

GREAT LAKES, GREAT MOVIES

SOO FILM FESTIVAL

FIVE DAYS OF MOVIES IN
SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN
SEPTEMBER 16-20, 2026

DATES AND VENUES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

FESTIVAL GUIDE

EVERYTHING CLASSIC

BRIDGE
95.1 FM

**Great Lakes,
Great Movies,
and
Everything Classic!**

Narrative Features

Hekla
 Small Business
 Sunfish (& Other Stories On Green Lake)
 Yooper Frankenstein

Documentary Features

Aanikoobijigan
 [ancestor/great-grandparent/great-grandchild]
 Detroit and Me
 EVERYTHING WE NEED IS HERE
 Spectacular by Comparison
 TRI FOR HOPE - From Hell to Paradise

Narrative Shorts

All the Money in the World
 Ana Sees Her Dad
 Bypassing
 Cafe Chronicles: The Loop Must Be Closed
 CHECK PLEASE
 CITIZEN FATHER
 The Climb
 Deaf Date
 The Door Next Door
 Dream To Sleep
 The Lake
 Lake St. Clair
 Love In All The Small Places
 Love's Lost is Found: A Case Flipowitz Mystery
 Me, My Dad, and the Thing in the Shed
 The Message
 Nuisance
 Past Tense
 the SCRIPT
 Shoot, Shovel and Shut Up
 slowly, gently
 Still Life
 Tea Time
 Tin Can
 Tomato Soup
 TYLER MESSES WITH TIME TRAVEL
 Uniformed
 V's Secret
 Zero Dopamine

Documentary Shorts

29 Men and God
 Evenly Matched
 F*** Your Policy
 GENERATION: CURE
 GTFO: The End of Harvey's
 I Wanted To Hear Your Voice
 Mall Video Store
 Normal
 Sincerely, Sage Jo
 Tall Jessie
 The Understanding of Me
 VENO, Struggling Artist
 WealthWashed
 Why Native Plants?
 Animation
 A Grieving Heart
 A Sparrow's Song
 Dance Is Everything
 Line 12
 Papá

 Music Video
 Running

Where and when will the movies be?

Bayliss library	LSSU Arts Center
Block 1 - Everything We Need is Here Sep 16, 2026 6:30 PM	Block 3 - Spectacular by Comparison Sep 18, 2026 1:00 PM
Block 2 - International Shorts Sep 17, 2026 6:30 PM	Block 4 - Detroit and Me September 18, 2026, 3:00pm
	Block 5 - Hekla Sep 18, 2026 5:30 PM
	Block 6 - Friday Night Fright: Yoooper Frankenstein September 18, 2026, 8:00pm
	Block 7 - Student Films September 19, 2026, 10:30am
	Block 8 - Made in Michigan September 19, 2026, 1:00pm
	Block 9 - Small Business September 19, 2026, 4:00pm
	Block 10 - Aanikoobijigan September 19, 2026 6:30pm
	Block 11 - HOMES Documented Sep 20, 2026 11:00 AM
	Block 12 - Welcome HOMES September 20, 2026, 1:00pm
	Block 13 - Run For It Sep 20, 2026 4:00 PM
	Block 14 - Sunfish (& Other Stories On Green Lake) Sep 20, 2026 6:30 PM

and which movies will be in the Shorts Blocks?

Block 2:

TYLER MESSES WITH TIME TRAVEL
Papá
Uniformed
slowly, gently
Process
CITIZEN FATHER
Line 12
Zero Dopamine
The Door Next Door
V's Secret
A Sparrow's Song

Block 7:

Love's Lost is Found: A Case Flipowitz Mystery
The Understanding of Me
RUNNING
Sleepless Night
29 Men and God
A Grieving Heart
Normal
Fuck Your Policy
The Message
Why Native Plants?
The Climb
WealthWashed
Tomato Soup

Block 8:

Ana Sees Her Dad
Still Life
Dream To Sleep
Bypassing
Past Tense
Me, My Dad, and the Thing in the Shed
the SCRIPT
Nuisance
Shoot, Shovel and Shut Up
Lake St. Clair

Block 11:

Tall Jessie
I Wanted To Hear Your Voice
GTFO: The End of Harvey's
Evenly Matched
Sincerely, Sage Jo
Mall Video Store

Block 12:

The Lake
VENO, Struggling Artist
Tin Can
Cafe Chronicles: The Loop Must Be Closed
Dance Is Everything
Tea Time
Love In All The Small Places
Deaf Date
All the Money in the World
CHECK PLEASE

Block 13:

GENERATION: CURE
TRI FOR HOPE - From Hell to Paradise

Welcome to the 2026 Soo Film Festival!

For a moment we weren't sure we were going to have a 2026 Soo Film Festival.

On the final day of last year's festival our projector broke,
which made us move the show over to Bayliss Public Library on a moment's notice;
We can't thank the staff at Bayliss enough for opening just for us which
allowed us to finish the festival with only a slight delay.
We also thank the filmmakers and our audience for rolling right along with us.

Then we had to fix the projector, *if* it was in fact repairable.
The closest factory authorized repair center was in Chicago,
which meant we had to find a reasonable way to get it there and back;
Then there was the question of if parts would be available due to the projector's age.
And With all these unknowns we thought it best to make other arrangements in
case we were going to be without a projector,
which is why we are at The LSSU Arts Center this year for the weekend portion of the festival.
We are grateful for the tremendous understanding of everyone at Soo Theatre
and for the Arts Center being able to accommodate us.
The projector turned out to be repairable and we fully anticipate returning to Soo Theatre in 2027.
*If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to help us with the projector repair
please visit soofilmfestival.org/donate or scan the QR code below.*

The festival kicks off with free evening programs at Bayliss Public Library Wednesday and Thursday.
And continues Friday through Sunday at The LSSU Arts Center.
Of note this year are two films with connections to Sault Ste. Marie.
Dave Cairns and Jude Reed make their feature directing debut with the horror
film Yoooper Frankenstein which they shot here and cast with many local actors.
See it Friday at 8pm as our Friday Night Fright selection.

Adam and Zach Khalil are Sault Tribe members returning to the
festival with their feature documentary
Aanikoobijigan [ancestor/great-grandparent/great-grandchild].
The film covers the important work of tribal repatriation specialists who
fight to recover Indigenous human remains from museum archives
and return them to their ancestral homes; See it Saturday at 6:30pm.

Our shorts programs once again offer a wide variety of films across several genres
and even several countries. The international shorts screen Thursday at Bayliss.

Saturday starts with student films and is followed by a collection of shorts Made in Michigan.
Sunday we cast the net a little wider and feature shorts from around The Great Lakes.
Please, do not miss the student films on Saturday. We particularly encourage student submissions
and this could be your first look at your favorite filmmakers of tomorrow.

Soo Film Festival places an emphasis on Great Lakes films and filmmakers but entry is open worldwide.
All films in every category are eligible for an Audience Award.
Festival attendees are encouraged to vote for their favorites.

Thank **you** for coming out and supporting the festival.
We are thrilled to once again welcome you to Sault Ste. Marie for five days of moviegoing.
Your support helps filmmakers stay here and work here.
Thank you for making possible another year of Great Lakes, Great Movies.

Jason Markstrom

President

Soo Film Festival



Tickets and Passes

A Festival Pass is \$50 and gives you admission to all blocks on all days of the festival. The Festival Super Saver Pass is \$80 and gives you TWO festival passes for one low price! A Daily Pass is \$20 and gives you admission to all blocks on a single day (Friday, Saturday, or Sunday). Tickets to a single block are \$7 for general admission and \$5 for students and seniors.

Tickets and passes for the 2026 Soo Film Festival are on sale now. You may purchase all tickets and passes online at the Soo Film Festival ticket page at FilmFreeway.

If you purchase tickets or passes online, please bring your receipt (printed or viewable on your phone).

No tickets are required for films shown at Bayliss Public Library.

Admission is free to all films at that venue.

Starting September 16th, you may purchase tickets and passes at the door.

We accept cash, credit cards, and debit cards.

Tickets to individual films will be available at the LSSU Arts Center 30 minutes before the film's start time.

You may pick up festival passes at the LSSU Arts Center 30 minutes before the first screening you wish to attend. If you purchase tickets or passes online, please bring your receipt (printed or viewable on your phone).

TICKET FAQ

If I purchase a single film ticket, do I have a reserved seat?

Single film tickets are reserved for a screening of a specific film with a specific screening time and date; however, having a ticket does not guarantee you a seat. You must arrive at the LSSU Arts Center at least 15 minutes before the scheduled screening start time.

Are festival passes good for any screening?

Yes; however, please arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the screening you wish to attend to assure yourself the opportunity to secure a seat.

Can ticket purchases be refunded or exchanged?

We regret that tickets cannot be refunded except in the case of a cancelled screening. Exchanges, when possible, will be subject to a \$1.00 processing fee per order.

I lost my tickets. What should I do?

If you have misplaced your Soo Film Festival tickets, please arrive 30 minutes before the screening begins and ask for assistance.



Everything We Need is Here

Drawn by a primal instinct, Tiffany forages Manitoba's Boreal forests on a quest for culinary mushrooms and something far deeper: Peace of Mind.

Guided toward places where resilience and resistance intersect, she engages with Indigenous and Settler Land Defenders, who seek to protect intact Nature for our collective well-being. Gradually a poetic story of trauma and resilience is revealed, while united resistance triumphs and wins the day.



Director Biography - KATHARINA STIEFFENHOFER

I am a Winnipeg-based independent documentary filmmaker with an interest in environmental and social justice.

I hold a BFA from the University of Manitoba.

In 2002, after a 16-year visual art practice, I entered employment in the local film industry's art departments.

I am the mother of two adult sons, an avid gardener, seed saver, passionate forager and advocate.

My deep connection to nature developed during my early years growing up on a small mixed farm on a Rhine Island in Germany.

My parents modeled a strong work ethic, devotion to social justice, good stewardship of the land, and empathy toward all living beings.

My work has moved between media over the course of my visual arts practice.

Large-scale cast glass and steel sculptures gave way to a site-specific land-based public artwork:

The burial of a 43' replica York Boat in Gimli on the shores of Lake Winnipeg.

My first documentary film, The York Boat Project (2003), documents the boat burial process, and conveys the underlying themes of converging histories, transformation, and universal interconnection.

My first feature documentary, And This Is My Garden (2010), celebrates the success of a school gardening project in a small, mainly Indigenous, community in Northern Manitoba.

The subsequent feature FROM SEED TO SEED (2018), reveals as much about the meaning of life as the challenges of farming

and impacts of the Climate Crises. My current documentary, Everything We Need Is Here, is a love poem to the Earth, interwoven with themes of Nature, connection, resilience and resistance.

Director Statement

Ancient hunter gatherer instincts drive my mushroom foraging passion, which initially drew me into this project. What started out as a film about foraging soon developed into a deeper consideration of the land, Nature, and of our interconnectedness with Everything.

My foraging partner, Tiffany, has been admirably called a "Wood Nymph" by those who have had the pleasure of spending time with her in the forest.

She sees things in the forest that nobody else does.

Her astonishing pearls of wisdom delight in their originality.

Most aren't aware of Tiffany's complex PTSD, because she masks her trauma well.

Tiffany forages Manitoba's Boreal forests on her quest for culinary mushrooms and peace of mind.

She seeks refuge, healing and connection in Nature. There she connects with Indigenous and Settler Land Defenders, who seek to protect intact forests for our collective well-being.

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Continued...

This Love Poem to the Earth aims to foster resilience and affirms spiritual resistance.

Life is layered and complex, and so is this film. Tiffany is the conduit who connects a set of interrelated story strands around themes of ecological justice and community health.

