asylum. Their tactics include petitions, demonstrations, media coverage, and seeking support from potentially sympathetic politicians. After all, Barack Obama saved his uncle from deportation.

No one on the outside can do anything if the inmates are invisible, and the system blocks the flow of information. Among many tense situations, the film tracks how a US citizen sympathizer sneaks necessary documents into Broward. Not drugs, not guns. Privacy waiver forms that inmates must sign for appeals to be made.

In what functions like a subplot, Marco undermines the deportation of a character called Beni by advising him to refuse boarding a plane, or bang on the pilot’s door saying he’s an asylum seeker, or decline seatbelts. If Beni can get himself back to Broward, he has another shot at staying in the US. The sequence is one of many high-tension, thriller-like highlights.

*The Infiltrators* pushes the envelope on the docudrama to reveal the truth behind ugly rhetoric, especially that of Trump, concerning people seeking safe lives.

## HotDocs festival 2019: portraits of conflicts and compassion excel

Toronto's documentary festival showcased harrowing stories from Syria and Afghanistan, alongside life-affirming tales

**Charlie Phillips**

Sun 12 May 2019



'A powerful sleight of hand': Hassan Fazili chronicles his family's exodus from Afghanistan in *Midnight Traveler*.

It was a strong year for North America's biggest documentary festival, [HotDocs](#), in Toronto. Unlike most documentary festivals, this one offers free daytime screenings for students and senior citizens, engaging the public and paving the way for lively post-film conversations. The main buzz was created by [Knock Down the House](#), a film about congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, which launched on Netflix during the festival; and [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#), about generations of injustice against the First Nations people in Canada.

But for me, two self-shot stories about heartbreak and losing everything stood out. [For Sama](#) rightly won the festival's special jury prize for international feature documentary. It was made from video diaries shot in Aleppo by the young journalist Waad al-Kateab, whose harrowing hospital videos of the aftermath of bombings were previously broadcast to much acclaim on [Channel 4 News](#). Co-directed with Edward Watts, *For Sama* follows Kateab's story from the early days of the uprising to the fall of her city. What comes in between is hard but important to watch, with her doctor husband and his colleagues attending to the dusty, traumatised bodies of babies and children. There's a near-constant soundtrack of the wailing of parents whose worlds have collapsed.

This superb film is addressed lovingly to Sama, the daughter of Kateab, born during the assault on the city. It shows the triumph of love over war and reminds us that civilians in [Syria](#) were killed by their own government, and when journalists like Kateab released footage of this to the western media, the international community did little about it.

Another essential condemnation of our complacency of the vulnerable comes in [Midnight Traveler](#), in which film-maker Hassan Fazili chronicles the flight of his family from political persecution in Afghanistan and their passage to Europe. While many documentaries have shown this journey, Fazili excels at capturing the experience of families waiting in refugee camps for months on end.

## The Guardian – May 12, 2019 (2 of 2)

Fazili and his wife, Fatima, also a film-maker, are forced to leave their homeland when the Taliban puts a bounty on Fazili's head. Along with their children, they have a real eye for documenting the beautiful. Their daughter Nargis is a particularly soulful observer; she notices "the painting-like quality" of mountains and is taken with the sight and sound of splashing water on the coast. She warns us of dark times to come after a period of relative calm in a Bulgarian camp. Along with fellow residents, the family are attacked by Bulgarian racists in a horrifying escalation of prejudice witnessed by the police, who don't intervene. We've grown attached to this family; their squalid conditions – which they never complain about – challenge us to reconsider our demands as Europeans. The film's conclusion is a powerful sleight of hand from Fazili, undercutting the typical happy ending of the refugee documentary.



I was also entranced by the acclaimed Dutch film-maker Heddy Honigmann's **Buddy**, following the lives of guide dogs and their human companions. The loyalty of these canines is a joy to behold; one highlight is an elderly blind woman's race through a forest with her bounding dog.

Pia Hellenthal's **Searching Eva** was a surprise delight. A character portrait of a 25-year-old Berlin sex worker/poet hipster, it always feels consensual, never exploitative, despite its explicit content.

In the shorts programme, Garrett Bradley's **America** features clips from **Lime Kiln Club Field Day** (1913) – the earliest-known surviving US feature film to showcase a black cast and crew. The result combines a re-creation of the original film with voiceover comment on how Hollywood has depicted the black experience. An exciting piece, it sits between nonlinear art and narrative.

While refined and experimental films such as *America* and *Searching Eva* are a long way from the DIY observations of *For Sama* and *Midnight Traveler*, they're similar in that they depict the worlds of those less seen in mainstream media. This is something that, once again, HotDocs proves the documentary form can do so well.

