

BOSNIAN-HERZEGOVINIAN FILM FESTIVAL (BHFF™) Backgrounder

Although, on average, Bosnia and Herzegovina, a very small country, generates only several feature films per year, its filmmakers have gained international recognition, often producing award-winning movies on very low budgets. Recent examples are Oscar-winning “No Man’s Land” (Danis Tanović) and “Grbavica” (Jasmila Zbanić), winner of the Golden Bear award at Berlinale.

Since its founding in 2003, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival (BHFF) has gained a reputation as an important showcase of contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian cinematography, as well as films that deal with the topic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This vibrant cultural event, organized annually in New York City by two not-for-profit organizations, brings together a wide spectrum of audiences from the Tri-State area and beyond. To date, BHFF has screened 51 feature-length, short, documentary and animated films viewed by significant number of people.

The Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival provides a platform for the international exposure of both emerging and internationally-renowned Bosnian-Herzegovinian filmmakers. The festival also features films that deal with the theme of Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus contributing to a greater understanding of this country, its diverse culture, complex history and challenges it faces more than a decade after the turmoil of early nineties.



History

The idea for organizing BHFF was first born in 2002 among film enthusiasts from the Bosnian-Herzegovinian diaspora in San Francisco and New York City, inspired by Benjamin Filipović, award-winning film director, professor at the Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo and president of the Association of Filmmakers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dr. Džemaludin Harba from the Radio Voice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a New Jersey based not-for-profit organization and representatives of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian community in New York together produced the first annual BHFF in October 2003.

Following its debut, in 2005 the BHFF became a co-production between Radio Voice of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Academy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a New York-based not-for-profit organization whose members were among some of the initial organizers of the first BHFF.

For more information about past BHFF™ events, please visit:

[First annual Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival™ 2003](#)

[Second annual Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival™ 2005](#)

[Third annual Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival™ 2006](#)

[Fourth Annual Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival™ 2007](#)

[Fifth Annual Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival™ 2008](#)



Location

The first BHFF was held at the Two Boots Pioneer Theatre in East Village, one of New York's cultural hubs.

Following its debut, while still maintaining its presence in East Village, the BHFF moved to larger premises at the Anthology Film Archives, known as an international center for the preservation, study, and exhibition of film and video. In 2007, BHFF moved to and remained in a more visible venue – Tribeca Cinemas, year-round home of the Tribeca Film Festival.

Guests

Honorary BHFF guests have included acclaimed members of the United States and Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural community, including Sarajevo Film Festival Director Mirsad Purivatra, Sarajevo Film Festival Executive Director Emina Ganić, actors Snežana Bogdanovic and Uliks Fehmiu, filmmakers Benjamin Filipović, Džemal Šabić, Sabina Vajrača, Alison Hanson and Gates Gooding, artists Aida Šehović, Nebojša Šeric Shoba and Sara Terry and former ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Dr. Mirza Kušljugić.

Audience and constituency

The Bosnian-Herzegovinian community has had a presence in the United States for the past hundred years and the most recent wave of émigrés arrived during the nineties. Currently, there are approximately 350,000 people of Bosnian-Herzegovinian origin living in the United States. Today, the community finds itself in need of artistic and cultural content, as well as activities that will help bring it together and provide links to its native and adopted country. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival is a rare such event, appreciated and praised for the quality of films and cultural exposure it provides. It helps bring together not only the Bosnian-American and other Balkan communities, but also the broader New York audiences and film enthusiasts from around the world.





Audience Awards

Each year, BHFF audience members vote for the films they consider outstanding. There are two “Golden Apple” awards presented at the closing of each annual festival: Audience Award for the Best Short or Feature Film and Audience Award for the Best Documentary Film. Films eligible for the audience awards are those screened at BHFF produced in the past two years. Winning films are presented with awards created by the accomplished Bosnian-American artist Aida Šehović.

Organizers

The festival is organized by two not-for-profit organizations: Voice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Inc. and the Academy of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Voice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving and raising awareness of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture in the Tri-State area and beyond. The Voice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Inc. broadcasts a weekly radio program in Bosnian language and organizes events for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian community. For more information, visit <http://www.voiceofbh.org>.

The Academy of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member-based not-for-profit organization located in New York with a mission to support the empowerment process of a new generation of Bosnians and Herzegovinians living in the United States and around the world. The Academy provides networking opportunities for young professionals and serves as a platform for various cultural, arts, and educational programs led by its members. For more information, visit <http://www.academybh.org>.

Volunteers

Since its founding, BHFF organization has been supported solely by its volunteers, many of whom are young professionals with full-time jobs in the fields of finance, international relations, architecture, education, law, advertising and public relations. As BHFF continues to command more public attention, it remains open to all film enthusiasts who are willing to contribute to its successful production. Below are the people responsible for the organization of BHFF.

BHFF 2009 Staff:

Almir Lucević
Amelisa Đulović
Amir Husak
Amra Turalić
Edita Zulić
Damir Pozderac
Leila Rachidi
Masa Čampara
Selma Avdičević
Dr. Džemaludin Harba
with special thanks to Ilhan Ramić,
for past and ongoing assistance
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BHFF Past Assistants:

Ajla Cico
Alma Osmanović
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Borko Amulić
Elvir Mujanović
Emir Bander
Irena Bruza
JeongEun Kim
Melisa Zukić
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Muamer Mrkanović

BHFF Award Design:

Aida Šehović

Special thanks to:

Amel, Amer and Alma
Mujezinovic
Alison Hanson
Gates Gooding
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Nedžad Begić
Rašid Nuhanović
Sabina Vajrača
Zlata Filipović
Tribeca Cinema staff
Anthology Film Archives staff
and many others...

