

Directors, actors, special effects wizards gather to discuss creativity

Greg Hamilton
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

PORTLAND - To place a finger on it is impossible. To corner and harness it, difficult and frustrating. And to stifle it would be a sin.

The creative impulse is a thing that exists in many but is manifested in few. It takes time to understand and patience to master, but for those who make use of it, the sky is the limit.

One wouldn't think that those who work in film, television and advertising actually sit around together and chew the creative cud, and the truth is, they most likely don't. They have jobs just the same as everyone else, and their creativity is just one of the tools they use to get through the day.

But for one weekend, many of these minds gathered at the Portland Creative Conference to muse on the issues of creativity and schmooz amongst groups of celebrities and industry types.

For five years the Rose City has played host to the Creative Conference, bringing in folks from around the West coast and Canada and giving them a



BACKES



FIELD

chance to hear from and interact with speakers who hold positions in the film/television/advertising industry.

Since its debut in 1990, the conference has brought in a variety of speakers. Among them include actors Ed Asner and Martin Sheen, directors Gus Van Sant (*Drugstore Cowboy*) and Joe Dante (*The Howling*), writers Caroline Thompson (*Edward Scissorhands*) and Buck Henry (*The Graduate*). It's also had a host of industry specialists ranging from *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, to stop motion animation guru Ray Harryhausen.

This year's offering was no exception.

Looking to expand from the previous gathering, conference directors assembled a program that included a 'master of cere-

monies' position filled by computer visual effects wizard and 1993 conference speaker Michael Backes, who helped develop the computer effects for *Jurassic Park*. The program also pushed speakers to derive answers concerning the creative vibe that often times had nothing to do with the speakers' profession. Instead of the usual war stories (and there were some), speakers this year seemed better prepared and primed to sift through their own creative impulses.

NYPD Blue and *LA Law* director Brad Silberling opened the conference with a refreshing discussion on his creative vision of human interaction and how to film it. Silberling, an ardent detractor of the 'shakey-cam' technique used in television and commercials, focused on the importance of the "reality of small moments" and their abilities to "make the scene."

Silberling is also finishing his first feature film, a Steven Spielberg production of *Casper the Friendly Ghost*.

Also featured on the first day were screenwriter Syd Field, who gave a lecture on the

basics of screenwriting as well as pumped his latest authorial effort; English animator Peter Lord, who seemed a bit out of sorts but engaged the audience with his Oscar-nominated clay-mation film shorts; and special effects designer Robert Greenberg who surprised the crowd with a passionate discussion on alternative art, rather than elaborating on the effects he produced for *The Shadow* and *True Lies*.

The second and final day of the conference began a little sketchy with film ad-man Tony Seiniger espousing the benefits of test-screening movies, a corporate invention that often sacrifices creativity for profitability. Several times during his delivery, the audience cringed visibly at his corporate sensibilities.

However, the day was not entirely lost.

Striding in like his *Northern Exposure* ex-astronaut namesake, actor Barry Corbin livened things up considerably with a rousing address on the creative spark of acting, which included a monologue (sans Texas accent) from

Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, which brought the attendees to their feet.

Oscar-nominated director Martha Coolidge, of *Rambling Rose* and *Lost in Yonkers* fame, continued to strengthen the afternoon's pace with her insights on patience and dealing with studios. As an added bonus, Coolidge screened some unreleased material from her earlier years.

Actors Karen Silas and Michael Beach, the stars of CBS's new Portland-based television crime-drama *Under Suspicion*, finished up the lectures with a Q & A on acting and climbing the role ladder.

Also featured at the conference were three film premieres: Robert Redford's *Quiz Show*, based on the 1950s television game show scandal that rocked the nation; Tim Burton's *Ed Wood*, a biography on Ed Wood, commonly known as The World's Worst Director; and Tom Noonan's *What Happened Was*, which starred conference speaker Karen Silas and won top honors at this year's Sundance Film Festival.

CALENDAR

7 FRIDAY

Linda, a country musical
8 p.m. at the Downtown Cabaret
Tickets are \$8

A Pirate's Lullaby, a play
8 p.m. at the Lord Leebrick Theatre
Tickets are \$7

Sara Hickman
8 p.m. Cate Auditorium, Agate Hall
Tickets are \$6 for students

8 SATURDAY

Caliente
9:30 p.m. at the WOW Hall
Tickets are \$5, \$6

Those Krazy Keyboards
10:30 a.m. at Beall Hall
Tickets are \$3 students, \$5 family



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

String bass player Barry Green will perform Sunday in a benefit concert for the 4J Strings Program Sunday at 8 p.m. in Beall Concert Hall. Tickets are \$3 for students. Proceeds will go to the string program, which has been severely cut in recent years because of budget losses. Green is principal bass with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and a professor at the University of Cincinnati. He and three of his associates will perform works by Vivaldi, Bolling, J.S. Bach and others.

A Pirate's Lullaby
8 p.m. at The Lord Leebrick Theatre
Tickets are \$7

Penn and Teller
8 p.m. at the Hult Center
Tickets are \$15, \$20

Heavenly, Lois
9:30 p.m. at the WOW Hall
Tickets are \$5

Cherry Poppin' Daddies
9:30 p.m. at Good Times
Tickets are \$6

9 SUNDAY

Eggs, Air Miami
8:30 p.m. at the WOW Hall
Tickets are \$5

Tinsley Ellis
9:30 p.m. at Good Times
Tickets are \$6

10 MONDAY

Nick Gravenitis
9:30 p.m. at Good Times
Tickets are \$5

An Evening of Latin Jazz
The Oregon Jazz Ensemble
8 p.m. at Beall Hall
Tickets are \$5 for students

11 TUESDAY

Kathryn Lucktenberg, Dean Kramer
8 p.m. at Beall Hall
Tickets are \$3 for students

The Strangers, Buffalo Roam
9:30 p.m. at Good Times
Tickets are \$5

12 WEDNESDAY

Eugene Symphony Orchestra
with Stephanie Chase, violin
8 p.m. at the Hult Center
Tickets are \$10 to \$33



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