

Swell AI Transcript: Tom_Hall_2024_V2_V1.mp3

SPEAKER_02:

It's nice to see you, Tom. How are you?

SPEAKER_03:

Likewise. I'm well, thanks. How are you guys?

SPEAKER_00:

Good. I bet you're not tired, stressed. You don't have anything to do right now. You're just hanging out, right?

SPEAKER_03:

Life is good.

SPEAKER_02:

It should be good. We were reviewing the lineup. It looks like you have done a fantastic job.

SPEAKER_00:

Yeah. Home run, Tom.

SPEAKER_03:

Thanks, guys. Yeah, our team has worked very hard on this program this year.

SPEAKER_01:

We can tell.

SPEAKER_03:

Right down to the wire.

SPEAKER_02:

Yes, right down to the wire. OK, so let's get down to the nitty gritty of this festival. Yeah, let's talk about these films. OK, how many movies or films are in this festival this year?

SPEAKER_03:

Like episode in the weeds, I don't even count. I'm going to say like 65 probably. Somewhere in there. And then that's sort of our target

goal every year. And then on the short side about roughly the same number. So we're anywhere between 130 140 films, probably in the in the full program. We have a few that we have a few that we're going to add. Now that the book is going to print. We've had a couple of more things that have sort of popped up where we left a little hole in the schedule, just in case we got some things so

SPEAKER_02:

That's a lot. That's a lot.

SPEAKER_03:

It is. I feel for the audience because it's hard, right? Like, you know, the other thing is like most people have never heard of these movies before. They're new. They're not, you know, they don't have huge marketing budgets behind them. You're not watching ads on the NFL game of the week or whatever for these films. These are smaller independent films. So figuring out what one might be for you or that you might like, um, can be a challenge. There's just always, there's a lot happening at once.

SPEAKER_02:

Last year, you know, we did this and you have the features that you kind of highlight a bunch of films. And I remember that a lot of those films, they're kind of opening here. They're right around the opening of the film. And for example, the holdovers. It went on to just be smashed. We got to see it early. Everybody that saw it last year was like, there was something really special about that.

SPEAKER_00:

May, December was another one from last year. That was really something.

SPEAKER_02:

Why don't we get to the list of films?

SPEAKER_00:

Yeah, let's get to some of your suggestions and maybe some background on some of the films. I found it so helpful last year. And people had said to me after hearing your podcast episode that it was helpful for them to narrow things down and prioritize sort of where to go, when, and what movies that they should definitely go see. OK.

SPEAKER_02:

Yeah. Cool. So what we did letting, you know, is that we went through the, the book that comes out that people should be receiving it in their mail, you know, soon and that they can take a look. They'll pick it up at stores, right? Or pick it up at stores.

SPEAKER_03:

Yeah, we received those books on the 27th. So next Friday from now, there are probably already out. But they're all over town in different vendors, different shops. And you can pick them up at the Claridge or at the Moncler Film Headquarters as well. But we print about 15,000 of those books and sort of spread them all over Essex County for people.

SPEAKER_02:

And when does the festival start?

SPEAKER_03:

Friday, October 18th. And it runs through Sunday, October 27th.

SPEAKER_02:

Okay. And then what is the opening night film?

SPEAKER_03:

So you mentioned the holdovers from last year. This year's opening night film is a film called Conclave by Edward Berger. It's the same company that had the holdovers as focus features. So one of the interesting stories from last year is you know, the holdovers was an experiment because we wanted to see if we put it in the Wellmont, how it would do at the Claridge. It was, you're right, it opened not too long after the festival. So, like, how does the word of mouth of playing a Wellmont screening impact the way that we operate the movie theater year-round, and how would the film do at the box office. And it went on to be the large, you know, last year's Barbie and Oppenheimer. So like, let's take those off the table. And it ended up being one of the biggest movies of the year at the Clarity. It ran for weeks and weeks. It had a great run with us. Financially, it did really well. The distributor was really happy with it. So we went back to them and said, you know, can we replicate that model with Conclave because, you know, this is a movie that we think is going to be in the awards season, Conversation as well. It opens not too long after the festival, and so let's see if we can replicate the model for what we did with The Holdovers. And they were like, absolutely, you know, given that The Holdovers was such a success theatrically, let's try it with Conclave. The film itself is it's incredible. I loved it. So the director who we just today. confirmed will be there for opening night is Edward Berger, who made a film, was it last year or two years ago?

Adaptation of All Quiet on the Western Front, which was on Netflix and won four Academy Awards, Best Foreign Language. I think they had like Best Adapted Screenplay, something like that. But he won like four Oscars for All Quiet on the Western Front. So this is his follow up film. Ralph Fiennes stars in it, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow are sort of the main leads. Yeah, it's really great. And so it is a movie I will not spoil, but the very first scene of the movie is we find out that the Pope has died and Ralph Fiennes is one of the lead cardinals who's going to lead the process of selecting The new pope and it's in contemporary times. So it's not a period piece or anything. It's like today set today. And so there are multiple candidates among the cardinals who want to be Pope or people want to be Pope and it goes through the sort of intrigues and process and politics and all of the things behind the scenes and dramatizes them in a very powerful and interesting way. This is a throwback movie. I don't know if you like those kind of films where like someone arrives with a letter with a wax seal on it with a secret and the guy sort of opens it and looks. I do too. I love these kind of movies. I do too. Or like, yeah, like there's a hidden door and like what's behind the hidden door like that, but not like Da Vinci Code level where it's all math. It's not like that at all.

SPEAKER_00:

They're not showing formulas like on the screen going up like that. Yeah, right.

