

DOKUDAILY

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WE ANNOUNCE
DOKUFEST OPEN

Daily Picks

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PHOTO: ELMEDINA ARAPI

TRIBUTE TO DOKUFEST

I do not, I have to admit, get typically emotional when I unravel the snippets of the multitude of journeys one gets to experience in this lifetime. But this one... I suppose it is a persistent reminder of just how substantial the right people, right environment, and right ideals are at the right moment. I joined DokuFest when I was a teenager, at a time when I probably knew less than I thought I did, and was learning more than I realized at the time.

Very quickly, I got familiar with the films flickering against the backdrop of ancient stone, and that golden Prizren light that lingers long after the sun sets. Moreover, I became family with the people that will forever be my mentors. These people that gave rise to this movement with an immense amount of love, and with the same love and rebellion, continue to sustain the heartbeats of art, culture and resistance.

Eight years later, with the same magic, and eagerness to see, explore, and absorb, I turn into the long ago me, thinking of the first evening screening under the stars, when the crowd falls silent and the city itself seems to lean in to listen. I feel the effects of a re-shape, in the late-night conversations by the river, the laughs echoing through the old streets, in the way strangers leave here as companions bound by a common remembrance.

DokuFest to me, more than anything, is being swept up in a current of creativity and humanity. It is about a city that opens its heart to the world, and a world that answers back with stories that remind us who we are and what we might become.

Year after year, it feels like coming home to a place that is both familiar and ever new. A place where time slows, the air buzzes with possibility, and you realize that even in the smallest corner of the world, beauty can echo endlessly if it is nurtured with love.

Here's to DokuFest! The week where Prizren becomes a poem, and all of us, for a fleeting moment, get to live inside it.

Written by: Flutura Balaj



PHOTO: FERDI LIMANI

DAILY PICKS

ELLIS PARK / 105'
SLANTED & ENCHANTED: MUSIC ON FILM



KINO ABI ÇARSHIA 1 17:00

THE VANISHING POINT / 104' -
HUMAN RIGHTS DOX



SHTËPIA E KULTURËS (SALLA E MADHE) 18:30

KNEECAP / 105'
FICTION/NON-FICTION



DOKUKINO PLATO 20:30

1984 / 110'
BLAST FROM THE PAST



DOKUKINO 22:00

RESISTANCE - WOMEN OF PEACE AND JUSTICE
IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND ALBANIA
DOKUTALKS



SHKOLLA E MUZIKËS 'LORENC ANTONI' 17:00

BYRON YEATES X IN2STELLAR
X REBISWAN
DOKUNIGHTS



SONAR STAGE 23:59

DokuFest Opens Its 24th Edition with a Rejection of Being a Neutral Witness



PHOTO: FERDI LIMANI

The usual venue for the opening of the International Documentary and Short Film Festival in Prizren has changed this year. Due to renovation works at the Lumbardhi Cinema, the opening ceremony of the 24th edition of DokuFest was moved to Kino Lumi, a venue that has already become emblematic for the festival.

Although the location of the opening ceremony has changed, DokuFest's approach to emotionally moving its guests through image and sound remains the same. Without uttering a single word, a powerful statement was once again delivered on Friday evening. Director Leart Rama's film brought the author's personal reflection on this year's festival theme, "Endless Greed Mental Void", prompting the audience to reflect on events in today's world.

"To feel means to notice. To allow yourself to be touched by what you see, by the news you receive, and by what you are told. To be moved by the tremor in a song, to notice the weight, the pain in someone else's body. To pursue the truth, to never give up seeking it. To recognize loss, injustice, resistance, what is right, what is wrong, the sudden rush of blood through your whole body. To let everything in, and to let everything hurt. To let it move you. To allow yourself to see, to allow yourself to cry. To give space to your feelings, to name them, to trust them, to let them change you. To stand with the world, even when it's easier to walk away. So, thank you for coming, for opening up, for staying here even though it hurts. For feeling and entering the stories, even when they are heavy and unfinished, like the one unfolding here, now," it is said in the explanation given for the film, which can be viewed at this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCv_eqzn850.

