

GlobeDocs Film Festival celebrates 10 years of curiosity, art, and community

Filmmakers, journalists, and audiences have come together in dialogue for a decade of thought-provoking docs. Among this year's notable attendees: Michael Dukakis and Errol Morris.

By **Natalia Winkelman** Globe correspondent, Updated October 17, 2024, 1:41 p.m.



A still from "Another Stab At Life." ANOTHER STAB AT LIFE

David and Goliath stories and tales of motherhood in all its complexity are two of the heartbeats of this year's GlobeDocs Film Festival, which begins on Tuesday and runs through Oct. 27.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the festival remains a showcase for some of the year's best documentary cinema, as well as a space to celebrate curiosity, art, and community.

First organized in 2015, [GlobeDocs](#) was the brainchild of Boston Globe Media CEO Linda Pizzuti Henry, who sought to bring attention to the documentary form and celebrate Boston as a mainspring of documentary filmmaking. Over the past decade, the festival has screened 258 films and featured and hosted more than 300 filmmakers and special guests, including Jimmy Chin for “The Rescue,” Ai Weiwei for “Human Flow,” and Frederick Wiseman for “City Hall.”

A trademark of the festival are its post-film discussions, where filmmakers, Globe journalists, and audiences can come together in dialogue. Among this year’s notable attendees are former Massachusetts governor [Michael Dukakis](#) and Oscar-winning filmmaker [Errol Morris](#).

For this year’s milestone edition, we invited two GlobeDocs experts to weigh in: Marcia Gonzalez and Kathleen Caulfield, a pair of close friends who have attended nearly every GlobeDocs screening for the past three years running — and a number of them before then, too.

“I will tell you, it is a marathon week,” Gonzalez said on a video call from her home in Stoughton. “There are four documentaries on Saturday and Sunday. It is exhausting, but so worth it.”

“It’s a field trip for us,” added Caulfield, who lives in Billerica. This year, she’s particularly excited for the opening night feature, “Dukakis: Recipe for Democracy,” since she remembers his terms as governor.

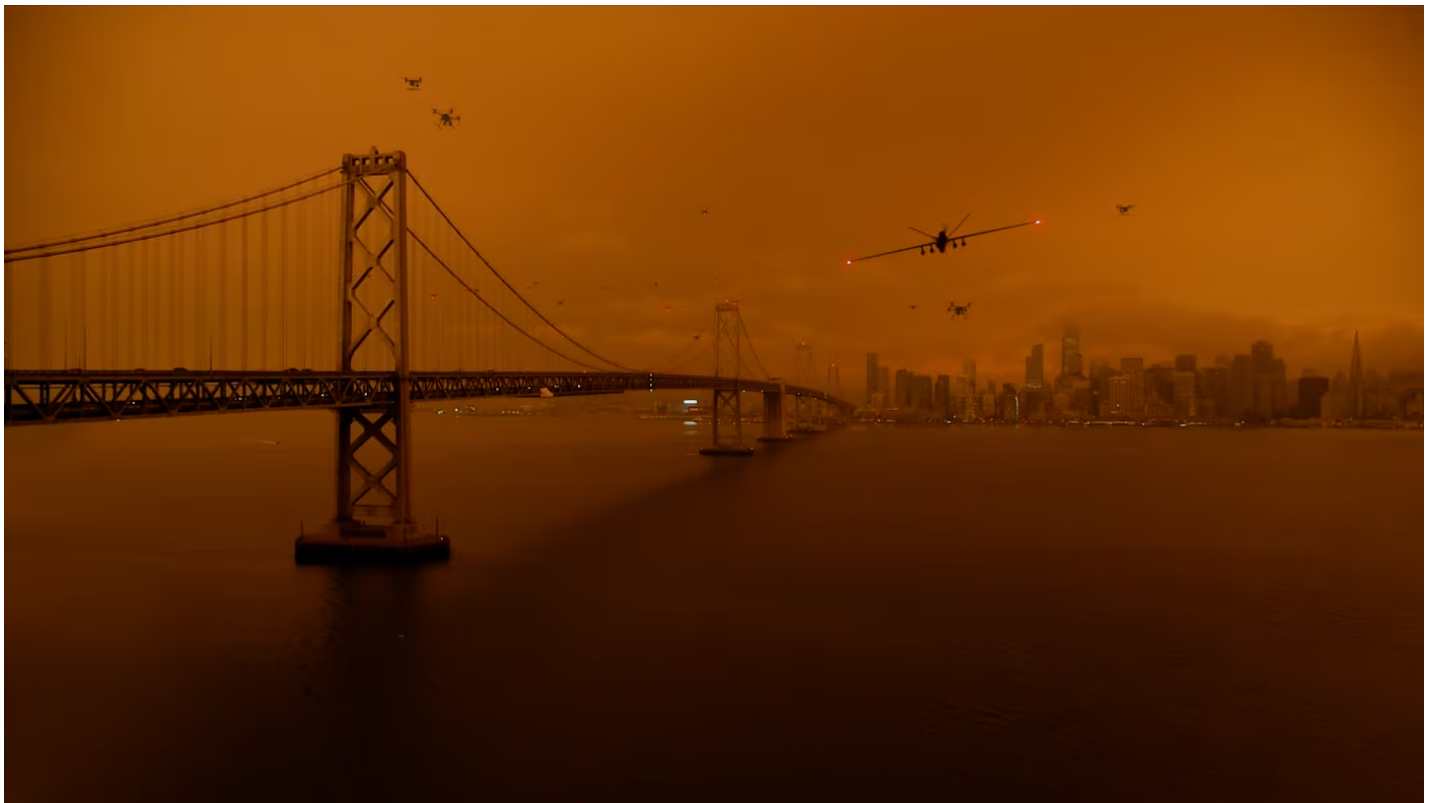
The women praised GlobeDocs programmer Lisa Viola’s tendency to include stories both local and global. Attending the festival as Bostonians, they’re apt to learn about apartheid-era South Africa one day and efforts to save snowy owls at Logan Airport the next.

