



The Beaufort International Film Festival Marks a Dozen, February 21-25

Interview by Mark Shaffer

"Everything I learned I learned from the movies." -Audrey Hepburn

The scene takes place in downtown Beaufort in the wee small hours of a clear February night. A small group of people spill out of Breakwater Restaurant and Bar onto the deserted sidewalks of Carteret Street. The last of the After Party holdouts mill about and shuffle, exchange hugs, promises, last laughs and a few tears. Warily and reluctantly they part and fade into the night and the 11th annual Beaufort International Film Festival is officially over.

It's not the first time this scene has played out and no doubt it will be repeated next month as the 12th iteration of BIFF concludes. Festival runners, Ron and Rebecca Tucker, continue to build the "little film festival that could" into one of the circuit's most popular small town events. And yet somehow it has managed to remain intimate and under one roof. This year's expanded slate of films comes from across the USA, around the planet and just up the road apiece. Old friends and fresh faces in the business will meet and mingle and connect. Thousands of people from places far and near will pack the town for the state's biggest annual film event and a Lowcountry experience like no other.

BIFF Turns Twelve

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Tuesday, 19 December 2017 14:08 - Last Updated Wednesday, 20 December 2017 06:19

Mark Shaffer: Now that the finalists have been chosen and you've had a chance to process things, how does it look on paper compared to 2016?

Ron Tucker (above): There's a lot of difference. Every film festival we do seems to take on a different



personality. This year is going to be different in that we have a big mix of returning BIFF alumni and a lot of new people who've committed to come for the first time. A lot of them heard about us through other filmmakers. When I make the [notification] calls I always ask how they found out about us. And it's almost always from someone who's been here before. It's always a big compliment that other filmmakers think enough of us to spread the word.

MS: How many entries and how many finalists out of that number?

RT: 330 total entries and 46 finalists not counting screenplays and special presentations. We have four feature films this year and all are as different as night and day. The French entry, *Love is Dead* is a comedy as is

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The Man From Outer Space.

That film's from Ben Hall who was one of our student filmmakers from UNCSA several years ago. It's his first feature film and we were pleased to see that he made it in.

MS: You've split the Documentary category this year into Features and Shorts.

RT: Over recent years we've gotten more short docs and it seemed to be a trend. Documentary filmmakers have figured out they can tell a story in 30 minutes or less. We decided this year that it would be fair to separate the two. Sometimes a feature length documentary is years in the making. So, it wasn't fair to compare those films with something that came together last summer. And that works out well for us. The feature length docs are



some of the best we've ever had. They're from all over. *Purple Dreams* is out of Charlotte. We've got one from Hawaii, *Poisoning Paradise*, directed by Pierce Brosnan's wife.

MS: I noticed the name right away, Keely Brosnan.

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RT: He's a producer on the film, as well. *Forgive, Don't Forget* comes from Lynchburg, Virginia and *City of Joy*, is out of New York. And they're all very different.

Lots of variation in the short doc category. *Almost Cured* is about [America's] racial issues in the early 1960's and the director is from Haifa, Israel. And then there's

Bud's Odyssey

by Mark Kirkland. He's had a film here before but never attended. He's also one of the directors on

The Simpsons

. Hopefully, he'll be here. And there's [BIFF alumna] Teresa Bruce's

Just Wrong.

She's thrilled to be coming back.

To Breathe Free

is from David Barnhart who had great success last year with

Trigger,

is back. Across the board they're all just great and very different.

MS: Now comes the Short Film category - always a crowd pleaser and a showcase for all sorts of talent. A lot of familiar names are back this year. And a few perennials are missing. That's the way it goes. And fifteen films this year.

RT: It's the most we've ever selected. We've been trying to build up the category and make it a strong attraction for filmmakers who produce shorts. We had 91 submitted and from that we selected 15. Which means there were a lot of good short films that didn't make the cut, some

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