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All the best movies we saw at New York Film Festival, ranked (including Steve McQueen's 'Lovers Rock')

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Start spreading the news: New York Film Festival is finally here. Virtually.

Like Toronto International Film Festival, NYFF decided to turn into a mostly online affair this year because of COVID-19. But you don't have to show up to Lincoln Center to get tickets: Film fans can go online to rent movies from the impressive, globetrotting 2020 slate including Sofia Coppola's "On the Rocks" (featuring Bill Murray and Rashida Jones) and the first three films in the five-part "Small Axe" anthology directed by Steve McQueen ("12 Years a Slave") that tells stories set in London's West Indian community from the late 1960s to the early '80s.

Like free stuff? NYFF has you covered there, too. Friday through Sunday, audiences can stream the new political documentary "All In: The Fight for Democracy" at no charge, and the presentation will include a post-screening discussion with producer/politician Stacey Abrams and Oscar winner Whoopi Goldberg.

'I'm really done': Steve McQueen on dedicating 'Lovers Rock' to George Floyd at NY Film Festival

Toronto Film Festival: All the best movies we saw, ranked

After a successful Toronto fest, we're heading to New York – which in 2020 means switching couches – to round up and rank the best efforts we watch:



Gabino Rodriguez (left) and Luisa Pardo star in "Fauna," a Mexican comedy with a meta detective noir story-within-a-story. NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL

5. 'Fauna'

The quirky and slightly absurdist little Mexican comedy sneakily weaves in shades of criminal fiction and violence as part of populist imagination. Estranged siblings Luisa (Luisa Pardo) and Gabino (Gabino Rodríguez) return home to visit their parents alongside Luisa's fellow actor and hapless boyfriend Paco (Francisco Barreiro), a bit player on a popular narco TV show. Their many awkward interactions give way to a meta noir detective story with all the actors playing different roles that subtly hints at the town's shady underbelly.

4. 'The Inheritance'

Director Ephraim Asili's timely experimental film is part documentary and part fictional narrative interspersing a lesson on Black culture with a historical plight for racial and social justice. In the film peppered with footage of first Black congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, as well as images of Black icons John Coltrane and Muhammad Ali, a young man (Eric Lockley) inherits his grandmother's Philadelphia house and creates a Black socialist collective with his girlfriend (Nozpho Mclean). Asili creates a tapestry of their story interspersed with the story of the MOVE liberation group and the tragic bombing of their Philly house in 1985 that took 11 lives and destroyed 61 homes.



Nozpho Mclean stars as a member of a Black socialist collective in Philadelphia in the experimental film "The Inheritance." EMPAC RFI



Notice our new look? As you get used to things, please let us know what you think!



Police are ready to quell gilets jaunes (aka "yellow vests") protestors in Paris in the documentary 'The Monopoly of Violence.' MAXIME REYNIÉ

3. 'The Monopoly of Violence'

Those who followed the cable-news footage of the civil unrest in our country following George Floyd's death will see an eerie reflection in this arresting French documentary chronicling the violent skirmishes in late 2018 between national police and the gilets jaunes (aka yellow vests) movement that called for economic justice in Paris. Amid brutal and haunting footage, academics debate the philosophy of legitimized power and should the state hold it, while police and victims alike discuss their sides of a conflict that claimed hands and eyes and changed lives forever.



'All In: The Fight for Democracy' features Georgia Democrat Stacey Abrams, the first Black woman from a major party to run for governor in the USA, and her fight against voter suppression. AMAZON STUDIOS

2. 'All In: The Fight for Democracy'

You won't find a more persuasive and urgent vehicle to get people voting in the 2020 election than this well-done and informative documentary that goes to some dark places in American history yet also leans hopeful. The film chronicles voter suppression tactics and the disenfranchisement of people of color and women – from the earliest days of the country until now – and lifts the voices of those who've fought against it. "All In" also focuses on Abrams, a Democrat who ran for Georgia governor in 2018 and has her own stories to tell about the importance of voting rights.

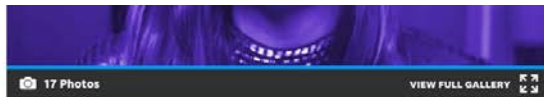


Franklyn (Micheal Ward) and Martha (Amarah-Jae St. Aubyn) meet at a lively reggae party in 1980 in Steve McQueen's 'Lovers Rock.' PARISA TAGHZEDEH/AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

1. 'Lovers Rock'

The only fictional tale in McQueen's series, the 1980-set slice-of-life narrative centers on a house party at a time when Black people weren't welcome at white London nightclubs. Martha (newcomer Amarah-Jae St. Aubyn) sneaks out of her house and goes to this reggae-fueled shindig where she meets the flirtatious Franklyn (Micheal Ward) in a night filled with love, revelry, racial tensions and hard feelings. McQueen brilliantly stages the party as an evolving organism, from women doing sharp karate moves to "Kung Fu Fighting" early in the evening to men dancing wildly as the night wears on, and a parade of tunes throughout lend the movie its joyous heartbeat.





The best movies of 2020, ranked (including 'She Dies Tomorrow')

Theaters have taken closed for much of the year due to COVID-19, and streaming's picked up a lot of the slack. Here are the best films so far in 2020.



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