

MIDDLEBURY NEW FILMMAKERS FESTIVAL

Press Release

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Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival Announces Opening Night Film, Spotlights on Women Filmmakers

Middlebury, Vermont. . .The Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival is pleased to announce a dynamic slate of women filmmakers at its 3rd Annual event, highlighted by its Opening Night film, “Take My Nose, Please,” from 89 year old, first time filmmaker Joan Kron. Other spotlights on women filmmakers include an onstage event with MNFF honorees Ricki Stern and Annie Sundberg, the filmmaking duo behind “Marathon: The Patriots Day Bombing”; a screening of the groundbreaking documentary on Hollywood legend Hedy Lamarr from first time director Alexandra Dean and a return appearance by legendary documentary filmmaker Barbara Kopple.

“Hollywood can prove difficult for women filmmakers but many of indie filmmaking’s leading talents are women,” said MNFF Artistic Director Jay Craven. “We’ve featured dozens of women filmmakers during our first two years—and we’ve got even more women filmmakers this year, including documentary directors/producers Annie Sundberg and Ricki Stern and Alexandra Dean, the director of “Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story,” that focuses on the celebrated actress Hedy Lamarr whose on-screen persona masked a whole other life as a groundbreaking inventor.”

“The buzz around this year’s lineup is already building,” noted Lloyd Komesar, MNFF producer. “Our exceptional contributions from women filmmakers are clearly one of the main reasons that people are excited. Beginning with Joan Kron’s wonderful Opening Night film, we have stocked our lineup with thoroughly entertaining films.”

A complete list of films for the 3rd Annual Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival will be released on the MNFF website in early August.

“TAKE MY NOSE ... PLEASE!”

As its title might suggest, this year’s Opening Night film on Thursday, August 24, will be one to remember. Eighty-nine-year old filmmaker Joan Kron has crafted a hilarious, biting documentary that looks at the role comedy has played in exposing the pressures on women to be attractive – and society’s subsequent relationship with plastic surgery.

“Take My Nose...Please!” centers on two comedians considering plastic surgery – Emily, an emerging improv performer, who has always wanted to do something about her nose, and Jackie Hoffman, an Emmy-nominated Broadway performer recognized for her work in the TV series “FEUD: Bette and Joan,” who was offered a nose job in high school and regrets turning it down. Their hilarious deliberations on plastic surgery are set against the more

studied perspectives of culture critics, sociologists and psychologists, creating a film that is at once comedic and light, but isn't afraid to examine the profound challenges facing women and the pressure to be perfect. "I got the idea about comedians and plastic surgery because comedians are the only ones who tell the truth...and I tell the truth," Kron said.

"Today," said Kron, "while I was sitting in a lawyer's waiting room (when you make films, you spend a lot of time with lawyers) doing the usual once an hour email check, I am reading an email from the Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival and my mouth just dropped open—agape. There it was—the news that we had been chosen to OPEN the festival. I may be new at this, but I've been involved long enough to know that there is a mystique in the festival world about being the Opening Night film. Being selected to open a festival is just such an honor. It's like being an understudy and then suddenly seeing your name in lights on the marquee. I've watched audiences in so many cities fall in love with our film, but I'll never be blasé. I can't wait to take "Take My Nose, Please" to Middlebury—on opening night."

Before venturing into filmmaking, Joan Kron co-founded the New York Times Home section, was a freelance writer for the Wall Street Journal and New York Magazine, Editor – in–Chief at Allure Magazine and authored four books. Not merely a journalist before her filmmaking career, Kron also studied theatrical costume design at the Yale School of Drama, helped Andy Warhol create his perfume, "You're In," and was instrumental in bringing The Velvet Underground to Philadelphia.

"I found my real beat at *Allure* when I volunteered to interview four plastic surgeons and ended up having a face-lift (not part of the assignment)," Kron wrote in an article on her [website](http://joankron.com), joankron.com. "We were all surprised at the response when the resulting story, "Shopping For a New Face," came out. Even though our readers were young, we discovered that they were fascinated with cosmetic surgery. In the early 90s, plastic surgery was exploding and it had meager coverage in the popular press. I asked for the beat, rationalizing that I was the only one at the magazine old enough to appreciate it. My face-lift made me look as young as I felt. I wonder if I would still be working if I looked my age."

