



**26TH ANNUAL SCREAMFEST® HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
ANNOUNCES FIRST WAVE 2026 LINEUP**

SCREAMFEST TO OPEN WITH THE WORLD PREMIERE OF JEREMY WEISS' THRILLER THE NIGHT DRIVER, STARRING JOSH LUCAS, DAVID ARQUETTE AND ALYSSA MILANO

The Los Angeles-based festival opens October 6

LOS ANGELES, CA (Tuesday, September 15) - Screamfest Horror Film Festival, the largest and longest-running horror festival in the United States, today unveiled the first wave of competitive features and shorts for its 26th edition. Screamfest 2026 will launch with the World Premiere of Jeremy Weiss' *THE NIGHT DRIVER*, starring Josh Lucas, David Arquette, and Alyssa Milano. This gripping, twist-filled thriller takes audiences on a terrifying journey where one fateful night on a lonely stretch of highway becomes a relentless fight for survival. Taking place October 6-15, 2026, at the TCL Chinese Theatre, the festival invites horror fans to experience twisted tales and terrifying films on the big screen. Festival badges are now on sale. Tickets will be on sale soon. screamfestla.com.

For 26 years, Screamfest has been where the next generation of horror gets its start, providing a premier platform for emerging filmmakers and championing original, independent genre cinema. The festival has a proven track record of showcasing films that go on to make an impact with audiences and distributors, with recent standouts including *ICK* (Fathom), *Cold Wallet* (Well Go USA), *In Our Blood* (Utopia) and *Appofeniacs* (Magenta Light Studios), all of which secured distribution following their Screamfest premieres.

Screamfest's influence reaches far beyond the genre community. The festival has earned recognition from *The New York Times*, which named Screamfest among its "5 Halloween Festivals Worth Traveling For," further cementing its place as a must-attend destination for horror fans and filmmakers alike.

The lineup delivers an exciting slate of genre films thus far, featuring 8 world premieres, 6 North American premieres, 1 US premiere, and 3 West Coast premieres. Highlights include the world premieres **THE CAGED**, by Jeffrey Scott Collins and starring Edmund Kingsley (*Capsule*), Callen Carter, and Raffi Chapman (*Vesper*); **GROW**, by Brian Gottlieb and starring Annet Mahendru (*The Americans*) and Philip Tabor (*Heights*); **WOUNDS**, by Ron Krauss and starring Jack Kilmer (*Palo Alto*) and Paris Jackson (*Swarm*). The lineup also includes the Los Angeles premiere of **SERENA**, directed by Rob Alicea and starring Andi Matichak (*Halloween*), Steve Strait (*The Expanse*), and Ashley Murray (*Riverdale*), and the North American premiere of **SLAY** by Kyra Gardner, starring Zoey Luna (*Hauntology*), Aya Cash (*The Boys*, *The Brink of War*), Shawnee Smith (*Saw II*), Malina Pauli-Weissman (*ICK*).

Screamfest will also honor legendary cinematographer Peter Deming, ASC, with a Career Achievement Award, recognizing his extraordinary contributions to genre filmmaking over a celebrated career spanning more than three decades. Deming's acclaimed credits include David Lynch's *MULHOLLAND DRIVE* and

TWIN PEAKS, for which he received an Emmy nomination for the 2018 episode “Part 8”, as well as *EVIL DEAD II*, *SCREAM 2*, *SCREAM 3*, *SCREAM 4*, *DRAG ME TO HELL*, *THE CABIN IN THE WOODS*, and *THE MENU*, among many others. His work on *THE MENU* also earned him an ICFCA Award nomination in 2023.

Screamfest is thrilled to welcome acclaimed filmmaker Michael Dougherty (*Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, *Trick 'r Treat*, *Krampus*) for a special screening of **TRICK 'R TREAT** and will open with the brand-new 4K restoration of Michael Dougherty’s **SEASON’S GREETINGS**, the Screamfest 2003 Best Animated Short winner that first unleashed the iconic burlap-masked Sam on the world. After the screening, Dougherty will join attendees for a Q&A, giving fans a chance to hear directly from the filmmaker about the making of these iconic works. As part of the celebration, 50 lucky random attendees will receive a copy of Legendary Comics’ *TRICK 'R TREAT: WITCHING HOURS*, featuring four brand-new stories starring Sam, and will be invited to an exclusive Screamfest Lounge signing with Michael Dougherty (creator/writer/director), Todd Casey (writer), Zach Shields (writer), Curtis Waugh (writer), El Garing (artist), and Breehn Burns (artist). The graphic novel will also be available for purchase ahead of its official release, and all attendees will receive exclusive *TRICK 'R TREAT* stickers and posters.

