

2023 SFFILM FESTIVAL

# PROGRAM GUIDE

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66<sup>TH</sup> SAN FRANCISCO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

APRIL 13-23, 2023  
TICKETS at SFFILM.ORG

SFFILM

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# 2023 SFFILM Festival Programs

## **Against the Tide**

Thursday, April 20 at 6 pm PT at CGV 3

Saturday, April 22 at 5:30 pm PT at BAMPFA

Sarvnik Kaur (India 2023, 97 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

As the Arabian Sea's fish population dwindles, two fishermen from Mumbai's Koli community endeavor to change their fortunes. United by a shared ambition, their friendship is tested when each man chooses different technology. While Rakesh adheres to ancient practices handed down through generations of ancestors, Ganesh seeks modern methods that in the short-term promise a bigger catch but contribute to overfishing, dooming both men's long-term prospects. Ultimately powerless against the raging waters and growing mountains of debt, Rakesh and Ganesh sway along the waves of life, trying their best to keep their heads above the water that threatens to engulf them. Bookending it all, amidst centuries-old songs of valor and courage, is the customary hum of fishing boats and their promise of hope. **Against the Tide** won a special jury prize for vérité filmmaking at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and is an SFFILM Documentary Film Fund recipient.

## **Animalia**

Thursday, April 20 at 8:30 pm PT at CGV 2

Sunday, April 23 at 8 pm PT at BAMPFA

Sofia Alaoui (France, Morocco, Qatar 2023, 90 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

In this wide-ranging debut, mysterious green apparitions above a remote Moroccan lake bring chaos to the world around pregnant Itto. Married into a wealthy family, she feels like an interloper in her in-laws' grand house but she is alone when the strange celestial event occurs. As army trucks rush in, Itto—determined to save her unborn child—embarks on a dangerous journey to reunite with her husband. **Animalia** encompasses multiple genres, including road-trip and sci-fi movies, while

also diving deeply into themes of faith and class, hitting all its notes with perfect pitch. As Itto, Oumaima Barid expertly reveals the character's resolve to digest the enigmas she encounters without letting them deter her from her path.

## **Community Screening: "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret."**

Sunday, April 23 at 12 pm PT at CGV 3

Kelly Fremon Craig (USA 2023, 105 min)

*Section: Narratives: USA*

Margaret Simon, the 11-year-old New Jersey tween experiencing the first pangs of adolescence comes to vivid life on the big screen in this fresh, funny adaptation of **Judy Blume's** classic 1970 novel. **Abby Ryder Fortson** gives a star-making performance as young Margaret, coping not only with the onset of puberty but also grappling with her religious identity. Writer/director **Kelly Fremon Craig (The Edge of Seventeen)**, faithfully captures the book's defining moments while also freshening the material with new touches. Brilliant in support of Fortson are **Rachel McAdams** and **Benny Safdie** as Margaret's loving, complicated parents, and a heartwarming and hilarious **Kathy Bates** as her grandmother Sylvia. Margaret's story of longing and self-discovery has resonated with generations of readers. With this luminous adaptation, she stands poised to repeat the feat and capture the hearts of filmgoers. **Are You There God? It's Me Margaret.** will be offered as a community screening and is free and open to the public. Attendees must RSVP for tickets at [sffilm.org](http://sffilm.org).

*Recommended for ages 10 and up.*

## **Bad Press**

Saturday, April 22 at 6 pm PT at CGV 3

Rebecca Landsberry-Baker, Joe Peeler (USA 2023, 98 min)

*Documentaries: USA*

Assaults on press freedom and independence make reporting challenging worldwide but for First Nations journalists, reporting the news is wildly complicated. Transparency and fact finding are not protected on sovereign tribal lands where the First Amendment does not apply and where local politics are intertwined with newspaper funding. The result is editorial oversight that makes it almost impossible to report on malfeasance. Enter Angel Ellis, a Mvskoke Media journalist in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, fighting for access and accountability in her community while her scrappy colleagues valiantly try to keep the newspaper afloat when press protections are repealed by the National Council. With humor and pathos, these



brave muckrakers risk it all to hold those in power accountable in this Sundance Special Jury Award-winning documentary. Expected guests: Director **Rebecca Landsberry-Baker**, Director **Joe Peeler**, Subject **Angel Ellis**.

## Being Mary Tyler Moore

Sunday, April 16 at 12:30 pm at CGV 3

James Adolphus (USA 2023, 120 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

“Who can turn the world on with her smile?” Those theme-song words describing **Mary Richards**, the TV news producer who broke sitcom ground as a strong, single, independent woman on **The Mary Tyler Moore Show** aptly encapsulate the eponymous actor who played her as **James Adolphus’s** documentary engagingly illustrates. Both a biography of Moore, who knew from the age of three that she was destined for show biz (it was that or jail, her father observed), and a summation of her brilliant career, the film offers an honest portrait of a sometimes-troubled personal life alongside a long string of professional triumphs beginning with her Emmy-winning work on **The Dick Van Dyke Show** (1961-66). Produced by **Lena Waithe**, **Being Mary Tyler Moore** is a dazzling look back at an incandescent personality. Expected guest: Director **James Adolphus**.

## La Bonga

Saturday, April 15 at 12:30 pm PT at CGV 3

Sebastián Pinzón Silva, Canela Reyes (Colombia, USA 2023, 77 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

With Colombia’s right-wing paramilitary forces closing in, the Afro-Colombian inhabitants of La Bonga fled their farming community, leaving the jungle to reclaim it. Sebastian Pinzón Silva and Canela Reyes’s lyrical debut navigates the sticky terrains of memory, history, and home as it documents the Bongueros’ return 20 years later to what was once their village. Guided by a strong matriarch, the erstwhile townspeople and their descendants navigate the wilderness, remembering the hamlet and reconstructing it. As the families prepare to celebrate this bittersweet homecoming, they fight being written off by history along with the all-engulfing ferocity of nature.

## Dreamin' Wild

Sunday, April 16 at 8:45 pm PT at CGV 3

Bill Pohlada (USA 2022, 110 min)

*Section: Narratives: USA*

Rediscovery is both a blessing and a curse in **Bill Pohlada's (Love and Mercy, Festival 2015)** new film, based on real events and starring **Casey Affleck** and **Beau Bridges**. Affleck plays singer-songwriter Don Emerson who, as a teenager with his brother Joe (**Walton Goggins**) and with funding from their father, made a pretty decent LP that sank without a trace. Thirty years later, when record label founder Matt Sullivan tracks the brothers down to their family farm and wants to reissue the record and plan a couple of live shows, it rekindles the siblings' ambitions and competitiveness. Affleck is riveting as the more talented brother who submerges his dreams and talent for a simpler life while **Beau Bridges** brings his unmistakable humanity to his role of Don Sr, a loving parent who makes necessary sacrifices to help his children shine. Expected guests: Director **Bill Pohlada**.

## Confessions of a Good Samaritan

Sunday, April 16 at 5:30 pm at CGV 2

Penny Lane (USA 2023, 105 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

Am I a good person? What does it mean to be a good person anyway? These are questions at the heart of what might be director **Penny Lane's (Nuts!, Festival 2016)** most strikingly personal feature to date. What begins with the filmmaker's decision to give a kidney to a stranger, a so-called "Good Samaritan" donation, becomes a search into the history of surgical medicine, kidney donation, and what drives altruism. At the intersection of these inquiries is Lane's own vulnerable introspection. As her surgery date approaches, she wavers between steadfastness and trepidation, wondering all the while both why anyone donates a kidney, and why no one donates a kidney. Infused with Lane's signature humor, **Confessions of a Good Samaritan** is an inspiring journey into the world of kidney donation. Expected guest: Director **Penny Lane**.