Through festival films, Gonzalez has glimpsed “places that I will probably never go in my lifetime,” she said. “It just broadens your horizon.”

The pair don't have any special plans for the upcoming festival, other than their usual routine of snacks, screenings, and repeat. And don't count on them to sway the vote of the Audience Awards. When the five-point rating cards come out after screenings, Caulfield said, "Marcia and I are pretty much fives across the board."

The 16 features and 16 shorts that make up this year's GlobeDocs lineup are presented below, alphabetically.

For more information about films screening at the Coolidge Corner Theatre, Brattle Theatre, or online, visit globe.com/filmfest.



A still from "2073." 2073

2073

What will our world look like 50 years from now? That's the question director Asif Kapadia ("Amy") sets out to investigate in this bold film, which doesn't merely speculate about the future but actually visualizes it: The documentary is framed by a dystopian story in which a nonverbal dissident (played by Samantha Morton) survives in an American city devastated by tyranny, unchecked surveillance, and an unlivable climate.

Kapadia then rewinds time to show the audience how we ended up here, using archival footage and testimony from journalists to recast our recent history as an urgent warning: Make a change or humankind is doomed.

Screens Oct. 25 at 9 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A live Q&A with Asif Kapadia follows, moderated by Globe correspondent Natalia Winkelman.



A still from "Albert Pyun." ALBERT PYUN

Albert Pyun: King of Cult Movies

When the genre filmmaker Albert Pyun died in 2022, fans circulated a flurry of his craziest scenes online. A typical Pyun montage featured martial arts fighting, cyborgs, and apocalyptic landscapes, sometimes all at once. Known for his low-budget science-fiction flicks and cult B-movies, the wildly prolific director receives an admiring tribute in this documentary, which pairs interviews with footage from Pyun's expansive catalog. Moving at a breakneck pace that sometimes found him overseeing two or more movies at once, Pyun directed some 50 films during his lifetime. He died at 69, several years after

being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and dementia. He was, as this profile shows, determined to work on set until the very end.

Screens Oct. 23 at 8 p.m. at the Coolidge Corner Theatre.



A still from "American Delivery." AMERICAN DELIVERY

American Delivery

For some years now, the United States has had a higher rate of maternal deaths — deaths in pregnancy, childbirth, or postpartum — than any other wealthy nation in the world. In this thoughtful documentary, Carolyn Jones sets out to explore what's driving the maternal-health crisis and how we can fix it. Through interviews with midwives, nurses, and mothers, as well as time spent at birthing centers around the country, she underlines how empathic listening on the part of health care providers can help ensure safe deliveries while guaranteeing that parents receive the birth stories they want and deserve.

