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MEDIA ALERT

DOCLANDS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL
A Celebration of Documentary Filmmaking

Wednesday, April 30 – Sunday, May 4, 2024

Location for all Screenings: **Smith Rafael Film Center** • 1118 4th Street, San Rafael, CA

This year's festival features 25 compelling premieres, including three World Premieres (*The Invisible Mammal*, *Frozen in Time*, *Thaw*); two North American Premieres (*The Renaissance Prince*, *You Need This*); and four U.S. Premieres (*Ghost of the Sea*, *Sons*, *The Last Expedition*, *Dangerous Games: Roblox and Metaverse Exposed*).

FULL SCHEDULE
(Alphabetical Listing)

DOCPITCH – Championing the Future of Documentary Filmmaking

Highlighting the future of documentary filmmaking, DocPitch showcases exceptional projects in development. This dynamic event provides filmmakers with a unique platform to present their work to a panel of industry experts and an engaged audience. The selected finalists represent the forefront of documentary filmmaking, addressing pressing issues such as climate change, human rights, and cultural heritage — while offering fresh perspectives on resilience and change.

Now in its ninth year, DocPitch 2025 will feature a **hybrid format**, with in-person live pitching and voting at the Smith Rafael Film Center and virtual participation available at doclands.com/docpitch.

Global Premiere & Audience Voting:

- **Friday, April 11 @ 10:00 AM (PT):** Filmmaker pitches debut online; online voting opens.
- **Friday, April 25, at 11:59 PM (PT):** Online voting for the Audience Award closes.
- **Wednesday, April 30 @ 7:00 PM (PT):** In-person filmmaker pitches and Audience Award voting at the Smith Rafael Film Center.

With generous support from the Nancy P. & Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation and Resonance Philanthropies, DocPitch 2025 will award **\$100,000 in grants** to five independent documentary film teams, helping them complete feature-length projects currently in development or production.

Feature Films (Alphabetical Order)

CHAMPIONS OF THE GOLDEN VALLEY – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 12:00 PM**

Director: Ben Sturgulewski | US 2024 • 106 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Language: In English and Persian with English Subtitles

Young Afghan athletes from rival villages build makeshift wooden skis and convene for a mountain race that unites the community in a moment of peace and triumph just before many of the skiers are displaced.

DANGEROUS GAMES: ROBLOX AND THE METAVERSE EXPOSED – US PREMIERE

Screening: **Screening: Sunday, May 4 @ 5:30 PM**

Director: Ann Shin | Canada 2024 • 103 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

*In Person: Director **Ann Shin**; Local Metaverse Expert **Kavya Perlman***

When Alex discovers a dark side of the metaverse, where predators, extremists, and hate groups exploit platforms like Roblox and Minecraft, she teams up with a group of young investigators to expose the truth. Their search leads them to a predator with hundreds of victims—and a kidnapped child—revealing the devastating consequences of a system failing to protect its most vulnerable users.

THE DREAMERS AND I

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 3:15 PM**

Director: Kenji Yamamoto | US 2025 • 98 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Language: In English, Spanish, and Turkish with English Subtitles

*In Person: Director **Kenji Yamamoto**; Producer **Nancy Kelly***

Set in a Silicon Valley hacker house, THE DREAMERS AND I is a startling exploration of how innovative and disruptive ideas are incubated, nurtured, and – all too often – shattered. It all unfolds in a Silicon Valley “hacker house.”

FLIGHT 149: HOSTAGE OF WAR – CALIFORNIA PREMIERE

Screening: **Friday, May 2 @ 4:30 PM**

Director: Jenny Ash | UK 2024 • 129 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Language: In Arabic and English with English Subtitles

*Expected Guest: Director **Jenny Ash***

When Flight 149 landed in the middle of a warzone, the passengers and crew became human shields for Saddam Hussein. Thirty years later, the hostages are launching a legal case to discover the truth about why the plane landed in the first place.

*The feature will be preceded by the short film **We Were the Scenery**.*

FREE LEONARD PELTIER

Screening: **Friday, May 2 @ 3:30 PM**

Director(s): David France, Jesse Short Bull | US 2025 • 115 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Half a century ago, the US government put Leonard Peltier in prison for murder. This year, he's now home – but not yet pardoned, and still innocent.