## A Tribute to Mary Harron + "Dalíland"

Friday, April 14 at 8:30 pm PT at CGV 3

Mary Harron (UK, USA 2022, 103 min)

US Premiere

*Section: Narratives: International*

A Canadian by birth and raised in London, Mary Harron was a journalist before she became a filmmaker, writing for **Punk**, where among her scoops was getting the first interview with The Sex Pistols for an American magazine. In time, she would become a presenter and director of the BBC arts series **The Late Show**. Her first feature, **I Shot Andy Warhol** (1996), was nominated for a Film Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature, and captured the zeitgeist of the 1960s and of the artist's legendary studio, The Factory. Her next film was equally striking, a stylish, edgy adaptation of Bret Easton Ellis' bestselling novel **American Psycho** (2000), followed by her glorious evocation of the pin-up era, **The Notorious Bettie Page** (2005). For television, she examined the life of a notorious model with the biopic **Anna Nicole** (2013) and directed the miniseries of **Alias Grace** (2017), an adaptation **Margaret Atwood's** novel exploring the life of a 19th-century murderess, penned by **Sarah Polley**, winner of the 2022 SFFILM Award for Storytelling. More recently, she explored the motivations of Manson Family members in **Charlie Says** (2018). She continues her empathetic, adventurous exploration of lives lived on the edge with **Daliland** (2022), turning her lens to the marriage of surrealist artist **Salvador Dali (Ben Kingsley)** and wife Gala (**Barbara Sukowa**). Join us as we pay tribute to **Mary Harron** with a conversation, followed by a screening of **Daliland**. Expected guests: Director **Mary Harron**, Producer **David Sacks**, Screenwriter **John C. Walsh**

## **Daliland**

Saturday, April 15 at 7:45 pm PT at BAMPFA

Mary Harron (UK, USA 2022, 103 min)

US Premiere

*Section: Narratives: International*

It's best to depict egomaniacs, even talented ones like **Salvador Dalí (Ben Kingsley)**, gloriously chewing scenery), through the eyes of someone in their orbit but not their headspace. Someone like art-school dropout James (**Christopher Briney**), a handsome young man working for an NYC gallery in the mid-'70s who is asked to deliver money to Dalí and his wife Gala (an imperious **Barbara Sukowa**) and is soon swept into their world of parties filled with beautiful people and copious substances. Director **Mary Harron** is the perfect director for this subject matter, with an unerring eye for period detail and novel ways of looking at real celebrities from various cultural zeitgeists. Newcomer Briney deftly portrays the wide-eyed, game-for-anything James while Kingsley and Sukowa lay bare the roots of an obsessive and dysfunctional marriage between two extraordinary narcissists.

## Daughter of Rage

Saturday, April 15 at 8:45 pm PT at CGV 3

Laura Baumeister (Nicaragua, Mexico, Netherlands, Germany, France, Norway, Spain 2022, 91 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

“If you want something, you have to fight for it,” 11-year-old Maria’s (**Ara Alenjandra Medal**) mother Lilibeth tells her in **Laura Baumeister’s** powerful debut. The pair eke out a living out selling items scavenged from the massive landfill abutting their shack, a unique bond tethering them to one another and an inner wildness. But when one of Lilibeth’s deals goes sideways during a time of social unrest, she leaves Maria in the care of strangers—little realizing how her parenting has resonated with her daughter who pushes against all obstacles in her determination to reunite with her mother. Through striking cinematography, poetic imagery, and Medal’s touching performance, **Daughter of Rage** follows María as she harnesses the power of her inventive mind in her quest to find some semblance of home. Expected guest: Director **Laura Baumeister**.

## The Deepest Breath

Saturday, April 15 at 3 pm PT at CGV 3

Laura McGann (UK, Ireland 2022, 108 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

Italian **Alessia Zecchini** is one of the best freedivers in the world, engaging in a breathtaking and perilous sport in which incredible athletes dive without the aid of breathing apparatuses. **Laura McGann’s** immersive documentary profiles Zecchini, who was drawn to freediving from a very young age, alongside Stephen Keenan, a wandering soul who eventually becomes a safety diver, offering first aid to freedivers like Alessia. Over the course of the film, friends, family members, and experts on the sport all comment on the adventurous spirits of the pair while hypnotic footage of Zecchini’s dives submerges the viewer in a sensorial underworld that demonstrates the allure of such an extreme endeavor. Expected guests: Director **Laura McGann**.

## Earth Mama

Friday, April 14 at 8 pm PT at BAMPFA

Saturday, April 15 at 6 pm PT at CGV 3

Savanah Leaf (USA 2023, 97 min)



*Section: Narratives: USA*

A single mother in Oakland navigates the foster care system while making a living at a family portrait studio in this intimate coming-of-age story. Based on lived experiences from SFFILM-supported writer-director **Savanah Leaf**, the film follows Gia (portrayed by local musician **Tia Nomore**) who warily sizes up her surroundings and would-be allies, as she prepares for another child. Lush cinematography, assured direction, and humorous performances infuse this film with a shimmering authenticity rarely seen in debuts. In this drama made predominantly with a Bay Area crew, preconceptions of women with children in foster care are carefully examined and discarded, as Leaf presents a tender, textured, and surprisingly funny portrayal of motherhood. Expected guest: Director **Savanah Leaf**.

## **Ernest & Celestine: A Trip to Gibberitia**

Sunday, April 23 at 10 am PT at CGV 2

Julien Chheng, Jean-Christophe Roger (France 2022, 80 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

Best friends Ernest the bear, and tiny mouse Celestine are back for another lively animated adventure based on **Gabrielle Vincent's** beloved children's books. In this captivating sequel to **Ernest & Celestine** (Festival 2013), Ernest's violin is broken, so the duo travel back to his homeland, Gibbertia, for the repair. The country Ernest remembers is an exotic place, home to the best musicians on earth, where joyous music fills the air. To his and Celestine's dismay, things have changed. Music has been banned! To Ernest and Celestine, a life without music is unthinkable, so they join forces with friends and a mysterious masked outlaw to bring music and happiness back to the land of bears.

*Recommended for ages 7 and up*

## **Mushka: Workshop with Andreas Deja**

Saturday, April 15 at 1:30 pm PT at The Walt Disney Family Museum

Andreas Deja (USA 2022, 28 min)

World Premiere

*Section: Talks + Workshops*

Disney legend **Andreas Deja** began perfecting his mastery of hand-drawn animation as a boy in Germany. At 10, he first applied to work at Disney, and began his legendary career at the studio at 23 with **The Black Cauldron** (1985). Since

then, with his immense talent with pencil and paper, he brought life to such iconic characters as Gaston, Jafar, Mickey Mouse, and Tigger. Always pushing himself and his craft, Andreas left Disney in 2011 to pursue personal projects. His animation blog, *Deja View*, receives millions of views and serves as an invaluable resource for aspiring animators. Now, as a first-time writer and director, Andreas presents **Mushka**, a beautiful and touching tale of a young girl raising a tiger cub in Russia. Andreas will also present behind-the-scenes artwork, answer questions, and lead the audience in a drawing activity with his latest creation. Expected guest: **Andreas Deja**.

Be sure to bring paper and pencils to draw along.

*Recommended for ages 6 and up.*

## **Fremont**

Saturday, April 22 at 3 pm PT at CGV 2

Sunday, April 23 at 3 pm PT at BAMPFA

Babak Jalali (USA 2023, 91 min)

*Section: Narratives: USA*

A former translator for the US military, Donya (**Anaita Wali Zada**) now lives among the Afghan diaspora who call the eponymous Bay Area suburb home and makes a living writing fortune cookie epigrams in **Babak Jalali's (Radio Dreams, Festival 2015)** wry, character-driven drama. Faced with hostility from neighbors who regard her as a traitor and plagued by insomnia, Donya struggles in her new homeland but she's game for exploration, even agreeing to a blind date in far-off Bakersfield. Newcomer Zada is pitch-perfect and receives excellent support from Gregg Turkington as a Jack London-obsessed psychiatrist and **Jeremy Allen White (Shameless, The Bear)** as a sweet-natured mechanic. Shot in luminous black and white, **Fremont** presents a delightfully droll slice of one woman's life. Expected guest: Director **Babak Jalali**.

## **The Gravity**

Saturday, April 22 at 9 pm PT at CGV 3

Cédric Ido (France 2022, 85 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

Something is a little off in a housing project in the Parisian suburbs. Up in the sky, the planets are clicking into alignment, while on earth, the forces of gravity make

taking steps feel like wading through molasses. No one knows what it means, least of all Daniel and his brother, Joshua. They're just trying to get by, resorting to selling drugs to make ends meet. Daniel dreams of leaving the projects once and for all, but his careful plans go awry as both life and celestial positions fracture. A new gang of teenage dealers are intent on making changes and imposing their will on the neighborhood by any means necessary. Grounded by the deep relationship depicted between the brothers and capped off with an explosive finale, director **Cédric Ido's** second feature is a bold entry in the sci-fi genre.