She joins Cat who spearheads efforts to protect the urban Lemay Forest

from destruction for development. Inside this ancient riparian forest she meets Terrance, who has been performing traditional healing ceremonies there for several decades.

Tiffany travels to the East-side of Lake Winnipeg to visit Terrance's relatives, who oppose silica sand extraction on their traditional lands.

Marcel, the land protectors' spiritual leader, asks of our leaders:

"Why do you want to destroy this planet? This is all we have."

Nature and Tiffany are the central characters of this film.

This story unfolds chronologically as Tiffany guides us through the cycle of the seasons in Winnipeg and in rural Manitoba forests.

Histories and world views are illuminated,

and gradually her story of trauma and resilience is revealed, while united resistance wins the day.

Tyler Funk's exquisite cinematography and Joel Penner's time-lapse micro-photography contribute visual eloquence.

A blending of poetic and observational styles forms a seamless hybrid format.

I aim to create work that connects with the viewer on a visceral and intellectual level to invoke deeper understandings, caring about all living beings on this Earth to inspire positive action and social change.

Block 2-International Shorts

**TYLER MESSES WITH TIME TRAVEL**

When Tyler, a 16-year-old procrastinator, finally decides to study for the math test, his future self appears to warn him about the consequences of his actions.

Director Biography - Yul Baek

Yul Baek has been making films since he was 11.

With every film he produces, he challenges his intellectual and technical ability to outdo the last.

His most recent film tackles a common feeling with an absurdist, insane sci-fi adventure.



Papá

Director(s): Nicolás Arturo Grande Traba

In an old Victorian mansion, a young boy roams the shadowed halls searching for his lost toy. His silent presence awakens unsettling forces, drawing the new residents toward a chilling revelation buried deep within the house's haunted past.

Uniformed

Director(s): Dan Biurrum

A gay military police officer, Gustavo lives two irreconcilable realities. In a world where the uniform condemns him to hiding, he feels his true nature being crushed by fear. But for how long is silence a shield, and when does it become a weapon?

Slowly, Gently

US Premiere

Director(s): Raymart Avellaneda

Mark is the only child of a public school teacher in the province. He was just two years old when his father died of a heart attack. As he grew older, the province felt too small for his dreams he had for himself and his mother, Memel. So he left. He left his mother behind to chase a future in Manila.

Ten years later, just when he thought he had everything in his hands, Mark returns home to an abandoned house, to his mother's ashes, a quiet testament to the pandemic, and to lingering odes of grief tucked into corners and spaces that are slowly becoming familiar again.

Process

Director(s): Barbara Szczerbanowska

Known for his eccentricity and exceptionally long moustache, artist Felix Ambrosious Delacroix the 3rd gets asked about the secret behind his autoportait. As he explains, its crucial to begin work day before deadline, on 2 hours of sleep and 12 cups of coffee. But what if the produced artwork still doesn't live up to your expectations? Well, you need to abandon all hope, curl up into a ball and begin... a performance.

Citizen Father

Director(s): Stefan Jan Korzeb

Mariusz is a middle-aged municipal guard from Warsaw. He is a dedicated officer, deeply committed to maintaining law and order. Mariusz strives to be a loving father and a good citizen. Unfortunately, by focusing too rigidly on rules and duties, he loses touch with reality and fails to recognize the real threats.



The film was created by students of the Warsaw Film School. Still frame from Citizen Father

Line 12

Director(s): Sarah Schulz, Christopher Schmier

In a world of towering mountains, dutiful train conductor Peregrin navigates his train through dangerous terrain like a well-oiled clock. One day, the free-spirited musician Clara smuggles herself into his machine room. Soon, catastrophe strikes, and Clara and Peregrin have to overcome their differences to save the train from derailing.



still frame from line 12

Zero Dopamine

Director(s): Rodrigo Marini

(Content warning: depictions of mental illness and attempted suicide)

Ignacio is a musician who lives away from the stage due to early-onset Parkinson's disease. He has little contact with the outside world and tries to get by as best he can with his girlfriend Sofí-a. His life changes when he meets Valentina, a sales assistant at a second-hand record store.



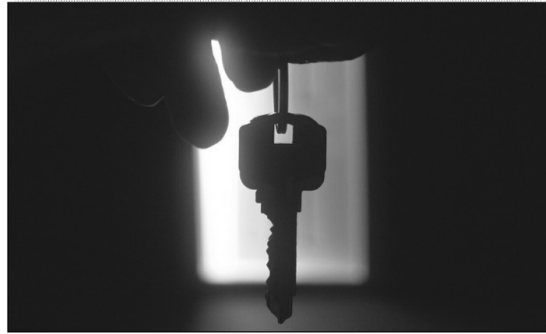
still frame from zero dopamine

The Door Next Door

US Premiere

Director(s): David Gozalez Rudiez

Jorge is in the middle of moving. As he prepares to spend his first night in the new house, surrounded by clutter and unopened boxes, he turns off the bedside lamp. In the darkness, something emerges. A different light illuminates him



still frame from The door next door

V's Secret

Director(s): Bassma Farah Nancy

Adam, 27, drops his wife's G-string onto neighbor Bassem's balcony. Bassem shuts the door, ignoring Adam's explanation. Convinced Bassem took it, Adam retaliates, breaking a flowerpot. He sneaks into Bassem's room, leading to a confrontation. But when the G-string is still missing, doubt begins to creep in.



Still frame from V's Secret



Still frame from A Sparrow's Song

A Sparrow's Song

Director(s): Tobias Eckerlin

Inspired by a true story, a widowed air raid warden in the midst of World War II struggles to overcome grief and rediscover joy in her life until she finds a dying sparrow she hopes to save.

Papá

Director Biography:

Nicolás Arturo Grande Traba was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1974.

He began his career as an animator under the mentorship of the Guadalajara-based filmmaker Rigoberto Mora. In 2007, together they founded the Bachelor's Degree in Animation, Digital

Art, and Multimedia at the Universidad del Valle de Atemajac (UNIVA), where he became a member of the faculty. As part of the natural activities an animation laboratory was established, from which numerous award-winning short films have emerged over nearly two decades of operation. Grande has collaborated on several of these short films, including *Agaric*, *Las traes*, *El gato y la rana*, *Unleash Darkness*, *Spark*, *A hilo y aguja*, *Matrioshka*, *Hertz*, *Irene*, and *Mery Honney*. He has also directed the series *Origen*, which portrays the adventures of two siblings in a museum; *Ronin Pumpkin*, which follows the misadventures of a scarecrow who fears crows; and his most recent work, *Papá*, about a child who plays the piano for his beloved toy.

Director Statement:

"I once heard Guillermo del Toro say that animation is a legitimate artistic medium and a true form of cinema, not a subgenre created solely to entertain children. That idea opened the door to the possibility of telling stories for a different kind of audience. In this case, I turned to something deeply personal: a fascination with the melancholic and the dark.

I vividly remember being profoundly moved by a film directed by Jan de Bont *The Haunting* particularly the infamous door sequence, where angelic figures gaze in terror at a presence that refuses to let them rest. That moment, filled with unease and silent dread, left an indelible mark on me. From there, everything else became history."

Uniformed

Director(s) Spotlight: Dan Biurrum

Director Biography:

With a degree in Film, Dan Biurrum seeks to create narratives that echo life. From *Vitória da Conquista*, *Bahia*, the scarcity of opportunities led him to advertising, and it was in this field that he found a creative laboratory to hone his vision for cinematic language. With *Uniformed (FARDADO)*, Dan celebrates his film debut.

Director Statement:

"As an artist, I seek to create narratives that echo life. Within this pursuit, I felt the urgency to delve into the complex layers of the LGBTQIAPN+ experience, a journey that often unfolds in silence. *FARDADO [Uniformed]* was born from the desire to give an even stronger voice to this struggle, and I chose the military police as the setting for a specific reason: the uniform amplifies to an extreme the conflict between who we are on the inside and what the outside world demands of us. It ceases to be just a uniform and becomes a symbol of a mask, an armor, behind which many hide their essence and their pain.

I believe in art as a tool for social transformation, and my desire with this film has always been to create a mirror that reflects reality without filters, inviting the audience to feel Gustavo's anguish and humanity. My wish is that the film works as an open wound, one that prevents us from ignoring reality. The intention is not to offer answers, but rather connection and reflection. If this film can make a single person feel less alone in their battle, or cause another to begin to see and question the suffering experienced by many LGBTQIAPN+ people within the context of the military, then it will have fulfilled its most essential role."

Slowly, Gently

Director(s) Spotlight: Raymart Avellaneda

Director Biography:

Raymart Avellaneda first found joy in fables as a child, which later led him to poetry. He graduated with a degree in Communication from Trinity University of Asia. He is part of the performing arts group *Ampalaya Monologues*, where he writes and performs poetry on stage.

He has written and directed short films for YB Creatives and previously worked as a Creative Producer at Viva Films. He completed the Scriptwriting and Directing track at Mowelfund Film Institute and is currently working at CreaZions Studios as a Senior Social Content Creator.

For Raymart Avellaneda whatever the medium, form, or shape of art he will always remain a storyteller.

Director Statement:

"Young adulthood is a critical time. Everything feels uncertain. You're still finding your place in a world that is intensely competitive. Everything moves so fast. People rush to build names for themselves, to attach achievements to who they are. In trying to catch up with our dreams, we sometimes leave so much behind.

And in the pursuit of being recognized by the world, we forget who we really are.

We are our mother's sons and daughters.
More than a short film, this is an enduring ode to our mothers."

Process

Director Biography: Barbara Szczerbanowska

Art and Design student, born and situated in Kraków. Completed the Digital Design bachelor course in UKEN.

Previously worked on *Kiki and Bouba: A peachy story* under the mentorship of COLA Animation.

Director Statement:

"I created this movie as my graduation film, which put up a lot of expectations for myself. It made me search for an idea that would feel uniquely me, but nothing felt like it. I've made multiple drafts but they all went into the bin. At the last minute I thought to myself: Why am I doing this?

I create many fictional characters, and the persona of the pretentious artist Felix Ambrosious Delacroix the III has been really close to my heart. Why not make a movie about him? I so long searched for an answer that was right under my nose."

Citizen Father

Director(s) Spotlight: Stefan Jan Korzeb

Director Biography:

Born in Warsaw, grew up in Buenos Aires, currently studying film production at the Warsaw Film School and law at the University of Warsaw with particular interest in the philosophy of law. For the past five years, he has been directing and managing the production of documentary, promotional and educational films. While working at CO.MEDIA film agency, he has completed film projects commissioned by companies from various industries, NGOs, and public institutions.

Director Statement:

"I wanted to create a film that would be a tragic farce about a difficult fatherhood. I feel that the relationship between a parent and a child is unique, unlike any other, governed by its own rules. The nature of this bond is mysterious and remains beyond verbal expression, as far as I'm concerned. Which is why I hope that my film absolves me of that obligation. I openly draw inspiration from the aesthetics of Krzysztof Kieślowski. The visual language of Citizen Father is deliberately restrained, creating space for looks and silence. The film is also shaped by my reflections on the philosophy of law. Through the film, I question legal positivism, which strictly separates legal norms from moral ones and may lead to a pathological attachment to inflexible rules. In Europe, the practice of legal positivism has contributed to the rise and legitimization of inhumane regimes of both fascism and communism.

Mariusz, the film's protagonist, falls into this trap of thinking. As a result, he loses sight of the broader context of his own life much as we sometimes do."