FROZEN IN TIME – WORLD PREMIERE

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 2:00 PM**

Director: Niobe Thompson | Canada 2025 • 127 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

*Expected Guest: Director **Niobe Thompson***

*The feature will be preceded by two short films, **Usugilix Awakun**, and **The Last Observers**.*

Discover the amazing creatures of Canada's prehistoric Arctic, through the astonishing story of a groundbreaking scientist.

GHOSTS OF THE SEA (LES ENFANTS DU LARGE) – US PREMIERE

Screening: **Friday, May 2 @ 4:00 PM**

Director: Virginia Tangvald | Canada, France 2024 • 122 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Language: In English and French with English Subtitles

*Expected Guest: Director **Virginia Tangvald***

While searching for clues about the death of her brother, who was lost at sea, Virginia Tangvald embarks on a fascinating investigation into her family's dark secrets. Calling into question the idyllic life of her father, legendary sailor Peter Tangvald, her quest dismantles the myth of absolute freedom and offers the hope that a toxic cycle has been broken.

I NEED YOU: 53 YEARS OF THE BAND AMERICA – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Day, May # @ Time PM**

Director(s): Dustin Elm, David Breschel | US 2024 • 129 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Expected Guest: Director(s) **Dustin Elm, David Breschel**; Executive Producer, **Frank Pollifrone**; Producer **Jack Piatt**

After 53 consecutive years of touring and over 5,000 electrifying performances, the iconic duo of America reflect on their past as they privately say goodbye to a lifetime together on the road.

INCANDESCENCE – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 6:00 PM**

Director(s): Nova Ami, Velcrow Ripper | Canada 2024 • 110 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

An immersive cinematic experience that weaves together on-the-ground footage with extraordinary stories of survival and adaptation that transform our understanding of wildfire.

THE INVISIBLE DOCTRINE: THE SECRET HISTORY OF NEOLIBERALISM (& HOW IT CAME TO CONTROL YOUR LIFE) – CALIFORNIA PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 6:30 PM**

Director(s): Peter D. Hutchison, Lucas Sabean | US, UK 2025 • 100 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Expected Guest(s): Director **Peter D. Hutchison and Lucas Sabean**

Neoliberalism reshaped our world—but do we even know what it is? Journalist George Monbiot reveals its secret history, its dire consequences, and how we can reclaim our future.

THE INVISIBLE MAMMAL – WORLD PREMIERE

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 12:00 PM**

Director: Kristin Tièche | US 2025 • 122 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Expected Guest(s): Director **Kristin Tièche**; Executive Producer **Windy Borman**; Producer **Matthew Podolsky**; Editor **Heidi Zimmerman**

In stunning slow-motion cinematography, *The Invisible Mammal* brings bats into the limelight and quickly debunks the unsavory reputation that unfairly besmirch these fascinating creatures.

THE LAST EXPEDITION (Ostatnia Wyprawa) – US PREMIERE

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 3:30 PM**

Director: Eliza Kubarska | Poland, Switzerland 2024 • 90 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Pioneering Polish mountain climber Wanda Rutkiewicz disappeared in the Himalayas in 1992. What happened on that final climb? Filmmaker and mountaineer Eliza Kubarska traces Wanda's footsteps on the world's highest peaks in a journey into the mystery surrounding the fate of the first woman to summit K2. Could Wanda be still alive, in a monastery in Tibet? Weaving together Wanda's own, previously unseen diaries, audio and video archives from her Himalayan expeditions, interviews with legendary climbers, Sherpas, Buddhist nuns and monks, this is a riveting account of the emotional struggles and aspirations of a woman who rose above a world that often sought to limit her and charted her own path to freedom.

MIDDLETOWN – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 2:45 PM**

Director(s): Jesse Moss, Amanda McBaine | US 2025 • 110 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Expected Guest(s): Directors **Jesse Moss, Amanda McBaine**; Film Protagonist **Fred Isseks**

Inspired by an unconventional teacher, a group of teenagers in upstate New York in the early 1990s make a student film and uncover a vast conspiracy that is poisoning their community. Thirty years later, they revisit their film and confront the legacy of this transformative experience.

A RADICAL THREAD – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 12:30 PM**

Director: Jeanne C. Finley | US 2025 • 120 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Expected Guest(s): Director **Jeanne C. Finley**; Director of Photography **Yumeng Gho**; Film Protagonist **Jennifer Rain Crosby**

In the face of climate-fueled wildfire, a Sierra Foothills community passes 50 years of innovative sustainability to the next generation while collectively stitching their stories of challenge and celebration into an 83-foot tapestry, one tiny stitch at a time.

