Sundance 2021 Top 10 Picks (So Many Films, So Little Timeâ?¦)

Description

Poste

HollywoodGlee inside

the Sundance Film Festival Headquarters at the Park City Marriott on January 23, 2019, in Park City, Utah, the day before the opening of the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. (Photo credit: Larry Gleeson/HollywoodGlee)

With the shortened Sundance 2021 Sundance Film Festival just around the corner (January 28th â?? February 3rd), I became aware of a thought, â??With all the spectacular screenings this year, Iâ??m going to share some of my top picks for an excellent festival experience and to help in discovering adventure.â?• Tickets on sale here.

Sundance Welcome

In my experience, the one event that really sets the tone for the festival is the Opening Night Welcome. On Thursday, January 28, 2021, at 4 P.M., audiences all over the world are invited to come together and kick off the reimagined 2021 Sundance Film Festival and to fÃªte the extraordinary artists who make up this yearâ??s festival. During the event, you can expect to hear from Sundance Festival director, Tabitha Jackson, and see many of the faces from the Sundance Festival family. Even though we cannot physically gather with one another, the opportunity to celebrate Utahâ??the Sundance spiritual homeâ??and experience a unique Sundance Film Festival journey rooted in discovery and adventure remains. Let us begin.

Summer of Soul

In 2017, I had the distinct pleasure of seeing Melissa Haizlipâ??s documentary feature, *Mr. Soul!,* at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture as part of the American Film Instituteâ??s AFI DOCS. *Mr. Soul!* showcased extraordinary performances of a plethora of African American artists. In a similar vein, the transporting Ahmir â??Questloveâ?• Thompsonâ??s documentary *Summer of Soul (Or When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*, an exploration of the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, a series of summer concerts radiating a wholesale reevaluating Black History, culture, fashion and music, taking place a mere 100 miles from the much more heralded Woodstock that was held on Max Yasgurâ??s dairy farm in Bethel, New York, is premiering at 7 P.M.

on January 28th.

Night of the Kings

Phillip Lecoteâ??s *Night of Kings* weaves a tale of epic proportions around a young man who is sent to La Maca, a prison in the middle of the Ivorian forest ruled by its inmates. As tradition goes with the rising of the red moon, he is designated by the Boss to be the new â??Romanâ?• and must tell a story to the other prisoners. Learning what fate awaits him, he begins to narrate the mystical life of the legendary outlaw named Zama King and has no choice but to make his story last until dawn. Well-choreographed, interpretive song and dance routines sets the viewing experience apart. *Night of Kings* is receiving high praise after its world premiere at the 2020 Venice Film Festival.

Wild Indian

In *Wild Indian* writer/director Lyle Mitchell Corbine Jr. (Shinaab and Shinaab, Part II, 2017 and 2019 Sundance Film Festivals) tells a story that spans centuries and the continent in a film destined to be a touchstone in Indigenous cinema. Leading an impressive cast, Michael Greyeyes delivers a gripping, enigmatic performance as a modern Native American man who has done terrible, unforgivable things.

Decades after covering up his classmateâ??s murder, Michael (Michael Greyeyes) has moved on from his reservation and fractured past. When a man who shares his violent secret seeks vengeance, Michael goes to great lengths to protect his new life. With a strong and compelling visual style that evokes both fascination and dread, *Wild Indian* considers the cost of survival in a world as cruel as our own.

