

## 2023 FILM COMPETITION WINNERS

### Grand Prize



Sponsored by Doña Paula | \$5000

### *Full Circle*

(USA, 2023, 100 mins)

Director: Josh Berman

Producer: Level 1, Conor Smith

*Full Circle is both an unblinking examination of the challenges of life after spinal cord injury and a celebration of the opportunity for growth that such a tragedy can present. Weaving the stories of legendary adventurer Barry Corbet's life after a traumatic spinal cord injury and the recovery of young snowboarder Trevor Kennison's following a similar life-altering event. Director Josh Berman has been shooting producing, directing and editing award-winning outdoor and action sports films and commercial work for two decades.*

**"This film provides a raw and unapologetic look at the difficulty of reinventing oneself. It is a documentary that 'goes there' - giving us hope and inspiration, but also making us deeply uncomfortable by introducing us to the difficult realities that come with paralysis. Trevor and Barry's stories capture our hearts because they represent the indomitable human spirit that moves mind and body beyond disability. Their stories of personal alchemy, and of turning tragedy into triumph, force us to ask ourselves the question posed by poet Mary Oliver, 'What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?'" - Sarah Steele, jury member**

## Best Film: Adventure



Sponsored by Aurora Expeditions | \$3000

### *Subterranean*

(Canada, 2023, 87 mins)

Director: François-Xavier De Ruydts

Producer: Cold Fingers Films, Jenny Rustemeyer

In a remarkable year, two gritty teams of hobbyist cavers are poised to break records for the longest and deepest caves in Canada. After discovering a flooded underground chamber, Katie, a daytime accountant, becomes obsessed with returning to the Bisaro Anima cave in the Rockies to push the caving depth record. At the same time, a passionate Vancouver Island team is attempting to link two tunnel systems to create the longest known cave in the country. From abyssal, muddy crawls to heart-pounding, vertical pits and underwater squeezes, these are places where no person has been before.

**"Typically, we celebrate snow-capped peaks and jagged granite edges. But this film takes us on a very different adventure – one maybe less celebrated but equally daring. From complete darkness aside from one's headlamp, the physical discomfort of going hundreds of feet down through tight passages, endless mud, not to mention the difficulty of hauling camera equipment around – everything about this undertaking embodies the spirit of adventure. *Subterranean* takes us where few films have gone before - into the belly of the earth, and in this case, into Banff's very own backyard." — Sarah Steele, jury member**

## Best Film: Environment



Sponsored by Mountain Equipment Company | \$3000

### *The Eagle With the Sunlit Eye*

(UK, 2023, 92 mins)

Director: Ted Simpson

Producer: Scout Studio, Finbar O'Sullivan

We drove it to extinction. We brought it back. Can we learn to look it in the eye? The White Tailed Eagle is one of the largest birds of prey on the planet. For generations, humans have struck an uneasy relationship with this apex predator. The return of this apex predator in Britain sparked controversy, as accusations of livestock killings quickly surfaced from Scotland's rural community. Despite no record of predation in Norway, and with an Irish reintroduction scheme ongoing, in Scotland a war of words rages on over the future of this raptor.

**"One day, will humans become the last remaining creatures on the earth? Biodiversity is critical to the future of humanity and the earth's ecosystem. Solving the human-animal conflict is a global challenge. Can we bring animals and plants back from extinction and find a way to co-exist harmoniously? This film is about the project to reintroduce the white-tailed eagle to Scotland. Through the conflicts between environmentalists and locals, this film also shows the efforts of people who try to find solutions in the face of conflict."**

- Tina Qian, jury member

## Best Film: Mountain Sports



Sponsored by Herschel | \$3000

### *Eternal Flame*

(Switzerland, 2023, 26 mins)

Director: Nicolas Bossard

Producer: MS PROD, Nicolas Bossard USA, 2022, 6 mins)

Director: Thomas Woodson

Producer: Kyle Richardson

After having climbed the Eternal Flame route on Nameless Tower in Pakistan (6200m), French BASE jumpers Eric Jamet and Antoine Pecher combine the ascent with one of the most beautiful BASE jumps imaginable. Following in the footsteps of pioneer jumpers from 1990, the duo of friends devour adventure and all it offers, beauty, power and anxiety all contribute to the experience.