Line 12

Director(s) Spotlight: Sarah Schulz, Christopher Schmier

Director Biography:

Sarah Schulz, born 1996 in Zweibrücken, began her Animation studies at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in 2016. In 2019, she joined Cartoon Saloon as a Clean-Up artist on their Oscar nominated feature Wolfwalkers (2020). After graduating in 2023, she has worked as an illustrator of childrens' books. Christopher Schmier has worked for the ARD/ZDF subsidiary phoenix before beginning his studies at the renowned Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in 2016. During his studies, he created several animation short films. Since 2020, he is working for E.D.FILMS in Montreal, a studio that has garnered international acclaim for various projects.

Director Statement:

"In an increasingly complicated world, in which everything is constantly in motion, constantly changing, in which you are nothing more than a cog in the wheel of much larger interrelationships - do you decide to learn to understand the rules of this juggernaut - or do you not even try the impossible, and decide on the right direction at life's waypoints based on gut feeling?"

Zero Dopamine

Director(s) Spotlight: Rodrigo Marini

Director Statement:

"The short film DOPAMINA ZERO was born from close contact with people affected by early-onset Parkinson's disease.

The theme was not chosen at random; it appeared before my eyes through a musician friend, Patricio Barandiaran, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's at 34.

Although it is a fictional story, it is inspired by his life, and his reality sparked my curiosity to explore a disease I thought I knew better than I did.

The script is based on interviews with patients and caregivers, as well as healthcare professionals such as psychologists, neuropsychiatrists, and Parkinson's associations.

In seeking to remain faithful to medical accuracy, I researched specialized books, films, and documentaries.

The goal of this project is to show, through cinema, the effects that this neurodegenerative disease has beneath the skin and how it impacts relationships with one's surroundings and loved ones.

DOPAMINA ZERO is a sensory journey that immerses the viewer in the mind and life of Ignacio (Juan Josi© Ballesta), a sensitive and fragile musician caught between the desire to live and the shadow of Parkinson's.

The narrative is woven with threads of hope on a loom of hysteria and despair.

The protagonist tries to survive alongside his girlfriend Sofi-a (Cristina Mediero), but his life changes when he meets Valentina (Veki Velilla), a clerk in an old record shop.

His connection to the outside world comes through the building's doorman (Roman Rymar), to whom he owes money due to certain addictions.

My aim is to capture the fragility of human existence through a lens unafraid to explore darkness, yet always searching for light through the redemption of its characters.

I want the audience to deeply understand what it means to live with early-onset Parkinson's when you have dreams to fulfill and a whole life ahead.

Everyone knows what Parkinson's is but do we truly understand it?

Do we comprehend the suffering of a person and their family because of this neurodegenerative and multisystemic disease?

The tremors, dystonia, and spasticity are only the visible part.

Dark thoughts, insomnia, lack of motivation, apathy, side effects of medication, and the challenge of going outside with an illness associated with the elderly are some of the hidden realities portrayed in the film.

These people are often misunderstood, labeled as crazy or drug addicts, and tend to isolate themselves, living in fear of an uncertain future while feeling that time is running against them.

Ignacio, our protagonist, is a sensitive artist afraid of failure.

To ease his pain, he turns to alcohol and drug addictions from his past that devastate his treatment. The Parkinson's Associations of Madrid, Vigo, and San Sebastián de los Reyes helped us tell this story by opening their doors for interviews with patients, caregivers, and professionals.

They shared valuable information not only with me but also with the cast to ensure authentic portrayals.

The short film focuses on Ignacio's human experience, following him through his consciousness like a ghost, avoiding a purely medical perspective in favor of a more emotional one where love and music play crucial roles.

The narrative style and visual aesthetics of DOPAMINA ZERO are inspired by the work of the Argentine-born French filmmaker Gaspar Noé©.

While maintaining my own style, I acknowledge that his unsettling camera movements, color schemes, time jumps, and the personality of his locations have been great influences.

DOPAMINA ZERO aims not only to inform but also to touch the hearts of viewers, making them feel and live the reality of those with early-onset Parkinson's.

Ignacio is as real as life itself; he has an A side and a B side; in one you may hate him, in another you can only love him.

Through this short film, I want to illuminate the shadows of this disease and show that even in the deepest darkness, there is always a spark of hope to continue on the path."

The Door Next Door

Director(s) Spotlight: David González Rudiez

V's Secret

Director(s) Spotlight: Bassma Farah Nancy

Director Biography:

Bassma Farah Nancy is a versatile artist with a bachelor's degree in Art Direction in Cinema and Theater from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Helwan University. She is also a graduate of Ramses College in 2012, and the Jesuit Cairo Film School in Egypt in 2022. Currently, Bassma works as a filmmaker, editor, actor, photographer, storyboard artist, singer, and music composer. She currently works as an international press guest relations manager at the Cairo International Film Festival in 2024. She has also participated in several acting and filmmaking workshops and has performed in numerous plays in community theaters. Her debut short film Sushi With Kebda won awards at two Egyptian film festivals. She completed V's Secret, her latest short film in 2024 as her graduation project for Jesuit Cairo film school and it has been selected to compete in Durban International Film Festival 2024 and the 30th International Festival of Local Television Golden Beggar, where it won the best screenplay prize in 2024. V's Secret has also been screened in the 78th Salerno International Film Festival in Italy.

Director Statement:

"During the Covid-19 quarantine, mundane tasks like hanging laundry spurred my contemplation. The scenario of a g-string landing on a conservative and unfriendly neighbor's balcony struck me as a potential embarrassment. This sparked questions about societal norms: Why would a feminine undergarment evoke such discomfort compared to a boxer? This curiosity led to the creation of a film centered on two male characters reacting to a feminine object. Exploring the ambivalence surrounding femininity has long intrigued me, especially given societal perceptions and male dominance. Influenced by Nawal Al Saadawi's writings, my short film delves into the male obsession with feminine elements, impacting both men and women."

A Sparrow's Song

Director(s) Spotlight: Tobias Eckerlin

Director Biography:

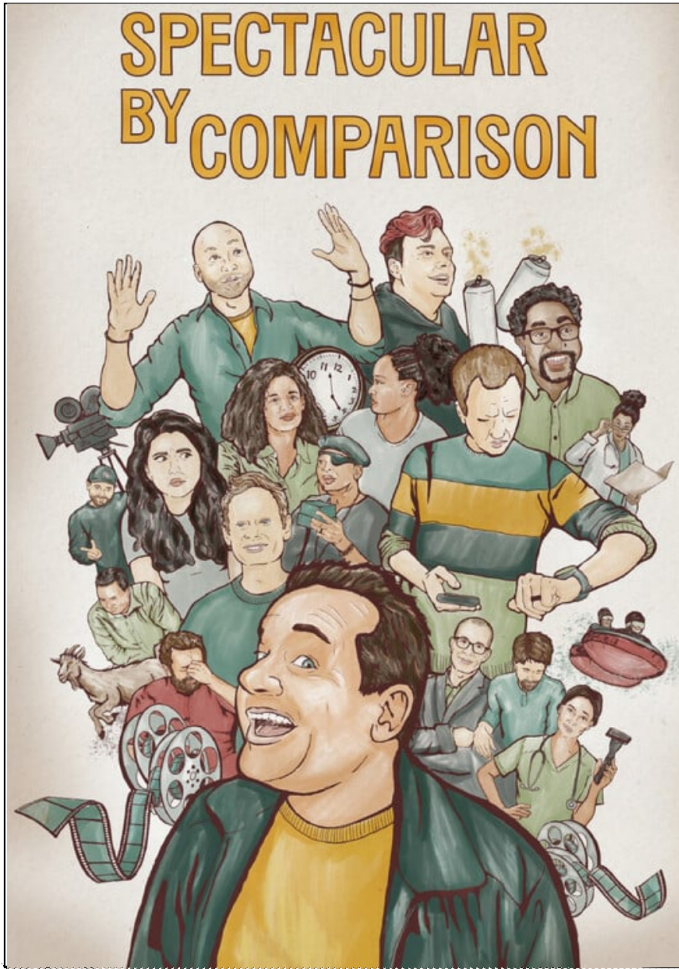
Tobias Eckerlin graduated from Animation Institute in 2025 with his graduation film A Sparrow's Song.

Director Statement:

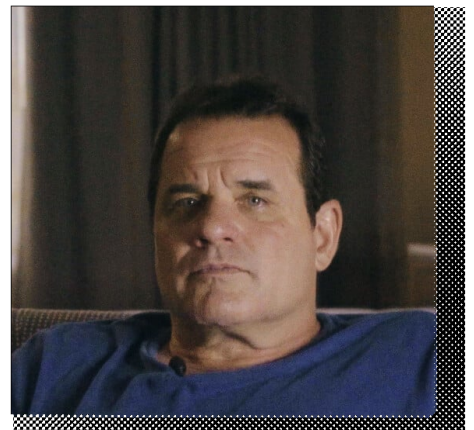
"Inspired by a true story, A Sparrow's Song follows a widowed air raid warden in the midst of World War II as she struggles to overcome her grief and rediscover joy in her life until she finds a dying sparrow she hopes to save. When I read the diary of Clare Kipps, I was deeply moved by this woman who, in the middle of one of history's darkest moments, takes care of something as small and seemingly insignificant as a dying sparrow. Through this simple act, she not only brought comfort to those around her but also found healing herself. To me, this story is not just about an altruistic act or the resilience it represents; it's about finding yourself by helping others. In these times, I often wonder how there is space for personal tragedy in a global crisis. But with this story, I've come to believe that there is space for personal tragedy, just as there is space for sharing personal kindness and that can make all the difference. In the end, A Sparrow's Song is about cohesion: being part of a society that shares values, holds together, and strives to make life better or at least bearable for all living beings within it. Even the smallest act of kindness can spark hope, bring good to those around you, and ultimately to oneself. A Sparrow's Song speaks on many layers, and I believe that the audience will be as touched and inspired by this old woman and the little sparrow as I was."

Spectacular by Comparison

When a group of independent filmmakers attend ScorpiusFest, a small film festival in Park City, Utah held the same week as Sundance, they discover a chaotic one-man operation held in a conference room with no projector. After meeting the festival's founder, Steffon Olsen, they return the following year with cameras to document and help run the event.



