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New Orleans Film Society Announces 25th Annual New Orleans Film Festival

Festival to open with U.S. premiere of Mike Binder's Black and White and close with world premiere of Joe Lauro's The Big Beat; 14 narrative and documentary feature films selected to compete

New Orleans, La. (August 15th, 2014)— On behalf of the New Orleans Film Society (NOFS), John Goodman is pleased to announce the 25th Annual New Orleans Film Festival, taking place October 16th- 23rd at venues across the city. The festival will kick off Thursday, October 16th, at the Civic Theatre with the U.S. premiere of Mike Binder's New Orleans–shot ***Black and White***. Closing the festival on Thursday, October 23rd, is the world premiere of ***The Big Beat***—a documentary directed by Joe Lauro that profiles the early years of Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew.

"Both opening and closing night selections have a special resonance for our city. *Black and White* is a testament to the thriving film industry in Louisiana and the meaningful stories being filmed here while *The Big Beat* honors the singular contributions New Orleans artists have made to our country's musical history. We are honored to host such special homecoming screenings for both films," says Jolene Pinder, New Orleans Film Society Executive Director.

The NOFS is also announcing the Festival's Narrative and Documentary Competition feature film selections that will compete for a grand jury prize, taking place at venues across New Orleans throughout the festival (listed below).

"It is a special privilege to live in New Orleans and be a part of its thriving film and entertainment industry. Over the past twenty-five years the New Orleans Film Festival has

developed into a world-class event with original and innovative programming that has helped put New Orleans on the map. This year's lineup is the most diverse and exciting program I've seen in years," says John Goodman, who was announced earlier this year as the Hollywood Liaison for the New Orleans Film Festival.

Opening/Closing Night Films:

WHEN: Opening Night: Thursday, October 16th, 2014, Time TBA
The Civic Theatre, 510 O'Keefe Street, New Orleans

Closing Night: Thursday, October 23rd, 2014, Time TBA
Carver Theater, 2101 Orleans Avenue, New Orleans

The Opening Night film, ***Black and White***, stars Academy Award–winners Kevin Costner and Octavia Spencer. *Black and White* is the story of a widowed grandfather (Costner) who is left to raise his bi-racial granddaughter. When the little girl's paternal grandmother (Spencer) seeks custody, a bitter legal battle ensues that forces the uneasy family members to have an honest conversation about life, death, anger, and America's racial divide. The film also stars Anthony Mackie, Jennifer Ehle, Gillian Jacobs, Bill Burr, Andre Holland, and introducing Jillian Estell.

"New Orleans as well as the state of Louisiana has come to my rescue more than once as a filmmaker," says Kevin Costner. "It was the difference between me making my movie and not. The group of filmmakers that exists here made it possible, and nothing feels better than bringing it back for them to see the vision that united us all in work."

One of the film's major stars, Anthony Mackie, is a New Orleans native; growing up, he attended New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts. The film's score is by renowned composer Terence Blanchard, who is also a New Orleans native.

Opening Night at the 2014 New Orleans Film Festival is sponsored by Second Line Stages and Windy Hill Pictures.

This year's Closing Night film, ***The Big Beat,*** profiles the early years of Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew. The documentary from veteran documentary filmmaker Joe Lauro (*Rejoice and Shout*, *Louis Prima: The Wildest*, *The Howling Wolf Story*) follows their journey turning New Orleans Rhythm & Blues into Rock N' Roll and shows how their music contributed to racial integration. Combing archival material and recent interviews with Dave, Fats, and surviving band members, the film illustrates the story of these two men and the other musicians who made their band among the greatest in Rock N' Roll history.

"I see *The Big Beat* as not only the story of Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew, but a tale of New Orleans, the city where Dave and Fats have always lived and where their music was born,"

says Director Joe Lauro. “Having our film's world premiere at the New Orleans Film Festival is an honor; it somehow completes the circle."

Narrative and Documentary Features in Competition:

The 2014 festival lineup was chosen from a total pool of more than 2,100 submissions, a record number for the festival and a 41% increase over the previous year. Submissions poured in from more countries than ever before, this year totaling 86—making this the largest and most far-reaching submissions pool the festival has ever seen.

"The films in this year's lineup promise to make audiences see the world in new ways,” says Clint Bowie, New Orleans Film Society Program Director. “They draw attention to lives and communities not often seen on screen and explore form and technique in ways that allow new perspectives on life."

