

MVFF38 | *Mill Valley Film Festival Overview*

*Examiner* | Arts & Entertainment/Movies

Monday, September 21, 2015

Journalist: Bonnie Steiger



## The Mill Valley Film Festival Returns for its 38th Year [Log In](#)



**Bonnie Steiger**  
SF Movie Examiner

**September 21, 2015**

1:29 PM MST



**Angelica**

*Pierpoline Films*

**MVFF38 | Mill Valley Film Festival Overview***Examiner | Arts & Entertainment/Movies*

Monday, September 21, 2015

Journalist: Bonnie Steiger

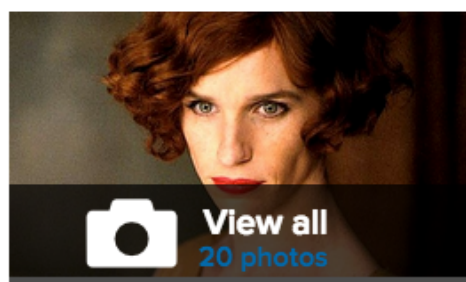
The **Mill Valley Film Festival** (MVFF), presented annually by the **California Film Institute** (CFI), will be held Thursday, October 8 – Sunday, October 18. Internationally recognized for showcasing the best in independent and world cinema, the Festival draws thousands of attendees every fall to Marin County for 11 days of films, **panel discussions**, and musical performances. The Mill Valley Film Festival provides attendees with a chance to catch an early glimpse of the Academy Award® contenders and discover some of the best films from around the world. Five out of the last seven Academy Award winners for Best Picture (*Slumdog Millionaire*, *The King's Speech*, *The Artist*, *Argo* and *12 Years a Slave*) made their California premiere at the Festival. The Festival takes place at the **CinéArts@Sequoia** (Mill Valley), **Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center** (San Rafael), and other venues throughout the Bay Area. There will be more than 200 filmmakers representing more than 50 countries.

Besides the plethora of films, there will be Tributes to **Max Ophuls** and **Catherine Hardwicke**; Spotlights on Sarah Silverman, Brie Larson, Carey Mulligan; many Premieres and **Parties**, the Exhibit: The Saga of **Ingrid Bergman**, music events, panel discussions, and several Q&As in which to speak with directors, actors and other festival guests.

***A LIGHT BENEATH THEIR FEET*** (World Premiere)

In the last few months of high school, Beth contends with the typical rites of passage: deciding on a school, finding a date to the prom, managing peer pressure from the mean girls and questions about an uncertain future. Beth longs for her independence, but is torn between the prospects of her dream school, UCLA, or sticking closer to home at Northwestern to care for her mother, Gloria (Taryn Manning of *Orange is the New Black*), who is struggling to stabilize her bipolar disorder. Set to a broody but wistful indie-rock soundtrack, this coming-of-age drama sets itself apart in its bold exploration of mental illness and its effect on the family as well as the afflicted.

Talent Attending: Taryn Manning, Valerie Weiss (Director), Jeffrey Loeb (Producer)



The Danish Girl

*The Mill Valley Film Festival**The California Film Institute*

**MVFF38 | Mill Valley Film Festival Overview***Examiner | Arts & Entertainment/Movies*

Monday, September 21, 2015

Journalist: Bonnie Steiger

**ANGELICA** (US Premiere)

Sexual repression and supernatural entities make uneasy bedfellows for Constance Barton (Jena Malone) in this playfully twisted period drama. It's not that Constance doesn't want to make love with her husband Joseph (Ed Stoppard); it's that she's been forbidden to after the difficult birth of their daughter Angelica. Overwrought by this enforced physical separation, the young mother sees nightmarish visions taking shape in the house and threatening her and the child, so she turns to a formidable spirit hunter named Mrs. Montague (Janet McTeer) for assistance. Based on the novel by Arthur Phillips, Lichtenstein's film revels in the psychosexual turmoil of its heroine while making pointed references about the predicaments of women in the Victorian age. **ANGELICA** is a haunting tale of unfed appetites and the damage they can wreak.

Talent Attending: Jena Malone, Mitchell Lichtenstein (Director)

**SPOTLIGHT ON SARAH SILVERMAN**

The evening will feature a screening of her latest film **I SMILE BACK** and will be followed by a live on-stage conversation and presentation of the MVFF Award.

