



SCFF SCHEDULE

7:00 PM **Opening Night Screening: F*cktoys**

Del Mar Theatre

Please join us for our Opening Night Feature Film and a Q&A with Director, Writer, and Star Annapurna Sriram! Part-time sex worker, full-time chaos magnet, AP is convinced that the universe has it out for her... and she might be right. In Fucktoys — the wild, unfiltered debut from writer/director/star Annapurna Sriram — AP seeks a cosmic reset after a swampy tarot reading (courtesy Big Freedia) tells her she needs \$1,000 and a sacrificial lamb to lift her curse. Armed with neither, she sets off on a bizarre quest with her kindred spirit Danni (Sadie Scott) through Trashtown, USA — a dystopian, neon-drenched sprawl of assorted oddballs, Tom of Finland cops, and strip clubs galore.

Director: Annapurna Sriram
Writer: Annapurna Sriram
Producer: Tim Petryni
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States of America
Length: 120 minutes

9:00 PM **Opening Night Gala at the MAH! (FREE)**

The Museum of Art and History

Kick off the Santa Cruz Film Festival with a celebration of film, art, and community! After the opening night screening of F*cktoys at the historic Del Mar Theater, head over to the Museum of Art & History (MAH) for a FREE Opening Night Party with RSVP. Enjoy four hours of music from Tide Swing, drinks provided by Front and Cooper, Steel Bonnet, and Birichino, food provided by Laili and fresh oysters by Johnny's Harborside! Connect with filmmakers, artists, and fellow festivalgoers, and experience the vibrant creativity that makes Santa Cruz unique. This lively party isn't just an afterparty—it's a gathering for everyone who loves cinema and believes in the power of community. Raise a glass, make new friends, and join us in celebrating the artists and audiences that make Santa Cruz Film Festival possible. Admission is free with an RSVP ticket —don't miss this signature kickoff to a week of inspiration!



4:00 PM **Satisfaction**

Colligan Theater

Set against the backdrop of the Greek isles, the film follows Lola who takes revenge against her sexual partner Philip. Things begin to unravel when they encounter the enigmatic Elena, who intoxicates Lola with her uninhibited way of being and emboldens her to face the roots of her pain. Please join us after for a Q&A with Director Alex Burunova!

Director: Alex Burunova
Writer: Alex Burunova
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States
Length: 97 minutes

5:30 PM **LGBTQ+ Shorts: Spin Cycle**

The 418 Project

Featured Short Films:

Rainbow Girls

As San Francisco's tech boom gentrifies their city, three young black trans women decide to take matters into their own hands by staging an audacious heist targeting the city's most exclusive luxury brands.

Director: Nana Duffuor
Region: United States
Length: 15:55

Abel

A priest, who lives in the countryside with his family, is about to receive an unexpected call from a woman that is going to upset him. A journey to the capital city, a Holy Communion and one last football match.

Director: Kostantinos Karamaghiolis
Region: Greece
Length: 15:60

Liminality

In the summer of 2004, in Berkeley, California, queer teens Nina and Jay grapple with understanding Jay's uncharted transgender identity amidst the throes of first love.

Director: Tess Bliven
Region: United States
Length: 13:30

The Yellow Sponge is the Dish Sponge

Do we really need to wash sheets every week? Why would you ever have to clean a shower head? What is the difference between the blue sponge and the yellow sponge? These are the questions that haunt Jason. He doesn't understand the world's obsession (and his husband Erik's obsession) with cleanliness. So, on the day of their big party Jason launches his campaign to open Erik's eyes to this problem. What starts as disagreements about Lysol Wipes and Febreze scented trash bags turns into something bigger as The Yellow Sponge is the Dish Sponge looks at a couples conflict as old as time...fighting about household chores.

Director: Michele Noble
Region: United States
Length: 16:39

pansies

After Caleb is almost caught in the back of a pickup truck with Logan Balfe, he has to keep things quiet while driving Logan home.

Director: Jamie J Simiele
Region: United States
Length: 12:56

5:30 PM **Parallel Shores: International**

Arthouse Shorts

Indexical at The Tannery

Featured Short Films:

Réveillon

On New Year's Eve, in a small village in Northern Greece, a father and his son await the arrival of a Canadian businessman. The Canadian is willing to invest in the father and son's copper mine in Albania; this plan is the last chance for them to escape generational poverty and transform their lives.

Director: Alexandros Vozinidis
Region: Greece
Length: 13:30

UPPER

Waiting for an asteroid to pass through the sky, two friends play around a remote landscape, driven by a curious urge to constantly aim higher.

Director: Lennert Madou
Region: Belgium
Length: 15:35

People & Things

A mass grave was discovered in the small town in eastern Ukraine as consequence of the 2022 Russian invasion. Olena (34) arrives with her daughter Kira (8) and boyfriend Tymur (31) to collect the DNA test result of her missing husband Ilya. During two days, Olena will not only find out if her husband is alive, but in addition to confronting the past, she also will be faced with the most important one - the present.

Director: Damian Kosowski
Region: Poland
Length: 20:04

6:30 PM **Out of Plain Sight with Short Film:**

When the Storms Hit

Colligan Theater

From Pulitzer Prize-finalist Rosanna Xia and Academy Award-winning L.A. Times Studios, OUT OF PLAIN SIGHT is a cinematic exposé of an environmental disaster lurking just off the coast of Southern California. Not far from Catalina Island, aboard one of the most-advanced research ships in the world, David Valentine discovered a corroded barrel on the seafloor that gave him chills. The full environmental horror sharpens into greater clarity once he calls Los Angeles Times journalist Rosanna Xia, who pieces together a shocking revelation: In the years after World War II, as many as half a million barrels of toxic waste had been quietly dumped into the ocean — and the consequences continue to haunt the world today. Please join us after for a panel with Directors Daniel Straub and Rosanna Xia and joined by Dr. David Valentine and Joe Burnett!

Director: Daniel Straub, Rosanna Xia
Writer: Rosanna Xia
Producer: Brynna Cyrier
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States
Length: 120 minutes

When the Storms Hit

When the Storms Hit captures the extraordinary efforts of Kevin Painchaud, the sole photojournalist at Lookout Santa Cruz, as he documents a relentless wave of atmospheric rivers that devastated California's Central Coast. But the title speaks to more than just weather—it's also a metaphor for the growing crisis in local journalism. With shrinking newsrooms and disappearing budgets, Kevin and his small team step into the void, bearing witness when no one else can. What begins as urgent storm coverage becomes a Pulitzer Prize-winning act of community service—and a powerful reminder of what's lost when local news disappears.

Director: Sean Peoples
Producers: Sean Peoples, Michael T. Miller, Kevin Painchaud
Release: 2025
Region: United States
Length: 09:35

7:00 PM **ART AND LIFE: The Story of Jim Phillips with Short Film: Love Letters: A Love Note to Skateboarding**

Del Mar Theatre

Embark on the epic ride of Jim Phillips, the genius behind skateboarding and rock culture's electrifying art. Drawing inspiration from his life in Santa Cruz, CA, Jim helped shape the golden era of skateboarding. Jim's story is a profound narrative of resilience, passion, and enduring artistic vision. This documentary explores Jim's dynamic life and career, showcasing his iconic work that has defined an era and secured his place in modern art history. Join us after for a Q&A with Art and Life Director John Makens and the legendary Jim Phillips, moderated by the one-and-only Judi Oyama!

