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**30 YEARS OF NEW FILM IN NEW ORLEANS**

**THE 30TH ANNUAL NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL**

**ANNOUNCES CLOSING, CENTERPIECE, AND COMPETITION FILMS LINEUP**

**New Orleans, La. (August 20, 2019) ––** The New Orleans Film Society (NOFS) announced the Closing Night Film, the Centerpiece Film, and the feature and short film **competition lineup for the 30th annual, Oscar®-qualifying New Orleans Film Festival (NOFF)**, which will take place from **October 16th through October 23rd** in venues across the city. The lineup is live at [neworleansfilmfestival.org](http://neworleansfilmsociety.org/lineup) and festival passes are on Early-Bird Sale until August 29th.

The New Orleans Film Festival is **turning 30 this year** and New Orleans shines ever brighter as an epicenter of culture and creativity during the festival with **500+ filmmakers** from every corner of the world in attendance at screenings of **230+ films**. The festival is expected to engage **30,000+ attendees** with visionary films, directors, and other film lovers. The festival is also known for its eclectic parties, virtual reality exhibition, conversations with notable actors, writers, and directors**––**and its filmmaker forum, offering numerous opportunities for project development and professional networking.

After receiving a record number of over **6,500 submissions from 104 countries** for the 30th anniversary of the festival, the festival’s seasoned team of programmers carefully curated a slate of 232 visionary, thought-provoking films that represent a wealth of perspectives. Overall, the directors of selected films represent 39 different nationalities. This year, films made in the American South represent 50%, and Louisiana-made films represent 26% of the lineup. Films directed by women and gender non-conforming directors account for 54% of the lineup, and films helmed by directors of color make up 56% of the lineup.

“The festival’s strong accent on Southern voices is a vote of confidence in the rich storytelling in this region,” said New Orleans Film Society’s Artistic Director Clint Bowie. “Our role is to help cultivate the storytellers here and shine a bright light on their work—and to continue to ensure that the New Orleans Film Festival serves as an important site of discovery for audiences and filmmakers alike.”

**HARRIET TUBMAN BIOPIC *HARRIET* TO CLOSE #NOFF2019**

***Harriet***, directed by **Kasi Lemmons** will serve as the festival’s Closing Night Selection at the Orpheum Theater. Coming to New Orleans following its World Premiere in Toronto, ***Harriet*** is a biopic about renowned abolitionist **Harriet Tubman**, who escaped slavery and risked her life to lead others to freedom through the network of safehouses known as the Underground Railroad. The film stars **Cynthia Erivo** in the titular role, with **Janelle Monáe** and **Joe Alwyn** in supporting roles. New Orleans-based **Terence Blanchard** provided the music for the film. Lemmons is known for having directed the acclaimed Louisiana-shot film ***Eve’s Bayou***, which screened at the 1997 New Orleans Film Festival. The festival plans a special screening of *Eve’s Bayou* to celebrate the breadth of Lemmons’ work.

**TRIBECA WINNER *BURNING CANE* CENTERPIECES THE FESTIVAL**

***Burning Cane***, directed by 19-year-old New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) alum **Phillip Youmans**, will serve as the Centerpiece Film for the festival, with a screening scheduled for Saturday, October 18, at the Orpheum Theater. The film, starring **Wendell Pierce**, is set amongst the cane fields of rural Louisiana, where a deeply religious woman struggles to reconcile her convictions of faith with the love she has for her alcoholic son and troubled preacher. The film received the “Youth Film Grant” through #CreateLouisiana last year, funded in part by the New Orleans Film Society. *Burning Cane* is executive produced by New Orleans based director **Benh Zeitlin** (*Beasts of the Southern Wild*).

With *Burning Cane*, **Youmans** became the **youngest and the first African-American director** to win the Founder’s Award for **Best Narrative Feature** at the **Tribeca Film Festival**. "Would be a noteworthy debut from a director twice Youmans' age." noted John DeFore of *The Hollywood Reporter*.

Additionally, Youmans’ new short film ***Nairobi*** will also screen at the festival. The 15-minute short film follows the story Eloise Sekongo immigrating to New York from Ivory Coast after divorcing her husband of 18 years.

“We couldn’t be more excited to have *Harriet* and *Burning Cane* occupy two of the festival’s most prestigious slots,” said Bowie. “Both films have strong Louisiana ties and reflect the bold work of two truly visionary artists.”

