



MEMORIAL CITY

IN THE NEWS

LIGHTS, CAMERA WORLDFEST

Houston’s biggest international film festival unspools 200 films and a host of stars

BY CRAIG D. LINDSEY APR 3, 2019, 2:20 PM

METRONATIONAL  
945 BUNKER HILL  
SUITE 400  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77024

MAIN  
713.973.6400

LEASING  
713.984.1001



The 52nd Annual WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival kicks off Friday, April 5 — and organizers are hoping for a big turnout. “We’re always trying to improve on attendance,” says founder/director Hunter Todd, who calls himself the “longest-running old fart running a film festival in the world.”

Although the festival — which prides itself on being the fest that gave such film icons as Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and the Coen brothers their big break — has been known to get several thousand moviegoers on a yearly basis, WorldFest usually has the lowest attendance of any major fest in a major city. What’s the excuse Todd usually gets about why there’s not an abundance of cinephiles every year? “Houston is too big and too busy,” he says.

Regardless, both Todd and WorldFest keep on keeping on with bringing world-premiere films, special guests, and the film icons of tomorrow to Houston. For the second year in a row, the festival will take place at Cinemark Memorial City, with its leather, lounge seats that Todd hears is already becoming kind of a problem. “They tell me that, every night, they have to get people out who’ve fallen asleep,” he says, laughing.

Todd is looking forward to opening night, when filmmaker Tim Disney (yes, from that family) will show his cloning drama William. “He’s a Disney of the Disney royalty,” says Todd, “and we’re very happy about that.”

For nine days after that, WorldFest will be unspooling a bevy of movies — 200 in total — and giving various stars and filmmakers the chance to show off their latest work. At the Westin Houston, Memorial City (aka the WorldFest HQ Hotel), longtime, local film critic Joe Leydon will hold public discussions with several filmmakers, including indie great Hal Hartley (Trust,



# culturemap

H O U S T O N

Amateur) and actor Kevin Sorbo, who'll be around for his latest directorial effort *Miracle in East Texas*. Also look for buzworthy flick *Teen Spirit* featuring actress du jour Elle Fanning.

## IN THE NEWS

METRONATIONAL  
945 BUNKER HILL  
SUITE 400  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77024

MAIN  
713.973.6400

LEASING  
713.984.1001

Veteran actor Eric Roberts will be here for the world premiere of *Lone Star Deception*, a political action drama where he plays an oil tycoon. And Todd is hoping Oscar-nominated actress Katharine Ross will show up for the world premiere of the comedy *Attachments*, where she plays an aging woman who bonds with a millennial I.T. nerd. "She's getting up there in age and doesn't get out as much," he says, "but we're still hoping Katharine will be able to join us." he says.

And let's not forget about the foreign filmmakers who'll be screening films — especially those from China. Some 30 features and shorts will come from there, along with 200 filmmakers who are scheduled to be attendance. Says Todd, "As [executive chairman and head of Asia for WorldFest Zhang] Ling says, we are the biggest spotlight of Asian cinema in the world."

Of course, you can holler at any of these people every night at the WorldFest Festival Club, which will also be at the Westin. "Anybody can come over and have a drink with the directors," says Todd, "and you don't need no stinking badges." (Take that, SouthBy.)

Essentially, Todd wants Houstonians to know that if you're gonna attend any film festival in this town, go to the genuine article. "Do you know that there are 32 film festivals in this city?" he asks. "But we don't rent movies. I like to call those other fests 'screening events.' We are the only, true international festival in Houston."

---

*For more information on the festival and movie showtimes, visit the official [WorldFest.org](http://WorldFest.org).*