

## Editorial: Film Festival enriches area's character

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(Photo: Journal file photo)

Take our friendly advice this week: Go see a movie!

But not just any movie, though this area does have some fine theaters that play shows year-round in all sorts of settings, in malls, quaint villages, and even at drive-ins during the good weather.

Rather, we are talking about the 16th Woodstock Film Festival, which shifts into high gear Thursday and has grown splendidly over the years.

Despite its name, the festival is more of a regional event, one with big financial and marketing impacts for the area. Screenings take place not only in Woodstock but in Rosendale, Kingston, Saugerties and Rhinebeck among other locales. And the festival enhances the Hudson Valley's reputation as an enticing destination.

For those of us fortunate to live here, the festival is one of many events that can be enjoyed at little cost. And moviegoers get an experience far beyond seeing the film. The vibe in and around the theaters is stirring, and the audience has a chance to rate the films and hear post-screening discussions from those involved in the productions.

The films are typically cutting edge and first rate. Some are experimental and eclectic. Some were shot in this region. And many, without indie productions and festivals like this one giving them a publicity push, likely never would have been made. Documentaries take on complicated subjects, ranging from the cleanup of the Gulf Coast oil spill to veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder.

This year, the festival is screening a record number of movies directed by women and will feature appearances by actresses Mary Stuart Masterson and Rose McGowan,

Like all forms of art, films can challenge us, stir our thinking and spur our creativity. They also are a big plus for the area's economy. As Journal music and arts reporter John Barry recently wrote, the film industry is flourishing in the Hudson Valley. In 2014, the Hudson Valley Film Commission worked with 100 productions, and 70 of those ended up filming in the Hudson Valley. Those productions resulted in more than \$4.5 million in direct spending.

Another study found that arts across the region inject nearly \$500 million to the economy. That study was done by the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach at the State University of New York at New Paltz, looking at the arts across Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties.

New York offers a film tax-credit program, and it can be controversial. There are legitimate concerns that New York City gets too much of the benefit and that some of the largest production companies shouldn't be eligible for such assistance. But there should be no argument that government funding of the arts has a place and has many benefits.

The Woodstock Film Festival in particular celebrates the smaller films, many of which will never be commercially successful but will enrich their audiences and offer a diversity of thought.

Right here, right in the Hudson Valley. Sixteen years — and growing.

### Find film schedule online

To find out more about the Woodstock Film Festival, go to [www.woodstockfilmfestival.com/](http://www.woodstockfilmfestival.com/)

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