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Sundance Film Festival Wrap â?? Fourth and Final

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

The 2022 Sundance Film Festival has come and gone leaving in its wake a plethora of films, music, conversation, and virtual space.

Acura continued on as the Official Vehicle and a Presenting Sponsor of the Sundance Film Festival for the 12th consecutive year offering the independent film community and fans gathering virtually for the 2022 Sundance Film Festival a unique experience at AcuraWatchParty.com. Virtual Sundance programming from Acura included important conversations and activations with like-minded entertainment and media partners focusing on supporting diversity in film, along with A-list filmmakers and talent.

Embracing the creative spirit of the Sundance film community, Acura debuted a new four-part anime series, *Chiakiâ??s Journey*, during the Festival. *Chiakiâ??s Journey* featured a young heroâ??s quest to overcome multiple challenges on her path toward victory while offering viewers a first look at Acuraâ??s trio of all-new Type S performance models: 2022 TLX Type S sport sedan, 2022 MDX Type S 3-row SUV, and 2022 NSX Type S supercar.

In staying true to form the 2022 emergent Sundance Film Festival theme of â??Fighting the Systemâ?• rang true as eloquently stated by Festival Programming Director, Kim Yutani, with art â??made against the odds, under challenging circumstances, (with filmmakers) being inventive in how theyâ??re telling

their stories, in the way they explore intimacy, just creating films in a way that is imaginative.â?• during an interview for Vanessa Zimmerâ??s â??Fighting the Systemâ?? Emerges as Major Theme in 2022 Lineup.

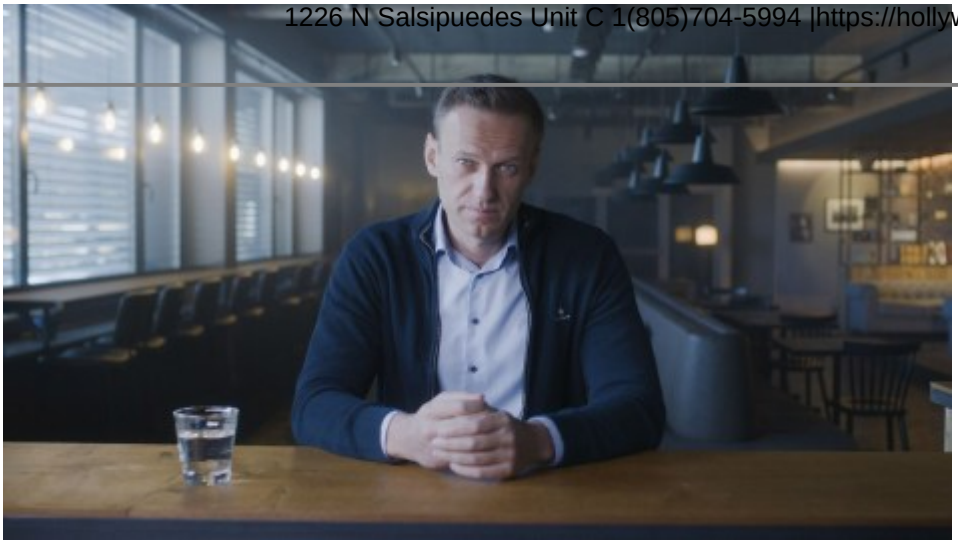
As the Delta and Omicron variants raged, Sundance bent on implementing updated COVID protocols over the holidays. At last, with the risk factors too great for the filmgoing populace the well-thought and deeply discerned decision was made to go virtual. Fortunately, Shari Frilot, Chief Curator of New Frontier, and a Harvard grad, stepped up and went where no man had gone before and created a vast virtual entity adeptly called â??*The Spaceship*â?• where art, film, and multimedia converged and sent the 2022 Sundance Film Festival into the stratosphere allowing for parties, mingling, conversation, and film and artistic viewings.



For those challenged by space and mobility, there is always next year. Yet, even without total access to all *The Spaceship* amenities, Sundance delivered 82 master feature-length films along with 6 Indie Episodics, and the aforementioned New Frontier (15) works.

Here were some of my top takeaways:

Navalny, Festival Favorite Award, Audience Award: U.S. Documentary Presented by Acura



A still from *Navalny*, an official selection of the U.S. Documentary section at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute.

