



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

IN WAVES TO OPEN THE 30TH AMERICAN FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL
Phuong Mai Nguyen's Animated Feature, Adapted from AJ
Dungo's Graphic Novel, Premieres in Los Angeles November 3
at the Directors Guild of America

Celebrating 30 years of French Cinema in Hollywood, November 3-8, 2026

LOS ANGELES, CA – September 24, 2026 – The American French Film Festival (TAFFF) will open its 30th anniversary edition on November 3 with the Los Angeles premiere of *In Waves* — a luminous, deeply felt love story between a shy teenage boy and the girl who teaches him to surf, and to live, before illness takes her from him. Directed by Phuong Mai Nguyen, the animated film brings together English-language voice performances by Will Sharpe (*Flowers*, "The White Lotus: Season 2") and Academy Award nominee Stephanie Hsu (*Everything Everywhere All at Once*). The Opening Night screening is presented in association with Netflix. The announcement was made today by The Franco-American Cultural Fund (FACF), originator of TAFFF.

Adapted from AJ Dungo's acclaimed graphic novel, *In Waves* follows AJ, a reserved high school student who spends his days drawing and skateboarding, and Kristen, an energetic surfer who draws him into the ocean and into first love — until she is diagnosed with cancer. Set against the surf culture of Southern California and animated in a style that echoes Dungo's own line, where the ocean moves with a weight and force you can feel, the film follows them from their first waves together through her illness, and into the drawings AJ made afterward.

"AJ Dungo, a Californian surfer and self-taught artist, spent years drawing his own graphic novel as a way of processing the loss of his girlfriend. That intimate, autobiographical work found its second life across the Atlantic, where French-Vietnamese director Phuong Mai Nguyen and Silex Films optioned it, assembled a French production, and spent years translating Dungo's linework into a fully animated feature. Netflix has now brought the finished film back to American audiences as U.S. distributor, closing a circle that began on a California beach and passed through French animation studios before returning home. It is precisely this kind of journey — an American story reimagined through French artistry and craft, then returned to its origins —

that sits at the heart of what TAFFF exists to celebrate,” says Cécile Rap-Veber, President of the Franco-American Cultural Fund and CEO of SACEM.

In 2024, TAFFF and the Writers Guild of America West (WGAW) presented "Bringing Graphic Worlds to Life," a workshop with DUNGO and *In Waves* producer Priscilla Bertin exploring that very journey from page to screen.

“I’m thrilled that *In Waves* will open The American French Film Festival’s 30th anniversary edition – a first for an animated feature film,” said Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix. “As the ultimate stateside destination for French films and series, it’s an honor to have TAFFF’s support and I look forward to audiences around the world discovering this special film.”

In Waves will kick off the festival and awards competition, running November 3–8, 2026, at the renowned Directors Guild of America (DGA) Theater Complex in Hollywood. The film will also screen on November 7 as part of the regular schedule ahead of its release in the United States by Netflix on December 11. The film will be among those competing for the 2026 TAFFF Awards, presented at TAFFF’s Closing Night’s ceremony in Los Angeles on November 8, and is one of several films at the Festival positioned as a contender in the coming awards season.

In Waves arrives in Los Angeles from Cannes, where it became the first animated feature ever selected to open Critics' Week. It is produced by Priscilla Bertin and Judith Nora (Silex Films).

Opening Night sets the tone for another exceptional lineup at TAFFF's 30th anniversary, including several animated titles among six days of the best in French film and series. The full lineup will be announced on October 6 at tafff.org. Box office and RSVPs open on October 8.

About The American French Film Festival:

The American French Film Festival is produced by the Franco-American Cultural Fund (FACF)—a unique collaboration between the Directors Guild of America (DGA), the Motion Picture Association (MPA), France’s Society of Authors, Composers, and Publishers of Music (SACEM), and the Writers Guild of America West (WGAW).

TAFFF is also supported by Unifrance, Villa Albertine - the French Institute for Culture and Education, CNC, Air Tahiti Nui, Champagne Louis Roederer, TV5 Monde, and Variety.

For more information, please visit: www.theamericanfrenchfilmfestival.org

US Media Contacts:

DDPR, Inc.
Danielle Dorfman
310-720-2651

danielledorf@yahoo.com

Media Plan PR
Tatiana Detlofson
310-663-3465
tatiana@mediaplanpr.com