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**Mill Valley Film Festival's Active Cinema Program:  
A Creative Social Action Network**

*MVFF Presents a Forum for Audience Members and Activists to Get Involved*

**SAN RAFAEL, Calif.** (September 13, 2011) – The Mill Valley Film Festival's Active Cinema program is once again presenting compelling films that will inspire audiences to put ideas into action. Featuring both documentary and fiction, national and international, all are united in their commitment to explore the world and its issues; to engage audiences; and to transform society. The goal of Active Cinema is to take the passion and fearlessness of the filmmakers and encourage audience members to contribute their talents and abilities daily in an effort to create social change.

**Active Cinema Special Film Events:**

**Can a Film Make the Difference?**

**Sunday, October 9, 2:00 pm Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center**

The power of storytelling meets the potential for change in the projects of these filmmakers. Hear about the innovative ways, means and resources they've employed in getting their work seen, heard and acted upon—and, of course, made—as they discuss the passion and experience that drives and inspires them.

**Invited Guests:**

**Luc Besson**, director, *The Lady*, *The Fifth Element*, *La Femme Nikita*

**Michelle Yeoh**, actress, *The Lady*; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*

**Pamela Yates**, director, *When the Mountains Tremble*, *Granito: How to Nail A Dictator*

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**Mystery, Myth or Madness?**

**Saturday, October 8, 2:00 pm, Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center**

A discussion of the controversies and myths surrounding ME/CFS, an extreme form of chronic fatigue. As many people go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, what positive steps can be taken to raise awareness and support the drive towards successful treatments?

**Invited Guests:**

**David Tuller**, lecturer, Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley; frequent contributor to the *New York Times*

**Natalie Boulton**, filmmaker, *Voices From The Shadows*

**Dr. Jose Montoya**, associate professor, Stanford School of Medicine

**ALL IN THE THUMBS**

**SMARTPHONES AND EDUCATION**

**Sunday, October 9, 4:45 pm, 142 Throckmorton Theatre**

Smartphones are complex, multiplatform devices, but do they offer a benefit or pose a threat to the educator? How can we use these pocket-sized computers to complement education and not distract from learning?

**Invited Guests:**

**Bill Couturié**, Academy Award winning director (*Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt*)

**Michael Tollin**, documentary film and TV series producer, director and writer (Nickelodeon Network, *Smallville*, *Coach Carter*)

**Caroline Knorr**, parenting editor at Common Sense Media

**Ingrid Hu-Dahl**, Director of Next Gen programs, Bay Area Video Coalition, lecturer

Moderator: **John Morrison**

CFI director of education

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**Active Cinema Films:**

**BETWEEN 2 FIRES**

**Directed by Agnieszka Lukasiak**

*In Polish and Swedish with English Subtitles.* An epic story of one woman's quest to find her place in the world, this spellbinding film focuses on the roller-coaster reality of a rootless—and stateless—immigrant single mom in modern-day Europe. Tormented by an abusive husband, Marta flees her homeland of Belarus with young daughter Anna. The promise of a new life in a Swedish refugee camp is hindered by her vulnerable position in a foreign world and the dark motivations of the people she meets. Magdalena Poplawska as Marta is a wonder to behold. She relies on simple facial expressions and subtle actions to potently convey Marta's inner life as she strives to make a better life for her child. Filmmaker Agnieszka Lukasiak fuses spellbinding images and situations that are heartbreaking and hopeful at once. Centering on the mother-daughter bond, the film tackles immigrant rights and sexual politics through the profound human story at its core.

**BUSONG (PALAWAN FATE)**

**Directed by Auraeus Solito**

*In Filipino, Palawanon and Cuyunon with English subtitles.* In this captivating meditation on nature, love, spirituality and loss, a woman who finds herself stricken with a strange illness that prevents her from setting foot on the earth takes a journey to find a cure among the indigenous people of Palau (in the Philippine Islands), who live in sync with the land, water and sky. Woven into her tale is a world of shamanistic rituals that describe the ways prayer, myth and story shape a culture. Throughout comes an emphasis on *busong*, or karma: When nature or individuals are disrespected, the consequences are clear and swift. *Busong (Palawan Fate)*, which premiered this year at Cannes as the first Palawanon indigenous feature, mingles magical realism with trenchant social commentary about the effect of mining, dynamite fishing and logging upon indigenous peoples, creating a beautiful homage to the idea of myth, creation and rebirth.

