

Mill Valley Film Festival
Showcasing the Best in Independent and World Cinema
Thursday, October 5-15, 2023

46TH MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL WRAPS WITH MAESTRO
CLOSING ELEVEN DAYS OF TRIBUTES, SPOTLIGHTS, AWARDS, PANELS, AND LIVE MUSIC
MVFF'S OVERALL AUDIENCE FAVORITE: CHRISTOPHER ZALLA'S
RADICAL



October 16, 2023 (San Rafael, CA) – The 46th Mill Valley Film Festival Closing Night film **Maestro** capped a fantastic 11 days of films, panels, parties, and musical performances at the annual autumn showcase, drawing over 30,000 attendees in person. The Festival screened 147 films representing 41 countries, including 56 premieres, 85 features, and 62 shorts; 45% of all films across the 2023 Festival were directed by women. Additionally, MVFF Education reached over 5,600 students across the US with virtual programming, in-person screenings, and school visits in Marin County, San Francisco, and the East Bay.

FULL LIST OF MVFF 2023 AUDIENCE FAVORITES

MVFF Overall Audience Favorite

RADICAL

Christopher Zalla

Audience Favorite | US Cinema (tie)

AMERICAN FICTION

Cord Jefferson

RUSTIN

George C. Wolfe

Audience Favorite | World Cinema

THE TASTE OF THINGS (*La Passion de Dodin Bouffant*)

Trần Ang Hùng

Audience Favorite | Documentary

WATER FOR LIFE

Will Parrinello

Audience Favorite | Family
FRYBREAD FACE AND ME
Billy Luther

Audience Favorite | Mind the Gap
A DOUBLE LIFE (documentary)
Catherine Masud
FANCY DANCE (narrative)
Erica Tremblay

Audience Favorite | ¡Viva el cine!
SKIN OF GLASS (*Pele de Vidro*) (documentary)
Denise Zmekhol
SOCIETY OF THE SNOW (*La Sociedad de la Nieve*) (narrative)
J.A. Bayona

Other awards given during MVFF this year include:

MVFF Award for Directing | **George C. Wolfe** (*Rustin*) and **Jeff Nichols** (*Bikeriders*)
MVFF Award for Breakthrough Directing | **Cord Jefferson** (*American Fiction*)
MVFF Award Lifetime Achievement: **Collaboration** | **Todd Haynes & Christine Vachon** (*May December*)
MVFF Award for Filmmaking | **Sofia Coppola** (*Priscilla*)
Mind the Gap Award Filmmaker of the Year | **Emerald Fennell** (*Saltburn*)
Mind the Gap Award Lifetime Achievements: **Visionary Artist** | **Lynn Hershman Leeson**
Mind the Gap Award Vision in Film Education | **Dr. Jimmeka Anderson** (Founder, Black Girls Film Camp)
Mind the Gap Creation Prize | **Lila Avilés** (*Tótem*)

Audiences flocked to the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, the CinéArts Sequoia, and the Lark Theater during this year's festival. MVFF also returned to Berkeley with a selection of films at BAMPFA (Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive), two days of screenings at San Francisco's Roxie Theater, and held live music shows at Sweetwater Music Hall.

Festival goers received an early look at upcoming Academy Award® contenders, discovered some of the best films from around the globe, and celebrated many talented Bay Area filmmakers and acclaimed filmmakers from countries worldwide.

Mark Fishkin Founder/Director of the Mill Valley Film Festival reflects on this year's 46th edition as “a testament to the enduring power of storytelling through cinema, showcasing its unique ability to unite our community. Despite the challenges posed by the SAG/AFTRA strike, limiting the presence of Hollywood actors, we returned to our roots as a directors' festival. Featuring films from first-time director Jack Huston's *Day of the Fight* to eloquent love story *Maestro*, audiences were introduced to stories of hope, tragedy, and redemption. The overwhelmingly positive response to films addressing significant themes—whether World, US, or documentary films such as *Fancy Dance*, *Radical*, or *Water for Life*—affirms that serious stories delving into our shared humanity deeply resonate with audiences. It was an honor to celebrate the exceptional talents of filmmakers from around the world, allowing them to engage with our audience and discuss their creations. In a world marked by turbulent changes, events like ours hold greater significance than ever before. We provided a safe and inclusive space for both local and international talents and guests to exchange ideas and foster dialogue. As we bid farewell to our 46th year, I take immense pride in the Mill Valley Film Festival's continued ability to push boundaries, made possible by the unwavering support of our entire community and staff.”

