

Movie on ‘Dirty Dancing’ resort to lead Borscht Belt Film Fest

‘We Met at Grossinger’s’ to launch 3-day event

By Katherine Kiessling
STAFF WRITER

The Catskills’ history as a vacation destination will play a starring role in the third annual Borscht Belt Film Fest, running Nov. 6-8 at Shadowland Stages in Ellenville. The festival is presented by the Catskills Borscht Belt Museum.

Opening the three-day celebration of Jewish cinema is “We Met at Grossinger’s,” a documentary about the once-thriving Catskills resort that inspired the 1987 film “Dirty Dancing.” An opening reception and conversation with the film’s producer Robert Friedmand and Grossinger family members, moderated by Issac Zablocki, director of film programs at the Marlene Meyerson JCC in Manhattan, will follow the screening. The film coincides with the August announcement that a Florida real estate developer is planning to revive the beloved resort.

Day two will feature “The Automat,” an ode to old-school, vending machine-style fast food joints; a short double-feature of “Egg Cream” on the historical and cultural significance of the chocolate drink and “Pair of Jokers” starring Jerry Stiller; “The Floaters,” which follows a struggling musician who reluctantly takes a job at a Jewish summer camp; “Stiller and Meara: Nothing is Lost,” a documentary by Ben Stiller about his parents Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara; and the dark comedy “Bad Shabbos” starring Kyra Sedgwick.

The festival will conclude on Nov. 8 with an encore screening of “We Met at Grossinger’s”; “Ringside in the Mountains,” which traces the Catskills’ Borscht Belt resorts’ historic ties to boxing legends including Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier; and “Mel Brooks: The 99 Year Old Man!,” a documentary on one of the most enduring names and voices in comedy. The latter



Courtesy of Bungalow Media + Entertainment/

A still from “We Met at Grossinger’s” about the once-popular resort that inspired “Dirty Dancing.” The documentary will open the 2026 Borscht Belt Film Fest on Nov. 6 at Shadowland Stages.



Courtesy of Jim Spellman

The late Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara attend the opening night of “Next Fall” on Broadway at the Helen Hayes Theatre on March 11, 2010, in New York City. A documentary on their comedy, life and love by their son Ben Stiller is one of the featured films at the 2026 Borscht Belt Film Fest in Ellenville.

will be followed by a talk with one of the documentary’s directors, Michael Bonfiglio.

In addition to its screenings, the Borscht Belt Film Fest will host two special conversations at The Common Good Bookstore. The first will be “Like Fa-

ther, Like Son? Josh Mostel on Acting, Comedy and the Mostel Legacy” moderated by Zablocki on Nov. 7. “Rescuing Borscht Belt History,” a conversation with “We Met at Grossinger’s” director Paula Eiselt, will be held on Nov. 8.



Presley Ann/Getty Images

Mel Brooks speaks onstage at a “Spaceballs” screening during the 2024 TCM Classic Film Festival at TCL Chinese Theatre on April 21, 2024, in Hollywood, Calif.

“This year’s lineup of films and conversations captures what makes the Borscht Belt so enduring — great stories, big personalities, comedy, nostalgia and a deep sense of community,” said Melody Gilbert, the festival director, in a statement. “From ‘We Met at Grossinger’s’ and ‘The Automat’ to Mel

Brooks, Stiller and Meara and a new generation of films, our festival celebrates the past while showing why this culture still resonates today.”

Festival passes and tickets to individual films and special events, as well as a detailed event schedule, are available at borschtbeltfilmfest.org.

Trump, Vance hit campaign trail in deep-red areas

By Michelle L. Price
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ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance both hit the campaign trail on Thursday, but headed to heavily Republican areas to shore up lagging enthusiasm in their party ahead of next month’s midterm elections.

Trump’s travel to Texas and Oklahoma kicked off what the president said will be a 32-day campaign blitz leading up to Nov. 3.

“I think we’re going to win. Every place I’ve gone, we win,” Trump said during a speech at a truck facility in Denton, outside Dallas. He said some have suggested his “heart isn’t in it. My heart is in it,” and if not, he’d be “home right now.”

“My heart is in it like never before,” Trump said of the run-up to the midterms.

Vance, meanwhile, stumped in Florida, putting the Republican Party’s highest-ranking officials in areas where GOP candidates once expected to have glide paths to victory but are now facing tougher races. The vice president tried to cast the GOP as representing common sense in the face of a Democratic push to the left.

“I have the easiest job in the world,” the vice president said in Lakeland, Florida. “I get to talk about how crazy the Democrats are.”

