

 Associated Bank PRESENTS

# the 2023 MILWAUKEE FILM FESTIVAL

APRIL 20 – MAY 04

Contact: Bre Graziano  
Director of Communications  
[bre@mkefilm.org](mailto:bre@mkefilm.org) | 262-490-9151

## MILWAUKEE FILM ANNOUNCES THE 2023 MILWAUKEE FILM FESTIVAL JURY AWARD WINNERS AND RECIPIENTS OF THE 2023 ABELE CATALYST AWARD

*The 15th Annual Milwaukee Film Festival closes May 4th, awarding \$34,000 to deserving filmmakers near and far and honors the 2023 Abele Catalyst Award Recipients, Cory and Michelle Nettles*

**MILWAUKEE, WI - Thursday, May 4th, 2023:** As the 15th Annual Milwaukee Film Festival draws to a close, Milwaukee Film has announced the winners of the 2023 Milwaukee Film Festival Jury Awards, along with the recipient of this year's Abele Catalyst Award, Cory and Michelle Nettles.

The Abele Catalyst Award is given annually in recognition of generous support to Milwaukee Film while honoring the awardees efforts to think big, aim high, and understand we can always do better. The award is inspired by Milwaukee Film's founder Chris Abele and his mission to create long-lasting positive impact on our community through film and awarded to those whose generous support embodies that enthusiasm.

"I'm excited to present this year's Catalyst Award to two people who also happen to be good friends, Cory and Michelle Nettles. While they have long been very generous to and supportive of great causes in Milwaukee, their goal has always been more than simply to make a gift, it's been to make a difference. And they're really good at it." Abele enthused. "They gave us an enormous \$100,000 Challenge Match for us to leverage new supporters, and recently renewed a three-year commitment to ongoing support. But that support is not just for the 'general operations' part of our work...it's specifically for our efforts engaging the community, to start conversations that don't happen otherwise, and always focused on making a difference, not just a headline. Our city is by all measures a much better, stronger and morally clear community for the presence of two incredible people who I know are going to continue making a difference for a long time." Abele concluded.

“We could not be more honored to receive the Abele Catalyst Award. We have tremendous respect for Chris and his leadership all across the community, including his significant support for Milwaukee Film.”

Remarked Cory and Michelle Nettles. “Additionally, we have one of the best film festivals in the world, so we are extremely honored to be associated with it in any way. Our support for Milwaukee Film continues to advance our commitment of support arts, culture and education in our community.”

**Milwaukee Film is also proud to announce the winners of the 2023 Milwaukee Film Festival juried awards, giving away \$34,000 in cash to deserving filmmakers near and far.**

“In recent years, our programming team has expanded eligibility by nominating exceptional films to these awards from across our program,” describes Cara Ogburn, Milwaukee Film’s artistic director. “This is all in the hopes of our awards representing the depth and breadth of talent we present on the screen and honoring awardees where the award can impact future projects across all areas of our festival in a more inclusive fashion.”

Jurors from a variety of backgrounds and within the industry deliberated in late April to select the winners in multiple juried areas. “Bringing our juries to Milwaukee each year is a chance to show off our city and festival to our friends from around the country,” explained Ogburn further. “They help us bring a widened gravitas to our juried awards that reflect the wider industry’s interests and priorities in honoring exceptional work,” she concluded.

See the below for a full listing of Milwaukee Film Festival 2023 Jury award winners:

**LIST EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER MFF2023 AWARDS CEREMONY ON THURSDAY 5/4, 6:30 p.m.**

**Luminaries Jury Award - *Smoking Causes Coughing* | dir. Quentin Dupieux**

Luminaries Jury:

Milan Chakraborty | Head of Film at Marginal MediaWorks

Laura Dyan Kezman | Owner/Director, LionArt Media

Willie Westone | Post-Production Studio Executive, AMC Networks

**Emerging Fiction Jury Award - *Next Sohee* | dir. July Jung**

Emerging Fiction Jury:

Sam Flancher | Programmer, Chicago International Film Festival

Brandon Harris | President and Co-founder, I’d Watch That

Mye Hoang | Filmmaker, Cat Daddies (MFF2022)

**Emerging Documentary Jury Award - *Lakota Nation vs. United States* | dirs. Jesse Short Bull & Laura Tomaselli**

Special Mentions:

*Kokomo City* | dir. D. Smith

*The Tuba Thieves* | dir. Alison O'Daniel

*Is There Anybody Out There?* | dir. Ella Glendining

Emerging Documentary Jury:

