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Yet Another Celebration of The Cannabis Film Festival¹

The International Cannabis Film Festival (FEICCA) has launched an open call for film directors and producers to participate in its sixth edition, which is set to take place in Mexico City.

The International Festival was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, in 2018, after Iván Librado and Tania Magdalena, who are both from Mexico City, decided to support cannabis culture through the seventh art. The festival focuses on films portraying the plant's diverse social manifestations worldwide.

The Sixth International Cannabis Film Festival will be celebrated from July 28th to 30th in the Mexico City borough of Tlalpan. This year, at least twenty countries are set to participate, including Turkey, India, France, and Uruguay, with more than 2,500 expected short and feature film submissions — surpassing the previous festival's 1,500 submissions.

Besides showing movies, shorts, documentaries, and web series on the big screen, FEICCA provides the public with diverse cultural activities, including workshops, talks, master classes, concerts, panic art, runways, and more—all of which focus on film and cannabis. In this year of heightened environmental awareness, the festival's offering includes CinemaCicleta (or CinemaCycle): a series of outdoor self-sustainable screenings powered by the audience's bicycle pedaling.

For almost six years, the festival's mission has been to dignify cannabis by using film as a tool for social transformation. More than 100 years ago, US authorities ac-



tually started using film as a medium to disseminate a prohibition and stigmatization campaign around the use and consumption of the plant, a campaign that affected Mexico, too.

“Today we are fighting to break away from the stereotypes of cannabis consumers through education, information, and culture,” notes director general Ivan Librado Ríos, who hopes the festival will “have an impact on the political agenda and public opinion, raising awareness in civil society regarding the topics that have been invisibilized by the hegemonic media.”

Every year, one of the requirements for participation in the open call is for filmmakers to narrate new stories about marihuana—proposing versions of reality that are different from the ones we’ve been told— thus casting light on medicinal and recreational consumers, activists fighting for the human rights of consumers, and researchers who continue to discover new properties and health benefits through their work. These filmmakers’ stories can lead us to reflect upon cannabis and do away with stigmas, putting a stop to discrimination against the plant’s consumers.

The festival’s main function is to create social change, and these changes can be found in the strong and clear messages of film productions, and, to a large extent, in their communications strategies. Festivals can provide spaces to come together and screen films, but every film needs to follow its own path in order to make a true social impact.

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From 2020 to 2022, the festival received more than 3,500 film materials. After curation, some 360 pieces were selected in four categories: animated, fiction, documentary, and experimental short and feature-length films. The participating pieces are screened throughout the festival days, but the films are also shared year-round at festivals like the Mexican Film Festival Network (Red Fest Mex), Unifest Film, and the Iberoamerican Festival Network (Red Ibero Fest), as well as at cannabis events that include FEICCA within their cultural programming.

The fact that cannabis festivals and events support each other is extremely important to FEICCA. The more connections emerge between cannabis experiences and the organizations closest to cannabis consumption, the greater the impact of a film project will be, since each actor can mirror an active part of the process. How many times have we felt ourselves reflected in the main character of a film? How many times have we seen a friend, family member, or acquaintance in any given main character? Film touches sensitive fibers of our awareness, helping us contemplate and empathize with different stories. The seventh art harnesses the ability to expand moral imagination, allowing us to imagine ourselves in another's shoes, even when our realities are very different.

Any producer or filmmaker who wishes to participate in the Sixth Edition of the International Cannabis Film Festival must sign up through the Film Freeway platform and submit film materials that reflect marijuana culture in Mexico and the world.

This year, the open call will be open for a month and a half. Films shorter than 40 minutes will be considered shorts. The films should be presented for selection in their original version, with Spanish subtitles, and each author may present as many pieces as desired.



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“The festival’s selection committee will filter the submitted pieces. The committee’s decisions are final. After the selection process is done, the results will be published on the festival’s official website,” stated Iván Librado.

A medal forged by the National Network of Artisans, which is charged with creating the festival’s prize year after year, will be awarded at the festival’s close. In so doing, FEICCA seeks to honor the festival’s winners with works of art.

For its fifth edition, the festival created an activist mural intervened by the Mexican artist Hobbs, which aimed to raise awareness on the right to freely develop one’s personality—a right that’s restricted by the prohibition of cannabis and its consumption.

Without a doubt, the International Cannabis Film Festival is an unusual cultural initiative, as it focuses on a subject that unsettles societies the world over.

The year 2020 marked the festival’s first virtual celebration, which sought to overcome borders and bring together audiences, directors, and producers. In said edition “we had the opportunity to speak with pro-cannabis activists, who shared information on the benefits of the plant, its legalization process, and the situation of cannabis in various countries,” explained FEICCA director Tania Magdaleno.

The international impact of this film gathering also stems from the alliances established with other organizations, such as the environmental foundation Colombia Territorio Azul and the economic-development project “Hemprendimiento por Colombia, una opción de vida” (roughly translated as “Hempreneurship for Colombia: A Life Option”), which have lent their support to the production of FEICCA 2023 in three Colombian cities: Medellin, Bogota, and Santander. **MM**

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¹ For more information on the International Cannabis Film Festival, follow @feiccamx on Facebook and Instagram.