



From left – Little Pink House, Lords of Dogtown

Year Three for Film Fest Tucson

Featuring Movies That ‘Tell A Good Story’

By Chuck Graham

It's time for the third annual Film Fest Tucson, Oct. 11-13, now making a larger footprint downtown with additional venues and more screens. This may be the youngest of the city's many cinema celebrations, but it keeps growing and has always finished in the black.

"We achieved break-even finances for the second year running," said Herb Stratford, founder and festival director.

"We've added more screens at the new AC Hotel Tucson Downtown, are holding a Saturday evening event at the Fox Tucson Theatre and have collaborations with several other nonprofit organizations.

"The main thing we want to do is present quality films that aren't mainstream – unique films that will start conversations."

While elements of the program were still being finalized at press time, nine new feature-length narratives are already booked, along with 16 documentaries – four of them to be shown in the popular free outdoor evenings on a 30-foot inflatable screen adjacent to the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

Adding more Hollywood glitz to the weekend is a Saturday night spotlight tribute program at the Fox Theatre to honor Director Catherine Hardwicke, as well as several additional actresses, Haley Lu Richardson and Sophia Mitrì Schloss. Hardwicke's film résumé includes working a crew spot on three pictures shot in Arizona: "Tombstone," "Tank Girl" and "Three Kings."

At Film Fest Tucson Hardwicke will

introduce and screen one of the most popular movies she directed, "Lords of Dogtown" (2005). Other films she helmed include "Thirteen," "Twilight" and "Red Riding Hood."

"She is one of only a few female directors of action films," said Stratford, adding that while Hardwicke is here she will lead a master class in directing.

Other industry professionals appearing on festival panels include directors from several of the films and Chris Gore, writer, film critic and founder of Film Threat magazine.

"One thing I've learned from doing these three festivals is that there definitely is an audience for the films we want to present," Stratford said. "Tucson's other film festivals are more aimed at niche audiences – the Jewish Film Festival, Tucson Cine Mexico, a couple of horror film fests.

"We're trying to build Film Fest Tucson as a destination festival with wide appeal. There are always so many more films being made than what audiences get to see at the mall theaters. We want to connect Tucson with films they won't have a chance to see anywhere else.

"But the bottom line for the festival is to pick movies that tell a good story – even the documentaries," he said. "Once a film hooks me, I start thinking of a local collaboration I can encourage."

This year the Nathaniel Kahn documentary "The Price of Everything" examines how the actual price tag for a piece of art is determined. It's described

in the Internet Movie Database as "having unprecedented access to pivotal artists and the white-hot market surrounding them, this film dives deep into the contemporary art world, holding a fun-house mirror up to our values and our times – where everything can be bought and sold."

Stratford is presenting "The Price of Everything" as a collaboration with the Tucson Museum of Art. Another quixotic view from the art world is found in "Beuys," being screened as a collaboration with Tucson's Museum of Contemporary Art.

Joseph Beuys was a German conceptual artist and activist popular in the 1960s and 1970s in both Europe and the United States. Most notably, he found meaning in the so-called "happenings" in groups that produced art out of pure emotion. According to Wikipedia, Beuys is "widely regarded as one of the most influential artists of the second half of the 20th century."

"I never stop looking all year long for new films I can show – staying in touch with filmmakers, learning about their upcoming projects," said Stratford. All of the festival's feature-length narrative films and documentaries are recent releases seeking new audiences.

Still to be announced for this year's fest are similar films connected to the worlds of fashion, architecture and jazz – topics this film festival always explores.

For current news about the festival visit filmfesttucson.com.



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