

# SLO FILM FEST

SAN LUIS OBISPO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

**APRIL  
23-28,  
2026**

**WHERE OUR  
STORIES LIVE!**

**FESTIVAL  
GUIDE**

FEATURING **PIADINA, HIGH BAR, & OX + ANCHOR**

“The perfect home base”  
- *The Global Traveler*



# Hotel San Luis Obispo



LOCATED RIGHT OF THE PALM THEATER

HOTEL SAN LUIS OBISPO IS PROUD TO SPONSOR THE 2026 SLO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL. WE INVITE YOU TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR CONVENIENT LOCATION NEXT TO THE PALM THEATER AND TREAT YOURSELF TO A DELIGHTFUL EVENING THAT COMPLEMENTS YOUR CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE. JOIN US BEFORE OR AFTER FILM SCREENINGS AND INDULGE IN EXQUISITE DINING AND HANDCRAFTED COCKTAILS AT OUR STUNNING VENUES: PIADINA, HIGH BAR, AND OX + ANCHOR.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year our theme is “*Where Our Stories Live.*” In a world where we sometimes feel our voices are being silenced, film is one of the many mediums through which we can express ourselves. For six days in San Luis Obispo, our stories not only live but thrive on the big screen. We are excited to once again showcase the incredible visions of independent filmmakers who are eager to share a little bit of themselves with you.

We will continue to champion storytelling both at the festival and year-round at the SLO Film Center. Movies are here to stay, and our stories will continue to leave a lasting legacy of resilience, hope, and determination.

**SKYE MCLENNAN**  
**SLO FILM CENTER**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



## STAFF & BOARD

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Skye McLennan | **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR:** Grace Tucker  
**FESTIVAL PROGRAMMER:** Cindy Kitagawa  
**FILMMAKER & ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR:** Shanti Herzog  
**VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:** Ryan Austin | **INTERNS:** Avery Roemer, Harper Dean

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**BOARD CHAIR:** Maria Kelly **TREASURER:** Tom Walters **SECRETARY:** Kyle Plummer  
**MEMBERS:** Asit Rairkar, Chelsea O’Connor, David Hardberger, Emily Ryalls, Janice Rohn, Meg Higdon, Nina Leschinsky, Rodney Ott, Ryan Hathaway, Suzanne Schonig

**SLO FILM CENTER STAFF**  
**HEAD OF PROGRAMMING:** Ryan Burr | **OPERATIONS ASSISTANT:** Talha Hussaini  
**MANAGERS:** Michael Lipari | **ASSISTANT:** Griffen Meyers  
**THEATER STAFF:** Bailey Bennett, Jessica Peña, Mallory Harris, Sean Kimberlin  
**GRAPHIC DESIGNER:** Elizabeth Kurrels & Rhiannon Dudley | **PUBLICIST:** Ann Flower  
**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Badger Branding | **LOUNGE COORDINATOR:** Bri Cormier  
And a huge thank you to all of our volunteers, sponsors and venues!



**MESSAGE FROM THE CITY**  
I enthusiastically support the 32nd San Luis Obispo International Film Festival. I’m honored that our city hosts a world class film festival and celebrates independent film year round at the SLO Film Center. This is truly one of the most exciting cultural events of the year within our community.

**ERICA A. STEWART, MAYOR OF SAN LUIS OBISPO**

# SPONSORS

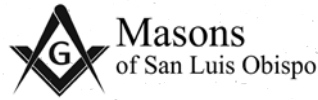
## PRESENTING



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS



## VENUE PARTNERS



## MEDIA PARTNERS



## ACCESSIBILITY PARTNER



Visit [slofilmfest.org/access](http://slofilmfest.org/access) for venue accessibility information and to find a list of our open caption screenings.

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

MONA & GORDON JENNINGS

## PRODUCERS

Austin Hope Wines



HOTEL SAN LUIS OBISPO

ROSSI ENTERPRISES, INC.



DISTINCTIVE RESORTS



## DIRECTORS



TOM SANT & SUSAN HIRSCH

THE SHANBROM FAMILY



## CINEMATOGRAPHERS



Mark Buchman  
Every Student  
Every Future  
Every Day  
San Luis Coastal School District  
Trustee

ESMERALDA AND CLINT PARKER



# SPONSORS

## HOSPITALITY PARTNERS

**HOTEL  
SAN LUIS  
OBISPO**

**MADONNA INN**



*Austin Hope Wines*

**LUNA  
RED**

**NÓVO**  
RESTAURANT LOUNGE

**ANCIENT  
PEAKS  
WINERY**

**shorebirds**  
HOTEL GROUP



**DOLPHIN BAY**  
RESORT & SPA

**Granada**  
HOTEL & BISTRO

**HOTEL CERRO**  
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA



**HERMAN  
STORY**

**DESPARADA**

**Apple Farm**  
WINE COUNTRY HOSPITALITY  
SAN LUIS OBISPO

**FIELD  
RECORDINGS.**



**WINE BOSS**  
PASO ROBLES



**culture  
pop**  
soda

**Taco Works**

**OLD SLO BBQ  
CO.**

## FEATURE FILM SPONSORS

Adamski, Moroski, Madden,  
Cumberland & Green LLP  
Mary Baiamonte  
The Bame Living Trust  
Sharon and John Dobson  
Ecologistics, Inc. &  
FARMstead ED/SLO  
County Farm Trail  
GALA Pride & Diversity  
Center and Tranz  
Central Coast  
Patricia Gomez and  
Frank Seiple  
Victoria Grostick

Dave Keitel  
Maggie King in Memory of  
Dale King  
Latino Outreach Council &  
Frederick Law  
Kelli Lincoln and  
Abe Lincoln  
Nurse Mo  
The Movie Group  
Festival Mozaic  
Dr. Brian and Jeri Roberts  
Susan Rodriguez, State  
Farm Insurance  
Sue and Tim Rueda

Samaasa Consulting, LLC  
Jerry and Kim Scott  
Lygia Smidt and Roxy Peck  
Elizabeth "Biz" Steinberg  
in memory of her husband  
Howard Steinberg  
Swift Action Fund  
Phil Wagner and Mary  
Blackler  
Tom and Judy Walters  
Minke WinklerPrins and  
Pete Petersen  
D. Rosh Wright

## SHORT FILM SPONSORS

Agape Church SLO  
The Allen Family  
L. Cherry and C. Bell  
Cal Poly Center For  
Expressive Technologies  
Cal Poly: Department  
of Art and Design  
Cal Poly: Department of  
Interdisciplinary Studies in  
The Liberal Arts  
Bill Clemens and  
Susie Clark

Compelling Vision  
Sandra Duerr  
Friends of R.A.C.E. Matters  
Jeff and Kerry Heller  
Idler's Home  
Janet Kershaw-McLennan  
M.D.  
NAACP San Luis Obispo  
Branch  
Debby and Steve Nicklas  
Rodney W. Ott

William Pendergrass and  
Ginger Ale  
Mary Qualls  
Sherrie Rheingans  
Harvey and Kristin  
Schwartzman  
Bern Singen  
The Wilkins Family  
Richard-Rosten Family

## SWAG BAG DONORS

Azhiaziam  
Austin Hope Wines  
Edible SLO Magazine  
Field Recordings Wine  
Megan's Organic Market

Nate's On Marsh  
Paso Almonds  
Paso Cookie Co.  
Secrets of the Garden  
Taco Works

The Mayan Collective  
William Painter Sunglasses

**More to be added soon.  
Please check our website  
for a complete listing.**

## SLO FILM CENTER FOUNDERS

Mona and Gordon Jennings  
The Shanbrom Family  
Foundation, Bob & Xiaoping  
Shanbrom  
Paul & Robyn Metchik

Esmeralda and Clint Parker  
Dave Keitel  
Jessica and Asit Rairkar  
Kelli and Abe Lincoln

Sharon and John Dobson  
BHE Renewables  
Bern Singen  
The Wild Longhorns of  
Borneo

## ANNUAL DONORS — \$500 & ABOVE

Tracy & Lynne Anderson  
Michael Bondello  
Lucia Cleveland  
Jack and Felicia Cashin

Gary and Muriel Harkins  
Patricia Gomez and  
Frank Seiple  
The Community Foundation

Annie Mohler & Bill Moseley  
Carol & Warren Sinsheimer  
Ann Robinson



**THANK YOU FOR  
SUPPORTING WHAT WE DO!  
CONSIDER MAKING A  
DONATION TODAY.**

SLO FILM CENTER  
**PALM**  
 THEATRE

**PALMIE**  
**MEMBERSHIP**  
**MOVIES + POPCORN**  
**ALL YEAR LONG!**



**\$99 ANNUAL (\$79 STUDENTS)**  
**6 FREE ADMISSIONS +**  
**\$1 OFF TICKETS +**  
**FREE SMALL POPCORN WITH EACH VISIT +**  
**BIRTHDAY REWARD**  
**15% OFF SLO FILM FEST PASSES +**  
**\$3 OFF SLO FILM FEST TICKETS**  
**SPECIAL SCREENINGS**



**VISIT THEPALMTHEATRE.COM**



*Paso Robles*  
 This is homegrown.



**NATE'S**  
*on Marsh*

The Best Seat In The House



Lunch | Dinner | Cocktails  
 Thursday - Monday  
 450 Marsh St.  
 SLO, CA 93401  
 805 544 4454  
 www.natesonmarsh.com

# PASSES

## LINE PRIORITY:

- 1. PASS HOLDER LINE:** Admitted 30 minutes before showtime. Open to Movie Mogul, Sponsor, Filmmaker, See+Stay, and Movie Star passes.
- 2. TICKET HOLDER LINE:** Admitted 25 minutes before showtime. Open to all guests who have pre-purchased or pre-reserved a ticket. You must have a ticket QR code to the exact screening. Open to Fan Pack 6 holders who have reserved a film screening in advance.
- 3. WALK UP LINE:** Admitted 10 minutes before showtime if space is available. Open to Fan Pack 6 holders who have not reserved film screening in advance. Open to general public who have not purchased a ticket in advance.

## FESTIVAL PASSES

### ALL-ACCESS MOVIE MOGUL—\$350

- Access to all screenings and special events, including Festival Encore
- Pass Holder Line
- Festival Lounge access
- Reserve in advance required to special events

### MOVIE STAR—\$225

- Access to all general and special presentation film screenings
- Access to Opening Night, Community of Skate and Music Video Showcase
- Excludes All Other Special Events
- Pass Holder Line
- Daytime Lounge Access (before 5pm)

### SEE + STAY—\$570 Value (\$285 each)

- Book a two-night stay from April 23-28 at any hotel in the city of SLO and receive two exclusive See + Stay passes.
- Access to special events
- 4 Regular screening tickets (per pass)
- Festival Lounge access
- Not available for purchase. Email your hotel confirmation to [info@slofilmfest.org](mailto:info@slofilmfest.org)

### FAN PACK 6—\$80

- Six tickets to general screenings
- Excludes Special Events
- Reserve tickets in advance for the Ticket Holder Line OR join the Walk Up Line to any screening
- Shareable between multiple people

# TICKETS

Individual tickets are available to each screening or event and can be purchased in advance online or at the festival Box Office. All events are general admission and we suggest you arrive at least 30 minutes before showtime to ensure your seat.

### SCREENINGS

- \$15 General
- \$12 Student + Palmie Members

### WALK UP TICKETS

- \$15 regular screening / \$25 Special Events
- No discounts, Card Only

### OPENING NIGHT FILM ONLY

- \$25 General
- \$22 Student + Palmie Members

### OPENING NIGHT FILM + PRE-RECEPTION

- \$40 General
- \$37 Student + Palmie Members

### SURF NITE

- \$25 General
- \$22 Student + Palmie Members

### COMMUNITY OF SKATE

- \$15 General
- \$12 Student + Palmie Members

### CLOSING NIGHT

- \$25 General
- \$22 Student + Palmie Members

### ADDITIONAL SPECIAL EVENTS

- \$25 General
- \$22 Student + Palmie Members

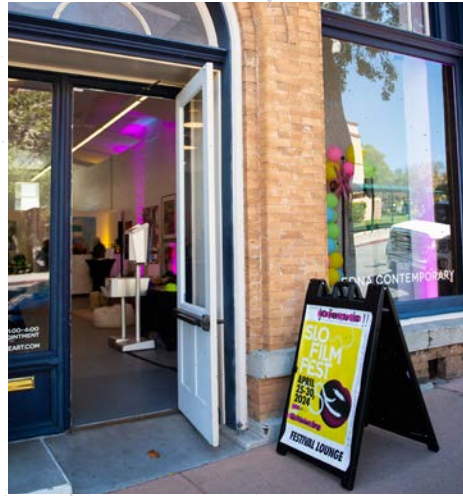
### R.A.C.E. MATTERS SHORTS

- Pay What You Want—Proceeds go to supporting R.A.C.E. Matters

### PANELS

- \$5 for non-pass holders

# LOCATIONS



## VENUES

### BOX OFFICE

Palm Theatre / 817 Palm St.

### FESTIVAL LOUNGE

Edna Contemporary / 967 Osos St.

### FREMONT THEATER

1035 Monterey St.

### DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS

888 Marsh St.

### PALM THEATRE

817 Palm St. — Card Only Concessions

### BAY THEATER

464 Morro Bay Blvd, Morro Bay

### THE MASONIC LODGE

859 Marsh St.

## BOX OFFICE HOURS

### PRE-FEST

#### April 3-April 20

Friday, Monday 4PM-6PM  
Sat, Sun 1PM-2:30PM, Sat, Sun 3PM-6PM

#### April 21-April 22

3PM-6PM

Please note that prior to the week of the festival, the Festival Box Office will be operating between regular Palm screenings, purchasing tickets and picking up passes must be done during the hours listed above.

### FESTIVAL

#### April 23-Opening Night

9:30AM-6:30PM

#### April 23-28

Everyday: 9:30AM-5:30PM

The festival box office is located in Theatre 3 of the Palm.

Please email [info@slofilmfest.org](mailto:info@slofilmfest.org) for any ticketing or general questions

## LOUNGE HOURS

Thursday, April 23: CLOSED  
Friday, April 24: Noon-10PM  
Saturday, April 25: 10AM-10PM  
Sunday, April 26: 10AM-9PM  
Monday, April 27: Noon-9PM  
Tuesday, April 28: Noon-9PM

View a detailed schedule of lounge events online.

# EDNA

## CONTEMPORARY



## ACCESS

For all accessible bookings or inquiries, or to notify us of your needs so we can make your visit as enjoyable as possible, please call 805.546.3456 or email: [info@slofilmfest.org](mailto:info@slofilmfest.org)

Visit [www.slofilmfest.org/access](http://www.slofilmfest.org/access) for specific venue accessibility information.

# OPENING NIGHT THURSDAY

Presented By Austin Hope Wines  
Supported by COAST 104.5 FM  
and Luna Red

JOIN US FOR OUR OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION AS WE TAKE OVER THE FREMONT THEATER WITH FOOD, MINGLING AND A SPECIAL FILM: GIVE ME THE BALL!

