

MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL 53-13 O 2024

MEDIA ALERT

Press/Media Contact:

Shelley Spicer, CAFILM / Mill Valley Film Festival
415.526.5845 | spicer@cafilm.org

Karen Larsen, Larsen Associates
415.957.2205 | publicity@larsenassoc.com

(The above number and email are not for publication)

**MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL TO HONOR DANIELLE DEADWYLER
WITH MVFF AWARD FOR ACTING AT SPECIAL SCREENING OF THE PIANO LESSON
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2024**



San Rafael, CA (August 27, 2024) – The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is proud to announce a Spotlight presentation of Netflix’s upcoming release, **THE PIANO LESSON**, at the 47th Mill Valley Film Festival (MVFF). The MVFF Spotlight program, dedicated to celebrating exceptional work by film artists in their current roles, will feature a screening of **The Piano Lesson** and presentation of the MVFF Award for acting to Danielle Deadwyler (*Till*).

Directed by Malcolm Washington in his feature film directorial debut, **The Piano Lesson** is a compelling adaptation of August Wilson’s Pulitzer Prize-winning masterwork. Joining Deadwyler for this special screening, followed by an on-stage conversation, are Malcolm Washington and John David Washington.

What: MVFF47 Spotlight | **THE PIANO LESSON** Screening and Award Presentation

Who: Danielle Deadwyler, director Malcolm Washington, and John David Washington

Date: Sunday, October 6, 2024

Time: 6:30 PM

Screening Location: Sequoia Cinema, 25 Throckmorton Avenue, Mill Valley, CA

“Malcolm Washington’s confident directorial debut both honors the soul of August Wilson’s Pulitzer Prize winning play and infuses it with a vibrant cinematic sensibility. He’s assembled a great cast, actors who have an incredible sense of the language and spirit that made Wilson one of America’s greatest playwrights,” said Zoë Elton, MVFF Director of Programming. “And Danielle Deadwyler’s work in this film is exquisite. As she did in *Till*, she again

proves herself to be one of the most outstanding actors of her generation. We're excited to be honoring her work with the MVFF Award."

A battle is brewing in the Charles household, where a prized heirloom piano stands at the center of a conflict that threatens to tear two siblings apart. On one side, a brother (John David Washington) is determined to build the family fortune by selling the piano, while on the other, a sister (Danielle Deadwyler) will stop at nothing to preserve the sole vestige of their family's heritage. Their uncle (Samuel L. Jackson) attempts to mediate, but even he can't hold back the ghosts of the past. *The Piano Lesson* delves into the intergenerational dynamics of identity, resilience, and transcendence, revealing profound truths about how we perceive the past and who gets to define our legacy. Directed and co-written by Malcolm Washington in his feature directorial debut, the film is brought to life by Oscar-nominated producers Denzel Washington and Todd Black, and features an all-star cast including Samuel L. Jackson, John David Washington, Ray Fisher, Michael Potts, Erykah Badu, Danielle Deadwyler, and Corey Hawkins.

Danielle Deadwyler, celebrated for her powerful performances, joins the ranks of past MVFF Spotlight honorees such as Nikyatu Jusu, Regina King, Denis Villeneuve, Robert Pattinson, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Brie Larson, Steve McQueen, and many other extraordinary talents.



Danielle Deadwyler's journey in the performing arts began in childhood and continued through her collegiate education, laying the groundwork for her professional career. Recently, she completed production on the Netflix film adaptation of August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson*, directed by Malcolm Washington, set to debut at the 2024 Toronto International Film Festival in September. Additionally, Danielle wrapped work on the action-thriller *Carry On*, directed by Jaume Collet-Serra, slated for a late 2024 Netflix release, and stars in and executive produces *The Women in the Yard*, another Collet-Serra project, premiering in March 2025. Danielle is widely recognized for her portrayal of Mamie Till-Mobley in the award-winning film *Till*, earning her nominations for a Critics Choice Film Award, Screen Actors Guild Award, and BAFTA Film Award, along with the 2022 Gotham Award for Outstanding Lead Performance, the Critics Choice Association's Celebration of Black Cinema & Television Actress Award for Film, and the National Board of Review Breakthrough Performance Award. She also appears in the Netflix limited series *From Scratch* and HBO Max's *Station Eleven*, for which she received a 2023 Film Independent Spirit TV Award nomination. Her other notable credits include *The Harder They Fall*, *The Devil to Pay*, *The Haves and the Have Nots*, and *Watchmen*.



