

DISABILITY IS DIVERSITY

ReelAbilities

FILM FESTIVAL LOS ANGELES

OCTOBER 21-23, 2022



CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY
10001 Broadway Avenue



STREET FOOD CINEMA
A TIL EVENTS PRODUCTION





COMCAST
NBCUNIVERSAL



ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR

October 21, 2022

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, welcome to the 5th annual ReelAbilities Film Festival.

Since 2007, the ReelAbilities Film Festival has presented international and award-winning films by and about people with disabilities — exploring, discussing, embracing, and celebrating the diversity of our shared human experience. This year, the festival will stage another lineup of innovative films that showcase a new generation of powerful and empowering stories.

Over the next three days, you will have the privilege of viewing more than a dozen films and get the chance to participate in several panel discussions that will challenge your perspectives and better inform your future actions. Most importantly, these films will give you a powerful understanding that representation on and behind the screen matters, reinforcing the vitality of authentic storytelling.

I send my best wishes for a memorable event and continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the initials 'E.G.' followed by a stylized flourish.

ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor



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DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY

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ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR

STEPHEN DAVID SIMON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 7, 2022

Welcome, my friends, to the ReelAbilities Film Festival LA 2022.

Only a year has passed since the last ReelAbilities Film Festival in Los Angeles, but it seems like a lifetime ago. Throughout the extraordinary experiences we have all shared – from health crises, to social crises, to climate crises – one thing has remained true: the need for Disability and Accessibility to be infused in all diversity, equity, and inclusion movements is more important now than ever.

To that end, RAFFLA 2022 continues to build on the successes of our first four years. Our film selections, from shorts to features, are as powerful in presentation as they are wide-ranging in vision. Our panels address conversations that happen far too infrequently and must be a fundamental part of today's social discourse.

We also continue our tradition of filmmaker discussions throughout the festival, to foster group discussions with some of the movers and shakers behind the magic that is Hollywood. This year will feature Academy Award winner Tony Kotsur from the film CODA and also include a conversation on the potential impact the 2028 Paralympic Games here in Los Angeles will have on awareness, inclusion and economic opportunities for people with disabilities.

As our communities continue to grow in visibility and adaptability, ReelAbilities continues to evolve. If you are new to the ReelAbilities family: welcome. If you are a ReelAbilities veteran: welcome back. Either way, thank you for taking this journey with us, wherever it may lead.

Sincerely,

Stephen David Simon
Executive Director

Disney Studios Content

*Proud
Sponsor of*

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL LOS ANGELES



Paramount

GLOBAL
INCLUSION

PROUDLY SUPPORTS THE
REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL LOS ANGELES



Paramount is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. We believe that to be the best creators and storytellers, our company must reflect, celebrate, & elevate the diversity of our audiences.



ABOUT

ReelAbilities

ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest film festival in the United States dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities. Founded twelve years ago in New York, ReelAbilities Film Festivals are now held annually in multiple cities throughout North America.

ReelAbilities Film Festival Los Angeles is working together with the diverse and varied public of Los Angeles to gain a greater appreciation of quality cinema across abilities. We seek to engage entertainment industry executives, filmmakers, and the film-going public in a meaningful way to:

- Highlight the challenges and opportunities for artists with disabilities.
- Provide a forum for filmmakers and artists with disabilities to gather, share their experiences, and connect to a wider audience.
- Showcase technologies which make movie-going more accessible.
- Feature excellent films from around the globe that are fully inclusive and re-imagine the role of people with disabilities in film.

ReelAbilities Film Festival Los Angeles provides entertainment industry leaders the opportunity to:

- Highlight their efforts to promote an inclusive, welcoming, and diverse workforce.
- Engage with stakeholders in the community to improve the visibility and inclusion of people with disabilities.

ReelAbilities Film Festival Los Angeles 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.

This will be the fifth year of ReelAbilities Film Festival Los Angeles. Although we have worked to ensure our festival is as inclusive and accommodating as possible, we realize there is still work needed to be done to ensure a fully accessible experience for all. Please join with us in helping to achieve the vision of a city that is fully inclusive and provides everyone, regardless of ability, a sense of belonging in the City of Angels.

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL

LOS ANGELES 2022 | OCTOBER 21-23, 2022

****ALL FILMS ARE PRESENTED WITH CAPTIONING AND AUDIO DESCRIPTION****

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21

6:30 PM - 7:00 PM Festival Opening Remarks & Check-In



CODA (OPENING NIGHT FILM)

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Ruby is the only hearing member of a deaf family from Gloucester, Massachusetts. At 17, she works mornings before school to help her parents and brother keep their fishing business afloat. But in joining her high school's choir club, Ruby finds herself drawn to both her duet partner and her latent passion for singing.

USA | 2021 | 111 mins | English
Director: Sian Heder

***9:00 PM - 9:30 PM - PLEASE JOIN US FOR A Q&A SESSION WITH ACADEMY AWARD WINNER TROY KOTSUR AND ACADEMY AWARD WINNER SIÂN HEDER WRITER AND DIRECTOR**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22

11:00 AM - 12:40 PM - ReelAbilities International Shorts Program followed by Q&A

SHORTS SHOWCASE 1



This series highlights a selection of disability films from around the world.