We're celebrating the kickoff of our 32nd Festival by meeting our special guests, filmmakers, and major contributors at this year's Opening Night Reception! We will be serving up catered bites from **Luna Red**, wine from **Austin Hope Wines**, and other treats in the pit of the Fremont Theater. This year's film is centered around a celebration of an incredible and legendary figure in the world of sports and women's rights — Billie Jean King. This film's message of hope and determination is poignant and uplifting.



WEST COAST PREMIERE

## GIVE ME THE BALL!

**DIRECTORS:** Liz Garbus, Elizabeth Wolff  
**PRODUCERS:** Liz Garbus, Elizabeth Wolff,  
Dominic Crossley-Holland, Dan Cogan,  
Chris James, Gentry Kirby

Presenting the West Coast Premiere of this electric portrait about the trailblazing World Champion tennis legend — Billie Jean King. Directors Liz Garbus and Elizabeth Wolff masterfully weave archival footage with Billie Jean King's own words to craft this uniquely intimate portrayal, revealing the inner turmoil behind the immense sacrifices she made to transform her sport and the world.

Documentary / 102 min / USA

**THURSDAY, APRIL 23 | FREMONT  
RECEPTION | 5PM TO 6:30PM  
FILM | 7PM**

*Film Screening Only:*  
\$25 General

\$22 Student + Palmie Member  
*All-Access, Movie Star and  
See+Stay Passes accepted.*

*Film + Reception:*  
\$40 General

\$37 Student + Palmie Member  
*Open to All-Access, Movie Star and  
See+Stay Passholders.*

*Passholders must reserve in advance.*

# SURF NITE IN SLO FRIDAY

Presented by Mechanics Bank,  
Also Supported By Surfing For Hope Foundation,  
THE KRUSH 92.5 FM and Samaasa Consulting, LLC

Since its inception in 2006, Surf Nite in SLO has continued to serve as one of those rare events fueled by the energy and enthusiasm of the crowd that attends each year. For the 20th anniversary of Surf Nite, we will be returning to the big screen at the Fremont Theater to celebrate surfing on the big screen. With drinks in the lobby, live music from RIFF TIDE, and mingling with other local surfers, join us for what's been coined the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" for surf and film lovers!

**FRIDAY, APRIL 24 | FREMONT  
DOORS & MUSIC | 5:30PM  
FILM | 7PM**

\$25 General / \$22 Student + Palmie Member

*All Access and See+Stay Passes accepted.  
Passholders must reserve in advance.*

**ADDITIONAL SCREENING  
TUESDAY, APRIL 28 | 12PM DOWNTOWN**  
*Audio Description Screening—No headsets or  
equipment necessary*



## THE BLIND SEA

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Daniel Fenech

**PRODUCERS:** Erin Fenech, Matt Formston, Nicola Nossal, Heath Davis, Dylan Longbottom  
This thrilling documentary follows the remarkable career of Australian surfer Matt Formston, a 3-time World Champion with just 3% vision, as he attempts the most dangerous challenge of his life: riding the monster waves of Nazaré. Pushing beyond prejudice and physical limits, Matt chases a world record for the largest wave ever surfed by a vision-impaired athlete. With insights from surfing legends, the film is both an adventure and a powerful testament, redefining what's possible for anyone facing adversity.

Documentary / 94 min / Australia

# COMMUNITY OF SKATE SUNDAY

Presented  
by 93.3  
KZQZ

SKATE FILMS HAVE BEEN A FUNDAMENTAL PART OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING SINCE ITS EARLY ORIGINS AND HAVE OFTEN BEEN THE LAUNCHPAD TO CULTURAL ART MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE. FOR ITS THIRD YEAR RUNNING, WE'RE EXCITED TO HONOR THIS COMMUNITY AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO FILM WITH A FILM THAT CELEBRATES THE CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND IMPACT OF SKATEBOARDING.

This year, join us at the historic Bay Theatre for a showcase of custom skateboard designs and live-screen printing by the SLO High School Advanced Graphic Design class. Stay after the screening for a discussion moderated by Dan Parks of Unerthed Skateboarding and Loose Bearings Artwork with filmmakers James Sweigert and Chris DeFord and featured skaters.



## N-MEN: THE UNTOLD STORY

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** James Sweigert  
**CAST:** Tony Hawk, Tony Alva, Steve Caballero, Randy Katen, John O'Shei, Doug Jones  
The greatest skate story never told. In 1975, beneath a lonely stretch of freeway in downtown Sacramento, California, a fearless crew of skateboarders found their proving ground on a raw concrete embankment. What started as an underground escape quickly became a revolution in motion that would help shape the future of skateboarding around the world. Until the release of the film, for decades, their story remained untold. Starring Tony Hawk and Tony Alva.

*Documentary / 86 min / USA*



WORLD PREMIERE

## PAT NGOHO: A MEDITATION ON CREATIVITY

**DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER:** Chris DeFord  
A contemplative exploration of the powerful intersection between skateboarding, art and the pursuit of creative equilibrium. Through an intimate and revealing conversation, Venice Beach artist and skater Pat Ngoho reflects on a lifetime devoted to movement, expression, and creative balance, diving into his perspective on how skating and art inform one another through passion becoming practice, and practice becoming purpose.

*Documentary / 9 min / USA*

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 | BAY THEATRE  
DOORS OPEN + SCREENPRINTING | 4:30PM  
INTRO AND FILMS | 5:30PM

\$15 General  
\$12 Palmie Member/Student

All Access, Movie Star and See+Stay Passes accepted.  
Passholders must reserve in advance.

# CLOSING NIGHT TUESDAY

Presented By Baker Wine &  
Grape Analysis, Inc.

OUR 2026 FESTIVAL WILL WRAP UP WITH AN AWARD CEREMONY FOR BOTH OUR JURIED AWARDS AND AUDIENCE AWARD VOTED ON THROUGHOUT THE FESTIVAL, ALONGSIDE A SHOWING OF JOHN CARNEY'S NEWEST FILM, POWER BALLAD.



## POWER BALLAD

**DIRECTOR:** John Carney | **WRITERS:** John Carney, Peter McDonald  
**CAST:** Paul Rudd, Nick Jonas, Peter McDonald, Marcella Plunkett, Havana Rose Liu, Jack Reynor  
**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:** Micah Green, Daniel Steinman, Dan Friedkin, Cathleen Dore, Keith Potter  
**PRODUCER:** Anthony Bregman, John Carney, Peter Cron, Rebecca O'Flanagan, Robert Walpole

When Rick (Paul Rudd), a past-his-prime wedding singer, meets fading boy-band star Danny (Nick Jonas) during a gig, the two bond over music and a late-night jam session. But when Danny turns one of Rick's songs into the hit that reignites his career, Rick sets out to reclaim the recognition he believes he deserves - even if it means risking everything he cares about. From writer-director John Carney (Sing Street, Once), POWER BALLAD is a feel-good story about music, self-respect, friendship, and the price of ambition.

Lionsgate presents, in association with 30WEST + Fís Éireann / Screen Ireland, a Likely Story / Distressed Films production, in association with Treasure Entertainment.

*Narrative / 98 min / Ireland, United States*

TUESDAY, APRIL 28 | FREMONT  
AWARDS + FILM | 6PM

\$25 General/\$22 Student+Palmie Member

All Access and See+Stay Passes accepted.  
Passholders must reserve in advance.

## RED EYE CINEMA

Presented by  
Megan's Organic Market

**AS AUDIENCES' APPETITES CONTINUE TO EVOLVE, OUR SELECTION OF HORROR AND GENRE FILMS THAT BEND AND CHALLENGE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HAS GROWN WITH IT.**

Each year, the festival expands this category, showcasing bold filmmakers who push the boundaries of suspense, fear, and the human psyche, proving that genre storytelling can be as thought-provoking as it is thrilling.



### SENDER

Sponsored by Jerry and Kim Scott

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Russell Goldman

**PRODUCERS:** Jamie Lee Curtis, Molly Hallam, Jake Katofsky, Thomas Grabinski

**CAST:** Britt Lower, Rhea Seehorn, Jamie Lee Curtis, Anna Baryshnikov, David Dastmalchian, Utkarsh Ambudkar, Mike Mitchell

After receiving a series of unnervingly personal packages she never ordered, a woman, newly sober and starting over, spirals into paranoia, convinced someone is watching her. As the online retailer denies responsibility, her search for the anonymous sender sends her down a dangerous rabbit hole, forcing her to confront her past and the fragile reality she's trying to rebuild. Produced by Jamie Lee Curtis and featured on screen, the film is a tense psychological descent into surveillance, recovery, and self-doubt.

*Psychological Thriller / 94 min / USA*

**SUN 7PM MASONIC LODGE**

## RED EYE SHORTS

This year's selections of genre/horror shorts are thoughtfully curated by local filmmakers Katie Neville and Jason Kaiser, founders of the annual community film festival, MicroHorrors. Join us as faith, greed, survival, motherhood, and control take centerstage in five genre-shorts from around the world.

**FRI 8 PM DOWNTOWN  
SAT 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

## SPECIAL SCREENINGS



### LEFT-HANDED GIRL

Sponsored by Esmeralda and Clint Parker

**DIRECTOR:** Shih-Ching Tsou

**WRITERS:** Shih-Ching Tsou, Sean Baker

**PRODUCERS:** Shih-Ching Tsou, Sean Baker, Mike Goodridge, Jean Labadie, Alice Labadie

LEFT HANDED GIRL follows a single mother and her two daughters who return to Taipei to open a noodle stand at a bustling night market, struggling to rebuild their lives and keep their family intact. When their traditional grandfather forbids his young left-handed granddaughter from using her "devil hand," buried tensions and long-held secrets begin to unravel. Filmed on an iPhone, Shih-Ching Tsou's vibrant directorial debut is co-written and edited by her longtime creative partner Sean Baker.

*Drama / 109 min / Taiwan*

**SUN 7:30PM PALM | Q&A WITH SHIH-CHING TSO**



### SUNSET BOULEVARD (1950) TRIBUTE TO NANCY ROSS JOYNT

Sponsored by Tom and Judy Walters in  
loving memory of Nancy Ross Joynt

**DIRECTOR:** Billy Wilder

**WRITERS:** Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder,  
D.M. Marshman Jr.

From 2010 to 2019, Nancy served as the Assistant to the Director and was an integral part of the operations of the festival, in her honor we asked her family to select a film.

Newly restored, Sunset Boulevard is Billy Wilder's timeless and ultimate film about Hollywood. It tells the story of Joe Gillis, a down-on-his-luck screenwriter who stumbles into the decaying mansion of former silent-movie star Norma Desmond. When Norma hires Joe to polish the script for her comeback, he is drawn into a web of delusion and madness.

*Noir, Drama / 110 min / USA*

**SAT 4PM PALM**

# SPECIAL PROGRAM

## BETWEEN DOUBT & DEVOTION

Presented by The  
Shanbrom Family and  
Dawn Janke, Ed.D

### THREE FILMS IN SEARCH OF THE SACRED

**"FROM WHAT REALM OF LIGHT WERE WE SHADOWS WHO DARKEN THE EARTH SPAWNED?"**

— Henry Miller, *Big Sur* and the *Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*

The life of the spirit rarely begins with certainty; it begins with questions, and from those questions emerges a restless desire for truth and transcendence. This series brings together films that inspire reflection about the deeper dimensions of existence. Together, they explore humanity's enduring pursuit of the sacred, tracing a philosophical journey from doubt through constructs of belief to a broader contemplation of life itself. Each screening will be introduced by a special guest who will frame the film's themes and lead a brief discussion afterward.



### THE MASTER (2012)

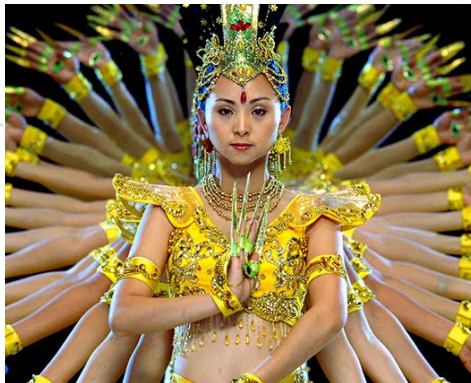
**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Paul Thomas Anderson

**CAST:** Joaquin Phoenix, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams

Set in the years following World War II, *The Master* centers on the relationship between a troubled veteran and the charismatic leader of an emerging religious movement. As the two men form an intense and uneasy bond, the film examines the forces of influence and allegiance that draw followers toward devotion.

Drama / 138 min / USA

SUN 1:15PM PALM



### SAMBARA (2011)

**DIRECTOR:** Ron Fricke

**WRITERS:** Ron Fricke, Mark Magidson

*Samsara* offers a guided meditation on the human condition, unfolding across landscapes, rituals, and cultures around the world. Documented over five years in twenty-five countries, the film takes its title from the ancient concept of the ever-turning wheel of life and invites viewers to contemplate the possibility of liberation.

Documentary / 102 min / USA

SUN 10AM PALM

### THE SEVENTH SEAL (1957)

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Ingmar Bergman  
Set during the Black Death, Bergman's iconic film follows a disillusioned knight returning from the Crusades who encounters Death on a desolate shoreline. Their famous chess match becomes a haunting confrontation with faith, doubt, and the search for meaning in the face of divine silence.

Fantasy, Thriller / 96 min / Sweden

SUN 5PM PALM



# GEORGE SIDNEY INDEPENDENT FILM COMPETITION

**OUR ANNUAL FILM COMPETITION CONTINUES TO ATTRACT EXCITING NEW INDEPENDENT FILMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. NAMED AFTER GEORGE SIDNEY, THE FESTIVAL'S FIRST RECIPIENT OF THE KING VIDOR AWARD. SIDNEY WAS A CENTRAL COAST RESIDENT AND A PASSIONATE SUPPORTER OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING.**

A panel of more than 100 screeners evaluated over 2,000 submissions, helping us make some very difficult decisions to finalize our Official Selections. The finalists in competition are juried by a panel of film and media professionals, and cash prizes will be awarded during our Closing Night Ceremony on Tuesday, April 28. Full Jury bios are available at [slofilmfest.org](http://slofilmfest.org).

