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Sundance Adds First Features by Robin Wright, Rebecca Hall to 2021 Edition

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'Passing'

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The indie film showcase's pandemic-era program also has directorial debuts by Jerrod Carmichael, Pascual

Sisto and Questlove with his Black Woodstock documentary.

As Sundance director Tabitha Jackson's reign at the indie film festival gets well underway, the marquee indie U.S. film showcase has gone mostly online with a pandemic-era discovery lineup filled with work by women and BIPOC directors and more than half the 2021 program shot by first-time helmers.

For Jackson, the focus on debut feature directors underlines how, despite the COVID-19 crisis pausing film production in Hollywood and upending planning for Sundance's upcoming Jan. 28 to Feb. 3, 2021, edition, the marquee festival isn't playing it safe as it doubles down on revealing new independent voices to the world.

"It's meant that hard work and new voices have been able to emerge in a way that perhaps they wouldn't have been able to do in years past and that for us is a gold mine of discovery," Jackson told *The Hollywood Reporter* as Sundance unveiled its film lineup Tuesday.

As in past years, look among Sundance's 72 features this year for high-profile, star-driven pics to debut in the U.S. drama competition, where 10 world premieres include Sian Heder's *Coda*, with Oscar winner Marlee Matlin and newcomer Emilia Jones starring; Christopher Makoto Yogi's ghost tale *I Was a Simple Man*, starring Constance Wu; Clint Bentley's *Jockey*, toplined by Clifton Collins Jr., Molly Parker and Moisés Arias; and *John and the Hole*, Pascual Sisto's directorial debut that stars Charlie Shotwell as a child, John, who holds his family captive in a hole in the ground.

Also bringing star wattage to Sundance's virtual event in the competitive sidebar is Rebecca Hall's directorial debut *Passing*, a race drama set in 1929 Harlem that stars Tessa Thompson and Ruth Negga and is co-produced by Forest Whitaker; *Superior*, Erin Vassilopoulos' first feature about estranged identical twins hiding out in upstate New York; and the Tiffany Haddish- and Christopher Abbott-starrer *On the Count of Three*, a dark comedy thriller directed by and also starring Carmichael of *The Carmichael Show* in his own directorial debut.

Also booked into the U.S. drama competition is Karen Cincorre's *Mayday*, a female-driven action film that stars Grace Van Patten, Juliette Lewis and Mia Goth; Nikole Beckwith's *Together Together*, a romantic drama toplined by *The Office* star Ed Helms and Patti Harrison; and Lyle Mitchell Corbine's *Wild Indian*, with Jesse Eisenberg starring and executive producing.

Other glitzy titles headed to Sundance include Robin Wright's directorial debut *Land*, where the *House of Cards* star directs herself as Edee Mathis, a lawyer consumed by grief and who resolves to remove

herself completely from life while in the wilderness of Wyoming; Casey Affleck's *The World to Come*, by director Mona Fastvold and a frontier drama with Katherine Waterston in the lead role; Dash Shaw's *Cryptozoo*, starring Michael Cera and Zoe Kazan; Albert Birney and Kentucker Audley's *Strawberry Mansion*, toplined by Audley, Grace Glowicki and Penny Fuller; and Sion Sono's *Prisoners of the Ghostland*, which stars Nicolas Cage and Nick Cassavetes.

Sundance director of programming Kim Yutani recalls that picking movies for the 2021 edition in a year like no other called for the novelty of her team traveling the world for the latest in U.S. and world cinema via their computers at home. "We even took a digital trip to Africa and I think that was possibly one of the highlights of our programming season," Yutani says.

Sundance programmers also piggy-backed on rival film festivals that became accessible as they, too, went online amid the pandemic. "I really admire all the other festivals that really mobilized and translated their festivals and co-production markets and works in progress to be online. That was incredibly convenient for us to adapt to that as we had more meetings than ever," Yutani adds.

