



SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (SIFF) OFFERS A ROBUST LINEUP FOR 23RD EDITION

SIFF Meets its 2018 Commitment to 50/50 Gender Parity

Lasse Halstrom, Lena Olin, Karen Allen and Louis Gossett Jr. to Receive SIFF's Award for Cinema Excellence

SONOMA, CA - February 12, 2020 - The 23rd edition of the Sonoma International Film Festival (SIFF), offering the best in independent cinema from around the world, announces a robust lineup of 131 features, documentaries and short films that includes a selection of World, North American, US and Northern California premieres from 30 countries. Blending a program of world-class film, food and wine, SIFF2020 is presented by United MileagePlus® Cards from Chase, and takes place from March 25 - 29 in Sonoma, Northern California, the prestigious, world renowned wine growing capital of the US.

SIFF Executive Director Kevin McNeely states: "SIFF is proud to showcase this year's programming theme of women overcoming adversity as part of its 2018 commitment to a 50/50 gender parity by 2020, which has been achieved in less than two years. In addition to offering a rich selection of female-driven films, SIFF is also pleased to present a stellar lineup of feature, documentary and short films by female directors."

Steve Shor, Program Director for SIFF, adds: "The 2020 theme and gender parity commitment marries SIFF's returning shorts sidebar program *LunaFest*, a travelling film festival by and about women which we are proud to present for the fifth year. Our new shorts sidebar *No Man's Land* is a curated film festival presenting films through a uniquely female lens in the outdoor film and adventure sport industry.

"To round out the festival's commitment, SIFF will also be presenting an Industry Panel "The Female-Driven Story" to explore the influences that have provoked the recent shift to female-character driven films," said Shor.

This year's celebrity guests will include award-winning director Lasse Halstrom ("My Life as a Dog," "What's Eating Gilbert Grape," "The Cider House Rules"), acclaimed Swedish actor Lena Olin (THE ARTIST'S WIFE, "Alias," "The Unbearable Lightness of Being"), SIFF alumni director/actor Karen Allen (COLEWELL, "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Starman") and Oscar® and Golden Globe-winner Louis Gossett Jr. (THE CUBAN, "An Officer and a Gentleman"), each of whom will receive SIFF's Award for Cinema Excellence.

Iconic American rock singer-songwriter-bass player-author-actor Suzi Quatro will receive SIFF's 2020 Appreciation Award for the titular music documentary on her life, *SUZI Q (Closing Night Film)*. Quatro will also give a live performance at SIFF along with other music luminaries Cherie Currie (*The Runaways*), Laurie Lewis (*The New Mamas and the Papas*) and famed keyboard player Robby Robinson.

Other Appreciation Award recipients will be director Edward James Olmos, actors David Strathairn, Haley Joel Osment, Martin Sheen, actress Kate Bosworth (*THE DEVIL HAS A NAME*) and documentarians Jennifer Siebel Newsom (*THE GREAT AMERICAN LIE*) and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (*VAXXED II - THE PEOPLE'S TRUTH*).

Highlights of SIFF's female-driven themes and female directed films include Tom Dolby's *THE ARTIST'S WIFE* which premiered at The Hamptons starring Lena Olin, Bruce Dern, Juliet Rylance (Strand Releasing); Unjoo Moon's *I AM WOMAN*, the inspiring story of 1970's Australian musician and activist Helen Reddy which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival; Richard Hobert's *THE BIRDCATCHER'S SON* which recently won the Audience Choice Award at the Santa Barbara Film Festival; Claudia Sparrow's award-winning documentary *MAXIMA* about a fearless Indigenous woman which won the Best of the Fest at Palm Springs and the coveted Audience Award at Canada's HotDocs; Irish director Mary McGuckian's *A GIRL FROM MOGADISHU* which premiered at Dublin Film Festival; Tom Quinn's award-winning *COLEWELL* starring SIFF alumni Karen Allen; Eliza Schroeder's British bakery drama *LOVE, SARAH*; Rahat Kazmi's *THE QUILT* based on the celebrated Urdu short story by Ismat Chughtai in its US premiere; Maria Peters' *THE CONDUCTOR* about a young woman's dream of becoming a conductor; Sabrina Aman's Eastern Sudan refugee camp documentary, *THE FORGOTTEN*, and the US premieres of Liam Firmager's documentary *SUZI Q*, on 70's rock icon Suzi Quatro which shares Closing Night Film status with Tom Waller's Thai cave rescue drama *THE CAVE*.