Screens virtually. A recorded Q&A with Carolyn Jones and producer Lisa Frank follows, moderated by Globe health and medical editor Anna Kuchment.



A still from "The Cinema Within." THE CINEMA WITHIN

The Cinema Within

It's hard to watch a movie about how we watch movies. How do you absorb the content while you're focused on the act of watching? Chad Freidrichs's enlightening documentary leans into this paradox, bridging its overview of cinematic language with overt examples of the film editing tricks it catalogs. It positions these pedagogical sequences alongside an enthralling mystery: If you showed montage techniques to people who had never watched a movie before, would they understand what was happening? In a remote Turkish community in the mountains, one researcher puts this question to the test.

Screens virtually. A recorded Q&A with Chad Freidrichs follows, moderated by Globe correspondent Loren King.

Dukakis: Recipe for Democracy

It's not often that one can just hang out with a presidential nominee. This window into the life of former Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis mostly steers clear of political milestones — a whole other film could be dedicated to that — and instead offers a cozy picture of Dukakis's current life in Brookline, where he and his wife have lived in the

same home for decades. The film also looks to the future by tracking the trajectory of one of Dukakis's star students: Juan Gallego, who follows in his mentor's footsteps by initiating his own career in politics.

Screens Oct. 22 at 7:30 p.m. at the Coolidge Corner Theatre. A live Q&A with Michael Dukakis, Juan Gallego, and directors Erin Trahan and Jeff Schmidt follows, moderated by Boston Globe Media CEO Linda Pizzuti Henry.

A still from "Ernest Cole: Lost and Found." MAGNOLIA PICTURES

Ernest Cole: Lost and Found

Raoul Peck, the filmmaker behind the illuminating documentaries "I Am Not Your Negro" and "Silver Dollar Road," returns with another film exploring aspects of the Black experience in America, but this time through the eyes of an emigre: the photographer Ernest Cole, who was born and raised in apartheid South Africa before moving to New York City in the mid-'60s. Peck relays Cole's story in his own voice, using first-person narration (by LaKeith Stanfield) and hundreds of Cole's photos. A moving portrait, the film celebrates Cole's body of work while meditating on the weight he carried as an exile living far from home.

Screens Oct. 27 at 1 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A prerecorded Q&A with Raoul Peck follows, moderated by Globe culture columnist and deputy managing editor for culture, talent, and development Jeneé Osterheldt.

A still from "Group Therapy." GROUP THERAPY

Group Therapy

Stand-up isn't therapy. That's what Shrewsbury native Mike Birbiglia — an enthusiastic proponent of talk therapy known for autobiographical stand-up — declares in an interview. His candid remarks offer a nice introduction for this documentary exercise, which explores the intersection of comedy and mental health by staging a group discussion session for six stand-up comics. In vulnerable testimonies by turns funny and moving, the attendees share how their struggles have both informed their work and impeded it, as when Peabody-born Gary Gulman faced a major depressive episode that temporarily prevented him from performing.

Screens Oct. 24 at 7 p.m. at Alamo Drafthouse Cinema. A prerecorded Q&A with director Neil Berkeley follows, moderated by Globe "Love Letters" columnist and podcast host Meredith Goldstein.

A still from "Mad About the Boy." MAD ABOUT THE BOY

Mad About the Boy

The title says it all in this Alan Cumming-narrated bio-doc, which offers a loving overview of the life of Noël Coward, the debonair playwright and actor whose cheeky sensibility helped define 20th-century entertainment. Born into poverty outside London,

Coward honed his natural talents as a performer as a young man rising to the top of British and American theater scenes. But fame and fortune didn't come without their costs: For decades, Coward hid his homosexuality and anxieties about his upbringing behind a mask of urbanity and poise.

Screens virtually. A recorded Q&A with director Barnaby Thompson follows, moderated by Globe assistant arts editor Brooke Hauser.

Martha Stewart in "Martha." NETFLIX/COURTESY OF NETFLIX

Martha

For many years, the Martha Stewart brand functioned as the ultimate lifestyle porn for her target female audience. But what was driving Martha herself? In a sea of glossy celebrity bio-docs, R.J. Cutler's film stands out for actually challenging its subject — pushing her to grapple with her acrimonious divorce, her pushy persona, and her time spent in prison. It's a fascinating dive into the life of the original influencer, whose perfectionism and entrepreneurial spirit were both her engine and her undoing.

