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BIFF organizers discussing drive-in movies and more

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer
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Gerard

BELOIT—Beloit International Film Festival (BIFF) Executive Director Greg Gerard is discussing creative ways to move forward with the festival set for Feb. 19-28 in light of COVID-19.

Currently the festival is planned to be a hybrid model of in-person and virtual events. However, Gerard said the final decision will be made in early January after consulting with city officials and the Reopen Rock County Task Force.

Gerard said there is also the possibility of having some drive-in movies where people sit and watch as their vehicles are running.



“It would be kind of a unique thing, some people might find fun to do. Films could be played on the side of buildings with people in their cars,” Gerard said. “They did it in Toronto and they did it in New York. I don’t see why we can’t do it here. It’s one way to keep a festival somewhat live.”

Gerard also mentioned a possible new venue this year, the Downtown Beloit Association’s new home at 557 E. Grand Ave.

Gerard said those with BIFF are meeting regularly to discuss how to hold the singalong, silent and classic film events in light of the pandemic.

“We will figure out something clever,” he said.

Gerard said there is also the possibility of having question-and-answer sessions done in large Zoom conferences with a number of local filmmakers participating and attendees sending in questions.

“We are going to be video-on-demand. People can watch them whenever they want to during the 10 days of BIFF and beyond,” Gerard said. “The best part of BIFF is the human connection. It’s nice to watch films, but also to talk to filmmakers, new friends and acquaintances about them.”

In the case of a hybrid festival, BIFF will find a company that will manage the festival virtually, offering all of BIFF's films online. The films also would be available at venues, with socially distanced seating. Having the films online and in-person would allow people to choose which makes them most comfortable and also allow the festival to continue in the event of another shutdown. Gerard said there is a lot of potential offering the films online, giving people more time to view the films and potentially buy more tickets.

In light of some virtual components of the festival, Gerard encouraged people to "practice" using their technology by watching a BIFF Year Round film. They are shown every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.. All films are \$6.

BIFF Year Round is sponsored by Stateline Community Foundation (SCF). For more information, <https://beloitfilmfest.org/> is the website to visit.

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