As part of its curation for the 23rd edition, SIFF has included a rich selection of international films by award-winning auteurs, many of whom have represented their respective countries at the Oscars®, including: Agustí Villaronga (*BORN A KING*- UK/Spain - Opening Night Film), Espen Sandberg (*AMUNDSEN* - Norway/Sweden/Czech Republic), Samir (*BAGDAD IN MY SHADOW* - Switzerland/UK/Germany), Euros Lyn (*DREAMHORSE* - UK), Pietro Marcello (*MARTIN EDEN* - Italy), Mika Kaurismäki (*MASTER CHENG* - Finland/UK/China), Peter Cattaneo (*MILITARY WIVES* - UK), Vladimir Khotinenko (*THE LENIN FACTOR* - Russia) and Rodrigo Bellott (*TU ME MANQUES* - Bolivia).

Cementing its reputation as a leader in mouth-watering, culinary-themed film festival programming, SIFF is also presenting a raft of films from around the globe that includes narrative dramas and comedies, documentaries and a smorgasbord of short films. For the third year in a row, SIFF|Devour! Chefs & Shorts Dinner program on Thursday, March 26, offers pairings of food-focused short films with noted chefs and top wines in a culinary extravaganza curated by Devour's Michael Howell and Lia Rinaldo of Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

On Friday, March 27, the instant cult film *FANTASTIC FUNGI* will screen as part of SIFF's Screen & Cuisine Lunch program, and further highlighting the best that SIFF has to offer, the new SIFF "Sip Trips" will give participants a private excursion to notable wineries between screenings taking place Thursday through Sunday.

SIFF will bestow juried awards for Best American Independent Feature, Best Documentary Feature, Best Foreign Feature, Best Animated Short, Best Comedy Short, Best Documentary Short, Best Dramatic Short and Best Foreign Short. Audience Awards with cash prizes will be handed out for Best Documentary, Best World Feature and Best American Independent Feature.

The list of prestigious judges at this year's SIFF includes renowned cinematographer John Bailey, former President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; Elisabeth Costa deBeauregard, President of Global Sales and Distribution of Storyboard Media; Nigel Daly O.B.E, former Chairman of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts-Los Angeles and President of industry trade magazine *Screen International*; Joe Della Rosa, an agent in the Media Finance department at leading entertainment and sports agency Creative Artists Agency (CAA); Britta Erickson, Denver Film Festival Director and Interim Executive Director for Denver Film; Gabrielle Kelly, screenwriter, producer and film lecturer; Hunt Lowry, CEO/President of Roserock Films and former CEO & President of Gaylord Films/Pandora; and Yumi Yokoo, CEO/President of Ponycanyon Music Publishing Inc. and Global Sales General Manager of Ponycanyon Inc., one of the leading companies of Fuji Media Holdings, Inc.

SIFF takes place within walking distance of Sonoma's historic plaza and was voted one of the Top Ten Film Festivals in the country last year by *USA Today* and one the 25 Coolest Film Festivals in the World by *Moviemaker Magazine* in 2016 and 2018.

#

PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

OPENING NIGHT FILM

SIFF2020 will start with the Opening Night Film, the North American premiere of the true events-based historical drama **BORN A KING** directed by Agustí Villaronga, starring Ed Skrein (Deadpool) and Hermione Cornfield (Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation) and produced by Andrés Vicente Gómez. The Opening Night film is presented by LCI Landers Curry and Christine Curry Design.

An extraordinary real life story set in 1919, **BORN A KING** is a coming-of-age story about Faisal, the 14-year old teenage Arab prince, who was dispatched from the deserts of Arabia to London by his warrior father, Prince Abdul Aziz, on a high stakes diplomatic mission to secure the formation of his country.

CLOSING NIGHT FILMS

The Closing Night Films will be the North American Premiere of the documentary **SUZI Q**, directed by Liam Firmager, and **THE CAVE**, directed by Tom Waller.

SUZI Q is the story of trailblazing American rock singer-songwriter Suzi Quatro, who helped redefine the role of women in rock'n'roll when she broke out in 1973. The film includes testimony from a host of rock luminaries including Alice Cooper, Joan Jett, Deborah Harry, Cherie Currie, KT Tunstall, Tina Weymouth and Suzi's musical family; and follows Quatro as she returns to her hometown, Detroit. **Suzi Quatro is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020 for a post-screening Q&A.**

Based on true events, **THE CAVE** starring Maythavee Burapasing ("Sming," "Four Fingers") and Ron Smoorenburge ("Who Am I?," "Brothers, Enter the Warriors Gate") tells the story of when a soccer team of 12 boys, aged 11-16, and their 25-year-old coach are trapped deep inside a cave in Northern Thailand, thousands of volunteers and soldiers from around the world unite in a race against time to find them. **THE CAVE** presents the thrilling tale of the largest international rescue mission of modern times. **THE CAVE** is presented by Music Nomad.

FEATURE FILMS DIRECTED BY WOMEN

Highlighting the finest films from around the world that explore the diversity of female experience both about women and directed by women, this year's festival features an exciting lineup of narrative, documentary and short films from new and established female voices.

A GIRL FROM MOGADISHU (Ireland, Belgium, Somalia)

Produced and directed by Mary McGuckian, starring Aja Naomi King ("How to Get Away With Murder," "The Birth of a Nation") and Barkhad Abdi ("Captain Phillips," "Eye in the Sky," "Blade Runner 2049").

