

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Mill Valley Film Festival — Rolls Out the Red Carpet

Sophia Stein · Wednesday, September 24th, 2014

Five of the past six Academy Award winners for Best Picture have enjoyed their Bay Area premieres at **The Mill Valley Film Festival**, including *12 Years a Slave* just this past year. The festival is reputed for providing attendees with an early glimpse of Academy Award contenders. “*Mill Valley Film Festival is where filmmakers take their first steps along the red carpet, although they are still touting their sneakers,*” describes programmer and trusted curator Zoë Elton.

On Thursday, October 2, Opening Night of the 37th Mill Valley Film Festival (MVFF), actress **Hilary Swank** and director **Jason Reitman** will be gracing the carpets of the Cinéarts Sequoia and Century Cinema Corte Madera theatres for screenings of their respective features, *The Homesman* (directed by Tommy Lee Jones) and *Men, Women, & Children*.

MVFF will continue over eleven days, shining the “Spotlight” this year on two phenomenal young actors: **Elle Fanning** and **Eddie Redmayne**. At merely sixteen years of age, Fanning is already being hailed by many as a ‘young Meryl Streep.’ On Saturday, October 4, she will be honored for her body of work with a screening of her latest film, *Low Down*. On Thursday, October 9, Redmayne will be saluted for his ‘career-defining’ portrayal of Stephen Hawking in *The Theory of Everything*.

There is some very innovative and thoughtful programming for the MVFF37. Highlights include: **Robin Williams: A Celebration**, with rare footage of Williams and his mentor Jonathan Winters. Members of the band **Metallica** have been invited to curate and host a series of screenings to include the highly-anticipated *Whiplash*, a screening of the work-in-progress documentary *Jaco*, and a pair of cinema classics — *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* and *Dracula Vs. Frankenstein*. Spanish-language cinema gems have been culled from around the world as part of the *¡VIVA EL CINE!* programming.* In true Bay Area style, **THE ART OF THE SCIENCES** is a focus of exploration in films from *How I Came To Hate Math* to *The Imitation Game* (Benedict Cumberbatch), and **HUMOR – IN THE JOCULAR VEIN** is a series of films that substantiates the claims of programmers that “*We take our role as trusted curators very seriously, but we don't take ourselves seriously.*”

The festival has not customarily hosted a film competition, but this year is different. **The Art of Amazing 4K Film Competition** (sponsored by Sharp) will culminate at MVFF on Thursday, October 9, with a program of high resolution shorts from contest finalists. Judges from Sharp, THX, RED, Lucasfilm, The California Film Institute, and Adobe will award more than \$65,000 in prizes to winners, and the public is invited to join in on the fun by casting their votes for their

favorite short films now: sharpartofamazing.com.



Fabrizio Rongione and Marion Cotillard, “Two Days, One Night,” Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne. Photo courtesy of The California Film Institute and the Mill Valley Film Festival.

Founder Mark Fishkin and his colleague Zoë Elkins have combed the offerings of Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Telluride, Sundance and Guadalajara film festivals, among others, to bring attendees the best of the new fall specialty films, along with the best of cinema from around the world. Some of the films you will not want miss: *Two Days, One Night* (Dardenne Brothers, Marion Cotillard), *Foxcatcher* (Steve Carell, Channing Tatum, Mark Ruffalo), *The Judge* (Robert Downey Jr., Robert Duvall), *Black and White* (Mike Binder, Kevin Costner, Octavia Spencer), *Diplomacy* (Volker Schlöndorff), *Force Majeure* (Ruben Östlund), *Timbuktu* (Abderrahmane Sissako), *Mr. Turner* (Mike Leigh), and *St. Vincent* (Bill Murray, Naomi Watts, Melissa McCarthy).

It all wraps on Sunday, October 12, with a Tribute to the ever-marvelous **Laura Dern** and a preview screening of Jean-Marc Vallée’s *Wild* (Reese Witherspoon).

The Mill Valley Film Festival affords proximity to directors and actors you have come to know and love, as well as, an introduction to wonderful new talent waiting to be discovered. It offers an experience, second only, perhaps to a seat at the Oscars themselves.



Benedict Cumberbatch, Keira Knightley, Matthew Goode, Rory Kinnear, Charles Dance, Mark Strong, Allen Leech, “The Imitation Game.”

Photo courtesy of The Weinstein Company and the Mill Valley Film Festival.

“Mill Valley Film Festival” Official Website

Top Image: Marion Cotillard, “Two Days, One Night,” Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne.

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