The work included fragments from Leart Rama's unpublished film, online news footage, Little Palestine: Diary of a Siege by Abdallah Al-Khatib, I Have Never Been on an Airplane by Redon Kika, NASA's video library, Ben's Birthday by Robert Decani, and Israel Palestine on Swedish TV by Göran Hugo Olsson, while the music featured Colin Stetson's The Lighthouse IV, Lord I Just Can't Keep From Crying Sometimes, Lighthouse I, and In Love and in Justice.

All of these wove together parallels between pain, suffering, injustice, and the indifference of continuing daily routines without a sense of the other side of the world. Meanwhile, the song

with the lyrics "When will this pain end" was enough to conclude this emotional experience and deliver the on-screen message: "We declare DokuFest open."

As a film festival from Kosovo, a society and context shaped by the post-war experience, DokuFest has made it clear for weeks now that we must not remain neutral witnesses to what is happening in the world, nor passively absorb injustice. This is something the festival also aims to manifest through its film program, events, and numerous discussions.

The documentary *The Helsinki Effect* (2025) by director Arthur Franck opened this edition's film program, revisiting the historic diplomatic gathering known as the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Helsinki. Despite being regarded at the time as a dull and tedious event, the filmmaker has crafted a lively and humorous narrative that unpacks its decisive role in reshaping the global order during the Cold War.

The film consists entirely of archival materials, official documents, and visual presentations, while the voices of two key figures from the conference, Leonid Brezhnev and Henry Kissinger are simulated using Artificial Intelligence.

Through his 88-minute work, Franck reveals how the Helsinki Conference had a profound impact on European security and how it still resonates today, half a century later, in a turbulent world. He also explains the influence of the agreement on the creation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other significant initiatives. Furthermore, he shows how slow diplomacy, despite prejudices, can bring results aimed at maintaining peace.

Film screenings on opening night continued in two other cinemas. The *Encampments and Separated* were shown at Kino Oborri, while *Facing War and Coexistence*, *My Ass!* were screened on the DokuKino.

When unveiling this year's theme, the DokuFest team stated:

"This year's program is an attempt to respond, to resist numbness, to rescue language from manipulation. To insist that the act of telling, listening, and being together still matters greatly. This year, we present the films, conversations, and music as a protest, as a call. Against the void. Against the desire to detach from reality. Against the relentless repetition of the act of forgetting."

For all the things we stand for

IN CONVERSATION WITH NITA DEDA



PHOTO: LUKA STRIKA

Following the opening ceremony of DokuFest, this meeting with Nita Deda, now part of the DokuNights music curation team, turns into a conversation about how musical tastes evolve and how they shape or leave a mark on a place that has created its own space of freedom: a space that gathers what can be highlighted as a hope for the future mixed with the nostalgia of first steps.

"I was lucky that when I joined DokuFest in 2010, DokuNights was still a small setup, held in closed spaces like restaurants. As it began to grow, the wings that the DokuFest team gives, learning through doing, were given to me too, especially by Veton Nurkollari. In those early years of developing DokuNights, I learned a lot about what it means to work with an audience and with a city, and what can be pushed forward as music that you love."

Over the years, DokuNights has built a loyal following, and Deda attributes this to experimentation and to listening to the music one hears all year round but now in a place one lives in with its long-standing rhythm and routine. Her collaborations have been many throughout the years, and she highlights her four-year collaboration with Patrik Ukiq and placing DokuNights on the Andrra stage, which came with its own expectations. As she points out, it was a process of learning from mistakes and from experimentation in order to connect more closely with audiences. "Even the curation of DokuNights always carried with it a kind of statement, just like the film program curated by Veton and Samir always do. This isn't only about giving space to international artists, but also about activating the local scene and emerging functional collectives." Nita recalls performances by Bijat, Angry Youth, Servis, or custom arrangements created specifically for films.