“This year feels like a watershed moment in cinema, where filmmakers have embraced the obstacles of these crazy times—delays in shooting, for instance—as a way to mature the work and the creative process. It's a time of discovery and creative innovation. There is a boldness and astuteness in works ranging from short films (The Monster of Lake Merritt!) to docs (Adrift!) to features (The Zone of Interest!) worldwide,” commented MVFF and MTG Director of Programming Zoë Elton. “And: the word most heard at the return of the Mind the Gap Summit? Inspiring! MTG proves itself an intersection point for filmmakers and funders and community where ideas and experiences—and inspiration—flow. It's like equity in action. Through the films that we curate, the conversations we inspire, the MTG Awardees—this year, Dr Jimmeka Anderson of Black Girls Film Camp, British director/writer Emerald Fennell, innovator/artist Lynn Hershman Leeson, and MTG Creation Prize recipient Lila Avilés—Mind the Gap is proof that positive change is happening.”

“Our Education programs covered quite a lot of ground at this year’s festival, reaching students from kindergarten through college with an array of films and filmmakers—and one live tarantula! It was such a joy to welcome more than 2,300 excited students to the theater from all around Marin, San Francisco, and the East Bay and to witness their laughter, awe, and enthusiasm at each screening,” said CAFILM Director of Education Joanne Parsont. “That level of engagement was especially palpable for our filmmaker guests who met with students both in the theaters and in several local classrooms—consistently marveling at the quality of student questions compared with those of standard adult audiences. We look forward to another 2,800 students experiencing festival films online in their classrooms this week!”

Opening Night, Thursday, October 5, MVFF returned to its roots as a heavyweight champion of independent filmmaking with the North American premiere of renowned actor **Jack Huston’s** (*Kill Your Darlings*, *American Hustle*) extraordinary writing/directing debut ***Day of the Fight*** featuring an all-star cast including Michael Pitt, Ron Perlman, Joe Pesci, and Nicolette Robinson, with Huston in attendance. Extraordinary in-person conversations continued throughout the festival and featured such luminaries as writer/director **Cord Jefferson**, whose smart comedy ***American Fiction*** shined as an MVFF **Centerpiece Spotlight Presentation** on Wednesday, October 11. Alongside, Director **Sofia Coppola** brought us her hotly anticipated ***Priscilla***, based on Priscilla Presley’s best-selling memoir. Jefferson was honored with the **MVFF Award for Breakthrough Directing**, while Coppola received the **MVFF Award for Filmmaking**. MVFF46 also presented Jonathan Glazer’s 2023 Cannes Grand Prix Winner, ***The Zone of Interest***, followed by an insightful, sobering onstage conversation featuring lead actor **Christian Friedel**.

The noteworthy conversations continued with MVFF Directors Night on Friday, October 13, with writer/director **Erica Tremblay**, with her moving narrative debut ***Fancy Dance***, set on the Seneca-Cayuga reservation in Oklahoma and starring Lily Gladstone (*The Unknown Country*, MVFF45); and acclaimed Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaking duo **Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi** and **Jimmy Chin** (*The Rescue*, MVFF 2021), who returned to MVFF with their narrative directorial debut, the inspirational ***Nyad*** starring **Jodie Foster** and **Annette Bening**.

MVFF46 featured several **Spotlights** and **Tributes** throughout the Festival. This year’s Spotlight programs included five-time Tony award-winning director and DGA award recipient **George C. Wolfe**, who presented the powerful ***Rustin***; and acclaimed writer and director **Jeff Nichols** for ***The Bikeriders***; Wolfe and Nichols were honored with the **MVFF Award for Directing**; and Academy Award-winning filmmaker **Emerald Fennell** (*Promising Young Woman*, MVFF43) received the **Mind the Gap Award for Filmmaker of the Year** with the beautifully wicked ***Saltburn***. This year’s **Tribute** programs included Academy-Award nominated writer-director **Todd Haynes** and powerhouse producer **Christine Vachon** who received the **MVFF Award: Lifetime Achievements for Collaboration** in celebration of their decades-long partnership in conjunction with a screening of their newest work, ***May December***; and the Bay Area’s own **Lynn Hershman Leeson** who received the **Mind the Gap Award: Lifetime Achievements - Visionary Artist Award** before a screening of four short films under the collective title ***Cyborgian Rhapsody***.