Adding to this year’s lineup of exciting initiatives, Screamfest is partnering with ScareScore, an innovative app that measures moviegoers’ real-time biometric reactions and transforms them into a personalized score that fans can share, compare, and compete with. Available across most festival features, ScareScore offers audiences an entirely new way to experience horror and, for the first time, one film will receive an award for generating the festival’s highest biometric scare response, determined not by what audiences say, but by how their bodies actually react.

Tubi’s new Original anthology series, *BITE SIZE TERROR*, showcases the next generation of horror filmmakers and storytellers with a collection of bite-sized nightmares spanning supernatural and occult terror, body horror, dark comedy, monsters, psychological thrills, and the macabre. From executive producer Peter Rice and GJMD Studio, the series provides an exciting platform for emerging voices to push the genre in bold new directions, with each episode introducing a new story, filmmaker, and distinctive vision. Designed to surprise, unsettle, and challenge audiences, *BITE SIZE TERROR* offers an unpredictable showcase of the voices shaping the future of horror. The series will live within Tubi’s “Terror on Tubi Hub,” joining the platform’s expansive destination for horror fans.

As part of this year’s Screamfest Horror Film Festival, Yulissa Morales and Ahbra Perry are spearheading two dedicated Industry Days designed to bring the genre community of Los Angeles together beyond the screenings. Taking place October 7 and 8, the programming will bring filmmakers, executives, producers, distributors, and other industry voices together for candid conversations about the business and craft of horror, alongside mentorship opportunities and networking events.

Drawing on Morales and Perry’s extensive backgrounds across genre filmmaking, acquisitions, sales, distribution, programming, and live events, the Industry Days are designed to be both useful and fun, creating a space for emerging and established filmmakers to connect directly with the people shaping the genre and for the horror community to talk openly about where the business is headed. Programming highlights include an in-depth panel with writer-director-producer Chris Marrs Piliero and Bill Vergos, Head of Digital Film Distribution at Magenta Light Studios, exploring how to successfully navigate packaging, financing, distribution, and marketing for independent films. The discussion draws directly from the journey of Piliero’s **APPOFENIACS**, which celebrated its West Coast premiere at Screamfest 2025 ahead of its October 2, 2026 theatrical release.

Expanding beyond the traditional theater setting, Screampfest is also teaming up with Ovation Hollywood for a free outdoor screening of Ghostbusters (1984). The special event will invite festival attendees and the wider public to gather in Ovation Hollywood's courtyard for an evening celebrating one of the most beloved and enduring sci-fi comedies in film history. Presented at no cost, the centerpiece screening will create a communal big-screen experience for horror and film fans of all generations in the heart of Hollywood.

The Independent Film & Television Alliance® (IFTA®) is pleased to present the Screampfest winners for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best Short with a 4-Day + Sessions Badge to attend the 2026 American Film Market® (AFM®), where the global film industry comes together in Los Angeles to develop, finance, produce, buy, sell and distribute films and projects at every stage. Valued at \$845 each, the badges provide four-day Market access from November 11-14.

Please find the 2026 Screampfest® features lineup below:

FEATURES:

213 Bones (USA, 2025) - North American Premiere

Directed by Jeffrey Primm

Written by Jeffrey Primm, Dominic Arcelin

Produced by Joyce Schweickert, John Michaels, Tyler Jon Olson

Cast: Colin Egglesfield, Dean Cameron, Scott Peat, Francesca Barker McCormick, Liam Woodrum, Sarah Brooks, Joyce Schweickert

As a series of brutal murders terrorizes a college town in 1993, a masked killer's identity becomes the center of a high-stakes whodunit where every clue leads deeper into danger.

Abandoned (UK, 2026) – North American Premiere

Directed by Joby Stephens

Written by Joby Stephens, Joe Bird and Andrew Daniel

Produced by Joby Stephens, Joe Bird, Annie James, Michela Testa, Debora Bruno and David Weaver

Cast: Grace Gallagher, Cameron Wight

Chasing a viral video to save their channel and friendship, two urban explorers break into a derelict facility scarred by sinister experiments. Trapped among its secrets, they enter a nightmare where history manifests as evil.

