

4th Annual New York Baltic Film Festival (NYBFF) is approaching

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The Fourth Annual New York Baltic Film Festival (NYBFF) presented by Scandinavia House: The Nordic Center in America returns in 2021 as a hybrid festival with both in-person and virtual screenings on November 3-14. This year, the festival will feature eleven feature films and one TV series with three International premieres, four North American premieres and one U.S. premiere, two New York premieres, and one East Coast premiere. Filmmakers will be present at a number of the premieres to participate in Q&A's after the screenings.

The festival will kick off on Wednesday, November 3 at Scandinavia House (58 Park Ave., NYC) with the East Coast premiere of *Goodbye Soviet Union* (Estonia, Finland), a playful, nostalgic, and thoughtprovoking comedy that follows the life and misadventures of Johannes and his eccentric Ingrian-Finnish family in the waning days of the Estonian Soviet Republic. Lauri Randla's debut feature won the Audience Award at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival last year.

The film perfectly embodies this year's festival theme: Adaptation and Resistance. Jūle Rozīte, the festival's Head of Programs, states: "These past two years have thrown us all off course and forced us to rethink our daily routines, expectations, and future plans. But this is not the first time in recent history that the Baltic States have had their daily lives turned upside down. And by delving deeper into these stories maybe we can learn a thing or two."

The theme of Adaptation and Resistance recurs throughout this year's program, including narrative features such as the North American premiere of *Runner* (Lithuania, Czechia), a punchy and dynamic drama about love on the run; U.S. premieres of *In The Mirror*, Latvian auteur Laila Pakalniņa's modern reimagining of the Snow White fairytale, and the wacky genre gem *Kratt*, a gleefully chaotic and absurd dark take on an Estonian myth; the International premiere of the first Latvian western *Wild East*; and New York premieres of historical spy thriller *Dawn of War* (Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania) and the visually dazzling murder mystery *Isaac* (Lithuania), both of which grapple with personal culpability in the atrocities of WWII. The festival will also present the International premiere of the first two episodes of TV miniseries *Emilija – Queen of the Press* (Latvia), a '20s period drama about Emilija Benjamiņš, Latvia's most powerful press and fashion magnate of the interwar years.

The festival line-up also includes feature documentaries, such as the North American premiere of *A Year Full of Drama* (Estonia) about a woman who has never been to the theater tasked with seeing every play produced in the country; the International premiere of *Tree Opera* (Latvia) about staging an unconventional opera in a wild forest in Finland, and the North American premiere of *Gentle Warriors* (Lithuania, Estonia), tracking the physical and emotional transformation of women military service volunteers when conscription for men was reintroduced in Lithuania; and *The Jump* (Lithuania), a stranger-than-fiction story of a Lithuanian sailor attempting to defect from the USSR by jumping on board an American ship off Martha's Vineyard at the height of the Cold War.

The Opening Night celebration at Scandinavia House on November 3 will start with the Goodbye Soviet Union screening at 7 PM, followed by a filmmaker Q&A and the Opening Reception, open to VIP passholders and special guests. Goodbye Soviet Union will have an encore in-person screening on Saturday, November 6, 12 PM and will be available via streaming to Virtual passholders from Sunday, November 7th.

November 3-7, festival in-person screenings and events will take place at Scandinavia House in New York, presented in accordance with new Covid-19 safety guidelines and protocols. Following the success of last year's festival, the online version will once again be available to viewers all across the U.S. via a streaming platform from November 5-14.

FESTIVAL LINE-UP

DAWN OF WAR (O2, Dir. Margus Paju, Estonia/Finland/Latvia/Lithuania, 2020, Narrative)

*New York Premiere

An Estonian intelligence officer is tasked with tracking down a Soviet double agent on the eve of WWII.

EMĪLIJA – QUEEN OF THE PRESS (Emīlija. Latvijas preses karaliene, Dirs. Andis Mizišs, Kristīne Želve, Latvia, 2021, TV series) *International Premiere

The true story of Emīlija Benjamiņš, a woman who was in turns exalted, envied, hated, and adored. She built a press and fashion empire, but ultimately not even her wealth and influence could save her from her fate.