Director: John Makens
Producer: John Makens
Release Date: 2024
Region: United States
Length: 90 minutes

Love Letters: A Love Note to Skateboarding

In this candid short film, lifelong skateboarder, Sean Taylor, revisits iconic skate spots around San Diego, California—not as a professional, but as someone whose life has been shaped by skateboarding. Through personal reflections and thematic vignettes, this film explores the pieces of skateboarding that combine to express a sincere love for the lifestyle. It's a tribute to the everyday skater—a love letter to skateboarding that reminds us it's not about being the best, but about staying connected to what inspires you.

Director: Alec Yasuo Walsh
Release: 2025
Region: United States
Length: 11:16



SCFF SCHEDULE

7:00 PM **Encore Screening of F*cktoys with Short Film: Heaven is Nobody's**
Santa Cruz Cinema

Please join us for our Opening Night Feature Film and a Q&A with Director, Writer, and Star Annapurna Sriram! Part-time sex worker, full-time chaos magnet, AP is convinced that the universe has it out for her... and she might be right. In Fucktoys — the wild, unfiltered debut from writer/director/star Annapurna Sriram — AP seeks a cosmic reset after a swampy tarot reading (courtesy Big Freedia) tells her she needs \$1,000 and a sacrificial lamb to lift her curse. Armed with neither, she sets off on a bizarre quest with her kindred spirit Danni (Sadie Scott) through Trashtown, USA — a dystopian, neon-drenched sprawl of assorted oddballs, Tom of Finland cops, and strip clubs galore.

Director: Annapurna Sriram
Writer: Annapurna Sriram
Producer: Tim Petryni
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States of America
Length: 120 minutes

Heaven is Nobody's

In this contemporary dark fable, a boy journeys through a nightmarish city to find a cure for his mom, as a dancing curse descends on him and his home.

Director: Hector Prats
Producer: Heather Francis
Release: 2024
Region: Spain
Language: English
Length: 12:10

7:00 PM **Inhabiting the Interval: Avant-Garde and Expanded Shorts**
Indexical at The Tannery

Featured Short Films

Queer Dream Triptych
"Frames from Donald Fox's psychedelic OMEGA (1970) — that 'deals with the death and rebirth of mankind' — are newly suffused with a poem written by the filmmaker during a period of personal transformation related to sexuality, chronic illness, familial trauma, and queer ancestry." —MIX NYC
"Powerful, evocative, and sensual... a highly articulated, accelerated book moving in kinetic space... full of delightful consonants, ones that feel medieval and modern simultaneously. [Reminiscent] of the work of Pat O'Neil and Barbara Hammer, true craftspeople of the avant-garde." —Lynne Sachs, filmmaker and poet

Director: Matt McKinzie
Region: United States
Length: 02:30

Weegee's New York
Hi, my name is Weegee. I am a dog. On my license, it says I am a cockapoo, but I don't know what that means. My parents adopted me five years ago and named me Weegee, after the famous photographer. They always tell me that I channel him, because I am a character, and hold my toys in my mouth like a cigar, just like the original Weegee. That guy called himself "Weegee the Famous", but I want to be famous-er.

Director: Eric Weeks
Region: United States
Length: 8:00

i.a. (inter alia)
Emilia Galotti is found the day after being predatorily followed. Claudia and Orsina gather with her. The three women must write a letter whose purpose remains unclear. Their conversation circles uncertainly, interrupted only by the changing light. What has happened refuses to be told. Their wills collide as they struggle with the uncertain purpose of their gathering, recognizing that words alone might not clarify their intentions. Between strategy and refusal, there is only passage. Freely adapted from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Emilia Galotti.

Director: Sidney Mandros
Region: Germany
Length: 21:23

Monument
Beginning in ghostly abstraction and accumulating texture by texture into a droning meditative trance, Monument deepens to a visual and sonic intensity, mixing Super 8 film with video footage to create a complicated, multilayered encounter with the tension of protest and reclamation. A vivid and energetic durational experience of collective resistance and celebration. Super 8 footage of the decaying monuments of Presidents Park (Croaker, VA) are layered with video footage captured on Monument Avenue (Richmond, VA) during the Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. Themes of registration and re-calibration are explored through form and content and the distinct features of the media employed.

Director: Jeremy Drummond
Region: Canada, United States
Length: 17:24

Saturday Night Blues
Poetry film for "Saturday Night Blues" by Brontez Purnell

Director: Jean Coleman
Region: United States
Length: 02:38

Travelers
"Travelers" is a movement dialogue piece that dives into the profound psychological and emotional experiences of isolation. This work explores the idea of being misled through one's own creation and the stark realization of being cut off from humanity with no hope of returning - while also giving this sense of acceptance for what's in front of us.

Director: Kedric Jon Bateman
Region: United States
Length: 11:02

Father Time and the Maiden
Father Time and the Maiden tells the story of a moment unfrozen.
What it feels to come alive after hundreds of years?

Director: Rodrigo Courtney
Region: Mexico
Length: 03:59

The Story of The Cricket Queen
The "Story of The Cricket Queen" recreates digital media tropes, trends, and aesthetics with analog film techniques.

Director: Natalie Peracchio
Region: United States
Length: 03:57

7:30 PM **Childish Things**
The 418 project

Join us after for a Q&A with Writer Director duo Nick and Cash Cassidy! Nick is a 30-year-old musician grappling with the pressures of adulthood and a push from his longtime girlfriend to settle down. He embarks on a roadtrip from Maine to California to sell his beloved blue tour bus, accompanied by his brother, Cash, who documents the trip. They visit family and friends, each at their own life crossroads, and meet a young woman looking to hitch a ride west. A fully improvised film shot on an actual roadtrip across America, Childish Things is a funny, poignant, and honest exploration of the time in every artist's life when they wrestle with whether to persevere in their creative pursuit.

Director: Nick Cassidy
Writer: Cash Cassidy, Nick Cassidy
Producer: Cash Cassidy
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States of America
Length: 95 minutes

8:30 PM **Dreams In Motion: An Experimental Animations Showcase**
Indexical at The Tannery

Featured Short Films

Bunnyhood
Bunnyhood is a frenzied, 9-minute rollercoaster ride, described by Directors Notes as "pure nightmare fuel," and akin to "watching the scribbled drawings etched onto an old school desk come to life"

Director: Mansi Maheshwari
Region: United Kingdom
Length: 09:07

Nobody
After an airstrike hits the home of a newlywed family in Gaza, the pregnant wife survives unharmed, alongside her husband's head, which remains alive without a body. How can life ever return to normal for this small family? We dive into their surreal journey as they grapple with loss, survival, and the fragile hope of rebuilding in the aftermath of tragedy.

Director: Msallam Hdaib
Region: Jordan
Length: 06:45

A Round of Applause for Death
Death takes centre stage and faceless spectators applaud the inevitable in a series of spectral dreams.