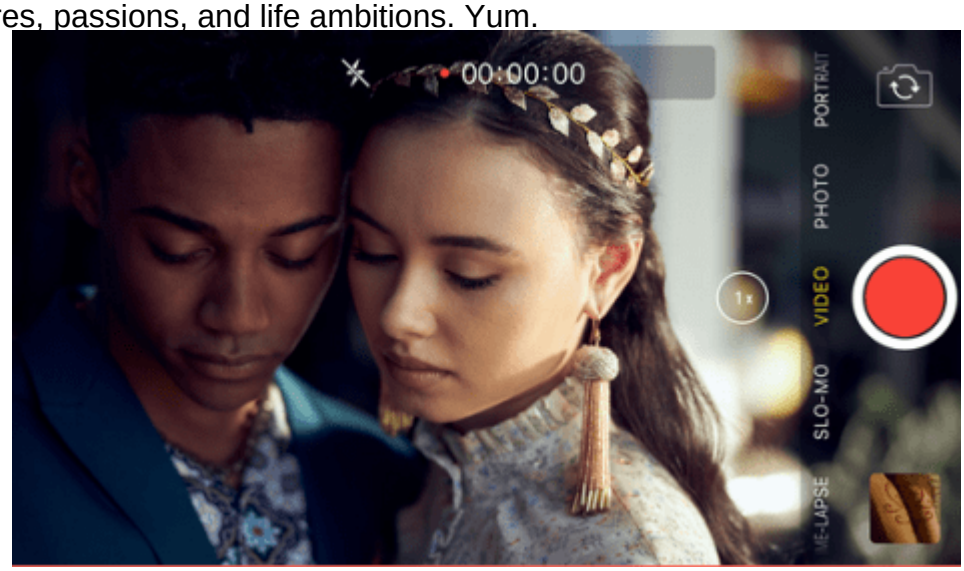
Passing

Rebecca Hallâ??s *Passing,* adapted from Nella Larsenâ??s acclaimed 1929 Harlem Renaissance novel, Hall is sure to provide some much-needed experiential insight into the pursuit of happiness and authenticity by those navigating the grinding tensions of American racism. Starring Tessa Thompson (*Sylvieâ??s Love*) and Ruth Negga (*Loving*), *Passing* is sure to seep into the viewerâ??s psyche in questioning basic belief systems as these two women who can â??passâ?• as white live their lives on opposites sides of the color line. Repression, obsession, and the lies people tell to protect their carefully constructed realities underscore Hallâ??s debut psychological thriller in this must-see feature attraction.

One For The Road

An unexpected delight from one of my earliest festival experiences was Thai Apichatpong Weerasethakulâ??s *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives.* Thailand films are emerging with industry support from the Royal family and I anticipate Director Baz Poonpiriyaâ??s *One For the Road*, produced by extemporaneous filmmaker Wong Kar Wai, will delight sensibilities in a similar fashion as Boss, a bar owner in New York City, receives a phone call from a sick friend, Aood. Boss returns to Thailand and takes on an amazing journey with Aood, driving from the north of Thailand to the south, looking to bring closure with people from his past. As the secrets from their past are revealed, they are ultimately offered an opportunity for redemption.

In the NEXT category, New Orleanian Marion Hill promises to deliver a respite from the COVID blues complete with an acoustic guitar soundtrack with *Ma Belle Ma Beauty*, an interracial, polyamorous, relationship-driven dive into the complexities of sexual fluidity and triangulation. Newlywed musicians Bertie and Fred are adjusting to their new life in the beautiful countryside of France. Itâ??s an easy transition for Fred, the son of French and Spanish parents, but New Orleans native Bertie grapples with a nagging depression that is affecting her singing. Laneâ??the quirky ex who disappeared from their three-way relationship years agoâ??suddenly shows up for a surprise visit, bringing new energy and baggage of her own. *Ma Belle, My Beauty* turns into a breezy and meaningful journey through wine-drenched candlelit dinners, firelit vineyard parties, farmersâ?? markets, and sunny hikes alongside the creek, as Fred, Bertie, and Lane grapple with how to get what they want inside the soup of their desires, passions, and life ambitions. Yum.



