



DOC NYC UNVEILS PROGRAMS FOR 7-DAY PRO CONFERENCE AND INAUGURAL SOLUTIONS LAB, NOVEMBER 12-19

CONFERENCE FEATURES MORE THAN 80 INDUSTRY EXPERTS

DOC NYC PRO AND SOLUTIONS LAB PASSES NOW ON SALE

NEW YORK, Oct.1, 2026 – DOC NYC, America’s largest documentary film festival, today announced the lineup for **DOC NYC PRO**, its seven-day conference dedicated to the art and business of documentary storytelling, taking place November 12-13 and November 15-19 at Village East by Angelika in New York City.

The festival also revealed the program for the new **Solutions Lab** on Saturday, November 14, a separate one-day gathering at The New School (63 Fifth Ave.) focused on collaborative problem-solving around some of the documentary field's most pressing challenges.

DOC NYC PRO and the inaugural Solutions Lab bring together filmmakers and industry professionals to strengthen and advance the documentary field. Organized around day-long themes, DOC NYC PRO convenes experts and insiders to explore documentary craft, production, business, and emerging industry trends.

The PRO conference kicks off with its popular work-in-progress showcase, **Pitch Day** (Nov. 12), featuring 8 teams presenting their early and advanced-stage projects to industry leaders for feedback. Other PRO conference thematic days include **Finding Your Story: How Ideas Become Great Films** (Nov. 13), **Final Cut: Making Your Story In The Edit** (Nov. 15), **Carrying The Film: Producers**

& Directors (Nov. 16), **Getting Seen: Distribution, Marketing, & Audience** (Nov. 17), **Sound, Image, & The Art Of Production** (Nov. 18), and **Career Sustainability: How Do We Thrive?** (Nov. 19).

New this year, the standalone **Solutions Lab**, held on Saturday, November 14, is designed as a day of collective problem-solving, combining a field-wide conversation with project-specific feedback. The morning of the event focuses on the future of funding, distribution, and audience-building through a panel discussion with a range of industry leaders, including Darcy Heusel of Outside and Douglas Dicconson of Theorem, an audience-development and U.S. distribution company, followed by intimate group conversations that encourage participants to imagine new possibilities for the field. The second half of the day shifts from big-picture solutions to individual projects. Through small-group consultation sessions with industry representatives Dawn Bonder (The deNovo Institute), Christie Marchese (Kinema), Dani Carlaw (Screen Scotland), filmmaker Byron Hurt (*Hazing*), producer Sabrina Schmidt Gordon (*Seeds*), Madeleine Schumacher (Giant Pictures) and others, filmmakers can workshop a specific challenge and receive direct feedback from industry professionals and peers.

“The documentary field is being tested right now, but it's also evolving in fascinating ways,” said Malikkah Rollins, DOC NYC’s Director of Industry and Education. “Filmmakers are navigating tougher economics, rapidly changing distribution models, and real pressures on independent storytelling. Yet the creativity, ingenuity, and determination I'm seeing across this community is remarkable. PRO 2026 is about helping filmmakers adapt, grow, and thrive in this new reality. Whether you're focused on craft, funding, audience building, ethics, or career sustainability, you'll find people wrestling with the same questions and sharing what they've learned. The strongest ideas often emerge when we're in conversation with one another, and that's what this week is about: connecting, challenging, and inspiring each other as we shape what's next for documentary.”

DOC NYC PRO is co-presented by Apple Original Films.

DOC NYC PRO takes place at Village East by Angelika at 181 Second Avenue in Manhattan. The Solutions Lab is held at Starr Foundation Hall, The New School 63 Fifth Avenue, NYC.

A PRO Day Pass can be purchased for \$125, offering access to the individual day's events. Discounted packages for any four or all seven days of PRO programming are also available; see below for details. PRO Day Passes include access to the Festival Lounge for the day, including a breakfast and happy hour for attendees (see below for a daily schedule).

The Solutions Lab pass is also available for \$125; the pass includes access to tHappy Hour at the Festival Lounge on November 14

The 2026 DOC NYC festival will start on Wednesday, November 11, with in-person screenings and events held at IFC Center, SVA Theatre, and Village East by Angelika through Thursday, November 19. DOC NYC's online screenings, available across the U.S., will begin on November 12 and continue through Sunday, November 29. The festival's film lineup will be announced in mid-October.

The DOC NYC PRO conference lineup is below. Additional conference panels will be added in the coming weeks, along with additional participants in the Solutions Lab; visit docnyc.net for updates.