A powerful and riveting narrative based on the true story of Ifrah Ahmed who, having escaped war-torn Somalia, emerged as one of the world's foremost international activists against gender-based violence.

I AM WOMAN (Northern California Premiere, Australia)

Directed by Unjoo Moon, starring Tilda Cobham-Hervey ("Hotel Mumbai," "52 Tuesdays"), Danielle Macdonald ("Patti Cake\$," "Dumplin'"), Evan Peters ("X-Men film series," "American Horror Story"), Molly Broadstock ("Clap"), Liam Douglas ("In Your Head"). **Director Unjoo Moon is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.**

The inspiring story of singer Helen Reddy, who wrote and sang "I Am Woman", the song that became the anthem for the women's rights movement in the 1970s. **I AM WOMAN** is presented by Bar None's Canyon Winery.

LOVE SARAH (Northern California Premiere, UK)

Directed by Eliza Schroeder, starring Celia Imrie ("The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," "Nanny McPhee," "Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace"), Bill Paterson ("The Witches," "Miss Potter," "Kingdom of Heaven"), Shannon Tarbet ("Killing Eve"), Shelley Conn ("Charlie and the Chocolate Factory") and Rupert Penry-Jones ("Persuasion," "The Four Feathers").

Determined to fulfill her late mother's dream, Clarissa enlists the help of her mother's best friend and her eccentric grandmother on a journey to open a bakery to honor the memory of their beloved Sarah.

THE CONDUCTOR (Netherlands)

Directed by Maria Peters, starring Christanne de Bruijn (Moordvrouw), Benjamin Wainright (World on Fire, War & Peace) Scott Turner Schofield (The Bold and the Beautiful), Richard Sammel ("Inglourious Basterds," "Casino Royale"), Sian Thomas ("Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix," "Perfume: The Story of a Murderer") and Seumas F. Sargent ("Tom of Finland," "Point Break").

Based on a true story, in 1926, Antonia Brico dreams of becoming a conductor, but the circuitous route to become the first woman to conduct a symphony orchestra takes its toll as both personal and professional pressures threaten to overwhelm her. **Actress Christianne de Bruijn is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.**

THE LADY IMPROPER (US Premiere, Hong Kong)

Directed by Tsang Tsui Shan, starring Charlene Choi ("The Twins Effect," "Fatal Visit"), Kang Ren Wu ("A Touch of Green") Lau Wing, Tai Bo ("Police Story," "Suk Suk")

A divorcee with a fear of intimacy embarks on a journey of self-discovery and sexual liberation when she falls for her restaurant's new chef, a free spirit who treats cooking as serious philosophy.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS DIRECTED BY WOMEN

AI WEIWEI: YOURS TRULY (USA)

Directed by Cheryl Haines | Gina Leibrecht

While detained in China, activist artist Ai Weiwei remotely transformed Alcatraz into a remarkable expression of socially engaged art focused on the plight of the unjustly incarcerated. Extraordinary things happened when exhibition visitors were inspired to write to prisoners-of-conscience worldwide.

CHASING PERFECT (UK),

Directed by Helena Coan

A singular, charming portrait of Frank Stephenson, one of the most influential car designers in the world, whose designs range from high-concept hypercars such as the McLaren P1 to everyday city vehicles like the iconic new Mini. CHASING PERFECT is presented by Bevan & Associates. **Frank Stephenson is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.**

ELEPHANT REFUGEES (World Premiere, US/Botswana/South Africa)

Directed by Louise Hogarth

A crisis of elephantine proportions is playing out in Botswana. A determined family of caring people is caught in the middle of the drama. Life changed forever for the family, and the

elephants, when climate change intensified the frequent droughts. **ELEPHANT REFUGEES** is presented by Susan Atherton.

MAXIMA (US/Peru)

Directed by Claudia Sparrow

Maxima, an indigenous woman from the Peruvian Andes, stands up to the largest gold producer in the world, US-based Newmont Mining Corporation, which has claimed ownership of her land in order to expand its multi-billion-dollar mining operation.

QUEEN OF HEARTS: AUDREY FLACK (West Coast Premiere, USA)

Directed by Deborah Shaffer

Octogenarian artist Audrey Flack has always been a trailblazer. Now, she returns to her canvas for the first time in decades, revealing her longtime struggles as an artist and mother to find her rightful place in the art world.

STAGE: THE CULINARY INTERNSHIP (Canada)

Directed by Abby Ainsworth

In the kitchen of Spain's legendary Mugaritz restaurant, a group of young fresh-faced interns, or stagiaires, spend nine grueling months learning their craft, finding their voices and keeping from cracking under the pressure.

