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HOT DOCS 2025: NORTH AMERICA'S PREMIER DOC FEST RETURNS WITH 113 FILMS FROM 47 COUNTRIES

Toronto, Canada – The highly anticipated **Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival** returns to Toronto from **April 24 to May 4, 2025**, promising an unparalleled celebration of non-fiction storytelling on a global scale. From 2662 film submissions, this year's slate will present 113 documentaries representing 47 countries across 11 diverse programs and will feature 35 world, 14 international, and 26 North American premieres. Furthermore, alongside the premieres of remarkable Canadian and international documentaries, the 2025 Festival will offer an extensive lineup of industry programs and events.

"I am incredibly excited to be able to share these 113 extraordinary films as part of the 32nd Hot Docs Festival," shared **Heather Haynes**, Director of Programming, Hot Docs. "Both the documentary landscape and the world of film festivals have been faced with new challenges and so much change over the past few years, and despite all of this, our community has found a way to keep moving forward. We're honoured to be able to continue to share the powerful work and talent of filmmakers from Canada and around the world with Toronto's dedicated film-loving audiences. Documentary filmmaking has always played a significant role in expanding on the stories shared in headlines, and in times such as this, when there is so much consistent change and uncertainty both here at home and globally, that expansion is perhaps needed now more than ever."

The 2025 Hot Docs Festival will open with the world premiere of ***Parade: Queer Acts of Love & Resistance***, directed by award-winning Canadian filmmaker **Noam Gonick** and produced by **Justine Pimlott** for the National Film Board of Canada, on **Thursday, April 24** at 6:15 PM (Industry screening) and 9:30 PM (public screening) at **Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema**. This ground-breaking feature documentary explores the pivotal moments and courageous actions that sparked Canada's 2SLGBTQ+ movement.

The **Big Ideas** series will once again spark insightful conversations with notable guests, including director **Maxim Derevianko** and special guests of *Ai Weiwei's Turandot*; director **James Jones** and journalist **Christo Grozev** of *Antidote*; director **Shoshannah Stern** and actor **Marlee Matlin** of *Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore*; and director **Violet Du Feng** of *The Dating Game*.

The **Special Presentations** program, showcasing high-profile films, festival circuit heavy hitters, and renowned subjects, includes the world premiere of ***The Nest***, a deeply personal exploration of memory, identity, and intergenerational storytelling by co-directors Chase Joynt and Julietta Singh. Special Presentations receiving an international premiere are ***Come See Me in the Good Light***, which follows spoken word artist and poet laureate of Colorado Andrea Gibson after an incurable cancer diagnosis; ***Deaf President Now!***, a powerful chronicle of the landmark student protest that transformed

accessibility rights in the US; ***Life After***, in which celebrated filmmaker Reid Davenport investigates the troubling implications of assisted suicide laws for disabled people; and ***Selena y Los Dinos***, a riveting look at the life and legacy of the “Queen of Tejano Music” Selena Quintanilla.

Canadian Spectrum Competition, a competitive program showcasing bold new works by Canadian directors, includes the world premieres of ***#skoden***, in which an iconic Indigenous meme sparks a poignant exploration of the unhoused Albertan man behind the viral phenomenon; ***Casas Muertas***, a lyrical meditation on loss, strength and hope that follows the resilience of three generations of Venezuelans, bound by uncertainty amidst a country-wide economic crisis; ***Shamed***, following an online vigilante and self-described “Creep Hunter” who seeks out potential sexual predators and ambushes them in videotaped confrontations; and ***Siksikakowan: The Blackfoot Man***, a luminous exploration of strength and vulnerability that spans generations of Siksika men and boys as they learn to embrace the intricacies of self-discovery amidst a sweeping Prairies backdrop. The Canadian Spectrum Competition is sponsored by TVO Docs.

International Spectrum Competition, a competitive program spotlighting engaging stories from around the globe, includes a compelling lineup of world premieres: ***Heritage*** is a meticulously crafted family snapshot in which two siblings alternate shifts caring for their elderly parents; ***I Dreamed His Name*** follows the filmmaker and her sister on a journey of discovery across Colombia’s painful history, thirty years after their Afro-Colombian father’s forced disappearance; ***I, Poppy*** follows a son’s fight against corrupt officials while his mother tends their poppy farm in India; ***King Matt the First*** takes us on an enchanting journey into the inner world of young Polish sisters as they grapple with impending adulthood; and ***Unwelcomed*** examines contrasting perspectives around the migrant crisis in Chile following its most violent anti-immigrant protest in late 2021, sparked by an unprecedented influx of migrants from Venezuela. The International Spectrum Competition program is supported by the Donner Canadian Foundation.

For the first time in the program’s history, ***Made In*** will showcase documentaries created by filmmakers and participants who, driven from their homelands by war, conflict or humanitarian crises, continue to tell stories that demand to be heard. This year’s lineup will include deeply personal and timely narratives from Afghanistan, Sudan, Ukraine, Palestine and beyond, offering audiences a rare and resonant perspective on survival, displacement and the enduring strength of the creative spirit. ***Made In Exile*** will include the world premiere of ***The Longer You Bleed***, which explores the emotional toll that constant consumption of war imagery takes on a group of Gen Z Ukrainians in Berlin. The program will also include Canadian premieres of ***Khartoum***, in which a group of displaced Sudanese filmmakers empower five fellow citizens to re-enact dramatic testimonies of their nation’s descent into civil war; ***Writing Hawa***, in which a mother is freed from the constraints of a 40-year arranged marriage, only to see her hopes for a brighter future decimated by the Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan; and ***Yalla Parkour***, a nostalgia-fuelled journey that reveals the harsh realities facing Palestinians through the forming of a relationship between a filmmaker and a young parkour athlete in Gaza. ***Made In Exile*** is supported by PEN Canada.