That meant the Sundance programming team eventually settled on its final film picks and 2021 slate while meeting online, rather than being able to sift through and argue over movie choices while seated in the same room and looking at one another eye to eye, as in past years before the pandemic.

"It's not about the individual films anymore so much, but what the festival is going to be, and not being able to be with each other, talk over each other, shout at each other, laugh with each other in the same way as happened previously, and that probably was more painful as the process of film selection is emotional and vibrant," Jackson recounts.

Other star-driven world premieres at Sundance — many of which were shot during the pandemic — include *How It Ends*, a drama from the husband-wife duo Daryl Wein and Zoe Lister-Jones, with Lister-Jones, Cailee Spaeny, Olivia Wilde, Helen Hunt, Fred Armisen and Larmorne Morris starring; Ben Wheatley's horror virus pic *In the Earth*; Kate Tsang's coming-of-age comedy *Marvelous and the Black Hole*, starring Rhea Perlman and Miya Cech; and, in the Midnight sidebar, Prano Bailey-Bond's *Censor*, a British psychological horror film that stars Niamh Algar and Michael Smiley and saw production disrupted by the pandemic.

Shortened to seven days, compared to the usual 10 days, the Sundance Institute's upcoming event will have film lovers in the U.S. and internationally mostly scrolling to view 72 feature-length movies and additional short films on a bespoke digital platform, rather than moving among theaters in Park City to take in premieres, events and talks, as in the past.

Expect in-person screenings in Utah and in another 24 U.S. states to take [place only](#) if allowed by local health authorities.

As part of the 2021 slate, the U.S. documentary competition will feature Peter Nicks' *Homeroom*, which follows the class of 2020 at Oakland High School in a year marked by seismic change; Theo Anthony's *All Light, Everywhere*, an investigation into surveillance technologies; *At the Ready*, Maisie Crow's doc about a Texas high school where students train to be police officers and border patrol agents; and directors Parker Hill and Isabel Bethencourt's *Cusp*, a portrait of three teenage girls confronting the dark corners of summertime adolescence in a Texas military town.

Also contending for top documentary at Sundance is Jamila Wignot's *Ailey*, about the dance pioneer Alvin Ailey; *Rebel Hearts*, director Pedro Kos' film about Catholic nuns defying church patriarchy; Mariem Pérez Riera's *Rita Moreno: Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It*, about the Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award-winning actress and dancer; and *Summer of Soul (... Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*, director Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson's debut feature about 300,000 people attending the Harlem Cultural Festival in 1969, the same year Woodstock took place.

And day one entrants for the U.S. documentary competition will be *My Tiger Mom* director Debbie Lum's latest film, *Try Harder!*, about a San Francisco high school orchestra filled with competitive Asian American students, and Natalia Almada's *Users*, a visual essay on technology's impact on human life.

The Sundance 2021 slate continues a commitment to gender and racial parity, with half of the 139 films and projects in the lineup, or 69, being directed by one or more women; and 51 percent, or 71, being helmed by one or more artists of color.

And among the 3,509 feature film submissions that Sundance received — 1,377 features from the U.S. and 2,132 coming from overseas — around 27 percent were directed by one or more women, 2 percent were directed by one or more nonbinary individuals, 42 percent were directed by one or more filmmakers who identify as BIPOC and 11 percent were shot by one or more filmmakers who identify as LGBTQ+.

With the 2021 Academy Awards postponed to April 25, 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and earlier major festival launching pads Venice, Toronto and New York reduced in scope this year, Sundance's top execs are being coy about what edge that might give their event as an awards season kingmaker. "It's definitely an interesting place for us to be in this year, but whether it works to our advantage, I'm not certain about that," Yutani says.

For Jackson, in her first year at the Sundance helm, she's grateful to filmmakers and their teams for entrusting their titles to her festival as the pandemic continues to upend Hollywood. "This is not an easy year to make lightly any decisions on this film that you've spent so many years, so much money and so many resources on, and in such challenging times. I feel gratitude for Focus, Neon, HBO, CBS, that they also trust us with their films," she says.

