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Alaska-Raised Filmmaker Returns Home as Award-Winning Feature *The Ladder* Has Alaska State Premiere at Anchorage International Film Festival

ANCHORAGE, AK - The Anchorage International Film Festival will host a deeply meaningful homecoming on Sunday, December 7 at 6 PM, when *The Ladder*, the debut feature film from Alaska-raised writer-director Emilio Miguel Torres, screens as part of the festival's 25th anniversary edition.

For Torres, who spent his early childhood in Anchorage, and attended Rabbit Creek Elementary School before later growing up in Ketchikan, the screening marks a rare full-circle moment. Four years ago, an original 15 minute proof-of-concept short film for *The Ladder* premiered at AIFF in 2021, igniting a journey that would grow into a multi-award-winning feature with 18 official selections and more than 10 major jury awards across the country including Best Feature Film, Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Cast, and Best Editing. This December, that journey comes home.

Shot entirely in Ketchikan, Alaska with a cast led by local actor Keith Smith, *The Ladder* is a grounded sci-fi drama about aging, identity, and the emotional cost of reinvention. The story follows an aging fisherman facing a mysterious procedure that promises a second chance at life, set against the lush, rain-drenched landscapes of Southeast Alaska.

Torres, who began making films as a kid growing up in Anchorage and then Ketchikan, returned to Alaska to shoot the feature, collaborating with local artists, casting actors from the community's theatre organization, First City Players, and partnering with businesses and sponsors like Tongass Federal Credit Union to craft the film.

"*The Ladder* was only possible because of the people who raised me. The wonderful Alaskan communities that celebrate art and community have shaped my worldview and taught me what storytelling can mean," Torres said. "To bring the feature back to Anchorage, where the short film first premiered, truly feels like closing the loop on my first major project since graduating film school."

The AIFF screening represents the official finale of the film's festival tour. Torres and award-winning lead actor and Ketchikan resident Keith Smith will both attend the screening for a post-film Q&A. "Ending our festival run in Anchorage is sentimental in a way I can't fully describe," Torres said. "I first had the spark of wanting to be a filmmaker as a child in Anchorage. This is the festival that believed in the short film in 2021. And now, after years of work and a beautiful journey around the country, we get to come home."

Screening Info for THE LADDER || Anchorage International Film Festival – 25th Anniversary Edition

Sunday, December 7 @ 6:00 PM **Venue:** Anchorage Museum 625 C St. Anchorage, AK 99501

Tickets available via AIFF website at: www.anchoragefilmfestival.org

About the Film

The Ladder is a community-driven Alaskan sci-fi drama exploring the universal questions of aging, purpose, and the longing for second chances. Filmed entirely in Ketchikan, the feature showcases local talent, rich Southeast landscapes, and a uniquely Alaskan perspective on emotional and existential storytelling.

More information, trailer, and stills: www.theladderfilm.com

About Anchorage International Film Festival

The Anchorage International Film Festival (AIFF) showcases bold, boundary-pushing films from around the world, inviting filmmakers and film lovers alike to celebrate the transformative power of independent cinema. Recognized globally as one of the “25 Coolest Film Festivals,” AIFF brings a unique lineup to Anchorage, Alaska, with screenings, workshops, and events designed to inspire and connect the film community. Join us this year for an unforgettable experience that both entertains and empowers.

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For press inquiries, interviews, or more information about *The Ladder*, please contact:

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