Screens Oct. 26 at 11 a.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A prerecorded Q&A with R.J. Cutler follows, moderated by Globe correspondent Natalia Winkelman.

A still from "Out of the Picture." OUT OF THE PICTURE

Out of the Picture

Ever wonder what happened to all the art critics? So did the Milwaukee journalist Mary Louise Schumacher, who, more than a decade ago, noticed a dwindling number of full-time art critic positions across the country. She began to document changes she saw across the media landscape, conducting surveys and embedding with a handful of critics across the country. In 2019, she became part of her own story when she was laid off by the newspaper where she had worked for 18 years. The result is a wide-ranging look at a writing mode that frequently goes misunderstood, with special attention paid to the chief concerns, values, and sensibilities driving criticism forward.

Screens Oct. 23 at 7 p.m. at the Coolidge Corner Theatre. A live Q&A with Mary Louise Schumacher and film participant Jeneé Osterheldt follows, moderated by Globe arts reporter Julian Sorapuru.

A still from "Porcelain War." PORCELAIN WAR

Porcelain War

A Ukrainian couple living on the Russia-Ukraine border passes their days fulfilling two higher callings: casting ceramics and fighting in combat. Before the war, Slava and Anya (alongside their Yorkie, Frodo) worked as artists, collaborating to create fragile porcelain figurines exquisitely painted with scenes of nature. But after the Russian invasion, Slava took up arms among fellow civilian soldiers to defend his country and preserve his way of life. Largely made up of footage captured by its subjects, the documentary juxtaposes scenes of artistry with those of warfare to show how resistance movements are strongest when they balance brutality with beauty.

Screens Oct. 25 at 6:45 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A live Q&A with directors Brendan Bellomo and Slava Leontyev, and co-writer Paula DuPré Pesman, follows, moderated by Globe correspondent Natalia Winkelman.

A still from "Recovery City." RECOVERY CITY

Recovery City

Four women living in Worcester bravely battle the stigma surrounding substance-use disorder in this unflinching portrait of addiction and recovery. There's Christine, a preternaturally patient and caring mother of four fighting for custody of her children. There's Bridget, who runs support meetings at a recovery center. And then there are Janis and Rebecca, a tireless advocacy team committed to offering resources and rehabilitation support to struggling women. Where many addiction stories stage recovery as a roller coaster ride of relapses, this documentary turns a clearer eye on the process, focusing on the life-saving impact of mutual care.

Screens Oct. 26 at 4:30 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A live Q&A with Lisa Olivieri and the four featured participants follows, moderated by Globe addiction reporter Chris Serres.

A still from "Separated." SEPARATED

Separated

Master documentarian (and Cambridge resident) Errol Morris returns to GlobeDocs with another work of deep reportage, this time on the Trump-era immigration policy of family separation. Working off of a book of the same name by NBC correspondent Jacob Soboroff, Morris interviews government employees who say that the horrifying policy — which gave rise to the phrase “kids in cages” to describe the detention of children kept from their parents — went into effect without field staff even knowing about it. Morris wanted the movie to be released before the election, with the hope it might sway voters; [he has been open](#) about his frustration with MSNBC for setting the air date in early December.

Screens Oct. 27 at 4 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A live Q&A with Errol Morris and Jacob Soboroff follows, moderated by Globe associate editor and columnist Marcela Garcia.

A still from "They're Here." THEY'RE HERE

They're Here

Ever experienced something you just can't explain? In this documentary, a handful of believers in upstate New York relay their encounters with UFOs and how the experiences changed them as people. The stories range from simple sightings to bizarre phenomena to repeat abductions; one woman even claims she has been taken from her bed by aliens 14 times. As the directors Daniel Claridge and Pacho Velez cut among the stories, certain parallels emerge: a lonely longing for connection, an attraction to fantasy, a desire to be part of something bigger. Periodic computer-generated imagery heightens the drama, lending the testimonies a supernatural sci-fi touch.

Screens virtually. A recorded Q&A with Pacho Velez and Daniel Claridge follows, moderated by Globe assistant arts editor Brooke Hauser.