## 'Our Godfather': Film Review

11:29 AM PDT 5/14/2019 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs Festival

*Real-life organized crime tales don't come more gripping.*

**Mark Franchetti and Andrew Meier's documentary recounts the story of Tommaso Buscetta, the Mafia turncoat whose testimony led to more than 400 convictions.**

The story of Mafia turncoat Tommaso Buscetta is compellingly told in a documentary by Mark Franchetti and Andrew Meier that recently received its world premiere at Toronto's Hot Docs festival. Relating the tale of Buscetta, the highest-ranking Mafia figure ever to break the code of silence known as omertà, with the gripping tension and fast pacing of a first-rate thriller, *Our Godfather* will prove fascinating for anyone interested in the milieu. And as the films with a title similar to this one demonstrated several decades ago, those numbers are legion. (Buscetta's story is also being dramatized in Marco Bellocchio's upcoming film *The Traitor*, which premieres in Cannes).

Buscetta was a boss in the Sicilian Mafia who committed numerous crimes, including murder, before he moved to Brazil in 1970 to escape the growing mob violence in his native city. He married a woman 20 years younger than him and continued his criminal ways in his new country, eventually getting arrested for drug trafficking. He was extradited to Italy and served a lengthy prison sentence. Along the way he became disillusioned with the Mafia because of its drug wars' endless bloodshed. (The documentary includes many graphic crime scene photographs and videos that will prove difficult viewing for the faint of heart.)

When Buscetta became a key witness in numerous trials in Italy and the United States, his testimony resulted in the conviction of more than 400 mafioso in both countries. He entered the Witness Protection Program, living with his family in such places as suburban New Jersey and southern Florida. The tight security was certainly necessary, given that 11 of Buscetta's relatives, including his two sons and other family members who had nothing to do with organized crime were brutally murdered or disappeared. Buscetta lived a quiet, mostly anonymous life for his remaining years, dying of cancer at age 71 in 2000.

What makes the documentary so compelling, besides its gripping narrative, is the onscreen testimony of Buscetta's third wife and surviving children, who still live in anonymity because of fear of reprisal. His son Roberto, who's never seen in full face and says he carries a gun at all times, says ominously,

## The Hollywood Reporter – May 14, 2019 (2 of 2)

"The Mafia never forgets." His widow displays her contempt for the organization that ruined their lives. "Omertà was sacred in the old times; now it's bullshit," she sneers.

There's also a wealth of fascinating archival footage and revealing home movies. The former includes a press conference featuring a young, pre-deranged Rudy Giuliani when he was prosecuting the "Pizza Connection" case based on Buscetta's testimony and a scene from an Italian trial in which Buscetta angrily confronts the former mob boss who had his relatives killed. The home movies featuring Buscetta reveal a dedicated family man who clearly had tremendous difficulty adapting to his new, banal lifestyle in a country where he never felt comfortable. We hear from several of the former FBI agents who were part of his around-the-clock protection, including one who became a close personal friend and still has a copy of a recipe for an Italian dish that Buscetta wrote out for him.

It's those small, resonant details that make *Our Godfather* more than simply a true-crime tale but also a moving portrait of a man who was both a stone-cold killer and a tragic figure who never got over his guilt for what his criminal lifestyle had done to his family. It's Shakespearean tragedy, mafioso style.

*Venue: Hot Docs*

*Production company: Black Earth Films*

*Directors-producers: Mark Franchetti, Andrew Meier*

*Screenwriters: Mark Franchetti, Andrew Meier, David Charap*

*Director of photography: Lars Kree*

*Editor: David Charap*

*Composers: Simon Elms, Colin Smith*

*93 minutes*



## “After Parkland” Documentary Shows Life Beyond the Headlines for School Shooting Survivors

"We wanted to bear witness to how families start to find meaning when so much of what was precious in your life is taken away so suddenly."

BY [EMMA SARRAN WEBSTER](#)



GETTY IMAGES

It's a fairly familiar scene, as far as school dance preparations go: As her date gets help with his bow tie, Victoria Gonzalez stands in front of the mirror, adding the final touches to her updo – including making sure the delicate flowers are in place just so. Except the flowers aren't just cute accessories Victoria bought at her local florist that day; the baby's breath are pieces of bouquet from her late boyfriend, Joaquin Oliver, who was murdered on February 14, 2018, one of 17 people murdered in a mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

"These little white ones are from the first bouquet of flowers that Joaquin ever got me," Victoria explained to the camera. "He showed up at my door after I got my wisdom teeth taken out, and he was just sitting there on my step with them in his hands." With one final sweep of hairspray, she looks in the mirror: "Okay, we're set. We're good."

