



PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

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Screenings / PTW programming

Philadelphia 250!

Welcome to the 19th Annual Philadelphia Independent Film Festival—an ever-evolving celebration of bold storytelling, global meets local perspectives, technology, and the enduring spirit of independent filmmaking. This year’s program features a carefully curated slate of local, national and international films amplifying emerging and established voices whose work challenges conventions and deepens cross-cultural dialogue. Hosted at the historic Ethical Society, our screenings unfold within a space rooted in ethical inquiry, intellectual exchange, and community engagement.

Building on years of curatorial experience and a deep archive of filmmaker relationships, PIFF continues to expand its role not only as an exhibition platform but as a site of networking and conversation. This includes our ongoing PTW discussions around the Tokenization of stories—exploring how narrative ownership, digital provenance, and new economic models are reshaping the way films are financed, distributed, and experienced in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

We extend our sincere thanks to Philly Tech Week and the Philadelphia film community for their continued collaboration and support in fostering innovation at the intersection of cinema and technology.

Welcome to the festival! PIFF #19

TICKETS:



Opening Night

Tuesday, May 5th, 2026

All screenings are located at the Philadelphia ETHICAL SOCIETY ~ 1906 Rittenhouse Square.

7:45 PM - 9:30 PM ~ FEAR OF HEIGHTS

(Philadelphia, PA) Documentary.

Director **Richard Murray**

102 min

In 1983, film student Rich Murray was handed \$20,000 in a brown paper bag by a hustler named 'Butch.' These were the funds he used to direct his first music video for a local Philly rocker named Alan Mann. That video for the song "Christmas on the Block", went on to become the first and perhaps only video by an unsigned artist to play on regular rotation on MTV.

Using "Christmas on the Block" as a framing device, Murray illuminates Mann's larger story - and how he could have, should of and almost did make it, but didn't because of his excesses, and a tragic accidental death. The film also turns the lens sharply on the film's director (Murray) and how his own excesses might have resulted in the same tragic trajectory, that but for wisdom and luck, did not.



6:20 PM ~ 7:25 PM. A Schlumpy Funk Movie (Pittsburgh) EXPERIMENTAL.

Director **Stephen Selly** Cast: **Laura Jean McLaughlin, Donald Warhola, Nicole**

Dezelon. 40 min.

Is this real? It is not a documentary. Schlumpy Funk is an art movement that is alive and vibrant in Pittsburgh. Intuition and serendipity play a large part in the creation of Schlumpy Funk Art.

SHORT: Letter To Earth (NYC) EXPERIMENTAL. Director Jill Sigman / Thinkdance

10:06 min. Letter to Earth is a video poem of remorse and remediation that speaks to humans' extractive relationship with the natural world and the need for listening and healing.



TICKETS:

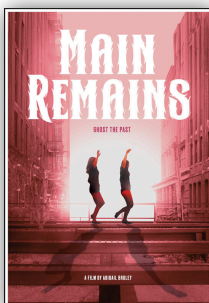


SHORT: What Comes Back to Us (NYC) EXPERIMENTAL

Director **Jill Sigman/Thinkdance 6:15 min.** What Comes Back to Us is a reflection on self, lineage, and how our intergenerational pasts inform our futures. Sound and memories both come back to us, here in a private ritual through the literal digging of roots and unearthing of the past/present/future body. Sigman, Lucacel, and Norderval use a multi-modal palette of sound, dance, and ceramics to explore these themes and investigate how knowing the past allows us to move forward into presence and healing.

SHORT: Drift (Philadelphia, PA) EXPERIMENTAL

Director **Harper Austin 9:22 min.** A video triptych meditation on the primordial beach: what does it mean to be human in relation to nature?



Main Remains (Philadelphia, PA) Director/Writer Abigail Bruly. Producer Laris Kreslins. Cast: Marisa DaBice 10:06 min.

Main Remains begins when a freak lightning strike lands Main in a strange, liminal afterlife, stuck between the past and whatever comes next. Armed with ghostly powers, she's supposed to make amends with those she resents—but instead, she weaponizes her teenage diary, forcing her estranged family into absurd acts of devotion.



