

Brendan Cleak & Kelly Dawn Noel's Triumphant New Film 'Staying' Makes Its 2026 Festival Debut

Short Documentary Film "Staying" Premieres on the 2026-2027 Festival Circuit

PORTLAND, OR, UNITED STATES, August 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The powerful short documentary film *Staying*, by award-winning director [Brendan Cleak](#) and groundbreaking multimedia artist [Kelly Dawn Noel](#), is set to make its festival premiere at the Wild Rivers Film Festival in Brookings, Oregon.



Staying (2026) Directed by Brendan Cleak

Through intimate reflection and unflinching honesty, the film follows Kelly's passage through suicidal ideation, despair, and the long climb back toward herself; unraveling the shame, silence, and hidden wounds of her past. What emerges is both a personal reckoning and a universal offering: a hand extended through the darkness to anyone who feels unseen, too heavy, or too far gone. In transforming vulnerability into connection, the film becomes a quiet beacon, a reminder that even in our most private suffering, we are never truly alone.

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Kelly Dawn Noel

“When my mind was at its darkest, creating became the thread that kept me tethered to the world,” explains artist and co-creator Kelly Dawn Noel. “Drawing, sculpting, writing, filming; each act was a small rebellion against the voice telling me to give up.”

Directed by Brendan Cleak; the visionary filmmaker behind *Motherthief* (2023) and *It Was All A Dream* (2021); *Staying* utilizes unconventional and innovative narrative techniques to bring its challenging story to life.

"With this film, we sought to break past surface-level conversations about mental health and invite viewers into something more honest, raw, and visually immersive" says Cleak. "Whether or not you've personally struggled, *Staying* extends a window into the internal experience of choosing to keep going; something that quietly connects each and every one of us."

Kelly's creative work frequently invites viewers into deeply personal territory, not as spectators but as participants in a shared human experience. Her exhibitions and projects are known for their emotional intensity and vulnerability, encouraging audiences to reflect on their own internal struggles and recognize that they are not alone.

"I hope to reach the people who feel invisible or unworthy, the ones who fear that their pain is too heavy or their darkness too deep. This film is for anyone who has ever felt alone in their struggle, to remind you that even in your most hidden anguish, you are not alone, and you never have been. My mission is to transform vulnerability into connection, to turn my story into a hand extended through the dark. If this light, this thread, this testimony can help even one person feel seen, understood, or held long enough to stay, then every shadow I walked through will have found its meaning."

The soundtrack for *Staying* is composed by Graffick, a Portland-based independent musician and composer whose work blends cinematic electronic production with colorful sound design. His dynamic score for *Staying* was inspired by both the chorus of people who reached out to help Kelly in her darkest moments as well as the voice Kelly now uses to support others in their time of need.

The film has three public showings during the Wild Rivers Film Festival weekend at the Chetco Playhouse in Brookings, Oregon:

Friday, August 14th at 2:00 PM

Saturday, August 15th at 4:00 PM

Sunday, August 16th at 12:00 PM

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