

**DOCLANDS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL COMES TO A CLOSE
WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE OVERALL
AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD
IMMEDIATE FAMILY**

**DOCPITCH AWARDS \$100,000 TO
DOCUMENTARY FILMS CURRENTLY IN PRODUCTION**



Photo Courtesy of Immediate Family Film

San Rafael, CA (May 15, 2023) – DocLands Documentary Film Festival concluded Sunday, May 14, after five days of in-person screenings at the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center with the announcement of the overall 2023 DocLands Audience Choice Award for Denny Tedesco's entertaining follow-up to his acclaimed documentary "The Wrecking Crew," **Immediate Family** chronicles the journey of a group of close friends who became the premiere studio band for the musical icons of the '70s and beyond, giving us a backstage tour of rock history.

Because the audience spoke clearly through a comparable number of votes for an incomparable film, a special 2023 Audience Impact Award was also announced for director Matt Waldeck's **Lovely Jackson**, a boldly cinematic true story about the triumph of hope, forgiveness, and perseverance through the darkest and most hopeless of circumstances that begins in violence and ends with the brightness of love.

Throughout the five days, there were many highlights, including the [North American Premieres](#) of **Brother Horse** followed by a live Zoom conversation with film subject Santi Serra; and **The Nettle Dress** followed by an on-stage discussion with filmmaker Dylan Howitt and subject Allan Brown; and the [US Premiere](#) of **Razing Liberty Square** with director Katja Esson, producer Corinna Sager, creative producer Ronald Baez, and film subject Aaron McKinney. The Rafael was bristling with excitement as filmmakers and film subjects from across the country showed up to introduce audiences to their latest projects including the [West Coast Premieres](#) of **Coldwater Kitchen** with filmmaker Brian Kaufman, **Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project** with filmmakers Joe Brewster & Michèle Stephenson, **Mom & Dad's Nipple Factory**, a 2021 DocPitch Finalist, with filmmaker Justin Johnson (aka JustinSuperstar), producer Jason Cohen,

and film subject Randi Johnson, and **No Legs. All Heart.** with filmmaker Pablo Durana and subject André Kajlich joining via Zoom.

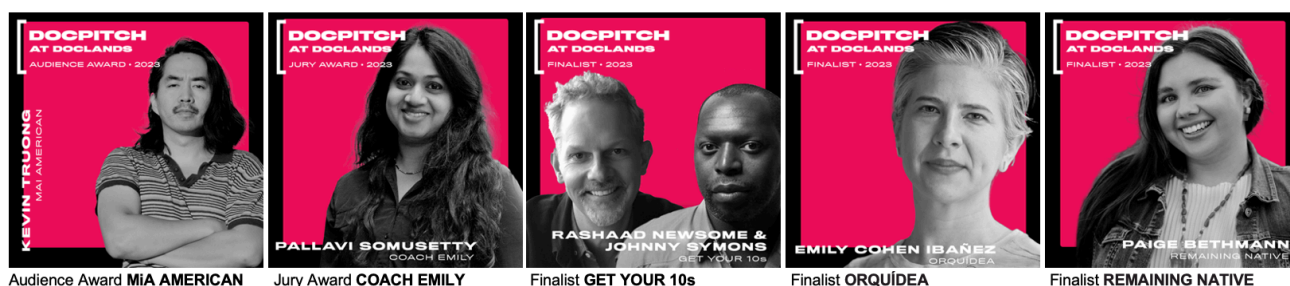
DocLands Honors Award was presented to the esteemed filmmaker Dawn Porter for her timely commentary on numerous subjects with social and political relevance. The award presentation was followed by an in-depth conversation about her craft as a documentarian, focusing on the original and insightful perspective she brings to each of her films. Through her lens, she gives us a glimpse into the lives, times, and importance of some of the most remarkable American artists, politicians, humanitarians, and social justice activists of our times. And the California Premiere of her latest project *The Lady Bird Diaries*.



L-R: Joanne Parsont (CAFILM Director of Education), Taige Shi, Diana Sanchez, Kristy Guevara-Flanagan, Wyatt Wu, Aldo Schwartz, Armando Gray // Photo ©Tommy Lau Photography

DocLands Education further expanded its outreach to the college student community this year, welcoming a group of undergraduate and graduate students from UCLA to experience every aspect of the festival. Five students and their documentary film professor attended numerous screenings and special events per day as well as a dedicated immersion program that included a private breakfast and conversation with director Jesse Short Bull (*Lakota Nation vs. The United States*), a presentation by the CAFILM Education team about the ins and outs of film festival submissions and participation, and a lunch listening session with CAFILM staff to learn how best to meet the needs and interests of emerging young filmmakers and film students. DocLands Education also continued its virtual program offering online screenings, paired with discussion guides, lesson plans, and film analysis toolkits to help integrate the films into the classroom curriculum and the popular Filmmakers Go to School program taking filmmakers both virtually and in-person into schools to meet and discuss their films and the art and craft of filmmaking with students.