Wednesday, May 6th

All screenings are located at the Philadelphia ETHICAL SOCIETY ~ 1906 Rittenhouse Square.

9:35 PM ~ 10:35 PM

Philadelphia Shorts meets the world v1

Last Call! (LA/Philadelphia, PA) Horror. Director/Producer Liz Holland. Writer/Producer Sean Michael Conway Cast: Amanda Schoonover, Sean Michael Conway. 11:00 min. Two bartenders find themselves trapped inside their bar when a mysterious bottle shatters, infecting their minds to turn on themselves.

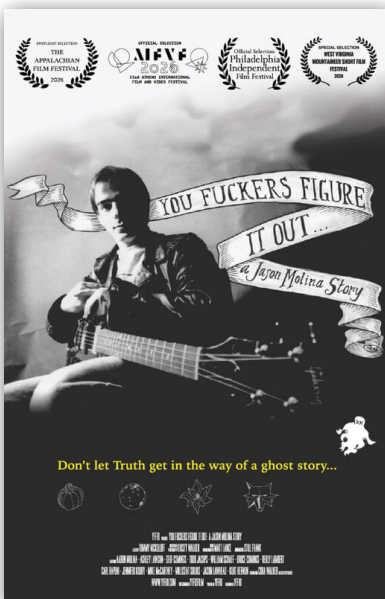
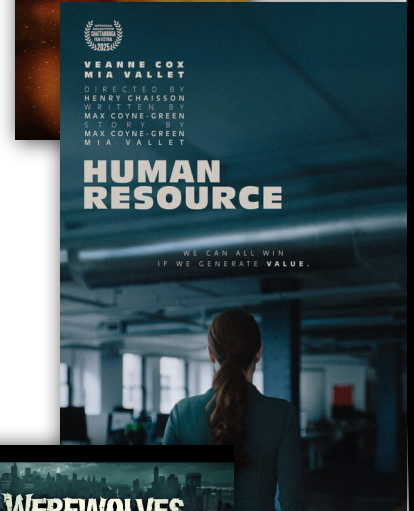
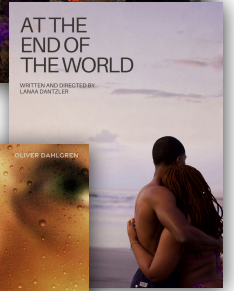
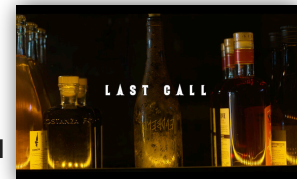
The Soup (Philadelphia, PA) Horror. Director/Writer Gabe Castro. Writer Kat Kushin. DP Roland Boyden. 9:50 min. Two friends conduct a ritual in hopes of making a meaningful connection with the spirit realm.

At the End of the World (Philadelphia, PA) Romantic Drama. Director/Writer Lanaa Dantzer. Producer Jewel Imani. Cast Brier Evans, Kymani Miller. DP Adam Reim. Gaffer Gavin Reagan. PA Madison Pilgrim, Vashti Oliver. 6:50 min. Seventeen-year-old Yvette Jones learns how to practice love as an act of justice over the course of a summer in Wildwood, New Jersey with a boy named Ernest.

HVAC (Los Angeles, CA) Queer, Coming-Of-Age. Director/Writer Jackson McKeenan. Producer Adam Callahan Cast: Cole Doman, Oliver Dahlgren. 10:54 min. In a blue-collar Missouri town, a 13-year-old HVAC apprentice grappling with confusing desires becomes entangled in a surreal, dangerous encounter at the local theatre—where longing and innocence bleed together in one irreversible night.

Human Resource (NYC / Philadelphia, PA)* Thriller. Director Henry Chaisson. Writer Max Coyne-Green. Producer Dawn Han, Mia Vallet, Luca Alan. Co-Producer Zahir Saleh. Cinematographer Justin Derry. Costume Design Katharina Windemuth. Executive Producer Frankie Seratch. 18:45 min. A desperate HR manager will do anything to save her staff from termination during a brutal hostile takeover.