"MARATHON: THE PATRIOTS DAY BOMBING"

MNFF will be honoring the filmmaking duo of Ricki Stern and Annie Sundberg at its 3rd Annual event this August with a VTeddy Award for "Sustained Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking" at the Closing Ceremonies following a tribute screening of their most recent film, "Marathon: The Patriots Day Bombing." The screening is slated for Sunday, August 27 at 4pm at the Town Hall Theater. Stern and Sundberg will appear on stage with MNFF Artistic Director Jay Craven for an extended Q&A at the film's conclusion. Audiences can also enjoy the Stern/Sundberg documentary "Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work," scheduled for 10a at the Marquis Theater.

The Stern/Sundberg event will round out an already robust lineup of guests, including Pulitzer-prize nominated journalist Dick Lehr, and renowned actors M. Emmet Walsh and Michael Murphy.

"People may not realize that Emmet Walsh, one of America's finest character actors, is also a Vermonter," said Jay Craven. "He's been in "Bladerunner," "Midnight Cowboy," "Ordinary People," "Serpico," and, of course, "Blood Simple," which we'll screen at the festival.

Michael Murphy was a regular for Robert Altman and Woody Allen. Dick Lehr wrote “Black Mass,” subsequently turned into a feature film of the same title, starring Johnny Depp and he’s one of America’s leading investigative writers. We’re looking forward to on-stage conversations with these industry leaders—and others.”

“BOMBSHELL: THE HEDY LAMARR STORY”

The MNFF is thrilled to present the highly anticipated documentary, “Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story” at Middlebury College’s Dana Auditorium at 7:15pm on Friday, August 25.

Director Alexandra Dean premiered the film at the 2017 Tribeca Film Festival to wide acclaim. The film examines a little known side of Hollywood actress Hedy Lamarr’s life. She was proclaimed Hollywood’s “Most Beautiful Girl” in 1940. Off the set, she pursued something much more unusual for women at the time: inventing technology. Lamarr was never credited with being the secret inventor of devices that led to secure wifi, bluetooth and GPS communications – that is, until now.

“The world of Hollywood has a legacy that parallel’s America own history,” said MNFF’s Jay Craven. “Just think of the Charlie Chaplin films that provide detailed visual evidence of their time period as much as they do entertainment. The Hedy Lamarr story is one of those history books, combining immigration, Hollywood glamour, movie making, gender, and amazing technical inventiveness by this extraordinary woman.”

Director Alexandra Dean is scheduled to appear at MNFF for a lively Q&A.

BARBARA KOPPLE RETURNS TO THE FESTIVAL

Two-time Oscar-winning filmmaker Barbara Kopple, whose films “Harlan County: USA” and “Miss Sharon Jones!” screened at last year’s event, will be back at the MNFF for a Returning Honoree Spotlight.

Her most recent film, “This Is Everything: GiGi Gorgeous,” centers on Gigi Gorgeous, a YouTube star formerly known as Gregory, who underwent a gender transition in 2013. This powerful film premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and will screen at Town Hall Theater at 130p on Saturday, August 26.

“Barbara Kopple had great fun with us last year – and she wanted to come back,” said Craven. “She was quite generous with her time and comments, so we’re thrilled to have her with us again.”

“I am so thrilled to be returning to Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival!” said Kopple. “Middlebury is such a beautiful place, and everyone here is so interesting and smart and the festival always hosts wonderful films. I look forward to being able to show our new film ‘This Is Everything: Gigi Gorgeous.’ Gigi is a remarkable person and continues to inspire those in the LGBTQ community. The love between her and her family is so pure and it is an honor to share their story with you all. ”

HAPPY HOURS AND PROGRAM UPDATES

Several MNFF Happy Hour receptions have also been announced: 5-6p at Edgewater Gallery on Mill Street on Friday, August 25 and 5-6p at the Middlebury Inn on Saturday, August 26. Both events are open to the public.

Please note: The date for the “Cutting Edge of Journalism” conversation with Pulitzer Prize nominated author Dick Lehr and MNFF’s Artistic Director Jay Craven has been changed from Saturday, August 26 to Friday, August 25. The event is still slated for 4-5pm at the Middlebury Town Office Building.

NOTES FROM MNFF HQ

Don’t forget to buy your Opening Night tickets as soon as possible – we are almost at capacity! A ticket to the event guarantees entrance to the Opening Night Film and After Party at the Swift House. Tickets are available online: <http://middfilmfest.org/ticket-sales/>

This year, the Festival will get underway on Thursday morning, August 24, with 1030a screenings at Town Hall Theater and the Marquis Theater, followed by screenings at 130p at these same venues.

The MNFF Festival Program will be available online in early August. Until then, stay current with our newsletter. Sign up here: <http://middfilmfest.org/updates/>

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