The **World Showcase** program features revelatory stories that span the globe, including the world premieres of *Aisha's Story*, in which a Palestinian grain miller in a Jordanian refugee camp safeguards her culture and shares her people's history through food; *Betrayal*, following the brother-in-law of Liberian dictator Charles Taylor as he becomes a courageous whistleblower against the dictator's regime; *The Gardener and the Dictator*, offering a unique glimpse into China's tumultuous last century through memories of the filmmaker's elderly grandparents and their quirky love story; *Marriage Cops*, in which an all-women police unit in northern India tackles troubled marriages with unexpected wisdom and authority; and *Spare My Bones, Coyote!*, the story of a Mexican American couple who, for 12 years, have organized biweekly search and rescue missions along the desert border.

The acclaimed **Persister** program will feature films that shine a light on the voices of strong, inspirational women who are speaking up and being heard, including the world premieres of *MAMA*, in which the filmmaker moves beyond the repair of her broken body into to a deeper, more vulnerable soul healing, following a breast cancer diagnosis, and *Widow Champion*, in which a widow rises to help other widows reclaim their rightful property, in rural Kenya where women lose their homes after a husband's death. The program will feature the international premiere of *Mama Goals*, in which Charlotta abandons a secure full-time healthcare job to pursue her dream of becoming a comedian.

Artsapes features creative minds, artistic pursuits and inventive filmmaking, and includes the North American premieres of *Queer as Punk*, following the trans-fronted Muslim punk band Shh...Diam!, whose electrifying performances in Kuala Lumpur defy the harsh criminal penalties faced by Malaysia's LGBTQ community, and *The Flamenco Guitar of Yeraí Cortés*, shot on richly textured 16mm to share an evocative portrait of Spanish guitarist Yeraí Cortés as he explores the spiritual power of flamenco. The program will see the Canadian premiere of *Ai Weiwei's Turandot*, in which the renowned dissident artist reimagines Puccini's opera as a bold critique of modern totalitarianism.

The new **Tipping Point** program features hard-hitting accounts of some of today's most pressing issues, including the world premiere of *Night Watches Us*, a poetic blend of music, dance and spoken word, chronicling a family's desire for justice after a 23-year-old Black father—grappling with a mental crisis—was shot and killed by Montreal police. The program also brings the North American premieres of *An American Pastoral*, in which a heated school board election in a conservative Pennsylvania town becomes ground zero for America's culture wars; *Colossal*, an exploration of the director's politically polarized family and role they played during the authoritarian regime of longtime Dominican Republic president Joaquín Balaguer; and *Facing War*, in which NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg needs to use all of his diplomatic skills to keep the Alliance together and committed to standing by Ukraine.

The popular **Nightvision** program presents future cult classics, including the North American premiere of *Garanti 100% Kréol*, a journey into the world of "magical insurance policies" on the island of Réunion, as those seeking health and peace of mind head to a "guesser," hoping to secure a protective talisman proffered by witchcraft and religion, including the director himself, desiring such a guarantee for his own film. Also receiving a North American premiere at Hot Docs 2025 is *Ultras*, an immersive and electrifying mosaic of soccer's "ultras," the uber fans whose monumental collective displays transform global stadiums into cauldrons of sound and colour. More than just a fandom, being an ultra is a way of life.

Hot Docs will present a specially curated selection of Canadian and international short films as part of the Festival's **Shorts Programs**, which will share 18 films from 13 countries as part of four individual shorts programs, each one aiming to excite and inspire with its unique collection of fresh filmmaking talent.

Hot Docs Festival 2025 will also include a free encore screening on the Festival's final night—Sunday, May 4—where the winner of this year's **Rogers Audience Award for Best Canadian Documentary** will be announced. The top Canadian feature film in the audience poll will receive a CAD 50,000 cash prize, courtesy of Rogers.

To learn more about the Hot Docs Festival 2025 program, download the Festival Media Kit at www.hotdocs.ca/media.

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Hot Docs (www.hotdocs.ca), North America's leading 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 32nd annual edition from April 24 to May 4, 2025, in cinemas across Toronto. 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 Deal Maker and Works-in-Progress screenings. 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.

Starting Tuesday, March 25, Festival ticket package holders, including Doc Soup subscribers, can redeem their ticket packages, and Hot Docs Members can purchase single tickets. Starting Tuesday, April 1, single tickets will be available to the public. Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and/or redeemed [online](http://www.hotdocs.ca) 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 cinema screenings). Single tickets are \$20 to regular Festival screenings and \$23 to Special Presentations screenings (\$18-\$20 members). Special events vary in price. A Festival 12-Pack is \$209 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$299. Hot Docs offers free tickets for all screenings before 4:00 p.m. to seniors and students with valid photo I.D., available online the day of the screening, subject to availability.

Hot Docs is proud to include Rogers as its Founding Partner; Netflix as its Presenting Partner; and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters. Full list of sponsors and partners: <https://hotdocs.ca/about/partners>.

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

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