In August 2020, a plane traveling from Siberia to Moscow made an emergency landing. One of its passengers, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, was deathly ill. Taken to a local Siberian hospital and eventually evacuated to Berlin, doctors confirmed that he had been poisoned with Novichok, a nerve agent implicated in attacks on other opponents of the Russian government. President Vladimir Putin immediately cast doubt on the findings and denied any involvement.

While recovering, Navalny and his team â?? already with a large social media following in tow â?? partnered with the data investigative journalism outlet Bellingcat as well as other international news organizations to investigate his attempted assassination and find proof of the Kremlinâ??s involvement. In *NAVALNY*, filmmaker Daniel Roher reveals a courageous and controversial would-be president at the precipice of sacrificing everything in order to bring reform to his homeland. â??BT (Sundance.org)



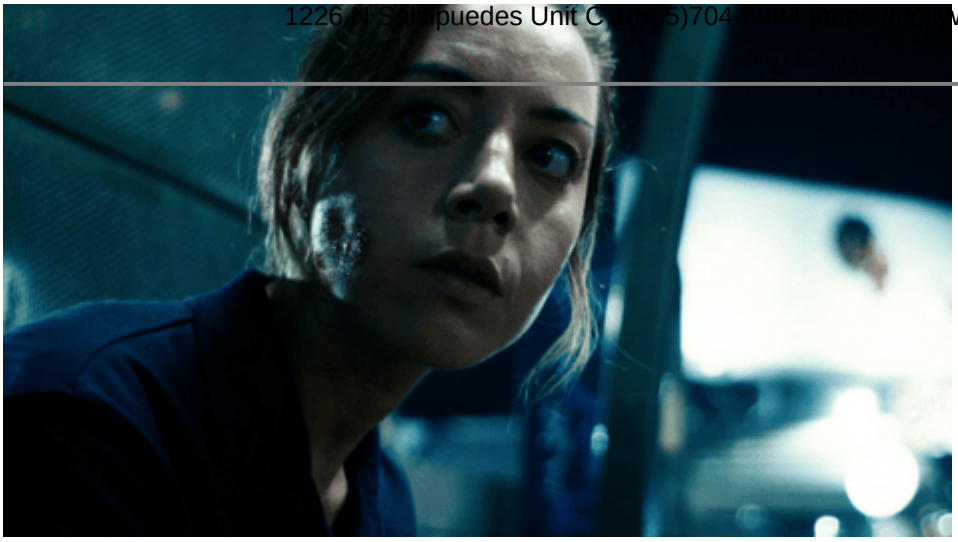
Good Luck To You, Leo Grande (Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute).

Director Sophie Hyde and Writer Katy Brandâ??s, ***Good Luck To You, Leo Grande***, stars Dame Emma Thompson, as a retired schoolteacher who has yet to experience the joy of sex. Enter Daryl McCormack as the young and debonnaire sex worker, Leo Grande. What starts out as a cold transactional relationship ends up as a deep, warm, caring transactional relationship opening hearts and minds to a retelling of modern love. Picked up by Searchlight Pictures and scheduled to stream exclusively on Hulu. Four stars.



Elizabeth Banks appears in *Call Jane* by Phyllis Nagy, an official selection of the Premieres section at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute | photo by Wilson Webb.

Phyllis Nagyâ??s ***Call Jane,*** set in the mid to late 1960â??s follows the pursuit of womenâ??s rights led by Elizabeth Banks, progressive suburbanite wife, and homemaker, Joy, who discovers a more engaging life in helping women get safe medical procedures for their unwanted or life-endangering pregnancies. Nagy wrote the 2015 Douglas Sirkian style melodrama, ***Carol***, directed by Todd Haynes. Jane has a similar look with a joyous, optimistic, and forward-looking narrative. Four stars.