Director: Stephen Irwin
Region: United Kingdom
Length: 05:00

Nostril
Nostril is a stop-motion animated short film about Lala, a sleep-deprived woman kept awake by her husband's obnoxious snoring. When the sound becomes so powerful that it quite literally sucks her into his nose, Lala finds herself in a terrifying battle against the boogery germ creatures that dwell within. Blending comedy and horror, Nostril looks at the things we put up with for love, highlighting relationship struggles with a light-hearted tone.

Directors: Michael Dondero, Shengnan Dong
Region: United States
Length: 04:30

Running Late
A stop-motion animated film about one mans surreal morning routine

Director: Alistair Nicholls
Region: United Kingdom
Length: 06:19

Tuna Tartare
Earth, 3036 A.D. Humans are on the verge of extinction and the world is now run by... TRASH. TUNA TARTARE is a bombastic can of tuna fish who runs THROATS karaoke bar with her BFF Susan, a fake Louis Vuitton purse with crippling anxiety. Upon hearing of the death of the last surviving human, Tuna is reminded of an old brush with fame that ended in embarrassment, sending her on an internal journey to battle her own insecurities and build herself back up again to do what she does best: karaoke.

Director: Lena Greene
Region: United States
Length: 10:33



SCFF SCHEDULE

12:00 PM **Documentary Shorts: Well Being and the Arts**
Colligan Theater

Featured Short Films:

My Brother's Keeper

A man looks back on his childhood, haunted by the loss of his beloved older brother killed at the height of the Vietnam War. In the wake of his brother's death, his father passes away, plunging him into a spiral of grief and confusion. Seeking escape, he finds solace on the open road. What begins as a search for answers nearly costs him his life—until he discovers an unexpected refuge in music, a path that leads him toward healing and a new beginning. Even in our darkest hours, there is always a path forward.

Director: Dominic Howes

Region: 17:38

Length: United States

Marks of Majesty

Marks of Majesty is a documentary project that briefly examines the stories of 7 different breast cancer survivors, previvors, and patients. Through a combination of portraits and motion, filmed interviews, and organic user-generated footage, we share our subjects' many and varied perspectives and post-operative bodies. We aim to dismantle myths and misconceptions about breast cancer, while also giving voice and power to those whose stories have historically been overlooked.

Directors: Julia Comita, Stephanie Francis

Region: United States

Length: 09:09

The Audition

A ballerina prepares for and attends a competitive audition for a ballet company in New York City.

Director: Victoria DeMartin

Region: United States

Length: 05:08

A Nesting Place

This short documentary tells the story of Natural Bridges Apartments — the Housing Authority of Santa Cruz County's first new affordable housing development in over 30 years. Through the voices of residents, community leaders, and the muralist whose art brings the project to life, A Nesting Place explores themes of belonging and what it truly means to have a home. Set along a migratory path of birds and butterflies, the film is a tribute to the idea that everyone — whether bird or human — deserves a place to land, live, and thrive.

Director: Michael Daniel

Region: United States

Length: 06:30

You and I are a Work of Art

Paint Splats, Compassion Sings! Amy Allen is an artist and hairdresser who befriends and makes art with an unhoused artist, Thomas and his singing dog, Oswald. Amy introduces Thomas to Beth, a housed person who has lost patience with some of her unhoused neighbors. They make art together and the conversation that results is both startling and heartening.

Director: Andrew Purchin

Region: United States

Length: 12:22

Mariachi Gringo

William Faulkner is a harp player who's spent over half of his life playing the music of his adopted country, Mexico. Now at 72 he finds himself at a dire point in his life and career as his health falls at a rapid decline. This documentary is not a comprehensive look at his entire life, rather it's an exploration of an artist in his twilight years who seeks solace in the one thing that has kept him alive all these years, Mariachi music.

Director: Miguel Garcia Mendoza

Region: United States

Length: 14:33

Spaghetti Week

'Spaghetti Week' is an independent documentary film that captures the life of Job (Jabalí) Verpoorte, a chemical engineer who changed everything to become a surfboard shaper. The short film celebrates the craft of wooden board making and all that gravitates around it: Nature, Relations, Surf and the Ocean. Meanwhile, we witness how Job deals with the certainties and uncertainties of love, friendship and life.

Director: Joe Morgan

Region: Portugal

Length: 15:52

2:15 PM **Berman's March with Short Film: Waiting for the End of the World**
Colligan Theater

A working-class drifter takes a road trip to reunite with his old friends at a cabin. While traveling, he encounters other souls populating the highways of a changing America. When he arrives, he finds his friends somewhat changed as well. Please join us after for a Q&A with Waiting for the End of the World Director Jeffrey Hoyt!

Director: Joshua Pikovsky, Jordan Tetewsky

Writer: Joshua Pikovsky, Jordan Tetewsky

Producer: Roger Mancusi

Release Date: 2023

Region: United States of America

Length: 100 minutes

Waiting for the End of the World

A haunting mosaic of small-town America on the brink of the apocalypse.

Director: Jeffrey Hoyt

Release: 2025

Region: United States

Length: 20:44

4:30 PM **Arcadia**
Colligan Theater

Premiering at Berlinale 2024, Arcadia begins with Neurologist Katerina and former doctor Yannis are heading off to a deserted seaside resort. Silence descends on the car as they travel across dunes in a windy autumn, matching the less-than-pleasant occasion: Yannis has been called to identify the victim of a tragic accident at the hospital of the small town. When the local policeman informs them that the victim's vehicle had plunged over the parapet of a stone bridge and leads them to the morgue, Katerina sees her worst suspicions confirmed. Together with Yannis, but also on her own nightly excursions to a mysterious, rustic beach bar called Arcadia, they begin to put the pieces of the puzzle together, revealing a haunting story of love, loss, acceptance and letting go.

Director: Yorgos Zois

Writer: Konstantina Kotzamani, Yorgos Zois

Producer: Antigoni Rota

Release Date: 2024

Region: Bulgaria, Greece, United States of America

Length: 99 minutes

5:00 PM **The Cigarette Surfboard with Short Film: Shape Of Hope**
The 418 Project

Join us after for a Q&A with Creator of the Cigarette Surfboard Taylor Lane! Impassioned surfer Taylor Lane builds a functional surfboard with 10,000 cigarette butts collected from California beaches. The Cigarette Surfboard becomes a platform to learn from professional surfers who are working to protect the ocean, and the symbol of a grassroots campaign to hold Big Tobacco accountable for their toxic, plastic waste. Surfing is the medium, but the message is universal.

Director: Ben Judkins

Producer: Taylor Lane

Music: Kai Killion

Release Date: 2024

Region: United States of America

Length: 115 minutes

Shape of Hope

A short documentary that explores a more sustainable alternative for crafting surfboards and snowboards while also making the boards more meaningful.

Director: Eric Dennis

Producers: Eric Dennis, Andreas Apostol, Sean O'Sullivan

Release: 2023

Region: United States

Length: 18:21

5:30 PM **Edge of Innocence: International Arthouse Shorts**
Indexical at The Tannery

Featured Short Films

Smells Like Kids' Spirit

Rita's summer is turned upside down when Brooks, an American musician, visits the ranch where she lives alone with her mother. A former lover, he rekindles their love under the gaze of the child in search of a father. An unsettling fascination is born, combining first stirrings with the mysteries of adulthood.