## NARRATIVE FEATURES

**MAX GESCHWIND** CAA Media Finance

**KATHY SUSCA** Film Collaborative — Director of Content and Operations

**TRAVIS WEEDON** Visit Films — Director of Festivals and Non-Theatrical

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

**MARK DICRISTOFARO** Filmmaker, Alumni (Winner, 2025 Best Documentary *Middletown*)

**BEN BRYAN** Documentary Filmmaker

**MAYA SEIDLER** Producer Couples Therapy, Head of Production, Edgeline Films

## DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

**CHRIS BURKARD** Filmmaker/Photographer

**LOREN K WATERS** Filmmaker, Alumni (Winner 2025 Best Short Doc, *Tiger*)

**JESSICA HESTER** Producer/Post Supervisor — Couples Therapy, Jerrod Carmichael Show, Filmmaker Alumni

## NARRATIVE SHORTS

**SHRUTI PAREKH** Filmmaker Alumni, (Winner 2025 Audience Award, *Zari*)

**CHELSEA CHRISTER** Filmmaker Alumni (*Bleeding Audio*, *Out for Delivery*, *Holding On Forever*)

**NANCY COLLET** Festival Strategy Consultant — Cinema Collet

# ADDITIONAL FILM COMPETITIONS

## CENTRAL COAST FILMMAKER SHOWCASE

**GINA PAPABEIS** Filmmaker Alumni (Winner 2025 Best CC Feature, *Unearth*)

**ADALBERTO ANGULO** Filmmaker Alumni (*Beautifully Ugly*)

**SORAYA SIMI** Filmmaker Alumni, Founder 805 Collective

## MUSIC VIDEO SHOWCASE

**KRIS LEFCOE** Filmmaker Alumni (Winner 2025, Best Music Video *Booked A Room*)

**JOHN LOKEN** EVP Marketing, Grammy Awards

**SUZANNE SCHONIG** Program Director, On-Air Host — KZOZ and KRUSH

## EPISODIC

**ANGIE HAN** Hollywood Reporter, Television Critic

**NICOLE BARKER** Series Fest, Programming Manager

# NARRATIVE FEATURES

## ADULT CHILDREN

Sponsored by Adamski, Moroski, Madden, Cumberland & Green LLP

**DIRECTOR:** Rich Newey

**WRITER:** Annika Marks

**PRODUCERS:** Angie Gaffney, Annika Marks, Thomas Sadoski, Rich Newey



Older, but maybe not wiser. ADULT CHILDREN follows as Morgan, a sheltered 17-year-old, struggles to define who she is in order to write her college entrance essay. When a family crisis provides her the rare opportunity to spend time with her significantly older half-siblings, she hopes they'll be able to shed some light on what it means to be an adult, only to be disappointed when she discovers they're all faking their way through it.

Comedy, Drama / 100 min / USA

**FRI 6:45PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 4:45PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:15AM DOWNTOWN**

## APRIL X

Sponsored by Patricia Gomez and Frank Seiple

**DIRECTOR:** Michael K. Parandi

**WRITERS:** Michael K. Parandi, Jack Coulton

**PRODUCERS:** Lavinia Postolache



Starring Connor Storrie from the recent hit series *Heated Rivalry*. In a crumbling near-future city, twins Bax and April struggle to survive on society's margins, trapped in cycles of debt and moral compromise. When April disappears after crossing paths with a shadowy biotech underworld, Bax is determined to find her and descends into a fractured world of memory and illusion where truths blur. Plunged into the city's underworld, Bax is quickly forced to reckon with identity, loss, and the ultimate cost of bringing April back.

Sci-Fi, Thriller / 96 min / USA

**SAT 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SUN 10:30AM PALM**  
**MON 7:30PM DOWNTOWN**

## THE BLUE TRAIL

Sponsored by Tom Sant & Susan Hirsch

**DIRECTOR:** Gabriel Mascaro

**WRITERS:** Gabriel, Mascaro, Tibério Azul

**PRODUCERS:** Rachel Daisy Ellis, Sandino Saravia Vinay



In a near-future Amazon where the government relocates the elderly to remote colonies in the name of economic productivity, 77-year-old Tereza receives an order that will erase the life she's always known. The colony, an isolated settlement where seniors are sent to "enjoy" their final years while the young focus on growth and progress, offers comfort at the cost of autonomy. Refusing to quietly accept this imposed fate, Tereza escapes into the vast rivers and tributaries of the rainforest to fulfill one last wish before her freedom is taken.

Drama, Sci-Fi / 86 min / Brazil

**FRI 10:30AM PALM**  
**MON 2:15PM DOWNTOWN**

# NARRATIVE FEATURES

## THE FISHERMAN

Sponsored by Elizabeth "Biz" Steinberg in memory of her husband Howard Steinberg

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Zoey Martinson

**PRODUCERS:** Kofi Owusu Afriyie, Corey Jackson, Yvonne Orji



A traditional Ghanaian fisherman who has been forced into retirement teams up with a sarcastic talking fish and a crew of Gen Z dreamers on a whimsical adventure to Accra. As they chase the unlikely goal of owning a boat, their adventure becomes a playful yet poignant exploration of tradition, generational change and navigating the modern world. Filled with laughter, magic, and the vibrant spirit of Ghanaian culture, THE FISHERMAN made history as Ghana's first official selection at the 81st Venice Film Festival.

Comedy, Drama / 105 min / Ghana

**FRI 4:45PM PALM**  
**SUN 6:45PM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 1:30PM DOWNTOWN**

## HOW TO DATE AGAIN

Sponsored by The Bame Living Trust with COAST 104.5

**DIRECTOR:** Matt Flanders

**WRITERS:** Rob Mor, Matt Flanders

**PRODUCERS:** Josette Eales, Matt Flanders, Rob Mor



WORLD PREMIERE

An LA-based animator, reeling from heartbreak, is pushed back into the dating world by his well-meaning friends. When he meets an emotionally intuitive record exec who matches his particular brand of weird, they take a spontaneous road trip along the California coast, including stops throughout SLO County and a stay at the iconic Madonna Inn. As they confront lingering pasts, HOW TO DATE AGAIN embraces the messiness of healing, vulnerability, and choosing connection.

RomCom, Drama / 96 min / USA

**SAT 7:15PM PALM**  
**SUN 10:45AM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 5PM DOWNTOWN**

## IF I GO WILL THEY MISS ME

Sponsored by Tom Sant and Susan Hirsch

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Walter Thompson-

Hernández | **PRODUCERS:** Josh Peters, Saba Zerehi, Ben Stillman



Fresh from Sundance 2026, this magical realism film is a tender, surreal father-son story. Twelve-year old Lil Ant transforms his neighborhood beneath the LAX flight path into a living Greek mythos, where family members become gods and endless departures crowd the skies. As Lil Ant searches for connection with his recently incarcerated father, he finds support within his close-knit community that helps him to reconcile myth and reality.

Drama / 92 min / USA

**SUN 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 7PM DOWNTOWN**

## NARRATIVE FEATURES

### MĀRAMA

**Director:** Taratoa Stappard  
**Producers:** Sharlene George, Ricky Lee Russell, Waipuka Rouzie Hassanova



Set in 1859 North Yorkshire, a Māori woman uncovers gruesome secrets inside an English manor. Living among her ancestors' stolen artifacts, she uncovers Sir Cole's horrific crimes. Embracing her Matakite powers, Mary becomes *Mārama* and must save Anne and avenge her family by destroying him. Blending gothic horror with cultural reclamation, the film explores the collision of heritage, trauma, and the supernatural.

Content Warning: Violence, Language, Racism

*Horror, Thriller / 83 min / New Zealand*

**SUN 8PM PALM**  
**MON 7:45PM DOWNTOWN**

### THE MUSICAL

*Sponsored by D. Rosh Wright*

**DIRECTOR:** Giselle Bonilla  
**WRITER:** Alexander Heller  
**PRODUCERS:** Rob Lowe, Greg Lauritano, Alexander Heller, Findlay Brown, Jordan Backhus



**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

A frustrated playwright turned middle school theater teacher spirals when he learns his ex-girlfriend is dating his smug nemesis, the school's principal (Rob Lowe). Determined to sabotage the principal's chances for the Blue Ribbon of Academic Excellence, he stages a reckless plan: produce the most outrageously inappropriate musical the school has ever seen.

*Dark Comedy / 84 min / USA*

**FRI 7PM PALM**  
**SAT 7:30PM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 11AM DOWNTOWN**

### ON THE END

*Sponsored by Sue and Tim Rueda*

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Ari Selinger  
**PRODUCERS:** Raven Jensen, Harris Gurny, Matt Heymann, Jared Hess, Jerusha Hess, Eric Kohn, Jason Beekman



Set at the far edge of Long Island, ON THE END follows Tom (Tim Blake Nelson), a reclusive Montauk mechanic, and Freckles, a fiercely independent outsider, as they navigate an unlikely road to falling in love. As gentrification, aging and rising tides threaten to erase their town, home and livelihood, their fragile relationship becomes a defiant act of resistance against a town and future slipping away beneath them.

*Drama / 115 min / USA*

**FRI 10:45AM PALM**  
**SUN 7PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 1:45PM PALM**

## NARRATIVE FEATURES

### THIS TEMPTING MADNESS

*Sponsored by Dave Keitel*

**DIRECTOR:** Jennifer Montgomery  
**WRITERS:** Andrew Davis, Jennifer Montgomery  
**PRODUCERS:** Andrew Davis, Jennifer Montgomery, William Day Frank, Mimi Chang, Jessica Malanaphy, Marcei Brown



Starring Simone Ashley and inspired by a true story, THIS TEMPTING MADNESS follows Mia as she awakens from a coma with fractured memories, the man she loves missing, and no one providing answers. As she pieces together her past, she begins to question her own actions and perception of reality. Haunted by a love she can't trust, Mia's recovery becomes a battle for her soul, revealing that love and madness often spring from the same place.

Content Warning: Violence, Language, Domestic Abuse.

*Psychological Thriller / 98 min / USA*

**FRI 5:30PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 4:15PM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 7:15PM PALM**

### VALENTINA

**DIRECTOR:** Tatti Ribeiro  
**WRITERS:** Tatti Ribeiro, Noelle Forougi  
**PRODUCER:** Noelle Forougi  
**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:** Jessica Alba



Set against the busiest border crossing in the U.S., VALENTINA follows a young woman navigating debts, family, part-time jobs, and daily pressures in El Paso. What begins as a simple attempt to pay parking tickets spirals into a 48-hour journey of errands, conversations, and delays, revealing the rhythms, struggles, and humor of life in an American border town. What unfolds is an intimate, honest portrait of El Paso, presented in a hybrid format—part narrative-comedy, part documentary.

*Drama, Comedy, Hybrid / 82 min / USA*

**FRI 7:45PM PALM**  
**SAT 11AM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 1:15PM DOWNTOWN**

## DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

### MANY FILMS IN THE FESTIVAL ARE ELIGIBLE FOR AN AUDIENCE AWARD!

This year you will have several options for voting:

- ★ Cast your vote at the exit door after each screening! Our volunteers will have voting tablets on hand to make sure your vote gets tallied!
- ★ Want to think about your rating a little longer? You will be emailed and texted (if you provided your phone number) a ballot after your screening!

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

### AANIKOOBIJIGAN

**(ANCESTOR/  
GREAT-GRANDPARENT/  
GREAT-GRANDCHILD)**

*Sponsored by Mary Baiamonte*

**DIRECTOR:** Adam Khalil, Zack Khalil  
**PRODUCER:** Steve Holmgren, Adam Khalil, Zack Khalil, Grace Remington, Jacque Clark, Franny Alfano



Trapped in museum archives, Ancestors bend time and space to find their way home. AANIKOOBIJIGAN follows tribal repatriation specialists as they fight to return and rebury Indigenous human remains and sacred objects from settler institutions. Blending essay and vérité, this daring film confronts the history of colonial collecting and the ongoing battle to recognize and enforce the laws meant to facilitate bringing their Ancestors home.

80 min / USA, Denmark

**FRI 11:15AM DOWNTOWN**  
**SUN 4:15PM DOWNTOWN**

### AMERICAN PACHUCO: THE LEGEND OF LUIS VALDEZ

*Sponsored by Tom Sant and Susan Hirsch*

**DIRECTOR:** David Alvarado  
**PRODUCER:** David Alvarado, Lauren DeFilippo, Everett Katigbak, Amanda Pollak



Against political resistance, AMERICAN PACHUCO follows the rise of an auteur from America's underclass. From migrant farmworker to revolutionary artist, Luis Valdez transformed American culture by staging plays on flatbed trucks, creating the first Chicano play on Broadway, and directing the landmark film *La Bamba* that brought Mexican-American life to the world. Enduring for over 60 years, Valdez and El Teatro remain a beacon for Latinx creators. Sundance 2026 Festival Favorite Award and Audience Award Winner.

92 min / USA

**SAT 4:30PM PALM**  
**MON 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:15AM PALM — OPEN CAPTIONS**

### BACKSIDE

*Sponsored by Lygia Smidt and Roxy Peck*

**DIRECTOR:** Raúl O. Paz-Pastrana  
**WRITER:** Raúl O. Paz-Pastrana, Gabriella García Pardo, Cristina Hernandez  
**PRODUCER:** Gabriella García-Pardo, Patricia Alvarez Astacio



Set against the backdrop of racing season at Churchill Downs, BACKSIDE offers an intimate, tender glimpse into the lives of immigrant workers who start their days at 2 a.m., seven days a week, caring for some of the world's most prized racehorses. This observational, vérité film captures the symbiotic relationship between human and animal labor, celebrating the quiet beauty of unseen work and the resilience of those who sustain it.

85 min / USA

**FRI 12PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

WEST COAST PREMIERE

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

### THE BIG CHEESE

*Sponsored by Maggie King  
in Memory of Dale King*

**DIRECTOR:** Sara Joe Wolansky  
**PRODUCERS:** Sara Joe Wolansky, James Smith, Adam Moskowitz, James O'Shaughnessy, Joe Beshenkovsky, Stacey Reiss



THE BIG CHEESE follows America's greatest cheesemongers as they attempt the impossible: beat the French at their own game at the "Olympics of Cheese." In Europe, cheesemongering is a prestigious career, but in America it often means minimum-wage work at a grocery counter. Determined to change that, Mr. Moo coaches a scrappy, eccentric team toward a hopeful victory, navigating cultural clashes and personal struggles in pursuit of respect, redemption, and proving that America belongs on the world's biggest cheese stage.

88 min / USA

**FRI 4:15PM PALM**  
**SAT 1PM DOWNTOWN W/ CHEESE TASTING**  
**MON 1:45PM PALM**

### BIRDS OF WAR

*Sponsored by SLO Review*

**DIRECTOR:** Janay Boulos, Abd Alkader Habak  
**PRODUCER:** Sonja Henrici



WEST COAST PREMIERE

BIRDS OF WAR traces the 13-year love story of a London-based Lebanese journalist and a Syrian activist-turned-cameraman who first connect during the Syrian civil war. Through intimate archives of texts, voice notes and footage from Aleppo, their professional collaboration evolves into a deep bond shaped by revolution, exile and loss, forming an emotionally moving portrait of love forged amid war and political upheaval.

Sundance 2026 Special Jury Award for Journalistic Impact

84 min / UK, Syria, Lebanon

**FRI 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 6:30PM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 4:30PM PALM**

### FORK IN THE ROAD

*Sponsored by Ecologistics, Inc. &  
FARMstead ED/SLO County Farm Trail*

**DIRECTOR:** Vivian Sorenson, Jonathan Nastssi | **PRODUCERS:** Nick Offerman, Lisa Holmes, Vivian Sorenson, Ricki Stern, Chrissy Lucas, Sara Magness, Davis Priestley, Stacy Lorts, Beth Schiff, Emma Wheylin



An intimate documentary exploring the connections between people, the land, and the future of our food system. Through stories of independent farmers, chefs, and experts, FORK IN THE ROAD, narrated by Nick Offerman, reveals the challenges of resisting the growing industrialization of agriculture. Beyond the farm, it shows how everyday food choices impact our bodies, communities, and planet, offering a powerful vision of sustainability as a shared responsibility toward a pathway to healing the Earth.

