



27th RAINDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

18-29 September 2019

www.raindance.org/festival

The Raindance Film Festival returns to London 18-29 September for its 27th edition. Against a backdrop of divisive politics and global turmoil, Raindance uses the medium of cinema to amplify the voice of indie filmmakers with compelling stories to tell. Whether it's honest narratives from trans people, exposing environmental crimes, or tales of vulnerable individuals forced by fate to make risky choices, Raindance is a champion of the underdog, the marginalised, and the independently minded. With features, documentaries, short films, industry events and immersive VR experiences, Raindance is a place to see the kind of fascinating, multi-faceted characters who thrive in today's crazy world of indie film.

The 27th Raindance Film Festival includes 90 feature films, with **12 World Premieres, 10 International Premieres, 9 European Premieres and 54 UK premieres**. The programme also includes 108 short films, 19 music videos, and 30 VR experiences.

Elliot Grove, Raindance founder says: "Raindance is happening from 18 September – no ifs no buts. Despite Brexit uncertainty, we're bringing the boldest and freshest talent from the world of indie filmmaking to the heart of London. Raindance is proud to have a global vision, not a narrow one, and this year's festival has an incredible range of stories from Britain and across the world. And remember that **Raindance means Raindance.**"

OPENING & CLOSING NIGHT GALAS

Raindance opens 18 September with the **World Premiere of KROW'S TRANSFORMATION** (dir: Gina Hole Lazarowich, Canada), documenting Canadian transgender model Krow Kian. A successful female model as a teen, the film charts Krow's transition over a 3-year period, including Krow walking the catwalk for Louis Vuitton's iconic SS19 show in Paris – his first show since transitioning to a male. The film incorporates conversations between Krow and his mother, plus stories from other trans people in Krow's circle. **Krow Kian and director Gina Hole Lazarowich will attend the gala premiere** at Vue West End in Leicester Square, the Home of Entertainment. A party at Café De Paris will follow, featuring Guilty Pleasures.

A special gala, the World Premiere of **EVERYBODY FLIES** (dir: Tristan Loraine, Beth Moran, UK) sees former British Airways captain turned documentary filmmaker Tristan Loraine exposing the cocktail of toxins that make up the air on commercial passenger aircraft.

The festival closes 29 September with the UK Premiere of post-modern comedy **AREN'T YOU HAPPY?** (dir: Susanne Heinrich, Germany). This debut feature brings together theory, feminism, humour and a bubblegum pop palate of colour as we follow a girl roaming a city looking for a place to sleep.

EMPOWERED WOMEN FROM EUROPE AND BEYOND

This year's festival image is a linear reinterpretation of Botticelli's The Birth of Venus – a symbol of love and beauty, but equally defiant and empowered. That's because in the year of Brexit, **Raindance's special guest continent is Europe**, with an emphasis on strong and empowered European women. Key titles include **A REGULAR WOMAN** (dir: Sherry Hormann, Germany). Inspired by tragic real-life events, it tells the story of a vibrant Turkish woman living in Berlin who is murdered at 23 by her youngest brother in an 'honour' killing. Including director Q&A. A dark coming-of-age tale, **LUNA** (dir: Elías Diringer, France) follows a young French woman who, during a night of drunken revelry with her friends, helps them gang rape a male stranger – but must grapple with her conscience when she falls in love with him. Including director Q&A. A romantic, melancholy comedy, **AURORA** (dir: Miia Tervo, Finland) captures a relationship between a commitment-phobic party girl and an Iranian man running from death. An independent comedy with a lighter shade of dark, **EMMA PEETERS** (dir: Nicole Palo, Belgium/Canada), focuses on a would-be actress who, believing that 35 is the expiry date for actresses, sets her mind to commit suicide on her 35th birthday.

The strand VIVA VOCE tells stories of women across the globe. A favourite at this year's Berlinale, hybrid documentary **BY THE NAME OF TANIA** (dir: Mary Jimenez, Bénédicte Liénard, Belgium/Netherlands/Peru) combines the true testimonials of many women forced into prostitution, creating one poignant central character. British director Tom Wilson focuses on a teenage girl who struggles to emancipate herself from her Roma community, clashing with her family, her teacher and her evangelical Baptist upbringing in the World Premiere of **MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN** (dir: Tom Wilson, Romania). Including director Q&A.

