

The longest running organization for Black, Indigenous, Asian and People of Colour in the Canadian Screen Industries, **Reelworld** is back and bigger than ever with its expanded **Reelworld Film Festival+Summit**

The 23rd Reelworld Film Festival has expanded to include a Summit, and continues to shine a spotlight on diverse Canadian with over 30 films and more than 40 featured speakers

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The longest running organization for Black, Indigenous, Asian and People of Colour in the Canadian Screen Industries, **Reelworld** is back and bigger than ever with its expanded **Reelworld Film Festival+Summit**. The **23rd Reelworld Film Festival** continues to bring audiences the best and brightest of diverse Canadian talent with over 30 films, and the **Reelworld Summit** will shine a spotlight on issues around diversity, inclusion and equity in the Canadian screen landscape.

The summit, taking place on November 1st and 2nd, will feature keynote speeches, industry discussions, fireside chats, research presentations, pitch opportunities and networking events. The festival, which will include film screenings, filmmaker mixers and the annual awards show, will continue until November 7.

"After 23 years of showcasing outstanding talent from the Canadian Black, Indigenous, Asian, South Asian, and People of Colour communities at the Reelworld Film Festival, we are thrilled to announce an exciting expansion—The Reelworld Film Festival+Summit, an event dedicated to celebrating Canadian talent," said **Reelworld Screen Institute Founder and Executive Director Tonya Williams**. *"This festival and summit combo will feature a lineup of exceptional speakers and thought-provoking panels addressing the unique challenges and experiences of Indigenous and racialized industry professionals in Canada. Reelworld is all about ensuring that diverse voices are being heard and so it was important for us to add this component to have a hub for those conversations. Join us for an unforgettable experience that continues to shine a spotlight on diversity and inclusion in the Canadian screen industry."*

This year, the **Reelworld Film Festival+Summit** is pleased to announce that its opening night film will be award-winning Canadian-British-Filipina director **Kim Albright**'s feature debut ***With Love and a Major Organ***. The film is screening on **November 1st at 7:00 PM at The Royal (608 College Street)**.

The remainder of the screenings will take place at **Paradise Theatre (1006c Bloor St W)** and the summit will be held at the **Marriott Courtyard (475 Yonge St)** on **November 1st and 2nd**.

Reelworld prioritizes its programming to support and amplify underrepresented Canadian voices. The Summit will feature a variety of discussions including ***AI is Coming, Are You Prepared?***, ***Secrets to Private Funding in Film!***, ***Achieving Respect and Reciprocity in Indigenous Co-productions***, ***What have we learned about our industry as a result of the US strikes?***, and ***Keeping Your Production Company Alive and Thriving***. Attendees can also expect a keynote speech from highly acclaimed filmmaker **Jennifer Holness**; a fireside chat with **2023 Reelworld Visionary Award** recipient — **Anita Lee**, **TIFF Chief Programming Officer**; and **2023 Reelworld Award of Excellence** recipient — prominent entertainment reporter **Traci Melchor** of **CTV's ETALK** and **Canada's Drag Race**.

Passes and tickets are now available for purchase at <https://www.reelworld.ca/film-festival-summit>

The **Reelworld Film Festival+Summit** is excited to announce this year's stellar lineup of **feature films**, which includes:

***WITH LOVE AND A MAJOR ORGAN* by Kim Albright**

In a world where everyone's heart is an object and there's a strong societal pressure to dampen emotion, lonely Virtual Insurance broker Anabel (Anna Maguire) always follows her heart. At odds with this overly pragmatic society, and after a series of devastating emotional blows, she rips her heart from her chest and gives it to a man she's fallen for, the strangely unfeeling George (Hamza Haq). Unburdened by her unique yet cumbersome heart, Anabel finds life easier. George, on the other hand, begins to feel everything, to the shock of his overbearing mother, Mona (Veena Sood). Anabel soon realizes she needs to get her heart back if she's going to survive.

***A STORM BLOWS OVER* by Gavin Baird**

A young woman's reality is put into question after the sudden disappearance of her boyfriend. She finds herself on a mysterious journey, seeking the answers she so yearns for.

***À TOI JEDDI* by Sara Ben-Saud**

From a Quebecer mother and a Libyan and Tunisian father, Sara was raised among the Quebecois culture while her father was learning to integrate. She's missing pieces to fully appropriate and understand her identity. From the cold of Quebec to the Tunisian desert, with the support of her grandfather's memoirs, Sara will experience an immersion in language as well as on a personal level within her family. *À toi Jeddi* is the story of Sara discovering her roots, friendships, growth, family and love...