Director: Aude Pépin

Region: France

Length: 19:15

Sunshine City

Siblings Stellar(23) and Max(17) are living out of their car and trying to get back on their feet. However, when Max makes a foolish mistake and puts their livelihood on the line, Stellar finds herself questioning how much longer she can support him.

Director: Arthur Gay

Region: New Zealand, United States

Length: 16:00

The Colour of My Room

Sylvie is hiding away on the coast while she waits to hear if her radiotherapy has been effective. But when her chirpy friend Anita comes to visit, she brings with her a London headspace (all wedding plans and career gossip) which interrupts the grounded space Sylvie has created. At first, it's awkward. But when an old ritual turns into a heart-to-heart, something thaws between them. With Sylvie's son watching on, Anita finally grasps how serious things are for Sylvie, while Sylvie sees that Anita may not be quite as happy as she has made out. They rekindle the sisterhood that underpins their friendship. After Anita leaves, Sylvie receives inconclusive news from the hospital. She takes her son up to the lighthouse, but it's closed. Instead, they make do with the the cliff edge – and together, they look out at the horizon towards France.

Director: Jake Alden Falconer

Region: United Kingdom

Length: 16:06

7:00 PM **Dreams In Motion: An Experimental Animations Showcase**
Indexical at The Tannery

Featured Short Films

Bunnyhood

Bunnyhood is a frenzied, 9-minute rollercoaster ride, described by Directors Notes as "pure nightmare fuel," and akin to "watching the scribbled drawings etched onto an old school desk come to life"

Director: Mansi Maheshwari

Region: United Kingdom

Length: 09:07

Shorts Block—Continued



SCFF SCHEDULE

7:00 PM **Dreams In Motion: An Experimental Animation Showcase (Cont.)**
Indexical at The Tannery

Featured Short Films

Nobody

After an airstrike hits the home of a newlywed family in Gaza, the pregnant wife survives unharmed, alongside her husband's head, which remains alive without a body. How can life ever return to normal for this small family?. We dive into their surreal journey as they grapple with loss, survival, and the fragile hope of rebuilding in the aftermath of tragedy.

Director: Msallam Hdaib
Region: Jordan
Length: 06:45

A Round of Applause for Death

Death takes centre stage and faceless spectators applaud the inevitable in a series of murderous dreams.

Director: Stephen Irwin
Region: United Kingdom
Length: 05:00

Nostril

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Directors: Michael Dondero, Shengnan Dong
Region: United States
Length: 04:30

Running Late

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Director: Alistair Nicholls
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Tuna Tartare

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Director: Lena Greene
Region: United States
Length: 10:33

7:00 PM **Join the Club**
Colligan Theater

Dennis Peron is San Francisco's biggest pot dealer. But when the AIDS epidemic sweeps through his community, Peron realizes that marijuana is more than a good time—it's medicine. In the wake of his lover's death, Peron opens the Cannabis Buyers' Club, a five-story dispensary complete with rainbow murals, drag shows, and doctors onsite. Law enforcement launches a multimillion dollar investigation into the club, but Peron has even larger aspirations, writing a landmark political initiative and leading the fight for change. Please join us after for a Q&A with Directors Kip Andersen and Chris O'Connell!

Director: Kip Andersen, Chris O'Connell
Producer: Chris O'Connell
Release Date: 2024
Region: United States of America
Length: 87 minutes

7:00 PM **Third Act**
Santa Cruz Cinema

Generations of artists call Robert A. Nakamura "The Godfather of Asian American film," but his son, Tad, calls him Dad. As the filmmaking son of a filmmaking legend, Tad uses the lessons his dad taught him to decipher the legacy of an aging man who was a social survivor of the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans, a successful photographer who gave it up to tell his own story, an activist at the dawn of a social movement—and a father whose struggles have won his son freedoms that eluded Japanese Americans of his generation. As Parkinson's Disease clouds his memory, Tad sets out to retrieve his story—and in the process discovers his own. The two have made films together, with Robert always by Tad's side. THIRD ACT is most likely the last. Please join us after for a Q&A with Director Tadashi Nakamura!

Director: Tadashi Nakamura
Producer: Eurie Chung
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States of America
Length: 115 minutes

7:30 PM **A Deeper Love: The Story of Miss Peppermint with Short Film: Don't Cry For Me All You Drag Queens**
The 418 Project

Join us after for a Q&A with the team behind A Deeper Love! Drag Race star Peppermint takes center stage in this up close and personal documentary about her journey with fame, identity, and the art of drag. Sharing her story alongside a close network of trans individuals, one of the world's favorite drag performers takes you inside her rise from humble beginnings to her current reign as outspoken trailblazer for the trans community.

Director: Oriel Pe'er
Producer: Oriel Pe'er, Marc Smolowitz
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States of America
Length: 100 minutes

Don't Cry For Me All You Drag Queens

"Don't Cry For Me All You Drag Queens" pays homage to the legendary Mother Cavallucci by weaving together the present and past to provide a striking portrait of belonging and memory. Joseph "Josie" Cavallucci (aka Mother Cavallucci) is a legendary New Hope drag queen that would host annual wedding celebrations in the 70s and 80s that served as fundraisers and a community party. Poetically merging archival photographs and present day footage from a community drag show, the film sparks conversation about the modern day issues Mother Cavallucci revolutionized.

Director: Kristal Sotomayor
Producers: Kristal Sotomayor, Nic Cory, Daniel Brooks
Release: 2024
Region: United States
Length: 09:00

8:30 PM **Inhabiting the Interval: Avant-Garde and Expanded Shorts**
Indexical at The Tannery

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Director: Matt McKinzie
Region: United States
Length: 02:30

Weegee's New York

Hi, my name is Weegee. I am a dog. On my license, it says I am a cockapoo, but I don't know what that means. My parents adopted me five years ago and named me Weegee, after the famous photographer. They always tell me that I channel him, because I am a character, and hold my toys in my mouth like a cigar, just like the original Weegee. That guy called himself "Weegee the Famous", but I want to be famous-er.

Director: Eric Weeks
Region: United States
Length: 8:00

i.a. (inter alia)

Emilia Galotti is found the day after being predatorily followed. Claudia and Orsina gather with her. The three women must write a letter whose purpose remains unclear. Their conversation circles uncertainly, interrupted only by the changing light. What has happened refuses to be told. Their wills collide as they struggle with the uncertain purpose of their gathering, recognizing that words alone might not clarify their intentions. Between strategy and refusal, there is only passage. Freely adapted from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Emilia Galotti.

Director: Sidney Mandros
Region: Germany
Length: 21:23

Monument

Beginning in ghostly abstraction and accumulating texture by texture into a droning meditative trance, Monument deepens to a visual and sonic intensity, mixing Super 8 film with video footage to create a complicated, multilayered encounter with the tension of protest and reclamation. A vivid and energetic durational experience of collective resistance and celebration. Super 8 footage of the decaying monuments of Presidents Park (Croaker, VA) are layered with video footage captured on Monument Avenue (Richmond, VA) during the Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. Themes of registration and re-calibration are explored through form and content and the distinct features of the media employed.

