

NINA MOINI: An upcoming documentary is looking to showcase the State Fair in a new light. Simply called *The Fair Documentary*, it goes behind the scenes of fair favorites and also highlights corners of the Fair you may never have seen before. The film is in production currently. And its director and producer, Alec Fischer, joins me in the studio now. Thanks for being here, Alec.

ALEC FISCHER: Thank you for having me.

NINA MOINI: Well, we should have talked out at the Fair, but maybe you've had your fill from being out there so much documenting everything.

ALEC FISCHER: Oh, yeah.

NINA MOINI: Tell me a little bit about why you wanted to create this. Are you from Minnesota?

ALEC FISCHER: Yeah, I'm from Minnesota. I actually worked at Sweet Martha's Cookie Jar in high school.

NINA MOINI: Nice!

ALEC FISCHER: So got the behind the scenes there, all my fill of cookies as a high schooler. And a friend of mine and I were talking about ways that we could showcase Minnesota to national and global audiences. And what would be a staple that would be a good focus?

NINA MOINI: Yeah.

ALEC FISCHER: And the Fair kept coming up as an idea. And with my background with Sweet Martha's and then also talking about this observational style we wanted to do that hadn't been done at the Fair before, we thought it would be really cool to use that format to show audiences, both within Minnesota, but then also beyond, what makes this place special.

NINA MOINI: That's so cool. Because you're right. Obviously, we all how much media coverage and different stories-- and how many amazing stories there are at the Fair. It's such an incredible place. But for that documentary style, it can be a little bit different. So you actually had to convince the folks, the leaders at the State Fair to get on board. How was that?

ALEC FISCHER: It was good. It was about an eight-month to 10-month process. They are obviously very picky about what they allow in, especially when you're asking to bring a big media crew in. That's one of the special things about the Fair-- is we're the best at what we do. And so they are, as well.

But yeah, it took coming back with new questions, new ideas-- ended up pitching their executive team and department heads with the final idea after we did a proof of concept in 2023. And after much back and forth, it was approved. And we have been filming ever since.

NINA MOINI: Wow. So you must have hundreds of hours that you've been out and doing this. So you were filming mostly last year at the Fair, but you wanted to wrap some stuff up, get some final shots, maybe, this week. How was that to wrap up? And how did you decide, I need to go back to-- what were you trying to fill out?

ALEC FISCHER: It was good. It was really exciting to be back at the fair for a more casual day of filming. Last year, we filmed 14 days. We filmed two days before the Fair and then all 12 days. That felt like a marathon that we prepared our best for. But it was a lot.

NINA MOINI: Yeah.

ALEC FISCHER: And so this year was a lot more calm and collected. We were able to get some final pickups that we needed, both with audio and some visuals. The film is pretty much done right now, which is exciting. We're just doing some sound and color editing as we move into fall. And so the pickup day this week was definitely just getting some of those last-minute transitions and little moments that will really make it in its final form.

NINA MOINI: Amazing. So how did you decide what you wanted to capture? And what do you think people are going to gain that they wouldn't gain from typical, maybe even news stories or any other kinds of stories at the Fair?

ALEC FISCHER: Yeah. The film really looks at-- even though we filmed it over three years, it's one day at the Fair. And so you really feel, from before the gates open till through the day and after the gates close, get a really in-depth, behind-the-scenes look at all the things that happen at the Fair. And it's special, because there are no interviews or archival footage. It's observational format.

And so you really feel this immersive, in-person kind of fly-on-the-wall, if you will, style, where you're really able to be in certain rooms where they've never allowed cameras before, even for news crews. And so I think there's going to be a lot of things that even superfans of the Fair are going to be surprised and delighted to see or even like, I didn't even that was the scale of these things or that that existed. And so I'm really excited to see people's reactions to some of the things we captured. Because yeah, I think it'll be a surprise for many people.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. What was surprising about all of this? When you say places people can't enter and stuff, I'm like, whoa.

[LAUGHING]

And I'm wondering, is there something, a tidbit you can give us from all that footage and all that you so uniquely experienced that would surprise somebody?

ALEC FISCHER: Yeah, I think one of the things that we were really excited and took three years of asking to get permission and trust building to get permission-- was we went up into the dorms of the 4H kids. A lot of people don't realize the 4Hers stay on site at the Fair and have to just for the bulk of competitions and all the things they're doing. And so we were able to go up with students and showcase them getting ready in the morning and what that process is and what the space even looks like.

