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Vashon Film Institute Announces Film, Program Slate for Inaugural VASHON ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL August 12-14, 2022

VIFF SHOWCASES TEN FEATURE FILMS, TEN SHORTS AND THREE LECTURES/SEMINARS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR ISLAND'S ICONIC VASHON THEATER

Vashon Island, WA (July 25, 2022) – The Vashon Film Institute (VFI), a new non-profit organization dedicated to fostering independent filmmaking in the Pacific Northwest, has announced the feature slate for its inaugural Vashon Island Film Festival (VIFF) unspooling August 12-14, 2022. VIFF will screen ten features and ten shorts that have distinguished themselves recently on the festival circuit, and present a variety of other film-centric events for patrons to experience, including its Opening Night Gala and Saturday Night Soiree, as well as a two seminars delivered by notable film industry guests.

Founded by local—and international—film producer and island resident Mark Mathias Sayre, “The Vashon Film Institute was originally founded to host a summer film intensive for youth, including scholarships for students who might not otherwise afford to attend,” he explains. “We’d originally hoped to create a community event that also supported the youth program, and this is how the Vashon Island Film Festival was born. However, our goal posts have shifted slightly for our inaugural year: 100% of the net profits will go to the family-operated Vashon Theater, a cultural landmark built in 1947 which, like many other theatres in a post-pandemic world, has struggled to keep their doors open. We still plan to institute the youth program in 2023, but plan to finance that primarily through grants and donations.”

VIFF will screen eight narratives and two feature docs of both variety and quality curated by Sayre and the VFI programming team. “Programming the festival ourselves offered us the advantage of quality control; we sought out a handful of varied and exceptional films that have resonated with audiences on the festival circuit. As such, we have some of the best performing films on the circuit this year, including the features that won SXSW and Tribeca, so in many ways this is a festival showcasing 2022's *crème de la crème*.”

“We've got coming-of-age stories, a civil war epic, a 1950's creature feature throwback, pandemic comedies, and a character study about grief, to name a few,” Sayre continues. “I think there's something for everyone in this year's program. “

All screenings are slated to take place in person. The narrative features include:

Nick Richey (*Low, Low*)'s **1-800-HOT NITE** follows 13-year-old Tommy (Dallas Dupree Young) after he loses his father to a drug raid and embarks upon an urban odyssey guided by a phone sex operator (Ali Richey) and with the help of his two best friends, O'Neill (Gerrison Machado) and Steve (Mylen Bradford). **HOT NITE** world-premiered at Santa Barbara and most recently captured the 2022 Dances with Films Audience Award for Fusion Features, and Filmocracy's award for Best Narrative Feature.

Crabs! by Pierce Berilzheimer brings together Dylan Riley Snyder, Allie Jennings, and Jessica Morris, among others, in an astonishing, scary and "inept" (*Nerdly*) horror film featuring the invasion of a sleepy coastal town by murderous crab monsters during prom night. The film's originality has fueled very positive reviews: while *Nerdly* describes it as "a film lover's dream" that pretty much looks like "a horror movie version of Power Rangers," *Mulderville* argues that it "literally blows up the screen...improbable but successful cross of *Goonies* vs. giant monsters." For *Heyuguys*, it is "outlandish, offbeat, and almost exhausting."

Brett Smith's **Freedom Path** tells us the escape and the rescue of a Union soldier (Gerran Howell) helped by a brave Black man, (RJ Cyler) who takes him to his community of free slaves running a portion of the Underground Railroad, and tries to hide from a ruthless slave catcher (Ewen Bremner). A deeply moving and emotional film warmly praised by other festival audiences, with many describing it as a "must-watch" or even perceiving awards potential.

Winner of the Founders Award for Best U.S. Narrative Feature at this year's Tribeca Film Festival, **Good Girl Jane** by Sarah Elizabeth Mintz features the awarded-winning actress Rain Spencer (Best Performance, Tribeca) as a lonely young girl who falls in love with a drug dealer in her desperate quest for intimacy, entangling her in his fellow LA teens' meth ring. A "gritty character study" (*We Got This Covered*) beautifully directed by Mintz who manages to "chart her own singular path" (*The Playlist*). Richard Propes said, "The film should make Hollywood knock on Spencer's door and pave the way for a brilliant acting career."

Inspired by writer/director/star James Morosini's true life experiences, **I Love My Dad** follows Chuck (Patton Oswalt) who desperately wants to reconnect with his estranged, depressive son, Franklin (Morosini). Blocked on social media, Chuck impersonates a waitress (Claudia Sulewski) online and starts checking in with Franklin, who falls in love with this imaginary girl and yearns to meet her in person. The SXSW 2022 Grand Jury and Audience Award winner showcases "terrific performances" (*Austin Chronicle*) as "[Morosini] takes an embarrassing thing that happened to him and turns it into a squirm-inducing (albeit surprisingly accepting) father-son comedy" (*Variety*).

