



## Geralyn's 2021 Sundance Film Festival Cheat Sheet

The 2021 Sundance Film Festival will take place digitally via a Sundance-built online platform that will be globally broadcasted. This pandemic year required adaption, which means a five-day festival instead of ten days, no in-person screenings in Utah, and a total of 71 Films instead of 128 in 2020.

Selected from 14,092 submissions including 3,500 feature-length films, much of the programming this year looks at the high school experience, and two documentaries look at how technology is changing us. There are three American Masters profiles: Amy Tan, Rita Moreno and Alvin Ailey. This year I am executive producing *BRING YOUR OWN BRIGADE*, *REBEL HEARTS*, *TRY HARDER!*, and *AILEY*. Utah Film Center fiscally sponsored three of those films: *BRING YOUR OWN BRIGADE*, *REBEL HEARTS*, and *AILEY*. Gamechanger Films financed the film *PASSING*. Overall, this year's festival brings unique and powerful selections.

Cheers,  
Geralyn

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### U.S. DRAMATIC COMPETITION

**CODA** / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Siân Heder, Producers: Philippe Rousselet, Fabrice Gianfermi, Patrick Wachsberger) — As a CODA – Child of Deaf Adults – Ruby is the only hearing person in her deaf family. When the family's fishing business is threatened, Ruby finds herself torn between pursuing her love of music and her fear of abandoning her parents. Cast: Emilia Jones, Eugenio Derbez, Troy Kotsur, Ferdia Walsh-Peelo, Daniel Durant, and Marlee Matlin. *This opening night film cast a deaf actor. The story is set in Gloucester and is an emotional yo-yo.*

**Jockey** / U.S.A. (Director: Clint Bentley, Screenwriters: Clint Bentley, Greg Kwedar, Producers: Clint Bentley, Greg Kwedar, Nancy Schafer) — An aging jockey is determined to win one last championship, but his dream is complicated when a young rookie shows up claiming to be his son. Cast: Clifton Collins Jr., Molly Parker, Moises Arias. Utah Film Center Alum, Greg Kewdar also produced *Rising from Ashes* and *Ghost Fleet*.

**\*Passing /** U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Rebecca Hall, Producers: Forest Whitaker, Nina Yang Bongiovi, Margot Hand, Rebecca Hall) — Two African-American women who can "pass" as white choose to live on opposite sides of the color line in 1929 New York in an exploration of racial and gender identity, performance, obsession and repression. Based on the novella by Nella Larsen. Cast: Tessa Thompson, Ruth Negga, André Holland, Alexander Skarsgård, Bill Camp. *This is a Gamechanger film.*

### **U.S. DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION:**

**\*Ailey /** U.S.A. (Director: Jamila Wignot, Producer: Lauren DeFilippo) — Alvin Ailey was a visionary artist who found salvation through dance. Told in his own words and through the creation of a dance inspired by his life, this immersive portrait follows a man who, when confronted by a world that refused to embrace him, determined to build one that would. *This is a Utah Film Center and Impact Partners film.*

**All Light, Everywhere /** U.S.A. (Director: Theo Anthony, Producers: Riel Roch-Decter, Sebastian Pardo, Jonna McKone) — An exploration of the shared histories of cameras, weapons, policing and justice. As surveillance technologies become a fixture in everyday life, the film interrogates the complexity of an objective point of view, probing the biases inherent in both human perception and the lens.

**Homeroom /** U.S.A. (Director: Peter Nicks, Producers: Peter Nicks, Sean Havey) — Following the class of 2020 at Oakland High School in a year marked by seismic change, exploring the emotional world of teenagers coming of age against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world. *Stunningly hopeful.*

**\*Rebel Hearts /** U.S.A. (Director: Pedro Kos, Producers: Kira Carstensen, Shawnee Isaac-Smith, Judy Korin) — A group of pioneering nuns bravely stand up to the Catholic Church patriarchy, fighting for their livelihoods, convictions and equality against an all-powerful Cardinal. From marching in Selma in 1965 to the Women's March in 2018, these women have reshaped our society with their bold acts of defiance. *Sister Corita and her amazing artwork. This film is fiscally sponsored by Utah Film Center.*

**Rita Moreno: Just a Girl Who Decided to Go For It /** U.S.A. (Director: Mariem Pérez Riera, Producers: Brent Miller, Mariem Pérez Riera, Ilía J. Vélez-Dávila) — Rita Moreno defied both her humble upbringing and relentless racism to become one of a select group who have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award. Over a seventy-year career, she has paved the way for Hispanic-American performers by refusing to be pigeonholed into one-dimensional stereotypes.

