



# NASHVILLE FILM FESTIVAL

## Nashville Isn't Just Music City—It Is Movie City!

In addition to being home to network television series and hundreds of professionals working in the local film industry, Nashville is blessed with one of the longest-running and most respected film festivals in the US—the Nashville Film Festival (NashFilm). Celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, NashFilm focuses on its mission “to amplify our collective and individual awareness by bringing the world to Nashville to celebrate innovation, music, and the many voices of the human spirit through the art of film.” NashFilm is an Academy Award qualifying film festival for documentaries and shorts and it is routinely ranked in the top 10 film festivals in the US.

NashFilm grew out of the Sinking Creek Film Celebration, the first film festival in the South, which makes NashFilm one of the longest running festivals in the country. Sinking Creek was started by a lawyer’s wife, Mary Jane Coleman, who was the first woman to direct a film festival in the US. Sinking Creek began back in the day of actual “film”—screening experimental, animation, and documentary shorts, and later exhibiting independent narrative features. For the first few years, the celebration was held in Greeneville, but it outgrew the town and was brought to Nashville and hosted at Vanderbilt University until

1998 when it moved to the Green Hills cinema complex. Sinking Creek recognized the energy, invention, and diversity of ideas composed by this new breed of artist and served as both a showcase for this work and as a place where practitioners, scholars, critics, and audiences of film came together. Though the venue, technology, and name have changed, the festival holds on to that spirit today.

Today’s filmmakers have exceptional new digital image capture equipment and digitally based editing/post-production facilities that make even films with low budget capable of “big screen” production values. That digital revolution, along with new digital marketplaces such as Netflix and Amazon, has created an explosion in content—but it lacks the filters designed to highlight truly exceptional films. NashFilm provides a unique venue in that regard—filtering through thousands of films to find the very best productions to screen at the festival.

NashFilm highlights the work of Tennessee filmmakers with special first-weekend programming that includes Tennessee filmmaker competitions and receptions. It also provides op-

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portunities for screenwriters, hosting a two-day screenwriting event that culminates in an award ceremony for feature length, short length, and student-written screenplays from around the world. Of course, the festival showcases Nashville's songwriters and music-makers, connecting Nashville musicians with buyers in Los Angeles and New York who select music for inclusion in films and television.

The festival also creates opportunities for film enthusiasts to get involved, each year training over 200 "screeners" that initially review and rate every film and script submission. For those with an interest in cinema, those who go through the training provided by NashFilm is an education in the art of film, allowing screeners to see "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of indie film (and to learn from the mistakes, as well as the excellence, of independent filmmakers). NashFilm also provides training for Nashville-area students with internships that offer key insight into eventual film careers.

Perhaps the best gauge of the pres-

tige of NashFilm is its international recognition—last year over 8,000 entries from over 120 countries were submitted in hopes of gaining one of just 300 screenings slots, and the festival's exclusivity attracts film buyers from major distributors.

Serving audiences is first and foremost with NashFilm—catering to those of us who love watching movies or relish the opportunity to "take a walk on the red carpet" and discuss films with the professionals who make them. Thanks to the annual event, tens of thousands attendees get to see indie films that would be otherwise unavailable (including under-served constituencies, for which NashFilm allocates over 1,000 free tickets each year).

NashFilm also provides continuous year-round programming, Movies in the Park, a free program of films running through the summer; Livin' Reel, an annual event that pairs at-risk youth with entertainment professionals to create an original song and music video, and The Workshop Series, where featured

speakers help advance the skills of hundreds of filmmakers and screenwriters.

This year's NashFilm festival is scheduled for October 3-12. Typically, screenings and panels start at noon and run until midnight in 10 theaters for 10 days at the Regal Hollywood theaters at 100 Oaks. The event also includes social and VIP lounges, workshops, and multiple photo opportunities with the casts and crews from major indie films. The festival will also include music showcases at some of Nashville's favorite performance venues and "meet and greets" at exclusive private venues. The complete program is online at the NashFilm website: [NashvilleFilmFestival.org](http://NashvilleFilmFestival.org).

NashFilm is truly a local gem. Whether you are a film industry professional seeking the validation and credentials that come from being selected for competition at a top film festival, or just a film buff that appreciates not only seeing a film but engaging with its producers, directors, and cast, NashFilm creates a venue for constructive discussions of social issues as portrayed in modern film, as well as just plain entertainment.

So butter up the popcorn—coming soon to a theater near you—the Nashville Film Festival! ■



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