



The 27th edition of Dances With Films: LA returns June 20-30 with Los Angeles

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

The 27th edition of Dances With Films: LA returns June 20-30 with Los Angeles's largest indie film-focused film festival. Adding a new co-presenting partnership with Outfest for additional LGBTQIA+ programming, a beefed-up Midnight Horror and Genre section, as well as continuing the celebration of music, dance, and family friendly programming in the Downbeat and Kidz sections, DWF: LA is set to deliver its most robust film schedule DWF has produced to date. That packed schedule will be bookended by the world premieres of Mahesh Pailoor's heartfelt drama ***Paper Flowers*** as the Opening Night selection and Terre Weisman's ***Max Dagan*** on Closing Night. All screenings will take place at the TCL Chinese Theatre (6925 Hollywood Blvd).



Since 1927, The TCL Chinese Theatre has been the home of the most important, star-powered red carpet. The main theatre was relaunched as the world's largest IMAX® theatre.

Make no mistake about it, Dances With Films truly is a "discovery" film festival. Yes, there is the occasional former Oscar nominee in the mix, but no "name" directors, per se. As opposed to some major market film festivals where several famous directors could dress up a home movie and it would still get programmed, DWF brings top fresh talent from all over the world to L.A. in droves.

And Dances With Films: LA (which we must specify now because they also have a very successful NYC version) is sitting on top of the film festival heap as the largest in Los Angeles. If you had ever attended DWF the past couple of years and been in the Chinese Theatre lobby, you'd see crowds to rival anything at any other big market fest. Seriously, it's crazy in terms of the number of people filing into (often sold out) screenings, scores of filmmakers doing photos and interviews on their orange (red) carpets, and some man or woman on a microphone/bullhorn trying to direct them all. It's a "scene".

All this comes at a time when several stalwart/larger fests across the country are struggling and very close to closing shop. However, Dances With Films is thriving and offering a prime example and template as to how film festivals can continue to grow, be relevant, usher in the next generation of filmmakers, and compete with multiplex films when it comes to putting butts in seats by creating an exciting film going experience for all audiences (not just the hardcore indie cinephiles).

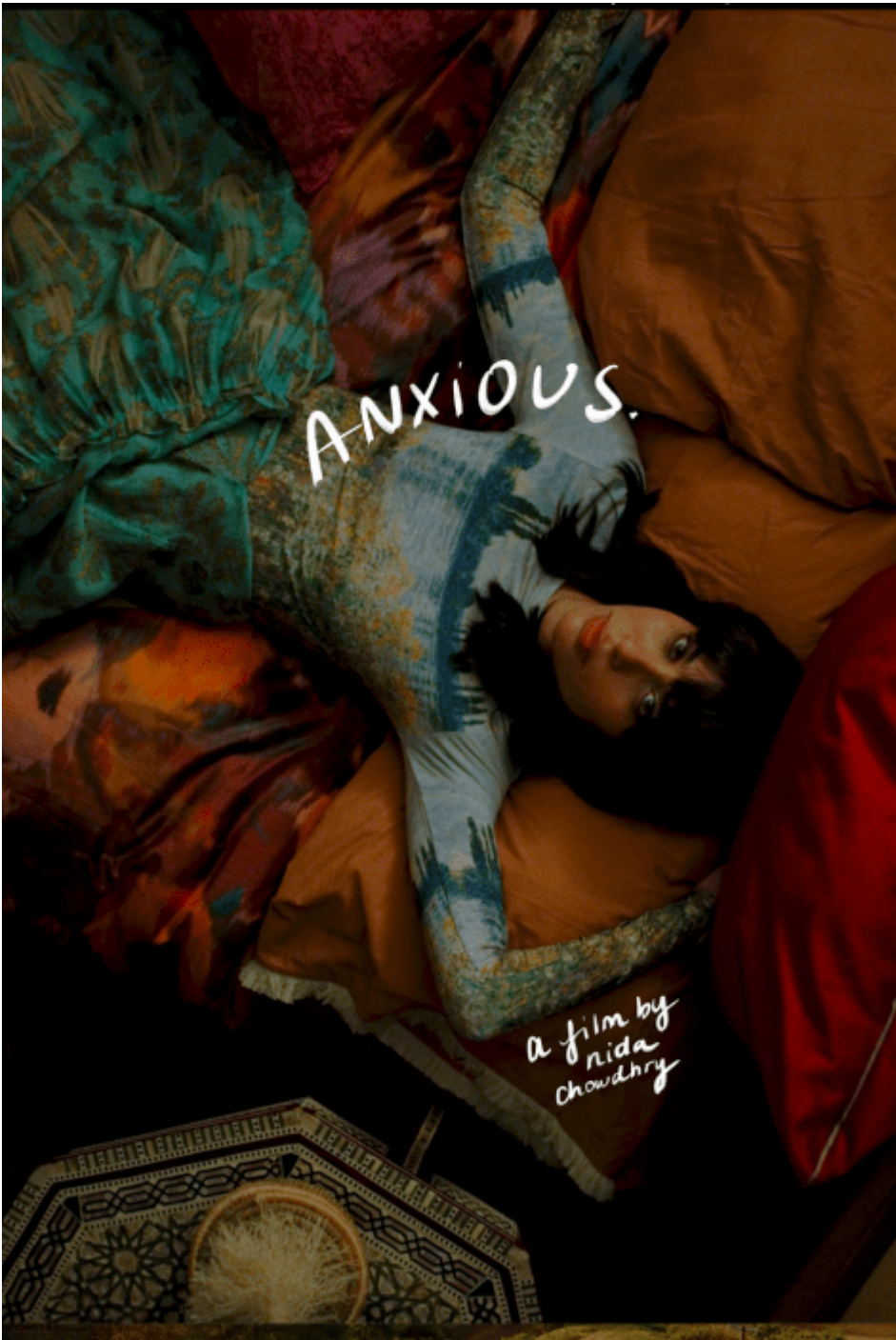
Look at these numbers: Among DWF: LA's lineup of 232 films, including 38 narrative features, 17 documentary features, 25 television and streaming pilots, and 152 short films (101 narrative and 20 documentaries, 13 Kldz section, 18 Downbeat/Music), are an impressive number of films (117!) making world, international, North American, or U.S. premieres. That number includes 24 narrative features, 10 documentary features, 69 narrative shorts, 22 documentary shorts (including Downbeat), and 15 pilots which will have world premiere screenings at the Chinese Theater this week and next.



