

## Film News: Virtual 2021 Sundance Film Festival in Last 3 Days

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CHICAGO – The 2021 Sundance Film Festival is winding down on Day Five, after a huge weekend of film premieres. This year's festival is virtual and online, meaning anyone with a ticket or a pass can indulge in the film offerings throughout the festival, which runs until Wednesday, February 3rd.

For the premieres of 2021, the cutting edge potential influencer films and all the ancillary new voice filmmakers, the Sundance Film Festival is the one that begins every film year with the movies that ultimately become the talk of the town and the gatherer of year end awards. Your ticket to the festival is your chance to see these films and filmmakers before the general public.



Prisoners of Ghostland

*Photo credit: Sundance Film Festival*

The Sundance Film Festival is an annual event organized by the Sundance Institute – an organization founded by actor Robert Redford in 1980 – and dedicated to the growth of independent artists. It usually takes place each January in Park City, Utah, and other locations, and is the largest independent film festival in the United States. It includes competitive categories in documentary and dramatic films, both feature length and short works, as well as out-of-competition categories for showcasing new films.

## ★ FILMS OF SUNDANCE: Capsule Reviews

All the information about participating in the festival, the On-Demand film downloads and status of accessibility is available by [clicking here](#). [22]

**“Passing”** – This is the director debut feature film of actor Rebecca Hall, a adaptation of a novel by Nella Larsen that was published in 1929. Set in the 1920s, the story is of two black women, Irene (Tessa Thompson) and Claire (Ruth Negga), who were friends as teenagers, but had lost touch as adults. On a hot New York City day, Irene spots her old friend in a hotel tea room, and finds out light-skinned Claire has been passing for white. Claire admires Irene’s upper middle class lifestyle in Harlem, and seeks to reconnect to her roots, including developing a friendship with Irene’s physician husband Brian (André Holland). The implications of this scenario are exquisitely played by the top drawer cast, but the slow story suffers a bit by its handcuff to the novel. However, Irene and Brian’s young sons were born at the same as Martin Luther King and the other civil rights activists, which gives the film another layer. **Available On-Demand February 1st.**

**“Together Together”** – The comic actor Ed Helms (“The Office”) has made his mark in the last ten years taking on interesting indie films. In “Together Together” he portrays Matt, a strangely unconnected man who desires a child, and hires a surrogate Anna (Patti Harrison). The story follows their journey through the pregnancy, as Helms portrays his requisite bumbling loser character and Harrison-as-Anna breaks down her past hurdles in the carrying of his child. The premise is a fairy tale that needs to be believed to have any chance, but the trite back-and-forth between the two – becoming uncomfortably intimate – is like a plane that cannot land. Written and directed by Nikole Beckwith. **Available On-Demand February 2nd.**

**“Prisoners of the Ghostland”** – Nicolas Cage has found his new niche, and by god he’s going to grind into the cinema scape if it kills him. “Prisoners ...,” a new film destined for cult status, has Cage portraying Hero, a maligned bank robber who is serving a sentence in a post apocalyptic hell run by the Governor (Bill Moseley). When he is the only person alive who can retrieve the autocrat’s granddaughter (Sofia Boutella), he is strapped to an exploding leather suit – controlled by the Governor – and forced into the harsh territory of The Ghostland to find the girl. It’s a gorgeous looking film, with some visions that stuck to me like a jumbled dream after eating too much Japanese food. And Cage, in his late career role as a cult clown, rolls with the samurai bouts, western themes and exploding suit. This is the first English language film of veteran Japanese director Sion Sono (“Toyko Vampire Hotel”), who has, like Cage, a reputation as a subversive. **Available On-Demand February 2nd.**

**“In the Earth”** – The latest by British director Ben Wheatley (“High-Rise,” “Free Fire”), this landscape is placed vaguely into the middle of the pandemic. It is the story of Martin (Joel Fry) and Alma (Ellora Torchia), a scientific duo who goes into a forest to get Martin to a remote experimental area. Along the way they are assaulted by a apparent forest hermit and forced into his lair. The story of this journey is muddled by a complex interconnection between the characters and the landscape, including contact with the eventual mad scientist (Hayley Squires). I’m sure Wheatley knew what he was attempting in this horror/thriller, but his ability to deliver that truth to the audience is convoluted and over indulgent, to say the least. **Look for release in 2021.**

Meet the Artist: a Sundance Fest interview with writer/director Nikole Beckwith in working with featured actors Ed Helms and Patti Harrison of “Together Together” ...

Read the 2017 HollywoodChicago.com interview with director Ben Wheatley of “In the Earth” on his previous film “Free Fire” ... ([CLICK HERE](#)) [23].

Read the 2016 HollywoodChicago.com interview with actor André Holland of “Passing” on his previous Academy Award winning film “Moonlight” ... ([CLICK HERE](#)) [24].

Read the 2011 HollywoodChicago.com interview with actor Ed Helms of “Together Together” on his excellent turn in the must-see indie film “Cedar Rapids” ... ([CLICK HERE](#)) [25].

Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com will be providing coverage of the Sundance Film Festival 2021 throughout the duration of the festival.

The virtual 2021 Sundance Film Festival will take place January 28th through February 3rd. For tickets, schedule and all information click on [Festival.Sundance.org](http://Festival.Sundance.org) [26]



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