DOC NYC PRO Conference Lineup, November 12-13 and 15-19

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 10:00am-4:45pm

PITCH DAY

Co-presented by Outlier Film Fund and media partner Future of Filmmaking

Our annual Pitch Day will showcase eight documentary projects spanning the **Early Stage** and **Advanced Stage** categories, giving filmmakers the opportunity to present their works-in-progress and receive candid feedback from leading industry professionals.

This year, Outlier Film Fund will present two \$30,000 awards: one to an Early Stage project and one to an Advanced Stage project. Winning teams will also receive a suite of prizes from leading film company Gigantic Studios, Sony Cameras, Think Tank Photo, and Blackmagic: DaVinci Resolve Studio to support the next phase of their filmmaking journey.

Early Stage Projects

Blindball

Directors: Carla Borrás and Jessica Massa

Kamnop, A Treasure is Waiting For You

Directors: Kanitha Heng Snow & Guillemos Roques / Producer: Christian Johann Popp

Queens Ballroom

Directors: Siyi Chen & Hansen Chenhui Lin

Winter Worm, Summer Grass

Directors: Srishti Lakhera and Amith Surendran / Producer: Srishti Lakhera

Advanced Stage Projects

Big in Gazi Baba

Director: Pauline Blanchet / Producers: Kreshnik Jonuzi and Avdi Thachi

Father Hood F*cking Cares

Director: Joel Fendelman / Producers: James Sanchez and Luke Robins / Executive Producer: Alex Dale

HEAT

Director: Aicha Cheriff / Producer: Lola Kenet and Camilla Marchese González

Newville

Directors: Pisie Hochheim, Tony Oswald / Producers: Jonna McKone

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 10:00am-4:45pm

FINDING YOUR STORY: HOW IDEAS BECOME GREAT FILMS

Against All Odds: The Making of *American Doctor*

American Doctor follows three physicians, one Palestinian, one Jewish, and one Zoroastrian, from a besieged hospital in Gaza to the halls of Congress. Director Poh Si Teng will reflect on the challenge of finding and capturing their stories while filming amid an unfolding crisis, and how those extraordinary circumstances shaped the film she ultimately made. In this discussion, Poh will share what it took to bring that vision to life: shooting in Gaza, building a production across eight countries, and preserving the film's intimate, human-scale perspective along the way.

Co-presented by Watermelon Pictures

You Have an Idea. Do You Have a Film?

Every documentary starts with an idea, but how do you know if there's a film inside it? Academy Award-winning filmmaker Morgan Neville will talk about the art of finding the story, especially when it isn't immediately obvious. Moderated by editor/director Carla Gutterrez (*Frida*), Morgan will draw on projects like *Man on the Run*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, and *20 Feet from Stardom*, he'll share how he spots narrative possibilities, follows unexpected leads, and turns big subjects into unforgettable films. A candid conversation about recognizing what makes a story worth pursuing and bringing it to life on screen.

Co-presented by Amazon MGM Studios

The Story Doula: Beyond the Logline

Every documentary begins with an idea, but not every idea can carry a film. Join Story Doula's resita heavenly cox (*Freedom Hill*) and director of the Documentary Accountability Working Group Natalie Bullock-Brown for an interactive session where pre-selected filmmakers pitch early-stage projects and receive live feedback on story, creative direction, and next steps. Through frank discussion, practical

funding insights, and collective problem-solving, participants will dig deeper than the logline to uncover a project's true potential. It's a rare chance to watch creative development unfold in real time and ask: can this idea sustain a documentary?

Co-presented by the Documentary Accountability Working Group (DAWG)

Have Celebrity Documentaries Sidelined Risky and Vital Storytelling?

What gives a documentary idea the best chance of finding support, reaching audiences, and getting made? Celebrity, in all its guises, has transformed documentary into mainstream entertainment, bringing unprecedented audiences and investment. Yet as buyers press for ever more recognizable names, many filmmakers wonder whether original, emerging, and riskier projects can still break through. Does attaching a famous subject, producer, or journalist make an idea more viable? Indiewire executive editor Ryan Lattanzio leads a conversation with filmmakers Pamela Ryan (*If Dreams Were Lightning*) and Kreshnik Jonuzi (*Enough*) about how story, audience, and market realities influence which projects move forward.