Livia Huang | Associate Programmer, America ReFramed

Allison Inman | Director of Education and Engagement, Belcourt Theatre

Jesse McLean | Chair & Associate Professor, Department of Film, Video, Animation and New Genres,  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

**Cream City Cinema Jury Award - *A Common Sequence* | dirs. Mary Helena Clark & Mike Gibisser**

**Cream City Cinema Jury Award - *Friday Night Blind* | dirs. Scott Krahn & Robb Fischer**

**Cream City Cinema Jury Award - *Of Wood* | dir. Owen Klatte**

Special Mentions:

*We Are Not Ghouls* | dir. Chris James Thompson

*RIP* | dir. Carol Brandt

Special Mention for Community Impact: *What We're Hungry For: How Food Pantries Fed Rural Wisconsin During the Pandemic* | dir. Jim Winship

Cream City Cinema Jury:

Melanie Addington | Executive Director, Tallgrass Film Association

Raul Benitez | Programmer, Midwest Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival, Comfort Station

Emily Long | Executive Director, Gene Siskel Film Center

**Shorts Jury Award - *How Not to Date While Trans* | dir. Nyala Moon**

Special Mention for Directing - *We Were Meant To* | dir. Tari Wariebi

Special Mention for Original Voice - *Everything I Learned When My House Burned Down* | dir. Joe Pickett

Special Mention for Animation - *Garrano* | dirs. David Doutel & Vasco Sá

Special Mention for Acting - Lena Papaligoura's performance in *AirHostess-737*

Special Mention for Impact Storytelling - *Where the Sun Always Shines* | dir. Rosie Baldwin

Shorts Jury:

Iva Dimitrova | Program Manager, Chicken & Egg Pictures

Lu Lippold | Communications Consultant, Minnesota Film & Television

Clay Pruitt | Director of Programming, Impact Distribution at Seed&Spark

**Kids' Choice Jury Award - *FATHEAD* | dir. C. Craig Patterson**

Special Mention for Best Message - *Slipping Away* | dir. Gabriel Hénot Lefèvre

Special Mention for Best Design - *Luce and the Rock* | dir. Britt Raes

Special Mention for Cutest and Rarest Character - *Swing to the Moon* | dirs. Marie Bordessoule,

Adriana Bouissie, Nadine De Boer, Elisa Drique, Chloé Lauzu, Vincent Levrero, Solenne Moreau

Special Mention for Best Animation Experimentation - *The Goose* | dir. Jan Mika

Special Mention for Best Representation - *Evan's Drum* dir. Tamaa Ivis

Additional Special Jury Mentions:

*Papa Zaza* / dir. Geraldine Charpentier

*A Morning with Aroha* / dir. Nicholas Riini

Rated K: For Kids Jury:

Amariona Di Giacinto, 10, Underwood Elementary

Athena Swartz, 12, Fernwood Montessori

Axel Quijas, 9, Stellar Elementary

Jane Todd, 11, Maryland Avenue Montessori

Lileth Gayle, 10, Golda Meir

Maren Dutmer, 10, Wauwatosa Montessori

Orson Dutmer, 12, Wauwatosa Montessori

Smith Wooldridge, 12, Wauwatosa Montessori School

Tyla'Grace Edgecomb, 9, Saint Sebastian Catholic School

**AUDIENCE AWARDS**

Following the close of the festival, Milwaukee Film will also award \$3,500 to the winners of the Allan H. (Bud) and Suzanne L. Selig Audience Awards for Best Feature and Best Short as voted by the audience. Winners will be announced the week of May 8th, 2023.

**ABOUT THE ABELE CATALYST AWARD**

Inspired by Milwaukee Film founder Chris Abele's interest in having a catalytic and long-lasting positive impact on our community through film, the Abele Catalyst Award was first awarded in 2013 and is given annually to the person or organization whose generous support embodies that enthusiasm to help us think big, aim high, and understand that we can always do better.

Previous Abele Catalyst Award recipients:

- 2022: Lacey Sadoff
- 2021: Geraud Blanks
- 2020: Allan H. "Bud" and Suzanne L. Selig
- 2019: Alec Fraser
- 2018: Christine Symchych
- 2017: Brico Fund
- 2016: Katie Heil
- 2015: Donald & Donna Baumgartner
- 2014: Marianne Lubar
- 2013: Chris Abele