

HIFF: 23rd Annual Festival Examines Human Condition

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blockbusters and independent smashes for its annual lineup from Thursday, October 8, through Monday, October 12, which will draw movie buffs and celebrities alike to a slate of more than 130 films from 41 countries, with a curious blending of Hollywood royalty—Robert Redford, Meryl Streep, Christopher Walken, Michael Caine, Harvey Keitel, Tom Hanks, Olivia Wilde, Michael Keaton, Cate Blanchett and Ethan Hawke—with breakout stars and eye-opening documentaries, all lending their talent to films confronting the human condition with all its facets and flaws.

"Our goal each year is to pick films that our audience probably won't get a chance to see out here on the East End," HIFF Artistic Director David Nugent explained. "This year we reviewed 2,500 films, so we take a tremendous amount of care to choose films of the highest quality and to expose our audience to a comprehensive broad stroke of films from around the world."

The festival will open with James Vanderbilt's "Truth," starring Ms. Blanchett and Mr. Redford, on Thursday at Guild Hall in East Hampton and Regal East Hampton Cinema. The film examines the controversial investigation and news broadcast concerning George W. Bush's military career, which subsequently ended news anchor Dan Rather's journalistic endeavors.

In the wake of NBC newsman Brian Williams's recent fall from grace, the film is especially topical and easily lends itself to its inclusion in the "A Conversation With ..." series at Bay Street The-

ater in Sag Harbor. Mr. Rather will kick off the lineup on Saturday, followed by actress Emily Blunt and director Michael Moore on Sunday.

Opening night in Southampton will feature "Youth," directed by Paolo Sorrentino and starring Mr. Caine and Mr. Keitel, a story about two old friends who review their lives and careers—a composer/conductor and film director, respectively—while on vacation at a Swiss luxury resort and confront their feelings of melancholy.

"This is an incredibly beautiful film that's full of whimsy, unusual characters, musical flourish and non-sequiturs," Mr. Nugent said.

This year's Centerpiece films include Tom McCarthy's "Spotlight," a film about the journalism investigation into the Catholic Church that will make its East Coast premiere on Saturday, and "Carol," in which Ms. Blanchett makes her second appearance in the HIFF program alongside Rooney Mara. Based on the book "The Price of Salt" by Patricia Highsmith, "Carol"—from director Todd Haynes—peels back the layers of socially forbidden love between two women in the 1950s.

While films by well-known directors—such as Steven Spielberg's "Bridge of Spies" starring Tom Hanks, which will close the festival on Monday—are bound to get plenty of mainstream attention, there is a wealth of films that should not be overlooked, according to Mr. Nugent. Keeping with the celluloid thread of the human condition that continues throughout this year's lineup, Mr. Hawke steps into Chet Baker's shoes in "Born to be

Blue," portraying the jazz musician's troubled life that ended tragically in 1988 after Baker fell out of his hotel room window in Amsterdam.

Meanwhile, Olivia Wilde and Luke Wilson portray distraught parents in "Meadowland" after their child disappears; Ms. Streep, Helen Bonham Carter and Carey Mulligan are the epitome of strength and determination in the pursuit of a woman's right to vote in "Suffragette"; and in an interesting twist, "Where to Invade Next" from Mr. Moore has been described as "optimistic." Delightfully stepping out into the world on a Marco Polo-like expedition, Mr. Moore examines various European social norms and means—from banking to running a prison—in the hopes of having them adopted in 21st-century America.

New to the festival's focuses is the "Compassion, Justice and Animal Rights" programming, which includes "How to Change the World," a documentary about those who banded together and formed the Greenpeace movement, and "Captain Fish," an animated short for all ages about a young girl who starts saving her fish sticks when she realizes how and where her beloved fish sticks are made.

"We really like having films like this at the festival that can approach a heavy subject in an entertaining way without being didactic," Mr. Nugent said.

Rounding out the program is "The Champions," a documentary chronicling the adoption and rehabilitation of pit bulls that were used for dog fighting by former NFL quarterback Michael Vick. The dogs got a new lease, and Mr. Vick got the slammer.

"This is a signature program and the winner receives the 'Giving Voice to the Voiceless' award, which will be presented by animal rights advocate Zeldia Penzai," according to HIFF Executive Director Anne Chaisson. "Raising further awareness about the moral and ethical treatment of all animals from around the world was something we found



Dan Rather, Emily Blunt and Michael Moore will each participate in the "A Conversation With ..." this weekend at Bay Street Theater in Sag Harbor.

JOHN FILO AND PASCAL LE SEGRETAIR/GETTY IMAGES



Cate Blanchett as Mary Mapes and Robert Redford as Dan Rather in "Truth," which will open the Hamptons International Film Festival on Thursday in East Hampton.

LISA TOMASETTI/COURTESY SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

to be of extreme interest to the local community. So, incorporating the program into the festival was a natural fit."

On the local level, the "Views from Long Island" category is comprised of four feature films and two shorts that were either made on Long Island, or by filmmakers who live in the area. Robert Edwards directed the drama "When I Live My Life Over Again," starring Christopher Walken, a father-daughter tale filmed primarily in East Hampton. "Harry & Snowman," a documentary about legendary Long Island horse trainer Harry deLeyer and how the right horse and \$80 can sometimes be life changing, will screen on Sunday, as well as "How to Dance in Ohio" from East Hampton filmmaker Alexandra Shiva.

"This is a really sweet and mov-

ing film about young people who are at various stages of the autism spectrum and are preparing to go to their first school dance," Mr. Nugent said. "There is a compassion to the film that is uplifting as these teens prepare for the dance—from figuring out what to wear, to picking up on subtle social nuances—and how to overcome the fears and butterflies we all experience when we're young."

And one of the biggest must-sees during the festival is "He Named Me Malala," from director David Guggenheim, who is also behind "An Inconvenient Truth" and "It Might Get Loud." Screening on Friday and Sunday, this film is part of the "Conflict and Resolution" category, as it shines a light on Malala Yousafzai, the Gandhi-like heroine who captured the world's

attention after she was brutally shot, and became one of the most eloquent voices for women's rights and education in Afghanistan and the world.

Real people, real events and real issues are omnipresent at this year's HIFF. Is it neo-cinema verite, or a newfound voyeuristic component that has crept into all of our lives, intellectually or not, engaging our endless fascination with what will happen next in the human condition?

Stay tuned.

The 23rd annual Hamptons International Film Festival will kick off on Thursday, October 8, and run through Monday, October 12, with screenings, panel discussions and red carpet walks at theaters from Westhampton to Montauk. For a complete schedule of events, or to purchase tickets, visit hamptonsfilmfest.org.



A still from "Room."

COURTESY HAMPTONS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

THIS FALL AT THE PARRISH

EXHIBITIONS

Platform: Tara Donovan
Through October 12

Andreas Gursky: Landscapes
Through October 18

Permanent Collection: Art. Illuminated.
Through November