

Smithsonian Starstruck: An Immersive Experience Officially Selected In Competition for the 2026 Venice International Film Festival

Groundbreaking immersive journey through the cosmos receives official selection at one of the world's most prestigious film festivals.

Melbourne, AUS — 16 July 2026 — Smithsonian Starstruck: An Immersive Experience, developed by Fever in collaboration with the Smithsonian, has been officially selected In Competition for Venice Immersive at the 83rd Venice International Film Festival, taking place September 2, 2026 through September 12, 2026.

Selected from submissions around the world, Smithsonian Starstruck joins a slate of approximately 30 immersive works selected for presentation at the festival. As an official selection, the experience will compete for the festival's highest honors, including the Venice Immersive Grand Prize, Special Jury Prize and Achievement Prize.

Presented by La Biennale di Venezia, Venice Immersive is the festival's official competition dedicated to Extended Reality (XR) and immersive storytelling. Since its launch in 2017, it has become the industry's most prestigious showcase for immersive experiences, recognizing works that push the boundaries of cinematic storytelling through emerging technology.

The experience will make its international festival premiere on Venice Immersive Island (Isola del Lazzaretto Vecchio), where it will be presented throughout the festival to international press, industry leaders, juries and accredited visitors.

"We set out to make a space documentary you could walk through," said James Elliott Mizroch, Director, Smithsonian Starstruck. "Think of Carl Sagan's Cosmos, or your

favorite IMAX film, but instead of watching from a seat, you step inside the story, reach out and touch it. We take the most iconic two dimensional space images in human history and rebuild them as walkable, to scale universes."

The official selection recognizes Smithsonian Starstruck as one of the year's most innovative immersive experiences, honoring its unique ability to transform scientific discovery into powerful and emotional storytelling.

"Astronomers often work on scales that are hard to imagine," said Randall Smith, Associate Director for Science, Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. "Immersive technology gave us a powerful new medium for translating scientific data into an experience that all people can see, feel, and explore for themselves. It allows us to share our research in ways that were simply not possible before."

Built using astronomical data and developed in close collaboration with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, the experience combines scientific authenticity with cinematic storytelling to bring the unimaginable to life.

Smithsonian Starstruck invites audiences to step inside the universe like never before. Rather than simply observing space, visitors walk through galaxies, witness the birth and death of stars, stand at the edge of a black hole, where gravity is so strong that everything – even light – falls towards it, and board humanity's most iconic telescopes, including the Hubble Space Telescope, James Webb Space Telescope and Chandra X-ray Observatory, as they journey across the cosmos.

The recognition by the Venice International Film Festival marks an important milestone not only for Smithsonian Starstruck but highlights the growing role of immersive media in shaping the future of storytelling.

This recognition also reinforces Fever's ongoing commitment to creating immersive experiences that make science, history, and culture accessible to audiences around the world. Through collaborations with leading cultural and scientific institutions, Fever continues to redefine how people learn, connect, and experience the extraordinary.

Following its world premiere in Washington, D.C., and international expansion in London, Manchester and São Paulo, Smithsonian Starstruck continues its international expansion with additional cities including Santiago, Chile; Madrid, Spain; Lisbon, Portugal; and Sydney, Australia, with more to follow.

About Smithsonian Starstruck: An Immersive Experience

Smithsonian Starstruck: An Immersive Experience is a 3D interactive, virtual reality experience that begins at Earth's observatories and launches visitors into the universe—aboard the world's most powerful space telescopes. Developed in close collaboration with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO), Smithsonian Starstruck translates real astronomical data from SAO, NASA, and ESA into a breathtaking journey through space.

Blending cutting-edge immersive technology with authentic science and powerful storytelling, Smithsonian Starstruck brings the birth and death of stars, and the vast depths of the cosmos, to life in an entirely new way for audiences craving smart entertainment.

Smithsonian Starstruck brings Smithsonian science and storytelling into an immersive, transportive format, extending the Institution's longstanding mission of sharing knowledge far beyond its physical museums. It reinforces Smithsonian's commitment to expanding access to knowledge and fostering curiosity.

Smithsonian Starstruck is part of Fever's growing portfolio of original immersive experiences, designed to make extraordinary scientific discoveries both accessible and tangible for everyone. Through a blend of education, storytelling, and cutting-edge immersive technology, Fever is redefining how people learn, connect, and explore — from iconic places on Earth to the furthest reaches of the cosmos.

About the Smithsonian

Since its founding in 1846, the Smithsonian Institution has been committed to inspiring generations through knowledge and discovery. It is the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, consisting of 21 museums, the National Zoological Park, education centers, research facilities, cultural centers, libraries and gardens. Two of the 21 museums—the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian

American Women's History Museum—are in the early planning stages. The total number of objects, works of art and specimens at the Smithsonian is about 157 million.

About the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory

The Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory is a research center of the Smithsonian Institution and part of the Center for Astrophysics, the largest astrophysics research center in the world. The Observatory has been a pioneer in space exploration and discovery since its founding in 1890. Today, in addition to performing groundbreaking astronomical research, SAO operates multiple satellites, including NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, and runs the Minor Planet Center that tracks all known asteroids in the solar system.

About Smithsonian Enterprises

Smithsonian Enterprises (SE) oversees the commercial activities of the Smithsonian Institution with five primary business divisions: media, retail, licensing, eCommerce and travel. The mission of SE is to engage in successful and profitable revenue generating business activities that support and extend the Smithsonian's mission, values, and reputation.

About Virtual Worlds

Virtual Worlds is a creative studio specializing in high-quality, free-roam immersive experiences that transport audiences inside history's most remarkable stories. By combining cinematic artistry with cutting-edge technology, the studio brings history, culture and imagination to life with unparalleled depth, scale and immersion.

About Fever

Fever is the world's leading tech platform for discovering culture and live entertainment, inspiring over 300 million people last year to discover the best experiences in over 40 countries. With a mission to democratise access to culture and entertainment in real life, Fever inspires users to enjoy unique experiences and events —from immersive exhibitions and sports to interactive theatrical performances, concerts, and festivals— while empowering its partners with data and technology to develop and expand new experiences worldwide.

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