

Published: 04.24.2008

Dog-gone good picks for final week

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Tucson Citizen

Get ready for the Best of the Fest as the Arizona International Film Festival goes into its final weekend. Upcoming events range from Thursday's outdoor screening of the dog-umentary for pet lovers, "Wiener Takes All," to the full-length narrative "Made in L.A." dramatizing exploited Hispanic workers in Los Angeles sweatshops.

Plenty of choices can be made based on one's own personal politics this weekend. Many of the features and documentaries have a political agenda to encourage.

"Sozdar: She Who Lives Her Promise" examines the difficult life of Kurdish freedom fighter Nuriye Kesbir, who languished in Dutch limbo for several years. She wasn't granted political asylum in the Netherlands, but she wasn't forced to return to her native Turkey, either.

"Brave New West" details the life of Utah journalist and editorial cartoonist Jim Stiles who uses his tiny newspaper, the Canyon County Zephyr, to fight the big government and big business forces that want to exploit Utah's natural resources.

A little less political but even more touching is "The Linguists," following the exploits of two men trying to save the dying languages of tiny cultures around the world being co-opted by larger ones. Is this neo-colonialism? In a sense, maybe it is.

"Coyote" puts a twist on illegal immigration by following two gringos who decide to help a Hispanic friend slip into the U.S. That was so easy, the pair of Americans decide to go in the business of helping illegal immigrants into this country. Quickly they meet up with drug smugglers and other less-than-idealistic people who thrive on shady border politics.

Anthologies of short films are always the favorite screenings of veteran film festival fans. Newcomers discovering the unique flavor of independent features are also advised to try the short films first.

"Chicano Shorts" contains five films, touching on issues of politics, religion, love, death and journalism.

A pair of longer shorts, booked under the title "Performance Shorts," examine the plight of young women who become sex workers.

The festival's dedication to increasing public awareness of Alzheimer's and dementia continues in a collection of 10 "Memory Shorts," most of the films running less than 10 minutes each.

Worth emphasizing is the unique plate of "IndieYouth Shorts" mostly from around the United States, also 10 entries. Most are less than 10 minutes long. Get a taste of what today's film-literate teens are thinking.

An important nonfilm event is the free workshop Saturday, "Tucson Is For Filmmaking: Why Filmmakers Like Shooting in Tucson" with a five-member panel of filmmakers. Tamara Mack is the moderator.

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Photo courtesy of Arizona International Film Festival

Tonight's screening of "Wiener Takes All" is open to dog lovers and their dogs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

What: 17th annual Arizona International Film Festival

When: through Sunday

Where: The Screening Room, 127 E. Congress St., Crossroads Festival Cinema, 4811 E. Grant Road, and the Tucson Chinese Cultural Center, 1288 W. River Road. Also, special events at the Fox Theatre, 17 W. Congress St.; Hotel Congress, 311 E. Congress St.; La Placita Village, 110 S. Church Ave.; Dinnerware ArtSpace, 264 E. Congress St., and The Hut, 305 N. Fourth Ave

Price: \$6 first screening each day; \$8 single admission all other screenings; \$10 opening night at the Fox; \$40 saver pass for six screenings; \$70 student producer pass, with current ID, for all screenings and workshops (including opening night); \$100 producer pass, for all screenings and workshops; \$150 Gold Sponsor pass, for all screenings, workshops, special events and receptions.

Info: 882-0204, filmfestivalarizona.com

THURSDAY

4 p.m. - Fox Theatre - From The Archives • "Chinatown" - U.S. Private detective Jake Gittes (Jack Nicholson) follows an adultery case all the way to the seamy intrigue of the California Water Wars in Roman Polanski's classic 1974 neo-noir.
6 p.m. - Screening Room - Reel Frontier/Memory Shorts • "Dear Oh Dear, Mr. Reilly" - U.S. • "Kuna Ni Nanang" - U.S. • "We Hear Sirens" - U.S. • "The Lemon Tree" - U.S. • "Intangible" - U.S. • "Swing" - U.S. • "Vision Decay Memory" - U.S. • "Palestine en Solidaridad" - U.S. • "Unknown" - South Korea • "The Girls of Elizabeth Street" - U.S.

7:30 p.m. - Cinema La Placita - Premiere Showcase • "Wiener Takes All: A Dogumentary" - U.S. The National Wiener Dog Racing Circuit may be an unknown event, but thousands of devoted fans, sold-out venues, and national news media coverage may help dachshund racing achieve the notoriety it deserves.

8 p.m. - Screening Room - Cine Chicano • "La Virgen de Guadalupe" - U.S. • "Below the Fold" - U.S. • "Chiles" - U.S. • "Tortilla" - U.S. • "American Dream" - U.S.

10 p.m. - Screening Room - Premiere Showcase • "Donovan Slacks" - United Kingdom