

THE GIRL IMPROVED

FILM & TELEVISION FESTIVAL



A HYBRID ONLINE-DRIVE-IN FEST

AUGUST 6-14, 2020

FESTIVAL.FILMOCRACY.COM/GIFTFEST

PROGRAM



Cultural Arts
CITY OF AUSTIN
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



*the
light
leaks*

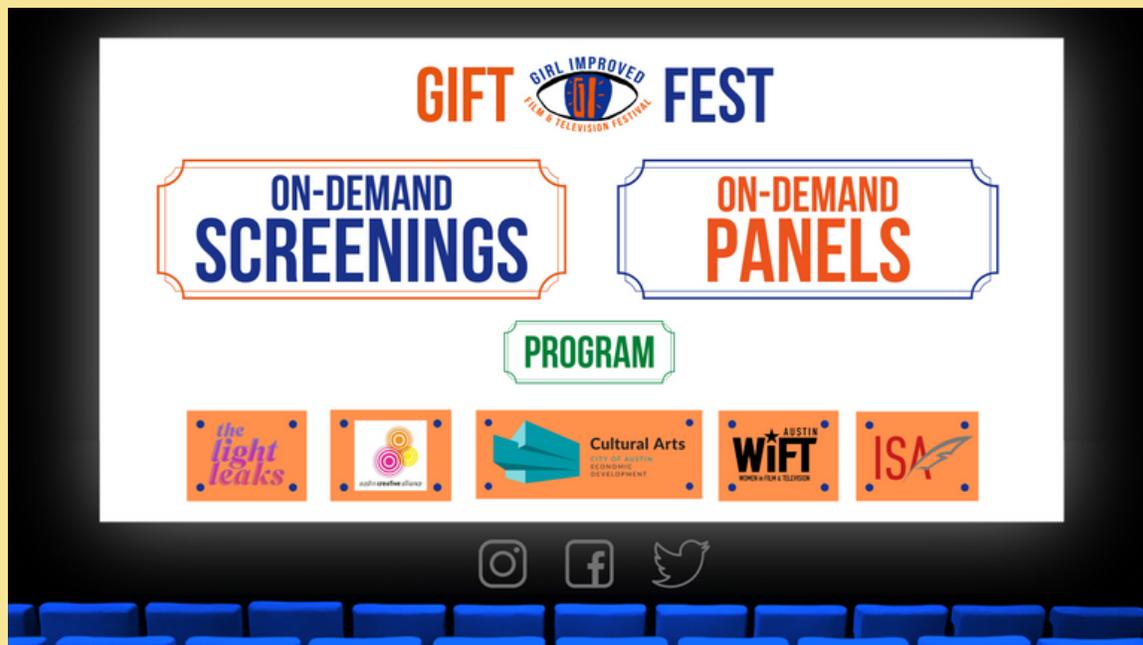


ImprovEd Arts is a sponsored project of Austin Creative Alliance. This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department.

WELCOME TO GIFT FEST 2021!

We are so glad you're here! This program will help you navigate the festival. The festival home page is the starting point for all your activities and features our virtual festival map (see below).

FESTIVAL HOMEPAGE: <http://festival.filmocracy.com/giftfest>



ON-DEMAND SCREENINGS: Provides access to all the short films in our festival line-up, plus pre-recorded Q&A sessions with the filmmakers. Available for on-demand viewing during the entire length of the festival.

ON-DEMAND PANELS: A curated selection of outside links to panels/workshops recorded by our Community Partners. Available for on-demand viewing at any time.

PROGRAM: A detailed look at all of our activities.

LOGOS: Links to our Sponsors and Community Partners.

WHAT IS GIRL IMPROVED?

It's something that follows the parameters for GIFT Fest: the director and a minimum of 50% of the key creative team identifies as female or nonbinary; plus, a minimum of 50% of the cast identifies as female or nonbinary. Oh, and the creators are 22 or younger.

