



Journal of Religion & Film

Volume 23
Issue 1 April 2019

Article 2

2-10-2019

Report from the Sundance Film Festival 2019

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Recommended Citation

Lyden, John C. (2019) "Report from the Sundance Film Festival 2019," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol23/iss1/2>

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Report from the Sundance Film Festival 2019

Abstract

Introduction to our coverage of the Sundance Film Festival 2019.

Author Notes

John Lyden became Editor of the Journal of Religion & Film in 2011. He was Professor of Religion at Dana College from 1991-2010 and is now the Director of the Liberal Arts Core at Grand View University. He is the author of *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (NYU Press), and the editor of the Routledge Companion to Religion and Film and co-editor (with Eric Michael Mazur) of the Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture. He was the 2008 recipient of the Spiritus Award for Outstanding Contributions to the study of Religion and Film.

Report from the Sundance Film Festival 2019

This year's festival boasted over 14,000 submissions—a new record---over 4000 of which were feature films. Out of these, the festival selected 112 feature films, 40% of which were directed or co-directed by a woman; 36% by a person of color; and 13% by someone who identified as LGBTQ. Few film festivals have made as much of an effort to include under-represented voices.

And that has been part of Sundance's brand since its inception. As the place where so many independent filmmakers started, it continues to offer a place where stories can be told and shown that would not appear otherwise.

Many of the films that relate to religion also focused on diversity and gender, such as *Hala* (a coming of age story of a young Muslim woman) or *Sister Aimee* (a fictionalized story of Aimee Semple McPherson that highlights the unusual power and fame she had for a woman of her day). Strong female characters are at the heart of many a film, from *Clemency* to *The Farewell*. And religious diversity and hybridization play their part, even in a charming children's film like *Abe*.

We hope that you will enjoy our reviews, and that you have the chance to see many of these films once they are distributed. We want to extend a very special thank you to Brianna Grinbaum of the Sundance Press Office for her invaluable assistance. And as always, we want to thank all the volunteers who make the festival possible by their endless hours of service. We couldn't do it without you.



Paradise Hills stars, clockwise from top left: Emma Roberts, Awkwafina, Eiza Gonzalez.

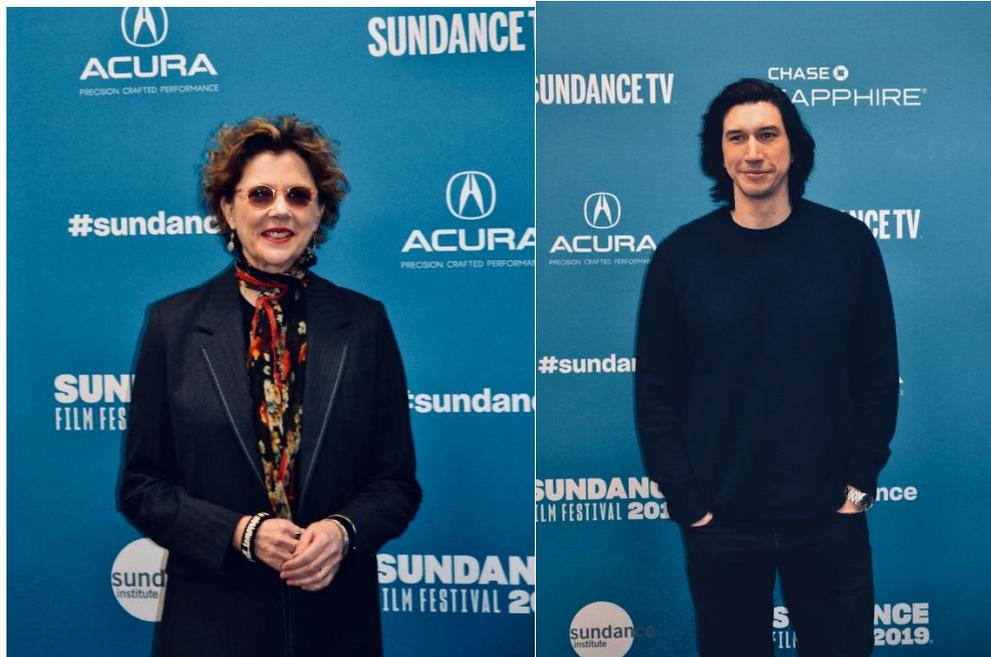
Photos by Monica Blizek.



From left: Milla Jovovich, Danielle McDonald, from *Paradise Hills*.

Photos by Monica Blizek.





Stars of *The Report*, clockwise from top left: Annette Bening, Adam Driver, Jennifer Morrison, Jon Hamm. Photos by Monica Blizek.