**IN COMPETITION: 27 FEATURE FILMS FROM 12 COUNTRIES**

The 30th New Orleans Film Festival feature film competition brings together **10 narrative feature** films and **10 documentary feature** films from 12 countries. The Louisiana Features Competition will host **6 feature films made in Louisiana**.

Scroll down to see more information on feature films in competition. 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, parties, and special guests will be released in the weeks to come.

The New Orleans Film Festival campus is centered around **the festival HUB at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC)**, which boasts a 180-seat and 300-seat screening room; main box office of the festival; **Cinema Reset virtual reality program** sponsored by Cox Communications with VR and new media programming by NOFF; and a bar with lounge areas.

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.**

#**NOFF2019 PASSES ARE ON EARLY BIRD SALE**

**All-Access and Weekender Passes** for the 30th New Orleans Film Festival are on early bird sale at [neworleansfilmfestival.org](http://www.neworleansfilmfestival.org). Festival goers can buy their passes now to **save $25 on all-access** and **$20 on weekender** passes. New Orleans Film Society members **save an additional $50** on pass purchases.

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, Oct 17th and Sunday, Oct 19th.

**Six-Film Pass** and **Student Pass** will go on sale on August 30th. Pass holders and NOFS members will be able to reserve their tickets on September 23rd while **individual tickets will go on sale for the public on September 30th**. Detailed information about #NOFF2019 passes and tickets can be found at [neworleansfilmfestival.org](http://neworleansfilmfestival.org)

**CLOSING FILM**

*Harriet* | dir. Kasi Lemmons | USA
Based on the thrilling and inspirational life of an iconic American freedom fighter, *Harriet* tells the extraordinary tale of Harriet Tubman's escape from slavery and transformation into one of America’s greatest heroes. Her courage, ingenuity, and tenacity freed hundreds of slaves and changed the course of history.

**CENTERPIECE FILM**

*Burning Cane* | dir. Phillip Youmans | USA

Amongst the cane fields of rural Louisiana, a deeply religious woman struggles to reconcile her convictions of faith with the love she has for her alcoholic son and troubled preacher.

**FEATURE FILMS IN COMPETITION AT THE NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL 2019**

**NARRATIVE FEATURES COMPETITION**

*The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open* | dir. Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, Kathleen Hepburn | Canada, Norway

Two Indigenous women from vastly different backgrounds find their worlds colliding when one of them is fleeing a violent domestic attack.

*Catching Up* | dir. Bill Crossland | USA

A man with muscular dystrophy embarks on a series of romantic misadventures after falling for an able-bodied woman.

*De Lo Mio* | dir. Diana Peralta | USA, Dominican Republic

Two "ride or die" sisters raised in NYC reunite with their estranged brother in the Dominican Republic to clean out their late father’s childhood home.

*A Great Lamp* | dir. Saad Qureshi | USA

Two sad vandals and an unemployed loner wait for a fabled rocket launch in this heartfelt kaleidoscope of pain and friendship.

*Love Cuts (Reži)* | dir. Kosta Djordjevic | Serbia, Croatia

A feisty young woman walks the streets of Belgrade, trying to resuscitate her relationship with her fed-up boyfriend while suffering a grievous abdominal wound.

*Romance Analyst* | dir. Rachel Wortell | USA

A comedy about a platonic love triangle between a woman, her best friend, and her therapist.

*Song Lang* | dir. Leon Le | Vietnam

A tough debt collector for a ruthless loan shark and a charismatic young opera singer meet in a gritty 1980s Saigon.

*Straight Up* | dir. James Sweeney | USA

An OCD gay twentysomething finds his intellectual soulmate in a struggling actress.

*Test Pattern* | dir. Shatara Michelle Ford | USA

An interracial couple's relationship is put to the test when the girlfriend is sexually assaulted and the boyfriend drives her from hospital to hospital in search of a rape kit.

*The World is Full of Secrets* | dir. Graham Swon | USA

On a summer night in 1996, five teenage girls tell morbid stories in a suburban house. However, as the night becomes darker, their world of fiction is consumed by a feverish reality.

**DOCUMENTARY FEATURES COMPETITION**

*Border South* | dir. Raúl O. Paz Pastrana | USA, Mexico

To stem the immigration tide, Mexico and the USA collaborate to crack down on migrants, forcing them into ever more dangerous territory.

*Crafting an Echo* | dir. Marco Williams | USA

This film takes the audience behind the scenes to experience firsthand the challenges of the creative process and the beauty of dance.