BIGGER THAN US

A behind-the-scenes documentary about the making of world's first-ever, SAG-registered feature film Best Summer Ever, made by a majority disabled cast and crew.

USA | 2021 | 16 minutes | English
Directed by Maya Albanese

PROSOPAGNOSIA

Prosopagnosia uses expressive animation to investigate intimacy, communication and memory. Prosopagnosia means face-blindness and to understand this neurodiverse behaviour, the contents of a memory box are intricately explored. Sketchbooks, photographs and diaries unravel to tell a unique and personal story.

United Kingdom | 2022 | 10 minutes | English
Directed by Steven Fraser

LOUIS' SHOES

Louis, an 8-and-a-half year old autistic boy, introduces himself at his new school in this imaginative tale about difference and acceptance.

USA | 2022 | 5 minute | French
Directed by Théo Jamin, Kayu Leung, Marion Philippe, Jean-Géraud Blanc

BEAUTIFUL

A teenage girl undergoes a transformative growth as she witnesses her mother's fight against breast cancer.

USA | 2022 | 6 minutes | Chinese
Directed by Mulan Fu

DAVEY'S LULLABY

Davey, a cheerful and loving man with Down Syndrome, lives with his elderly mother who cares for his numerous needs.

USA | 2022 | 9 minutes | ASL, English
Directed by Adam Douglas Deyoe

AIMEE VICTORIA

Aimee Victoria is a short film conceived and created entirely remotely during the lockdown of 2020 and inspired by true stories of relationships from disabled and LGBTQIA people which never make it to the screen. A film about two profoundly deaf women of color whose relationship is tested during a period of unprecedented turmoil. Separated on their anniversary, Aimee is shaken out of her self-imposed apathy as she demonstrates her love to Victoria.

USA | 2022 | 11 minutes | ASL
Directed by Chrystee Pharris

SEE THROUGH

Jessie and Brian, a young Deaf couple, recently discovered they are about to become parents. Their neighborhood coffee shop thrums with everything left unsaid, while they unearth new ways to communicate. Starring 2018 Tony Nominee Lauren Ridloff.

USA | 2019 | 11 minutes | ASL
Directed by Eyal Resh

BEAT LINGO

Marcus, a reserved teenager with mutism, attends public school for the first time in his life. Pushing through trials and prejudices of the past and present, Marcus soon uncovers a special gift he's been hiding from the world.

USA | 2022 | 16 minutes | English
Directed by Jose Navas

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22



BORDERLINE COFFEE

A young woman with crippling anxiety is taken on a journey when she sets out to accomplish what would seem to be a simple task: a cup of coffee.

USA | 2022 | 10 minutes | English
Directed by Jeff Ayars

THE RUNNER

After being separated during a dangerous mission to retrieve an important package, a runner and her blind partner must risk their lives as they escape down a post-apocalyptic coastline from a mysterious evil force. Following a narrow escape, the runner's injuries start to take her life leaving her blind partner with an impossible choice.

USA | 2015 | 13 minutes | English
Directed by Ryan Mack

12:45 PM – 1:15 PM

Q&A: REELABILITIES INTERNATIONAL SHORTS



1:45 PM - 3:05 PM

FEATURE FILM: IMPERFECT

Imperfect is a story of artists...who live and perform with the uniqueness of disability, and have historically been denied their place in the spotlight. The documentary follows a company of actors with all nature of disabilities – from spinal cord injury to Parkinson's Disease, cerebral palsy to autism – as they attempt an unprecedented version of Kander, Ebb, and Fosse's beloved musical Chicago. Capturing the raw, honest stories of the actors inside the production process and outside the theatre in their everyday lives, imperfect reveals a rare behind-the-scenes look at talented artists who push to succeed as professional performers, no matter the obstacles. imperfect crushes stale notions of disability and affirms the human condition...in all its many forms.

USA | 2021 | 77 minutes | English
Directed by Brian Malone and Regan Linton

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22

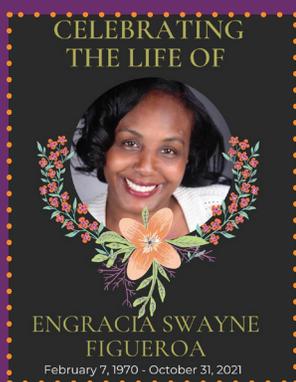


3:25 PM - 4:10 PM

**PANEL DISCUSSION:
IS HOLLYWOOD AFRAID OF DISABILITY?**

People have assumptions, stereotypes, and fears about disability. Given the unique role that Hollywood plays in either perpetuating or dispelling these notions, why haven't we come farther in authentically addressing disability on the big screen? Is Hollywood afraid of disability? This panel will look at what may be holding Hollywood back from advancing disability diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

4:30 PM - 4:40 PM



**ENGRACIA SWAYNE
FIGUEROA TRIBUTE**



4:40 PM - 6:00 PM

**FEATURE FILM:
MARICARMEN**

Maricarmen Graue is a cello player, music teacher, writer, and marathon runner. Blind and living alone, she subverts any expectations of helplessness with a biting sense of humor and a fierce attitude. Swaying between laughter and a bare-boned meditation on the act of living, Maricarmen navigates the trials and triumphs of a strong, perseverant woman.

