

Sundance Film Festival Lineup Features 38 First-Time Directors, Including Rebecca Hall and Robin Wright

[Peter Debruge](#) Dec 15, 2020 12:00pm PT



Courtesy of Sundance Film Festival

The Sundance Institute announced a smaller, more focused lineup for the upcoming 2021 [Sundance Film Festival](#) — down to 72 feature films from last year's 128. That program, which will be made available to a much wider audience via a tight, seven-day virtual edition, makes room for 29 countries and 38 first features, including debuts from Rebecca Hall ("Passing"), [Robin Wright](#) ("Land"), Jerrod Carmichael ("On the Count of Three") and Ahmir Thompson, aka Questlove of the Roots ("[Summer of Soul](#)").

The upcoming edition will unspool via Sundance's new proprietary streaming

platform from Jan. 28 to Feb. 3. With no red-carpet premieres in Park City, the pressure to program star-driven movies may also have been lower — although a year after “Palm Springs” set a sales record at Sundance, reps with higher-profile films may also be waiting for later, in-person opportunities to launch their work.

Health restrictions permitting, Sundance programmers hope to show every film on “satellite screens” (whether socially distanced art house, purpose-built venues or drive-in theaters). Supporting work that had fallen by the wayside last year, the lineup does make room for several Cannes 2020 label films (movies originally intended to premiere at the French fest last May): Pascual Sisto’s “John and the Hole,” Ninja Thyberg’s porn-world empowerment portrait “Pleasure” and Jonas Poher Rasmussen’s animated refugee story “Flee.”

Although the pandemic has disrupted the fest’s usual format, Sundance organizers had longer than most to adapt, taking a proactive approach to these challenges, even as they saw the crisis as a chance to test out a number of new initiatives.

“The year has been tumultuous for everybody,” explained festival director [Tabitha Jackson](#), who took over for outgoing Sundance chief John Cooper after last year’s edition. “But the whole form of the festival being upended has given us the opportunity to experiment with things that would have taken us longer to get to had it not been for the pandemic. Our ambitions around the reach and accessibility of the festival have been massively accelerated, both by technology and by necessity,” she said.

Among the changes are the combination of narrative and documentary features into a single Premieres section, where higher-profile films often premiere. This year’s lineup includes Ben Wheatley’s “In the Earth,” Sion Sono’s twisted Nicolas Cage starrer “Prisoners of the Ghostland,” Edgar Wright music doc “The Sparks Brothers” and new docs from Lucy Walker (freelance firefighting investigation “Bring Your Own Brigade”) and Nanfu

Wang (inside-China coronavirus exposé "In the Same Breath"). Jackson, who hails from a nonfiction filmmaking background, and Sundance director of programming [Kim Yutani](#) had been discussing such innovations before the pandemic, considering the blurring of boundaries between the two categories in films like "Bloody Noses, Empty Pockets" and "The Rider."

Even though the lineup is smaller, the pool from which to choose remained robust, despite all the logistical and economic challenges working against filmmakers: Sundance estimates that 3,500 features were submitted this year.

According to Yutani, "As we were planning this festival, we all were preparing for the possibility of it being either feast or famine. And then around September, we were actually on track to get about the same number of submissions that we always get. ... We had to leave some really great films behind. That speaks to the fact that the work is there and that there's so much good filmmaking to be shared amongst all the festivals this year."

Adds Jackson, "This is a world of work coming from all kinds of makers." Looking across the entire program, 50% included at least one woman director — that amounts to 70 of the 140 total projects (including short and new media work). Six were directed by non-binary artists, and just more than half (71) were made by creators of color.

"There's a trend of people being unapologetically who they are, both behind the camera and in front of the camera," Jackson said. "We often talk about identity and authorship and authenticity, and this year, almost every film is a film that only that filmmaker could have made. But we're also in a time where we see history being reclaimed" from the point of view of the present.

Noteworthy examples of diversity in the lineup include "R#J," a BIPOC retelling of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" told within an Instagram frame; opening-night film "Coda," featuring a hearing-impaired cast; and "My Name Is Pauli Murray," a portrait of the eponymous gender equality

crusader.