Werewolves in Brooklyn (NYC) AI Drama. Director Justin Suarez 2:28 min. Set in 1988 Red Hook, this 3-minute AI-generated film follows 13-year-old Danny Rodriguez, a brave Brooklyn kid who's had enough of adults blaming urban legends for missing kids. He decides to investigate for himself, only to discover that the myth might be real. What starts as frustration turns into a mission. Brooklyn needs someone to protect it. And Danny steps up.



7:40 PM ~ 9:20 PM

You Fuckers Figure it Out: Jason Molina Story DOCUMENTARY (Amherst, Ohio) Director Tommy Nickoloff. DP Kristy Walker. Producer Tommy Nickoloff. Drone Cinematographer Matt Lance, Rudy Juricic. 92 min. Conjure the spirit of indie-rock icon Jason Molina (1973-2013) with Ohio insiders who illuminate Truth about his coming of age on Lake Erie, escaping artless steel town indifference, and manifesting the legendary band, Songs: Ohia, as they celebrate contradictions that tether Jason's raunchy humor, propensity to lie, refusal to interpret lyrics, and untimely death into a haunting legacy unconfined by the record vault. YOU FUCKERS FIGURE IT OUT

Tommy began producing his debut film, "You Fuckers Figure It Out: A Jason Molina Story," in 2021. He also directed, edited, illustrated, and self-funded the feature-length documentary. It felt less like a new direction than an inevitable return—to Jason, to Lorain, and to the stories that shaped them both.

"This film is for Jason, his family, friends, fans, and every town where the American Dream was born, died, and still offers a second chance," he says.



Wednesday, May 6th (cont.)



All screenings are located at the Philadelphia ETHICAL SOCIETY - 1906 Rittenhouse Square.

6:20 PM - 7:20 PM

SCIENCE FICTION the 2nd campaign.

The Trinity (Vineland, NJ) Science Fiction. Writer, Director, Producer Manny Mertis. 37:23 min. The Trinity is a supernatural thriller pilot following Trinity Sanderson, a dedicated pathologist whose life unravels after being terrified by unexplained visions of Joshua Leeds's victims. When Joshua, a powerful businessman, unleashes a new dimension of ruthlessness through mind control, he sets out to acquire all of Earth's energy resources.



Texas Strange (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) Science Fiction. Writer, Director, Producer Justin Eugene Evans. Cast: Jason R. Moore, Michael B. Tabb, Adam Dunnells. Cinematographer Luis Caffesse. Composer Alexander Arntzen. Sound Designer Danilo Crnogorac, DA. Visual effects Annie Caps-Wightman and Hussam Eissa. 9:23 min. After two months on a distant planet, John Thurston returns to his ragtag crew of criminals and thieves. He expects a heroes welcome...instead they've held themselves a vote.

Deep Soup (Netherlands). Science Fiction. Director/Writer Luna Maurer and Roel Wouters Producer Corine Meijers. Cast: Hugo Hamlet. 4:48 min. DEEP SOUP takes the viewer on an enchanting journey, in which the world of matter takes on a new meaning. It is a celebration of the wondrous interaction between objects and the forces that act upon them, with a central message that the complexity and beauty of our human existence stem from the friction and collisions we experience every day.



Closure (Brooklyn, NY) Science Fiction. Writer, Director, Producer Ashley L. Canfield. Producer John Anthony Torres. Cinematographer CSamuel T. Wilsonast: Cast: John Anthony Torres, Nancy Gomez, Irma Cadiz, Glori Dei. 8:30 min. Kevin and his sister Emily reunite to navigate the complexities of their mother's passing, revealing hidden truths.



The 2400 (Canada/USA) Science Fiction. Director/Writer David Scott Titus. Writer Julie Bruns. Producer Phoebe Titus, Julie Bruns, Steven Kammerer, Polly Pierce, Adrian Neblett. Cast: Julie Bruns, Luis Raul, Steven Kammerer, Bryce Martel, Stephen Fallis. 5:00 min. An authoritarian regime tracks people by drones, hunting down people with expired residency cards.