Last year, Raindance became the first "Top 50" film festival to adopt the F-rated system (the F is given to any film written, directed or featuring women in significant on-screen roles – films meeting all three criteria are awarded a Triple F-Rating). Raindance is committed to all aspects of inclusion both onscreen and behind the camera, and continues to incorporate the F-rating this year. **Over one-third of this year's features are F-rated (30 films, up from 27 in 2018), including the F-rated opening night film, and the Triple F-rated closing night film.** F-rated shorts have increased from 35 in 2018 to 58 this year.

STRANDS & MORE FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

New horror strand SCREAMDANCE includes **DARK, ALMOST NIGHT** (dir: Borys Lankosz, Poland), a sinister tale of disappearing children, based on Polish novelist Joanna Bator's Nike Award winning novel. Not only do LGBTQ+ subjects take top billing with this year's opening night gala, the QUEER strand adds more colour to the Raindance rainbow with films including **FAMILY IN TRANSITION** (dir: Ofir Trainin, Israel), documenting an Israeli family whose lives change completely after their father tells them that he's a transgender woman. **QUEERING THE SCRIPT** (dir: Gabrielle Zilkha, Canada) documents the power of fans in shaping LGBTQ+ representation on TV, from *Xena* to *The L Word* to *Pose*.

Within the ABSURDITIES strand, the anthology film **7 REASONS TO RUN AWAY (FROM SOCIETY)** (dir: Gerard Quinto, Esteve Soler, David Toras, Spain) shows the absurdity of life via seven dark and comedic stories of a dysfunctional society. Another absurd comedy, **GREENER GRASS** (dir: Jocelyn DeBoer, Dawn Luebbe, USA) explores the world of competitive suburban soccer moms. Both include a director Q&A.

The ARTY strand includes the World Premiere of **DRIVEN TO ABSTRACTION** (dir: Daria Price, USA), documenting a \$80 million hoax that brought down New York's oldest and most

venerable gallery. A highlight of the SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA music strand, **ARA MALIKIAN: A LIFE AMONG STRINGS** (dir: Nata Moreno, Spain) documents this regarded violinist who escaped war-torn Beirut aged 14 and has lived a nomadic life ever since.

A collection of films with political and social issue, the POLITICO strand includes **JIRGA** (dir: Benjamin Gilmour, Australia), following an ex-soldier who returns to Afghanistan to find the family of a civilian he accidentally killed during the war.

Gael García Bernal's second feature as director, **CHICUAROTES** (dir: Gael García Bernal, Mexico) follows two teenagers who are driven by desperation and a lack of options in their Mexico City neighbourhood. More Mexican flavour can be savoured in SXSW jury prizewinner **NOTHING FANCY: DIANA KENNEDY** (dir: Elizabeth Carroll, USA/Mexico), a docu-portrait of this British-born Mexican food guru and environmental activist.

When he learns he has terminal cancer, a forest guard takes the identity of a woman in an attempt to trick death in **THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE** (dir: Natasha Merkulova & Aleksey Chupov, Russia).

THE BEST OF HOME-GROWN

British features include **HURT BY PARADISE** (dir: Greta Bellamacina, UK), a *Francis Ha-* style indie comedy by first-time feature director Greta Bellamacina, who also stars as a young mother trying to succeed as a poet in modern-day London. Followed by director Q&A. A former footballer turned gig promoter is out of his depth in **SCHEMERS** (dir: David McLean, UK). In the documentary **THIRST FOR JUSTICE** (dir: Leana Hosea, UK), a BBC journalist turned filmmaker exposes water pollution in the United States, focusing on a Native American community whose water is contaminated by uranium – part of the DIRTY WORLD strand of films exploring environmental issues. Followed by director Q&A. **ON THE PRESIDENT'S ORDERS** (dir: James Jones & Olivier Sarbil, UK/USA/Philippines) documents the bloody campaign against drug dealers and addicts in the Philippines. An access-all-areas music documentary, **MY VIEW: CLEM BURKE** (dir: Philip Sansom, UK) looks back on the career of the world-renowned drummer for the band Blondie.