THE GREAT AMERICAN LIE (Northern California Premiere) (USA)

Directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom

Cultural critics, academics and other notables explore the gendered nature of core American values with "masculine" traits like individualism, power, and money prioritized over "feminine" attributes such as collaboration, care, and empathy. This imbalance makes the American Dream a difficult goal. **Jennifer Siebel Newsom is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.**

THE PATH OF THE ANACONDA (Colombia)

Directed by Gloria Luz Arenas

The Anaconda Trail is the crossing of Wade Davis, the famous Canadian writer of the book *El Rio*, who returns to Colombia in the company of the anthropologist Martín Von Hildebrand. They cross the Colombian Amazon jungle along with the indigenous communities of the Apaporis River. **THE PATH OF THE ANACONDA** is presented by the Sonoma Valley Author's Festival. **Film subject and writer Wade Davis is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.**

THE STORY OF PLASTIC (USA)

Directed by Deia Schlosberg

Depictions of a world rapidly becoming overrun with toxic material, bringing into focus an alarming, man-made crisis. Striking footage, original animations, and archival material combine to point to the disastrous impact of the manufacture and use of plastics. **THE STORY OF PLASTIC** is presented by Sonoma Fit.

YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION (UK)

Directed by Emily Harris

Can we revisit the '60s yet again, not in a futile attempt to recapture that blissful, perfect (nostalgia) trip, but as an incubator for the kind of volcanic change needed at this fraught moment in the human experiment? The veddy British curators guide us through the upheavals of the second half of the decade, from the fashion freedom of Carnaby Street to the murderous clampdown at Kent State, with a special appreciation for the Bay Area. Idealists and futurists Stewart Brand and Lee Friedlander and cultural avatars Peter Coyote and Country Joe McDonald, bring their experiences to bear on the present moment. **YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION** is presented by Better Homes & Gardens/Wine Country Group.

NORTH AMERICAN FEATURE FILM HIGHLIGHTS

Exemplifying the variety and vitality of contemporary filmmaking, SIFF's lineup of North American feature films by emerging talents and established masters demonstrates that the landscape of cinema is as inspiring, and distinct as ever.

COLEWELL (Northern California Premiere) (USA)

Directed by Tom Quinn, starring Karen Allen ("Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull"), Kevin J. O'Connor ("The Mummy," "Van Helsing"), Hannah Gross ("Joker," "Marjorie Prime). **Actress Karen Allen is scheduled to appear at SIFF 2020.**

For 35 years, Nora has been the postmaster of Colewell, Pennsylvania. When the USPS decides to close her office, she must choose whether to relocate for a new position or face retirement in Colewell. Actress Karen Allen is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.

HUMAN CAPITAL (Northern California Premiere) (USA)

Directed by Marc Meyers, starring Liev Schreiber ("Ray Donovan" TV series, "Spotlight," "Salt"), , Marisa Tomei ("My Cousin Vinny," "The Wrestler," "The Big Short"), Peter Sarsgaard ("Shattered Glass," "Garden State," "Jarhead"), Maya Hawke and Alex Wolff.

Based on American novelist Stephen Amidon's 2004 book and the film "Il Capital Unman" by Palo Virzi, an impulsive business deal brings together two families, from across the social divide, with tragic consequences.

THE DEVIL HAS A NAME (Northern California Premiere) (USA)

Directed by Edward James Olmos, starring David Strathairn ("L.A. Confidential," "Good Night, and Good Luck," "Lincoln"), Edward James Olmos ("Blade Runner," "Selena"), Kate Bosworth ("Blue Crush," "Superman Returns"), Pablo Schreiber ("13 Hours," "Den of Thieves"), Haley Joel Osment ("The Sixth Sense," "Secondhand Lions"), Alfred Molina ("Spider-Man 2," "Frida, Magnolia") and Martin Sheen ("The Departed," "Apocalypse Now," "Badlands"). **Director Edward James Olmos, actors David Strathairn and Haley Joel Osment and actress Kate Bosworth are scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.**

A psychotic oil matriarch leaves the whole industry exposed when she attempts to outfight a bullish farmer whose water has been poisoned.

THE ARTIST'S WIFE (USA)

Directed by Tom Dolby, starring Lena Olin and Bruce Dern. **Actress Lena Olin is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.**

Faced with the devastating onset of dementia in her famous artist husband, Claire -- a once promising painter herself -- attempts to repair his fractured relationship with his estranged daughter and grandson while charting her own path for the future.

THE CUBAN (West Coast Premiere, Canada)

Directed by Sergio Navarretta, starring Louis Gossett Jr. ("An Officer and a Gentleman," "Enemy Mine"), Shoreh Aghdashloo ("House of Sand and Fog," "The Stoning of Soraya M.," "Star Trek") and Ana Golja.

When a young Afghan immigrant named Mina gets her first job in a nursing home, an unexpected friendship with Luis, a resident with dementia, reignites her love of music changing her life forever. THE CUBAN is presented by Care Partners Initiative and AFFIRMATIVhealth.