Thursday, June 20 features the World Premiere Opening Night presentation of Mahesh Pailoor's ***Paper Flowers***. Based on a true story, the film follows the poignant and inspirational journey of an ambitious USC graduate whose dream of making a difference as a Peace Corps volunteer is halted by a cancer diagnosis. Forced to return home and undergo treatment, he is immediately faced with the question "What is the true meaning of life when faced with limited time?" The international cast includes **Kapil Talwalkar, Olivia Liang, Karan Soni, Faran Tahir, Meera Simhan, and Tom Everett Scott**.



Sunday, June 30, DWF offers another world premiere as its Closing Night selection, Terre Weisman's **Max Dagan**. The film follows the title character's efforts to race against time to free his terminally ill father from prison following his conviction for the manslaughter of a California State Trooper. To do so, he'll need to uncover the truth about what really happened, open old wounds, and somehow get the help of his estranged uncle and the daughter of the dead trooper, to find evidence that could set his father free. The impressive cast includes **Rob Morrow, Zachary Gordon, Michael Madsen, Rob Brownstein, Lindsey Dresbach, Lisa Roumain, and Jay Mohr**.



Additional narrative feature films making their world premieres are Nida Chowdhry's surreal dark comedy **Anxious**, about a woman whose anxiety attack sends her down a rabbit hole where she meets versions of herself who take over her life. Verner Maldonado's dark comedy **Best Man Dead Man** takes place during a bachelor party in the middle of nowhere which quickly turns into a night of murder and mystery when the best man ends up with a knife in his head. Everyone is a suspect and only an eccentric private eye can solve the crime. Kerry Ann Enright's **Nobody Wants to Shoot a Woman** is a stark, intimate, yet unsentimental portrait of a mother marginalized by society who embraces a violent crime spree as a means to survive. Another title to look for will be Stimson Snead's **Tim Travers & The Time Travelers Paradox**. Making its Southern California premiere, the Sci-Fi comedy is about a reclusive mad scientist who creates a time machine to kill his younger self to create the

paradox over his ability to exist in a mission to stand alone with God at the end of time and tell the bastard off. The film features a cast of favorites including **Samuel Dunning**, **Felicia Day**, **Joel McHale**, **Danny Trejo**, and **Keith David**.

