

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Evolution! Mallorca — 7th Edition Sparkles

Sophia Stein · Wednesday, October 24th, 2018

The 7th edition of the Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival kicks off on Thursday, October 25, 2018. When I ask Founder-Director Sandra Seeling Lipski why she chose “**Evolution!**” for the name of the film festival, she explains: “I think that everything is evolving in our lives. Culture is evolving. And films. And storytelling. Every year, there are so many new stories to be told. New views to be explored.”

Evolution! Mallorca festival is curated by two millennial women — with Seeling Lipski as the head programmer for the narrative component and Maria Calafat heading up the documentary selections, which — in addition to the fact that the festival transpires over six nights and seven days in one of the most enchanting and enduring romantic destinations in the world — gives this evolving festival, this diamond in the rough, particular luster.

I first met Seeling back in 2017 at another intimate gem of a film festival, the Mammoth Lakes Film Festival, where I was impressed by her acting chops in the short film, *The Ring Thing*, and she mentioned to me her passion project the **Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival**.

Seeling moved to Palma de Mallorca with her family from Berlin as a child in the 90s, when the island was in the wake of a cultural renaissance, at a time when new German, Swedish, and French communities were just taking root. “Mallorca became a melting pot of cultures, nationalities, and languages,” she explains. “I went to an international school, so every language that you could think of was spoken on the playground.” At the age of fourteen, Seeling scored a role as a series regular in the television drama *Mallorca in Search of Paradise* (*Mallorca Suche nach dem Paradies*), playing Jasmine, the girlfriend of the son of the rich, obnoxious villain. “I was one of the teenagers in this group. We wouldn’t wear school uniforms, skipped school to go to the beach, and had problems like — our scooter wouldn’t work. It was ridiculous, but it was a great learning experience, and that’s when I said to myself (and my parents), I want to study acting and filmmaking when I’m done with school.”

In its 7th iteration, the 2018 festival will screen 15 narrative features, 6 documentary features, a multitude of shorts, VR experiences, and 25 films produced and directed by filmmakers from the Balearic Islands. Screenings take place in some spectacular venues: *Funny Story* (which debuted at Slamdance) will kick off the festival on opening night in an opulent 19th century opera house, the Teatre Principal. Cineciutat, an arthouse cinema in the city of La Palma, plays host to the majority of feature screenings; experimental shorts and some documentaries on art are programmed in the auditorium of Es Baluard Museu d’Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma.

Unique to **Evolution! Mallorca** is a drive-in cinema component, with a slice of something for everyone — from a screening of Pixar family favorite, *Coco*, to James Cameron’s sci-fi classic, *Aliens*, to screenings of two indie features — Laura Holiday’s *Daddy Issues* and Jesús del Cerro’s *HAWAII*.

Seeling has been skilled at attracting phenomenal talent to honor in award ceremonies followed by intimate Q&As each year. A highlight of this year’s festival, actress **Melissa Leo** will be honored with the **Evolution Icon Award** and a tribute screening of *The Fighter*, the David O. Russell film for which she won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in 2011. “Being independent and strong, and striving after what you want represents the spirit of the festival. The inspiring Melissa Leo stands for all of that,” Seeling illuminates.

In 2016, when **Evolution Honorary Award** recipient **Danny DeVito** was asked why he decided to grace the festival with his presence, he bemusedly responded:

“Why did I decide to come here? It’s an island. And no man — is an island. So I decided to be on one.”

I had a chance to WhatsApp briefly with rising star Sandra Seeling Lipski about the 2018 iteration of the **Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival**.



*Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival founding director Sandra Seeling Lipski
in conversation with Oscar-winning filmmaker Paul Haggis,
recipient of the Evolution Innovation Award in 2017.*

Sophia: You’ve written that Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival aims to push limits, to raise consciousness, to bridge cultures, and to build a stronger and more purposeful community. Is there a film this year that you think particularly pushes the limits?

Sandra: One of my favorite narrative films in the program this year is called *M*. It’s a French film with actress **Sara Forestier**, who has been working since she was a teenager. She is very well known in France. Sara has won many awards, and this is her debut as a writer-director and lead actress. The film is a love story about this girl who has a speech impediment and this young Arabic immigrant who lives in Paris. They meet — and of course, they come from the most different backgrounds you could ever imagine — but they fall in love and need to work through all kinds of issues and hurdles to find each. It’s a very raw, emotional piece of work from both of these actors in the bridging of cultures. Their upbringing and languages are so different and sometimes that impairs their ability to be who they would like to be. There are so many elements to this film, and Sara has done such a beautiful job of executing it all in this movie. I’m just in awe of her. It’s really special.

