



**35TH VIRGINIA
FILM FESTIVAL**
A PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Welcome



Jody Kielbasa

Director, Virginia Film Festival
Vice Provost for the Arts, UVA

I am humbled and proud to share some of the brightest moments and achievements from the 35th Annual Virginia Film Festival, which took place November 2-6, 2022.

“The Virginia Film Festival is back.” This is the phrase I heard the most throughout the Festival weekend from patrons, community members, and supporters who filled theaters in Downtown Charlottesville and the Grounds of UVA to celebrate the art of film. Though we presented Festivals in 2020 and 2021 - despite the myriad challenges that the pandemic presented - this year felt different. Some of my favorite moments included hearing the gasps of surprise and guffaws of laughter that rang through a sold out Paramount Theater during *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*, followed by a night of dancing and celebration at the Opening Night Gala. I was delighted when walking on the Downtown Mall as it was abuzz for five days with VAFF movie-goers discussing what they just watched and what they were seeing next. I will not forget how people were moved to tears after the screenings of *Stay Awake* and *Living* or how gracious and inspiring our special guests were during panels and discussions.

Without restrictions on travel or events, we increased the size of our program and the number of guests we brought in from all over the world. We also enjoyed the special events that had been paused since 2020, providing more opportunities for connections and celebration. In the Spring, we welcomed a new member to our team, Senior Programmer Ilya Tovbis, a seasoned industry professional who did not skip a beat and worked with our Advisory Board, guest programmers, and partners to curate a truly excellent program.

In 2022, the Virginia Film Festival was back because you - our audience and partners - came back. And we could not be more grateful for your continued patronage and support. We feel incredibly lucky to serve this community and share the power and art of film with you each year. Thank you for a wonderful year at the VAFF and we look forward to bringing the best in cinema to Virginia in 2023!

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“I love the collaborative energy of the festival...VAFF has offered me a wonderful challenge and opportunity to translate my work as a film scholar into accessible formats that can engage wider audiences.”

- Samhita Sunya, UVA Assistant Professor
and VAFF Guest Programmer

Program At-A-Glance

119

Films and
Events

28

Sold Out
Events

35

Countries
Represented

156

Volunteers

17,000+

Attendances

72

Industry Guests

42

Speakers,
Discussants,
and Subject
Matter Experts

42%

of Films Directed
by Women

46%

of Films Directed
by BIPOC
Individuals

47%

of Guests and
Discussants
were Women

43%

of Guests and
Discussants were
BIPOC Individuals



Breakthrough Star Award

The festival featured rising star **Jonathan Majors** (*Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, *Creed III*, *Magazine Dreams*) for a special screening of his new film *Devotion*. At the screening, actor and VAFF board member **Jason George** presented Majors with the **Breakthrough Star Award**, acknowledging an exceptional early to mid-career actor's achievement. Following the screening, Majors was joined for a discussion with **Tyler Coates** (*Hollywood Reporter*).

Craft Award

The festival presented the **Craft Award**, which recognizes a distinguished and outstanding practitioner of behind-the-scenes film craft, to renowned production designer **Eugenio Caballero** before a screening of his new film *Bardo, False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths*. After the screening, Caballero was joined by **Critic-in-Residence Carlos Aguilar** (regular *LA Times*, *NY Times*, *The Wrap* contributor) for a post-screening discussion.





Gerald L. Baliles Founder's Award

Local filmmaker **Jamie Sisley** received the **Governor Gerald L. Baliles Founder's Award** at a screening of his film *Stay Awake*, which offered a deeply personal look at the familial impacts of opioid addiction. The award recognizes excellence in Virginia filmmaking. Following the screening Sisley was joined by stars Wyatt Oleff and Chrissy Metz and USA Today's film critic **Brian Truitt**.

Changemaker Award

The Festival presented the **Changemaker Award** to Academy Award-winning screenwriter and prominent LGBTQ+ activist **Dustin Lance Black** (*Milk*, *J. Edgar*, *Under the Banner of Heaven*). The award recognizes a filmmaker who has been a force for positive change. NPR critic **Bilal Qureshi** led the screenwriter in a discussion about the film and his work as both an artist and an activist.





Screenwriting Achievement Award

VAFF's Family Centerpiece screening of the new animated adaptation of the beloved children's book by Ruth Stiles Gannet, *My Father's Dragon*, was paired with another major award presentation: the **2022 VAFF Screenwriting Achievement Award** for **Meg LeFauve**. This award recognizes the achievement of an exceptionally talented, creative, and compelling screenwriter.