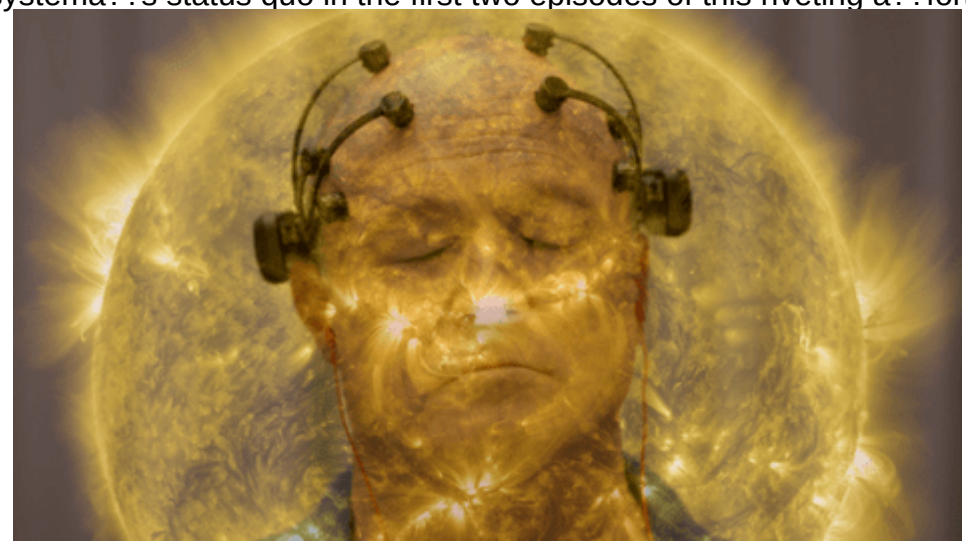
R#J

From Director Carey Williams, Hailed by Filmmaker Magazine as one of 2018â??s New Faces of Independent Film, emanates *R#J,* a modern-day retelling of the Shakespearan Romeo & Juliet. In fair Verona, a war as old as time is brewing between the rival Houses of Capulet and Montagueâ??but itâ??s being captured in a new way. Montague and Capulet Gen Zers are using their cell phones to document the eruptions of violence plaguing their communities. Utilizing black and brown bodies and told through text messages and smartphone screens in the social media language of GIFâ??s, the sharing of Spotify playlists, and Instagram accounts, a plea for peace and a way to escape their star-

crossed destiny unfold.

Philly D.A.

The docuseries, *Philly D.A*., spotlights a civil rights attorney, Larry Krasner, and his ascent to become the District Attorney in Philadelphia, while repeatedly calling out discrimination and corruption in Americaâ??s most incarcerating major city. In June 2018, Krasner made an unprecedented request for a comprehensive list of police officers who had lied while on duty, used excessive force, racially profiled, or violated civil rights, an unprecedented move in order to spotlight dishonest police officers and check their future courtroom testimony. Directors Ted Passon and Yoni Brook vigorously bring to life the people impacted and incensed by the failings of the system as well as those fighting to maintain the systemâ??s status quo in the first two episodes of this riveting â??forthcomingâ?• docuseries.


All Light, Everywhere

Using the rise of police body cameras as a point of departure, director Theo Anthony creates a kaleidoscopic portrait of our shared histories of cameras, weapons, policing, and justice in *All Light, Everywhere* as he explores the personal and philosophical relationships between cameras and

weaponry. Moving from the 19th century, where the nascent art of photography went hand in hand with colonial projects and the development of automatic weapons, to the headquarters of Axon, a company with a near-monopoly on body cameras in the United States, Anthony charts a long view of the relationship between photography and violence. Anthony roots his inquiry in Baltimore, a city that has long been a testing ground for new policing technologies.

The Pink Cloud

Last but not least (and by no means is this list all-inclusive), is *The Pink Cloud*. Director Iuli Gerbase has crafted an ambitiously stylish debut feature set in an evocative, not-too-distant world that eerily echoes life in lockdown. Giovana and Yago are strangers who share a spark after meeting at a party. When a deadly cloud mysteriously takes over their city, they are forced to seek shelter with only each other for company. As the months pass and the planet settles into an extended quarantine, their world shrinks, and they are forced to come to terms with an accelerated timeline for their relationship. Both a delicate exploration of what it means to connect in a world we no longer recognize and an unflinchingly honest look at the ways we shape our own reality, *The Pink Cloud* digs deeply into the underbelly of collective loneliness to offer us a way out.

The Pink Cloud Trailer:

And no festival is over until The Wrap.

Itâ??s a Wrap

Before feasting your eyes on the award-winning films from this season, finish off your Sundance Film Festival experience by looking back on the Festival that was. Festival director Tabitha Jackson leads a celebratory end to this all-new experience by bringing audiences together for one last word in the virtual space on February 3rd, 2021, at 8 A.M.

Stay tuned for more as Sundance Film Festival 2021 goes virtual!

Category

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