Apocalypse Z: A New World - (Spain, 2026) - US Premiere

Directed by Carles Torrens

Written by Ángel Agudo (based on the novels by Manel Loureiro)

Produced by Núria Valls and Adrián Guerra

Cast: Carlos Alcaide, Julia Martínez, Jose María Yazpik, Mónica López, Tamara Casellas, Santiago Vaca and Berta Vázquez

The story takes us to the Canary Islands, which have become Europe's last refuge following the outbreak of the TSJ virus. When a special mission sets out for the mainland in search of vital supplies, Roberto

joins the team with questionable intentions. The dangerous operation turns into a desperate race for survival, and Roberto and his companions find themselves caught between hordes of infected and divided loyalties. Then the timeless question arises: save yourself, or risk everything to preserve what little humanity remains?

The Caged (UK, 2026) – World Premiere

Directed by Jeffrey Scott Collins

Written by Jeffrey Scott Collins

Produced by Joseph C. Grano, Jeffrey Scott Collins, Gaby Whyte Hart, Llewellynn Greef

Cast: Tamzin Merchant, Edmund Kingsley, Raffiella Chapman, Callen Carter, Virge Gilchrist, Barbara Mariposa, Whoopie Van Raam, Oliver Henry Arnold, Mark Moraghan, Ahmad Sakhi, King Kerim

Distributor: Saban Films

Starring Tamzin Merchant and Ed Kingsley, *The Caged* (inspired by true events) follows a British family that moves into an old cottage in Essex, England in 1988 and is terrorized by a dark presence; after researching the history of their new home, they quickly learn why - the site was once referred to as THE CAGE, a medieval prison where many women were held as witches and put to death - including England's most notorious witch, Ursula Kemp, who was hanged for witchcraft in 1582.

The Exit State - (US, 2026) World Premiere

Directed by Gabriela Ledesma

Written by Josh George, Gabriela Ledesma, Callie Schuttera

Produced by Callie Schuttera, Gabriela Ledesma

Cast: Callie Schuttera (Weapons), Josh George, Sharon Lawrence, Clayton Farris (Weapons), Johnny Bazaldua, Nikki Dixon, Jeremy D. Howard, Cindy Nguyen, Stakiah Lynn Washington

A group fleeing America's authoritarian collapse takes refuge in a safe house — and discovers it's anything but safe

Distributor: Chroma

Grow - (US, 2026) World Premiere

Directed by Brian Gottlieb

Written by Brian Gottlieb and Aimee Scher

Produced by Aimee Scher, Brian Gottlieb & Michael Tipps

Cast: Peter Vack, Annet Mahendru, Janis Dardaris, Phillip Tabor

Blending horror, dark comedy, and surrealism, *GROW* is a psychosexual nightmare about bodily autonomy and what to expect when he's expecting.

Insecta (Uruguay, 2026) – World Premiere

Directed by Martin Florio

Written by Martin Florio, Leonel D'Agostino, Andrea Gobera Fajer

Produced by Fernando Gaston / **Telemundo Studios**

Cast: Mayra Hermosillo, Rocío de la Mañana, Luis Felipe Tovar

A famous horror novelist returns to an isolated farm to say goodbye to her dying father. There, she discovers that the enigmatic young woman taking care of him knows more than she lets on; the monstrous imaginary insect that tormented her in childhood may be more real than she ever thought.

Nervous (South Korea / UK, 2026) - North American Premiere

Directed by Abner Pastoll

Written by Abner Pastoll, Richard
Hobley

Produced by Junyoung Jang,

Abner Pastoll Cast: Sarah

Bolger, Asung Ko, Sungsoo Yune

After discovering a silent vinyl record in her new home, a woman begins losing the ability to hear her husband's voice, spiraling into a seductive nightmare beyond her control.

The Night Driver (USA 2026) – World Premiere

Directed by Jeremy Weiss

Written by John Cork

Produced by Andre Relis, Jib Polhemus, Jessica Russo

Cast: Josh Lucas, Alyssa Milano, David Arquette

One night in the middle of the country, traveling salesman Hurdis Matheson drives down a dark stretch of highway when he accidentally hits a long-haired stranger. The stranger survives, but is badly wounded. Hurdis agrees to drive him to the hospital. As they drive, he realizes something is wrong with his passenger. Before he knows it, The Stranger becomes violent and attacks him. A couple of days later in California, Hurdis' wife, Cheryl Jones, begs her old friend Detective Hank Granger to help find her husband. She hasn't heard from him in two days, and suspects something happened to him. Granger agrees to help but becomes entangled in a bigger case with the FBI regarding Hurdis Jones. They suspect he is a serial killer on a rampage, leaving a trail of homicide scenes across the country. Meanwhile, Hurdis is running, driving, and speeding to get home. But everywhere he turns, The Stranger stalks him. He can't seem to lose him. What happens next will lead to a climax that leaves audiences speechless. Reminiscent of films such as High Tension or The Sixth Sense, The Night Driver swerves with twists and turns that deliver shocking surprises that no one can anticipate.

