

# ANNUAL REPORT

 **RIVERRUN**  
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

2020

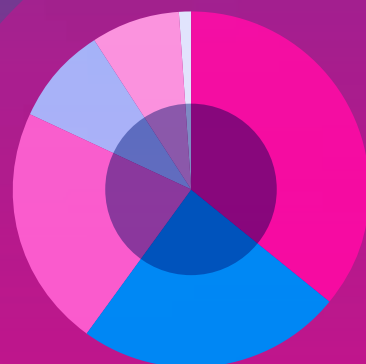
*Fiscal year 2020 ended up looking quite different for the RiverRun International Film Festival, and we begin the 2021 fiscal year with tremendous gratitude to the many friends and businesses who continue to support us and to everyone who has participated in our virtual and drive-in screenings, two formats new to the RiverRun business model. We concluded fiscal year 2020 on June 30 and are pleased to report our organization achieved several important milestones and enhanced our year-round programming and educational initiatives despite the difficult decision to cancel our annual film festival.*



Founded in 1998, RiverRun International Film Festival is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the role of cinema as a conduit of powerful ideas and diverse viewpoints. Our mission is to foster a greater appreciation of cinema and a deeper understanding of the many people, cultures, and perspectives of our world through regular interaction with great films and filmmakers. We are honored to be an Academy Award-qualifying festival in the categories of Animated Short Film and Documentary Short Film.

#### FINANCIAL POSITION

The budget for the 2020 fiscal year was reduced to \$790,200 to account for potential reductions in one of our grants. While RiverRun is on par with most other film festivals in that ticket sales typically account for 10 to 15% of our revenue, the cancellation of the festival had a significant impact. Although the loss of ticket revenue was substantial, we were very grateful that approximately 14% of ticket holders did not request a refund and allowed their ticket purchases to become donations. The lack of ticket revenue for 2020 results in an even greater reliance on support from individuals, grants, foundations, and corporate partners in order to produce our next festival and year-round programming.



#### RIVERRUN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2020

##### SOURCES OF REVENUE:

Business Sponsorships	36%
Individual Contributions	24%
Grants	22%
Merchandise & Other Revenue	9%
Film Submission Fees	8%
Tickets	1%

#### YEAR-ROUND HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to the annual festival, RiverRun presents an ambitious schedule of year-round programming. For the 2020 fiscal year, we presented 24 year-round screenings at various venues prior to COVID-19, 18 of which were offered free to the community.

#### FILMS WITH CLASS

Films With Class, RiverRun's educational initiative, typically hosts in-person screenings for over 1,000 students during our annual festival. This year, with classroom instruction moving online, we piloted a virtual edition of our Films With Class program with elementary students from Brunson, Meadowlark, and Morgan Elementary Schools. Students from these schools were going to attend the festival in person, but we quickly shifted to an e-learning experience when the festival was cancelled and school moved online due to the coronavirus. Students were able to view the films at home and individually record videos in response to a series of film-related prompts, which filmmakers could then see and to which they could respond. While COVID-19 prevented this year's unique cinematic in person opportunity for students, it did lift time constraints on the discussion parts of these programs. This allowed for not only a greater number of individual exchanges between students and filmmakers, but also resulted in increased depth of expression in many cases. Kelsey Williams, a teacher at Brunson Elementary School, was thrilled to offer a virtual version of Films With Class to her students. "Each week, we had 'Film Festival Friday,'" she said "The kids loved the films and were incredibly excited to participate! I hope we can continue to work with RiverRun to build this program and participate in the future. It is so important to teach the next generation to be good patrons of the arts in our community."

