



SBIFF Executive Director Roger Durling onstage with SBIFF Staff and Volunteers at the closing night screening of Their Finest

International Film Highlights

FASCINATING NARRATIVES AND COMPELLING DOCUMENTARIES were among the variety of international programming at this year's SBIFF. The substance of these global films reverberated throughout the ten day festival.

One of the more enjoyable documentaries hailed from Italy, *Water*

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and Sugar: Carlo Di Palma, The Colours of Life. Documentarian Fariborz Kamkari weaved art-film footage, talking head interviews with filmmakers Woody Allen and Wim Wenders, among others, to create a touching tribute to the visual mastery of the cinematographer Carlo Di Palma. Especially thrilling, Di Palma was an apprentice cameraperson on the important Italian neo-realist film *Rome, Open City*, in 1945. Archival footage from 1940s and 50s era Rome is integrated, as well as older interviews with Di Palma. The result is a poem that gives focus to the complexities involved in setting up shots, camera movements, and lighting in cherished films such as Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* and *Red Desert* as well as later Woody Allen classics such as *Radio Days* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*. Without documentaries like this, film history would be hidden from view.



Director **Catalina Mesa** of *Jericó, The Infinite Flight of Days*



Editor **Taly Goldenberg** and Director **Yonatan Nir** of *My Hero Brother*, Winner of the Audience Choice Award and Best Documentary Award

A filmmaker that shows promise, Peruvian born, Swiss-raised Klaudia Reynicke, brought the domestic premiere of *The Nest (Il nido)* to the festival, a fictional drama set within a small Northern Italian enclave. The film features an insightful performance from lead actress Ondina Quadri, as a village member visiting her family of origin. Hidden secrets abound, made more vivid by the landscape setting that somehow captures the emptiness of a rigidly traditional patriarchal society. Refusing to recognize outsiders, the film is an indictment of provincial thinking which many times can have disastrous consequences.

Other films and filmmakers from Italy were especially strong including *Indivisible*, a visually arresting drama about co-joined twins vying for their freedom. The characters seemed to belong to an exploitative social stew and were drawn sharply. The shabby waterfront settings in and around Naples revealed an extraordinary mirror of the globally widening gap between rich and poor. The performances of actor-sisters Angela and Marianna Fontana, as directed by Edoardo De Angelis, were beguiling.

Another Italian film highlight included *Piuma*, a fast-paced, over-the-top farce about family complications from director Roan Johnson. Set in Rome, and often hilarious, the plot focused on a surprise pregnancy providing a springboard for antics from an energetic cast. Other notable efforts included an apocalyptic drama set in Iceland, *Bokel*, from US-based filmmakers Geoffrey Orthwein and Andrew Sullivan. The duo was able to craft an intriguing story of survival with faith-based themes and create an ominous atmosphere filled with mysterious plot twists and some unusual light-filled settings from the terrain surrounding Reykjavik.

Features nominated for Academy Awards were also screened. *Land of Mine*, from Denmark, was a compelling historically based narrative dramatizing the forced labor that Denmark required from defeated German soldiers at the conclusion of WWII. The task involved was to clear millions of landmines buried by the Nazis along the West Coast. Dangerous circumstance and tragic cruelty were displayed raising questions of the difficulty of justice after

war-time. The director Martin Zandvillet developed a suspenseful story combined with a richly atmospheric score and sun-drenched cinematography.



10-10-10 Competition Winners **Quinnolyn Benson-Yates** (College Filmmaker), **Emily Hay** (High School Filmmaker), **Claire Rossi** (High School Screenwriter) with **Mary Beth Riordan** and **Christopher Lloyd**. Not pictured is **Malena McKaba** (College Screenwriter).

Toni Erdmann, a three-hour comic tale from German director Maren Ade, provided a critique of the the globalizing forces of outsourcing and the poverty of corporate ethics. Sandra Hüller as the daughter Ines and Peter Simonischek as the prankster father elevated the material with many outrageously funny scenes. It is a wonder to see such a powerful female film director make such an extraordinary statement on the predicaments to contemporary life.



Lisa Lolocono and **Christopher Lloyd**

The French-Swiss animated feature, *My Life as a Zucchini* from director Claude Barras, spins an effectively touching outcast tale about an orphanage. Using stop-motion puppets, and taking years to create, this film is up for consideration in the Best Feature Animation Oscar category. The characters, voice acting, and storytelling collaborations work on a very high heartfelt level. A story for both adults and children, the film is insightful throughout, promoting empathy for children who are left behind by tragic circumstances.