**"A self-filmed epic journey to climb and jump from one of the highest cliffs on the planet, this film is an excellent story of adventure, friendship, and laughter. The film takes us on a crazy trip into the depths of Pakistan, showcasing its colourful and friendly culture. It was great to see excellent alpinists who don't take themselves too seriously. You can just imagine how difficult the self-filming would have been!"**

- Mark Sedon, jury member

## Best Film: Mountain Culture



Sponsored by Helly Hansen | \$3000

### *Leo & Chester*

(Canada, 2022, 8 mins)

Director: Andrea Wing

Producer: MMGY Origin, Aline Mayerhoffer

Leo, a sought-after rock star with a promising career, turns his back on the industry to pursue a life on the land with a herd of buffalo.

**"This film accomplishes the impossible – in just nine minutes of intense storytelling, the filmmaker captures the life-changing spiritual experience of Leo Downy who once was a rock star. The camera spans the beautiful wintry landscape of the Rocky Mountains, examining the deep bond between man and buffalo (yes, buffalo). Leo contextualizes the buffalo to tell the story of what was once thought of as ‘human progress’ but was in fact violence against peoples, animals, and nature. We see him make a conscious choice of going back to a more harmonious way of living and we are left wondering about ourselves and our own choices. A big shout out to Andrea Wing and her team for making this little gem that outshone many at this year’s festival. And to Leo Downy for doing what he loves."**

— Nandini Purandare, jury member



## Best Film: Climbing



Sponsored by Arc'teryx | \$3000

### *Reel Rock: Resistance Climbing*

(USA, 2023, 37 mins)

Director: Zachary Barr, Nick Rosen

Producer: Reel Rock, Zachary Barr, Nick Rosen, Inas Radaydeh, Tim Bruns

In the strife-torn hills of Palestine, a diverse crew of Bedouins, dirtbags and urban professionals embraces climbing as a much-needed respite from the burdens of the Israeli occupation. American writer and climber Andrew Bisharat visits the West Bank to explore his own roots and the power of climbing to transform lives.

**"So much more than a climbing film! Made before the current Middle Eastern conflict, this film offers a great explanation of Palestine's geopolitical situation and how the Palestinian people are caught up in the conflict. It shows how climbing can bring joy and hope when people don't have much. It bridges religion, wealth, and different cultures to bring people together. The film is a masterpiece of climbing story telling."**

— Mark Sedon, jury member

## Best Film: Snow Sports



Sponsored by Park Distillery | \$3000

### *The Blackcountry Journal*

(USA, 2023, 9 mins)

