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HOT DOCS FORUM 2023 ANNOUNCES PROJECT SELECTIONS

- NORTH AMERICA'S MOST EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY MARKET RETURNS IN-PERSON TO TORONTO DURING HOT DOCS 30th-ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL, PRESENTING 19 CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS FROM 16 COUNTRIES

Toronto, ON – Hot Docs is pleased to announce the project selections for the 24th edition of the **Hot Docs Forum**, presented by the DGC, the acclaimed international financing event aimed at securing co-productions and funds for feature length documentaries. The Hot Docs Forum returns in-person to Toronto's Hart House on the mornings of May 2 and May 3 as part of Hot Docs Festival 2023, taking place April 27 to May 7, 2023. 19 projects representing 16 countries and featuring 23 filmmakers, 12 of whom are women and 11 of whom are BIPOC, will pitch to international decision makers and members of the documentary community. An additional Wild Card pitch will be selected live at the Forum. The Hot Docs Forum is generously supported by Presenting Forum Sponsor the Directors Guild of Canada.

The Forum, the flagship industry event of Hot Docs Festival, is a spirited live event where pre-selected projects are pitched for co-production financing to a roundtable of leading commissioning editors, film fund representatives, financiers, programming executives, and angel investors. Selected projects will also participate in **Hot Docs Deal Maker**, a curated one-on-one pitch meeting program, which includes an additional 35. The full list of Hot Docs Deal Maker 2023 projects will be announced on March 29.

"It is at the Hot Docs Forum where films launch into the marketplace and later propel into our audiences' sphere. The 2023 Forum selections are outstanding expressions of filmmaking in its many forms and from so many dynamic voices," shared **Elizabeth Radshaw**, Hot Docs Industry programs director. "A massive thank you to Dorota Lech and to this year's Selection Committee, comprised of Amelia Hanibelsz, Leah Giblin, and Monika Navarro, for an exceptional program and to Lauren Clarke, curator of Hot Docs Deal Maker."

"In 2022 the Hot Docs Forum participants pitched to 70+ key commissioning editors and funders and over \$50,000 in cash prizes were awarded," added **Dorota Lech**, Industry programmer and Forum producer. "Back from three online editions, we are preparing to welcome back our international community to the 24th Hot Docs Forum. This year's slate is a dynamic combination of bold and heartfelt. Congratulations to all the filmmakers who inspire us with their artistry, tenacity, and vision, and who are fighting to share stories in increasingly hostile environments."

Two cash prizes will be awarded to top Forum pitch teams: the prestigious **first look** prize, financed by members of Hot Docs **first look**, a curated access program for philanthropic supporters of and investors in documentary film; and the **CMF-Hot Docs Forum Canadian Pitch Prize**, presented in partnership with the Canada Media Fund, a \$10,000 cash prize awarded to the best Canadian pitch and intended to go towards the production and completion of the winning project.

At the Forum, participating teams will take up to seven minutes to pitch their doc project to the world's leading commissioning editors, investors, and industry experts. Following the pitch, each team receives eight minutes of live feedback and, in some cases, on-the-spot financial commitments. Participating decision makers confirmed to date include A24, Al Jazeera Documentary Channel, Al Jazeera English, Amazon Studios, ABC News Studios, ARTE G.E.I.E., BBC, BBC Arabic, BBC Arts, bilibili, Catapult Film Fund, CBC - documentary, CBC Radio-Canada, Chicken & Egg Pictures, Concordia, CNEX, Field of Vision, HBO Europe, Hulu, International Documentary Association, Impact Partners, Independent Television Service, Indigenous Screen Office, Knowledge Network, Lyfta, National Geographic, Netflix, NHK Enterprises, Nia Tero, Paramount, Participant Media, PBS - ITVS, RTS - Radio Télévision Suisse, POV, Sandbox Films, Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program, TG4, The DeNovo Initiative, The Redford Center, The Whickers, TVO, Vice Studios, WGBH, yesDBS, ZDF/ARTE, SBS - Australia, SVT – Arts.

The following projects will be presented at the 2023 Hot Docs Forum:

CINEMA KAWAKEB

Production Companies: Jo image Productions (Jordan), YN Films Inc. (Canada)

Director: Mahmoud Massad

Producers: Munire Armstrong, Su Baloglu

When a hidden lens through an old cinema ticket office becomes a confessional.

EXODUS STORIES

Production Company: Vida Vida Productions, LLC (USA)

Director: Ilse Fernandez

Producers: Ilse Fernandez, Michele Farinola

Through intimate access, *Exodus Stories* follows the high-stakes journeys of three Central American immigrants who join the migrant caravans fleeing violence and hoping to find refuge in the United States at a time when asylum is under siege. Capturing their resilience every step of the way, they prove the American Dream is a beacon for those living in a nightmare.