A still from "Union." UNION

Union

Two talented documentary filmmakers, Brett Story (“The Hottest August”) and Stephen Maing (“Crime + Punishment”), pair up for this observational chronicle of Amazon employees fighting to unionize their Staten Island warehouse. Trailing current and former workers, the film at times takes the form of a tense thriller as it shows the challenges of organizing at a grassroots level, not to mention the intimidation campaigns and anti-union rhetoric pushed by Amazon leadership. It also shines a light on the draconian conditions at Amazon warehouses, where surveillance and a relentless high-pressure environment push workers to the brink.

Screens Oct. 26 at 2 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A live Q&A with producer Mars Veronne and union organizer Natalie Monarrez follows, moderated by Globe reporter Katie Johnston.

A still from "Whatever It Takes." WHATEVER IT TAKES

Whatever It Takes

In a sea of true-crime documentaries about scandals, scams, and hoaxes, this riveting cyberstalking nightmare stands out. Its story of a middle-aged couple harassed by an internet stranger hits close to home: Ina and David Steiner were running an e-commerce blog in Natick when they started receiving bizarre threats on the web. The intimidation began virtually, but soon escalated into shipped packages of live cockroaches and cars idling ominously outside their home. Who was tormenting the Steiners, and why? The film navigates this modern horror story's engrossing twists with an eye toward its most unsettling truth: Big Tech might be the biggest threat of all.

Screens Oct. 26 at 7 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A live Q&A with director Jenny Carchman follows, moderated by Globe reporter Aaron Pressman.

A still from "Zurawski v Texas." ZURAWSKI V TEXAS

Zurawski v Texas

After *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022, Texas banned abortions. There was an exception to the rule: to protect the health of a pregnant patient, although the terms surrounding this special case were not made clear to physicians. Amanda Zurawski is among the many women who suffered due to this obfuscation: While pregnant, she went into sepsis and nearly died. Maisie Crow and Abbie Perrault's powerful film follows Zurawski, her attorney, and other plaintiffs as they fight for clarity on this urgent issue. By offering an emotional window into the lives of women personally affected by the ban, the documentary mounts a persuasive defense of the right to bodily autonomy.

Screens Oct. 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. A live Q&A with Maisie Crow and lawyer Jamie Levitt follows, moderated by Globe editor in chief Nancy Barnes.

Shorts

A man who survived a horrific stabbing at Boston's South Station shares his story of perseverance in **"Another Stab at Life."**

A still from "Bearing Witness." BEARING WITNESS

"Bearing Witness: A Name & A Voice" offers an inside look at the practices and priorities of four Globe journalists.

"Decoding Ancestral Knowledge" shines a light on the work of microbiologist Kiana Frank, who combines scientific work with wisdom gleaned from her native Hawaiian heritage.

Audrey Tang battled a serious heart condition and gender dysphoria before becoming Taiwan's first minister of digital affairs in **"Good Enough Ancestor."**

A still from "Goodbye Morganza." GOODBYE MORGANZA

A woman explores her family's displacement from their ancestral home in Maryland in **"Goodbye, Morganza."**

A death row prisoner reflects on his crime in the days leading up to his execution in **"I Am Ready, Warden."**

A still from "La Roche." LA ROCHE

The high-stakes sport of slalom skiing comes alive in **“La Roche.”**

Explore the wealth of knowledge trapped within the horizon of a black hole in **“Light at the Edge of the Universe.”**

An organization supporting widowed women in Tamil Nadu, India, receives a spotlight in **“Lighthouse.”**

A still from "Looking Forward." LOOKING FORWARD

Steven Ascher, who in 1996 received an Oscar nomination for his documentary “Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern,” explores how the ubiquity of technology affects our feelings about the future in **“Looking Forward.”**

“One Story at a Time: Celeste Lecesne” traces author and actor Celeste Lecesne’s journey to becoming a luminary for queer youth.

Delve into the beauty of underwater dancing in **“Otherworldly: Dancing in the Deep.”**

A transgender marathon runner advocates for inclusivity in **“Out of the Dark: Cal Calamia.”**

A state representative from Montana fights for trans medical care in “**Seat 31: Zooey Zephyr.**”

A still from "The Snowy Owls of Logan Airport." THE SNOWY OWLS OF LOGAN AIRPORT

“**The Snowy Owls of Logan Airport**” follows efforts to relocate snowy owls from Boston’s runways.

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