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

13 YEARS OLD AND YOUNGER

+ = PRE-RECORDED FILMMAKER Q&A IS AVAILABLE

- **"Condemned By Inaction" (Natalie Creek, 12) CALIFORNIA +**

Frustrated with presidential inaction in the fight against global warming, a young middle school student decides to personally take the president to court. (3 mins)

- **"Crow Call and Response" (Axaxia OM, 11) CANADA +**

I made this film to bring awareness to what is happening with our waters. I want people to see and realize that we have to save our waters. It took me about a week to to make the footage and three days to make the music. The film allowed me to express my voice and feelings. (3 mins)

- **"FRIENDS LOVE" (Miss Diya M, 13) INDIA**

This animated story tells of the love and affection of a living being in nature. It shares how important it is to help each other, and, also, that the parent is one of the best teachers for a child. (3 mins)

- **"History in the Making: A Poem" (Kwecta'mn Pierre, 13) CANADA**

In the spring of 2020, in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic, Canadians across the country were in self-isolation. Reel Youth offered the Together Apart virtual filmmaking program as a fun and creative way to bring people together, and create art that reflected the moment. (3 mins)

- **"H.I.V. PSA" (Audrey Maxon, 13) CALIFORNIA +**

This film is a PSA about an ongoing pandemic that isn't COVID-19 - HIV. It gives a brief look into what HIV is, where it came from, and what we are doing about it. (3 mins)

- **"Quarantine Things 3 Cabin Fever" (Salah Rabah, 13) NEW YORK**

The third episode of the Quarantine Things series. Cabin Fever shows the harrowing descent of a seemingly innocent family straight into madness during quarantine... or so it seems. (3 mins)

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

14-15 YEARS OLD

+ = PRE-RECORDED FILMMAKER Q&A IS AVAILABLE

- **"A conversation with E" (Esabella Strickland, 15; Taylor Mitchell, 15; Skylar A, 15) CANADA**

When a girl playfully responds to a mysterious post-it note, she finds herself unable to escape the conversation she began. (5 mins)

- **"A Single Question" (Rishika Tiwari, 15) NEW YORK**

An adolescent questions how we navigate our personal religious beliefs and life's most important questions. (8 mins)

- **"All I See Is Blood" (Omega Harrop, 14) NEW YORK**

This film is about Violet Newbin, a regular girl who likes music, art and writing. But there is more to her than you think: something in her can't come out and she gets bullied for it and later on, that leads her to do very crazy things. (4 mins)

- **"Arthritis" (Toccora Lewis, 15) NEW YORK**

Toccora Lewis' film "Arthritis" is a personal documentary about her struggles facing arthritis in her leg. (5 mins)

- **"Dear Mom and Dad" (Ruby O'Dair, 14) TEXAS +**

In this short film a young teen girl takes a leap of faith and prepares to speak her truth. (2 mins)

- **"Deeper: What is a Woman?" (Serafima Zaytsev, 15) NEW YORK**

Filmmaker Serafima Zaytsev explores what it means to be a woman through the perspective of two friends in her film, "DEEPER: What is a Woman?" One is born in Croatia, and another born in New York City. They seek to understand how culture, generation, and family help define gender. (6 mins)

- **"Discovering Anxiety" (Paula Hanel, 15) NEW YORK**

A filmmaker documents her experience of anxiety and explores its impact on her life and those closest to her. (8 mins)

- **"Hello Frisco" (Ava Bounds, 15) UNITED KINGDOM +**

Why was the baby abandoned in a Victorian drain? And how can the four maids on a mission save its life? This playful, surreal road movie pits four teens against the elements in a race against time. (5 mins)

- **"Isn't It Good?" (Arden Egerton, 15) TEXAS**

A short film about my relationship to music, nostalgia, and the pain of exceptional art. (4 mins)

- **"It's Social Security, Stupid!" (Paola Perez, 15) FLORIDA**

A short documentary that goes in-depth about the problems within the social security system. From the unique perspective of a high school student, this short takes you on the many issues that our government has regarding retirement and discusses the much-needed action for prosperity in America. From a lack of financial education in primary schools to insufficient funding, this documentary covers it all! (6 mins)

CONTINUED...