And so I think that was really exciting. Because if you're in 4H, you know the inner secret. You know it's like a big, fun slumber party away from home. But I think, in many ways, the average fair guest just isn't aware that this whole other section of the Fair exists where all these kids can come and get to know each other and celebrate agriculture. And so something like that-- obviously, you can't just bring a camera into a dorm.

NINA MOINI: Right.

ALEC FISCHER: So that took a lot of trust building. But also, it was fun to show that side.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. And there's so many people keeping it running and keeping the machine running. And so it's great to feature them and all their hard work, as well. Is this for mostly Minnesotans? Is it for non-Minnesotans? Or what do you think people can take away from this, whether they are familiar with the Minnesota State Fair or not?

ALEC FISCHER: Yeah. I think the biggest thing we've heard from folks in Minnesota is they either don't go to the Fair or they can't go to the Fair very long because of the crowds. And I think that this will be a really cool way to give an immersive experience to folks where they don't necessarily have to battle the crowds to get a full day at the Fair. So I'm excited for, like I said, superfans to see things they've never seen but also the average fairgoer, who maybe doesn't want to deal with the crowds, to be able to see some fun stuff and maybe eat some fair food at theaters without having to push through crowds.

And for folks outside of Minnesota, I think I'm really excited-- and the crew's been really excited-- to, again, show why this place is so special. I think Minnesota, the last six years, has typically been provided a lens of violence in headlines globally. And I think a lot of people really respect the work that's been done here through activism and advocacy.

But so often, they're relating our state with that lens of state violence. And I think I'm really excited to show how we gather and the importance of this sacred space for many people that is full of joy and laughter. But also, all of us need to be here for it to exist. So I'm really excited for that element of the film to show folks who maybe have never heard of the Fair or have known of Minnesota, maybe briefly, really showing why it's important for us to gather and what we are as a state and a people.

NINA MOINI: And why it's called the Great Minnesota Get Together.

ALEC FISCHER: Exactly.

NINA MOINI: So you're wrapping things up, almost there. When can people see the movie? How can they see the movie? When's it going to be wrapped up?

ALEC FISCHER: Yeah. Well, right now, we are working on festival submissions. So ideally, we'll have film festival screenings for the first six months of 2027. That'll be across North America.

And then we're planning-- we can't say the exact dates yet, because we want it to be a surprise-- but we are planning a pretty robust Minnesota theatrical release. We have 20 theaters confirmed right now. We're working to get it to about 50 by next year. So ideally, next summer-- I won't say the exact dates-- but you'll be able to see the film on the big screen across the state.

NINA MOINI: OK, cool. OK, I have to ask you my favorite fair question. You know I asked our meteorologists, as well. And they were giving a lot. So feel free to give a few of your favorites.

[LAUGHING]

What's your favorite food? What is your favorite food to eat at the Fair? And I'm excited, because you really know the Fair inside and out. So tell us what it is, Alec.

[LAUGHING]

ALEC FISCHER: It has depended on my mood, but I'll say my go-tos. My go-tos have been the deep fried Oreos, especially the red velvet ones at the Deep Fried Candy Bar Stand.

NINA MOINI: Ooh.

ALEC FISCHER: I really love the apple cider pop at the Egg Court building. It's like \$3.00 cash. And it's just like a fresh apple cider but like a Popsicle. It's amazing.

And then because it's been so hot this year, I've really loved the Minnesnowy Shaved Ice.

NINA MOINI: Sure.

ALEC FISCHER: That's been a go-to for me. But yeah, I always got to try a new food or two. And yeah, the new Jive Station, their mac and cheese was amazing. I had that yesterday.

NINA MOINI: OK, good to know.

ALEC FISCHER: Yeah.

NINA MOINI: Amazing. Alec, thank you so much. Congratulations on all of this. I know a lot of Minnesotans feel an immense pride and are going to be excited to see it. Thanks for coming by *Minnesota Now*.

ALEC FISCHER: Yeah, thanks for having me.

NINA MOINI: Alec Fischer is the director and the producer of *The Fair Documentary*, coming to a theater near you next year.