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**SCIENCE MUSEUM TO CELEBRATE THE 20th BIRTHDAY
OF OMNIFEST THIS WINTER**

The popular annual Omnitheater film festival begins on January 4

St. Paul, Minn. – From **January 4 through February 28**, the Science Museum of Minnesota’s William L. McKnight-3M Omnitheater will host one of its most popular traditions. Celebrating its 20th birthday in 2019, **Omnifest** will feature five films running in rotation on its 90-foot domed screen. With topics ranging from volcanoes to tornadoes to the seven wonders of the world, the festival offers something for all ages and interests, making Omnifest an ideal family destination this winter.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary year, all five films selected for Omnifest 2019 are films that the Science Museum of Minnesota, the largest museum producer of giant screen films, has had a hand in producing: *Ring of Fire*, *Journey to Space*, *The Greatest Places*, *National Parks Adventure*, and *Tornado Alley*.

Also notable is that the 2019 festival is the last festival that will take place on film in the Omnitheater. Later in 2019, the theater will convert from a giant screen film projection system to a digital laser projection system. When the conversion is complete, the Omnitheater will become one of the first members of the IMAX Laser Dome community. The new projection system will allow for even better contrast, brightness, clarity, and color – features that viewers have come to expect in the Omnitheater. It will also open the Omnitheater up to a whole new inventory of digital film content that will become available in the coming years.

“The Science Museum of Minnesota has always been a leader in the giant screen film industry,” says Mike Day, executive vice president of the Science Museum and executive producer of the Omnitheater. “We’ve sustained the level of support and commitment that was demonstrated

by the leadership and financial supporters in opening the William L. McKnight-3M Omnitheater 40 years ago, so we've always been involved in the production and distribution of films and the building of industry partnerships. We are going to be a leader in the content production in the digital world, as well, just as we've been in the film world. Omnifest 2019 gives us a chance to celebrate where we've been, and to look forward to where we're going."

Included in this year's festival:

Ring of Fire

Only the Omnitheater's nine-story domed screen can do justice to the great circle of volcanoes that rings the Pacific Ocean. In this Science Museum of Minnesota original production, visitors will get a front row seat for the spectacular eruptions of Mount St. Helens and Sakurajima in Japan. They'll see the birth of a new volcano in southern Chile, and they'll meet people who live within the shadows of some of the world's most active volcanoes.

Journey to Space

Some of the most exciting space exploration missions of our time lie ahead of us: from capturing asteroids to landing astronauts on Mars. *Journey to Space* features magnificent giant screen views of Earth and footage of remarkable operations in space – including the deployment and repair of the famous Hubble Space Telescope. Viewers will get a sweeping overview of past space accomplishments, current activities, and future plans, showcasing how the Shuttle launched and assembled the International Space Station (ISS). Together, these programs have taught us how to live, build, and conduct science in space.

National Parks Adventure

The United States National Park Service celebrated its centennial in 2016. *National Parks Adventure* honors that milestone birthday by taking viewers on a breathtaking journey to 30 of its most spectacular landscapes – from Yellowstone's famous geysers to the soaring Devil's Tower, from the raging rivers of Denali National Park to the teeming wildlife of the Everglades. Viewers will be transported to the most powerful vantage points of these wild places, and their majesty and beauty will be captured for the Omnitheater's giant screen – the only screen big enough to convey them.

The Greatest Places

Viewers will ride along on a journey to seven of the world's most dynamic landscapes in *The Greatest Places*. This Science Museum of Minnesota original production blends trips

to Tibet's Chang Tang Plateau, South America's Iguazu Falls and Amazon River, and the enormous icebergs of Greenland with forays to the world's tallest sand dunes in the Namib Desert, the Okavango Delta in Botswana, and the island nation of Madagascar.

Tornado Alley

Viewers will join *Storm Chasers* star Sean Casey and the researchers of VORTEX 2, an ambitious project that seeks to understand the origins and evolution of tornadoes, on a science adventure through the "severe weather capital of the world." Armed with a 70mm camera, a fleet of customized vehicles designed to withstand gale force winds, torrential rains and unrelenting hail, and an arsenal of the most advanced weather measurement instruments ever created, Casey and the VORTEX2 researchers will attempt to surround tornadoes and the supercell storms that form them, gathering the most comprehensive severe weather data ever collected.

Omnifest's five films will run in rotation during regular museum hours. Find a complete schedule at www.smm.org/omnifest. Tickets are \$9.95 for adults and \$8.95 for kids ages 4 to 12 and seniors. Subsequent same-day films are \$2 off the original price. Science Museum members receive free tickets for one Omnitheater film per day for each person covered under the membership.

As with all Omnitheater showings, advance reservations are strongly recommended and are available by visiting www.smm.org or calling (651) 221-9444.

The Science Museum of Minnesota is the region's leading museum attraction. Its William L. McKnight-3M Omnitheater, which features a nine-story domed screen and a state-of-the-art sound system, is one of only four convertible dome theaters in the world. The museum is located at 120 West Kellogg Boulevard in downtown St. Paul, on the banks of the Mississippi River. For museum hours, directions, and visit information, visitors can call (651) 221-9444 or visit www.smm.org.

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Note: Images from all five Omnifest 2019 films are available at www.smm.org/media. B-roll is also available; contact Sarah Imholte for access (simholte@smm.org or 651-221-9412).