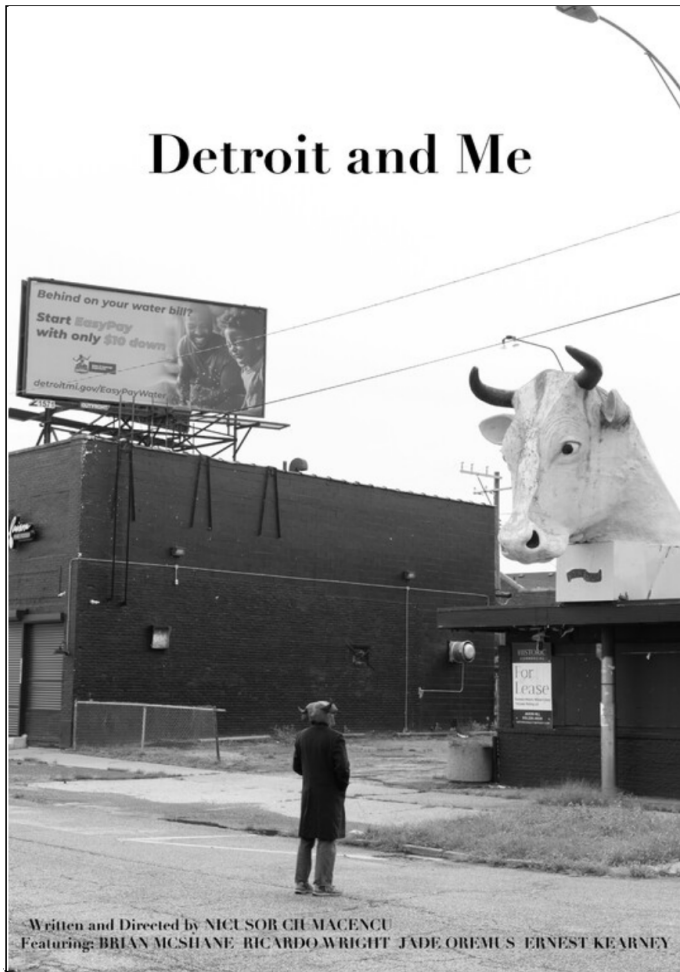
Directed by: Evan Cannon & Tyson Kroening



Detroit and Me

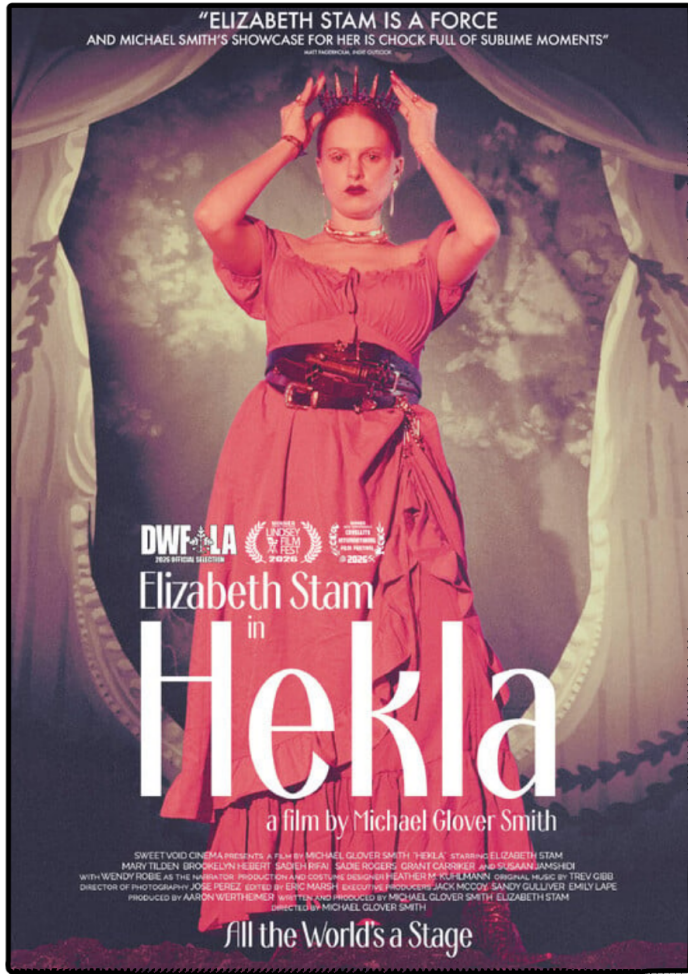
Midwest Premiere

is two stories worlds apart all thru the eyes of a former Romanian immigrant returning to the city at the 20 year anniversary of his immigration to America, to Detroit. First story documents how settling in Detroit unfolded from the moment of arrival 20 years ago, on the first streets he traveled and the neighborhood he lived in. There are funny situations, an immigrant's integration cannot go fully smoothly, we learn of American customs unknown to one from outside the US: free coffee refills, saying "cheese" when taking a picture etc. Second part focuses on the dramatic changes Detroit has experienced in recent years and the wonderful reconnection with the city that, for 3 years, had been the beginning of his American adventure.



Directed by: Nicusor Ciumacencu





Hekla

Hekla, a determined Chicago actress, races through auditions, breakups, and self-doubt over the course of one chaotic day, risking her heart and career to claim her voice and step fully into the artist and woman she's meant to be.

Director Biography - Michael Glover Smith

Michael Glover Smith is a Chicago-based filmmaker, author, and college professor. His most recent feature, the award-winning *RELATIVE*, stars Wendy Robie (*TWIN PEAKS*) and is distributed by Music Box Films. It was the 23rd highest-grossing movie in the U.S. during its first week in release in 2022.

His other work includes *MERCURY IN RETROGRADE* (2017), starring French film icon Roxane Mesquida, *RENDEZVOUS IN CHICAGO* (2018), and *COOL APOCALYPSE* (2015).

His first book, *FLICKERING EMPIRE: HOW CHICAGO INVENTED THE U.S. FILM INDUSTRY*

(Columbia University Press, 2015), co-written with Adam Selzer, is an acclaimed non-fiction study of film production in Chicago during the silent-movie era.

His second book, *BOB DYLAN AS FILMMAKER: NO TIME TO THINK*, was published by McNidder & Grace in 2026.

Director Statement

HEKLA is the fulfillment of a dream born in my head in 2016. While holding auditions for my second feature, the Roxane Mesquida-starring *MERCURY IN RETROGRADE* (2017), I conceived the idea of creating a project about a day in the life of an actor.

I wanted to make a movie that would simultaneously be a love letter to Chicago's theater and film communities as well as an exploration of the inner world of a single artist: going inside their brain, showing their "process," and the difficulty they have in achieving a balance between their personal and professional lives.

After making my fourth feature, *RELATIVE* (2022), with the brilliant Elizabeth Stam,

I decided to refashion this script as a vehicle for her, inviting her to board the project not only as lead performer but also co-writer and co-producer.

The result is the deepest collaboration I've ever had with an actor, yielding the kind of intense, Gena Rowlands-esque performance that every director dreams of eliciting.

Because the title character has a larger-than-life comedic persona, I also decided that the film's visual style would need to take its cues directly from the flamboyant Hekla, intermixing different aesthetics in a wild and unpredictable yet always purposeful manner.

HEKLA was self-financed primarily through the sale of my condo.

As a filmmaker, I've never had more skin in the game.

— Michael Glover Smith, Chicago, 2026





Yooper Frankenstien

(Content Warning: violence, language, and nudity)

Madness, love, and blood abound when a rogue scientist builds his greatest creation.

Director(s): David Cairns &
Jude Reed



Still frame from yooper frankenstien



Still frame from Yooper Frankenstien

Love's Lost is Found: A Case Flipowitz Mystery]

Director(s): Eve Dowding

When tasked with finding her good friend's lost love, Detective Case Flipowitz discovers that one's lost love is not always what it appears.

The Understanding of Me

Director(s): Katy Coakley



"Theresa Marie Montiel, a successful graphic designer better known as Nacho, spends most of her time sketching and designing. The piece that sticks out to her most is "The One Little Indian." In this documentary short, Nacho explores her mixed race heritage through her personal designs and how racial representation is important in the art industry."

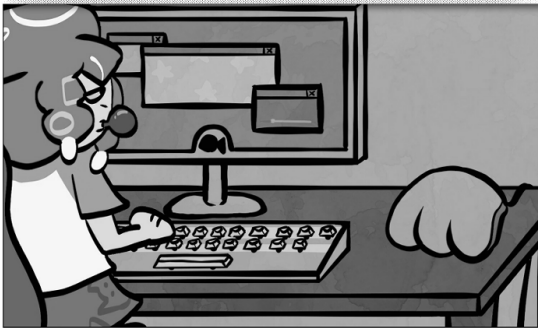
Still frame from *The Understanding of Me*

Running

Music video for the Morbidly Obese Seal song 'Running'

Director: Alyssa Marx

Sleepless Night



Still frame from *Sleepless Night*

Director(s): Rory Brown

After a long night gaming, the humanoid jellyfish, Ari, tries to find creative ways to get to sleep...

29 Men and God

Director: John Burns

Author John U. Bacon discusses his new book on the Edmund Fitzgerald.

A Grieving Heart

Director(s): Wendy Cong Zhao

An immigrant woman examines her past in the wake of her American ex-boyfriend's death. The film explores how love and loss impact the ways she confronts her identity, memories, insecurities, and regrets.



Still frame from *a grieving heart*

Normal

Director(s): Keall Emmers

Normal is a short reflexive documentary about growing up with divorced parents and living between two homes. Using personal narration, archival footage, and interviews with my parents, the film reflects on how something that seems difficult or overwhelming to others became my everyday reality and how hearing their perspectives changed the way I understand my own childhood.



Still frame from Normal

Fuck Your Policy

Director(s): TK James

After an executive order renouncing the existence of trans and non-binary people, Fuck Your Policy explores the experience of existing outside the gender binary in the current political climate.



Still frame from Fuck your Policy

The Message

Director:

Faith Kenya Geovana Williams

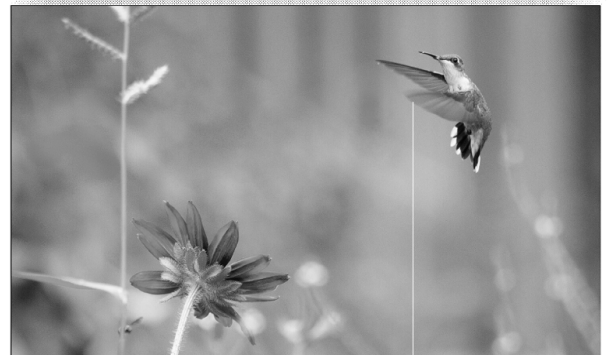
Connor texts his crush while being a nervous wreck the entire time.

Why Native Plants?

Director(s): Cecelia Gould

Native plants improve outcomes for the environment, but are increasingly eliminated in favor of more "typical" garden plants. Learn how to make an impact on your local environment, and potentially yourself, by planting native species.

Produced by Cecelia Gould, Olivia Lee, and Samantha Sanday with support from the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism.



Still frame from Why Native Plants?

The Climb

Director(s): James Roberts, Werner Andrews

After slaying a deer, a hunter secluded in frozen, silent wilderness, is driven to insanity by the traumatic manifestations of his dead little brother.



Still frame from The Climb

Ana Sees Her Dad

Director(s): Mark Broe

A young girl has a realization about her dad during an inspection of her household chores.



Still frame from Ana Sees Her Dad

Still Life

Director(s): Drake Whelton

A social media influencer forced to sit phone free during a drawing class spirals into a surreal breakdown as her addiction to constant validation unravels her sense of true self.



Still frame from Dream to Sleep

Dream to Sleep

Director(s): Michael McCallum

A man tries to escape impending doom.

Bypassing

Director(s): Luke Madorski

A couple's date is cut short when one of their doppelgangers mysteriously appears.

Past Tense

Director: TL Westgate

Norman is taking his wife to the boss's party. What could possibly go wrong?

Me, My Dad, and the Thing in the Shed

Director(s): Tanner Hamilton

An estranged son attempts to reconnect with his aging father while competing for his affection with an otherworldly guest.



Still frame from Me, My Dad, and the Thing in the Shed

The SCRIPT

Director(s): Alexander David Prater

With less than 9 hours left, a writer struggling with writer's block must find creative inspiration before it's too late.

Nuisance

Director(s): Jouel Truesdell

Anthony

21-year-old Derek has been raised at the cross-cultural intersection of rural American life and modern Black culture. When his younger brother, Bowie, turns 10, Derek is tasked with taking the newest young hunter in their family on his first hunting trip. Bowie, a multi-racial child with his own unique perspective, tries to make sense of the world through his sketch journal. Bowie hopes they will reconnect through their shared love of nature, but he becomes subjected to the very expectations which have confined Derek.



Still frame from Nuisance



Still frame from Shoot, Shovel, and Shut Up

Shoot, Shovel, and Shut Up

Director(s): Trần Hoàng Calvin

The Clifford family hopes to start a new life by selling their dilapidated, impoverished farm. But when the discovery of an endangered bird on the property threatens to collapse the sale, the son Andy must decide whether to make the bird's presence known or to shoot, shovel, and shut up.

Lake St. Claire

Director(s): Caitlin Mayernik

As girlhood fades, four friends gather for a final summer sleepover at their Lake St. Clair cottage.



