

ABOUT:

The Rural Route Film Festival highlights works dealing with rural people and places. While the term "rural" relates to the country, people living in the country, or to farming (*Webster's*), the programmers of RRFF leave it to the film and video artists to find their own definition of "rural." Whether it's a documentary about an organic turnip farm in West Virginia, a fictional backpacking drama set in Peru, a personal/experimental work of life and love in a small town, RRFF wants to see and hear what these artists have to say.

Since 2002, the Rural Route Film Festival has been centered in New York City, where both founders (originally from Iowa) met working in the film industry. While having a rural festival in one of the world's largest cities is an oxymoron, the irony proved to work, bringing in submissions from all around the world and attracting city slickers who were curious about the country and country folk who moved to the city but wanted to reconnect with home.

A touring program has always been a key feature of the Rural Route Film Festival. Following our first fest in New York, we took a "Best Of" program of shorts and optional features on the road across the U.S., and soon after into Canada and Europe. 2008-2009 opened the doors to a whole new spectrum of international screenings as Rural Route Director Alan Webber played the part of nomad, traveling consistently for an entire year through all seven continents with backpack, video camera, mini-projector, and stack of DVDs.

Rural Route has been effective in creating a like-minded community of filmmakers. Unlike most festivals that operate under a general theme of 'independent film,' Rural Route's specific focus on rurality has allowed us to place similar artists together whose work might otherwise be ignored or lost within the programming of broader based festivals. Filmmakers under the Rural Route umbrella are able to network through each other, discuss/critique one another's work, and even crew on one another's projects. Many filmmakers have premiered their work at Rural Route and gone on to win awards through festival runs domestically and abroad, have their work screened through television outlets such as IFC and PBS, and have their films picked-up by independent film and online distributors.

HISTORY:

The Rural Route Film Festival begins its first year in the vibrant, multi-cultural neighborhood of Astoria, Queens at the recently remodeled Museum of the Moving Image, along with special screenings and farm workshops down the street at the largest rooftop farm in the city with partners Brooklyn Grange and Rooftop Films. Prior to 2011, we had been at the esteemed Anthology Film Archives from 2005-2007 after two years spent in Williamsburg, Brooklyn at Enid's and Galapagos. Screening in Astoria gives us a new, original foundation to work with, and an unlimited amount of potential in making this much more of a local/community event. The Museum of the Moving Image will provide us with the professionalism we are accustomed to via high-quality film and video projection equipment and the rooftop farm gives us the ultimate platform to showcase our message of 'bringing the country to the city!' Overall, we feel 2011 is a huge step in the right direction, a blueprint for a strong future base for the festival.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- NY Premieres of popular documentaries, *King Corn* (pre-release sneak preview), *Asparagus! A Stalk-umentary*, *Barbecue is a Noun*, and *Dressed to Kill: Women Who Hunt*.
- First screening in 35 yrs of *Spring Night*, *Summer Night* (35mm print). The first regional independent film ever made went on to screen at venues across the country (including The National Gallery in Washington, D.C.) after its Rural Route premiere retro appearance.
- Partnerships with renowned film/cultural groups such as Appalshop, Rooftop Films, Saddle Creek Records, the Society for Agriculture and Food Ecology, ImagiNation in Harlem, and the Alan Lomax Archives.
- Key international rural film partners/sister-festivals in countries around the world (incl. China, New Zealand, Chile, Sweden, Austria, etc.)
- Revival of the 1989 NYC documentary, *Green Streets* (16mm print), on the history of urban community gardening (also went on to national screenings).
- Live music concert w/Young God Label freak folk recording artist Akron/Family at the Anthology Film Archives Theater.
- Continuous screening of work by award-winning women filmmakers: Cindy Stillwell, Erin Hudson, Allison Cooke and Mary Robertson.
- “Year of the Nomad” Tour spanned one full-year over 2008-9 and hit 7 continents/32 countries
- NY Premiere of coming-of-age feature, *Popular Musik from Vittula*, adapted from the best-selling book in Swedish history by Mikael Niemi (the Swedish Ambassador to the U.S. was a special guest in attendance at this screening).
- Hosting of special guests such as David Sutherland (television documentarian, *The Farmer's Wife*, *Country Boys*), and Jay Craven (Vermont fiction filmmaker, RFFF NY Premiere of Kris Kristofferson vehicle, *Disappearances*).
- Co-curated screenings in NY museum settings such as: Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art and Scandinavia House
- Tour dates in upper echelon cultural venues such as London’s Horse Hospital, Chicago’s Gene Siskel Film Center, Cornell Cinema, Austin’s Alamo Drafthouse, the Webster Film Series, the Henry Ford Museum, Ragtag Cinemacafé, San Francisco’s Red Vic Theatre, and the Denver Film Society.
- Regular off-season tour dates in unique, rural venues such as Jokkmokk, Sweden (indigenous village North of the Arctic Circle), Arica, Chile (in the world’s most arid desert), on the side of a barn at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship in Neersville, VA, at a punk rock squat in Amsterdam, and at a senior center in Brocton, NY.
- Screened award-winning features: Jim Jarmusch’s *Dead Man*, Monteith McCollum’s experimental Slamdance/Ann Arbor winner, *Hybrid*, Ron Fricke’s *Baraka*, Polish director Przemyslaw Wojcieszek’s *Louder than Bombs*, Joel Palombo’s Indian Sufi music road trip *Milk & Opium*, Eric Valli’s *Himalaya* and the Martin Scorsese produced/Iowa set, *Rain*.
- Shown work by renowned experimental filmmakers such as Matt McCormick, Bill Brown, and Jacob Burckhardt
- 2008 release of “Best of Rural Route” DVD featuring films from all first 5 yrs
- Write-ups in key publications such as *The Village Voice*, *MovieMaker* magazine, *TimeOut New York*, *San Francisco Weekly* and *The Chicago Tribune*.