Co-presented by Gigantic Studios

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 10:00am-4:45pm

FINAL CUT: MAKING YOUR STORY IN THE EDIT

Co-presented by Andscape

The Cut, the Notes, and the Negotiation of *Road to Sankofa*

Navigating creative vision, collaboration, and studio feedback is rarely simple. How do directors, producers, editors, and commissioning partners reconcile competing perspectives while shaping a film's final form? Join director Muta'Ali Muhammad, producer Samir Hernandez, and editor Mark Fason for a behind-the-scenes look at how *Road to Sankofa* is coming together in post-production. Moderated by Mary Almonte, head of Andscape Studios, the conversation examines how difficult notes, competing perspectives, and creative disagreements are negotiated in pursuit of the strongest film.

Co-presented by Andscape

Feedback Loop: How to Deal with Rough Cut Notes

When the notes on your rough cut start coming in, how do you know what to do? Documentary editor and writer David Teague (*Pretty Baby: Brooke Shields*) takes an inside look at the art of navigating feedback. Through a case study from his own editing work, he'll show you how he excavated valuable insights from rough cut screenings, notes from funders, and team member feedback. Then, joined by editor Damian Rodriguez (*Pee-wee as Himself*), they'll discuss the role of consulting editor and share lessons on effective ways to give and receive notes that open up new ways of thinking and ignite a creative spark.

Workshopping the Edit: Collaborative Feedback for Shorts

Stuck on a cut of your short film? Unsure what's working? Selected filmmakers will share work-in-progress edits of their short documentaries and receive live feedback from UFO filmmaker support organization co-directors Sean Weiner and Arno Mokros, *New York Times* Op-Docs producers Alexandra Garcia and Yvonne Ashley Kouadjo, and the audience. Part workshop, part public edit session, this program models collaborative post-production critique, inviting everyone in the room to help the projects reach picture lock. Gain insight into the editorial decisions, creative risks, and problem-solving that shape a documentary before it's finished.

The AI Edit: What Are We Gaining, What Are We Losing?

AI is entering the edit room from every direction. Some tools can save hours of tedious work, while others promise to identify story beats, build assemblies, and help shape an edit. For documentary filmmakers, those possibilities raise both excitement and concern. Where does AI genuinely improve the process, and where does it fall short? Join editor Phillip Shane (*Being Elmo*), who will demonstrate some of the latest AI-powered editing tools, ethics expert and producer Tiffany Fisher-Love (*United Skates*), and others for a candid conversation about the practical uses of AI, the ethical questions it raises, and what documentary storytelling stands to gain or lose as these tools become part of everyday editorial practice.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 10:00am-4:45pm

CARRYING THE FILM: PRODUCERS & DIRECTORS

Protect Your Film: Permissions, Clearances & Fair Use

Nothing kills momentum faster than discovering, after months of work, that a clip, song, photo, or story element could put your film at risk. In this practical conversation, Reavis Page Jump LLP attorneys Nicole Page and Daniel Ain break down the rights issues filmmakers most often wish they'd understood from the start. From fair use and life rights, to licensing music and archival to other clearance pitfalls, Nicole and Dan will demystify decisions that affect financing and distribution. Attendees can submit their toughest rights and clearance questions in advance, and selected questions will be answered live. You'll leave knowing what needs permission, what might not, and how to protect your film before issues become expensive.

Co-presented by Reavis Page and Jump LLP

Anatomy of a Film: *Slumlord Millionaire*

DOC NYC's 2024 Audience Award-winning *Slumlord Millionaire* follows residents, activists and attorneys battling some of New York City's most notorious landlords. Join co-directors Steph Ching and Ellen Martinez and producer Nicole Tsien for a deep dive into the film's development, production, distribution and impact campaign. Get an inside look at the access, storytelling, and editorial decisions that shaped the film and hear how they turned a complex housing crisis into an award-winning documentary. Moderated by Sian-Pierre Regis, author of Firelight Media's newly released case study on the film.

Co-presented by Firelight Media's Beyond Resilience series

What Would You Do? Navigating Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Documentary

Documentary filmmaking is full of tough calls with no easy answers. When you are making a personal documentary the challenges compound. When do you pick up the camera? When do you put it down? How do you handle the unfolding great moment if someone doesn't want to be filmed, but you think they might change their mind later? What does continued consent look like when a participant's cognitive capacity is diminishing over time? In this interactive conversation

moderated by Documentary Producers Alliance leader Sarah Rachael Wainio, filmmakers Zoe Potkin (*Daddy's Girls*), Jacob Fertig (*Offcuts*) and others will unpack the real-time dilemmas they are navigating as they film their unfolding personal documentaries.

