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**Media Contact**

Zaf Yumru

Marketing and Communications Manager

[zaf@neworleansfilmsociety.org](mailto:zaf@neworleansfilmsociety.org)

**New Orleans Film Society Announces 29th Annual New Orleans Film Festival**

*Festival Celebrates The Most Diverse Lineup of Its History –with 80% of Films From Female Directors or Directors of Color*

**New Orleans, La. (August 21, 2018) ––** The New Orleans Film Society (NOFS) announced today its Closing Night film and **competition lineup for the 29th annual, Oscar-qualifying New Orleans Film Festival (NOFF)**, which will take place from **October 17th through October 25th** in venues across the city. With **60% of films by female directors** and **54% by directors of color** – and **80% from either a female director or director of color** – the 2018 lineup boasts the most diverse line-up in the festival’s history.

After receiving a record number of nearly **6000 film and screenplay submissions** for the 2018 festival—an increase of over 25% from 2017—the festival’s seasoned team of programmers carefully curated a slate of 220 visionary, thought-provoking films that represent a wealth of perspectives. Entries came from 120 different countries. Overall, the directors of selected films represent 42 different nationalities. This year, Louisiana-made films represent 27% of the lineup.

“Audiences are hungry for trailblazing films, dynamic perspectives and broader representation on-screen and behind the camera. We hope that #NOFF2018 will be site of discovery–– for stories less often celebrated, for creative voices that aren’t prioritized for mainstream Hollywood, and for audiences who are drawn to films that reflect and shape our culture today,” said New Orleans Film Society’s Executive Director, Fallon Young.

The festival has also announced the film **A Tuba to Cuba** as its **Closing Night** selection, to screen **Thursday, October 25, at the Contemporary Arts Center**, with a special performance to follow from the **Preservation Hall Jazz Band** as part of the **Closing Night Party**. The documentary, which follows the band as they retrace their musical roots to the shores of Cuba, underscores the festival’s programmatic focus on films from and about the **Caribbean** and the Caribbean diaspora, particularly those that speak to the historical and cultural ties between New Orleans and the Caribbean.

The feature competition lineup, including ten narrative feature films, nine documentary feature films, and eight feature films made in Louisiana, are listed below following the pre-launch event. Short films and features screening out of competition can be found at [www.neworleansfilmfestival.org](http://www.neworleansfilmfestival.org). Additional festival announcements, including Opening Night, Spotlight Films, panels, and special guests will be released in the weeks to come.

This year the New Orleans Film Festival campus expands to include a larger campus in the New Orleans Central Business District, centered around **a new festival HUB at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC)**, which boasts a 180-seat *The Ranch Theater* and a 300-seat screening room; **Cinema Reset virtual reality program** sponsored by Cox Communications with VR and new media programming by NOFF, with support from Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition, Downtown Development District and Samsung; a music video lounge; and the festival’s main box office.

Two blocks away from the HUB at the CAC, **The Advocate** will host a 180 seat screening room and the festival’s VIP lounge for All-Access Passholders. Select **festival screenings** will also be held **at the Broad Theater, Orpheum Theater and Prytania Theater.**

**THE FESTIVAL PRE-LAUNCHES WITH ETHAN HAWKE’S *BLAZE* ON AUGUST 29TH**

The New Orleans Film Society invites cinephiles to **warm up for the 29th New Orleans Film Festival** with **a special preview of the feature film BLAZE, directed by Ethan Hawke, on Tuesday, August 29th at the Orpheum Theater!**

BLAZE is a biopic of Texas outlaw music's unsung legend **Blaze Foley**, written by Ethan Hawke and Blaze Foley's former sweetheart, **Sybil Rosen**. Rosen will attend the screening at the Orpheum Theater for a Q&A session on the 29th. Hawke approached Rosen about the project after reading her own telling of Foley's story in the book "**Living in the Woods in a Tree**." The lead role of Foley is played by newcomer **Ben Dickey** (a musician by trade), and fans of Netflix's Arrested Development will spot **Alia Shawkat** as the female lead (Sybil Rosen). Rosen plays her own mother in the film. Blaze was filmed in **Baton Rouge, Louisiana** and opened at **Sundance Film Festival 2018.**

The special preview is **free of charge** for New Orleans Film Society members and #NOFF2018 pass holders! Members and non-members alike are invited to gather at Loa Bar at the International House Hotel from 5pm to 7pm; a complimentary signature cocktail will be offered to New Orleans Film Society members. Doors open at the Orpheum at 7pm and the film begins at 7:30pm. **Tickets are available to non-members / non-pass holders via [neworleansfilmsociety.org.](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fneworleansfilmsociety.org%2F&h=AT3vqxG3eTcNYoRAMZLW_wFsXtWoy-rhY6pB430E7-MsHGcvArTx6pNmdiNfUWcenuBZnR1gwCcQsoJt5mg-iQ009Vqaogz6zEdt3KjUfzOEf4HOlcpftz4vS3l-WZRMxvHXCTQ)**

**CLOSING NIGHT SELECTION**

*A Tuba to Cuba* | dir. T.G. Herrington, Danny Clinch | USA

A TUBA TO CUBA follows New Orleans' famed Preservation Hall Jazz Band as they retrace their musical roots from the storied city of jazz to the shores of Cuba and in turn discover a connection that runs much deeper than could have been imagined.

