

Be at your fest

Sometimes it's fun to see a movie before the critics tell you what to think, before the marketing people tell you what to anticipate, before any other viewer has a chance to start doling out stars. That's what you get at film festivals, and D.C. has more than you might think. None of them are Sundance or Cannes, but that's the point: Instead of being overloaded by glitz and glamour, these festivals are just about the movies. Which one is right for you? Answer a few questions below and find out. KRISTEN PAGE-KIRBY (EXPRESS); ILLUSTRATION BY DREW SHANNON (FOR EXPRESS)

OK, so do you have a long attention span?

No. I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO FINISH THIS CHART

Are you feeling the Bern?

NO

Will you read subtitles?

NO

Are you broke?

NO

Are you feeling the Bern?

YES

Do people who call movies "films" annoy you?

NO

Do you like Oscar bait?

NO

Do you have a car?

NO

Do you have a car?

YES

Do you have a car?

YES

Do you have a car?

YES

Do you have a car?

NO

Do you have a car?

YES

Do you have a car?

YES

Do you have a car?

NO

Middleburg Film Festival

Sept. 8-18; middleburgfilm.org

We don't know much about this year's festival. At press time, they were still taking submissions. Here's what we do know — you attend the 90-minute chunk of your choosing, and you get to see a wide-ranging selection of short films that encompass every possible genre. You want the best picture Oscar, in fact, every film to take the audience prize here has scored a best picture nom. Clearly, these moviegoers have good taste.

Dc Shorts

Sept. 8-18; dcshorts.com

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AFI Docs

June 22-26; afi.com

Formerly known as Silverdocs and formerly a little homegrown festival, AFI Docs is now arguably the country's premier festival when it comes to documentaries. Winners here have gone on to achieve box office and critical success, and the panels often encompass both the art and the business of filmmaking.

Outdoor film series

Everywhere, all the time; all summer greenfilmseries.com

Screen on the Green used to be the only game in town. Now that series is always on the brink of closing (no news yet about this year), but every possible area has stepped up. Schedules aren't live yet, but most fests include a blend of classic and modern cinema and most are family-friendly, if not specifically targeted to kids.

GI Film Festival

May 21-29; gofilmfestival.com

All of the local film festivals have a lot to offer, but this one is the only one with an '80s party. That happens after the May 25 screening of "Top Gun," attended by Iceman himself, Val Kilmer. Gary Sinise, a longtime supporter of veterans' issues, will appear with his Lt. Dan Band in concert at the Howard Theatre. Themes include women in the military, international films and a salute to wounded warriors.

Korean Film Festival

May 19-June 18; asia.si.edu

Though this free festival's home, the Freer Gallery, is closed for renovation, the films keep rolling. This year's screenings will be held at a handful of alternate sites, and at least one is close to you. That means it's easy to catch one of the crime films, lush historical pieces, dramas, comedies and documentaries, including "My Love, Don't Cross That River," Korea's highest-grossing independent film of all time.

Filmfest DC

April 14-24; filmfestdc.org

Celebrating its 30th year, Filmfest DC features mostly international films, though the U.S. is well-represented. The opening night's film is "The Dressmaker," starring Kate Winslet as a scandalous seamstress returning to her backwater Australian hometown. Themes include music, comedies, crime thrillers and movies about and from Cuba. There are dozens of director Q&As and panel discussions.

DCLabor Film Fest

April 29-May 31; dclabor.org

The anchor of the DC LaborFest — which celebrates working people through music, poetry and other events — the DC Labor Film Fest includes a lot of recent films you meant to catch but didn't, for whatever reason, including last year's "Suffragette," "Trumbo" and "Concussion." In fact, there are 21 movies — many of them free — that examine the intersection between work, economics, politics and art.

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Middleburg Film Festival

Oct. 20-23; middleburgfilm.org

One of the area's youngest festivals (it's in its fourth year), this event in the Virginia countryside brings in some heavy hitters — attendees often hear Oscar buzz before Oscar voters do. Last year's top audience prize went to "Spotlight," which went on to win the best picture Oscar; in fact, every film to take the audience prize here has scored a best picture nom. Clearly, these moviegoers have good taste.