Many local films and filmmakers were celebrated during MVFF46, including the World Premiere of **Maureen Gosling’s** lively portrait of singer Barbara Dane in ***The 9 Lives of Barbara Dane***; the West Coast premiere of ***Avenue of the Giants*** by **Finn Taylor**, which dramatized the true story of Auschwitz survivor Herbert Heller; The World Premiere of ***Water for Life***, chronicling the efforts of environmental defenders in Latin America fighting for clean water by Bay Area documentarian **Will Parrinello**; the World Premiere of ***A Double Life*** by **Catherine Masud**, which unraveled the life of Civil Rights activist and fugitive Stephen Bingham and his alleged involvement with the 1971 San Quentin Prison Riots; and a rousing portrait of local legend Carol Doda in ***Carol Doda Topless at the Condor***, by **Jonathan Parker** and **Marlo McKenzie**.

Active Cinema

The Festival’s Active Cinema initiative is a forum for films united in their commitment to explore the world and its issues, engage audiences, and transform ideas into action. Highlights this year included ***Adrift***, **Rory Kennedy’s** intervention into the ongoing global refugee crisis; the world premiere of ***Farming While Black*** by local filmmaker **Mark Decena**; ***Common Ground***, focusing on the power of regenerative agriculture; ***Patrol***, following the Rama-Kriol peoples in Nicaragua as they fight to save one of the most biodiverse regions in Central America before it’s too late; and ***The Right to Read***, an inspiring documentary executive produced by Levar Burton on efforts to reverse the trend of plummeting literacy.

Mind the Gap

Both a celebration and call to action, **Mind the Gap** is MVFF’s platform for inclusion and equity, amplifying and championing filmmaking by women, non-binary people, and other marginalized groups through a vibrant

collection of films, Q&As, Panels, and Conversations. The 2023 Mind the Gap program featured the return of the **Mind the Gap Summit**, where members of the public, the local film community, and all festival attendees gathered to experience a curated day of Mind the Gap-centered programming celebrating the incredible work of female filmmakers worldwide. The Mind the Gap Summit Keynote Speech was given by **Dr. Jimmeka Anderson**, founder of Black Girls Film Camp and the first recipient of the Mind the Gap Award for Vision in Film Education.

¡Viva el cine!

MVFF's ¡Viva el cine! Initiative is a showcase of Latin American, Latinx, and Spanish-language stories, connecting audiences with diverse cultures, identities, and histories explored through the magic of cinema. This year included films from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain, Uruguay, and the US. Highlights included the World Premiere of **Katina Medina Mora's *Heartbeat***, the West Coast Premiere of **Felipe Gálvez Haberle's *The Settlers***, Chile's official submission for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film; the animated documentary ***They Shot the Piano Player*** (narrated by Jeff Goldblum) by **Fernando Treuba and Javier Mariscal**; ***Musica!***, the latest documentary from popular Bay Area filmmakers **Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman**; **Christopher Zalla's *Radical***, winner of the 2023 Sundance Festival Favorite Award; ***¡Vive el cine infantil!*** a festive collection of kid-centric animated and narrative short films; and the North American Premiere of **Sergio Machado's sensual *River of Desire***.

MVFF Education

CAFILM Education has been offering free education programs to Bay Area schools for more than 30 years, welcoming thousands of students to participate in the Festival each year by viewing new films and meeting filmmakers from around the world. We continued this tradition with two free programs available exclusively to K-12 schools in the Bay Area and across the country. **School Screenings**, a selection of narrative features, documentaries, and shorts programs is carefully curated from the general Festival program and was offered for free to all participating schools as weekday matinees in the theater and throughout the Festival online and **Filmmakers Go to School**, a more interactive festival experience connected Festival filmmakers with students in their classrooms (both in-person and virtually) for live discussions about their films and the art and craft of filmmaking. MVFF Education programs were supplemented by free curriculum resources, including film-analysis toolkits, lesson plans, and discussion guides to help teachers incorporate the films into their class curriculum.