SPEAKER_03:

Exactly. It's like that. The golden ratio means that. So it's more like. more like In the Name of the Rose, but contemporary, sort of behind-the-scenes church film. But it's serious. Like, it really feels like a throwback to those sort of political intrigue dramas of the 70s, you know, like, and All the President's Men, a procedural movie. But then it has some, you know, because of the secrets that are sort of uncovered, you're along for the ride in a very, Thriller-y almost way. I loved it. And they do not make movies like this anymore for adults. We've opened with comedies. We've opened with documentaries. We've opened with all kinds of different films. I don't think we've ever opened with like, you know, a drama of this stature. So I'm really excited to see what the audience makes of it. Yeah. And to talk to Edward about it, because it's a It is also a big leap for him from his last movie, which is a war movie. You know, a very intense, powerful movie. So yeah, I'm really excited to have this film. And we're like, it has to be opening night because it is going to start conversations. That's what we want that film to do. We want people to be like, holy moly, what else is playing? Uh, let's go, let's keep going.

SPEAKER_02:

Okay. So that's the opening night film. And then the, what we have next is the family centerpiece that was on the list. If we're going by this.

SPEAKER_03:

Sure. Hello. So we're doing two screenings. We're doing two screenings of flow. It is a no dialogue animated film. So it's for all ages, kids through adults. I loved it. Our programming team loved it. Um, And it's the story of sort of a post-environmental catastrophe. This cat has survived and sort of makes their way into the world and meets other animals along the way. They sort of go on a survival path together to try and sort of navigate and figure out how to stay alive in a world that's been, you know, environmentally devastated in different ways. And so it has a really powerful environmental message that I think is important, but it's just a really great adventure story told cinematically. I mean, not having dialogue, there's no cast for the animals, like no one's playing the cat, which I really appreciate because it really, they act like animals, they don't act like people being animals.

SPEAKER_02:

I love that you said that because we have a thing in this, in our home about talking animals in movies. Yes. It's like the movie's out. Yes, exactly.

SPEAKER_03:

I have some bright red lines on my parenting watching as well and that is Talking Animals is not my favorite one either. The nice thing about this movie is we're also able to offer a sensory friendly screening for kids of all different abilities to come and just we bring the lights down to half and we bring the sound down to half so it's not as overwhelming sensorily for kids and it's a no judgment zone for for kids and families to be themselves and enjoy a movie.

SPEAKER_02:

It's also for a lot of people that are into art and animation because the animator himself did a movie before this called Away. And he does everything. And the music, the animation, the script, the writing, the animation, it takes him so much time to do these. And they're really unique. They're not like any other type of animation. And this one that's coming out that he's doing, the style in which he's doing it has been very anticipated to, to see it because it's super unique. He Latvian and he does it all himself. Okay. So what do we have next?

SPEAKER_03:

Between the mountain and the sky. So this document, uh, Maggie Duane is from New Jersey and was a CNN hero. when they do the CNN Hero Awards. She graduated from high school in New Jersey, went on like a year trip to Nepal and never came back. She founded a school, an orphanage in Nepal and still lives there and still operates this orphanage. And it's the story of sort of her journey, the life that she's built for herself. sort of the overwhelming responsibility and the impact that that responsibility has as she tries to build this sort of life and family for herself at this orphanage. She's coming from Nepal. We have some of the kids coming from Nepal for the Q&A. The director is coming as well. It's going to be a very, very powerful screening. one of the most moving documentaries we have at the festival as well. So they're going to be here to talk about it with me after the movie. And then I'm hoping that, you know, this film gets a wider attention because it's, yes, it's really, really beautiful. The stories, you know, it's not all sunshine and roses. It's a very, there's some tragedy and some difficult things that happen. I don't want to give anything away for the story of the film, but she's also written a book about this. So that's, it's not like I'd be spoiling it if you've read the book, but just to have her coming and to be here and make the time to come back to New Jersey and share the story with us, I think is a real gift. It's in the Wellmont for a reason. We didn't put it in. We put it in a big theater because I'm trying to encourage people to attend this movie. I think there's, again, another one that would be a real conversation starter. And just to have them here with us, we're incredibly privileged, so.

SPEAKER_02:

That's awesome. OK, I'm just scrolling through the list here. Unstoppables probably now. Unstoppable, you're right.

SPEAKER_00:

The J-Lo, Matt Damon conversation at the Unstoppable premiere.

SPEAKER_03:

Will Bennifer be there?

SPEAKER_01:

You're listening, yes. You guys can come.

SPEAKER_00:

Bennifer, you're both allowed to come. We'll get two tickets, even though your name is Bennifer. We'll just, we'll let you have two seats. Two seats. We'll take as many pictures of you or not.

SPEAKER_02:

What I read is, though, that he couldn't keep his hands off of her. So maybe they do want just one seat.

SPEAKER_00:

Yeah, probably. Together. We could give them that big chair that you have when you interview people and they can just sit together in it.

SPEAKER_03:

I have no comment on any of this part of the conversation. All right, all right. So tell us about the movie. I'm not that all in on Ben Affleck. The audience will be, though. So Matt came in and Ben Affleck produced a film last year called Air, which was about Nike, and Michael Jordan, if you remember that film, it was actually really good. This is the sort of next in their sport production. Jarell Jerome is the lead, and he plays a real, he was one of the kids in Moonlight, Barry Jenkins, in the middle section, yeah. So he's one of the stars of Moonlight, and he plays a young man who's born with one leg, who is a high school wrestler, and wants to wrestle in college. I don't want to tell too much of the story, but it's his rise through the college wrestling process. And so it's very cinematic. They do a really great job of explaining what's going on. There's not a million wrestling scenes. It's really about his perseverance and his domestic situation, his J-Lo plays. his mom, who's married to Bobby Cannavale, who's, you know, not a nice person in the movie. And so there's, so there's some, I like him too. He came, he came for our screening this year. Um, of Ezra, we did have a Q and a with Bobby.

