

ABOUT US

"They do everything right."

--Roger Ebert speaking about the USAFF

"Whenever the USA Film Festival calls, I try to answer because it means so much to me personally."

--Stephen Tobolowsky, USAFF National Advisory Committee Member, quoted in Advocate magazine

ARTS & CULTURE MISSION STATEMENT

The USA Film Festival is a Dallas-based, 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to the recognition and encouragement of excellence in the film and video arts through the presentation of diverse cultural and educational programs.

YEAR-ROUND programs and events include the annual Spring USA Film Festival, now in its 56th year; the annual KidFilm Family Festival, now in its 42nd year, the oldest and largest-attended international children's film festival in the United States; special premieres; an International Short Film Competition; year-round "Meet the Filmmakers" screenings; film series and retrospectives organized around important themes and filmmakers; presentations of restored prints on the big screen, and educational activities including filmmaker discussions and extensive community outreach activities.

LIVE CINEMA -- Through its year-round multicultural programs and special events, the USA Film Festival provides an opportunity for the public to discover films not scheduled for commercial distribution and sheds new light on familiar films by facilitating discussion and encounters with filmmakers and lecturers.

With the exception of special member screenings, all events are open to the public.

MOVIES ON THE BIG SCREEN THE WAY THEY WERE MEANT TO BE SEEN -- Programs take place at proper theater settings throughout the Dallas area, in fully accessible facilities, to ensure maximum accessibility for all publics.

A YEAR-ROUND EVENT -- The Festival presents programs every month -- We're a 50-Day Festival!

PROGRAM MISSION -- Equality/Diversity/Inclusion/Education --To enrich our community by providing a wide variety of diverse cultural and educational programs; To promote equality, equity and inclusion through both our programs and through access for all publics by presenting free and low cost programs; To celebrate the film and video arts; To utilize the power and popularity of the visual medium to reach and teach people of all ages; To support filmmakers by providing an outlet for their works as well as providing the opportunity to speak with our audiences.

AFFIRMATIVE OPERATIONAL POLICY -- FREE ARTS PROGRAMS! --The Festival believes that a great city should have access for all residents to educational opportunities and cultural programs, particularly for publics who have been historically underrepresented based on gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status. The Festival is committed to serving residents from throughout the Dallas community by providing as many high quality,

socially and culturally diverse program opportunities as possible with no financial barriers.

Annual attendance = 30,000+

Most programs are FREE admission to the community!

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Where it all started.

Alan J. Pakula presents a screening of THE STERILE CUCKOO in 1969

at the brand new Bob Hope Theatre on SMU Campus with Dr. Bill Jones moderating the Q&A.

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SHORT HISTORY

Following its original incarnation in 1970 as the "Screen Generation Film Festival," and a (pre-Cannes) visit from filmmaker Robert Altman (pictured left below with Dr. Bill Jones) with an early cut of MASH and pre-release screening of The Sterile Cuckoo with Alan Pakula (complete with coast-to-coast hook-up so that students in San Francisco and Manhattan could participate in the post-screening discussion) and Michael Wadleigh with Woodstock, the USA Film Festival was officially created in 1971. Both Altman and Pakula, having provided the inspiration for the creation of the Festival, became our life-long friends, visiting the Festival and Dallas with their films many times throughout their prestigious careers.

In the early 1970s, the Festival concentrated solely on the then largely uncelebrated films made in the United States. Both amateur and professional filmmakers were invited to submit works to a panel of nationally-renowned critics who selected the best films for competition in the annual festival. Director George Stevens was recognized with the Festival's first Great Director Tribute which took place at the Festival's first home on Southern Methodist University's campus. (Proceeds from that first festival were used to establish the SMU Film Archives.)

In 1973, the Festival changed the format -- Rather than a competition, the annual program became a showcase for American films. The critics, acting as scouts instead of judges, offered films they deemed worthy of recognition and invited filmmakers and creators for on-stage discussion with the audience. Early critics and jurors included Hollis Alpert, Charles Champlin, Roger Ebert, Paul Schrader, Judith Crist, Barbara Bryant, Manny Farber, Andrew Sarris, Dwight MacDonald and others.

The following year, the Festival expanded its activities, honoring Gregory Peck at the first Great Screen Actor Retrospective. Peck was present for the three-day event and appeared on stage each evening for discussion with the audience. Today the program exists as the Master Screen Artist Tribute.

