

Reelworld, the longest-running organization dedicated to Black, Indigenous, Asian, and People of Colour in the Canadian screen industries, proudly brings back the **Reelworld Film Festival** for its **24th year**, and the **Reelworld Summit** for its second year, from **October 21st to November 3rd, 2024**

Daring heist drama **STEALING VOWS** directed by **Bobby Singh Brown** will be the Opening Night Film for this year's Film Festival

Toronto, ON – September 18, 2024

Reelworld, the longest running organization for Black, Indigenous, Asian and People of Colour in the Canadian Screen Industries, brings back the **Reelworld Film Festival+Summit** for its 24th year continuing to provide audiences the best and brightest of diverse Canadian talent and shining a spotlight on issues around diversity, inclusion and equity in the Canadian screen landscape.

The summit will take place on **October 22nd** and **October 23rd** at the **Marriott Courtyard** in downtown Toronto featuring keynote speeches, industry discussions, fireside chats, research presentations, pitch opportunities and networking events. The **film festival**, which will include film screenings, filmmaker mixers and the annual awards presentation, will feature in-person screenings from **October 21st to 27th**, with the films available to watch online for an additional week, until **November 3rd**.

"Reelworld has always been about more than just showcasing films—it's about amplifying voices that are too often underrepresented in mainstream cinema," says **Tonya Williams, Founder and Executive Director of Reelworld Screen Institute**. *"This year, we're thrilled to continue this tradition by providing a platform for these important stories and facilitating essential industry conversations."*

The festival will kick off with the Canadian heist film, **STEALING VOWS**, directed by **Bobby Singh Brown**, on **October 21st at 7:00 PM EST at The Royal Theatre (608 College St, Toronto, ON)**. The Opening Night screening is sponsored by **TD Bank Group**.

Inspired by true events, this gripping film delves into the South Asian wedding industry, following four disgruntled wedding vendors (an emcee, a photographer, a caterer and a decorator) as they embark on a summer heist spree, robbing their wealthy clients' homes during the wedding receptions in the hopes of buying their own happily-ever-afters.

"Director Bobby Singh Brown's matrimonial-themed heist film set in the summer of 1998 has all the notes of a classic caper, the stakes of a crime action drama, and the high energy of a South

*Asian wedding,” said **Reelworld** Senior Film Programmer, **Marina Hanna**. “With its grand wedding sequences, multiple dance scenes, and an extensive ensemble cast led by Fuad Ahmed, Gia Sandhu, Anand Rajaram, and Ali Hassan, weaving this film together with unstoppable momentum was a feat in and of itself. And it promises viewers as much fun as the goodies and baddies are having onscreen. Co-written by Brown and Ali Hassan, *Stealing Vows* is destined to become a Canadian caper classic.”*

What makes this project so special is the remarkable journey **Bobby Singh Brown** took to get it made. A labour of love and determination, **STEALING VOWS** was crowdfunded by friends, family, and supporters from the South Asian community, raising a budget of \$250,000 CAD. Brown’s innovative spirit shone through as he pulled together resources, including in-kind contributions of gear, locations, and VFX support from his extended network. His passion for this project was evident in every step, as he fought against the odds to bring this unique story to life during the height of the pandemic.

*“I’m a huge fan of heist films and ensemble casts,” said **Bobby Singh Brown**. “I wanted to create something where we could show off a talented group of actors, but create something fresh and new. You don’t get Indian heist films.”*

The cast includes a powerhouse ensemble featuring **Gia Sandhu, Fuad Ahmed, Anand Rajaram, Ali Hassan, and Amrit Kaur**. This unique narrative, inspired by true events, is a testament to Brown’s visionary filmmaking and dedication to championing diversity both on and off the screen.

Opening Night tickets can be purchased [here](#). The remainder of the screenings for this year’s festival will take place at **Paradise Theatre (1006c Bloor St W)**. The full festival lineup will be announced on September 26th.

Every year, Reelworld recognizes the contributions of individuals who have made a significant impact on the Canadian screen industry. This year, Reelworld is proud to present the **Visionary Award** to **Fennella Bruce** and the **Award of Excellence** to **Sugith Varughese**.

