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**"POETIC LICENSE" TO OPEN
THE 2026 SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

AN EVENING WITH JULIAN SCHNABEL

STEVEN SODERBERG'S "THE CHRISTOPHERS" AS CENTERPIECE

SHOT IN SONOMA "UNDER THE LIGHTS" TO CLOSE THE FESTIVAL

Sonoma, CA – March 3, 2026 – The 29th annual **Sonoma International Film Festival (SIFF)** will run **March 25–29, 2026**, unveiling a 104-film lineup spanning 37 countries bringing five days of bold cinema, culinary artistry, and intimate filmmaker access to the heart of wine country and anchored by new work from **Maude Apatow, Julian Schnabel, and Steven Soderbergh**, alongside a robust slate of international premieres and awards contenders. The 2026 program includes **41 narrative features, 16 documentary features, and 47 shorts**.

“Following last year’s record-setting edition, we’re raising the bar again with a lineup that reflects the full spectrum of contemporary cinema — from internationally celebrated auteurs to bold genre voices,” said SIFF Artistic Director Carl Spence. “We’ve assembled the finest films we discovered throughout the year — including exceptional works that deserve a larger spotlight — alongside in-person conversations with visionary filmmakers and our signature culinary program. Sonoma isn’t just a festival; it’s a destination where world-class cinema meets an unforgettable experience.”

A WINE COUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL LIKE NO OTHER

SIFF is more than a film festival—it’s a full sensory experience that brings together award-winning cinema and gourmet indulgence. Festival-goers can find their adventure with exclusive SIFF Pop-Ins featuring curated food and wine experiences at top Sonoma restaurants, lively parties at celebrated establishments, and intimate conversations with film industry veterans.

The 29th Annual Sonoma International Film Festival is March 25-29, 2026

103 East Napa Street | Suite 2A | Sonoma, California 95476 | 707.933.2600 | www.sonomafilmfest.org
Sonoma Valley Film Society dba Sonoma International Film Festival is a 501(c)(3) organization. Tax ID: 68-0428999.

An Evening with Julian Schnabel – *In the Hand of Dante*

SIFF will host an in-person presentation and career conversation with **Julian Schnabel**, who brings his latest feature, *In the Hand of Dante*, to the festival. Schnabel, the artist-filmmaker behind *Basquiat*, *Before Night Falls*, and the Oscar-nominated *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, returns with a literary epic starring **Oscar Isaac, Gal Gadot, Gerard Butler, John Malkovich, Al Pacino, Jason Momoa, and Martin Scorsese**. The screening will be followed by a moderated discussion examining Schnabel's career across visual art and cinema.

Notable Talent

Notable talent represented in this year's lineup includes **Riz Ahmed, Joe Alwyn, Maude Apatow, Gerard Butler, James Corden, Mark Duplass, Gal Gadot, Cooper Hoffman, Oscar Isaac, Theo James, Juliette Lewis, Jason Momoa, Leslie Mann, Ian McKellen, Kim Novak, Bob Odenkirk, Nick Offerman, Timothy Olyphant, Al Pacino, Randall Park, Martin Scorsese, Jason Segel, Cliff "Method Man" Smith, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Chow Yun-Fat, Henry Winkler, Sam Worthington**, and more.

Beyond the screen, SIFF unfolds as a curated celebration of taste and atmosphere. Highlights include the **Opening Night soirée at historic Sebastiani Vineyards & Winery**, the elegant **Moon and the Stars Dinner at Valley Bar + Bottle**, the high-energy **Studio 54 Disco Party at HopMonk**, and the **Centerpiece Dolce After Dark Party at Buena Vista Winery**. Exclusive Pop-In tastings feature exceptional wines and seasonal bites at **The Bar at MacArthur Place, Williams Sonoma, and The Sonoma Cheese Factory**.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **Opening Night Film: *Poetic License*** – (California Premiere) Maude Apatow's directorial feature debut follows Liz (Leslie Mann), adrift in a new town, who befriends two adoring students (Cooper Hoffman, Andrew Barth Feldman) after auditing a poetry class. Flattery spirals into awkward longing in this smart, laugh-out-loud story of reinvention. A Row K Release.
- **Centerpiece Film: *The Christophers*** – Oscar-winning Steven Soderbergh serves up a razor-witted chamber comedy skewering art, money, and long-simmering grudges starring Ian McKellen. A NEON Release.
- **Closing Night Film: *Under the Lights*** (California Premiere) Shot in Sonoma, this film follows a teen with epilepsy who risks everything to attend prom.
- **SIFF After Dark:** Balancing its prestige slate, SIFF will present After Dark, a genre-focused strand featuring high-profile talent and commercial energy: ***Fuze*** (Dir. David Mackenzie) – London-set thriller starring Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Theo James, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, and Sam Worthington; ***Normal*** (Dir. Ben Wheatley, A Magnolia Pictures Release) – Dark action-comedy starring Bob Odenkirk, Lena Headey, and

Henry Winkler; ***The Last Viking*** (Dir. Anders Thomas Jensen, A Samuel Goldwyn Release) – Black comedy starring Mads Mikkelsen; ***Over Your Dead Body*** (Dir. Jorma Taccone, A IFC Films Release) – horror-comedy featuring Jason Segel, Timothy Olyphant, Samara Weaving, and Juliette Lewis.