Director: Jeremy Drummond
Region: Canada, United States
Length: 17:24

Saturday Night Blues

Poetry film for "Saturday Night Blues" by Brontez Purnell

Director: Jean Coleman
Region: United States
Length: 02:38

Travelers

"Travelers" is a movement dialogue piece that dives into the profound psychological and emotional experiences of isolation. This work explores the idea of being mislead through one's own creation and the stark realization of being cut off from humanity with no hope of returning - while also giving this sense of acceptance for what's in front of us.

Director: Kedric Jon Bateman
Region: United States
Length: 11:02

Shorts Block—Continued



SCFF SCHEDULE

8:30 PM Inhabiting the Interval: Avant-Garde and Expanded Shorts (Cont.)
Indexical at The Tannery

Featured Short Films

Father Time and the Maiden
Father Time and the Maiden tells the story of a moment unfrozen. What it feels to come alive after hundreds of years?

Director: Rodrigo Courtney
Region: Mexico
Length: 03:59

The Story of The Cricket Queen
The "Story of The Cricket Queen" recreates digital media tropes, trends, and aesthetics with analog film techniques.

Director: Natalie Peracchio
Region: United States
Length: 03:57

9:00 PM After Hours Party (FREE)
HWY 17 Studios

Experience the pulse of the festival at a midweek celebration like no other—our After Hours Warehouse Party takes over the brand new HWY 17 Studios, Santa Cruz's hub for creative launches and bold ideas. Step into 22,500 square feet of cinematic energy, where the DJ collective Tide Swing soundtracks your night with eclectic, festival-ready beats. Indulge in artisan bites from Upper Crust Pizza, fresh ceviche, and curated small plates. Enjoy pours from Lester Wines and ice-cold Parish Publick House beer—all in a space built for bold moments and new connections.

This is the party where film, local flavors, and future legends collide. HWY 17 is your canvas—dress to impress, come curious, and RSVP now for an unforgettable night that brings the film festival to life.



11:00 AM Industry Panel: The Future is Local: Reimagining Independent Filmmaking on the Central Coast (FREE)
Hotel Paradox

What will it take for Santa Cruz and the Greater Monterey Bay Area to become a consequential part of the independent filmmaking ecosystem in California? At a time when Hollywood production is down nearly 60%, filmmakers and communities across California are stepping up to imagine and innovate new models of access, sustainability, and opportunity. Join the Santa Cruz Film Festival, Watsonville Film Festival, Poppy Jasper Film Festival, #MakeltBay (The East Bay Film Collective), and HWY 17 Studios for a lively and overdue conversation about the future of film on the Central Coast. From Santa Cruz to Watsonville, San Benito to Monterey, our region has the talent, capacity, and community to evolve the next wave of indie film production — while building a coalition with the Bay Area to launch an impactful film art and jobs sector of its own. By working together across the Central Coast and the Bay Area, we can attract more productions, create jobs, and ensure our stories reach wider audiences. Together, we'll ask: How can Santa Cruz lead the way in creating a thriving indie film scene? What partnerships, policies, and community support are needed to incentivize filmmaking across the Central Coast? And how can we ensure access for diverse voices, local storytellers, and the next generation of creators? This is not just a panel—it's an open conversation. Come with your questions, insights, and ideas. Help us shape the future of independent cinema right here on the Central Coast!

Featured Industry Guests include

- Marc Smolowitz** (Producer/Filmmaker, Outerlands; Founder, 13th Gen)
- Kerri Wood Einerton** (Executive Director of Government Affairs & Public Policy, SAG-AFTRA NorCal Local)
- Sam Bempong** (#MakeltBay / East Bay Film Collective)
- Consuelo Alba** (Executive Director and Co-Founder, Watsonville Film Festival)
- Mattie Scariot** (Director, Poppy Jasper International Film Festival)
- Christina Glynn** (Santa Cruz County Film Commission)
- Ryan "RJ" Allen** (Founder, HWY 17 Studios)
- Paul Kmiec** (Filmmaker/Executive Director of Santa Cruz Film Festival).

12:00 PM A Culinary Uprising: The Story of Bloodroot with Short Film: Lesbian Custody
Colligan Theater

In the 1970s and '80s, there were over 230 feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses across the United States and Canada. Bloodroot, located in Bridgeport, Connecticut, is now the oldest and longest-running of these spaces, operating continuously for over 46 years. 'A Culinary Uprising: The Story of Bloodroot' is a short documentary that explores this feminist, queer, vegan restaurant and bookstore, highlighting the legacy of its pioneering proprietors, Selma Miriam and Noel Furie. The film offers an intimate look at their 46-year working partnership and how they navigate sexism, homophobia, and the realities of aging. Despite challenges, Bloodroot has endured as a beloved space for generations of feminists, vegans, and queer people who continue to return. Please Join Us After for a Q&A with Director Annie Laurie Medonis!

Director: Annie Laurie Medonis
Release Date: 2025
Length: 100 minutes

Lesbian Custody

A short video essay about the history of lesbian mothers fighting for custody of their children in the 1970s. The short introduces the landmark lesbian feminist documentary "In the Best Interests of the Children" (dirs. Frances Reid, Liz Stevens, Cathy Zheutlin, 1977) — providing insight into the personal story of the making of the film and the larger context for this nearly forgotten period of LGBTQ history, and putting the history in dialogue with the political struggles of today. As a conversation between past and present, the video features now retired filmmaker, Frances Reid (award winning cinematographer and director), talking with Julie Stevens (adult daughter filmmaker Liz Stevens and Reid's lover, now deceased) as they explore the archives and production photos from the film and reminisce about their lives in Berkeley as a lesbian family.

Director: Samuuel Topiary, Molly Skonieczny
Producers: Samuuel Topiary Landberg, Molly Skonieczny
Release: 2025
Region: United States
Length: 18:00

1:00 PM Call Me Mule with Short Film: Late-Diagnosed
The 418 Project

Join us after for a Q&A with Director John McDonald! John Sears, who refers to himself as Mule, has been roaming the western United States with his three mules for over thirty years. The 72-year-old and his animals sleep outside, claiming the right to move freely. Bemoaning the loss of open space, urban sprawl and our dependence on the automobile, Mule advocates a simpler way of life in harmony with nature. While many appreciate his nomadic lifestyle, Mule is not welcome everywhere. His confrontations with law enforcement have resulted in fines, arrests, even institutionalization. His story may be unique, but it has universal appeal, celebrating the creativity, courage and resilience to choose an extraordinary way of life and defend his place in the world.

Cast: John Sears
Director: John McDonald
Release Date: 2023
Length: 115 minutes

Late-Diagnosed

Matt often didn't recognize himself in photos and never really understood why—until one day his loss of hearing helped him see more clearly. This educational video breaks down what living with auditory processing disorder can feel like, as well as the complicated feelings that come with this and other diagnoses.

Cast: Matthew Baltar
Director: Matthew Baltar
Release: 2025
Region: United States
Length: 03:35

2:00 PM The Invisible Mammal
Santa Cruz Cinema

Against the backdrop of the sixth mass extinction, an all-woman team of biologists set out to save bats from a deadly fungal disease, but when the COVID-19 pandemic interrupts their work, they are sent down a path of discovery that illuminates the connections between bat conservation and the spread of infectious disease. Please join us after for a Q&A with Director Kristin Tieche!