***Summer Of Soul (...Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*** / U.S.A. (Director: Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Producers: David Dinerstein, Robert Fyvolent, Joseph Patel) — During the same summer as Woodstock, over 300,000 people attended the Harlem Cultural Festival, celebrating African American music and culture, and promoting Black pride and unity. The footage from the festival sat in a basement, unseen for over 50 years, keeping this incredible event in America's history lost – until now.

***\*Try Harder!*** / U.S.A. (Director: Debbie Lum, Producers: Debbie Lum, Lou Nakasako, Nico Opper) — In a universe where cool kids are nerds, the orchestra is world class and being Asian American is the norm, seniors at Lowell High School compete for the top prize: admission to the college of their dreams.

### **WORLD CINEMA DRAMATIC COMPETITION**

***El Planeta*** / U.S.A., Spain (Director and Screenwriter: Amalia Ulman, Producers: Amalia Ulman, Kathleen Heffernan, Kweku Mandela) — Amidst the devastation of post-crisis Spain, mother and daughter bluff and grift to keep up the lifestyle they think they deserve, bonding over common tragedy and an impending eviction. Cast: Amalia Ulman, Ale Ulman, Nacho Vigalondo, Zhou Chen, Saoirse Bertram.

***The Pink Cloud*** / Brazil (Director and Screenwriter: Iuli Gerbase, Producer: Patricia Barbieri) — A mysterious and deadly pink cloud appears across the globe, forcing everyone to stay home. Strangers at the outset, Giovana and Yago try to invent themselves as a couple as years of shared lockdown pass. While Yago is living in his own utopia, Giovana feels trapped deep inside. Cast: Renata de Lélis, Eduardo Mendonça.

### **WORLD CINEMA DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION**

***Flee*** / Denmark, France, Sweden, Norway (Director: Jonas Poher Rasmussen, Producers: Monica Hellström, Signe Byrge Sørensen) — Amin arrived as an unaccompanied minor in Denmark from Afghanistan. Today, he is a successful academic and is getting married to his long-time boyfriend. A secret he has been hiding for 20 years threatens to ruin the life he has built.

***Inconvenient Indian*** / Canada (Director and Screenwriter: Michelle Latimer, Producers: Stuart Henderson, Justine Pimlott, Jesse Wente) — An examination of Thomas King's brilliant dismantling of North America's colonial narrative, which reframes history with the powerful voices of those continuing the tradition of Indigenous resistance.

***Misha and the Wolves*** / United Kingdom, Belgium (Director and Screenwriter: Sam Hobkinson, Producers: Poppy Dixon, Al Morrow, Matthew Wells, Gregory Zalcmán, Jürgen Buedts) — A woman's Holocaust memoir takes the world by storm, but a fallout with her publisher-turned-detective reveals her story as an audacious deception created to hide a darker truth.

***Playing With Sharks*** / Australia (Director and Screenwriter: Sally Aitken, Producer: Bettina Dalton) — Valerie Taylor is a shark fanatic and an Australian icon – a marine maverick who forged her way as a fearless diver, cinematographer and conservationist. She filmed the real sharks for *Jaws* and famously wore a chainmail suit, using herself as shark bait, changing our scientific understanding of sharks forever.

***President*** / Denmark, U.S.A., Norway (Director: Camilla Nielsson, Producers: Signe Byrge Sørensen, Joslyn Barnes) — Zimbabwe is at a crossroads. The leader of the opposition MDC party, Nelson Chamisa, challenges the old guard ZANU-PF led by Emmerson Mnangagwa, known as "The Crocodile." The election tests both the ruling party and the opposition – how do they interpret principles of democracy in discourse and in practice?

***Writing With Fire*** / India (Directors and Producers: Rintu Thomas, Sushmit Ghosh) — In a cluttered news landscape dominated by men, emerges India's only newspaper run by Dalit women. Armed with smartphones, Chief Reporter Meera and her journalists break traditions on the frontlines of India's biggest issues and within the confines of their own homes, redefining what it means to be powerful.