**CALIFORNIA STATE OF MIND: THE LEGACY OF PAT BROWN**

**Directed by Sascha Rice**

They just don't make 'em like Edmund G. "Pat" Brown anymore. His visionary initiatives as California governor serve as a constant reminder of how investing in the future, from education to infrastructure, is necessary, humane and smart. The square-shouldered San Francisco native with the no-nonsense black-framed glasses chose real-world experience over college en route to a law degree, then applied his drive and ambition to public service. Combining a wide-ranging vision with unmatched political skills, Brown forged California into the Golden State through two astonishingly productive terms as governor. "The godfather of modern California," as Tom Brokaw calls him, spearheaded the vast, widely affordable public university system, an expanded network of innovative freeways and (to the eternal dismay of some Bay

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Area denizens) the mammoth water system that carries northern California snowmelt to the agricultural heartland and the populous Southland. Sascha Rice, Pat's granddaughter and Governor Jerry Brown's niece, has crafted a valuable, insightful documentary filled with fascinating, forgotten details and priceless archival footage, including clips of gubernatorial challengers Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

### **GIRLFRIEND**

**Directed by Justin Lerner**

All love stories are complicated. But writer-director Justin Lerner has ventured into very prickly territory with extraordinary self-assurance. Evan (graceful newcomer Evan Sneider) is a young man with Down syndrome living with his devoted mother (the ever-elastic Amanda Plummer, MVFF Tribute 1995) in a poor, working-class town. Leading an ordinary life in most respects, Evan's greatest desire is to have a love affair like those he sees on TV. To that end, he pursues Candy (Shannon Woodward), a single mom he's had a crush on since high school. But his approach proves problematic: Seeing her on the verge of eviction and stuck in a toxic relationship with her sinister-looking, volatile ex-husband *Twilight's* Jackson Rathbone), Evan gifts Candy with a large amount of money he's just inherited. Against a deceptively tranquil rural setting, the need for love and the need for survival come into stark conflict in this poignant and fearless first feature.

### **GRANITO: HOW TO NAIL A DICTATOR**

**Directed by Pamela Yates**

*In Spanish and English with English subtitles.* In her 1982 documentary, *When the Mountains Tremble*, filmmaker Pamela Yates (*State of Fear*, MVFF 2005) drew the world's attention to the Guatemalan military's campaign of genocide against its own indigenous population. The film also propelled Mayan activist Rigoberta Menchú to international prominence and a Nobel Peace Prize. Nearly 25 years later, Yates was asked to join a team of forensic experts, lawyers and Mayan survivors to help bring an international human rights case against Guatemala's former political and military leadership. Using old footage and outtakes, as well as new interviews with Menchú and other activists, Yates has crafted a gripping work that is partly a detective story and partly a reflection on how sometimes a film doesn't just document history, but can also be called upon to make history. The powerful, multilayered *Granito* is a masterful documentary from a deeply engaged filmmaker.

### **HEIST: WHO STOLE THE AMERICAN DREAM?**

**Directed by Donald Goldmacher, Frances Causey**

"Everything in this country is about money. Everything." Thus begins this outrage-stirring documentary in the vein of 2010's *Inside Job*. There's no denying the American economy has gone from bad to worse to apocalyptic; *Heist* digs deep to uncover who and what lit the fuse on the current disaster. Filmmakers Frances Causey and Donald Goldmacher reveal decades of shady dealings between corporations and

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the US government, from Reagan's deregulation spree to Clinton's thumbs-up on the North American Free Trade Agreement. The result, of course, is that a very small group of mega-rich Americans control most of our country's wealth, as everyone else (including labor-union members, poor families and senior citizens) scrambles to hold onto jobs, homes, pensions and social security—things the current system seemingly cares little about protecting. Fortunately, the film offers strategies for the non-billionaires among us, including voting crook-enabling politicians out of office. Getting mad as hell can't hurt, either.