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

14-15 YEARS OLD

+ = PRE-RECORDED FILMMAKER Q&A IS AVAILABLE

- **"Miscommunication" (Destinee Marcion, 15) NEW YORK**

This film investigates the lack of communication teens and parents have when it comes to discussing mental health, and how cultural stigma and age gap can make it hard for teens to seek help. (9 mins)

- **"Normal Family" (Maya Velazquez, 15) NEW YORK**

Maya Velazquez's documentary, "Normal Family", is about her discovering the coming out story of her two moms for the first time. (8 mins)

- **"Obsess Over Every Breath" (Madison De Santos, 15; Hiral Choudhary, 15; Gianna Villanueva, 15) CALIFORNIA +**

Across the globe students sit through hours of school and stay unaware about the horrors occurring outside our windows. Teachers and parents must question the use of school hours; does it even matter beyond the bell. (3 mins)

- **"Remember" (Wendy Cantoran, 14) NEW YORK**

How the 2016 election has impacted me and my mom and how I've learned to cope. (7 mins)

- **"The Colours of My Life" (Hasi Meher, 15) CANADA +**

A poetic perspective on the way different colours are represented. (4 mins)

- **"The Fruits of our Labor" (Maddie Valdez Clark, 15) TEXAS**

A teen reminisces about her past emotional experiences through a bag full of fruit, revealing both her unstable and vulnerable sides. (3 mins)

- **"The Path" (Nan Lin, 15) NEW YORK**

Children of immigrants often face high expectations and pressure to succeed on a path their parents laid out for them. Many students are negatively affected by the stress and struggle to maintain a positive mindset. (6 mins)

- **"The Perfect Teen" (Parmis Mokhtari-Dizaji, 15; Nicole Nguyen, 15) MASSACHUSETTS +**

As high school teens ourselves, we're often expected to meet society's expectations. As people surrounded by other artists and academics, we often hear the complaints of those who are too scared to do something because it isn't perfect. Businesses and other entrepreneurs encourage people to take risks and not to let failure hinder us, but the school environment says otherwise. Unprecedented amount of teens who suffer from this is terrifying. This is a cause of teen mental health issues. (2 mins)

- **"The Story of One Water Bottle" (Gianna Villanueva, 15; Ricardo Rodriguez, 15) CALIFORNIA +**

The journey of our trash, and how our choices can change the story. (3 mins)

- **"Treasure Adventure" (Asha Lazuk, 14) NEW YORK**

Two young girls go on vacation and find a treasure map that leads to many unexpected discoveries. (8 mins)

END OF 14-15 BLOCK

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

16-18 YEARS OLD

+ = PRE-RECORDED FILMMAKER Q&A IS AVAILABLE

- **"1870" (Rachel Dunlap, 16) NEW YORK**

This film highlights the struggles of African Americans throughout history but it is also a call for change; which I hope inspires others to share their story. (6 mins)

- **"25 Cents" (Daphne Parkhill, 18) NEW YORK**

A sheltered young girl desperately wants to buy a bouncy ball from a 25 cent machine, but when her mother says no she sets off alone on an adventure to experience a side of her city she's never seen before. (8 mins)

- **"Alkalize or Die" (Sarah Mackenzie, 17) TEXAS +**

An experimental film about how we take care of ourselves. (2 mins)

- **"Am I Real" (Talia Washington, 16) TEXAS**

A girl suffers from dissociative identity disorder. This film is a representation of the struggles of dissociative identity disorder throughout just one day, showing: losing track of time, not feeling real, feeling like an outcast, even when surrounded by people, and much more. (7 mins)

- **"Annie Atighioyak (Panak)'s Story" (Inuinnait Youth Filmmakers) CANADA**

Annie grew up helping her Elders, and living on the land with her parents. She remembers the games they played, and stories that were told in the tent at night. She is watching the effects of climate change in her community of Cambridge Bay, NU, and finds hope in the young generations of her family. (5 mins)

- **"Apple Crumble" (Kate Saltel, 17) TEXAS +**

When two friends take a mysterious quiz in a 90s teen magazine, everything crumbles. (4 mins)

