
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Passport to A Global Adventure: The 56th Annual San Francisco International Film Festival

Sophia Stein · Wednesday, April 17th, 2013

Everyone and his cousin has heard of Sundance Film Festival. Cannes, Telluride, Toronto, and Venice film festivals share equal notoriety. What you may not know is that San Francisco plays host to one or more film festivals practically each and every week; over eighty film festivals grace the city by the Bay annually. The largest and most ambitious of these is the San Francisco International Film Festival. The 56th Annual San Francisco International Film Festival (SFIFF) will take place from Thursday, April 25 – Thursday, May 9, 2013, with screenings of 95 feature films, from 51 countries, with \$70,000 in cash prizes for juried award winners, and upwards of 100 filmmaker guests in attendance — including Steven Soderberg (slated to deliver the State of Cinema Address), and conversations and master-classes with William Friedkin, Philip Kaufman, and Richard Linklater.

“Authentic,” “diverse,” “innovative” – these are the adjectives that forward-thinking Ted Hope, the newly installed Executive Director, uses to qualify the offerings of the 2013 SFIFF. “As one of the leading American festivals committed to international cinema, we provide our community with passports to an ever-changing world,” Hope asserts.

In that spirit, the 2013 SFIFF will launch its inaugural A2E: Artist to Entrepreneur — Direct Distribution Lab (May 2-5). A2E will bring filmmakers (by invitation) together with technology pioneers, to collaborate in developing technology tools and entrepreneurial approaches to independent filmmaking, with the goal of increasing sustainability for artists, financiers, audiences, and the industry itself.

The San Francisco Film Society (supporters of the 2012 Academy-nominated “Beasts of the Southern Wild” and 2013 Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner “Fruitvale”), curates selections for the SFIFF. Films are not programmed thematically, rather themes emerge organically from the best works selected for participation each year.

With 67 narrative features, 28 documentary features, and 63 shorts, the offerings of the SFIFF are staggering. An attendee might tailor their festival experience to a particular interest: taking in all 19 “Feature Films Directed by Women” this year, for example, 13 films related to “Literature,” or 7 films that explore the “Economy.” One could focus on films from a particular geographic region: screening 17 films from “Asia,” 11 films from “Latin America,” or 4 films from “Sub-Saharan Africa.” If genre is your draw, this year’s festival offers up a selection of 12 “Gangster Films” and 9 “Comedies.” “Animation and Anime,” “Film Classics” and “Premieres” — the San Francisco International Film Festival provides the perfect holiday escape for film enthusiasts. A chance to expand one’s global perspective, while with hobnobbing with masters and up-and-comers, in a renowned tourist destination city, not so far from home. “Ambitious,” “promising,” “accessible” — a trip to the SFIFF is well worth the investment.

Tickets are modestly priced: \$15 general admission for screenings; classes and events from \$15-\$125; a CINEVOUCHER 10-pack redeemable for ten tickets can be purchased online for \$140; and the CINEVISA pass which provides early admittance to any festival screening sells for \$1000 (plus SFFS membership, starting at \$80).

For additional information and to purchase tickets: <http://festival.sffs.org/>



Images: Top, SIFF's opening night movie, 'What Maisie Knew;' bottom, the closing night film, 'Before Midnight.'

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