## **THE LADY**

**Directed by Luc Besson**

This profound and epic love story, set against a backdrop of political upheaval, chronicles the lives of Burmese pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi (Michelle Yeoh, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) and her husband, British academic Michael Aris (David Thewlis, Mike Leigh's *Naked* and *Harry Potter*). After the bloody military takeover, Suu Kyi entered the political arena, painfully eschewing a peaceful domestic life in London to embody the hopes and ideals of her people. With Suu Kyi placed under house arrest and consequently enduring long periods of separation from Aris and their two sons, the couple remained devoted both to each other and to the necessity of pursuing the greater good. Yeoh's portrayal of a woman whose commitment to truth and peace place her in the pantheon of great visionary leaders—think Gandhi and Mandela—is an exquisite and beautifully modulated performance, the heartbeat of director Luc Besson's deeply affecting film.

## **OUR NEW FRONTIER: SUSTAINABILITY**

### **THE NEW ENVIRONMENTALISTS**

**Directed by John Antonelli, Will Parrinello, Tom Dusenbery**

### **THE NEW FRONTIER: SUSTAINABLE RANCHING IN THE AMERICAN WEST**

**Directed by Melinda Levin, Irene J. Klaver**

### **PORTRAIT OF A WINEMAKER: JOHN WILLIAMS OF FROG'S LEAP**

**Directed by Deborah Koons Garcia**

### **TRANSITION TOWN TOTNES**

**Directed by Deborah Koons Garcia**

It's easy to feel overwhelmed as the clock ticks away on Earth's dwindling natural resources. These films demonstrate what individuals as well as whole communities are doing to achieve a sustainable future. Two new films from Mill Valley filmmaker Deborah Koons Garcia (*The Future of Food*, MVFF 2004) are featured. *Portrait of a Winemaker* (US 15 mins) is an insightful look at a pioneering winemaker and his unique dry-farming method. *Transition Town Totnes* (US 14 mins) delves into the origins of the innovative Transition Movement with founder Rob Hopkins. Melinda Levin's *The New Frontier: Sustainable Ranching in the American West* (US 28 mins) explores the controversies over ranching and rangeland management with three modern-day cowboys challenging the perceived "frontier hangover" stereotype of ranchers in

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the American West. *The New Environmentalists* (US 24 mins), from John Antonelli, Will Parrinello and Tom Dusenbery, is the latest version of the Emmy Award –winning series, narrated by Robert Redford, featuring inspiring portraits of passionate activists from around the world who have won the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize.

### **PARIAH**

**Directed by Dee Rees**

By day, 17-year-old Alike is an earnest student with a talent for writing poetry. By night, she's an aspiring "lothariette" sneaking into lesbian clubs with her best friend Laura, whose tough-girl swagger is popular with the ladies. But Alike is hiding more than a fake ID from her parents. Heading home, she sheds her do-rag and baggy clothes for the gold earrings and pink top that her domineering mother favors. Desperate for Alike to outgrow her "tomboy thing," her mother imposes her church friend's daughter, Bina, hoping that her artsy and bohemian charm rubs off. Reluctant at first, the two grow closer as they bond over music, art and literature. But adolescence can be a confusing time, when no one is sure where they stand. Torn between the expectations of her mother and her own self-discovery, can Alike emerge as a young woman with a clear sense of her own identity?

Director Dee Rees draws natural performances that transcend the coming-of-age drama with effortless authenticity, for a portrait of young adulthood at once touching, brutal, humorous and real.