Regarding taking a stance while the RESISTANCEEXISTENCE installation stands beside Kino Lumi, she refers to what DokuFest has always done. She mentions the opening video created by Leart Rama, which speaks to the world as if it were holding up a clear and easily readable diagnosis of terror in contrast to deep collective apathy. She also references the participation of bands like 47SOUL last year, from Palestine, or DAKHABRAKHA this year, from Ukraine: not just for the excellent music they bring, but as a human stance, not to be seen as some moral imposition we're forced to meet but rather as an act of solidarity and empathy with those suffering unjust fates. This care translates into music curation as well.

"Last year we experimented with the stage, using different spaces to adapt to the artists and to push their performances to another level of refinement. This year, since Kino Lumbardhi is under renovation, we're facing a new challenge and exercise: using the same stage for each artist, but in different ways," says Nita, referring to the work done in shaping these performances. Expressing excitement for many of the upcoming performances starting tonight, she mentions Cinna Peyghamy, an artist she has followed and invited for a long time, finally arriving at DokuFest on August 6 and Anda Kryeziu as well. And we have a full circle moment with Ibadet Ramadani, coming for second time at DokuFest, now with a new album.

The cherry on top remains the final night, and Nita explains how this evening is traditionally reserved for a performance from Albania whether in past years with Saz'iso, River Voices of Osum, or last year with Orkestra Shkodra. This year it will be Pulsi i Beratit. Her ongoing collaboration with Edit Pula serves not just to bring people together under the gentle flow of Albanian spiritual music, but also as a moment of appreciation and preservation of this inexhaustible poetic and folk

source on a stage whose audience is always open. As Nita notes: "For the Orkestra Shkodra performance last year, there were many people who changed their entire schedules just to be in Prizren that day for that moment of sincere and pure exchange." In terms of taking a stance, this invitation extended to a city in Albania to close a festival in Prizren stands strong and unique.

We are at the beginning of the festival, and DokuDaily has also spoken to other important voices at DokuFest about various aspects of curation during a time when our attention is overwhelmed with cultural events and happenings that seem to stretch the day even further. In this moment of cultural oversaturation often filled with repetition DokuFest carves out a moment of breath and delivers a taste that has been ripened over many years. Nita says this selection, this process, and this standard should define the nature of a program: it should be genuine, not arrogant.

In this conversation about music, there was also a moment when we grasped the spirit that DokuFest carries a spirit that invites everyone to learn, not to judge, to stand up for what's right, and to develop a sensibility that, as Nita emphasized during the talk, is something DokuFest truly deserves.

Programs On Competition



PHOTO: LUKA STRIKA

It seems that Prizren has a kind of elastic ability to stretch itself just enough to create one more pocket for cinema. Naturally, this elasticity requires and has entire teams behind it, and their work is evident. From Kino Oborri to the House of Culture, and from DokuKino to Kino Abi Çarshia, we will follow the competition categories of this year's DokuFest.

The Balkan Dox category brings directors from various Balkan countries from Turkey, Greece, North Macedonia, and beyond, with specific focuses on the materiality of experiencing life in the Balkans, not only through impossibilities, misunderstandings, and intense confrontations with history. Tonight at 20:30 at DokuKino Plato, we invite you to watch the first lineup of films in this category, featuring 12 productions.

In International Feature Dox, stories come together from Cuba to Croatia and from the United States to Ukraine. From intimate, isolated narratives that uncover a multilayered world in a desolate corner of the planet, to absurd survival situations that force accountability, to emotional intergenerational confrontations, this category is certainly aiming to make the jury's job difficult. Screenings for this category begin on August 2nd at DokuKino, so get ready to embark on these extraordinary journeys.

From South Korea to Northern Ireland and beyond, straight into the cinemas of Prizren, comes the International Short Dox competition category, featuring strong visual experimentation, oscillating between wonder and the pursuit of reality like an almanac. From perspectives on how catastrophic events have dismantled life to lives seemingly lived just to be documented, these films await you starting August 3rd in the evening at DokuKino.

