

San Diego, California, U.S.

By Tom Kirvan

San Diego International Film Festival

25 AND COUNTING

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL TO MARK MAJOR MILESTONE THIS AUTUMN

As it celebrates its silver anniversary, the San Diego International Film Festival has grown from a small regional showcase of movies into an influential launching pad for global cinema in the span of 25 years.

This year's event, which takes place from October 13-18, features six days of film screenings, red-carpet events, and special programs across southern California's La Jolla, University City, and Solana Beach.

Presented by the San Diego Film Foundation, the festival brings together filmmakers, entertainment industry professionals, and movie-lovers for a week showcasing studio premieres, independent films, documentaries, and award-winning shorts from around the world. Organizers have labeled this year's festival theme as "Culture | Coast | Cinema," celebrating the power of storytelling and diversity through the art of film.

From its humble beginnings a quarter-century ago, the film festival now has a global reach, attracting interest from more than 3,200 filmmakers from 85 countries who submit work annually.

As evidence of its impact with movie-goers, the festival has featured numerous films that have earned a combined 36 Academy Awards and 167 nominations. Among the notable films:

- "Nomadland," winner of Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actress at the Academy Awards
- "Parasite," winner of Best Picture and Best International Feature Film
- "The Power of the Dog," winner of Best Director and a leading multi-nominee
- "The Imitation Game," winner of Best Adapted Screenplay and a multi-award nominee
- "Silver Linings Playbook," Academy Award winner for Best Actress
- "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri," winner of Best Actress and Best Supporting Actor awards



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SAN DIEGO CONNECTIONS FOR PRIMERUS MEMBERS

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Yet, despite its global profile, the festival also is known for making a community and educational impact on the San Diego region. Its Focus on Impact Education Program is one such initiative, as organizers have partnered with local school districts and institutions to bring issue-based student art and global documentary screenings into middle and high schools.

Festival Highlights

1. **Night of the Stars Tribute** – The festival's signature awards event is set for Tuesday, October 13 at The Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center in La Jolla. The evening will feature red-carpet arrivals, the presentation of the Gregory Peck Excellence in Film Award, an awards ceremony, and an exclusive after-party with music, cocktails, and late-night bites.
2. **Opening Night Film & Party** – Scheduled for Wednesday, October 14, the Opening Night Celebration will include red-carpet experiences and an exclusive studio premiere, followed by a post-screening party. Festival organizers say the event offers attendees the opportunity to mingle with filmmakers, film enthusiasts, arts supporters, and community leaders.
3. **Independent Films and Studio Premieres** – From Thursday, October 15 through Sunday, October 18, audiences can watch a lineup of studio premieres, independent features, documentaries, and short films at AMC UTC 14 in La Jolla. Many screenings will include filmmaker Q&A sessions and panel discussions.
4. **Fest Lounge** – Open October 16-18, the Fest Lounge serves as the festival's social hub. Guests can enjoy complimentary wine, beer, light bites, filmmaker panels, industry conversations, live entertainment, and networking opportunities between screenings.
5. **25 Years After Dark** – To celebrate the festival's 25th anniversary, organizers will host a special Saturday night party on October 17 at the Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach. The event will feature live music, recognition of award-winning filmmakers, and a dance party celebrating the festival's legacy. Proceeds support the festival's educational initiatives.
6. **Culinary Cinema** – One of the festival's most popular signature events returns on Sunday, October 18. Hosted at AMC UTC 14 at Westfield UTC, Culinary Cinema combines film and food with a cuisine-themed movie experience, chef-driven tastings, a gourmet buffet, and wine and cocktail pairings.

Festival passes and tickets are currently available for purchase through the San Diego International Film Festival website. Available options include VIP passes, festival passes, and individual event tickets. Festival organizers say passholders receive varying levels of access to screenings, filmmaker Q&As, special events, and the Fest Lounge.

Individual screening tickets start at \$18, while VIP packages carry a higher price tag but include access to screenings, priority seating, filmmaker panels, and select signature events. Night of the Stars and Opening Night experiences are also available separately.

For the full festival schedule, passes, and ticket information, visit sdfilmfest.com.



Image courtesy of the San Diego International Film Festival