Actor Louis Gossett Jr. is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020.

UNCORKED, (West Coast Premiere, Netflix)

Directed by Prentice Penny, starring Courtney B. Vance ("The Hunt for Red October"), Matt McGorry ("Orange is the New Black"), Niecy Nash ("Reno 911"), Sasha Compere ("Miracle Workers").

Elijah must balance his dream of becoming a master sommelier with his father's expectations that he carry on the family's Memphis BBQ joint.

FOREIGN FEATURE FILM HIGHLIGHTS

Highlighting impressive recent productions from across the world, this selective slate spans a wide geographic range, featuring established auteurs as well as fresh talent from the international festival scene.

AMUNDSEN (Northern Californian Premiere, Norway, Sweden, Czech Republic)

Directed by Espen Sandberg ("Kon-Tiki," "Max Manus: Man of War," "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales") starring Katherine Waterston, Pål Sverre Hagen, Christian Rubekand & Mads Sjøgård Pettersen.

The story of Roald Amundsen, an unknown man from impoverished Norway, who becomes the greatest polar explorer the world has ever seen in this dramatic and epic film about the life of a remarkable and fascinating man. AMUNDSEN is presented by Eyeball Engineering and Krieger Brothers.

BAGHDAD IN MY SHADOW (Switzerland, UK, Germany)

Directed by Samir (Iraqi Odyssey, 2014 Swiss Oscar entry).

Iraqi expats Amal, Taufiq and Muhamad love meeting up at a little café in London, but they find their lives upended when Amal's husband, a former informant of Saddam's regime, suddenly shows up. AMUNDSEN is presented by Eyeball Engineering & Krieger Brothers.

DAFFODILS (New Zealand)

Directed by David Stubbs, starring Rose McIver ("The Lovely Bones," "iZombie"), George Mason ("Home and Away," "Go Girl"), and acclaimed Grammy Award winning singer/songwriter/actress Kimbra ("The Identity Thief," "The Heat").

A heartachingly romantic musical follows singer Maisie and the recollections of how her parents met and fell in love. Sound tracked with playful re-imaginings of iconic New Zealand songs. DAFFODILS is presented by Stone Barn Farms.

DREAM HORSE (California Premiere, UK)

Directed by Euros Lyn, starring Toni Collette ("Muriel's Wedding," "Little Miss Sunshine," "Hereditary"), Damian Lewis ("Band of Brothers," "Homeland"), Owen Teale ("Game of Thrones"), Joanna Page ("Love Actually," "To the Ends of the Earth"), Karl Johnson ("Hot Fuzz," "The Death of Stalin"), Steffan Rhodri ("Submarine," "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1").

The film tells the true story of Jan Vokes, a Welsh cleaner and bartender, who decides to breed and rear a racehorse. She persuades her neighbors and friends to contribute financially to the goal. The group's unlikely investment plan pays off as the horse rises through the ranks and puts them in a race for the national championship. DREAM HORSE is presented by Pets Lifeline & the Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance.

FROM THE VINE (Canada/Italy)

Directed by Sean Cisterna, starring Joe Pantoliano ("Risky Business," "Midnight Run," "Memento"), Paula Brancati ("Dark Oracle," "Moon Point"), Marco Leonardi ("Cinema Paradiso," "Like Water For Chocolate," "Maradonna," "The Hand of God").

A downtrodden CEO, experiencing a moral crisis, travels back to Italy to recalibrate his compass. He discovers new life by reviving his grandfather's old vineyard, reconnecting with his family and offering the small town of Acerenza a sustainable future. FROM THE VINE is presented by Exotic Yoga Retreats.

GRANADA NIGHTS (World Premiere, UK/Spain)

Directed by Abid Khan, starring Antonio Aakeel ("Tomb Raider"), Oscar Casas (The Orphanage), Alice Sanders (How to Talk to Girls at Parties).

A British tourist gets dumped by his long time girlfriend while in Granada, Spain. Feeling lost and isolated in the Spanish culture, he befriends a group of foreigners and crashes into the international student scene.

I LOVE MY MUM (West Coast Premiere, UK)

Directed by Alberto Sciamma, starring Kierston Wareing ("Fish Tank," "The Double") and Tommy French ("1917," "Luther").

A European comedy about accidental immigration. Following a car crash, Olga and her son are inadvertently shipped in a container from London to Morocco. Without money, documents, and still in their pajamas, their adventure takes them through Spain and France.

MARTIN EDEN (Northern California Premiere, Italy)

Directed by Pietro Marcello, starring Luca Marinelli (“They Call Me Jeeg,” “Rainbow: A Private Affair”), Jessica Cressy (“The App”), Vincenzo Nemolato (“Tale of Tales”), Marco Leonardi (“Cinema Paradiso,” “Like Water For Chocolate”) and Denis Sardisco (“Carlo & Malik”).

