



DIFF Announces World Premiere as Opening Night Film of 20th Dallas International Film Festival 2026

Cinépolis Victory Park to host Academy Award® Qualifying Festival April 23 – 30, 2026

DALLAS (April 2026) – **DIFF** has announced the World Premiere of **LAST SHOT** as its Opening Night Film during the 20th edition of the annual **Dallas International Film Festival**. The film, directed by **Andy Palmer** and written by **Todd Friedman**, features **Jamie Pressly** who also co-produced. It will open DIFF 2026 on Thursday, April 23, at 7:30 p.m. at the Historic Texas Theatre, while the US Premiere of **KENNY LOGGINS: CONVICTION OF THE HEART** will be the Closing Night Film on Thursday, April 30.

Additionally, DIFF announced that **Michael De Luca, Co-Chair and CEO of Warner Bros. Motion Picture Group**, will be the Keynote Speaker at its first-time **DIFF Industry Conference**, presented in collaboration with **Dallas Film Commission**.

The Festival has also added **ROUND PEGS SQUARE HOLES**, a documentary starring **Mark Cuban, Billy Gibbons, and Reverend Horton Heat** as the **Founders Night Film** on April 24 at 5:45 p.m. at The Texas Theatre.

Festival co-founder **Michael Cain** said, "I'm deeply grateful to the Dallas International Film Festival for embracing this new Founders Evening, generously sponsored by Reeder Capital, and to director Russell Hobbs for allowing us to World Premiere Round Pegs Square Holes, a story I chose because it was born in Deep Ellum, the neighborhood that started it all for us back in 1999 with the Deep Ellum Film Festival. It's a privilege to honor my dear friend and co-founder, the late Liener Temerlin, and all those who helped bring this vision to life. This evening is both a tribute to the creative spirit that shaped Dallas and a celebration of the future it continues to inspire."

The Festival is an **Oscar® Qualifying Festival**, and will feature screenings of more than 120 films, Q&A sessions, and panels with filmmakers and actors, nightly DIFF Red Carpets, and special events. **Cinépolis Luxury Cinemas Victory Park**, located steps away from American Airlines Center at 2365

Victory Park Lane, returns as the host venue. Additional screenings and events will be held at the historic **Texas Theatre** and the artful **Virgin Hotels Dallas** – which returns for the fourth year as the Premier Sponsor of the Festival – among other world-class Dallas destinations to be announced.

New films added to the lineup of feature films for DIFF 2026 include:

AS WE BREATHE (Narrative Feature) (Turkey) – US Premiere

Director: Seyhmus Altun

In a small Anatolian town in the early 2000s, ten-year-old Esma's world quietly unravels after a factory explosion sets off an unrelenting fire. As smoke poisons the land and her family struggles to survive, Esma clings to what remains of her childhood. The film is a tender portrait of resilience in the face of invisible disasters, a story about growing up too soon, holding on to hope, and refusing to disappear.

FIREFLIES AT EL MOZOTE (Narrative and Latino Feature) (United States)

Director: Ernesto Melara

This compelling action war drama, with strong social relevance, was inspired by true events. It chronicles the well-documented massacre of the village of El Mozote, Morazán Province, El Salvador, considered to be the worst atrocity perpetrated by government forces on civilians in modern Latin American history. This coming-of-age story follows a ten-year-old survivor in his quest to avenge the deaths of his family and the destruction of his village.

LAST SHOT (Narrative Feature) (United States) – World Premiere

Director: Andy Palmer

Caden Issacs, a 12-year-old basketball prodigy, navigates the turbulent waters of grief and adolescence after the sudden death of his father, Darren. Moving to Nashville to live with his estranged mother, Lexi, a driven music executive, Caden struggles to find his place on a new elite basketball team while grappling with the high expectations of those around him. Through intense rivalries, newfound friendships, and the relentless pursuit of excellence, Caden learns to process his pain and rediscover his passion for the game.

LONELY NIGHTS (Latino Feature) (Mexico)

Director: Julián Acosta Vera

Andres, a shy, upper-class young man begins an unexpected relationship with Lorena, a young prostitute controlled by a pimp. A bond forms between them that forces them to question their lives amidst social pressure, violence, and expectations.

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD: THE FIRST CORAL REEFERS (Documentary Feature) (United States)

Director: John H. Cunningham

Journey through the 1970s and early '80s with the original members of Jimmy Buffett's Coral Reefer Band as they recount their contributions to iconic albums, life on tour, and the lasting impact they had in shaping a unique and enduring genre of music.

POWWOW PEOPLE (Documentary Feature) (United States)

Director: Sky Hopinka

Structured around the arc of a single day, this vérité-style documentary is grounded in the rhythms, relationships, and lived experience of a contemporary Native gathering. Rather than entering as outside observers, the filmmakers organized the powwow itself, inviting dancers, singers, vendors, and community members to participate in the making of this film.