Director: Kristin Tieche
Writer: Kristin Tieche
Producer: Kristin Tieche
Release Date: 2025
Length: 110 minutes

2:15 PM STREET SMART: Lessons from a TV Icon
Colligan Theater

STREET SMART: LESSONS FROM A TV ICON is a feature documentary about Sonia Manzano — known to millions as "Maria" from SESAME STREET. The film follows Sonia's remarkable journey, from a young girl in the South Bronx finding refuge in television, to becoming the first Latina on American TV in a regular role, through 44 years on screen on SESAME STREET, and now as a creator of ALMA'S WAY. Featuring interviews with luminaries, original animation, and scripted scenes that blend humor and heart, this inspirational documentary invites viewers to learn once again from this beloved icon. Please join us after for a Q&A with Director Ernie Bustamante!

Director: Ernie Bustamante
Writer: Ernie Bustamante
Producer: Steve Canals, Maor Azran
Length: 95 minutes

3:00 PM Narrative Shorts: Roots & Reveries
The 418 Project

Featured Short Films

Dawn Every Day
Set in 1956, 8 year old Nabil navigates through new social norms he cannot fathom that impact his next door best friend in post nationalized Egypt. Inspired by true events.

Director: Amir Youssef
Region: Egypt
Length: 19:57

Shorts Block—Continued



SCFF SCHEDULE

3:00 PM **Narrative Shorts: Roots & Reveries (Cont.)**
The 418 Project

Featured Short Films

Grandma Nai Who Played Favorites

During her chaotic family's Qingming visit, dead Grandma Nai sneaks away from her peaceful afterlife after overhearing that her queer grandson is about to get engaged to a woman.

Director: Chheangkea
Region: Cambodia, France, United States
Length: 18:44

We're Not Done Yet

"We're Not Done Yet" follows a mother, Bettina, and her son, Alex, as they face challenges during a weekend trip to Bettina's beach house. Alex, in his late 20s, is forced to confront his controlling tendencies and acknowledge his mother's independence. The film unfolds through an odd encounter with the neighbors, the discovery of a filled out adoption application, and Bettina's budding new romance. After tensions rise, and an emotional confrontation ensues, Alex learns to accept his mother for who she is, and allows her to live her life in the way she wishes. This unfiltered 20-minute film captures the humor, love, and struggle of family dynamics, and portrays the cathartic joy that comes from embracing change.

Director: Joseph Longo, Sofia Camargo
Region: United States
Length: 22:11

Lottie

On a family vacation fifteen-year-old Lottie, restless and unraveling, fixates on an older pizza delivery boy who makes her feel seen. As her parents quietly try to protect her from unraveling, they only drive her deeper into it.

Director: Bella Rieth
Region: United States
Length: 22:20

4:30 PM **Central Coast Shorts: Crossroads of Longing and Belonging**
Colligan Theater

Featured Short Films

The Long Valley

A documentary about the hopes and dreams of the people of the Salinas Valley, one of the most productive agricultural regions in California. The film uses a photobook aesthetic, exploring the space between still photography and film. Robert was born in the valley, and Rodrigo taught there for over a decade.

Directors: Robert Machoian, Rodrigo Ojeda-Beck
Region: United States
Length: 13:30

Crossroads

June and Daniel spend their last day together in sorrow as June prepares to leave Santa Cruz for a program far away. In a desperate attempt to relive their best moments, they cannot help but notice that their time together is coming to an unavoidable end.

Director: Christopher Lawrence
Region: United States
Length: 10:35

The Color of Sky

The hope that lingers in the farewell.

Director: Cristal Gonzalez Avila
Region: United States
Length: 09:03

HomeTown HomeLess

A poetic exploration of land and home set in Santa Cruz, California's Potrero district. The film follows unhoused poet, Momma Shannan, and the women within her community as they move through shifting encampment spaces. Amidst uncertainty, these women come together to talk about life, love, and loss.

Director: Maleah Rose Welsh
Region: United States
Length: 19:40

The Power of Art

In Santa Cruz, California, where soaring rental prices have deepened a housing crisis, artist Abi Mustapha brings visibility to those most affected. Through her residency with Housing Matters, funded by the Central Coast Creative Corps, Abi engages the community with transformative projects, including the elaborate "Look Me in the Eyes" art show—a powerful collection of intricate portraits that tell personal stories. The Power of Art reveals how creativity connects communities, challenges perceptions, and inspires change in the face of adversity.

Director: Michael Daniel
Region: United States
Length: 07:27

Honoring Our Ancestors by Sharing History

A brief look into how Qingming Festival in Santa Cruz honors the original Chinese Pioneers of early Santa Cruz.

Director: Andrew O'Keefe
Region: United States
Length: 04:52

The Ballad of Tita and the Machines

In a near future where Artificial Intelligence in the workforce is a societal norm, Tita, an injured and elderly fieldworker, reluctantly hires an artificially intelligent humanoid substitute to fill in for her picking strawberries and unexpectedly attracts the curiosity of the creators of this technology when their AI workers are unable to do her back-breaking work.

Director: Miguel Angel Caballero
Region: United States
Length: 15:00

5:15 PM **Where in the Hell with Short Film: Budget Paradise**
The 418 Project

When her girlfriend disappears mid-road trip, sardonic prop master Kasey is left stranded in a California backwater. Panicked, she hitches a ride with cash-strapped actor Alan on his trek to an audition in Canada. Together, the unlikely duo dodges Reno psychics, stale corn nuts, and border security on a quest to find a missing soulmate and maybe validation. Please join us after for a Q&A with Director Laramie Dennis!

Director: Laramie Dennis
Writer: Laramie Dennis
Producer: Laramie Dennis
Music: Anna Eichenauer
Release Date: 2024
Length: 110 minutes

Budget Paradise

Chester, a Black non-binary artist searches for space to paint while seeking permission to exist within their hometown.

Cast: Ashley Hernandez
Director: LaTajh Simmons-Weaver
Producers: Sean Gillane, Chris Walters, Caitlyn Durkin
Release: 2025
Region: United States
Length: 13:51

7:00 PM **Goddess of Slide: The Forgotten Story of Ellen McIlwaine**
Santa Cruz Cinema

Celebrates the legendary – and largely forgotten – Canadian musician who fought for her right to play the slide guitar, a male-dominated instrument in a male-dominated world. Eight months after arriving in Greenwich Village with no prospects, she found herself opening for the biggest blues legends in the world, like Odetta, Richie Havens, and Mississippi John Hurt. But it's the six magical nights that changed the course of her life. Please join us after for a Q&A with Alfonso Maiorana!

Director: Alfonso Maiorana
Release Date: 2024
Region: Canada
Length: 110 minutes

7:00 PM **Narrative Shorts: The Long Way Home**
Colligan Theater

Featured Short Films

Gloria

Gloria, a Chinese woman in her 70s living alone and struggling with her memory, finds new purpose in teaching herself Spanish.

