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Sundance Film Festival 2023 Introduction

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Sundance Film Festival 2023 Introduction

Abstract

Introduction to our coverage of the 2023 Sundance Film Festival.

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Author Notes

John Lyden is the Department Chair and Blizek Professor of Religious Studies 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).



For the first time in three years, the Sundance Film Festival was held in person, and I have to admit that it was good to be back. Audiences seemed jazzed to be able to see films in the theaters in Park City, and the reviewers for the *Journal of Religion & Film* were there among them. I was joined by Dereck Daschke of Truman State University, who returned to Sundance after a ten-year hiatus, as well as first time Sundance attendee Chris Deacy of the University of Kent, UK, who as a life-long Brit was continually amazed by the amount of snow that Utah could hold. Together we reviewed 29 feature films that dealt with everything from immigrant identity to indigenous resistance, from toxic relationships to quests for immortality, and from new religions to hospital chaplaincy. These include reviews of several of the Festival award winners, in particular, *A Thousand and One* (US Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic), *Scrapper* (World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic), *The Persian Version* (Audience Award: US Dramatic), *A Still Small Voice* (Directing Award: US Documentary), *Animalia* (World Cinema Dramatic Special Jury Award: Creative

Vision), *Mami Wata* (World Cinema Dramatic Special Jury Award: Cinematography), and *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* (Directing Award: World Cinema Documentary).

As always, our thanks go to the Press Office and especially to Tammi Rosen, Chief Communications Officer of the Sundance Institute, for facilitating and overseeing the complex schedules of both in-person and online screenings. Without their work, as well as those of the tireless volunteers, we would be unable to enjoy the wonderful cinematic offerings of the Sundance Film Festival. We look forward to returning again next year to more films, more snow, and more interaction with all those involved in delivering the best of independent filmmaking.