



The 20th Annual Whitaker St. Louis Filmmakers Showcase runs virtually from July 10-19, 2020

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ST. LOUIS - The Whitaker St. Louis Filmmakers Showcase, an annual presentation of the nonprofit Cinema St. Louis (CSL), serves as the area's primary venue for films made by local artists. The Showcase screens works that were shot in the St. Louis region or were written, directed, or produced by St. Louis-area residents or by filmmakers with strong local ties who are now working elsewhere.

Because of the Covid-19 health crisis, the Showcase will be presented virtually in 2020. CSL is partnering with Eventive, which also handles our ticketing, to present the Virtual Festival. Films will be available to view on demand anytime from July 10-19. There are no geographic limits on accessing the programs. Once a ticket-holder begins watching a program, access remains available for 48 hours.

The Showcase's 15 film programs range from full-length fiction features and documentaries to multi-film compilations of fiction and documentary shorts. Most programs will feature recorded Q&As with filmmakers, which will also be available on CSL's YouTube channel.

In addition to the film programs, which will be available for streaming anytime during the July 10-19 run of the Showcase, this year's event features a series of free master classes focused on key aspects of making and marketing an independent narrative feature. These will be offered as live streams at specific times/dates during the Showcase, but recordings of the presentations will also be archived and available on the CSL YouTube channel. A free live stream on the evening of July 19 will present the Showcase jury awards — including a \$500 prize to the Best Showcase Film — and announce the films that will move on to the Whitaker St. Louis International Film Festival in November.

This year's Showcase includes the following:

- **America's Last Little Italy:** The Hill: A documentary feature by Joseph Puleo that explores the deep historic roots of the Hill, St. Louis' iconic Italian neighborhood.
- **The Ballad of John Henry:** A documentary feature by Matthew Rice that analyzes how an ex-slave became one of America's greatest tall-tale heroes: John Henry.
- **College Bound:** A documentary feature by Jenna Gandolfo that chronicles a diverse group of Ritenour High School students as they overcome an array of obstacles to be accepted into some of the top universities in the country.
- **Doc Shorts Programs:** The first of the two programs focuses on food, wine, and nature, and the second is anchored by Post-Dispatch columnist Aisha Sultan's "33 and Counting," a true-crime story about a 70-year-old grandmother serving a life sentence for a murder she says her rapist committed.
- **Easy-Bake:** A narrative feature by writer-director-star Zoë Kennison — a Webster U. grad — in which a 22-year-old college student is informed by her doctor that she is on an unexpected biological clock: Because of a medical issue, she has only one year to conceive a child.
- **Master Classes:** A series of four free master classes — featuring filmmakers and industry professionals — focused on key aspects of making an independent narrative feature: Finding Financing (July 11), Developing a Budget (July 12), Casting (July 18), and Securing Distribution (July 19).
- **My Ireland:** A documentary feature by Anthony Monaghan, a working-class immigrant now living in St. Louis, that takes a hard look at the rampant emigration, mass evictions, and homeless crisis that plague his homeland of Ireland today.
- **Narrative Shorts Programs:** The 56 films in the six programs include comedies, dramas, thrillers, and experimental works.
- **Resolution:** A narrative feature by former St. Louisan Jacob T. Martin in which a tight-knit group of friends gathered for a New Year's Eve party have their night of celebration descend into chaos when the host couple breaks up.
- **Wake Up:** A documentary feature by Nate Townsend that weaves together stories from four different frontlines of suicide prevention across the country. The film premiered at We Are One: A Global Film Festival.

The **Whitaker Foundation** again serves as the Showcase's title sponsor. The foundation's twofold mission is to encourage the preservation and use of parks and to enrich lives through the arts. The **Chellappa-Vedavalli Foundation** is underwriting both the Showcase's master classes and the \$500 prize for the Best Showcase Film.

The event's other sponsors include the Arts & Education Council, Grizzell & Co., Missouri Arts Council, Missouri Film Office, Regional Arts Commission, St. Louis Public Radio, and Washington University Film & Media Studies.