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NEW DOCUMENTARY “TIKTOK, BOOM.” EXPLORES THE IMPACT OF THE CONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL MEDIA APP THAT BECAME A CULTURAL PHENOMENON, PREMIERING ON PBS’S INDEPENDENT LENS OCTOBER 24, 2022

From Director of Award-Winning “Coded Bias,” the New Film Dissects TikTok App Across Socio-Political, Economic, and Cultural Cross-Sections, Featuring Interviews with Leading Gen Z Influencers, Tech Policy Experts, and More

(San Francisco, CA) – September 2, 2022 – How does a teenage dance app become an issue of national security? From Emmy-nominated director Shalini Kantayya, of the critically-acclaimed film “Coded Bias,” “TikTok, Boom.” makes its broadcast debut on INDEPENDENT LENS October 24, 2022 at 10 p.m. ET (check local listings). The film will also be available to stream on the PBS Video app.

“TikTok, Boom.” explores how a social media app, best known for videos of teenagers dancing, became the flashpoint of a geopolitical controversy between two superpowers—the U.S. and China. This Sundance favorite explores the impact of an app that eclipsed Silicon Valley to become a global cultural phenomenon reshaping the world. A cast of Gen Z influencers is central to the film, making this one of the most needed and empathetic films exploring what it means to be a digital native.

“TikTok, Boom.” explores the history-making app’s journey from its early origins as a music app, owned by the Chinese AI company ByteDance, to its explosion into the global public consciousness, and delves into the security issues behind the platform, such as content moderation and free speech, and its mental health impacts on young people.

Praised by *The Wrap* as “engrossing” and by *Variety* as “sprightly, informative,” “TikTok, Boom.” explores the app’s many layers, centering on the platform’s three well-known Gen Z influencers and content creators: Feroza Aziz, an Afghan American teen activist; Spencer X, an Ecuadorian Chinese American beatboxer; and Deja Foxx, a Filipino American political strategist and model. Each influencer shares their stories of how they catapulted to prominence on the platform, and how their instant stardom on the app has changed their lives, impacting everything from their careers to their mental health.



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Intertwined with the stories of these creators are the insights of brave whistleblowers and noteworthy experts across the fields of technology, policy, and media, including: former technology reporter for the *New York Times*, Taylor Lorenz; *Bloomberg News* New York Bureau Chief Shelly Banjo; Center for Humane Technology Chief Mobilization Officer David Jay; All Tech Is Human Founder David Ryan Polgar; and more. Taken together, these expert interviews provide rare insight into questions of data collection, child online protection, and geopolitical national security tensions surrounding TikTok.

“TikTok, Boom.” focuses on TikTok’s rapid growth during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, following the creators’ journeys on the platform as they dovetailed with major political events, including the Black Lives Matter movement that swept the nation in 2020. Teen activists, influencers, and journalists shed light onto being “shadow banned” on TikTok, a term that references having one’s content shown to fewer users by the algorithm, i.e. being banned on the platform without formal notice. As TikTok eclipses Facebook and Instagram as the most downloaded social media app globally, the film delves into the geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and China, illuminating the causes and impacts of President Trump’s proposed ban of the app, and the impact it would have had on creators and their careers.

“TikTok’s story is about the future of social media itself, and the increasing tension between democratic youth culture and authoritarian data surveillance,” Kantayya said in a statement. “I’m thrilled to helm such a timely film focusing on Gen Z influencers, and how technology meets, amplifies, and opposes our humanity.”

“TikTok, Boom.” was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance and was an official selection at SXSW, SF Film, and HotDocs. The documentary is a Campfire Studios Production in association with Olive Hill Media and Such Content. Kantayya’s film “Coded Bias” premiered at Sundance, was broadcast on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS and launched on Netflix.

Visit the [“TikTok, Boom.”](#) page on INDEPENDENT LENS for more information about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

Shalini Kantayya

Shalini Kantayya’s “TikTok, Boom.” was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival and was an official selection at SXSW. Kantayya’s critically-acclaimed Sundance film “Coded Bias” was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Science and Technology Documentary. Her debut “Catching the Sun” was released globally on Netflix, executive produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, and was named a NY Times Critic’s Pick.

Ross Dinerstein

Ross Dinerstein is the founder and CEO of Campfire Studios. Over the past 20 years, Dinerstein has produced or executive produced 50+ series and feature films, premiering projects at the most



prestigious festivals in the world and airing on almost every major network and streaming platform.

Danni Mynard

Danni Mynard is a documentary filmmaker, based out of Brooklyn, New York. She produced “TikTok, Boom.” which premiered at Sundance 2022, along with the critically-acclaimed “Once Upon a Time in Londongrad” and “WeWork: or the Making and Breaking of a \$47 Billion Unicorn.” Her recent work can be viewed on HBO, Netflix, Hulu, Nat Geo, and many more.

CREDITS

Director Shalini Kantayya

Producer(s) Ross Dinerstein
Danni Mynard

Executive Producers Lois Vossen
Sally Jo Fifer

About INDEPENDENT LENS:

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

About ITVS:

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films, and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, INDEPENDENT LENS, as well as on other PBS series, and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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