Two-time Emmy winner **Sarah Silverman** is as versatile a performer as they come. Her repertoire includes everything from film and television, stand-up comedy, to iconic online videos. She released a book in 2010, the New York Times Bestseller, *The Bedwetter: Stories of Courage, Redemption, and Pee*. Silverman debuted an hour-long stand-up special, 'We are Miracles,' on HBO in 2013. She was awarded a 2014 Primetime Emmy in the Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special category. Silverman will next be seen in the drama feature, **I Smile Back**, a film adaption of a novel by Amy Koppelman. She also has wrapped production on *Ashby* opposite Mickey Rourke and Emma Roberts and recently had a recurring role on season 2 of the Golden Globe nominated series '*Masters of Sex*.'

**About I SMILE BACK:**

Laney is an attractive, intelligent suburban wife and devoted mother of two adorable children. She has the perfect husband who plays basketball with the kids in the driveway, a pristine house, and a shiny SUV for carting the children to their next activity. However, just beneath the façade lie depression and disillusionment that send her careening into a secret world of reckless compulsion. Only very real danger will force her to face the painful root of her destructiveness and its crumbling effect on those she loves.

At the core of **I SMILE BACK**'s power is an indelible performance. Sarah Silverman reinvents herself as a dramatic actress in the career-defining, intensely layered, and heartbreaking role of Laney. **I SMILE BACK** is at times darkly humorous, but also harrowing and unflinching as an authentic, humanizing portrait that offers no easy resolution for a damaged woman struggling to come to terms with herself.

**MVFF38 | Mill Valley Film Festival Overview***Examiner | Arts & Entertainment/Movies*

Monday, September 21, 2015

Journalist: Bonnie Steiger

**SPOTLIGHT ON CARRIE MULLIGAN**

**Carey Mulligan** exploded onto the independent film scene in 2009 with her unforgettable performance in Lone Sherfig's *An Education*, and her career has gathered momentum ever since. A constantly in-demand actress, her work in the films *Drive*, *Shame*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Inside Llewyn Davis* has won praise from audiences and critics alike.

**Closing Night Film:** Profoundly moving, ***SUFFRAGETTE*** tells the story of women who were foot soldiers in the fight for the right to vote in the early 20th century, ordinary women who risked all—their jobs, homes, children, even their lives. One such is Maud (Carey Mulligan): A laundry worker since childhood, she joins the evolving suffrage movement in hopes of breaking the cycles of injustice, poverty, and abuse that so many women endure.

**SPOTLIGHT ON BRIE LARSON**

**Brie Larson** has built an impressive career as one of the more versatile young actresses working today. She garnered numerous 2014 Best Actress award wins and nominations for her performance in Destin Daniel Cretton's *Short Term 12*. Her dramatic role as 'Grace' earned her Best Actress wins at the Locarno Film Festival and Gotham Awards. Up next, she will be seen in the Martin Scorsese executive produced '70s crime thriller, *Free Fire*, opposite Sharlto Copley, Cillian Murphy and Armie Hammer.

Most recently, Larson was seen in the Judd Apatow-directed film *Trainwreck* and co-starred in *The Gambler*, opposite Mark Wahlberg. In addition, she had supporting turns in James Ponsoldt's *The Spectacular Now* and Joseph Gordon-Levitt's *Don Jon*. Prior, Larson was seen in *21 Jump Street* as the love interest to Jonah Hill, and received rave reviews for her supporting role in the Oren Moverman film *Rampart*. Larson is still widely recognized for her portrayal of 'Kate', Toni Collette's sarcastic and rebellious daughter, in Showtime's breakout drama *United States of Tara*.

**About *ROOM* (California Premiere)**

Jack is five. He lives with Ma in Room. They can cook, exercise, read books, watch TV, sing songs, and 'Do Scream.' Everything in Room is real; everything else is just TV. Room is Jack's whole world. Until it's not. Room is based on Emma Donoghue's bestseller, which is told from Jack's viewpoint. Donoghue adapted her own work, and between her script and director Lenny Abrahamson's attention to detail and excellent eye for framing, the story transforms for the screen and retains the immediacy of the boy's experience. Jacob Tremblay is mesmerizing as Jack and the phenomenal Brie Larson conveys Ma's complexity and emotional balancing act with the smallest change of expression, pause, or measured breath. Together they embody the incomparable bond between mother and child and bring to life this riveting story about defining one's own world.