- **"Bet on yourself" (Lola Parrilla, 17; Tomas Nebot, 17) SPAIN**

A guy who likes online video games with his friends is attracted to Internet gambling ads. He begins to gamble compulsively and, almost without realizing it, ends up gambling with the financial and emotional stability of his entire family. (9 mins)

- **"Boogie Ghost" (Kate Saltel, 17) TEXAS +**

When a shy teenager encounters a mysterious dancing ghost, she must decide whether to give in to the groove or her social anxiety. (2 mins)

- **"Confessions of an Insomniac" (Max the Monsterr, 17) TEXAS +**

Video diary of a therapy session looking at depression and stress-induced insomnia through the eyes of a young black minority. (3 mins)

- **"Dear Reader" (Lily Barfield, 16) FLORIDA +**

Lillian, a screenwriter and employee of a vintage shop, has writer's block. While going through boxes, Lillian discovers a letter written by a young woman in the year 1919. The letter voices her hopes and ambitions for the future, something Lillian connects to on a profound level. (7 mins)

CONTINUED...

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

16-18 YEARS OLD

+ = PRE-RECORDED FILMMAKER Q&A IS AVAILABLE

- **"Derailed" (Thea Taylor Mogg, 16) NEW YORK**

Three teenagers honestly reflect on the impact of their parents' divorce. (4 mins)

- **"EYE ROBOT" (Elina Villemure, 16; Kya Garner Minnick, 16) MICHIGAN**

A Robot downloads human emotion and experiences Love, Laughter and Hate. (2 mins)

- **"Eyes Behind the Frame" (Arianna Williams, 16) NEW YORK +**

In a space where the industry of photography is portrayed as monolithic narrative, Eyes Behind The Frame shines a light upon teenage photographers of color based in New York City and the stories they choose to tell. This documentary explores just a small division of a larger subculture full of show stopping talent, untold narratives, and genuine connection. (4 mins)

- **"Fluid" (Roma Bickerton, 17) TEXAS**

Part of Creative Action's Youth Cinema Collective's "Home Movies" collection. (2 mins)

- **"Forming Existence" (Aria Elizabeth Repich, 16; Sisi Raimond Feybesse, 16) TEXAS**

A girl dropped in a blank universe gets lonely and then decides to create her own world. (1 min)

- **"Get Lifted" (Jaali Michael, 16) NEW YORK**

What happens when anxiety and depression get in the way of going to school? This film explores the struggles of a young woman who realizes she may not graduate from school on time. (8 mins)

- **"Knock, Knock" (Ashleigh Lawless, 18) MASSACHUSETTS +**

Expecting to enjoy a weekend with the house to herself, a girl on film soon realizes she isn't home alone in the midst of filming a video diary. With a sudden mood change, she has to struggle to figure out who (or what) is in the house before they get to her first. (6 mins)

- **"La Voodoo Femme" (Kristin Quintanilla, 16) TEXAS**

Made in collaboration with Gina Yvonne, a local Santera in San Antonio, TX, "La Voodoo Femme" is a short documentary that attempts to shine a light on the beautiful yet misunderstood religion of Santeria. I began documenting my meetings with Gina at her home and the resulting footage became the film. My main goal was to enlighten and depict a sacred institution that developed based on the convergence of people and cultures. (8 mins)

- **"MerryMakers" (Elena Goluboff, 17) NEW YORK**

Two middle school girls sneak out one Saturday night to the West Village. Over the course of the night, they learn about themselves, each other, and what it means to grow up. (10 mins)

- **"Monster's best friend" (Heidi Cristobal, 17) CALIFORNIA**

When a teen is saved from the horror depths of an unknown monster, she learns that her savior is her lovable dog. Through the confusion and anger, our young character tries to understand the intentions of the unknown monster by analyzing its relationship with her dog. Despite her intent to separate them both, she learns that a bit of kindness is key to discovering a new friendship. (4 mins)

CONTINUED...

