THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES’ REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2019 LINEUP

ReelAbilities Los Angeles runs October 25-27 and celebrates people with different abilities.

Fest opens with THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON and concludes with CHAINED FOR LIFE as well as a special presentation of the 1932 cult-classic FREAKS.

LOS ANGELES, CA (September 18, 2019) – The second annual ReelAbilities Film Festival: Los Angeles 2019 announced today its lineup of narrative and documentary features as well as short films. The festival runs October 25-27, 2019 at Universal Cinema AMC at CityWalk Hollywood. Tickets and passes will be available to purchase October 1. For more information: http://reelabilities.org/losangeles.

ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest festival in the United States dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities. Founded more than ten years ago in New York City and now held annually in multiple cities throughout North America, the festival presents international and award-winning films by and about people with disabilities in multiple locations throughout each hosting city. Post-screening discussions and other engaging programs bring together the community to explore, discuss, embrace, and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience.

ReelAbilities Film Festival: Los Angeles 2019 will take place October 25-27, 2019 at Universal Cinema AMC at CityWalk Hollywood. The three-day festival will showcase new and classic films, conversations, and artistic programs, with ten shorts and five features celebrating more than 10 different physical and intellectual disabilities and hailing from five different countries.

The festival is produced by the City of Los Angeles Department on Disability in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Commission on Disability and ReelAbilities North America. Sponsors include NBC Universal, CBS, Variety, SAG-AFTRA, Writers Guild of America, The Ruderman Family Foundation, Jeffrey Pechter, WGA, Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, and Disability Rights Legal Center.

“Just as Los Angeles has doubled down on its commitment to accessibility and inclusion, the ReelAbilities Film Festival LA continues to build,” said Stephen David Simon, Executive Director of the City of Los Angeles Department on Disability. “In just its second year in LA it has evolved into a milestone for meaningful change in Hollywood and beyond.”

Opening the festival on Friday, October 25 with a blue carpet and a private gala is Tyler Nilson and Michael Schwartz’s smash hit THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON. A modern Mark Twain-style adventure story, THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON tells the story of Zak (Zack Gottsagen),
a young man with Down syndrome who runs away from a residential nursing home to follow his
dream of attending the professional wrestling school of his idol, The Salt Water Redneck
(Thomas Haden Church). A strange turn of events pairs him on the road with Tyler (Shia
LaBeouf), a small time outlaw on the run who becomes Zak's unlikely coach and ally. Together
they wind through deltas, elude capture, drink whisky, find God, catch fish, and convince
Eleanor (Dakota Johnson), a kind, nursing home employee charged with Zak's return, to join
them on their journey. THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON premiered at SXSW earlier this year
where it won the Audience Award.

Festival Co-director, Michael Dougherty said, “This film calls to mind Hal Ashby's work in the
quietly forceful way it looks at outsiders eye-to-eye, it asks questions about independence and
identity that the disability community deals with on a daily basis. Far from being preachy,
though, this is a rollicking, hilarious adventure, full of love and empathy, that is, as Mark Twain
once said, ‘a good story well-told.’ ”

The festival will close on Sunday, October 27 with the Los Angeles premiere of Aaron
Schimberg’s CHAINED FOR LIFE. Critically acclaimed, the film is about the on and off-screen
relationship between a beautiful actress (Jess Weixler) and her leading man (Adam Pearson),
an actor living with a severe facial difference. CHAINED FOR LIFE is a spiritual cousin to the
likes of Tod Browning, Werner Herzog, and David Lynch, weaving a hypnotic and surreal
depiction of art and identity that challenges our preconceived notions of appearances and how
film images influence the way we think and feel about those who are “other.”

The festival will also host a rare, special screening of Todd Browning’s 1932 groundbreaking cult
classic FREAKS with a beautiful, digitally remastered film and restored to its original 1:33 frame.
Based on the true-life experiences of circus sideshow performers of the 1930s, Tod Browning’s
once-banned tale of murder and madness under the big top has gone from being critically
reviled and misunderstood - much like its subjects - to taking its rightful and raging place as a
seminal pop culture provocation, influencing everything from seventies punks on the Bowery to
“American Horror Story” in the living room.