I OF THE WATER

Production Company: Making Waves Films LLC (USA)

Director: Kimberlee Bassford

Producers: Kimberlee Bassford, Marilyn McFadyen, Vilsoni Hereniko, Leanne K. Ferrer, Cheryl Hiras, Linda Goldstein Knowlton

After a painful experience pushes her into self-exile, acclaimed Samoan writer Sia Figiel untangles her complicated past, revealing a hidden past of sexual abuse and initiating a journey toward healing.

INTERCEPTED

Production Companies: Les Films Cosmos Inc. (Canada), Hutong Production (France), MoonMan (Ukraine)

Director: Oksana Karpovych

Producers: Giacomo Nudi, Rocío Barba Fuentes, Pauline Tran Van Lieu, Lucie Rego, Darya Bassel

A journey through Ukraine that reveals the banality of evil behind the Russian invasion.

KARACHI SKY

Production Company: Capital K Pictures LLC (USA)

Director: Sofian Khan

Producer: Faisal Azam

Memoir meets *in memoriam* in this personal journey through a filmmaker's twenty-year archive and the relationship that changed the course of his life.

LIFE ON THE EDGE

Production Companies: Anima Films Ltd. (UK), Thulsa Doom Limited (UK), Levon Gharibian (UK), Film.GI (Greenland)

Directors: Johnny Langenheim, Sebastian Feehan

Producers: Andrea Land, Paninnguaq Heilmann, Cyrus Mirzashafa, Levon Gharibian, Hector N. Helsing, James Reed

Haunted by his best friend's death and his own violent past, Nuka Aqissiaq travels across Greenland giving counsel to the desperate as an epidemic of suicide ravages this Inuit nation.

MARRIAGE COPS

Production Company: Marriage Cops LLC (USA)

Directors: Cheryl Hess, Shashwati Talukdar

Producer: Diana Chiawen Lee

In a small city in northern India, unhappy couples seek relationship advice in the most unlikely of places—the local police station.

REDLIGHT TO LIMELIGHT

Production Companies: Bindubot Communication (India), Touch Narrative (India), Marx Film OÜ (Estonia), Les Steppes Productions SARL (France), JW Documentaries Oy (Finland), VFS Films (Latvia)

Director: Bipuljit Basu

Producers: Nilotpal Majumdar, Max Tuula, Maria Gavrilova, Louis Beaudemont, Nicolaï Iarochenko, John Webster, Uldis Cekulis, Sanaket Mandal

The dream of telling their own stories brings sex workers and their children together to form a tiny self-taught film unit in a Kolkata brothel. The amateur but resilient film crew eventually scales the battle up through their films to make the brothel a better place to live.

SANATORIUM

Production Company: Venom Limited (Ireland)
Director: Gar O'Rourke
Producers: Samantha Corr, Andrew Freedman, Ken Wardrop

Despite a war raging close-by, mud treatments, lasers, and electro-shock therapies continue at the Ukrainian Kuyalnik Sanatorium, where a small group searches for love, healing and happiness.

SHIFTING BASELINES

Production Company: GreenGround Productions Inc. (Canada)
Director: Julien Elie
Producers: Andreas Mendritzki, Aonan Yang, Julien Elie

Where the Rio Grande meets the sea, the rockets of SpaceX prepare to launch; astronomers come to gaze skyward, philosophers come to gaze inwards, hawkers come to make a buck and environmentalists come to survey the damage. Welcome to Boca Chica, USA.

SHOW ME THE PAST IS REAL

Production Companies: Younger Daughter Films (Canada), Parkside Films (USA), Fit Via Vi Films (USA)
Director: Charlie Tyrell
Producers: Julie Baldassi, Mona Panchal, Shannon Riggs, Clay Tweel, Bill Way, Elliott Whitton

The objects we treasure hold magical meaning for us. But can we really save the past?

TERRA INCOGNITA

Production Companies: CAUCASO Società Cooperativa (Italy), LES ALCHIMISTES SAS (France)
Director: Enrico Masi
Producers: Stefano Migliore, Loïs Rocque

A group of colossal magnets are traveling on a cargo ship through the Mediterranean Sea, and in parallel, a family lives voluntarily without electricity in the Western Alps. Beyond the mountains, in the South of France, an experiment is ongoing at ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor), an advanced lab aimed at bringing the sun to earth. The film is a psychogeographic detour into the core of the political ecology debate.

THE 5 BILLION DOLLAR SCAM

Production Companies: Medalia Productions Ltd. (Israel), Intuitive Pictures Inc. (Canada)
Director: Hilla Medalia
Producer: Ina Fichman

Binary Option trading promised quick money and easy profits but ultimately led thousands to lose their life savings. This film follows a precedent-setting legal case of an international scam gone awry, and the investigators and informants that would ultimately topple this house of cards.

THE SANDBOX

Production Company: Compy Films Inc. (Canada)

Director: Kenya-Jade Pinto

Producers: Shasha Nakhai, Kenya-Jade Pinto, Jennifer Baichwal, Rich Williamson

Your future is being written in the sand.