*A RADICAL THREAD will be preceded by the short film **Good Enough Ancestor***

REMAINING NATIVE – CALIFORNIA PREMIERE

Screening: **Friday, May 2 @ 6:30 PM**

Director: Paige Bethmann | US 2024 111 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Expected Guest: Advisor **Dawn Valdez**

Remaining Native is a coming-of-age documentary told from the perspective of Kutoven (Ku) Stevens, a 17-year-old Native American runner, struggling to navigate his dream of becoming a collegiate athlete as the memory of his great-grandfather's escape from an Indian boarding school begins to connect past, present, and future.

THE RENAISSANCE PRINCE (Renessanseprinsen) – NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Screening: **Friday, May 3 @ 7:30 PM**

Director: Emily Louisa Millan Eide | Norway 2024 • 111 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Expected Guest: Director **Emily Louisa Millan Eide**

15-year-old painter William Heimdal rejects the artistic trends of the 21st century - his aim is to recreate the figurative compositions made by the great masters of the past. But William has to go to school with his peers that are preoccupied with TikTok and climate change activism. Is there a place in the modern world for an old soul?

*The Renaissance Prince will be preceded by the short film **Old Girl in a Tutu: Susan Rennie Disrupts Art History***

THE SECRET OF ME – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 11:30 AM**

Director: Grace Hughes-Halett | UK 2025 • 110 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

19 year old Kristi discovers a secret her doctor and parents have kept from her all her life. Her search for truth uncovers a radical psychology experiment on a pair of identical twins that led to a global medical scandal.

SHELF LIFE

Screening: **Friday, May 2 @ 7:15 PM**

Director: Ian Cheney | US 2024 • 102 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

A global exploration of cheesemaking in unexpected places draws surprising parallels between the aging of cheese and the human experience, offering a sensory and philosophical journey into time, decay, and craftsmanship.

SONO LINO – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 2:15 PM**

Director: Jacob Patrick | US 2024 • 101 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Expected Guest: Director **Jacob Patrick**

Famed Italian artist and craftsman, Lino Tagliapietra, is widely held as the greatest master glassblower in history. He began his journey with glass at the age of 11 as a factory worker in Murano, Italy, and now at 88, he prepares for his final hot shop session while grappling with age, identity and the struggle of watching his protégés continue his legacy as his famed career comes to a close. A master amongst masters and one of one artist in history.

SONS – US PREMIERE

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 12:30 PM**

Director(s): Justin Simms | Canada 2024 • 70 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

How do we teach our boys to become better men? Set against the backdrop of his son's first five years of life—from cooing infant to hurricane of a boy—filmmaker Justin Simms looks at modern masculinity through the lens of fatherhood as he asks an increasingly urgent question: How do we teach our boys to be better men?

SPEAK. – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 6:30 PM**

Director: Jennifer Tiexiera, Co-Director: Guy Mossman | US 2025 • 104 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Expected Guest: Co-Director **Guy Mossman**

Five American teens spend a year crafting spoken word performances with the dream of winning the world's largest and most intense public speaking competition, the NSDA Nationals.

STARMAN – WEST COAST PREMIERE

Screening: **Thursday, May 1 @ 6:30 PM**

Director: Robert Stone | US 2025 • 85 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Expected Guest(s): Director **Robert Stone**; Executive Producer **Shelby Stone**; Film Protagonist **Gentry Lee**

Are we alone in the universe? For over half a century, legendary NASA engineer and best-selling science fiction author, Gentry Lee, has explored every aspect of this question in the realms of space science, robotic exploration and the human imagination. At age 82, he has come to a revelatory conclusion...

THAW – WORLD PREMIERE

Screening: **Sunday, May 4 @ 3:30 PM**

Director: Robin Hauser | US 2025 • 88 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Expected Guest(s): Director **Robin Hauser**; Producers **Joanne Esser** and **Annie Marr**; Editor **Jennifer Steinman Sternin**; Film Protagonists **Kathleen** and **Shirin** (last names withheld); Expert **Claire Tomkins**

Egg freezing is now a global phenomenon, used by women all over the world. But its outcomes can't be known until years later when the eggs are thawed and fertilized. Thaw follows three American women navigating difficult choices about their biological clocks, and questioning what "choice" actually means in this new era of eggs on ice.