DISCOVER NEW INDIE TALENT

Central to Raindance's mission is the discovery of new indie talent from every corner of the globe. Features made by first-time filmmakers include **PLATFORM** (dir: Sahar Masayebi, Iran), the story of three sisters from a poor background who join the Iranian national Wushu team. **ORAY** (dir: Mehmet Akif Büyükkatalay, Germany) portrays a man torn between his faith, everyday reality and identity as he tries to rebuild his life in a new Muslim community in Cologne. A boy shuts himself away from his friends and family after the death of his classmate in **A DOBUGAWA DREAM** (dir: Asato Watanabe, Japan). A mother is forced to enter the world of high-end prostitution when her husband's addiction to escorts leaves them penniless in **ALICE** (dir: Josephine Mackerras, Australia/France). A waiter unwittingly becomes entangled in the mysterious disappearance of his neighbour in **THE WAITER** (dir: Steve Krikris, Greece). An upbeat Latin American roadtrip, the documentary **MIGUELITO** (dir: Sam Zubrycki, Australia/Puerto Rico/Colombia/USA) asks what happened to the boy who in 1973 had a successful but short-lived music career. These films screen in competition for Best Discovery award.

AWARDS & JURY

The Raindance Film Festival awards system honours features and documentaries in 8 categories: Best International Film, Best UK Film, Best Director, Best Performance, Best Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Discovery, Best Documentary. Awards partner STAMP will provide over CAD \$100,000 of post-production prizes for winning filmmakers in all categories.

This year's jury comprises **Rachel Shenton** and **Chris Overton** (winners of the Academy Award® for Best Live Action Short Film *For The Silent Child*), **David Yates** (director, *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* franchises), **Kacey Ainsworth** (*Eastenders*, *Granchester*), **Babou Ceesay** (*Eye In The Sky*, *Dark Mon£y*), **Ed Skrein** (*Deadpool*), **Ella Balinska** (*Charlie's Angels*), **Susan Wokoma** (*Year of the Rabbit*), **Ophelia Lovibond** (*Guardians of the Galaxy*), **Hugh Skinner** (*W1A*, *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*), **Billy Zane** (*Titanic*), **Tom Ellis** (*Lucifer*), **Ruth Bradley** (*Grabbers*, *Humans*), **Chloe Pirrie** (*The Game*), **Nathaniel Martello-White** (*Cla'am*), **Josh Dylan** (*Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*), **Tom Felton** (*Harry Potter*), **Dan Smith** from the band *Bastille*, and award-winning singer songwriter **Emeli Sandé**.

SEE PRESS KIT FOR FULL LIST OF FILMS SCREENING IN COMPETITION.

ACADEMY AWARD® QUALIFYING SHORTS PROGRAMMES

Raindance is now a **triple Oscar qualifying festival**. As of this year, the recipients of Raindance's Best Animation Short and Best Documentary Short join Best Live Action Short in being eligible for consideration in the Short Film category of the Academy Awards® without the standard theatrical run (provided the film otherwise complies with the Academy rules). Short programmes include *Queer*, *Radical Agenda*, *Relative States* and *Way Out East*, with highlights including **NIMIC**, the new short starring Matt Dillon by Oscar-winning Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos (*The Lobster*, *The Favourite*).

RAINDANCE INDUSTRY PROGRAMME (19 – 29 SEPTEMBER)

Raindance's industry programme traditionally runs 5 days, but new this year it will run for the full duration of the festival, beginning at 10:30am every day with a brunchtime talk – a perfect wake up for film industry professionals. Industry highlights include the German Films collaboration **TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN**, a cross-comparison of up-and-coming British and German talent, with participants including actors Maria Dragus and Christian Friedel, and director Anca Miruna Lazarescu. **INDUSTRY MINDS** examines mental health & the film industry, and **THE TIP OFF PODCAST** probes three investigative documentary filmmakers about their process, including how to protect sources, in two special live editions of the podcast.

Presented by Lumix, **A CINEMATOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS WITH ZORAN VELJKOVIC** gets the inside story on this year's Raindance trailer. Presented by Mandy.com **A CASTING DIRECTOR MASTERCLASS WITH MANUEL PURO** gives an insight from the casting director of films including *Moon*, *Elements* and *Northern Soul*. In the script to screen event **ANATOMY OF A REEL WITH... SIMON RUMLEY** the indie screenwriter of films including *Crowhurst* presents an honest side-by-side comparison of one of his scripts and the finished film. **IT TAKES AN INDUSTRY TO RAISE A BABY** debates the sacrifices filmmakers have to make regarding childcare. Further industry panels question how indie VOD platforms compare with market leaders like Netflix, and the reality of green filmmaking with BAFTA's Head of Sustainability. And of course there'll be **LIVE!AMMUNITION!** – an opportunity to pitch to film industry executives in front of an audience.