While it has been somewhat surprising that few of the movies that played Sundance in recent years have confronted the turbulent Trump presidency outright, filmmakers have found indirect ways to assert their politics.

“In independent filmmaking, the notion of resistance or providing the counter-narrative to the dominant narrative has always been important,” Jackson said. “This year, that has been the political response to the times — telling stories from who you are about things you consider to be important — and it’s those fragments of the bigger tapestry that provide something incredibly powerful. That’s how I’m interpreting why we’re not seeing lots of literal current affairs approaches to the Trump administration.”

Especially noteworthy this year are not only the number of films made during the health crisis but those that seem to anticipate it — like Daryl Wein and Zoe Lister-Jones’ apocalyptic “How it Ends,” featuring appearances by Olivia Wilde, Fred Armisen and Helen Hunt, or the aforementioned Ben Wheatley thriller, set amid a viral outbreak.

“There were a couple of films that were made absolutely about COVID and the pandemic, but the films that were made before or during are also interesting. The context in which the films are received changes the meaning of the work,” Jackson said. “Films like ‘The Pink Cloud’ or ‘The Dog Who Wouldn’t Be Quiet’ were made before the pandemic but absolutely speak to it. We had this sense that there was something out there, and it has expressed itself creatively.”

The full lineup:

U.S. DRAMATIC COMPETITION

The 10 films in this section are all world premieres.

Coda (Director and Screenwriter: Siân Heder, Producers: Philippe Rousselet, Fabrice Gianfermi, Patrick Wachsberger) — As a CODA – Child of Deaf Adults – Ruby is the only hearing person in her deaf family. When the family's fishing business is threatened, Ruby finds herself torn between pursuing her love of music and her fear of abandoning her parents. Cast: Emilia Jones, Eugenio Derbez, Troy Kotsur, Ferdia Walsh-Peelo, Daniel Durant, and Marlee Matlin. **DAY ONE**

I Was a Simple Man (Director and Screenwriter: Christopher Makoto Yogi, Producers: Sarah S. Kim, Christopher Makoto Yogi, Matthew Petock, Yamato Cibulka) — As a family in Hawai'i faces the imminent death of their eldest, the ghosts of the past haunt the countryside. Cast: Steve Iwamoto, Constance Wu, Kanoa Goo, Chanel Akiko Hirai, Tim Chiou, Boonyanudh Jiyarom.

Jockey (Director: Clint Bentley, Screenwriters: Clint Bentley, Greg Kwedar, Producers: Clint Bentley, Greg Kwedar, Nancy Schafer) — An aging jockey is determined to win one last championship, but his dream is complicated when a young rookie shows up claiming to be his son. Cast: Clifton Collins Jr., Molly Parker, Moises Arias.

John and the Hole (Director: Pascual Sisto, Screenwriter: Nicolás Giacobone, Producers: Erika Portnoy, Alex Orlovsky, Mike Bowes) — A nontraditional coming-of-age story, set in the unsettling reality of John, a kid who holds his family captive in a hole in the ground. Cast: Charlie Shotwell, Michael C. Hall, Jennifer Ehle, Taissa Farmiga.

Mayday (Director and Screenwriter: Karen Ciorre, Producers: Jonah Disend, Lucas Joaquin, Karen Ciorre, Sam Levy) — Ana is transported to a dreamlike and dangerous land where she joins a team of female soldiers engaged in a never-ending war along a rugged coast. Though she finds strength in this exhilarating world, she comes to realize that she's not the killer they want her to be. Cast: Grace Van Patten, Mia Goth, Havana Rose Liu, Soko, Théodore Pellerin, Juliette Lewis.

On the Count of Three (Director: Jerrod Carmichael, Screenwriters: Ari Katcher, Ryan Welch, Producers: David Carrico, Adam Paulsen, Tom Werner, Jake Densen, Ari Katcher, Jimmy Price) — Two guns. Two best friends. And a pact to end their lives when the day is done. Cast: Jerrod Carmichael, Christopher Abbott, Tiffany Haddish, J.B. Smoove, Lavell Crawford, Henry Winkler.