Adapted from a Jack London novel, and operating in the tradition of the great Italian classics, a dashing young proletarian hopes his dreams of becoming a writer will help him rise above his station to marry a bourgeois university student.

MASTER CHENG (Northern California Premiere, Finland/UK/China)

Directed by Mika Kaurismäki, starring Pak Hon Chu (“My Prince Edward”), Lucas Hsuan, Vesa-Matti Loiri (“Road North,” “The Boys”).

Professional chef and recent widower Cheng travels from China with his young son to a remote village in Finland to connect with an old friend. While there, he helps a diner owner and becomes a celebrated member of the community

THE BIRDCATCHER'S SON (North American Premiere, Sweden/Faroe Islands)

Directed by Richard Hobert, starring Rudi Kohnke (“Angels in Fast Motion”), Vígdis Eliesersdóttir Hentze Björck (“Eugene Onegin,” “Inquietude”) and Livia Millhagen (“Miffo”). **Director Richard Hobert is scheduled to appear at SIFF2020**

Esmar’s lease will expire within a year if he has no son. As his wife has given birth only to daughters, a friend suggests that their best chance to have a son is for another man to impregnate Johanna.

THE QUILT (Lihaaf) (US Premiere, India/France)

Directed by Rahat Kazmi, starring Tannishtha Chatterjee (“Brick Lane”), Sonal Sehgal (Aashayein, Radio), Virendra Saxena (“A Wednesday, Rudraksh”)

Based on Ismat Chughtai's celebrated short story of the same name, this interwoven plot follows the same sex relationship between Begum and her masseuse, as well as the obscenity trial Chughtai withstood after publishing the story.

THE LENIN FACTOR (West Coast Premiere, Russia)

Directed by Vladimir Khotinenko, starring Evgeny Mironov, Fyodor Bondarchuk

Having dedicated his life to the preparation of the revolution in the Russian Empire, Vladimir Lenin, living in exile in Switzerland, desperately seeks a way back to Russia in order to take control. THE LENIN FACTOR is presented by Franklin University.

U-235 aka TORPEDO (US Premiere, France, Belgium)

Directed by Sven Huybrechts, starring Koen De Bouw (“The Last Tycoon,” “Professor T”), Thure Riefenstein (“The Man in the High Castle,” “12 Monkeys”), Ella-June Henrard (“Boy 7,” “Portable Life”) and Joren Seldeslachts (“Blind”).

A team of Belgian resistance fighters kidnaps a German submarine during WWII to obtain uranium, needed for the Manhattan Project, from the Belgian Congo to New York.

WOMEN ON THE RUN (US Premiere, Czech Republic)

Directed by Martin Horský, starring Jenová Boková (“Burning Bush”), Tereza Kostková (“Stuck with a Perfect Woman”), Veronika Khek Kubařová (“10 Rules”), Zlata Adamovská (“Lovers & Murderers”), Ondřej Vetchý (“Dark Blue World”), Vladimír Polívka (Hastrman), Bolek Polívka (Divided We Fall) and Martin Hofmann (The Brothers Grimm, Anthropoid, The Zookeeper’s Wife).

Vera is determined to fulfill her dying husband's last wish--run a marathon! The spirited mother of three daughters doesn't think this will be a problem and drafts them to help her run the race as a family relay team. WOMEN ON THE RUN is presented by Unali Events.

DOCUMENTARY FILM HIGHLIGHTS

SIFF surveys the most vital and innovative voices in nonfiction filmmaking.

5B (USA)

Directed by Paul Haggis (“Crash,” “In the Valley of Elah,” “Million Dollar Baby”) | Dan Krauss

The inspirational story of everyday heroes, nurses and caregivers who took extraordinary action to comfort, protect and care for the patients on the fifth floor of San Francisco General Hospital, one of the first AIDS ward units in the United States.

BEFORE THE PLATE (Canada)

Directed by Sagi Kahane-Rapport

Follow John Horne, one of Canada’s most renowned chefs, as he traces each ingredient from a single plate of food all the way back to the farms they came from.

DAYS OF RAGE, THE ROLLING STONES’ ROAD TO ALTAMOUNT (UK)

Directed by Tom O’Dell

As the dream of peace and love was shattered in the late 1960s, the Rolling Stones became the voice of this turbulent new era and their concert at Altamont would bring the decade to a shocking end.

PIZZA, A LOVE STORY (California Premiere, USA)

Directed by Gorman Bechard

Pizza wasn't invented in New Haven. It was perfected there. This is the story of the history, genius, dedication and love behind the three restaurants serving what many feel to be the finest pizza in the world. PIZZA, A LOVE STORY is presented by The Red Grape.

ROADLESS (USA)

Directed by Steve Jones/Todd Jones/Jon Klaczkiewicz

In the winter of 2019, Bryan Iguchi teamed up with fellow snowboarders Jeremy Jones and Travis Rice to explore an untamed part of Wyoming on a 10-day human powered expedition.

