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## **The Garden State Film Festival Returns**

*A Love Affair of Cinema!*

**Asbury Park, N.J. March 2, 2022** – The Garden State Film Festival (GSFF), returns for its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition March 23 to 27 for in-person events, as well as the new virtual showcase March 28 to April 3—a total of 12 days of cinema screenings and events.

In 2020, the GSFF became the first festival to switch to an all-virtual format as a result of the pandemic, and we returned in a hybrid in-person/virtual iteration in 2021. For 2022, GSFF offers cineastes the chance to once again enjoy in-person premieres, parties and seminars. Alternatively, the virtual ticket allows you to screen your choice of numerous titles anytime within the virtual week. It's the ultimate hybrid of entertainment!

This year, the festival will offer 200 films comprising both feature-length and short dramas, thrillers, comedies, documentaries, student films, foreign films, videos and web series, music and more! Live events will include seminars, filmmaker interviews, the Friday Night Gala and the finale awards presentation. Additionally, for the 20th anniversary, the festival has announced the Kevin Smith Home Grown Feature Award, named in honor of Jersey's own celebrity filmmaker and his determination to make his Hollywood dreams come true.

Additionally, the Asbury Lanes will host "Meet the Filmmaker" on **Thursday, March 24, 2022**, which offers guests a sneak peek at the festival's full line-up of films and special events. A reception prior to the screening includes a cash bar and complimentary hors d'oeuvres. Additionally, Industry Days returns to connect Tri-State area-based and visiting filmmakers with the public during panels, workshops, master classes, and networking events.

The Friday Night opening film is the Irish dark comedy "Redemption of a Rogue," about a man named Jimmy who intends to hang himself, until he learns that his father's will states that he cannot be buried on a wet day. Stuck in a "Groundhog Day"-like purgatory, days roll into weeks as Jimmy seeks redemption, with plenty of laugh-out-loud twists.

Among this year's other offerings are "Graceland," a short starring Anna Camp ("Pitch Perfect") about a Southern mom whose life is all shook up when her fourth grader claims to be the reincarnation of Elvis Presley. There's also "Fourth Grade," starring William Baldwin and Mena Suvari in a comedy about what happens when parents react to a brick of weed being found in a fourth-grade classroom.

Important documentaries this year include "Absolute Power: Nasdaq Exposed," about the Nasdaq's vengeful assault on longtime ally and Chinese born consultant Benjamin Wey. "American Rackets" provides an in-depth look into the Mafia and the lucrative numbers operation run by Rocco "Rocky Nap" Napoli and his father, James "Jimmy Nap" Napoli, considered the father of racketeering.

“Chasing Childhood” examines the pressures and depression faced by American children in academia. Wrestling fans will love the fascinating “The Claw,” about the churchgoing family man James Raschke, aka Baron von Raschke, one of the greatest super villains in the history of professional wrestling. “The United States of Elie Tahari,” a documentary on international fashion icon Elie Tahari, will screen on March 26, with Tahari attending in person.

Closer to home, the documentary “Monmouth County, 9/11, and Its Aftermath” relates the untold story of how the Seastreak ferried survivors and first responders from Manhattan to New Jersey following the attacks of September 11.

On the lighter side there’s “Marvelous and the Black Hole”, starring Rhea Perlman, about a teenage delinquent’s friendship with a surly magician who helps her navigate her inner demons and dysfunctional family. And “Our Almost Completely True Story,” an unlikely story involving a short Jewish leprechaun, features Peter Macnicol, Tess Harper, Morgan Fairchild and Mindy Sterling.

Garden State Film Festival, New Jersey’s Premier Independent Film Festival®, sees over 25,000 attendees converge on the seaside community of Asbury Park each year. It all started as a dream by founder Diane Raver to create a 501-c-3 non-profit organization to promote the art of filmmaking at all levels. Since that time, the festival has increased to offer creative arts education programs and a forum for both local and international independent filmmakers to exhibit their work.

“Whether you attend in person or screen the films at home you will be treated to a diverse and carefully chosen selection of films, music videos,” said Executive Director Lauren Concar Sheehy. “The GSFF is a celebration of independent film that you can’t see anywhere else.”

This year, First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy, wife of Governor Phil Murphy, will serve as honorary chair.

“We hope you will join us and support our efforts in the State of New Jersey to use the cinematic arts not only to bring the best in a cultural event to our state, but to support our outreach programs throughout the entire state and throughout the year to seniors, underserved youth and our military among others” said Concar Sheehy.

The in-person Multi Pass gives you access to all in-person events (except the awards ceremony) and is just \$75. It is suggested you get these tickets in advance as it will sell out. The ALL ACCESS Virtual Pass is only \$44.99. Visit [gsff.org](http://gsff.org) for tickets, screening schedules and tons of cool info.

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