SPEAKER_02:

Oh, yeah, that's right. That's right. That's right.

SPEAKER_03:

Yeah. But he, uh, not in this movie. It's characters. Not great.

SPEAKER_02:

So anyway, not a nice person. He has range.

SPEAKER_03:

Let's just say he does have range. So there's domestic strength at home. I'm trying to, you know, the family is not well off and trying to, navigate going to college, being a collegiate wrestler, sort of overcoming all of that and triumphing. It's a really positive, feel-

good message. The director of that film will be with us as well, William Goldenberg. We're going to try and get the young man whose life it is based upon with us on, I think, Zoom. We're working on that as a possibility for the Q&A as well. And then apparently you guys are getting Ben Affleck and Jennifer.

SPEAKER_00:

I have our own speed dial and you talk to Ben every once in a while. So should I bring my daughter who's 14?

SPEAKER_03:

Yeah, it's definitely like a PG 13 movie. We'd love to have all the high school students there. It's really about that.

SPEAKER_00:

That is, I think the audience. Hi. And Janette knows this well, has a really strong wrestling team.

SPEAKER_02:

Yeah. Yeah. Community. Well, we'll, we'll promote it for them because it's a big, it's a big deal. And people misunderstand wrestling best sport and nobody understands it. Yeah. Okay. We have a conversation piece going on here. Rachel, you take this one. Cause you're the foodie in this relationship. I know garden.

SPEAKER_00:

Yeah. Okay. So, you know, it was a little out of left field and we were like, wait, you know, it's her memoir, right? Obviously. Well, probably cause she's so famous, cooked a lot of her recipes and I find her very interesting, her background and how she even came to cooking. So how, how did this come about?

SPEAKER_03:

Right. So one of the things we've done over the years that has little remarked upon, but it's something that we've been trying for quite a long time is to integrate television and television storytelling into the film festival. So we've had celebrities at the festival in the past who were here with television projects, but because they're celebrities, I don't think people thought that we were doing these conversations or events and appearances for them on the TV set. We've also done a lot of storytelling events of all different kinds. So we've had writers, we've had book talks, we've had story flams, we have improv, and we wanted to integrate more of that type of thing into the festival. So you'll see on the schedule there we have improv

happening, we have a play performance happening at the festival this year. We were doing a conversation with Ina about her new memoir. We're all big fans of her. Yeah. As are, as is Stephen Colbert, who loves Ina Garten. And, um, I think they really enjoy each other's company. So Jeffrey is coming with her to the, to the Walmart. We're really excited about that as well. Cause I'm like, I've got to meet Jeffrey.

SPEAKER_01:

Okay. I need to talk to Jeff.

SPEAKER_02:

Okay. I'm going to jump to another person that's in the same vein that you're, I see the movie Martha is on the list. Yeah. Yeah.

SPEAKER_03:

So that, that is a, you know, programmers like myself have little winks to each other. So putting the Martha movie after the Ina Garten conversation was definitely on purpose. Yeah. Um, it's that I found out that they're friendly.

SPEAKER_02:

They are. Okay. Cause I saw some, uh, there's a little bit of, you know, snapping back and forth between the two of them, but they're really friendly friends supportive of one another's work.

SPEAKER_03:

So, yes, the movie is terrific. RJ Cutler did the Billie Eilish movie a couple of years back. He's done like a million incredible portrait films, and he does not pull punches and is not afraid to ask questions, put them in the final cut, like retains final cut, and puts some of the more challenging things. into the movie.

SPEAKER_00:

So it is not a... Well, Martha Stewart is known for being very controlling of her image and everything else. Yes, absolutely.

SPEAKER_01:

She's been saying that she doesn't like the second half of it. Yeah. But she's saying it with him, like next to him. On stage. Yeah, on stage. Yeah.

SPEAKER_03:

While she talks about the film, yeah. Which is great. I think that's the kind of thing... Yeah, it's great.

SPEAKER_01:

It makes it entertaining to see that, you know? Absolutely.

SPEAKER_03:

And so that comes... I mean, it comes through in the film. Like, she's had some challenges that are... I'm sure she wants to put behind her, but you cannot honestly tell her story. Without it. Yeah, without that stuff. It can't just be like all the great things you've done. Like, there have been major issues. And so it's in the film and, you know, it's all really good. It's well done, I think. And the sort of tension and dynamic between him and Martha on camera is definitely worth watching as well. And plus the whole sort of, Snoop Dogg, redemption of her life and all the things that she's gone through. It's fascinating. I didn't know she was the first billionaire entrepreneur. I learned a lot about her. She's a very strong-willed, powerful woman. incredibly smart, made incredible decisions and built like this empire of aspirational, entertaining culture or whatever for people. I learned a lot about her. Yeah.

SPEAKER_00:

She's amazing. And make her baked mac and cheese. It's excellent. Yeah.

SPEAKER_02:

It's awesome. Yeah. Well, I jumped over the end to get to Martha that was in the list. So the end, the end. Yes. Yeah. Okay.

SPEAKER_00:

No, no. No. In a good way. Is it the end? It might be.

SPEAKER_02:

I saw The Act of Killing, which... Okay. Okay. That movie, I don't know if this is going to be anything like that movie, because I don't think it is, but the director has some skill that is incredible. I mean, that movie, I'm still messed up from that movie.

SPEAKER_00:

And then you told me to see it. That's not nice.