GENTLE WARRIORS (Švelnūs kariai, dir. Marija Stonytė, Lithuania/Estonia, 2019, Documentary) *North American Premiere

Three young women who volunteered for military service in Lithuania experience physical and emotional transformation as they learn to become responsible for their own faith and happiness.

GOODBYE SOVIET UNION (Hüvasti, NSVL, dir. Lauri Randla, Estonia/Finland, 2020, Narrative) *East Coast Premiere

A nostalgic coming-of-age comedy about the misadventures of Johannes and his eccentric Ingrian-Finnish family in the waning days of the Estonian Soviet Republic.

IN THE MIRROR (Spoguļī, dir. Laila Pakalniņa, Latvia/Lithuania, 2020, Narrative)

*U.S. Premiere

Once upon a time, there was Snow White and her father, when along came a gym-obsessed stepmother, and countless selfies.

ISAAC (Izaokas, dir. Jurgis Matulevičius, Lithuania, 2019, Narrative) *New York Premiere

A Soviet-style film noir about complicity and murder in the dying days of WWII. An investigation decades later and mounting guilt distorts the line between memory and fiction.

THE JUMP (Šuolis, dir. Giedrė Žickytė, Lithuania/Latvia/France, 2020, Documentary)

In 1970, just off the coast of Martha's Vineyard, Lithuanian sailor Simas Kudirka jumped off his Soviet vessel onto a U.S. coast guard cutter and requested asylum. His leap for freedom set off a chaotic series of events, leading to one of the biggest political standoffs of the Cold War.

KRATT (dir. Rasmus Merivoo, Estonia, 2020, Narrative) *U.S. Premiere

Two city kids, one Estonian village, zero smartphones. When they are dropped off at Granny's house, a brother and sister find

instructions on how to build a mythological servant. The only piece of the puzzle missing is a human soul...

RUNNER (Bėgikė, dir. Andrius Blaževičius, Lithuania/Czechia, 2021, Narrative)

*North American Premiere

Maria is frantically searching for her boyfriend who is missing after his latest psychotic episode. Armed with patience and love, she chases down clues throughout the city, but the real story keeps evading her.

TREE OPERA (Koku Opera, dir. Mārtiņš Grauds, Latvia, 2020, Documentary)

*International Premiere

A group of Latvian artists stage an unconventional opera in the middle of a wild Finnish forest, reimagining our relationship with the natural world and the genre in the process.

WILD EAST (Kur vedīs ceļš, dir. Matīss Kaža, Latvia, 2021, Narrative) *International Premiere

The first Latvian Western mixes scheming aristocrats, runaway brides, and a missing inheritance with intrigue, shotguns and sailboats. Where will this road take us?

A YEAR FULL OF DRAMA (Aasta tāis draamat, dir. Marta Pulk, Estonia, 2019, Documentary) *North

American Premiere

A young woman who has never been to the theater takes on an ambitious experiment to spend a year immersed in drama as she tries to find her place in the world.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK BALTIC FILM FESTIVAL

Established in 2018, the New York Baltic Film Festival is presented and organized by Scandinavia House in collaboration with the Consulate General of Estonia, Consulate General of Lithuania, and Daris Delins, former Hon. Consul for Latvia in New York, Financial support for the festival comes from the Estonian Film Institute, National Film Center of Latvia, and Lithuanian Film Center, with additional sponsorship by the Lithuanian Culture Institute, American Latvian Association, LV-100, Printful, PBLA Culture Fund, Lithuanian Foundation, Embassy of Latvia in Washington DC and the Permanent Mission of Latvia to the United Nations in New York.

More information: balticfilmfestival.com

For program announcements, please subscribe to the festival newsletter at balticfilmfestival.com and Scandinavia House newsletter at scandinaviahouse.org. For more immediate updates, follow NYBFF on Instagram and Facebook.

<https://www.nkc.gov.lv/en/article/4th-annual-new-york-baltic-film-festival-nybff-approaching>