5:20 PM - 6:05 PM

PIFF Music Video Festival #19

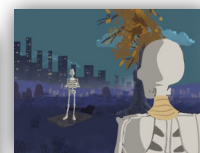
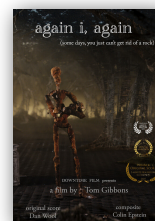
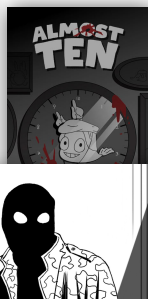
- Mother Mary (NOLA) 5:27
- Blue Theory (Netherlands) 1:50 min.
- Paper Doll - Maia Dobbs (New York) 4:10 min.
- Sleeping in Puplic - Jefferson Berry (Philadelphia, PA) 4:46 min.
- Blow Me Away - Noir Addiction (Scranton, PA) 4:06 min.
- Paper Towels - Blacklite District (Whitestone, NY) 4:07 min.
- Match Made in Hell II - 9TAILSHADOWWOLF (Philadelphia, PA) 5:17 min.
- BuddhaMachine=HMA (Philadelphia, PA) 10:30 min
- Ghost - Brina Palencia (Texas) 3:53 min.
- Nyx - Toni Leo (feat. Lupe Dragon) (New Jersey) 4:57 min.



4:30 - 5:15 PM

FESTIVAL DE ANIMACION! #19

- JEEM 1983 (Lebanon) 15:40
- 35 Days (Ann Arbor, MI) 6:49
- God Dam (New Jersey) 2:43
- Again I, Again (Dallas, Texas) 1:55
- Almost Ten (Astoria, NY) 1:58
- Dance To The Grave (Philadelphia, PA) 4:40
- Croaked! (Pooler, Georgia 31322). 3:31





Thursday, May 7th

All screenings are located at the Philadelphia ETHICAL SOCIETY - 1906 Rittenhouse Square.

9:30 PM - 10:30 PM

Slip into the night...

In Turn (Islamic Republic of RAN) Documentary/Drama. 16:10 min. An elderly man dies unexpectedly in a nursing home. Despite extensive efforts, no will or final instructions are found. This incident prompts the remaining residents to record their last wills on camera and send them to their children. Soon after, unsettling events begin to unfold within the nursing home.

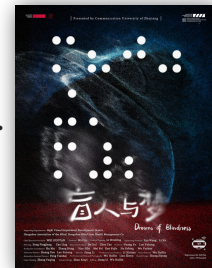


Navel Gazer (San Francisco, CA) Thriller. Writer/Director Shirin Mori. Producer Ky Shin, Max Sokoloff, Rachel Clyde, Alex Vaheid. CaAltair Hanson Juliet Deem Lauren Peterson Sophia Dufort 17:12 min. Birth-fearing Kora (they/them) is puzzled when they receive a check for \$8,000, accompanied by a note thanking them for their egg donation. When they investigate the mysterious fertility clinic behind it, Kora needs to escape a motherhood-obsessed cult that only sees them for their body.



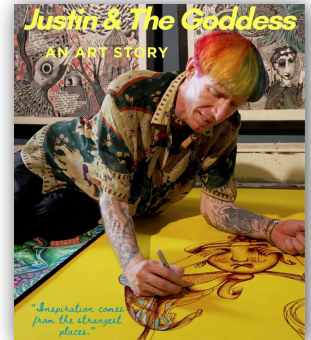
Berta (Spain) Thriller. Writer/Director/Producer Lucía Forner Segarra. 16:48 min. Berta wants Alex to understand the harm he caused her years ago and will do whatever it takes to explain it to him.

Dreams of Blindness (Philadelphia, PA) AI Narrative Drama. 12:27 min. Using dreams as an entry point, this film focuses on the inner worlds of visually impaired individuals. Through the integration of VR imaging and AIGC technologies, it invites viewers to enter a shared dream space, an immersive journey into the poetic dimensions of darkness.



8:00 PM - 9:20 PM

Justin and the Goddess (Philadelphia, PA). Documentary. Writer/Producer/Director Bill Lynch. 58 min. This film reveals the source of inspiration for a visionary Philadelphia artist and his unique paintings, literary, and musical works.



Mojitos, Mojitos (Russian Federation) Writer/Director/Producer Alice Purinson. Producer Calista Zaporozhan, Shylah Owens, Erik Rogers. Cast: Madison Yu, Nathaniel Warren, Ebube Wobo, Nate Bogosian, Michael Xavier Reitzel, Jason DiPietro, Gabe Garza. 9:50 min.