SPEAKER_02:

no yes i do think you need to see the act of killing i do think everybody needs to see the act of killing it is fascinating it is it's about indonesia and it's like the these people that killed people want to just be in a movie they want to be the characters of who they are and they tell you how they did it yeah so the director of that documentary has now made a fiction film and

SPEAKER_03:

P.S. it's a musical. And by musical, I don't mean contemporary songs. I mean like a 1950s musical about the end of the world. There's a group of people who have survived a climate catastrophe who are living in a bunker for years. They are not related to one another, but basically form a family together. living in this bunker at the end of the world. And there's sort of aspirations about where they want to be. The youngest person in this family is obviously going to be the last person on Earth if everyone sort of survives into old age or whatever. And so he's this sort of bright-eyed, optimistic 20-something kid who breaks out into song. There are dance sequences, original songs, but it's in that sort of old Hollywood musical style. And we, through the process of this happening, learn about sort of the culpability and relationships these people had to what happened to bring about the end of the world, who they have lost along the way, why they are who they are now. And I won't say any more about it. It is wild. I've never seen, I've never seen a movie quite like it ever.

SPEAKER_02:

Well, Tilda Swinton is in it.

SPEAKER_03:

So yes, Michael Shannon is in it. It has a really great cast. They're all, you know, they're all singing in their own voices. The guy who wrote the music is a Broadway composer. It's just, and again, like coming off of the act of killing and the look of silence, which was the sequel to that talk. It's a huge swing in a totally different direction. You could see those musical numbers in The Act of Killing and think, OK, I can see how it got to this idea, right? But the ambition behind it is just completely different and bigger. And it's a huge swing. So that one is definitely worth seeing. I will put it down. It's not the only musical in the festival, but it is the wildest.

SPEAKER_02:

The wildest ever in the festival, for sure. It sounds like it. Okay, great. There's going to be some panels that we have here that's listed

with Ankler. And we actually, at Ankler, so let's tell people what Ankler is, because it's kind of come on the scene in the last couple of years and has really been successful.

SPEAKER_03:

Yeah, so that Ankler is a new sort of series of newsletters and online publications that are affiliated with one another. There's like sort of the overall trade publication, the anchor, which has each one of these things in it, but each one of them is sort of a standalone focus underneath that umbrella. So imagine like variety, and then underneath each level of variety, there's a whole newsletter about AI, there's a whole newsletter about the numbers that are happening at box office and TV. There's a whole thing about awards season. And so we've booked three panels with them. Their team is coming out. It'll be their first time at the festival. Sean McNulty, he does the wake up for them, which is the daily film business, box office, TV numbers, studio mergers, like all those sort of behind the scenes business stuff of TV and film. is a New Jersey resident and we're really excited to welcome him to Montclair for the first time as well. That's great. Yeah. So they're each doing a, Sean, Eric Barmack is doing a panel on AI and Katie Rich is doing like an awards. She covers the award season, red carpet-y stuff for them. And she has a podcast called Prestige Junkie. She's formerly of Vanity Fair. She'll be here as well to do a panel about award season. So yeah, we're really excited to partner with them. And those are all free. Open to the public. You can just grab a ticket online for free and come hang out. Yeah.

SPEAKER_02:

Uh, it's really great. They're very informative and you learn a lot. You take away some information for sure. I've really enjoyed your panels. Yeah. Okay. So moving on to a Nora, which is by a New Jersey. Uh, he's from Sunday. Yeah. Sean Baker's from New Jersey summit.

SPEAKER_03:

Yes, Sean is amazing. So Sean has been making films for quite a while now, which I can't believe, but I was fortunate to be able to program his work very early in his career. We showed a film of his called Prince of Broadway at a previous job and I got to know him a little bit through that process and have shown his films since, basically. We had Red Rocket a few years back at the festival. The Florida Project, a lot of people remember. Tangerine. Tangerine, which he did as well. So this is another in a series of sort of social realist, but again, very formally interesting films by Sean, we were laughing. So at my previous festival in like 2008, we had Sean Baker, I had Greta Gerwig, I had Barry Jenkins, the Safdie brothers, all with their first movies at my old film festival. And my old colleague who I worked with as a programmer there now runs the Austin Film Society in Austin, Texas.

She's their like artistic director or whatever. And this year at the Cannes Film Festival, Greta Gerwig was the president of the jury at Cannes. We were watching the results coming, like critics' picks of what films people liked from Cannes or whatever, and I texted her and I was like, if Greta Gerwig hands the palm door to Sean Baker at Cannes, we need to go to Chicago because she lives in Texas and I'm on the East Coast. We have to meet in Chicago or St. Louis and then watch the world collapse because I can't believe time and space have inverted upon themselves. These two kids that we, like, got behind, you know, 16 years ago or whatever it was, are now handing palm doors to each other. Like, hey, what did I do wrong in my career? And then also, like, somebody picked the right path. Others did not.

SPEAKER_02:

You're the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain.

SPEAKER_00:

You are the Wizard of Oz. You are behind the curtain. So it happened.

SPEAKER_01:

But yeah, that's cool, though. That is very, very cool.

SPEAKER_03:

Greta Gerwig handed the Palm Door to Sean Baker for *Enora*. It is the Palm Door winning film from the Cannes Film Festival. You cannot believe it. It's crazy. It's crazy. He's like an American social realist. Stylistically, it's more realistic. It's, I call it like a reverse pretty woman. When you see it, you'll know what I mean, but it's the antithesis of that sort of stylized Cinderella story.

