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IT'S A WRAP

43rd MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL AND DOCLANDS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL CONCLUDE THIS YEAR'S VIRTUAL AND DRIVE-IN FESTIVAL

**2020 FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS, AUDIENCE FAVORITE AWARDS, AND
50/50 BY 2020 MIND THE GAP PLEDGE SURPASSED WITH 57% OF FILMS
DIRECTED OR CO-DIRECTED BY WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE 11 DAY FESTIVAL**



SAN RAFAEL, CA (October 20, 2020) – The 43rd Mill Valley Film Festival (MVFF43) and the DocLands Documentary Film Festival (which ran in tandem this year) concluded on October 18th after 11 days of virtual and drive-in screenings, panels, and special events. Among the many highlights were Tributes to luminaries **Viola Davis**, Dame **Judi Dench**, Sir **Anthony Hopkins**, **Sophia Loren**, and **Kate Winslet**, as well as Festival Spotlights on **Delroy Lindo**, **Clare Dunne**, **Regina King**, and **Aaron Sorkin** with cast members from *The Trial of the Chicago 7*. Most notably, MVFF's gender equity initiative Mind the Gap surpassed its pledged goal of 50/50 women director representation by 2020, with 57% women directors or co-directors represented across the entire Festival.

“One could make the case that the 43rd MVFF was smaller — fewer films, no receptions — yet in fact, it felt grander, in a multitude of surprising ways.” said Mark Fishkin, Founder/Director Mill Valley Film Festival and California Film Institute, “Larger certainly in spirit, with ideas plucked from our Board, staff, and community. Initially, the most common answer to any question asked of us was, “I don’t know.” As staff settled on the concept of a virtual festival as well as a Drive-In, trust never played a more important role than this year, a year of unknowns.”

“The confidence from filmmakers in our ability and commitment to provide the best platform possible in which to amplify their work and voices, from the community that has rallied and supported MVFF for 42+ years, and from our audiences who recognize the importance of independent, international, and documentary films and how those films can have an impact on our society, encouraged us to move forward.”

“With no defined road map, together with our partners and supporters, the Mill Valley Film Festival was able to create a model that was needed during these challenging times, a program that would resonate with our community and audiences around the world. Smaller, bigger – who can say? What we can say is this: It was a model we can be proud of and continue to build upon as we move forward.”

MVFF Director of Programming Zoë Elton stated: “We’ve entered a new era for film festivals—and creating an online, Drive-In Festival reinforced the way we bring communities together, even in this socially distant time. I never thought I’d be programming films for a Drive-In: but experiencing a film like *Nomadland* outdoors, by a lagoon, under the stars, was amazing.” Elton continued: “We re-doubled our commitment to equity with Mind the Gap, intentionally embracing committed, intersectional programming—as well as hitting 57% women directors across MVFF. And with people signing on to view the Festival from as far afield as the UK, Spain, Greece, and Australia, I think it’s fair to say our films and programs reached the world—and reached people’s hearts.”

AUDIENCE FAVORITE AWARDS

Audience Favorite – Drive-In - **NOMADLAND**

Audience Favorite – Online - **THE FATHER** and **ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI** (tie)

Audience Favorite – US - **UNCLE FRANK**

Audience Favorite – World - **MASTER CHENG**

Audience Favorite – Valley of the Docs - **THE BOYS WHO SAID NO!**

Audience Favorite – Family - **SISTERS: THE SUMMER WE FOUND OUR SUPERPOWERS**

Audience Favorite – DocLands - **LAUREL CANYON: A PLACE IN TIME**

Audience Favorite – Mind the Gap - **NOMADLAND**

Audience Favorite – ¡Viva el Cine! - **THE HEIST OF THE CENTURY**

Drawing virtual attendees from all over the world, audiences got an early look at upcoming Academy Award® contenders, discovered some of the best films from around the globe, including a world-class selection of new documentaries in DocLands, and celebrated the many talented local filmmakers in the Bay Area.