89 min / USA

**SAT 10:30AM PALM**  
**SUN 4:30PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 2:15PM DOWNTOWN**

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

### THE HISTORY OF CONCRETE

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** John Wilson  
**PRODUCERS:** John Wilson, Clark Filio, Shirel Kozak, Allie Viti



After attending a workshop on how to write and sell a Hallmark movie, filmmaker John Wilson tries to use the same formula to sell a documentary about concrete. Using his unique sense of humor and documentary style familiar from his acclaimed show *How To with John Wilson*, this hilarious adventure is much more than a movie about concrete—it's a fascinating ride through American life, and the characters within it.

101 min / USA

**FRI 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**  
**SUN 1:15PM DOWNTOWN**

### A LIFE ILLUMINATED

*Sponsored by Phil Wagner and Mary Blackler*

**DIRECTOR:** Tasha Van Zandt  
**WRITERS:** Tasha Van Zandt, Eileen Meyer, Sebastian Zeck | **PRODUCERS:** Tasha Van Zandt, Sebastian Zeck, Jessica Harrop, Kathryn Everett



After a lifetime of unveiling the deep sea's most elusive secrets, pioneering marine biologist Dr. Edie Widder descends 3,300 feet into the ocean's depths on her most groundbreaking mission yet: to capture a bioluminescent phenomenon that could transform our understanding of life on Earth. Blending footage from decades of expeditions, the film illuminates the profound and hidden beauty of the ocean's twilight zone while emphasizing the urgent need to protect these fragile ecosystems.

90 min / USA

**FRI 2:45PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 1:30PM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 4:45PM DOWNTOWN**

### STEAL THIS STORY, PLEASE!

*Sponsored by Victoria Grostick*

**DIRECTOR:** Tia Lessin, Carl Deal  
**PRODUCERS:** Karen Ranucci, Diana Cohn, Caren Spruch, Dominique Bravo



Undeterred by soldiers, politicians and riot police, journalist Amy Goodman has reported some of the most consequential stories of our time. STEAL THIS STORY, PLEASE! goes behind the scenes in a gripping portrait of the trailblazer whose three-decade career and unwavering commitment to truth-telling on Democracy Now! amplify the voices silenced by corporate media. Urgent, provocative, and unexpectedly funny, the film is a celebration of resistance, asking: What happens to democracy when the press surrenders to power?

101 min / USA

**FRI 5PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 1:30PM PALM**  
**MON 1:45PM DOWNTOWN**

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

### STREET SMART: LESSONS FROM A TV ICON

*Sponsored by Latino Outreach Council and Frederick Law*

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Ernie Bustamante  
**PRODUCERS:** Maor Azran, Ernie Bustamante, Steven Canals



Known to millions as "Maria" from Sesame Street, STREET SMART follows Sonia Manzano's remarkable journey from a young girl in the South Bronx finding refuge in television to becoming the first Latina with a regular role on American TV. Spanning 44 years on Sesame Street and now as the creator of Alma's Way, STREET SMART blends interviews, humor, and heart to paint a vibrant portrait of Sonia - inviting viewers to learn, once again, from this beloved icon.

84 min / USA

**FRI 1:30PM PALM**  
**SAT 10:15AM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:30AM DOWNTOWN**

### THEYDREAM

*Sponsored by The Movie Group*

**DIRECTOR:** William D. Caballero  
**WRITER/PRODUCERS:** William D. Caballero, Erin Ploss-Campoamor, Brad Jones, Elaine Del Valle



After twenty years of documenting his Puerto Rican family, a filmmaker and his mother are confronted with devastating loss. In the wake of his grandmother's death, grief threatens to pull them under until they turn to animation. Together, they begin re-creating their loved ones through 2D and 3D animation and archival footage, transforming memory into living, breathing art. Blending humor and vulnerability, THEYDREAM becomes an intimate portrait of intergenerational healing.

91 min / USA

**FRI 2PM PALM**  
**SAT 7PM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 11:30AM DOWNTOWN**

### TURTLE WALKER

*Sponsored by Dr. Brian and Jeri Roberts*

**DIRECTOR:** Taira Malaney  
**WRITERS:** Taira Malaney, Sam Rogers  
**PRODUCER:** Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti, Vikram Malaney, Angad Dev Singh, Taira Malaney



A cinematic journey showcasing how one step sparked a lifetime of discovery. In the 1970s, Satish Bhaskar embarked on an exploration of India's coastline, risking his life to uncover the hidden nesting beaches of sea turtles. His quest unraveled mysteries of these ancient ocean travelers, sparking a mission to save them from extinction. But when a devastating tsunami strikes in 2004 that erases entire shorelines, Bhaskar is forced to confront his greatest question yet: What happens to sea turtles when the beaches they depend on disappear?

75 min / India, UK, USA

**FRI 4:15PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SUN 10:15AM DOWNTOWN**  
**MON 4PM DOWNTOWN**

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

### VOICES:

#### THE DANNY GANS STORY

Sponsored by Tom Sant & Susan Hirsch and KVEC NEWS TALK 96.5 FM

**DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER:** Andrew Davies Gans



Blending electrifying performances with intimate interviews, VOICES tells the untold story of Danny Gans—a Cal Poly alumni and one of Las Vegas' greatest entertainers. Through the eyes of his son, Andrew, on a mission to better understand the man behind the voice, the film traces Gans' unprecedented rise, sudden death, and enduring legacy. A riveting portrait of a once-in-a-generation singing impressionist, VOICES becomes a personal investigation into legacy, mystery, and loss as Andrew retraces his father's meteoric career.

102 min / USA

**SAT 1:45PM DOWNTOWN**

**SUN 4:30PM PALM**

**MON 10:45AM PALM**

### WE ARE PAT

Sponsored by GALA Pride and Diversity Center and Tranz Central Coast

**DIRECTOR:** Rowan Haber

**WRITERS:** Hannah Buck, Rowan Haber

**PRODUCERS:** Caryn Capotosto, Rowan Haber



WE ARE PAT revisits the iconic SNL sketch, *It's Pat*, in an effort to explore how gender, comedy, and cultural values have evolved since the 1990s. Tracing Pat's origins back to an era of gender anxiety and using it to draw parallels to current culture wars around queerness, the film invites trans and non-binary comedians to reimagine and reclaim the character through comedy. By examining humor as both a weapon and a tool for change, WE ARE PAT asks: How does art age, who gets to be in on the joke, and can laughter transform pain into power?

88 min / USA

**FRI 1:30PM DOWNTOWN**

**SUN 1PM DOWNTOWN**

### WHEN A WITNESS RECANTS

Sponsored by Minke WinklerPrins and Pete Petersen

**DIRECTOR:** Dawn Porter

**PRODUCER:** Dawn Porter, Jennifer Oko, Miriam Weintraub



In 1983, noted author Ta-Nehisi Coates remembers learning that a 14-year old boy was murdered in the corridor of his Baltimore middle school. Revisiting the case as an adult, he learns the truth about the three innocent teenagers who were falsely convicted and incarcerated for 36 years. The film explores the collateral damage the handling of this case had on the community, the wrongfully accused, and the young witnesses pressured to betray them.

117 min / USA

**FRI 7PM DOWNTOWN**

**SAT 10AM DOWNTOWN**

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

### Y VÂN:

#### THE LOST SOUNDS OF SAIGON

Sponsored by Festival Mozaic and KRUSH 92.5

**DIRECTOR:** Khoa Ha, Victor Velle

**PRODUCER:** Douglas Emerson



A young Vietnamese American artist sets out to recover the lost musical recordings of her late grandfather, legendary composer Y Vân. Once the soundtrack of Saigon's golden age, his songs filled dance halls and radio waves before being silenced in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Told across three generations, the film uncovers hidden family stories and a forgotten history shaped by displacement. An intimate act of remembrance and reclamation, the film explores the enduring power of music, memory and cultural inheritance.

94 min / USA, Vietnam

**FRI 1:15PM DOWNTOWN**

**SUN 10AM DOWNTOWN**

**TUES 2PM PALM**



**IN JULY 2024, IN COLLABORATION WITH JIM AND PATTY DEE, OWNERS OF THE PALM THEATRE, WE ESTABLISHED THE SLO FILM CENTER, BRINGING THE PALM THEATRE UNDER OUR STEWARDSHIP AND CREATING THE COUNTY'S ONLY NONPROFIT ART-HOUSE MOVIE THEATER.**

Over the past two years, we have showcased hundreds of films, including new indie releases and retrospective screenings, and partnered with community organizations on special events and more. We are bringing the magic of the film festival to San Luis Obispo County all year long.

The SLO Film Center has become a vibrant hub that celebrates the independent spirit of filmmaking and is a place where you can call your second home.

# THURSDAY, APRIL 23

**FESTIVAL BOX OFFICE OPEN**  
9:30AM-6:30PM

## FREMONT

5PM **OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION + RED CARPET**  
7PM **OPENING NIGHT CEREMONY + FILM** (p10)

# FRIDAY, APRIL 24

**FESTIVAL BOX OFFICE OPEN** 9:30AM-6:30PM

### PALM THEATRE

10:30AM  
**THE BLUE TRAIL**  
(p18)

1:30PM  
**STREET SMART**  
(p25)

4:15PM  
**THE BIG CHEESE**  
(p23)

7PM  
**THE MUSICAL**  
(p20)

10:45AM  
**ON THE END**  
(p20)

2PM  
**THEYDREAM**  
(p25)

4:45PM  
**THE FISHERMAN**  
(p19)

7:45PM  
**VALENTINA**  
(p21)

### DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS

11:15AM  
**AANIKOBIJIGAN**  
(p22)

2:15PM  
**SHORTS 1: PEAK JOURNALISM**  
(p60)

5PM  
**STEAL THIS STORY, PLEASE!**  
(p24)

8PM  
**SHORTS 6: RED EYE**  
(p60)

### DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS

1:15PM  
**Y VÂN: THE LOST SOUNDS OF SAIGON**  
(p27)

4PM  
**BIRDS OF WAR**  
(p23)

7PM  
**WHEN A WITNESS RECENTS**  
(p26)

### DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS

10:30AM  
**THE HISTORY OF CONCRETE**  
(p24)

1:30PM  
**WE ARE PAT**  
(p26)

4:15PM  
**TURTLE WALKER**  
(p25)

6:45PM  
**ADULT CHILDREN**  
(p18)

### FREMONT

12PM  
**BACKSIDE**  
(p22)

2:45PM  
**A LIFE ILLUMINATED**  
(p24)

5:30PM  
**THIS TEMPTING MADNESS**  
(p21)

5:30PM  
**DOORS AND MUSIC**

**SURF NITE**

7PM  
**FILM STARTS**  
(p11)

### LOUNGE

4PM  
**FILMMAKER & SPONSOR MIXER**

**FESTIVAL LOUNGE OPEN** 12PM-10PM

# SATURDAY, APRIL 25

**FESTIVAL BOX OFFICE OPEN** 9:30AM-5:30PM

### PALM THEATRE

10:30AM  
**FORK IN THE ROAD**  
(p23)

1:30PM  
**STEAL THIS STORY, PLEASE!**  
(p24)

4:30PM  
**AMERICAN PACHUCO**  
(p22)

7PM  
**HOW TO DATE AGAIN**  
(p19)

10:45AM  
**SHORTS 3: THE SPACE BETWEEN US**  
(p60)

1:15PM  
**SHORTS 5: STORIES FROM THE AMERICAS**  
(p60)

4PM  
**SUNSET BOULEVARD**  
(p15)

7PM  
**SHORTS 2: WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND**  
(p60)

### DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS

11AM  
**VALENTINA**  
(p21)

1:45PM  
**VOICES: THE DANNY GANS STORY**  
(p26)

5PM  
**ADULT CHILDREN**  
(p18)

7:30PM  
**THE MUSICAL**  
(p20)

### DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS

10:30AM  
**BACKSIDE**  
(p22)

4PM  
**APRIL X**  
(p18)

7PM  
**THEYDREAM**  
(p25)

### DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS

10AM  
**WHEN A WITNESS RECENTS**  
(p26)

1:30PM  
**A LIFE ILLUMINATED**  
(p24)

4:15PM  
**THIS TEMPTING MADNESS**  
(p21)

7:15PM  
**SHORTS 6: RED EYE**  
(p60)

### MASONIC LODGE

10:15AM  
**STREET SMART**  
(p25)

1PM  
**THE BIG CHEESE**  
(p23)

4PM  
**SHORTS 4: FANTASTICAL**  
(p60)

6:30PM  
**BIRDS OF WAR**  
(p23)

7PM  
**DOORS**

7:30PM  
**MUSIC — FILMS**  
(p54)

### LOUNGE

10:30AM  
**PANEL #1: FINANCING, PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION**  
(p61)

1PM  
**PANEL #2: BEYOND THE FARM**  
(p61)

3:30PM  
**FESTIVAL PARTY**

**FESTIVAL LOUNGE OPEN** 10AM-10PM

## CONNECT WITH US

STAY UP TO DATE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR! JOIN OUR MAILING LIST BY VISITING [SLOFILMFEST.ORG](http://SLOFILMFEST.ORG)

**FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA**  
@SLOFILMFEST | @THEPALMTHEATRE | #SLOFILMFEST2026

# SUNDAY, APRIL 26

	PALM THEATRE		DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS		OTHER	LOUNGE	
FESTIVAL BOX OFFICE OPEN 9:30AM-5:30PM	10:30AM APRIL X (p18)	10AM SAMSARA (p16)	10:30AM SHORTS 2: WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND (p60)	10AM Y VÂN: THE LOST SOUNDS OF SAIGON (p27)	10:45AM HOW TO DATE AGAIN (p19)	10:15AM TURTLE WALKER (p25)	10AM PANEL 3#: SOCIAL IMPACT STORYTELLING (p61)
	1:30PM STEAL THIS STORY, PLEASE! (p24)	1:15PM SHORTS 5: STORIES FROM THE AMERICAS (p60)	1PM WE ARE PAT (p26)	1:15PM HISTORY OF CONCRETE (p24)	1:30PM FILMMAKERS OF TOMORROW (p58)	12:45PM SHORTS 3: THE SPACE BETWEEN US (p60)	12:30PM PANEL #4: THE NEW MODEL FOR LOW BUDGET FILMMAKING (p61)
	4:30PM VOICES: THE DANNY GANS STORY (p26)	5PM THE SEVENTH SEAL (p16)	3:45PM EPISODICS (p52)	4:15PM AANIKOBIJIGAN (p22)	4:30PM FORK IN THE ROAD (p23)	6PM SHORTS 1: PEAK JOURNALISM (p60)	BAY THEATRE 4:30PM DOORS OPEN COMMUNITY OF SKATE 5:30PM FILM STARTS (p12)
	7:30PM LEFT-HANDED GIRL (p15)	8PM MĀRAMA (p16)	7PM ON THE END (p20)	6:45PM THE FISHERMAN (p19)	7:15PM IF I GO WILL THEY MISS ME (p19)	MASONIC LODGE 7PM SENDER (p14)	