On the LGBTQIA+ programming front, David Beck and Jennifer Bobbi's **Regarding Us** is an Outfest co-presented selection about a transgender woman who has a profound impact on the lives of two children after losing her teaching career. Nayip Anthony Garcia's **Almost Popular** follows two high school juniors who go on a quest to fulfill their dream to become part of the elite POP Girls who rule the school. Parker Brennon's queer horror anthology **Hauntology** is framed by a young woman taking her 12-year-old sister with runaway aspirations (on a journey around town, where she tells supernatural tales in which characters have more in common with the youngster than they first realize).

Once again, Dances With Films will please fans of horror and genre fare with its Midnight section of films led by four features making their world premieres. In Kevin Mix's **Death Perception**, a group of college students at a screening party for a short film made by an aspiring filmmaker begin to get picked off one by one by a mysterious masked killer. Matt Warren's **Delicate Arch** centers on four young friends who take a camping trip to Southern Utah in order to escape an ecological disaster. Alone in the desert, they soon realize they're being observed by a mysterious cosmic force. Jeff Wolfe's psychological thriller **Mourning Rock** stars **Billy Burke** as a state park ranger who, along with his wife, struggles to come to terms with their missing teenage son while dealing with a local mystery that questions their relationship. Craig Ouellette's **Straight On Till Morning** follow a young couple falling for each other on a romantic road-trip until they cross paths with a pious couple who have something much, much darker in mind.

Highlights among the feature-length documentaries making world premieres include Sarah Schoellkopf, Jayson McNamara, Francisco Villa, and Melissa Daniels **Norita**, Executive produced by **Jane Fonda**, the film takes viewers on a gripping journey through Argentina's tumultuous history, where Norita's personal tragedy becomes a catalyst for change. Featured in the Downbeat section, and filmed almost entirely on iPhones, Eryl Cochran's **Dance As You Are** is a playful documentary following 100 strangers from around Los Angeles as they come together to form adult dance teams for a recital. Razieme Iborra's **How the West Was One** focuses on three unconventional cowgirls as they reshape our vision of the American West. Rebecca Corry's **Saving Jones** looks at the filmmaker's dedication to educating, advocating, and saving the lives of pit bulls, who are arguably the most abused, discriminated against and murdered dogs on earth. Oscar-winner **Bill Guttentag**'s latest, **Spyral**, tells the tragic true story of the toll that bipolarism and drug abuse takes on a woman's life and her family via a decade of home videos, diaries, and social media.

Notable in the film festival world for the screening and promotion of television, web series pilots, and episodics, Dances With Films also has a healthy number of world premieres in this section. Elizabeth Cox and Kirill Yeretsky's animated entry **Ada** focuses on the title character as she heads to the first day of her new job at the public library. She's got A LOT on her mind, but soon realizes her daily reality's mundane duties, grumpy boss is completely at odds with the urgency she feels about the pressing problems facing humanity. Dave Seger's **George of Tujunga** introduces us to a small-town moron who has his perfectly meaningless life upended when his eight-year-old niece shows up at his door with nowhere else to go. Jason Lee Courson's **Seekingâ?'** centers on the growing pains of

becoming a “chosen family” when three roommates (2 gay men, 1 straight man) all from different backgrounds, learn to cohabitate and navigate love and life in the big city. Brian Wallace and James Longley’s **World Twistories** explores eccentric people and their offbeat ideas throughout history. Presented by Tik-Tok sensation **Paul Longley**, the pilot episode looks at a coffee shop that opened in London in 1703 where you were required to speak Latin to get your coffee.

Along with a lineup of films overflowing with invention and innovation, Dances With Films’s short films also are spiced with several recognizable faces and names, including Russell Goldman’s **Burn Out**, which is executive produced by **Jamie Lee Curtis** and stars **Tommie Earl Jenkins** (*Wednesday*), Eli Vidis Newman’s **Concrete**, which stars four-time Oscar nominee **Ed Harris**, Kestrin Pantera’s **Dr. No Means No**, which stars comedy duo **The Sklar Brothers**, and **Breeda Wool** (*The Walking Dead*), Mike Harris’s **Mecánica**, which stars **Haley Joel Osment**, and **Olivia Sandoval** (*Fargo*), and Danny Farber’s **Thoughts and Prayers**, which is executive produced by **Amy Poehler**.

See you at the movies!



(Photo credit: Larry Gleeson)

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