

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Stephen Miller, a 29-year-old film enthusiast living in San Francisco. I am not a film student, nor do I work in the humanities sector. To be honest, I imagine my profile hardly resembles your typical applicant: I am a technologist, entrepreneur, and former Artificial Intelligence researcher at Stanford University. In my day-to-day life, I lead a company of 50 to develop cutting edge camera software. This is my job—my life—and I love it.

If I were to choose one passion above all others, however, it would be film. Not merely the act of *watching* film, but of participating therein: writing about, wrestling with, debating over, dissecting, unraveling. Cinema, to me, is the single most honest vehicle for societal communication: it is an art form in constant dialogue with itself. It evolves as we evolve, and becomes about whatever we are presently about—our joys, our heartbreaks, our deep-rooted anxieties. It can serve as a beautiful escape from the world, yes, but at its best it is quite the opposite: it has the power to *amplify*, or sanctify, or tint it.

And so, I have devoted every bit of free time to pursuing this passion. For 11 years I have cohosted a weekly film review podcast called [The Spoiler Warning](#). For each episode, a good friend and I watch a contemporary film in theatres (festivals included) and spend an hour or two discussing their themes on mic. This exercise spans all genres, running the gamut from arthouse to blockbuster to documentary to children's movie. At 540 episodes and counting, that has made for many hundreds of hours of unbroken film discussion, recorded and freely distributed. I am also an avid writer on film, frequently composing film reviews¹, longform essays², and festival dispatches³, all of which can be found on [s davidmiller.com](#). I am also a Star level member of [SFFILM](#), attending frequent screenings and giving money to support local film initiatives.

Last year, I applied for the Three Days In Cannes Young Cinephile program. For [my letter](#), I wrote a bit about films that connected me to certain times and places: *Before Sunrise*, *Persepolis*, *Mustang*, *Lost In Translation*. Having been fortunate enough to attend Cannes 2018, however, I now have an entirely new collection of film memories; some of which I count among the happiest of my life. Sitting rapt at evening premieres in the Lumière: the hypnotic ache of *Burning*, the ephemeral, epic journey of *Wild Pear Tree*. Groggy mornings with *BlackKkKlansman*, *Shoplifters*, *In My Room*. Evenings in cafes, filled with frenzied discussion. The visceral thrill of finding myself in a place where cinema permeates absolutely everything; the glimmer of hope that I might possibly return.

At 29, I am no longer eligible for that wonderful program. It would be an honor and a privilege to attend the Festival again, this time as the same thing I will be 50 years from now: simply, happily, a cinephile.

¹ A small selection of recent reviews I'm proud of:

- [Fundamentalism and the Miseducation of Cameron Post](#)
- [SFFILM Review: Eighth Grade](#)
- [Review: Mid90s and Minding the Gap](#)
- [Tribeca Review: State Like Sleep](#)

² A recent essay: [Quiet Echoes: Integrity and Contradiction in the Shadow of Trump](#)

³ Last year included Tribeca, Cannes, and the Mill Valley Film Festival. Here are two from Cannes:

- [Cannes Day 2: BlackKkKlansman, Knife + Heart, Wild Pear Tree](#)
- [Cannes Day 3: Shoplifters, Yomeddine, Under the Silver Lake](#)