

Film News: 2022 Sundance Film Festival Fills the Cinema Bill

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CHICAGO – The 2022 Sundance Film Festival heads into Day Seven, and offers online events as well as films (see below). Like last year, the festival is virtual/online, meaning anyone/anywhere with a ticket or a pass ([link](#) [26]) can indulge in the film offerings and events throughout the festival, which runs until January 30th.

One of the highlight offerings is free to anyone, with no need for extra tickets or credentials. Beyond Film programming offers something for everyone ... with filmmaker chats, meet-ups and a daily talk show with Festival Director Tabitha Jackson. Festivals stars and directors participating include Emma Thompson, Dakota Johnson, Amy Poehler and Eva Longoria Bastón. Click on [BEYOND FILM](#) [27] for the archive and what is upcoming.



Palm Trees and Power Lines
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

“Alice” – An oddball film in approach, but hard edged on themes, the story contrasts two eras in black American culture ... the pre-Civil War plantation South and the funky 1973 in the waning days of the Civil Rights movement. Alice (Keke Palmer) is held captive in slave quarters on the plantation, but longs for freedom. There are stories about strange visitations to the land they work, including a man whose “hand creates fire” (a lighter). One night, Alice runs away and finds herself in 1973 America, where she is assimilated by Frank (Common), a kindly truck driver. After being inspired, Alice seeks revenge. Choosing the two eras is the most interesting element of the film, and its themes of redemption include Frank’s wrestling with his Civil Rights past. However, the situation and the revenge lacks proper context and doesn’t fully work. The highlight is Keke Palmer as the title character, creating the right amount of awe in her circumstances and using the Pam Grier/Coffy muse of the era for her revenge model.

“The Janes” – In the third film at Sundance on a woman’s right to safety and health in decisions for abortion, this documentary is a companion piece to the narrative feature film “Call Jane” ... both regarding the Jane Collective of Chicago from 1968 through 1973. The feminist group began setting up safe and available abortions for women in the underground, during an era when the procedure was illegal in Illinois (and most of America until Roe v Wade), through laws determined by the patriarchy. Using a male practitioner, and then learning to do abortions themselves, the former “Janes” tell the story of a period for woman’s health that now seems stone age ... except when looking at the repressive laws against women being perpetuated AGAIN by the patriarchy. The issue is about who can get an abortion both then and now ... only those who can afford to travel away from states making it illegal again or all woman.

“Palm Trees and Power Lines” – The title refers to the mendacity of a beach town where a teenager named Lea (Lily McNerny) is wasting away the summer before her Senior Year by hanging with disconnected “friends” and experimenting with unfulfilling coupling. Things change when a man twice her age (Jonathan Tucker) picks her up and begins a process of seduction which includes a declaration of love. Circumstances start to spin beyond Lea’s control as they grow closer as a couple. Disconnection is a theme in this film, uncomfortably so. It’s a perfect storm of Lea being bored and separated from her friends, her unavailable mother (Gretchen Mol) and a manipulative stranger that inspires shouts of “run away!” But this concept of a very real situation is more psychologically complicated, and combined with a more sexualized teen society creates more emotional vulnerability. A significant debut for writer/director Jamie Dack, adapting her own short film.

“Hatching” – Part of the Sundance Fest “Midnight” offerings, this is an amazing horror film from Finland that combines social/cultural commentary, chilling monster scares and genre homages for films that have come before. Tinja (Siiri Solanlinna) is a on-the-edge of adolescence gymnast in a family whose mother (Sophia Heikkilä) pretends through social media that they are perfect. That “perfection” includes a ruthless killing of a black bird that infiltrates their house, and Tinja’s retrieving of the bird corpse leads her to an egg she decides to hatch. A supernatural force melds Tinja’s psyche to the hatching, an evolving horror bird she names Alli, and her connection with the creature disrupts the perfect life. What is extraordinary about this film isn’t the creature elements – although there are several goose bump incidents of blood and gore associated with it – but the critique of modern family life, with all elements including the Dad and brother (who hilariously dress alike) being dismissed for the shining star of gym star Tinja. The bird creature is just the symptom of the larger disease, but certainly advances the illness to a point of an unexpected outcome. Another great feature debut from writer Ilja Rautsi and director Hanna Bergholm.

Trailer for “Hatching,” due in theaters on April 29, 2022 ...

Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com will be providing coverage of the Sundance Film Festival 2022 throughout the duration of the festival.

The virtual 2022 Sundance Film Festival will take place January 20th through January 30th. For tickets, schedule and all information click on Festival.Sundance.org [26]



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