Chronicler Award

The highly regarded documentarian **Sam Pollard** was also a special guest at the festival, with his new film *Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power*. Pollard received the **Chronicler Award**, which recognizes a documentary filmmaker who has demonstrated excellence, creative vision, and significant achievement in non-fiction filmmaking. Following the screening, Pollard joined a conversation with IndieWire writer **Robert Daniels**.



Opening Night

The 35th VAFF kicked off with a sold-out screening of *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* at The Paramount Theater. The film was introduced by Festival Director Jody Kielbasa and UVA President Jim Ryan.



Centerpiece Film

VAFF's Centerpiece screening featured the film *Women Talking*, directed by Sarah Polley. The screening of the film also featured a tribute to two-time Tony award-winning actress **Judith Ivey**, known for her incredible legacy as a stage performer, as well as her onscreen work.



International Oscar Contenders

The VAFF featured eleven International Oscar Contenders in the 2022 program including *Close* and *EO* along with other acclaimed films *Saint Omer*, *Corsage*, and *Beautiful Beings*.



Audience Demographics

AGE COMPARISON



- 18-34 yo, 54%
- 35-54 yo, 20%
- 55-74 yo, 20%
- 75+ yo, 4%
- Younger than 18, 1%

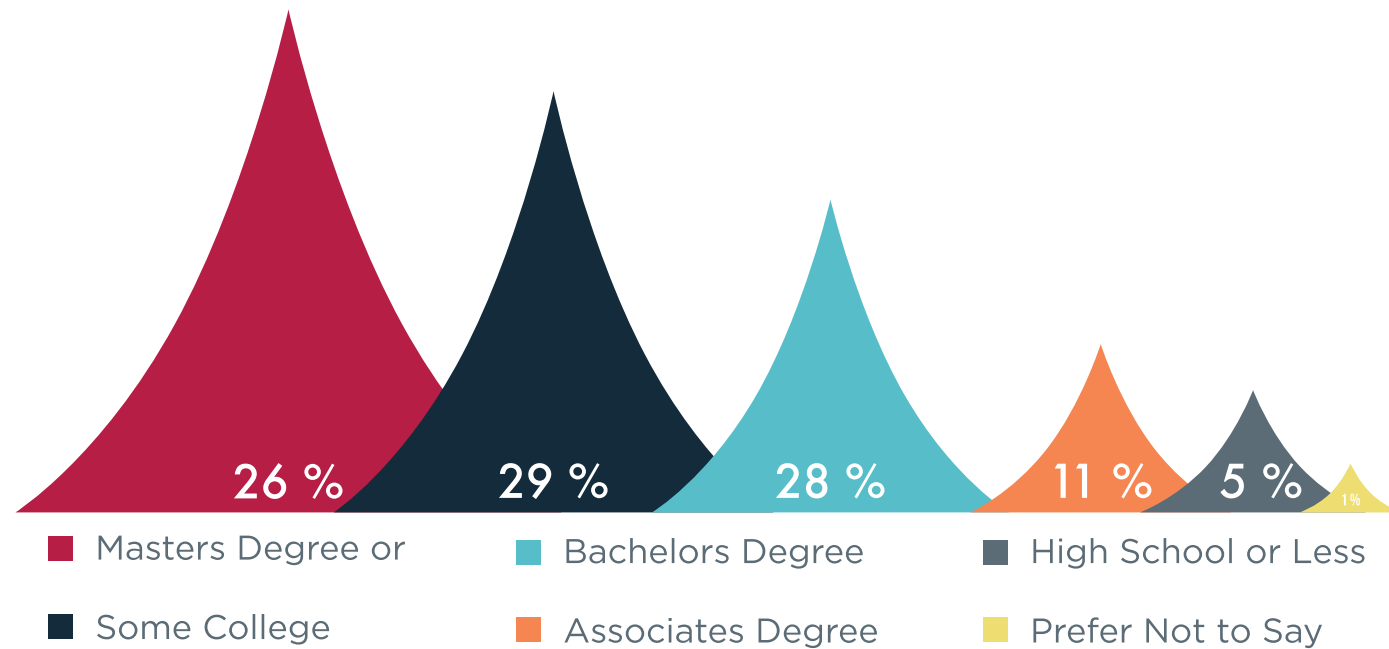
*based on 1936 responses

32%

OF SURVEY TAKERS
Identify as a member of a historically disenfranchised and/or under-represented group (e.g., based on gender identification, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.)