FESTIVAL LOUNGE OPEN 10AM-10PM

## OSCAR QUALIFYING



The SLO Film Festival is proud to be an Academy qualifying festival for documentary short films. Winning films at this festival may be eligible to enter for Oscars® consideration. Celebrate cinema year-round at The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

[ACADEMYMUSEUM.ORG](http://ACADEMYMUSEUM.ORG)

# MONDAY, APRIL 27

	PALM THEATRE		DOWNTOWN CENTRE CINEMAS		FREMONT	LOUNGE	
FESTIVAL BOX OFFICE OPEN 9:30AM-5:30PM	11AM CCFS SHORTS 1 (p48)	10:45AM VOICES: THE DANNY GANS STORY (p26)	11AM THE MUSICAL (p20)	10:30AM AMERICAN PACHUCO (p22)	11:30AM THEYDREAM (p25)		
	1:15PM CCFS SHORTS 2 (p48)	1:45PM THE BIG CHEESE (p23)	1:45PM STEAL THIS STORY, PLEASE! (p24)	1:30PM THE FISHERMAN (p19)	2:15PM THE BLUE TRAIL (p18)		
	3:30PM CCFS SHORTS 3 (p48)	4:30PM BIRDS OF WAR (p23)	4:45PM A LIFE ILLUMINATED (p24)	4:30PM SHORTS 5: STORIES FROM THE AMERICAS (p60)	4PM TURTLE WALKER (p25)	4PM CENTRAL COAST FILMMAKER MIXER	
	5:45PM THE STRAWBERRY (p51)	7:15PM THIS TEMPTING MADNESS (p21)	7:30PM APRIL X (p18)	7:15PM BACKSIDE (p22)	7PM IF I GO WILL THEY MISS ME (p19)	5PM HOW TO DATE AGAIN (p19)	
					7:45PM MĀRAMA (p20)	7PM CAL POLY SHORT CUTS (p59)	

FESTIVAL LOUNGE OPEN 10AM-10PM

## INTERESTED IN GETTING MORE INVOLVED?

We want to say a huge thank you to all of our sponsors and volunteers. We wouldn't be able to put this festival on without you!  
 Email [VOLUNTEER@slofilmfest.org](mailto:VOLUNTEER@slofilmfest.org) to volunteer at future events  
 Email [SPONSORSHIP@slofilmfest.org](mailto:SPONSORSHIP@slofilmfest.org) to become a sponsor of the festival or a founding member of the SLO Film Center  
 Learn about all of our volunteer, sponsorship and donation opportunities at [WWW.SLOFILMFEST.ORG](http://WWW.SLOFILMFEST.ORG)





# THEkrush

92.5 • THE PERFECT BLEND



MUSIC - WINE - LIFESTYLE - LOCAL COMMUNITY - STREAM/POD - KRUSH925.COM

AMERICAN GENERAL MEDIA - SAN LUIS OBISPO - PROUDLY SUPPORTING SLO FILM FEST SINCE 2007



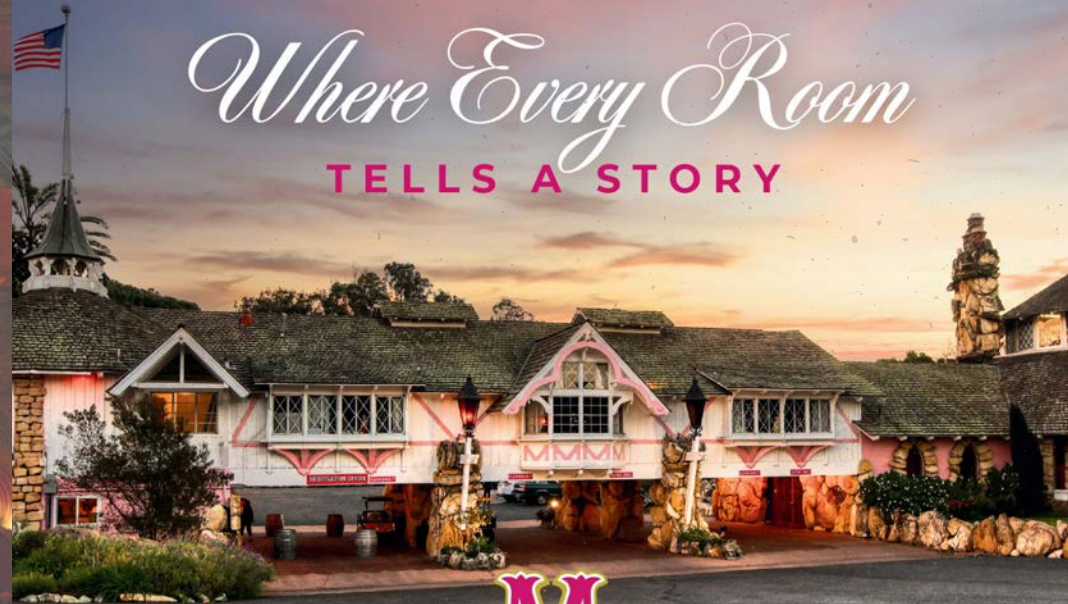
## IN YOUR COMMUNITY



# FREMONT

## THEATER

Fremont Theater is proud to support SLO Film Festival



*Where Every Room*  
TELLS A STORY



MADONNAINN.COM

805.543.3000

## NARRATIVE SHORTS

### AKABABURU: EXPRESSION OF ASTONISHMENT

Sponsored by Susan Rodriguez,  
State Farm Insurance

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Irati Dojura Landa Yagari  
**PRODUCER:** Laura Giraldo Mira

SHORTS #5



Kari, a young Indigenous girl, has been taught to fear her own laughter. When she meets Kera who shares the myth of Kiraparamia, a woman said to be punished by the gods for laughing at her husband, Kera offers a different telling—laughter was not her downfall, but her liberation. Inspired by this reclaimed story, Kari finds the courage to laugh freely, transforming shame into strength and confronting those who have sought to silence her.

*Drama, Fantasy / 14 min / Colombia*

**SAT 1:15PM PALM**  
**MON 4:30PM DOWNTOWN**

### BENNY'S SECOND BIRTHDAY

Sponsored by Rodney W. Ott

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** R.J. Glass  
**PRODUCERS:** Amanda Freedman,  
Daniel Leighton

SHORTS #6



WEST COAST PREMIERE

You are cordially invited to attend Benny's second birthday. When strangers begin arriving at her toddler's birthday party, a pregnant mother is forced to confront her son's unsettling popularity and the growing realization that he may be forming bonds beyond her control. A psychological horror, BENNY'S SECOND BIRTHDAY dives into motherhood, isolation, and the quiet terror of watching your child become someone you no longer fully know.

*Horror / 12 min / USA*

**FRI 8PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

### BOYFIGHTER

Sponsored by Mary Qualls

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Julia Weisberg Cortés  
**PRODUCERS:** Mayte Avina, Doménica Castro, Constanza Castro

SHORTS #5



As a father prepares to confront the greatest tragedy of his life, memories of his past as a bare-knuckle street fighter resurface, forcing him to reckon with the legacy he passed on to his son. Woven between past and present, BOYFIGHTER explores cycles of violence, masculinity, inheritance, and how love and survival collide across generations. A raw and intimate look into regret and responsibility, the film searches for the possibility of hope among the ashes of a brutal past.

*Drama / 17 min / USA*

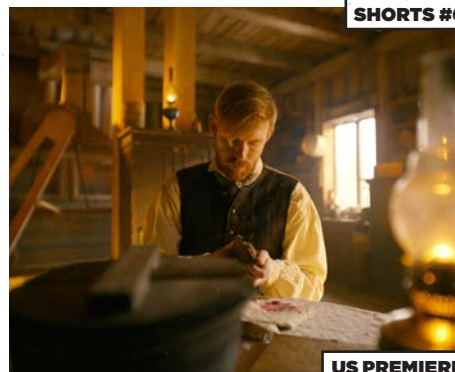
**SAT 1:15PM PALM**  
**MON 4:30PM DOWNTOWN**

## NARRATIVE SHORTS

### BREADSONG

**DIRECTOR:** Katariina Aule  
**WRITER:** Sven-Sander Paas  
**PRODUCERS:** Laura Raud, Andreas Kask

SHORTS #6



US PREMIERE

In old rural Estonia, a quiet family's life is disrupted when a strange accident allows them to hear a pop song from the future. What begins as curiosity turns into fixation, as the melody seeps into their daily routines and relationships. As the song replays in their minds at a growing cost, the family's unity is tested, exposing how desire and distraction can drown out what matters most. Blending historical drama and mystery, BREADSONG explores temptation and the price of being in pursuit of something extraordinary.

*Horror / 16 min / Estonia*

**FRI 8PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

### EM & SELMA GO GRIFFIN HUNTING

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Alexander Thompson  
**PRODUCERS:** Roger Mayer,  
Alexander Thompson

SHORTS #4



Set in the depression-plagued 1930s, girls must complete a rite of passage: hunting a mythical beast in order to be accepted as proper women. When Em embarks on her hunt alongside her mother Selma, what should be a day of bonding fractures into moral rebellion. As Em begins to question the ritual's senseless violence, the two are driven toward a dangerous reckoning that threatens to turn myth into bloodshed. A coming-of-age mythical fable about intergenerational traumas and the beasts we are taught to destroy.

Content Warning: Sexual assault depicted.

*Fantasy, Drama / 19 min / USA*

**SAT 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:30AM PALM**

### EVERYTHING MUST GO

Sponsored by Sherrie Rheingans

**DIRECTOR:** Tiffany So  
**WRITERS:** Tiffany So, Saba Saghafi  
**PRODUCERS:** Quinci Bryant, Griffin Di Stefano, Jay Ellis, Aaron Bergman

SHORTS #3



WORLD PREMIERE

Two strangers meet while sleepwalking... only they're not strangers at all, but a couple on the verge of breaking up. Night after night, their unconscious selves drift back to one another, revisiting shared memories and the small moments exhibiting the love that once felt inevitable. As daylight pulls them further apart, the film asks: What happens to the emotional clutter we accumulate in a relationship when it's about to end? A surreal romance and an ode to the parts of us that still carry a torch for the love we used to have.

*Romance, Comedy, Drama / 14 min / USA*

**SAT 10:45AM PALM**  
**SUN 12:45PM DOWNTOWN**

# NARRATIVE SHORTS

## FACADE

Sponsored by Idler's Home

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Modupe Thompson  
**PRODUCERS:** Kristen Vaganos, Claire Gostin, Modupe Thompson



SHORTS #3

WORLD PREMIERE

After a well-meaning intervention, a brilliant but guarded architect is forced to confront her past alongside the vacant lot where her childhood home once stood. As buried memories resurface and new connections threaten her carefully controlled world, she must decide whether to keep building walls or step outside of her comfort zone by letting someone in. An imaginative exploration of vulnerability and community, FACADE explores the courage it takes to open yourself up before everything you've built comes crashing down.

Comedy / 13 min / USA

**SAT 10:45AM PALM**  
**SUN 12:45PM DOWNTOWN**

## FAMILIAR STRANGER

Sponsored by Covelop, Inc.

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Ace Mahbaz  
**PRODUCER:** Sophie Stacey



SHORTS #3

FAMILIAR STRANGER follows Ava and Cyrus on what begins as an ordinary first date, complicated by an unexpected discovery upon arrival. As the day unfolds, the two discover a shared language that opens the door to deeper connection, vulnerability, and unspoken histories. Told in British Sign Language with minimal spoken dialogue, the film is an intimate portrait of identity, belonging, and the surprising ways intimacy can grow when we allow ourselves to find connection through discomfort.

Romance, Drama / 15 min / United Kingdom

**SAT 10:45AM PALM**  
**SUN 12:45PM DOWNTOWN**

## FAR FROM THE PLAINS

**DIRECTOR:** Luigi Sibona

**WRITERS:** Luigi Sibona, Niellah Arboine  
**PRODUCER:** Jack Filtness



SHORTS #2

WEST COAST PREMIERE

As storms hit London and his mother slips into depression, Frankie searches for stability as his world begins to unravel. On the verge of hopelessness, he finds refuge in a stable, where horses and an unlikely friendship offer moments of wonder and escape. But when the storm finally breaks, Frankie must confront his loss and discover whether hope can survive in the aftermath. A magical realist coming-of-age story, FAR FROM THE PLAINS is a beautiful portrait of grief, resilience, and finding light in the bleakest moments.

Drama / 16 min / United Kingdom

**SAT 7PM PALM**  
**SUN 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**

# NARRATIVE SHORTS

## I HAVE WINGS BUT I CANNOT FLY

**DIRECTOR:** Victor Velasco

**WRITERS:** Ginaris Sarra, Victor Velasco  
**PRODUCER:** Josslyn Glenn



SHORTS #4

WORLD PREMIERE

In a retro-futuristic city where shapeshifting birds are hunted and feared, a devoted single mother risks everything to hide her son's emerging transformation. When Daniel begins showing telling signs, Miriam secretly brings him to her workplace, desperate to keep him safe. But as suspicion mounts, she must choose between survival and defiance. Blending grounded emotion with soaring fantasy, the film explores immigration, motherhood, and the fierce sacrifices required to protect a child in a world that fears difference.

Fantasy, Drama / 15 min / USA

**SAT 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:30AM PALM**

## THE LAST SNOW

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Rodophe Bouquet-Populus | **PRODUCERS:** Basile Vincent, Etienne Moreau



SHORTS #6

THE LAST SNOW traps Isabelle and Guillaume on a chairlift at a ski resort where the winter snow is slowly disappearing. What begins as a mundane, almost comic encounter shifts into mounting dread as the lift stalls, the lights flicker, and something monstrous is anticipated in the distance. Blending visceral horror full of tension, anxiety and mystery, THE LAST SNOW transforms a familiar alpine scenario into a nightmarish survival tale.

Horror / 20 min / France

**FRI 8PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

## LONG'S LONG LOST & MINI MART

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Julian Doan

**PRODUCERS:** Doménica Castro, Constanza Castro, Alex Nystrom, Jenni Trang Lê



SHORTS #4

In the back rooms of a seedy Little Saigon convenience store, a young man reanimates his dead father for one final conversation. In this surreal yet mundane world where reunions with the dead are sold alongside booze, cigarettes and lotto tickets, grief becomes a transaction, a vice and an addiction. As the father returns, long-buried grief, memories and unspoken truths surface, exposing the obsessive and often futile pursuit of closure, catharsis, and the comfort of one last goodbye.

Drama / 18 min / USA

**SAT 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:30AM PALM**

# NARRATIVE SHORTS

## MINE

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Jaclyn Moore  
**PRODUCERS:** Jenée LaMarque, Drew Denny, Saray Bravo, Eleanor Jean, JoAnne Yarrow

SHORTS #6



A woman relives one of the worst nights of her life in MINE, a haunting meditation on control, desire, safety and survival. What begins like a familiar home-invasion horror slowly fractures into something more intimate and unsettling, blurring the line between fear and longing. Co-starring Mark Duplass, the film reclaims authorship over trauma, exploring how eroticism and terror can coexist, how trust can heal or endanger, and how safety itself can be a matter of perspective.