MVFF43 presented special Tributes to **Kate Winslet**, Dame **Judi Dench**, **Viola Davis** (who was also the recipient of the Mind the Gap Award - Actor of the Year), Sir **Anthony Hopkins**, and international icon **Sophia Loren**. Festival Spotlights included **Clare Dunne**, who presented her new film **HERSELF**, and **Regina King**, whose eagerly anticipated film **ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI** was the Festival Centerpiece. MVFF Conversations this year were held with **Delroy Lindo** regarding his career and recent work in Spike Lee’s **DA 5 BLOODS**, and screenwriter **Aaron Sorkin** and members of the cast of his latest film **THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7**. DocLands honored filmmaker **Freida Lee Mock**, who presented her new film **RUTH: JUSTICE GINSBURG IN HER OWN WORDS**.

In collaboration with Outdoor Movies, the Festival installed a studio-grade outdoor cinema with a 52-foot screen at Lagoon Park in San Rafael. The packed Drive-In screenings included the World Premiere of **BLITHE SPIRIT**, a spectacular Noël Coward adaptation from Edward Hall starring Judi Dench; the ultra-stylized **MAINSTREAM** by Gia Coppola, a commentary on contemporary social media; **AMMONITE** by Francis Lee starring Kate Winslet, an 1840s-set portrait of an intense relationship between a fossil hunter and a young woman sent to convalesce by the sea; George Gallo’s ultimate, retro drive-in film **THE COMEBACK TRAIL**; Braden King’s beautiful adaptation of Carter Sickels’ compassionate novel **THE EVENING HOUR**; **TAKE ME TO THE RIVER NEW ORLEANS** by Bay Area filmmaker Martin Shore, took us on a journey through New Orleans broad musical landscape of jazz, brass, soul, hip-hop and funk, featuring the final performances of the Neville Brothers and Dr. John; **THE BEE GEES: HOW CAN YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART** from legendary producer Frank Marshall; Venice Film Festival’s Golden Lion winner **NOMADLAND** by Chloé Zhao, starring Frances McDormand; and a special 40th anniversary presentation of **STAR WARS, EPISODE V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**.

Other special screenings and virtual guests at MVFF43 included **ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI**, Regina King's impressive directorial feature debut; Sundance favorite **HERSELF**, co-written by and starring Clare Dunne; Erika Cohn's chronicle of women fighting reproductive injustice in their communities, **BELLY OF THE BEAST**; the jazz-infused period romance **SYLVIE'S LOVE**, starring Tessa Thompson; **LAUREL CANYON: A PLACE IN TIME**, director Alison Ellwood's intimate portrait of the artists who created a music revolution; **THE FATHER**, by Florian Zeller and starring Anthony Hopkins, an uncanny examination of the dramatic effects that dementia inflicts upon both the person afflicted and their loved ones; **I CARRY YOU WITH ME**, a cross-border romantic drama by acclaimed documentarian Heidi Ewing; and **THE TRUFFLE HUNTERS**, a portrait of men and their canine companions who search for rare, expensive, and delicious white Alba truffles deep in the forests of Italy.

DocLands Documentary Film Festival (presented this year in tandem with MVFF) brought compelling feature-length and short documentary films and the provocative insights behind them.

"What a weird, wild, yet wonderful ride it's been this year!" announced DocLands Director of Programming Joni Cooper. "Instead of DocLands taking place for four consecutive days in spring as is typical, we seized the day and celebrated DocLands' films and filmmakers from May right through October, beginning with a livestream DocTalk showcase of diverse DocLands films and filmmakers; followed by a successful pivot to a completely virtual and far-reaching DocPitch in which a staggering \$125,000 in prize money was awarded to eight timely projects in development; and finally to DocLands' fully virtual - and surprisingly intimate - program of exquisite films and compelling conversations." Cooper continued: "We're grateful for the vision and dedication of the insightful filmmakers and audiences who encouraged us to accept the challenge to innovate — and in turn embraced all that was offered."