A list of other films confirmed for the 2021 Sundance Film Festival follows.

World Cinema Dramatic Competition

The Dog Who Wouldn't Be Quiet / Argentina (Director: Ana Katz, Screenwriters: Ana Katz, Gonzalo Delgado, Producers: Laura Huberman, Ana Katz) — Sebastian, a man in his 30s, works a series of temporary jobs and he embraces love at every opportunity. He transforms, through a series of short encounters, as the world flirts with possible apocalypse. Cast: Daniel Katz, Julieta Zylberberg, Valeria Lois, Mirella Pascual, Carlos Portaluppi. World Premiere

El Planeta / U.S.A., Spain (Director and Screenwriter: Amalia Ulman, Producers: Amalia Ulman, Kathleen Hefferman, Kweku Mandela) — Amid the devastation of post-crisis Spain, mother and daughter bluff and grift to keep up the lifestyle they think they deserve, bonding over common tragedy and an impending eviction. Cast: Amalia Ulman, Ale Ulman, Nacho Vigalondo, Zhou Chen, Saoirse Bertram. World Premiere

Fire in the Mountains / India (Director and Screenwriter: Ajitpal Singh, Producers: Ajay Rai, Alan McAlex) — A mother toils to save money to build a road in a Himalayan village to take her wheelchair-bound son for physiotherapy, but her husband, who believes that an expensive religious ritual is the remedy, steals her savings. Cast: Vinamrata Rai, Chandan Bisht, Mayank Singh Jaira, Harshita Tewari, Sonal Jha. World Premiere

Hive / Kosovo, Switzerland, Macedonia, Albania (Director and Screenwriter: Blerta Basholli, Producers: Yll Uka, Valon Bajgora, Agon Uka) — Fahrije's husband has been missing since the war in Kosovo. She sets up her own small business to provide for her kids, but as she fights against a patriarchal society that does not support her, she faces a crucial decision: to wait for his return, or to continue to persevere. Cast: Yllka Gashi, Çun Lajçi, Aurita Agushi, Kumrije Hoxha, Adriana Matoshi, Kaona Sylejmani. World Premiere

Human Factors / Germany, Italy, Denmark (Director and Screenwriter: Ronny Trocker, Producers: Susanne Mann, Paul Zischler, Martin Rehbock) — A mysterious housebreaking exposes the agony of an exemplary middle-class family. Cast: Sabine Timoteo, Mark Waschke, Jule Hermann, Wanja Valentin Kube, Hannes Perkmann, Daniel Séjourné. World Premiere

Luzzu / Malta (Director and Screenwriter: Alex Camilleri, Producers: Rebecca Anastasi, Alex Camilleri, Oliver Mallia) — Jesmark, a struggling fisherman on the island of Malta, is forced to turn his back on generations of tradition and risk everything by entering the world of black-market fishing to provide for his girlfriend and newborn baby. Cast: Jesmark Scicluna, Michela Farrugia, David Scicluna. World Premiere

One for the Road / China, Hong Kong, Thailand (Director: Baz Poonpiriya, Screenwriters: Baz Poonpiriya, Nottapon Boonprakob, Puangsoi Aksornsawang, Producer: Wong Kar Wai) — Boss is a consummate ladies' man, a free spirit and a bar owner in NYC. One day, he gets a surprise call from Aood, an estranged friend who has returned home to Thailand. Dying of cancer, Aood enlists Boss' help to complete a bucket list — but both are hiding something. Cast: Tor Thanapob, Ice Natara, Violette Wautier, Aokbab Chutimon, Ploi Horwang, Noon Siraphun. World Premiere.