*based on 1930 responses

WHAT IS THE HIGHEST DEGREE OR LEVEL OR SCHOOL YOU HAVE COMPLETED?



*based on 1936 responses

SURVEY TAKERS IDENTIFIED AS:



51% FEMALE WOMAN

46% MALE MAN

1% NON-BINARY

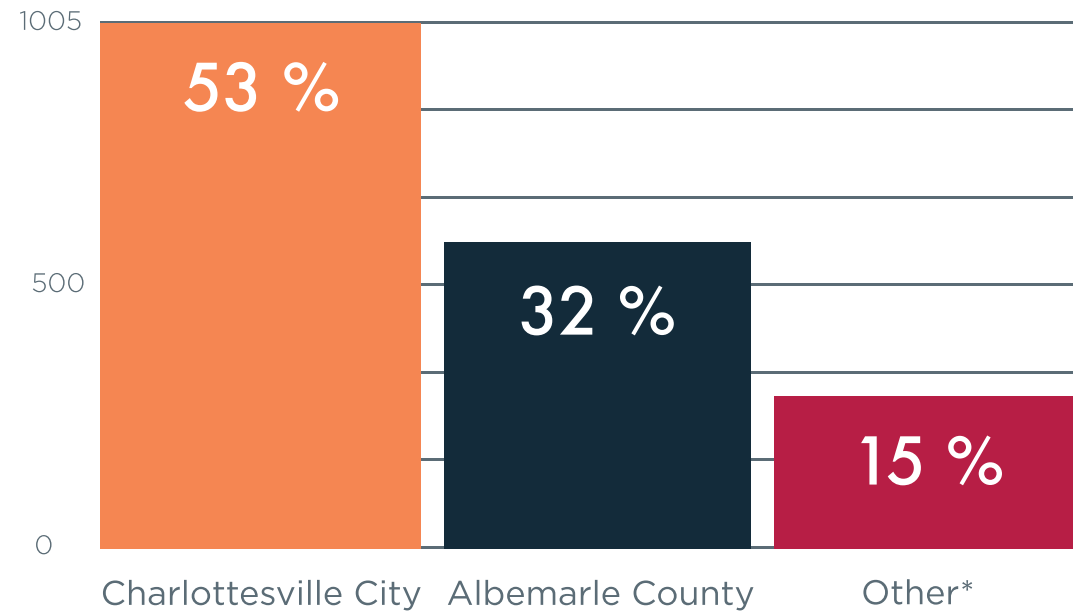
1% OTHER

2% PREFER NOT TO SAY

*based on 1953 responses

Audience Demographics

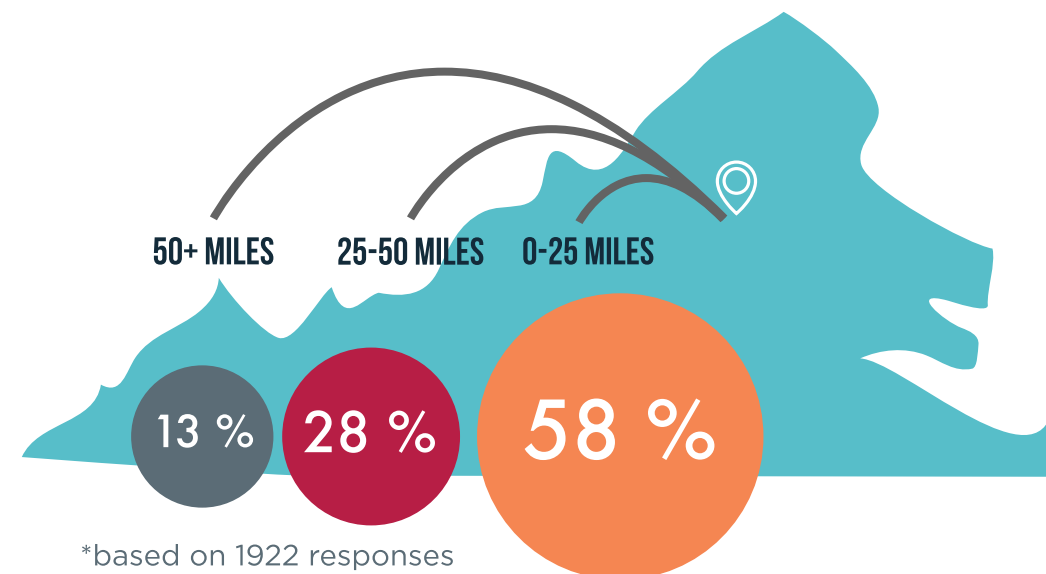
CITY OR COUNTY OF PRIMARY RESIDENCE



*Others include: Surrounding Central Virginia Counties, Richmond Area, Northern Virginia, Lynchburg, Staunton, Virginia Beach, North Carolina, Alabama