SPEAKER_02:

Mikey Madison is the, she's being kind of heralded for her acting. If you guys saw *Better Things* on HBO, she was the older daughter and I loved her in that as well. She's so good. And then I saw the trailer for this and I was like, oh my God, she is in this and she's amazing. Yeah. yeah i mean i i love his movies i i you know i'm iranian and we have a realism kind of like thing in uh our film love and he does it from an american slant you know and it's really i always found it interesting because it's really i mean it's edgy it's always it's like life in the shadows of american success you know it's like always and it's gritty and it's It's sometimes it's a little hard to watch some of this, you know, you know, it's hard to watch but it's it is the reality in some places, you know, they're also like funny and empathetic and they're tell the stories of people whose lives don't get told in film very often. It's four stars beside the it that it

because I starred the ones that are like, for sure.

SPEAKER_03:

I hope he can earn a fifth star.

SPEAKER_02:

Oh, there we go. There we go. Seven stars now.

SPEAKER_00:

Should we segue to the Iranian film then?

SPEAKER_03:

I have two for you that you don't know that I have two. You do.

SPEAKER_02:

I only saw one listed.

SPEAKER_03:

Yes, that's right. The other one is sneaky, but I'll tell you about both. So the first one. that you're probably talking about was also at Cannes this year, called The Seed of the Sacred Fig by Mohamed Rasseloff, who, backstory on him, he has been a profoundly effective critic of state violence in Iran. So he's been an anti-death penalty crusader. Someone who has all of his films show the work of sort of the moral compromise that happens with individuals who participate in state violence, whether they be executioners, policemen, guys working in the secret police behind the scenes in Iran. all of his films are sort of targeted, exposing the immorality of that work in the context of sort of everyday life. So, you know, you go to work, you execute some political dissonance, you come home, talk to your wife, have dinner, watch some TV, go to bed, that type of thing. And he's been an incredible, incredible storyteller for that. He is not very popular among the authorities in Iran for that reason, and was sentenced to prison for making this film after being told that he could not make films anymore. This film was shot secretly on the run and on the fly over a long period of time. And so they basically built the story around locations where they could have access to privacy to make films, as opposed to, and also stealing shots in Tehran. And it's about a family whose father works as an administrative judge during the protests against mandatory hijab and women striving for equal status in Iranian culture. Those protests were repressed violently. The film uses real news footage of the protests and the state response in the film. And the man who's the sort of protagonist has two daughters who are of age with the women who are in the streets,

basically younger women, college students. They basically rebel against and reject his role and participation in repressing women and want to have support for a friend of theirs who was also involved in the protests who ends up getting injured. I don't want to, again, give too much away about the movie. It's hard to talk about without doing it, but so the film got made. The director was sentenced to prison and a public flogging for making it. He fled Iran and then went to the Cannes Film Festival where it premiered literally days before his premiere, *Fleeing the Country*. And his last film, *There's No Evil*, won our jury prize during the pandemic at Montclair Films. So we love his work and are incredibly honored to be able to show this one as well. Cannot recommend it highly enough. It's a little bit long. I know people look at the runtime and might think, well, I think like 168 minutes, almost three hours, definitely worth the time. And when filmmakers are, uh, unable to travel, we always used to hold an empty seat for them in the theater, sort of the tradition around the world now for filmmakers who are unable to be in person because they've been detained in their home country. You know, we may do that even though he's free in Europe. I could not recommend it enough. Uh, I loved it. Very, very, very powerful film.

SPEAKER_02:

Okay. So you said you have another person. Okay.

SPEAKER_03:

So I'm going to try to describe this movie in a way that makes sense. And it's not going to make sense, but trust me, it makes sense. Imagine if Canada was Iran. Winnipeg, all the street signs are in Persian. The children are in an Iranian film of the 1970s. The entire culture is built around Iranian culture. Instead of a tea shop, you have Tim Horton's Donuts, but it's Tim Horton's Donuts structured like an Iranian tea shop. This movie is playing at the festival. It was at Cannes this year. It's called *Universal Language*. It is essentially a Canadian 1970s Iranian film in Persian with Canadian actors telling a very classic early Kirastami style, kids in school coming out story with a lot of Canadian cultural cross-referencing. And imagine putting all of that into like a Guy Madden blender. Uh, that is universal language. Larissa and I watched this movie and immediately started texting with each other. We're like, what plot are we putting in this movie? It was, it is so good. Okay, I'm excited. I'm excited. If you know Iranian cinema, this is such an homage. And you're like, why is this? They never, yes, but they never answer like, why is it in Canada? What's happening? Why? How did this happen? None of that matters. It's just like, that's the world we're in.

SPEAKER_00:

Yeah, it's really great.

SPEAKER_02:

Well, they do. They do. They do. Iranian film uses children really well, you know, really well. And my dad used to say, well, it's because it's easy. You don't get in a lot of trouble when you're using kids. Because there's not as many restrictions. Right. They don't have to have their hair cover. They can be, you know, they can do things that other people can't do. Interesting. Okay. Let's see, what else do we have that we haven't mentioned?

SPEAKER_00:

Can I ask you about the Pedro Maldivar film? Cause I'm such a fan of his.

