

The 8th Annual Beaufort International Film Festival Returns February 12-15



By Mark Shaffer

For most of a decade now Ron and Rebecca Tucker have done something a lot of people around here would consider nuts. Each February, in the absolute dead of winter, in the lowest slump of the off-season in the Lowcountry, they put on a film festival. Crazy still, they expect people to show up for it, buy tickets, book hotel rooms and spend their money in the local shops, restaurants and bars. And here's the really crazy part: it's worked. Hell, it's boomed.

Since its inception the Beaufort International Film Festival – BIFF to locals – has grown, well, like mad. With each edition total audience numbers have risen like a full moon tide. Entries continue to pour in from all over the globe. And industry insider word-of-mouth spreads the news about this funky little fest in the land of Forrest Gump. In November that last bit paid off as MovieMaker Magazine and MovieMaker.com readers picked BIFF as one of the "25 Coolest Film Festivals In The World" right along with Tribeca and Manhattan. (Charleston also made the list.) But perhaps the most important validation comes in the numbers revealed in a survey conducted during last year's festival.

Truth at 24 Frames per Second

Written by Mark Shaffer

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Mark Shaffer: The Chamber of Commerce study finally backed up what you long held to be fact.

Ron: The majority of the people who attended the festival were here in Beaufort because of the festival.

Rebecca: And most importantly they were from out of town.

Ron: They represented the "heads in beds" numbers the Chamber hoped to get.

MS: Essentially that proves what you've been saying all along, that the festival is a destination event with a viable economic impact on the community in a seasonal slack time.

Ron: I think so. Hotels and inns were pretty much booked and there were a lot people walking around downtown wearing BIFF caps and t-shirts.

MS: We heard lots of good feedback from restaurants and bars. And the numbers were up once again.

Ron: We were just shy of 8,000 people, up from about 7,000 the year before. It just keeps growing.

