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Sundance 2022 Introduction

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Sundance 2022 Introduction

Abstract

This is the Introduction to our coverage of the 2022 Sundance Film Festival.

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Author Notes

John Lyden is Professor of Religious Studies and the Blizek Professor of Religion and Film at University of Nebraska Omaha. He has been the Editor of the Journal of Religion & Film since 2011. 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 also co-edited, with Ken Derry, *The Myth Awakens: Canon Conservatism, and Fan Reception of Star Wars* (Wipf and Stock 2018).



Once again, the Sundance Film Festival was held fully online due to COVID-19. The decision to eliminate the in-person events in Park City was made just two weeks before the festival opened, but the staff made the transition in format swiftly and efficiently. We were able to see all the films we wanted to, and our reviews showcase the high quality and diverse content in the films that were shown.

The program included 82 feature-length films from 28 countries, with 39 of the 92 feature film directors being first-time feature filmmakers. 15 of the feature films and projects were supported by the Sundance Institute in development through direct granting or residency labs, and 75 were world premieres. These films were selected from 14,849 submissions, including 3,762 feature-length films. Of the 3,762 feature film submissions, 1,652 were from the U.S., and 2,110 were international.

Of the accepted features, 29 were directed by one or more filmmakers who identify as people of color, and for the second year in a row, more than half of the directors were female. In addition, 15 film projects were directed by Indigenous people.

The films dealt with a wide range of contemporary issues including racism, disability, and climate change. And they also, of course, dealt with religion.

We hope that you enjoy these reviews, and that you have the chance to see some of these films once they are distributed. Whether you see them online or in a theater, these films show that independent cinema is alive and thriving, even during a pandemic.