“This is an essential work in the history of disability film narrative because it uses authentic
casting in the telling of its tale, and also because the consigning of it to the fringes of film culture
begs the question, ‘Why is the depiction of disability so controversial?’” explains Dougherty,
“We’re excited to re-examine this important film, in all its thorniness and complexity, with the
hopes of coming to a greater understanding of where it fits in history and where we are now in
terms of representation and storytelling.”

ReelAbilities Film Festival: Los Angeles 2019 will also host several thought-provoking panels
including The Revolution Will be Posted: Disability in the Age of Social Media. This panel will
examine the footprint of the disability community in social media. It will examine how social
media can be used to highlight issues, create awareness, and foster more inclusion. The timely
I’ll Go On: Mental Health, Disability & Resiliency panel, will examine why so many people are
affected by mental health illnesses and why there is so much stigma and the connection
between mental health and resiliency. It will also shed light on the connection between the
mental health community and the disability community. And ripped from the headlines,
Disability Authenticity on Screen: Why People with Disabilities Should be Seen in Authentic and
Non-descript Roles will focus on why authentic representation of people with disabilities in film
and television is socially and financially significant. It will also look at the importance of non-
descript roles on screen (both big and small) and why actors with disabilities should have the
opportunities afforded to those in the non-disabled community. Please visit http://
reelabilities.org/losangeles for updated panel information and ticket availability.

Tickets and Passes
Tickets and Passes will go on sale early October. For more information please visit http://
reelabilities.org/losangeles or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @ReelAbilitiesLA.
About REELABILITIES

ReelAbilities Film Festival was initiated in New York at the JCC Manhattan in 2007, founded by Anita Altman and Isaac Zablocki. The festival was the first of its kind to present a series of award-winning films by, about and for people with disabilities. As the festival progressed, screenings continued to take place at multiple venues across the city and all films are followed by discussions that engage the community in promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity, while providing accessible conditions to match the different needs of our multi-layered society.

COMPLETE FILM FESTIVAL LINE-UP BELOW:

OPENING NIGHT FILM

THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON
USA/2019/93 mins/English
Directors: Tyler Nilson, Michael Schwartz

A modern Mark Twain style adventure story, THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON tells the story of Zak (Zack Gottsagen), a young man with Down syndrome, who runs away from a residential nursing home to follow his dream of attending the professional wrestling school of his idol, The Salt Water Redneck (Thomas Haden Church). A strange turn of events pairs him on the road with Tyler (Shia LaBeouf), a small time outlaw on the run, who becomes Zak’s unlikely coach and ally. Together they wind through deltas, elude capture, drink whisky, find God, catch fish, and convince Eleanor (Dakota Johnson), a kind nursing home employee charged with Zak’s return, to join them on their journey. (Down syndrome)

CLOSING NIGHT FILM

CHAINED FOR LIFE
USA/2019/91 min/English
Directed by Aaron Schimberg

Concerning the on- and off-screen relationship between a beautiful actress (Jess Weixler) and her leading man (Adam Pearson), an actor living with a severe facial difference, CHAINED FOR LIFE is a spiritual cousin to the likes of Tod Browning, Werner Herzog, and David Lynch, weaving a hypnotic and surreal depiction of art and identity that challenges our preconceived notions of appearances and how film images influence the way we think and feel about those who are “other”. (Facial difference)

SPECIAL SCREENING

FREAKS
USA/1932/64 min/English

In this strange, unforgettable masterpiece of early American cinema, a circus’ beautiful trapeze artist plots with her strongman lover to steal the fortune of a fellow sideshow performer, a good-natured little person, by agreeing to marry him. Things take a turn for the genuinely horrific when their nefarious plot is discovered by the other “freaks” and they take violent revenge. Based on the true-life experiences of circus sideshow performers of the 1930s, Tod Browning’s once-banned tale of murder and madness under the big top has gone from being critically reviled and misunderstood - much like its subjects - to taking its rightful and raging place as a seminal pop culture provocation,
influencing everything from seventies punks on the Bowery to “American Horror Story” in the living room. (Multiple disabilities)

**SHORTS**

**IAN**  
Argentina/2017/10 min/Spanish  
Director: Abel Goldfarb

Ian uses a wheelchair. All he wants is to make friends, but discrimination keeps him away from the playground. (Wheelchair user)

