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## **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Salem Film Fest: Come to Salem, See the World!**

SALEM, MA – February 15, 2015 – The 8<sup>th</sup> annual all-documentary Salem Film Fest will be held March 5 – March 12, 2015, in Salem, MA, with its largest line-up ever - 38 films by filmmakers representing 10 different countries telling stories from around the world. Twenty-nine of these films will be making their North American, US, East Coast, New England or Massachusetts premiere. Spread out over eight days with screenings at both CinemaSalem and the Peabody Essex Museum, the festival kicks off with the thought-provoking *STRAY DOG*, about Vietnam veteran and biker Ron “Stray Dog” Hall, which is directed by Oscar nominated director Debra Granik (*Winter’s Bone*). Granik, along with editor Tory Stewart, will be at the festival to present.

A few highlights include: the North American premiere of *35 COWS AND A KALASHNIKOV* a visually stunning triptych about warrior-farmers, colorful dandies and voodoo wrestlers in Ethiopia, Congo-Brazzaville and Congo-Kinshasa; *ONCE UPON A CRIME*, the riveting story of two New York detectives who were falsely accused and imprisoned for committing murder on behalf of the Mafia; *CHILDREN OF THE ARCTIC* by returning Salem Film Fest alum Nick Brandestini (*DARWIN*) which follows a year-in-the-life of Native Alaskan teenagers coming of age in Barrow, Alaska; *I AM BIG BIRD* which gives a fascinating look at Carroll Spinney, the man behind Sesame Street’s beloved Big Bird; *CAIRO DRIVE*, a unique exploration of one of the world’s most populated cities, filmed from its street – literally; *BACK ON BOARD: GREG LOUGANIS*, an intimate portrayal of the trailblazing openly gay four-time Olympic champion diver Greg Louganis; and *MORPHINE: JOURNEY OF DREAMS* about the iconic genre-busting 1990’s band Morphine, that blazed like a comet across the global music scene. Filmmakers will be present for over half of this year’s screenings, providing audiences with a unique opportunity to learn more about the documentary filmmaking process.

As in previous years, all film screenings will be preceded by *Salem Sketches*, a group of homegrown and wildly popular shorts. These short vignettes capture the voice and landscape of Salem through characters and places both past and present. In addition, the festival will feature three filmmaker forums, a panel discussion with members of the production team from PBS series *AMERICAN EXPERIENCE*, the college documentary shorts program *MASS REALITY CHECK* and the *5-MINUTE STUDENT DOCUMENTARY CONTEST* highlighting five-minute documentaries produced, shot and edited by high school students. There will also be plenty of music, including The Vapors of Morphine with original Morphine band members Dana Colley, Jerome Deupree and Billy Conway as well as vocalist and guitarist Jeremy Lyons.

Filmmaker awards include: the Michael Sullivan FRONTLINE Award for Journalism in a Documentary Film, a \$1000 cash prize that will be awarded to the filmmaker judged to have presented a tough, controversial story through engaging and fair minded investigative reportage; the American Cinematographer Magazine Award for Cinematography; the Alliance of Women Film Journalists EDA Award for Best Female Director; Salem Film Fest Editing Award; Salem Film Fest Jury Award; Mass Reality Check Best Short Award; and the highly coveted Salem Film Fest Audience Award.

For more information about Salem Film Fest visit [www.salemfilmfest.com](http://www.salemfilmfest.com), follow Salem Film Fest on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/salemfilmfest](http://www.facebook.com/salemfilmfest)); Instagram ([www.instagram.com/salemfilmfest](http://www.instagram.com/salemfilmfest)), and Twitter (@\_SalemFilmFest).

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Salem Film Fest was founded in 2008 by filmmaker Joe Cultrera (HAND OF GOD), local businessman Paul Van Ness (CinemaSalem), Executive Director of the Salem Chamber of Commerce Rinus Oosthoek and others from the community. Fueled by great films, dedicated volunteers and enthusiastic audiences, the weeklong festival is a community wide event with screenings at CinemaSalem and the Peabody Essex Museum and filmmaker parties and music events held at venues throughout downtown. For more information including ticket purchase information visit [www.salemfilmfest.com](http://www.salemfilmfest.com), follow Salem Film Fest on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/salemfilmfest](http://www.facebook.com/salemfilmfest)), Instagram ([www.instagram.com/salemfilmfest](http://www.instagram.com/salemfilmfest)), and Twitter (@\_SalemFilmFest).