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**FILM FESTIVAL VETERAN CARL SPENCE  
NAMED SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (SIFF)  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

Sonoma, CA July 26, 2022—Sonoma International Film Festival (SIFF) has tapped Carl Spence as its new Artistic Director, assuming the role from Kevin W. McNeely, who will transition to Director Emeritus.

“The enthusiasm and passion of Kevin McNeely and Co-Director Ginny Krieger, along with the entire festival team, was infectious and reminded me of the early days of my festival film career,” said Spence. “I look forward to joining the team and continuing the tradition of making SIFF the place everyone wants to be with extraordinary films, food, wine and yes, even more fun.”

Spence’s 28 years of experience in the festival world includes longtime leadership roles with Seattle International Film Festival as Co-Director|Artistic Director (2003-2016). During his 23 years with Seattle, the festival grew to one of the largest attended and most prominent North American arts nonprofits, moving from a once-a-year festival to a vital year-round presenting arts organization under his guidance.

“I am so excited to have Carl Spence join the SIFF team as our Artistic Director,” said Kevin W. McNeely, SIFF Director Emeritus. “His past festival experiences, coupled with his industry contacts promises to take SIFF to a new level.”

Other prominent industry positions include programming roles with Palm Springs International Film Festival (Director of Programming 2003-2008; Lead Programmer 2008-2016); Miami Film Festival (Senior Programmer 2017-2022); San Francisco International Film Festival (Director of Programming 2001-2003); and Seattle, where he began his career (Film Programmer 1994-2001; Associate Director 1998-2001). Other areas of expertise include marketing, sponsorship, publicity, and talent management and acquisition.

Concurrent to his new position with Sonoma International Film Festival, Spence is the Co-Founder, Co-Director and Chief Curator of the Orcas Island Film Festival in the San Juan Islands, Washington. As a film festival subject matter expert, Spence serves as a consultant to key industry stalwarts including: FilmFreeway, the film submission platform used by filmmakers globally; and has also consulted with Eventive, an enterprise solutions provider specifically for the film festival ecosystem; as well as film companies, filmmakers and film festivals worldwide.

He has served as a jurist at internationally acclaimed festivals including: Sundance Film Festival, The Berlin Film Festival, The SXSW Film Festival, The Savannah Film Festival, The Ashland Film Festival, The Cleveland Film Festival, The San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival (Frameline) and The Vancouver International Film Festival.

## **About Sonoma International Film Festival**

The Sonoma International Film Festival is a 501(c)3 corporation dedicated to promoting independent film, supporting filmmakers around the world, and inspiring film lovers. Blending a program of international film, food, wine and fun, SIFF hosts its annual festival each March, as well as special events including SIFF Summerfest, and selected films, advance screenings and special guests year-round.

SIFF's signature initiative--the Media Arts Program started at Sonoma Valley High School in 2002--introduces students to the process of storytelling and provides the resources for them to create films. SIFF has granted more than \$725,000 to the program since its inception.

**Make plans for SIFF Summerfest August 4-6, 2022.** Passes on sale now at [sonomafilmfest.org](http://sonomafilmfest.org).

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