Still frame from Lake St. Claire

Ana Sees Her Dad

Director(s) Spotlight: Mark Broe

Director Biography:

Mark Broe is a writer and sound recordist based in Michigan. He is the author of the fantasy novel, Temple of Conquest. His passion is producing short films with his partner, Jazmine Kuyayki Broe.

Still Life

Director(s) Spotlight: Drake Whelton

Director Biography:

I've been messing with camera's since I was a child. A graduate from Delta College's Electronic Media Broadcasting/Film Production class of 2015, I've been working consistently in my home town of Saginaw Michigan and across the country to grow my business White Knuckle Films. I love to bring story's to life through video and my experiences with different cultures from around the world has left an everlasting impact on my work.

Dream to Sleep

Director(s) Spotlight: Michael McCallum

Director Biography:

Michael McCallum is an award winning director/writer/actor/producer/editor who was born in Lansing, MI where he currently resides. He started acting in 1997 and started his film company, Rebel Pictures, in 1999. His first three feature films, Fairview St., Handlebar, Lucky, all screened at Celebration Cinema in Lansing, MI for week long runs to sell out crowds. All three films have played nationally and internationally garnering many awards. Since 2008 he has released a string of 16 award-winning short films. McCallum was honored to receive the Michigan Independent Filmmaker Of the Year Award 2012 by the Uptown Film Festival in Detroit. In 2015 McCallum and his Rebel Pictures team finished their fourth feature film, Buffalo! He was excited to work, again, with his talented Father, William C. McCallum, who plays the lead role in Buffalo. They also wrote the film together.

It has won 22 awards and received 12 nominations in 38 film festivals. It has also played in Italy, Amsterdam, Switzerland, Singapore, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Grand Rapids, The Caribbean, Lithuania, Greece, Amsterdam, Russia, Hong Kong, Portugal, Indonesia, Italy and Australia!

With the 21 projects that Rebel Pictures has made they have won 117 major awards, been nominated for 102 other major awards and been accepted into 255 film festivals internationally! In 2013 and 2014, he was invited to direct a short film for the Production Workshop for the Grand Rapids Film Festival (GRFF). Both films were finished by McCallum and one of his editors and have won awards nationally. He currently serves on GRFF's advisory board and leads the committee which produced the 36-Hour Challenge. In addition to film, Michael is also an accomplished theater performer. He took on the iconic role of Stanley Kowalski in Lansing Community College's production of A Streetcar Named Desire! He also co-hosts a weekly radio show, Show Biz Weekly, in Mid-Michigan. His films, trailers and writing can be seen and purchased at: RebelPictures.net

Bypassing

Director(s) Spotlight: Luke Madorski

Luke Madorski is a writer/director from Michigan who attended Oakland University.

Past Tense

Director(s) Spotlight: TL Westgate

Director Biography:

TL Westgate was born in Michigan, but settled in Florida as his home starting in the fifth grade. As a graduate from Florida State, he has worked in the video production industry for over 30 years and won several industry awards (Emmy, Telly, Marcom). In 2010 he began getting serious about filmmaking and has traveled the world to support his films in festivals. They have played in fests around the world and won several awards. He also enjoys photography and has two adult sons. He currently is a professor at the Los Angeles Film School.

Director Statement:

"Our LGBTQ+ friendly film turns the tables on the traditional sexual history experience for comedic effect."

Me, My Dad, and the Thing in the Shed

Director(s) Spotlight: Tanner Hamilton

Director Biography:

Tanner Hamilton is a filmmaker from Grand Rapids, Michigan. He works as a DP & camera assistant on indie films and commercial projects in the West Michigan area. In his own work, he enjoys exploring the genres of science fiction, horror, action, and drama.

Director Statement:

"I live in the Midwest and love my dad.

This movie is about living in the Midwest and loving your dad.

By making this film, we aim to create space for reflection on how men navigate emotional intimacy in a world which often discourages them from embracing it. Through its mix of absurdity and sincerity, our film encourages a new perspective on father-son bonds, masculinity, and the unexpected ways love can be rekindled."

The Script

Director(s) Spotlight: Alexander David Prater

Director Biography:

Alexander Prater is a versatile filmmaker based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, with expertise spanning acting, directing, screenwriting, cinematography, and editing. He is the founder of Obscure Film Company, through which he produces a variety of independent films. Prater's notable works include *The Five Stages of Quarantine* (2021), *Safety Patrol* (2022), and *Halloween Spooktacular: 2023* (2023). His storytelling is influenced by his appreciation for the concept of absurdity, a theme he often explores in his projects such as *How To Hide A Body* (2019) and the upcoming *Ghost Buddies: The Gathering*. With a passion for filmmaking and a desire to create engaging stories, Prater continues to expand his body of work and contribute to the independent film scene.

Nuisance

Director(s) Spotlight: Joel Truesdell Anthony

Director Biography:

Joel Truesdell Anthony is a multidisciplinary filmmaker from Ypsilanti, Michigan. They have a background in acting, voice acting, casting, and editing across both short and feature-length films. Their background in theatre spans from touring children's shows, costuming and makeup, to stage productions alongside Ben Vereen in the original debut production of *Soaring on Black Wings* honoring the Tuskegee Airmen.

Through the lens of magical realism, they aim to tell grounded character-driven stories that honor the complexity and joy of intersecting identities while elevating the magic of Michigan's natural world, which inspires their work.

Their directorial debut narrative short, 'Nuisance', was filmed in Southeast Michigan, where their creative practice remains rooted. Joel's work is shaped by a deep connection to the natural world and a commitment to expanding access to outdoor spaces for BIPOC, Queer, and Disabled communities. Joel Truesdell Anthony has a B.A. in Communications & Theatre Arts Comprehensive and M.A. in Speech Language Pathology.

Director Statement:

"Growing up Black, Indigenous, Queer, and neurodivergent in Michigan, I learned to navigate between cultures and perspectives. What I once saw as barriers have become sources of richness, giving me multiple lenses to experience and interpret the world. Michigan's landscapes and communities shaped me, and as I raise my own children here, I see how identity can be both anchor and compass, opening pathways to unexpected intimacy and understanding.

My work explores the societal, cultural, and familial expectations that shape how we perceive others and ourselves. At the same time, I am drawn to storytelling that transcends those limitations. While in Mexico, I encountered a painting titled *Futuro* by an award-winning animator, an experience that reminded me how art, especially when rooted in shared traditions, can communicate beyond language. That artist later became the animator for this short film, expanding its vision through her own cultural lens."

Shoot, Shovel, and Shut Up

Director(s) Spotlight:Trần Hoàng Calvin

Director Biography:

Trần Hoàng Calvin is an award-winning independent director and producer from Grand Rapids, Michigan. He graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with a BFA in film and television production and has over a decade of experience in the film industry with credits from ABC News, VICE Media, and DECON-Mass Appeal. Tr n is the founder of NODEHAUS media, an impact studio.

A bona fide filmmaker, Tran's directorial credits include CoinDesk's Rizqi Presents: BLOCKCHAIN on Amazon Prime, the MPI Original film *A Clean Slate* (Cleveland International, BronzeLens), LearnLiberty's *Refuge: The Story of Viet Tran* and *Dead Malls: Explained*, and NODEHAUS's originals *Arbitrary Lines: The Free Spirit of Caroline* (Better Cities Film Festival), *Long Ride Home*, and *An American Portrait*.

Lake St.Claire

Director(s) Spotlight: Caitlin Mayernik

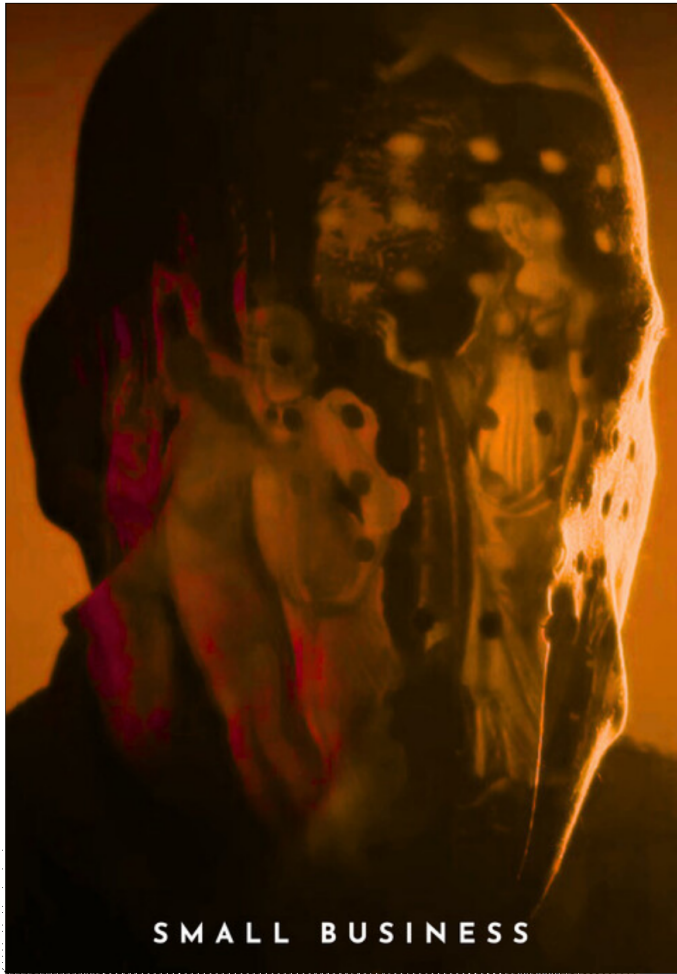
Director Biography:

Caitlin Mayernik is New York City based and Detroit, MI raised. She is a writer, director, and producer of film & theater about girlhood.

Director Statement:

"This film is dedicated to my hometown friends, and it is drawn from my own childhood growing up on Lake St. Clair, Michigan. Summers on the lake were defined by long days, sleepovers that stretched into dawn, and the unspoken belief that this world would last forever. As we grew older, those same spaces began to hold something heavier: the quiet realization that girlhood is not something you leave all at once, but something that slowly slips away.

By returning to Lake St. Clair, I wanted to make a love letter to the memories of my younger self, and to the friendships that shaped my youth."



