

## Business

### Manchester to have its own film festival in October

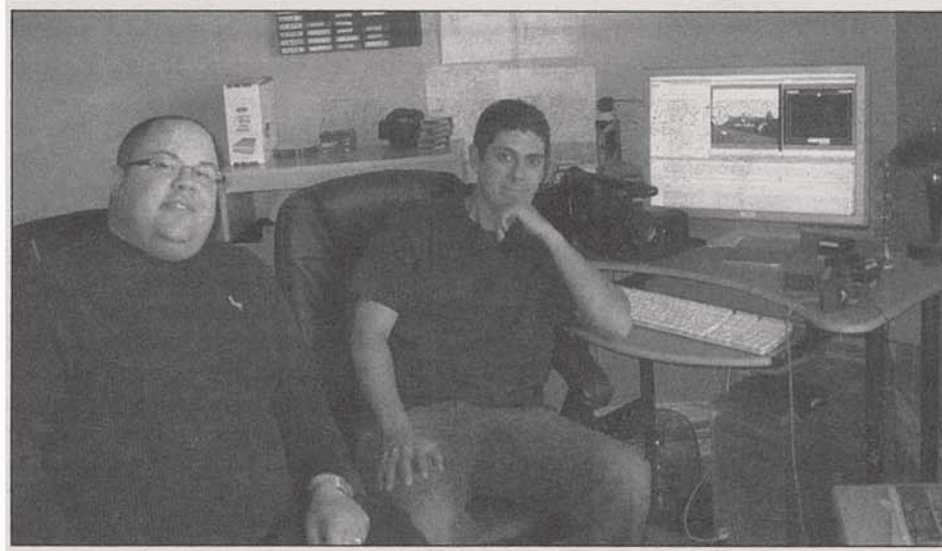
by Sherman Tarr

Will there be paparazzi on hand, with their celebrity-seeking cameras, when the First Silk City Flick Fest kicks off in Manchester this fall? Maybe not, but the organizers of the October event are not seeking that Hollywood aura: they see the fest as a stimulus to the Manchester's businesses and schools and to independent filmmakers in Connecticut and worldwide.

The First Silk City Flick Fest will be held downtown Oct. 8-11. Organized by Justin Morales from Cool Hand Pictures and John Ramaglia of The Sawicki Agency, the fest is already accepting submissions from students and independent filmmakers worldwide, and at least a half dozen have come in.

"We're actually considered an international festival," said Mr. Ramaglia, "because we got a submission from the United Kingdom." The fest will showcase "the best Connecticut independent and student films from across the world that express originality and the unique view for which independent films are famous for" according to a press release. The opening day gala will be Oct. 8 at Cheney Hall, followed by screenings at Manchester Community College and the Parkade Cinemas.

There is a thriving film community in the state, said Mr. Ramaglia. "People in Connecticut are fighting to keep the state tax credit for people who make films in Connecticut. If you spend \$50,000 in the state you can get you can get a 30 percent tax credit on up to \$10 million." When there was talk in the current legislative session about repealing the tax credit, Mr. Ramaglia joined some 400 people at the



*John Ramaglia of the Sawicki Agency (left) and Justin Morales from Cool Hand Pictures are two of the founders of the First Silk City Flick Fest, to be held in downtown Manchester Oct. 8-11.*

State Capitol protesting any repeal.

Filmmaking "is not just about actors and actresses," Mr. Ramaglia said, "it's about the people behind the scene: camera crews and all the others who are involved."

"When I tell people I'm an insurance agent, it's like 'OK, you're an insurance agent,'" said Mr. Ramaglia. "But when I say I'm a co-founder of a film festival, people get excited. It's a feel-good thing."

#### *Sponsors lining up*

"We've got a lot of sponsors," said Mr. Ramaglia, listing the Manchester Super 8 hotel and conference center, Panera Catering, El Mariachi restaurant, Olde Burnside Brewing Company and its Ten Penny Ale, City Steam Brewery and Cafe in Hartford, Cool Hand Pictures, The Sawicki Agency and Cox

Communications. Other sponsors are Manchester Community College, The Little Theater of Manchester and Parkade Cinemas & Entertainment, all of which will be venues for showing the films.