## **NEXT**

***Cryptozoo*** / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Dash Shaw, Producers: Kyle Martin, Jane Samborski, Bill Way, Tyler Davidson) — As cryptozookeepers struggle to capture a Baku (a legendary dream-eating hybrid creature) they begin to wonder if they should display these rare beasts in the confines of a cryptozoo, or if these mythical creatures should remain hidden and unknown. Cast: Lake Bell, Michael Cera, Zoe Kazan, Grace Zabriskie. *Dash Shaw is a filmmaker and graphic novelist. Teenagers will love this animated feature that highlights capitalism and environmentalism. It's an aesthetic delight.*

***SEARCHERS*** / (Director: Pacho Velez, Producers: Pacho Velez, Joe Poletto, Cathy Tankosic, Sam Roseme) — In encounters alternately humorous and touching, a diverse set of New Yorkers navigate their preferred dating apps in search of their special someone. *Directed and produced by Pacho Velez (director of THE REAGAN SHOW), this*

*film surrounds a group New Yorkers looking for love on dating apps — capturing how we live now — quite funny.*

***Son of Monarchs*** / Mexico, U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Alexis Gambis, Producers: Abraham Dayan, Maria Altamirano) — After his grandmother's death, a Mexican biologist living in New York returns to his hometown, nestled in the majestic monarch butterfly forests of Michoacán. The journey forces him to confront past traumas and reflect on his hybrid identity, sparking a personal and spiritual metamorphosis. Cast: Tenoch Huerta Mejía, Alexia Rasmussen, Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez, Noé Hernández, Paulina Gaitán, William Mapother. *Son of Monarchs is the winner of the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize this year. Filmmaker and biologist Alexis Gambis is the mind behind this romantic and meditative film.*

## **PREMIERES**

*This year Fiction and Non-Fiction Premieres are together as one section.*

***Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir*** / U.S.A. (Director: James Redford, Producers: Karen Pritzker, Cassandra Jabola) — Amy Tan has established herself as one of America's most respected literary voices. Born to Chinese immigrant parents, it would be decades before the author of *The Joy Luck Club* would fully understand the inherited trauma rooted in the legacies of women who survived the Chinese tradition of concubinage. *Unintended Memoir — Jamie Redford's last film. A complete portrait of Amy Tan. A deep dive of creative expression and identity.*

***\*Bring Your Own Brigade*** / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Lucy Walker, Producers: Lucy Walker, Julian Cautherley, Holly Becker, Lyn Lear) — A character-driven vérité and revelatory investigation takes us on a journey embedded with firefighters and residents on a mission to understand the causes of historically large wildfires and how to survive them, discovering that the solution has been here all along. *See the origins and history of wildfires and their relationship to climate change. An incredibly powerful film that hits home for Californians through harrowing footage.*

***How it Ends*** / U.S.A. (Directors, Screenwriters and Producers: Daryl Wein, Zoe Lister-Jones) — On the last day on Earth, one woman goes on a journey through LA to make it to her last party before the world ends, running into an eclectic cast of characters along the way. Cast: Zoe Lister-Jones, Cailee Spaeny, Olivia Wilde, Fred Armisen, Helen Hunt, Lamorne Morris. *This is Daryl Wein's and Zoe Lister-Jones' creative response to lockdown — pre-apocalyptic comedy and optimistic nihilism.*

***In The Same Breath*** / U.S.A. (Director: Nanfu Wang, Producers: Nanfu Wang, Jialing Zhang, Julie Goldman, Christopher Clements, Carolyn Hepburn) — How did the Chinese government turn pandemic coverups in Wuhan into a triumph for the Communist party? An essential narrative of firsthand accounts of the coronavirus, and a revelatory examination of how propaganda and patriotism shaped the outbreak's course – both in China and in the U.S. *Nanfu Wang directed and produced this Chinese COVID-19 cover-up. It is boldly critical of Chinese government — geopolitical and parallels the U.S. response to the pandemic.*

***Land*** / U.S.A. (Director: Robin Wright, Screenwriters: Jesse Chatham, Erin Dignam, Producers: Allyn Stewart, Lora Kennedy, Leah Holzer, Peter Saraf) – The poignant story of one woman's search, in the aftermath of an unfathomable event, for meaning in the vast and harsh American wilderness. *Cast: Robin Wright, Demián Bichir, Kim Dickens. Robin Wright directs and stars in the film.*

***Mass*** / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Fran Kranz, Producers: Fran Kranz, Casey Wilder Mott, JP Ouellette, Dylan Matlock) — Years after a tragic shooting, the parents of both the victim and the perpetrator meet face-to-face. *Cast: Jason Isaacs, Ann Dowd, Martha Plimpton, Reed Birney. Decades after a school shooting, parents meet each other with grief and forgiveness.*

***My Name is Pauli Murray*** / U.S.A. (Directors: Betsy West, Julie Cohen, Producer: Talleah Bridges McMahon) — Overlooked by history, Pauli Murray was a legal trailblazer whose ideas influenced RBG's fight for gender equality and Thurgood Marshall's landmark civil rights arguments. Featuring never-before-seen footage and audio recordings, a portrait of Murray's impact as a non-binary Black luminary: lawyer, activist, poet, and priest who transformed our world.