*based on 1895 responses

HOW FAR DID YOU TRAVEL?

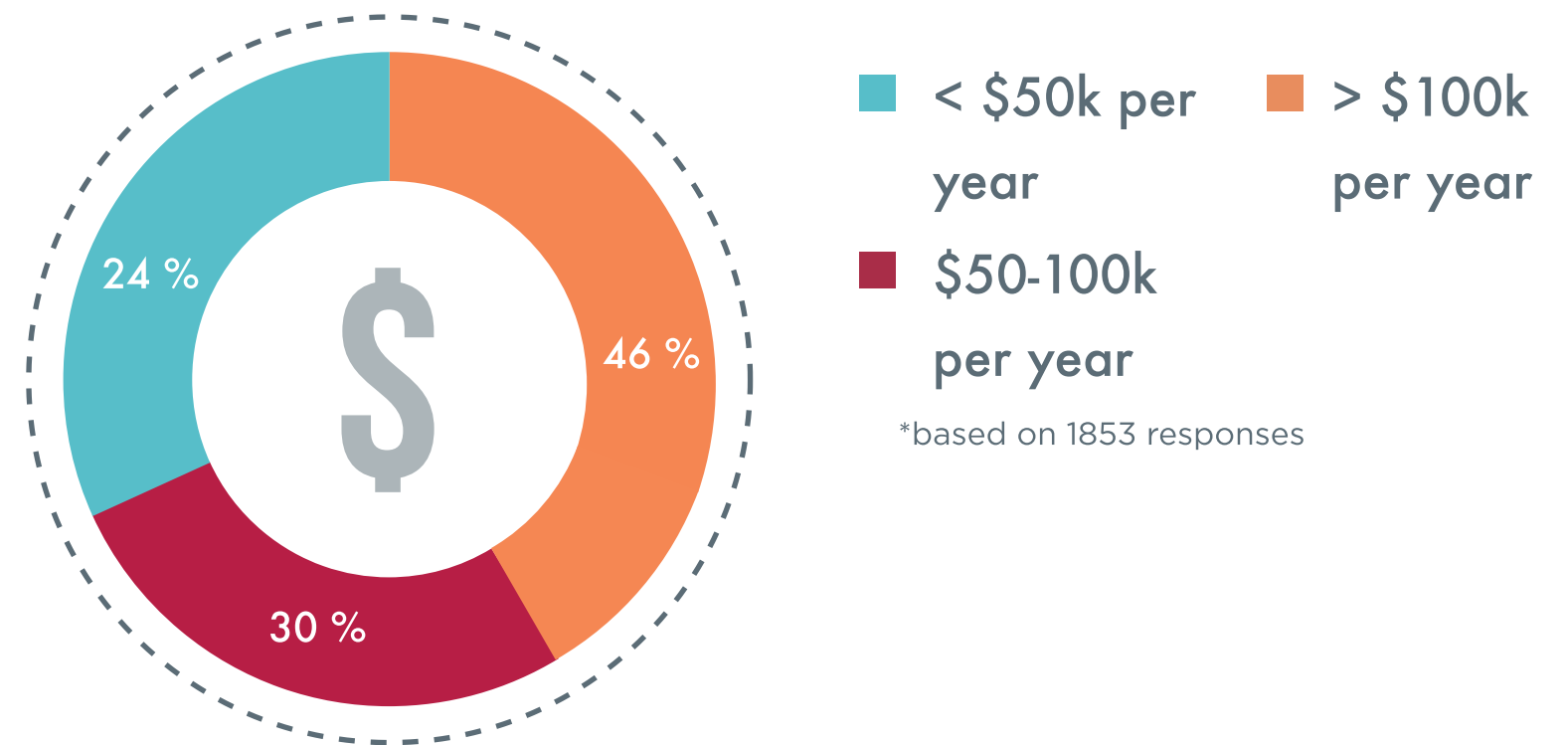


*based on 1922 responses

“The music, the engagement, the community, everyone... It was just this great feel-good moment in the greater Charlottesville community—you could tell people were just highly anticipating the Virginia Film Festival experience.”