SPEAKER_03:

And this is his first English language feature. It's a Tilda Swinton and Julianne Moore who were like friends who reconnect after many years of not sort of spending time together. She's a writer. Julianne Moore is a writer and Tilda Swinton's character is a war photographer. And they come together after not seeing each other for a long time. And then I'm going to draw a line there because I don't want to spoil anything on this movie either. But the interesting thing about it is sort of Pedro Almodovar style-wise working in English, you realize how distancing works with language and visual style. Because when I'm watching his films in Spanish, I'm not a Spanish speaker. I look at the subtitles, but I'm looking at the visual language that he has, which is very unique style. So seeing that done and not having to look at the subtitles and having it be in English, it's a different experience. It was really quite a different experience of his work for me, like in a good way. Like I really enjoyed it. And of course, he's always been like, in the melodrama and telenovela style and like, you know, that are like of that thing. So to see that, those similar traits in this context was really, again, it's like, it's a very unique movie in his body of work for me, because I wasn't distanced by the language. So, and it's hard to adjudicate, I think, if you don't speak the language, performance sometimes, right? So when I'm watching, when I'm watching a film, I've often like watched something like, wasn't so-and-so great? And like a French speaker will be like, that was, they were terrible. Like, how did you not, like, they were sad, like, oh, really? It's so true, it's so true. Right? So like, the fact that it's, I feel like my ability to experience the film is different. And so it was, it's just unique in his body of work. So every film of his is worth seeing. Yes. And this movie is terrific. The performances are really, as an English speaker, they're really good.

SPEAKER_02:

You can tell now. There's about three other movies, maybe four, that I want to hit really quickly.

SPEAKER_03:

Blitz. So Blitz is by Steve McQueen, who did 12 Years a Slave, that won Best Picture a few years back. He did the Small Axe series recently that was on Amazon. If you haven't seen that, it's really great. This film is a very different style for him. So a lot of his stuff has been, I'll call it stylized political realism. This film is not that at all. It is a classic story, World War II, London, the Nazis are bombing London every day. The government decides to take children away from parents, put them on a train, send them to the countryside so that they are safe from the bombing and they can save the kids. Diersha Ronan plays the mother of a young boy who has been taken away. And so she works sort of Rosie the Riveter style British version in a factory, an ammunitions factory, trying to help the war effort. And her son is taken away on a train to the countryside. But he's like, I'm not leaving my family. He jumps the train. And sort of makes his way back to London through the peril of the bombing toward find reconciling with his mother reuniting with his mother so that they can reconnect and be back together again instead of him going off to some unknown English safety. He doesn't want to do that. So he's a young 12 year old boy who goes on an adventure. through London during the bombing to find his way back home to his mom. She, for the most of the film, doesn't know that he's missing, but can't get word of where he is, and then discovers that he's missing. And so it's their search for one another in that context. It's a really great childhood sort of adventure movie, very different for Steve McQueen. It's not really for little kids, but certainly teenagers and up cinematic. It seems very, yes. Very cinematic.

SPEAKER_02:

Okay. Um, what else are we kidding? So we probably should talk about is there's 2073.

SPEAKER_03:

Yeah. 2073 by Asif Kapadia. So Asif directed the Amy Winehouse documentary, which won the Oscar, the Maradona documentary, the Ayrton Senna documentary, which I don't know if you guys have ever seen it, but as a person who does not care one iota about auto racing, it is one of the best sports documentaries I've ever seen in my life. This is a huge swing from him as well, a total change in style from what he's done before, which has been the sort of biographical portraits of famous people. So this movie is speculative science fiction. as a documentary. I know that sounds crazy. Yeah. Yeah. So the way it works is it's inspired by La Jetée, the Chris Marker film that became 12

Monkeys with Bruce Willis, if you ever saw that, about a future world. So you're living underground in a future world. So there's an inspiration there. It's not a retelling or anything like that. But Samantha Morton plays a futuristic character in a post-apocalyptic film. post-apocalyptic sci-fi world, and that world is the result of our current political context and climate. So the film uses documentary footage about what's happening in the world today to lay the foundation for a dystopian, what will our actions today what's happening in the world today, what would that look like in the future if things continue down the road that they're on? Climate change, politics, authoritarianism, war, famine, all of these issues that we deal with in society today, and then it speculates a future, a science fiction-y future of what that might look like in the future. So it's a mixture between sci-fi fiction, but that sci-fi fiction is really speculating on documentary footage today. I love when documentaries are not like, here's 35 facts for you to digest and feel, you know what I mean? It's a movie. It really feels like it's cinema. So we're giving us the documentary award for this film because I think it is a unique approach to, I don't know how the documentary world will feel about it.

SPEAKER_02:

Yeah. But they need to shake it up a little, you know, it's, it's really become very, you know, kind of, they're formulaic, you know, it's like, I did see the, the recent Will and Harper movie where he opens up saying, here I am in the classic documentary entry. You're like, yeah, that's basically how it happens. Right? Right. Sitting in a chair.

SPEAKER_03:

I mean, documentaries in crisis right now, big time, right? So the streaming services are like, we love true crime. And we love celebrity portraiture. And that's it. Like, you know, and people aren't doing big political films or long follows of, you know, unknown characters. Like, they're not getting cinemas. Like, cinemas are not playing documentary. We just ran Will and Harper at the Claridge. We're trying to do documentaries where we can, but they're not getting a lot of theatrical. Like, the whole community is in crisis, I think, in terms of, like, how do you build a career and a sustainable future for documentary film? I think people taking risks and doing different styles and trying new things, crisis can always lead to opportunity. I was moved by it in that way. Like you could tell this person cares and believes in.

SPEAKER_01:

stopping this from happening and getting the message to you.

SPEAKER_02:

Even if it has to be a scary way. Yeah. Okay. So you guys, let's wrap this up with two other films. Okay. And I try to do them quickly. Okay. Well, let's do night bitch first. And then we'll close with a closing rate title. Okay. Amy Adams is getting a lot of attention for this. And tell us about it.

SPEAKER_03:

Yeah. So I am a parent. I'm also Uh, for many years in my young children's life, I was a work at home parent for a long time, especially during the pandemic. Um, I went into this movie, you know, as a man and a father and I left. feeling seen in ways I had never been seen before.