TURTLE WALKER

Screening: **Friday, May 2 @ 7:30 PM**

Director: Taira Malaney | India, UK, US 2024 • 75 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Language: In English and Hindi with English Subtitles

In the late 1970s, Satish Bhaskar embarked on an epic journey along India's spectacular coastlines, living alongside rare sea turtles to unravel the mysteries that surround them – and set out to save the enigmatic sea creatures from extinction.

YOU NEED THIS – NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 5:00 PM**

Director: Ryan Andrej Lough | US 2024 • 82 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Expected Guest: Director **Ryan Andrej Lough**

An immersive saga about the individual and social effects of consumerism and hyper-capitalism, examining propaganda, the notion of Self, and ideas to prevent the prevailing economic system from hurtling the world into a sixth extinction.

Short Films (Alpha List)

GETTING HIGH (Shorts Program – Total Running Time: 109 Minutes)

Screening: [Saturday, May 3 @ 11:30 AM](#)

- **PERFECTLY A STRANGENESS – BAY AREA PREMIERE** (15 Min)

Screening: [Saturday, May 3 @ 11:30 AM](#)

Director: Alison McAlpine | Canada 2024 • 15 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

In the dazzling incandescence of an unknown desert, three donkeys discover an abandoned astronomical observatory and the universe. A sensorial, cinematic exploration of what a story can be.

- **THE BIRD IN MY BACKYARD – BAY AREA PREMIERE** (19 Min)

Screening: [Saturday, May 3 @ 11:30 AM](#)

Director: Ryan Wilkes | Canada 2024 • 19 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

In an urban backyard on Canada's West Coast, a window salesman has created a living laboratory for investigating hummingbird behavior. *The Bird in My Backyard* follows citizen scientist, Eric Pittman, as he documents the journeys of two female Anna's hummingbirds as they attempt to raise their young in his urban garden. It's a story about the childlike curiosity in all of us, the wonders it can reveal and the doors it can open if we just lean in a bit closer.

- **THE EXPERIMENTAL AGE** (25 Min)

Screening: [Saturday, May 3 @ 11:30 AM](#)

Director: Marco Zingaretti | Italy 2024 • 25 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Words reign supreme as celebrated Italian poet and author Erri De Luca climbs one step at a time into life's next moment, in what he deems his third and final 'horse.'

- **THE BIRDS – BAY AREA PREMIERE**

Screening: [Saturday, May 3 @ 11:30 AM](#)

Director(s): David Allen, Martin Dohrn (A Film By) | UK 2024 • 40 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Told through the cinematic experience of wildlife filmmaker Martin Dohrn, THE BIRDS finds meaning and pathos as it gets up close to one of England's little-known wonders of the natural world. As Martin chases down the twisting and turning of giant flocks of shore birds on England's Wash estuary, he attempts to literally record evolution in action as a peregrine falcon scythes through the mind-blowing murmurations – astonishingly large numbers of birds flying in synchronized patterns and creating shapes in the air. Ultimately, this feature short reveals important insights not only into the hidden mechanisms of nature, but also into the psyche of a man facing up to the end of his career.

Good Enough Ancestor

Screening: [Sunday, May 4 @ 12:30 PM](#)

Director: Cynthia Wade | US 2024 • 21 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Language: In English and Taiwanese with English Subtitles

Expected Guest: Director [Cynthia Wade](#)

Every night as a child, when visionary Audrey Tang prepared to go to sleep, she felt she had only a 50% chance of waking up in the morning due to a congenital heart problem. Her heart, like democracy across the globe, is both fragile and strong — still beating but facing an existential threat.

Good Enough Ancestor will proceed the feature film *A Radical Thread*.

THE LAST OBSERVERS – BAY AREA PREMIERE

Screening: [Saturday, May 3 @ 2:00 PM](#)

Director: Maja K Mikkelsen | Country Year • 24 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Language: In Swedish with English Subtitles

A Swedish couple tag migrating birds while working a day job at the last manual weather station, recording the weather day and night, seven days a week, for 36 years.

The Last Observers will proceed the feature film *Frozen in Time*.