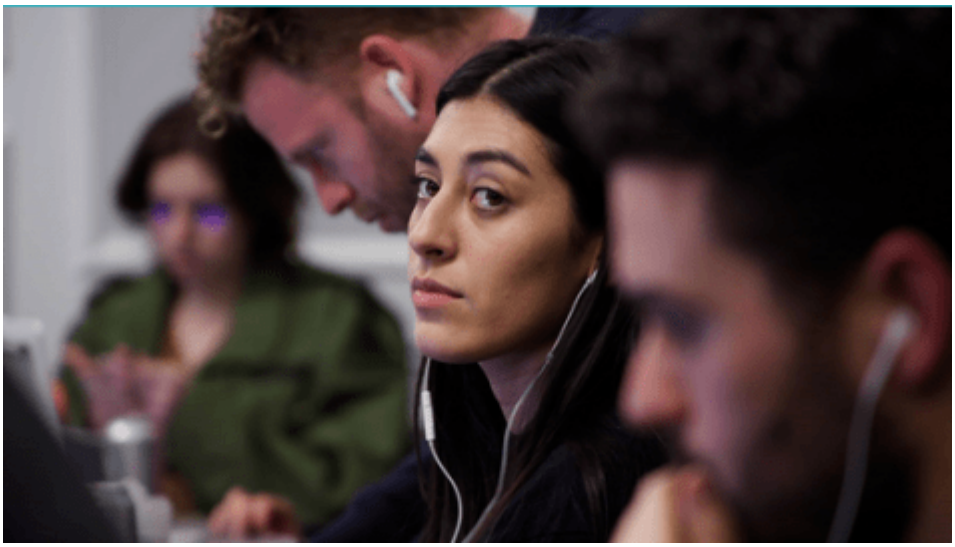

Emily The Criminal (Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute)

Emily The Criminal from Director John Patton Ford addresses the fallout from the collateral damage of a young womanâ??s college experience and relationship troubles. Aubrey Plaza portrays Emily, a young woman who went to college on student loans, partied, got an education, then received an assault conviction for her role in a relationship fight. Unable to land suitable work with her criminal record, Emily becomes a â??dummy shopper,â?• in an illegal, underworld enterprise. Fast-paced, this psychological, neo-thriller reverberates an age-old adage, â??desperate people do desperate things.â?


EMERGENCY

***Emergency*,** the recipient of the **Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award: U.S. Dramatic**, harkens the impact racism can have on life-threatening, real-life situations and its ramifications on human potential. Told through a darkly comedic lens with moments of â??throw it all at the kitchen sinkâ?• style of comedy. Guaranteed to â??shock, enlighten, and infuriate.â?• From two-time Sundance alum Carey

Williams (2021â??s modern, social media retelling of â??Romeo and Juliet,â?• *R#J*), based on his 2018 Sundance short film of the same name. Excellent writing and strong acting. Four stars.


To The End (Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute)

Director Rachel Lears, whose Lears 2019 Sundance film *Knock Down the House* followed four women who ran insurgent congressional campaigns in 2018, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Cori Bush. The film won the Audience Award and the Festival Favorite Award and was shortlisted for an Oscar and nominated for an Emmy. Lears 2022 offering***, To The End,*** is a visionary look behind the scenes of a philosophical movement, social and political, where young people have rejected the cynicism and complacency of a power structure that has failed to meaningfully address the existential threat faced by climate change. Told through the narratives of four instrumental leaders and women of color â?? Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Varshini Prakash, Alexandra Rojas, and Rhiana Gunn-Wright. This is more than the Green New Deal. Itâ??s planetary survival. Four stars.



Oscar de la Hoya and Julio Cesar Chavez appear in *La Guerra Civil* by Eva Longoria BastÃ³n, an official selection of the Premieres section at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute.

La Guerra Civil, directed and produced by Eva Longoria BastÃ³n tells the story of two of Mexicoâ??s greatest lightweight modern-era boxers, American-born Oscar De La Hoya and Julio Cesar Chavez. More than a boxing story, Longoria BastÃ³n shapes the narrative through the Mexican and Mexican-American cultural lens. What emerges is a very intimate look at both boxers and their impact on the dichotomy of what it means to be Mexican and what it means to be Mexican-American. Four stars.


The Worst Person In The World (Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute).

The Worst Person in the World directed by Joachim Trier is the third part of his Oslo trilogy. A beautifully made film with a first-time film portrayal for the lead actress, Renate Reinsve. The film is told through Reinsveâ??s character and is about finding oneâ??s place in the world. In the filmâ??s introduction, Trier referred to the film as a Norwegian romantic comedy told in twelve separate chapters with an epilogue and a prologue. Originally premiered in competition at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival (with Renate Reinsve winning Best Actress for her performance).