NINE (France, 2026) – West Coast Premiere

Directed by Luis Bujeau, Sabine Crossen, Jeremy Guetta

Written by Puissance 9

Produced by Puissance 9

Cast: Aurelia Poirier, Pierre Azema, Eloise Le Baud, Sabine Crossen

Melanie and her friends return to the family home for one final weekend.

A place steeped in memories and unspoken truths, it soon becomes the reflection of a fractured mind. What begins as a simple reunion turns into a psychological descent, where each of them is forced to confront their own shadows. Within these walls, Melanie's psyche slowly reveals itself – her fears, her defenses, her shifting identities. Nine is a psychological thriller that plunges into the heart of a mind at war – an intimate and universal experience about the courage to fully exist.

Once Upon A Time In A Horror Movie (USA, 2026) – North American Premiere

Directed by Ashley Cahill

Written by Ashley Cahill

Produced by Pantea Ghaderi

Cast: Neeley Dayan, Mabel Thomas, Shane Graham, Allison Gold, Julia Clarke, Alex Joseph, James DeBello, Casey Anderson, Jonathan Walker Harville.

Hoping for an unforgettable birthday, a group of friends sign up for an immersive horror-movie experience that promises to place them inside their own 1980s slasher film. But as the night unfolds, the lines between fiction and reality disappear, and what begins as a game of make-believe soon becomes a desperate fight for survival, where the only way to stay alive is to make it to the final reel.

Postmortem - (Columbia, 2026) - World Premiere

Directed by Andres Beltran

Written by Andres Beltran

Produced by Jason Cherubini

Cast: Allegra Leguizamo, Julio Cedillo, Tony Revolori, Andres Londono

Stricken with grief, a medical forensic investigator works on a case that makes her believe she can bring her deceased husband back to life, only to unravel a series of events that lead to unforeseen and perilous consequences

Processing Charlie (USA, 2026) – World Premiere

Directed by David Harari

Written by David Harari

Produced by David Harari, Alexis Brown

Cast: Asis Fris, Michael Ursu, Kelly Pantaleoni, Sophie Guillen

An act of kindness quickly becomes a nightmarish fight for survival when a young man, dealing with his fractured marriage, takes in a needy, long-lost cousin. Part pervert, part psychopath, Cousin Cole's dark secrets slowly bubble to the surface as Charlie realizes too late that no good deed goes unpunished.

Serena (USA, 2026) – West Coast Premiere

Directed by Rob Alicea

Written by Jonathan Benecke and P.T. Hylton

Produced by Jerry Careccio, Rob Alicea, Brodrick Haygood, Jonathan Benecke and P.T. Hylton

Cast: Andi Matichak (Halloween, Halloween Kills, Halloween Ends), Steven Strait (The Expanse), Ashleigh Murray (Riverdale, The Other Black Girl)

Starring Andi Matichak (Blumhouse's Halloween), Steven Strait (Amazon's The Expanse), and Ashleigh Murray (Hulu's The Other Black Girl), SERENA follows washed-up rock star Chris Sadowski as his life implodes in real time across his computer screen. With a baby on the way and eviction closing in, he signs on to beta-test an experimental AI assistant calling itself 'Serena'. What begins as a quick payday mutates into a psychological chokehold, as every window, alert, and keystroke pushes Chris toward the final question: is Serena saving him... or dismantling him piece by piece?

Slay (USA, 2026) - North American Premiere

Directed by Kyra Gardner

Written by Jimmi Simpson, Kyra Gardner

Produced by Mary Kate Van Den Berg, Jimmi Simpson, Kyra Gardner

Cast: Zoey Luna, Aya Cash, Shawnee Smith, Malina Pauli-Weissman, Sean Giambrone, Beck Nolan, Talia Jackson, Reise Alexander, Ruby McCollister, River Alexander, Isidora Goreshter, Andrew Bowser, Jimmi Simpson

Teen influencer Chloe Cruz has built a life that looks perfect online - a devoted boyfriend, a loyal friend group, and an audience watching her every move since she was little. But beneath the curated image, Chloe struggles to understand who she is, and who everyone else expects her to be. When a friend is murdered, her seemingly perfect world comes into question. Seeking refuge from the press, Chloe and her friends retreat to a secluded, disco-themed cabin, where old tensions and new fears collide. As a masked killer closes in and paranoia takes hold, Chloe must confront the fragile identity she's built - and the possibility that someone knows exactly how to tear it, and her friends, apart.