Victoria was heading to Stoneman Douglas's prom, with Joaquin's best friend Dillon McCooty – sticking together, as they had been for the past three months since the shooting, as they continue to work through grief, cope with the shooting, and move forward with their lives.

In another Parkland home that day, Andrew Pollack met with a group of girls as they took their pre-prom pictures and departed for the dance. They invited him to the pre-dance festivities; but his daughter, Meadow – who died after being shot nine times – would only be there in spirit. Her friends honored her with temporary tattoos of her name on their backs, and invited Andrew to join in the pre-dance festivities.

"The girls wanted me to go," he told the camera. He hoped they had a good time, he said, but for him, "it was brutal, not seeing my daughter there."

## Teen Vogue – May 16, 2019 (2 of 2)

These very intimate moments were all caught on camera as part of a new documentary *After Parkland*, which recently premiered at Tribeca Film Festival in New York City and Hot Docs International Documentary Festival in Toronto. It shows us parts of the community's stories that we haven't much seen: the parts between the headline-making moments, captured by filmmakers, Emily Taguchi and Jake Lefferman, who initially traveled to Parkland on assignment for ABC's Nightline.

"We have, sadly, been on assignment in mass shooting situations before," Jake tells *Teen Vogue*. "After each, you are...left with these questions about what tomorrow is going to look like after the cameras leave, or what does the next week or month look like for a family that is grieving and has this void in their life now, and how does a community begin to rebuild?"

"I think we wanted to bear witness to how families start to find meaning when so much of what was precious in your life is taken away so suddenly," Emily says.

Emily and Jake were compelled to make the film after speaking with survivors in the immediate aftermath; starting with Sam Zeif, a Parkland senior whose texts with his brother during lockdown went viral. "We were both taken aback by how articulately he was able to describe what he went through," Jake says. "We were blown away by it. It was like the air was sucked out of the room. And the fact that Sam so early on could see why it was important to use his voice to keep his friend Joaquin [Oliver]'s memory alive; to make sure that everyone in the country and the world understood what they went through and why it cannot happen again."

## Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up reveals stirring activism in wake of headline-making death

By [Peter Howell](#) Movie Critic  
Thu., May 30, 2019

★★★★



### Nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up

Hot Docs, Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, Documentary, 2019, Docs, Film, Cinema, Film Festival

Documentary on the death of Saskatchewan Cree man Colten Boushie and efforts by his family to find truth and justice. Directed by Tasha Hubbard. Opens Friday at TIFF Bell Lightbox. 98 minutes. **PG**

The Cree word for “justice” closely relates to the word for “respect,” we learn in Tasha Hubbard’s cinematic inquiry, an understanding that permeates this powerful work of activist cinema.

She examines the August 2016 shooting death of [Colten Boushie](#), a young Cree man in Saskatchewan, and the subsequent controversial “reasonable doubt” acquittal of his killer by an all-white jury.

Hubbard challenges Canada’s legal system and outlines the country’s long history of mistreatment of Indigenous peoples, as she and the Boushie family take their cause to Ottawa and the United Nations.

George Hupka’s stirring cinematography completes one of the most consequential films ever to open Hot Docs, which went on to win the fest’s \$10,000 Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award earlier this month.

Peter Howell is the Star’s movie critic based in Toronto. Follow him on Twitter: [@peterhowellfilm](#)

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/review/2019/05/30/nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up-reveals-stirring-activism-in-wake-of-headline-making-death.html>

## Review: Halston

Andrew Parker 4 days ago



### Halston

**5** out of 10

*Halston* is a flashy, stylish, decently entertaining, but also resoundingly hollow documentary about a high fashion icon who valued his privacy and even in death refuses to be overly analysed. While French documentarian Frédéric Tcheng was previously able to make fascinating biographies of Christian Dior and Diana Vreeland, he seems to have met his match when talking about the uncompromising and obstinate Roy Halston Frowick, resulting in a documentary that covers the rise and fall of one of fashion's most famous and infamous mononyms without getting to know much about the film's subject as a human being. One suspects that Halston would be over the moon about such an obtuse and respectful depiction, but it's hard to think that audiences at large will be just as fulfilled.