Starting today at 16:00 in the Grand Hall of the House of Culture, the International Shorts category awaits you, with films that speak to stories from around the world that, if we stripped away geography, would feel like our own.

The Human Rights Dox category brings 8 films to this year's DokuFest, presenting intense confrontations with cultural shock, battles with bodiless entities, and grueling journeys toward a life where one can finally breathe freely. You are invited to the Grand Hall of the House of Culture starting August 2nd at 18:30.

The environment is one of the most urgent, pulsing issues, and in the Green Dox category beginning today at Kino Oborri at 8 PM we'll face stories of the collapse of earth and air, where the soft flesh of life hangs by a thread.

Finally, in this mini-guide of ours, to kick off the excitement of the festival's competitions, we invite you to enthusiastically follow the National Competition, featuring works by Albanian directors and those from the diaspora, with stories that connect times, worlds, and generations through the furrows of a life full of limits and anxieties, but also extraordinary hope.

For more, we invite you to grab a program, fill it with notes and thoughts and if, somewhere, sometime, your program decides to have a life of its own, you can see everything happening [online](#).



PHOTO: FERDI LIMANI

DOKUNIGHTS

DANCING IN THE ABYSS

WRITTEN BY GUS EDGAR-CHAN

Endless Greed Mental Void. An ethos, a condition, a refusal to look at the world around us. Our theme for this year’s edition of DokuFest is an admission of guilt: surrounded by genocide, mass starvation, immense gluttony from those in charge, and vast power structures failing to reckon with our imminent collapse, it’s easy to turn away from the abyss, to close your eyes, to press your hands to your ears. As DokuNights co-curator Leart Rama phrases it, “Living in 2025 isn’t living, it’s existing. Every second feels more difficult, and it will probably get even harder before it gets better.”

DokuNights is not an immediate antidote to all this, but it does refuse to look away. A programme curated with a mentality of challenging existing hierarchies and offering voices to left-field artists that deserve their time in the spotlight, its lineup is one of collectivity, resistance and free spiritedness. And epitomising this are tonight’s all-night barnstormers, featuring three DJs operating with the same liberating, expressive energy.

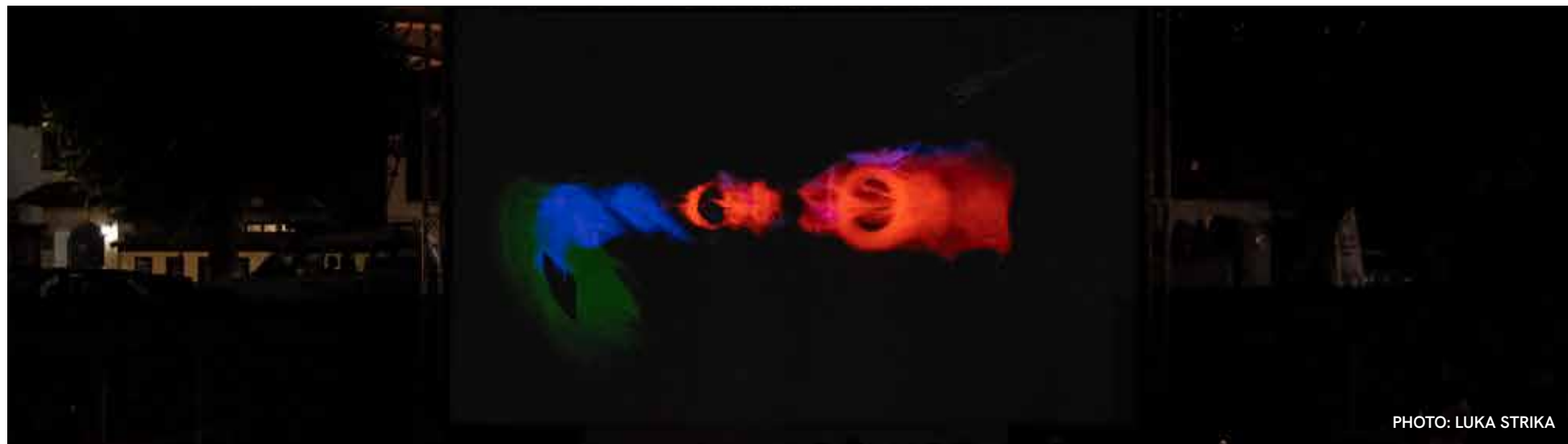
We welcome Byron Yeates, who oversees the exciting Radiant Records label and is fundamental to the infamous queer party series La Noche; IN2STELLAR, a Melbourne-based dynamic duo offering up galvanic grooves to leave you floating; and Rebiswan, Kosovo’s emerging talent bursting at the seams with anarchic abandon. These are three DJs of immense vitality and incredible talent, all refusing to be boxed into established structures and labels. In short, they are the perfect opener for the times we find ourselves in.