## Home Is a Hotel

Saturday, April 22 at 12:45 pm PT at CGV 3

Kevin Wong, Todd Sills, Kar Yin Tham (USA 2023, 92 min)

World Premiere

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

“You gotta build your whole life in a room,” says one of the protagonists of this memorable documentary focused on residents of San Francisco SROs or single room occupancy housing. Available to people with lower incomes or those trying to get off the streets, the buildings are frequently cramped, often noisy, and sometimes riddled with vermin. The film tellingly reveals inhabitants who are diverse and complicated and have a wide variety of needs that these residences and their staffs are often unable to meet. From a single mother trying to find her missing daughter to an elderly woman who is going blind and facing eviction, to the two ex-addicts co-parenting their son, the film gives voice to the broad range of people struggling to keep a roof over their heads in one of the wealthiest cities in the country. With poignancy and humor, **Home Is a Hotel** is a must watch for any Bay Area resident. Expected guests: Directors **Kevin Duncan Wong, Tod Sills, and Kar Yin Tham.**

## Hummingbirds

Sunday, April 16 at 8:30 pm PT at CGV 2

Estefanía “Beba” Contreras, Silvia Del Carmen Castaños (USA 2023, 78 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

During a stifling summer in Laredo, Texas, two adolescents stargaze from a car's rooftop, share worries that they could be deported, and fret over their futures while rebelling against present circumstances. Directors **Estefanía “Beba” Contreras** and **Silvia Del Carmen Castaños** spotlight their own lives, revealing the poetry and passion that fire young spirits in a world that wants to control their bodies and their citizenship. As their state moves towards draconian anti-abortion legislation,

Beba and Silvia fight back with their words and their Sharpie pens. Goofy and rebellious in equal amounts, the film tenderly centers this soulful friendship as the pair acknowledge their feelings for one another in poems, songs, and the headlong sense of adventure their bond brings to daily living. **Hummingbirds** is the recipient of an SFFILM Rainin Grant. Expected guests: Director **Estefanía “Beba” Contreras**, director **Silvia Del Carmen Castaños** Producer **Jillian Schlesinger**.

## **I Have Electric Dreams**

Saturday, April 22 at 3:30 pm PT at CGV 3

Sunday April 23 at 5:30 pm PT at BAMPFA

Valentina Maurel (Belgium, France, Costa Rica 2022, 100 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

Powered by dreamy cinematography, **I Have Electric Dreams** follows teenage Eva as she grapples with the emotions and realities of her parents’ split. She lives with her mother and younger sister but would rather reside with her estranged artist father. After much angst and rebellion, Eva gets her wish, only to be left largely unsupervised by her distant dad. Through her tumultuous interactions with her neglectful parent and a sexual relationship with one of his friends, Eva comes of age. Newcomer Daniela Marín Navarro makes an indelible debut with her complex portrayal of a young woman who learns many hard lessons on her journey to adulthood.

## **Closing Night: “I’m a Virgo” (Series)**

Sunday, April 23 at 6 pm PT at CGV 3

Sunday, April 23 at 7:30 pm PT at CGV 2

Boots Riley (USA 2023, 115 min)

*Section: Narratives: USA*

From visionary filmmaker Boots Riley (**Sorry to Bother You**, Festival 2018), **I’m A Virgo** is a darkly comedic, fantastical coming-of-age joyride about Cootie (Jharrel Jerome, **When They See Us**), a 13-foot-tall young Black man in Oakland, CA. Having grown up hidden away, passing time on a diet of comic books and TV shows, he escapes to experience the beauty and contradictions of the real world. He forms friendships, finds love, navigates awkward situations, and encounters his idol, the real-life superhero named The Hero, played by Walton Goggins (**The Hatefule Eight**, **The Righteous Gemstones**, and **Dreamin’ Wild**). **I’m A Virgo** is a mythical odyssey that questions the purpose of the mythical odyssey. Additional cast includes Brett Gray, Kara Young, Allius Barnes, Olivia Washington, Carmen

Ejogo, and Mike Epps. Riley will be in attendance at this special screening of the first four episodes of **I'm a Virgo** followed by a Q&A, presented by Prime Video.

## Invisible Beauty

Thursday, April 20 at 5:30 pm PT at CGV 2

Bethann Hardison, Frédéric Tcheng (USA 2022, 116 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

**Bethann Hardison** is the fashion icon and cultural force you didn't realize you already revered. As one of the first black supermodels and an outspoken activist, Hardison took the world by storm in the 1970s, sharing the catwalk with Iman, and mentoring **Naomi Campbell**, **Tyra Banks**, and **Tyson Beckford**. Never content with the status quo, Hardison pushed for dialogue on representation and discussed raced and diversity years before those issues were part of the cultural conversation. She continues to advocate for change today. Hardison teams up with veteran fashion documentarian **Frédéric Tcheng** (**Halston**, Festival 2019) to tell her astonishing life story with lively commentary and salacious behind-the-scenes observations of the fashion elite. This insightful portrait of a remarkable woman also includes commentary from **Whoopi Goldberg**, **Tracee Ellis Ross**, and **Zendaya**. Expected guests: Director **Bethann Hardison**, Director **Frédéric Tcheng**

## Joan Baez I Am a Noise

Tuesday, April 18 at 5 pm PT at Castro Theatre

Miri Navasky, Maeve O'Boyle, Karen O'Connor (USA, France, Ireland, UK, Turkey 2023, 109 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

In her 20s, **Joan Baez** was the undisputed queen of folk music, one of the first people to recognize **Bob Dylan's** talent and record his songs (the two would also make another kind of music together for a while), and someone who used her rising celebrity to fight for civil rights and justice and against the war in Vietnam. This entrancing documentary takes a long look back at Baez's wild ride while following the longtime San Mateo County resident on her 2018/2019 Fare Thee Well Tour. The final Baez standing after the deaths of her two sisters and her parents, Baez gives an account not just of her singular life of art and activism but also spins a complicated family story. Music, archival material, and oral history combine for a stunning glimpse into the voice of a generation. Thank you to Festival sponsor Crisanta de Guzman & Bryce Lee. Expected guests: **Joan Baez**, director **Miri Navasky**, director **Karen O'Connor**.

## **“The Kidnapping of the Bride” + “Balikbayan” + “No More Longing”**

Sunday, April 23 at 12:15 pm PT at CGV 2

*Section: Mid-Length Films*

With three stories of deeply intimate relationships that cross borders, this program is a multifaceted look at the joy and friction of migration. *Total Runtime 63 min.*

### **The Kidnapping of the Bride**

Sophia Mocerrea (Germany 2023, 31 min)

*Section: Mid-Length Films*

Luisa and Fred are getting married, and all of the in-laws are in town. Love and good humor gets them through the preparations for the ceremony that will bridge Luisa’s Argentinian family and Fred’s German kin, but they can’t escape all of their parents’ expectations—or the Teutonic tradition of the bride’s abduction from her own wedding. This winner of the 2023 Sundance Short Film Jury Award for International Fiction is both a warm and subtle look at the place of tradition.

### **Balikbayan**

Rebecca Rajadnya (USA 2022, 19 min)

*Section: Short Films*

The distance between Cecile and the Philippines grows further with each passing day. Expected guest: Director **Rebecca Rajadnya**.

### **No More Longing**

Connor Lee O’Keefe (USA 2022, 16 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A musician tries to find his voice after moving away from Brazil and starting testosterone. Expected guest: Director **Connor Lee O’Keefe**.