With a thematic emphasis on "The Great Outdoors" and the "Art of Impact," highlights from DocLands included **PUBLIC TRUST** by David Garrett Byars, a searing examination of public lands under threat; **TIME**, a mesmerizing portrait of the impact of incarceration on a family by Garrett Bradley, winner of the Documentary Directing Award at the Sundance Film Festival; **THE BOOK MAKERS** from Bay Area filmmaker James Kennard, which examined the people who are keeping books and book-making alive in the 21st century; and **CITIZEN PENN** by Don Hardy, an incisive portrait of actor Sean Penn's humanitarian work in Haiti.

Bay Area-based filmmakers had a particularly strong presence this year. Local highlights included **ALICE STREET** by Spencer Wilkinson; Brandon Moore's **DENNIS: THE MAN WHO LEGALIZED CANNABIS**; **LOS HERMANOS/THE BROTHERS** by Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider; **CAREGIVER: A LOVE STORY** by Kevin Gordon and Jessica Zitter; the directorial debut of Maya Pisciotto in **CALABRIA BY FEEL**; **NEVER TOO LATE: THE DOC SEVERINSEN STORY**, produced by Berkeley resident Ariana Garfinkel; and the World Premiere of Yael Bridge's **THE BIG SCARY "S" WORD**.

For the second year, the Festival hosted *Variety's* "10 Screenwriters To Watch," an honor *Variety* has bestowed for over a decade. Honorees included Tracy Deer (**BEANS**), Clare Dunne (**HERSELF**), Shaka King and Will Berson (**JUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH**), Viggo Mortensen (**FALLING**), Andy Siara (**PALM SPRINGS**), Kemp Powers (**ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI**), Emma Seligman (**SHIVA BABY**), Kata Weber (**PIECES OF A WOMAN**), Remi Weekes (**HIS HOUSE**), Tracey Scott Wilson (**RESPECT**); the panel was moderated by Steven Gaydos, Executive VP Of Global Content, *Variety*. The program also included Charlie Kaufman, recipient of *Variety's* Creative Impact In Screenwriting Award, discussing his work with *Variety* Deputy Awards and Features Editor Jenelle Riley.

In addition to the *Variety* Screenwriters panel, MVFF43 hosted a number of thought-provoking and insightful conversations and panels. Mind the Gap presented five conversations: "The Evolution of Black Women's Roles Onscreen," "Rethinking Classics: Towards a More Democratic Global Canon," "Changing the Industry From the Inside," "Building Your Own Table & Chairs," and a Directors Forum, which included Radha Blank (**THE 40-YEAR-OLD VERSION**), Gia Coppola (**MAINSTREAM**), Gina Prince-Bythewood (**THE OLD GUARD**), Liesl Tommy (**RESPECT**), and Alice Wu (**THE HALF OF IT**), and Keynote by Academy Award®-winning producer Cathy Shulman, President and CEO, Welle Entertainment; Writer-Producer, *First Ladies* and Co-founder, ReFrame.

MVFF43 also hosted a panel on the "State of the Industry: A Pivotal Year," with panelists Ira Deutchman, founder, Cinecom and Fine Line Features, director, **SEARCHING FOR MR. RUGOFF** (MVFF43); Rebecca

Green, Producer, **IT FOLLOWS**, Editor-in-Chief, Dear Producer; and Aijah Keith, Director of Acquisitions, IFC Films.

A special live Democracy Roundtable included Jimmeka Anderson, Founder/Executive Director, I AM Not the MEdia; Lisa Cortés, co-director, **ALL IN: THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY**; Judith Ehrlich, director, **THE BOYS WHO SAID NO!**; David Harris, journalist and activist; and Michael Shermer, founding publisher, *Skeptical* magazine and author, *Giving the Devil His Due*; moderated by CFI Education Outreach Manager Shakira Refos.

Youth programs this year included the creative arts workshops “1 Day/1 Roll Super 8 Youth Filmmaking Challenge,” the inaugural MVFF Teen CineClub, and an art-making workshop inspired by the short film **COLETTE THE ARTIST**. CFI Education presented a curated selection of 17 free online film programs to K-12 school groups from 66 different schools across the country, supplemented by a comprehensive collection of pre-recorded filmmaker Q&As, discussion guides and film analysis toolkits, and the Filmmakers Go to School program connected students in real time with filmmakers from around the world through live online conversations.