The Pink Cloud / Brazil (Director and Screenwriter: Iuli Gerbase, Producer: Patricia Barbieri) — A mysterious and deadly pink cloud appears across the globe, forcing everyone to stay home. Strangers at the outset, Giovana and Yago try to invent themselves as a couple as years of shared lockdown pass. While Yago is living in his own utopia, Giovana feels trapped deep inside. Cast: Renata de Lélis, Eduardo Mendonça. World Premiere

Pleasure / Sweden, Netherlands, France (Director and Screenwriter: Ninja Thyberg, Producers: Eliza Jones, Markus Walta, Erik Hemmendorff) — A 20-year-old girl moves from her small town in Sweden to L.A. for a shot at a career in the adult film industry. Cast: Sofia Kappel, Revika Anne Reustle, Evelyn Claire, Chris Cock, Dana DeArmond, Kendra Spade. World Premiere

Prime Time / Poland (Director: Jakub Piątek, Screenwriters: Jakub Piątek, Lukasz Czapski, Producer: Jakub Razowski) — On the last day of 1999, 20-year-old Sebastian locks himself in a TV studio. He has two hostages, a gun and an important message for the world. The story of the attack explores a rebel's extreme measures and last resort. Cast: Bartosz Bielenia, Magdalena Poplawska, Andrzej Klak, Malgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, Dobromir Dymecki, Monika Frajczyk. World Premiere

World Cinema Documentary Competition

Faya Dayi / Ethiopia, U.S.A. (Director, Screenwriter and Producer: Jessica Beshir) — A spiritual journey into the highlands of Harar, immersed in the rituals of khat, a leaf Sufi Muslims chewed for centuries for religious meditations — and Ethiopia's most lucrative cash crop today. A tapestry of intimate stories offers a window into the dreams of youth under a repressive regime. World Premiere

Flee / Denmark, France, Sweden, Norway (Director: Jonas Poher Rasmussen, Producers: Monica Hellström, Signe Byrge Sorensen) — Amin arrived as an unaccompanied minor in Denmark from Afghanistan. Today, he is a successful academic and is getting married to his longtime boyfriend. A secret he has been hiding for 20 years threatens to ruin the life he has built. World Premiere.

Inconvenient Indian / Canada (Director and Screenwriter: Michelle Latimer, Producers: Stuart Henderson, Justine Pimlott, Jesse Wente) — An examination of Thomas King's brilliant dismantling of North America's colonial narrative, which reframes history with the powerful voices of those continuing the tradition of Indigenous resistance. International Premiere

Misha and the Wolves / United Kingdom, Belgium (Director and Screenwriter: Sam Hobkinson, Producers: Poppy Dixon, Al Morrow, Matthew Wells, Gregory Zalczman, Jürgen Buedts) — A woman's Holocaust memoir takes the world by storm, but a fallout with her publisher turned detective reveals her story as an audacious deception created to hide a darker truth. World Premiere

The Most Beautiful Boy in the World / Sweden (Directors: Kristina Lindström, Kristian Petri, Producer: Stina Gardell) — Swedish actor/musician Björn Andresen's life was forever changed at the age of 15, when he played Tadzio, the object of Dirk Bogarde's obsession in *Death in Venice* — a role that led Italian maestro Luchino Visconti to dub him "the world's most beautiful boy." World Premiere

Playing With Sharks / Australia (Director and Screenwriter: Sally Aitken, Producer: Bettina Dalton) — Valerie Taylor is a shark fanatic and an Australian icon — a marine maverick who forged her way as a fearless diver, cinematographer and conservationist. She filmed the real sharks for *Jaws* and famously wore a chainmail suit, using herself as shark bait, changing our scientific understanding of sharks forever. World Premiere

President / Denmark, U.S.A., Norway (Director: Camilla Nielsson, Producers: Signe Byrge Sorensen, Joslyn Barnes) — Zimbabwe is at a crossroads. The leader of the opposition MDC party, Nelson Chamisa, challenges the old guard ZANU-PF led by Emmerson Mnangagwa, known as "The Crocodile." The election tests both the ruling party and the opposition — how do they interpret principles of democracy in discourse and in practice? World Premiere