Thriller / 14 min / USA

**FRI 8PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

## MY ONLY FRIEND IS A ROBOT NAMED BEANS

Sponsored by Janet  
Kishaw-McLennan M.D.

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Anika Kan Grevstad  
**PRODUCERS:** Corrina Leatherwood, Skye Mahaffie, Chris Bauer, Anika Kan Grevstad

SHORTS #4



In an isolated future, Ruby, newly 25 and deeply lacking a social life, finds her carefully constructed routines disrupted by an unlikely new friend: a mail-order robot. As the two form an unexpected bond, Ruby is forced to confront her fear of vulnerability, the quiet ache of loneliness, and the anxious inner voice that insists connection is something that only other people get to have. Through this strange but tender friendship, she begins to discover the power of opening up in a world that makes isolation feel inevitable.

Sci-Fi, Comedy / 14 min / USA

**SAT 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:30AM PALM**

## NEVER NEVER NEVER

**DIRECTOR:** John Sheedy  
**WRITER:** Elizabeth Packett  
**PRODUCERS:** Andre Lima, Grant Vidgen

SHORTS #3



US PREMIERE

Set in a quaint Welsh fishing village, aspiring drag queen Henrick and reserved fisherman Arwyn are drawn into a secret romance. As Henrick dazzles the local stage alongside his mother, their glittering performances clash with his father's rigid traditions, while Arwyn, caught between love and obligation, wrestles with his heart. When Henrick considers leaving home in search of acceptance, their forbidden relationship is tested by family and identity, asking whether love can truly be realized in a place that fears difference.

Romance / 18 min / United Kingdom, Australia

**SAT 10:45AM PALM**  
**SUN 12:45PM DOWNTOWN**

# NARRATIVE SHORTS

## OLIVE

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Tom Koch  
**PRODUCERS:** Tom Koch, Astrid Lark, Anthony James Faure, Matt Rachamkin

SHORTS #2



Sam cares for his grandmother as Alzheimer's begins to blur reality, forcing him to navigate shifting perceptions, fleeting moments of connection, and the fragility of identity. Moving through NYC together, their days are shaped by tenderness, routine and quiet denial until a discovery threatens to shatter the fragile world they've built. As boundaries between past and present begin to unravel, OLIVE explores what it means to hold on when our memory and the ones we love begin to slip away.

Drama / 13 min / USA

**SAT 7PM PALM**  
**SUN 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**

## SUMMER TRIANGLE

Sponsored by Sharon and John Dobson

**DIRECTOR/WRITERS:** Maryam Esmaili, Ali Babai | **PRODUCER:** Sepide Bernji

SHORTS #3



A young girl in search of her missing cat climbs to her rooftop but instead finds a teenage boy on the brink of ending his life. Refusing to leave him there, she insists he help her search for the cat, pulling him into a fleeting, imaginative adventure in the final moments he believes he has left. Through whimsical storytelling, the film explores how shared imagination can transform despair into connection, revealing the quiet, life-altering power of empathy, creativity and human bond.

Drama / 8 min / Iran

**SAT 10:45AM PALM**  
**SUN 12:45PM DOWNTOWN**

## TETHERED

Sponsored by Bern Singes

**DIRECTOR:** Alessandro Cino Zolfanelli  
**WRITERS:** Angus Blair, Alessandro Cino Zolfanelli  
**PRODUCER:** Paola Dominique Delfuego

SHORTS #4



US PREMIERE/STUDENT PROJECT

Gatlin, an outsider from the Moon, crashes into the vibrant world of Earth and forms a fleeting but powerful connection with Harper, a fierce huntress. Drawn into her village of color, music and life, Gatlin discovers love and belonging for the first time. But as their bond deepens, the Moon's relentless pull grows stronger, threatening to tear him away and return him to a distant, lonely existence.

Animation / 9 min / United Kingdom

**SAT 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:30AM PALM**

# NARRATIVE SHORTS

## THE VEIL

**DIRECTOR:** Gabriel Motta  
**WRITERS:** Gabriel Motta, Jonts Ferreira  
**PRODUCERS:** Gabriel Motta, Jonts Ferreira, Felipe Apolonio



SHORTS #6

US PREMIERE

In a cult profiting from staged exorcisms, darkness descends when the pastor's daughter becomes genuinely possessed, forcing her brother to confront his father's authority. As the siblings navigate possession, secrecy, and repressed desire, psychological and carnal horror collide, blurring the line between ritual and reality. A queer horror short, THE VEIL explores Brazil's rich spiritual landscape, examining faith, repression, liberation, family, the suffocating weight of inherited power and the liberating cost of breaking those cycles.

Horror / 20 min / Brazil

**FRI 8PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

## VULTURES

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Dian Weys  
**PRODUCERS:** Emilie Dubois, Anaïs Bertrand, Le Roux Fourie



SHORTS #2

WEST COAST PREMIERE

In the moments after a car crash, before the authorities arrive, a hot-headed tow truck driver stakes his claim, determined to protect his tow at any cost. What begins as a routine scramble quickly escalates into a tense standoff, as tempers flare, loyalties fracture, and control slips away. Relentlessly suspenseful and straight from 2025 Cannes Film Festival, VULTURES captures the brutal, predatory world that emerges in the margins of disaster, where survival depends on speed, aggression and moral compromise.

Drama / 15 min / France, South Africa

**SAT 7PM PALM**  
**SUN 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**

## WHAT IF THEY BOMB HERE TONIGHT?

Sponsored by Susan Rodriguez, State Farm Insurance

**DIRECTOR:** Samir Syriani  
**WRITERS:** Samir Syriani, Nadine Chalhoub Syriani | **PRODUCER:** Nicolas Khabbaz



SHORTS #2

WHAT IF THEY BOMB HERE TONIGHT immerses viewers in the mind of a Lebanese couple during an anxiety-filled night, gripped by the fear that an Israeli airstrike could shatter not only the walls of their home but the life they've built. With their children nearby, they face an impossible choice: stay and risk everything, or abandon the life they've worked so hard to create.

Drama / 16 min / Lebanon

**SAT 7PM PALM**  
**SUN 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**



WE ARE  
**COMMITTED**  
 TO  
**SLO**  
 COUNTY

Topaz Solar Farms is proud to partner with the 2026 San Luis Obispo International Film Festival to create a more accessible event for all.



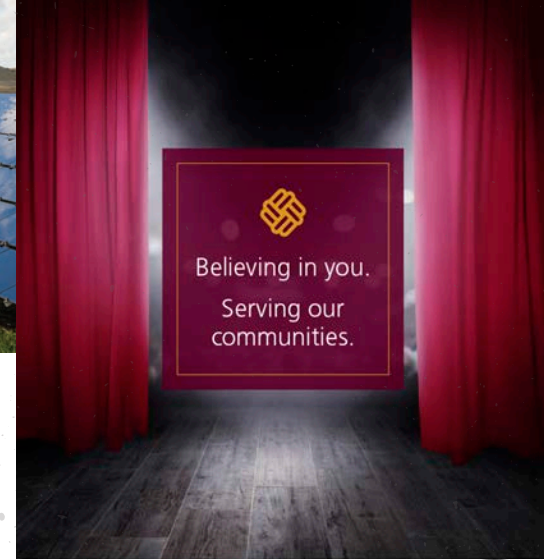
DISCOVER MORE [www.bherenewables.com](http://www.bherenewables.com)

**Megan's**  
 ORGANIC MARKET  
 CIO-000029-LIC

**PROUD SPONSORS OF THE SLO FILM FESTIVAL**

**PRESENT THIS COUPON & RECEIVE 20% OFF YOUR ENTIRE ORDER**

OPEN 7 AM - 9PM | 280 HIGUERA ST. SLO, CA  
 805.592.1420 | MUST BE 21 OR OVER | 18+ W/ MEDICAL ID  
\*Redeemable through May 3, 2026. May not be combined with any other discounts. Limit one per person.



We're proud to support 2026 San Luis Obispo International Film Festival!

800.797.6324  
[mechanicsbank.com](http://mechanicsbank.com)



**MUSIC ROAD TRIP**

Free  
**A travel app for music fans.**



## DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

### LA MAYORDOMÍA

**DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER:** Martin Edralin



SHORTS #5

LA MAYORDOMÍA takes viewers into Xochimilco, a vibrant borough of Mexico City, where families take turns caring for Baby Jesus icons dating back to the 16th century for one-year terms. This sacred stewardship is believed to bring miracles and good fortune, inspiring many to embark on a decades-long wait of anticipation and devotion, for the rare chance to host the revered figures in their homes.

23 min / Canada

**SAT 1:15PM PALM  
MON 4:30PM DOWNTOWN**

### LOVE BIRDS

*Sponsored by Sharon Dobson and John Dobson*

**DIRECTOR/PRODUCERS:** Elliott Kennerson, Angel Morris | **WRITER:** Elliott Kennerson



SHORTS #1

A research observation that altered gay history and the love story that made it all possible. When married biologists George and Molly discover that many of the seagull pairs they were studying were both female, their groundbreaking research on "lesbian seagulls" unexpectedly sparked national headlines, coinciding with the rise of the LGBTQ+ rights movement. Amid the scientific acclaim, George and Molly's ambitious, tender and tested love story unfolds, showing how a single observation can change both history and the love of a lifetime.

28 min / USA

**FRI 2:15PM DOWNTOWN  
SUN 6PM DOWNTOWN**

### A MAN WHO TAKES PICTURES OF FLOWERS

*Sponsored by Richard-Rosten Family*

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Yoo Lee  
**PRODUCERS:** Yoo Lee, Shengluo Zhang, Shinae Kim



SHORTS #1

A MAN WHO TAKES PICTURES OF FLOWERS uses mixed media to follow Jung Myung Kim, a photographer who has spent over 40 years capturing Korea's wildflowers. Using 1.5 million still photographs transformed into time-lapse video and paired with stop-motion animation, the film creates a singular, enchanting world. Layered with Kim's own voiceover, it reflects a lifetime of passion, quiet joy, and perseverance as he continues to pursue his art even while confronting illness.

13 min / USA, South Korea

**FRI 2:15PM DOWNTOWN  
SUN 6PM DOWNTOWN**

WEST COAST PREMIERE

## DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

### OH WHALE

*Sponsored by Sandra Duerr*

**DIRECTOR:** Winslow Crane-Murdoch

**WRITER:** Corky Devault

**PRODUCER:** Luke Terrell, Cecilia Brown, Rachel Gardell



SHORTS #1

A small Oregon town, an exploding whale, and the man whose reporting made the story legendary. On November 12th, 1970, news anchor Paul Linnman arrived in Florence, OR, unaware that this bizarre assignment about a beached whale would define his career. Equal parts absurd and heartfelt, told with fast-paced humor and insight into why the story has endured for decades, the film reminds us that we don't get to choose our fate, only what we make of it. Well... OH WHALE!

26 min / USA

**FRI 2:15PM DOWNTOWN  
SUN 6PM DOWNTOWN**

### RAMÓN WHO SPEAKS TO GHOSTS

*Sponsored by Bill Clemens and Susie Clark*

**DIRECTOR:** Shervin Kermani

**WRITER/PRODUCERS:** Shervin Kermani, Karla Reyes



SHORTS #5

RAMON WHO SPEAKS TO GHOSTS follows Ramón as he walks the island of La Palma after a volcanic eruption, microphone in hand, listening for the echoes of those lost and the stories the land still holds. Blending tragedy and quiet beauty, the film transforms one man's search for ghosts into a meditation on loss, memory, and the fragile lives disrupted by nature's force.

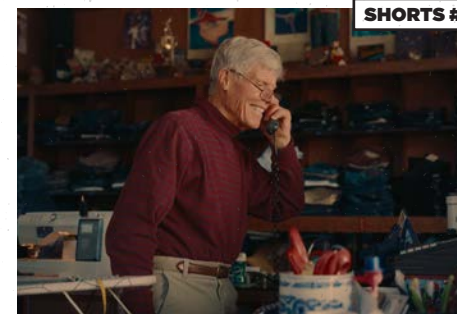
8 min / Spain, Canada, Mexico

**SAT 1:15PM PALM  
MON 4:30PM DOWNTOWN**

### THE RIGHT FIT

*Sponsored by Covelop, Inc.*

**DIRECTOR/WRITERS:** Max Mollring, Nicolas Collins | **PRODUCERS:** Max Mollring, Nicolas Collins, Jonathan Salazar



SHORTS #1

A vibrant portrait of Tom Diettrich, the sole owner of beloved denim shop, Jeans To A T. Part retail store, part community hub, Tom's shop offers a place where customers become regulars and denim becomes art. A master of fit with an uncanny memory for sizes, Tom has built a global following through craft, care, and connection. After being open six days a week for nearly five decades, retirement looms. The film celebrates the legacy of a true original and asks what remains when the last of its kind finally closes its doors.

13 min / USA

**FRI 2:15PM DOWNTOWN  
SUN 6PM DOWNTOWN**

WORLD PREMIERE

# DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

## STILL STANDING

Sponsored by Covelop, Inc.

**DIRECTORS:** Victor Tadashi Suárez, Livia Albeck-Ripka

**PRODUCERS:** Livia Albeck-Ripka, Victor Tadashi Suárez



SHORTS #2

Shot on 16mm film, STILL STANDING follows residents of Altadena, California, grappling with the aftermath of the 2025 wildfires that destroyed over 9,000 structures and left thousands of homes standing but contaminated with toxic ash. With insurance companies declaring many homes habitable with no clear state or federal guidelines on safety, residents are forced to face an impossible choice: risk their health to return home, or leave behind the life they've built.

10 min / USA

**SAT 7PM PALM**  
**SUN 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**

## SWIM SISTAS

Sponsored by Harvey and Kristin Schwartzman

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Catherine Joy White

**PRODUCERS:** Afua Hirsch, Amandla Crichlow, Anais Ferrato, Oriane Pick, Catherine Joy White



SHORTS #1

A poetic, visually stunning love letter to water, sisterhood, and the enduring strength of Black women across generations, SWIM SISTAS follows four women from a young girl diving into joy, to Great Britain's first and only Black female Olympic swimmer breaking historic barriers, to a woman learning to swim at 54, defying a legacy of inherited fear. Told through the lens of Black women reclaiming their place in water and history, the film celebrates connection, resilience and hope.

11 min / United Kingdom

**FRI 2:15PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SUN 6PM DOWNTOWN**

WEST COAST PREMIERE

## VOICES FROM THE ABYSS

Sponsored by Swift Action Fund

**DIRECTOR/WRITERS:** Irving Serrano, Victor Rejon | **PRODUCER:** Ramon Llaven



SHORTS #5

VOICES FROM THE ABYSS offers an intimate look at the diverse community of youths, elders, and native residents who make up the La Quebrada Cliff Divers in Acapulco, Guerrero, earning a living by risking their lives diving 100 feet into the sea as part of a legendary performance. Through stunning cinematography, slow-motion footage, personal testimonies, and an original poem recited by the divers themselves, the film explores faith, courage, and the delicate balance between life and death.