#### SPECIAL SCHOOL SCREENINGS

Prior to COVID-19, Films With Class offered several special screenings at area schools during the 2019-2020 school year. In the fall, we hosted filmmaker Taylor Sharp with his documentary *Hoops Africa: Ubuntu Matters*. Taylor hosted screenings at Carver High School, R.J. Reynolds High School, and the Carter G. Woodson School. Over 530 students attended these screenings over two days. We also hosted a public screening of the film at Marketplace Cinemas in Winston-Salem. Christopher Martin works with community engagement and educational partnerships at Forsyth Tech and coordinated the screenings at Carver High School. He wrote, "During the movie there was an attentiveness that rarely happens with an assembly of this size. Having the filmmaker there in person engaging the students in a Q & A format after the film was the icing on the cake." Additionally, we



presented three screenings of *We Still Live Here - Âs Nutayuneân*, a moving film about the revitalization of the Wampanoag language, the first time a language with no native speakers has been revived in this country. The screenings were at Walkertown Middle School and Forsyth Tech.

#### INDIE LENS POP-UP SERIES

Films With Class also presents the Indie Lens Pop-Up screenings in conjunction with ITVS, a free series that brings people together for film screenings and community-driven conversations. The series shows documentaries prior to their airing on PBS broadcasts of Independent Lens. Three films were screened in person in Winston-Salem and Yadkinville prior to COVID-19. Our Winston Salem screenings were held at the Forsyth County Central Library and our Yadkinville screenings were held at the Willingham Theater at the Yadkin Cultural Arts Center. All in-person screenings featured panel discussions. The in-person Indie Lens films included *Decade of Fire*, *The First Rainbow Coalition*, and *Always in Season*. Additionally, we presented *We Still Live Here - Âs Nutayuneân* as a special documentary screening in Winston-Salem and Yadkinville as well as two documentary screenings at Habitat for Humanity. Following the cancellation of in-person screenings due to the pandemic, we presented three Indie Lens films as virtual screenings, which also had discussion components. Those films were *Bedlam*, *Eating Up Easter*, and *Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project*.

#### RIVERRUN RETRO

We held three RiverRun Retro screenings in the 2020 fiscal year. Film legend Carroll Baker and RiverRun Advisory Board member Foster Hirsch visited for a discussion and screening of the controversial film classic, *Baby Doll*, which starred Ms. Baker. A reception for patron circle members was held with Ms. Baker at Sfeer+Co in downtown Winston-Salem. In January, Veronica Cartwright joined us for screenings of the 1978 version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* at Hanesbrands Theatre in Winston-Salem and RED Cinemas in Greensboro with programs moderated by UNCISA professor and RiverRun Board Member Dale Pollock in Winston-Salem and RiverRun Director Rob Davis in Greensboro.

#### SPECIAL SCREENINGS

In addition to our Indie Lens and RiverRun Retro series, we also offered some additional special screenings including two showings of *Fiddlin'*, a documentary focusing on the positive cultural, human, and economic impacts of the annual Old Fiddler's Convention in Galax, Virginia. Screenings were held at the RamKat in Winston-Salem and the historic Reeves Theatre in Elkin. The film's sound recordist, Tom Hauser, attended both screenings



for a Q & A session and was joined at the RamKat by Joshua Ausley, the film's director of photography, and in Elkin by producer Vicki Vlasic. Two musicians from the film, Scott Willard and William Gayheart, entertained prior to the Reeves screening. We also hosted a screening of the Best of the Greensboro 48 Hour Film Project at Marketplace Cinemas with 48-Hour city producer Iris Carter as special guest to discuss the program and winning films.

#### 2020 FESTIVAL

After receiving over 2,000 film submissions, our 2020 RiverRun International Film Festival was set to include 173 films representing 42 countries with over 100 filmmakers and special guests scheduled to attend. As we were finalizing what promised to be an outstanding 2020 event, we were also closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation. On March 13, we made the difficult decision to cancel the festival, our priority being the health, safety, and wellbeing of all our constituents. During what would have been our festival dates, we modified our e-newsletter to include film and book recommendations from some of our filmmakers and guests who were planning to be with us along with some of our past guests and honorees.

