



SLAMDANCE ANNOUNCES 2020 FEATURE FILM COMPETITION LINEUP

11 Narrative and 9 Documentary Features to be Showcased in Competition During 26th Annual Festival, Including 16 World, North American, and U.S. Premieres

Festival Also Announces Breakouts Section Lineup

Embargoed Until Monday, December 2 at 9:00 AM PST

December 2, 2019 (Los Angeles, CA) - [The Slamdance Film Festival](#) today announced the Narrative and Documentary Feature Film Competition programs, as well as the lineup for its returning Breakouts section, for their 26th edition, taking place January 24-30, 2020 in Park City. Slamdance continues to be the premiere film festival “by filmmakers, for filmmakers,” dedicated to fostering a community for independent emerging artists.

The feature competition lineup boasts 16 premieres, including 10 World, 5 North American, and 1 U.S. debuts. In addition to the United States, films come to Slamdance from countries around the globe, including Belarus, Canada, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, and South Africa. All competition films are feature length directorial debuts with budgets of less than \$1 million USD, and without US distribution. Featured films were selected by a team of Slamdance alumni via a blind submission process and are programmed democratically. Films in both categories are also eligible for the Audience Award and Spirit of Slamdance Award, the latter of which is voted upon by filmmakers at the festival. Photos of selected films available [here](#).

“Slamdance is above all a place of discovery,” said Slamdance Co-founder and President Peter Baxter. “Every year filmmakers break out of the festival because the industry at large recognizes the need for new voices. With a record breaking 8,231 submissions this year, our artist-led organization brings a lineup full of wonderful risk taking and unique storytelling. That’s the spirit of Slamdance 2020.”

Recent examples of filmmakers whose careers have been launched at Slamdance include Andrew Patterson, director of the 2019 feature narrative breakout *The Vast of Night*, who has recently signed with WME and, following a bidding war for the film, secured a major distribution and future production deal with Amazon, as well as 2018's *Pick of the Litter* co-directors Dana Nachman and Don Hardy who sold their crowd-pleasing documentary to IFC during the festival and were hired by Disney+ to develop their work into a series.

The 2020 festival will see the return of the Russo Fellowship -- a \$25,000 prize launched in 2018 by celebrated festival alumni Anthony and Joe Russo (*Avengers: Endgame*, *Avengers: Infinity War*) to enable a deserving filmmaker the opportunity to continue their journey with mentorship from the filmmaking duo. Presented by AGBO Films in partnership with the festival, the 2019 fellowship was awarded to filmmaker Hannah Peterson who has since screened her short *East of the River* at the Tribeca Film Festival (after premiering at Slamdance), signed with Paradigm, and been hired by the Duplass Brothers to direct the Disney Channel web series, *Shook*.

Also announced today is the lineup for the festival's returning Breakouts section. Launched last year, Breakouts are films by non-first-time-feature directors who demonstrate a determined vision of filmmaking that is instinctively becoming their own. These artists continue to push boundaries in genre and form, and are beacons of light that predict the future of film. Slamdance's goal is to help daring and resilient filmmakers connect with bigger audiences and take their well-deserved place on the world cinema stage.

"Once again, in it's sophomore year as an official section of the festival, the Breakouts program includes a set of dynamic storytellers beyond their first films who continue to push cinema boundaries in both narrative and documentary forms," said Paul Rachman, Slamdance co-conspirator and Breakouts programmer. "They are clearly establishing their paths forward towards their audiences with originality and risk."

Established in 1995, Slamdance is dedicated to discovering and supporting new talent in independent filmmaking. In addition to the Russo Brothers, notable Slamdance alumni who first gained notice at the festival include: **Ana Lily Amirpour** (*A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night*), **Ari Aster** (*Midsommar*), **Sean Baker** (*The Florida Project*), **Gina Prince Bythewood** (*Shots Fired*), **Lena Dunham** (*Girls*), **Marc Forster** (*Finding Neverland*, *007: Quantum of Solace*), **Seth Gordon** (*The King of Kong*), **Bong Joon-Ho** (*Parasite*, *Okja*), **Dana Nachman** (*Pick of the Litter*), **Christopher Nolan** (*Dunkirk*, *Interstellar*), **Oren Peli** (*Paranormal Activity*), **Jeremy Saulnier** (*Green Room*), **Lynn Shelton** (*Sword of Trust*, *Humpday*), **Benh Zeitlin** (*Beasts of the Southern Wild*), and **Marina Zenovich** (*Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind*). Box Office Mojo reports alumni who first showed their work at Slamdance have earned over \$20 billion at the box office to date.