Sophia: Is there a title that you think is strikingly consciousness raising?

Sandra: Local filmmaker, **Line Hadsbjerg** (originally from Sweden), made a doc called *Out of Plastic*. It’s about all the plastic surrounding Mallorca and the Balearic Islands. Of course, there are a lot of documentaries about plastic in the oceans of the world, but it was really special to have a filmmaker focus on our little piece of land here in the Mediterranean — to shockingly document how bad the situation really is and what we need to do to change it.

Sophia: How about a film that effectively focuses on building a stronger and more purposeful community?

Sandra: Definitely a film that does that is: *All the Women That I Know*, a documentary by a Galician filmmaker here in Spain, **Xiana Gomez Diaz**. Gomez is interviewing around ten women, her friends, about how they feel about their local businesses and working with men. The film is about the whole environment for women dealing with men today. This film definitely attaches itself to the #MeToo movement. It's a very interesting take on how women can create a more safe community for themselves by expressing how they feel.

Sophia: This year, you are honoring Spanish actress Marisa Paredes, who has been featured in so many Almodóvar film classics, including *All About My Mother* (1999), *Talk to Her* (2002), and *The Skin I Live In* (2011), with an award for the body of her work. How did you choose to screen *The Flower of My Secret* (*La Flor De Mi Secreto*) in tribute to Paredes?

Sandra: **Marisa Paredes** chose *The Flower Of My Secret*, actually. I think she just really likes that character, Leo Macías, the writer. We were very excited when she chose that film which has been elevated to a kind-of cult film status here in Spain. I can't wait to ask her about it in the Q&A.

Sophia: Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen will be in attendance with *Arctic*, which debuted in the Midnight Section at Cannes earlier this year. In 2012, Mikkelsen won Best Actor at the Cannes Film Festival for his role in Thomas Vinterberg's *The Hunt*; however, some critics have now noted that his performance in *Arctic* is the best performance of his career to date.

Sandra: *Arctic* is a very entrancing film. It gets you into that trance of the arctic in a story that gradually builds to heightened intensity. I can't wait for him to get here. **Mads Mikkelsen** will receive the **Evolution Vision Award**, and **Tobias Lindholm** who wrote *The Hunt* will receive the **Evolutionary Award** at our Closing Night Ceremony. Tobias is a director-writer in his thirties who has already accomplished so much — having been Oscar-nominated for his screenwriting on a Best Foreign Film, twice! He's just in the beginning of his career, has an amazing voice, and very strong stories to tell, so we want to applaud him for that.

Sophia: At the conclusion of the festival, you will present awards to films in competition. Who on your jury will determine this year's recipients?

Sandra: **David Victori** is on our jury — a director who, in the last three years has had four movies in cinemas in Spain. Victori got his big break when he was on that show *Project Greenlight* with Matt Damon and Ben Affleck a few years ago in LA. Then, he went back to Spain and started producing and directing movie after movie. We're very excited to have him, along with several local Mallorcan filmmakers who have had projects in the festival in previous years. So, this is also our way of bridging cultures, of bringing international filmmakers to the festival, but also incorporating the local communities.

Sophia: You and I shared the experience of the Mammoth Lake Film Festival. Right now, there are a gazillion film festivals all over the world, in some phenomenally beautiful places. In what ways is Evolution! unique?

Sandra: Evolution! is unique because, first of all, it's a destination festival in beautiful Mallorca, Spain. It is featured at the end of October, with a beautiful Indian Summer, and the line-up of movies and programming and satellite events that really invite every nationality — no matter what

language you speak or where you've come from. Selections will screen in German, Spanish, Romanian, Georgian, and Hebrew. Everything that's not in English has English subtitles. And everything that's English has Spanish subtitles. It's a melting pot of cultures and ideas. And I think it's just a really inspiring place to go to.

*Now that you know about **Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival**, hope to see you on the island ...*

*Unable to make it out to the island of Mallorca for the **2018 Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival**? Seeling has you covered; award winning films from this year's competition will screen in the summer of 2019 at **EMIFF Hollywood**.*

Evolution! Mallorca International Film Festival Official Website



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