

For Immediate Release: March 17, 2026

**HOT DOCS ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF BIG IDEAS:  
THE BIG STORIES BEHIND FOUR OF THE FESTIVAL'S BIGGEST DOCUMENTARIES,  
SHARED LIVE ON STAGE**

BIG IDEAS EVENTS TO FEATURE WORLD PREMIERES AND OSCAR-NOMINATED FILMMAKERS,  
PLUS TRAILBLAZING *DEMOCRACY NOW!* JOURNALIST AMY GOODMAN

**Toronto, March 17, 2026** - Hot Docs announced today that the popular long-running series **Big Ideas** will return as part of the 2026 Hot Docs Festival, taking place April 23 to May 3 in Toronto. Celebrating its 13<sup>th</sup> year, Big Ideas gives audiences a rare opportunity to experience the premieres of four thought-provoking documentaries immediately followed by a dynamic, in-depth conversation with the filmmakers and subjects who brought these incredible stories to the big screen.

The 2026 Big Ideas series will see the world premieres of two new films exploring the ways we seek to build our personal lives online. In Emmy-nominated director Shalini Kantayya's *Love Apptually*, we swipe right on a journalist's exploration of dating app algorithms, and we sink into early aughts nostalgia to catch up with everyone's old friend Tom in *Myspace*, Tommy Avallone's portrait of the pioneering social networking platform. Receiving its North American premiere is Iranian-Canadian filmmaker Raha Shirazi's *A War on Women*, which traces 40 years of feminist resistance by Iranian women against the Islamic Republic, and receiving a Canadian premiere is *Steal This Story, Please!* from Oscar-nominated filmmakers Carl Deal and Tia Lessin (*Trouble the Water*), a gripping portrait of *Democracy Now!* trailblazer Amy Goodman, whose unwavering commitment to truth-telling spans three decades of turbulent history.

Filmmakers from each of these films as well as subject Amy Goodman will be in attendance at this year's Festival to take part in Big Ideas live on stage.

"Big Ideas events are one of the ways Hot Docs brings documentary storytelling directly into conversation with the world around us," said Diana Sanchez, Executive Director, Hot Docs. "These screenings invite audiences to experience the film and then continue the conversation live - with filmmakers, journalists and experts - about the issues shaping our world today. We're honoured to welcome Amy Goodman and these filmmakers for what will be a thoughtful and engaging discussion."

The films will each receive their premiere at the Festival as part of Big Ideas. Three will receive additional screenings throughout the Festival as part of the Special Presentations program, with the fourth screening as part of a yet to be announced themed program. Guests participating in Big Ideas are included below, with moderators to be announced over the coming weeks.

### LOVE APPTUALLY

D: Shalini Kantayya | P: Elizabeth Woodward | USA, Australia | 2026 | 81 min | World Premiere  
Tired of swiping without results? Follow one journalist's quest to unpack the dating app algorithms shaping modern romance as she reveals how, in an already lonely world, technology, bias and profit are increasingly influencing who we meet and why.

**Filmmaker and Hot Docs alum Shalini Kantayya** (*Coded Bias*; *TikTok*, *Boom*) discusses her latest deep dive into the world of technology, this time focusing on Tinder. *Love Apptually* explores the unknown structures behind big tech and the algorithms that both lift and restrict the users attempting to find love in the digital age.

### MYSPLACE

D: Tommy Avallone | P: Van Toffler, Trent Johnson | USA | 2025 | 96 min | World Premiere  
What is the legacy of Myspace? Pulling at the heartstrings of millennials and curious newcomers alike, this nostalgic portrait traces how this pioneering social networking platform shaped the digital world we now inhabit, from online fame to social media overload.

Join **director Tommy Avallone** for a conversation about Myspace, the pioneering social media site that became a cultural phenomenon for casual users and upcoming artists alike, and how it set the stage for the social media landscape that we know today.

### STEAL THIS STORY, PLEASE!

D: Carl Deal, Tia Lessin | P: Carl Deal, Tia Lessin, Karen Ranucci, Diana Cohn, Caren Spruch | USA | 2026 | 102 min | Canadian Premiere  
Fiercely independent journalist Amy Goodman has spent three decades holding the powerful to account, reporting from conflict zones and the *Democracy Now!* newsroom as an essential voice highlighting global issues and pursuing truth in an era of "alternative" facts.

**Journalist Amy Goodman** joins **Oscar-nominated filmmaker Tia Lessin** for a conversation about the importance of independent journalism in a world where media representatives can often be stifled and how those still fighting shine a spotlight on the stories that need to be told.

### A WAR ON WOMEN

D: Raha Shirazi | P: Marco Serrecchia, Marica Stocchi, Beatrice Bordone Bulgari, Gianluca Curti, Daniele Occhipinti, Luca Bradamante | Italy | 2026 | 102 min | North American Premiere  
Long before the world chanted "Woman, Life, Freedom," Iranian women have been rising up. Intimate interviews and archival footage trace 40 years of feminist resistance against the Islamic Republic, culminating in a revolution led by the very women the regime tried to silence.

Join **director Raha Shirazi** for an exploration of women's rights in Iran, from decades of resistance and activism to the recent rally cry of "Woman, Life, Freedom," and how *A War on Women* spotlights well-known members of the community to reframe the global conversation around how these women are changing history.

New this year, Big Ideas Cocktails will take place before each Big Ideas event. These receptions offer audiences the opportunity to gather and connect before the screening. Tickets are \$50 per person and must be purchased in addition to a ticket for the same-day Big Ideas screening.

Film stills of Big Ideas titles are available at [tinyurl.com/HD2026SP1](https://tinyurl.com/HD2026SP1)

For more information on Hot Docs, visit [hotdocs.ca](https://hotdocs.ca)

###

Hot Docs ([hotdocs.ca](https://hotdocs.ca)) is North America's leading documentary festival, conference and market. 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 33<sup>rd</sup> annual edition in Toronto from April 23 to May 3, 2026. 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 and Hot Docs Deal Maker. Since its inception in 1993, Hot Docs has supported the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs, production fund portfolio, and valuable professional development programs. The organization fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs also operates 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 24, Festival ticket package holders, including Doc Soup subscribers, can use their ticket packages, and Hot Docs Members can purchase single tickets. Starting Tuesday, March 31, single tickets will be available to the public. Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and/or redeemed [online](https://www.hotdocs.ca) at [www.hotdocs.ca](https://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 \$22 (\$20 member) for regular screenings, and \$27 (\$24 member) for Big Ideas screenings. A Festival 12-Pack is \$228 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$340 (\$216 and \$320 members). Hot Docs offers free tickets for regular screenings before 4:00 p.m. to patrons 60+ and students with valid photo I.D., available in-person on the day of the screening, subject to availability.

Hot Docs is proud to include Rogers as its Founding Partner and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters.

**Media Contact**

Bill Alexander

[balexander@hotdocs.ca](mailto:balexander@hotdocs.ca)