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Vashon Film Institute (VFI) Announces Film and Program Slate for Second Annual VASHON ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL (VIFF), August 10-13, 2023

VIFF SHOWCASES TWELVE FEATURE FILMS AND SEVEN SHORTS AT ISLAND'S ICONIC
VASHON THEATRE

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Vashon Island, WA (July 19, 2023)—The Vashon Film Institute (VFI), the non-profit organization dedicated to fostering independent filmmaking in the Pacific Northwest, has announced the programming slate and schedule for its second annual Vashon Island Film Festival (VIFF), set for August 10-13, 2023. VIFF will screen twelve features and ten shorts that have distinguished themselves on the festival circuit. VIFF will also feature a selection of other events for patrons to experience, including Rock on the Rock, its Saturday Night Soirée, and the Sunday Awards Ceremony. All events will be hosted at the newly renovated, family-operated cultural landmark Vashon Theatre and its new outdoor event pavilion, The Backlot.

Founded by international film producer and longtime island resident Mark Mathias Sayre, “The Vashon Film Institute has established VIFF as our flagship program for celebrating independent cinema, and its success is vital to our development of other educational programs, events, and workshops focused on youth and the entire community at large. If we can engender the creation of more art—and support its creators—in addition to celebrating the art itself, then the institute will be fulfilling its principal goals. To quote *Lawrence of Arabia*: ‘Big things have small beginnings.’”

VIFF will screen an array of esteemed features, eight narratives and four documentaries, curated by Sayre and the VFI programming team. “Last year we discovered that programming the festival ourselves offered the advantage of quality control, and we’re sticking with that model this year by selecting 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 from this and last season, including Grand Jury and Audience Award winners from Sundance, Slamdance, SXSW, Berlinale, and more. In many ways this is a showcase of 2022-2023’s *crème de la crème* in competition against each other at a singular festival.” A distinguished selection of eight narrative and two documentary shorts rounds out the program.

“We’ve got coming-of-age stories; children, adults and families gone wrong; smart, short, and sharp horror; an inspiring examination of a female football league; a truth-is-stranger-than-

fiction spy saga; and long-overdue salutes to two of the PNW's most legendary bands, to name a few of our offerings," 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:

Fresh from its world premiere at SXSW 2023, Lance Larson's **Deadland** follows Mexican American US border agent Angel Waters (Roberto Urbina), who is bewildered when an undocumented immigrant he witnessed die reappears days later.

Escaping Ohio, written and directed by and starring former Akron resident Jessica Michael Davis, is a fresh perspective on the teenage rom-com. On the brink of adulthood, Sam (Davis) has dreams of leaving her small town for new adventures in California. But this is unwelcome news to her best friend JJ (Collin Kelly-Sordelet), who dares to prove why Ohio is worth sticking around for. The film just had its world premiere at Dances with Films.

In the multiple award-winning **I Like Movies**, Canadian director, co-producer, and writer Chandler Levack tells the story of Lawrence, a socially inept seventeen-year-old cinephile who gets a job at a video store, where he forms a complicated friendship with his older female manager. The film took home awards from Calgary, Santa Barbara, and Miami.

Writer director Paris Zarcilla brings the horror/mystery/drama mashup **Raging Grace** to Vashon from SXSW, where it won the Grand Jury Award for Narrative Features. Joy is an undocumented Filipina immigrant who is struggling to do the best she can for her daughter when she secures a job taking care of an extremely wealthy but terminally ill old man. The new position pays well but Joy and her daughter Grace start to realize everything is not as it seems: Something dark is festering beneath the surface, threatening all they have worked for.

Charlotte Regan's **Scrapper** captured the Grand Jury Prize for World Cinema at Sundance this year. Following her mother's death, a resourceful 12-year-old girl, Georgie (Lola Campbell), continues to live alone in their London-outskirts flat. She makes money stealing bikes with her friend, Ali (Alin Uzun), and keeps social workers off her back by pretending to live with an uncle. It works like a charm until her estranged father Jason (Harris Dickinson) shows up. Sizing him up as a rubbish dad, Georgie wonders why he's suddenly taking an interest; especially when she's doing just fine on her own, thank you very much.

Directed by Lawrence Chen and produced by Jonathan Hsu, the unique hybrid docu-narrative **Starring Jerry as Himself** is the story of Jerry C. Hsu in which he plays himself, a retired, divorced Taiwanese immigrant living in Orlando. Based on a true story, Jerry receives an urgent call from the Chinese police, who inform him that he's the prime suspect in an international money laundering investigation. Under threat of arrest and extradition to China, the police force Jerry to cooperate as an undercover agent in their case. After months of keeping the investigation a secret, Jerry finally reveals everything to his family, who decide to document his ordeal and discover the truth about what really happened and how it changed Jerry's life forever. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary Feature, Audience Award for Best Documentary Feature, AND Acting Award (Jerry C. Hsu) at Slamdance this past January.

In Olivia West Lloyd's psychological thriller **Somewhere Quiet**, Meg (Jennifer Kim) tries to readjust to normal life after being involved in a heinous abduction. She takes a healing trip upstate with her husband Scott (Kentucker Audley) to stay at his family's countryside

compound. Meg's plan to regain her sense of normalcy get swiftly disrupted with the arrival of Scott's cousin Madeline (Marin Ireland). Their conflict brings out passive-aggressive behavior that makes Meg question her sanity while also coming to terms with the truth behind her kidnapping. The film world-premiered at Tribeca.

Three generations spend the summer uncovering the secrets of mysterious tobacco barns in Rocio Mesa's **Tobacco Barns**. Seven-year-old Vera lives in the city but adores spending the holidays in her grandparents' town—particularly in their deserted tobacco barn. Nieves, a local teenager whose father forces her to help work her family's land, can't avoid feeling caged. The two girls, driven by the sense of adventure and the need to find oneself respectively, will be connected to a magical creature that will change the way they see their own reality.

