

# The Martha's Vineyard Times

## Film : Martha's Vineyard film series come to an end

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In a tribute to long-time Island summer resident Jules Feiffer, the Martha's Vineyard Film Society screens the Jack Nicholson/Art Garfunkel 1971 classic, "Carnal Knowledge," on Saturday, August 21 at the Katharine Cornell Theatre.



Photo courtesy of Ian Teal

James Gandolfini stars in former Island residents Ian Teal and Kathy Fehl's film "Mint Julep."



Photo courtesy of Ian Teal

Angelica Torn and Ian Teal in "Mint Julep."

The M.V. Film Festival will wind up its summer series at the Chilmark Community Center on Wednesday, August 25 with "Waste Land," an unusual documentary about a Brazilian artist

who fashions art out of garbage.

And former Vineyarders Kathy Fehl and Ian Teal will present their independent, neo-film noir comedy, "Mint Julep," in an East Coast premiere on Thursday, August 26, at the Katharine Cornell Theatre.

Best known for his Pulitzer-Prize-winning syndicated cartoons about neurotic sophisticates, the multi-talented Mr. Feiffer has written more than 35 books, plays, and films. After delving into children's books, most recently with his daughter Kate, an Island resident, this year he published a memoir, "Backing into Forward."

In it, Mr. Feiffer describes how he sent the first draft of "Carnal Knowledge," written as a play at the Saratoga Springs, N.Y., writer's retreat Yaddo, to director Mike Nichols. When the director, also an Island summer visitor, called to say he wanted to film it, the cartoonist's response was vintage Feiffer:

"Give me 30 seconds to think it over...And then, after five seconds, 'okay'," he writes.

Mr. Feiffer's collaboration with Mr. Nichols in turning the play into a movie script became a vigorous tutorial on writing and editing, which Mr. Feiffer claims he lied his way through. "At times I felt like a witness undergoing cross-examination," he writes.

As a result, "Carnal Knowledge" turned into a stunning award-winner after its release in 1971 and entered the pantheon of American classics. Mr. Feiffer won Best Comedy Written for the Screen from the Writers Guild of America.

In a telephone interview conducted last week from Southampton, N.Y., where he is teaching in the writing program at Stonybrook University, Mr. Feiffer commented further on "Carnal Knowledge."

While there have been a lot changes in regard to women, he suggested that, through a series of holding actions and cover stories, men still back off from commitment without changing. At the time of the film, he says, "Men loathed to be friends with women. There seemed something gay about it, something not part of their macho makeup."

Several generations since, boys and girls in high school have learned they can hang out and be friends. "Men backed off from that macho idea," Mr. Feiffer says. "I still think young men and middle-aged men are terrified of long-term commitment. Men fear domestication, and end up being married with kids in 25 years, and women call the shots."

Married at the time of the film to his first wife Judy, mother of his daughter Kate, Mr. Feiffer says he was not trying to be autobiographical. "Neither one of those guys represents me," he says.

Mr. Feiffer attributes his shift to children's books to fathering three daughters late in life. "It's a great joy to work with Katie," he says, "As it is to work with Halley as an actress." Like her mother Jenny, Mr. Feiffer's second wife, Halley Feiffer, has pursued a career in acting.

"My Side of the Car," Mr. Feiffer's next collaboration with daughter Kate, is based on an incident from her childhood growing up summers on Martha's Vineyard. It will be published in March. Mr. Feiffer's next project is a graphic novel about a dancing cat.

A Fire Island regular, Mr. Feiffer switched allegiances to Martha's Vineyard in 1966, after theatre director Bob Brustein invited him and his wife to visit them there, along with Philip Roth.

Asked if he saw himself doing more films, Mr. Feiffer quipped, "Sure, if Hollywood wants to adapt my memoir and star George Clooney or Brad Pitt."

From "Waste Land" to Island

"Waste Land" visits Jardim Gramacho, located outside Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and purported to be the largest landfill site in the world. In 2007, New York-based Brazilian artist Vik Muniz undertook a project involving the garbage pickers who work at the site but prefer to be called recyclers.

In his experimental media work, Mr. Muniz arranges objects into an image, then photographs the result. Mixing art with social projects led him to speculate about the ways art can change people.

He spent two years photographing and working with Gramacho's recyclers to produce an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, and the process has been filmed by director Lucy Walker. A trailer for "A Life's Work," about Vineyard artist Barney Zeitz will also be shown.

Cinema Circus at the Chilmark Community Center will close its season with children's selections dubbed "Along for the Ride," at 5 pm.

In "Mint Julep," former Vineyard residents Ian Teal and Kathy Fehl enlisted "The Hurt Locker" star David Morse, James Gandolfini of "The Sopranos" and Angelica Torn from "The Sixth Sense" to act in their new dark comedy about a journey through southern culture.

Beginning the film 10 years ago, they wrote, produced, directed, and acted in it, putting the film on hold when they ran out of money. HD camera technological advancements allowed them to complete the project.

Both Ms. Fehl and Mr. Teal have been active in Vineyard theatre in the past, and Mr. Teal helped originate the Shakespeare productions performed during the summer at the Amphitheatre in Vineyard Haven. The couple lives now in Weyauwega, Wis., where they own and operate a 1915 vintage opera house. They will attend the screening.

*"Carnal Knowledge," Saturday, August 21, 8 pm, Katharine Cornell Theatre, Vineyard Haven. \$15; \$12 for M.V. Film Society members. Doors open at 7:30. Proceeds will benefit the M.V. Film Society and its International Film Festival in September.*

*"Waste Land," Wednesday, August 25, 8 pm, Chilmark Community Center. \$14; \$7 for M.V. Film Festival members; at [tmvff.org](http://tmvff.org) or door.*

*Cinema Circus, "Along for the Ride," Wednesday, August 25, 5 pm, Chilmark Community Center. \$10; \$5 M.V. Film Festival members and children.*

*"Mint Julep, Thursday, August 26, 8 pm, Katharine Cornell Theatre, Vineyard Haven. \$8. 920-538-3990.*

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