Malcolm Washington, a Los Angeles filmmaker, is making his feature film directorial debut with *The Piano Lesson*, an adaptation of August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterwork for Netflix. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania and the prestigious American Film Institute, Washington directed award-winning short films and music videos, including the 2017 short film *Benny Got Shot*, for which he received the Filmmaker to Watch Award at the Atlanta Film Festival. His previous credits include *She's Gotta Have It*, *Summer of 17*, *The Dispute*, and *North Hollywood*.



John David Washington is an accomplished actor and former professional football player known for his versatile roles in film and television. He gained widespread recognition for his lead role in Spike Lee's *BlacKkKlansman* (2018), which earned him several award nominations, including a Golden Globe. Washington has continued to build an impressive filmography with standout performances in films such as *Tenet* (2020), directed by Christopher Nolan, and *Malcolm & Marie* (2021). The son of acclaimed actor Denzel Washington, John David Washington began his career as a professional football player before transitioning to acting. His other notable credits include *Ballers* (HBO), *Beckett* (2021), and *Amsterdam* (2022).

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About the MVFF Award

Inaugurated in 2007, the Mill Valley Film Festival Award is a specially designed bronze sculpture created by Mill Valley artist Alice Corning, each one individually cast for the recipient and a numbered, limited edition. The MVFF Award is presented to the recipients of Tributes and Spotlights, MVFF's special programs that honor and celebrate distinguished artists and innovators in the filmmaking community. Corning describes her artwork as a representation of "the power and dignity of a human being... much like great work in film."

About Mill Valley Film Festival

Presented by the California Film Institute (CAFILM), the 47th Mill Valley Film Festival runs October 3-13, 2024. 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 the California Film Institute

The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing film and media arts through acclaimed programs like the Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival. CAFILM Education provides students of all ages with opportunities to learn about the world through the art of film and filmmaking. Our premier independent theater, the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, engages over 275,000 guests annually with compelling cinema and storytelling on pressing social, environmental, and cultural issues. Additionally, CAFILM now owns and operates the Sequoia Cinema, reinforcing our commitment to preserving cinematic heritage and access to fine films locally. The organization relies on the generosity of its community; the invaluable support from our sponsors, foundations, donors, and members ensures our ability to continue expanding and sustaining our vital programs. Join us in celebrating, exploring, and championing the art of film. For more information, visit cafilm.org.

Supporters | Mill Valley Film Festival

The California Film Institute is once again proud to acknowledge the leadership support of the Christopher B. Smith Family, Jennifer Coslett MacCreedy, 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 of the Mill Valley Film Festival: Raymond James, Delta Air Lines, Jackson Square Partners, Lucasfilm, Ltd., Wareham Development, and Bellam Self Storage and Boxes.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

47th Mill Valley Film Festival

Celebrating the best independent and world cinema alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders.

Thursday, October 3 to Sunday, October 13, 2024

Ticket On-Sale Dates

Early Bird Tickets and Passes are on sale now

General Public Single Tickets on sale September 18, 2024

CFI members can purchase single tickets in advance of the public beginning Mid-September

MVFF47 Bay Area Screening Venues:

San Rafael: Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center – Thurs, Oct. 3 – Sun, Oct. 13, 2024

Mill Valley: Sequoia Cinema – Thurs, Oct. 3 – Sun, Oct. 13, 2024

Larkspur: Lark Theater – Sat, Oct 5 & Sun, Oct 6 + Fri, Oct 11, Sat, Oct 12 & Sun, Oct 13, 2024

Berkeley: Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive – Sat, Oct 5 & Sun, Oct 6 + Thurs, Oct 10 – Sun, Oct 13, 2024

General Admission Information:

General \$18.50 | CAFILM Members \$16.00 | Seniors (65+) \$17.00 | Students with ID and Youth (12 & under) \$9.00 | Shorts Programs: \$11.50