

WAKEFIELD INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL **WIFF** FESTIVAL DU FILM INTERNATIONAL DE WAKEFIELD

WAKEFIELD FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2016 LINEUP

(Wakefield, QC) Wakefield International Film Festival (WIFF) is proud to announce a stellar lineup for its 7th annual festival. It's a program with depth, intended to encourage discussion through visits by filmmakers, panel discussions, and the like. Most of the films chart difficulties current in the world – peace making, gender inequality, the threatened environment, finding alternative ways of living – but offer to 'find a way through,' instead of being merely depressing. There is also breathtaking beauty here. And intriguing sleuthing. Oh: and a real, bona fide Oscar™ will be putting in an appearance – you can have your picture taken with him on the red carpet! Eight films. Four weekends. Two screenings for each film. 6 – 28 February. What better way to spend the ice dog days of February? Here's what you'll see:

February 6 & 7 – The festival opens with the **English language premiere** of *In Pursuit of Peace*, directed by Montreal filmmaker, Garry Beitel. This riveting film makes the case for unarmed civilian peace building and mediation as a response to violent international conflict. It follows four Canadian peacemakers in their work in some of the world's hottest conflict zones, highlighting their hopes and challenges as they try to create alternatives to violence. **Director Garry Beitel will attend for the first screening, 4pm on February 6th.**

Then, WIFF is privileged to present the **Canadian premiere** of the magnificent *Breath of Life*, a 'strikingly beautiful film' (*Greenpeace co-founder Michael Bailey*) from Hawaii which deftly weaves the ideas of some of the world's great thinkers with those of farmers, native Hawaiian wisdom keepers, and various others who love the land, sea, sky, rivers and lifeforms of Earth, all in an attempt to find out exactly WHY we're where we are now, as well as possible paths of redemption. **A panel discussion with audience participation will follow the film's 4pm screening on February 7th.**

February 13 & 14 – Charles Wilkinson's *Haida Gwaii: On the Edge of the World* tells the story of the Haida people, their reclamation and rebuilding of their lands, along with their responses to current threats. They just may be creating a path forward that the rest of us can follow. Winner of many awards, including *Best Canadian Feature Documentary* at Hot Docs 2015 and *Most Popular Canadian Documentary* at the Vancouver Film Festival 2015. **A panel discussion with questions from the audience will follow the film's 4pm screening on February 13th.**

The uplifting, joyous documentary *Mavis!*, directed by Jessica Edwards, is the first film ever about the gospel & soul music legend and civil rights activist Mavis Staples and her family group, *The Staple Singers*. From the freedom songs of the '60s to today at age 75, Mavis has stayed true to her roots. Her message of life and equality is needed now more than ever. "A spirited and captivating bio-doc that richly deserves the exclamation point in its title." (Variety) **Bring your sweetie to the 4pm show on Valentine's Day and celebrate with us.**

February 20 & 21 – WIFF's third weekend begins with Su Rynard's visually stunning and elegiac documentary, *The Messenger*, a film which examines our deep connection to birds and warns the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own. On one level the film tells of their mass depletion, and on the other, tells the story of the many people who are working to save them. "Th(is) documentary is ... beautiful, heartbreaking and inspiring all at once." reellifewithjane.com **At the 4pm show on February 20th, the film's producer Joanne Jackson and others will discuss the film and the plight of songbirds with the audience.**

Also up this third weekend is *Painted Land: In Search of the Group of Seven*, directed by Phyllis Ellis. With dramatic readings by some of Canada's greatest actors weaving the historical into the present-day, this film follows historian Michael Burtch and writer/photographer team Gary and Joanie McGuffin, as they try to track down precise locations of some of the Group of Seven artists' most iconic paintings. **Director Phyllis Ellis is slated to appear at the February 21, 4pm screening, for a Q & A with the audience.** As an added bonus, for one screening only after the February 21, 4pm screening of *Painted Land*, WIFF is hosting a 'working copy premiere' of *The Man Who Built Cambodia*, Christopher Rompré's fascinating short doc exploring the life and works of Cambodian architect Vann Molyvann, set against the turbulent late 20th century history of that country.

February 27 & 28 – The festival's last weekend has a 40th anniversary party in store – with Oscar™ on hand! In 1975, local filmmaker Budge Crawley netted Canada's first Best Feature Length Documentary Academy Award™ with the remarkable *The Man Who Skied Down Everest*. The film follows the still-unbelievable story of the "grandfather of extreme skiing," Yuichiro Miura, and his ski down Mount Everest's South Col in May, 1970. Breathtaking. To say the least. Douglas Rain (the voice of HAL in *2001* and long-time actor at Stratford Festival) reads an English language translation of Miura's inner feelings from his journal, which are steeped in Japanese philosophy and set a contemplative mood. **Come to the February 27th, 4pm screening for the Oscar™ party!**

The second film on WIFF's closing weekend is current festival darling *Driving With Selvi*, directed by Elisa Paloschi. It concerns a young woman from South India who bucks her patriarchal society, leaves the violent and abusive husband she was married to as a child bride and, against all odds, becomes South India's first female taxi driver. (*Truth to Power Documentary Award*, Reel Asian International Film Festival, 2015) **Director Elisa Paloschi and Selvi, the subject of the film, will be in attendance at the February 28th, 4pm show for a Q & A with the audience.**

Wakefield International Film Festival screenings take place at the Wakefield Centre La Pêche, 38 Valley Drive, Wakefield, QC, a lovely 20-minute drive from downtown Ottawa, perhaps longer if it's snowing... Ticket prices for festival screenings all include tax. A single admission is \$15. A weekend pass for one, which includes a \$10 restaurant coupon and a drink at the Wakefield Centre La Pêche bar, plus admission to two films, is \$37. There is also a Party Pass of 10 admissions, fully transferable, for \$120. Tickets are available online www.centrewakefieldlapeche.ca/event-2110598 or at the door. Arrive early. Passes (not single tickets) are also available at the Wakefield Centre La Pêche, Wakefield Express and La Tulipe Noire.

All of this, plus more information about our films, is at: www.wakefieldfilmfestival.ca

Robert Rooney, who founded WIFF in 2010 with wife and partner Brenda Rooney, curated this 2016 festival. It was his last artistic endeavour before he passed away January 5, 2016. Robert believed in the power of documentary film both as an agent of change, and also as a means to share the experience of life, art, music and history. The festival was founded as an expression of this, to run an annual series of the best of current international documentary film, and to provide a forum for discussion of issues raised by these screenings.