Co-presented by Jewish Film Institute

What Gets a Documentary Made?

Every documentary has to answer a few basic questions: Why this story? Why now? And why should anyone say yes? Join the team behind ESPN Films' 30 for 30, including executives Tara Nadolny and Josh Oshinsky, for a candid look at how projects break through. They'll share what helps a film get noticed, what makes a pitch stand out, and what decision-makers look for when evaluating projects. You'll hear practical advice on story, audience, access, archives, team building, and pitching. While the examples come from ESPN Films, the lessons apply to filmmakers navigating funders, broadcasters, streamers, festivals, and beyond.

Co-presented by ESPN Films' 30 for 30

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 10:00am-4:45pm

GETTING SEEN: DISTRIBUTION, MARKETING, AND AUDIENCE

Inside Elev8Docs: Marketing Insights for BIPOC Filmmakers

The market is tough for independent documentary filmmakers, and filmmakers of color often face the steepest barriers. In response, Color Congress launched Elev8Docs in 2025, a series of bold marketing experiments designed to expand distribution opportunities for nonfiction films by filmmakers of color. Join impact and marketing strategists Chana Ginelle Ewing and Javier Rivera DeBruin of little big world and filmmaker Bernardo Ruiz (*El Equipo*) for a fishbowl-style conversation on what worked, what didn't, and what's next. Together, we'll explore practical strategies for overcoming marketing and distribution challenges, with a special focus on two overlooked opportunities: breathing new life into older films and connecting the documentary ecosystem to the creator economy.

Strategy Session: Bring Your Project. Leave with a Plan

You've made the film (or it's almost finished). Now what? Who is it for, and how do you reach them? In this live project workshop, marketing and distribution strategist and Non-Fiction Hotlist founder Adam Neuhaus and social media strategist Dor Dotson will review pre-selected films in production and offer candid, real-time feedback on audience, positioning, outreach, and release strategy. Using participating projects as case studies, they'll help filmmakers think through where their films fit in the marketplace, how to build interest before launch, and how to connect with the audiences most likely to care. Leave with practical ideas and strategies you can apply to your own project.

Finding Your Film's Full Audience

The most important part of releasing your film is making sure the audience that would love it most knows it exists. In this session, Jolt Film's co-founder, Tara Hein-Phillips, offers a preview of AIM: Jolt's Audience Insight Modeler tool that models a film's audience potential and integrates audience intelligence and marketing strategy across all phases of a film's release. The presentation, which will include other guests, also offers a practical way to think about who their film is for, how to reach them, and how each stage of release can build on the last for maximum reach and impact. The tool is currently in a pilot period, with a release to filmmakers expected later this year.

Additional panel to be announced

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 10:00am-4:45pm

SOUND, IMAGE, & THE ART OF PRODUCTION

Capturing Clean Audio in Chaos: Strategies for Challenging Environments

Crowded streets. Unpredictable weather. Deafening stadiums. Great documentary moments rarely happen under perfect recording conditions. Join filmmakers from DOC NYC, Audio-Technica's sound engineer Brent Chamberlin and location sound mixer Noel Danemiller of Lock 18 for a practical conversation on how to capture clear, usable sound when the environment is working against you. Learn

strategies for recording in noisy, fast-moving, and high-pressure situations, from bustling city streets and live events to sports venues packed with fans. Experienced audio professionals will share microphone selection tips, field techniques, and troubleshooting advice.

Co-presented by Audio-Technica

Color in the Lens

"Color in the Lens" is where filmmakers get real: no talking points, no rehearsed answers. Host Iyabo Boyd sits down with two directors creating some of the most striking documentary work today – Arielle Knight (*The Boys and the Bees*) and Marialuisa Ernst (*A Place of Absence*), guided by frozen frames pulled straight from their films. Part masterclass, this panel zooms in on the choices nobody asks about: the shot that almost got cut, the risk that paid off, the rule they broke on purpose. Born from Brown Girls Doc Mafia, this is a space built to center filmmakers of color on their own terms, one still, one story, one color at a time.

Maximizing Your Camera for Infinite Possibilities

Flooded landscapes. Vanishing shorelines. Faces filling the frame. From sweeping vistas to intimate close-ups, four films will showcase the power of documentary cinematography. Despite working in radically different environments, these filmmakers share a common challenge: how to translate real life into compelling images. Join moderator/cinematographer Derek Howard (*Rapinoe*), festival filmmakers David Heilbroner and Kate Davis (*Totality*), and filmmakers from *Ephemeral* as they unpack the visual decisions behind their films, from observational moments and intimate interviews to expansive landscapes and unfolding events. Through clips, stories from the field, and practical insights, they'll reveal how cinematography shapes the way we experience a story.

