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## **ACHIEVING NOTORIETY: NORTH CAROLINA GAY AND LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL<sub>[sm]</sub> COMES OF AGE FOR THE CAROLINA THEATRE**

**Durham, N.C.**— The North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival<sub>[sm]</sub> (NCGLFF) is the second largest gay and lesbian film festival in the Southeast, attracting 10,000 patrons for the past three years. Since its beginnings as a summer film series in 1995, each year the NCGLFF has presented a diverse array of shorts, documentaries and feature films. Many films, such as *Issues 101*, *200 American*, *Tarheels & Short Skirts*, *Relax...It's Just Sex*, *Camp: The Movie*, *Elvira's Haunted Hills*, *Experimental Me* and *A Family Affair*, have made their world or regional première at The Carolina Theatre's North Carolina Gay & Lesbian Film Festival.

Last year, the Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau ([Durham-nc.com](http://Durham-nc.com)) named the NCGLFF as a **Signature Event** for Durham, the highest honor bestowed on a cultural event or attraction by the organization.

The 9th Annual NCGLFF will be held August 12-15 (with an Après-Fest the nights of the 16-19) at The Carolina Theatre of Durham as one of the largest GLBT events in the Carolinas. This year's program already includes *Adored: The Diary of a Porn Star*, *Eating Out*, the Cuban documentary *90 Miles* and the lesbian horror feature *Make a Wish* with the rest of the program being finalized during June. Check out up-to-date information about the NCGLFF at [www.carolinatheatre.org/ncglff](http://www.carolinatheatre.org/ncglff). The **Emerging Film Awards** winners will be announced on our website beginning July 1. Tickets can be purchased by contacting The Carolina Theatre box office at (919) 560-3030. Single tickets are \$7.50 and a five-pack discount ticket block is \$32.

The critical acclaim of the past eight years proves that a great idea nurtured can become a great reality. The North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival started as a film series presented by The Carolina Theatre in 1995. In association with NC Pride '95, held at the Durham Civic Center, several films were scheduled to screen during the weekend's events. PRIDE's activities and the film series did not escape the notice of the conservative members in the area. Local faith-based and conservative groups organized opposition to the film screenings, but the Theatre stood firm in its mission to serve all segments of the community. Durham City officials and Durham's district attorney previewed the films and agreed that they were neither offensive nor "pornographic." Local media coverage of the controversy helped spread the word so that attendance and support for the film presentations was substantial.

The success encouraged volunteers from the gay/lesbian community and The Carolina Theatre staff to develop a festival. Held during the summer of 1996, the first full-fledged North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival became a reality--attracting more than 1,000 attendees from the Triangle's community. Eight full-length features and two short films were shown that year. Filmmakers Barbara Hammer (*Tender Fictions*) and Sonja de Vries (*Gay Cuba*) participated in the NCGLFF and discussed their films and the production process with attendees.

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The 1997 Festival featured 10 full-length films, several short films, and a photo exhibit; "Love Makes A Family." The festival attracted more than 2,000 attendees with five of the film screenings selling out.

Expanding to 21 films in 1998, the NCGLFF also included a live performance of comedian Rob Nash's one-man show *12 Steps to A More Dysfunctional Family* on Saturday night. One prominent film in the festival, *Relax...It's Just Sex*, was the opening night film at 1998's OUTFEST and the closing film of 1998's Frameline. The ability to book first-rate, first-run films like *Relax...It's Just Sex*, *Fire* and *Alive & Kicking* indicated that the North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival had acquired national recognition.

In 1999, the Festival expanded to four days and included screening from Spain, Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom. The Festival's non-film programs continued to grow, with the community resource room more than tripling the number of participating organizations to 42. With more than 4,400 in attendance in 1999, the NCGLFF became the most attended film festival produced by The Carolina Theatre and is consistently used as a model for emerging film festivals around the country.

The 2000 weekend established the NCGLFF as the place to be for filmmakers seeking Southern exposure. Special events included the opening night film --*The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*--an adaptation of the longest running one-man show in New York theatre history. The Festival also included many award-winning films such as: *A Luv Tale* (Audience Choice award at the 1999 Hollywood Black Film Festival), *Show Me Love* (Best Feature Film at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1999) and for documentary enthusiasts, *Paragraph 175* (Berlin Film Festival and the Sundance Film Festival for Best Documentary Film). The animated short *Rick & Steve, The Happiest Gay Couple In All The World* received the first **Emerging Film Award**. The Emerging Film Awards are given to those films/filmmakers which have not secured theatrical distribution prior to the opening of the festival and whose artistry best explore and illuminate the human condition from an LGBT context.

The NCGLFF reached a cultural and artistic milestone in 2001 by becoming one of the largest gay and lesbian film festivals in the Southeast. Among the internationally renowned films were *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award and Best Director of a Feature), *Scout's Honor* (Best Documentary Audience Award and Freedom of Expression award at Sundance) and *Iron Ladies* (two Teddy Awards at the Berlin International Film Festival). Acclaimed Canadian filmmaker Lea Poole made her English-language debut with the feature film *Lost and Delirious*. *All Over the Guy*, *Monkey's Mask*, *Taboo*, *Webcam Boys* and *On the Bus* were included on the Festival's exclusive or featured screenings lists.

"In 2002, we were getting the opportunity to present huge films before the rest of the country saw them," said Senior Director Jim Carl. "People began recognizing us as the place to debut queer cinema. We were able to partner with some extremely prestigious distribution companies to show exclusive screenings in North Carolina, a real boon for the Festival audiences!" The Festival screened 102 films that year, 30 more than had ever been programmed before including the world premiere of *Camp: The Movie* and *Issues 101*.

The opportunity to partner with the BBC and BBCAmerica to present a free screening of the acclaimed lesbian film *Tipping The Velvet* was a highlight of 2003. As well, the appearance of filmmakers from around the country grew as cast members, directors, producers and writers representing 10 films visited the Festival. Anne Misawa, director of the Emerging Film Feature *Eden's Curve*, said: "Everyone at the festival as well as the community were not only extremely generous and hospitable, but fun too! It was wonderful to see the Aloha Spirit in action so many miles away from Hawai'i."

"The North Carolina Gay & Lesbian Film Festival was the first stop on the festival circuit for my film *200 American*," said producer/writer/director Richard LeMay, "The venue, the organization, and more importantly, the personal attention given to the filmmakers was top notch. *200 American* has been to festivals all over the world and the experience at the NCGLFF has not been matched. Hands down, an amazing experience that spoiled me for the other festivals. *200 American* has been bought for distribution worldwide and it all started in Durham, North Carolina."

With programming still underway, the 2004 Festival promises to be just as exciting and rewarding as the past 10 years.

### EMERGING FILM AWARDS

Since 2000, when the awards were established, the programming committee has the opportunity to recognize the best in the following categories: Feature, Documentary, Men's Short and Women's Short.

2000

Emerging Film: *Rick & Steve: The Happiest Gay Couple In All The World*

Best Doc: *Daddy and Papa*

Best Women's Short: *Bitanic*

Best Men's Short: *Boychick*

2001

Best Feature: *Get Your Stuff*

Best Women's Short: *Her Urge*

Best Men's Short: *The Rape of Ganymede*

2003

Best Feature: *Eden's Curve*

Best Doc: *No Secret Anymore: The Times of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon*

Best Women's Short: *D.E.B.S*

Best Men's Short: *The Visitor*

2002

Best Feature: *The Perfect Son*

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