DocLands 2023 also concluded with the announcement of four juried industry awards totaling \$55,000 and a \$45,000 Audience Award. The awards were distributed Sunday morning, May 14, 2023, through the CAFILM fundraising initiative **DocPitch**, designed to aid filmmakers in completing their feature-length documentary film projects currently in production, with support from the Nancy P. & Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation and Resonance Philanthropies.



DocPitch Award Recipients

\$45,000 Audience Award	MAI AMERICAN , director Kevin Truong
\$40,000 Jury Award	COACH EMILY , director Pallavi Somusetty
\$5,000 Finalist	GET YOUR 10s , directors Rashaad Newsome, Johnny Symons
\$5,000 Finalist	ORQUÍDEA , director Emily Cohen Ibañez
\$5,000 Finalist	REMAINING NATIVE , director Paige Bethmann

“With over 100 worthy submissions this year, the juries had the most difficult task of winnowing that number down to five finalists for the Audience and Jury Awards. I would like to thank and acknowledge all of them. I am grateful to our DocPitch funders who allow us to support these documentary filmmakers with vital funds to put toward any necessary budget line items toward the completion of this wonderfully diverse set of projects that reflect the beauty and challenges of lived experiences and that open unique perspectives to us all,” said DocLands Director of Programming Joni Coor. “I also feel fortunate to be able to introduce the audience to the decision-making process. After all, it’s they who ultimately hold the economic power collectively, to keep theatre venues open and flourishing. We’re honored to provide a vehicle that in this way helps produce films that enlighten, enrich, and entertain audiences worldwide.

After the audience votes were carefully verified and tallied, we’re delighted to announce that the \$45,000 Audience Award went to director Kevin Truong for an intimate tribute to his mother, **Mai American**.

The journey of making my film, **Mai American**, has been the most difficult thing I’ve ever done. It’s been full of many rejections and my fair share of wins but finding out I won the Audience Award at DocPitch--well, in many ways, it felt like I hit an emotional peak,” said award-winner **Kevin Truong**. “Pitching a film for the world to see is a scary thing, especially a personal documentary. But over the past two weeks, I was reminded that an incredible community is showing up for me. A community of friends, family, supporters, filmmakers, funders, old classmates, and even strangers. The entire process was humbling. I am beyond grateful for this amazing opportunity and support--thank you DocPitch at DocLands, presented by the California Film Institute, for giving it to me! Finally, I have absolute love and respect for the other filmmakers: Pallavi, Debra, Paige, Emily, Sara, and Rashaad and Johnny. Thank you for doing the work in telling these stories. It’s an honor to be in the community with you! DocPitch affirmed that there is an audience for my film, and this funding brings me so much closer to getting it done and telling a story that will make my mom and my communities proud!”

An industry jury comprised of Paola Mottura of the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Fund, Eric Johnson, SVP, Sound & Engagement Trailblazer Studios, and Annie Roney, Founder & CEO, of ROCO Films presented the \$40,000 Industry Award to director Pallavi Somusetty for her project **Coach Emily**. The remaining three finalists each receive \$5,000, with all funds going toward the continued development and production of the films.

“From the moment that we were selected as DocPitch finalists to now, hearing that we received the Jury Award, we have felt the power of community big time,” said award recipient **Pallavi Somusetty**. “We have received so many messages of support from our future audience members, and other funders are reaching out too. Community is what roots our story to us and what supports our film’s participants through their journeys. We feel very blessed to be telling Emily’s coaching story and now to be part of the DocLands family. We give thanks to Joni and DocLands for uplifting our film and us as filmmakers.”

The DocPitch Industry Jury would like to congratulate all the filmmakers for their unique projects and wish them all a smooth road to completion as they all have all the necessary components in place for success.