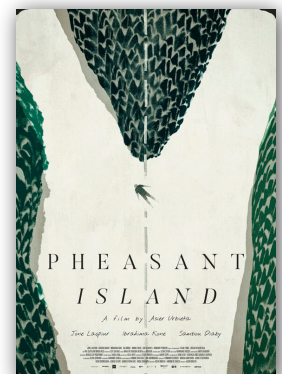
All She Wants for Christmas is You! (France) AI Drama. Director Jeremy Ouisse. Writer Brune Rio. 4:15 min. Every Christmas, the Bergots family loses one of its own – always after hearing the same song. Morris, the last survivor, tries to escape it by locking himself away just after Halloween, when the Christmas season begins.



CORVUS (London, United Kingdom) AI. Director X New Worlds, William Greiner. Original Music Kari Aryeh. 4:04 min. Corvus is a surreal experimental film tracing the strange, non-linear paths we take through grief, myth, technology, and ecological memory. Moving fluidly between dreamscape and documentary, the film follows the Crow as a symbolic guide - at once trickster, witness, guide and omen - through landscapes both internal and external.

5:40 - 7:40 PM

PHEASANT ISLAND. (Madrid, Spain) Drama 99 min. Director ASIER URBIETA. Pheasant Island, shared by Spain and France, is where a drowned illegal immigrant's body is discovered. Survivor Nassim flees violent French authorities at the border, a harrowing event that disrupts the lives of interracial couple Laida and Sambou.



A Peculiar Morning (Burbank, CA) Drama 12:00 min. A grieving woman lies on her bed in a very beige studio apartment. As she moves through her morning ritual, we discover she's afraid to leave her house, and has built a community from the inanimate objects in her home.



Thursday, May 7th

(cont.)

All screenings are located at the Philadelphia ETHICAL SOCIETY - 1906 Rittenhouse Square.

4:35 PM - 5:30 PM

Philadelphia Shorts meets the world v2

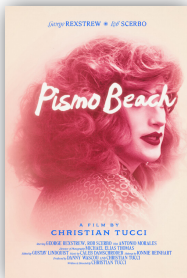


TRACKER (Delaware) Drama. Writer/Producer Jamie Davis. Director Gordon Delgiorno Tania Romero. Cast: Shawn Kline, Tanyell Oberly Annika Godfrey, Chad Bavis, Eddie Kowala Padrino, Yasi Alvarado. 9:56 min. A father afraid of losing control over his daughter adds a tracker device on his daughter's phone before her first date. What could go wrong?

MORNING, BEAUTIFUL (NOLA / Brooklyn, NY) Drama. Writer/Director/Producer Jamie Neumann. Writer/Producer Evan Howard. Producer Richard Matthew Carrillo. Producer Biliana Grozdanova. Producer Marina Grozdanova. Cast: Ally Doman, Sepideh Moafi, Ajay Naidu, David Krumholtz, Richard Matthew Carrillo. 8:00 min. Our charismatic party girl leads a seemingly dreamy existence, but will this morning-after in Brooklyn be the one that finally wakes her up?

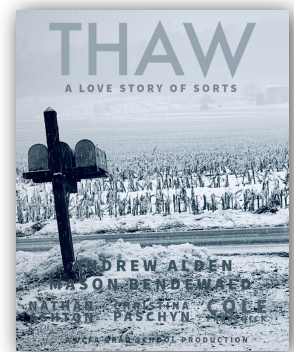


D!SoRd3rEd (NYC) Drama, Experimental. Writer/Director/Cast Corey Allen. 8:54 min. In a wasteland of rubble and ruin, J. Doe—a Black Patient Zero—navigates the wreckage of a nation haunted by its own reflection. Pursued by histories of violence, erasure, and resistance, he confronts the ghosts of an unfinished reckoning. Blurring archive and hallucination, *Disordered* is a visual requiem—part ritual, part rupture—that confronts the consequences of a soul that cannot forget, yet refuses to remember its past.