**MVFF38 | Mill Valley Film Festival Overview***Examiner | Arts & Entertainment/Movies*

Monday, September 21, 2015

Journalist: Bonnie Steiger

**Local Narratives:**

Local filmmaker Brian Perkins debuts his first feature, **THE GOLDEN KINGDOM** (US Premiere). Beautifully shot in [Myanmar](#) with non-actors, four young Buddhist monks and their abbot live peaceably in a remote mountain monastery. One day the abbot is summoned to the city and must make the dangerous journey on foot through the mountain pass. Spiritual life meets a troubled world with the keen eye of compassion.

**Local Documentaries:**

In her compelling and timely documentary, Robin Hauser Reynolds examines the history and current state of the technology and computer science industry in **CODE: DEBUGGING THE GENDER GAP** (California Premiere). Reynolds points her camera at the women and people of color within the industry (many local to the Bay Area) who are working to motivate diverse populations to understand what tech jobs have to offer them creatively as well as financially, while actively exposing the cultural stereotypes, educational obstacles and rampant sexism which prevent so many young women and minorities from entering the computer science workforce.

In **SURVIVING SKOKIE** (World Premiere), Bay Area filmmaker Eli Adler's deeply personal documentary follows the path of his father, Jack Adler, a Polish immigrant and concentration camp survivor who built a life and family in Skokie, Illinois. But the quiet existence of hundreds of survivors is rocked to its core in the late '70s when a neo-Nazi group announces plans to march through this Midwest town.

In 1994, [Edythe Boone](#) was one of the seven women artists commissioned to cover San Francisco's historic [Women's Building](#) with a massive, iconic mural entitled MaestraPeace. Now in her 70s, the African-American artist supervises a restoration of the mural to its original brilliant colors and teaches public art to everyone from West Oakland middle schoolers to Richmond seniors. Marlene 'Mo' Morris follows the veteran muralist whose art can be found all over the Bay Area commemorating the great events of her time. Those events keep coming, as we see when the death of Edy's nephew, Eric Garner, becomes a national symbol for racist policing in **A NEW COLOR: THE VERY PUBLIC ART OF EDYTHE BOONE** (World Premiere).

**DOGTOWN REDEMPTION** (World Premiere) captures the fascinating faces and sturdy souls of Oakland recyclers, including a former punk rocker and a misplaced minister, who often cover over 10 miles of city streets as they haul hundreds of pounds of recyclables for a modest payout. By focusing on the dramatic personal plights of these hard working individuals, the film also raises intriguing questions about the socio-economic reality of West Oakland. Filmmaker Amir Soltani combines intimate interviews and powerful all-access footage to craft an intense, heart wrenching, and occasionally hopeful portrait of society's forgotten people.

**MVFF38 | Mill Valley Film Festival Overview**

*Examiner | Arts & Entertainment/Movies*

Monday, September 21, 2015

Journalist: Bonnie Steiger

Meet **PENNY** Cooper- 'Champion of the marginalized': celebrated criminal trial attorney and lesbian, staunch supporter of the arts. **Penny** has been at the center of profound changes in society from 1940s through the present. Despite facing incredible challenges Penny spins gold from every adverse situation, confronting each head on without ever losing her positive attitude or sense of humor. Shot in the Bay Area by local filmmaker Elizabeth Sher.

Unconditional love might not seem a rigorous pedagogical principle, but it's the guiding precept of this Lincoln High's approach to teaching troubled teens. Walla Walla, Washington high schoolers are the focus of Bay Area director/producer James Redford's sixth documentary about uplifting responses to the acute problems of our times in **PAPER TIGERS**.

The Mill Valley Film Group returns with a trio of compelling documentaries addressing global issues: THE NEW ENVIRONMENTALISTS – FROM MYANMAR TO SCOTLAND, SEA CHANGE and THE ROOTS OF 'ULU.

For tickets and additional information, please [visit](#) or call 877.874.MVFF (6833).