***Philly D.A.*** / U.S.A. (Created By: Ted Passon, Yoni Brook, Nicole Salazar, Producers: Ted Passon, Yoni Brook, Nicole Salazar, Josh Penn, Michael Gottwald) — A groundbreaking inside look at the long shot election and tumultuous first term of Larry Krasner, Philadelphia's unapologetic District Attorney, and his experiment to upend the criminal justice system from the inside out. *This Episodic Doc is an 8-part series about a new term public defender who spoke out against police brutality — trying to reform a system that is broken. Truly an edge-of-seat watch.*

***Street Gang: How We Got To Sesame Street*** / U.S.A. (Director: Marilyn Agrelo, Producers: Trevor Crafts, Ellen Scherer Crafts, Lisa Diamond) — How did a group of rebels create the world's most famous street? In 1969 New York, this “gang” of mission-driven artists, writers and educators catalyzed a moment of civil awakening,

transforming it into *Sesame Street*, one of the most influential and impactful television programs in history. *Marilyn Agrelo is also the producer and director behind the documentary Mad Hot Ballroom.*

## **SPOTLIGHT**

***Night of the Kings*** / France, Ivory Coast, Canada, Senegal (Director and Screenwriter: Philippe Lacôte, Producers: Delphine Jaquet, Yanick Létourneau, Ernest Konan, Yoro Mbaye) — A young man is sent to La Maca, a prison on the Ivory Coast in the middle of the forest ruled by its prisoners. With the red moon rising, he is designated by the Boss to be the new "Roman" and must tell a story to the other prisoners. *Cast: Koné Bakary, Steve Tientcheu, Digbeu Jean Cyrille, Rasmané Ouédraogo, Issaka Sawadogo, Denis Lavant.*

***The World to Come*** / U.S.A. (Director: Mona Fastvold, Screenwriters: Ron Hansen, Jim Shepard, Producers: Casey Affleck, Whitaker Lader, Pamela Koffler, David Hinojosa, Margarethe Baillou) — Somewhere along the mid-nineteenth century American East Coast frontier, two neighboring couples battle hardship and isolation, witnessed by a splendid yet testing landscape, challenging them both physically and psychologically. *Cast: Katherine Waterston, Vanessa Kirby, Casey Affleck, Christopher Abbott.*

## **NEW FRONTIER**

***The Changing Same: Episode 1*** / U.S.A (Lead Artists: Michèle Stephenson, Joe Brewster, Yasmin Elayat, Key Collaborators: James George, Alexander Porter, Rad Mora, Elliott Mitchell) — An immersive, episodic virtual reality experience where the participant travels through time and space to witness the connected historical experiences of racial injustice in America. A respectful, haunting story infused with magical realism and Afrofuturism about the uninterrupted cycle of the 400-year history of racial terror — past and present. *This was created by Michèle Stephenson and Joe Brewster, directors of AMERICAN PROMISE.*

## **SHORTS**

***The Rifleman*** / U.S.A. (Director: Sierra Pettengill, Screenwriters: Daniel Garber, Sierra Pettengill) — Told entirely through archival material, tracing Harlon Carter, considered the “father of the modern NRA,” across the decades, revealing the links between the National Rifle Association, the U.S. Border Patrol, and gun culture. *Directed by Sierra Pettengill, who is also director and producer of THE REAGAN SHOW.*

***Snowy*** / U.S.A (Directors: Kaitlyn Schwalje, Alex Wolf Lewis) — Snowy, a 4-inch-long pet turtle, has lived an isolated life in the family basement. With help from a team of experts and his caretaker, Uncle Larry, we ask: Can Snowy be happy and what would it take? *Supported by Bill and Ruth Ann Harnisch from The Harnisch Foundation and produced by Rebecca Stern (2018 Impact Partners Producers Fellow).*

### **SPECIAL SCREENINGS**

***LIFE IN A DAY 2020*** / United Kingdom, U.S.A. (Director: Kevin Macdonald, Producers: Jack Arbuthnott, Tim Partridge) — An extraordinary, intimate, global portrait of life on our planet, filmed by thousands of people across the world, on a single day: 25th July 2020. *Kevin Macdonald directed this crowd sourced documentary—taking place around the world—15,000 hours of footage submitted. The tenor of the project is very moving and deals with politics, death and loss.*