**NARRATIVE FEATURES COMPETITION**

*Chained for Life* | dir. Aaron Schimberg | USA

A beautiful actress struggles to connect with her disfigured co-star on the crowded set of a European auteur's English-language debut.

*Empty Metal* | dir. Adam Khalil, Bayley Sweitzer | USA

SOUTHERN U.S. PREMIERE. A trio of aimless musicians are caught up in a shadow revolution governed by psychic native separatists, sovereign citizens, survivalist preppers, and steered by a dreadlocked rasta.

*Family First* | dir. Sophie Dupuis | Canada

Constantly walking a tightrope, JP tries to maintain a proper balance between the numerous needs of his family, his job with his brother, and his involvements in his uncle's drug cartel.

*Fort Maria* | dir. S. Cagney Gentry, Thomas Southerland | USA

Four women in the South are connected by the death of a dog.

*A Haunting Hitchhike* | dir. Heejae Jeong | South Korea

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE. 16-year-old girl Jeong-ae is on her way to find her long-lost mother, believing that she's the only hope left to her.

*Jules of Light and Dark* | dir. Daniel Laabs | USA

WORLD PREMIERE. Two young lovers, Maya and Jules, are found wrecked on the side of the road in North Texas by a loner roughneck, Freddy. As her relationship crumbles, Maya forms a friendship with Freddy, whose past mistakes and experiences offer her insights on her life.

*Life is Fare* | dir. Sephora Woldu | Eritrea, USA

Sephora, an idealistic young Eritrean American, pitches a well-meaning but ludicrous film about identity, memory, and homesickness to her traditional mother.

*Pig Film* | dir. Josh Gibson | USA

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE. In an empty world, a solitary female mechanically follows the protocols of a factory hog farm. Her labors are sporadically punctuated by musical rhapsodies as she moves toward the impending end.

*Solace* | dir. Tchaiko Omawale | USA

SOUTHERN U.S. PREMIERE. A 17-year-old orphan is shipped off to her estranged grandmother. She plots her escape while navigating a foreign environment, new friendships and a hidden eating disorder.

*Waru* | dir. Briar Grace-Smith, Casey Kaa, Ainsley Gardiner, Katie Wolfe, Chelsea Winstanley, Renae Maihi, Paula Whetu Jones | New Zealand

Following the death of a child, eight Māori women are confronted by guilt, pride and defeat but will ultimately risk everything for the greater good of their community.

**DOCUMENTARY FEATURES COMPETITION**

*América* | dir. Erick Stoll, Chase Whiteside | Mexico

América is a story of brothers confronting the chasm between adolescent yearning and adult realities when brought together to care for their ailing ninety-three-year-old grandmother.

*For the Birds* | dir. Richard Miron | USA

A woman's love for her pet ducks, chickens, geese, and turkeys—all 200 of them—ignites a battle with local animal rescuers and puts her marriage in jeopardy.

*Gimme A Faith* | dir. Hao Zhang | China, USA

WORLD PREMIERE. Two evangelical Christians in the Bible Belt of the United States are devoted to converting newly arrived Chinese international students.

*Jaddoland* | dir. Nadia Shihab | Kuwait, USA

WORLD PREMIERE. A visit to her mother’s home art studio in Texas prompts the filmmaker to explore the meaning of home and the search for belonging across three generations of her Iraqi family.

*Laila at the Bridge*| dir. Elizabeth Mirzaei, Gulistan Mirzaei | USA, Afghanistan

Laila Haidari survived child marriage and her own traumatic past to battle one of the deadliest problems in Afghanistan: heroin addiction.

*Man Made* | dir. T Cooper | USA

Traces the paths of four transgender male bodybuilders as they prepare to step on stage at the only all-trans bodybuilding competition in the world.

*The Unafraid* | dir. Heather Courtney, Anayansi Prado | USA

A look at the personal lives of three DACA students in Georgia, a state that has banned them from attending their top state universities and disqualifies them from receiving in-state tuition at any other public college.

*While I Breathe, I Hope* | dir. Emily Harrold | USA

WORLD PREMIERE. This film explores what it means to be young, Black, and a Democrat through the experiences of South Carolina politician Bakari Sellers.

*Wrestle* | dir. Suzannah Herbert, Lauren Belfer | USA

The wrestling team at JO Johnson High School in Huntsville, which has been on Alabama's failing schools list for many years, fights their way towards the State Championship and the doors they hope it will open.

