

**\*\*FULL LIST OF FILMS AND SYNOPSES FOLLOWS\*\***



## **PLANET IN FOCUS INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL RETURNS FOR ITS 24th EDITION WITH AN ENERGIZING LINEUP**

**Festival is set to open with the Toronto Premiere of Matthieu Rytz's Sundance hit *Deep Rising* and close with the World Premiere of Toronto director Andrew Nisker's *Nuked*.**

The 24th annual Planet in Focus International Environmental Film Festival (PIF) runs from October 12-22, 2023 at the Paradise Theatre. [PlanetInFocus.org](https://planetinfocus.org)

TORONTO (September 22, 2023) – The [Planet in Focus International Environmental Film Festival \(PIF\)](https://planetinfocus.org), Canada's largest and longest running environmental film festival, has announced its 24th film lineup slated for October 12-22, 2023. This year's edition will be filled with opportunities to build community, learn from guest speakers and filmmakers, and experience films—and even a piano concert by a film director!—live. This year's PIF will run entirely in-person at the Paradise Theatre in Toronto.

“As always, we are beyond excited to offer Toronto audiences an opportunity to reflect on and learn more about environmental issues through the art of film,” said Planet in Focus' Executive Director Katherine Bruce. “So many of the issues covered in our lineup are incredibly relevant today, from social justice to activism, from sustainability to allyship. We are thrilled and very proud of what we have in store for our audiences.”

The festival will open with the **Toronto Premiere** of Canadian director **Matthieu Rytz's** deep sea documentary ***Deep Rising***, narrated by **Jason Momoa**. Closing out the festival will be the **World Premiere** of **Canadian filmmaker Andrew Nisker's *Nuked***, a documentary that follows former residents of Bikini Atoll, a nuclear test site during the Cold War, as they seek justice and accountability for their displacement and the mass contamination of the island.

Among the Canadian feature films in the lineup are: The premiere of ***s-yéwyáw: Awaken***, by **Liz Marshall** where stories of hope and homecoming intersect as Indigenous change makers learn and document the teachings of their Elders; and ***The Hearing***, directed by **Émilie B. Guérette** and **Peggy Nkunga Ndonga**, an urgent and unprecedented first-person account of one family's journey through the Canadian asylum system.

Additionally, Planet in Focus will host two special screenings to honour its Eco-Hero Award recipients. Its annual free Family Day event on Saturday, October 14 will feature a screening of ***I Won't Stand For It*** by **Caroline Bacle**, featuring **Planet in Focus 2023 Rob Stewart Youth Eco Hero Miyawata Dion Stout** who will be present to receive her award on stage. The event includes a breakfast and a selection of Canadian and international titles expressly curated for young people.

**Planet in Focus 2023 Canadian Eco Hero, Britt Wray** will attend the October 19 screening of ***The Climate Baby Dilemma***, by **Victoria Lean**. This documentary explores why many young people are citing climate change as a reason not to have children and start families, and is centred on the work of Wray.

All Access Festival passes are now on sale, ticketing and other info can be found at [planetinfocus.org](http://planetinfocus.org)

[To learn more, click here to visit the Planet in Focus website.](#)

#### **Social Media**

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#### **About Planet in Focus**

Planet in Focus is a non-profit organization whose mission is to use film as a catalyst for change by raising awareness of critical environmental issues through a variety of media-based initiatives including; the Planet in Focus International Film Festival, the Green School Tours, Eco-Film Lab, the PIF Student Film Festival, and year-round screenings that showcase the best environmental films from Canada and around the world. [PlanetinFocus.org](http://PlanetinFocus.org)

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### **PLANET IN FOCUS ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL 2023 LINEUP**

#### **\*OPENING NIGHT\***

#### ***Deep Rising* | Matthieu Rytz | USA**

*Deep Rising*, directed by Matthieu Rytz (*Anote's Ark*) and narrated / executive produced by Jason Momoa, examines the consequences of strip mining the ocean floor for metals used in clean

technologies, a rapidly approaching reality with dangerous consequences for fragile ocean ecosystems. Featuring exquisite underwater cinematography, Rytz takes a multifaceted approach to probing deep sea mining, following characters who view accessing these metals as necessary to a green future, and those who are opposed and seeking alternative sustainable solutions. The film exposes the International Seabed Authority, a secretive organization in charge of protecting and conserving the ocean's seabed, while navigating the complex interests of nation states and corporate agendas. Is the green economy doomed by ties to extractive industries, or are there truly sustainable answers to the energy crisis?