## **King Coal**

Saturday April 22 at 5:45 pm PT at CGV 2

Elaine Sheldon (USA 2022, 78 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*



Documentarian **Elaine McMillion Sheldon** grew up a coal miner's daughter, identifying with **Loretta Lynn's** classic country tune. As she distills this unique version of Americana, Sheldon returns to a community grappling with an industry on the brink of extinction as a major contributor to climate change. Blending vérité and dreamy narration in a film that emphasizes the Appalachian region's natural beauty, she weaves together a lyrical saga in which the place she grew up—and others like it—celebrate and seek meaning in a storied past. At a time when people the world over struggle with what comes next when the way of life that has sustained them grows obsolescent, Sheldon's emotional ode offers spirited hope that those fading cultures can survive and thrive once more. Expected guests: Director **Elaine McMillion Sheldon**, musician **Dominic "Shodekeh" Talifero**. *This screening is in celebration and recognition of Earth Day.*

## L'Immensità

Saturday, April 15 at 5:30 pm PT at BAMPFA

Sunday, April 16 at 6 pm PT at CGV 3

Emanuele Crialese (Italy, France 2022, 98 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

**Emanuele Crialese's** first film in 11 years is a personal portrait of two outsiders trying to escape the confines of their environment. **Penelope Cruz** commands the screen as Clara, an effusive but slightly manic mother raising three kids in 1970s Rome. She tries to make family life a party amid a loveless marriage while her eldest daughter, Adri, experiences gender dysphoria in an era where the term doesn't really exist. Cruz conveys desperation under Clara's playfulness as the character cries while applying makeup or mischievously slides beneath the table at a dinner party to frolic with her kids. Blending intimate scenes of family drama with surreal musical sequences and anchored by Cruz's multilayered performance, **L'Immensità** is a tremendous return from a director whose work SFFILM has championed from the very beginning.

## Love & Mathematics

Saturday, April 15 at 6:45 pm PT at CGV 2

Claudia Sainte-Luce (Mexico 2022, 82 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

Once a teen pop star and now in his mid-30s, Billy (**Roberto Quijano**) has crashed back down to earth, trapped in the velvet cage of a boring, upper-middle-class life. A stay-at-home dad, he spends his days lounging around and caring for his newborn

baby while his wife flourishes in a successful corporate career. Change arrives with new neighbor Monica, a mega-fan of Billy's boy band who had a huge crush on him back in the day. Through the pair's comedic and awkward exchanges, Billy regains his confidence and dives back into his music, starting with finishing his romantic ballad, "Love and Mathematics." Quijano won the best actor award for his performance at the Havana Film Festival New York.

## Luxembourg, Luxembourg

Friday, April 14 at 9 pm PT at CGV 2

Sunday, April 16 at 7 pm PT at BAMPFA

Antonio Lukich (Ukraine 2022, 106 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

With great narrative brio, director **Antonio Lukich** tells the story of twin brothers, living in central Ukraine, who go on a road trip to find their Yugoslavian father who is rumored to be in Luxembourg. As with most great road movies, the preamble and the journey are more important than the destination as Kolya and Vasya are shown as troublemaking kids who eventually become, respectively, a bus driver and a cop. When darkly funny circumstances find them both at loose ends, they embark on the search for their dad to hopefully get some answers as to why their lives lack meaning and purpose. Lukich has crafted a rollicking and engaging film with a melancholic soul that traverses as much emotional terrain as geographical.

## Mariupolis 2

Friday, April 14 at 6:15 pm PT at CGV 2

Mantas Kvedaravičius (Lithuania, France, Germany 2022, 112 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

Seeds of hope thrive amidst great tragedy in this visually remarkable documentary. Shot in March 2022, only weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the film takes place inside and on the grounds of the titular city's Christian Baptist Evangelical Church. From a woman making soup in the church's backyard to men sweeping debris from the parking lot to the constant noise of shelling and the rising smoke of multiple fires, this extraordinary record reveals, without comment or voiceover, citizens valiantly trying to survive the daily terrors of war. That sense of tragedy and hope marks the story of the film itself: Russian soldiers captured and killed director **Mantas Kvedaravičius**, a Lithuanian filmmaker and anthropologist, in April 2022, leaving his partner **Hanna Bilbrova** to complete this vital account of a city (and country) besieged. Kvedaravičius's tenderly framed

moments of humanity during an unfolding global crisis gain fresh poignancy a year into the war.

## Martinez

Friday, April 21 at 7 pm PT at BAMPFA

Sunday, April 23 at 3 pm PT at CGV 3

Lorena Padilla (Mexico 2023, 93 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

In this satirical take on workplace culture, human resources informs elderly employee Martinez (**Francisco Reyes, A Fantastic Woman**) that it is time for him to retire—but first he must train his replacement. To add to his troubles, his next-door neighbor passes away, bequeathing him her diary along with other personal items. A Chilean who has lived in Mexico for 40 years, Martinez befriends the young man taking his job, who inspires him to explore life outside himself. As he rummages through his neighbor's things, Martinez examines his existence and begins to realize that perhaps the end of his career is a new beginning, leading to reinvigoration and joy. Expected guest: Director **Lorena Padilla**.

## Mel Novikoff Award: Firelight Media + “The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution”

Saturday, April 15 at 3:15 pm PT at CGV 2

Stanley Nelson (USA 2015, 116 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

**Stanley Nelson** charts the Black Panther Party's meteoric rise in the 1960s and its disintegration several years later. Fed up with racial discrimination, poverty, and police brutality, Oakland's urban Black youth were ready for radical change. For them, the BPP was the vehicle. Nelson's film offers candid accounts by lesser known rank-and-file members—many of them women—who did the Black Panthers' daily work. Packed with anecdotes and new revelations, the documentary captures the excitement of a time filled with idealism, internationalism, and impatience. Beyond explicating the party's compelling political program, archival footage also reveals the members' swaggering image and seductive style. With police brutality, the militarization of police departments, and government surveillance once again at the forefront of the American conversation, **The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution** remains profoundly resonant. -- Cornelius Moore, Festival 2015

## **MEL NOVIKOFF AWARD**

For over 30 years, the SFFILM Mel Novikoff Award has been given to an individual or institution whose work has enhanced the film-going public's appreciation of world cinema. Award-winning filmmakers **Stanley Nelson** and **Marcia Smith** founded Firelight Media in 1998 as a nonprofit documentary production company with a focus on telling stories seldom broached in mainstream media. Ten years later, the company adjusted its focus to concentrate on backing filmmakers of color, while Nelson led a new, for-profit documentary production house, Firelight Films. With labs, fellowships, and film funds, Firelight Media supports artists around the world. Their cohort includes 2022-2024 Firelight Documentary Fellows **Silvia Del Carmen Castaños** and **Estefanía "Beba" Contreras**, whose debut feature, **Hummingbirds**, screens at this year's Festival. Join SFFILM as the Novikoff Award returns to the festival and we celebrate Firelight Media for their enormous impact upon the independent film community. A conversation with Smith and Nelson will be followed by a screening of Nelson's **The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution** (Festival 2015). Expected guests: **Stanley Nelson, Marcia Smith**, moderator **Amber Love**

## **Mel Novikoff Committe**

- John Cooper - Director Emeritus, Sundance Film Festival
- A-Lan Holt - Artist & Arts leader; Director at the Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University
- Gary Meyer - Editor, Eat Drink Films; co-found Landmark Theatres; former co-director of the Telluride Film Festival
- Susan Oxtoby - Director of Film and Senior Film Curator at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
- Janis Plotkin - Producer; Programmer; co-founder and former co-director, San Francisco Jewish Film Festival
- Rodrigo Reyes - Filmmaker; BAVC MediaMaker Fellowship Co-Director
- Jessie Fairbanks - SFFILM Director of Programming
- Rod Armstrong - SFFILM Associate Director of Programming

## **Members Screening**

Saturday, April 22 at 10 am PT at CGV 3

Now taking RSVPs for our members-only surprise screening at the 66th SFFILM Festival. Join us for a powerhouse drama starring a beloved international actress. The film's title will be announced on stage the morning of the screening. Hope to see you there!

## Milisuthando

Friday, April 21 at 8:45 pm PT at CGV 3

Saturday, April 22 at 2:30 pm PT at BAMPFA

Milisuthando Bongela (South Africa, Colombia 2023, 128 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

Director **Milisuthando Bongela** grew up in South Africa during apartheid unaware that the country's racist segregation policy existed. She was born in Transkei, a state formed for Black people in 1976. When apartheid ended in 1994, Transkei dissolved, leading Bongela to a reckoning with her place in society. Using striking archival and vérité footage of her family along with deeply personal interviews, Bongela bravely constructs this personal essay about what it meant to grow up in Transkei during apartheid and her continuing process of coming to terms with the aftermath. In her poetic examination of her relationships with her friends, family, and even the film's crew, she invites us into a realm of necessary questions for which there are no easy answers. Expected guest: Director **Milisuthando Bongela**.