2020 competition features include:

NARRATIVE FEATURES

1986 – (Germany, Belarus) North American Premiere

Director/ Screenwriter: Lothar Herzog

While Elena repeatedly has to drive into the 'forbidden zone' of Chernobyl in order to make deals for her father, her life seems more and more contaminated by a destructive force...

Cast: Daria Mureeva, Evgeni Sangadzhiev, Vitali Kotovitski, Alexei Filimonov, Helga Filippova, Alexei Kravchenko

A Dog's Death – (Uruguay, France, Argentina) North American Premiere

Director: Matías Ganz

Veterinarian Mario and his wife Silvia enjoy a bourgeois life in Montevideo but two events will disturb their tranquility. A dog surgery goes wrong for Mario and Silvia discovers retirement. They will be dragged from paranoia to violence and from violence to nonsense.

Cast: Guillermo Arengo, Pelusa Vidal, Soledad Gilmet, Lalo Rotaveria, Ruth Sandoval, Ana Katz

Beware of Dog – (USA, Russia, Germany) World Premiere

Director/ Screenwriter: Nadia Bedzhanova

Three young adults experience parallel struggles with mental health and identity. In Moscow a woman struggles with severe OCD, while her cousin in Berlin tries to build a romantic relationship ignoring her own mental condition. Meanwhile in New York City, a heartbroken boxer faces addiction and lack of self worth in the aftermath of a break-up.

Cast: Marina Vasileva, Buddy Duress, Paula Knüpling, Marina Prados, Kevin Iso, Pavel Tabakov

Murmur – (Canada)

Director/ Screenwriter: Heather Young

While performing community service at an animal shelter, an older woman begins compulsively adopting pets to ease her loneliness.

Cast: Shan MacDonald

Majnuni – (Bosnia i Herzegovina, USA) North American Premiere

Directors: Kouros Alaghband, Drew Hoffman Screenwriters: Kouros Alaghband, Drew Hoffman, Adnan Omerović

After stalking a broken family through the night in the war-torn city of Sarajevo, Adnan snaps into an altered state of consciousness where his identity becomes entangled in the lives he is following.

Cast: Adnan Omerović, Dina Hebib, Barry Del Sherman, Nela Baždar, Emil Ivancic, Mel Flanagan

Residue – (USA) World Premiere

Director/ Screenwriter: Merawi Gerima

A young filmmaker returns home after many years away to write a script about his childhood, only to find his neighborhood unrecognizable and his childhood friends scattered to the wind.

Cast: Obinna Nwachukwu, Dennis Lindsey, Taline Stewart

Sanzaru – (USA) World Premiere

Director/ Screenwriter: Xia Magnus

When a mild Filipina nurse is hired by an elderly woman declining into dementia, the walls between this world and the next crumble as she uncovers her employer's shocking family secret.

Cast: Aina Dumlao, Justin Arnold, Jayne Taini, Jon Viktor Corpuz

Shell and Joint – (Japan) North American Premiere

Director/ Screenwriter: Isamu Hirabayashi

A wild ride into a world of ideas, alternately profound, shallow, funny and horrific, conveyed by outspoken characters in powerful static compositions, in and around a capsule hotel.

Cast: Mariko Tsutsui, Keisuke Horibe, Kanako Higashi, Aiko Sato, Hiromi Kitagawa, Atsuko Sudo, Ayano Kudo, Naoto Nojima

Tahara – (USA) World Premiere

Director: Olivia Peace

At the funeral for a Hebrew school classmate who took her own life, two best friends find themselves distracted by the teenage complications of lust, social status, and wavering faith.

Cast: Rachel Sennott, Madeline Grey DeFreece, Shlomit Azoulay, Daniel Taveras, Bernadette Quigley

Tapeworm – (Canada) US Premiere

Directors/ Screenwriters: Milos Mitrovic, Fabian Velasco

A hypochondriac, a failed comedian, a loner and two naive stoners seek an escape from their pitiful and mundane existence.