23 min / Mexico

**SAT 1:15PM PALM**  
**MON 4:30PM DOWNTOWN**

PROUD SPONSOR OF SLO FILM FEST



**EDNA CONTEMPORARY**  
967 OSOS ST., SLO | [WWW.EDNAFINEART.COM](http://WWW.EDNAFINEART.COM)

**LUNAREd**



**MAKE A RESERVATION AT [LUNAREDSLO.COM](http://LUNAREDSLO.COM)**



**NOVO**  
RESTAURANT LOUNGE

**MAKE A RESERVATION AT [NOVORESTAURANT.COM](http://NOVORESTAURANT.COM)**



**JUST A SHORT DRIVE TO NEARBY MAJOR CITIES, THE CENTRAL COAST BOASTS INCREDIBLE SCENIC FILMING LOCATIONS AND SOME AMAZING TALENT. JOIN US ON MONDAY, APRIL 27, AS WE SPEND THE DAY SHOWCASING FILMS FROM OUR CENTRAL COAST FILMMAKERS AND CELEBRATE THIS OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY. AT THE TOP OF THE EVENING WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT THE CAL POLY SHORT CUTS AT THE FREMONT THEATER.**

**AUGUSTINE ESCALANTE: HOMETOWN HERO**

**DIRECTOR:** Chachi Ramirez  
**WRITER:** Robert Ramirez  
**PRODUCERS:** Chachi Ramirez, Bob Havlicek, Max Parada



**CCFS SHORTS #1**

**WORLD PREMIERE**

AUGUSTINE ESCALANTE tells the story of a son of migrant farmworkers whose courage and sacrifice in World War II left an indelible mark on his family and community. From the deserts of North Africa to the battlefields of Italy and the push across France, Escalante's journey as a sergeant is one of bravery, resilience, and leadership under fire. Through archival research and personal storytelling, the film honors his decorated military service, commemorates his ultimate sacrifice, and celebrates the lasting impact of his heroism on his family and community.

*Documentary / 16 min / USA*

**MON 11AM PALM**

**THE COVER UP**

**DIRECTOR/WRITERS:** Talha Husssaini, Jacob Heimlich  
**PRODUCERS:** Talha Husssaini, Jacob Heimlich, Alex Raban, Jennifer Gosnell, Carlos Plummer, Kyle Plummer



**CCFS SHORTS #2**

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

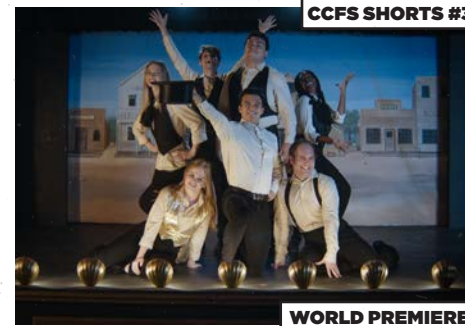
Guilt, secrets, and the desperate urge to bury the truth. When Carmen's identical twin brother, Connie, claims the one thing he wants most—his wife—a diabolical plan sets deadly events in motion. Atmospheric and relentless, the film pulls viewers into a suspenseful world where every choice matters and silence can be lethal.

*Thriller, Horror / 16 min / USA*

**MON 1:15PM PALM**

**THE GREAT AMERICAN / MELODRAMA & VAUDEVILLE & DOCUMENTARY**

*Sponsored by Nurse Mo*  
**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Eileen McNulty  
**PRODUCERS:** Eileen McNulty, Ana Tenewitz



**CCFS SHORTS #3**

**WORLD PREMIERE**

A hybrid documentary that invites the viewer behind the curtain to witness a troupe of young actors as they open their hearts on stage through a parody-western-musical-comedy. Full of hyperbole, song, dance and heart, the film interprets rehearsals and summer performances in the theater's signature style, celebrating a 50-year tradition of community, creativity, and the joy of live musical theater, both inside and outside the proscenium of the beloved Oceano theater house.

*Documentary / 23 min / USA*

**MON 3:30PM PALM**

**THE LAST ACT**

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Zilong Zee  
**PRODUCERS:** Zilong Zee, Joyce Lao



**CCFS SHORTS #3**

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

After a humiliating audition rejection, THE LAST ACT follows a struggling actor spiraling into obsession and violence. As her twisted performance escalates, ambition, revenge, and reality blur, culminating in a shocking, meta twist that exposes the fragile line between acting and life itself. A darkly satirical psychological short, the film explores rejection, the hunger to be seen, and the costs of proving one's worth.

*Drama / 14 min / USA*

**MON 3:30PM PALM**

**LEMON**

**DIRECTOR/WRITER/PRODUCER:** Beth Curry



**CCFS SHORTS #1**

Six-year-old Lemon has never left home due to her mother's severe agoraphobia. When her mother dies suddenly, Lemon must throw out all she's learned and step outside for the first time in search of her father. Conditioned to fear the unknown, Lemon relies on her imagination as a security blanket, and her journey from fear to bravery becomes a tender exploration of courage, human connection, and the importance of reaching out to the world and people we've never known beyond our own familiar walls.

*Drama / 15 min / USA*

**MON 11AM PALM**

**MAY I PUT YOU ON HOLD?**

*Sponsored by William Pendergrass and Ginger Ale*

**DIRECTOR:** Ash Blodgett | **WRITER:** Ryan Self  
**PRODUCERS:** Tara Jayn, Nicole Mangona, Ryan Self



**CCFS SHORTS #3**

While battling the absurdity of telephone customer service, Liz is accidentally and unexpectedly transferred to the Afterlife. Stuck between death and hold music, she must navigate cosmic bureaucracy, confront her own mortality, and discover what truly matters if she ever wants to return to the land of the living. A darkly comedic and inventive tale, the film reminds us that sometimes the most important things in life shouldn't be put on hold.

*Comedy, Drama / 14 min / USA*

**MON 3:30PM PALM**

**MI VIDA. MI FUTURO**

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Andres Quintero  
**PRODUCERS:** Fabian Acosta, Miriam Valencia



**CCFS SHORTS #2**

A coming-of-age short drama, MI VIDA. MI FUTURO follows Luis Mejia, a first-generation Hispanic student torn between his own dreams and his family's expectations. When Luis receives a life-changing acceptance letter to pursue acting, he must navigate the tension between honoring his mother's sacrifices and forging his own path, discovering what it truly means to follow his heart.

*Drama / 16 min / USA*

**MON 1:15PM PALM**

**THE OTHER ROE**

*Sponsored by Debby and Steve Nicklas*

**DIRECTOR:** Wendy Eley Jackson  
**WRITERS:** Wendy Eley Jackson, Elisa Gambino | **PRODUCERS:** Wendy Eley Jackson, Elisa Gambino, Donia Hames Robinson, Sam Pollard, Ann Rose



**CCFS SHORTS #1**

Uncover the untold story of attorney Margie Pitts Hames, the civil rights lawyer whose Supreme Court victory in Doe v. Bolton—the lesser-known companion case to Roe v. Wade—fundamentally reshaped reproductive rights in America. Restoring a missing chapter of history, the film traces Hames' courageous fight on behalf of vulnerable women, revealing the personal risks, legal battles, and cultural resistance she faced. A powerful portrait of conviction, resilience, and the quiet force of a woman whose legacy has long been overlooked.

*Documentary / 16 min / USA*

**MON 11AM PALM**

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

**THE STRAWBERRY**

*Sponsored by Kelli Lincoln and Abe Lincoln*

**DIRECTORS:** Carlos Eduardo Plummer, Kyle Plummer  
**WRITER:** Steve Brody, PhD  
**PRODUCERS:** Darien Jewel, Julian Mercado Avila



**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

When Herb Kaplan is diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer, he decides to face his final months on his own terms. Determined to reconcile with his estranged sons and find the joy he long overlooked, Herb navigates guilt, pain, and the weight of unfinished family history as he decides to say goodbye in a final act of agency over his life. A tender exploration of love, forgiveness, courage and the sweetness of slowing down in life, the film reminds us to cherish what's right in front of us before it's gone.

*Feature Film / Drama / 97 min / USA*

**MON 5:45PM PALM**

**THAT'S SO DRAG**

**DIRECTOR:** Jenny Gosnell  
**PRODUCERS:** John Pranjic, Trenton Dusablon



**CCFS SHORTS #2**

THAT'S SO DRAG celebrates small town drag through the artistry, charisma, intentionality and passion of Nala Diamond and Juicy CW. Known for bringing the party to downtown SLO with their legendary drag brunches, the two Queens take us behind the curtain, under the lashes, padding and fabulous fashion, to reveal what it truly means to embody a Queen. A vibrant, heartfelt exploration of performance, identity and community, the film captures drag as both spectacle and personal expression.

*Documentary / 25 min / USA*

**MON 1:15PM PALM**

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

# EPISODICS

## PILOTS ARE LANDING AT THE SLO FILM FESTIVAL!

New this year, we're bringing an Episodics Showcase to the big screen and celebrating new series, fresh voices, and the art of the television pilot. Get a first look at tomorrow's binge-worthy hits before they find their streaming home.



## DICK BUNNY

**DIRECTOR:** Katie Locke O'Brien  
**WRITER:** Susie Mendoza  
**PRODUCERS:** Katie Locke O'Brien, Susie Mendoza, Kim Griffin

When Max, a sleep-deprived new mom spiraling with postpartum anxiety, hits her breaking point trying to survive modern LA mom culture, an unexpected ally appears: Dick Bunny, a sarcastic rabbit hallucinated from a mysterious British children's book that arrived on her doorstep. As isolation, pressure and self-doubt threaten to unravel her, Dick Bunny becomes Max's only confidant in a world that feels increasingly unreal.  
*Comedy / 9 min / USA*

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 | DOWNTOWN FILMS | 3:45PM



## ONE FOR THE TEAM

*Sponsored by Friends of R.A.C.E. Matters*

**DIRECTOR:** Rain Valdez | **WRITERS:** Darryl Stephens, Kyle Puccia  
**PRODUCERS:** Darryl Stephens, Kyle Puccia, Liesl Wilke, Rain Valdez

When trans lacrosse standout Nico Ramirez transfers to an elite high school to protect his shot at an Ivy League scholarship, he is forced to navigate privilege, power, and conflicting feelings about his new access to a toxic boys club that finally sees him as "one of the guys." As peer pressure mounts and lines blur between belonging and betrayal, Nico must decide whether to stay silent to secure his future or risk everything by standing up for who he is.

*Drama / 33 min / USA*



## POUR DECISIONS

*Sponsored by Covelop, Inc.*  
**DIRECTOR:** Jonathan Salmon  
**WRITERS:** Jonathan Salmon, Abdi Ibrahim, Tim Mallon  
**PRODUCERS:** Jordan Butler, Abdul Kassamali

POUR DECISIONS follows the wildly optimistic owner of a failing donut shop who has one day to prove that it's worth saving. With a dysfunctional staff and a painfully misguided community fundraiser, every attempt to drum up support flops. Awkward drinks, custom donuts, and sympathy sign-spinning included. When an unexpected robbery becomes the only thing that actually works, survival comes down to luck, delusion and very bad ideas. A workplace comedy starring Holmes and Garrick Bernard, where delusional optimism, incompetence, and misplaced faith somehow keep the lights on. Barely.  
*Comedy / 24 min / USA*



## SAVAGE

**DIRECTOR:** Josh Bowman  
**WRITER:** Connor Paolo  
**PRODUCERS:** Nicholas Logan, Brittany Fallow, Bridget Regan, Tyler Shields

Directed by Josh Bowman, a desperate private investigator accepts a high-paying missing-persons case in a remote swamp town of ten residents, hoping to fund her daughter's cancer treatment. But as she digs deeper, she discovers a place where every legend is real, secrets are paid for in blood, and escape may be impossible. To survive, she must solve the disappearance and confront a dark history tied to her own bloodline.  
*Thriller, Drama / 32 min / USA*

WORLD PREMIERE



## TOO ROMANTIC

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Talia Light Rake  
**PRODUCERS:** Heavy Shovel Productions, Ashley Laconetti, Jared Haibon, Gillian Cooper, Larry Furlong, K180 Studios LLC, Topcat, Katherine Romans, Charlie Traisman, Sarah Whelden

TOO ROMANTIC asks the modern love question: What matters more—love or likes? When a collaboration between two influencers unexpectedly turns romantic, Samantha Carr's (Rivkah Reyes) perfectly curated night spirals off-script, forcing her to choose between genuine connection and the online persona she's built her life around.

*Romantic Comedy / 25 min / USA*

US PREMIERE

# MUSIC VIDEOS

Presented by Music Roadtrip  
Also Supported by KCPR

## FOR THE SIXTH YEAR IN A ROW, MUSIC VIDEOS HAVE A HOME AT OUR FESTIVAL.

We are elated to once again be able to experience and celebrate the eclectic mix of creative music videos in person in one our most unique venues to date! Enjoy a set by local band evening gowns and many of the filmmakers in attendance to talk about their films.



### ANIMUS IGNIS

**DIRECTOR:** Hwang Broz  
**WRITER:** Rui Wang  
**PRODUCERS:** Rui Wang, Yu-Ming Huang  
4 min / China



### THE THOUGHT OF ME

**DIRECTOR:** Elliot Peters  
**WRITER:** Phineas Peters (CITIZEN the Artist)  
**PRODUCER:** Phineas Peters  
3 min / USA



WORLD PREMIERE

### DRIVE YOU LIKE A CADILLAC

**DIRECTORS:** Ryan Maw, Sacha Carlson, Skyler Poiley  
**WRITERS:** Ryan Maw, Sacha Carlson  
**PRODUCERS:** Ryan Maw, Sacha Carlson, Steve Mead, Shannon Rhodes  
7 min / USA



### TOPANGA CANYON

**DIRECTORS:** Nikki Lorenzo, Lauren Withrow  
**WRITER:** Nikki Lorenzo  
**PRODUCER:** Kelly Silva  
4 min / USA



WORLD PREMIERE

### FISHBOWL

**DIRECTOR:** Jonah Moshammer  
**WRITER:** Maria Donjacour  
**PRODUCERS:** Jonah Moshammer, Maria Donjacour  
5 min / USA



US PREMIERE

### WE COLLIDE

**DIRECTOR, WRITER:** Rupert Höller  
**PRODUCERS:** Sarah Zaza, Sabine Tatzgern  
4 min / Austria



WEST COAST PREMIERE

### SIDE BY SIDE

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Gabriela Mo  
**PRODUCER:** Karin Nantes  
4 min / Brazil



### WON'T BE AROUND

**DIRECTOR:** Terry Blade  
**WRITERS:** Terry Blade, Bobby Cole  
**PRODUCERS:** Terry Blade, Larry Robertson, Cotton Bro, Bobby Cole  
3 min / USA

SATURDAY, APRIL 25 | MASONIC LODGE  
DOORS OPEN | 7PM  
MUSIC STARTS | 7:30PM

After the screening, stay for our juried Music Video Awards along with a conversation with all of our attending Music Video Filmmakers!