*Mexico | 2019 | 80 minutes | Spanish
Directed by Sergio Morkin*

6:00 PM - 6:30 PM

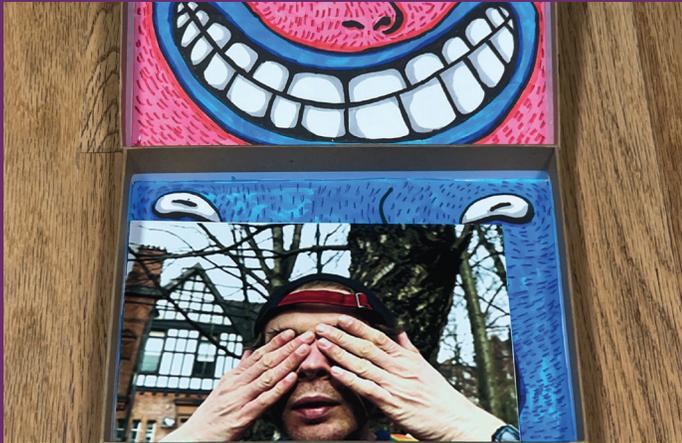
**PANEL DISCUSSION:
ARE WE THERE YET?: AUTHENTIC
REPRESENTATION IN FILM**

Film provides us with a window to the experience of others. When films portray the experience of people with disabilities should those films be cast with actors who have disabilities or can anyone act in any role? This panel will explore authentic representation, where we are, and where we still need to go.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23

11:00 AM - 12:15 PM - Easterseals Disability Film Challenge

SHORTS SHOWCASE 2



Winners and special selections from Easterseals Disability Film Challenge.

MAC & CHEESE (BEST FILM, BEST DIRECTOR, BEST EDITOR)

An everyday hero grapples with friendship, responsibility, and the decision to eat (or not to eat) his roommates mac & cheese.

USA | 2022 | 5 minutes | English
Directed by Amanda Pinto

SEVEN (BEST ACTOR)

A 19 year old girl is removed from her normal life after finding out she's the next slayer and the only one who can save the world. Not fully understanding her true destiny, tensions run high as she trains with her watcher Mr. Gordon.

USA | 2022 | 5 minutes | English
Directed by Marie Alyse Rodriguez

SUPERHERO, INC. (BEST WRITER)

What happens when an unstoppable telekinetic job hunter encounters an immovable hiring manager? A mess, probably.

USA | 2022 | 4 minutes | English
Directed by Liz Whitmere and Christine Bélanger



ILY (AWARENESS CAMPAIGN AWARD)

ILY is about five girlfriends in their early twenties. They are not superheroes or anti-heroes but regular girlfriends talking about what regular girlfriends do: career, dating, sex and relationships. It is this purpose for which we approached the theme of this year's challenge. Grappling with a stalled career and dating as a disabled woman, the "girls' night" is both typical and atypical. Neither of which is especially superheroic, which is exactly what we wanted to say.

USA | 2022 | 4 minutes | English
Directed by Christine Marshall

FANTASTIC IDEAS : WHERE DO WE FIND THEM?

Two kiddos come up with an idea for a superhero movie. Our cast comprises of two children born with orthopedic disabilities. They both wear a prosthesis on their leg which we call their "robot leg". They are unstoppable.

USA | 2022 | 2 minutes | English
Directed by Robert James Ashe

HEROES IN TRAINING

Four villains find redemption, and tap into their inner hero.

USA | 2022 | 5 minutes | English
Directed by Brittany Phillips

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23



CINDY & PIPER DRIVE TO MCDONALD'S

Piper and Cindy, the newest members of the Sanction Society, just want to eat but obstacles keep getting in their way. Will they save the day, and fix their hunger pains?

USA | 2022 | 5 minutes | English

Directed by Shannon DeVido

TACO TUESDAY

A young woman, with the ability to see into the future, uses her superpower to fight crime.

USA | 2022 | 6 minutes | English

Directed by John Lawson

IN THE MIRROR

When the camera stops rolling a social media influencer is forced to face her biggest nemesis, herself.

USA | 2022 | 4 minutes | English

Directed by Natasha Jimenez

APHASIA SUPERHEROES

For the millions around the world who have aphasia, adversity wears many disguises, but within each of those affected, an Aphasia Superhero is waiting to be revealed...

USA | 2022 | 5 minutes | English

Directed by Dr. Gillian Velmer

PANDORA

What if you had the ability to take any superpower in the world? Supervillain Pandora (Maysoon Zayid) has traveled the globe collecting superheroes' powers. Now when she finally encounters Time Bender (Anita Hollander), a time-traveling heroine, and a sidekick of mysterious origins, in New York City, Pandora gets a little more than she bargained for.

USA | 2022 | 6 minutes | English

Directed by Anna Pakman and Jd Michaels

ONE STEP AHEAD

Timor-Leste, Asia's youngest country, has taken on a massive and thought-provoking step: to aim for the full inclusion of people without disabilities. This undertaking doesn't come without challenges. It needs people stepping up to the task. It needs heroes. Let's meet some of them!