## My Name Is Alfred Hitchcock

Friday, April 21 at 4 pm PT at BAMPFA

Mark Cousins (UK 2022, 120 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

**Mark Cousins** dives into the oeuvre of the Master of Suspense in this entrancing film in which the long-dead **Alfred Hitchcock** delivers from beyond the grave a lively lecture on his work. Actor **Alistair McGowan** masterfully embodies that famous voice but it is Cousins' words that really nail the impression. Whether explaining the importance of camera movement, delighting in **Strangers on a Train's** runaway carousel climax, or taking the measure of **James Stewart's** desire for **Grace Kelly** in **Rear Window**, Cousins reveals a work of deep scholarship yet one that is often humorous and playful. Populated by clips from Hitchcock's entire career, from his early English period to his final picture, the San Francisco-shot **Family Plot**, **My Name Is Alfred Hitchcock** amuses and educates as it celebrates the auteur and his films. Expected guest: Director **Mark Cousins**.

## **“1000% Me: Growing Up Mixed” + “Creating Things” + “Southern Afternoon”**

Saturday, April 22 at 12 pm PT at BAMPFA

*Section: Mid-Length Films*

### **1000% Me: Growing Up Mixed**

W. Kamau Bell (USA 2023, 59 min)

*Section: Mid-Length Films*

Playful and enormously charming, **W. Kamau Bell's** latest work profiles the joys and struggles of children growing up mixed-race. Beginning with his own family, Bell speaks with kids and parents throughout the Bay Area as they illuminate the unique experience of defining themselves in a world that seems to prefer hard lines and neat categories. Tender but never shying away from hard questions, **1000% Me: Growing Up Mixed** is a timely exploration of identity and belonging that challenges our assumptions. Total Runtime 86 min

*Recommended for ages 7 and up*

### **Creating Things**

Bryan Simpson, Taylor Simpson (USA 2022, 11 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Through their father's art and a long-lost interview, two brothers take stock of his legacy. Expected guests: Director **Bryan Simpson**, director **Taylor Simpson**.

### **Southern Afternoon**

Tian Lan (China 2022, 16 min)

North American Premiere

*Section: Short Films*

A Uyghur father suspects his daughter has received a love-letter but faces a language barrier. Expected guests: Director **Tian Lan**.

## **Centerpiece: “Past Lives”**

Tuesday, April 18 at 8 pm PT at Castro Theatre

Celine Song (USA, South Korea 2023, 106 min)

*Section: Narratives: USA*



Playwright **Celine Song** makes a masterful leap to film with this tenderly wrought relationship drama revolving around long-separated childhood friends' attempts to define their unusual connection over two reunions set 12 years apart. Drawing from her own life, Song steers the film seamlessly through time and space, exploring the interiority of her characters while confidently unpacking the decisions that determine who they are and who they might have been. Visual rhythms established in the opening prologue immediately inform the viewer of our place in this story. We are here to bear witness and make assumptions, and Song is here to subvert those expectations. Debuting to critical acclaim at Sundance and Berlin, this romantic journey is a dreamy recollection of heartache and reconciliation. Thank you to Festival sponsor Dave Liu & Lauren Wu. Expected guests: Director **Celine Song**, actor **Greta Lee**.

## **Peafowl**

Saturday, April 15 at 2:30 pm PT at BAMPFA

Saturday, April 22 at 8:30 pm PT at CGV 2

Byun Sung-bin (South Korea 2022, 114 min)

North American Premiere

*Section: Narratives: International*

After the death of her father, Myung makes a pilgrimage to her hometown to lead her father's funeral ritual, decades after she left in the face of family and community transphobia. Now a professional Waack dancer, Myung seeks to use her coming inheritance to fund her transition. As part of her homecoming, Myung helps her cousin come out and contend with his homophobic parents. A masterfully shot debut feature, **Peafowl** follows Myung as she confronts her relationship with her family and finds her personal style of dancing. Expected guest: Director **Byun Sung-bin**.

## **Persistence of Vision Award: Mark Cousins + "The March on Rome" + "My Name Is Alfred Hitchcock"**

Thursday, April 20 at 7 pm PT at BAMPFA

Mark Cousins (Italy 2022, 98 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

### **The March on Rome**

Aiming for a coup, fascist Black Shirts marched from Naples to Rome in 1922, the demonstration leading to the ascension of Benito Mussolini as Italy's dictator. **Mark**

**Cousins** explores this pivotal moment that presaged worldwide horrors to come in this commanding documentary that weaves together world and cinema history. Actor Alba Rohrwacher appears as a witness to Il Duce's regime but most of the film is culled from archival footage. Cousins' centerpiece is Umberto Paradisi's record of the march, **A Noi!**, propaganda the filmmaker dissects, exposing a foundational myth of Italian fascism and demonstrating the power of lies to alter history. With modern black shirts on the rise, Cousins masterfully connects the past to the present in a film that makes manifest the adage that those ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it. This film is screening as part of the Persistence of Vision Award, dedicated to Tom Luddy, and awarded to Mark Cousins. Expected Guest: Director **Mark Cousins**.

### **Persistence of Vision Award**

Documentary filmmaker and writer Mark Cousins has made features about the writer **D.H. Lawrence (6 Desires: D.H. Lawrence and Sardinia)**, his hometown (**My Belfast**), and the bombing of Hiroshima (**Atomic: Living in Dread and Promise**). But it is in his work devoted to cinema that he has made his biggest impact. He is the director of the 15-hour documentary **The Story of Film: An Odyssey**; its sequel, **The Story of Film: A New Generation**; **The Eyes of Orson Welles**; **The Storms of Jeremy Thomas**, about the Oscar®-winning producer; and many other works that display his vast knowledge of film. Among this year's Festival offerings is his witty survey of the work of the Master of Suspense, **My Name Is Alfred Hitchcock**. We dedicate this year's POV presentation to the late Tom Luddy, whom Cousins calls "one of the most influential film people of the second half of the 20th century." The POV presentation, dedicated to Tom Luddy, includes **Mark Cousins** in conversation, followed by a screening of **The March on Rome. My Name Is Alfred Hitchcock** will screen the day after.

## **Sloan Science on Screen: "The Pod Generation"**

Wednesday, April 19 at 7:30 pm PT at Dolby Cinema

Sophie Barthes (Belgium, France 2022, 109 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

Rachel (**Emilia Clarke**) and Alvy (**Chiwetel Ejiofor**) live a comfortable lifestyle in New York City in this satiric blend of sci-fi and social commentary set in the near future. While Rachel has a corporate job at a company that makes AI assistants, Alvy works from their upscale apartment studying plants as a botanist. The couple want to have a child but pregnancy might impede Rachel's prospects for promotion. Her employer has a solution to the dilemma in a new biotech breakthrough, a portable artificial womb in which the fetus can incubate. Experiencing impending parenthood at a remove tests the relationship between husband and wife as well as

their connection to their “pod baby.” Writer/director Sophie Barthes presents a striking, darkly funny critique of the effects of capitalism and technology on the family. Expected guest: Director **Sophia Barthes**, moderator **Glenn Kiser**.

## Rally

Friday, April 21 at 5:30 pm PT at CGV 3

Sunday, April 23 at 12 pm PT at BAMPFA

Rooth Tang (USA 2023, 101 min)

World Premiere

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

A divisive character who dedicated her life to improving conditions in her community, **Rose Pak** was San Francisco’s atypical kingmaker. An immigrant from China, she started as a journalist and activist but found her greatest success as a controversial power broker who collaborated with Mayors **Willie Brown**, **Gavin Newsom**, and **Ed Lee**. She fought against the closure of the Embarcadero Freeway, a vital link to Chinatown, after the Loma Prieta earthquake, but claimed victory in her fight for the building of the city’s Central Subway, her crowning achievement. **Rooth Tang** unpacks and holds up to the light the work of a woman who worked tirelessly to bring Chinese-American issues to the forefront of discourse in this patient and probing profile of a Bay Area mover and shaker. Expected guest: Director **Rooth Tang**.

