SEATTLE (August 22, 2019) – The freshest films in queer cinema are set to sweep Capitol Hill this autumn at the 24th annual Seattle Queer Film Festival (SQFF), taking place October 10–20. The largest festival of its kind in the Pacific Northwest, SQFF has announced its Opening and Closing Night gala screenings and launched a members-only early-bird sale of discounted tickets and passes.

“Throughout this year’s festival, we reflect on the last 50 years since the Stonewall Riots, where queer rights are today, and the vast amount of work we have to do for the future,” said Ben McCarthy, executive director of Three Dollar Bill Cinema, the nonprofit queer film and media arts organization that produces the Seattle Queer Film Festival. “It is fitting to open the festival with the story of a legend whose life had and continues to have such an incredible impact on the queer community.”

This year’s Opening Night Gala film is Sid & Judy, Showtime’s new documentary about queer icon Judy Garland and her tumultuous marriage to Sid Luft, her third husband. Narrated by actor Jon Hamm, the film raids Luft’s archives, providing a previously unseen cache of
recordings and photographs that give fresh insight to a legendary woman. SQFF is excited to host Director Stephen Kijak (*Never Met Picasso*) for a Q&A after the film.

“The Wizard of Oz was such a touchstone for me as a little girl, and it was because of Judy and all her wonderfully queer companions,” said Kathleen Mullen, SQFF Festival Director. “Judy was more than just an ally to our community at a time where allies were few and far between. She was an important person in our collective queer psyche. We are all ‘friends of Dorothy’ in a way.”

The Seattle Queer Film Festival is set to close with the winner of the Queer Palm and the Best Screenplay prizes at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival, *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*. The lesbian love story set in the late 18th century follows the young daughter of a French countess who develops a mutual attraction to the female artist commissioned to paint her wedding portrait.

“*Portrait of a Lady on Fire* was a natural choice for our festival sendoff,” said Mullen. “It’s exquisite and seductive storytelling and cinematography. It’s especially exciting to be bringing back an alum of the festival.” Director Céline Sciamma’s 2011 film *Tomboy* won Best Narrative Feature at the 16th Seattle Queer Film Festival.

Both Opening and Closing Night Galas will take place at the SIFF Egyptian Theatre on Capitol Hill, with parties to follow.

Early-bird discounted tickets and passes go on sale this Tuesday, August 20. Full Festival Passes, Gala Passes, Six- and Ten-Packs, and Opening Night and Closing Night tickets will all be discounted through September 10 for Three Dollar Bill Cinema members, who receive, among other perks, discounted tickets and exclusive access to screenings throughout the year. Tickets and passes range from $14 to $245. Prices will increase on September 11.

The full SQFF24 program launches online on September 11 at [https://threedollarbillcinema.org/sqff24](https://threedollarbillcinema.org/sqff24).
Opening Night: **Sid & Judy**

**Stephen Kijak; 2019; US; 95 min.; in English without subtitles**

It’s been 50 years since the untimely death of diva and queer icon Judy Garland in June of 1969. But she is still a star to many a queer kid, whether through the timeless *The Wizard of Oz*, emotional ballads sung with her famous intensity, or the many drag queens that still belt out her powerful songs.

Garland began performing in vaudeville when she was only two years old and went on to have an illustrious career on the stage and in radio, film, and television. Now, director **Stephen Kijak** (*We Are X, Never Met Picasso*) has uncovered never-before-seen recordings, photographs, and insights from the archives of her third husband, producer Sid Luft (*A Star is Born* and *The Judy Garland Show*).

First-person accounts of Garland’s career along with Sid and Judy’s tumultuous marriage are narrated by Emmy winner Jon Hamm (*Mad Men*) and Academy Award® nominee Jennifer Jason Leigh (*The Hateful Eight, Atypical*). Judy Garland’s status as an icon for the whole LGBTQ2+ community—her death may even have partly inspired the Stonewall riots—is highlighted through her queer following, including transgender activist and Stonewall veteran Miss Major.

Closing Night: **Portrait of a Lady on Fire**

**Céline Sciamma; 2019; France; 119 min.; in French and Italian, with English subtitles**

Desire can be a powerful force, capable of consuming the heart like a roaring fire. Set in 18th century France, *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* follows Marianne, a young painter commissioned to undertake the wedding portrait of reluctant bride-to-be Héloïse. Pretending to be her companion, Marianne discreetly observes her muse by day and secretly paints her by night. The
intimate moments they share during their daily walks along the beach spark the flames of a passionate romance that defies their fate, which has been imposed on them by the norms of their conservative and repressive society.

Winner of the Queer Palm and the Best Screenplay prizes at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival, out lesbian director Céline Sciamma (Water Lilies, Girlhood, and Tomboy [Best Narrative, SLGFF 2011] and co-writer of Being 17) wraps us in an elegant and seductive canvas, where each frame of the film becomes a stunning work of art, thanks to its breathtaking cinematography. Noémie Merlant and Adèle Haenel deliver monumental but nuanced performances, freely inhabiting the fascinating female-centric world Sciamma constructs. An arresting and provocative drama, Portrait of a Lady on Fire is one of the most beautiful and fervent romances in recent years, one that everyone will fall in love with.

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For press credentials or high-res images, to preview any films, or to arrange interviews with guests, please email Blake Buckley at blake@threedollarbillcinema.org.

About the Seattle Queer Film Festival

Started as the Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival in October 1996, the Seattle Queer Film Festival has grown into the largest event of its kind in the Pacific Northwest, gaining industry and audience recognition for showcasing the latest and greatest in queer film, from major motion picture premieres to emerging talent. An important venue in the Seattle film scene, the festival provides unique opportunities for visiting and local filmmakers to engage and entertain the Seattle region’s LGBTQ2+ and allied community. For more information, visit https://threedollarbillcinema.org/seaqueerfilm.

About Three Dollar Bill Cinema

Three Dollar Bill Cinema is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that provides access to films by, for, and about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2+) people and
a forum for LGBTQ2+ filmmakers to share and discuss their work with audiences. Annual programs include the Seattle Queer Film Festival, Translations: Seattle Transgender Film Festival, Three Dollar Bill Outdoor Cinema, and Reel Queer Youth. For more information, visit https://threedollarbillcinema.org.

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