SPEAKER_01:

Really?

SPEAKER_03:

That's interesting. In a good way, I guess. I mean, kind of. So yeah, you know, Amy Adams' character, who is an artist who puts her career on hold to raise her son while her husband goes to work every day. in the suburbs, they leave the city, they move to the suburbs. Weird how this might play in Montclair. Things psychologically get complicated. I'll put it that way. So yeah, so she wants to be like every person in that situation. They have an inner life that may be in conflict. with the world around them. This movie felt so Gen X, as a Gen Xer, I was like, the soundtrack is Gen X. That's awesome. Yeah, everything about it was like, just felt like time and place. uh that anyone who's got kids even you know men uh like i said myself i was with another film programmer from another festival who's also a father of young kids who works from home a lot and we were both like wow we needed to go we were talking about this earlier and i was like i i'm a little on the

SPEAKER_02:

And I was like, well, I, I can relate like Rachel's like, that's me. We up in the middle of the night when they were little, I was night full stop.

SPEAKER_00:

Yeah. Yeah.

SPEAKER_02:

You guys are selling it. I think I might want to see this.

SPEAKER_03:

Take the jump with it.

SPEAKER_01:

I will, I will.

SPEAKER_03:

Marielle Heller, who's the director, did Can You Ever Forgive Me with Melissa McCarthy a few years back. She played Anya Taylor-Joy's mom on The Queen's Gambit. She's also an actor. She's very good, yeah. Yes, she directed it. and I think adapted it and is coming to receive the director's award. She'll be there for a Q and A. We'll talk about the movie after. So bring your dog sequence questions for her and ask her about them in person. And I will point at you and say, I have a question there.

SPEAKER_00:

Perfect. I'll be like, when can I start running with dogs? Where do I do that? Where's my pack?

SPEAKER_02:

All right. So the closing night film, The Piano Lesson.

SPEAKER_03:

Yes, it's an adaptation of August Wilson's play. It's part of his cycle of plays about the Black experience in America in the 20th century. Denzel Washington, executive, produced this film. His son, Malcolm, this is his debut feature as a director. And his other son, John David Washington, is in the film. They're both going to be here with us. Stephen Colbert is going to be doing the Q&A for this movie. It's going to really, Danielle Deadweiler, Sam Jackson. It has an incredible cast. It's really powerful. If you don't know the play, the story is about a family that was a sharecropping family who had survived being enslaved and had retained this piano as part of the family's legacy. It's now set in the mid-1930s, I think, and Daniel Deadweiler has moved to Pittsburgh as part of the Great Migration and has the piano with her. And in the piano, they have carved sort of over time, the family members had carved the story of the family into the wood of the piano. So it's got, it's very detailed with like images of marriages and babies, and it's got their whole family history sort of told visually on the surface of the piano. John David Washington's character is still in Mississippi. working on land that he wants to purchase back from the people who had enslaved his family

prior. And he's finally coming into his own economic power to be able to do that. And in order to do that, he thinks that the family needs to sell the piano so that he can have enough money to buy the land upon which his family had been enslaved. And so he and his sister have to, negotiate whether or not they will sell off this story of their family, the legacy object, the only sort of inherited wealth that they have as a family, or if they will retain it and not buy the land on which the family had been enslaved. So it's a really incredible moral dilemma. The performances are great. It's a great American play. And I can't believe that this is Malcolm Washington's first movie. Like, I watch it, and I was like, because, so everything about first-time filmmakers, and I love them for it, you know when you're watching one, because they have waited their whole life to do five or six different shots in the movie where you're like, first-time filmmaker, you got a drone, and you're going to push it through a tree.

SPEAKER_00:

Where's the dolly? Where's the dolly?

SPEAKER_03:

I was going to try everything possible. You've been waiting for this moment ever since film school to do this shot.

SPEAKER_01:

I'm going to zoom out.

SPEAKER_03:

Exactly.

SPEAKER_02:

And there's no drone in this movie.

SPEAKER_03:

This movie has visual discipline to it. And again, it's a play adaptation. It's not like they're running wild in the streets of Times Square. you know, trying to do crazy stuff. It is people in a room talking, for the most part. There are some other sequences that are sort of outside of the house.

SPEAKER_00:

It's hard to do a play into a movie. I mean, it's very hard.

SPEAKER_03:

And not make it feel like a play. Play, yeah. Right, so it does not. I think it really transcends, as cinema has sequences that are outside of the context of the house or whatever, but it really works. And like I said, I cannot believe he was a first-time filmmaker to have the discipline to not do the restraint to tell the story the right way. So we're giving, you know, I was like, we have to give him the Breakthrough Director Award at the festival for this because that level of restraint and control and mastery with your first film, I haven't seen it. And then John David Washington is so, I just, I'm a fan of his and he's great in this film. His character is deeply unlikable for a lot of different reasons. And I think he carries that out well. And I love the fact that, you know, these sort of challenging characters never get, actors never get recognized for that work. They only get recognized for like the one that makes you feel good or you can relate to or the, wow, he really, I thought for sure that was Ray Charles, you know, Jamie Foxx. You were incredible. What an impression. Like that to me, like, fine, you're an actor. Good job. I like difficult characters that like bring me into the movie. And people can inhabit those and give performances. Those people and comedians never get... That's true. Yeah. It drives me crazy. I'm like, the best performance I've seen, you know, might be a comedy performance and you'll never hear about them. And that's the hardest work to do.

SPEAKER_00:

It is, the timing. Timing is everything. It's incredible.