Pitch Fest is our annual competition for college documentary filmmakers, and we had a record nine schools participating this year including our first colleges and universities from out of state. We consulted with our judges and held a virtual edition of Pitch Fest for the first time.

Additionally, we spoke with our film jurors and they all viewed films virtually and deliberated electronically to select the 2020 film winners in our five competition categories.

We also began to immediately explore alternative ways to deliver some of our films. By April 24, just a few weeks after our traditional festival would have concluded, we were able to launch our Virtual Theater, and prior to June 30, we had presented a number of films in that format. In addition to ticketed films, we also featured virtual free screenings of our North Carolina Shorts programs and our Saturday Morning Cartoons. We have been encouraged by the audience response.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

As fiscal year 2021 began, we expanded our programming to include drive-in screenings at Winston-Salem's Marketplace Drive-In, proving that while our world has changed, RiverRun's mission has not. Much uncertainty still exists with respect to future events, but we look forward to seeing everyone when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, the entire RiverRun team remains adaptable, patient, and hopeful, and we hope all our constituents and those close to you are safe and well.

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## PRESENTING SPONSORS



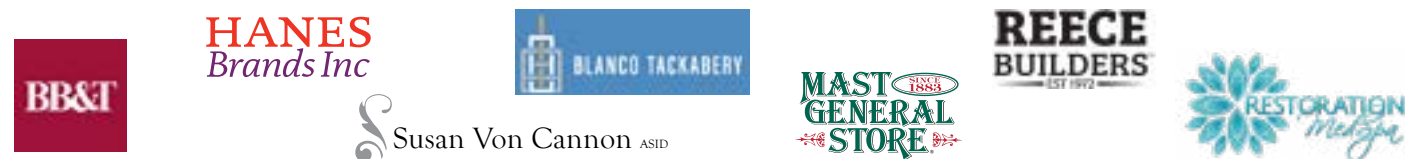
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Willingham Theater at the Yarkin  
Cultural Arts Center  
Winston-Salem Monthly Magazine  
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88.5 WFDD radio  
89.9 WDAV radio  
90.5 WSNL radio



This project was supported by the N.C. Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources

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AS OF 6/30/20

# 2020 RiverRun Award Highlights



## RE:VISION INDEPENDENT FEATURE COMPETITION

Best Film  
**De Lo Mio**  
Directed by Diana Peralta

Peter Brunette Award for Best Director  
Maša Neškovi  
**Asymmetry**

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

Best Documentary Feature  
**I Am Not Alone**  
Directed by Garin Hovannisian

Best Director  
Sam Ellison  
**Chèche Lavi**

Honorable Mention  
**Anbessa**  
Directed by Mo Scarpelli

## NARRATIVE SHORTS

Best Narrative Short  
**Tattoo**  
Directed by Farhad Delaram

Special Jury Award  
**Wonder**  
Directed by Javier Molina

Best Student Narrative Short  
**Terminal**  
Directed by Kim Allamand

## DOCUMENTARY SHORTS \*

Best Documentary Short  
**Exit 12**  
Directed by Mohammad Gorjestani

Best Documentary Short  
**Ashes to Ashes**  
Directed by Taylor Rees & Renan Ozturk

\*tie

## ANIMATED SHORTS

Best Animated Short  
**Petty Thing**  
Directed by Li Zexi

Special Jury Award for Outstanding Film  
**Sous la Glace**  
Directed by Luce Grosjean, Ismail Berrahma, Flore Dupont, Laurie Estampes, Quentin Nory & Hugo Potin

Special Jury Award for Best Student Film  
**Blieschow**  
Directed by Christoph Sarow

## PITCH FEST

FIRST PLACE  
**Painting Your Room in My Heart**  
Directed by Yuqi Lu  
Wake Forest University

## SECOND PLACE

**Clickbait: Stop the Traffic**  
Directed by Madison Rae Reitz  
University of North Carolina at Wilmington