Cast: Adam Brooks, Alex Ateah, Milos Mitrovic, Sam Singer, Stephanie Berrington, Jennifer Mauws, Julie Simpson, Sandro Dibari

Thunderbolt in Mine Eye – (USA) World Premiere

Director: Sarah Sherman, Zachary Ray Sherman Screenwriters: Jason Loftus, Caylan Ford

A brainy fourteen year old embarks on an awkward but heartfelt first love relationship with her brother's best friend while exploring her budding feminism and a gender double standard at their high school.

Cast: Anjini Taneja Azhar, Quinn Liebling

DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

An Ordinary People – (South Africa, Eswatini, Namibia) World Premiere

Director: Ernest Nkosi

Born out of crime and largely marginalized by mainstream society emerges the story of Car Spinning in South Africa.

Ask No Questions – (Canada) World Premiere

Directors: Jason Loftus, Eric Pedicelli

A former Chinese state TV insider is held in a brainwashing camp and compelled to accept the official narrative on a fiery public suicide, which he believes was a government plot.

Bastards' Road – (USA)

Director: Brian Morrison

Coming home from war is just the beginning.

Big Fur – (USA)

Director: Dan Wayne

If World Champion taxidermist Ken Walker can't find Bigfoot, he'll make one.

Higher Love – (USA) World Premiere

Director: Hasan Oswald

A blue collar father tries to rescue his pregnant, heroin-addicted girlfriend from the dangerous streets of Camden, NJ. Once their son is born, a new journey begins for the fate of the baby and the family's sobriety that may split them apart forever.

Jasper Mall – (USA) World Premiere

Directors: Bradford Thomason, Brett Whitcomb

A year in the life of a dying shopping mall.

Lovemobil – (Germany)

Director: Elke Margarete Lehrenkrauss

Along the country roads of rural Germany, prostitutes from foreign countries work in old caravans when mysteriously one woman is murdered and fear begins to spread into an already dark and surreal world.

Maxima – (USA, Peru)

Director: Claudia Sparrow

A multi-billion-dollar corporation meets their match in a fearless Indigenous woman who remains uncowed after years of violent intimidation.

Queen of the Capital – (USA)

Director: Joshua Davidsburg

DC Bureaucrat by day, drag queen by night, Muffy Blake Stephyns follows her dream of leading a group of vibrant drag performers on a crusade for the community.

BREAKOUT FEATURES

Close Quarters – (Mexico) North American Premiere

Director/Screenwriter: Andres Clariond

In a time in which it is essential to question gender roles, this film explores, confronts and breaks apart man's darkest insecurities and vices.

Cast: Paulina Gaitan, Jose Pescina, Jorge Jimenez

The Penny Black – (USA) World Premiere

Director: Joe Saunders

The estranged son of a con man fights temptation, paranoia, and his own nefarious legacy as he searches for the rightful owner of a mysterious, million-dollar stamp collection.

The Wind. A Documentary Thriller – (Poland, Slovakia)

Director/ Screenwriter: Michal Bielawski

"The Wind" is a multi-thread story on a clash between people and the forces of nature, woven into a documentary thriller.

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ABOUT SLAMDANCE:

By filmmakers, for filmmakers. Established in 1995 by a wild bunch of filmmakers who were tired of relying on a large, oblique system to showcase their work, Slamdance has proven, year after year, that when it comes to recognizing talent and launching careers, independent and grassroots communities can do it themselves.

In addition to the Festival, Slamdance serves emerging artists and a growing community with several year-round initiatives. These include the Slamdance Screenplay Competition, its educational program Slamdance Polytechnic, DIG showcase of Digital Interactive and Gaming art, distribution efforts through Slamdance Presents, worldwide screening series Slamdance on the Road, LA screening series Slamdance Cinema Club, and its newly announced Miami edition of the festival.

For more information on Slamdance, visit: <https://www.slamdance.com>

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Hashtag: #Slamdance2020

Additional References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slamdance_Film_Festival

Photos/Images:

- [Slamdance Logo](#)
- [Slamdance Festival 2020 Artwork](#)
- [Film Stills](#)

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