## Shorts 1: Generations

Friday, April 21 at 5:45 pm PT at CGV 2

*Section: Short Films*

This collection of shorts explores the enduring impact of family and the complex bonds between generations, portraying the transformative nature of our relationships and the roles they play in shaping our identity. Depicting different cultures, each story is a unique exploration of love, loss, and legacy. From a daughter's quest for her mother's history, to a mother's struggle to break a cycle of trauma, to a heartfelt tribute to grandmothers, these films weave a tapestry of wisdom, strength, and resilience, reminding us of the lasting connections that bind us together across all ages. Total Runtime 100 min

### Now I'm in the Kitchen

Yana Pan (USA, China 2022, 5 min)

US Premiere

*Section: Short Films*

Filmmaker Yana Pan reflects on her mother and her independence while cooking her favorite dish. Expected guest: Director **Yana Pan**.

### **Nǎi NAI & WàI PÓ (Grandma & Grandma)**

Sean Wang (USA 2023, 17 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Director Sean Wang's ode to his two colorful grandmas is a captivating and bittersweet reflection of life. Expected guest: Director **Sean Wang**.

### **Still Waters**

Aurora Brachman (USA 2021, 12 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A daughter's quest for answers about her mother's past unearths a memory with a lasting impact. Expected guest: Director **Aurora Brachman**.

### **Mancha**

Nicole Mejia (USA 2022, 15 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A mother seeks to protect her daughter from the stain that curses her family's women. Expected guest: Director **Nicole Mejia**.

### **Carrion**

Yvonne Zhang (USA 2022, 22 min)

*Section: Short Films*

In the face of a mother's grief, the fear of loss haunts her little girl.

### **The melting creatures**

Diego Céspedes (France, Chile 2022, 17 min)

*Section: Short Films*

In a secluded community hiding from the sun, a trans woman and her daughter visit her ex-lover.

### **Rest Stop**

Crystal Kayiza (USA 2022, 12 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A young Ugandan-American girl embarks on a soul-stirring bus ride with her immigrant mother.

## Shorts 2: Traditions

Thursday, April 20 at 8:45 pm PT at CGV 3

*Section: Short Films*

Arising from the waves of the world's waters and the depths of the earth—sometimes accompanied by the distant chirping of birds—come tales intertwined for generations, exploring lives and defying limitations of time and space. These short films tell stories that are ancient and new, acquainting us with people and places that teach us to look around and dig deeper into our own times. These works unearth, over and again, community, joy, knowledge, kinship, and love—all things that are old but shouldn't die. Total Runtime 102 min

### **By Water**

Iyabo Kwayana (USA, Singapore 2022, 12 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A tender story of siblings lies buried within a pile of voicemail messages. Expected guest: Director **Iyabo Kwayana**.

### **Sèt Lam**

Vincent Fontano (France 2022, 23 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A fisherman dances with death in this visually arresting, dreamlike story shot on Réunion Island.

### **After We're Gone**

Ima Iduozee (Finland 2022, 10 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Somewhere between truth and fantasy, the past and future come together to tell the story of the people of Africa. Expected guest: Director **Ima Iduozee**.

### **I Am Home**

Kymon Greyhorse (USA 2021, 3 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A retelling of the eternal tale of the ties that bind us all together. Expected guest: Director **Kymon Greyhorse**.

### **Addresses**

María Luisa Santos, Carlo Nasisse (Costa Rica 2022, 14 min)

*Section: Short Films*

In a city with no street addresses, a deep dive into the history of memory and place.

**Cloistered**

Catherine Finsness (USA 2022, 22 min)

World Premiere

*Section: Short Films*

This focus on a New Jersey religious community undoes the stereotypes we hold of nuns. Expected guest: Director **Catherine Finsness**.

**Birdsong**

Sparsh Ahuja, Omi Zola Gupta (UK, Laos 2022, 18 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A meditation on the act of listening and perceiving, guided by the vanishing Hmong tradition of whistling. Expected guest: Director **Omi Gupta**.

**Shorts 3: The Body**

Sunday, April 16 at 12 pm PT at CGV 2

*Section: Short Films*

Bear witness to the human body as a cinematic focal point in five diverse stories. Each tale demonstrates the unshakable potential of our bodies, and all the beauty and madness that they can contain. The body is an intimate place, bound not by one identity. It is an instrument for poetry, its language spoken profoundly through gliding hands. Flowing through water and coalescing with nature, captured by those who can see its true sacredness. Real and unreal, the flesh can suit us as we see fit but devour who we really are beneath our skins. And in different forms it can bring varied meanings to the same words. These bodies create stories told with the power unique to cinema. Total Runtime 89 min

**Persona**

Sujin Moon (South Korea, 7 min)

*Section: Short Films*

The skin she lives in begins to consume her true self.

**Maria Schneider, 1983**

Elizabeth Subrin (France 2022, 25 min)



*Section: Short Films*

Three actors portray **Last Tango in Paris** star Maria Schneider in this recreation of a 1983 interview.

**How to Carry Water**

Sasha Wortzel (USA 2022, 16 min)

North American Premiere

*Section: Short Films*

The boundless beauty of bodies in water, seen through the lens of Shoog McDaniel.

**And Then I Was Here**

Alex Stergiou (USA 2022, 13 min)

*Section: Short Films*

The intimate final days of pregnancy and birth of a child to a genderqueer parent. Expected guest: Director **Alex Stergiou**

**Regard Silence**

*Section: Short Films*

*Santiago Zermeño (Mexico 2022, 29 min)*

*North American Premiere*

Spellbinding stories and poetry unfold through the fluid movements of Mexican Sign Language.

**Shorts 4: Family Films**

Saturday, April 15 at 10 am PT at CGV 3

*Section: Short Films*

Exciting possibilities burst forth on our festival screen as this lively collection of shorts thrillingly demonstrates the unique power of cinema. A flock of rose-colored aquatic avians disrupts the military precision of a massive warship while an adventurous arachnid dreams of a lunar destination just out of web's reach. A young sapling soaks up the wisdom passed on from the rustling leaves of its wise neighbor as lush cinematography captures Ecuador's flora and fauna and the cozy streets of suburbia. Collected from many corners of the world, these true, not-so-true, and animated stories are sure to inspire laughter, curiosity, tears, and awe in the youngest filmgoers. Total Runtime 70 min

*Recommended for ages 5 and up.*

## **New Moon**

Jeff Le Bars, Jérémie Balais (France, USA 2022, 12 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A surrealist night shared by a mother and son filled with love, inspiration, and Aretha Franklin.

## **Pete**

Bret Parker (USA 2022, 7 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A true story about gender identity, Little League Baseball, and people who accept change.

## **The Wind and the Trees**

Todd Stewart (Canada 2022, 9 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Deep in the boreal forest, a mature pine tree and a seedling begin a conversation.

## **Kintsugi**

Cleto Acosta-McKillop (USA 2022, 8 min)

*Section: Short Films*

When a flashy neighbor moves next door, a restaurant's lucky cat is faced with insecurities.

## **El Moño**

Luis Fernando (USA 2022, 9 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Andrea learns of generational family magic that helps her find lost objects in unexpected ways.

## **Swing to the Moon**

Marie Bordessoule, Adriana Bouissie, Nadine De Boer, Elisa Drique, Chloé Lauzu, Vincent Levrero, Solenne Moreau (France 2022, 6 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Living in the forest, a spider will do anything to reach her lunar dream.

### **With a Wool Ball**

Belén Ricardes (Argentina 2021, 5 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Charming stop-motion musical of an Argentinian winter full of ponchos, animal friends, and warm stories.

### **Dipsas Speaks**

Craig Leon (Ecuador 2022, 6 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Wildlife sounds a warning message of deforestation in their fragile Ecuadorian Amazon ecosystem.

### **Labor of Love**

Richard O'Connor (USA 2022, 3 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Mary shares memories of her grandmother, a formerly enslaved, life-saving midwife in North Carolina.

### **Code Rose**

Taye Cimon, Pierre Coëz, Julie Groux, Sandra Leydier, Manuarii Morel, Romain Seisson (France 2022, 5 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Hijinks ensue when flocks of flamingos disrupt operations on an aircraft carrier.