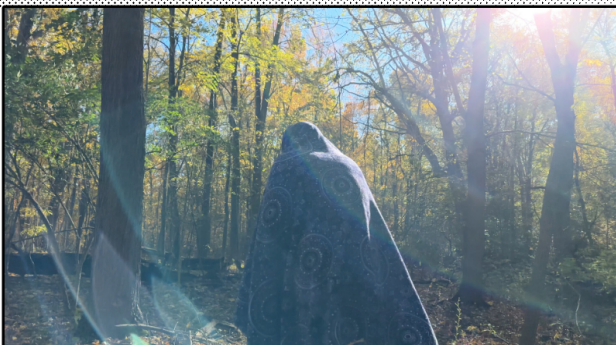
Small Business

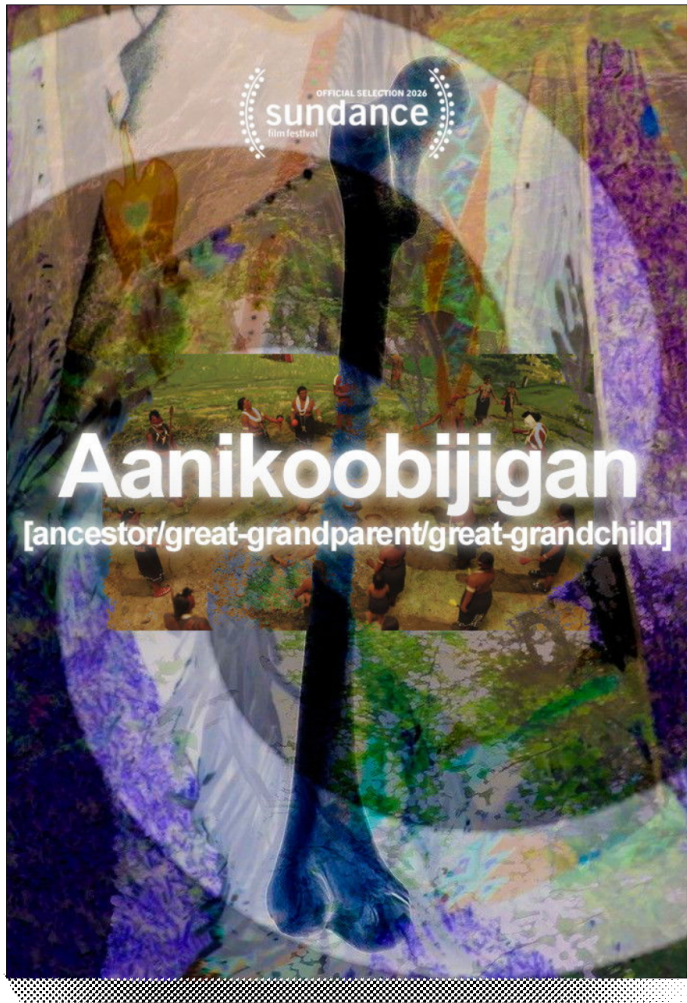
World Premiere w Q&A

A struggling mortgage broker given 30 days to save his business sets a plan in motion that grows darker with every step.

Directors: Paul Rothman
& Andy North

Still frame from small business





Directed by: Adam Khalil, Director

Adam Khalil (b. 1988, United States) is a filmmaker and artist from the Ojibway tribe who lives and works in Brooklyn.

His practice attempts to subvert traditional forms of imagemaking through humor, relation, and transgression.

Khalil's work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, Sundance Film Festival, Walker Arts Center, Lincoln Center, Tate Modern, and Whitney Museum of American Art, among other institutions. Khalil is the recipient of various fellowships and grants, including but not limited to: the Herb Alpert Award, Jerome Artist Fellowship, Creative Capital, Sundance Art of Nonfiction and Gates Millennium Scholarship.

Khalil is a co-founder of Cousin Collective and core contributor to New Red Order

Zack Khalil

(b. 1991, United States) is a filmmaker and artist from the Ojibway tribe who lives and works in Brooklyn.

His work centers indigenous narratives in the present—and looks towards the future—through the use of innovative nonfiction forms.

His work has been exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Walker Arts Center, and the Sundance Film Festival among other institutions.

Khalil is the recipient of various fellowships and grants, including but not limited to: Sundance Art of Nonfiction, Sundance Institute Indigenous Film Opportunity Fellowship, UnionDocs Collaborative Fellowship, and Gates Millennium Scholarship.

Khalil received his BA from Bard College.

Aanikoobijigan [ancestor / great-grandparent / great-grandchild]

In the sterile storage of museums and archives our ancestor's remains struggle to find their way home. The film follows eleven indigenous repatriation specialists that make up MACPRA (Michigan Anishinaabek Cultural Preservation & Repatriation Alliance)

fighting to rebury and return ancestors from settler-colonial libraries, archives, and museums.

Through an essayistic approach the film lays bare the history of indigenous collections, the laws passed to ensure return of human remains and funerary objects, and vérité portraits of the righteous and courageous individuals doing the hard and emotionally draining work of bringing our ancestors back home.

Tall Jesse

Director(s): Adam Burns

An eccentric coach uses his outsider status to develop a new play to implement in the annual Troy Athens powder puff football game.

I Wanted to Hear Your Voice

Director(s): James Pellerito

After eight years of caring for his mother with severe dementia, a son struggles through their daily care routine. Recorded voicemails serve to show the progression of the disease, underscoring the frustration, isolation and burnout that comes with intensive caregiving.



Still frame from I Wanted to Hear your Voice

GTFO: The End of Harvey's

Director(s): Jerod Kauffman

A documentary trying to capture why Harvey's on the Mall was so loved in it's final days before permanent closure.



Still frame from Evenly Matched

Evenly Matched

Director(s): Troy Nicolas Tedeschi

A documentary short film that explores the culture and community of competitive Yu-Gi-Oh!, a trading card game. It explores through the perspective of seven people who have never played before, being thrown into an overly complicated and confusing card game. What is it like to learn something new and how is community important to how learn new skills?

Sincerely, Sage Jo

Director(s): Jacob Wilkins

After life takes an unexpected turn, middle school sweethearts Megan and Mitchell Shelton find a new purpose through creating keepsakes for others' important life moments.

Mall Video Store

Director(s): Nick Nummerdor & Andrew J. Morgan

Mall Video Store is a fun and nostalgic short documentary about Harrison Lange, owner of Static Tape Video, an independent video store located inside a Michigan shopping mall. Passionate about movies and physical media, Harrison spends his days rescuing VHS tapes, tracking down forgotten collections, and creating a place where movie lovers can connect through a shared love of film.



Still frame from Mall Video Store

Tea Time

Director(s): Ellie May Gilmer

An elderly woman makes some tea and prepares for the visit of her Grandson. She anxiously watches the clock preparing for his visit while she also washes the dishes and sweeps the floor.

Love in All the Small Places

Director(s): Rebeka Herron & Sarah Cleveland

Love in All the Small Places follows Sasha, a dedicated people pleaser, whose life unravels when her husband reveals a startling truth. With support from her best friend Moe and sister Taylor, Sasha has to relearn what love truly means.

Deaf Date

Director(s): David Levy

Desperate to impress a date who's one dealbreaker is deafness, a deaf man ditches his cochlear implant and attempts to bluff his way through a chaotic double date.



Still frame from Deaf Date

All the Money in the World

Director(s): Dale Metz

Scott Masters in the richest man in the world.

And when the world is not enough, you shoot for the moon.



Still frame from CHECK PLEASE

CHECK PLEASE

Director(s): Shane Chung

Two headstrong Koreans can't agree on who's treating who to dinner, causing their casual restaurant outing to spiral into a martial arts deathmatch.

Tall Jesse

Director(s) Spotlight: Adam Burns

Director Biography:

Adam Burns teaches filmmaking at Troy Athens High School and works as a creative producer for the Troy School District.

I Wanted to Hear your Voice

Director(s) Spotlight: James Pellerito

Director Biography:

Born and raised in Italy, James Pellerito holds an MFA in Film from the Columbia University School of the Arts. His work has screened at over 200 festivals worldwide (including Berlin, Outfest, NewFest, Frameline, Hot Docs, Full Frame, DOC NYC, AFI Docs and BFI Flare), won over thirty awards, aired on HBO Latino, Sundance TV, Logo TV, and PBS America, and been reviewed in Variety, The New York Times, Entertainment Weekly, Los Angeles Times and The Hollywood Reporter. His feature documentaries include Pop Star On Ice (2009, IFC Center), American Cheerleader (2014, Fathom Events) and Anatomy of a Male Ballet Dancer (2018, Film Forum). Pellerito served as co-creator, showrunner, director and executive producer on two seasons of his series Be Good Johnny Weir (2010, 2012). He is a graduate of the 2-year Meisner acting program at The Neighborhood Playhouse and he teaches film and media in Atlanta.

GTFO: The End of Harvey's

Director(s) Spotlight: Jerod Kauffman

Sincerely, Sage Jo

Director(s) Spotlight: Jacob Wilkins

Director Biography:

Jacob Wilkins is an award-winning Michigan-based documentary filmmaker and film student at Washtenaw Community College. He has received eight WCC film awards, including three Best in Show honors, as well as 2 NATAS Student Production Award. His work focuses on intimate, character-driven nonfiction stories that explore vulnerability, resilience, and human connection.

Evenly Matched

Director(s) Spotlight: Troy Nicolas Tedeschi

Director Biography:

Originally from New Hampshire, Troy Tedeschi is a current graduate student at the Rochester Institute of Technology School of Film and Animation pursuing his MFA in film production. Prior to R.I.T. Troy studied theatre production and worked for 4 years in Stage Management. Now dedicated to film, *Evenly Matched* is Troy's third short and first documentary.

While not always the director of the films he works on, Troy frequently works as First Assistant Director, repurposing what learned as a stage manager. On all projects, Troy values blending the silly and the serious, an attitude that can be found in his other works: *Thank You, Fifteen!* and *Balcony, Pursued by a Cricket*, and his upcoming film *Drive-Out!*

Director Statement:

"Relative to a majority of players, I am still a new player to competitive Yu-Gi-Oh. Having read my first card in the fall of 2020 while in college at the peak of Covid-19, I had to teach myself the game with no in-person community, until 2023 when I began playing in tournaments and made Yu-Gi-Oh a large part of my adult life. But I am a filmmaker first and gamer second. While studying at R.I.T. I began to passionately bring up the game to my new friends until many were interested in learning. *Evenly Matched* was then conceived when I said to myself Oh lord, they are going to hate this. lets film it!.

Gaming communities often question what the new player experience looks like, as finding ways to grow can be difficult when there are many negative stigmas about gamers and the games they play. Having been in many, some of those stigmas are justified. But to me, the friendships and memories made in these spaces outweigh the negatives. *Evenly Matched* is my contribution and love-letter to Yu-Gi-Oh! players.

Heavily inspired by *Spellbound 2002*, *Navalny 2022*, and the reality television series *Dragula 2024* (Yes, three wildly different sources), I hope that *Evenly Matched* inspires you to share your passions and explore other's, however ridiculous they may be."

Mall Video Store

Director(s) Spotlight: Nick Nummerdor, Andrew J. Morgan

Director Biography:

Growing up together in the industrial port city of Muskegon, Michigan director's Nick Nummerdor and Andrew Morgan share a penchant to travel the path less walked when it comes to their filmmaking and subject matter. The pair of directors find that in between the cracks and fissures of our culture, there lies the fascinating lives and tales of American experience that are often written off as unimportant, mundane, or obscure.

They have completed dozens of projects together. Their best known film Vannin' successfully screened at numerous festivals and was a featured film on Amazon Prime in 2018. Their follow up Sneeze Lake won top awards on the festival circuit in 2020 before launching on Fandor & Peacock.

Their short docs include Concrete Dreams, North Branch, Hill Climb, Endless Ride, & Mall Video Store. In addition they have won three Telly Awards for non profit documentary work and have crewed on numerous significant films.

Director Statement:

"As the world of streaming becomes increasingly crowded and fragmented, there seems to be a growing renewed interest in physical media and shared, in-person experiences. Record stores have made a comeback, while video rental spaces have largely disappeared. This contrast invites us to think about how we watch films today and what might be lost when those spaces go away.

We set out to make a film that is both enjoyable and reflective, one that considers the role movies have played in shaping our lives. Over the course of a year - Rather than using traditional lit interviews, we leaned toward a mostly vérité style, letting moments unfold naturally and seeing what emerged during the filming process.

At its core, this project is some escapism from the current news cycle, an invitation to spend time inside a mall video store, and hopefully a good time (...and maybe you will see your favorite movie in the background)."

Tea Time

Director(s) Spotlight: Ellie May Gilmer

Spotlight on Ellie May Gilmer: Ellie currently lives in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada and is a recent graduate of Sault College where she made 'Tea Time.'

Ellie loves visiting Lake Superior, including it many times in her short films.

Love in All the Small Places

Director(s) Spotlight: Rebeka Herron & Sarah Cleveland

Director Biography:

Rebeka Herron is a disabled mixed-raced Latina filmmaker based in Northern Ontario. Alumna of Women in the Director's Chair, and the Producers' Lab at the Canadian Film Centre, and member of industry organizations Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television, ACTRA, and the Canadian Media Producers Association.

