

## RIVERRUN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL TO MOVE TO WINSTON-SALEM

**North Carolina School of the Arts To Have Screenings at Stevens Center and School of Filmmaking**

WINSTON-SALEM – The RiverRun International Film Festival will be held in Winston-Salem next April 24-27, hosted by the North Carolina School of the Arts and the city of Winston-Salem. Screenings will be held at the NCSA School of Filmmaking on campus and at the School's Stevens Center downtown.

RiverRun organizers are planning more than the requisite film screenings, however. There will be a strong educational component, with filmmaking workshops and panel discussions.

"We want it to be a place for artists and professionals in the film industry to come together," said Gennaro "Gene" D'Onofrio, executive director of the festival. "We want to build a creative think tank for filmmakers, both professional and student.

"What's more, we want to bring the professionals here to stimulate the movie industry in the area."

Festival organizers are also planning several activities in downtown Winston-Salem, including a block party/street festival, pre- and post-screening parties, and a gala event, all of which they hope will attract film-lovers across the state and beyond.

"We want RiverRun to be what Sundance was in the early days," said Dale Pollock, dean of the NCSA School of Filmmaking and the festival's artistic director.

It was Pollock who convinced D'Onofrio to bring the festival to Winston-Salem. A Parsons-trained interior designer, D'Onofrio changed to set design for theatre and then directing theatre, where his son, Vincent – now star of TV's "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" – got his start. D'Onofrio was doing training videos for a furniture company when he discovered North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. Always a film enthusiast, he founded RiverRun four years ago in Asheville, and, with the support of Brevard College, attracted filmmakers from California to Canada. But the festival also spotlighted North Carolina-made films, such as MORNING.

"RiverRun is an established festival with a good reputation," said Pollock, a former Hollywood producer whose 1991 film CROOKED HEARTS starred Vincent D'Onofrio.

Pollock said he hopes to see the festival encourage independent and regional filmmaking. That would be in keeping with the spirit of the NCSA School of Filmmaking, which was founded on the Southern storytelling tradition.

Pollock anticipates accepting 18 films for competition – feature-length and short; animated, documentary and fiction; foreign and domestic. "We want a mix of films, genres and nationalities," he said. There will also be a category for student works. In addition, the festival will invite two or three exceptional films from

other festivals for special screenings. And there will be a major film premiere.

While the state has other film festivals, what is unique about RiverRun is that it will be in partnership with Winston-Salem and the North Carolina School of the Arts. "It is fitting that the state's premier arts conservatory and one of the country's finest film schools would host a major film festival," said NCSA Chancellor Wade Hobgood. "We are looking forward to our new association with RiverRun, and hope to see it continue for many years."

Stacie Brenner, an events planner who had great success with Rock the Block and Kickin' the Downtown Blues in Winston-Salem, has been hired to market RiverRun. Brenner hopes to triple the audience, which was about 1,500 in Asheville, to at least 3,000 to 5,000 people attending screenings, with perhaps a total of 20,000 involved in the entire festival.

Tickets to screenings will be reasonably priced: \$5 per screening, or books of 10 screenings for \$35. The premiere film and gala will be priced separately. Passes will also be offered, and there will be discount prices for students and senior citizens.

The RiverRun International Film Festival will be accepting entries through March 1. For more information, call 336-831-1914, or visit the website at [www.riverrunfilm.com](http://www.riverrunfilm.com). The RiverRun office is located at 8 W. Third St., Suite M1, Winston-Salem, NC 27101.

An arts conservatory of international renown, the North Carolina School of the Arts was the first state-supported, residential school of its kind in the nation. Established by the N.C. General Assembly in 1963, NCSA became part of the University of North Carolina in 1972. More than 1,000 students from middle school through graduate school train for careers in the arts in five professional schools: Dance, Design & Production (including a Visual Arts Program), Drama, Filmmaking, and Music.

The NCSA School of Filmmaking offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts and College Arts Diploma in screenwriting, directing, editing and sound, producing, cinematography, and production design. For more information, visit the School's website at [www.ncarts.edu](http://www.ncarts.edu).

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