Mr. Morales said he believes Manchester will be a good site for a film festival. It is known as "The City with Village Charm" and has an abundance of natural beauty set against a backdrop of a diverse history. He recalled that "Silk City" comes from the Cheney Brothers, who settled in south Manchester in 1838 and set up a factory that became world famous for premium quality silk thread and fabrics — as well as for the invention of innovative silk processing techniques. "Through the great generosity of the Cheney family, Manchester has become the benefactor of the Cheney lands and has preserved them for the town.

*Film, page 36*

## Film/35

We also plan on conducting customized historical walks throughout downtown Manchester and the Cheney Historical District.”

“I’ve always had a fascination with films,” Mr. Morales said. “I’ve been to a few film festivals and I realize that what a festival does is bring the community together, generates income for small businesses and promotes local colleges and students.

“Overall, it’s a great symbiotic relationship where art and business and dream all come together. Manchester Community College is a great college, and they’ve jumped on board, the venues are here, businesses are here, people are here, so one thing led to another.”

Manchester Mayor Louis A. Spadaccini and the town board of directors got behind the project at a board meeting in January attended by the festival founders.

The mayor said “We [Manchester] have a tremendous arts community and this fits very well into it that. I think it would be very good for the local economy, I believe it’s the only one East of the River ... and also it’s well timed too, in prime foliage season, a good time to visit New England.”

The kickoff event on April 23 at 7 p.m. will be at an open house hosted by MARC, Inc of Manchester at its Manchester Parkade facility on West Middle Turnpike. The public is welcome to the evening of networking and entertainment.

The Silk City Flick Fest is donating 10 percent of its proceeds to MARC, Inc. a nonprofit organization that supports people with disabilities. MARC’s director of marketing Kevin Zingler said the donation will go the group’s \$4.375 million campaign to build a new facility on Sheldon Road. MARC will also provide volunteers to help with the festival and assist with marketing and public relations.

The highlight of the kickoff at MARC will be the unveiling of the cover artwork for the fest program by international artist Hans Weiss of Manchester. “He’s

really opened his door to the festival, told us to look at his paintings of historic Manchester and pick some out. All these things keep finding their way into the festival to give it life. It’s taken off. It’s all together. It’s really fun.”

Mr. Morales was born in Manchester. He has lived, worked and traveled all over the world, from the Pacific to England. After getting interested in film making, he moved to New York City where he worked on independent films and some big studio pictures like “The Hours.” Later he graduated from Connecticut School of Broadcasting and opened Cool Hand Pictures, a video production and editing house in downtown Manchester.

Mr. Ramaglia by day is an insurance agent for the Sawicki Agency, but some nights he is a local TV personality. In the summer of 2008, he started his own TV interview program “The John Ramm Show,” It can be seen on several Connecticut public access cable channels and on the Internet.

Also involved as a co-founder in the film fest is Ryan Maloney, a comedian based in New York City who originally is from Manchester. Mr. Maloney has been performing stand-up comedy for more than 11 years, is a regular performer at Hartford’s Brew Ha-Ha Comedy Club, served as Brett Butler’s opening act and recently co-headlined First Night Hartford at The Bushnell.

The event’s administrative director is Magda “Maggie” Grover who worked on two NBC shows. (Friday Night Lights and Celebrity Apprentice 2) as well as two independent films (Once More With Feeling and The Best Laid Plans). Ms. Grover is a graduate of Manchester Community College, where she obtained her associate’s in multimedia studies.

Entries for the Manchester festival must be post-marked by Aug. 14.

For information on the Silk City Film Fest, to submit a film or become a sponsor, go to [www.silkcityflickfest.com](http://www.silkcityflickfest.com) or call Cool Hand Pictures at 646-6400. **ML**