Rebeka has been making waves with her diverse portfolio of work including her directorial debut Armchair Traveller, animated series A Witch Named Agatha which won Best Animation at Emerging Lens Cultural Film Festival, and Broken Bones which won the Forest City Film Festival Pitch awarding her \$60,000 in prizes to direct her second feature.

After decades in the industry, multi award-winning leading actress Sarah Cleveland makes her directorial debut with Love In All The Small Places. With extensive credits across projects for Netflix, Amazon, Hallmark, Lifetime, and more, she has built a reputation for grounded, emotionally precise performances. Transitioning behind the camera, she brings a comprehensive understanding of production and an actor-focused leadership style that champions authentic, character-driven storytelling. Sarah is committed to crafting work in which audiences find characters both relatable and genuine, while fostering a collaborative set where cast and crew are valued as integral partners in the creative process.

Deaf Date

Director(s) Spotlight: David Levy

David Levy is a Toronto based creator and Second City alum.

Having spent years on the comedy stage, David has learned the most relatable and best comedy often comes from the specific, awkward moments of our own lives

CHECK PLEASE

Director(s) Spotlight: Shane Chung

Director Biography:

SHANE CHUNG is a Korean-American filmmaker who enjoys challenging mainstream narratives around Asians and Trojan-Horsing thorny emotions and complex topics into genre films.

His latest short is the martial arts comedy 'CHECK PLEASE', which is one part a tribute to '90s Hong Kong action flicks and one part a bighearted reflection on the in-betweenness of holding an Asian-American identity. The short has screened at Fantastic Fest 2024, Palm Springs International Shortsfest 2025, the Chicago International Film Festival 2025, and won a 'Best Director' prize at the BFI Future Film Festival 2025.

He is currently developing 'CHECK PLEASE' into a feature.

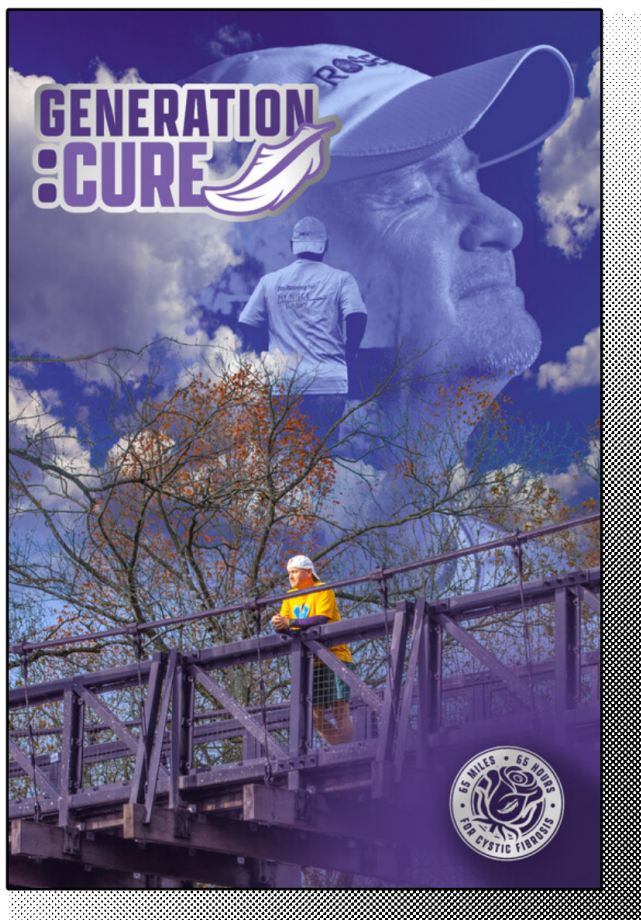
Director Statement:

"CHECK PLEASE is heavily influenced by schlocky, zany, stunt-filled action comedy and martial arts films (Jackie Chan, Stephen Chow) because first and foremost I wanted to make a crowdpleaser. I think the best movies are like magic tricks in that you walk away after seeing them asking how did they do that?!

And yet I also wanted to use the fun of the action genre to trick the audience into sitting with a movie that talks about a theme more personal to me: the in-betweenness of holding a Korean-American identity. I address a few questions about belonging and representation: what is Koreanness? Is it innate? Can you gain or lose it? (Jay attempts to reclaim his perceived loss in Koreanness by attaching himself to superficial cultural Korean rituals, like picking up the bill.) And is there such thing as a bad Korean on screen? I wanted to portray Asian Americans in film that go beyond a tired immigrant storyline or a discrimination storyline and instead focus on the relatable internal struggle of being too Korean for America, but being too American for Korea. This is a resonant theme for many, my hope is that this film can help them feel that they aren't alone!"

Block 13 - Run for It: Generation: Cure

A short and a feature documentary about men pushing themselves and their bodies to raise awareness for important causes.



GENERATION: CURE begins as a run—but quickly becomes something more. Through the story of Chad and the loss that drives him, the film captures how a community rallies around cystic fibrosis, turning grief into momentum. What unfolds is not just a tribute, but the start of something bigger: a call to show up, give back, and help shape what comes next.



Brett Langolf – Co-Director

Brett Langolf is an award-winning director with a background in advertising and the Founder of contentEXP Group (CXG), a creative collective operating at the intersection of film and brand storytelling. His work is rooted in authenticity bringing real stories to life in ways that inspire action and connect with audiences. Drawing from his experience in advertising, Brett approaches filmmaking with a sharp understanding of narrative, audience, and impact, translating complex ideas into compelling visual stories. His films and branded documentaries have been recognized by the American Advertising Federation and international film competitions. Based in Columbus, Ohio, Brett focuses on purpose-driven work that bridges storytelling and real-world change.

Alex Boydston – Co-Director

Alex Boydston is a director, cinematographer, and editor known for crafting visually compelling, emotionally grounded stories. As Director of Photography and Editor at contentEXP Group (CXG), Alex brings a meticulous eye for composition, pacing, and tone—shaping narratives that feel both intimate and cinematic. His work spans documentary and branded film, with a focus on capturing authentic moments and translating them into powerful visual experiences. His collaborative approach and technical precision are central to the storytelling process, helping bring human-centered stories to life.

I came in thinking this was a fundraising run. But when we let the story lead, it became something much bigger — a story we had to tell. This isn't about inspiration. It's about what happens next — and what you choose to do.

-Brett Langolf





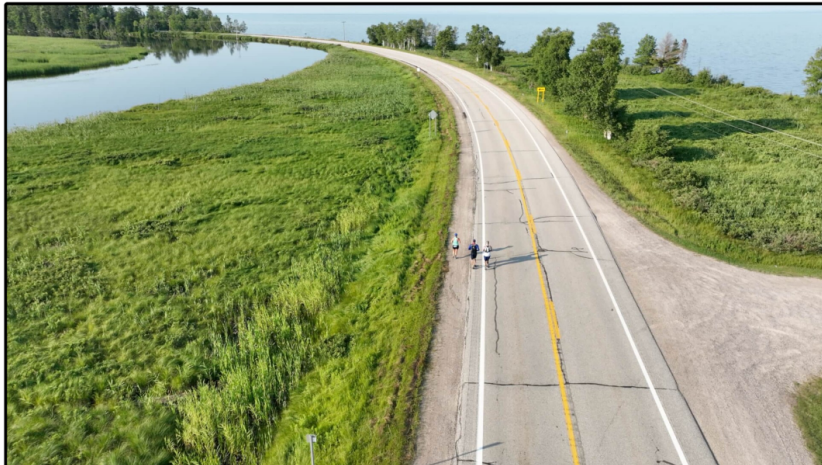
TRI FOR HOPE

documents Brandon Hillaker's extraordinary 400-mile personal triathlon across Michigan, journeying from Hell to Paradise. Over 96 grueling hours, Brandon bikes 330 miles, swims 5 miles, and runs 65 miles to shatter mental health stigma and offer hope to those battling suicidal ideation. Having survived a suicide attempt in 2013, Brandon spent years rebuilding his life through recovery and advocacy, later founding the Delta College Green Ribbon Initiative. This intimate documentary captures the intense mental and physical effort of his trek and the profound internal purpose driving it, proving that the path out of personal darkness is forged through resilience, open conversation, and community.

Director Biography - James Dagg

James Dagg is a Michigan-based independent documentarian specializing in endurance sports, outdoor life, and the healing power of both. An endurance athlete himself, Dagg brings a unique insider's perspective to his films, drawing upon creativity leveraged in a 34-year career in engineering and design. He focuses on raw, inspiring narratives of individuals overcoming adversity to find wellness. His latest documentary, TRI FOR HOPE, chronicles a man's extraordinary 400-mile personal triathlon from Hell to Paradise, Michigan, highlighting the profound limits of human resilience and mental health recovery.

Still frame from TRI FOR HOPE



Director statement continued on next page...

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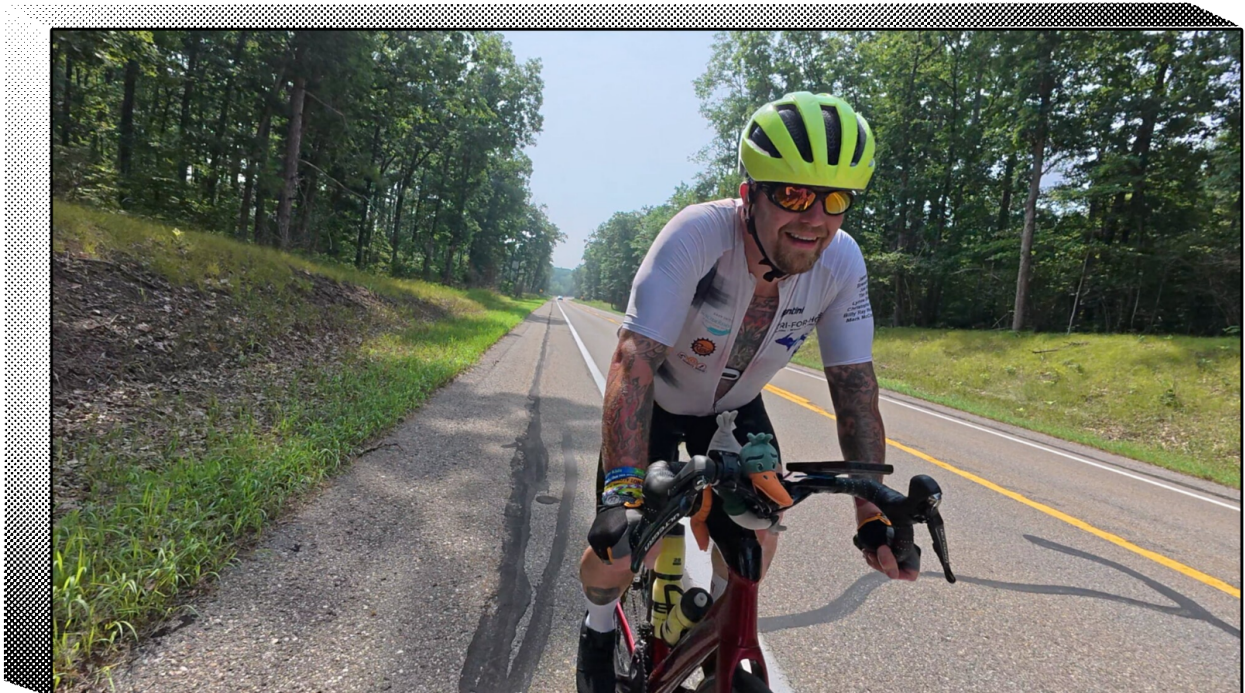
Director Statement

Endurance sports are about more than just physical stamina; they are a test of the human spirit. As an endurance athlete myself, I understand the unique mental space one enters when the body is pushed to its limits. When I met Brandon Hillaker and he told me of his personal mental health journey that had inspired his plan to bike, swim and run from Hell to Paradise, Michigan, I recognized the symbolism but was, understandably, leery of the potential outcome.

