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THE 17TH ANNUAL HAMILTON FILM FESTIVAL IS BACK WITH A SCI-FI THEME AND A NEW VENUE

Hamilton - The 17th Annual Hamilton Film Festival is back from Nov 5th - 14th, with over 100 films that will screen in 5 venues across Hamilton. The new Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre, The Staircase, Starlite Drive-In Hamilton, The Westdale, and the Playhouse Cinema will be screening independent films from Canada, and around the world. Dozens of filmmakers, producers, cast and crew will make their way to Hamilton to support their work, and participate in Q&As.

While the Sci-Fi theme will be running throughout the festival, the event offers up a mix of short and feature length films including dramas, comedies, documentaries, animated films, and over 20 films from local filmmakers. "We aim to earn the *Hamilton* in our title" - Says Nathan Fleet, the executive director of the festival.

The Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre (AMAC) is also the new home of the Hamilton Film Festival's School of Media Arts, where some of the screenings will take place.

On Nov 5th, 8pm, the festival kicks off in the new 470 seat AMAC with a program of Sci-Fi shorts from GTHA filmmakers with some recognizable faces including Darrin Rose (Mr. D) who directed and stars in "Second Life", and Rodrigo Fernandez-Stoll (Kim's Convenience) who stars in "Going Away Party." The program ends with the Dark Crystal-esque "A Promise of Light" by Niagara Falls filmmaker Timothy Moran.

Sun Nov 6th has movies running all day from 10am - 11pm. Starting off in the AMAC with "Kids Can Film", movies made by 8-12 year old kids as part of the film school's summer camps, a short block of movies for families, then 2 local documentaries. "Merk" is by Bernard Gray from local restaurant Merk about his restaurant barely surviving during the pandemic, and "Safe" by John Butler that follows real tenants that live at Indwell affordable housing units, and discusses, and explores, the issues surrounding the Affordable Housing and Opioid Crises in Canada. The event then moves to The Staircase, the venue where the festival started in 2004. At 5:30, some mid-length shorts from Hamilton Filmmakers "Ramblings Of A Middle-Aged Drag Queen" by Aharon Jinjhashvili, Wr. Darren Stewart-Jones, "I Know What You Are" by Tyler Davies and Braeden Wilmer, and "Sincerely, Yours" by AJ Bate. The evening continues with Sci-Fi Shorts from the UK at 7pm, and a short block of international films. "Fieldtrip", in the UK Sci-Fi shorts, is sweeping up awards across the world in award qualifying festivals. If you like sci-fi, don't miss that one!

The Hamilton Film Festival recently became a Canadian Screen Award qualifying film festival, which means that if a film has played in a few qualifying film festivals, it becomes eligible for nominations. It's a big deal for the filmmakers, and the festival, as HFF has been applying for for 5 years now. "We had been showing, and awarding, films that went on to be CSA nominees so we knew we were programming quality work." - Says Fleet.

On Mon Nov 7th, the event continues at The Staircase with a 7pm screening of "Bob Lanois: Snake Road," a documentary by Dave Conlon about the late Bob Lanois featuring several interviews from prominent Canadian musicians, followed by a Q&A. That event is currently 50% sold out. At 9pm, a screening from Hamilton L.O.F.T. (Ladies of Film and Television, features short films from female identifying filmmakers including a short documentary "Beautiful Disaster" by local filmmaker / author Cher Obediah.

For the third year, a Double-Feature at the Starlite Drive-In will happen on Tues Nov 8th, \$26 a carload and you get to see the early show, "Animated Shorts", and the late show, an 80's throw-back perfectly suited for the drive-in called "Galaxy Warriors." The festival started using the drive-in during the pandemic and the response has been wonderful so it has continued.

Back at The Staircase on Wed Nov 9th, the centre francophone Hamilton will host an event, screening a documentary at 7pm that celebrates it's 50th anniversary (French with English subtitles), followed by a 9pm screening of a Montreal-based film by Patricia Chica, "Montreal Girls". Screenings continue at the venue on Thurs Nov 10th with a feature film "Trader" at 7pm. A single-actor thriller about a sociopathic stock trader by Toronto-based Corey Stanton. At 9:30pm, a collection of short Dramas including local film "Generations Under Sail" by Adam Benish, "Jelly" by March Mercanti, and "Sarah" by Peter Riddihough.