THE AMBER LIGHT (Scotland)

Directed by Adam Park

In this journey through the lesser-known parts of Scottish whisky culture, we follow spirits writer Dave Broom on his quest to gain a deeper understanding of his national drink. The film traces his journey back to the roots of whisky.

THE CAVERN CLUB: THE BEAT GOES ON (UK)

Directed by Christian Francis-Davies | Jon Keats

A unique view of the self-proclaimed "greatest club in the world." Famous as the venue that hosted The Beatles 292 times, it survived two closures, was demolished and rebuilt, and is now back to its former glory.

THE FORGOTTEN (US/Sudan/Eritrea)

Directed by Sabrina Aman

An undercover journey into Eritrean refugee camps to view the never-before-seen conditions that these refugees live in every day. Captured by the intelligence officers while filming, director Sabrina Aman makes it back in one piece to share their heart-wrenching stories.

THE NATURE MAKERS (USA)

Director: Scott Saunders

In a world increasingly dominated by humans, three teams of wildlife conservationists go to extraordinary and seemingly unnatural lengths to try to save threatened species and habitats in the American heartland. **Director Scott Saunders is schedule to appear at SIFF 2020**

VAXXED II: THE PEOPLE'S TRUTH (World Premiere) (USA)

Directed by Brian Burrowes

An exploration into a possible link between various vaccinations and illness, injury, and death, based on thousands of interviews with doctors, scientists, nurses, and parents who discuss the vaccine injuries they have witnessed. **Robert Kennedy Jr. and Dr. William Thompson are scheduled to appear at SIFF2020**

WINTERLAND (USA)

Directed by Jon Klaczkiewicz | Steve Jones | Todd Jones

Today's mountain athletes can only stand as tall as those who came before them. Enjoy a celebration of ski and snowboard culture as a new crop of modern-day pioneers attempt to etch their names in the annals of history.

SHORT FILM HIGHLIGHTS

A complete list of SIFF's Animated Shorts, Comedy Shorts, Culinary Shorts, Documentary Shorts, Dramatic Shorts and Foreign Shorts is on the SIFF website - www.sonomafilmfest.org

SPECIAL EVENT SCREENINGS

FANTASTIC FUNGI (USA)

Directed by Louie Schwartzberg
SIFF|Screen & Cuisine Lunch

Through the eyes of renowned scientists and mycologists, become aware of the beauty, intelligence and solutions that the fungi kingdom offers in response to some of our most pressing medical, therapeutic, and environmental challenges. FANTASTIC FUNGI is presented by the American Mushroom Institute & The Mushroom Council

LE CHOCOLAT DE H (West Coast Premiere) (Japan, Ecuador, France)

Directed by Takashi Watanabe
Chocolate and Wine Pairing at Friday Screening

Follow world-renowned chocolatier Hironobu Tsujiguchi on his journey as he takes a fresh look at food in areas of outstanding natural beauty in Ecuador and his native hometown on the Noto Peninsula in Japan. LE CHOCOLAT DE H is presented by Cultural Exchange. **Chef Tsujiguchi is scheduled to appear at the Friday screening which will also feature a special chocolate and wine pairing.**

SIFF|DEVOUR! CHEFS & SHORTS DINNER

SIFF|Devour! Chefs & Shorts Dinner, now in its third year, will feature experts Michael Howell and Lia Rinaldo, the founders of DEVOUR! food and film festival in Nova Scotia, Canada, who pair noted chefs, wines and food-focused short films. The featured chefs include Michael Howell (Founder and Executive Director of Devour!), Chef Douglas Keane of Cyrus (that returns to Sonoma County in the near future), Chef Seadon Shouse of Timber Cove Resort, Northern California, Chef Casey Thompson of Georgette, Sonoma, Confectioner Hironobu Tsujiguchi of Le Chocolate de H, Tokyo, Japan.

SPECIAL SCREENINGS/SIDEBARS

LUNAFEST PROGRAM

Two Screenings - 91 Minutes

Short films by, for and about women are showcased in this year's slate of LUNAFEST selections. LUNAFEST is presented by Coplan Vineyards.

NO MAN'S LAND PROGRAM

Two Screenings - 74 minutes

As recognized thought leaders and change-makers in the outdoor film and adventure sport industry, No Man's Land is working to establish and normalize women's voices and perspectives through a uniquely female lens. NO MAN'S LAND is presented by Striker & Indy.

INTERNATIONAL MOVIE LIVE CONCERT TOUR

RIGHT IN THE EYE (EN PLEIN DANS L'OEIL)

International Movie Live Concert Tour

Two Screenings

75 minutes | France

Creator: Jean-François Alcoléa

This multimedia show brings 12 timeless silent films from Georges Méliès, French film pioneer, with three musicians and over 50 instruments, many of which are rare or totally original.