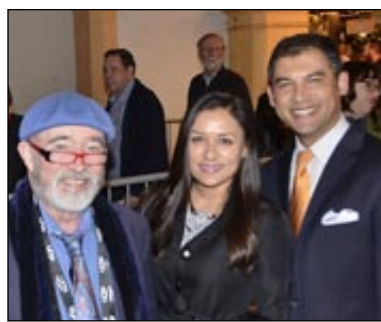
Robert F. Adams, a Santa Barbara landscape architect, is a graduate of UCLA's School of Theatre and Film, as well as Cal Poly. He has served on the film selection committees for the Aspen Film Fest and the SB International Film Festival. Email him at robert@earthknower.com.



Producer **Katerina Gecmen-Waldeck**, Actress **Salome Demuria**, and Producer **Nadezhda Gorshkova** of *House of Others*



Sound Mixer **Chris Carcher**, Producer **Oscar Gutierrez**, and Cinematographer **Michael McSpadden** of *Working Class Heroes*



Archie McLaren, **Jonnie Williams**, and First District Supervisor **Das Williams**

SBIFF 3rd Weekend!

SBIFFS 32ND FESTIVAL is a wrap - except for a special treat prepared especially for the local community - the 3rd Weekend! Beginning on Friday, February 17th, the 3rd Weekend is a community event where highlights from the Film Festival screen for free at the Metropolitan Fiesta 5 Theatre 2 (916 State St.). Seating is first-come first served.

FRIDAY, FEB 17

Documentary Shorts: Refugees
5pm • 86min • *Dancing In Limbo*, Malawi/USA, Dir Amanda Larsh, Caroline Roffe, Hannah Bradford, Nick McDonald • *High Chaparral*, USA, Dir David Freid • *Port of Entry*, USA, Dir Marisa Pearl • *Refuge*, Greece/USA, Dir Matthew. K Firpo • *Refugee*, USA, Dir Emily Moore, Joyce Chen, Emily Chen

The Constitution (Ustav Republike Hrvatske)
7:30pm • Jeffrey C. Barbakow Award – Best International Feature Film • Dir Rajko Grlić, 93min, Subtitled • The unlikely relationships that form in a shared apartment building reveal a series of social, political, and ethnic issues that point to larger problems, a perfect metaphor for modern-day Croatia. Croatia

Gaviota: The End of Southern California
9:30pm • Dir Shaw Leonard, 87min • In a monumental collaboration of artists, activists, and environmental organizations, this film documents the last remaining 20 miles of wild coastline in Southern California and the wildlife that thrives there. USA

SATURDAY, FEB 18

Rebels on Pointe
11am • Dir Bobbi Jo Hart, 90min • This cinéma vérité documentary celebrates Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo – the all-male, drag ballet company founded over 40 years ago on the heels of New York's Stonewall riots. Canada/Italy/Japan/USA/UK

The Good Catholic
2pm • Panavision Spirit Award for Independent Cinema • Dir Paul Shoulberg, 96min • Daniel loved his job as a small town priest more than anything. Then he met Jane. God help him. USA • Preceded by "IT'S BEEN LIKE A YEAR" – winner of the Bruce Corwin Award for Best Live Action Short Film

Sámi Blood (Sameblood)
5pm • Valhalla Award for Best Nordic Film • Dir Amanda Kernell, 125min, Subtitled • A Sámi girl in the 1930s is removed from her family and sent to a state boarding school intended to raise its Indigenous people to a level deemed "acceptable" to the rest of Swedish society. Sweden/Denmark/Norway

My Hero Brother
7:30pm • Audience Choice Award & Best Documentary Award • Dir Yonatan Nir, 78min, Subtitled • In this remarkable and inspiring story, a group of young people with Down syndrome embark on a demanding, two week trek through the Himalayas, accompanied by their siblings. Israel/India

Given
9:30pm • Dir Jess Bianchi, 72min • Seen through a child's eyes, Given's family explores world cultures while surfing along the way. This deeply moving film offers a humbling contrast of a small voice traveling through a big world. USA