Tonight, and tomorrow, and at every DokuNights event beyond, rules will be broken. Hierarchies will be questioned. Dancefloors will be liberated. The Sonar stage at Kalaja provides the space for just that: a rebellious bliss lasting long into the night. Yes, Endless Greed Mental Void. But there’s power in taking everything in, refusing to be broken, letting yourself sway in spite of it all.

There’s power in dancing in the abyss.



On Special Programs



During this edition of DokuFest, you'll have the opportunity to attend a series of special programs curated by the festival team designed to appeal to a wide range of tastes. Each of these events offers a moment of reflection, a chance to witness perspectives from both near and far that speak to how we come to know the universe.

The Kids Program takes place at ITP every day of the festival starting at 10:00 AM, with free admission: perfect for anyone who wants to start their day on the right foot. With stories that speak to the nuances of life and big messages, and a sense of awareness regardless of age, this program is intertwined with offerings for different age groups and features a valuable collaboration with the Clermont-Ferrand ISFF.

We are especially eager for the screenings of the Future is Here program, where young people from around the country showcase the films they've created in Prizren. This year marks the 13th edition of this initiative, offering a glimpse into the narratives emerging from the new generation. It's a moving event not to be missed on August 6th at 20:00 in Kino Lumi.

Yesterday, the film screenings began with the View from the World program and the Opening Ceremony film The Helsinki Effect. This program will continue throughout the week in various cinemas across Prizren. For more information, [explore](#) the offerings and travel the world from the four corners of the screen.

For those who seek the adrenaline of sport on these summer nights, DokuFest has prepared a program of four films tailored to enthusiasts showcasing the fury of the mountains, the tension before a penalty kick, water, and the elements humanity has turned into both challenge and exhilaration. Join us at DokuKino Plato on August 6th at 22:30 and at Kino Lumi on August 7th at 20:00 to experience it.

There are many collaborations in the special programs such as the one between DokuFest and the Lumbardhi Foundation with the Blast from the Past program, which features screenings on August 2nd, 4th, and 8th in various cinemas around Prizren. It opens with 1984, continues with a tribute to director David Lynch (who passed away this year) with Lost Highway, and concludes with O-Bi, O-Ba: The End of Civilization, directed by Piotr Szulkin.

Also in the realm of collaborations, for all fans of experimental genres and contemporary art, the Kontakt Collection and Autostrada Biennale bring a special program more information on that can be found [here](#).

Today, starting at 15:00 at DokuKino, the program focused on the films of Brett Story, curated by Pamela Cohn will screen: a must-see if you're in Prizren.

Among all these programs, you'll find experiments and speculations on the documentary genre in the Fiction/Nonfiction program, or in Special Screenings.

As the week unfolds, we'll share more detailed updates on these special programs and the whole world they carry within them. For now, take this small guide in hand and wander through the box of Prizren.