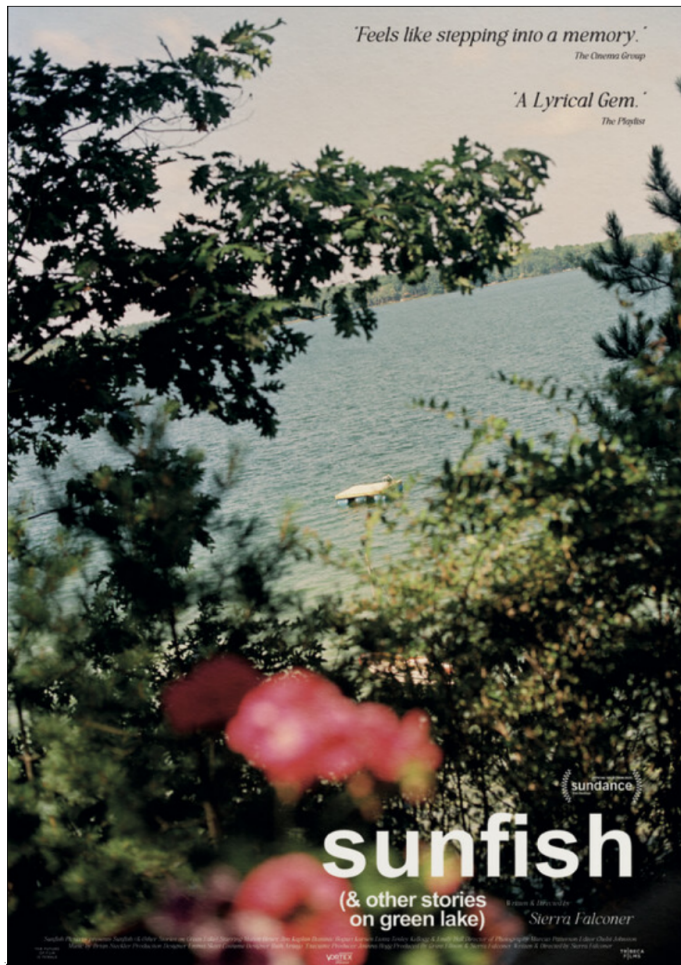
My goal was to see beyond the staggering statistics of a 400-mile triathlon \and capture Brandon's mental and emotional journey.

What I ultimately witnessed deeply moved me.

By following Brandon through his preparation and the 4 day trial across Michigan's landscapes, I wanted the audience to experience the reality of his effort—not to admire him from a distance, but to find their own hope and joy in his perseverance. This film is my attempt to tell the story of the everyday battle for mental wellness, proving that while the path to recovery is never easy, it is possible if we surround ourselves with the right team and are willing to keep moving forward.



Still photo from TRI for Hope



Sunfish (& Other Stories On Green Lake)

Sunfish (& Other Stories On Green Lake) is an anthology following the residents of a small town and the lake that binds them together.

Director Biography - Sierra Falconer

Sierra Falconer is a Michigan raised, Los Angeles based screenwriter and director. She earned her BFA in film history from Wesleyan University and her MFA in film directing from UCLA. Her UCLA thesis film and feature directorial debut, *SUNFISH (& OTHER STORIES ON GREEN LAKE)* premiered in competition at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival, where she was named one of the top breakout voices by IndieWire. Sierra is represented by WME.

Director Statement

I grew up in rural Michigan, in a town of less than five hundred people that halos a small freshwater lake.

It's the kind of town where everyone knows everyone, and people stay for generations.

My infrequent visits to the lake are like a step into the past.

Everything feels just the way it did when I left some seven or eight years ago, which, I imagine, is the way it's always felt--since my grandfather's grandfather loaded the back of his truck with spare mahogany cores, claimed his land on the lake, and built the cabin that would one day be ours. I've described *Sunfish* as a personal work of autobiography, but the film is not autobiographical in the traditional sense.

The events that unfold are not transcribed from my childhood or foundational years because the narrative is in service of place. I am concerned with locating a specificity of place,

community ethos, and ecological memory, with each chapter capturing a different piece of the Green Lake whole. Some elements of place, like the old rope hammock,

the *Sunfish* sailboat, or the sounds of wind chimes and loon calls, can be simply incorporated into the mise-en-scene or soundscape of the film.

Other, more thematic, idea-based, lived elements of place, like the deafening boredom, the sudden need to believe in something, and the gravitational pull that the lake has on its residents, require careful weaving throughout the narrative-plotting and character-arcs to be fully realized.

Put all together, *Sunfish* is an invitation to experience what it feels like to live and grow in small town Michigan.



The Venues

All films will be screened at Bayliss Public Library, a Superior District Library, located at 541 Library Drive, and at the LSSU Arts Center located at 650 W. Easterday Avenue

Ratings

Many of these films have not yet been rated by the Motion Picture Association. Please read the full descriptions online, watch the trailers, and choose responsibly.

How to Fest

Where to Stay

For information about hotels and motels that are offering discounted lodging to Soo Film Festival-goers, please see the Soo Film festival website at soofilmfestival.org

Where to Eat

For information about restaurants that are offering discounts to Soo Film Festival-goers, please see the Soo Film festival website at soofilmfestival.org

For more information about the area, visit the Sault Ste. Marie Pure Michigan website at saultstemarie.com

(operated by the Sault Ste. Marie Convention & Visitors Bureau).

Roll the Credits!

A huge thank you to everyone who helped
make this year's Soo Film Festival happen!

Everything Classic Bridge FM

Roberts P. and Ella B. Hudson Foundation

The dedicated and talented filmmakers who shared their films,
without whom this festival would not exist!

The filmmakers who traveled to the Soo for Q&A sessions
about their films. You make it a real film festival.

Everyone at the Soo Theatre for being so understanding this year.
Adam, Noah, Nathan and the rest of the staff at LSSU Arts Center
The hotels and restaurants who provided a festival discount
Linda Hoath and the Sault Ste. Marie Convention & Visitors Bureau

Bayliss Public Library, a Superior District Library

Special thanks to all of our film judges who spent countless hours
reviewing our submissions. We could not do it without you!

Our tireless Festival Committee - Jason Markstrom, Allison Youngs,
Pat Egan, Susan James, Carrie DeWeese, and Liz Brugman

Liz Brugman, webmaster

Makenna Pastewski, program guide creator

Everyone who helped after this guide went to press.

Everyone who volunteered, came to a movie,
created a buzz on social media, or wished us well.

Thanks for your energy and enthusiasm!

Save the Date!

**SOO FILM
FESTIVAL**
2027

September 15-19



Shirts, hoodies, and other items are available in many colors and styles for delivery from our Bonfire store.



The most up-to-date festival news is online.



Find Soo Film Festival on Facebook at
facebook.com/SooFilmFestival



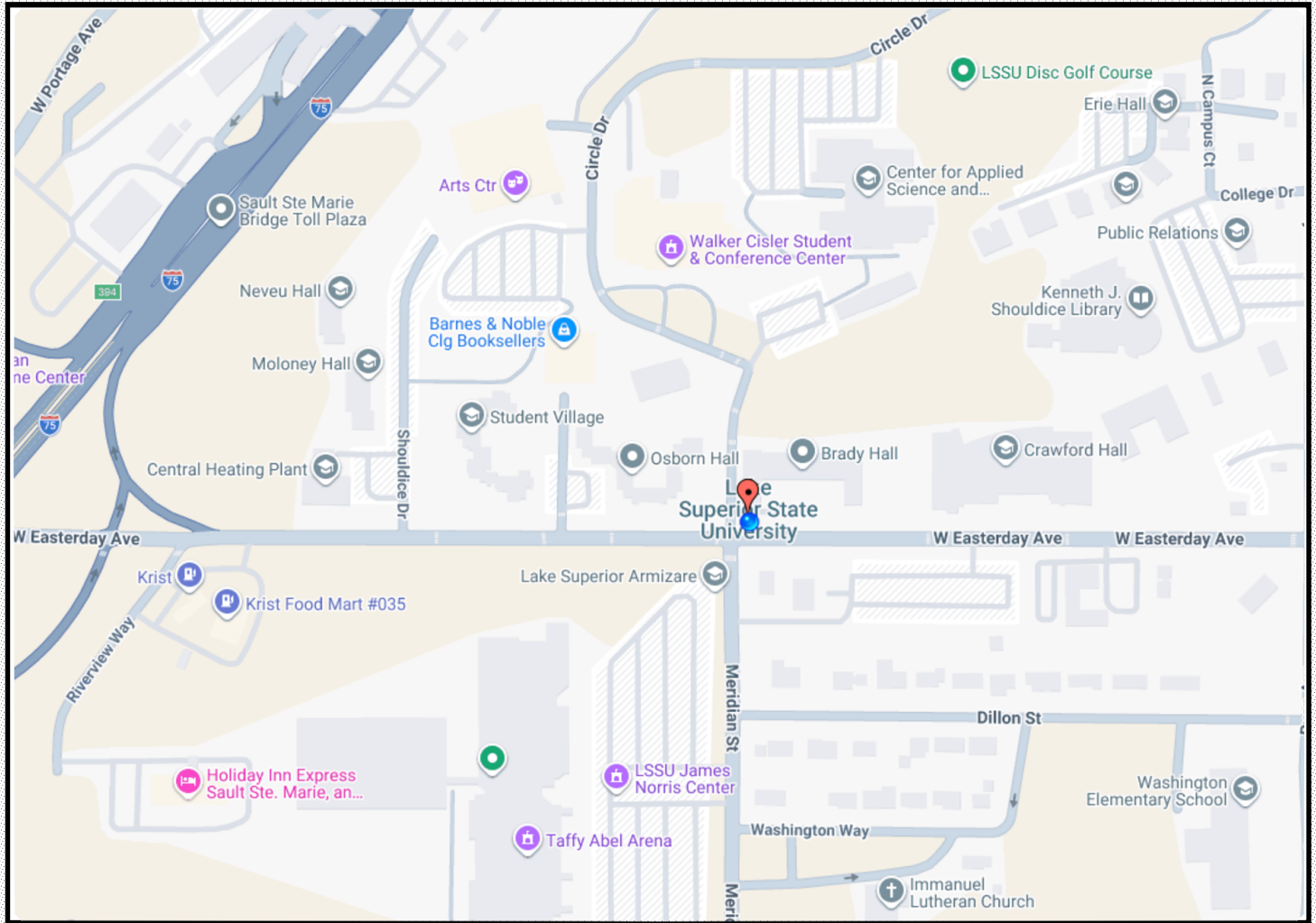
Instagram and Threads @soofilmfestival



and on Bluesky @soofilmfest.bsky.social.

**SOO FILM
FESTIVAL**

Map of Sault Ste. Marie



**SOO FILM
FESTIVAL**

Soo Film Festival

Phone: 906-440-6086

SooFilmFestival.Org

Soofilmfest@gmail.com

September 16th-20th

Sault Ste. Marie MI

About us

Soo Film Festival, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote and host film and allied arts festivals in the City of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Soo Film Festival, Inc. seeks to showcase the work of independent and emerging filmmakers from the Great Lakes of North America while bringing movies back to downtown Sault Ste. Marie and the historic Soo Theatre.

Our Mission: Great lakes, Great movies!