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**U.S. PREMIERE OF “WIDOW CLICQUOT” TO OPEN  
2024 SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL MARCH 20-24, 2024**

*BEAU BRIDGES TO RECEIVE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD*

*CHEF SUSAN FENIGER TO RECEIVE CULINARY EXCELLENCE AWARD*

*ETHAN HAWKE’S “WILDCAT” IS THE CENTERPIECE FILM*

*LUC BESSON’S “DOGMAN” ON CLOSING NIGHT*

*WORLD PREMIERE OF “EXTREMELY UNIQUE DYNAMIC” IS GAY-LA SPOTLIGHT WITH  
POST-FILM PARTY HOSTED BY JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL*

Sonoma, CA March 1, 2024—Top film and industry notables are converging in Sonoma for the 27th annual Sonoma International Film Festival (SIFF) March 20-24, 2024 featuring 43 narrative features, 16 documentary features, and 48 short films representing more than 25 countries.

“Building off last year’s festival, the highest attended in the history of SIFF, we are excited to welcome veteran actor Beau Bridges, and provide a showcase for premieres and extraordinary films from notable filmmakers and talent,” said Carl Spence, SIFF Artistic Director. “The Sonoma International Film Festival exemplifies why film festivals are essential to introduce appreciative audiences to the best and brightest from around the world. By creating unique, in-person experiences—through our films, parties, special events, and community initiatives—we bring people together; we ask them to look closer.”

“Each year we showcase the cinematic and culinary worlds to Sonoma over five fun-filled days, but it’s in showcasing Sonoma, and this place and our community, to the world that we really shine,” said Ginny Krieger, SIFF Executive Director.

**FILM HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Opening Night is the U.S. Premiere of Thomas Napper’s **Widow Clicquot** starring Haley Bennett.
- The Centerpiece Film is Ethan Hawke’s **Wildcat** starring Maya Hawke.

- The Closing Night Film is Luc Besson's **Dogman** starring Caleb Landry Jones.
- The World Premiere of **Extremely Unique Dynamic** directed by Harrison Xu, Ivan Leung, and Katherine Dudas is the Gay-La Spotlight Film, with a party to follow hosted by actor, director, screenwriter, producer, and musician John Cameron Mitchell (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*).
- A Closing Night Special Presentation of Pablo Berger's Academy Award®-nominated film **Robot Dreams** is at Sonoma Academy's brand new state-of-the-art Community Performing Arts Center in Santa Rosa, supported in part by the KHR McNeely Family Fund, featuring Dolby Atmos and Meyer Sound with a 4k Christie Laser Projector.
- The Bay Area premieres of star-studded films include Thea Sharrock's **Wicked Little Letters** (Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley); Tony Goldwyn's **Ezra** (Bobby Cannavale, Rose Byrne, Robert De Niro, Vera Farmiga, Whoopi Goldberg, Rainn Wilson); Daina O. Pusic's **Tuesday** (Julia Louis-Dreyfus), Gilles Legardinier's **Mr. Blake At Your Service** (John Malkovich, Fanny Ardant); Giorgio Diritti's **Lubo** (Franz Rogowski); Bertrand Bonello's **The Beast** (Léa Seydoux, George MacKay); Bob Byington's **Lousy Carter** (David Krumholtz, Olivia Thirlby); and Stephen Soucy's **Merchant Ivory** (Emma Thompson, Helena Bonham Carter, Vanessa Redgrave, Hugh Grant), amongst others.

#### TRIBUTES:

Award-winning actor Beau Bridges will be presented the SIFF Lifetime Achievement Award. As part of the tribute to the actor and his illustrious 40-year film and television career, Beau Bridges will participate in an on-stage conversation followed by a 35th Anniversary screening of **The Fabulous Baker Boys**.

Award-winning chef Susan Feniger will be presented with the Culinary Excellence Award at a special dinner and screening event featuring the Bay Area Premiere of director Liz Lachman's **Susan Feniger. Forked** and a multi-course dinner curated by Feniger.

#### SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS:

- A live episode of the highly successful "The Film That Blew My Mind" podcast, with co-hosts Sundance Director Emeritus John Cooper and Tabitha Jackson, will feature guest John Cameron Mitchell.
- SIFF Food Insecurity Awareness Initiative: Festivalgoers are encouraged to make cash donations throughout the festival, with a portion of matched funds from SIFF and PG&E going to the Redwood Empire Food Bank and the California Restaurant Alliance-Restaurant Cares. Local restaurants will provide small bites and beverages at a free community event. Collections of non-perishable food items for F.I.S.H., collected at the SIFF Box Office, are also encouraged.
- SIFF's ongoing commitment to the Sonoma Valley High School Media Arts Program, started in 1997 by Dr. Kevin W. McNeely and supported annually by SIFF, has expanded to include full college scholarships to deserving Sonoma Valley students to pursue studies in the creative arts at Sonoma State University. Four students were selected for the KHR McNeely Family Fund Scholarships, including Hannah Alvarez (Pivot Charter School), and Issac Calderon, Richie Cross, and Adriel Velázquez (Sonoma Valley High School).

- The festival will celebrate the 2024 films and visiting talent with lively parties at local wineries and hotspots including Sebastiani Vineyards & Winery, Buena Vista Winery, Hopmonk Tavern, and The Lodge at Sonoma.

### **PROGRAMMING TEAM & FESTIVAL JURORS:**

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

This year's jury includes Jason Hellerstein (Sideshow), Rosa Bosch (film impresario), Julie Huntsinger (Telluride Film Festival), Tyler Coates (Hollywood Reporter), Ilda Santiago (Rio Film Festival), Thelma Adams, Matthew Carey (Deadline), Rob Williams (Participant Productions), Jannette Napoli (ITVS), and Tabitha Jackson.

### **ABOUT THE HIGHLIGHTED FILMS:**

**Widow Clicquot** is based on the true story of the "Grande Dame of Champagne," otherwise known as Veuve Clicquot, who against all odds advanced her late husband's techniques to create the recipe for modern-day champagne. A love story of sparkling wine and female determination! (United Kingdom/89min)

Ethan Hawke directs Maya Hawke ("Stranger Things"), Laura Linney, Steve Zahn, Alessandro Nivola, Vincent D'Onofrio, and others in **Wildcat**, a literary biopic about Southern Gothic writer Flannery O'Connor. By cleverly collaging excerpts from her short fiction, personal letters, and journals, he illuminates her brilliance piece by piece, bone by bone. (USA/108min)

**Dogman** is a high-octane action film by Luc Besson (*The Fifth Element*) that tells the incredible story of Doug (Caleb Landry Jones), who escapes his traumatic childhood with a psychic connection to dogs, the safety of a drag cabaret troupe and the desire to combat injustice in the human world with his gang of loyal friends. (France/114min)

In this deliriously silly stoner comedy, **Extremely Unique Dynamic**, two friends decide to make a movie about making a movie that stars two friends making a movie. When cameras start rolling, secrets and half-truths about their friendship, crushes, sexuality, and every other imaginable insecurity come out. (USA/73min)

**Susan Feniger. Forked** is a verite documentary film following award-winning celebrity chef Susan Feniger on her first solo restaurant, her passionate struggle and quest to bring global street food under one roof in the form of a new Los Angeles restaurant: Street. Shot by her longtime filmmaker partner Liz Lachman, it's a story about starting over and about not if one fails...but how. (USA/92min)

**Robot Dreams** is Pablo Berger's music-filled story set in 80s NYC about the miracle of true friendship between a dog and a robot is highly entertaining for adults but suitable for all ages. Academy Award Nominee, Best Animated Feature. (Spain/96min).

[Click Here to see the complete line-up with press materials, photos, posters, and film descriptions.](#)

## **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 to date graduating through the program. The KHR McNeely Family Fund Scholarships at Sonoma State University started in 2023, provide deserving high school students with full college scholarships.

The Sonoma International Film Festival is supported year-round by Sustaining Sponsor KHR McNeely Family Fund, and Official Airline, Delta Air Lines. SIFF2024 Festival Premiere Sponsors include Chihuly Studio, Cogir Senior Living, Dolby, Gloria Ferrer, Jak W, Merrill Lynch, Northern California Public Media, the San Francisco Chronicle, and Sebastiani Vineyards & Winery.

For festival passes, tickets, and more information, visit [sonomafilmfest.org](http://sonomafilmfest.org).

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