2022 | 5 minutes | Directed by Lena Lenzen

and José Americo

LIFE TRIALS

A struggling super hero regains his confidence with the help of a wise and unrelenting super friend.

USA | 2022 | 6 minutes | English

Directed by Tal Anderson and Vickie Anderson

ANDY & KALIOPE

When Andy must move to yet another foster home, his case worker helps him connect to his inner superhero.

USA | 2022 | 6 minutes | English

Directed by Crystal Arnette and Catriona Rubenis-Steven

12:15 PM - 1:00 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION:

HOSTED BY NIC NOVICKI, EASTERSEALS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23



1:30 – 3:20 PM

**KIDS' SUNDAY FUNDAY:
OPENING REMARKS WITH INCLUSION
MATTERS**

FEATURE FILM: FINDING NEMO

Marlin (Albert Brooks), a clown fish, is overly cautious with his son, Nemo (Alexander Gould), who has a foreshortened fin. When Nemo swims too close to the surface to prove himself, he is caught by a diver, and horrified Marlin must set out to find him. A blue reef fish named Dory (Ellen DeGeneres) — who has a really short memory — joins Marlin and complicates the encounters with sharks, jellyfish, and a host of ocean dangers. Meanwhile, Nemo plots his escape from a dentist's fish tank.

*USA | 2003 | 100 minutes | English
Directed by Andrew Stanton*

3:20 PM - 3:50 PM

**KIDS' SUNDAY FUNDAY:
DANCE PARTY**

Co-hosted with Straight UP Abilities and Inclusion Matters by Shane's Inspiration



4:10 PM – 5:50 PM

**FEATURE FILM:
POPPY**

Poppy is the story of a young woman with Down syndrome who refuses to be defined by disability and decides to take control of her own life. It's her ambition to become a motor mechanic – starting with the apprenticeship that was promised her by her late father. But Dave, her super-protective brother, who has reluctantly taken over the family workshop/garage is far from encouraging. And it's not until she teams up with an ex school friend who needs his car fixed in time enter the local burnout competition that her plans progress.

*New Zealand | 2021 | 98 minutes | English
Directed by Linda Niccol*

5:50 PM - 6:00 PM

**END OF KIDS' SUNDAY FUNDAY:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOU'S**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23



6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

RISING PHOENIX: TOKYO, EPISODE 3

From the team behind the Rising Phoenix movie on Netflix about the story of the Paralympics, Rising Phoenix: Tokyo began production in March 2020 once the world became aware of Covid 19. The Team at HTYT Missions began documenting the threat of Covid on the Tokyo Paralympic Games and the emotional journeys of athletes who were due to travel to Tokyo.

The new 3-part series follows the experiences of 12 Paralympians from 11 countries and the wider Paralympic movement from the moment that the world began to close down up until many of them competed at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. It provides a unique insight into one of the most extraordinary sporting events in history.

The production is directed by Mat Whitecross and co-directed by Bim Ajadi, the pioneering UK filmmaker who identifies as deaf. John Battsek produces it at Ventureland and Jack Thorne executive produces. Around 25% of those who worked on the production identify as disabled.

*UK | 2020 | 45 minutes | English
Directed by Ian Bonhôte, Peter Ettedgui*



8:00 PM - 9:00 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION: LA28 PARALYMPICS AND OLYMPICS AND THE IMPACT ON DISABILITY INCLUSION WORLDWIDE



REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL PANELS

FRIDAY OCTOBER 21, 9:00 PM-9:30 PM

CODA Q&A



PANELISTS

SIÂN HEDER WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Siân Heder is an Academy Award winning writer and director. Her debut feature, *TALLULAH*, starring Elliot Page and Alison Janney, premiered at Sundance in 2016 and was released as a Netflix original. Siân wrote and produced for three seasons of the Netflix series, *ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK* and has directed episodes of *GLOW*, *ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK*, *THE PATH*, and *LITTLE AMERICA*.

Her latest film, *CODA*, debuted at Sundance in 2021 and was the first film in the festival's history to win all four major awards. It sold to Apple for a record breaking \$25 million and received the BAFTA for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Supporting Actor, the SAG ensemble award and the WGA award for Best Adapted Screenplay. *CODA* received the Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Supporting Actor. Most recently, Siân was executive producer and showrunner on *LITTLE AMERICA* for Apple TV+.