**LOUISIANA FEATURES COMPETITION**

*Bending Lines: The Sculpture of Robert Wiggs* | dir. Allison Bohl DeHart, Peter DeHart | USA

Obsessed with the repeating geometry of nature, a sculptor works in the space between art and science.

*Buckjumping* | dir. Lily Keber | USA

WORLD PREMIERE. Buckjumping takes the pulse of present-day New Orleans by turning to its dancers, the men and women who embody the rhythm of the city and prove it on the streets every chance they get.

*Mississippi Madam: The Life of Nellie Jackson* | dir. Timothy Givens, Mark K. Brockway | USA

In 1902 Nellie Jackson, an African-American woman born into poverty in Possum Corner, Mississippi, traveled north to Natchez and opened “Nellie’s", a brothel she ran for more than sixty years.

*Same God* | dir. Linda Midgett | USA

The first African American woman to gain tenure at "the evangelical Harvard" faces a life-altering backlash to her public show of solidarity with American Muslims.

*The True Don Quixote* | dir. Chris Poché | USA

WORLD PREMIERE. Danny Kehoe lives an ordinary life that leaves him bored nearly to death. His only escape is in his collection of books and comics, all recounting, with great inaccuracy, the romantic tales of the chivalrous Knights Errant. When those books are taken away, he goes mad. In his desperation, he re-christens himself as the last and greatest knight of all, Don Quixote.

*This Little Light* | dir. Ada McMahon, Wendi Moore-O'Neal | USA

When Black feminist freedom singer Wendi Moore-O’Neal married her now wife, Mandisa, she was fired from her job as a community organizer. This is a self-determined portrait about the Black Southern Freedom movement.

*This Taco Truck Kills Fascists* | dir. Rodrigo Dorfman | USA

WORLD PREMIERE. Jose Torres-Tama is on a mission: to create a revolutionary Taco Truck Theatre with a simple message: “No guacamole for immigrant haters”.

*Tomorrow Never Knows* | dir. Adam Sekuler | USA

The uncomfortable reality of death is faced by Shar and Cynthia who, upon Shar’s diagnosis with early-onset Alzheimer’s, make a brave and difficult decision.

#**NOFF2018 PASSES ARE ON SALE**

**All Access and Weekender Passes** for the 29th New Orleans Film Festival are on sale at [neworleansfilmfestival.org](http://www.neworleansfilmfestival.org). New Orleans Film Society members **save $50** on All Access Passes.

For true film buffs who would like to experience **all 9 days of the festival**, an All Access Pass is the best option. All Access Pass holders **enjoy free tickets** to all screenings with **priority entrance** to theaters, access to **parties every night** of the festival, feel like a star at the **Festival VIP Lounge**, and more…

**Weekender Pass** holders enjoy all of these privileges between **Friday, October 19th and Sunday, October 21st**. The New Orleans Film Festival’s **Weekender Pass is a great opportunity to visit New Orleans** for out-of-towners while exploring some of the best new and seasoned voices in cinema.

Three more types of passes; **Unlimited Film Pass**, **Six Film Pass**, and **Student Pass** will go on sale on September 4th. Pass holders and NOFS members will be able to start claiming their free tickets on September 24th while **individual tickets will go on sale for the public on October 3rd**. Detailed information about #NOFF2018 passes and tickets can be found at [neworleansfilmfestival.org](http://neworleansfilmfestival.org)

**SUPPORT FOR THE 29TH NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL COMES FROM…**

The 29th New Orleans Film Festival’s **Marquee sponsors** are **21st Century Fox** and **New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation**.

**Chloe Wine Collection** is the festival’s **Official Wine Sponsor**. **The New Orleans Advocate** is the festival’s **Signature Media Sponsor**. The **Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans** is an official sponsor of the festival HUB.

Producing, Premiere and Premiere Trade sponsors include **The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences**, **Bond Moroch**, **the City of New Orleans**, **The Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans**, **Cox Communications**, **Hilton New Orleans Riverside**, **Kyotocolor**, **Louisiana Entertainment**, **The New Orleans Hotel Collection**, **Panavision**, **Restore the Mississippi River Delta**, **Second Line Stages**, **Solomon Group** and **VER**.

Grantors include the the the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts & Sciences, the Arts Council of New Orleans, Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Helis Foundation, Jazz & Heritage Foundation, Louisiana Division of the Arts, South Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

**ABOUT THE NEW ORLEANS FILM SOCIETY**The New Orleans Film Society discovers, cultivates, and amplifies diverse voices of filmmakers who tell the stories of our time. Founded in 1989, NOFS produces the Academy-accredited New Orleans Film Festival annually and invests year-round in building a vibrant film culture in the South to share transformative cinematic experiences with audiences and connect dynamic filmmakers to career-advancing resources. Year-round programming includes free and low-cost screenings for members and the broader community of cinephiles in New Orleans, a 20-year running French Film Festival featuring contemporary and classic French cinema, and filmmaker professional development programs created to nurture diverse voices in filmmaking in the American South. NOFS is a 501(c)(3) organization.