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JIMMY CARTER Rocks the 2020 Virtual AFI DOCS to a Resounding Close

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

AFI DOCS Wraps Up its First-Ever Virtual Film Festival

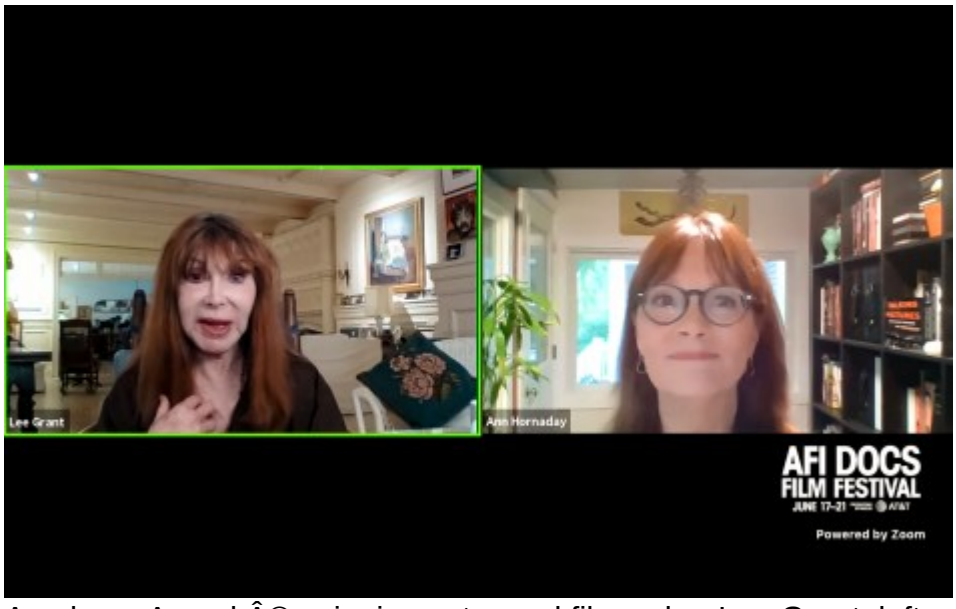
The 2020 AFI DOCS went virtual for the first time ever. The scheduled Opening Night Film, BOYS STATE, an up-close and personal look inside the American Legionâ??s annual political summer camp, was postponed for me due to technical issues. Consequently, *A Thousand Cuts* became the first film I viewed. I was able to circle back with an extended *Boys State* viewing window thanks to AFI DOCS. In the words of former President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, in the Closing Night Film, *Jimmy Carter, Rock & Roll President*, â??If I had to do it all over again, I wouldnâ??t have it any other way.â?•

The AFI DOCS offerings for its 2020 edition featured 59 films from 11 countries and 12 virtual World Premieres, with 61% of the films directed by women, 25% by POC directors, and 14% by LGBTQ directors. AT&T returned as Presenting Sponsor. Eventive provided the virtual space for viewings.



Rebuilding Paradise

Some of my favorite films and events included: the Closing Night Film, *Jimmy Carter, Rock and Roll President,* an artistic view into the influence of music on the Carter Presidency featuring musical legends Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Dizzie Gillespie, Jimmy Buffet, Trisha Yearwood, Garth Brooks, and Gregg Allman while providing an intimate look inside the former United States President who made peace, human rights, and healing a priority (highly recommended viewing); Ron Howardâ??s *Rebuilding Paradise*, a blistering Verite-style documentary capturing the devastation of the 2018 Camp Fire and the resiliency of a group of Paradise, Calif., residents in the aftermath; *Sing Me A Song,* a â??beautiful observational portraitâ?• on the influence technology has on a Bhutan monastery and the life of its monks; and, the **Guggenheim Symposium with Lee Grant**, a conversation moderated by Washington Postâ??s Ann Hornaday, that focused on Grantâ??s second career behind the camera after an Oscar-worthy acting career. Grant spoke of Barbara Koppleâ??s groundbreaking work, *Harlan County, U.S.A.*, and the profound influence it had on her decision to make her 1986 Best Documentary Oscar-winning *Down and Out in America â??* Grantâ??s exploration of homelessness, foreclosures, and food insecurity across the country during the Reagan-era recession.