***COACHING WHILE BLACK* by Alex Eskandarkhah**

Coaching While Black follows the remarkable journey of Donald Tex Phillips, a former collegiate hooper turned coach, as he takes over the struggling NAIT Ooks men's basketball program. Facing racial prejudice, media scrutiny, and challenges from within, Tex leads his team to multiple ACAC championships. However, despite his success, he battles discrimination and battles that threaten his legacy, becoming an inspiring tale of resilience, real change, and basketball brilliance in Canada.

HEIGHT MARKERS by Pranay Noel

Height Markers follows Neva and her son Aaron, on Aaron's last two days before leaving home, as Aaron seeks closure after a bad break up, and Neva contemplates a life without her son at home. They are both haunted by memories of Aaron's late father, Ted. The film is an examination of the ever-present role of memory in shaping our perceptions of love and loss and tries to capture a sense of being unable to fully understand those you love the most.

LAY DOWN YOUR HEART by Marie Clements

An intimate look into the mind of Niall McNeil, an artist and performer with Down syndrome, and his unique chosen family. In *Lay Down Your Heart*, Niall introduces us to his many "family members," his multiple "children," his renowned "ex-wife" and director of the film Marie Clements, and other bonds forged through open-hearted creativity.

ONE ACT ABOUT TOILET PAPER by Paul Aihoshi

Who placed the toilet paper the "wrong way" in the washroom? For the young married couple, Sue and Michael, this is a problem they face. Their suspicion quickly turns to their close friends, Beck and Robby, who they decide to invite over to confront.

STRANGERS IN A ROOM by Andre Rehal

Jae Kim, a second-generation Korean actor, encounters a demonic vision on the day of a big commercial audition. After a microaggression during the audition, Jae is plunged into a state of shock and depression.

UNION STREET by Jamila Pomeroy

Spanning across three generations, *Union Street* chronicles the ongoing effects of racism, displacement and the cultural erasure of African Canadians, while examining the systemic mechanisms that destroyed Vancouver's historic Black community in the 60s. Train porters, speakeasies, juke joints and a thriving community all existed in the Black neighborhood; and so did musicians like Jimi Hendrix, Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. The reverberations of this thriving community are still felt, and in the face of adversity a new generation of Black Vancouverites work to rebuild, facilitate Black joy and redefine what it means to be African Canadian.

ORAH by Lonzo Nzekwe

Orah Madukaku (Star Trek: Discovery's Oyin Oladejo), a Nigerian immigrant taxi driver in Toronto, agrees to launder dirty money for her boss in exchange for bringing her son over from Nigeria. When the plan goes horribly wrong, Orah takes matters into her own hands to settle the score.

This year's **short films** examine four different themes:

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Family. Whether we like it or not, our lives are bound to them. We love them. We make concessions big and small for them—to nurture, appease... or even *survive* them. And so, these relationships are enduring in our lives. Whether navigating an overwhelming family dinner like in **100 DAYS** by **Derek Kwan**, unpacking your biracial identity like in **MIXED FEELINGS** by **Benjamin Freemantle**, having coffee with a new sibling like in **MEETING AMY** by **Richard Chen**, planning your future with a new lover like in **DATING INDIAN** by **Len Morissette**, or mourning the loss of a loved one, like in **THE MOTHER'S SEAT** by **Kaia Singh**, these filmmakers show us that understanding family helps us better understand ourselves. It may not always be an enjoyable experience, but for the audience, it's beautiful to watch.

HOPE IS IN THE AIR

No matter how distinct our cultural backgrounds or geographic locations may be, when it comes to experiencing injustice and inequality, we all share the same feelings of pain, and our ultimate goal is to create a better world. All armed with hope, a group of hardworking Black men in **PENDULUM** by **Manuel Mathieu**, a family fleeing war-torn Vietnam in **BOAT PEOPLE** by **Thao Lam**, an ambitious female chef in **HIGH END DYING** by **Helen Liu**, a rebellious teenage girl in **ZIP** by **Ava Maria Safai**, and four generations of libertarian women in **HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS** by **Sunny Mohajer**, sacrifice themselves for a brighter future and greater equality. *Hope is in the air* showcases five female-driven stories by talented filmmakers who all advocate for justice on the screen.