OLD GIRL IN A TUTU: SUSAN RENNIE DISRUPTS ART HISTORY

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 7:30 PM**

Director: Cheri Gaulke | US 2025 • 8 Minutes | Strand: Wonderlands

Expected Guest(s): Director [Cheri Gaulke](#); Co-writer [Sue Maberry](#)

Feminist scholar, Susan Rennie, seizes her iPhone and sneaks her queer, octogenarian body into master works of art, disrupting the narrative of the male gaze.

Old Girl in a Tutu: Susan Rennie Disrupts Art History will proceed the feature film *The Renaissance Prince*.

USUGILIX AWAKUN

Screening: **Saturday, May 3 @ 2:00 PM**

Director(s): Palmer Morse, Matt Mikkelsen | US 2023 • 11 Minutes | Strand: The Great Outdoors

Expected Guest: Director [Palmer Morse](#)

In the waters off the remote island of Iluulux or so called Unalaska, Alaska, toxic algal blooms are increasingly infecting filter feeding shellfish with unknown causation. After a community member died from eating blue mussels, a staple cultural food, Unangax scientist Shayla began working with her tribe to research and understand the harmful blooms and what can hopefully be done about them. Illuminating the profound connection between the Unangax people and their environment, Usugilix Awakun showcases the resilience and resourcefulness of a culture in the face of unprecedented challenges.

Usugilix Awakuni will proceed the feature film *Frozen in Time*.

We Were the Scenery

Screening: **Friday, May 2 @ 4:30 PM**

Director: Christopher Robert Radcliff | USA 2025 • 14 Minutes | Strand: Art of Impact

Language: In Vietnamese with English Subtitles

We Were the Scenery is a short documentary film based on the real life experiences of writer Cathy Linh Che's parents, two Vietnam War refugees, who, in 1976, while stateless in a refugee camp in the Philippines, were utilized as background extras during the filming of Apocalypse Now.

We Were the Scenery will proceed the feature film *Flight 149: Hostage of War*.

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About DocLands Documentary Film Festival

DocLands Documentary Film Festival, presented by the California Film Institute, is a vibrant celebration of nonfiction storytelling held annually in Marin County, California. Expanding upon the exchange of ideas and inspiration through captivating screenings, networking, and engaging conversations, DocLands strives to foster dialogue, inspire connections, and build an inclusive community around the art of documentary filmmaking. DocLands aims to illuminate filmmakers' diverse perspectives and ignite a passion for exploring real-world issues by showcasing compelling stories and the thought-provoking insights behind them. Through screenings, discussions, and networking opportunities, DocLands continues to highlight the artistry and impact of documentary cinema.

DocLands Sections

- **Art of Impact:** Experience stories illuminating the diverse cultures, politics, and personal narratives shaping our global community.
- **The Great Outdoors:** Journey outside to explore and appreciate the beauty of our environment, compelling us to protect and conserve our planet's natural wonders.
- **WonderLands:** Discover stories of joy, wonder, and possibility that uplift and inspire audiences.

About DocPitch

DocPitch, an annual event presented by the California Film Institute, connects independent documentary filmmakers with industry professionals and funders, providing a platform to showcase compelling unfinished projects that need financial backing. Selected projects are presented to a panel of industry experts and a public audience, offering opportunities to secure funding through jury and audience awards. With support from the Nancy P. & Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation and Resonance Philanthropies, DocPitch awards \$100,000 in cash to assist feature documentary projects in development or production. DocPitch plays a vital role in bringing powerful documentaries to life by fostering connections and advocating for bold, original storytelling.

For additional information about the DocLands Documentary Film Festival and DocPitch, please visit <https://www.doclands.com/> or contact press@cafilm.org.

About the California Film Institute

The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing film and media arts through acclaimed programs like the Mill Valley Film Festival and the DocLands Documentary Film Festival. CAFILM Education provides students of all ages with opportunities to learn about the world through the art of film and filmmaking. Our premier independent theater, the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, engages over 275,000 guests annually with compelling cinema and storytelling focused on important social, environmental, and cultural issues. Additionally, CAFILM now owns and operates the Sequoia Cinema, reinforcing our commitment to preserving cinematic heritage and ensuring access to fine films in the local community. The organization thrives on the generosity of its community—sponsors, foundations, donors, and members—whose support sustains and expands our programs. Join us in celebrating, exploring, and championing the art of film. For more information, visit cafilm.org.

Supporters | DocLands

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