Trump and Vance could have their work cut out for them, though.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that only 17% of U.S. adults approve of Trump’s handling of the cost of living. Just 26% approve of his handling of the economy overall, marking a new low.

Republicans have expressed growing pessimism about their chances in the election, which will determine control of Congress, as the president has repeatedly dismissed concerns

about high costs and gas prices as his unpopular war in Iran drags on.

According to Trump, his party’s headwinds are merely a matter of poor public relations about a job he says is well done.

“We’re doing great, but I can’t get the word out,” Trump said in Texas. He also said, “Maybe we’re doing a bad job selling it.”

Still, the president spent far more time scoffing at his predecessor, President Joe Biden, reliving his 2024 presidential campaign and defending the war in Iran than he did talking about how he’ll help lower the cost of living.

Democrats say Trump and the Republicans are desperate

The Democratic National Committee said Trump and Vance are “desperately trying to rally their base as the midterm elections approach and Republicans face defeat.”

“Donald Trump and JD Vance started a deadly and costly war with Iran that sent the economy spiraling and pushed prices even higher, and now — in the final stretch to the midterms — they’re desperately pleading with voters to ‘give (them) another chance,’” said DNC deputy communications director Kendall Witmer.

In Oklahoma, Trump is campaigning with Republican Mike Mazzei, who is running against Democratic state House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson for governor.

Democratic Governors Association spokesperson Kevin Donohoe said Trump’s campaign rally shows that Republicans “are in full-on panic mode.”

The event will be held on the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, putting Trump in the company of just a handful of U.S. presidents who have visited tribal nations while in office.

Before his evening Oklahoma stop, Trump toured a truck manufacturing facility and chatted briefly with workers in



Eric Gay/AP

Vice President JD Vance arrives for a rally Wednesday in Harlingen, Texas.

Texas, where Republicans are spending heavily to try to bolster state Attorney General Ken Paxton in a Senate race. Paxton faces a very competitive challenge from Democratic state Rep. James Talarico.

Paxton attended the event and Trump joked that he “could be a pain in the ass sometimes, I’ll be honest” but also noted, “We need Ken so badly and that’s why I’m here.”

Vance also stumped for GOP candidates

Trump will be campaigning in more politically competitive areas in the days and weeks ahead as he embarks on his travel blitz, but Republican officials will not send him to places where they think his presence could drag down their candidates, according to a person familiar with the party’s strategy who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Trump’s Oklahoma visit, and likewise one on Friday to Ala-

bama, are aimed at hitting two targets with one stop, the person said.

Republican officials have noted that Trump’s visit brought him close to the Dallas-Fort Worth media market, meaning the president’s message reached Texas voters who could back Paxton.

His Friday stop in Mobile, Alabama, is aimed not only at boosting Sen. Tommy Tuberville as he runs for Alabama governor but also at shoring up support in Florida’s adjacent panhandle for Republican Rep. Byron Donalds. Donalds is running for Florida governor against David Jolly, the Republican-turned-independent who is now running as a Democrat.

Donalds’ campaign in heavily GOP Florida comes as Republicans there have faced some turbulence and voter concerns about affordability and artificial intelligence data centers have become central issues.

While Trump is in Oklahoma and Texas, Vance campaigned

for Donalds in central Florida. That came a day after the vice president campaigned in Texas, rallying with Republican candidate Eric Flores, who is in a tight U.S. House race in south Texas.

Vance, speaking in Harlingen, Texas, on Wednesday, acknowledged broader discontent over the high prices in the U.S. but shifted the blame away from Trump and Republicans.

“I know that there are people out there who are frustrated by the pace of progress,” he said, but “we have spent every single day fighting for you, digging ourselves out of the hole that Joe Biden left us in.”

Trump will also campaign on Saturday in Vandalia, Ohio, and on Monday in Grand Island, Nebraska.

Trump is expected to campaign for the GOP almost daily

In a meeting on Capitol Hill this week, White House chief of staff Susie Wiles described privately to GOP senators that Trump will have a near-daily sprint of campaigning ahead of the Nov. 3 midterms.

Wiles showed Republicans the president’s upcoming travel schedule, which attendees described as extensive and almost every day, all across the country.

West Virginia Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito said that White House officials are “acknowledging the headwinds” but that “they have a strategy, and we have a strategy,” including money that the president’s operation will continue to deploy.

Capito also defended the White House’s plan to send Trump to traditionally conservative territory, arguing that he can motivate the Republican base not just where he travels but elsewhere in the country because he has such a broad reach.

“He can get more of his voters out — that are going to be our voters — than anybody else,” Capito said.