The **Reelworld Visionary Award** recognizes individuals whose lifetime of work behind the scenes has shaped the Canadian media industry. Through advocacy, entrepreneurship and leadership they have contributed to advancing our industry and making it a more inclusive and equitable place for all. Past recipients include Anita Lee, Shirley Cheechoo, Raja Khanna and Nick Davis. This year, Reelworld is proud to present the Visionary Award to Fennella Bruce. Fennella is a veteran television producer and writer who is now at the helm of **FKB Media Solutions**, a media consulting company, and **FKB Media Productions Inc**, a television and film production company. As one of Canada's first Black news producers, her decision-making has contributed to the Canadian media landscape. Most recently, as a media consultant, Fennella has elevated Black voices in print, radio and television. Her production company is now developing its first documentary on the legendary Canadian hip-hop artist **Maestro Fresh Wes**,

which is also telling the story of the early days of rap music in Canada. To celebrate this award and honour her achievements, Fennella will participate in a Luncheon Fireside Chat at the Reelworld Summit on October 22nd.

The **Reelworld Award of Excellence** recognizes individuals whose decades of creative excellence in film and series have led to more authentic stories being told on screen, inspiring new generations of young artists in the process. In the past, this award has honoured writers, directors, producers and actors such as Jennifer Podemski, Clement Virgo, Graham Greene and Mina Shum. This year, Reelworld is proud to present the Award of Excellence to **Sugith Varughese**. Sugith is an award-winning actor, television writer, and short film and children's TV director, best known for writing the famed Muppet TV series **Fraggle Rock** and starring as Mr Mehta in **Kim's Convenience** and Dr Ajay Singh in **Transplant**. He was the first recipient of an MFA in Film from a Canadian university and the first visible minority to attend the prestigious Canadian Film Centre as a writer-director, and is also a produced playwright. To celebrate this award and honour his achievements, Sugith will participate in a Luncheon Fireside Chat at the Reelworld Summit on October 23rd.

The **Visionary Award** and the **Award of Excellence** luncheon events are generously sponsored by **Paramount+ in Canada**.

Additionally, renowned director, writer, producer, and actor **Jennifer Podemski** will be the Keynote Speaker at the **Reelworld Summit on October 23rd**. Hailing from Toronto but calling Barrie, Ontario, her home, Jennifer's artistic journey has been shaped by her rich Anishinaabe (First Nation) and Ashkenazi (Jewish) heritage. A registered member of Muscowpetung Saulteux Nation in Saskatchewan, Jennifer has dedicated her career to amplifying authentic Indigenous stories and perspectives through her work as a storyteller.

The Reelworld Summit will be held at the **Marriott Courtyard (475 Yonge St)** on **October 22nd** and **October 23rd**. Passes can be purchased [here](#).

With a focus on diverse works by diverse people, the **Reelworld Film Festival** showcases and supports Black, Indigenous, Asian, and People of Colour producers, directors, screenwriters, actors and all on and off-screen talent. The festival programming reflects strong and authentic voices from across Canada, championing filmmakers with a unique point of view. As the country's largest socially impactful film festival, Reelworld has reached a diverse audience of over 350,000 engaged individuals to date.

About Reelworld

Reelworld was founded in 2000 by award-winning actress and producer **Tonya Williams** to advance opportunities for Canadians who are Black, Indigenous, Asian, South Asian, and People of Colour in the screen industries by providing professional development and advocating for racial equity in Canadian content and production.

Reelworld Screen Institute, a non-profit, provides training programs and presents the acclaimed **Reelworld Film Festival**, which celebrates stories by racialized Canadians. Providing access to opportunities is core to **Reelworld**, and **Access Reelworld** is Canada's leading hiring platform for racialized crews and talent. **Reelworld Foundation**, a registered charity, is transforming the industry by creating mechanisms that hold systems accountable for greater equity.

Reelworld Film Festival+Summit would like to thank all the sponsors, partners and funders who share our vision and values:

Warner Bros Discovery Access Canada, Canada Media Fund, TD Bank Group, Telefilm Canada, Ontario Creates, Canada Council for the Arts, Creative BC, Ontario Arts Council, Paramount+ in Canada, Bell Fund, AFBS, TVO, Rogers Group of Funds, DGC National, Blue Ant Media, Independent Production Fund, Shaftesbury, Canadian Media Producers Association, APTN, Hollywood Suite, DGC Ontario, ACTRA National, ACTRA Toronto, and Writers Guild of Canada.

This year's media and community partners are Bell Media, Playback, Rogers Sports & Media, CBC, and Women in the Director's Chair.

Reelworld Screen Institute would also like to thank our 2024 year-round sponsors, partners and funders: RBC, WarnerBros Discovery Access Canada, CMF, Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Women and Gender Equality Canada, Ontario Government, Ontario Creates, Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, Government of Canada, City of Toronto, Bell Media, Amazon MGM Studios, NBCUniversal, Telefilm, Miziwe Biik and NABET 700-M UNIFOR.

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