PISMO BEACH (Philadelphia, PA) Drama, Comedy. Writer/Director/Producer Christian Tucci. Producer Danny Wascou. Cast: George Rexstrew, Rob Scerbo. 14:58 min. At a gig, drag performer is confronted by a lonely stranger with an eerie coincidence to share.

Thaw (Philadelphia, PA) Thriller. Writer/Director/Producer. Mason Bendewald and Andrew Alden. Producer Christina Paschyn. Cast: Christina Paschyn, Mason Bendewald, Cole Frederick, Stacey Aswad. 8:52 min. In the snowy stillness of an isolated Airbnb, a revered photographer struggles with creative block—but behind her celebrated work lies a deadly secret, and the man who loves her may be the one ensuring her dark vision comes to life.



MIRRORS (Philadelphia, PA) Drama. Writer/Director Nicole Rose D'Arecca. 5:29 min. A young woman struggles with her reflection as she is haunted by the expectations of the generation that came before her.

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM (KLH Listening room, Ethical Society) Philly Tech Week - Tokenizing the Storytelling community. Why? How? Join us as we continue our discussion on how to create the Storyteller economy. With Moderator Benjamin Barnett. Guest Dr. Alan Rosenblatt Ph.D.



Friday, May 8th

All screenings are located at the Philadelphia ETHICAL SOCIETY - 1906 Rittenhouse Square.

9:30 PM - 10:15 PM (Closing Night Screenings!)

And in the end...

Washington Avenue (Philadelphia, PA) Writer/Director/Producer Vince Minniti. Cast: Freddy Ganno, Salvatore Mazzotta, Davide Petrillo. Drama 15:00 min. Having lost his father and facing Father Time, Sammy confronts himself and decides he can no longer live a mundane life as a butcher. He searches for the meaning of "honor". Together with his buddies he decides to court a local mob boss and attempts a lethal lifestyle change.



Why I Love You: Meet the Ultimates (Philadelphia, PA)

Documentary. Director Shontel Horne. 16:34 min. West Philadelphia R&B girl group The Ultimates may not be household names, but their song "Why I Love" found a home with an unlikely audience 50 years after it was originally recorded. This film tells the story of The Ultimates and proves that great art will always find its audience.



Imagos (Los Angeles, CA) AI Drama. Writer, Director, Producer Brogan R Wassell. 5:00 min. What remains when what has been fades away. When only the image of the past carries on? That's the question of this film and explored within the world of involving robots.

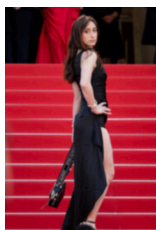
8:00 PM - 9:20 PM

THE FUTURE OF CINEMA (Student Films)

Dreams to Believe in (Bethlehem, PA) Drama. Writer/Director/Producer Ethan Baron. Cast: Aiden Clare, Sara Montse, Erica Love. 9:47 min. A Hopeless Romantic has a dream to find the love of his life. He decides to go on a pursuit to find the one meant for him.



ACB-223 (NYC) Sci-fi, Comedy. Director/Writer Quinn Topper Marcus. Producer Klpp Marcus. Cast: Alice Dylan, Amelie Raine Marcus, Kipp Marcus. 18:30 min. In the time of AH - 001, the final solution for human eradication is almost complete. Artificial Anthropod Assassins known as ACB's have cleansed earth of late remaining life. In the final chapter of human civilization, found life is ended and taken to the Moon Tower for closure.



Granted (Houston, TX) Drama. Director/Producer Kaia Chambers. Writer Ian Nichols. Producer Matthew Kuster. DP DJ Bevan. Costume Design Tina Zhang, Sarahbelle Kim. Cast: Zachary Kirchhoff, Eric Lieberman, Ian Nichols. 16:00 min. In a prestigious academic fellowship program, Sam Carter, a working-class student, forms a friendship with a privileged peer—until an unexpected turn of events turns their partnership into rivalry—forcing him to question how far merit can take you in a world driven by power and privilege



The Slicks (NYC) Drama, Comedy, Crime. Writer/Director Tucker Papa. Producer Alexei Clarke, Amrut Ayyala. Cast: Daniel Carione, Jeremy Cohen, Tess Riley, Amrut Ayyala. 10:31 min. Two short story writers, desperate for an idea, conjure inspiration by meddling with their neighbor's private affairs.

