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**42nd ANNUAL ATLANTA FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES OPENING NIGHT AND SELECT MARQUEE SCREENINGS**

**ATLANTA, GA (March 6, 2018) —** The 2018 Atlanta Film Festival (ATLFF) is pleased to unveil its Opening Night and select Marquee programming for the 42nd annual festival, taking place from Friday, April 13, 2018 – Sunday, April 22, 2018.

BLINDSPOTTING, the upcoming feature film debut from director Carlos López Estrada starring “Hamilton” actor and 2016 Tony Award Winner Daveed Diggs, will kick off the Atlanta Film Festival as this year’s Opening Night Presentation. Diggs, who co-wrote the film with lifelong friend Rafael Casal as a provocative yet challenging love letter to their hometown of Oakland, will attend the April 13 red carpet screening at the Plaza Theatre with Casal and will receive an ATLFF Innovator Award.

This year, ATLFF will launch a new initiative to honor Originators, Innovators and Rebels in the film industry, a symbolic gesture in the spirit of key figures who have helped shape Atlanta's story. Daveed Diggs will be the first recipient of the ATLFF Innovator Award.

Additional Marquee screenings will take place throughout the 10-day festival, giving attendees the opportunity to see an array of releases from major film and independent studios, which include: TULLY (starring Charlize Theron, Mackenzie Davis, Mark Duplass and Ron Livingston), LEAVE NO TRACE (starring Ben Foster and Thomasin Harcourt McKenzie ) and WON’T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR, a forthcoming, feature-length documentary profiling beloved children’s educator Fred Rodgers.

Jason Reitman, the Academy Award® -nominated director of JUNO (2007) and UP IN THE AIR (2009), will introduce his new film TULLY at its Marquee screening on Sunday, April 15 and will participate in a post-film Q&A session. TULLY reunites Reitman with screenwriter Diablo Cody, and the film follows the friendship and bond between a mother of three (Charlize Theron) and her babysitter (Mackenzie Davis).

Before the festival kicks off, the public is invited to an ATLFF Kickoff Party on Friday, March 30 at the Rialto Center for the Arts from 8:00 p.m to 10:00 p.m. Festival attendees will be able to pick up their 2018 badges, purchase tickets and festival merchandise, receive program guides and enjoy food and drinks.

This year, ATLFF received a record-breaking 7,600+ feature length and short film submissions. Additional information pertaining to the festival’s remaining lineup of more than 150 feature and short length films, Special and Closing Night Presentations and Creative Conference programming will be announced soon.

The Atlanta Film Festival is the annual centerpiece of educational and enriching film programing that is provided year-round by parent organization, the Atlanta Film Society.

To purchase badges, please visit [www.AtlantaFilmFestival.com](http://www.atlantafilmfestival.com). Individual tickets go on sale March 30. Additional programming announcements are forthcoming.

**OPENING NIGHT PRESENTATION**

**BLINDSPOTTING**

*Directed by Carlos López Estrada*

*USA, 2018, English, 95 minutes*

Collin (Daveed Diggs) must make it through his final three days of probation for a chance at a new beginning. He and his troublemaking childhood best friend, Miles (Rafael Casal), work as movers and are forced to watch their old neighborhood become a trendy spot in the rapidly gentrifying Bay Area. When a life-altering event causes Collin to miss his mandatory curfew, the two men struggle to maintain their friendship as the changing social landscape exposes their differences.

Lifelong friends Daveed Diggs and Rafael Casal co-wrote and star in this timely and wildly entertaining story about friendship and the intersection of race and class set against the backdrop of Oakland. Bursting with energy, style and humor, “Blindspotting,” boldly directed by Carlos López Estrada in his feature film debut, is a provocative hometown love letter that glistens with humanity.

***Actors/Writers/Producers Daveed Diggs & Rafael Casal scheduled to attend.***

***Prior to the film, Daveed Diggs will be presented with the ATLFF Innovator Award.***

**SELECT FILM TITLES**

**LEAN ON PETE**

*Directed by Andrew Haigh*

*UK/USA, 2017, English, 121 minutes*

Fifteen-year-old Charley Thompson (Charlie Plummer) arrives in Portland, Oregon with his single father Ray (Travis Fimmel), both of them eager for a fresh start after a series of hard knocks. While Ray descends into personal turmoil, Charley finds acceptance and camaraderie at a local racetrack where he lands a job caring for an aging Quarter Horse named Lean On Pete. The horse’s gruff owner Del Montgomery (Steve Buscemi) and his seasoned jockey Bonnie (Chloë Sevigny) help Charley fill the void of his father’s absence—until he discovers that Pete is bound for slaughter, prompting him to take extreme measures to spare his new friend’s life. Charley and Pete head out into the great unknown, embarking on an odyssey across the new American frontier in search of a loving aunt Charley hasn’t seen in years. They experience adventure and heartbreak in equal measure, but never lose their irrepressible hope and resiliency as they pursue their dream of finding a place they can call home.

