

211 views | Mar 21, 2019, 10:00am

# Miami Film Festival Launches Critically Acclaimed Films



**Carrie Coolidge** Contributor



Opening Night of the Miami Film Festival 2019 at Olympia theater and DuPont Building.

COURTESY OF MIAMI DADE COLLEGE

The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual [Miami Film Festival](#) recently wrapped up after presenting more than 160 feature narratives, documentaries and short films of all genres, from more than 40 different countries.

The [acclaimed film festival](#) is produced by [Miami Dade College](#) and is considered the preeminent film festival for showcasing Ibero-American cinema in the U.S., and a major launch pad for all international and documentary cinema.



The film, “BIRDS OF PASSAGE” was awarded the Miami Film Festival’s top Grand Jury prize. A viscerally stunning epic directed by Cristina Gallego and Ciro Guerra, the film covers the origins of the Colombian narcotics trade.

COURTESY OF CIUDAD LUNAR

The film, “Birds of Passage” was awarded the top Grand Jury prize. “Birds of Passage” is a viscerally stunning epic that covers the origins of the Colombian narcotics trade.

Directed by Cristina Gallego and Ciro Guerra, has won [the \\$40,000 Knight Marimbas Award](#), which is the top Grand Jury prize of the festival. Ciudad Lunar Productions of Colombia and the US distributor, The Orchard released the film theatrically in select markets on March 15th.

## YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

---

---

---

---

Sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Marimbas Award is given to the film that best exemplifies richness and resonance for cinema’s future.





MIAMI, FLORIDA - MARCH 07: Producer Benjamín Doménech, Jaie Laplante, actress Lali Esposito and director Gonzalo Tobal attend 'The Accused' premiere during the 2019 Miami Film Festival at Olympia Theatre on March 07, 2019 in Miami, Florida. (Photo by Rodrigo Varela/Getty Images)

GETTY

The Festival's Audience Award for Best Feature went to "Screwball" from the Miami-based production company Rakontur. Directed by Billy Corben, the documentary traces the roots of the recent high-profile Major League Baseball scandal to bizarre origins in shady south Florida tanning salons. The film is set for a major release from New York-based Greenwich Entertainment, Screwball will open in Miami theaters on March 29th.



MIAMI, FL - MARCH 06: Director Julius Amedume, Kevin Sharpley, Jaie Laplante, actor Jack Coleman, actor/producer Jimmy Jean-Louis and Steven Lord Suzan attend the 2019 Miami Film Festival 'RATTLESNAKES' Screening at SilverSpot Cinema - Downtown Miami on March 6, 2019 in Miami, Florida. (Photo by Johnny Louis/Getty Images)

GETTY

Directed by Billy Corben, the documentary traces the roots of the recent high-profile Major League Baseball scandal to bizarre origins in shady south Florida tanning salons. The film is set for a major release from New York-based Greenwich Entertainment and will open in theaters on March 29th.

The HBO Ibero-American Feature Film Award was presented by jurors Paz Fabrega (Viaje), film critic Rubén Peralta Rigaud and HBO Vice President Leslie Cohen to Bani Khoshnoudi's *Fireflies*, which made its US Premiere at the Festival. *Fireflies* is lead produced by Pensée Sauvage and Zensky Cine of Mexico.



MIAMI, FL - MARCH 4: Actress Patricia Clarkson (R) is seen at the Precious Gem Award Presentation during the 2019 Miami Film Festival at the Tower Theatre on March 4, 2019 in Miami, Florida. (Photo by Alexander Tamargo/Getty Images)

GETTY

Golden Globe-winning actress Patricia Clarkson received the Festival's Estrella Damm Precious Gem Award. Clarkson won the 2019 Golden Globe for her role in Jean-Marc Vallée's HBO limited series *Sharp Objects*, and received an Oscar nomination for her pivotal role in Peter Hedges' *Pieces of April* (2003). A talented stage and small screen actress as well, she received a Tony Award nomination for the Broadway production of "The Elephant Man", and won two Emmy Awards for her work in Alan Ball's *Six Feet Under*.

Throughout a career that has spanned more than 30 years of work, Clarkson is known for her versatility in working with both top independent cinema artists such as Tom McCarthy, Todd Haynes and Isabel Coixet and popular big-budget mainstream films directed by the likes of directors Martin Scorsese, Brian de Palma and Clint Eastwood. She was also involved with the highly successful trilogy, *The Maze Runner*.





The Miami Film Festival launched the inaugural edition of Knight Heroes. This year, a Masterclass was taught by award-winning director Aaron Stewart-Ahn (left), Oscar-winning, Miami-born filmmaker Barry Jenkins (center), and award-winning filmmaker Boots Riley (right)

COURTESY OF MIAMI FILM FESTIVAL

The Festival also launched its inaugural edition of Knight Heroes. This year, a Masterclass was taught by Oscar-winning, Miami-born filmmaker Barry Jenkins, director of “Moonlight”, for which he won the Academy Award for Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay (Jenkins also directed the critically acclaimed “If Beale Street Could Talk”). Award-winning filmmaker Boots Riley (director of “Sorry to Bother You”) and Aaron Stewart-Ahn, co-writer of the acclaimed break-out hit “Mandy”, also appeared with Jenkins at the Festival as part of the Knight Heroes Masterclass.

Over the past five years, the Festival has screened films from more than 60 countries, including 300 World, International, North American, U.S. and East Coast Premieres. This year, “Vandal” a feature film, starring Richard Schiff, Beau Knapp and Daniel Zovatto, held its world premier at the Miami Film Festival.



“Vandal” a feature film, starring Richard Schiff (right), Jose Daniel Freixas (the film's director, center), and co-star Daniel Zovatto (left) held its world premier at the Miami Film Festival.

COURTESY OF WORLD RED EYE

Directed by acclaimed director, Jose Daniel “Jaydee” Freixas (also of “Magic City Memoirs”), [Vandal is the story of a young leader of a legendary Miami graffiti art crew](#). The film explores the struggle of street artists to keep their art alive as well as the social backlash that goes hand in hand with pursuing their biggest passion. It is worth noting that “[Vandal](#)” is a Miami film made in Miami by Miamians.

Richard Schiff, who has a starring role in “Vandal”, attended the film’s premier. Schiff is an Emmy Award-winning actor who is known for his starring roles in many feature films and television series including “The West Wing”, “Ballers” and the critically acclaimed TV drama, “The Good Doctor”.



Tony Gonzalez, Manolo Gonzalez-Vergara, Frankie J Alvarez, Veronica Gessa, Jose Daniel Freixas, Daniel Zovatto and Richard Schiff appear at the premier of "Vandal" at the Miami Film Festival.

COURTESY OF WORLD RED EYE

The film's lead actor, Daniel Zovatto (who starred in "Don't Breathe" and "It Follows"), also appeared at the film's premier. Zovatto was also recently recognized as one of Variety's Top 10 Latinxs To Watch in 2019.

Major sponsors of the Festival include HBO, American Airlines, Miami-Dade County, Tilia Real Estate, The State of Florida, Jaguar Land Rover, Univision Radio and Telemundo, among others.

For [more information](#), or to buy tickets for the Miami Film Festival in 2020, visit [miamifilmfestival.com](http://miamifilmfestival.com) or call 305-237-FILM (3456).

*Carrie Coolidge is a luxury travel and real estate contributor to Forbes Life. You can follow her on Twitter at @carriecoolidge*





**Carrie Coolidge** Contributor

---

I am a Manhattan-based luxury travel and real estate writer. I was a contributing writer at Barron's Penta magazine where I penned the Trendspotting column and also cove...

**Read More**

---