Behind the Screens

MVFF presented another strong slate of **Panels**, **Master Classes**, and **Workshops** to supplement the outstanding film programming and to continue the discussion for Festival attendees, including the annual State of the Industry Panel where independent filmmakers and producers weighed in on the "Barbenheimer" phenomenon, the historic labor strikes, and the pressing issues currently facing the film industry today; a Masterclass focused on writing and directing animation with legendary animator, screenwriter, director, and producer John Musker (*Aladdin*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Moana*); and Artificial Intelligence, "buzzworthy" term of the year, is discussed in **AI: Perils, Possibilities, Promises**, a moderated conversation with members of the film community as they considered the risks and rewards of AI within the context of our industry and our lives.

MVFF Music

MVFF Music returned with two live music shows at downtown Mill Valley's historic Sweetwater Music Hall. On October 10, **In Honor Of An American Hero** followed the world premiere of Maureen Gosling's documentary, a special one-of-a-kind tribute concert that honored the legendary Barbara Dane and included guest artists Holly Near, Willie Chambers (Chambers Brothers) and many more; and following the California premiere of ***Feast Your Ears: The Story of WHFS 102.3*** on October 13, the party continued with **A Celebration Of East And West Coast Renegade Radio**, with performances by Maria. Muldaur and her band, Annie Simpson, members of the Firesign Theater, and a reunion of former DJs from both KSAN and WHFS radio all hosted by the legendary Ben Fong-Torres.

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About Mill Valley Film Festival

Presented by the California Film Institute (CAFILM), the 46th Mill Valley Film Festival runs October 5-15, 2023. MVFF is a significant cultural cinema event in the San Francisco Bay Area. It has gained international recognition for its commitment to showcasing exceptional films, supporting emerging talent, and fostering creative dialogue. Over the years, it has hosted renowned filmmakers, actors, and industry professionals, further establishing its reputation as the West Coast launch pad for many Academy Award-winning films and a hub for cinematic excellence.

About Mind the Gap

Films represent one of our most significant opportunities to impact society, break through language barriers, and highlight common values and shared experiences. Movies change the way we think and operate in society, which is why it's so important for films to reflect the totality of the world. Every race, every age, every religion, every sexual orientation. And every gender. **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 diverse perspectives, the platform is committed to challenging prevailing industry narratives regarding women, BIPOCs, queer people, and people with disabilities.

We are grateful for the support of our Mind the Gap sponsors: Christine A. Schantz, Marin Community Foundation, Netflix, and LUNA.

About California Film Institute

The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is a non-profit organization that celebrates and promotes film and media arts through its renowned programs, which include the Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival. CAFILM fosters the next generation of filmmakers and film lovers through CAFILM Education, offering a wide range of activities, including screenings, Q&A sessions, seminars, and a rich program of classes and hands-on workshops led by international & local filmmakers and industry professionals. The Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, one of the leading non-profit independent theaters in the country, serves as a year-round hub for cinema-centric programming. CAFILM utilizes the power of storytelling through film to entertain and address social, environmental, and cultural issues, reaching 275,000 guests annually. Additionally, CAFILM is the majority owner of the Sequoia Theater in downtown Mill Valley. The organization relies on the generosity of its community; the invaluable support from our sponsors, foundations, individual donors, and members ensures our ability to sustain these vital programs. For more information, visit cafilm.org.

The California Film Institute and Mill Valley Film Festival are in Marin County, California, on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homelands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples. This includes the Southern Pomo and Graton Rancheria Tribes. These tribes were removed or displaced from their lands. We recognize this history and the harm to present-day Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples and to their ancestors. The California Film Institute commits to moving forward from a place of authenticity and working with present-day tribes to elevate their stories, history, and present-day legacy through film.

Supporters

The California Film Institute is once again proud to acknowledge the leadership support of the Christopher B. Smith Family, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, and Vickie Soulier, and the continued major support of Marin Community Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, and The Gruber Family Foundation. We are also fortunate to have the contributions of the following Signature and Major Sponsors of the Mill Valley Film Festival: Jackson Square Partners, Lucasfilm, Ltd., Wareham Development, and Bellam Self Storage and Boxes.