THEORY OF SOUL

Revealing the inner life of a character without exposition takes great care. When it works, an unfolding story grips the viewer's conscience, leaving them to question their POV. In **SILKWORM**, a split-second decision by one brother unlocks a moral dilemma for the other. In **DESYNC**, a daughter overwrites a painful memory with an idyllic narrative. **YOU ASK TOO MUCH** portrays the unsettling inner life of a 94-year-old grandmother. **OVERSIGHT** leaves the viewer to wonder what happened between two characters at a laundromat late one night. In **THE BODY OF MY NAME**, dance unlocks something in the performers, previously lost.

ALTERED REALITIES

From a psychedelic beach fever dream in **Introduction** by Bruna Arbex, to the current housing landscape in Montreal with **Eli Jean Tahchi's Neighbors in my backyard**, this program plays with form and pacing, creating new worlds to delve into the old human struggles for connection. Futuristic/parallel worlds are used as a story engine to understand human isolation in **Charter**, directed by **Asif Limbada** and **Alireza Shojaei**; **The Future Above Us**, directed by Vanessa Magic; and **Mindslip**, directed by **Swaroop Elamon**. The western thriller is given a new lease through a residential school revenge quest in **Cloud Striker**, directed by **A.W. Hopkins**, and the seen and unseen is explored in **Lê** directed by **Solara Thanh-Binh Đặng**. Connecting all these projects are deeply curious filmmakers using all the filmic language at their disposal for audiences to experience worlds outside of their purview, and possibly shift their perspective.

Reelworld is proud to present two cash awards: \$25,000 for *Outstanding Feature Film* and \$10,000 for *Outstanding Short Film*. This year's award sponsors include **DGC National**, **WIFT-**

Toronto, Entertainment Partners Canada, Chargefield, AstroLab Studios Inc and Lenz Rental. Feature and Short award categories this year include *Outstanding Actress, Outstanding Actor, Outstanding Director, Outstanding Writer, Outstanding Cinematographer, Outstanding Producer,* and *Outstanding Film.* Audience members are also encouraged to participate and rate the films they watch for the selection of the *Reelworld Audience Choice Award.*

In addition to the film awards, Reelworld recognizes industry leaders at all levels through the **Trailblazer Awards, Visionary Award, and Award of Excellence.** This year's recipients are: **Trailblazer Awards: Andrew Phung, Farid Yazdani, Amanda Strong, Marie Ka, Winnifred Jong, and Fawzia Mirza; Visionary Award: Anita Lee; and Award of Excellence: Traci Melchor.**

With a focus on diverse works by diverse people, the **Reelworld Film Festival** showcases and supports Black, Indigenous, Asian, and People of Colour producers, directors, screenwriters, actors and all on and off-screen talent. They connect with agents, casting directors, broadcasters and distributors, invite them to the festival, and help them find new Canadian talent. The **Reelworld Film Festival** programming reflects the strong and authentic voices from across Canada and features 100% Canadian Black, Indigenous, Asian, and People of Colour talent. As the country's largest socially impactful film festival, Reelworld has reached a diverse audience of over 350,000 engaged individuals to date.

About Reelworld

Reelworld was founded in 2000 by award-winning actress and producer **Tonya Williams** to advance opportunities for Canadians who are Black, Indigenous, Asian, South Asian, and People of Colour in the screen industries by providing professional development and advocating for racial equity in Canadian content and production.

Reelworld Screen Institute, a non-profit, provides training programs and presents the acclaimed **Reelworld Film Festival**, which celebrates stories by racialized Canadians. Providing access to opportunities is core to **Reelworld**, and **Access Reelworld** is Canada's leading hiring platform for racialized crews and talent. **Reelworld Foundation**, a registered charity, is transforming the industry by creating mechanisms that hold systems accountable for greater equity.

Reelworld Film Festival+Summit would like to thank all the sponsors, partners and funders who share our vision and values:

TD Bank Group (Opening Night Sponsor), Telefilm Canada, CBC, Canada Media Fund, Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Creates, Toronto Arts Council, Government of Ontario, Creative BC, Ontario Arts Council, City of Toronto, Music Publishers Canada, TVO, Shaftesbury, DGC National, Rogers Group of Funds, Bell Fund, CMPA, Blue Ant Media, Independent Production Fund, The Art & Entertainment | Writers' Coalition (AFBS), Hollywood Suite, ACTRA National, ACTRA Toronto, APTN, and Writers Guild of Canada.

This year's media and community partners are **Bell Media, Rogers Sports & Media, Playback, CHCH, Mogul, FevaTV, Super Channel, Afro Global Television, REMC, Women in View, WIDC,**

WIFT-Toronto, AstroLab Studios Inc, Chargefield, Lenz Rental and Entertainment Partners
Canada.

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