



jewish film institute

**WORLD-RENOWNED
SAN FRANCISCO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL
HONORS 35 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP WITH NEW NAME**

*San Francisco Jewish Film Festival Renaming Organization as
Jewish Film Institute to Celebrate Global Influence in Film Industry*

SAN FRANCISCO (June 23, 2015) – The San Francisco Jewish Film Festival (SFJFF) has announced a renaming of their year round organization to the **Jewish Film Institute** to better reflect the cultural initiatives and services they provide, including the world-renowned SFJFF – the first and largest festival of its kind. The repositioning of the institution coincides with the 35th anniversary of the SFJFF, which has evolved from an annual international film festival to a full-service media arts organization that serves audiences worldwide. The SFJFF will retain its name as an annual festival and continue to be the signature program of the Jewish Film Institute.

The SFJFF has played a pivotal leadership role in the world of independent Jewish film, offering bold and innovative programming, open dialogue, and discussion as well as support to international filmmakers and Jewish-centric programs since 1980. In 2000, the SFJFF hosted the first-ever **National Conference of Jewish Film Festivals** (organized by the **National Foundation for Jewish Culture**) with 31 participating Jewish film festivals. Since the birth of the SFJFF, more than 150 subsequent Jewish film and culture festivals have been created worldwide. The Festival – named one of the 50 most innovative Jewish organizations in the U.S. by the **Slingshot Fund** and among the top 50 film festivals worldwide by **IndieWire** – will continue to be the principal program of the Jewish Film Institute and is well positioned to expand its impact at the intersection of film media and Jewish culture for the next 35 years.

The establishment of the Jewish Film Institute captures the breadth and impact the organization has had since its inception, and also marks the influence it will continue to evoke for years to come, providing a platform for artistic expression and community engagement among local and international audiences. The programs of the Jewish Film Institute include the New Jewish Filmmaking project, which has mentored over 300 young filmmakers since its inception in 2002; sneak previews of new releases throughout the year; screenings in senior communities throughout the Bay Area; a filmmaker residency for filmmakers working with Jewish themes, housed in its home at the 9th Street Independent Film Center in San Francisco; and a robust online shorts program hosted on its YouTube channel.

Since debuting the world’s first online Jewish film archive in 2001, the organization’s online archive currently hosts over 1400 films and has become a valuable resource to national libraries and to a global audience of more than 1.7 million people. In honor of its 35th anniversary, the Jewish Film Institute will add an additional feature to its online service by offering viewers even greater access to the **JFI Film Archive** – a new **Video on Demand (VOD) platform available via Vimeo**. “The world of film and media has changed exponentially since 1980 when we



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invented the idea of the Jewish Film Festival,” explains **Lexi Leban, Executive Director of the Jewish Film Institute**. “In celebration of our 35th Anniversary, we are reinventing ourselves to meet the needs of a new generation of film lovers.”

From its earliest years, the organization has discovered and nurtured notable cinematic talents including Amos Gitai, Dani Levy, Roberta Grossman, Amy York Rubin, Lacey Schwartz, Ry Russo-Young, Liz Garbus, Tiffany Shlain, Michal Aviad, Jill Soloway, Hilla Medalia, Karin Albou, and Peter Forgacs. Independent filmmakers often screen their short films live or online and later return to the Festival with feature length movies, including Emmy award-winning director Jill Soloway’s *Afternoon Delight*. The SFJFF has been an important theatrical launching pad for many acclaimed features and documentary films, including *God is Great and I’m Not, Promises, Strange Fruit, Trembling Before G-d, Hiding and Seeking, The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg, The Other Son, Little White Lie, and Arab Labor*.

As the premier curatorial voice for Jewish film and media, the Jewish Film Institute offers film exhibition programs, educational initiatives, live programming, online activities and filmmaker support that speak to the needs of the broadening community. The Institute seeks to introduce audiences to groundbreaking stories and thought-provoking content that will enlighten and inspire viewers to expand their understanding of Jewish culture through film, media, and dialogue.

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About the Jewish Film Institute

The Jewish Film Institute is the premier curatorial voice for Jewish film and media and a leading arts and culture organization in the Bay Area. Built on the foundation of the world-renowned San Francisco Jewish Film Festival – the world’s first and largest Jewish film festival – the Jewish Film Institute catalyzes and inspires communities in San Francisco and around the world to expand their understanding of Jewish life and culture through film, media, and dialogue. Year round, the Jewish Film Institute promotes awareness and appreciation of the diversity of the Jewish people through multiple mediums – including original online programming that reaches a global audience of over 1.7 million people. All of these services, along with artists’ support and educational initiatives, give viewers around the world even greater access to Jewish culture and the visionaries who shape it.

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