In Katherine Dudas' **Juniper** Mack (Madison Lawlor) attempts to connect spiritually with her recently deceased sister by escaping to her family's rustic cabin. But Mack's type-A childhood bestie, Alex (Decker Sadowski), crashes her private grief retreat with her own offbeat friend, Dylan (Olivia Blue). Alex attempts to bond with an increasingly resentful Mack, and tensions mount as Dylan's true feelings for Alex begin to show. Another Santa Barbara debut, *Film Threat* calls **Juniper** "a solid entry into the mumblecore genre... it is thoroughly a female-centered [and created] film."

Set against the isolation of the first COVID lockdown, **Traveling Light** tells the story of Caddy (Tony Todd), an Uber driver in search of his son who has been missing on the streets. He crosses paths with Harry (Danny Huston), a cult leader holding a bizarre ceremony on

Mulholland Drive where Todd (Stephen Dorff) and Mary (Olivia d'Abo) are serving as acolytes. Directed by Bernard Rose (*Candyman, Immortal Beloved*), and executive produced by Oscar® nominee and Seattle native S. Leigh Savidge (*Straight Outta Compton*), this unique film is an equally funny and frightening satire of bourgeoisie life and the irreverent madness of the pandemic.

After learning that their best friend **Wes Schlagenhauf is Dying**, filmmakers Parker Seaman and Devin Das decide to document their journey to see Wes one last time... all in the name of Hollywood success. A mockumentary film *about* filmmaking set during the pandemic, whose “laugh-out-loud bluntness” (*Hammer to Nail*) has audiences in stitches: “Seaman and Das have made a feel-good buddy comedy that never tries to make itself self-important, and ends up having you believe in the power of friendship... Audiences are in for a short but hilarious and very gratifying road trip.”

The documentary features include:

The beautifully directed doc (Dru Holley) **Buffalo Soldiers: Fighting on Two Fronts** explores the often-contradictory role played by Black soldiers throughout American history, with particular emphasis on the settling of the American West and colonialism abroad. Fresh off the heels of its world premiere at the Seattle International Film Festival, *The Stranger's* Charles Mudede hails the documentary as “expertly edited and researched,” further confirmed by *Film Threat's* Josiah Teal: “one cannot help but acknowledge its sheer historical value.”

When a wild tiger kills men who enter his territory in Warren Pereira's **Tiger 24: The Making of a Man-Eater**, he is declared a man-eater and locked up in a zoo. This galvanizes massive social uproar and activists take their cause to the streets, online, and all the way to the Indian Supreme Court. Living between nature and true crime documentary, *Tiger 24* “... is a compelling and dramatic story for animal lovers and fans of crime procedurals” (*Film Threat*). “... *Tiger 24* contains intimate, unguarded footage of large predators that would make David Attenborough green with envy” (*Oregon Arts Watch*).

At VIFF's Opening Night Gala, badge holders can mingle with filmmakers, and its Saturday Night Soiree features live music, street food, and a beer/wine garden.

Finally, VIFF presents two seminars/lectures presented by industry professionals. “As we meet our goals at VIFF, we hope to expand the ancillary events offered during future festivals,” says Sayre. “In addition to celebrating independent cinema, we hope VIFF can also educate and empower. The best-case scenario is that our program helps motivate the creation of more art.” The seminars comprise:

From Script to Screen: The Evolution of an Edit

Born and bred on Vashon Island, director Anthony O'Brien explores the significant metamorphosis a film undergoes before it is presented to audiences. Drawing from real life experience during the filming of his epic Western *The Timber*, O'Brien deconstructs what can go right and what can go wrong during each stage of film production, and how to navigate the middle ground between.

An Introduction to the Motion Picture Industry

Presented by VFI President and veteran film producer Mark Mathias Sayre, *An Introduction to the Motion Picture Industry* is a crash course in the business of filmmaking designed for any layperson who has ever wondered: “What does a film producer actually *do*?” Covering development through distribution, film fans and future filmmakers are offered an insider’s look behind the magic of the movies.

Festival registration is now open to the public with three tiers of badges available for purchase through VIFF’s website: a three-film, a six-film, and a ten-film package for the most dutiful cinephiles. Patrons can purchase single day-of screening tickets if there aren’t enough badge holders to fill the theater to capacity.

In conclusion, Sayre says, “Our motto is that we’re ‘putting the independent back in film festival.’ Whether good or bad, a lot of festivals have moved away from showcasing independent films, instead preferring content produced and/or distributed by major studios or streamers. Our goal is to focus on programming a high-quality line-up of truly independently-produced films. We also think our visiting guests and patrons will find something residents already know: that the island is one-of-a-kind. Vashon is one of the most beautiful settings in the country, if not the world.

About VFI

Founded by veteran independent film producer Mark Mathias Sayre, the Vashon Film Institute (VFI) is dedicated to fostering independent filmmaking in the Pacific Northwest, including the launch of two unique programs: the Vashon Island Film Festival and Vashon Scholars, a multi-week summer film intensive education program it plans to host for youth on the island starting in 2023. Its Board of Directors presently includes three individuals with island roots: Maura Little, Isaac Mann, and Peter Serko.

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