Director: Kim Blanck
Region: United States
Length: 09:39

Oopsie Daisy

Oopsie Daisy follows Noah, a young Jewish man who is grieving the loss of his mother and finds comfort in bringing mistakenly stolen painted stones to her grave, but little does he know the importance these rocks hold to a young woman, Elizabeth, caring for her sick grandmother, May. Noah struggles with coming to terms with the sudden death and as a result, struggles with severe anxiety and loneliness. Similarly, Elizabeth struggles with her problems- spending time with what's left of the grandmother she once knew through their only connection to the past: art. When Noah and Elizabeth meet unexpectedly, they learn more about each other and form a new connection.

Director: Kira Beckerman
Region: United States
Length: 16:36

We are Kings

Two immigrant teenagers, Lin and Walid, sneak into Lin's mother's Chinese restaurant to pirate DVDs they can sell at school. But when Lin's high school crush, Amber, unexpectedly walks in, the afternoon veers from a harmless hustle into a moral dilemma. Caught between his mother's quiet sacrifices, his best friend's loyalty, and Amber's rebellious world, Lin is pulled into a car ride that becomes an emotional rollercoaster.

Director: Frank Sun
Region: United States
Length: 12:29

Titty Boy

Titty Boy tells the story of a teenage boy with gynecomastia (aka "man boobs") who attempts to change his body by taking matters into his own hands.

Director: Austin Ford Franklin Culp
Region: United States
Length: 13:52

Fix the Faucet

Stuck in a nightmarish cycle of failing to check everything off her never ending to-do list, and juggling situationships with noncommittal Los Angeles lovers, Violet must overcome her desire for distraction before her overbearing mother comes to town.

Director: Jennifer Gouchoe
Region: United States
Length: 10:32

Shorts Block—Continued



SCFF SCHEDULE

7:00 PM Narrative Shorts: The Long Way Home (Cont.)
Colligan Theater

Featured Short Films

Time Is Money
Jace, a financially challenged writer/director and self-proclaimed graduate of the school of Mark Duplass, delivers packages to survive while struggling to secure funds for his first indie feature. A bonus for the top-ranked delivery driver could solve his problems.

Director: Duran Jones
Region: United States
Length: 11:39

7:45 PM Shorts After Dark: Twisted Oddities
The 418 Project

Featured Short Films

The Ride
A '76 Plymouth reflects on its journey, witnessing decades of human life, capturing moments of freedom, temptation, and redemption as it changes hands from one owner to the next.

Director: Slava Denisov
Region: United States
Length: 15:00

Bidet
A group of best friends are hunted by a possessed bidet.

Director: James Brylowski
Region: Canada
Length: 07:30

MotherWound
A young woman is confronted by her mother's legacy that has manifested as a creature lurking in her peripherals. The more she ignores it, the more ravenous it becomes.

Director: Hana Holloway, Camille Zapata
Region: United States
Length: 18:00

Vibeland: Zodiac
In a surreal San Francisco where urban legends are real, a young Black woman's date night becomes a deadly game of cat and mouse with an infamous serial killer who targets women like her.

Director: Rodrigo Williams, Alexi Papalexopoulos
Region: United States
Length: 24:07

Chickentown
"CHICKENTOWN" follows a determined young woman, Mitzi, in pursuit of justice after her sister's tragic death. Mitzi intentionally hitchhikes with Dodge, her prime suspect in her sister's murder. As she skillfully navigates through tense conversation, suspense builds as Mitzi inches closer to an inevitable confrontation. After a chaotic and unpredictable series of events, Mitzi faces a critical choice: Will she attempt to avenge her sister, knowing she risks falling into the same fate?

Director: Madeline Poeta
Region: United States
Length: 13:10

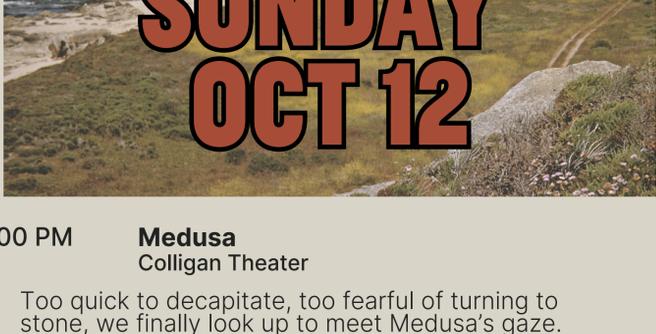
Swipe
A girl attempts to swipe her way to happiness. After an exhaustive search, and astronomical body count, she resorts to assembling her dream boy from left over parts.

Director: Patrick Smith
Region: United States
Length: 05:00

9:00 PM Filmmaker & Friends Wine Salon
Birichino Winery Tasting Room

Join us for an unforgettable evening at the Filmmaker & Friends Wine Salon—an exclusive after-hours gathering for VIPs and filmmakers at the beautiful Birichino Winery Tasting Room. Raise a glass with fellow film lovers, industry guests, and creators in a relaxed, intimate setting just steps from the heart of downtown Santa Cruz. Enjoy Birichino's renowned wines, light bites, and spirited conversation as we celebrate cinematic ingenuity and the vibrant creative community that defines the Santa

Mingle, unwind, and toast to the art of film with us. Admission is complimentary for festival VIPs and filmmakers with valid credentials.



12:00 PM Medusa
Colligan Theater

Too quick to decapitate, too fearful of turning to stone, we finally look up to meet Medusa's gaze. Medusa, an iconic symbol of tragedy and transformation, captivates with her stone-turning gaze. A viral sculpture disrupts traditional portrayals, sparking societal reflection. One of the most body modified trans people in the world, Tiamat Legion Medusa shares their healing journey, while a diverse chorus of voices examines Medusa's myth. Celebrating her transformative power, this documentary invites audiences to redefine Medusa's narrative. Please join us after for a Q&A with Director Jesseca Ynez Simmons!

Director: Jesseca Ynez Simmons
Producer: Jesseca Ynez Simmons, João Queiroga
Length: 130 minutes

2:00 PM EarthVision Environmental Shorts: We Are All Connected and Cocktail Hour
Hotel Paradox

Discover urgent journeys and intimate connections to our planet at the Environmental Shorts Screening & Cocktail Hour—an afternoon devoted to visual storytelling, community, and hope. Enjoy provided hours d'oeuvres and cocktails for purchase at 2:00 and a screening at 3 of this carefully curated program spotlighting bold new shorts illuminating the intersections of nature, culture, and resilience.

Featured Short Films

Tule
Tule is a poetic 2D animated mixed media short film championing awareness and hope. A young Pomo girl serves as the narrator of our project. Her poetic contemplations ring true with convictions shared by her Pomo community at Clear Lake, California. She revels in the local nature's glory, but dread strikes when she faces today's careless pollution damage that impedes cultural practices.

Directors: Jocelyn Estrella Garcia
Region: United States
Length: 04:06

The New Canaries
A resilient, farmworker community, bound by shared struggles, farmworker itself to defend its health and the land, sparking a movement for environmental and labor justice.

Directors: Brenda Avila-Hanna, Megan Martinez Goltz
Region: United States
Length: 19:58

The Elkhorn Slough & Carbon Sequestration
Dr. Adina Payton, a professor in the Departments of Earth and Planetary Sciences at UC Cruz, leads a cohort of PhD students on their research at the Elkhorn Slough. Their investigation dives into the slough's unique capacity to sequester massive amounts of CO2 and the importance of protecting these ancient, natural ecosystems.