Sabaya / Sweden (Director and Screenwriter: Hogir Hirori, Producers: Antonio Russo Merenda, Hogir Hirori) — With just a mobile phone and a gun, Mahmud, Ziyad and their group risk their lives trying to save Yazidi women and girls being held by ISIS as Sabaya (abducted sex slaves) in the most dangerous camp in the Middle East, Al-Hol in Syria. World Premiere

Taming the Garden / Switzerland, Germany, Georgia (Director Salomé Jashi, Producers: Vadim Jendreyko, Erik Winker, Martin Roelly, Salomé Jashi) — A poetic ode to the rivalry between men and nature. World Premiere

Writing With Fire / India (Directors, Screenwriters and Producers: Rintu Thomas, Sushmit Ghosh) — In a cluttered news landscape dominated by men, emerges India's only newspaper run by Dalit women. Armed with smartphones, chief reporter Meera and her journalists break traditions on the front lines of India's biggest issues and within the confines of their own homes, redefining what it means to be powerful. World Premiere

Next

The Blazing World / U.S.A. (Director: Carlson Young, Screenwriters: Carlson Young, Pierce Brown, Producers: Brinton Bryan, Elizabeth Avellán) — Decades after the accidental drowning of her twin sister, a self-destructive young woman returns to her family home, finding herself drawn to an alternate dimension where her sister may still be alive. Cast: Udo Kier, Carlson Young, Dermot Mulroney, Vinessa Shaw, John Karna, Soko. World Premiere

Cryptozoo / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Dash Shaw, Producers: Kyle Martin, Jane Samborski, Bill Way, Tyler Davidson) — As cryptozookeepers struggle to capture a Baku (a legendary dream-eating hybrid creature) they begin to wonder if they should display these rare beasts in the confines of a cryptozoo, or if these mythical creatures should remain hidden and unknown. Cast: Lake Bell, Michael Cera, Angeliki Papoulia, Zoe Kazan, Peter Stormare, Grace Zabriskie. World Premiere

First Date / U.S.A. (Directors and Screenwriters: Manuel Crosby, Darren Knapp, Producers: Brandon Kraus, Manuel Crosby, Darren Knapp, Lucky McKee, Charles Horak) — Conned into buying a shady '65 Chrysler, Mike's first date with the girl next door, Kelsey, implodes as he finds himself targeted by criminals, cops and a crazy cat lady. A night fueled by desire, bullets and burning rubber makes any other first date seem like a walk in the park. Cast: Tyson Brown, Shelby Duclos, Jesse Janzen, Nicole Berry, Ryan Quinn Adams, Brandon Kraus. World Premiere

Ma Belle, My Beauty / U.S.A., France (Director and Screenwriter: Marion Hill, Producers: Ben Matheny, Kelsey Scult, Marion Hill) — A surprise reunion in southern France reignites passions and jealousies between two women who were formerly polyamorous lovers. Cast: Idella Johnson, Hannah Pepper, Lucien Guignard, Sivan Noam Shimon. World Premiere

R#J / U.S.A. (Director: Carey Williams, Screenwriters: Carey Williams, Rickie Castaneda, Alex Sobolev, Producers: Timur Bekmambetov, Igor Tsay, John J. Kelly, Alex Sobolev, Anna Soboleva) — A reimagining

of *Romeo and Juliet*, taking place through their cellphones, in a mash-up of Shakespearean dialogue with current social media communication. Cast: Camaron Engels, Francesca Noel, David Zayas, Diego Tinoco, Siddiq Saunderson, Russell Hornsby. World Premiere

Searchers / U.S.A. (Director: Pacho Velez, Producers: Pacho Velez, Joe Poletto, Cathy Tankosic, Sam Roseme) — In encounters alternately humorous and touching, a diverse set of New Yorkers navigate their preferred dating apps in search of their special someone. World Premiere