SPEAKER_03:

So, John David Washington's performance in this movie, I think it's phenomenal. I'm dying to see the conversation after this. Yeah. I want to hear them talk to Steven about it because he's from South Carolina. Like, you know, there's some stuff to talk about. So I think there's a lot of interesting, serious dialogue to be had.

SPEAKER_02:

Did we get to everything we needed? I think there is the Selena Gomez movie that we didn't mention.

SPEAKER_03:

Also a musical. Incredible. Go see it.

SPEAKER_02:

Yes. I saw the trailer for that. It looks amazing. It is amazing.

SPEAKER_03:
Amelia Perez it's called. It's fantastic.

SPEAKER_02:
Yes. And I think so. There's tons of other movies. We just went over the, the highlighted.

SPEAKER_00:
Otherwise we would keep you here for four more hours.

SPEAKER_02:
There's about 120, right? There's like a hundred. We went over, I don't know how many we went over a lot. We went over a lot. So we really appreciate you sharing this.

SPEAKER_00:
Everybody needs to go get their tickets, become a member because we are members and then you can get your tickets in advance. And I just love being a member too, because I get to go to the Claridge whenever, and I get a little discount and I feel good.

SPEAKER_02:
It's \$6 with your membership. Yeah, it's awesome. I can tell you.

SPEAKER_03:
And discount at the concession stand. Don't forget that.

SPEAKER_02:
That's right. Oh, I didn't know that. I snuck in food. I'm sorry to say. Even though the stupid intro even tells you, you know. It's not a stupid intro.

SPEAKER_03:
I literally wrote the intro. Did you? Because I know.

SPEAKER_02:
It even says we know about that. We know about that. You brought food in.

SPEAKER_03:

Because you smuggled candy from CVS. I knew it.

SPEAKER_00:

No, I brought in it. I love the intro. You did the intro with the leaf blowers?

SPEAKER_03:

I helped write that, yes.

SPEAKER_00:

That was amazing. Very good.

SPEAKER_03:

It is so funny. We, to this day, get a lot of pushback. So we're doing a new one soon. I don't know who else are going to win.

SPEAKER_02:

What do you get pushback on? The leaf blower bar? Yeah, it's so funny, because it's so controversial.

SPEAKER_03:

Advocates for leaf blowing were not pleased that we were making light of the controversy.

SPEAKER_02:

Oh, my gosh.

SPEAKER_03:

Sorry, advocates against gas-powered leaf blowers.

SPEAKER_02:

Where is the sense of humor? Those threads are the most, there's like a thousand comments within two seconds on those threads.

SPEAKER_00:

Okay, fine. If you're filming a new one, you should just have, you know, like when people read out stupid tweets or whatever on the, have someone sit there and read out the Facebook group comments.

SPEAKER_02:

He'd be in so much trouble. You cannot do that.

SPEAKER_00:

what you could turn it into a musical i can totally it would be so funny and you could just sing the little the crazy you know facebook you're getting him in so much trouble and i 100 would do that but

SPEAKER_03:

There are others who are more restrained at Montclair Film who would not allow me to take part in that, but yes.

SPEAKER_00:

That would be fun. I would support you 100%. Thank you.

SPEAKER_02:

Well, OK. So I just want to thank you so much. And also, just from last year when you came on, I think I mentioned this in a post to you that you had recommended two films that from Rachel asked you, what are two films that you recommend? I watched one right after we talked, which was Ahazar Balthazar. Balthazar, yeah. I am still messed up from that movie. I was so messed up from that movie. It's beautiful. It has so many layers to it, but the overwhelming layer is that I just, that donkey, the life that he lived is so painful. So do you have another recommendation?

SPEAKER_03:

What about, have you seen The Apartment?

SPEAKER_00:

Yeah, I love the apartment. That's a good recommendation. It is a good recommendation. Everybody watch the apartment. Everybody should go see the apartment.

SPEAKER_03:

Yeah, if you haven't seen that one. The other one I might recommend that's hard to find, but if you can find it, if you haven't seen it, would be The Landlord, which is from 1970. Good, okay, you haven't seen this one. This will be my recommendation for this year.

SPEAKER_01:

Okay, good.

SPEAKER_03:

The Landlord by Hal Ashby, who did Harold and Ma, and then Being There, and The Shampoo. Yes. This is his first film as a director and it stars Beau Bridges. He plays the scion of a rich Upper East Side family in New York who decides he's going to get into the real estate game and buys a brownstone in then lower working class neighborhood known as Park Slope Brooklyn. So it's shot in Park Slope, where I live, in 1970 on the streets of the neighborhood as it was then. And the mockery, like the level of mockery that goes into what would now be probably one of the greatest real estate investments of all time. And he becomes sort of entangled in a romantic relationship with his tenant, who is African-American, a woman, And it has an interracial relationship, which in 1970, again, on the screen was like never, ever seen or talked about. The class difference also being huge in the film and him being sort of this clueless buffoon. It's a very good dark comedy with a romantic angle, but just the sort of social transformation that's gone on since that time, especially in the idea of gentrification that you know is coming while you watch this movie, you have the context of today. I highly recommend that one. That'd be a good one.

SPEAKER_01:

If you already see my apartment. That's great.

SPEAKER_03:

The apartment, the apartment leads with that line where he's like, I live on West, whatever 50, whatever street my rent is \$27 a week. And I'm like, stop right there. I can't, I can't, I can't watch this. Man, that hurts.

SPEAKER_02:

Well, I hope you have a wonderful festival and you have a great lineup and we're excited that, um, we have it here again this year.

SPEAKER_00:

Yes. Thank you for taking the time to chat with us again. We love talking to you.

SPEAKER_03:

Love talking to you guys too. Thank you for having me. It's an honor to be on. We'll see you there. Bye guys. Thank you.

