

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Thanksgiving Comes Early at the Mill Valley Film Festival

Sophia Stein · Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

Chiwetel Ejiofor, 12 Years A Slave, Director Steve McQueen / Photo courtesy of the Mill Valley Film Festival

From October 3-13, film enthusiasts can partake of a pre-Thanksgiving virtual cornucopia of riches at the 36th annual Mill Valley Film Festival (MVFF). Given the frenzied and ever-increasingly cluttered marketplace for independent and world cinema, the MVFF is “a trusted curator” signals Executive Director, Mark Fishkin. “Everything [we screen during the Mill Valley Film Festival] is worthwhile,” because “everything has been curated,” he insists. Indeed, four of the last five films that have gone on to win the Academy Award for Best Picture (*Slumdog Millionaire*, *The King’s Speech*, *The Artist*, and *Argo*) have all premiered at MVFF. This year the line-up includes such heavy-hitters as *12 Years a Slave*, *Dallas Buyers Club*, *Philomena*, and *August: Osage Country*, along with appearances by guest directors and actors, including Steve McQueen, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Jared Leto and John Wells, to name just a few.

Watch the Trailer for *12 Years a Slave*:



Capital by Director Costa-Gavras / Photo courtesy of the Mill Valley Film Festival

The festival kicks off on opening night with two spectacular features: Alexander Payne’s *Nebraska*, with Bruce Dern and Will Forte, in attendance; and *The Book Thief* with appearances by director Brian Percival, and actors Geoffrey Rush and Sophie Nélisse (*Monsieur Lazhar*). In a tribute to filmmaker Costa-Gavras (*Z*, *State of Siege*, *Amen*, *Missing*), MVFF will screen his latest thriller, *Capital*, and the master of cinema himself will participate in a conversation moderated by actor and activist Peter Coyote. Special festival premieres include *At Middleton* (with Andy Garcia and Vera Farmiga present) and *Beside Still Waters* (from writer-director Chris Lowell). There will be a 30th anniversary celebration of *Star Wars, Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*. The closing night finish is a tribute to director Ben Stiller, with the picture he both directed and stars in, the filmic adaptation of James Thurber’s classic *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*.

Watch the Trailer for *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*:



Andy Garcia and Vera Farmiga, At Middleton, Director Adam Rodgers / Photo courtesy of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Beyond the screenings and parties, there are multitude of enticing panels, master classes, and special events to lure you in – panels that focus on directors, to breaking barriers for women, to the state of independent cinema in light of the digital conversation that has shaken open wide the whole system; master classes with David Thomson (*Sins of the Father*) and Jan Troell (*The*

Emigrants, The Last Sentence). There is even a hike and skills exchange in Golden Gate National Park, Marin Headlands. Not only is the Mill Valley Film Festival extremely easy to navigate, it happens to take place in venues situated in Mill Valley, San Rafael, and Corte Madera, jewels of enchanted towns.

Director of Programming Zoe Elton calls *12 Years a Slave*, “a brilliant and devastating film” that “catches the zeitgeist” and “left her feeling changed.” If you want to see this film, and so many others, in advance of their national openings, by all means, make the trip north and cross the Golden Gate Bridge to give thanks for the abundant cultural feast that 2013 and the Mill Valley Film Festival has laid out before you.



Ben Stiller in The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, Director Ben Stiller / Photo Courtesy the Mill Valley Film Festival

Tickets are \$14, \$12.50 for seniors and students.

For additional information and to purchase tickets to The 36th Mill Valley Film Festival: <http://www.mvff.com/>

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