Co-presented by Sony

Case Study: *Everest: The Other Side*

Follow the team behind Academy Award winning *Free Solo* attempting to document one of the world's most dangerous environments while navigating the human realities behind the venture. In this case study, moderated by Liz Nord (NYU Production Lab), producers Shannon Dill and Anna Barnes along with cinematographer Clair Popkin unpack the creative, logistical, and ethical

challenges they faced throughout production. How do you balance story with responsibility when filming people in extreme, deadly circumstances? What obligations do filmmakers have to participants, crews, and audiences when lives may be at risk? The conversation explores the production's breathtaking cinematography, the practical realities of filming at altitude, and the difficult editorial and ethical decisions that shaped the film.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 10:00am-4:45pm

CAREER SUSTAINABILITY: HOW DO WE THRIVE?

The Career Between the Credits

Creative careers are often measured by milestone moments: the exhibition, the book, the performance, the film. This conversation focuses on everything else. Bringing together filmmakers whose careers have unfolded across changing industries, life stages, and economic realities, the session explores what makes creative work sustainable over time. From community and resilience to reinvention, purpose, and paying the bills, speakers will share lessons on building a life that can support creativity through change, opportunity, and uncertainty.

Live Strategy Session for Funding Your Doc

Every documentary finds its own way to the finish line, often drawing on a mix of resources that evolve as the project grows. This workshop, moderated by funding specialist Tracie Holder, is part case study, part live strategy session, exploring how filmmakers piece together the support they need at different stages. Through a pre-selected audience submission and case studies from filmmakers including Rachel Elizabeth Seed (*A Photographic Memory*), learn how grants, sponsorships, investors, fiscal sponsorship, trade-outs, and other resources can come together to support a film from development through completion.

What Brands Will Buy (And Won't): Financing, Creative Control, and Making a Deal

Brand partnerships are becoming an increasingly common source of support for documentary projects, but these collaborations come with both opportunities and tradeoffs. Join Raymond van der Kaaij and Margo Mars of London-based brand

entertainment company Lief Entertainment Studio, filmmaker **Fiz Olajide** (*Imported*) and **David Isaac** (Chobani) for a candid conversation about what brands are looking for, how partnerships are structured, and how filmmakers can protect their editorial independence. Through real-world examples, case studies, and industry data, panelists will share practical guidance for navigating branded collaborations while staying true to the story you want to tell.

The Story Has More Than One Home

What if a feature film or series isn't the only destination for your story?

Stories evolve over years, and the road from idea to screen is rarely linear. In this conversation, documentary veterans Doug Block and Nina Gilden Seavey explore how documentarians can build sustainable creative careers by embracing multiple storytelling formats and platforms, and what strategic decisions to make along the way. They'll discuss ways to test ideas, connect with audiences, sharpen craft, and keep projects moving while larger works are still taking shape. Rather than distracting from filmmaking goals, these opportunities can strengthen stories, expand reach, and open new creative and professional paths.

TICKETS AND PASSES

Attending PRO or The Solutions Lab:

DOC NYC PRO conference events can be attended with the purchase of an individual **PRO Day Pass** for any individual day's events for \$125. Each pass also includes access to the Festival Lounge for that day, including Breakfast and Happy Hour.

- **PRO Day Pass packages** can be purchased for \$450 for any four days of PRO programming or \$749 for all seven days of the PRO conference and are available [here](#).

- **PRO Passes** are available for purchase online at www.DOCNYC.net. In-person sales will be available November 12-19 at Village East by Angelika (181 Second Avenue, open 30 minutes before the venue's first event of the day until 15 minutes after the day's last screening).

The Solutions Lab Pass, which is a standalone ticket for the November 14 event, grants access to that day's events and the complimentary happy hour in the Festival Lounge. *Please note that sales for The Solutions Lab close on October 30.* **Festival All Film Passes** are now on sale at an early bird rate [here](#).

Individual film tickets will go on sale when the main program is announced.

SPONSORS

The festival is made possible by:

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DOC NYC is produced and presented by IFC Center, a division of AMC Global Media.

To inquire about sponsor or partnership opportunities for DOC NYC, contact Executive Director Raphaela Neihausen at raphaela@docnyc.net.

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