In the 1970s, with the first Short Film Competition, the Festival recognized excellence in this important cinematic form. Since then, the International Short Film & Video Competition has been broadened to include video arts and has screened thousands of films and videos, awarding over \$350,000 in cash prizes, and presenting the top entries each year at a special ceremony on Closing Night of the spring festival. Numerous winners and finalists have gone on to receive Academy recognition (shortlisted, finalists and winners).

In 1981, recognizing the need for informational programs and resources among the rapidly growing metroplex film community, the Festival dramatically increased its scope by offering a slate of activities throughout the year with a special emphasis on educational programs. In addition, the Festival established on-going partnerships with over 200 local arts, cultural and social service organizations to present unique programs spotlighting the wide variety of experiences recorded on film.

In 1975, responding to the void of high quality children's film programming in the commercial market, international film library consultant Barbara Bryant curated the first annual Children's Film Circus for the Festival. This program was officially christened KidFilm Festival in 1983, celebrating excellence in children's media arts. As the first festival of its kind in this country, KidFilm brought national recognition to Dallas and has become the inspiration for similar programs nationwide. Today, KidFilm is the largest-attended children's media festival in the United States bringing 10,000 children, educators and adults to this popular arts-in-education curriculum-interactive program every year. Since its inception, KidFilm arts-in-education programs have served over 200,000 DISD students and educators -- utilizing the media arts to enhance literacy skills -- and we have donated over 5,000 books to Dallas area families as part of our KidFilm Literacy Program.

In 2026, our monthly programs will include the 42nd annual KidFilm Family Festival; the 56th Annual Spring Festival, the Annual International Short Film and Video Competition and the best new American and foreign works; TexFest and "Meet the Filmmakers" installments, as well as several other on-going series and other year-round programs, retrospectives, tributes, premieres and events.

Since its existence, the USA Film Festival has presented the world, national or regional premieres of thousands of studio and independent feature films as well as short experimental, animated, documentary and dramatic films. Throughout the years, the Festival has brought to its audiences thousands of leading directors, producers, actors, screenwriters, editors, composers, production designers, cinematographers, historians and other experts, fulfilling its mission of creating a "LIVE CINEMA" experience, whereby filmmakers present their films in person and discuss their works with the audience.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Current Members, Former Members & KidFilm Advisory, Founders

Diane Baker

Peter Biskind

John Bloom

Peter Bogdanovich

Charles Burnett

Bill Butler

Joe Camp

Julie Corman

Grover Crisp

Shelley Duvall

Harrison Engle

Milos Forman

Jeffrey Godsick

Elliot Gould

Dick Guttman

Charles Haid

Douglas Hall

Foster Hirsch

Joan Hyler

Ronald Judkins

Christine LaMonte

Lisa Loeb

Margaret Loesch

Daphne Maxwell Reid

Leonard Maltin

Arthur Novell

Victor Nunez

Catherine Olim

John Putch

Alan Rudolph

Paul Schrader

David Shepard

Stephen Tobolowsky

Douglas Urbanski

John Waters

Frederick Wiseman

Victoria Wozniak

Paul Bartel

Elmer Bernstein

Bernie Brillstein

Ronni Chasen

George Cukort

Kirk Douglas

Roger Ebert

Hillard Elkins

Bill Feeder

Horton Foote

Sidney Ganis

Ollie Johnston

Martin Jurow

Arthur Knight

Dick Lederer

Mervyn Leroy

Barry Lorie

Joseph L. Mankiewicz

Arthur Manson

Stanley Marcus

Stan Margulies

Dale C. Olson

Gregory Peck

Arthur Penn

Polly Platt

Charles Powell

Tom Pryor

Walter Seltzer

Robert Sklar

George Stevens

Frank Thomas

King Vidor

Raoul Walsh

Murray Weissman

Philip Wuntch

William Wyler

Bud Yorkin

Max Youngstein

June Foray

Deborah Forte

Paul Gagne

Sid Krofft

Marty Krofft

Ferne Margulies

Carol Mechanic

Hayley Mills

Morton Schindel

Dallas Founders

G. William Jones

L.M. Kit Carson

Don Safran

Bob Porter

Founding Critics

Hollis Alpert

Judith Crist

Barbara Bryant

Manny Farber

Andrew Sarris

Dwight MacDonald

Jonas Mekas

P. Adams Sitney

Charles Champlin

Paul Schrader

Gerald Nachman

Harry Haun

John Bustin

Roger Ebert

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