ROUND PEGS SQUARE HOLES (Documentary Feature) (United States) – World Premiere

Directors: Michael Dunaway and Russell David Hobbs

This feature documents the art renaissance and rebirth of Deep Ellum in the 1980s-90s, Deep Ellum's musical history and how art scenes and movements promote and protect individuality. Deep Ellum, now 150 years old, started as a Freedman's town, grew to be an edgy outsider community home of the blues scene in the 1920s-30s, then sat dormant until 1984. Dallas was an extremely materialistic city, people were hungry to create a scene of free expression, art, music and theater, an open door of opportunity. The flood gates opened and everybody from all over Texas and beyond came and discovered what they were gifted in and a community flourished.

THREE COLORS: PAN-AFRICAN (Narrative Feature) (United States)

Director: Elijah Davis

Winner of the Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature at Slamdance 2026, this anthology feature film has three chapters that each take their meaning from the themes behind the colors of the Pan-African flag – red, black, and green.

Actor/director **Lou Diamond Phillips**, who first gained attention with his roles in LA BAMBAs, STAND AND DELIVER, and YOUNG GUNS, will accept the **DIFF Dallas Star Award** as part of the Festival, and will be honored at a luncheon hosted by **Virgin Hotels Dallas** on Friday, April 24. He will discuss

his latest film, **KEEP QUIET** – which will have its North American Premiere at DIFF before its theatrical release by Lionsgate in April – onstage with **NBC 5 Today anchor Deborah Ferguson**.

The **DIFF Industry Conference**, presented in collaboration with **Dallas Film Commission**, will feature panels focusing on filmmaking, television production, and how to thrive in an ever-changing industry, according to **Katie Schuck**, the Dallas Film Commissioner, and **Austin Flores**, who is the Location Specialist for Dallas Film Commission and will serve as Conference Director.

The Dallas International Film Festival is a global adventure featuring more than 120 film screenings, panels, Q&As with filmmakers and actors, nightly Red Carpets, live screenplay table reads, awards, and other events and activations where filmmakers, screenwriters, film industry leaders, celebrities, sponsors, and audiences come together to experience and discuss film. Films are curated from submissions received by filmmakers from 100+ countries worldwide, across Texas, and the United States, and include narrative features, documentaries, and short films of all genres from studios and independent filmmakers. Festival information is available at <https://diffdallas.org/diff>.

The Dallas International Film Festival is one of only 59 film festivals in the United States and only 181 film festivals worldwide to earn the designation of Oscar® Qualifying Festival by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Oscar® Qualifying short film awards at the Dallas International Film Festival are: Grand Jury Prize - Best Animated Short Film; Grand Jury Prize - Best Documentary Short Film; and Grand Jury Prize - Best Narrative Short Film.

Films that win qualified awards may be qualified to enter the 99th Academy Awards®, provided that the films meet all the requirements set forth in the official rules for that season. See <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/rules-eligibility> for details.

Virgin Hotels Dallas is the Premier Sponsor of the 2026 Dallas International Film Festival. Additional Sponsors as of March 31 include: AdChat DFW, Akin, AllGood Cafe, Asana Partners, BestofGuide.com, Burned to Light Media, Cinépolis Luxury Cinemas Victory Park, City of Dallas Office of Arts & Culture, Commerce House, Lisa Cooley, Dallas County Historical Commission, Dallas Film Commission, Dallas Tourism Public Improvement District, DFW MSP, DGN Entertainment News, Eataly Dallas, Edgemere, Event Horizon Films, Filmfrog, Fons PR, Fort Worth Film Commission, Tanya Foster, Linda and Jon Halbert, Mary Hatcher, H-E-B, Tim Headington, History Undressed, Susan Kandell, KERA, Keurig Dr Pepper, Lakewood Brewing Co., Lynn Lewis, Sarah Losinger, Lynn McBee, Moody Fund for the Arts, Ruth Mutch, Nowadays Orange Productions, Jim Nugent, OneBar USA,

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For sponsorship information, please contact Beth Wilbins, CEO, bwilbins@dallasfilm.org.

About DIFF Dallas | Dallas International Film Festival

DIFF Dallas is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts and culture organization established as Dallas Film Society, Inc. in 2006. Through year-round screenings and events, film series, educational programs, community partnerships, and film festivals, DIFF Dallas builds community and raises awareness of the world's most approachable and inclusive art form.

Named by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as an Oscar® Qualifying Festival, The Dallas International Film Festival is the signature presentation of the organization. Through curation of the broadest range of expression through film, the Dallas International Film Festival serves as the region's most powerfully inclusive and equitable platform for diverse, emerging and underrepresented voices. Since its founding, the Festival has screened more than 2,500 widely diverse new films from 60 countries, provided more than \$1.1 million in awards and hosted more than 100,000 filmgoers and filmmakers.

DIFF Dallas is committed to celebrating films and their impact on society, honoring filmmakers and recognizing their contribution enhancing both the creative community and the city of Dallas, providing leadership in film education, and celebrating excellence in the art of film. More information is available at <https://diffdallas.org/>.

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