Director: Joel Hersch
Region: United States
Length: 09:58

Portrait of a Seaweed Farmer
Portrait of a Seaweed Farmer: Ana Borrero, PhD, follows a Spanish marine scientist who leaves behind a high-stress academic career to cultivate something far more sustainable—seaweed and a life in balance. Now sustaining in Clear Lake, California, she channels her scientific expertise into growing an industry poised to combat climate change through regenerative farming. With humor, heart, and humility, Ana reflects on her journey from a microscope-loving child to working mother of two, driven by both environmental urgency and a desire to be present for her young family. A deeply personal look at how one woman found meaning, and a future, beneath the surface.

Director: Jeff Siebert
Region: United States
Length: 10:11

Sandpipers' Last Supper
SANDPIPERS' LAST SUPPER sheds light on shorebirds — one of the fastest disappearing groups of birds in the world; reveals the beauty and ecological value of under-appreciated intertidal mudflats; and supports a call to action for the conservation of these vital habitats that have starkly declined around the world. Taking part in the sandpipers' journey, three individuals cross paths on the mudflat. As they discover the unsuspected life force of biofilm that feeds the shorebirds in the mud, they also find the invisible threads that connect different pieces of the ecosystem — and each other in a way that transforms their own personal connection with the natural world.

Director: Isabelle Groc
Region: United States
Length: 25:03

841
Catching waves and biting boards, Sea Otter 841 has captured the attention of citizens, scientists, and journalists around the world. While she continues to evade capture, the media frenzy has raised the question: What should we do about this unruly otter?

Director: Rachel Burnett
Region: United States
Length: 16:18

2:00PM It's Dorothy!
Santa Cruz Cinema

Since Dorothy Gale started her epic journey down the Yellow Brick Road over a century ago in THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ, she's become a celebrity, a brand, and a beacon for marginalized voices across our culture. IT'S DOROTHY! brings to life her timeless adventures in Oz through those who've played her, from Judy Garland to Nichelle Lewis (THE WIZ), and the cultural icons (John Waters, Lena Waithe, Rufus Wainwright) who she's inspired to hope and to dream. With a magical remix of archival and cinematic art, director Jeffrey McHale follows up his SHOWGIRLS documentary with another insightful look at a queer cultural touchstone. Please join us after for a Q&A with Producer Ariana Garfinkel!

Director: Jeffrey McHale
Writer: Jeffrey McHale
Producer: Ariana Garfinkel
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States of America
Length: 120 minutes



SUNDAY
OCT 12

SCHEDULE

2:15 PM **A Little Fellow: The Legacy of A.P. Giannini**
Colligan Theater

Presented by The Dante Alighieri Society of Santa Cruz: Please join us after for a Q&A with Director Davide Fiore! Before banks in the U.S. had a branch on every corner, they were an exclusive service for the wealthy. For the poor, working, and immigrant class, saving money was as unreliable as stashing it under a mattress. But at the turn of the 20th century, A.P. Giannini, son of Italian immigrants, revolutionized the industry with his small Bank of Italy in San Francisco. As a first-generation Italian-American, his goal was to serve "the little fellow" and breed prosperity within his immigrant community. But, by building trust and giving loans on a simple handshake, he created one of the largest banks in the country – Bank of America. A Little Fellow tells the story of a man who struck fear into the heart of Wall Street while having everyday people in mind. Known as "People's banker," he gave a friendly face to a greedy industry. As one of the first investors in Hollywood, the Golden Gate Bridge, and Hewlett-Packard, his forward-thinking helped the country through two World Wars and the Great Depression.

Director: Davide Fiore
Writer: Joe Mancini, Davide Fiore
Producer: Anna Laclergue, Sacha Smith, Joe Mancini, Davide Fiore
Length: 120 minutes

4:30 PM **Playing with Fire: An Ecossexual Emergency**
Colligan Theater

From the creators of the first queer environmental documentary feature films comes a hot new offering. The third chapter is their most epic and daring yet — fusing art, activism, and intimate storytelling in a touching journey through crisis, change, and renewal. When a firestorm rips through their redwood forest home, two artist-activists — Beth Stephens & Annie Sprinkle — emerge with a powerful message of love, resilience, and ecological hope, guided by a relationship with their magical peacock. Please join us after for a Q&A with Directors Annie Sprinkle & Beth Stephens!

Director: Annie Sprinkle, Beth Stephens
Producer: Keith Wilson
Release Date: 2025
Length: 115 minutes

6:30 PM **Closing Night: Outerlands**
Colligan Theater

Cass juggles jobs as a nanny, restaurant server, and party drug dealer in order to make ends meet and pay for their tiny San Francisco apartment. After a one night stand with Kalli, a co-worker they have a crush on, Cass agrees to watch her 11-year-old daughter, Ari, while she goes out of town. But as days pass without word from Kalli, Cass and Ari form a bond that spirals Cass back to their own difficult childhood and the pain they've been running from. Please join us for our Closing Night Film Outerlands followed by a Q&A with Director Elena Oxman!

Director: Elena Oxman
Producer: Marc Smolowitz
Music: Lena Raine
Release Date: 2025
Region: United States of America
Length: 100 minutes

8:45 PM **Closing Night Awards Ceremony (FREE)**
Woodhouse Blending + Brewing

Join us for an unforgettable night as the Santa Cruz Film Festival wraps up its 25th anniversary season at Woodhouse Blending & Brewing! Celebrate a week of bold storytelling and cinematic magic with filmmakers, friends, and movie lovers from across our creative community. Enjoy delicious provided food from Woodhouse's kitchen, award-winning brews on tap, and musical guests JAM and the Buttered Biscuits to keep the energy high. The ceremony will feature the presentation of 18 awards, recognizing outstanding achievement among this year's filmmakers. Join fellow creatives, festival supporters, and industry professionals as we honor the visionary talents that have enriched this year's festival. Admission is free, and all are welcome. Please join us for an evening of recognition, connection, and gratitude as we celebrate the achievements and contributions of our festival community

VENUE ADDRESSES

- Del Mar Theatre**
1124 Pacific Ave #4415, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Parking Available Behind the Theatre Accessible by Front Street
- Santa Cruz Cinema**
1124 Pacific Ave #4415, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Parking Available at Locust St Parking Garage & Soquel Ave Parking Garage
- The 418 Project**
125 River St S, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Parking Available at River/Front St Garage or Soquel/ Front St Garage
- Colligan Theater at The Tannery Arts Center**
1010 River St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Free Parking Outside the Colligan (Limited Spots Available)
- Indexical at The Tannery Arts Center**
1050 River St #119, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Free Parking Outside the Colligan (Limited Spots Available)
- Hotel Paradox**
611 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Free Parking in Hotel Paradox Lot
- HWY 17 Studios**
831 Almar Ave, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Free Parking in HWY 17 Studios Lot (Limited Spots Available)
- Museum of Art and History**
705 Front Stree, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Parking Available at River/Front St Garage or Soquel/ Front St Garage
- Woodhouse Blending & Brewing**
119 Madrone Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Parking Available at Address (Limited) Overflow Parking at Dominican Hospital Outpatient Rehab Center (111 Madrone St)
- Birichino Winery Tasting Room**
204 Church St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Street Parking Available