Joanne Parsont, CFI Director of Education, stated: “Despite the challenging circumstances, MVFF43 gave us a truly unexpected and unique opportunity to reach students throughout and well beyond the Bay Area — and to connect them with filmmakers from around the world in conversations that, in many cases, just wouldn’t have been possible in a regular theater setting.” Parsont continued: “While we missed the energy and excitement of hundreds of kids coming to the theater, we are so thrilled to have been able to share such a diverse selection of films and filmmakers with more than 8,000 students in our online MVFF Education programs. It is truly a new era for CFI Education, and we can’t wait to continue to expand our global reach throughout the year.”

About Mill Valley Film Festival

Presented by the California Film Institute, the 43rd Mill Valley Film Festival runs October 8-18, 2020. The MVFF is an acclaimed eleven-day cinema event celebrating the best in American independent and world cinema. Located just north of San Francisco, it’s known as a filmmakers’ festival, and the West Coast launch pad for many Academy Award®-winning films, annually showcasing 200+ films from over 50 countries. The MVFF creates a community that celebrates the best in international film as well as Tributes and Spotlights with major film talents. The relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere surrounding MVFF gives filmmakers and audiences alike the opportunity to share their work and experiences in a collaborative and convivial spirit.

About DOCLANDS

Presented by the California Film Institute, DocLands Documentary Film Festival brings compelling stories and the provocative insights behind them to Marin County, California. Expanding upon the exchange of ideas and inspiration through public screenings and engaged conversations, DocLands aims to build an active, involved, fully supportive community around documentary film, dedicated to initiating connections and partnerships that will illuminate and invigorate the business and art of non-fiction filmmakers.

About Mind The Gap

Mind the Gap, is the California Film Institute’s platform for inclusion and equity, amplifies and champions filmmaking by women, non-binary people and other marginalized groups. Alongside our celebration of filmmaking from a diverse spectrum of perspectives, the platform is committed to challenging prevailing industry narratives regarding women, BIPOCs, queer people, people with disabilities.

About California Film Institute

The California Film Institute (CFI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting film as art and education with a diverse series of annual programs, including the presentation of the internationally acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival, celebrating its 43rd year in 2020 and the documentary film festival DocLands; building the next generation of young filmmakers and audiences through CFI Education, featuring a broad range of activities, screenings, Q&A sessions, and seminars with top international and local filmmakers and industry professionals, as well as a rich program of classes and hands-on-workshops for all Bay Area students and lifetime learners. Year-round, CFI acts as a film-centric town hall with a varied calendar of programming at the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, one of the leading non-profit independent theaters in the US, celebrating and promoting the art of storytelling through film. CFI is also the majority owner of the Sequoia Theater in Mill Valley, California. Additionally, through CFI Releasing, a national non-profit film distribution initiative, CFI enables filmmakers and sales agents to collaborate with U.S. independent exhibitors, giving nationwide audiences access to quality independent film and promoting this work as a valuable artistic and educational medium conveying different visions, viewpoints, and cultural perspectives. CFI relies on the generosity of its community to sustain these core programs. The invaluable support of our sponsors, foundations, and individual donors ensures our continued success. For more information visit cafilm.org

Supporters | MVFF

CFI is once again proud to acknowledge the leadership support of Christopher B. and Jeannie Meg Smith, Project No. 9, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, Vickie Soulier and Caroline Labe, and the continued major support of Marin Community Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, The Gruber Family Foundation, and Resonance

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Supporters | DocLands

CFI is once again proud to acknowledge the leadership support of Christopher B. and Jeannie Meg Smith, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Vickie Soulier and Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, and the continued major support of The EACH Foundation, Genuine Article Pictures, The Gruber Family Foundation, Jim Boyce Trust and Kris Otis, Marin Community Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, and Teresa Wolf.

Supporters | Mind the Gap

CFI is proud to acknowledge a group of supporters who believe in the power of film to positively transform society. We are grateful to Christine A Schantz, Marin Community Foundation, Netflix, Delta Airlines, Resonance Philanthropies and Egide Family Foundation for their generous support of Mind the Gap.

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