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Photo caption: Ava Gardner sings in the movie, *Show Boat* (1951), which MGM executives would later dub with singer Annette Warren. Ava's singing voice was used in several movies including *Mogambo* (1953), where her performance received an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role.

Ava Gardner Festival: The final "Toast to Ava" Centennial Event

(Smithfield, NC - June 23, 2023) - The Ava Gardner Museum has hosted a year-long Centennial celebration in honor of the legendary actress, fashion icon, and humanitarian Ava Gardner, a North Carolina native who grew up just 7-miles east of Smithfield. This year's festival, scheduled for October 6-8, concludes the year-long celebration. The festival will include a multitude of exciting events, as the museum unveils new exhibits, conducts heritage tours, hosts special film and video presentations, and more.

"The opening night FREE film screening of *Show Boat*, down by the Neuse River, seems a natural fit for a film about a riverboat", stated Lynell Seabold, Museum Director, "we are excited to partner with WRAL and the Town of Smithfield to offer this event for all that want to come to Downtown Smithfield. The whole weekend will be filled with special guests and tributes to Ava as our Centennial program comes to an end."

The weekend continues following the opening night reception and film, and the following is a snapshot of the festival schedule. Additional updates will be available on the [Ava Gardner Museum website](#) and via the [Ava Gardner Facebook page](#).

Ava Gardner Festival weekend schedule:

Friday, October 6, 2023

9:30 am - 4:00 pm **Special Museum Hours for Friday**

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm **A Toast to Ava! Reception**

New exhibits will open featuring new loans of Ava's movie costumes, and two new recreated iconic gowns from the film *Show Boat*. World-renowned costume designer James Kelly is traveling from London, England to Smithfield, NC to share more about his designs with festival attendees. James Kelly is a costume maker and collector, wedding dress designer, and wardrobe assistant with the English National Ballet, who restores and reproduces Hollywood costumes.

Cost: \$25.00 per person, including light refreshments, cake, and sparkling wine.

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm ***Show Boat* Film Screening**

The Town of Smithfield and the Ava Gardner Museum offer this FREE film screening of *Show Boat* at the newly renovated Neuse River Amphitheater. Food trucks will be available beginning at 6:30 pm for guests to have dinner before the film. Lawn chairs are suggested. In the case of rain, the film screening will be canceled. Location: Neuse River Amphitheater, 150 S. Front Street, Smithfield

Saturday, October 7, 2023

9:00 am - 5:00 pm **Museum Open to the Public**

Enjoy new exhibits and the following special programs throughout the day. Museum admission is \$12.00 with special 3-day passes available. Film screenings and heritage tours are priced separately. Museum Address: 325 E. Market St., Smithfield.

Heritage Tour Hours: 9:30 am, 11:30 am, 1:30 pm

Festival goers will step aboard a tour bus with one of the Museum's experts for a one-hour, guided trip through Ava's hometown. Participants travel to the Grabtown and Brogden communities, just seven miles east of Smithfield, where Ava was born and raised. The tour concludes with a visit to Ava's final resting place in Sunset Memorial Park. Tours leave from in front of the Museum.

Ticket price: \$20.00.

3:00 pm

Victoria Price Presentation & Book Signing

Vincent Price's daughter Victoria will talk about her father's career and relationship with Ava Gardner. They starred together in the film, *The Bribe*, a film noir from 1949 directed by Robert Z. Leonard. Victoria will hold a book signing event following her presentation. Location: Theater at the Museum.

7:30 pm

Film Screening of *The Bribe*

The film is based on the short story "The Bribe" by Frederick Nebel in Hearst's-International Cosmopolitan (Sep 1947). Victoria Price will introduce the film with a short review of Vincent's and Ava's friendship formed during the filming of the project. Ticket price: \$10 per person. Location: Smithfield Cinemas, 175 S. Equity Drive, Smithfield.

Sunday, October 8, 2023

10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Special Museum Hours for the Festival

The museum will open with special hours of operation for festival guests.

1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

Film Screening of *Show Boat*

When it comes to music on the Mississippi River, the Cotton Blossom show boat was the place to go. When musical main attraction Julie Laverne (Ava Gardner) and her husband are suddenly forced to leave the show, Cotton Blossom owner Andy Hawks' (Joe E. Brown) own daughter, Magnolia (Kathryn Grayson), takes center stage. She soon falls madly in love with roguish gambler Gaylord Ravenal (Howard Keel), and the two leave the Cotton Blossom on a honeymoon, only to enter into a tumultuous marriage. Location: Smithfield Cinemas, 175 S. Equity Drive, Smithfield. Ticket price: \$10 per person per film.

4:00 pm - 5:45 pm

Film Screening of *The Bribe*

Federal agent Rigby (Robert Taylor) travels to a Central American island to investigate stolen war surpluses. Suspicion falls on veteran Tugwell Hintten (John Hodiak) and his alluring singer-wife, Elizabeth (Ava Gardner). But Rigby's situation gets more complicated when he starts an affair with Elizabeth. The brains of the scam J.J. Bealer (Charles Laughton) and Carwood (Vincent Price) offer the lawman a bribe. When he refuses it, both lovers' lives are jeopardized. Location: Smithfield Cinemas, 175 S. Equity Drive, Smithfield. Ticket price: \$10 per person per film.

“Be sure to check out our gift shop for Ava 100 merchandise and officially licensed Ava Gardner products. Sign-up for our newsletter and stay tuned to our social media, blog, and website for all the latest updates and future announcements about our plans for this year’s festival. You don’t want to miss it”, continued Seabold.

The Ava Gardner Museum is located in Downtown Smithfield, at 325 E. Market Street, convenient to hotels offering special rates for the weekend, and nearby local shops and restaurants also planning to celebrate the weekend with special offers. For more information, visit www.avagardnerfestival.com, call 919-934-5830 or email avainfo@avagardner.org.

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