- **Culinary Films & Events:** ***The Big Cheese*** (Director: Sara Joe Wolansky/USA), ***Fork in the Road*** (Director: Jonathan Nastasi, Vivian Sorenson/USA), ***Hello Betty*** (Director: Pierre Monnard/Switzerland), ***Raoul's, A New York Story*** (Director: Greg Olliver, Karim Raoul/USA). **The Moon and The Stars Dinner** at renowned Sonoma Eatery Valley Bar + Bottle features wines from Moon Mountain AVA wineries alongside a fresh, vibrant spring menu celebrating the season's best ingredients.
- **World premiere of *Fork in the Road***
- **US Premiere of *Winter of the Crow*** (Cohen Media)
- **Special Screenings:** Alfred Hitchcock's thriller ***Vertigo*** starring Kim Novak and James Stewart, presented in conjunction with the documentary ***Kim Novak's Vertigo***. 4K Restoration of John Woo's ***The Killers*** (Hong Kong)
- Other notable films include: ***I Swear*** (Sony Pictures Classics), ***Cielo*** (Juno Films), ***Mile End Kicks*** (Sumerian Pictures), and ***The Last One for the Road*** (Music Box Films).

PANELS

SIFF's industry conversations include “**The Art of Casting: The Craft Behind the New Oscar,**” exploring the Academy's newest category and the evolving role of casting in shaping performances and careers including director/writers Barry Jenkins (*Moonlight*), Lulu Wang (*The Farewell*), and casting directors Kerry Barden, and David Ruben; “**The Power of Storytelling,**” a discussion with documentary filmmakers on impact-driven filmmaking and audience engagement; “**Film Veterans Tell All,**” featuring Academy members and industry insiders offering candid perspectives on today's film landscape; and “**Food, Film & the Future,**” examining how cinema influences conversations around sustainability, culture, and the global food system.

CELEBRATING CINEMATIC EXCELLENCE

PROGRAMMING TEAM: The five-day festival is curated by Artistic Director Carl Spence, along with senior programmers Amanda Salazar and Ken Jacobson and shorts programmer Oscar Arce Naranjo.

FESTIVAL JURORS: This year's jury includes esteemed international industry professionals, including Greg Ellwood (*The Playlist*), Chris Gardner (The Hollywood Reporter), Max Gerschwind (CAA), Kirsten Schaffer (Women in Film), Kerry Barden (Casting Director), Ania Trzebiatowska (Sundance), Nick Price (Reel South), and many more. Their expertise ensures that SIFF remains a platform for groundbreaking storytelling and artistic innovation.

FEATURE COMPETITION FILMS: *Ky Nam Inn* (Director: Leon Le/Vietnam), *Maspalomas* (Director: Jose Mari Goenaga, Aitor Arregi/Spain), *My Tennis Maestro* (Director: Andrea di Stefano/Italy), *Orphan* (Director: László Nemes/Hungary), *Silent Rebellion* (Director: Marie-Elsa Sgualdo/Switzerland), *The Soundman* (Director: Frank Van Passel/Belgium), *Sundays* (Director: Alauda Ruiz de Azúa/Spain), *Vainilla* (Director: Mayra Hermosillo/Mexico)

DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION FILMS: *The Art of Adventure* (Director: Alison Reid/Canada), *Barbara Forever* (Director: Brydie O'Connor/USA), *The Big Cheese* (Director: Sara Joe Wolansky/USA), *Fork in the Road* (Director: Jonathan Nastasi, Vivian Sorenson/USA), *Jane Elliott Against the World* (Director: Judd Ehrlich/USA), *Kim Novak's Vertigo* (Director: Alexandre O. Philippe/USA), *Newport and the Great Folk Dream* (Director: Robert Gordon/USA), *Raoul's, A New York Story* (Director: Greg Olliver, Karim Raoul/USA), *State of Firsts* (Director: Chase Joynt/USA).

[Click here for the complete line-up with press materials, images, and film descriptions](#)
[Festival Trailer](#)

Passes are on Sale Now, Single Tickets go on Sale March 11th.

Festival passes, tickets, and more information at sonomafilmfest.org.

About Sonoma International Film Festival

The Sonoma International Film Festival is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to promoting the best in independent film and filmmakers from around the world, inspiring savvy film lovers, and introducing the power of film to student filmmakers. Blending a program of international film, food, wine, and fun, SIFF hosts its annual festival each March, as well as year-round events and special screenings. Ginny Krieger is the Executive Director, Carl Spence is the Artistic Director, and Dr. Kevin W. McNeely is the Director Emeritus.

SIFF's signature initiative--the Media Arts Program started at Sonoma Valley High School in 2002--introduces students to film by providing ongoing support so they may explore their creative pursuits. SIFF has given more than \$800,000 in resources to the program since its inception, with hundreds of students graduating through the program to date, in addition to providing college scholarships annually to deserving students.

The Sonoma International Film Festival is supported year-round by Sustaining Sponsor: KHR McNeely Family Foundation
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