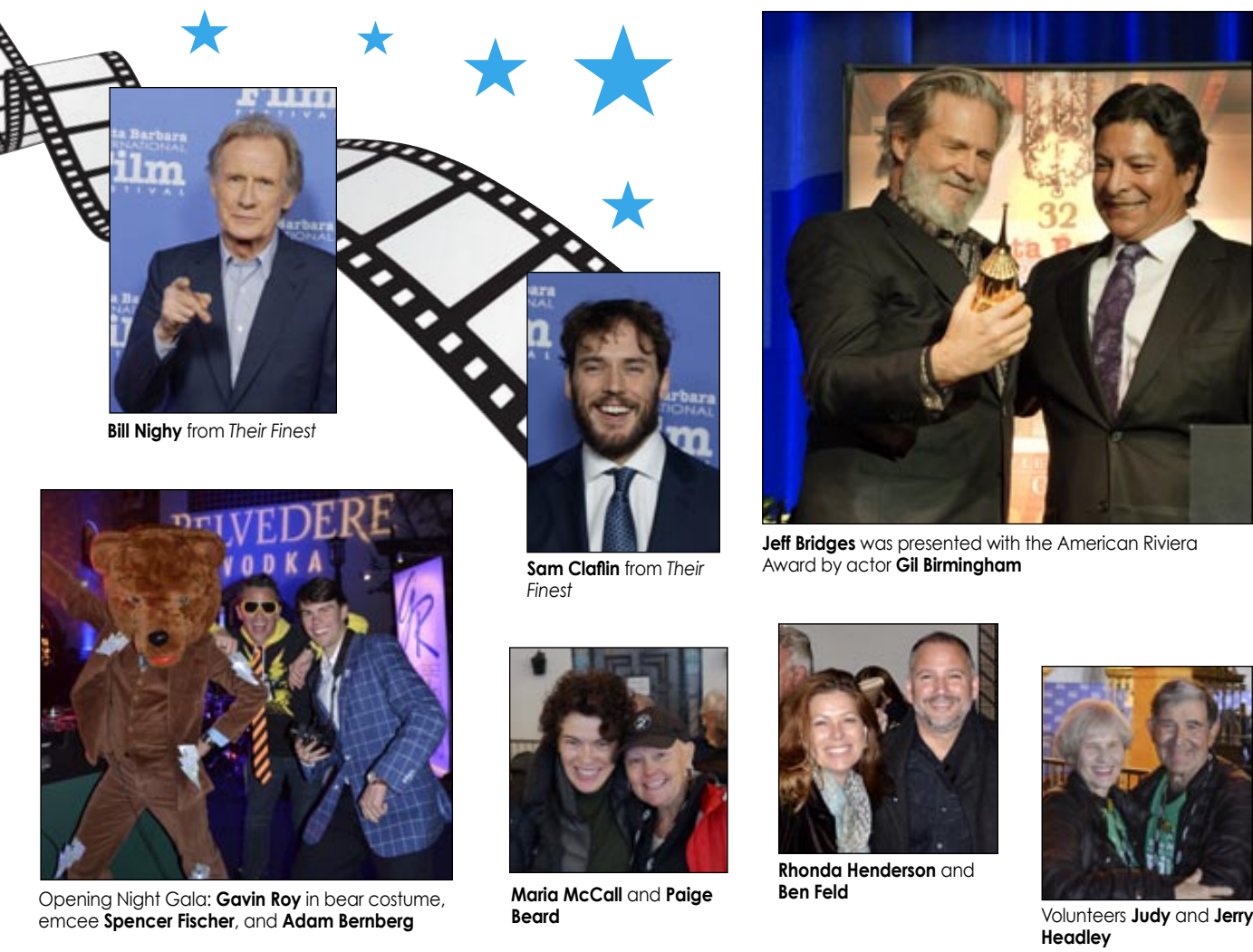
SUNDAY, FEB 19

Tamara
11am • Nueva Vision Award for Spain/Latin America Cinema • Dir Elia K. Schneider, 120min, Subtitled • A successful lawyer with a wife and two small children finally comes to terms with his neglected past and his desire to become a woman. Venezuela/Uruguay/Peru

Angry Inuk
2pm • Social Justice Award for Documentary Film • Dir Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, 82min, Subtitled • Inuit director Alethea Arnaquq-Baril joins a new tech-savvy generation of Inuit as they campaign to challenge long-established perceptions of seal hunting. Canada

Strawberry Days
5pm • ADL Stand Up Award • Dir Wiktor Ericsson, 93min, Subtitled • With his parents, a 15-year-old goes from Poland to Sweden to work on a strawberry farm where foreign workers are exploited. Against all odds, he forms a bond with the farmer's daughter. Sweden • Preceded by "CONFINO" - Winner of the Bruce Corwin Award for Best Animated Short Film

Jericó, The Infinite Flight of Days
7:30pm • Dir Catalina Mesa, 77min, Subtitled • This colorful, poetic, and lush documentary presents an intimate view of eight women of all ages in the Colombian village of Jericó, revealing their stories, their inner lives, and their wisdom. France/Columbia



Shorts Programs Highlights

AN OUTSTANDING VARIETY OF SHORT FILM PROGRAMS were organized for the festival. Each set were grouped by thematic considerations. Many of the shorts programs were well attended, and became a highlight of the 2017 festival.