Passing (Director and Screenwriter: Rebecca Hall, Producers: Forest Whitaker, Nina Yang Bongiovi, Margot Hand, Rebecca Hall) — Two African American women who can “pass” as white choose to live on opposite sides of the color line in 1929 New York in an exploration of racial and gender identity, performance, obsession and repression. Based on the novella by Nella Larsen. Cast: Tessa Thompson, Ruth Negga, André Holland, Alexander Skarsgård, Bill Camp.

Superior (Director: Erin Vassilopoulos, Screenwriters: Erin Vassilopoulos, Alessandra Mesa, Producers: Benjamin Cohen, Grant Curatola, Patrick Donovan) — On the run, Marian returns to her hometown in upstate New York to hide out with her estranged identical twin sister, Vivian. Struggling to put the past behind her, Marian lies about the reason for her return, leaving her sister in the dark until their two worlds begin to collide. Cast: Alessandra Mesa, Ani Mesa, Pico Alexander, Jake Hoffman, Stanley Simons.

Together Together (Director and Screenwriter: Nikole Beckwith, Producers: Anthony Brandonisio, Daniela Taplin Lundberg, Tim Headington) — When young loner Anna is hired as the surrogate for Matt, a single man in his 40s, the two strangers come to realize this unexpected relationship will quickly challenge their perceptions of connection, boundaries and the particulars of love. Cast: Ed Helms, Patti Harrison, Tig Notaro, Julio Torres, Anna Konkle.

Wild Indian (Director and Screenwriter: Lyle Mitchell Corbine Jr., Producers: Lyle Mitchell Corbine Jr., Thomas Mahoney, Eric Tavitian) — Two men are inextricably bound together after covering up the savage murder of a schoolmate. After years of separation following wildly divergent paths, they

must finally confront how their traumatic secret has irrevocably shaped their lives. Cast: Michael Greyeyes, Chaske Spencer, Jesse Eisenberg, Kate Bosworth, Phoenix Wilson, Julian Gopal.

U.S. DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION

The 10 films in this section are all world premieres.

Ailey (Director: Jamila Wignot, Producer: Lauren DeFilippo) — Alvin Ailey was a visionary artist who found salvation through dance. Told in his own words and through the creation of a dance inspired by his life, this immersive portrait follows a man who, when confronted by a world that refused to embrace him, determined to build one that would.

All Light, Everywhere (Director: Theo Anthony, Producers: Riel Roch-Decter, Sebastian Pardo, Jonna McKone) — An exploration of the shared histories of cameras, weapons, policing and justice. As surveillance technologies become a fixture in everyday life, the film interrogates the complexity of an objective point of view, probing the biases inherent in both human perception and the lens.

At the Ready (Director: Maisie Crow, Producers: Hillary Pierce, Maisie Crow, Abbie Perrault) — Home to one of the region's largest law enforcement education program, students at Horizon High School in El Paso train to become police officers and Border Patrol agents as they discover the realities of their dream jobs may be at odds with the truths and people they hold most dear.

Cusp (Directors: Parker Hill, Isabel Bethencourt, Producers: Zachary Luke Kislevitz, Parker Hill, Isabel Bethencourt) — In a Texas military town, three teenage girls confront the dark corners of adolescence at the end of a fever dream summer.

Homerom (Director: Peter Nicks, Producers: Peter Nicks, Sean Havey) —

Following the class of 2020 at Oakland High School in a year marked by seismic change, exploring the emotional world of teenagers coming of age against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world.

Rebel Hearts (Director: Pedro Kos, Producers: Kira Carstensen, Shawnee Isaac-Smith, Judy Korin) — A group of pioneering nuns bravely stand up to the Catholic Church patriarchy, fighting for their livelihoods, convictions and equality against an all-powerful Cardinal. From marching in Selma in 1965 to the Women's March in 2018, these women have reshaped our society with their bold acts of defiance.

Rita Moreno: Just a Girl Who Decided to Go For It (Director: Mariem Pérez Riera, Producers: Brent Miller, Mariem Pérez Riera, Ilija J. Vélez-Dávila) — Rita Moreno defied both her humble upbringing and relentless racism to become one of a select group who have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award. Over a seventy year career, she has paved the way for Hispanic American performers by refusing to be pigeonholed into one-dimensional stereotypes.