## **Shorts 5: Youth Works**

Saturday, April 22 at 12:30 pm PT at CGV 2

*Section: Short Films*

Young directors from as close as the Bay Area and as far away as Spain and Taiwan bring empathy, awareness, and specificity to storytelling. Encompassing emotive composition, breathtaking drone footage, and playfully sleek editing, this collection includes a diverse range of animation, narratives, and documentaries. Experimental movement, dark political humor, and tales varied enough to embrace classroom romance and reflections on growing up and interdependence mark this introduction to an up-and-coming group of cinematic voices carrying us into the next generation of filmmaking. Total Runtime 73 min.

*Recommended for ages 11 and up.*

### **Rational Functions**

Esmé Nix (USA 2022, 6 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A lonely girl finds connection in class through understanding math as tragic love stories.

### **Our Days in Dongshi**

Hsiang-Yu Li, Tse-Ling Huang, Po-Wen Yen, Hsin-Yi Hung (Taiwan 2022, 10 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Connect with the charming children of Dongshi, Taiwan, a coastline township famous for its oysters.

### **The Sound**

Cole Willis (USA 2022, 5 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Preparing for an upcoming performance, a young dancer begins to embrace her unrealized potential.

### **My Sisters in the Stars: The Story of Lee Yong-soo**

Ian Kim (USA, South Korea 2022, 10 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Meet one of the last surviving WWII-era Japanese comfort women through this multimedia animation.

### **Growing up with Memory Loss | A Gift for My 16th Birthday**

Keertana Sreekumar (USA 2022, 3 min)

*Section: Short Films*

A young artist with an impaired memory reflects on what it means to grow up.

### **Parental Orbit**

Dara Carneol (USA 2022, 9 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Described as a gruncle dance extravaganza, two family filmmakers discuss life and creativity.

### **Hop Heel Drop**

Sania Bhatia (USA 2022, 3 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Tap dancer Sydney Barnas shares her story of encouragement and passion for movement.

### **An Island in the Middle of the Sea**

Alberto Montull (Spain 2022, 5 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Students plan a surprise trip for their unwell teacher amongst the striking Galician landscapes.

### **American Ball Game**

Teja Mettu, Krish Mysoor (USA 2022, 9 min)

World Premiere

*Section: Short Films*

With twisting dark humor, Dan uncomfortably tries to fit in with his friend's white family.

### **Shopworn**

Athena Cheris (USA 2022, 6 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Stubbornness might be the downfall for an aging boxer unable to let go.

### **The External-Internal Monologue of an Interdependent Insomniac**

Julian Felix Aaronson (USA 2022, 7 min)

*Section: Short Films*

Fraught with insecurities over sexuality, self-acceptance, and gender, a sleep-deprived teenager explains various smells.

## **Sloan Science on Screen Award: "BlackBerry"**

Monday, April 17 at 7:30 pm PT at Premier

Matt Johnson (USA 2023, 123 min)

*Section: Narratives: USA*

“The person who puts a computer inside a phone will change the world,” avers company founder Mike Lazaridis (impeccably played by **Jay Baruchel**) in Matt Johnson’s exuberant depiction of the rise and fall of BlackBerry. The film begins in 1996 with the founding of a small Canadian company focused on using quantum science to provide secure communications and mobile productivity resulting in the launch of a handheld device that soon took the world by storm ... until competitors took the technology one step further. Johnson’s film perfectly captures the heady creative period of the mid-’90s as groups of nerdy engineers and innovators gorging on snacks and sci-fi flicks intersect with the high-powered and demanding world of financiers and venture capitalists. The terrific supporting cast includes **Cary Elwes, Michael Ironside, and Rich Sommer**. This year’s winner of the Sloan Science on Screen Award.

Expected guests: Director **Matt Johnson**, screenwriter **Matthew Miller**, panelist **Joel Moore**.

### **SLOAN SCIENCE ON SCREEN AWARD**

**BlackBerry** is the SFFILM Festival recipient of the **Sloan Science on Screen Award**, a recognition that celebrates the compelling depiction of science in a narrative feature film. Presented through a partnership between SFFILM and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the prize is part of SFFILM’s Sloan Science in Cinema initiative. Also part of the Sloan Science on Screen Initiative is the screening of **The Pod Generation**.

## **Smoke Sauna Sisterhood**

Sunday, April 23 at 2:15 pm PT at CGV 2

Anna Hints (Estonia, France, Iceland 2023, 89 min)

*Section: Documentaries: International*

The healing powers of sisterhood take on a new meaning in this luxuriant portrait by **Anna Hints**. Following a group of Estonian women who gather in a handmade sweat lodge, the film languidly moves through the seasons as bodies gather in the rituals of the sauna. Baring their souls and their flesh, tears are released into the heavy, warm air, and quickly dispelled with laughter as the women nurture one another. The specificity of each individual’s experience weaves a rich tapestry and yet there is a undertow of universal understanding flowing throughout this finely crafted film. Hints immerses us in a space innately known to all humans, suspending viewers in an ephemeral experience of love and acceptance. This debut feature won the Sundance Film Festival’s World Cinema–Documentary directing award. Expected guest: Director **Anna Hints**.

## **Snow and the Bear**

Friday, April 14 at 6 pm PT at CGV 3

Sunday, April 16 at 4:45 pm PT at BAMPFA

Selcen Ergun (Turkey 2022, 93 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

Asli is a nurse wholly committed to her profession even when it means relocating to a remote Turkish town with provincial beliefs and sub-zero temperatures. Though the villagers warn her of bear attacks from the neighboring forest, Asli finds more to fear from some of the men around her. One, a brutish womanizer, objects to Asli prescribing bedrest for his pregnant wife. Another appears kind but arouses Asli's suspicions that he could be stalking her. When a citizen disappears, rather than take a good look in the mirror to find a culprit, townsfolk point fingers at the bears or Asli. Director **Selcen Ergun** expertly balances the tension between patriarchal tradition and modernity, crafting a chilly mystery-drama that hones in on the wilderness inside humanity as much as the woods that surround Asli's new home.

## **Something You Said Last Night**

Saturday, April 22 at 8:15 pm PT at BAMPFA

Sunday April 23 at 4:30 pm PT at CGV 2

Luis De Filippis (Canada, Switzerland 2022, 96 min)

**US Premiere**

*Section: Narratives: International*

**Luis De Filippis's** story of a one-week family vacation makes an indelible leap forward in the depiction of trans lives on screen. It also perfectly encapsulates the tensions that can arise from close proximity and overdetermined fun when paired with family dynamics. But above all, the film presents a loving and accepting foursome where Canadian-Italian matriarch Mona's boisterous energy exasperates her daughters. Renata is older, comfortable with her trans identity amid supportive parents, yet still finding her place in the world while Siena likes a good party with boys. Their dad, Guido, just wants to relax by the lake with a beer or two. Over these seven days, secrets will be aired, tears will be shed, hair will be braided, and hangovers will be endured—small but poignant moments perfectly rendered by De Filippis in her memorable debut. Expected guest: **Luis De Filippis**.

## Opening Night: “Stephen Curry: Underrated”

Thursday, April 13 at 6:30 pm PT at Grand Lake Theatre

Thursday, April 13 at 9:30 pm PT at Grand Lake Theatre

Peter Nicks (USA 2023, 110 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

Award-winning filmmaker **Peter Nicks** (**The Waiting Room**, Festival 2012; **The Force**, Festival 2016; **Homerom**, 2021) returns with another rousing documentary about a Bay Area institution. This time his camera turns to the celebrated and singular iconography of NBA superstar **Stephen Curry**. Intertwining Curry’s emergence on the court at North Carolina’s Davidson College with thrilling footage of the 2021-22 Golden State Warriors season when the team won its fourth championship of the Curry era, Nicks deftly builds a portrait of a man who continually defies expectations. In addition to career-defining moments on and off court, Nicks also explores Curry’s academic ambitions and familial bonds. With unique access, heart-pounding edits, and electrifying footage, **Underrated** tells the remarkable story of a local legend. Thank you to Festival sponsors Alison & Mike Mauzé. Expected guests: Director **Peter Nicks**, producer **Ryan Coogler**, Warriors schedule dependent.