Way Back Home (Philadelphia, PA) Drama. Writer/Director Chad Hamilton. Producer Gorby Shih, Sharon Mayo. Editor Patrick K. Nichols. Cast: Nayib Felix, Marion Grey, Dan Jessup. 20:00 min. Jared and Van inherit their grandmother's dilapidated brownstone. The siblings have opposing views on what to do with the house until a surprise offer forces one to make arrangements behind the other's back.



Friday, May 8th (cont.)

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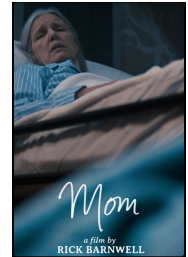
6:15 PM - 7:45 PM

AMERICAN THEATRE (Athens, GA) Political Comedy. Director Dylan Frederick, Nicholas Clark. Producer Laura Hilliard. 85 min. A "canceled" theater director summons a troupe of conservatives to an abandoned cabin in rural Georgia to plot revenge on the Atlanta theater community with a musical retelling of the 1692 Salem witch trials



Mom (Catonsville, MD) Drama.

Writer/Director/Producer Rick Barnwell. Director of Photography John Grove. Cast: Pam Holden, Steve Polites. 5 min. A woman on her deathbed uses her remaining strength to perform a simple act of motherly love.



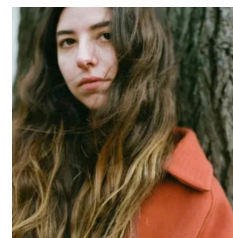
5:00 PM - 6:05 PM

Twin Tongues (Philadelphia, PA, Puerto Rico, Peru) Documentary. Director/Producer Iliana Pagán Teitelbaum. Producer Franklin Guzmán Zamora. Animation Annais Delgado Sánchez. Editor José Quintana. Cast: Irene Atabey Guzmán Pagán, Ernesto Lautaro Guzmán Pagán 50 min.

In an English-dominant world, can a pair of Latinx twins learn English without losing their Spanish? Twin Tongues/Lenguas gemelas explores migration, languages, and power through a Puerto Rican-Peruvian family when their twins enter first grade. Shot in Philadelphia (United States), Puerto Rico, and Peru, this nonfiction film celebrates multilingualism as it wrestles with the choices that speakers make in relation to their languages today.



American Gold Refinery (Brooklyn, NY/Israel) Art House Films. Writer/Director Shahar Kramer. Producer Itai Zwecker. Editor Itai Zwecker. 10:47 min. American Gold Refinery is a 10-minute personal video essay set between two parallel worlds: the Diamond District on Forty-Seventh Street in Manhattan and a pigeon auction in West Babylon, New York. Diamonds and pigeons—one a precious stone, the other a city bird—form a study in contrast. Yet both derive their value from desire.



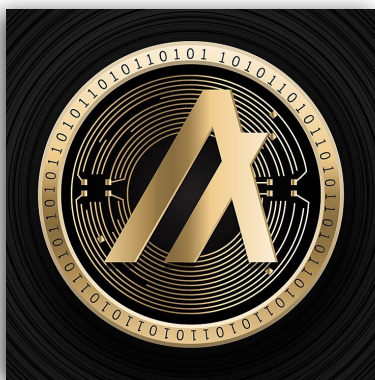
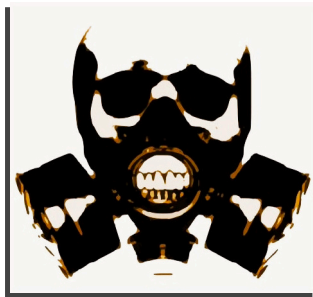
11:30 AM - 1:30 PM (KLH Listening room, Ethical Society) VR @ Philly Tech Week -

BurnerSphere is an immersive documentary experience that tells the story of the communities that make up the Burning Man culture through a unique interactive, multiplayer platform. It is an official virtual Burning Man experience created by BRCvr in collaboration with Burning Man Project. (TBD)



Thank you Philadelphia!

SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS...



NOTES...

PIFF #19

PHILLY
250



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