



The 14th Beaufort International Film Festival Heats Up February

By Mark Shaffer, Editor At Large

Much has changed since we first started covering the Beaufort International Film Festival back in 2009. The Marvel Cinematic Universe (the MCU) had just laid the foundation for the next decade's campaign of worldwide cinematic domination with *Iron Man*, starring Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark. James Cameron's

Avatar

was about to shatter box office records on its way to becoming the top grossing film of all time with box office numbers so huge they were thought to be untouchable. Heath Ledger posthumously becomes the first actor to win an Oscar for the role of a comic book villain as Joker in

The Dark Knight

. And Ridley Scott's acid rain-soaked dystopian world of

Blade Runner

still lurked somewhere in the future.

As we prepare for the 14th BIFF, Tony Stark finally made the ultimate sacrifice to save the universe in *Avengers: Endgame*, also simultaneously unseating *Avatar* from the all-time box office throne. This prompted James Cameron to immediately get to work on not one, but four long promised *Avatar* sequels. And as we go to press, Joaquin Phoenix is the odds on favorite to take home an Oscar for his uh, *interpretation* of Joker, guaranteeing two things: A) more Joker movies, and B) that no actor will ever again turn down the chance to play Joker. Just one question, Joaquin, "Why so serious?"

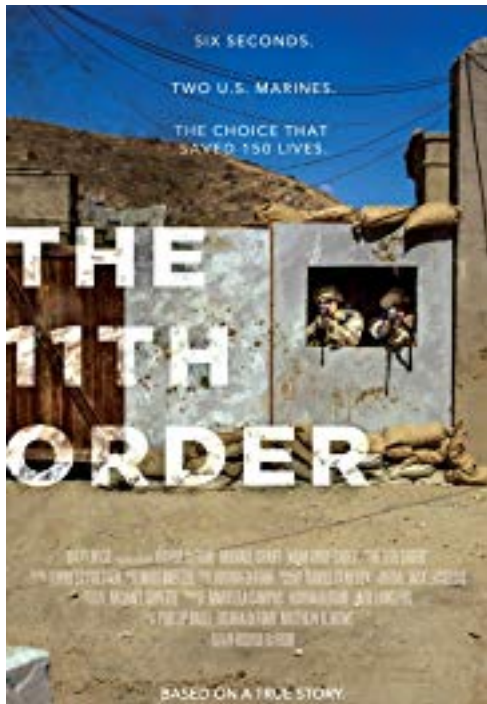
Oh, and as of last November, we've officially passed Blade Runner without a replicant in sight. However, flying cars may soon be a thing.

While all this was going on, BIFF organizers, Ron and Rebecca Tucker (above), quietly built on positive buzz and industry word-of-mouth to carve out a niche for Beaufort among the 8000-plus film festivals on the planet. Keep in mind, film festivals are like restaurants – almost half of them never make it to year two. BIFF is currently among the 100 best-reviewed film festivals in the world according to FilmFreeway.com. The "little festival that could" still takes place under one roof – the University of South Carolina Beaufort Center for the Arts.

For as long as we've previewed BIFF, it's been a running gag that each year I ask Ron the same question to start: Are you worried that no one will show up? The answer has always been, "Yes." Not this time.

Ron Tucker: (laughs) I'm worried *too many* people may show up this year. But that's a good problem to have, I guess. Ticket sales have been good, the marketing has been good and the filmmakers have been great with promoting us on social media - maybe more so than any other year.

Mark Shaffer: The social media aspect has really evolved along with this festival. It's an essential



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