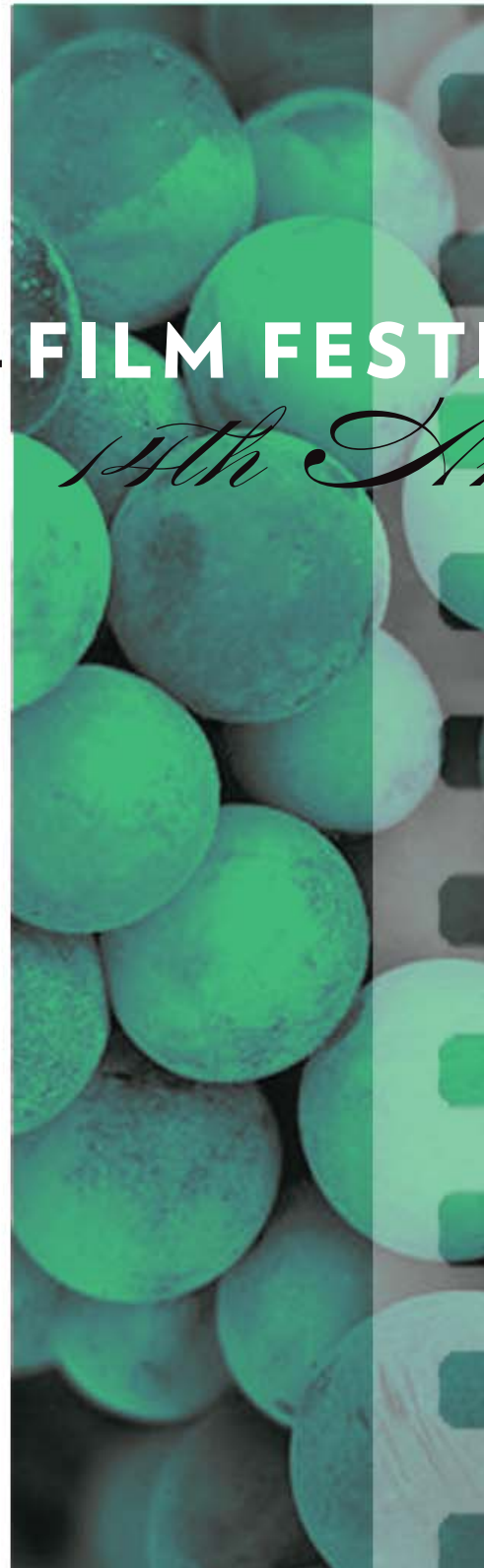


PRESS KIT

SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

*14th Anniversary*





# THE 14th ANNUAL SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL APRIL 6-10, 2011

*A celebration of film, food & wine*

Set amidst the unparalleled beauty of the Sonoma Valley Wine Country, the 14th Annual Sonoma International Film Festival welcomes filmmakers and film lovers on April 6th-10th, 2011, to a sun-drenched, luxurious extended weekend, pairing new independent films from around the world with great food and wine.



## About the Sonoma International Film Festival

The Sonoma International Film Festival is one of the top destination film festivals in the world and, located in the heart of wine country, is uniquely positioned to be a lively celebration of film, food and wine. An annual gathering for film industry insiders, cinema enthusiasts, filmmakers and critics, SIFF is considered among the most scenic and epicurean venues to experience the art of film.

Founded in 1997, The Sonoma International Film Festival is a five day international event that takes pride in showcasing emerging talent and featuring unreleased films. The exciting film schedule is complimented by special events, unique panel discussions, and a one-of-a-kind hospitality tent. It's to that lounge atmosphere that festival goers are drawn to mingle and enjoy lively discussions about the films and programs presented while enjoying the best of wine country vintages and culinary delights.

SIFF is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. The Festival supports the Sonoma Valley High School Media Arts program established over a decade ago by the Sonoma Film Society.

## The 2010 Festival

Highlights from the 13th annual Sonoma International Film Festival in April 2010 include: 74 independent films from 12 different countries in six sensational screening venues serving food, wine and beer. Feature films, documentaries, shorts, world cinema, animation, and student films comprised the sensational Festival program. The "Backlot" hospitality tent served as the Festival Hub and featured the best of Sonoma's



## At A Glance

- \*18,000 Festival goers who enjoyed the best in film, food and wine
- \*100 volunteers who really run the show(s)
- \*74 independent films from 12 different countries
- \*125 Film Society Patron who enjoyed VIP treatment at the parties & screenings
- \*22 corporate sponsors had excellent exposure for their products & access to the Festival goers
- \*15 special events from the Opening Night pre-film reception to the Awards Ceremony
- \*6 screening venues within walking distance of the Sonoma Plaza
- \*4 days filled with film, friends, and festivities

Celebrities who have been honored by the Sonoma Film Festival over the years:

