



Surprise package

The 46th Telluride Film Festival, nicknamed ‘The Show’ will take place between 30 August and 2 September, but it is not like any other silver screen industry gathering

Telluride has a population that barely scrapes over 2,500 people. At almost 3,000 metres altitude, it is occasionally inhabited by second home owners and adventure-seekers looking for fresh snow, mountain bike trails or rock climbing. But for Labor Day weekend, its population triples and the Hollywood spotlight swings 1,300 kilometres east. The festival was first held in 1974, at the Sheridan Opera House. Eventually other venues, including outdoor locations, were added.

Cannes Film Festival is a distant memory and industry players not in Venice are warming up for Toronto the following week and Oscar season. Swarms of film enthusiasts engulf the town for four days of total cinematic immersion, blissfully spending entire days in dark rooms.

Aside from thin oxygen and tiny infrastructure, Telluride is different because it does not reveal the festival program until everybody has arrived. And it always maintains an insistence that premieres have to be aired for the first time in North America.

Its audiences were the first in the watch *Juno*, *The Lives Of Others*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *The Crying Game*, *Blue Velvet* and *The Civil War*. Michael Moore’s first film *Roger and Me* was first screened here in 1989 and more recently *The Imitation Game*, *Sully*, *Moonlight* and *Lady Bird*.

Guest directors who change every year have included Errol Morris, Peter Bogdanovich, Bertrand Tavernier, Salman Rushdie, Don DeLillo, Peter Sellars, Stephen Sondheim, Buck Henry, and Michael Ondaatje. After serving

guest director in 2001, Salman Rushdie wrote that, “It is extraordinarily exciting, in this age of the triumph of capitalism, to discover an event dedicated not to commerce but to love”.

In 2018, *Roma* director Alfonso Cuarón and *The Favourite* actress Emma Stone were treated to tributes and world premieres were released such as David Lowery’s *The Old Man & the Gun*, starring Robert Redford as an escaped con; Jason Reitman’s *The Front Runner*, toplined by Hugh Jackman as a presidential candidate; Karyn Kusama’s *Destroyer*, featuring Nicole Kidman as the survivor

Above: Telluride is most famous for its winter attractions, with some of the best skiing in the world, but the Rocky Mountain town is spectacular in summer when the Film Festival – and the masses – arrive in town

of an undercover police operation; Yann Demange’s true-crime tale *White Boy Rick*, starring Matthew McConaughey; and Joel Edgerton’s *Boy Erased*, in which Lucas Hedges plays a young man forced to undergo gay conversation therapy.

Telluride likes to do things a bit differently, even asking people in the industry to design the poster for them with the sole requirement that the word SHOW be featured. This is a tribute to a large illuminated sign which says “Show” and sits outside of the Sheridan Opera House, the festival venue where the Silver Medallions are awarded.

Top: An alloy orchestra play a live score in 2018, creating a quite unique atmosphere
Above right: Known as ‘The Show’, Telluride also features an outdoor stage where film fans can enjoy the stunning backdrop



The festival pays tributes to the industry’s luminaries and provides a stage for candid discussions directors and actors. Silver medallions have gone to Penélope Cruz, Daniel Day-Lewis, Gérard Depardieu, Clint Eastwood, Jodie Foster, Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep.

Despite intense competition from both the glamorous Venice International Film Festival and the

sprawling Toronto International Film Festival to be the first to offer some of the season’s most anticipated movies, executive director Julie Huntsinger says, “There are so many good movies this year, it’s just heartbreaking that we can’t include them all. I’m just thrilled with the brand-new things we get to show.”

And unlike Cannes Film Festival, which has shut out

Netflix for the last two years, Telluride welcomes several titles from the streaming giant. “They’re pro cinema and so are we. As long as people treat cinema as the beautiful art that it is, we’re with them,” says Huntsinger, giving Netflix credit for picking up *Roma*, a foreign-language film in black and white.

“It’s breathtaking”, adds Huntsinger.

“What a genius Alfonso Cuarón is and Netflix is supporting that vision 1,000%.”

There were 35 total Oscar nominations for films played at the Telluride Film Festival in 2018.

More than 50 films will be screened in ten different venues all over town and the weekend will be jam-packed with guest speakers, symposiums, discussions and opportunities for meet and greets with the stars. telluridefilmfestival.org ■