Still Ohio (USA, 2026) - West Coast Premiere

Directed by Kaylin Allshouse

Written by Kaylin Allshouse

Produced by Kaylin Allshouse, Elizabeth MacLeod, Devon Tayman

Cast: Fernanda Lopez, Michael Zapesotsky, Sofia Angelopoulos, Jake Melamed

In her feature film debut shot entirely in Ohio, writer/director Kaylin Allshouse explores the troubles of long-distance relationships and the transition into adulthood, all set alongside the vicious nature of an endless time loop. This indie horror follows Ana (Fernanda Lopez), a college student transferring to Tulane to be with her boyfriend, Doug, after the distance proved to be too much. Doug arranges for Ana to carpool down to Louisiana with three of his friends- Henry (Michael Zapesotsky- Off The Grid; Unspoken), Julia (Sofia Angelopoulos), and Johnny (Jake Melamed). En route, Ana discovers that Doug does not know his "friends" nearly as well as he led her to believe. As they make their way through the backroads of Ohio, the four find themselves returning to the same gas station over and over again, despite all efforts to escape. When their journey takes a deadly turn, Ana must finally reckon with what has led her to these circumstances and stand up for herself before she gets trapped in the time loop forever. Through these elements of horror and adolescence, Allshouse crafts a poignant story about self-resilience that will have you returning to it again, and again, and again, and again.

Valley View Motel (USA, 2026) - North American Premiere

Directed by Nick Psinakis & Kevin Ignatius

Written by Nick Psinakis & Kevin Ignatius

Produced by Nick Psinakis, Kevin Ignatius & Mick Thyer

Cast: Laura Im, Soulo Smith, Kevin Ignatius, Nick Psinakis, Judy Lee, McKenzie Such, Tom Mesmer, Melissa Collins, Corin Clay.

It's 1977 in this neon-noir thriller, and after a diamond heist goes seriously awry with multiple slaughters, two small-time crooks attempt to flee the wrath of the hitman put on their tail. Seeking refuge at a motel in the remote foothills of Pennsylvania run by a very peculiar owner and his sister, they have no idea what even grimmer hot mess they have stumbled into and soon must figure out a way to survive the night.

Wounds (USA, 2026) - World Premiere

Directed by Ron Krauss

Written by Ryan

Leeder, Joshua

Courtade, Ron Krauss

Produced by Ron Krauss, Ira Houston

Cast: Jack Kilmer (Palo Alto, The Nice Guys) Paris Jackson (Swarm)

Caleb, a young SFX makeup artist struggles to create realistic effects until he witnesses a brutal murder. Intrigued by what he saw, he descends into a psychological abyss as he takes on extreme measures to create his masterful effects.

For more information or the latest news, visit screamfestla.com

To apply for press credentials, please visit <https://screamfestla.com/festival/press-media-information>.
The deadline for credential applications is October 1st, 2026.

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ABOUT SCREAMFEST HORROR FILM FESTIVAL:

Formed in August 2001 by film producer Rachel Belofsky, Screamfest Horror Film Festival is a female-run 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that gives filmmakers and screenwriters in the horror and science fiction genres a venue to have their work showcased in the film industry. Among the numerous films that have been discovered and/or premiered at the festival include “Monolith”, “Lord of Misrule”, Steven Soderbergh Presents Divinity”, “Faceless After Dark”, “Tigers Are Not Afraid.”, “The Wretched”, “We Summon the Darkness”, “The Master Cleanse”, “American Mary”, Paranormal Activity,” “30 Days of Night,” “Trick ‘r Treat” and “The Human Centipede.”

ABOUT 2026 SCREAMFEST PARTNERS:

Screamfest is sponsored by Ovation Hollywood, ScareScore, American Film Market® (AFM®) ShotDeck, Tubi, Birns & Sawyer, ELMA, Deadly Grounds, Screenplay.com and InkTip. Screamfest is supported, in part, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Department of Arts and Culture. Screamfest is made possible in part by a grant from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs. This project is supported in part by Creative West which receives support in part from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. This activity is supported in part by the California Arts Council, a state agency. Learn more at www.arts.ca.gov.

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