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7 Greater Boston film festivals to check out this winter

Still from "Little White Dove." (Courtesy Harvard Film Archive)

After cancelling three in-person screenings due to last year's pandemic surge, Between World Film's family festival returns on Jan. 14 for its 24th year. All events will be screening in-theaters, all but three will also stream online. Online workshops in clay modeling and a face-to-face session for junior film critics will also take place. This festival's natural—a wrap increase in in-person offerings and fewer in-some online—reflects a majority of the region's festivals as they enter 2021.

With an abundance of international film titles and book adaptations, executive director Ellen Gittelman says the family Festival's founding goal of fostering cultural and reading literacy for kids ages 4-11 remains unshaken. The festival, successfully shifted to best that my kids (ages 5 and 8) recognized two stories from the Weston Woods shorts collection "Waterstone" by Andrew Wong and "The Little Red Butterfly That Could" by Bruce Bernard, an familiar books. As for movies with subtitles, non-readers can wear headphones to hear the reading by local actress Rena Sofaldo.

"Kids need to be out and doing stuff with each other. Hearing each other laugh," says Gittelman. With tickets selling fast, she says she's feeling increasingly confident more kids will have that chance this year.

Below, more details on this film festival and six other offerings to consider this winter.

Balmont World Film's Family Festival

When: In-person Jan. 14 to end Jan. 31; online Jan. 10-31
Where: Boston Museum Circus in Brist Newton, Pier Regatta / in Watertown, Brattle Theatre in Cambridge, Regent Theater / in Arlington and online
Highlights: Perennial favorites of this festival, designed for kids ages 4-11, include Scholastic Books' latest adaptations in the form of Wooden Woods shorts, an annual tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the latest from Massachusetts' own Jerry Williams (one set of the presses they were still looking forward, with 40th artistry and 40th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party celebration). Also, a Q&A session with questions about using most when kids learn but genuinely not interested in giving hair a per pigtail. Indie's Academy Award nominee for Best International Feature, a love letter to the movies sold through a child's eyes, "Last Film Show," shows on the festival. **Need to know:** Sign kids up in advance to learn to model clay figures just like Shaun the Sheep or Gromit for clay, held online, or to sharpen film critic skills with Joyce Kulhawik and Tom Shick, held in-person.

Still from "Cats." (Courtesy Belmont World Film)

Boston Festival of Films from Iran

When: Jan. 26-28
Where: MFA, Boston
Highlights: Three releases from 2022 and a restoration round off this in-house box, held for the 19th year in a row. Based on a true story about the web of beliefs and behaviors that create what the director calls a "serial killer society," Ali Abbasi's "Holy Spider" made the shortlist for Best International Feature in the forthcoming Academy Awards. Jinal WRER film from Iran, "Leaves of the Fifth Tree," the documentary "Ellis's Sea Bill" follows only two Iranian trees now to be authentically and "Ellis's Sea Bill." Ellis's Sea Bill" follows only two Iranian trees now to be authentically and "Ellis's Sea Bill." Ellis's Sea Bill" follows only two Iranian trees now to be authentically and the city. It reveals a movement about poverty, microenthusiasm and hope also present in Amir Naderi's newly restored "The Runner" from 1985.
Need to know: Iranian celebrities such as actress Taraneh Alidoosti, who starred in the Oscar-winning 2016 film, "The Salesman," have been visiting jail time to publicly support anti-government protests.

Zia Amir Ebrahimi in "Holy Spider." (Courtesy Mubi)

Love on the Run

When: Feb. 1-28
Where: Coolidge Corner Theatre
Highlights: Hitting the road together could spark a romance. Then again, fleeing could force fleeting, fictional feelings. With questions like this in mind, the Coolidge Corner Theatre's annual series has long used up of love. Cars factor into several titles, such as "Thelma and Louise Ride 1 and "Queens & Slim" on Feb. 25. Camp gear and vintage Americana takes center stage in Wes Anderson's "Moonrise Kingdom" Feb. 5, about partially in Bloody Island.
Need to know: Become a beach scene from "Moonrise" at Eric Wedwitt's Nane Park, also the site of the Hangfest. Which, come to think of it, would be a good name for an Anderson movie.

