

Programmer picks

Each year, we present a rich variety of documentaries that challenge perceptions and inspire conversations. Through conversations with IDFA's programmers, we're sharing a selection of their handpicked, unique gems from the festival lineup.

Table of Contents

- [My Homeland](#)
- [Chronicles of the Absurd](#)
- [Echoes Within](#)
- [The Guest](#)
- [There Are So Many Things Still To Say](#)

My Homeland

My Homeland, a film by director Tabarak Allah Abbas was picked by Niki Padidar, programmer of the Youth Competition.

In her recommendation, Padidar praises *My Homeland* for its refreshing take on a universal issue: displacement. "Some topics are often portrayed in clichés, reducing characters to one-dimensional figures and omitting layers of reality that don't fit the usual narrative," she says.

"These biases subtly shape and skew our worldview, often dividing us. Films that offer a more nuanced and layered view of reality are rare and worth celebrating. *My Homeland* is one of these films—a refreshing departure from oversimplified storytelling."

In *Homeland*, people have been replaced by cyborgs, thus eliminating ethnicity, religion and other factors that could infuse prejudice. Making this story of fighting evil and searching for freedom more relatable and universal.

"Whether or not you're an anime fan, this unique approach provides a fresh perspective on a familiar subject," Padidar says. "The couple's struggle against menacing robots to save their child makes the story instantly universal, shifting the focus to humanity's shared struggles rather than superficial traits like appearance, religion, or identity. It invites us to root for the protagonists, not based on a first impression, but on their resilience and humanity. *My Homeland* is powerful, entertaining, and above all, original, smart, and expertly crafted," she concludes.



My Homeland

Tabarak Allah Abbas

Chronicles of the Absurd

Chronicles of the Absurd, a film by Miguel Coyula, was picked by programmer María Campaña Ramia.

This film deploys a string of secret audio recordings to expose the various forms of control and intimidation that independent artists in Cuba have to suffer.

"Animated photographs, audio recordings – mostly clandestine – cell phone-made videos, graphic art, and text written in sober typography are put together in a rhythmic yet harrowing tale. I can't recall having seen a film like this before," she says. "A piece constructed with very few elements, no economic resources, but certainly an unflinching drive. Is this really a film? Someone could ask. Just as Malevich and the Suprematists, Miguel Coyula and Lynn Cruz lean on almost nothing but their focus, freedom, and independence to create a brutal work of art."

For Ramia, the film was a revelation: "I watched *Chronicles of the Absurd* in awe not knowing what to think but uncomfortably immersed in the meanderings of two dissident artists through the entrails of censorship and oppression. And when it was finished, I wished everyone else could watch it."

"Cuba has been a hotspot for avant-garde cinema—just think about Nicolás Guillén Landrián or Sara Gómez, whose retrospective I highly see as an unmissable event at IDFA 2024—and *Chronicles of the Absurd* is proof that ideological dignity and artistic experimentation are still the trademark of the mythical island."



Chronicles of the Absurd

Miguel Coyula

Echoes Within

Pranami Koch's *Echoes Within* was picked by IDFA's Associate Programmer of Competition for Short Documentary.

"In this captivating documentary, a filmmaker with a poetic voice seeks to connect with her Koch roots, despite never having met her grandmother" Wakai says.

"She explores the question of identity: What shapes who you are today? What precedes you and what remains after you are gone?" For her, the film invites these reflections organically, resulting in what she calls "a profound exploration of personal and collective history."

"Forced to integrate into a broader national narrative, the film delves into the multilayered identities of the Koch community intertwining the filmmaker's own story with the past and present experiences of her community. As their voices and emotions resonate in their own language, viewers are enveloped in a warm sense of connection. With love, the film celebrates and examines the essence of our existence."



Echoes Within

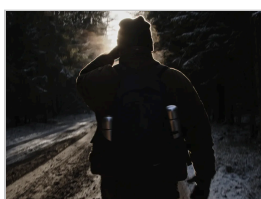
Pranami Koch

The Guest

Zvika Gregory Portno and Zuzanna Solakiewicz' *The Guest* was picked by IDFA's Programmer Laura van Halsema.

"For me, this is one of the most impressive films of this year," Van Halsema says. "It is set in the zone on the border between Poland and Belarus where refugees have been very violently pushed back on both sides of the border since 2021. Like hunted wild animals, they hide in the surrounding forests where a number of Polish volunteers try to help them at night."

"*The Guest* is about a Polish family that lives in that zone and where one day a young Syrian man rings the doorbell. The film mainly takes place in the living room of the house, which is surrounded by patrolling soldiers, where the camera observes the situation very precisely and quietly. It delivers both a sharp and oppressive image and an exceptionally human film."



The Guest

Zvika Gregory Portnoy, Zuzanna Solakiewicz

There Are So Many Things Still To Say

Programmer Sarah Dawson picked *There Are So Many Things Still To Say* by Omar Amiralay.

"I'll be honest with you. I'm in a funeral mood today." These are the words with which great playwright Saadallah Wannous begins his interview with Omar Amiralay, against a background of heart rate monitors and softly ringing telephones. The hospital is a calm, muted world, suspended out of time. Here, on the quiet border between life and death, two friends find space for profound and vulnerable reflection on the history of a region about which there remains, still, so much to say. We bring this precious film to you as part of the [Dead Angle: Borders program](#).



There Are So Many Things Still to Say

Omar Amiralay

Support



IDFA Festival

Organization >

Annual reports >

Jobs at IDFA >

Volunteering at IDFA >

Festival >

Festival reports >

Archive >

Contact >

Helpdesk and FAQ >

Press >

Advertising >

[Privacy statement >](#)

[Newsletter >](#)

Follow IDFA



1515111111 | 1111111111

1111111111

1111111111

1111111111

1111111111

1111111111

1111111111

1111111111