



Montclair Film fosters community: year-round events



*Students in a cinematography class this past summer learn about making film.
COURTESY AMY GALLATIN*

By GWEN OREL

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The festival came first.

Montclair Film Festival began in Bob Feinberg's kitchen, and debuted in the spring of 2012.

Five years later, the organization that presents the festival operates year-round, and changed its name to reflect that fact. From MFF it became MF, Montclair Film.



BOB FEINBERG

It opened its Investors Bank Film + Media Center in April 2017, just in time for the festival.

The name change “represents the future of the organization,” said MF Founder and Chairman Bob Feinberg. MF, Feinberg said, is a “full-on, year-round arts and education organization. Montclair is where we're located. It's part of our DNA. Film is the core of what we do. While MFF will probably remain the jewel in the crown, it's just one of the things we do.”

LEARNING TO FILM, LEARNING FROM FILM

MF has offered classes for young filmmakers for awhile, but adult classes are new to the building, said MF Executive Director Tom Hall, who will oversee his fourth film festival in this role in spring 2018. Education Director Sue Hollenberg is “leading the charge,” Hall said. Adult classes offered this semester included Improv Comedy Workshop; Editing with Premiere Pro; Video Memoirs, and Hands On SFX Make-Up Intensive. A new semester will be announced in December.

Offering acting classes is natural, said Hall, because acting and writing are “tied together. We’re considering creating showcases for performers and storytellers.”

Another way of encouraging new filmmakers is through the Emerging Filmmaker Competition 2018. Students in grades 6-12 can submit short films in different categories through March 4, with some of the winners screened at the 2018 Montclair Film Festival.

In January, MF will once again partner with Montclair State University to present “Behind the Screen,” a collaboration



TOM HALL

which brings screenwriters, directors and technicians to the university to talk about their craft.

A junior jury will weigh in on films under consideration for prizes.

Feinberg said that education programs will be a large focus of energy for the organization as it continues to grow. He’d like to bring in educators from the school systems. “Not having to scramble for space [for classes] is tremendous,” he said.

One exciting program is The “505 + Films and Friends,” which grew out of the sensory friendly screenings during the festival. House lights and sound are turned down to half, to make the experience friendlier for people on the autism spectrum and differently abled children and adults. An event for high school students is scheduled for Dec. 1, and for adults 18-28 on Dec. 3.

“We’re partnering with educators and clinicians to launch a year-round program in a social environment,” Hall said. “It’s a social get-together as much as a cinema program.”

SCREENINGS, SPECIAL EVENTS

MF will holds some events outside of its home: its annual fundraiser with Stephen Colbert, this year with Samantha Bee, will be held on Dec. 2 at NJPAC.



STEPHEN COLBERT

In February, MF will again hold a “Loser’s Lounge” fundraising party at the Wellmont Theater, 5 Seymour St. Last year’s party was an ‘80s party, while this year’s is titled “’70s mixtape! A 1970s dance party.” Montclair Film will partner with Charitybuzz to auction off a chance to sing with Patrick Wilson live on stage.

Back at its home, “Members Only” screenings allow MF to show films to its members that are “award contenders, in our opinion,” Hall said. “They are high profile films, shown in advance of their release in Montclair. Some have played the festival in the past.” Being part of the life-cycle of a movie besides one or two screenings during a festival is one of MF’s goals, he said.

A program called “Filmmakers Local 505” focuses on New Jersey and Essex County filmmakers, with a Q-and-A afterwards.

After an October screening of “Revolution ‘67,” about the Newark riots, Feinberg said, “I sat in the audience thinking, ‘This is exactly what I hoped would happen if we could launch a festival and open a building and talk to filmmakers. It was a great night.



Nick Lowe tapes a PBS special at Montclair Film. COURTESY TONY TURNER/MONTCLAIR FILM

The cinema space can be converted into an event space and has hosted some special events: Laura Linney taught a master class there in April. And recently, coinciding with his concert at the Outpost in the Burbs, Nick Lowe taped a television program there for PBS, called “Speakeasy.” Feinberg, who said he has loved Lowe since he was a teenager, said the program will air sometime in December.

“I’m a true believe in cinema as a platform for connecting people. When you tell a story, you have people find empathy for each other, have dialogue for the experience and find new understanding. We need that right now.”

Hall said, “When the back door opens up, and students come into classes, when we open the doors at night. When we have family screenings, and see little kids coming in, that’s what I love. I want people to feel home and welcoming. I’m not showing movies because I like them. I want people to connect around them.”