Jedia Turner-Smith and Daniel Kaluuya in "Queen & Slim." (Courtesy Pitchfork)

Superb Owl Sunday

When: Feb. 12
Where: Brattle Theater
Highlights: Cats, cows, and donkeys have had their share of big screen moments over the last few years. For only "one night" here, the best pair of all can be found at the Brattle's Feb. 12 double-header. These two cinema-enthusiast icons, Jim Jarmusch and Agnès Varda, have been friends for decades. Jarmusch's "Stranger than Paradise" and "The Dead" and David Brooks's unknown and feathered hair ("Lebanon"), added between by this date the Brattle will have hatched its new surround sound system.
Need to know: Eight owl species can be found in Massachusetts. Click here to hear their calls.

Still from "Lebanon." (Courtesy Yes Cafe)

Boston Sci-Fi Film Festival & Marathon

When: Feb. 15-20
Where: Somerville Theatre and online
Highlights: 47 training for the Boston Marathon has this for left out of reach, consider another hundred significant long haul: Boston's 24-hour movie binge marathon (Feb. 19-20), a staple for almost all of the fest's 46 years. Dragon is world premiere of Chinese-American director Ruby Yang's "Dragon." Black and Asian American singers also have their stories, with Chinese, about 100 films total plus panels, parties, a podcast. Alien sightseers.
Need to know: The second annual Time Traveler's Ball can transport you back to 2019, if that interests you, or ahead to space-filled, climate-stable, human-animal-rights-friendly worlds.

Remapping Latin American Cinema: Chilean Film/Video 1963-2013

When: Feb. 23 - April 17
Where: Harvard Film Archive
Highlights: In 2020 and 2021, HFA director Haden Guest and filmmaker and visiting faculty member Santiago Antúnez Aguirre sought courses in Chilean cinema. This program launches as an offshoot and commemorative further examination, or an alternate reading, of the 2020 Remapping Latin American Cinema, a program of Latin American cinema. Included are rarely seen works and rediscoveries such as Raúl Ruiz's "Three Sad Tigers (Tres Tristes Tigres)" as well as titles by women directors Valeria Sarmiento, Marilu Mallet, Angelina Vásquez and Alicia Scherson. Guest and Aguirre also plan on collaborations with Latin American national film archives and film critics to expand the reach of these works.
Need to know: Intermapper recorded her most recent film with HFA the February 2019 screening "Ana y Antígona: The Films of Valeria Sarmiento."

Still from "Little White Dove." (Courtesy Harvard Film Archive)

Boston Baltic Film Festival

When: March 2-3 in-person, March 4-19 online
Where: Middlesex's Patriotman Cinema and online
Highlights: Lithuania's Kaunas, a sister city, some 100 miles south of the Baltics, hosted Jaga last February, with the invasion taking place a few days before this festival kicked off. Though largely focused on historic events, last year's fictional and documentary films from Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania served as a stark reminder of the lasting impact of Soviet rule over the now independent region. One special guest, Lithuanian-American Ieva Vitkuviene, director of "Ieva's Summer," a coming-of-age novel adaptation of Sarah Dessen's book (Dessen's parents), underscores the ever-pure of freedom and should remind Western nations "that we always starts unexpectedly." Baltic nations closed their borders to more Russian citizens in September. Though production cycles mean that this year's titles will not likely address the newly war, but you get the sense that the grip of Soviet hegemony has never been fully loosened.
Need to know: Like Boston, the New York Baltic Film Festival also began in 2016.

Last year's Boston Baltic Film Festival commenced days after Russia invaded Ukraine. (Courtesy Boston Baltic Film Festival)

Also showing:

- **Kinoteja Dresden + Antonia, Ukrainian, Hungarian** Films starting and by one of the first women to direct films in Japan, largely in the 1950s, screening at Harvard Film Archive Jan. 20 Feb. 26
- **Knight Light's Film Series** Thursday nights at Emerson's Bright Family Screening Room from late January through April
- **Roman Polanski's Moonlight Mondo Film Festival** Streaming during the month of February
- **Mixed Stories: Community, Connection and Conversation Through Cinema** Monthly screenings at Arlington's Fountain Theatre Center through June
- **Projecting Connections: Chinese American Experiences** Monthly screenings at Arlington's Paperroom Center through June

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