Summer Of Soul (...Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised) (Director: Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Producers: David Dinerstein, Robert Fyvolent, Joseph Patel) — During the same summer as Woodstock, over 300,000 people attended the Harlem Cultural Festival, celebrating African American music and culture, and promoting Black pride and unity. The footage from the festival sat in a basement, unseen for over 50 years, keeping this incredible event in America's history lost – until now. **DAY ONE**

Try Harder! (Director: Debbie Lum, Producers: Debbie Lum, Lou Nakasako, Nico Opper) — In a universe where cool kids are nerds, the orchestra is world class and being Asian American is the norm, seniors at Lowell High School compete for the top prize: admission to the college of their dreams.

Users (U.S.-Mexico – Director: Natalia Almada, Producers: Elizabeth Lodge Stepp, Josh Penn) — A mother wonders, will my children love their perfect

machines more than they love me, their imperfect mother? She switches on a smart-crib lulling her crying baby to sleep. This perfect mother is everywhere. She watches over us, takes care of us. We listen to her. We trust her.

WORLD CINEMA DRAMATIC COMPETITION

The 10 films in this section are all world premieres.

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 thirties, 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.

El Planeta (U.S.-Spain – Director and Screenwriter: Amalia Ulman, Producers: Amalia Ulman, Kathleen Heffernan, Kweku Mandela) — Amidst 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.

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.

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.

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.

Luzzu (Malta – Director and Screenwriter: Alex Camilleri, Producers: Rebecca Anastasi, Ramin Bahrani, 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.

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. **DAY ONE**

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.

Pleasure (Sweden-Netherlands-France – Director and Screenwriter: Ninja

Thyberg, Producers: Eliza Jones, Markus Waltå, Erik Hemmendorff) — A 20-year-old girl moves from her small town in Sweden to LA 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.

Prime Time (Poland – Director: Jakub Piątek, Screenwriters: Jakub Piątek, Łukasz 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 Popławska, Andrzej Kłak, Małgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, Dobromir Dymecki, Monika Frajczyk.

WORLD CINEMA DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION

The 10 films in this section are all world premieres unless otherwise specified.

Faya Dayi (Ethiopia-U.S. – 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.

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

DAY ONE

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 (U.K.-Belgium – Director and Screenwriter: Sam Hobkinson, Producers: Poppy Dixon, Al Morrow, Matthew Wells, Gregory Zalcmán, 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.

The Most Beautiful Boy in the World (Sweden – Directors: Kristina Lindström, Kristian Petri, Producer: Stina Gardell) — Swedish actor/musician Björn Andrésen'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 which led Italian maestro Luchino Visconti to dub him "the world's most beautiful boy."

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.

President (Denmark-U.S.-Norway – Director: Camilla Nielsson, Producers: Signe Byrge Sørensen, 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?

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.

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.

Writing With Fire (India – Directors 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 frontlines of India's biggest issues and within the confines of their own homes, redefining what it means to be powerful.

NEXT

The 10 films in this section are world premieres unless otherwise specified.

The Blazing World (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.

Cryptozoo (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.

First Date (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.

Ma Belle, My Beauty (U.S.-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.

R#J (Director: Carey Williams, Screenwriters: Carey Williams, Rickie Castaneda, Alex Sobolev, Producers: Timur Bekmambetov, Igor Tsay, John J. Kelly, Alex Sobolev, Anna Soboleva) — A re-imagining of Romeo and Juliet, taking place through their cell phones, 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.

Searchers (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.

Son of Monarchs (Mexico-U.S. – 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. (International Premiere) **Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize**

Strawberry Mansion (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.

We're All Going to the World's Fair (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.

PREMIERES

The 14 projects in this section are all world premieres.

Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir (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. (Documentary)

Bring Your Own Brigade (Director and Screenwriter: Lucy Walker, Producers: Lucy Walker, Julian Cautherley, Holly Becker, Lyn Lear) — A character-driven vérité 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. (Documentary)

Eight for Silver (U.S.-France) (Director and Screenwriter: Sean Ellis, Producers: Mickey Liddell, Pete Shilaimon, Sean Ellis) — 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. (Narrative)

How it Ends (Directors, Screenwriters and Producers: Daryl Wein, Zoe Lister-Jones) — On the last day on Earth, one woman goes on a journey through LA 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. (Narrative)

In The Earth (U.K. – 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. (Narrative)

In The Same Breath (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 coronavirus, and a revelatory examination of how propaganda and patriotism shaped the outbreak's course – both in China and in the U.S. (Documentary)

DAY ONE

Land (Director: Robin Wright, Screenwriters: Jesse Chatham, Erin Dignam, Producers: Allyn Stewart, Lora Kennedy, Leah Holzer, Peter Saraf) – The poignant story of one woman's search, in the aftermath of an unfathomable event, for meaning in the vast and harsh American wilderness. Cast: Robin Wright, Demián Bichir, Kim Dickens. (Narrative)

Marvelous and the Black Hole (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. (Narrative)

Mass (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. (Narrative)

My Name Is Pauli Murray (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 non-binary Black luminary: lawyer, activist, poet, and priest who transformed our world. (Documentary)

Philly D.A. (Created By: Ted Passon, Yoni Brook, Nicole Salazar, 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. (Episodic Documentary)

Prisoners of the Ghostland (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. (Narrative)

The Sparks Brothers (U.K. – 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 Ron & Russell Mael, celebrating the inspiring legacy of Sparks: your favorite band's favorite band. (Documentary)

Street Gang: How We Got To Sesame Street (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. (Documentary)

MIDNIGHT

The six films in this section are world premieres unless otherwise specified.

Censor (U.K. – 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. **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.

A Glitch in the Matrix (Director: Rodney Ascher, Producer: Ross M. Dinerstein) — A multi-media 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.

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.

Mother Schmuckers (Belgium – Directors and Screenwriters: Lenny Guit, Harpo Guit, Producers: David Borgeaud, Erika Meda) — Issachar & Zabulon, two brothers in their twenties, 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.

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

This section represents a collection of films that have already premiered at other festivals.

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 (Director: Mona Fastvold, Screenwriters: Ron Hansen, Jim Shepard, Producers: Casey Affleck, Whitaker Lader, Pamela Koffler, David Hinojosa, Margarethe Baillou) — Somewhere along the mid-nineteenth 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 (U.K.-U.S. – Director: Kevin Macdonald, Producers: Jack Arbuthnott, 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.

NEW FRONTIER

[See separate story for program of live performance, AR, VR and emerging media.](#)

INDIE SERIES PROGRAM

The episodic content in this section are world premieres unless otherwise

specified.

4 Feet High (Argentina-France – Directors: María Belén Poncio, Rosario Perazolo Masjoan, Executive Producers: Ezequiel Lenardón, Marie Blondiaux) — Juana, a 17-year-old wheelchair user, aims to explore her sexuality but is ashamed of her body. Trying to find her place in a new high school, she will go through failure, friendship, fear and politics until she builds her own pride. Cast: Marisol Agostina Irigoyen, Florencia Licera, Marcio Ramses, Natalia Di Cienzo, Francisca Spinotti.

Seeds of Deceit (Netherlands – Director: Miriam Guttman, Executive Producers: Monique Busman, Michiel van Erp, Judith Reuten) — The revelation that Dr. Karbaat clandestinely used his own semen to inseminate more than 65 of his patients shocked the world. A vivid portrayal of how that happened and all the ways it haunts those affected: the emotional trauma of coming to terms with a changed life, a new identity.

These Days (Director and Screenwriter: Adam Brooks) — Mae, lonely and self-isolating, navigates the world of online dating during the early days of quarantine. Her first attempt is a comic disaster; then, she meets Will and her world begins to change in unexpected ways. Cast: Marianne Rendón, William Jackson Harper, Amy Brenneman, Parker Young.

Would You Rather (France-Germany – Creators: Lise Akoka, Romane Guéret, Executive Producer: Pierre Grimaus, Jean Dathanat) — Sixteen-year-olds Shai, Djeneba, Aladi, and Ismaël grew up in a working-class Paris neighborhood. Together, they watch hours drift by, cracking jokes, and playing their favorite game, "Would you rather?" As the group's equilibrium suddenly shifts, they have to start making choices – in their lives and their game. Cast: Fanta Kebe, Shirel Nataf, Zakaria Lazab, Mouctar Diawara. (North American Premiere)