**\*CLOSING NIGHT \***

***Nuked* | Andrew Nisker | Canada**

The fallout of the nuclear testing during the past century had severe consequences. For the people of Bikini Atoll, part of the Marshall Islands, the repercussions of detonating 67 nuclear bombs on their island during the Cold War continues today, leaving mass contamination and the former residents displaced. In *Nuked*, director Andrew Nisker (*Coral Ghosts*, *Ground War*), follows Bikini Atoll Mayor Anderson Jibas on his quest to seek justice for the islanders. His goal is to hold the United States accountable to promises of assistance made to the islanders who sacrificed so much, and who want to return home. Featuring rare and illuminating archival footage of the Bikini Atoll nuclear tests, *Nuked* is an essential reminder of the cost of a nuclear arms race.

**\*FEATURE FILM SELECTION\***

***s-yéwyáw: Awaken* | Liz Marshall | Canada**

Planet in Focus stalwart Liz Marshall returns to the festival with *s-yéwyáw: Awaken*, a stirring collaboration with Indigenous multimedia changemakers Alfonso (Sito) Salinas, Ecko Aleck, Charlene SanJenko, Patti Poskitt and Özgün Gündüz. Animated by a spirit of reconciliation and infused with Indigenous ceremony, Marshall's latest film follows members of the Nlaka'pamux, shíshálh, and Scwépemc First Nations as they documenting the traditional cultural teachings and legacies of their Elders, including the impacts of genocide resulting from the Residential School system. Intimate, candid, and crafted with warm sensitivity, *s-yéwyáw: Awaken* extends a precious invitation to witness the process of intergenerational healing.

***The Hearing* | Émilie B. Guérette, Peggy Nkunga Ndona | Canada**

Following a summer that saw African asylum-seekers shamefully neglected by Toronto's shelter system—and with climate change poised to displace billions over the coming decades—*The Hearing* is essential, urgent viewing. This timely story, from Émilie Guérette and Peggy Nkunga Ndona, offers unprecedented, first-person insight into the workings of Canada's asylum system. Having fled repression in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, co-director Ndona and her family seek to rebuild their lives in Montreal as, all the while, the threat of deportation looms. Documenting her own emotionally fraught journey through the asylum process along with her husband and three young children, she invites viewers to witness their struggle against a complex and coldly bureaucratic system.

***!AITSA* | Dane Dodds | Denmark/South Africa**

The Karoo, an ancient desert region in South Africa, has become the most desirable site on the planet to build the world's largest radio telescope. Its aim is to deepen our knowledge of space, by detecting signals from the early universe. In *!AITSA*, South African director Dane Dodds explores the universe and our desire to unlock its mysteries, weaving together scientific testimony with the ancient cosmic wisdom of the desert's Indigenous Khoisan people, and other locals who detail the wounds of South Africa's modern history. Featuring stunning cinematography of the Karoo, imposing telescopes and dark celestial skies, the film questions humanity's meaning in the infinite vastness of the universe.

### ***The Climate Baby Dilemma* | Victoria Lean | Canada**

**\*Planet in Focus 2023 Canadian Eco Hero, Britt Wray will be in attendance to speak to her work and receive her award.**

While climate change has been linked to an increasing frequency of environmental disasters, climate anxiety is changing how we make decisions about our future. In the *The Climate Baby Dilemma*, director Victoria Lean (*The Last River*) explores why many young people are citing climate change as a reason not to have children and start families. Centred on the work of writer and academic, **Britt Wray**, whose research investigates how climate change impacts mental health, the film brings together stories of prominent and diverse activists and youth. While some are hesitant to have children in a time of ecological crisis, others are remaining hopeful by reframing anxiety and grief by taking transformative action

### ***How to Blow Up a Pipeline* | Daniel Goldhaber | USA**

Inspired by Andreas Malm's controversial book proposing strategic vandalism as a just response to the climate crisis, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* is an urgent and gripping feat of cinematic agitprop. Director and co-writer Daniel Goldhaber takes Malm's non-fiction treatise and reworks it into a deft thriller, centered on a crew of young activists who scheme to sabotage a conduit for Texan crude. Shrewdly employing the conventions of the heist genre, the film explores the compelling motivations of each plotter, interwoven with intense procedural sequences as they execute their daring, dangerous, and righteous mission. Earlier this year, the Alberta Energy Regulator cautioned that *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* could incite radical action, making it not only one of 2023's most riveting big-screen releases, but also, perhaps, its most provocative.