PANELISTS

TROY KOTSUR ACTOR

Troy Kotsur earned the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role as Frank, the Deaf fisherman father of a hearing daughter who wants to be a singer in director Siân Heder's "*CODA*" (2021.) Kotsur is the first Deaf male actor and only the second Deaf actor overall to win the Oscar, after his "*CODA*" co-star Marlee Matlin for her role in *Children of a Lesser God* (1986.) Kotsur also earned BAFTA, Critics' Choice, Gotham, Independent Spirit and Screen Actors Guild awards, and was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for his role in "*CODA*." Other recent film credits include "*Wild Prairie Rose*" (2016,) "*No Ordinary Hero: The SuperDeafy Movie*" (2013) which he also directed, "*Universal Signs*" (2008) and "*The Number 23*" (2007.) In television, Kotsur was most recently seen in the Disney+ series "*The Mandalorian*", for which he created the Tusken sign language, and was also used in the show's spinoff series "*The Book of Boba Fett*". Other television roles include "*CSI: NY*", "*Scrubs*", "*Criminal Minds*", "*Strong Medicine*", "*Doc*", and "*Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye*". A native of Mesa, AZ, Kotsur began acting in grade school, with some of his earliest performances including reenacting Tom and Jerry cartoon storylines to his classmates. He studied theater, film and television at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and following graduation, toured with the National Theatre of the Deaf. He began working with the Deaf West Theatre in Los Angeles in 1994 where he directed and acted in several stage productions including *Spring Awakening*. In 2012, he was nominated for an Ovation Award for his role in the Deaf West Theatre production of *Cyrano*. Kotsur continues to live in Mesa, AZ with his wife and daughter.



MODERATOR

SHOSHANNAH STERN WRITER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, ACTRESS

Shoshannah Stern created, wrote, executive produced and starred in the critically acclaimed Sundance Now series, "*This Close*," with Josh Feldman. Her writing has been featured in the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Her work as an actor include stints on *Grey's Anatomy*, *Supernatural*, *Jericho* and *Weeds*. She is currently developing a thriller for AMC called *Disquiet* and wrote for the upcoming Marvel series *Echo*. She lives happily in Los Angeles with her much-loved family.

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL PANELS

SATURDAY OCTOBER 22, 12:45 PM-1:15 PM

Q&A: REELABILITIES INTERNATIONAL SHORTS



PANELISTS

ADAM DEYOE DIRECTOR

Adam Deyoe graduated from Emerson College with a B.F.A. in film production. He has directed numerous features including the cult films "Psycho Sleepover" and "Yeti: A Love Story" for Troma Entertainment, the horror action-thriller "Dead Season" for the Syfy Network, and the teen dance drama, "1 Chance 2 Dance" for MarVista Entertainment. His latest directorial works have been the zombie-thriller "Decade of the Dead" which wrapped shooting Sept 2021 in Hawaii and the stop motion short film "Davey's Lullaby".



PANELISTS

RYAN MACK DIRECTOR, SCREENWRITER, AND PRODUCER

Ryan is an award winning director, screenwriter, and producer based in Los Angeles, CA. He has written and directed two short films "You're Family Now," which won the Best Short Film award at the 2021 GenreBlast film festival and "The Runner" which is currently making the rounds in the festival circuit. As a queer filmmaker, his current writing focuses on Sci-Fi/Horror elements often from a LGBTQ prospective.



PANELISTS

JOSE NAVAS WRITER/DIRECTOR

Jose Navas is a Writer/Director born in Nicaragua and raised in Miami, Florida. He studied film at the Miami International University of Arts and Design before founding the production company FlickHouse Studios. His film, "Beat Lingo" (2021), made its World Premiere at the 38th annual Miami Film Festival in 2021 and was presented at the Harvard University following its premiere. His most recent film, "With His Eyes Closed" (2021) made its World Premiere at the prestigious Los Angeles Latino Film Festival at the iconic TLC Theater.



PANELISTS

EYAL RESH FILMMAKER

Eyal Resh is a live-action and animation filmmaker. His stories explore the intricacies of the human condition through the themes of intimacy, sex, and communication. Eyal's work screened in festivals such as Sundance, Tribeca, LAFF, Outfest, Viennale and more. Some of his work could be found on Hulu, Amazon Prime and Vimeo on demand. Eyal is a graduate of the MFA Film Directing Program at CalArts.



MODERATOR

NIKKI BAILEY PERFORMER, DIRECTOR, PUBLISHED AUTHOR, AND EMMY NOMINATED PRODUCER, AND PODCAST HOST/PRODUCER

Nikki is a Writer, Performer, Director, Published Author, and Emmy Nominated Producer, and podcast host/producer. After earning a Master of Divinity degree in theology and ethics, she began a career as a writer, actor and comedian. Nikki recently wrote, directed and starred in a short film called "The Crossroad". She was nominated for two Emmy awards for her work as a producer on PBS specials. With a saucy Philly attitude and lot of sparkle, Nikki tells stories about life's lessons with irreverence, intelligence and a divinely inspired, diva-esque flare.

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL PANELS

SATURDAY OCTOBER 22, 3:25 PM-4:10 PM

PANEL: IS HOLLYWOOD AFRAID OF DISABILITY? INCLUSION WORLDWIDE

People have assumptions, stereotypes, and fears about disability. Given the unique role that Hollywood plays in either perpetuating or dispelling these notions, why haven't we come farther in authentically addressing disability on the big screen? Is Hollywood afraid of disability? This panel will look at what may be holding Hollywood back from advancing disability diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.



