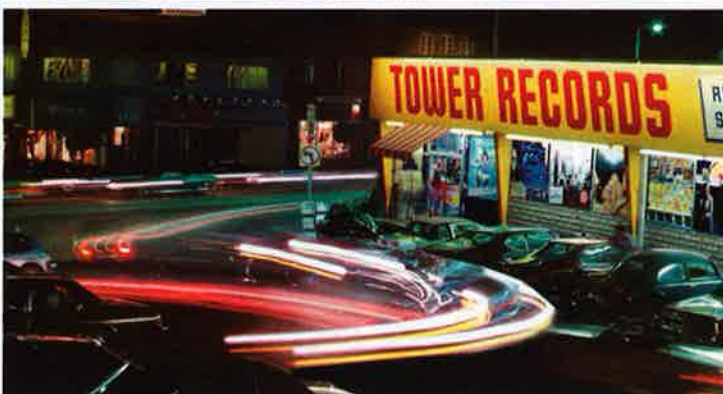


Clockwise from top left: Clip from *The Overnight* starring Adam Scott; Colin Hanks, who'll attend the festival; Clip from Hanks' documentary *All Things Must Pass*; GIFF founders Carina Crain, Wendy Reyes, and Colleen deVeer



Screen Time

The inaugural Greenwich International Film Festival looks to mix big-time film culture and philanthropy close to home. Film critic **MARSHALL FINE** sat down with festival founders to see what we can expect.

Wendy Reyes and Colleen deVeer, co-founders of the Greenwich International Film Festival—which runs June 4 to 7 in Greenwich, Connecticut—have spent more than two years organizing, wrangling, cajoling, traveling, and, of course, movie-watching to help launch the first festival this year.

“We’ve basically worked for two and a half years without salary,” Reyes says, sitting in a conference room of the festival office. “It’s been a passion project. We love the arts, and we love the forum that film gives to domestic causes.”

The festival will feature 29 new films—everything from documentary shorts to feature-length thrillers, with monetary prizes for winners in different competitive categories of features and nonfiction films. With a budget of about \$1 million, a staff of eight, and a corps of 100 volunteers, the

festival will create its own village in downtown Greenwich during its inaugural weekend, bordered by the Bowtie Cinema, the Delamar Hotel, and L’escale Restaurant.

Q: Where did the idea for a film festival in Greenwich come from?

Wendy Reyes: It started as something we decided to do over dinner, and, in stressed-out times since then, we’ve asked ourselves, ‘What were we thinking?’

Q: Why a film festival?

WR: Greenwich is sort of the flip side of Los Angeles. In Greenwich, there’s a lot of capital available—but movies aren’t being pitched. We have a lot of friends who invested in one-off movies, and we decided it made sense to create a festival where financing and filmmakers can come together. We also see it as a good opportunity to focus on philanthropy. For the first year, we’ve partnered with UNICEF.

Reel Picks

The first Greenwich International Film Festival will run June 4 to 7 in Greenwich, Connecticut, with a lineup that includes more than two dozen films, five panels, and a variety of other festival-related events. Here are a few films to watch for:

All Things Must Pass: The opening night film, this documentary by actor Colin Hanks (who will attend the festival), looks at the rise and fall of the seemingly monolithic record-store chain, Tower Records.

I Smile Back: This drama stars Sarah Silverman and Josh Charles and deals, in painfully honest ways, with a suburban housewife struggling to keep her addiction a secret from her family.

The Keeping Room: A festival-circuit favorite, this tense tale stars Brit Marling in a harrowing story of three Southern women alone on a farm, at the end of the Civil War, as marauding Northern soldiers approach.

The Overnight: This sometimes-raunchy new comedy stars Adam Scott (*Parks and Recreation*), Taylor Schilling (*Orange Is the New Black*), and Jason Schwartzman (*Bored to Death*) in the story of a couple spending an evening with the parents of their son's new friend.

Victoria: This German film sounds like one that will have people talking—a white-knuckle tale of a bank heist, filmed in one continuous shot.

For more information about tickets, titles, and show times, visit www.greenwichfilm.org.

Colleen deVeer: Film is a good way to discuss how to use media for a cause. We're even offering a social-impact prize [\$10,000] for the best film with a social message—across all categories.

Q: Is Greenwich also part of the attraction?

WR: We're definitely a destination festival, and we also want to be able to be a local film festival for the community. It's definitely a beautiful place to come in June—this gorgeous place that also happens to be a 40-minute ride from New York. In terms of size, we think we'll be similar to Telluride [Film Festival]. But Telluride [Colorado] is very difficult to get to, so we hope to be Telluride on the East Coast.

Q: What's been the biggest challenge in organizing this for the first time?

CD: One of the biggest challenges has been getting sponsors to bet on us in our first year. We've wrangled a lot of people in town with family foundations and gotten everybody excited to support it. We have Bentley on board as a sponsor and JetBlue.

Q: Where did you find the films you'll be showing?

CD: We've been traveling to film festivals for the past two years: Toronto, TriBeCa, South by Southwest, Napa Valley, Cannes. Most of the films come from this year's Sundance and South by Southwest. We also set up links on two websites so filmmakers could submit online. We had more than 450 films submitted—features, documentaries, short films.

WR: Our vision from the very beginning has been grand. We want to be a working film festival, a place where up-and-coming filmmakers can find financing and distribution.


CD: The filmmakers are thrilled to get an opportunity to show their work. The hardest part was choosing from so many films.

“We want to be a working film festival, a place where up-and-coming filmmakers can find financing and distribution.”

Q: How has the community embraced it so far?

WR: It can be hard for people to get their minds around just what a festival is. They don't understand yet that buying a pass to the festival gets you into all kinds of events, not just one movie. In terms of sponsors, corporations are very bureaucratic. For a company with vision, this is a perfect marriage. The most thrilling part has been finding out how many people are willing to make a bet on us in this first year.

CD: We have three films by filmmakers with local ties. And the other filmmakers are thrilled to get an opportunity to show their work. But when you haven't done something like this before, it's hard to prove you can pull off a four-day festival with a small team.

WR: We're creating a festival village that covers about a mile, with shuttles and restaurant partners. We expect the town will take in \$4 million in revenue in our inaugural year. We're expecting 10,000 people. And we think it will grow from that. The local businesses are excited. 

Marshall Fine, critic-in-residence at The Picture House in Pelham, writes about film at www.hollywoodandfine.com.

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