Danny Glover  
Michael Keaton  
Matthew Modine  
Robert Forster  
Saul Zaentz  
Blythe Danner  
John Lasseter  
Bruce Willis  
Lauren Hutton  
Robin Williams  
John Ratzenberger  
Alexander Payne  
Joe Pantoliano  
Jon Favreau  
Cheech Marin



## The Face Behind The Festival - Kevin W. McNeely

Kevin McNeely is a favorite face about Sonoma – not only during the annual Film Festival, but in the details of community life: McNeely can often be found pouring wine and hosting the summer outdoor film series at the Sonoma Plaza, contributing to numerous charities in town and poking his head in the Sonoma High Media Arts Program as he tours the program funded by the Sonoma International Film Society. He is appreciated for his gregarious greetings, friendly smile and heartfelt support for people he meets along the way. But don't let the affability fool you – Kevin's sharp mind and business acumen quietly provide the backbone for the Festival's continued leadership.

According to McNeely, running an international film festival is a combination of “project management skills, integrity, and of course – a love of motion pictures.” His career started in NYC where he worked on a couple of movies – at one point meeting then stand-in Bruce Willis, now a long time friend who earned a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Festival in 2009 – before producing shows for ESPN. It was during his episodic television career that Kevin worked with a variety of personalities in challenging circumstances, which he credits for instilling the grit it takes to run an entire film festival.

After living and working in NYC, Kevin moved to the west coast. Having gone to school in California, he welcomed the opportunity to return. A partner of a leading San Francisco restaurant and a small winery in Sonoma, Kevin appreciates the epicurean delights of life in Northern California.

Once settled in the town of Sonoma, Kevin and his wife Rosemary sought out philanthropic interests in the community and both are well-respected supporters of many local causes. Kevin got involved in the early stages of the Film Festival's “humble beginnings with committed individuals who wanted to bring a unique cultural asset to our community.” Having held advisory and Board positions in the past, Kevin eventually found himself Chairman of the Board and Festival Director.

Kevin is proud of the Festival, which he says is a true collaborative effort - “A talented and capable staff has grown the Festival into one of the top ten destination film festivals in the world – a celebration of film, food and wine.” He points out that multinational companies sponsor today's Festival, and equally important, that the Festival is embraced by local businesses, wineries, and patrons. McNeely says education is a key component of the organization; the Sonoma International Film Society started the Media Arts Program at Sonoma Valley High School ten





### Q& A with Kevin:

First Cinematic Memory : Ben-Hur

Coolest Villian: Alan Rickman

Most Daring Hero: Of course – Officer John McClane!

Best Movie Soundtrack: A tie – Saturday Night Fever & Pulp Fiction

Your Opinion of Popcorn at the Movies: Never enough!

A Classic That Should Be Remade: To Catch A Thief

Your “Go To” Film Source: Cevin Cathell (Sonoma Film Festival Program Director)

Most Under-rated Film: Harold & Maude

Favorite Holiday Film: A tie – A Wonderful Life and Love Actually

Memorable Sonoma International Film Festival Moment: When the screen goes suddenly dark – midfilm - and Robin Williams stands up in the dimly lit Sebastiani Theatre to deliver his “shtik” until the projectionist resolves the problem so the show can go on.

Favorite Film Legend: Sean Connery

First Film Festival You Attended: Sundance



## Sonoma & Cinema “Epicurea”

Among destination film festivals the world over, The Sonoma International Film Festival is the cinema lovers chance to indulge all their senses – Sonoma’s temperate climate, stunning landscapes, abundance of quality wineries and access to fresh, seasonal produce make this Valley an epicurean dream. The annual Film Festival is the perfect opportunity to pair your love of film with world class food and wine.

The Sonoma Film Festival has a unique set of friends and neighbors – wineries, restaurants, organic produce farmers, olive growers, and inspired chefs who all conspire to make your visit to the Festival a gourmet escape like no other.

Sonoma was recently earned the “citta slow” designation – the first U.S. city to receive this distinctive classification that includes not only slow food and a rich agricultural bounty, but a community attitude that savors life along with all the delights of food and wine. This cozy ambiance drifts into the spirit of the Festival where it is paired with the thrill of celebrity, the creative inspiration of independent film and the excitement of a world class festival.

### Some of our local sponsors include:

Benziger Family Winery  
Gloria Ferrer Winery  
Nicholson Ranch  
Sebastiani Vineyards and Winery  
Lasseter Family Winery  
Gundlach Bundschu  
MacMurray Ranch  
Muscardini Cellars  
Arrowood Winery  
Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery  
Buena Vista Winery  
Bartholomew Park Winery  
Deerfield Winery  
Wendy’s Sonoma Valley Wineshack  
The Farm at Carneros Inn  
Meritage Restaurant  
Café la Haye





## Sonoma International Film Society

The Sonoma International Film Society is a cultural and philanthropic organization committed to supporting the art of independent films and the enrichment of Sonoma Valley High School's Media Arts program. The generous donations of Film Society Patrons provide the financial foundation for a vibrant cinematic festival held each spring in the town of Sonoma, CA.