Born in Des Moines, Iowa, Halston moved to New York City where he started his career as a milliner for Bergdorf Goodman, eventually becoming the head designer in his department. But becoming known as the man who put the pillbox hat onto the head of Jackie Kennedy wasn't enough for the trendsetting and increasingly popular Halston, who went out on his own in the 1960s amid the rise of more big name designers getting into the ready-to-wear fashion industry. He made a killing in cosmetics, fragrances, hot pants, ultrasuede, and accessories, and his clothing was seen on red carpets at every major social event and awards show. He was one of the first American designers ever allowed to showcase their work in Paris. His company was so large that it was purchased by one of America's largest corporate conglomerates, Norton Simon, and eventually he'd become the first designer to allow his clothes to be mass produced and sold at a major department store chain. He had it all for awhile, but his particular style of micromanaging, hard partying lifestyle, and a complete lack of empathy or people skills would lead to his downfall in the 1980s.

Tcheng frames *Halston* like a mystery, peppering interstitials throughout the film where actress and writer Tavi Gevinson plays an investigator looking into the lost, undocumented gaps in the

## The Gate – May 31, 2019 (2 of 3)

designer's life. It makes sense from a storytelling perspective when one considers that his failed business partnership led to most of Halston's archives, designs, and prototypes either being destroyed or sold off for pennies on the dollar by his previous corporate overlords. Although there are plenty of archival interviews with Halston still readily available and found, a lot of the stories and materials that built his empire are lost forever. Unfortunately, one gets the sense that this framing device isn't particular necessary, and Halston would still be a frustrating enigma to try and get a handle on if he were alive today.

When it comes to the business details and learning how Halston ran day-to-day operations, Tcheng has a lot to work with. No company that made as much money and got as the wealth of press that Halston's did would be lacking in that department. Similarly, there are plenty of stories about Halston partying at Studio 54 and rubbing elbows with the cultural elites of his time, like Andy Warhol, Elsa Peretti, and Liza Minnelli (the latter of whom gives a new interview for the film, but says very little out of respect for her departed friend). New interviews with some of his production heads, members of his omnipresent stable of models that flanked Halston at all times, frustrated corporate partners, and even filmmaker Joel Schumacher (who was a close friend and longtime co-worker) do their best to fill in the details about who Tcheng's subject was a person, but answers remain unattainable.



In all of his interviews that are seen in the documentary, Halston shoots down any attempts by journalists to ask personal questions. To Halston, the past wasn't something to be talked about, and all that mattered was today and tomorrow. To that effect, the stories shared throughout *Halston* only speak to the man's passion to be the best and the anger people incurred if they ever dared to question his genius. *Halston* mentions that he was gay, but outside of an archival audio interview with former boyfriend Victor Hugo, that's all there is to say about his personal relationships. Other archival audio and video interviews (and even some of the new ones conducted by Tcheng) paint a rather unflattering picture of a man who seems like he was a tyrant. Like many problematic artists, some people were willing to look past his abusive practices and see his genius, while others, most notably late fashion illustrator Joe Eula, are willing to pour heavy amounts of gasoline onto an already burning pile of bad feelings.

But it's clear that Tcheng wants *Halston* to function more as a fluff piece than a takedown, even if he doesn't have a lot of evidence to back up such an approach. Whenever someone brings up something nasty that Halston did, Tcheng will immediately cut to one of his subject's many successes. When Halston's career starts to decline, Tcheng doesn't shy away from painting the

designer as the architect of his own demise, but the film pivots in a weirdly specific direction to talk about a story of brand mismanagement instead of about the person who committed said mismanagement on a personal level. Late in the film, *Halston* somewhat disingenuously (but not totally without cause) paints its subject's corporate handlers as villains. It's also at this point where Tcheng has been saving all that he knows about Halston's earliest years before becoming a success in hopes of ending the movie on a cathartic, sympathetic note.

It doesn't work at all and the film suffers on the whole as a result. No matter how unfair it was that Halston had his livelihood stripped away from him in a hostile takeover of his company, Tcheng doesn't do enough to make viewers shake the feeling that the film's subject was kind of a monster to everyone who worked for him at the height of his success. *Halston* tries to become a "sympathy for the devil" sort of narrative, but without any personal details beyond painting its subject as a successful, egotistical millionaire, the approach doesn't stick. There's no mystery behind Halston no matter how hard Tcheng tries to manufacture one. Halston was an unapologetic asshole, and since he didn't want to speak about how he became one in his own words while he was still with us, there's not much reason to care about his legacy. For a biography, it's a highly unfashionable look that's way too safe to talk about anything beyond the brand on the label.

***Halston opens in Toronto at The Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Friday, May 31, 2019. It expands to Hamilton on June 12, Ottawa, Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Regina on June 14, and to Saskatoon and Montreal on June 21.***  
**Check out the trailer for *Halston*:**