Academy Award Â® -winning actor and filmmaker Lee Grant, left, and the Washington Postâ??s Ann Hornaday during the 2020 Guggenheim Symposium at AFI DOCS.

Truthfully, there were so many excellent films, presentations, panels, and forums, Iâ??m somewhat dumbfounded virtually. A film deserving of special mention, however, is *The Fight,* produced by Elyse Steinberg, Josh Kriegman, Eli Despres, Maya Seidler, Peggy Wexler, and Kerry Washington, and tracked four American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) cases beginning with archival footage of a crowd of peaceful protesters outside the Brooklyn, New York, office building. The gathering came together following the newly inaugurated (seven days old) United States Presidentâ??s public declaration on national television of Donald J. Trumpâ??s Muslim ban. The Muslim banâ??s third iteration was upheld by the United States Supreme Court. In the other three cases, the ACLU prevailed revealing military sex-orientation discriminatory policy, census misinformation perpetrated by the Commerce Department, and the denial of constitutionally granted reproductive rights by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. All three issues were strongly supported publicly by President Trump. An exceptionally well-constructed film. Essential viewing.



The Fight

Congratulations to this yearâ??s AFI DOCS Award Winners. The Audience Award for Best Feature went to **TRANSHOOD**, directed by Sharon Liese. The Audience Award for Best Short went to **BLACKFEET BOXING: NOT INVISIBLE**, directed by Kristen Lappas and Tom Rinaldi. The Grand Jury Prize for Short Films went to **ABORTION HELPLINE, THIS IS LISA,** directed by Barbara Attie, Janet Goldwater, and Mike Attie. The jury said of the selection, â??For its simple yet profound approach to a polarizing political issue, we have selected a film which puts humanity ahead of an agenda.â?• The Shorts Grand Jury Prize is a qualifying award for Academy Award eligibility. The jury also awarded an honorable mention to **DO NOT SPLIT**, directed by Anders Hammer.

This yearâ??s voting jury for the competitive Short Films slate was comprised of Opal H. Bennett, festival Programmer for DOC NYC and Athena Festival and Shorts Producer for POV; filmmaker and curator Cameron Yates; and Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Smriti Mundhra.

In addition to the films and the Guggenheim Symposium, AFI DOCS offered a plethora of panels featuring engaging discussions between filmmakers and film subjects, led by some of the nationâ??s top journalists: NBC Newsâ?? Meet the Press moderator and NBC News Political Director Chuck Todd; NBC News Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent Andrea Mitchell; MSNBC correspondent Trymaine Lee; CNN anchor and correspondent Juan Carlos Arciniegas; NBC News correspondent and MSNBC anchor Katy Tur; NBC News correspondent Jacob Soboroff; NBC Newsâ?? Meet the Press senior producer Allie Sandza; CNN history correspondent Douglas Brinkley; author and journalist Lois Romano; activist and journalist Treâ??vell Anderson; journalist Soledad Oâ??Brien; and The Washington Postâ??s chief film critic Ann Hornaday, Global Opinions writer Jason Rezaian, on-air reporter Nicole Ellis and deputy editorial page editor Ruth Marcus.

Moreover, The AFI DOCS Forum explored unique topics with keynote presentations, conversations, panel discussions, and micro-meetings that covered developments affecting our world and documentary filmmaking. Programming for the Forum was made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts. NBC Newsâ?? Meet the Press and The Washington Post returned to host and moderate sessions, with Netflix and ITVS joining to host sessions as well.

Until next time, I look forward to seeing you at the movies!

About AFI DOCS

Showcasing the best in documentary programming from the US and around the globe in the heart of the nationâ??s capital, AFI DOCS is the nationâ??s premier documentary film festival.

AFI DOCS offers a unique opportunity to connect audiences with inspiring documentarians, film subjects, national opinion leaders, public policy experts, and changemakers. With insightful screenings, industry panels, and creative workshops you wonâ??t experience at any other film festival, the festival harnesses the power of this important art form and its potential to inspire social change.

Throughout the year, the AFI DOCS Film Series brings audiences in the nationâ??s capital the best in nonfiction filmmaking.

â??The nationâ??s leading documentary film festival.â?• â?? The Washington Post

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* Featured photo: President Jimmy Carter, left, and musician Willie Nelson.

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