

YouTube plots 'Your Film Festival' for users

January 19 2012, By JAKE COYLE , AP Entertainment Writer

(AP) -- YouTube is launching a film festival that will play out online and ultimately send 10 finalists to the Venice Film Festival.

The [Google Inc.](#)-owned [video site](#) announced Thursday that Your [Film Festival](#) will take submissions of short films up to 15 minutes in length between Feb. 2 and March 31. Fifty semi-finalists will be selected by Scott Free Productions, Ridley and Tony Scott's production company.

Those 50 films will form a channel on YouTube: <http://www.YouTube.com/yourfilmfestival> . There, users will be able to view the films and vote for their favorites.

The 10 finalists will be flown to the 69th annual Venice Film Festival, where their films will be screened in August. Ridley Scott will lead a jury in selecting a winner, who will receive a \$500,000 grant from YouTube to produce a work with Scott Free.

"Through this program, YouTube will give filmmakers the opportunity to reach a vast audience, screen their work during the Venice Film Festival and potentially be rewarded in a career-changing way," Robert Kyncl, global head of content at YouTube, said in a statement.

Last year, YouTube released the film "Life in a Day," which was co-produced by Scott. The feature-length documentary stitched together videos submitted by YouTube users.

Though anyone can submit a film, Your Film Festival is particularly

hoping to reward young filmmakers and producers. YouTube said that it will be doing outreach at both the Sundance Film Festival and South By Southwest to spur filmmakers to participate in Your Film Festival and urge them to consider YouTube a pathway to industry attention.

"Short filmmaking is exactly where I started my career 50 years ago, so to be helping new filmmakers find an entry point like this into the industry is fantastic," said Scott.

YouTube has held film contests in the past, but the global Your Film Festival is on a much larger scale. International films will have subtitles added. Basically the only restrictions beside length are that entrants must be at least 18 years old and that the work can't have been distributed prior to Jan. 1, 2010.

"We've always wanted to do something like this, but there were limitations in the past that prevented us from doing it," says Nate Weinstein, YouTube entertainment marketing manager. "The time also seemed right given the work that the organization is doing within original channels."

YouTube hopes the Your Film Festival channel will be a one-stop-shop for high-quality programming, and YouTube is increasing focus on the channels. [YouTube](#) is pushing to make its platform more conducive to longer viewing visits and to advertisers that want their brands aligned with quality programming.

YouTube's most dramatic push into original programming was announced last fall with the launch of more than 100 video channels from partners including an array of Hollywood production companies, celebrities and new media groups.

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