### Film Society Annual Membership

\$150 – Invited to Monthly Cinema Series and eligible as a screener for all Festival film submissions, access to Festival Library (best films of last 6 years), “Bring A Friend” coupons for cinema series, 25% off April's Festival Pass if you decide to attend.

### PATRONAGE LEVELS AND BENEFITS

#### Sonoma International Film Society Patrons

Investor \$25,000

Executive \$ 10,000

Producer \$5,000

Director \$1,500

All Levels of Film Society Patrons Receive the Following Membership Benefits From Your Tax Deductible Donation:

\*Year-Round invitations to all SIFF hosted monthly events including: Cinema Series, Sneak Previews, Receptions, Lectures, Dinners, Filmmaker Q&A, Special Events and Programs, Wine Tours and Tastings, etc...

\* All Access to Festival Films and Events During the SIFF Including: Pre-Opening Party at the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, Opening Reception at MacArthur Place, Festival Gala, Filmmakers Lunches and Dinners, VIP and After Parties, Opening and Closing Night Film Screenings, Spotlight Tribute, Closing Night Awards Party, and Filmmaker Reception.

\*Exclusively Reserved Seating, Held By Patron Name





## Sonoma International Film Festival Passes & Privileges

**Star Pass** \$750 individual/\$1,400 couple (Includes Monthly Cinema Series Hosted by Film Society)

\* All Access to Festival Films and Events During the SIFF Including:  
Pre-Opening Party at the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, Opening Reception at MacArthur Place, Festival Gala, Filmmakers Lunches and Dinners, VIP and After Parties, Opening and Closing Night Film Screenings, Spotlight Tribute, Awards Party, and Filmmaker Reception

\* Fast Lane Entry to all Festival Events for priority seating

\* All-Inclusive Food and Wine at the Hospitality Tent in our Back Lot

**Premiere Pass** \$300/\$550 (early bird pricing, good until 2/14/11. Does Not Include Monthly Cinema Series Hosted by Film Society)

\* Guaranteed Access to Festival Films and Programs during the SIFF including:  
Opening Night Film Screening and After Party, Festival Gala, Spotlight Tribute, Closing Night Film Screening and Awards Party.

\* Four Food and Wine Tickets for the Hospitality Tent in our Back Lot

**Festival Pass** \$150/\$275 (early bird pricing, good until 2/14/11)

\* Access to Films and Programs including: Film Screenings, Panels and Discussions, and Closing Night Film Screening & Awards Ceremony.

**Day Pass** \$60 (early bird pricing, good until 2/14/11)

\* Access to Film Screenings For Day Purchased

**Single Film Tickets** \$10



## Youth Education

The Sonoma International Film Society helped establish the Sonoma Valley High School Media Arts program ten years ago and through its continual support, has built it into a first class Film and Broadcast Television facility. The student program, under the direction of Peter Hansen, opens doorways to creativity in the digital arts through filmmaking classes, animation, scriptwriting, film theory, live television broadcasting, and most of all - storytelling. Hansen's favorite line with his students is: Story, story, story!

Hansen's lab, on the Sonoma High campus, is easily as sophisticated as many local television broadcast stations. His philosophy is a practical one - "Train them on the best equipment possible, so when they get their first job, they will shine!" The impressive displays of dozens of high end Macintosh Computers, video equipment, and a complete Broadcasting studio often surprises visitors to the program. In addition to the cutting-edge equipment, The Film Society and generous community donors fund partial salary and benefit costs, weekend and after-school workshops, and other program expenses.

Hansen's devotion doesn't stop when the school day ends. After working all week, he often chaperones Friday Film Nights at the campus Media Lounge - a media club house/art lounge - keeping kids safe and encouraging their love and exploration of the film arts. It is this sort of enthusiasm and engagement that allows him to be a trusted advisor to so many. Through a balance of encouragement, mutual respect and established responsibility, Hansen has captured the respect of many students who proudly call him their mentor. In addition, parents of film students are grateful for their child's enthusiasm and interest. Hansen says, "I have seen many students graduate who would have normally dropped out because they were inspired by the film class and stayed on to at least get a diploma."

Each year, the students produce up to twenty short films which are presented during the Sonoma International Film Festival; many attendees consider this to be one of the highlights of the Festival. There are two student showings on the big screen, on the biggest day of the festival. "They feel like rock stars," Hansen says, then adds - "No....they are Rock Stars, if only for a day!"

Kimberly Hughes, a long-time Festival Board member, joins Peter each year, producing short films with Middle School Students over an intense three-day workshop at the Boys and Girls Club in Sonoma. These short PSA style films are included in the Student Works Screenings. All of the student films that come out of the Media Arts Program are a Festival show-stopper. Often a crowd of over 300 students, parents, indie filmmakers, and industry professionals whistle and cheer on the student film makers - a true celebration of budding film makers, and a day they will never forget.

### About Peter Hansen

Peter Hansen studied Journalism, Broadcast Journalism, Advertising and Speech Communications at San



## Contact and general information

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