Director: Mallory Duncan, Patrick Elmore

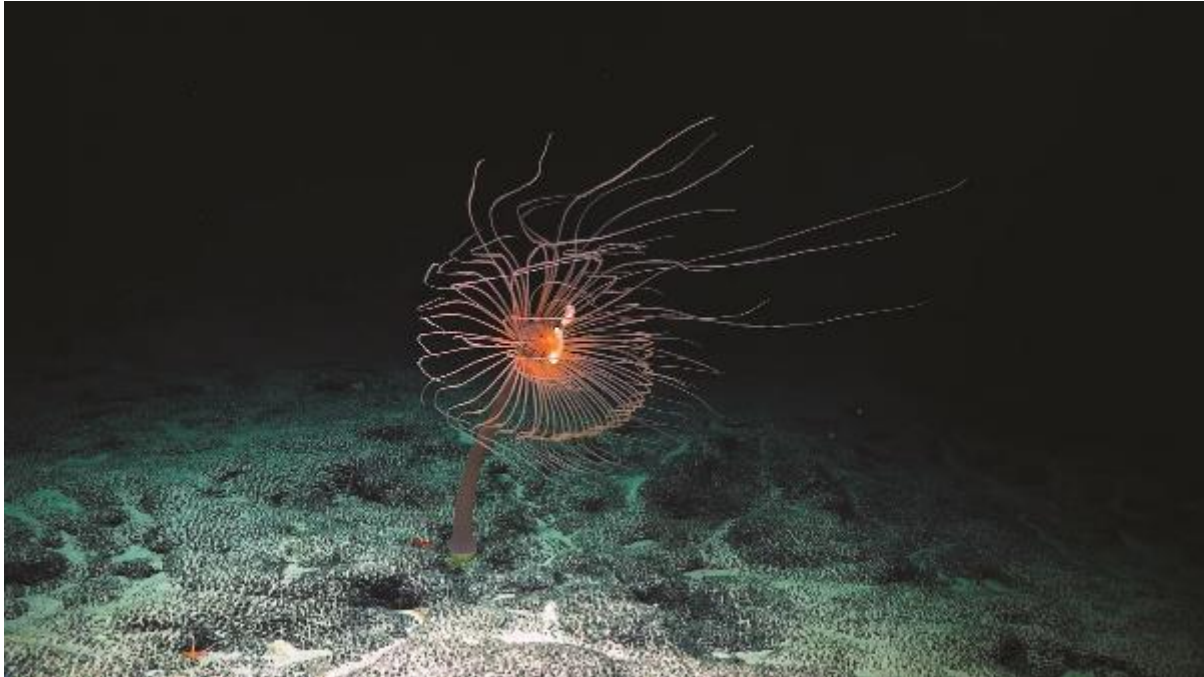
Producer: Uhuru Mountain Connections, Mallory Duncan

A skier contemplates his connection to skiing and the mountains. As he hurries through the streets of L.A., his path takes a turn after bumping into a jazz musician who helps him discover the correlation between jazz and skiing – an expression of art, skiing, and black culture.

**“Every frame of this short film is like a beautiful piece of photography. The way the filmmaker puts jazz, skiing, and black culture together is very creative. It seems so smooth and natural. The three distinct elements complement each other, and all become enjoyable individually.”**

— *Tina Qian, jury member*

## Best Feature Film



Sponsored by NRS | \$3000

### *Deep Rising*

(USA, 2023, 94 mins)

Director: Matthieu Rytz

Producer: Deep Rising PTE, Matthieu Rytz

Narrated by Jason Momoa, *Deep Rising* illuminates the vital relationship between the deep ocean and sustaining life on Earth. The documentary also follows mining startup The Metals Company, as it pursues funding, public favor, and permission from the International Seabed Authority to mine wide swaths of the Pacific Ocean floor.

**"Spectacular cinematography gives us a look into an 'alien' world right here on earth. But as we humans tend to do, we want to destroy it. Is the ocean worth saving at the expense of the electric car? Will mining the seabed simply speed up our extinction? An absorbing and compelling film that will have you thinking and talking. This film shows a solution exists."**

— *Mark Sedon, jury member*



## Best Short Film



Sponsored by DUER | \$3000

### *School of Fish*

(USA, 2022, 19 mins)

Director: Colin Arisman, Oliver Sutro

Producer: Wild Confluence Media, Orvis, Colin Arisman, Oliver Sutro

Indigenous people and salmon have been intertwined for thousands of years in Bristol Bay, Alaska. The knowledge of harvesting, preserving and sharing fish is as important here as any lesson in a book. Today, kids must not only learn from their elders how to fish, but also how to fight. For the last century, corporations have sought to extract the wealth of this rich region. Now Pebble Mine threatens to pollute the pristine headwaters of Bristol Bay. Can the next generation step up to defend the most prolific salmon run left on earth?

