



■ LAUNCH: (l-r) Mark Leaver from Southwest Screen, David Bill of The Manor by the Lake, and festival director David Pearson

Now let's take on Hollywood!

■ By GARY VYSE

DIRECTORS, writers and producers are expected to jet in from across the globe for the Cheltenham International Screenwriters' Festival 2007.

Organisers hope to beat last year's attendance of 500 film and TV writers.

Flights are already booked from the US, South America and Italy.

The aim is twofold - to promote script-writing to beginners and to attract writers to Cheltenham in the hope they will be inspired by the surroundings and consider the town as a film setting.

Festival director David Pearson said: "The best stories come from secrets and Cheltenham is a well-kept secret. It's a town which could compete internationally and we want to unlock that secret."

Cheltenham Borough Council is backing the festival. Council leader Duncan Smith (C, Charlton Kings) said: "Cheltenham has an exciting potential for the

Cotswolds aims to be film Mecca

"We're hoping to have the key industries in film coming into the town.

"It's not just about bringing people in - we also hope to encourage talent in Gloucestershire."

The festival launch featured speeches by Wallace and Gromit scriptwriter Bob Baker and Heartbeat actress and writer Sophie Ward, who lives near Stroud.

It took place at The Manor by the Lake, in Arle Court, Cheltenham.

Manor owner and festival chairman David Bill said: "This is a great chance to whet people's appetite for the festival."

likes of Hollywood scriptwriter Diana Osana, who penned Brokeback Mountain and Hustler writer Tony Jordan appeared.

This year's event, called Writers Return will run from July 3 to 6 at Cheltenham Film Studios.

For more information, go to www.screenwritersfestival.com

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