

That's a Wrap: BIFF 2011

Written by Mark Shaffer
Thursday, 24 February 2011 15:44

The Filmmakers Have the Last Word on Why BIFF is Buff



Days after the curtain falls on the 2011 edition of the Beaufort International Film Festival the buzz still hangs in the air, crackling like some unseen static charge. The energy is palpable. The conversation is ongoing in the bars and restaurants and cafes. The filmmakers are gone, audiences dispersed, all evidence of the after-party is long since wiped away. For festival organizers/show-runners, Ron Tucker and Rebecca Berry, the eighteen-hour days and late night suppers at Huddle House are finally over – until next year.

Once again the festival numbers set a high watermark: BIFF garnered 204 entries from 24 countries.



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33 filmmakers attended the festival along with more than 5,000 of their newest friends. All records. This year's festival expanded by a day, saw record sell-outs and added behind-the-scenes workshops like the Screenwriter's Table Read. If the trend continues, next year should be something special indeed.



Lowcountry Weekly is proud to have been a part of the BIFF experience with extensive coverage in print and online at www.lcweekly.com . Hats off to our Film Fix bloggers: Duncan Pittman, Teresa Bruce, and Margaret Evans.

A few days after the fact I'm sitting with a still weary Tucker and Berry at a local watering hole, conducting the obligatory post-op interview (look for it online). Rebecca reports that her dental hygienist has friends from out of town who can't wait to come back. Ron says the reaction from the attending filmmakers has been "off the board." Meanwhile a local news report on the festival and its effort to bring film production back to the Lowcountry has gone viral, making news as far away as Oregon.

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Film festivals like BIFF are about passion. This is not the feeding frenzy of Sundance, the fleshpot of



Cannes or the sprawling urban hydra of Seattle. This is all about passionate people traveling from near and far to show their passion projects to an audience who will hopefully appreciate the effort. And it all takes place under one roof, in one theater with a one-on-one formula. The idea is simple: come to BIFF, see the movies, and meet the filmmakers. Hang out. The problem with trying to wrap up something like this is finding the proper words to do the thing justice.



As I began to cull through the three days of interviews I'd managed to grab with the various filmmakers, it hit me: let them tell the story. This seems appropriately cinematic – not so much a collection of comments as a sort of print documentary *in their own words...*

ON THE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE:

Seth Boggess (Director, *Left Alone*): It's been *amazing*.

Jonathan Flora (Director, *Lt. Dan Band: For the Common Good*): Our experience has been incredible. Talk about genuine Southern hospitality. It's been all about the filmmaker and the vision



Beaufort has about infusing the arts and supporting the arts right here in the community.

Deborah Flora (Producer, *Lt. Dan Band*): We've been to a lot of different film festivals in a lot of different capacities and this one is run so excellently. It's very organized. It's on time.

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Virginia Friedman (Director, *Tap Out*): Beaufort and film is like love and marriage; they go together. BIFF has a growing reputation in the film community. Filmmakers kiss and tell. It's an occupational hazard, and the buzz around BIFF has been terrific.

Dr. Chester DePratter (Archeologist/Producer, *Sea Island Secrets*): Oh, it's wonderful. I had no idea of what to expect. I'd never been to [a film festival] and it's very welcoming. It's a beautiful Saturday afternoon and I still have people coming up to me and telling me how much they enjoyed the film and they're glad we're here.

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Benjamin Busch (Writer/Director/Actor, *BRIGHT*): What I love most is that you have a lot of loyalists. Talking to viewers after my screening many of them would say that it was their fourth year or third year. You have to be doing something wonderful in order to get people to come back. [As independent filmmakers] we're poor already. I drove to Beaufort (from Michigan). So when we make the effort to come, the reward for our expense is that we have a full house.

Natasha Warloe (Producer/Actor, *Left Alone*): The crowds here are absolutely unbelievable.



Seth Boggess: They love movies.

Natasha Warloe: Yes! They're really, really passionate about what they're coming to see here and that's what every filmmaker wants. It was hard to get out of the theater [after our screening]. People kept pulling us aside and giving their encouragement. You couldn't ask for a better situation.

Ned Farr (Director, *A Marine Story*): There were a lot of former Marines at [my screening] and when the lights came back up and they said, "You did it right, kid. That's how it is." That made

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me proud, really proud. It doesn't get much better.



Adam Sumner (Writer, *180 Proof*): The festival has totally blown my mind. It's way beyond my expectations. I've learned some things about myself and gotten some amazing feedback. It's made me a better screenwriter.

Margaret Rogers (Co-writer, *The Grey Man*): We won the inaugural screenplay competition at the very first festival. Coming back five years later has been exciting. The festival has evolved and it's attracted so many more people and the quality of the films has been superb.

Marcia Rhea (Co-writer, *The Grey Man*): The films have

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Michael Powers, The View senior producer, and filmmakers.



Margaret Brown with award-winning filmmaker, Ramin and Dallas. How does this compare? Is a



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Michael Powers (Director, Ramin and Dallas) and filmmakers. The workshop with Ramin and Dallas.

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After a long and busy week of screenings, the BIFF 2011 film festival has come to a close. The festival was a great success, with many films being screened and a large number of people attending. The festival was a great success, with many films being screened and a large number of people attending.



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