

Physicist-produced documentary to appear in New York Film Festival

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The temperature is heating up for *Particle Fever*, a documentary produced by Johns Hopkins University professor David Kaplan that highlights the construction of one of the most audacious ventures in modern science. The film will be screened on Sept. 29 and Oct. 2 at the [New York Film Festival](#), one of the most prestigious in the country.

The New York Film Festival, formed in 1963 by the Film Society of Lincoln Center, is considered an essential launch pad for compelling independent and mainstream movies to find distributors, generate industry buzz or capture the attention of movie audiences. The festival is in its 51st year and will run from Friday to Oct. 13.

For *Particle Fever*, the showing in New York is the second prestigious North American festival booking this year. In late August, the film was shown at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado.

"The goal all of these years was to produce something that would appeal beyond the scientifically literate – to tell the emotional and very human story behind [scientific discovery](#)," Kaplan said. "I can't tell you how excited we are that we've made it into these mainstream and prestigious festivals."

The documentary gives viewers an up-close look at one of the most significant [scientific breakthroughs](#) as it is happening: the creation of the Large Hadron Collider. The LHC is an almost 17-mile tunnel beneath the France-Switzerland border, where physicists smash [tiny particles](#) into

each other at incredible speeds and look for [new physics](#) amidst the wreckage. The full-length feature film follows six scientists as they attempt to recreate conditions that existed just moments after the Big Bang and could potentially explain the origin of all matter.

"The intensity of the scientists we follow is palpable," Kaplan said. "You see, once you start, you can't stop. Particle physics is addictive, like puzzles are to some people. These are just the greatest puzzles of all time, literally."

Kaplan, a [theoretical physicist](#) who studies dark matter, supersymmetry, and the properties of the Higgs boson, has been consumed with the LHC for about a decade. His passion for the project lead him to the film's director and film editor, two men whose own passions are helping drive attention to the movie's central mystery.

Directed by Mark Levinson, a particle physicist turned filmmaker, the film is edited by Walter Murch, a member of the Johns Hopkins Class of 1965. Murch is an esteemed Hollywood film editor and sound designer who has worked on some of the most timeless and evocative movies in film history, such as *Apocalypse Now*, *The English Patient* and *The Godfather* trilogy. His book, *In the Blink of an Eye: Perspectives on Film Editing*, with a forward written by famed director Francis Ford Coppola, is considered the seminal text on movie editing and an industry must-read, Kaplan said.

"Mark came in at an early stage and has been an invaluable partner," he said. "We complement each other perfectly – my weaknesses are his strengths, and vice versa. And his schooling in [particle physics](#) allowed him to jump in at full speed. Walter joined the project two years ago, and he is a genius. What a privilege it has been to collaborate with him and watch him work."

While the exposure *Particle Fever* is receiving at film festivals may help find a distributor for the movie, Kaplan said fundraising has gone so well that he and the team of editors, producers and scientists that worked on the film are positioned to get it into theaters without a traditional distributor. The team is also considering science festivals and other outlets to screen the documentary.

"We are prepared to distribute the movie ourselves early next year if we can't find one," he said. "There's actually a greater return on investment if we do it ourselves."

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

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