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

16-18 YEARS OLD

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- **"Nights in the Greenhouse" (Bella Shepard, 17) TEXAS +**

A curious investigation into the filmmaker's dream world in 2020. (4 mins)

- **"Pick Up" (Sophia Sutter, 17) TEXAS**

Pick Up is a look into the subconscious of someone trying to change and understand the consequences of who they used to be. (2 mins)

- **"reflections" (Ava Dorina Eielson, 17) MASSACHUSETTS +**

A teenager falls into the realm of self-hated as she reads a fashion magazine, shattering the very fragile perception of her own beauty. Drowning in a sea of unattainable beauty standards. Will she sink or swim? (6 mins)

- **"Restless Room" (Mila Cueva, 16) MARYLAND +**

In the short film "Restless," a girl gets transported and trapped in an enchanted room that torments her. At the same time, she gets visions of a faceless girl in a bathtub who seems to be in danger, all while she keeps hearing a scream. She struggles to escape, but eventually the room itself ends up taking her to the girl in the bathtub, who is revealed to be her. (3 mins)

- **"Scout" (Latrice Holifield, 16) TEXAS +**

Nancy, a very attractive scout, approaches young Fernando with a chance to pursue his dreams. He gets more than he signed up for. (5 mins)

- **"Somon Amna" (Inuinnait Youth Filmmakers) CANADA**

"Somon Amna" is a traditional Drum Dance song performed by the Kugluktuk, Nunavut song group "Tauryuit Numiqtiit" in the language of Innuinaqtun. This song tells the story of a hunter lost on the tundra. Drum Dancing was almost lost to this community until this group of women started gathering to sing together and carry this ancient tradition forward. (5 mins)

- **"The Box" (Chelsea Trotti, 17) CALIFORNIA +**

A pair of siblings search for a missing box left to them by their grandfather only to rediscover something much more valuable. (5 mins)

- **"The Dancing Bears" (Ryleigh Jenkins, 16; Katie Garey, 16) GEORGIA +**

Students with differing abilities are all too often left out of STEM education. Some teenagers in Georgia are bashing those barriers and changing the way the world looks at STEM education and technology. (3 mins)

- **"Tire Kickers" (Olivia Carter, 17) TEXAS +**

Blinded by naivety, Connor buys his first car over text. When he quickly realizes he has been pranked by prank star Prankity Spankity, he and his friend Brandy decide to take revenge. They soon find themselves pleading guilty for the pranksters death. (8 mins)

CONTINUED...

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

16-18 YEARS OLD

+ = PRE-RECORDED FILMMAKER Q&A IS AVAILABLE

- **"Volo Mori (I Crave Death)" (E.K. Lewis, 17; Wiley Martinez, 17) TEXAS +**

A comedically macabre stop motion film that examines the process of what happens to your remains once the mortician gets a hold of you. (4 mins)

- **"Warm Water" (Camille Cayenne, 17) TEXAS**

Part of Creative Action's Youth Cinema Collective. (3 mins)

- **"When Two Ends Meet" (Deborah Miller, 17) NEW YORK**

Two couples experience domestic violence. The victims meet by chance and find themselves on a journey to help each other heal. (10 mins)

- **"Yellow Cards for Equal Pay" (Maia Vota, 18) VERMONT +**

Members of the Burlington High School girls soccer team recount the launch of their viral #EqualPay movement, inspired by Megan Rapinoe and the U.S. women's national soccer team, from its humble beginnings to national media coverage. (5 mins)

- **"Your Destination is on the Left" (Adele Rankin, 18) TEXAS +**

Short documentary style clipshow showcasing the last two months of high school. (6 mins)

MANY OF OUR SUBMISSIONS CAME FROM THESE INCREDIBLE FILM PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH:

REEL 
WORKS

REELYOUTH

HERFRESH FILMS



**creative
ACTION**



CHECK THEM OUT!