### **SARABAH**

**Directed by Gloria Bremer, Maria Luisa Gambale**

*In English, French, German, Wolof and Diola with English subtitles.* In this stirring documentary, hip-hop artist Sister Fa fights to stop the practice of female genital cutting (FGC) in her home country of Senegal. From her early days as an unpolished music phenom through a career-reinvention in Berlin, Sister Fa has continually smashed barriers in the male-dominated hip-hop world. But as this intimate film reveals, her strength of character was forged in a journey of hardship and transformation. Now, with the support of her husband and child, Sister Fa is ready to speak out about her own experience as a survivor of FGC. Sister Fa and her band travel to rural Senegal, where she launches a music-packed education campaign that culminates in an emotional visit to her home village.

### **VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS**

**Directed by Josh Biggs, Natalie Boulton**

This compassionate and moving exposé bears witness to the tragic consequences of psychiatric prejudice and medical ignorance concerning one of the most prevalent illnesses of the 21st century. The film foregrounds the riveting stories of several British families confronting what must be everyone's worst nightmare: a loved one suffering a life-altering illness that leaves him or her bedridden and in constant

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pain, with no apparent cure. But what if the medical establishment made the situation worse instead of better? Such are the heartbreaking circumstances of the under-reported controversy surrounding ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis), aka chronic fatigue syndrome. Firsthand accounts from patients, caretakers, and medical experts paint a shockingly confused state of affairs—and underscore the urgency and frustration around this issue. A call to action for anyone who cares about the health and wellbeing of their community, this powerful film is equally a tribute to those whose voices *must* be heard.

### **THE WELCOME**

**Directed by Kim Shelton**

War is an unfortunate part of our daily lives, whether we only read about it in the newspaper or participate directly in it. Whatever our involvement, in the end, war is something we strive to put behind us. But for some, life after war is one constant loop played over and over in the nightmare of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In 2008, 20 veterans and their families gathered at a mountain retreat in Southern Oregon to try a new approach to the healing process. They brought with them memories of Iraq, Afghanistan and Vietnam, and under the compassionate guidance of author-mythologist Michael Meade were able to express their suffering through poetry, song, storytelling and ritual. *The Welcome* is a rare and daring film that places us in the room with these brave souls to share in their humor, their pain and, ultimately, their journey to hope and renewal.

### **34th Mill Valley Film Festival**

Presented by the California Film Institute, the 34th Mill Valley Film Festival runs October 6-16, 2011 at the CinéArts@Sequoia (25 Throckmorton Avenue, Mill Valley), Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center (1118 Fourth Street, San Rafael) and other venues throughout the Bay Area. **Tickets are \$13.50 (CFI Members, \$11), unless otherwise noted and are available for purchase starting on September 14 for Director's Circle, Premier Patron and Cinema Benefactors only, September 17 for all CFI Members only, and starting on September 19 for the general public.** Regular tickets may be purchased online at mvff.com. For additional information, please visit mvff.com or call 877.874.MVFF (6833)

### **California Film Institute (CFI)**

The non-profit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through the presentation of the Mill Valley Film Festival and year-round exhibitions at the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, film distribution by CFI Releasing, and building the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through the CFI Education program. For more information visit [www.cafilm.org](http://www.cafilm.org) or call (415) 383-5256.

### **Sponsors**

As a nonprofit arts organization, MVFF relies on the generosity of its community to sustain not only the Festival, but also the year-round programs of the California Film Institute. The invaluable support of our sponsors, foundations, and individual donors ensures our continued success as we celebrate our 34th year. CFI is once again proud to acknowledge the leadership support of Christopher B. and Jeannie Meg Smith, and the continued major support of Jennifer Coslett MacCready, The Bernard Osher Foundation, the Gruber Family Foundation, the Marin Community Foundation, the Christine Zecca Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation and the Major Industry Support of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences. We are also fortunate to have the continued contributions of the following Major Sponsors of the Mill Valley Film Festival: Wells Fargo, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Maroevich, O'Shea & Coghlan Insurance Services, Frantoio Ristorante and Olive Oil Co., Zaentz Media Center/A Wareham Development, Bellam Self Storage & Boxes and LRG Capital Real Estate.

**MVFF press materials are available at <http://filmmakers.mvff.com>.**

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