Son of Monarchs / Mexico, U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Alexis Gambis, Producers: Abraham Dayan, Maria Altamirano) — After his grandmother's death, a Mexican biologist living in New York returns to his hometown, nestled in the majestic monarch butterfly forests of Michoacán. The journey forces him to confront past traumas and reflect on his hybrid identity, sparking a personal and spiritual metamorphosis. Cast: Tenoch Huerta Mejía, Alexia Rasmussen, Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez, Noé Hernández, Paulina Gaitán, William Mapother. Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize

Strawberry Mansion / U.S.A. (Directors and Screenwriters: Albert Birney, Kentucker Audley, Producers: Taylor Shung, Sarah Winshall, Emma Hannaway, Matisse Rifai) — In a world where the government records and taxes dreams, an unassuming dream auditor gets swept up in a cosmic journey through the life and dreams of an aging eccentric named Bella. Together, they must find a way back home. Cast: Penny Fuller, Kentucker Audley, Grace Glowicki, Reed Birney, Linas Phillips, Constance Shulman. World Premiere

We're All Going to the World's Fair / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Jane Schoenbrun, Producers: Sarah Winshall, Carlos Zozaya) — A teenage girl becomes immersed in an online role-playing game. Cast: Anna Cobb, Michael J. Rogers. World Premiere

Premieres

Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir / U.S.A. (Director: James Redford, Producers: Karen Pritzker, Cassandra Jabola) — Amy Tan has established herself as one of America's most respected literary voices. Born to Chinese immigrant parents, it would be decades before the author of *The Joy Luck Club* would fully understand the inherited trauma rooted in the legacies of women who survived the Chinese tradition of concubinage. World Premiere, Documentary

Bring Your Own Brigade / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Lucy Walker, Producers: Lucy Walker, Julian Cautherley, Holly Becker, Lyn Lear) — A character-driven verité and revelatory investigation takes us on a journey embedded with firefighters and residents on a mission to understand the causes of historically

large wildfires and how to survive them, discovering that the solution has been here all along. World Premiere, Documentary

Eight for Silver / U.S.A., France (Director and Screenwriter: Sean Ellis, Producers: Mickey Liddell, Pete Shilaimon, Sean Eliis) — In the late 1800s, a man arrives in a remote country village to investigate an attack by a wild animal but discovers a much deeper, sinister force that has both the manor and the townspeople in its grip. Cast: Boyd Holbrook, Kelly Reilly, Alistair Petrie, Roxane Duran, Aine Rose Daly. World Premiere, Narrative

How It Ends / U.S.A. (Directors, Screenwriters and Producers: Daryl Wein, Zoe Lister-Jones) — On the last day on Earth, one woman goes on a journey through L.A. to make it to her last party before the world ends, running into an eclectic cast of characters along the way. Cast: Zoe Lister-Jones, Cailee Spaeny, Olivia Wilde, Fred Armisen, Helen Hunt, Lamorne Morris. World Premiere, Narrative

In the Earth / United Kingdom (Director and Screenwriter: Ben Wheatley, Producer: Andy Starke) — As a disastrous virus grips the planet, a scientist and a park scout venture deep into the forest for a routine equipment run. Through the night, their journey becomes a terrifying voyage through the heart of darkness as the forest comes to life around them. Cast: Joel Fry, Ellora Torchia, Hayley Squires, Reece Shearsmith. World Premiere, Narrative

In the Same Breath / U.S.A. (Director: Nanfu Wang, Producers: Nanfu Wang, Jialing Zhang, Julie Goldman, Christopher Clements, Carolyn Hepburn) — How did the Chinese government turn pandemic coverups in Wuhan into a triumph for the Communist party? An essential narrative of firsthand accounts of the novel coronavirus, and a revelatory examination of how propaganda and patriotism shaped the outbreak's course — both in China and in the U.S. World Premiere, Documentary. DAY ONE