On Friday November 11th, and 12th, the festival moves into The Westdale with "Mixed Shorts" at 3pm, "Emerging Filmmakers Shorts" at 6:30pm, and the feature sci-fi "Amortal" at 9:30pm. On Saturday, "Comedy Shorts" at 6:30pm featuring Luba Goy (Royal Canadian Air Farce) in Open House, followed by "Thrills and Chills" shorts at 9:30pm.

On Sat Nov 12th from 10am - 4pm, "Industry Day" takes place in the Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre. A local film pitch at 10am, The Art of Business Panel at 11:30am, and Work in Hamilton panel at 1pm, followed by a mixer at 2:30pm. "This is a great opportunity for filmmakers to learn a bit about the local film industry, and to meet other like-minded professionals, and emerging makers." - Says Fleet.

On Sun Nov 13th, the event takes over the Playhouse Cinema with 4 features. At 1pm, Mike Mignola: Drawing Monsters is a documentary centred around Mignola's comic book universe centred around Hellboy. Interviews from Guillermo del Toro, Ron Perlman, Neil Gaiman and more. At 3:30pm the mystery / drama "Albatross", by Hamiltonian Myles Yaksich, will screen with special guest producer Jennie Lew Tugend (Leathal Weapon / Free Willy) in attendance for the Q&A along with other cast and crew members. "Albatross" is a dark, character-driven drama, which examines the concept of self (identity, ethnicity and sexual-orientation) in the context of society, while illustrating the compromises individuals are willing to make to feel as though they belong. At 7pm, Trevor Anderson's feature film "Before I Change My Mind" featuring lead local talent, Vaughan Murrae will screening with a Q&A after. Synopsis - 1987: While the other students wonder if new kid Robin is a boy or a girl, Robin forges a complicated bond with the school bully, making increasingly dangerous choices to fit in. At 9:30pm, the thriller "Around Robin" screens and features local talent Ann Purvue (Reign). Synopsis - A young celebrity receives a letter from a mysterious stalker and develops catalepsy, a condition that paralyzes her whenever she feels threatened. As more letters arrive, suspicion falls on members of her inner circle, all of whom are dangerously obsessed with her.

The festival ends where it began, on Mon Nov 14th at the Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre with 2 feature. 1pm, "Klondike" by Ukranian director Maryna Er Gorbacch which follows The story of a family that from July 17-19 2014 finds itself at the center of MH-17 air crash catastrophe near the village of Hrabove in the Donetsk Oblast of Ukraine. At 7pm the festival closes with "North of Albany" by Marianne Farley and stars local actor Rick Roberts. Synopsis - Annie frantically flees Montreal for the US with her young son, Felix and teenage daughter, Sarah, fearing the repercussions after Sarah severely injures her school bully. When their car breaks down just outside a small town in the Adirondacks, the family is stranded. Paul, a single father and the town's lone mechanic, isn't able to fix the car until he gets the part that's needed. Annie's stubborn insistence to leave town at all costs comes head-to-head with Paul's unwillingness to give in.

When Sarah realizes that her secret is out in the open, she runs away, forcing Annie and Paul to join forces to find her. When Paul's traumatic past is revealed, Annie realizes that she is not the only one running and comes to terms with facing the music.

Binge Watcher passes are available for \$99 and if you plan to see everything, the pass pays for itself by Tuesday so you get 6 more days for free.

Tickets can be purchased now at hamiltonfilmfestival.com and range from \$5 - \$26.

The Hamilton Film Festival started in 2004 at the Staircase Theatre as a way to continue bringing independent cinema to Hamilton. At a time when most festivals were still showing film, HFF allowed indie filmmakers a chance to get on screen via VHS and DVD. Over the past 17 years, the Hamilton Film Festival has been recognized as a catalyst for the growing film industry in the city. Many filmmakers, and film business now operating in the city, first learned about the great features of Hamilton, through this event. The Hamilton Film Festival started Lights Camera Hamilton, which is now a Not-For-Profit organization that helps to connect, enhance, and grow the local industry, and the new Hamilton School of Media Arts, to train, mentor, and prepare the city's next generation of filmmakers.

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Photos and kits: <https://www.hamiltonfilmfestival.com/hff17press.html>

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