

SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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JOHN WATERS TO BE SPOTLIGHTED AT THE 15TH ANNUAL

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Sonoma, CA (January 6, 2012) – The 15th annual Sonoma International Film Festival, April 11-15, 2012, will pay tribute to innovative filmmaker John Waters, hosting the American director, author, actor and photographer during a special evening on Saturday, April 14th, at the Sonoma Veteran's Memorial Building.

The night's events will include Waters' one-man "vaudeville" act that celebrates the film career and obsessional tastes of the man William Burroughs once called "The Pope of Trash." Various ticket packages will be available ranging from general seating to a private reception and dinner with Mr. Waters.

"John Waters exemplifies some of America's most unique filmmaking beyond mainstream storylines. His ability to portray extreme characters with both darkness and humor is a testament to his extreme talent," said Festival Director Kevin McNeely. "We are excited and honored to have him attend our festival."

Waters had a substantial body of underground cinema to his credit when he began to reach wider audiences with the release of "Hairspray" in 1988. But his career grew from an early calling. Born in Baltimore in 1946, Waters was drawn to movies at an early age, particularly exploitation movies with lurid ad campaigns. He subscribed to *Variety* at the age of twelve, absorbing the magazine's coverage of the entertainment industry and its lexicon of insider lingo. This early education would prove useful as the future director began his career giving puppet shows for children's birthday parties. As a teen-ager, Waters began making 8-mm underground movies.

Using Baltimore as the setting for all his films, Waters assembled a cast of ensemble players, mostly native Baltimoreans and friends of long standing: Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole and Edith Massey. Waters also established lasting relationships with key production people, such as production designer Vincent Peranio, costume designer Van Smith, and casting director Pat Moran, helping to give his films that trademark Waters "look."

After slightly more than a decade of underground film-making, Waters created "Hairspray," a box office and critical success starring the then unknown Ricki Lake along with Deborah Harry, the late Sonny Bono, Jerry Stiller, Pia Zadora and Ric Ocasek.

The success of “Hairspray” brought Waters major Hollywood backing for his next feature, “Cry-Baby” (1990), starring Johnny Depp. In 1994, Waters released “Serial Mom,” starring Kathleen Turner and Sam Waterston, which was the closing night attraction at that year's Cannes Film Festival.

“Pink Flamingos” enjoyed a successful 25th anniversary re-release in 1997 and was followed by *Pecker*, released in 1998 and starring Edward Furlong and Christina Ricci. “Cecil B. DeMented,” a comedy action-thriller about a young lunatic film director (Stephen Dorff) and his gang of film cultists who kidnap a real-life Hollywood movie goddess (Melanie Griffith) and force her to act in their own Super 8 underground movie, was released in 2000. In 2004, “A Dirty Shame,” starring Tracey Ullman, Johnny Knoxville, Selma Blair and Chris Isaak, was released.

Through it all, Waters has cultivated a multi-faceted career as an artist in many mediums. In addition to writing and directing feature films, Waters is the author of six books and is also a photographer. As an actor, Waters has appeared in many motion pictures including Jonathan Demme’s “Something Wild”, Woody Allen’s “Sweet and Lowdown”, Herschell Gordon Lewis’ “Blood Feast 2: All You Can Eat” and Don Mancini’s “Seed of Chucky,” as well as many cameos on television.

Waters’ performance in Sonoma on April 14th will be the latest iteration of his evolving one-man show “This Filthy World,” a show he has performed at colleges, museums, film festivals and comedy clubs around the world. Drawing from Waters’ fascination with true crime, exploitation films, fashion lunacy and the extremes of the contemporary art world, this joyously devious monologue elevates all that is trashy in life into a call to arms to ‘filth followers’ everywhere.

For more information about tickets to the Waters event, please contact the Sonoma International Film Festival at: (707) 206-2284. For general festival information or to purchase festival passes, please contact: info@sonomafilmfest.org or (707)933-2600.

About The Sonoma International Film Festival

Founded in 1997, Sonoma International Film Festival takes pride in showcasing emerging talent, providing a supportive environment for filmmakers, and creating a rich cultural asset for Northern California’s wine country.

As one of the nation’s top ten destination film festivals, SIFF is uniquely positioned as a lively celebration of film, food, wine and music. An annual gathering for film industry insiders, filmmakers, critics, and cinema enthusiasts, SIFF takes place in one of the most scenic and epicurean places in the world to experience the art of film.

SIFF has screened films that have gone on to major theatrical release including: *Bhutto*, *The Cove*, *Dressed*, *Bag-It*, *Humpday*, *Lemon Tree*, *Fat*, *Sick and Nearly Dead*, and *The 500 Days of Summer*. The festival’s reputation has encouraged film luminaries including Susan Sarandon, John Lasseter, Bruce Willis, Michael Keaton, Robin Williams, Lauren Hutton, Danny Glover and Saul Zaentz to attend and actively participate in discussion panels and in interviews.

The festival success story has also been reflected in its growing recognition within film festival circles and the entertainment industry. Last June, SIFF won a Golden Trailer Award for Best Film Festival Trailer (*Tipsy*) and Best Film Festival Poster at the awards show held in Los Angeles.

Sonoma International Film Festival incorporates all that is glamorous, exotic, unusual and extraordinary about the film world and delivers it in one of the most beautiful destinations in the world.

SIFF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Phone (707) 933-2600

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