### ***Cabin Music* | James Carson | USA/Canada**

Hailed as a childhood prodigy, Edmonton-born pianist James Carson pursued his musical gifts all the way to the prestigious New England Conservatory. But a spiritual crisis would spur him to turn his back on music and prompt a two-year pastoral pilgrimage from Spain to Japan. Upon returning to his native Alberta, Carson set about building a remote, strawbale cabin where he would craft new compositions inspired by the natural wonders encountered on his travels. The symphonic, globe-spanning *Cabin Music* gives visual and sonic expression to that transformative journey. Featuring spellbinding performances and powerful, lyrical imagery, Carson's directorial debut pays tribute to the transcendent forces of music and nature.

\*A short performance by pianist and filmmaker **James Carson** will follow the screening.

### ***Biocentrics* | Fernanda Heinz Figueiredo | Brazil**

Refined by millions of years of evolution, nature's creatures and systems exhibit both extraordinary elegance and marvelous functionality. What better model, then, could a designer hope for? That's the question at the heart of *Biocentrics*, a fascinating look at the principles that guide the practice of biomimicry—a transdisciplinary approach to innovation inspired by wondrous, naturally occurring forms. Surveying biomimicry's influence on knowledge, culture, and technology, Filmmaker Fernanda Figueiredo and biologist Janine Benyus meet the international community of architects, engineers, philosophers and scientists contending with global challenges by looking to the natural world.

### ***Foragers* | Jumana Manna | Palestine**

For Palestinians, Zataar (thyme) and the wild akkoub thistle are essential plants to the cuisine. In Israel, conservation laws have prohibited foraging these plants in the wild, resulting in fines and the prosecution of many Palestinians. In a wry, humorous tone, *Foragers* depicts customs around these plants using a masterful combination of fiction, re-enactment, documentary and archival footage. Palestinian director Jumana Manna shows how these laws perpetuate the inequalities that divide Israelis and Palestinians, and how these unassuming desert plants have become symbolic to the Palestinian struggle, as joyous traditions collide with politics and ecology.

### ***After Work* | Erik Gandini | Sweden**

Beginning with the industrial revolution, humans have been on a path to becoming redundant in the workplace, as more jobs are being lost to automation, computers and artificial intelligence. *After Work* is a highly stylish and thought provoking investigation of humanity's relationship to work culture. In an astute and witty tone, Swedish director Erik Gandini travels across the globe to the US, South Korea, Kuwait, and Europe to examine different facets of values that shape work-life. Interviews with intellectuals and public figures such as Noam Chomsky and Elon Musk shape a narrative that questions how work affects our societies, and what will happen when technology takes over our jobs. Gandini asks, what could we be without work?

### ***A Golden Life* | Boubacar Sangaré | Burkina Faso**

In a time of turmoil in West Africa, Burkina Faso's financial crisis caused a rise in the country's artisanal mines. *A Golden Life* follows the coming of age story of Rasmané, a 16 year old boy working in a gold mine to provide a better future for himself. Burkinabe director Boubacar Sangaré delves into the daily life of Rasmané and other young men, who descend into the depths of the dangerous pit, hoping to find the precious metal. Filmed in a deftly cinematic, observational style, Sangaré captures the nuances of their lives, punctuating the hardship of their toiling labour by moments of true levity in their friendships outside the pit. The film creates a tender portrait of a young man making the best of difficult circumstances, in order to survive and grow into manhood.

### ***Light Needs* | Jesse Maclean | USA**

For many urban-dwellers, caring for ferns or fig trees has become a primary opportunity to commune with nature. Featuring a colourful cast of passionate plant lovers, *Light Needs* inventively explores the surprisingly intimate and complex relations that can develop between houseplants and the humans with whom they cohabit. Pondering, without pretension, such questions as what it might feel like to transform sunlight into glucose, visual artist Jesse McLean suffuses the film with warmth, humour, and a sensuous attention to detail. Exquisitely photographed, and featuring a subtly enveloping score, *Light Needs* is a generous invitation to expand one's consciousness, and to cultivate empathy for the non-human organisms that bring such vibrancy to our world.

***Silvicola* | Jean-Philippe Marquis | Canada**

An unusually intimate glimpse into the people, processes, and paradoxes of modern forestry practices, *Silvicola* is a sensorially immense contemplation on the psychic entanglement of humans, machines, and nature, set amongst the sprawling forests of the Canadian Pacific Northwest.

**\*SHORT FILM SELECTION\***

***Shirampari: Legacies of the River* | Lucia Florez | Spain**

In one of the most remote places of the Peruvian Amazon, an Ashéninka boy must overcome his fears and catch a giant catfish using just a hook to start his journey to becoming an adult.

***Tiny* | Ritchie Hemphill, Ryan Haché | Canada**

*Tiny* is a contemplative stop motion film which tells the story of 'Nakwaxda'xw Elder Colleen Hemphill's childhood. The film portrays modern day Colleen as she reflects on her past, and re-enacts the stories she tells of her youth, as a young girl growing up on a float-house in the wild and unpredictable Pacific Northwest and its waters. As she retells her story, Colleen notices how different her way of life was when she was young, and how much more harmonious her community was with nature. The film aims to celebrate the life and identity of Colleen by sharing the gift of her presence and stories with audiences.