*Exodus* | dir. Bahman Kiarostami | Iran | *US PREMIERE*

In a center where Afghan immigrants who have illegally entered Iran are registered for deportation, the exit-interview process results in surprisingly delicate, witty exchanges.

*Flannery* | dir. Elizabeth Coffman, Mark Bosco | USA

A documentary covering the unusual life and ground-breaking fiction of acclaimed Georgia writer Flannery O'Connor.

*Gracefully* | dir. Arash Es'haghi | Iran

*Gracefully* tells the story of a drag queen who had been performing on stage for decades before the revolution and after the 1979 Iranian Revolution he has been banned from any kind of performance. He lives on a farm and spend most of his time farming and he sometimes dances for elderly people at nurseries.

*Havana, from on high* | dir. Pedro Ruiz | Canada, Venezuela

Forced upwards by the chronic shortage of housing in Central Havana, makeshift houses form a secret village above a decaying district.

*Homemade* | dir. Jason Maris | USA

Groundbreaking, intimate & artful, Homemade is the six-year journey following highly decorated Force Reconnaissance Marine, Adam Sorensen, as he navigates life after war.

*Pier Kids* | dir. Elegance Bratton | USA

Three homeless, queer black youths navigate the streets, welfare, and their biological families in order to find stable housing.

*Ringside* | dir. André Hörmann | USA, Germany

A look at the dangerous, volatile world of Chicago’s South Side from the perspective of two remarkably gifted young boxers and the fathers who train them.

*Singular* | dir. Dennis Scholl and Marlon Johnson | USA

Chronicles the extraordinary rise of Haitian-American jazz singer Cecile Mclorin Salvant, anchored by a pristine recording of a live concert.

**LOUISIANA FEATURES COMPETITION**

*Burning Cane* | dir. Phillip Youmans | USA

Amongst the cane fields of rural Louisiana, a deeply religious woman struggles to reconcile her convictions of faith with the love she has for her alcoholic son and troubled preacher.

*Easy Does It* | dir. Will Addison | USA | *WORLD PREMIERE*

Two small-town buddies and their accidental hostage careen across the 1970s Southwest on a treasure hunt turned crime spree. A freewheeling road adventure about unlikely friendships and the giddy futility of chasing the American dream.

*The Long Shadow* | dir. Daniel Lafrentz | USA | *WORLD PREMIERE*

A young, female Sheriff’s Deputy in rural Louisiana takes on her town's old money establishment when the woman she loves**––**an attorney fighting a land grab that threatens to displace the town's poor**––**is murdered.

*Lost Bayou* | dir. Brian C Miller Richard | USA

In this Southern Gothic mystery, a struggling addict ventures into the Louisiana swamp to reconnect with her faith healer father, only to discover he is hiding a troubling secret aboard his houseboat.

*Mossville: When Great Trees Fall* | dir. Alexander Glustrom | USA, South Africa

One man standing in the way of a petrochemical plant expansion refuses to give up.

*Up from The Streets* | dir. Michael Murphy | USA | *WORLD PREMIERE*

A celebration of the culture of New Orleans through the lens of music.

**SUPPORT FOR THE 30TH NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL COMES FROM…**

The 30th New Orleans Film Festival’s **Marquee sponsors** are **City of New Orleans**, **HBO**, **New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation**, and **Second Line Stages**.

**The New Orleans Advocate - Times Picayune** is the festival’s **Signature Media Sponsor**. The **Contemporary Art Center New Orleans** is the **Festival HUB Sponsor**. [**The Chloe Wine Collection**](https://www.chloewinecollection.com/) is the festival’s **Official Wine Sponsor**.

Producing, Premiere and Premiere Trade sponsors include **Cox Communications, The Helis Foundation, RESTORE The Mississippi River Delta, Louisiana Entertainment, VER, The Ranch Studios, New Orleans Business Alliance**, **XRM Media, Creative Film Connections**, **Hilton New Orleans Riverside**, **Kyotocolor**, **Panavision**, **Reel Security, SGPS Showrig**, **Solomon Group**, **Light Iron**, and **Bretchel Hospitality.**

Grantors include the National Endowment for the Arts, Bloomberg Philanthropies, City of New Orleans, The Helis Foundation, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Louisiana Division of the Arts, Jazz & Heritage Foundation, Cinereach, the LGBT Fund at the Greater New Orleans Foundation, and Foundation for Louisiana.

**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 Oscar®-qualifying 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.