

## Queens Film Fest Cannes Do It

By Lisa Fogarty

When the Sixth Annual Queens International Film Festival kicks off Thursday, Nov. 6, local movie buffs will get a chance to add a whole new roster of names to their Netflix wishlists: Polish Director Andrzej Krakowski, Mexican actress Angélica Aragon and Robert Sarnoff, a filmmaker from Rockaway Beach, just to name a few.

The festival, which will take place from Thursday through Sunday, Nov. 9 at the Crowne Plaza LaGuardia Hotel, will offer over 100 film screenings – including several Academy Award entries and Sundance Film Festival selections – and will feature the work of filmmakers from Ireland to Australia, South America to the Middle East, and Japan to Queens, New York. And it may just force New Yorkers to redefine a term that has plagued Queens residents for years.



QIFF President Marie Castaldo talks about the festival's mission.

“We always hear about the bridge and tunnel crowd,” said Theresa Osborne, director of Queens tourism and affairs and a representative of Queens Borough President Helen Marshall. “This event will switch it around – Manhattanites will become the bridge and tunnel crowd.”

The QIFF is launching its first annual Youth Initiative this year, offering Queens-based students the chance to be part of the festivities by attending screenings, participating in panel discussions alongside accomplished film, radio, and television personalities and creating their own original screenplays and films for awards and recognitions. And, as always, the familiar themes of ethnic and cultural diversity, pertinent subjects in a borough where more than 200 languages are spoken, will be a major focus of this year’s celebration, said Marie Castaldo, president of the Queens International Film Festival.

Highlights of the festival will include Krakowski’s “Looking for Palladin,” a drama set in Guatemala, starring three-time Tony Award winner Ben Gazzara; the documentary “Seasons in the Valley,” an exploration of the relationships between New York’s Hudson Valley apple growers and Jamaican laborers hired to work for them; and a book signing with Mimi Gabriel, Haitian-born author and recipient of the 2008 Women Who Make a Difference Award.

“Our mission is not only to create an event that appeals to the industry,” Castaldo said, “but to create an event that celebrates the ethnic and cultural diversity of Queens by bringing talented filmmakers and the general public together for an unforgettable experience.”

In addition to film screenings, this year’s program will include book signings, screenplay readings, art exhibits, parties, panel discussions, and a free performance by the Queens Symphony Orchestra.

For more information about the Queens International Film Festival, updates, and ticket purchases, visit [queensfilmfestival.com](http://queensfilmfestival.com).



Standing (l. to r.) Marie Castaldo, Terri Osborne, and Megan Esteves. Sitting (l. to r.) Marsh Shneider, James Acuri, Joseph Lara.