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DOC NYC ANNOUNCES NEW COMPETITION SECTIONS AND NEW PROGRAMMING TEAM STRUCTURE; SUBMISSION DEADLINE EXTENDED TO JULY 9

June 30, 2021 — DOC NYC, America’s largest documentary festival, unveiled plans for its 2021 edition, taking place both in theaters and online November 10-18, 2021. The festival will restructure its film lineup, adding three new competition sections, and will expand roles for the programming team. The festival also announced that the film submissions deadline has been extended to July 9.

“We take inspiration from documentary filmmakers who persevere at telling stories under the most difficult circumstances,” said DOC NYC Artistic Director Thom Powers. “They’ve emboldened us to keep growing despite all the challenges of the pandemic. We look forward to welcoming documentary makers back to New York, while continuing to reach online audiences with films and panels across the United States and around the world.”

NEW COMPETITIVE SECTIONS

The 2021 festival will introduce separate **U.S.** and **International Feature Competitions** to replace its Viewfinders competition. The shift will more than double the number of films screening in juried competitions. The new competitions will highlight work from mid-career and emerging filmmakers, representing a spectrum of nonfiction styles, including observational, investigative, first-person, and more.

For work that is more essayistic and poetic, the festival will launch the new **Kaleidoscope Competition**, to be overseen by veteran DOC NYC programmer Ruth Somalo, who also serves as President of The Flaherty Board of Trustees. “DOC NYC is excited to deepen our commitment to documentaries that engage with the ever expanding potential of the cinematic

form,” said Somalo. “In keeping with the name Kaleidoscope, we’re looking for films that change our perspective and delight us.”

The **Metropolis Competition**, now in its 12th year, will continue focusing on New York stories. The section will now be led by longtime DOC NYC programmer Karen McMullen, who also works as the Director of Programming at TIDE and a Features Programmer for the Tribeca Festival. “As New York starts to emerge from the pandemic and reinvent itself, we’re excited for the Metropolis section to explore the city’s past, present, and future,” said McMullen.

In addition to the four feature competition sections, the festival will continue to curate other feature docs in thematic and stylistic sections, including the longstanding **Sonic Cinema** (on musicians), **Portraits** (for character studies), and **Fight the Power** (covering stories of activism), along with the new **Luminaries** section that will feature new work from established nonfiction auteurs. Other high profile sections that will return are **Winner’s Circle** (showcasing award winners from international festivals) and **Short List: Features**, which spotlights 15 of the year’s top award contenders.

FEATURES PROGRAMMING TEAM

The festival’s programming team includes longtime Feature Programmers **Ruth Somalo** and **Karen McMullen**, and the newly promoted **Brandon Harrison**; along with new Associate Features Programmers **Kim Garcia** and **Bedatri Choudhury**; and Program Manager **Anita Raswant**. They will work in collaboration with Artistic Director Powers to curate the feature documentary lineup that forms the backbone of the festival. While many festivals were forced to shrink during the pandemic, DOC NYC plans to present a slate of more than 120 feature documentaries and more than 100 shorts in 2021, just as it did in 2020.

In 2021, the festival will take a fresh approach to highlight the wide-ranging perspectives and insights of its programming team. Individual programmers will take lead responsibilities for various sections of the festival lineup. Additionally, each film description will be signed by a programmer, so that audiences can explore the lineup by curatorial taste.

“The pleasure of a large festival is that we can serve many different audiences and appetites,” said Powers. “The updates to our programming structure will help documentary lovers more easily find the films that match their interests and make unexpected discoveries guided by the diverse expertise of our programmers.”

NEW HEAD FOR SHORTS PROGRAMMING

Samah Ali has been named the festival’s lead Shorts Programmer. A veteran DOC NYC Associate Shorts Programmer and screening committee member, she is also the founder of Sisterhood Media and programmer for Hot Docs and other festivals. In her new role, she’ll head

up a team that includes returning Associate Shorts Programmer **DeWitt Davis** and newly hired Associate Shorts Programmer **Elyse Wang**. Ali will also oversee **DOC NYC U**, the festival's showcase for student films from several New York-based graduate and undergraduate film programs, and will take part in curating the **Short List: Shorts** section that spotlights 12 of the year's strongest award contenders.

"It's an honor to succeed the brilliant Opal H. Bennett as Shorts Programmer and I am excited to lead the shorts team into the burgeoning future hybrid festivals to come," said Ali.

NEW BEGINNINGS FOR DOC NYC PROGRAMMING ALUMNI

The festival's programming changes take place following the departure of three longtime members of DOC NYC's programming team. Jessie Fairbanks, a veteran DOC NYC Features Programmer, became the new Director of Programming for SFFILM in San Francisco this past winter. Opal H. Bennett, Shorts and DOC NYC U Programmer for six years and the festival's first Director of Filmmaker Development, was recently named Co-Producer at American Documentary / POV. Basil Tsiokos, DOC NYC's Director of Programming for seven years, is moving on to a new job that will be announced soon.

"As I leave DOC NYC for another opportunity, I know the festival will be in great hands with the fantastic programming team that we've put into place," said Tsiokos. "I'm excited to see the lineup they select for 2021."

"We cherish the time we got to work with Basil, Opal, and Jessie," said DOC NYC Executive Director Raphaela Neihausen. "They each made vital contributions to the growth of our festival and laid a strong foundation for others to follow. We're excited to find new ways to collaborate with them in the future."

SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE EXTENDED

The final film submission deadline for DOC NYC has been extended to July 9. For more information, visit <https://www.docnyc.net/submissions/>

The final deadline for submitting works-in-progress to DOC NYC's Only In New York program is August 1. For more information, visit <https://www.docnyc.net/about-us/only-in-new-york/>

Photos of DOC NYC's programming staff are available at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/75spwcs0zi4btra/AABa235n1Gef6VY3903yrKHUa?dl=0>

For bios of DOC NYC's features and shorts programmer, visit

<https://www.docnyc.net/about-us/meet-the-team>

About DOC NYC

DOC NYC, America's largest documentary festival, takes place annually in November; the 12th edition will be held in person and online November 10-18, 2021. The 2020 festival was held exclusively online, showcasing over 250 films and events with hundreds of filmmakers participating in pre-recorded Q&As and live virtual events. In addition to premiering feature-length and short documentaries, the festival's highlights also include DOC NYC PRO—a series of in-depth panels and case studies—and the Visionaries Tribute awards ceremony that honors major figures in the field of nonfiction film. DOC NYC is produced and presented by IFC Center, a division of AMC Networks.