PANELISTS

NASREEN ALKHATEEB CINEMATOGRAPHER

Emmy award-winning cinematographer whose work illuminates historically excluded voices. Her work has been featured by VP Kamala Harris, Oprah, NASA, Tribeca Film Festival, the Women's March, the United Nations, FX Network, and Apple+. A 2022 Ford Foundation's Disability Futures Fellow, a Visions mentee of the American Society of Cinematographers, a fellow of Sundance's Accessible Futures Intensive, Forbes described her as "breaking barriers."



PANELISTS

RYAN DAMODARAN DIRECTOR OF INTEGRATED PLANNING & MULTICULTURAL AT DISNEY STUDIOS CONTENT

In partnership with filmmakers and teams across Disney, he works to ensure representation, authenticity, and intentionality throughout support for Studio titles including upcoming films like Black Panther: Wakanda Forever and The Little Mermaid. He is also part of Disney's Creative Inclusion Council. Prior to this, Ryan helped to build the Studio Integrated Planning team and oversaw planning for films including Frozen, Moana, Coco, Soul, and Encanto.



PANELISTS

ROD CARRILLO-LUNDGREN DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING & DEVELOPMENT

Rod Carrillo-Lundgren is currently Director of International Programming & Development for AMC Networks, overseeing original development and co-productions for AMC, AMC+, Sundance Now, and BBC America. Before joining AMC, Rod worked at Freeform, Latin World Entertainment, NBCUniversal International Studios, and Universal Cable Productions. He received his Masters from Newcastle University Business School in the UK & his Bachelors from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.



PANELISTS

KURT YAEGER PRODUCER, WRITER AND PERFORMER

Kurt has written and developed projects with producers, showrunners, and directors, acquired film and tv rights to bestselling books, and his feature "The First Case" is currently on "The Black List". He is well known for his on-screen recurring appearances in "Sons of Anarchy", "Quarry", "Tell Me A Story", "Seal Team", "The Village", "NCIS LA", and series regular on "Another Life". Kurt is a Ruderman Foundation Board Member, SAG/AFTRA Performers with Disability Committee Member, Writers Guild of America - Writers with Disabilities Member, and Producers Guild Diversity Workshop Member.



MODERATOR

ANDREA JENNINGS ADVOCATE

Andrea Jennings, M.Mus. is a sought-after keynote speaker, moderator, and panelist for numerous diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) panels advocating for social justice through the lens of Disability culture, film, music, and art. She is the Chair of the Accessibility and Disability Commission for The City of Pasadena, Disability and Accessibility Strategist for C Talent at Whalar, Founder of Shifting Creative Paradigms, and Co-Founder at RAMPD. Andrea's work has been featured at Park Avenue Armory, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rutgers University's Jack Tchen exhibitions and recognized by Forbes, Billboard Magazine, The Hollywood Reporter, and The New York Times.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 23, 4:30 PM-4:40 PM

ENGRACIA SWAYNE FIGUEROA

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL PANELS

SATURDAY OCTOBER 22, 6:00 PM-6:30 PM

PANEL: ARE WE THERE YET? AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION IN FILM

Film provides us with a window to the experience of others. When films portray the experience of people with disabilities should those films be cast with actors who have disabilities or can anyone act in any role? This panel will explore authentic representation, where we are, and where we still need to go.



PANELISTS

ASHLEY EAKIN WRITER-DIRECTOR

Ashley Eakin is a writer-director based out of LA with a physical disability. Her latest film, "Forgive us our trespasses", was developed as part of Netflix's Emerging Filmmaker Initiative and is currently live on the streaming platform. Eakin is also developing a half-hour series with 20th Century for FX. Eakin recently directed three episodes of TV for AppleTV+ and Disney+. She is currently co-writing a thriller for Netflix with her husband Shawn Lovering and is attached to direct. Prior to working on her own projects, Eakin was the assistant to film director Jon M. Chu and worked on "Crazy Rich Asians".



PANELISTS

NATALIE GROSS WRITER, DANCER AND FASHION/BEAUTY ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT

Natalie Gross won the 2021 & 2022 Disability Film Challenge Best Actor Award. As a legally blind creator, Natalie uses her disability to speak up/speak out for equal representation in the entertainment & fashion industry. She is Marketing & Outreach coordinator for Blind Institute of Technology. She is Creative Director & Cohost of Fashionably Tardy podcast that bridges the gap between the disability community and the fashion industry. She is currently a freelance rider with pop sugar writing about fashion in relation to disability and she was the first blind fashion designer in the Meadoverse.



PANELISTS

KRISTEN LOPEZ TV EDITOR AT INDIEWIRE

Is a TV Editor at IndieWire and a disabled entertainment writer whose work has been published in Variety, Forbes, and Roger Ebert. Her first book, "But Have You Read the Book" debuts March 7th from TCM and Running Press. As a disabled film buff, her writing often deconstructs the issues regarding disability and gender in entertainment. She has a Masters in English from Sacramento State University. In her free time she enjoys reading, podcasting, and watching old movies.



PANELISTS

ELLE POTRUCH TALENT MANAGER

Elle Potruch is a Talent Manager with C Talent @ Whalar. She represents high-profile Deaf and Disabled actors, models, and content creators. As a member of the disability community, Elle has been able to combine her passion for authentic inclusion with her life-long love of film and television.