**"Over the past 10 years, I have been living as a grateful guest in the territories of the WSANEC Nations. During this time, I have learned about the role of salmon in local Nationhood, cultural wellness and how vital it is for the health of the land. School of Fish reveals the interconnections between one family and their commitment to salmon in the territories of Bristol Bay. This story speaks to ancestral knowledge, and the importance of present action for generations to come. It's an example of how filmmaking is a tool for self-determination."**

— Peruzzo Andrade, jury member

## Creative Excellence Award



Sponsored by Core Values Cider Co. | \$3000

### *Soundscape*

(USA, 2023, 15mins)

Director: Timmy O'Neill

Producer: Well Travelled Collective, Sarah Steele\*

*Soundscape* shares the sightless experience of climbing a mountain via echo location, touch and imagination. *Soundscape* features Erik Weihenmayer, a global adventure athlete and author who is fully blind, as he ascends a massive alpine rock face deep in the Sierra Nevada. Using expert camera work from Mikey Schaefer and emotive, novel animation from Leah Nichols to bring to life a concept by adaptive climbing pioneer Timmy O'Neill, the film is a surprising and soulful adventure.

**"At one point in the film, blind climber Erik Weihenmayer says, "There is such nuance to sound if you actually pay attention." Climbing the steep rock face, through and with Erik was a completely new and different perspective. This film creates questions and looks for answers. One question is as simple as 'Why climb when you cannot see?' Neither the protagonist nor the filmmaker court sympathy. They merely steer the viewer through an experience up close, using magnificent camera work and animation, and most importantly, communicating that sound is truly as evocative and experiential as sight; that touch conveys so much information. I never thought it possible. Timmy O'Neill, pioneering adaptive climber and maker of this film, thank you."**

— Nandini Purandare, jury member

\*Juror Sarah Steele abstained from discussion for the Creative Excellence award and was not present for the final decision making.



## Audience Choice Award



Sponsored by 11th Hour Racing | \$3000

### *Yamnuska: The Ragged Edge*

(Canada, 2023, 65 mins)

Director: John Price

Producer: Sherpas Cinema, Malcolm Sangster

Follow two modern day adventurers as they embark on a rock climbing journey through time, celebrating the rich history and folklore of one of Canada's most iconic climbing cliffs as they pay homage to the colourful characters who have etched their names into its vertical walls since the 1950s.

*Photo from the film Yamnuska: The Ragged Edge.*

## Special Jury Mention



### *Descendance*

(Austria, 2023, 32 mins)

Director: Michael Haunschmidt

Producer: Legs of Steel, Daniel Schiessl

Dennis Ranalter, aka D-Ran, is a world class free-ride skier with dual Austrian and African heritage. In *Descendance*, he considers his mountain childhood, which was full of privilege where he was alienated from his African roots. Setting out on a journey to revisit his paternal family in Ghana, Africa, he recognizes the need to celebrate multiculturalism as part of his self-identity.

*Photo from the film Descendance.*

**"This film is a powerful piece about breaking barriers - be it on skis, with oneself, or in society. With the backdrop of stunning ski footage starring professional athlete Dennis Ranalter – also known as 'Legs of Steel' – *Descendance* sheds light on the unnecessary pain caused by biases and harmful stereotypes that linger in adventure sports. This piece not only surfaces a necessary conversation around the complex nature of identity, but the need for society to change its narrative."**

— Sarah Steele, jury member

## Special Jury Mention



### *Keepers of the Land*

(Canada, 2023, 28 mins)

Director: Deidre Leowinata, Douglas Neasloss

Producer: Moonfish Media Inc., Deidre Leowinata, Douglas Neasloss

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 told through the eyes of elder and hereditary chief Nismuutk, Ernest Mason Jr., and the new young leaders following in his footsteps.

*Photo from the film Keepers of the Land, photo by Deidre Leowinata*

**"The Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival has become a gathering place for those who connect to the spirit of the mountains. Those of us privileged enough to spend time in the mountains know that if the land is well, we are well. And that Indigenous communities are leading the way in caretaking for our planet. It is a rare treasure to come across a film that not only inspires but also educates. This year's jury wants to uphold the leadership of the Kitasoo Xai'xais in their production of the film *Keepers of the Land* as a true honorary mention."**

— *Peruzzo Andrade, jury member*