

SOLANA BEACH SUN



LifeStyles

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SECTION B

'How to Fest' at SD Film Festival

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What makes a Film Festival different from going to the movies?

A film festival is special because *independent* films, which have become the lifeblood of quality cinema, is not viewed anywhere else and the filmmakers are present at most of the screenings to discuss their films with the audience. Often this includes the director, actors, writers and producers. More than 1,400 films are submitted, mostly from the U.S. but also internationally, and less than 10 percent are selected for the festival.

"This year, we have 108 slated for festival viewing," said Dale Strack, the new chairman of the San Diego Film Festival (SDFF). "We are so excited about the line-up and have had over 1,200 submissions from some very talented, emerging filmmakers."

Independent filmmakers submit their films to festivals because it is their opportunity to see the audience react and speak with them directly. Also important is that their film is viewed by distributors who either buy or arrange distribution for their films into movie theaters in the U.S. and foreign markets. The criteria for an independent film are:

- Features average about two hours in length and may be in any genre: action, drama, comedy, etc.
- Documentaries are factual films, which are dramatic.
- Shorts are short stories and are shorter than feature films, which are usually funded by film grants, non-profit organizations, or out-of pocket funds. They may also qualify for the Oscars, which are bestowed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Also presented in festivals are new big studio (i.e. Paramount, 20th Century Fox, etc.) films, which SDFF will be premiering before being released into movie theaters.

The "festing" experience includes the public and filmmakers alike in panels and seminars. Panelists include directors, actors, critics, studio executives and other industry insiders who will discuss the movie business and movies.

"I really enjoy the Q&A sessions with the filmmakers after the screenings. It is rare for filmmakers to have the opportunity to have direct interaction with an audience," said Tonya Mantooth (Emmy Award-winning producer and

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Strack's partner). "To hear theater-goers and filmmakers share their passion for film is really amazing."

Festing isn't just watching movies, it is about networking, education and new information.

Parties and special events like the Opening Night film (TBA) and party (at the new club Bang Bang — one hour of open bar and food) are a big part of every festival.

"Celebrities are the glitz and glamour of Hollywood right here in San Diego," Strack said. "From red carpet events with press interviews to running shoulders with celebs at posh parties or Q&A's at premiere screenings."

1. Choosing your passholder experience:

A pass is the best way to experience the festival, which guarantees premium entrée into screening venues, panels, lounges and special events. SDFF offers three levels of access, indulgence and fun: Festival pass, VIP pass and Patron pass. Also offered are Day passes for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, last minute rush tickets and individual special event tickets.

2. How it works:

Patrons enter all events first. VIPs and Festival Pass holders enter second. Day passes and individual Rush tickets enter third (on space availability). In order to view the films, panels and special events, early arrival at the venue is highly recommended.

Visit SDFilmFest.com for tickets.