



AFI DOCS 2018 ANNOUNCES OPENING AND CLOSING NIGHT FILMS

Description

Posted by [Larry Gleeson](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — MAY 4, 2018, WASHINGTON, DC — AFI DOCS has announced its Opening and Closing Night films, and Centerpiece and Special Screenings — with AT&T returning as Presenting Sponsor of the festival for the fifth consecutive year. For its 16th edition, the American Film Institute's annual celebration of documentary film in the nation's capital will open with the world premiere of *PERSONAL STATEMENT* (DIRS Juliane Dressner and Edwin Martinez) and will close with *UNITED SKATES* (DIRS Dyana Winkler and Tina Brown).

This year's program also includes *ABOVE AND BEYOND: NASA'S JOURNEY TO TOMORROW* (DIR Rory Kennedy) as the Centerpiece. The four Special Screenings will be the world premiere of *THE COLD BLUE* (DIR Erik Nelson), *KINSHASA MAKAMBO* (DIR Dieudo Hamadi), *MR. SOUL!* (DIRS Sam Pollard and Melissa Haizlip) and *WITKIN & WITKIN* (DIR Trisha Ziff). The full slate will be announced in the coming weeks. AFI DOCS runs June 13–17, 2018, in Washington, DC, and Silver Spring, MD.

"We are at a cultural crossroads where identity, race and personal agency are redefining what it is to be American in 2018," said Michael Lumpkin, Director, AFI Festivals. "With *PERSONAL STATEMENT*, *UNITED SKATES* and this year's Centerpiece and Special Screenings, AFI DOCS will continue its legacy of introducing new perspectives to audiences, while challenging longstanding conventions."

AT&T's ongoing support as Presenting Sponsor enables AFI DOCS to connect audiences, policymakers and storytellers in the heart of our national government.

The Opening Night screening of *PERSONAL STATEMENT* will be held on June 13 at the Newseum and will be followed by a Q&A with directors Juliane Dressner and Edwin Martinez. The film centers on three Brooklyn high school seniors who, lacking support services at school, band together to help each other get into college.

The Closing Night screening of *UNITED SKATES* will be held on June 17 at the Landmark E Street Cinema and will be followed by a Q&A with directors Dyana Winkler and Tina Brown. The film chronicles the fight to save roller-skating rinks, which have played a critical role in modern African-

American culture.

The Centerpiece screening of ABOVE AND BEYOND: NASA'S JOURNEY TO TOMORROW will take place at the National Air and Space Museum. As NASA heads into its 60th anniversary, filmmaker Rory Kennedy looks back at the men and women who have built the institution, and whose boundless curiosity drives scientific progress forward.

OPENING NIGHT SCREENING

PERSONAL STATEMENT: DIRS Juliane Dressner and Edwin Martinez. USA. Karoline, Enoch and Christine are Brooklyn high school seniors who just want to go to college, but lack the resources most American teens take for granted, including guidance counselors. Refusing to give up, they learn to counsel each other, and carry their classmates with them as they pursue their dreams.

CLOSING NIGHT SCREENING

UNITED SKATES: DIRS Dyana Winkler and Tina Brown. USA. Roller-skating has played a critical role in modern African-American culture, with rinks serving as both a haven of community and of artistic expression, and a flashpoint in the civil rights movement. UNITED SKATES chronicles the fight to save these rinks, and the souls of communities nationwide.

CENTERPIECE SCREENING

ABOVE AND BEYOND: NASA'S JOURNEY TO TOMORROW: DIR Rory Kennedy. USA. Rory Kennedy tells the stories of the women and men behind the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's decades-long exploration of our solar system, our universe and our planet, in this enlightening film that celebrates NASA's triumphs, mourns its tragedies and affirms the importance of its mission both in space and on Earth.

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

THE COLD BLUE: DIR Erik Nelson. USA. In 1943, legendary Hollywood director William Wyler crafted MEMPHIS BELLE, a celebrated tribute to the titular WWII bomber. Using footage of the film from the National Archives, THE COLD BLUE features gripping narration from some of the last surviving B-17 pilots. A meditation on youth, war and stunning bravery.

KINSHASA MAKAMBO: DIR Dieudo Hamadi. Democratic Republic of the Congo. Amid the backdrop of seemingly never-ending political and social unrest that hangs over the Democratic Republic of the Congo, three young activists take to the streets with their fellow countrymen to overthrow their country's President and help enact much needed change in their politically beleaguered country.

MR. SOUL! DIRS Sam Pollard and Melissa Haizlip. USA. An in-depth look at the late 1960s WNET public television series SOUL! and its producer Ellis Haizlip. The series was among the first to provide expanded images of African Americans on television, shifting the gaze from inner-city poverty and violence to the vibrancy of the Black Arts Movement.

WITKIN & WITKIN: DIR Trisha Ziff. Mexico. The artwork of septuagenarian twins Joel-Peter and Jerome Witkin transcends genres and traditional form. WITKIN & WITKIN explores the brothers' complicated relationship with one another, while examining depths and divisions in their work. Joel-

Peter's stunning photography and Jerome's powerful figurative paintings distinctly capture the human condition, reflecting differing emotional and intellectual approaches.

Tickets to AFI DOCS, including Opening Night and Closing Night screenings, will be available early to AFI members exclusively beginning May 11, and to the public on May 14. Passes for AFI DOCS 2018 are now on sale at [AFI.com/afidocs](https://www.afidocs.com). More information about AFI DOCS screenings and other special events will be announced in the coming weeks.



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About AFI DOCS

AFI DOCS is the American Film Institute's annual documentary festival in Washington, DC. Presenting the year's best documentaries, AFI DOCS is the only festival in the U.S. dedicated to screenings and events that connect audiences, filmmakers and policy leaders in the heart of our nation's government. The AFI DOCS advisory board includes Ken Burns, Davis Guggenheim, Chris Hegedus, Werner Herzog, Barbara Kopple, Spike Lee, Errol Morris, Stanley Nelson, D A Pennebaker, Agnès Varda and Frederick Wiseman. Now in its 16th year, the festival will be held June 13-17, 2018, at distinguished Washington, DC, venues, the Landmark E Street Cinema and the historic AFI Silver Theatre in Silver Spring, MD. Visit [AFI.com/AFIDOCs](https://www.afidocs.com) and connect on twitter.com/AFIDOCs, facebook.com/AFIDOCs, youtube.com/AFI and instagram.com/AmericanFilmInstitute.

About the American Film Institute

The American Film Institute was established by presidential proclamation in the White House Rose

Garden, and launched its national mandate on June 5, 1967 — to preserve the heritage of the motion picture, to honor the artists and their work and to educate the next generation of storytellers. AFI's founding Trustees included Chairman Gregory Peck, Vice Chairman Sidney Poitier, Francis Ford Coppola, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Jack Valenti and George Stevens, Jr., as Director.

About AT&T

AT&T is proud to be the Presenting Sponsor of the 2018 AFI DOCS. We help people connect in ways that improve lives – every day. Through DIRECTV, DIRECTV NOW and AT&T U-verse, we deliver the kind of entertainment people love to talk about. And you can watch almost anytime, anywhere. For 10 years, we've supported AFI's commitment to honor the heritage of film and the artists who make them. And through a variety of programs, we're focused on giving amateur and underrepresented filmmakers the support they need to succeed.

(Source: Press release courtesy of AFI DOCS Press Office)

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