*#Marquee*

**LEAVE NO TRACE**

*Directed by Debra Granik*

*USA, 2018, English, 108 minutes*

Will (Ben Foster) and his teenage daughter, Tom (Harcourt McKenzie), have lived off the grid for years in the forests of Portland, Oregon. When their idyllic life is shattered, both are put into social services. After clashing with their new surroundings, Will and Tom set off on a harrowing journey back to their wild homeland.

*#Marquee, #NewMavericks*

**A PRAYER BEFORE DAWN**

*Directed by Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire*

*France/Thailand/UK, 2017, English/Thai, 116 minutes*

“A Prayer Before Dawn” is the remarkable true story of Billy Moore, a young English boxer incarcerated in two of Thailand’s most notorious prisons. He is quickly thrown into a terrifying world of drugs and gang violence, but when the prison authorities allow him to take part in the Muay Thai boxing tournaments, he realizes this might be his chance to get out. Billy embarks on a relentless, action-packed journey from one savage fight to the next, stopping at nothing to do whatever he must to preserve his life and regain his freedom. Shot in a an actual Thai prison with a cast of primarily real inmates, “A Prayer Before Dawn” is a visceral, thrilling journey through an unforgettable hell on earth.

*#Marquee, #Sports*

**RBG**

*Directed by Betsy West & Julie Cohen*

*USA, 2018, English, 97 minutes*

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg has created a breathtaking legal legacy for women’s rights while becoming an unexpected pop culture icon. The personal journey of this diminutive, quiet warrior’s rise to the nation’s highest court during a hostile time for women, is revealed in this inspiring and multidimensional portrait. Now 84, Ginsburg refuses to relinquish her passionate duty, continues to have vigorous dissenting opinions and her exercise workouts.

*#Documentary #NewMavericks*

**TULLY**

*Directed by Jason Reitman*

*USA, 2018, English, 94 minutes*

A new comedy from Academy Award-nominated director Jason Reitman (“Up in the Air”) and Academy Award-winning screenwriter Diablo Cody (“Juno”). Marlo (Academy Award-winner Charlize Theron), a mother of three including a newborn, is gifted a night nanny by her brother (Mark Duplass). Hesitant to the extravagance at first, Marlo comes to form a unique bond with the thoughtful, surprising, and sometimes challenging young nanny named Tully (Mackenzie Davis).

*#Comedy, #Marquee*

**WON’T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?**

*Directed by Morgan Neville*

*USA, 2018, English, 94 minutes*

From Academy Award-winning filmmaker Morgan Neville (“20 Feet from Stardom”), “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” takes an intimate look at America’s favorite neighbor: Mister Fred Rogers. A portrait of a man whom we all think we know, this emotional and moving film takes us beyond the zip-up cardigans and the land of make-believe, and into the heart of a creative genius who inspired generations of children with compassion and limitless imagination.

*#Animation, #FamilyFriendly, #Marquee, #Puppetry*

**About the Atlanta Film Festival and Atlanta Film Society**

The Atlanta Film Festival, now in its fifth decade, is an Academy Award-qualifying festival and one of the region’s largest and longest-running preeminent celebrations of cinema in the Southeast United States. More than 25,000 festival attendees enjoy independent, animated, documentary and short films each year, selected from more than 7,600 submissions from 120 countries. The Atlanta Film Festival is the chief annual operation of the Atlanta Film Society (ATLFS), one of the oldest and largest organizations dedicated to the promotion and education of film in the United States, which enriches the community through screenings, classes, workshops and other events year-round. It is also the most distinguished event in its class, recognized as the 'Best Spring Festival' by Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 'Best Film Festival' by Creative Loafing and Atlanta Magazine, as well as one of the '25 Coolest Film Festivals in the World' by MovieMaker Magazine. Major funding for the Atlanta Film Society is provided by Turner, XFINITY, Delta Airlines, MailChimp and the Fulton County Board of Commissioners through the Fulton County Arts & Culture Department and the National Endowment for the Arts through the Art Works category. [www.AtlantaFilmFestival.com](http://www.atlantafilmfestival.com)