

New York, New York

2010 TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
APRIL 21 - MAY 2

Film festival capital of the world, New York City is thronged by movie buffs all year round. Screening films from different parts of the world, by known and upcoming film-makers, NYC is a melting pot of global cinema.

Text Maria Giovanna

Thanks to directors such as Martin Scorsese and Woody Allen, the streets and landscapes of their (and my) native New York City (NYC) are easily recognised worldwide. Even first-time visitors feel they've been here before. But what some people don't realise is that we New Yorkers have a voracious appetite for films and film festivals—one that extends far beyond the famous bookends of the decades-old New York Film Festival (which takes place every autumn at Lincoln Center) and

the Tribeca Film Festival (Robert De Niro and Jane Rosenthal's post-9/11 brainchild, which happens every spring).

Attending these festivals gives us a chance to see the films before everyone else. Given how multi-cultural NYC is, we also get the chance to see films from all over the world that might not get distributed to our local cinemas. It's also a great opportunity to see revered (or even reviled) actors and directors up close, and to participate in panel discussions with them about the movies we've just seen.

▲ The Tribeca Film Festival, an annual spring film festival, was set up post-9/11 by Robert De Niro and Jan Rosenthal.

Films from home and beyond

No matter what time of the year, you will find several festivals running. From the most widely acclaimed directors and indie companies to smaller, more niche-market films, often about the many ethnic groups that reside in Manhattan and its surrounding boroughs—you'll find it all here. If you know something of the city's immigrant history, you might not be surprised to hear there's an annual Irish film and music festival in March called 'The Craic' (Gaelic for 'a good time'), which is held in anticipation of St Patrick's Day. But did you know there are also yearly Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Turkish film festivals? Add to the mix other festivals throughout the year dedicated to the Latino community, Asian Americans and Native Americans, and you've still only seen the tip of the iceberg.

Starting late February and running through mid-March, the New York International Children's Film Festival – one of the largest for children and teens in all of North America – includes Uma Thurman, Susan Sarandon and Gus van Sant among its jury members.



Image courtesy: New York International Children's Film Festival

▲ Above: The NY International Children's Film Festival 2010 opens with Mamoru Hosoda's *Summer Wars*.

Left: Have a good time on St Patrick's Day at The Craic.

Bottom left and right: Stills from Alla Kovgan and David Hinton's *Nora*, a film based on real incidents from the life of dancer Nora Chipaumire.

Even the niche markets have sub-niches

New York is a large enough city to host not only the annual New York Jewish Film Festival, but also the Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, which focuses on that scattered population of Jews who trace their roots back to the Iberian Peninsula, the Balkans and beyond.

Since 1993, the Film Society at Lincoln Center has hosted the New York African Film Festival, an event intended to expand awareness about African cinema and create further opportunities for distribution of these films. Meanwhile, in the same year, the African Diaspora Film Festival was also being launched to "shine a different or comprehensive light on African Diaspora life and culture—no matter what the filmmaker's race or nationality."

While the Lesbian and Gay Film Festival has been running since 1988, did you know there's also a Queer Black Cinema festival, too?



Image courtesy: The Craic



Image courtesy: The African Diaspora Film Festival



Image courtesy: The New York Surf Film Festival

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Beyond nationality, age group or orientation, there are festivals to suit various interests and walks of life. For science geeks or the merely curious, the Imagine Science Festival was established to promote collaboration between scientists and filmmakers, with the ultimate goal of “making science accessible and stimulating to a broader audience.” Last year’s audience award winner, Jim Capobianco’s *Leonardo*, chases away any stereotypical expectations of glass beakers or technicians in white lab coats. Instead, it is a charming animated short film that portrays the innovative da Vinci observing birds in flight and applying what he sees to his own historic work at the drawing board.

For the past four years, Fordham Law School has hosted screenings of law-related films and discussions afterward with legal professionals as well as filmmakers and writers.

We even have our own Surf Film Festival. For landlubbers who think it would be more apropos, say, on the West Coast, festival co-founder Morgan Berk explains: “The NYSFF was founded because the East Coast is the red-headed stepchild of the



Image courtesy: New York International Children's Film Festival

▲ Above: A still from Hosoda’s *Summer Wars*.

Top left and right: The New York Surf Film Festival showcases short and feature length films, including cult classics by well-known surf filmmakers.

The New York City Mayor’s Office of Film, Television and Broadcasting maintains and regularly updates a list of film festivals:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/film/html/links/index.shtml>

A quick glance at the months ahead:

New Directors/New Films Festival: March 24–April 4

GenArt Film Festival: April 7–13

New York African Film Festival: April 7–13

Tribeca Film Festival: April 21–May 2

New York City Mental Health Film Festival: April 25

Bosnian–Herzegovinian Film Festival: May 14–15

surf industry. NYC, Long Island and New Jersey are blessed with miles of coastline on the Atlantic Ocean and get their fair share of pumping swell. While seemingly a fish out of water, the NYSFF is actually in the centre of a thriving international surf community. Surf films should be given a proper screening in a movie theatre, not a crowded, noisy bar like in the rest of the world. Our mission is to bring this to light to filmmakers, and create a pilgrimage for the surf industry.”

The *desi* angle

Given how prominent the Indian community in NYC has become in the last decade, it was only a matter of time until the *desi* presence was felt on the film festival circuit. In 2001, Aroon Sivdasani’s Indo-American Arts Council held its first film festival with luminaries like Ismail Merchant, James Ivory and Madhur Jaffrey present. The yearly event has grown to be the largest South Asian film festival outside of India. Last year’s ran for five days and included the likes of Javed Akhtar, Shabana Azmi, Anurag Kashyap, Sudhir Mishra and Rahul Bose, among others.

A few years back, the South Asian International Film Festival jumped into the fray. The two festivals now run almost back-to-

back each autumn, giving New Yorkers a wealth of films from the Indian subcontinent.

Insider info

Here are some tips for first-timers. Consider buying your tickets online in advance, since many screenings sell out fast. Most festivals are now also on Twitter, so you can keep up with any last-minute changes. If you plan to see several films and panels back-to-back, have a good breakfast; you’d be surprised how much energy you expend while sitting all day. And finally, don’t limit yourself to only the island of Manhattan. Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx (all easily accessible by public transportation) have also made a place for themselves on the international film festival circuit, and you’ll get to see more of New York City than the average tourist.

▼ Bottom and left: The Imagine Science Festival hopes to make science accessible and stimulating to wider audiences.

Below: Attending the Tribeca Film Festival gives you a chance to rub shoulders with world-renowned actors and directors.



Image courtesy: Tribeca Film Festival



Image courtesy: Imagine Science Festival



Image courtesy: Imagine Science Festival

Fact file

Getting there

Jet Airways has regular flights to New York from Brussels, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai.

Accommodation

There is a wide range of accommodation options available to suit every budget.

For more information:

Log on to www.nyc.gov