UNTITLED AFRICAN CLIMATE CHANGE FILM

Production Companies: One Story Up LLC (USA), We are not the machine Ltd (Kenya)

Directors: Pete Murimi, Daphne Matziaraki

Producers: Toni Kamau, Maya Craig, Roger Ross Williams, Geoff Martz

Climate change and unresolved historical injustices raise the stakes in a generations-old conflict between indigenous pastoralists and white landowners in a wildlife conservation haven.

UNTITLED DWARFISM PROJECT

Production Companies: In Proportion LLC (USA), Little By Little Films Limited (UK), Multitude Films (USA)

Director: Julie Wyman

Producers: Julie Wyman, Lindsey Dryden, Jonna McKone, Jess Devaney, Anya Rous

A new drug promises to make Little People taller, threatening the community it claims to serve. Meanwhile, director Julie Wyman confronts her own dwarfism diagnosis. As Little People grapple with the choice to give up difference, the film poses an urgent question: can we see and be seen differently?

UNTITLED THWAITES PROJECT

Production Companies: Old Chilly Pictures, LLC (USA)

Director: Emelie Mahdavian

Producers: John D. Sutter, Emelie Mahdavian

How do you watch the climate crisis unfold without losing hope? *Untitled Thwaites Film* tells the story of a female-led science team's visit to an Antarctic ice shelf that holds back several feet of sea level rise. They will be the last seven humans to set foot on this crumbling ice.

WHOSE DREAM ARE YOU LIVING

Production Company: Ayvision Ltd (Iran)

Director: Mohammad Tabarsa

Producers: Mahnaz Tafaghi, Mohammad Tabarsa

The announcement of the first ever music competition on Iranian television sparks an inner fire for Hanif in a forbidden atmosphere.

ZERO HOUR

Production Companies: NoCut Film Collective (India), CinemaPaar Productions (India)

Directors: Deeksha Ketkar, Nachiket Guttikar

Producers: Arya Rothe, Isabella Rinaldi, Cristina Hanes, Nachiket Guttikar, Deeksha Ketkar

An intimate portrait of a politician from a deceptively quiet Indian village, who must choose between his career ambitions and his family's demands, after his teenage son takes a radical step behind his back.

The Hot Docs Forum wishes to thank Presenting Forum Sponsor Directors Guild of Canada and Founding Partner Telefilm Canada. The Hot Docs Forum receives additional support from Banff World Media Festival, Blue Ice Pictures, C21 Media, Canada Media Fund, Canadian Media Producers Association, CBC, Chiledoc, European Film Promotion, Front Row Insurance, Gardiner Roberts LLP, Italian Trade Commission, L'Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada (APFC), National Film Board of Canada, Netflix, Ontario Creates, Playback, Realscreen, Rogers Group of Funds, Scotia Wealth Management, SODEC, the City of Toronto, and Variety.

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[Hot Docs \(www.hotdocs.ca\)](http://www.hotdocs.ca), North America's largest documentary festival, conference and market, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing and celebrating the art of documentary and to creating production opportunities for documentary filmmakers. Hot Docs will present its 30th annual edition from April 27 to May 7, 2023, in cinemas across Toronto, with a selection of films available online to audiences throughout Canada. Hot Docs will also mount a dynamic series of knowledge sessions, networking opportunities and market programs for documentary practitioners and industry delegates, including the renowned Hot Docs Forum, Hot Docs Deal Maker and The Doc Shop. Year-round, Hot Docs supports the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs and a multi-million-dollar film fund portfolio, and fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs owns and programs the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, a century-old landmark located in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood and the world's first and largest documentary cinema, and operates Hot Docs at Home streaming platform.

Starting Tuesday, March 28, Festival ticket package holders, including Doc Soup subscribers, can redeem their ticket packages, and Hot Docs Members can purchase single tickets. Starting Tuesday, April 4, single tickets will be available to the public. Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and/or redeemed online at www.hotdocs.ca or in person at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema Box Office, located at 506 Bloor Street West (hours vary daily in accordance with screenings). Single tickets are \$19 to regular Festival screenings and \$22 to Special Presentations screenings (\$17-19 members). Special events vary in price. A Festival 12-Pack is \$199 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$279. Hot Docs offers free tickets for all



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screenings before 5:00 p.m. to those 60+ and students with valid photo I.D., available online the day of the screening, subject to availability. Free screenings for students courtesy of CBC and CBC Gem.

Hot Docs is proud to include Scotia Wealth Management as its Presenting Platinum Partner; Rogers Group of Funds as its Founding Partner; CBC as its Signature Partner; Netflix as its Presenting Partner; and Telefilm Canada, the City of Toronto and the Government of Ontario as its Major Supporters.

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Hot Docs is a charitable, not-for-profit organization committed to advancing the art of documentary and supporting opportunities for independent filmmakers.