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RiverRun Festival Rakes It In

By Chronicle Staff Report

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The recent RiverRun International Film Festival had a stellar week in Winston-Salem earlier this year.

Based on box office data, direct community feedback and results from an exhaustive audience survey completed by Quest Analysis, festival officials are calling 2007-08 a watershed year for RiverRun, which took place April 23-28.

Box office sales this year outpaced all previous years, reaching \$71,781- a 35 percent increase over 2007. The total number of tickets issued increased 41 percent over last year, to 10,567 from 7,516 in 2007.



“We’re extremely pleased to be able to generate a greater portion of our income directly from box office sales,” said RiverRun Executive Director Andrew Rodgers. “But while ticket sales were really up this year, they still only account for about 15 percent of our total budget. Corporate support, grants, and private donations enable us to achieve the needed operating capital. Like RiverRun, most other film festivals around the country depend heavily on non-ticket revenue to support their operation.”

Winston-Salem based market research company Quest Analysis conducted an in-depth survey of 2008 RiverRun attendees to establish audience demographic details and economic impact results. The survey showed that festival attendees tend to be very affluent and highly educated. Based on results, 86 percent of 2008 RiverRun attendees have obtained at least a 4-year college degree, while 44 percent have advanced degrees. Additionally, more than a third of all attendees make more than \$120,000 annually and more than one-in-three live outside Winston-Salem.

The survey found that the average distance traveled to attend RiverRun is 74 miles. And, in a sign that the Festival’s influence is spreading, the survey showed that 9 percent of all attendees live outside of North Carolina.

“There’s no doubt about it. This was a great year for RiverRun in terms of ticket sales and community support for the festival,” said RiverRun Executive Director Andrew Rodgers. “The overall positive response to the festival, as evidenced by the survey, was also great to see. We’re thrilled to see the momentum behind RiverRun continue to grow and believe the festival has an extremely bright future.”

Rodgers added that RiverRun is exploring some new avenues for the decade-old festival, including possible screenings of “best in show” films in the fall of 2008.