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Break Down Some Barriers This Weekend

Moscow's famous international festival of films about people with disabilities begins

By The Moscow Times

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Going to the movies has never been so much fun. "**Sanctuary**"

If you love movies, you're in luck this weekend. The 9th Breaking Down Barriers International Film Festival begins Friday and runs through Monday. The festival showcases films – feature films, short-form films, documentaries, animated and children's films, and children's films – about people with disabilities. The films are sometimes deeply moving, sometimes hilariously funny, but always fascinating, illuminating, and thought-provoking.

This year the organizing committee at Perspektiva, a Russian non-governmental organization devoted to improving the lives of people with disabilities, received a record number of submissions: over 300 films from 40 countries. Seventeen films are in the festival

competition and will be considered by an international jury headed by director Andrei Proshkin and including special festival guest, journalist and award-winning documentary filmmaker Jon Alpert.

Altogether almost 80 films from 30 countries will be shown at three venues – the Almaz Cinema, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Multi-Media Art Museum – with the closing ceremony to be held at the Hall of Church Councils of the Christ the Savior Cathedral on Sunday evening.

All the venues are, of course, barrier-free. All the films will be shown in the original language with subtitles (most of the Russian films are also sub-titled in English).

There will also be a great number of workshops and a special children's program on Saturday with films and entertainment for little guests, so that parents or guardians can enjoy some quiet time in the theater.

Best of all – there will be nearly a dozen filmmakers at the festival to talk with audiences after their films are shown. Don't miss "Mind Over Matter," a film by director Sebastian Paquet about Brandon Mendenhall, who was born with cerebral palsy but taught himself guitar and formed a wildly successful band. Both the director and main character will be in town to talk about the film.

Another not-to-miss film is the award-winning Irish film "Sanctuary" about love between a young man with Down Syndrome and a young woman with severe epilepsy. Director Len Collin will talk about the film and answer questions.

All the films with guest filmmakers will be shown a few times at various venues, so be sure to check the schedule, here in English, to find a screening that suits.

Entrance is free but you have to register online ahead of time here.

For more information about the films, schedule, venues and film festival, see the site*.*

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