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displayed admirable techniques often accomplished with tight production budgets. Here are some of the compelling standouts:

Dramedy Shorts

10K, Hairpin Bender, Megan's Shift were all amusing portraits of the younger generation finding their way through a challenging society, tinged with humor. *Pregame* employed captivating camera movements negotiating through a New Year's Eve Party as one character after another repelled each other. *Writer's Block*, starring Jane Lynch and directed by Troy Miller, was an ironic comment on Hollywood success, involving a plagiarizing, or inspired, songwriter desperately seeking inspiration to create a breakthrough in her stalled career.

Animated Shorts

With over ten films, this program was awash with stories that were amusing throughout, offering a wide variety of visual wizardry, from stop motion puppets to shorts with cartoon and comic book techniques. *Confined (Confinio)* from Italy and directed by Nico Bonomolo was rich with an underlying theme of the serious consequences of political protest. Isolated and exiled on a distant island, the protagonist, captive for years, exists with his memories, dreams, and fantasies in a prison-lighthouse. The

film also salutes film history and does so with the lighthouse projection. Creative and resourceful, *Confined* won the Bruce Corwin Award for Best Animated Short. *Second to None* from Irish animator Vincent Gallagher, *Edward the Gorilla* from Charles D'Avignon, and *Fish with Legs* from Australian director Dave Carter, all hit humorous notes with very simple stories using techniques that ranged from crude to mesmerizing. From New Zealand, *Spring Jam*, from filmmaker Ned Wenlock, was captivatingly fun with characterizations of the natural world colliding with classical, rock, and blues-themed vinyl records. David Chai's *swiPed* was an indictment of modern cell phones and the consequences of widespread addiction to the contemporary devices. *The Talk*, from Canadian animator Alain Delannoy, offered an unusual study on the awkwardness of male-oriented sex education with hand-drawn vibrating images, that reached a high level of artistic mastery.

Comedic Shorts and Dramatic Shorts

Within the Comedic Shorts program, Swiss filmmaker Christophe M. Saber was able to create an atmosphere of comic chaos in *Discipline*, where a little girl sets in motion a somewhat global conflict all within the setting of a European mini-mart. An excellent example of the short-film form, within twelve short minutes, the film managed to suggest a warning shot to all those people who are overly-righteous, perhaps holding a mirror up to modern society. Another winning comedy was *The Bathtub* from Austria, directed by Tim Ellrich, in the Dramatic Shorts program. Using just a single camera placement and a

long-running continuous shot, this well-conceived story was both gently absurd and funny, with three middle-aged brothers attempting to re-create a bathtub shot from their toddler past. Within the same program and also from Austria, *Lacrimosa* from director Tanja Mairitsch used expert black and white underwater photography to create a visually compelling experience revolving around loss and memories set to an ethereal pan flute score.

Other Shorts Programs

From the Thrillers program, *The Beast*, from Croatia, provided insights about the disruptive nature of capitalism. Director Miroslav Sikavica wrests a neo-realist style story that is breathtaking in his head-long critique of authoritarian policies. In the Santa Barbara Doc Shorts program the films offered a glimpse of life on the Central Coast. Some of the standouts included *The Believers* from Leah Bleich, *Line 11* from Alexandra Vasquez, and *The Boatmaker* from Casey McGarry, which provided exceptional portraits of characters within our local community. The Refugees program was especially hard-hitting with documentary stories that examined the international trend of immigration, all offering a human dimension to a growing global problem. *Refugee* from co-directors Joyce Chen and Emily Moore was a highlight, and the other films portrayed the difficulties of those families that have to run from political violence. Other stand-outs in this section included the harrowing *Refuge* from Matthew K. Firpo, *High Chaparral* from David Freid, and *Port of Entry* from Marisa Pearl and Andrea Meller.