MODERATOR

TOBIAS FORREST ACTOR, PRODUCER, WRITER AND SINGER

After a C5 spinal injury, Tobias Forrest discovered a passion to perform. He is an actor, producer, writer and singer who has been in the "Academy Awards" choir and is starring as "Patrick" in the much-anticipated film "Daruma". He also plays "Jorge" in "Coffee Wars" premiering soon and "Mac" in "Special Unit" currently available online. Tobias recurred on "Wisdom of the Crowd" which featured his song "Lizard People", guest starred on "How To Get Away With Murder" and "Queen Sugar" with other credits including "Good Trouble", "The Sessions", "Weeds" and more.

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL PANELS

SUNDAY OCTOBER 23



MASTER OF CEREMONIES

DANNY J. GOMEZ ACTOR

Danny J. Gomez is a professional actor with credits on 'New Amsterdam' (NBC), 'All Rise' (OWN), award winning play 'All of Me', and the upcoming comedy-thriller 'Martinez, Margaritas, and Murder!'. He has worked on national campaigns for Facebook, Target, Zappos and more, and in 2019, he was awarded the Christopher Reeve Acting Scholarship. After a near-death mountain biking accident left Danny paralyzed from the waist down, he committed his life to advocacy for representation for disabled actors in Hollywood.

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL PANELS

SUNDAY OCTOBER 23, 12:15 PM-1:00 PM

PANEL: HOSTED BY NIC NOVICKI, EASTERSEALS



MODERATOR

NIC NOVICKI FOUNDER/DIRECTOR AT DISABILITY FILM CHALLENGE

While 61 million Americans have disabilities, they are the most under-represented population in entertainment and media. As someone with a disability myself, I launched the Film Challenge in 2013 in response to the under-representation of talent with disabilities both in front of and behind the camera to give aspiring filmmakers the opportunity to showcase their work and provide them with meaningful exposure. In 2017, I joined forces with Easterseals – the nation's leading nonprofit supporting people and families with disabilities – to expand the event, now known as the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 23, 3:20 PM-3:50 PM

KIDS' SUNDAY FUNDAY: DANCE PARTY



SUNDAY OCTOBER 23, 5:25 PM-6:00 PM

END OF KIDS' SUNDAY FUNDAY: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOU'S

REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL PANELS

SUNDAY OCTOBER 23, 8:00 PM-9:00 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION: LA28 PARALYMPICS AND OLYMPICS AND THE IMPACT ON DISABILITY INCLUSION WORLDWIDE.

The Paralympics and Olympics have represented billions of dollars in marketing and community development in their host cities and beyond. What will Los Angeles' Paralympic legacy be? How can communities and businesses build on that legacy? And how might disability inclusion, awareness and equity be forever changed? After the premier of the final episode of Rising Phoenix: Tokyo, join us for a discussion with filmmakers, Paralympians, and business leaders on how LA28 will transform how the world understands disability inclusion, diversity, and the Paralympic legacy.



PANELISTS

ASHLEY DOS SANTOS MEDIA BUFF. BRAND BUILDER. CRISIS AVERTER. SENIOR DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, LA28

In her role at LA28, she develops and executes brand visibility, reputation management and global stakeholder engagement efforts. Ashley works across teams to ensure LA28's success in growing from a startup to large-scale organization by establishing foundational tools and processes and leading strategically collaborative, brand-building campaigns.



PANELISTS

LEROY MOORE CO-FOUNDER OF KRIP HOP NATION.

2021 Emmy award winning Leroy F. Moore Jr. is the Co-Founder of Krip Hop Nation. Since the 1990s, Moore has been a key member of Poor Magazine, starting with the column "Illin-N-Chillin" and then as a founding member of the magazine's school, the Homefulness and Decolonize Academy. Moore is one of the founding members of National Black Disability Coalition and an activist around police brutality against people with disabilities.



PANELISTS

GREG NUGENT PRODUCER

Greg's passion for the Paralympics began as the Director of Marketing at London 2012. He formed the Rising Phoenix project in 2018, starting with the movie about the story of the Paralympics released on Netflix. 16% of those who worked on this identified as disabled. This was followed by "Rising Phoenix: Tokyo", a series following Paralympians to the Tokyo Games. 25% of those who worked on the series identified as disabled. Greg holds the worldwide exclusive rights to tell stories about the Paralympics until LA 2028. His ambition is use the story of the Paralympics to change attitudes to disability. The team have now set a target of 50% representation on their next project, "Rising Phoenix: Paris".



PANELISTS

MATT WIENER PARTNER, MANAGING DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF CONSULTING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS GROUP

Wiener is a Partner, Managing Director and Head of Consulting & Business Development at Innovative Partnerships Group, joining the firm less than one year into the company formation. Mr. Wiener oversees growth for the company, serving as a member of Executive Team with leadership duties across property, brand, retained, and project-based clients in domestic & international markets and leading a dynamic, high-performing team across the country.