\$15 General  
\$12 Student + Palmie Members  
All passes accepted.

**STAY TRUE: IN AN INTENTIONALLY CONFUSING WORLD, TRUTH MATTERS, INCLUDING TRUTH TO SELF.**

These five short films tell stories of people who stay true to what motivates them, inspires them, feeds them, heals them. Programmed by R.A.C.E. Matters SLO.



## THE BADDEST SPEECHWRITER OF ALL

Sponsored by NAACP San Luis Obispo Branch and Agape Church SLO

**DIRECTORS:** Ben Proudfoot, Stephen Curry  
**PRODUCER:** Stephen Curry, Erick Peyton, Ben Proudfoot

Directed by NBA Champion Stephen Curry and Academy Award winner Ben Proudfoot, THE BADDEST SPEECHWRITER OF ALL dives into the life of Clarence B. Jones, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s trusted lawyer and speechwriter, as he reflects on the personal cost, moral reckoning, and unexpected truths behind making history. Explore an intimate insider's view of the Civil Rights Movement through the eyes of the man who helped craft the opening lines of the iconic "I Have a Dream" speech and recounts the pivotal choice between a secure, successful life and a path of purpose that would help shape a nation.

Documentary / 29 min / USA



## BOOK OF GEORGE

Sponsored by The Allen Family and Compelling Vision

**DIRECTOR:** Danny Schmidt | **WRITERS:** Danny Schmidt, Chris Naum  
**PRODUCERS:** Danny Schmidt, Hayley Nenadal, Clay Barron, George McKenzie Jr. From street violence in Brooklyn to the pages of National Geographic, George McKenzie Jr. finds purpose behind a camera. Trading a gun for a lens, McKenzie transforms a life shaped by violence into one driven by vision, photographing everything from urban wildlife to elusive Florida panthers. As one of the few Black photographers in the predominantly white world of wildlife conservation, he's not only reframing nature through his work, but empowering kids of color to see themselves as stewards of the natural world and claim futures once thought out of reach.

Documentary / 15 min / USA

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 | PALM  
FILMS START | 1:30PM

Pay What You Want, Proceeds go to supporting R.A.C.E. Matters.



## THE BOYS AND THE BEES

Sponsored by The Wilkins Family and Friends of R.A.C.E. Matters

**DIRECTOR:** Arielle Knight | **PRODUCER:** Sean Weiner

On an idyllic farm in rural Georgia, THE BOYS AND THE BEES follows a beekeeping family as parents tenderly share the art of tending hives with their young sons. Through the rhythms of the seasons, the boys learn lessons of care, patience, courage and connection to the natural world. Bees, nature, and family intertwine to tell a deeper story of a family rooting themselves in the land and restoring the severed bond between Black communities and stewardship of the land within a changing planet.

Documentary / 19 min / USA



## FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Sponsored by R.A.C.E. Matters and L. Cherry and C. Bell

**DIRECTOR/WRITER:** Chisom Chieke

**PRODUCER:** Justice A. Whitaker

A heartfelt romantic dramedy about love, ambition, and the pressure of expectations. FOOD FOR THE SOUL follows Ada Eze, a first-generation Nigerian American artist who has secretly dropped out of medical school to pursue painting, while her fiancé Trey Williams, a Black American game designer, fights to prove his creative career is more than a dream. As their playful, steady love collides with family pressures and cultural tensions, they must decide whether to live for approval or for themselves.

Drama, Comedy / 18 min / USA



## ¡QUE SUENE LA BANDA!

Sponsored by Jeff and Kerry Heller and Susan Rodriguez - State Farm Insurance

**DIRECTOR:** Jorge Parra Jr.

**WRITERS:** Jorge Parra Jr., Ling Li

**PRODUCER:** Meghan Truax

As Javier, a classically trained trombone player, prepares for a pivotal college audition, he's asked to perform with his father's banda group, forcing him to confront the cultural roots he's tried to keep quiet at his elite private school. When a video of the performance circulates among his peers, embarrassment erupts into a painful rift between father and son. To move forward in music and life, Javier must reconcile youthful ambition with family, heritage, and the sound he's been running from.

Drama, Romance / 23 min / USA

# FILMMAKERS OF TOMORROW

Sponsored by Mark Buchman, Schoolyard Communications

Now in it's 20th year, this program continues to inspire youth filmmakers from around the world to share their talents with our festival audience. This showcase presents some of the very best films submitted this year from around the world by under 18 filmmakers in Elementary, Middle and High School.



## CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Eden Adams, Aidan Rutman, Eli Mayer  
5 min / California

## FIND ME IN THE VOID

Denver Humphrey, B.P. Edwards, Jimmeke Anderson, Sierra Davis, India Walton, Muhyi Ali, Lauren McGarrett  
7 min / Florida

## THE GRIMM TRUTH

Mason Graham, Jaden Samuel, Adam Almarez  
6 min / Santa Maria, CA

## JUST ONE MORE

Bingqing Liu  
4 min / China, Singapore

## LATE FOR A DATE

Jupiter Chapman, Dexter Shaffer, Ivor Gallaher, Kusha Matewere  
3 min / Virginia

## LUISA

Kiyomi DallasKidd  
3 min / California

## MODELING

Rishan Sathiyaa, Easun Hung  
3 min / California

## OVERWHELMING

Wyatt Harrington, Emma Reasner  
4 min / Nipomo, CA

## THE PARK

Ella Bettencourt  
6 min / Morro Bay, CA

## PEACE OF MIND

Bluebelle Saraceno, Aglaya Semenova, Eli Miller, Blues Saraceno, Dena Saraceno  
6 min / California

## PRO

Ray Peng, Xiaoyi  
6 min / China

## THE PSYCHIC ARTS ACADEMY

Kayla Cache, Cohen Murphy, Cassie Chen  
7 min / New Zealand

## SHATTERED

Zhixin Yang, Boyuan Li.  
6 min / Shanghai, China

## SIGNAL

Sakura Sato, Clodagh Connolly  
2 min / Canada

## THE WHEELCHAIR

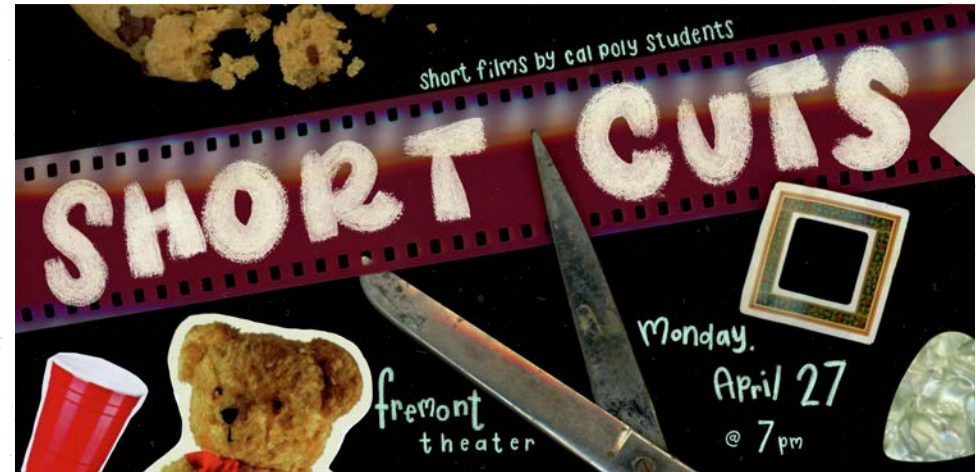
Clara García, Mariano Reinaldos, Santiago Pajares  
6 min / Spain

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 | DOWNTOWN  
FILMS START | 1:30PM

\$15 General  
\$12 Student + Palmie Members  
All passes accepted.

# CAL POLY SHORTS CUTS

Sponsored by Cal Poly: The Center For Expressive Technologies, Cal Poly: Department of Interdisciplinary Studies In The Liberal Arts and Cal Poly: Art And Design Department



SHORT CUTS features 6 short films created by Cal Poly students under the mentorship of Randi Barros, filmmaker and ISLA Lecturer, and James Werner, artist and Professor of Art & Design. Engage with emotionally charged stories exploring love, loss, discovery, and unexpected moments of connection. See tomorrow's filmmakers at work today.

## CAREER FAIR

When two college roommates set their sights on the same organization presidency, a house party spirals into a messy networking event.

## FLATLINE

Pulled from the bright lights, sounds, and emotions of a college party by a late-night phone call, a young man returns home to confront the strange, quiet aftermath of loss, where grief refuses to behave the way it's supposed to.

## GIRL NEIGHBORS

After inviting the new girls across the street over for a game night, two roommates feel their carefully planned evening start to slip out of their control.

## PEN PALS

A grandmother and granddaughter exchange letters, discovering connection and similarity even as one of them nears the end of her life.

## SQUARES

When a young woman becomes obsessed with the anonymous author of a mysterious café notebook, her fantasy romance begins to unravel her real friendship.

## TEDDY

When a young, spunky girl faces a disconnection within her family, she wants nothing more than to play with her brother's old teddy bear or, maybe even better, her brother himself.

MONDAY, APRIL 27 | FREMONT  
FILMS START | 7PM

\$12 General / \$5 Student  
All passes accepted.

# SHORTS PROGRAMS

## SHORTS #1: PEAK JOURNALISM (91 min)

Five films with storytelling at the highest level, providing news, perspective, and more than a little fun.

**LOVE BIRDS**  
**A MAN WHO TAKES PICTURES OF FLOWERS**  
**OH WHALE**  
**THE RIGHT FIT**  
**SWIM SISTAS**

**FRI 2:15PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SUN 6PM DOWNTOWN**

## SHORTS #2: WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND (70 min)

Emotionally layered films covering memory, grief, identity, and silence.

**FAR FROM THE PLAINS**  
**OLIVE**  
**STILL STANDING**  
**VULTURES**  
**WHAT IF THEY BOMB HERE TONIGHT?**

**SAT 7PM PALM**  
**SUN 10:30AM DOWNTOWN**

## SHORTS #3: THE SPACE BETWEEN US (68 min)

Five stories about friendship, love and pain, proving that distance is not just geographical.

**EVERYTHING MUST GO**  
**FACADE**  
**FAMILIAR STRANGER**  
**NEVER NEVER NEVER**  
**SUMMER TRIANGLE**

**SAT 10:45AM PALM**  
**SUN 12:45PM DOWNTOWN**

## SHORTS #4: THE FANTASTICAL (75 min)

Discovering who you are when the world gets bigger than you ever imagined.

**EM & SELMA GO GRIFFIN HUNTING**  
**I HAVE WINGS BUT I CANNOT FLY**  
**LONG'S LONG LOST & MINI MART**  
**MY ONLY FRIEND IS A ROBOT**  
**NAMED BEANS**  
**TETHERED**

**SAT 4PM DOWNTOWN**  
**TUES 11:30AM PALM**

## ADDITIONAL SHORTS PROGRAMS:

**CAL POLY SHORT CUTS** (p59)  
**R.A.C.E. MATTERS SHORTS** (p56)  
**EPISODICS** (p52)  
**MUSIC VIDEO SHOWCASE** (p55)  
**FILMMAKERS OF TOMORROW YOUTH SHOWCASE** (p58)

## SHORTS #5: STORIES FROM THE AMERICAS (85 min)

Explore culturally rich stories from the US, Mexico, Canada, and Colombia.

**AKABABURU: EXPRESSION OF ASTONISHMENT**  
**BOYFIGHTER**  
**LA MAYORDOMÍA**  
**RAMÓN WHO SPEAKS TO GHOSTS**  
**VOICES FROM THE ABYSS**

**SAT 1:15PM PALM**  
**MON 4:30PM DOWNTOWN**

## SHORTS #6: RED EYE CINEMA (82 min)

*Sponsored by Megan's Organic Market*  
Programmed by MicroHorrors — Join us as faith, greed, survival, motherhood, and control take centerstage in five genre-shorts from around the world.

**BENNY'S SECOND BIRTHDAY**  
**BREADSONG**  
**THE LAST SNOW**  
**MINE**  
**THE VEIL**

**FRI 8PM DOWNTOWN**  
**SAT 7:15PM DOWNTOWN**

## CENTRAL COAST SHORTS #1 (48 min)

**AUGUSTINE ESCALANTE: HOMETOWN HERO**  
**LEMON**  
**THE OTHER ROE**  
**MON 11AM PALM**

## CENTRAL COAST SHORTS #2 (57 min)

**THE COVER UP**  
**MI VIDA. MI FUTURO**  
**THAT'S SO DRAG**  
**MON 1:15PM PALM**

## CENTRAL COAST SHORTS #3 (51 min)

**THE GREAT AMERICAN MELODRAMA**  
**THE LAST ACT**  
**MAY I PUT YOU ON HOLD?**  
**MON 3:30PM PALM**

# PANELS AND WORKSHOPS

Presented by New Times

Learn from the pros! Panels take place at the Festival Lounge and are free to all passholders or \$5 for general admission.



Director, Shih-Ching Tsou on set of *Left-Handed Girl*

## PANEL #1: FINANCING, PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION

Hear from filmmakers and industry experts on financing, packaging, and selling independent films. Max Geschwind (CAA), Jennifer Montgomery and Andrew Davis (Director and Producer of *THIS TEMPTING MADNESS*).

**SAT 10:30AM LOUNGE**

## PANEL #2: BEYOND THE FARM

Listen to *FORK IN THE ROAD* filmmakers and local farmers as they discuss small scale farming, sustainable food systems and the community benefit of storytelling.

**SAT 1PM LOUNGE**

## PANEL 3#: SOCIAL IMPACT STORYTELLING

Join the filmmakers from episodic *ONE FOR THE TEAM* for a discussion on the changing narrative in LGBTQIA+ stories.

**SUN 10:30AM LOUNGE**

## PANEL #4: THE NEW MODEL FOR LOW BUDGET FILMMAKING

A discussion on attainable budget and production models for indie films, with Shih-Ching Tsou, Director of *LEFT-HANDED GIRL* and Producer of *The Florida Project*, *Red Rocket* & *Tangerine*.

**SUN 12:30PM LOUNGE**



It all happens downtown.  
Shop • Explore • Dine • Discover

Downtown SLO Farmers' Market: Every Thursday at 6 PM, Higuera Street

DowntownSLO.com



**SLO LIFE TIP #14** }

# DITCH THE CAR.

In SLO, it's easy to roll from scene to scene while keeping things green. When you walk, bike or rideshare between SLO Film Fest venues, you can focus on your next step instead of your carbon footprint.

**BONUS FEATURE:** Visit SLO's Keys for Trees program donates a portion of your hotel room charge to plant trees in our community, so you're helping us grow closer to our goal of carbon neutrality by 2035 by simply staying here.



**SCAN TO  
LEARN MORE**

SUSTAINABLE  
**SLO**  
A Visit San Luis  
Obispo Program

Visit  
San Luis  
**Obispo**  
Live the SLO Life