***Keepers of the Land* | Deirdre Leowinata, Douglas Neasloss | Canada**

In the heart of British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest, one Nation is reclaiming the power they held for millennia. As the impacts of colonial exploitation and mismanagement take an increasing toll on their territory, the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation finds strength in its stories and culture, emerging as a stewardship leader in a new age of reconciliation in Canada. A powerful story of resurgence, the weight of hereditary leadership, and the responsibility they carry into the modern world told through the eyes of elder and hereditary chief Nismuutk, Ernest Mason Jr., and the new young leaders following in his footsteps.

***Ava Mocoli, The Twins* | Luiza Calagian, Vinicius Toro | Brazil**

On the conflictive border between Brazil and Paraguay a village of the Guarani indigenous people, surrounded by soy plantations, struggles to preserve their culture and territory. The arrival of twins and the prophecy that accompanies them mobilizes the community.

***Blue Wail* | Jason Lee O'Hara | Canada**

Experimental documentary which combines digital underwater cinematography (found footage/archives), with analog phytograms, interrogating the crisis of plastics in our oceans. The film's entire soundtrack was produced exclusively from plastic retrieved from our oceans, which is revealed in the closing credits.

***Soleil de Nuit* | Fernando López Escrivá, María Camila Arias | Canada**

During an astronaut training in an abandoned open-pit mine, a crew of Canadian astronauts is interrupted by an Atikamekw elder. They ask him to leave, as they are training for an important mission to the moon. The elder hesitates, but decides to leave on one condition: the astronauts must deliver a sacred message to the spirits of his community on the moon.

***Forests* | Simon Plouffe | Canada**

Eastern white pines submerged under the waters of a hydroelectric reservoir on unceded Innu territory transform into flames. This exploration between water and fire illustrates our current climate emergency through multiple stories about the relationship between a community and its land.

***Losing Blue* | Leanne Allison | Canada**

What does it mean to lose a colour? *Losing Blue* is a cinematic poem about losing the otherworldly blues of ancient mountain lakes, now fading due to climate change. With stunning cinematography, this short doc immerses the viewer in the magnificence of these rare lakes, pulling us in to stand on their rocky shores, witness their power and understand what their loss would mean—both for ourselves and for the Earth.

***I Won't Stand For It* | Caroline Bacle | UK**

Miyawata is a 15-year old Indigenous activist from Winnipeg, Canada, who never hesitates to speak up for what she believes in. To protest the injustices that her people have faced throughout the history of Canada, she refuses to stand for the National Anthem. She's on a mission to help Indigenous voices be heard and included. And she's the very first organizer of school strikes for the climate in her hometown. The climate movement in Winnipeg had big momentum... until COVID hit. Now that the end of the pandemic is in sight, can she get the movement going again?

***Do You Hear What I Hear?* | Cat Mills | Canada**

Mufflers, honks and drilling: the perpetual soundscape of Toronto. Fed up with sleepless nights, a couple of activists take the fight to City Hall in the hopes of changing the outdated noise bylaws.

***Inbetweening Beings* | Isaac King | Canada**

*Inbetweening Beings* connects animation and ecology. With projected installation, outdoor stop-motion, and found materials, humans are invited and implicated into nature.

***Spuffies* | Jaka Ivanc | Slovenia**

Spuffies have a serious thing for jubees. When they've eaten the very last delicious fruit and hunger is about to strike, they head to the jubee grove, through the murky forest.

***Pond* | Lena von Döhren, Eva Rust | Switzerland**

A shoal of herrings, adopting fantastic formations, roams the vast ocean. When seagulls suddenly attack, one small herring finds itself stranded in a tidal pool. As it searches desperately for a way out, it discovers many other sea creatures here. And now there is no time for fear: only by joining forces can they hope to defend themselves against the hungry seagull.

***Finding Our Wild* | Sid Gopinath, Aditya Joshi | USA**

*Finding Our Wild* is a doc short made in collaboration with REI-Co-Op. On a long overdue camping trip, Prabha and his son Sid find themselves working through feelings about immigration, fatherhood, and aging.

***Field Notes* | Aisha Jamal | Canada**

A woman discovers a passion for bird-watching during her pandemic isolation, which leads to an appreciation for the natural world that exists in the midst of the concrete jungle. As the birds—including a particular pair of plovers—fight for survival, she's committed to protecting their habitat and bringing awareness to their plight.