**SHAKESPEARE IN TOKYO**  
Australia/2018/21 min/English  
Directed by Genevieve Clay-Smith

A Shakespeare fan with Down syndrome sets off on a solo adventure to discover Tokyo and to prove his independence. (Down syndrome)

**MAPPING THE DISABILITY TRAP**  
USA/2018/14 min/English  
Directed by Jason DaSilva

Filmmaker Jason DaSilva presents a healthcare crisis as he tries to be closer to his son who lives 2,000 miles away. (multiple disabilities)

**ON THE SPECTRUM**  
Israel/2018/25 min/Hebrew  
Directed by Yuval Shafferman

Three roommates in their twenties, all on the autism spectrum, share an apartment while learning to contend with the world around them. (autism)

**CODA**  
USA/2019/22 min/English  
Directed by Erika Davis-Marsh

A young dancer struggles with her identity and growing up hearing in a deaf family. (deafness)

**PARENTS, INC**  
USA/2019/5 min/English  
Directed by Harald Zwart

A teenage girl living in a post-apocalyptic world struggles with the new reality she lives in, along with unreasonable parents. (Amputee)

**I/O**  
USA/2019/5:34/English  
Directed by Carl Hansen

A man struggles to reveal to his girlfriend that he's been dating her through his robot. (Multiple disabilities)

**THE VANISHED**  
USA/2019/5 min/English  
Directed by Catriona Rubenis-Stevens and Rachel Handler
Inception meets Groundhog Day as Alice’s friends begin to disappear and she must choose between constantly reliving the same nightmare or vanishing into the unknown. (Amputee)

**HUMAN HELPER**
USA/2019/5 min/English
Directed by Shaina Kaur Ghuraia

In the near future, artificially intelligent robots, otherwise known as human helpers, are a regular part of life. However, they’re not very inclusive. Dr. Rachel Hubbert and her assistant Tony have made it their mission to make them not ableist. (Wheelchair user)

**FEATURES**

**SUICIDE: THE RIPPLE EFFECT**
USA/2017/93 min/English
Directed by Kevin Hines and Greg Dicharry

At age 19, Kevin Hines attempted to take his own life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge. Seventeen years later, he still struggles with many of the same symptoms that led him to attempt suicide, but he is on a mission to use his story to help others stay alive. (Mental health)

**THE DRUMMER & THE KEEPER**
Ireland/2017/92 min/English
Directed by Nick Kelly

Gabriel is a drummer in a promising band, desperate to hide his bipolar diagnosis from his exasperated band mates. At a therapeutic mixed-ability soccer game he’s obliged to attend, Gabriel meets Christopher, a teenager with Asperger’s Syndrome, and the two are forced to “make friends.” (Asperger’s syndrome, bipolar disorder)

**THE R-WORD**
USA/2019/66min/English
Directed by Amanda Lukoff

A purposeful look into the long-reaching history and lasting implications of the word “retard(ed)” and current attitudes and perceptions about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through the personal narrative of four sibling stories and first-person accounts of self-advocates, we get an intimate and nuanced perspective of the challenges and triumphs of people living with an intellectual disability. The R-Word is an unflinching, heartwarming, humorous, and hopeful journey through our shared human experience.

**PANELS**

**I’LL GO ON: MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITY & RESILIENCY**
Mental health illnesses are common in the United States, yet many people are not receiving services. This panel will examine why so many people are affected by mental health illnesses, why there is so much stigma and the connection between mental health and resiliency. It will also shed light on the connection between the mental health community and the disability community.

**THE REVOLUTION WILL BE POSTED: DISABILITY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**
In a digital age, social media has a significant impact on the way issues are framed. This panel will examine the footprint of the disability community in social media. It will examine how social media can be used to highlight issues, create awareness, and foster more inclusion.
Disability Authenticity on Screen: Why People with Disabilities Should be Seen in Authentic and Non-descript Roles
Panel sponsored by the Ruderman Family Foundation

Should a person with a disability play a person with a disability or should someone without a disability play someone with a disability? Is it all just acting?

This provocative discussion will focus on why authentic representation of people with disabilities in film and television is socially and financially significant. It will also look at the importance of non-descript roles on screen (both big and small) and why actors with disabilities should have the opportunities afforded to those in the non-disabled community.

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