

# Whitney

When they visited the local movie house in Portsmouth, The Music Hall, in 1999, it must have seemed a bit like going back in time. Out of that nostalgia, they hatched the idea to bring to their new community a set of film premieres, a sample of six films, directly from their debuts at Telluride, giving New Hampshire audiences the rare opportunity to see a sampling of the newest films not yet released to the public.

When interviewed by Music Hall Film and Outreach Manager Chris Curtis, Bill Pence recalled: "What truly excited me in bringing this festival to Portsmouth is that it brought back the feeling of Telluride Film Festival in its early days before it became the internationally known festival it was to become. Telluride By The Sea is smaller, more intimate. And one need not choose one film over the other."

Masoud Yazdani, director of Intellect Publishing, observed: "When we sit down to watch a film, the sensual experience-sight and sound-is familiar, but the cerebral one, the story itself, can take us anywhere. In this sense, film is both an old friend and a new adventure. By looking at films from different regions of the world, we are given a window into what makes people all over the world so different, and also what makes those people the same. In this way, we can each develop a better understanding of 'the other': an understanding that avoids stereotypes and acknowledges both the unity and diversity of humanity."

What do filmmakers show us about ourselves? The 2018 Telluride By The Sea roster includes an author conning her way to a comeback through

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forgery; a customs officer who smells rage; a timid dog-groomer gone violent; a scandalous presidential candidate; a transsexual ballerina; an English melodrama about royalty; and a mountain-climber risking all-for sport and to take on the larger questions. (Note: A seventh film was added to honor the 20th anniversary.)

The 2018 Telluride By The Sea festival is star-studded: Melissa McCarthy, Richard E. Grant, John Ajvide Lindqvist, Hugh Jackman, Olivia Colman, Rachel Weisz, and Emma Stone; and new work from directors Marielle Heller (*The Diary of a Teenage Girl*); Matteo Garrone (*Gomorra*); Jason Reitman (*Thank You For Smoking*); Yorgos Lanthimos (*The Lobster*); *The Killing of Sacred Deer*.

Fame and forgery. "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" From Fox Searchlight Pictures, stars Melissa McCarthy as a once-respected author fallen on hard times and a conman played by Richard E. Grant, as McCarthy tries to save her career by tapping into her gift for forgery. McCarthy plays the part with such precise intensity, it is easy forget her gifts as a comedian.

Outsiders and synesthesia-scent indicate motive? In "Border," a Swedish film from Neon, a troll-like customs officer played by Eva Melander, has a preternatural sense of smell that allows her to detect guilt and rage. Swedish-Iranian director Ali Abbasi adapted the ingenious script with Isabella Eklöf and John Ajvide Lindqvist from Lindqvist's short story in which he blends erotic and supernatural elements with commentary on outsiders in contemporary Sweden.

Fragility and violence. "Dogman," an Italian film by Magnolia Pictures, tells the story of a sweet-tempered dog groomer being pushed to his limits when forced to assist in a robbery, and how the gentle Marcello (Marcello Fonte) takes revenge. Writer-director Matteo Garrone, filming in an impoverished small-town, blends shocking violence with unexpected tenderness.

Politicians, the television candidate, and the tabloids. "The Front Runner" from Sony Worldwide, takes on the 1988 tabloid scandal that derailed Gary Hart's presidential aspirations. Hugh Jackman, remarkably convincing as

Senator Hart, clings to ideas, yet is powerless when it comes to changing media culture.

A transsexual ballerina. "Girl," a Belgium-Netherlands film, courtesy of Netflix, follows Lara (Victor Polster), a young transsexual teenager whose medical progress is impeded by the grueling physical training of a ballerina. Polster, who was just age 15 at the time of filming, perfectly captures the dual physical and psychic challenges faced by Lara in a film hailed for its heart-breaking beauty and clarity.

A melodrama about royalty. "The Favourite," an English film courtesy of Fox Searchlight Pictures, takes us to the 18th-century English court, as a witty, foul-mouthed script manages to sustain a comic yet savage edge. This story of an odd triangle pits chronically infirmed Queen Anne (Olivia Colman) and her long-time companion Lady Marlborough (Rachel Weisz), against interloper Abigail (Emma Stone), a young gentlewoman fallen on hard times bent on restoring her lost privileges.

Mountain-climbing gone extreme. "Free Solo," an American film by National

Geographic, chronicles Alex Honnold, one of the most celebrated rock climbers in history, as he takes on the greatest rock-climbing challenge of all-a "free solo" (free of ropes, that is) ascent of El Capitan, the legendary 3,000-foot wall in Yosemite. Without ropes, Honnold can plunge to his death at any moment. Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin use a variety of mountain-filming tricks to capture each step. But the film is not just about sport, as it explores wider questions about how we calculate risk in our lives.

Film is a way for us to travel inside another's mind or imagination, a way to tour physical and metaphysical countrysides that may be foreign to all our expectations. Stella Pence: "We've seen film audiences all around the world, and the feeling at Telluride By The Sea is special...(it) reflects the essence of the parent festival-'Let's go to see something, maybe even something which might not seem attractive at first glance.' Challenge yourself, take a risk."

Films stretch our minds and our expectations. As film historian Nick Smedley said, in film, "we are subtly and unconsciously washed with layers of cultural values, idealistic aspirations, an understanding of good and evil, the transformation of the everyday into the heroic and the mythic, the redemption of past mistakes, the finding of love, the losing of love, the acknowledgment of our hidden desires and secret pain-the discovery of the meaning of our lives."

For full film schedule and ticket information, see [www.portsmouthnh.com/event/telluride-by-the-sea-2018/](http://www.portsmouthnh.com/event/telluride-by-the-sea-2018/).

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