



SO INDEPENDENT
FILM FESTIVAL
AND AWARDS

official film festival programme



20th-28th November
vue Picadilly
Circus

INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF **DARIO SALAS SOMMER**



Days 1 & 2

Photo Source: **Onegin**



20th November

17:00

Amazons

From the ancient North Caucasus comes a story of women who fought like storms. Warriors, sisters, spirits of the highlands. Their memory lives again on screen. Directed by Samara Saralpova.

Q&A

~ GRAND OPENING ~

18:00

Reception

19:00

UBI SUNT

A meditative reflection on life and death, loss and memory. Comprising a single long take, the film mirrors the unbroken flow of the existential experience. Directed by Natalia Jezova.

19:30

Onegin

In 19th century Russia, Eugene Onegin lives a life of privilege and detachment, turning away from friendship and love until he is left with only regret. Based on Pushkin's classic tale, the film is directed by Martha Fiennes and stars Ralph Fiennes and Liv Ullmann.

21st November

17:00

Messengers of Light

A poetic visual journey from the Nativity to the Transfiguration, portraying angels, saints, and prophets through luminous reflections and imagery. Directed by Lydia Grigorieva.

18:00

Lydia Grigorieva. I Choose to Live

A story of spiritual freedom and human resilience. A journey where life transforms into poetry, leaving an enduring trace in the hearts of those who listen to her piercing voice and witness her extraordinary path. Directed by Maria Bregman.

Q&A

19:00

Swallowtail and Dragonfly

Based on the true story of one courageous woman's journey from glittering stardom in 1930's Shanghai through war and revolution, sustained by her gift for beauty and an epic love that would never die. Directed by Julia Joy Pierrepont III. Produced by Dawen Zhang.

Q&A

21:30

The Elysian Field

Livingstone's journey aboard a vintage bus becomes a pilgrimage of love and remembrance, shared with fellow travelers chasing their dreams amid the fading rhythms of village life. Directed by Pradip Kurbah.

Day 3

Photo Source: **The Trap**

22nd November

15:00 *New Year's Miracle*

On New Year's Eve, several families face comic mishaps that intertwine through an unconventional Santa Claus, who, without a beard or gifts, still brings a touch of holiday magic. Directed by Oksana Stashenko.

16:40 *The Trap*

When gunshots shatter the calm of a school, questions arise... Why did a student bring a gun? Are the classmates victims, villains, or something in between? Directed by Sergey Baryshev.

17:30 *Rhythms of Dream*

Varya dreams of winning the nation's biggest dance competition with her partner Nik, a popular young blogger. But, when her secret is revealed on the eve of the finals, the two must confront prejudice and pressure that reach far beyond the dance floor. Directed by Irina Barovskaya.

~ SIFFA SPECIAL SCREENINGS ~

19:30 *Networking*

20:00 *Fans Only*

Joel Van der Molen teams up with industry legend Tommy Gunn for an unfiltered journey into the adult film world, challenging stereotypes and uncovering the human stories behind a misunderstood industry.

Speech

21:40 *Evacuation*

During World War II, Natalia and her daughter Galya flee east with other evacuees in search of safety. Amid the chaos of a crowded station, they are separated, and Natalia begins a desperate search to find her child. Directed by Farkhat Sharipov.





Day 4

Photo Source: *The Postman*

23rd November

12:00

Qingtong and Kuihua

Based on Cao Wenxuan's novel *Bronze and Sunflower*, the story unfolds in a Southern Chinese water town during the 1960's and 70's. When young Kuihua loses her father in a storm, she's taken in by Qingtong's kind but struggling family. Together, they endure hardship with courage and love. Directed by Chen Kunhou.

Speech

14:30

Palma 2

A former pilot moves his family to the countryside, where their quiet life changes when a bear cub named Mansur and their dog Palma are taken by poachers. As the animals fight their way home through the wild, their new friends embark on a journey that reminds them what it means to be a true family. Directed by Vladimir Kandaurov.

16:50

The Postman

An autistic postman, loved by his town, replaces death notices with comforting "letters from the front", a tender deception that cannot escape the watchful eyes of wartime authorities. Directed by Andrey Razenkov.

18:50

Escape

Best Friends Carla and Tamsin set out for a peaceful island getaway, but their trip turns deadly when they're kidnapped by a criminal gang. The captors soon learn they've underestimated their victims, as the women fight back in a gripping battle for survival and empowerment. Directed by Howard J. Ford.