Feature films screening out of competition, as well as the short film lineup and the Louisiana showcase, will be announced in the coming weeks.

NARRATIVE FILMS IN COMPETITION:

Buttercup Bill **(dir. Émilie Richard-Froozan & Rémy Bennett)**

This New Orleans–shot feature centers on the psycho-sexual romance between Patrick and Pernilla—mutually obsessed soul mates clinging to childhood secrets. Closer to twins separated at birth than friends or lovers, their volatile, whiskey-soaked relationship oscillates between fairy-tale innocence and sadomasochism. Love and cruelty are one in this dreamlike haze of obsession. Featuring musical sequences with Hurray for the Riff Raff.

Dig Two Graves **(dir. Hunter Adams)**

The mysterious death of a young boy triggers the unearthing of a town’s long buried secrets in this debut feature from Hunter Adams. One part Gothic thriller, one part black comedy, and one part Dickensian mystery, *Dig Two Graves* dramatizes the cycle of violence that perpetuates itself over generations in a small backwoods town. This film was workshopped in the Independent Feature Project (IFP) labs.

Love Land **(dir. Josh Tate)**

When Ivy, an aspiring tattoo artist, finds herself in a Texas institution for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, she hatches a scheme to manipulate a fellow resident with Down Syndrome in order to escape the facility and reunite with her boyfriend. Featuring a leading cast with intellectual and developmental disabilities, *Love Land* tells a universal story of labels, love, and liberty. **World Premiere**

***Manhattan Romance* (dir. Tom O'Brien)**

In this movie about making a movie, a TV commercial editor is consumed by his latest passion project: a documentary that examines the nature and variety of intimate relationships in New York City. Danny's fascination with the details of others' romance is juxtaposed with hilarity and heartbreak to the solitary nature of his own. This indie romantic comedy is a love letter to New York itself—and features standout performances from Katherine Waterston (the lead actress in Paul Thomas Anderson's upcoming *Inherent Vice*), Caitlin Fitzgerald (*Masters of Sex*), and Gaby Hoffman (*Crystal Fairy*, *Girls*). **World Premiere**

***Proud Citizen* (dir. Thom Southerland)**

Krasimira Stanimirova wins second place in a Bulgarian play-writing contest, and her award is a trip to the United States, Kentucky to be exact, to see the world premiere of her Communist-era, autobiographical play. Expecting to be met with a warm welcome and "Southern hospitality," she instead finds herself isolated and lonely in a hotel off an interstate. Exploring America on foot, Krasi ruminates on her complicated past as she confronts the reality that her play might not be such a big deal. Along the way she slowly finds comfort amongst strangers in this alien world, including a young mother and her son.

***Sabbatical* (dir. Brandon Colvin)**

Ben Hardin, a middle-aged scholar, returns home to care for his ill mother during his scheduled writing sabbatical. While home, faced with the remnants of a life he left behind, Ben's relationships with estranged friends and family are tested. Routine becomes reenactment, as past traumas are refreshed and agitated. *Sabbatical* is constructed to evoke the melancholy mood of returning home—not the glowing warmth of nostalgia or the restful ease of vacation-like escape, but the evacuated feeling that sets in beyond those initial sensations.

***Sunbelt Express* (dir. Evan Wolf Buxbaum)**

Set along the Arizona/Mexico border, this film is about a down-on-his luck ex-teacher (Tate Donovan), who, after getting fired for plagiarizing a student's work, has just about hit rock bottom. He now begrudgingly shuttles immigrants across the border illegally in the trunk of his car—for cash. Meanwhile, his ex-wife is in the heat of a conservative campaign for State Senate, and his teenage daughter has started spying on him to see where he disappears to on the weekends. **North American Premiere**

<u>DOCUMENTARY FILMS IN COMPETITION:</u>

***61 Bullets* (dir. David Modigliani)**

61 Bullets looks at the complicated—and still disputed—story of the assassination of Huey Long, the populist U.S. Senator from Louisiana who remains one of the most colorful and contentious figures in American history. Seventy-five years after the assassination, the son of Long's alleged killer and his family delve into a painful past to question the official story. Not a film about conspiracy theories, or a one-sided shot at vindication, the film is, instead, a Louisiana mystery revealed through an emotional journey, told through the eyes of compelling present-day characters and exploring themes of father-son relationships, justice, and how history is formed. **World Premiere**