END OF 16-18 BLOCK

ON-DEMAND SCREENING BLOCKS

19-22 YEARS OLD

+ = PRE-RECORDED FILMMAKER Q&A IS AVAILABLE

- **"Angry, Tired, and Uninspired" (Meghan McCullin, 21) ARIZONA +**

Phoebe Porter is a student screenwriter who is preparing for her first big project. She struggles to come up with an idea that not only shares her creative voice but also sets her apart as a unique individual. She looks to her best friend, Ezra, for advice and learns that even in her creative funk, she can still tell a beautiful story as long as she writes from the heart. (6 mins)

- **"Capture the Flag" (Connie O'Connor, 21) FLORIDA**

When a teen sports enthusiast is invited to try out for an exclusive team, she must prove she has what it takes to capture the flag. (8 mins)

- **"Dear Alex" (Rowan Gundry, 20) MICHIGAN +**

Dear Alex is about a character writing a journal entry while laying in bed about someone, the entry shows the thoughts, feelings and the lessons that they learned from this person. The person is revealed at the end. (2 mins)

- **"Dream Catcher" (Amy Nunez, 19) CALIFORNIA +**

Luz feels left behind because she has not found her personal legend, her goal in life, while others around her already have. Her reflection tries to help her see what's already in front of her, but she can't, leading her reflection to take a dark turn. (10 mins)

- **"Gratitude" (Alyce Rogers, 20) FLORIDA**

In this short documentary, Alyce shares her story of growth and realization brought on by the pandemic. (4 mins)

- **"October" (Abby Phillips, 20) TEXAS**

"October" is an original song/lyric video from singer-songwriter and filmmaker, Abby Phillips, who goes by the stage name, Albee. The song reflects her real insecurities and fears of aging and accomplishing "enough." It is an authentic dive into her head to illustrate how the passing of time highlights the pressures and expectations of reaching enough success. (4 mins)

- **"She Wanted to Be a Cowboy" (Emily Imbrogna, 22) MASSACHUSETTS**

Artist Trina Baker explores the unique relationships she's had with the animals she has worked with throughout her career and how they have ultimately influenced her amassed body art work. (10 mins)

- **"Skeleton of a Moth" (Emma Kay Smith, 21) UNITED KINGDOM +**

Skeleton of a Moth' is a short documentary animation made by Emma Kay Smith about the emotional difficulties and social pressures that affect teenage girls of today. The film is a collective narrative going back and forth between multiple girl's perspectives as they talk through problems surrounding body image, mental health, and sexual assault. Emma hopes that the film will show anyone who has or is experiencing any of the issues discussed, that they aren't alone, and that they have other people around them who will understand what they are going through. (8 mins)

- **"Turquoise Earrings" (Xinchi Wang, 22) MASSACHUSETTS**

Leslie, a college girl, plans to confess her real feelings to her friend Chloe, but Leslie's plan is interrupted when Chloe finds out she might be pregnant with her ex-boyfriend's baby. (10 mins)

END OF 19-22 BLOCK

MEET OUR INDUSTRY COMMENTATORS

introducing...



TRICIA LEE
Director-Writer

INDUSTRY COMMENTATOR
(SCREENWRITING)

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introducing...



ANGÉLICA PÉREZ-CASTRO
Cinematographer

INDUSTRY COMMENTATOR
(CINEMATOGRAPHY)

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introducing...



SPENSER REICH
Editor

INDUSTRY COMMENTATOR
(EDITING)

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GIRL IM
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introducing...



NATALIE METZGER
Director-Writer-Producer

INDUSTRY COMMENTATOR
(PRODUCING)

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introducing...



LISA DONATO
Director-Writer-Activist

INDUSTRY COMMENTATOR
(DIRECTING)

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MEET OUR JUDGES

introducing...



DIVA RODRIGUEZ
Storytelling Specialist

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



LAUREN LEE
Filmmaker

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



REGINE CLEMENCEAU
Script Consultant

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



ANDREEA DOBRE
Film Director

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



VINCY WANG
Filmmaker

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



SHAVLAH AND SHANDRA CONLEY
Sisters' Productions

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



SYDNEY HAYWARD
Filmmaker

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



KAREN CECILIA
Playwright - Theatre Maker

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



JOAN MONTREUIL
Indie Filmmaker

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

introducing...



FILSON ALI
Producer

GIFT FEST
JUDGE

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AT THE BLUE STARLITE DRIVE-IN

MONDAY, AUGUST 9TH - 8:45PM

Requires a separate ticket



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