

Five Days in February

Written by Mark Shaffer

Wednesday, 11 January 2017 09:09



The Beaufort International Film Festival Celebrates Its 11th Season With Expanded Schedule

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"That's part of your problem. You haven't seen enough movies. All of life's riddles are answered in the movies." – Steve Martin as 'Davis' in *Grand Canyon*

I first began writing for this publication nearly nine years ago – in February, 2008. We were freshly relocated from the Pacific Northwest where I wrote for a Seattle Times-owned website. Theater and film figured prominently and my colleagues and I spent most of a month each year covering the Seattle International Film Festival. SIFF was a festival in theory only. It lasted nearly three weeks and screened hundreds of films across dozens of specialized categories across what seemed like the entire Puget Sound. It was a bloated, overstuffed behemoth of an “event” that had no center or cohesion.

When I arrived in Beaufort that February, I only found out that Beaufort had a film festival weeks after it was over. It was almost like a secret – a complete opposite of SIFF. In the years since Ron and Rebecca Tucker created the Beaufort Film Society and took control of

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BIFF the festival has grown nearly exponentially. And yet somehow it has managed to remain intimate and all under one roof. Once again this year's slate of films come from across the continent and the globe and from just up the road a piece. Old friends and ne



w faces will meet and mingle and connect at the USCB Center for the Arts. And there will be homecomings of sorts.

Twenty-five years ago writer/director Julie Dash (right) shot her landmark film *Daughters of the Dust*

not far from where the restored version will screen and where she will receive the inaugural Robert Smalls Merit & Achievement Award. The film is riding the crest of an art house renaissance fueled by its influence on pop diva Beyonce's controversial bestselling video album, "Lemonade." According to the Tuckers, Dash is t

he perfect representative for the 11th

BIFF with a strong slate of films written and directed by women.

Mark Shaffer: What were the takeaways from last year's festival that helped shape 2017?

Ron Tucker: I think the biggest thing that we learned from last year is that we have a lot of attendees from outside of Beaufort County. We had 37 states and five countries represented. Of course, you know how I worry every year that no one is going to show up—

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MS: Oh yeah.

Ron: And last year was another record breaking year. We had record setting screenings two days apart.

Rebecca Tucker: One was in the middle of the afternoon and the other was 10:30 on a Saturday morning.

MS: Good point.

Ron: I'm still worried no one's going to show up this year (laughter). By our count over 12,000 people attended the 2016 festival. We had a great opening ceremony at a new venue (Tabby Place) that went really well. And we had 77 filmmakers attend – another record. Every year we seem to raise the bar a bit higher.



There's also another effect. The filmmakers who come to BIFF love it and they tell other filmmakers about it. This year we got a lot of entries with cover letters saying that so-and-so told us about this festival and we should submit to it.

Rebecca: That's a big compliment for Beaufort, not just the festival.

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Ron: It's a compliment for Beaufort, but the consensus opinion across the board is that our festival is organized and well-planned –

Rebecca: Completely thought out down to the last detail.

Ron: Another thing that makes it special are the BIFF audience regulars – the people who come to the festival year after year whether they're coming from Connecticut or Wisconsin or Arizona –

MS: You've got a following like the Grateful Dead. We need some trippy T-shirts
(Laughter)

Ron: I think it also helps that our other BIFF alumni are connected in other places, too. Like Josh Mikel (from 2014's "The Lengths"). We're starting to see him everywhere. He just posted a scene from "The Walking Dead." Anyway, a lot of these alums who've submitted in the past are hoping to get back because they're treated well, they make connections and they love the post screening pub crawls, as you mentioned in *Lowcountry Weekly*.

MS: You've said this was a banner year for feature entries.

Ron: We had 38 submitted and selected six. We've never had six feature films before.

Rebecca: With the expanded schedule we had a little more time on Saturday to add another feature.

MS: You've added a day and pushed the Awards Ceremony to Sunday. Looks like

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