Marvelous and the Black Hole / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Kate Tsang, Producer: Carolyn Mao) — A teenage delinquent befriends a surly magician who helps her navigate her inner demons and dysfunctional family with sleight of hand magic, in a coming-of-age comedy that touches on unlikely friendships, grief and finding hope in the darkest moments. Cast: Miya Cech, Rhea Perlman, Leonardo Nam, Kannon Omachi, Paulina Lule, Keith Powell. World Premiere, Narrative

Mass / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Fran Kranz, Producers: Fran Kranz, Casey Wilder Mott, JP Ouellette, Dylan Matlock) — Years after a tragic shooting, the parents of both the victim and the perpetrator meet face to face. Cast: Jason Isaacs, Ann Dowd, Martha Plimpton, Reed Birney. World Premiere, Narrative

My Name Is Pauli Murray / U.S.A. (Directors: Betsy West, Julie Cohen, Producer: Talleah Bridges McMahon) — Overlooked by history, Pauli Murray was a legal trailblazer whose ideas influenced RBG's fight for gender equality and Thurgood Marshall's landmark civil rights arguments. Featuring never-before-seen footage and audio recordings, a portrait of Murray's impact as a nonbinary Black luminary: lawyer, activist, poet and priest who transformed our world. World Premiere, Documentary

Philly D.A. / U.S.A. (Directors: Ted Passon, Yoni Brook, Producers: Ted Passon, Yoni Brook, Nicole Salazar, Josh Penn, Michael Gottwald) — A groundbreaking inside look at the long-shot election and tumultuous first term of Larry Krasner, Philadelphia's unapologetic district attorney, and his experiment to upend the criminal justice system from the inside out. World Premiere, Documentary

Prisoners of the Ghostland / U.S.A. (Director: Sion Sono, Screenwriters: Aaron Hendry, Reza Sixo Safai, Producers: Michael Mendelsohn, Laura Rister, Ko Mori, Reza Sixo Safai, Nate Bolotin) — A notorious criminal is sent to rescue an abducted woman who has disappeared into a dark supernatural universe. They must break the evil curse that binds them and escape the mysterious revenants that rule the Ghostland, an East-meets-West vortex of beauty and violence. Cast: Nicolas Cage, Sofia Boutella, Nick Cassavetes, Bill Moseley, Tak Sakaguchi, Yuzuka Nakaya. World Premiere, Narrative

The Sparks Brothers / United Kingdom (Director: Edgar Wright, Producers: Nira Park, Edgar Wright, George Hencken, Laura Richardson) — How can one rock band be successful, underrated, hugely influential and criminally overlooked all at the same time? Take a musical odyssey through five weird and wonderful decades with brothers Russell & Ron Mael, celebrating the inspiring legacy of Sparks: your favorite band's favorite band. World Premiere, Documentary

Street Gang: How We Got to Sesame Street / U.S.A. (Director: Marilyn Agrelo, Producers: Trevor Crafts, Ellen Scherer Crafts, Lisa Diamond) — How did a group of rebels create the world's most famous street? In 1969 New York, this "gang" of mission-driven artists, writers and educators catalyzed a moment of civil awakening, transforming it into *Sesame Street*, one of the most influential and impactful television programs in history. World Premiere, Documentary

Midnight

Censor / United Kingdom (Director: Prano Bailey-Bond, Screenwriters: Prano Bailey-Bond, Anthony Fletcher, Producer: Helen Jones) — When film censor Enid discovers an eerie horror that speaks directly to her sister's mysterious disappearance, she resolves to unravel the puzzle behind the film and its enigmatic director — a quest blurring the lines between fiction and reality in terrifying ways. Cast: Niamh Algar, Nicholas Burns, Vincent Franklin, Sophia La Porta, Adrian Schiller, Michael Smiley. World Premiere.