Chiqui (Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute).

Chiqui, an indie episodic set in the 1980s was a romp. Itâ??s 1987. Chiqui and Carlos emigrate from Colombia to New Jersey to find a better life for themselves and their unborn son. Upon their arrival, they quickly realize that the American dream is not as easy to achieve as they thought. The cast and crew â?? simply superb.



Downfall: The Case Against Boeing (Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute).

Downfall: The Case Against Boeing. One of the most anticipated films of the festival from acclaimed director, Rory Kennedy. Kennedyâ??s films are well-researched and provide astute socio-cultural insights. **Downfallâ??s** production values were exceptional resulting in a very polished film revealing shifts in cultural norms undoubtedly contributing to the untimely and tragic Max 737 plane crashes. Scheduled for a February 13th Netflix release followed by a theatrical run. A Netflix and Moxie Films Production. Four stars.



Chloe Okuno

Watcher, Chloe Okunoâ??s, multi-layered suspenseful horror, drama, thriller features Maika Monroe as a young, blonde female coping with life in a foreign country. Monroe delivers a highly competent and strong performance. The non-diegetic soundtrack added immensely to the suspense and featured Max Richterâ??s â??Moment in Paris.â?• Undeniable *Charade* and *Rear Window* Hitchcockian influences Shot on location in Bucharest, Romania. Four stars.


Maika Monroe appears in *Watcher*

by Chloe Okuno, an official selection of the U.S. Dramatic Competition at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance.

As the festival inched closer to its end, after nine days, 84 feature films and 59 short films, the juries deliberated and the audience voted. The 26 jury-awarded and six audience-awarded prizes recognized â??achievement in global independent storytelling.â?• Bold, intimate, and culture-shifting stories prevailed across categories, with Grand Jury Prizes awarded to ***Nanny* (U.S. Dramatic)**, ***The Exiles* (U.S. Documentary), *Utama* (World Cinema Dramatic),** and ***All That Breathes* (World Cinema Documentary)**. Audience Awards were presented to ***Navalny* (U.S. Documentary), *Cha Cha Real Smooth* (U.S. Dramatic), *Girl Picture* (World Cinema Dramatic), *The Territory* (World Cinema Documentary), *Framing Agnes* (NEXT)**, with ***Navalny*** winning the **Festival Favorite Award.**


Joana Vicente

â??Todayâ??s awards represent the determination of visionary individuals, whose dynamic work will continue to change the culture and create discourse throughout the year,â?• said

Sundance Institute CEO **Joana Vicente**. â??This yearâ??s entire program has proven that no matter the context, independent storytelling remains a pivotal tool in expanding critical dialogues, and these stories will and must be shared.â?•


Tabitha Jackson

â??The 2022 Sundance Film Festival once again met our audience wherever they happened to be,â?• added Sundance Film Festival Director **Tabitha Jackson**, â??Whether you watched from home or one of our seven satellite screens, this yearâ??s Festival expre were present, together, as a community connected throug already changed those who experienced it.â?•


Kim Yutani

â??We are so grateful for this yearâ??s jurors who brought their expertise and passion to their decision-making process,â?• said the Festivalâ??s Director of Programming **Kim Yutani**, â??We congratulate the award winners and weâ??re so thankful to each and every

film in the program that made the 2022 Sundance Film Festival such a huge success.â?•

The awards announcement marked a key point of the 2022 Festival, where 84 feature-length and 59 short films â?? selected from 14,849 submissions â?? were showcased online via the Festivalâ??s online platform; a selection of the program played at 7 Satellite Screen locations across the United States.

The 2022 Sundance Film Festival jurors were: **Chelsea Barnard, Marielle Heller,** and **Payman Maadi** for U.S. Dramatic Competition; **Garrett Bradley, Joan Churchill,** and **Peter Nicks** for U.S. Documentary Competition; **Andrew Haigh, Mohamed Hefzy,** and **La Frances Hui** for World Cinema Dram **Porter** for World Cinema Docu mpetition section. **Penelope Bartl** rt Film Program Competition.

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Larry Gleeson, left, with Hollywood starlet, Angie Dickinson. (Photo credit: HollywoodGlee)

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