Eric Johnson admitted to “a nearly impossible task of choosing one film out of five incredible finalists for the Jury Award. I'm particularly happy to see *Coach Emily* receive the Jury Award because as an African American, I can only imagine the impact of seeing a film centering black and brown people in the outdoors would have had on me as a young person and on my daughters and son. I'm sure this film will open a lot of eyes and provide new perspectives and possibilities for people of all colors. Kudos to DocLands and the DocPitch program for presenting such an amazing and diverse group of finalists!”

Annie Roney says, “*Coach Emily* has the story, the characters, and the heart that is needed in this moment. As a film, the imagery is fresh and new...simply put, women of color just aren't cast as central characters in the natural world, and if you don't see it, you can't be it. The film has the potential to inspire a whole generation of black and brown girls to seek the profound joy and peace that nature provides. I'll be rooting for *Coach Emily* to make its way to the top!

As a founding member of DocLands Advisory Group, Paola Mottura sees “*Coach Emily* as a perfect fit for DocPitch with its great premise and a lot of heart. Coach Emily seems an extraordinarily resilient woman whose impact on the lives of the girls goes way beyond the sport, and rock climbing becomes a metaphor for life with Coach Emily preparing the girls to be empowered, resilient, and liberated young women.”

The six previous DocPitch Audience Award winners include Theo Rigby's ***Sanctuary Rising*** (2017), completion scheduled for late 2023; James LeBrecht and Nicole Newnham's 2020 Independent Spirit Award-winning documentary ***Crip Camp*** (2018), which Netflix acquired, and was nominated in the Best Documentary Feature category at the 2020 Academy Awards®; Chris Temple and Zach Ingrasci's ***Five Years North*** (2019), which screened at many film festivals, including DocLands 2020; Dianne Whelan's ***500 Days in the Wild*** (2020) completion scheduled for 2024; Maren Poitras' ***Finding the Money*** (2021) completion planned for 2023; and Alana Maiello's ***Chewed Gum*** (2022) completion expected for 2023.

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About DocLands

Presented by the California Film Institute, DocLands Documentary Film Festival brings compelling stories and the provocative insights behind them to Marin County, California. Expanding upon the exchange of ideas and inspiration through public screenings, networking and pitching events, and engaged conversations, DocLands aims to bring diverse communities together for dialogue and to build an active, inclusive, and fully supportive community around documentary film and is dedicated to initiating connections and partnerships that will illuminate and invigorate the business and art of non-fiction filmmakers.

DOCLANDS Sections

Art of Impact engages and sparks action by sharing stories that open our eyes to the global community and its disparate cultures, politics, personal narratives, and biographies.

The Great Outdoors transports us outside to truly appreciate, explore, and ultimately compel us to save and conserve our environment and the wilds of our precious and precarious planet.

WonderLands lifts our spirits through stories of joy, wonder, and possibility.

About California Film Institute

The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is a non-profit organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting film and media arts through the presentation of the internationally acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival, DocLands Documentary Film Festival, and the ongoing cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and film lovers through CAFILM Education. CAFILM Education features a broad range of activities, including screenings, Q&A sessions, seminars with top international & local filmmakers and industry professionals, and a rich program of classes and hands-on workshops. Additionally, CAFILM acts as a year-round film-centric town hall with a diverse calendar of programming at the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, one of the leading non-profit independent theatres in the country. The art of storytelling through film enables CAFILM to touch 275,000 guests throughout the year with films and events that entertain and address a breadth of social, environmental, and cultural issues. CAFILM is also the majority owner of the Sequoia Theater in Mill Valley, California. CAFILM relies on the generosity of its community to sustain these core programs; the invaluable support of our sponsors, foundations, individual donors, and members ensures our continued success. For more information, visit cafilm.org.

Supporters | DocLands

CAFILM is proud to acknowledge Vickie Soulier, the Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, Project No. 9, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Bellam Self Storage and Boxes, Jackson Square Partners, Jim Boyce Trust and Kris Otis, Community Action Marin, AC San Rafael Marriott, and the Academy of Integrated Humanities and New Media for their generous support of DOCLANDS. We are also fortunate to have the contributions of the following DocPitch supporters Nancy P. & Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation and Resonance Philanthropies.

Land Acknowledgement

The California Film Institute and the DocLands Documentary Film Festival are located in Marin County, California, on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homelands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples. This includes the Southern Pomo and Graton Rancheria Tribes. These tribes were removed or displaced from their lands. We recognize this history and the harm to present-day Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples and to their ancestors. The California Film Institute commits to moving forward from a place of authenticity and working with present-day tribes to elevate their stories, history, and present-day legacy through film.

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