- Kevin McDonald, UVA Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Community Partnerships.

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME



*based on 1853 responses

Marketing Reach



20K+ Total followers across all social networks

11K Facebook

3.7K Instagram

4.6K Twitter

1.5 Million +

Total number of post, page, profile impressions across all social networks

16.5K+

Total number of e-newsletter subscribers (average open rate of 40%)

538K+

Total number of Website Pageviews

Highlighted Media Coverage

Virginia Film Festival was covered extensively in media outlets locally and throughout the Commonwealth leading up to and during the Festival weekend. We also welcomed nationally recognized film critics from major entertainment and news outlets to come to Charlottesville, participate in our on-stage discussions, and interview our industry guests.



UVA Impact and Partnerships



← The 2022 Festival engaged with **24 UVA faculty and staff** and **14 UVA alumni** to participate in introductions and discussions in our film program, and as volunteers. We also collaborated with **9 Departments and Programs** to create, host, and promote our programming to the UVA Community.

The VAFF offered UVA full-time enrolled students access to the Festival's 2022 Festival through UVA Art\$. **The Festival issued 2,046 free Art\$ tickets to UVA Students.** In addition, we worked directly with **60 UVA students** as arts administration interns, VAFF volunteer ambassadors, and Festival events volunteers.



← UVA Professor and internationally renowned filmmaker Kevin Everson's filmmaking class was also given the opportunity to speak personally with industry guests Jonathan Majors, Julie Lynn, and Kern Jackson.

Other UVA Partnerships: UVA Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Miller Center, UVA Gordie Center, UVA Office for Sustainability, UVA School of Architecture, The Jefferson Trust

Community, Accessibility, and Outreach

The **Jefferson-Madison Library Systems** partnered on VAFF's Family Centerpiece screening of *My Father's Dragon*, making the titular book the "book of the month" for young readers in Charlottesville and Albemarle County in the leadup to the Festival. —————>



The VAFF hosted a series of free panels at the CODE building, aimed at encouraging local artists, providing industry advice, and generally bringing audiences into direct conversation with industry guests. These insightful panels included: ***From Page to Screen*** screenwriting panel; ***Making It*** film industry career panel; and ***Power of Media, Storytelling, and the Muppets of Sesame Street*** panel. —————>



Part of the VAFF's mission is to support films and filmmakers of Virginia. We partnered with the **Virginia Film Office** to present 6 Virginia-based filmmaker presentations alongside 6 VA-based short films. The VFO also announced winners of the 2022 Virginia Screenwriting Competition.

VAFF's commitment to accessibility included five screenings presented with open captions and ASL interpretation of introductions and discussions for the deaf and hard of hearing community. One of these films, ***Dani's Twins***, followed the journey of a Virginia resident who became one of the first quadriplegics to give birth to twins. The screening included a discussion with producer Angie Gentile, subjects Dani Izzie, Rudy Izzie, and Dr. Robert Fuller, moderated by Eric Swensen (UVA Health). —————>



"This was the first time in my life that I felt like I was able to go to a public film screening and enjoy the movie like any of my hearing peers, and that experience means a lot to me personally."

Sponsor Highlights



← **Bank of America** has been a Premiere Sponsor of the Virginia Film Festival for several years, supporting the Opening Night Film and Gala. Bank of America's mission to foster stronger communities aligns with the VAFF as we work to engage our community around the art and power of film. As a VAFF sponsor, Bank of America enjoys prime marketing on two of VAFF's largest events, opportunities to engage with clients and employees and much more, all while providing incredible support to the VAFF.



← In 2022, we established a new partnership with the **Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC)**. SELC was the Presenting Sponsor of VAFF's inaugural Environmental Film Series, which included 11 narrative and documentary films. Representatives from SELC were present at venues prior to screenings to share information and merchandise with audience members.



← **Ting Internet** presented VAFF's 2022 Audience Favorite Award and their support was acknowledged on all of our voting kiosks, which were stationed at every venue during the 5-day Festival. Ting has supported the VAFF for several years and provides internet for many of VAFF's venues and event spaces.

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