



COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY

Bucks Fever FilmFest was born in 1999 at a planning meeting of the Bucks Fever Advisory Council of the Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce. At that meeting, Chamber member Jon Wilner (formerly of the Delaware Valley Arts Institute), suggested that Chamber add a contemporary art form of growing interest in Bucks County, a Film Festival, to the Chamber's 25-year-old *Bucks Fever, Celebration of the Arts Program*.¹ FilmFest would encourage and support the growth of a filmmaking community by providing a venue to view the works of area professional and student filmmakers.

Key to the concept was a partnership with the County Theater, the independent movie theater in downtown Doylestown that had sparked a revitalization of Doylestown and built a strong interest in films and filmmaking in the community. The County Theater's founder and Executive Director, John Toner and his Manager, Jim Sanders, agreed to collaborate with the Chamber and FilmFest in providing the screening venue for the films, because of FilmFest's mission to provide a mentoring and learning experience with rising area student filmmakers, along with adult and professional filmmakers.

¹ *Bucks Fever – A Celebration of the Arts* is a program of the Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce. Founded over two decades ago, Bucks Fever's goals are to: increase awareness of the County's heritage and encourage the next generation of Bucks County artists; augment the economic vitality of Bucks County by showcasing the region's art, culture and history as a tourist destination; and support the entrepreneurial and economic endeavors of individual artists and groups as part of the free enterprise system. *Bucks Fever* is comprised of eight annual marquis Chamber events including:

Bucks Fever Spectacular (*March*); Byers Bucks Fever Art Exhibition (*April*); Artists' Studio Tour (*May*); Brown Bag-It with the Arts (*weekly performing arts series May-August*); Excellence in Design Architectural Tour (*September*); Bucks County Sculpture Show founded by Dr. Selma Burke (*September*); FilmFest Preview, Seminar and Screening (*October*); Nelson Shanks: A Private Exhibition (*November*)

In addition to these Chamber events, the Chamber produces and distributes 50,000 copies of the popular Bucks Fever brochure that promotes hundreds of Bucks County art, culture and historical events. The Chamber promotes these events through the brochure as a courtesy to the non-profit organizations that submit their events. The Signature Benefactor for Bucks Fever 2008 is Univest National Bank and Trust Co.

The first FilmFest was held in September of 2000 and featured a screening of the Academy Award winning “The Buddy Holly Story”, introduced and followed by a panel discussion with the producers, director, and musical director, all of whom are Bucks County residents.

In July 2002, the first juried, short film and video FilmFest was opened up to the filmmaking community, receiving 29 submissions from student and independent filmmakers, from which 15 short films/videos were selected and screened at the County Theater to overflow audiences. In each of the ensuing annual FilmFests, the number and the quality of submissions have increased. Today, FilmFest’s submissions have doubled, receiving roughly 60 submissions each year. In addition to having their work screened publicly in a movie theater setting, winning filmmakers are given the opportunity to have their films aired on Comcast On Demand Get Local throughout the Philadelphia area, thereby greatly expanding their viewing audience.

Over the years, FilmFest has added seminars directed primarily at young filmmakers on subjects ranging from film financing, auditions, and script writing. Past seminar presenters include Mike Lemon of Mike Lemon Casting (exclusive casting agent for all M. Night Shyamalan films), James Breckinridge, script and screenplay writer, Fred Bauer, Producer of “The Buddy Holly Story,” and Mac Outfitters.

In 2008, Film Fest will host its first-ever Awards Night at the Mercer Museum on October 7, 2008. Awards Night is a networking opportunity for filmmakers and the central Bucks County business community. The Key Sponsors for this year’s festival include the Silverman Family of Partnerships, and Anheil Maslow & MacMinn, LLP and Patron Sponsors, Fulton Bank and Martin Kueney Insurance Solutions.