

ILLUMINATE Film Festival Brings Conscious Cinema to Sedona May 27-31



Narrated by Liam Neeson, “Love Thy Nature” (Arizona Premiere at the Illuminate Film Festival on May 31) is a cinematic immersion into the beauty and intimacy of our relationship with the natural world.

Film has the power to transform lives. Where better to midwife the rising trend in conscious cinema than Sedona, Arizona, home to mind-body-spirit revolutionaries among the red rocks. The second annual [ILLUMINATE Film Festival](#) expects to draw an attendance of 3,500 May 27-31. Three state-of-the-art Sedona venues will premier 22 world-class films and offer additional activities.

“Our purpose at ILLUMINATE is to showcase cinematic gems that

empower those who see them to live kinder, wiser, more enlightened lives,” said Danette Wolpert, festival executive director. “ILLUMINATE films inspire viewers to seek greater levels of awareness. They remind us who we are by awakening the heart to embody love once more.”

Wolpert and her team, a 501c3-sponsored group, are at the forefront of this new wave in cinema, the mind-body-spirit genre called the conscious film movement.

“Humanity craves inspiring stories that push us along on our journey toward happiness, freedom, abundance and peace,” Wolpert said. Those film stories, in general, revolve around wellness, self-discovery, mind-body science, organic and plant-based nutrition and sustainable living.

According to a recent study (by *Sparks & Honey* in partnership with *Gaiam TV*), more than 100 million people in the U.S. are hungry for information on how to grow spiritually and live in harmony with other people, other cultures, and the earth.

Conscious concepts, once trivialized, are becoming mainstream thanks to moguls like Oprah, Russell Brand, Deepak Chopra, Russell Simmons and others. And film production values have kept pace, dramatically improved as both veteran and novice filmmakers enter the conscious media space to hone their craft, Wolpert pointed out. “These developments, as well as technological advancements in everything from camera gear to social media tools, have democratized our ability to produce, market, and distribute conscious content.”

Take last year’s films, for example. *Speciesism* explored how the collective global consciousness could very well be shifting to include all life forms as sacred. *May I Be Frank* told one man’s true story of redemption, from drug addiction and illness to a second chance at finding love through an amazing mind-body-and-spirit transformation. Films also included the Southwestern premieres of *AWAKE: The Life of*

Yogananda, Song of a New Earth, and other independent film gems. This year's films include several narrative features, documentaries and shorts as [world and US premieres](#).

ILLUMINATE's model is unique. It pairs transformational films with a "view and do" experience called Reel Healing. Filmgoers may participate in world-class healing workshops, performances and activities, sound journeys, kirtan, group meditations, hikes and more. "These enable people to more deeply integrate the movie's message," Wolpert explained. "We herald film as a healing modality."

The festival supports that theme with its own healing village, which offers products and services by health and wellness practitioners.

Also in support of its mission to expand human consciousness through film, ILLUMINATE will once again host the world's only [Conscious Film Convergence](#) this year at the festival. It brings together the nation's key stakeholders in the conscious content industry, including filmmakers, producers, distributors, brands and press. They explore strategies for the financing, sales, marketing and distribution of transformational films.

According to Wolpert, Sedona is the ideal home for ILLUMINATE.

"[It] enjoys a unique reputation as the energetic capital of North America, and is distinguished by its natural beauty, wellness resources and metaphysical appeal," she said. Indeed, statistics show wellness travel is growing at nearly twice the rate of total worldwide tourism, and that Sedona is a top 20 US Traveler's Choice destination.