DAY ONE

Coming Home in the Dark / New Zealand (Director: James Ashcroft, Screenwriters: Eli Kent, James Ashcroft, Producers: Mike Minogue, Catherine Fitzgerald, Desray Armstrong) — A family's outing descends into terror when teacher Alan Hoaganraad, his wife Jill, and stepsons Maika and Jordon explore an isolated coastline. An unexpected meeting with a pair of drifters, the enigmatic psychopath Mandrake and his accomplice Tubs, thrusts the family into a nightmare when they find themselves captured. Cast: Daniel Gillies, Erik Thomson, Miriama McDowell, Matthias Luafutu. World Premiere

A Glitch in the Matrix / U.S.A. (Director: Rodney Ascher, Producer: Ross M. Dinerstein) — A multimedia exploration of simulation theory — an idea as old as Plato's Republic and as current as Elon Musk's Twitter feed — through the eyes of those who suspect our world isn't real. Part sci-fi mind-scrambler, part horror story, this is a digital journey to the limits of radical doubt. World Premiere

Knocking / Sweden (Director: Frida Kempff, Screenwriter: Emma Broström, Producer: Erik Andersson) — When Molly moves into her new apartment after a tragic accident, a strange noise from upstairs begins to unnerve her. As its intensity grows, she confronts her neighbors — but no one seems to hear what she is hearing. Cast: Cecilia Milocco. World Premiere

Mother Schmuckers / Belgium (Directors and Screenwriters: Lenny Guit, Harpo Guit, Producers: David Borgeaud, Erika Meda) — Issachar & Zabulon, two brothers in their 20s, are supremely stupid and never bored, as madness is part of their daily lives. When they lose their mother's beloved dog, they have 24 hours to find it — or she will kick them out. Cast: Harpo Guit, Maxi Delmelle, Claire Bodson, Mathieu Amalric, Habib Ben Tanfous. World Premiere

Violation / Canada (Directors, Screenwriters and Producers: Madeleine Sims-Fewer, Dusty Mancinelli) — A troubled woman on the edge of divorce returns home to her younger sister after years apart. But when her sister and brother-in-law betray her trust, she embarks on a vicious crusade of revenge. Cast: Madeleine Sims-Fewer, Anna Maguire, Jesse LaVercombe, Obi Abili, Jasmin Geljo, Cynthia Ashperger. International Premiere

Spotlight

Night of the Kings / France, Ivory Coast, Canada, Senegal (Director and Screenwriter: Philippe Lacôte, Producers: Delphine Jaquet, Yanick Létourneau, Ernest Konan, Yoro Mbaye) — A young man is sent to La Maca, a prison on the Ivory Coast in the middle of the forest ruled by its prisoners. With the red moon rising, he is designated by the boss to be the new "Roman" and must tell a story to the other prisoners. Cast: Koné Bakary, Steve Tientcheu, Digbeu Jean Cyrille, Rasmané Ouédraogo, Issaka Sawadogo, Denis Lavant.

The World to Come / U.S.A. (Director: Mona Fastvold, Screenwriters: Ron Hansen, Jim Shepard, Producers: Casey Affleck, Whitaker Lader, Pamela Koffler, David Hinojosa, Margarethe Baillou) — Somewhere along the mid-19th century American East Coast frontier, two neighboring couples battle hardship and isolation, witnessed by a splendid yet testing landscape, challenging them both physically and psychologically. Cast: Katherine Waterston, Vanessa Kirby, Casey Affleck, Christopher Abbott. North American Premiere

Special Screenings

Life in a Day 2020 / United Kingdom, U.S.A. (Director: Kevin Macdonald, Producers: Jack Arbutnott, Tim Partridge) — An extraordinary, intimate, global portrait of life on our planet, filmed by thousands of people across the world, on a single day: 25th July 2020. World Premiere
