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CIFF'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY OPENS WITH THE THICKET & STAR-STUDED RED CARPET

Calgary, AB - In celebration of its Silver Anniversary, the Calgary International Film Festival's Opening Gala returns to the Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons on **September 19, 2024**, featuring the Alberta-shot feature film **THE THICKET**. Produced by Chad Oakes & Michal Frislev of Calgary based Nomadic Pictures and Directed by Elliott Lester, best known for the Golden Globe and Emmy-nominated HBO movie *Nightingale*, starring David Oyelowo and produced by Plan B, as well as *Aftermath*, produced by Darren Aronofsky and starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

THE THICKET, a dark western thriller from Tubi Films is a film about vengeance, justice, and unlikely companionship - starring Peter Dinklage (*Game of Thrones*), Juliette Lewis (*Yellowjackets*), Esmé Creed-Miles (*Hanna*), and Levon Hawke (*Wildcat*). The film also features Macon Blair (*Blue Ruin*), Andrew Schulz (*Sneaky Pete*), James Hetfield (frontman of *Metallica*), David Midthunder (*Longmire*), Arliss Howard (*Full Metal Jacket*), Leslie Grace (*In The Heights*), and Gbenga Akinnagbe (*The Wire*).

Peter Dinklage and Leslie Grace will attend and walk the red carpet at the Jack Singer Concert Hall in Arts Commons, followed by a post-screening Q&A.

"I couldn't be prouder to be announcing THE THICKET as our Opening Gala film. This is a year where we have so much to celebrate - 25 years of film in our history, and the start of a new era for CIFF as we step into the [Constellation strategy](#). This event really lets us show off just how far we've come, and where we're headed," said Acting Executive Director Katherine Penhale.

THE THICKET was filmed in and around Calgary in mid-winter and was adapted from the novel of the same name by Joe Lansdale.

"Launching the festival with a film that was made right here in Alberta with Alberta crews is a perfect fit for our Opening Gala and having the most high-profile red carpet in CIFF's history with guests like Peter Dinklage means we get to

demonstrate Alberta's place in the film economy on a star-studded stage," said Penhale.

When fierce bounty hunter Reginald Jones (Peter Dinklage) is recruited by a desperate man to track down a ruthless killer known only as Cutthroat Bill (Juliette Lewis), he rallies a band of unlikely heroes, including a grave-digging ex-slave and a street-smart woman-for-hire. Together, they embark on a perilous quest to track down Cutthroat Bill, leading them into the deadly no man's land known as The Thicket.

For director Elliott Lester, the human heart at the center of the story drew him to the material. "I love the notion of the quest for family and redefining what family really means. What happens when everyone you care about in a story is an orphan? Where do those people go? How do they find one another? This was the most challenging movie I've ever made—it was literally the ride of a lifetime, deep into the heart of The Thicket."

"Being able to return to an Opening Gala at the Jack Singer Concert Hall for the first time since 2019 is very exciting - Arts Commons has always championed CIFF's constellation dreams and was one of the first venues to sign up to be an official Constellation Partner. We couldn't make this kind of event happen without their generous support, along with the support of all our [Constellation partners](#), sponsors and donors," added Penhale.

Additional producers on THE THICKET are: Peter Dinkledge and David Ginsberg (Estuary Films), Caddy Vanasirikul and Brian O'Shea (The Exchange), Shannon Gaulding, Andre L III, Gianni Nunnan. Executive Producers are: Blair Ward and Anders Erden (Orogen Entertainment), Eric Harbut, Giovanna Trischitta, Nat McCormick, Danny Guzman, Robyn Noorwood, Adriana Lima.

For more information, please visit [CIFFcalgary.ca](https://ciffcalgary.ca)

TICKETS for the Opening Night Gala will be on sale starting at 10 a.m. on August 28th through Arts Commons.

Media Access to film photos and 25th Anniversary CIFF logos [HERE](#).

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**CIFF | Calgary International Film Festival
September 19 – September 29, 2024**

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About the Calgary International Film Festival

Founded in 2000, the Calgary International Film Festival (CIFF) is a not-for-profit charitable organization that brings films and filmmakers from around the world to Calgary for its annual Fall festival and year-round programming. CIFF is now the largest event of its kind in Alberta and the sixth-largest film festival in Canada, bringing audiences together for remarkable and engaging cinematic experiences. CIFF is proud to present its 25th Anniversary festival from September 19 – September 29, 2024 with in-cinema screenings, celebrating stand-out stories and offering once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

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