Q&A

21:00

A Siege Diary

Olga is walking through the whole city to her father. She has just buried her husband and is sure she will soon die from hunger. Directed by Andrey Zaitsev

Day 5

Photo Source: **Besieged**

24th November

17:00

Besieged

When a coup d'etat erupts, three foreign master's students Elias, Christie and Daniel flee into the mountains to escape the new regime. As they struggle to survive in the wild, their friendship and love are pushed to the breaking point. Directed by Gonzalez Pasaran

~ SIFFA SPECIAL EVENT ~

19:00

A Talk by Joel Van der Molen

This engaging session offers valuable perspectives on independent filmmaking, authentic storytelling, and the art of connecting with audiences by the award-winning filmmaker Joel Van der Molen, director of *Fans Only* and *Gipsy Billionaire*. A must-attend event for filmmakers, creatives, and film lovers alike.

20:30

SIFFA Shorts Competition

The first day of the vibrant showcase of emerging talent and bold storytelling. From mythic journeys to urban realities, these short films explore human connection, loss, and discovery in strikingly original ways.

The Shore of Promises

A lyrical fantasy about a child's search for solace, by Joy Shi.

Only Daughters

A tender coming-of-age story of two sisters finding their path, by Noemi Forti.

The Turtle

A moving tale of family, memory and reconciliation by Moris Amiryani.

Machine of Quiet Killing

A haunting psychological thriller of grief and obsession by Raphael Allason.

Snatcher

An urban romance born from guilt and curiosity by Jasdeep Sagar.

The Boomerang

A sharp moral drama about deception and consequence by Sergey Baryshev.

Absent

An introspective portrait of presence, loss, and time by Tahid Barghi Valenjah.

Q&A





Day 6

Photo Source: **Legends of the Eternal Snow**

25th November

17:00

Flying with Fins

Q&A

Artist and experimenter Alzek Misheff embarks on a philosophical journey through art and life. Blending painting, performance, and music, the film explores creativity, memory, and the timeless search for meaning. Directed by Maria Averina.

19:00

Legends of the Eternal Snow

Amid the vast snowy expanses of Yakutia, an aging man and his companions escort a young bride promised to an old prince. As the harsh journey unfolds, the girl's longing for freedom stirs compassion in the young Nykus, whose feelings soon turn to defiance. When fate leads them to an abandoned hut hiding secrets from the past, love, guilt and destiny collide in the frozen silence. Directed by Maria Averina.

20:30

SIFFA Shorts Competition

Day two of SIFFA's shorts competition programme celebrating originality and emotional depth through stories that span cultures and genres. Linked by themes of self-discovery and transformation, these films explore how people face change and find meaning in unexpected places.

W: A Return to Oz

A haunting visual journey through memory, music, and space by Daniel Howard-Baker.

Hear Me Out

A family drama uncovering buried truths by Anna Lee.

The Interval

A sharp clash between two rival actors by Kirill Khaletsky.

Maru and My Friend's Wedding

A haunting psychological thriller of grief and obsession by Raphael A touching reflection on identity and friendship by Hyunbin Lee.

The Breadwinner

A bittersweet tale of pride and fragile relationships by Tatiana Fedyunina.

Q&A

Tidal Roots

A meditative look at life and belonging by the sea by Peter Weller

Days 7 & 8

Photo Source: **Battleship Potemkin**

26th November

17:00

White Tiger

As World War II nears its end and the battles grow ever more brutal, a mysterious and seemingly indestructible German tank, the "White Tiger" begins to haunt the front lines. Directed by Karen Shakhnazarov.

19:10

Taymetov: The Forgotten Hero

The film follows Abdusamat Taymetov, the first Uzbek pilot and war hero, who on the final day of World War II is tasked with a secret mission... To deliver Germany's act of surrender and the Victory Banner from Berlin to Moscow. Directed by Eldar Yuldashev.

Q&A

20:10

The Last Frontier

In October 1941, three and a half thousand young cadets from the Podolsk schools were sent to defend the Ilyinsky line near Moscow. For twelve days, they held back the German advance, outnumbered but unyielding, in a heroic stand that helped save the capital. Directed by Vadim Shmelev.

27th November

17:00

NeGogen

Grig leaves behind his successful urban life to pursue art in distant, beautiful Lagos. But, as his past refuses to let go, he must fight for the right to live and create on his own terms.

~ CLOSING FILM & AWARDS ~

18:30

Reception

19:30

Battleship Potemkin

Based on true historical events, the film reflects the defining social forces of the 20th century. The pursuit of freedom, the fight against tyranny, and the defense of human dignity, calling for unity and equality among people. Its groundbreaking form continues to shape the art and language of cinema to this day. Directed by Sergei Eisenstein.

Awards Ceremony

This ceremony presents the announcements of this year's winning films! This evening marks the culmination of the festival's screenings and is followed up by the **Awards Celebration** on the 28th of November in *Dear Darling* club Mayfair.



Thank you for attending this year's festival, see you at the Awards Celebration in Mayfair on the 28th of November!

