

No shortage of international flavor at film fest

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With a nod to the early days of Tucson's film glamour, the 17th annual Arizona International Film Festival will add some old school elegance this year by holding Thursday's opening ceremonies at the shimmering Fox Theatre downtown. A screening of "Hollywood Chinese" (2007), the Taipei Golden Horse winner for Best Documentary, will be the centerpiece. The documentary recounts the lengthy if relatively less known contributions that Chinese artists in the U.S. have made to the movie world.

From the first Chinese-American film produced in 1916, straight through to Ang Lee's smashing of cowboy stereotypes in "Brokeback Mountain" in 2005, we meet the actors, directors and writers who created America's image of China. Arthur Dong, the director of "Hollywood Chinese," will attend the opening at the Fox and talk about the film.

As befits this two-week cinema celebration billed as the state's longest running and largest film festival, lots more opening events will continue Friday with special festival startup programs at the downtown Screening Room, the Tucson Chinese Cultural Center and the Crossroads Festival Theatre, as well as a 6 p.m. schmoozing and cruising social get-together at the Hotel Congress.

Capping Friday's films is a late night program of unconventional short films, "Edgy Shorts," at 10:30 p.m. in the Screening Room.

Scheduled for screening during the two-week event are 93 films from 15 countries, representing Australia, Korea, Japan, the Canary Islands, Latvia, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Canada, China and the United States. Included are 18 entries from the recent Sundance and jointly-running Slamdance festivals, as well as 15 new works from Arizona filmmakers. Included are 25 full-length narrative features and documentaries.

The heart of each year's AIFF is the Reel Frontier Film and Video Competition. This year's juried program of 15 features and 50 shorts from 14 countries has been culled from submissions by independent filmmakers representing straight narrative, dramatic and comedy shorts, experimental, animation and documentary styles. These entries are shown throughout the festival. The winners are announced on April 26, then screened again in the Best of the Fest showcase on April 27.

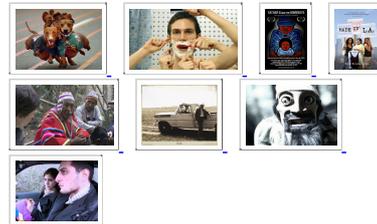
Cine Chicano is another perennial festival series favorite. This year's opening film is "Father G and the Homeboys," detailing the efforts of Jesuit priest Father Greg Boyle, who was able to earn the confidence then redirect the lives of four "gang-bangers" living in the Boyle Heights sector of Los Angeles. For more than 20 years Father Boyle has nurtured Homeboy Industries to help local young people prepare for a life of success rather than a life of violence.

Another entry is "Made in L.A.," telling the story of three Latinas working in the city's "sweatshops," who band together in a campaign to win basic labor protection from a "mega-trendy clothing retailer." A collection of short films by emerging Chicano filmmakers completes the lineup.

The Wellness Cinema series, introduced last year, returns with fresh films on the topics of health, wellness and lifestyle.



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Photos courtesy of Arizona International Film Festival

Dog lovers and their four-legged friends are welcome at the screening of "Wiener Takes All," which chronicles the grit and glory of dachshunds who love to run in competitive races. The film will be shown April 24 at La Placita Village.



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IF YOU GO

What: 17th annual Arizona International Film Festival

When: Thursday through April 27

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 (except opening night at the Fox); \$70 student producer pass, with current ID, for all screenings and workshops (including opening night); \$100 producer pass, for all screenings and workshops (including opening night); \$150 Gold Sponsor pass, for all screenings, workshops, special events and receptions.

Info: 882-0204, filmfestivalarizona.com

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

THURSDAY

7:30 p.m. - Fox Theatre - Opening Night • "Hollywood Chinese" - Winner of the Taipei Golden Horse for Best Documentary, Hollywood Chinese brings together a fascinating portrait of actors, directors, writers, and iconic images to show how the Chinese have been imagined in movies. Filmmaker Arthur Dong will introduce the film

FRIDAY

6 p.m. - Hotel Congress - Opening Night Fiesta
7:30 p.m. - Crossroads Theater - Wellness Cinema • "Away From Her" - Canada. The 50-year relationship is turned upside down when the wife succumbs to Alzheimer's disease, prompting a