The documentary features include:

From neighboring Whidbey Island, filmmaker Jordan Albertsen's **Boom: A Film About the Sonics** tells the untold story of one of rock 'n' roll's wildest and most influential bands, The Sonics. **Boom** takes a deep dive, exploring how a relatively unknown band from the Pacific Northwest became a worldwide phenomenon 50 years after their heyday, and in doing so, shaped music for decades to come. Featuring interviews with homegrown heroes and breakthrough artists alike from Pearl Jam, The Sex Pistols, Heart, Soundgarden, Mudhoney, and many, many more, **Boom** comes to Vashon trailing lavish critical acclaim and years of accolades and prizes at festivals from Tacoma to Bremen in a new, never-before-seen director's cut.

Downwind. Mercury, Nevada, was the site for the testing of 928 large-scale nuclear weapons from 1951 to 1992. Martin Sheen narrates this harrowing exposé from directors Mark Shapiro & Douglas Brian Miller of the United States' disregard for everyone living downwind.

Documenting Earth, "the world's slowest metal band," **Even Hell Has Its Heroes** director Clyde Petersen tracks Earth's pivotal role in the popularization of grunge, and its visionary founder's friendship with Kurt Cobain.

Winner of the Audience Award for Documentary Spotlight at SXSW 2023, Olivia Kuan's **The Herrericanes** chronicles The Houston Herrericanes, a pioneering team that was part of the first women's full-tackle football league in the 1970s. Their unknown story is one of commitment, courage, and strength. Despite adversity and hardship, they fielded a team purely for the love of the game. What they started is a movement that is still in motion today. Kuan also took home the Louis Black/Lone Star Award at SXSW this year for her directorial work on the film.

VIFF will also screen eight narrative and two documentary shorts: **Bläckfisk** from director Sarah Hanner, awarded Best Director of the Year at the Independent Shorts Awards 2023 ; **Closing Dynasty** from director Lloyd Lee Choi, Audience Award Winner for Narrative Shorts at SXSW 2023 and recipient of the Crystal Bear Award for Best Short Film at Berlinale 2023; **Cycle** from director Leigh Powis; **Dead-Enders** from directors Fidel Ruiz-Healy & Tyler Walker, Audience Award Winner for Midnight Shorts at SXSW 2023; **Down Home** from directors Riley Engemoen & Liz Moskowitz; **It Turns Blue**, from director Shadi Karamroudi, recipient of the Grand Jury Award for Narrative Shorts at SXSW 2023; **Nicole**, from directors Edy Modica & Ian Fari; **We Were Meant To**, from director Tari Wariebi, world-premiered at Sundance 2023; **When You Left Me On That Boulevard**, from director Kayla Galang, awarded the Grand Jury Award for Best Short Film at Sundance 2023; and **Will You Look At Me**, from

director Shuli Huang, Queer Palm Award Winner at Cannes 2022 and recipient of the Grand Jury Award for Best Non-Fiction Short Film at Sundance 2023.

At ***Rock on the Rock***, VIFF's Friday night event at the Backlot, ticket holders mingle with filmmakers whilst giving their necks some welcome whiplash as local bands shred into the night! Then the ***Saturday Night Soirée*** features live music, street food, and a beer/wine garden at the Backlot.

Narrative and documentary features compete for the coveted **Quartermaster Award**, which recognizes excellence in feature filmmaking, as well as the **Audience Award for Best Feature**. Nominees from the features also compete for the **Red Bicycle Awards**, which honor individual categories, as determined by solely by the Vashon Film Institute's Executive Team.

Short Films compete for the **Burton Award**, which recognizes excellence in short filmmaking, as well as the **Audience Award for Best Short**. The Awards take place Sunday, August 13 at 7:30PM at the Vashon Theatre.

Winners for all awards are selected by VIFF's Jury in an anonymous voting process, excluding the Audience Awards, which are determined by attendees. This year's jury consists of actor **Cameron Jebo** (Power Rangers Megaforce); actress **Ali Richey** (Low, Low); actor/producer **Steven Swadling** (Freedom's Path); author and comedian **Amber Tozer** (Sober Stick Figure); and actor **Dallas Dupree Young** (Cobra Kai, 1-800-Hot-Nite).

Attendance to VIFF is made available through single screening tickets. A finite number of tickets are available for sale. Each single screening ticket is valid for one individual to a single screening only. Discount packages are available for tickets bought in bulk. Ticket holders may form a queue 1-hour before each screening and will be admitted at the scheduled show-time on first-come, first-serve basis. Admittance is not guaranteed and closes once capacity has been met. Admittance to VIFF's events at the Backlot require proof of purchase of a single screening ticket. Tickets can be purchased at www.vashonislandfilmfestival.com

In conclusion, Sayre says, "A film festival should introduce its audience to films they might not otherwise have the opportunity to see, especially in the theater. As such, we've focused on programming a high-quality line-up of truly '*independent*' films. We also believe off-island 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 Vashon Film Institute

Founded by veteran independent film producer Mark Mathias Sayre, the Vashon Film Institute is dedicated to fostering independent filmmaking in the Pacific Northwest, including the launch of two unique programs: the Vashon Island Film Festival and Framechangerz, a multi-week summer film intensive it plans to host for youth on the island starting in 2024. Its Board of Directors presently includes three individuals with island roots: Maura Little, Isaac Mann, and Peter Serko. Sayre and Little serve as Co-Presidents. Press resources available [here](#).

A Word from Our Sponsors:

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