MODERATOR

TATYANA MCFADDEN PARALYMPIAN

Born with spina bifida, Tatyana McFadden has won 20 medals at the Paralympics, including 8 golds. She worked both as a producer and as a star of "Rising Phoenix," the documentary that tells the story of the Paralympic Movement on Netflix. She is actively involved in advancing the rights of people with disabilities. Her efforts are credited for the passage of the Maryland Fitness and Athletics Equity for Students with Disabilities Act, otherwise known as Tatyana's law, requiring schools to give students with disabilities the opportunity to compete in inter-school athletics.

FILM SELECTION COMMITTEE



DAWN GRABOWSKI

Dawn Grabowski likes to be known as an actress first, and Actress/Performer With a Disability second (PWD). She doesn't let her disability define her, it's just another part of her. Dawn is an award-winning actress, motivational speaker, writer, and comedian who has written, produced, performed and presented "Always Going Up" in the Los Angeles area. She has also written & produced a full length feature "Dangerous Perceptions, and Web series, Quest. Her new Web Series is The Adventures of The Amazing Lady. She has a B.A. in Theatre Arts and a B.S. in Paralegal.



DIANA ELIZABETH JORDAN

Diana Elizabeth Jordan is an award-winning actor, solo artist, theater & filmmaker, artist educator & disability influencer. She has been cast in over 60 theater productions, film and television including CBS's S.W.A.T. She was one of 20 actors selected from over 7,000 applicants for the inaugural Warner Media Discovery Access Talent Showcase. She performed her solo show "Happily Ever After (One Woman's Journey To Find A True Love)" at the 2021 Hollywood Fringe where she received a diversity scholarship, Pick of The Fringe and an Encore Producers Award honors.



JULIA MUNIZ

Julia Muniz is an award-winner Brazilian storyteller based in Los Angeles with over a decade of work that aims to inspire, raise awareness and create dialogues through multimedia JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) storytelling in front of and behind the camera, producing commercials, narratives, documentaries, events and directing photography. Julia currently works as Communications Chair for the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) first Disability Alumni Network (UDAN).



HÉCTOR MANUEL RAMÍREZ

Héctor Manuel Ramírez (them/they) is an Apache & Mexican Two Spirits person occupying space in Yaanga, Tongva (Los Angeles, California) the unceded ancestral lands of the Tongva/Kizh/Tatavin, Chumash & Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Héctor is an Autistic person who is hard of hearing & has a psychiatric disability. Hector has done local, state, & federal level policy work in the areas of equity & disparities in Disability, Native American, Latinx, Indigenous, LGBTQIA2S+, Immigrant, Undocumented Americans, & most impacted & highly marginalized communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



STEERING COMMITTEE



DANNY WOODBURN

Danny Woodburn is a 30 year veteran actor (as seen in Seinfeld and Watchmen) and disability rights activist whose work has led to increased representation, understanding, appreciation, and opportunities for Performers with Disability (PWDs). He has had a role in every change occurring today for PWDs in Hollywood, and has worked to open doors for PWDs at 20th Century Fox, CBS, NBC, HBO, and other studios.



ALISA SCHLESINGER

Alisa Schlesinger is a founding member of ReelAbilities Film Festival Los Angeles. She serves as a Commissioner on the City of Los Angeles Commission of Disabilities. She has been an advocate for people with disabilities for over twenty-five years and is committed to expanding visibility and inclusion for people with disabilities in the entertainment industry.



JENNIFER SCHLESINGER

Jennifer Schlesinger is a founding member of ReelAbilities Los Angeles. She is the Associate VP at Alzheimer's Los Angeles, a local non-profit committed to helping families affected by Alzheimer's or dementia. RAFFLA 2021 will be the first time she has watched a movie since last year's Festival--it's been a tough year.



ELIZABETH FISH

Over the last 13 years of her career in entertainment, Elizabeth Fish has worked on various indie films as a producer, director, sound editor & mixer, camera operator as well as a production assistant & SAG background actor on various TV shows. She had the honor of producing and directing 4 short documentaries for Joni & Friends in 2015 for their world conference. Currently a Coordinator at Disney Television Studios for 20th Television. She is a leader on the Disability ERG for DGE as well as their Creative Pipeline team for disability and a member of 20th TV's Action Group where she spearheaded a panel discussion on disability in front of and behind the camera.



STEPHEN DAVID SIMON

Stephen David Simon is Executive Director of the City of Los Angeles Department on Disability, working to ensure that all City programs, services, activities, and facilities are accessible to all Angelenos. He previously served as the City's AIDS Coordinator, responsible for development, implementation and oversight of the City's HIV/AIDS policies and programs. He received his Juris Doctorate and Bachelors degrees at UCLA.



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RICKY ROSALES
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 12, 2022

Myrna G. Cabanban, President
City of Los Angeles Commission on Disability

RE: ReelAbilities Film Festival LA 2022

WELCOME!!

It is with great privilege to welcome you all to the 2022 City of Los Angeles Department on Disability's **5th Annual ReelAbilities Film Festival**. This year marks the return to the in-person format of this new Los Angeles tradition, as well as a continuation of the virtual showcase.

In the next few days, we will witness the talents, skills, hearts, and souls of People with Disabilities as their stories are revealed. So let's sit back and enjoy.

Lights. Camera. ACTION!

Sincerely,

Myrna G. Cabanban
President



SAG·AFTRA.

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