

'Better Than Ever', 37th Annual Miami Film Festival Kicks Off Friday

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MIAMI (CBSMiami) – Miami-Dade College's [Miami Film Festival](#) kicks off Friday as it celebrates its 37th year.

The festival is a major launchpad for international and documentary cinema. It grants the world's best emerging and established filmmakers the opportunity to showcase their work in the Miami community.

Last year's Miami Film Festival attracted more than 45,000 film aficionados.

Miami Film Festival Director Jaie Laplante says this year's line up, which features 135 films, is better than ever.

"We developed a strong voice through the years, really focused on some great films made here by filmmakers from Miami," said Laplante.

Miami based directors Kareem Tabsch and Jessica Kavana Dornbusch both have films in this year's festival.

Kavana Dornbusch wrote and directed 'Reefa'. It is based on the true story of a 2013 tragic police taser death of 18-year-old graffiti artists Israel "Reefa" Hernandez.

Miami-native Kareem Tabsch's documentary titled 'Mucho, Mucho Amor' debuted at the Sundance Film Festival and will close out the Miami festival this year.

The film will give audiences a look at the life and vision of the legendary Puerto-Rican astrologer, the late Walter Mercado.

“‘Mucho, Mucho Amor’ is the story of Mercado’s unlikely rise to fame from a shy boy in the Puerto-Rican countryside to the magnetic superstar and icon of Latino television,” said Tabsch. “Walter was a consummate professional. We submitted it to Sundance November 1st and Walter died November 2nd.”

This year’s festival is set to open with “The Burnt Orange Heresy.”

It is the fifth movie adaptation of the works from late black noir novelist Charles Willjefer and will bring a star-studded cast.

“His new film stars Donald Sutherland and Mick Jagger among others. It’s a very sexy, steamy thriller based in the art world, so South Floridians will relate to that as well,” said Laplante.

If you or anyone you know is a fan, feel free to come out and experience the festival.

The festival runs until March 15, 2020.

For more information, visit www.miamifilmfestival.com