*Recommended for ages 10 and up.*

### **OPENING NIGHT PARTY -**

SFFILM is back for another season! The 66th iteration of the San Francisco International Film Festival kicks off with a story of hometown hero, **Stephen Curry**, directed by another hometown talent, **Peter Nicks**, at Grand Lake. SFFILM has always been a festival for the entire Bay Area and we are delighted to see you this year in Oakland. Following the opening night screening, SFFILM will host our annual kick-off party to welcome our audience back to the movies.

## **STILL: A Michael J. Fox Movie**

Friday, April 21 at 8:30 pm PT at CGV 2

Davis Guggenheim (USA 2022, 94 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

More than an icon, **Michael J. Fox** is a global celebrity who rose to fame in the beloved sitcom **Family Ties**, starred in the blockbuster **Back to the Future** trilogy, and smooth talked his way into our hearts on **Spin City** before shocking the world with his Parkinson’s diagnosis. It could be argued the actor is now more



famous for his disease than his performances, something director **Davis Guggenheim** (*Waiting for “Superman”*, Festival 2009) is determined to rectify with this uplifting profile of an indomitable spirit. Featuring a treasure trove of clips from Fox’s many roles, this smartly constructed documentary also takes us into Fox’s daily life as he deals with the harsh realities of his illness. Davis thoughtfully balances the unvarnished truth with the explosive charm of a man who must continually redefine success. Expected guests: Director **Davis Guggenheim**

## Stone Turtle

Saturday, April 15 at 9 pm PT at CGV 2

Woo Ming Jin (Malaysia, Indonesia 2022, 91 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

**Woo Ming Jin** (*Woman on Fire Looks for Water*, Festival 2010) returns to SFFILM with this vivid supernatural mystery set on a nearly deserted island on the Malay Peninsula. There, Zahara lives a clandestine life with her young niece, dealing in precious turtle eggs. The arrival of a mysterious man who claims to be researching leatherback turtles sets the stage for a story of sexual violence and karma that resets a couple of times to give Zahara the chance to finesse the story of her life. Winner of the prestigious FIPRESCI Prize at Locarno and with a sometimes-surreal style and tone that recalls David Lynch or Apichatpong Weerasethakul, **Stone Turtle** is stunningly visual, from the blinding white sands of the island to the femme-fatale scarlet hues of Zahara’s frequently worn red dress.

## The Tuba Thieves

Saturday, April 15 at 12 pm PT at BAMPFA

Sunday, April 16 at 2:45 pm PT at CGV 2

Alison O’Daniel (USA 2023, 91 min)

*Section: Documentaries: USA*

It’s true that a rash of tuba thefts have plagued Los Angeles high schools, but the mystery behind the loss of the oompah instruments is not the point in this bracing film that blends elements of documentary, narrative, and essay. Instead, the tubas provide one thread as filmmaker **Alison O’Daniel** creates a visually stunning work that captures life on roads, seas, mountains, forests, and skies, and features a sound design—including sequences of complete silence -- so visceral it almost feels textured. Open-captioned and populated by a largely deaf cast, O’Daniel invites the audience both to “hear” the world through the experiences of the deaf and hard of

hearing and really listen to the world around us. Expected guest: Director **Alison O'Daniel**.

## **Vicenta B.**

Friday, April 14 at 6 pm PT at BAMPFA

Sunday, April 16 at 3:30 pm PT at CGV 3

Carlos Lechuga (Cuba, France, Colombia, Norway, USA 2022, 77 min)

*Section: Narratives: International*

Set amongst the vibrant landscape of Cuba, the film follows Vicenta, a gifted clairvoyant who uses her ability to connect to her ancestors to foresee the future. When her beloved son leaves home in search of employment abroad, the heartbreak of their separation drives Vicenta into an identity crisis as she worries about her boy. While she can foretell others' future, her own remains cloudy as she struggles with her ancestors to understand the journey ahead for her son. She rediscovers her connection to the island and recovers her own sense of well-being as she learns to cope with what she cannot control.

## **“What These Walls Won't Hold” + “How We Get Free” + “Sol in the Garden”**

Saturday, April 15 at 12 pm PT at CGV 2

Sunday, April 16 at 2 pm PT at BAMPFA

*Section: Mid-Length Films*

This trio of films imagines a world of redemption, prison reform, and abolition from the perspectives of those who are the most affected. Total Runtime 94 min.

## **What These Walls Won't Hold**

Adamu Chan (USA 2022, 42 min)

World Premiere

*Section: Mid-Length Films*

Filmed during the coronavirus pandemic, **Adamu Chan's What These Walls Won't Hold** is not about COVID but about the way the crisis brought into focus and catalyzed ongoing organizing efforts at San Quentin State Prison. Chan, who was incarcerated there, chronicles his journey home, interweaving his account with those of his loved ones both inside and outside the penitentiary walls. What emerges is a tender picture of a community thriving with relationships built on

trust, and an indomitable zeal to fight for a brighter and better future for those incarcerated. It creates a blueprint for resistance and liberation that is for all and invites us to imagine the abolitionist utopia that awaits us at the end of our strife.

### **How We Get Free**

Geeta Gandbhir, Samantha Knowles (USA 2023, 31 min)

*Section: Short Films*

In Denver, an intrepid activist runs for office with the aim of eliminating cash bail.

### **Sol in the Garden**

Emily Cohen Ibañez, Débora Souza Silva (USA 2022, 21 min)

World Premiere

*Section: Short Films*

A formerly incarcerated woman catches the sun as she nourishes a garden with her new community. Expected guests: Director **Emily Cohen Ibañez**, Director **Débora Souza Silva**

## **Section Descriptions**

### **Documentaries: International**

From points all around the globe, this collection of documentaries introduces viewers to issues and viewpoints beyond our own borders.

### **Documentaries: USA**

Traversing San Francisco's SRO hotels, the life of **Joan Baez**, a mysterious string of tuba thefts, and much more, the Festival's US documentaries take the country's pulse with its diverse lineup.

### **Mid-Length Films**

Clocking in between 31 and 59 minutes long, these films may be slimmed down in length but pack a wallop in storytelling.

### **Narratives: International**

From Ukraine to Italy to the suburbs of Paris and beyond, this array of films takes the pulse of our global village.

### **Narratives: USA**

A selection of emerging American talents spin resonant and culturally diverse tales of life in the US.

### **Short Films**

The Festival's short films, made by filmmakers both veteran and new, pack each moment with storytelling power.

## **Spotlight Descriptions**

### **Bay Area Voices**

The manifold qualities of the Bay come into focus with these films set in the Bay or made by local filmmakers.

### **Cine Latino**

From a fortune teller in Cuba to a young woman's fraught coming of age in Costa Rica, the Cine Latino program showcases the diverse textures and cinematographic excellence of Latin American storytelling.

### **GGA Documentary Competition**

Presented at the Festival since its 1957 inaugural year, the Golden Gate Award Doc Competition features the most significant non-narrative films of the season.

### **Family Friendly**

A personal tale from a Disney animation legend, a heart-warming Judy Blume adaptation, and shorts for—and sometimes made by—youth offer captivating fare for parents and kids alike.

### **Global Documentaries**

SFFILM's documentary showcase celebrates the finest in nonfiction filmmaking from around the world, near and far.

### **Global Visions**

Travel the world without ever leaving the Bay with this program of narrative filmmaking with a global perspective.

### **Marquee**

The Marquee spotlight features top-flight talent and the festival circuit's hottest titles that are sure to dominate conversations in months to come.

### **New Directors**

Meet the new crop of emerging narrative talent as SFFILM presents stellar debut features from around the world and awards their work with this juried competition.

### **SFFILM-Supported**

Since 2009, SFFILM Makers programs have granted more than \$9 million to independent filmmakers worldwide. Join us as we celebrate these talented independent storytellers and bring their stories to the San Francisco Bay Area.

### **Shorts + Mid-Lengths**

From animation to documentary, experimental to family-oriented, the Festival's short film programs offer terrific work under 30 minutes while our mid-length programs focus on the wide range of work between 31 and 59 minutes in length.

### **Special Events**

Crowd-pleasing big nights, award presentations, and our Tribute programs make up the 2023 Festival Special Events.

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