EVENTS

"The Female-Driven Story" Industry Panel

While 40% of 2019's top 100 films featured a female protagonist, women directed only 12% of those films. Filmmakers discuss their reasons for making films driven by female characters. Does the current national conversation, the power of the story itself, or evidence that today's audiences support female lead stories motivate them? Does the Times Up movement, money or the leveling of the film industry's playing field provoke this shift?

Moderated by Kevin McNeely, SIFF Executive Director

Panel to include: actress Karen Allen ("Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Shoot the Moon," "Split Image," "King of the Hill," "The Perfect Storm," COLEWELL); Britta Erickson, Denver Film Festival Director and Interim Executive Director for Denver Film; producer/writer Vanessa McMahon; director Maria Peters (THE CONDUCTOR, "Sonny Boy"); Nichola Ellis, founder, The Lighthouse Company ; Kelly Vickery, artistic director and founder of Berkshire International Film Festival.

"Strategies for Optimizing Distribution" Industry Panel

Independent film development, production and distribution all work best when creative story ideas are integrated with promotion and sales efforts. Building a campaign around your film is the key to success. Join a team of experienced film distribution executives to learn valuable insights on this process. Discussion will include new digital markets, promotional practices, distribution sequencing, versioning strategies and much more. Knowing your end game can help you make the right decisions along the way.

Moderated by Nigel Daly, O.B.E, former Chairman of the British Academy of Film and

Television Arts - Los Angeles and President of industry trade magazine Screen International

Panel to include: Elisabeth Costa DeBeauregard - President of Global Sales and Distribution of Storyboard Media; Joe De La Rosa - an agent in the Media Finance department at leading entertainment and sports agency Creative Artists Agency (CAA); Yumi Yakoo, CEO/President of Ponycanyon Music Publishing Inc. and Global Sales General Manager of Ponycanyon Inc.; Hunt Lowry - CEO/President of Roserock Films and former CEO & President of Gaylord Films/Pandora.

FREE PUBLIC EVENTS

UFO SYMPOSIUM & SCREENINGS

This year marks the 10th anniversary of this popular event, which features a lunch, an expert panel and two screenings of THE PHENOMENON, slated for national summer release.

THE STUDENT SHOWCASE

The Student Showcase program is supported by SIFF as a key fulfillment of the festival's mission to support, invest and enrich youth educational opportunities. Selections from this year's filmmaking students will be screened twice. THE STUDENT SHOWCASE is presented by the Sonoma Valley Education Fund.

FESTIVAL PASS INFORMATION

The 23rd Annual Sonoma International Film Festival runs from Wednesday, March 25 through Sunday, March 29.

The best way to experience the festival and have access to all films is by getting a SIFF pass. SIFF can be enjoyed at different levels. Currently Student Passes are \$75, Cinema Passes are \$350, \$975 for Soirée, and \$2,500 for Patron level. All Cinema pass holders will have day access to the SIFF Backlot Tent. Soirée pass holders will have day VIP area and evening parties' access. For information about tickets, festival passes, prices, and benefits visit www.sonomafilmfest.org

###

ABOUT THE SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The Sonoma International Film Festival, an entirely walkable festival, is a 501(c)3 corporation dedicated to promoting independent film, supporting filmmakers around the world, and inspiring film lovers. Most films screened at the Festival have attending filmmakers and actors making for informative Q&A's. This unique five-day event features screening venues in and around Sonoma Plaza, including at the historic Sebastiani Theatre built in 1933 and the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, and offers world-class cuisine from local artisans and exceptional wine from Sonoma vintners. Renowned filmmakers, industry leaders and celebrities such as Bruce Willis, Susan Sarandon, Robin Williams, John Lasseter, Danny Glover, Demián Bichir, Mary-Louise Parker, Karen Allen, Michael Keaton and Meg Ryan have walked the festival red carpet and enjoyed its intimate ambiance.

SIFF's signature initiative - the Media Arts Program started at Sonoma Valley High School in 2002- introduces students to the process of storytelling and provides the resources for them to create films, many of which are shown annually at The Student Showcase.

Over the past 23 years, the Sonoma International Film Festival has received the support of many incredible sponsors who include but are not limited to: United MileagePlus® Cards from Chase, Manitou Fund, Diageo, Sony, Dolby, *Sonoma Magazine*, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Bank of Marin, Franklin University, Sophienwald, Stor-It-All, Sonoma Fit, Film Mare Island, Topo Chico, Ledson Hotel, North Bay Web, Don Julio, Johnnie Walker, Ketel One Botanical, *San Francisco Chronicle*,

Landmark Vineyards, Brew Dr., Huge Bear Wines, OHM Coffee Roasters, Farm Fresh To You, Rodney Strong, Gloria Ferrer, Coplan Vineyards, Lake Sonoma Winery and the Sonoma Tourism Bureau.

For more information, please visit www.sonomafilmfest.org

#