RAINDANCE IMMERSIVE (27-29 SEPTEMBER)

For the fourth year, Raindance will champion the creators who push the artistic boundaries in the mediums of Virtual, Augmented and Mixed Reality. Running 27 – 29 September at the OXO Tower, the **GALLERY OF IMMERSIVE STORIES AND INTERACTIVE WORLDS** celebrates the creativity, ingenuity and artistry expressed in immersive storytelling. This year's selection features 30 experiences created by acclaimed XR directors, game designers and artists, including 10 World Premieres, 3 International Premieres, and 14 UK Premieres.

Mixed Reality (MR) highlights include natural history documentary **RISE OF ANIMALS WITH DAVID ATTENBOROUGH**, replicating three prehistoric animals. Virtual reality (VR)

experiences take you to incredible places that might otherwise be out of reach. Explore a multi-faceted Jerusalem in **THE HOLY CITY**. Narrated by Geraldine Chaplin, natural history documentary **MEMORIA** is a rare opportunity to witness Spain's ancient La Garma cave paintings, as they're otherwise inaccessible. Narrated by Rosario Dawson, **BATTLESCAR – PUNK WAS INVENTED BY GIRLS** documents the rise of punk in 1970s New York via two female punks. Created by contemporary Japanese artist Miwa Komatsu, **INORI** takes you into an artists mind. Experience a traditional South American Ayahuasca ceremony with a shaman in **AYAHUASCA: KOSMIK JOURNEY**. Utilising artificial intelligence and voice control, **RAY SPARKS** is a fairytale story about interacting with trust. **AFTERLIFE** imagines the heartbreak of a family who've lost their 5-year old son. Based on Joseph Conrad's classic novella, **HEART OF DARKNESS** is entirely hand-drawn by Australian comic artist Sutu. With volumetrically captured actors, **OPERATION OHELLO** gives a Shakespearian twist to a story of Navy Seals, and features Viola Davis, Julius Tennon and Mary Chieffo. Starring Colin Farrell, **GLOOMY EYES** is a reflection of populism in the world, with an outlandish Trump-like preacher oppressing a community of zombies. A dreamlike animated interactive VR experience, **GLIMPSE** stars Taron Egerton and Lucy Boynton as a heartbroken panda and his girlfriend. Pilot the iconic TARDIS in **DOCTOR WHO: THE EDGE OF TIME** starring Jodie Whittaker. Exploring memory loss and dementia, **COSMOS WITHIN US** is the first foray into VR by Satore Studio, who've created visuals for clients including Alexander McQueen, Vivienne Westwood and Beyoncé. Spanish fashion designer Paula Canovas del Vas expresses female empowerment by presenting her London Fashion Week collection via **SEE, SAW – SEEN**, a room-scale VR experience with giant models that stare back at their audience. Taking place at the Jackson Lane Theatre, **A BOX IN THE DESERT** combines VR with live performance by incorporating a real actress.

This year's VR artwork was created in virtual reality by Sutu. Experiences are nominated for the **Raindance Immersive Awards**, recognising creative excellence and technical achievement across 10 categories – making Raindance the only festival in Britain to champion VR on this scale.

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EDITORS NOTES:

ABOUT RAINDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

Raindance Film Festival is the largest independent film festival in the UK and it has been recognised by Variety as “one of the world's top 50 unmissable film festivals”. Raindance showcases the boldest, freshest content from British and international filmmakers. Industry and the public attend cutting-edge panels, talks and workshops. Raindance is a qualifying festival for Oscars®, BAFTA and BIFA.

ABOUT RAINDANCE: THE VOICE OF INDEPENDENT FILM

Raindance is dedicated to fostering and promoting independent film around the world. Founded in 1992, it combines Raindance Film Festival, film training courses, and Raindance Higher Education. Our training courses are at the heart of the Raindance structure, aiming to give individuals the tools to start shooting their film, and covering screenwriting, production, directing, and virtual reality. Moreover, Raindance has developed three fully accredited Higher Education Film Programmes, becoming the only major film festival in the world to offer higher education.