Big Moccasin **(dir. Chelsea & Andrew Moynehan)**

An intimate look into the lives of four people who live on Big Moccasin Rd., a 20-mile stretch of pavement in the Appalachian Mountains of southwest Virginia. Realized with an astonishing intimacy, the film is a slice of Americana that digs deep into a lost world whose memories and presences still linger in the very fabric of American Culture. **North American Premiere**

Dwarves Kingdom **(dir. Matthew Salton)**

Curious tourists flock to a theme park in China, where about 100 little people live and put on musical and dance routines. While critics liken the park to a human zoo, many of the little people who work there see the park as a chance to live in a community that understands them. Through interviews and rich observational footage, the film uncovers the soul-stirring and ultimately life-affirming stories of these people who live and perform in this unique and controversial setting. This film marks the exciting debut feature of Matthew Salton.

Meet the Hitlers **(dir. Matt Ogens)**

Meet the Hitlers examines the relationship between names and identity by exploring the lives of people who are linked by the name "Hitler." A character study, the film offers an intimate portrait of its subjects, whose reactions to their name span the spectrum of human experience, from tragedy to comedy, and heartbreak to hope. The film marks the second feature documentary from Emmy-nominated filmmaker Matt Ogens, his first being the critically acclaimed *Confessions of a Superhero* (2007). **World Premiere**

Of Kites and Borders **(dir. Yolanda Pividal)**

Of Kites and Borders tells the story of the daily struggle of living on the U.S.-Mexico border, as told through the eyes of four working children in the city of Tijuana. Profiled are a teen border smuggler, a nine-year-old dumpster scavenger, and a pair of young brothers who perform wrestling matches at busy street intersections for spare change. The film is a story of hope, struggle, and survival that digs behind newspaper headlines to explore life on the other side of the wall and the underlying context of immigration.

When the Bell Rings **(dir. Brad Bores)**

When 40-year-old former boxer David "Dino" Wells makes a gutsy attempt to return to fighting, he finds that his 15-year absence from the sport has left him in need of intense training. He tackles his return with determination and grit, battling his own body as well as skeptical coaches and ruthless promoters. Meanwhile, he's also tormented by memories of a fatherless childhood, which drive him to take on another challenge: reuniting with his estranged son in New Orleans. **World Premiere**

***Where God Likes to Be* (dir. Nicolas Hudak)**

This lyrical documentary portrays what it means to be Native American today—taking a personal and cinematic journey into the heart of the Blackfeet Indian reservation in Montana. It follows three young protagonists over the course of one summer, marked by a turning point in each of their lives as they must decide if they want to leave home to attend college or stay and struggle with life on the impoverished reservation.

NOFF PASSES & TICKETING:

All-Access Passes will go on sale on September 1st ($200 for NOFS members / $250 general admission) and grant pass holders the opportunity to reserve seats for all screenings and VIP access to all parties and special events during NOFF. All-Access Passes do not **guarantee** admission to the Opening Night film. A limited quantity of Opening Night tickets is available only to All-Access Pass holders on a first-come first-served basis, beginning at noon CST on September 25th.

Tickets and passes will be available to purchase at www.neworleansfilmfestival.org.

Ticketing schedule:

September 1: All-Access Passes available for purchase online.

September 25: Tickets available to reserve online for members of the Quarter Century Club, Producers Circle, and All-Access Pass holders.

October 1: Tickets available for purchase online for New Orleans Film Society members only.

October 13: Main box office opens, tickets on sale to the public.

About the New Orleans Film Society

Since 1989, the New Orleans Film Society (NOFS) (http://neworleansfilmsociety.org) has engaged, educated and inspired through the art of film. This year, 2014, marks the 25th anniversary of the New Orleans Film Festival. The Producing Sponsor of the 2014 NOFF is the City of New Orleans; Premiere Sponsors include Hollywood Trucks, Second Line Stages, and

Windy Hill Pictures. NOFS hosts special events throughout the year: the French Film Festival, the New Orleans International Children's Film Festival, and other events designed to benefit local film audiences, artists, and professionals. NOFS partners with local organizations to present monthly film series. NOFS reaches 32,000 people year-round through its programming. NOFS is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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