

## **IFF Panama announced**

Written by T. Rob Brown (aka Roberto Chocolate)

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La Prensa, Helkin Guevera...

### **Film Festival in 2012**

An international film festival, which is preparing for 2012, is taking shape, starting with the name: International Film Festival of Panama, or abbreviated IFF Panama said Laura Emerick, head of the Panama Film Commission of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MiCi).

This exciting international film festival will be held from April 26 to May 1, 2012, with a selection of 50 to 80 films, details Emerick.

There will be a pre-launch event in April 2011 to promote the festival.

The executives of the festival are working on the budget, and expect it to be ready in late January 2011, following a planning study to set out the logistics required by the festival, adds Emerick.

### **FROM TORONTO**

The IFF Panama is an initiative of Henk Van der Kolk, co-founder of TIFF - the Toronto International Film Festival, and Robert Brown, Chief Executive Officer of the festival who is also from Toronto. Van der Kolk only moved to Panama on November 1st. Brown, also originally from Toronto, has lived in Panama since 2007.

Also on the committee is Abner Benaim and Pituka Ortega Heilbron, Panama film directors, Diana Sanchez, head of programming - who is currently the Program Director for TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival), Luis Pacheco - President of ASCOCINE - the Panamanian Association of Cinematographers, and representatives of government including Roberto Henriquez - trade and industry Minister, Jose D. Arias - Vice Minister of foreign trade, Gilberto Vallerino - Finance Minister, Shamah Salomon - director of ATP (the Tourism Authority of Panama), Maria Eugenia Herrera - director of INAC (National Institute of Culture) and Laura

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Emerick of the Panama Film Commission, among others.

"This festival will not be in conjunction with the International Film Festival in Toronto, but TIFF has offered its support. The festival staff will be made up of Panamanians, but will the council of representatives of the Toronto festival, "says Emerick.

Some of the benefits a cultural event such as this can offer are business development, job creation related to the film industry and tourism.

"It is also very good for the economy" says Emerick, head of the Panama Film Commission. She mentions that the Toronto Film Festival generates \$170 million to the Canadian city and of the 500,000 people who attended the TIFF festival last September, 44% were tourists from outside the Province of Ontario.

"Our film festival will be unlike any other festival in the world", notes Emerick. Attendees will see all of Panama - we are organizing trips to beaches and iconic locations in the country for the festival. There will also be free screenings for the people in parks and squares in different provinces.

The ultimate goal is to build a Festival Center which will include a film school as part of the festival.

The Film Commission is solidly behind IFF Panama, says Emerick.