



Testing new Waters

■ Film writer and director John Waters will be a keynote speaker at the ninth annual University Queer Film Festival

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

For eight years, the University's Queer Film Festival has provided a venue for alternative views in cinema. Today, with the beginning of the event's ninth incarnation, event director Morgen Smith hopes to stay true to the festival's roots while opening it to a broader audience.

The goal of the festival has always been to promote amateur films dealing with homosexual, bisexual and transgender themes. The event solicits films from all over the country and even across borders. The awards for the chosen films are modest, going no higher than \$200 for a jury's choice, but the lure of exposure are enough to draw participants. The eight selected short films, including both serious and comedic movies, will be shown Friday at 8 p.m. in 180 PLC.

The variety of the short films creates an easy transition between the two documentaries showing today and Saturday. The festival begins at 8 p.m. today with "Paragraph 175," a film about homosexuals who were imprisoned during the Holocaust. Smith said the title represents a section in the German

penal code that prohibited sodomy and created an excuse for homosexual persecution. But "Paragraph 175" went beyond the Holocaust and wasn't repealed in Germany until 1969.

Saturday's film, "Divine Trash," is in direct opposition to "Paragraph 175." The documentary recounts the early career of writer and director John Waters. Waters is known to mainstream audiences through films such as "Hairspray," "Cry Baby" and "Pecker," but he is known to a wholly different audience with his earlier films, which include "Pink Flamingos" and "Female Trouble."

Seeing this film will prepare audiences for the conclusion of the festival Sunday at 8 p.m., when John Waters himself will take the stage in the Silva Concert Hall at the Hult Center.

"I think that the fact that John Waters is speaking is making the festival a more common event," she said. "Sure, it's a queer film festival, but I'm trying to draw in more films that aren't so out there."

Water's films are still out there, but in a different direction. His homosexuality is not what makes his films original; it is his outlook on life. Everything is funny to the eccentric director, as is apparent both in his films and in his character.

"I think that homosexual people have an innate sense of humor," he said. "Not all of them, but most.

When you're an outsider, humor is the best protection."

Michelle Dubey, Cultural Forum film coordinator, warns that the audience may need to be protected from Waters' sometimes-offensive humor.

"Don't look to be offended; don't get offended when you are," Dubey said. "You can't be offended because that's what he wants. It's best to not take him too seriously."

Waters said that his intention is first to entertain, but audiences should expect to be a little shocked. Waters uses his skills as a stand-up comedian, another of his creative ventures, to make his speeches more enjoyable.

"How many directors do you know that do stand up?" he jokes. "I think that ... people should be harsher on directors who just sit behind a camera."

Dubey and Smith worked together to bring John Waters to the University. In a lucky move, Dubey's parents recently relocated to Baltimore, Waters' hometown. "Cecil B. Demented," Water's latest film, premiered in Baltimore during the summer, and Waters was to be in attendance. Dubey used this opportunity to track him down and invite him to speak.

Yes, Baltimore did produce more than a Super-Bowl-winning football team. Waters has a great deal of hometown pride for the city, and most of his films are

based there.

"I have an apartment in New York [just] to have an apartment in New York, but Baltimore is where I'm inspired," he said.

In frequent trips to the city, Waters hangs out in blue-collar bars where he observes and interacts with people to find the substance for his future films. While all his films exaggerate aspects of real society, sometimes a line or a location will be pulled directly from his common experiences.

"Cecil B. Demented," for example, deals with a young film director in Baltimore who is determined to make a movie that is the antithesis of a fake Hollywood film. Although Waters would never go to the gun-wielding lengths shown in the movie, the film does poke as much fun at his cinematic beginnings as it does Hollywood.

There is a line in the film that says, "Technique is nothing more than failed style." While Waters' films constantly improve, they have not yet matched the aesthetic of Hollywood, but that is not the goal. Because he has the freedom to create whatever films he wants, he is free to deal with topics that would otherwise be unavailable. And in that process, he is also free to make mistakes.

"Mistakes sometimes lead to the best things in art," he said.

All film events start at 8 p.m. in 180 PLC. Tickets to individual shows cost \$4 for students with ID

Queer Film Festival Schedule

Thursday 8 p.m. 180 PLC: Paragraph 175

Friday 8 p.m. 180 PLC: Short film competition winners

Saturday 8 p.m. 180 PLC: Divine Trash

Sunday 8 p.m. Hult Center: An evening with John Waters

Tickets: \$4 for students with ID, \$5 for the general public. A pass for all three film nights is \$8 for students, \$10 for the public. Tickets to "An Evening with John Waters" are \$12 for students, \$18 for the general public. Ticket price includes admission to "Divine Trash" Saturday at 8 p.m.

Tickets are available at the EMU ticket office, Mother Kali's Books and Hungry Head Books. Tickets to "An Evening with John Waters" are also available at the Hult Center.

and \$5 for the general public. A pass for all three film nights can be purchased for \$8 by students and \$10 for the public. Tickets to "An Evening with John Waters" are \$12 for students and \$18 for the general public. Ticket price includes admission to "Divine Trash" Saturday at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at the EMU ticket office, Mother Kali's Books and Hungry Head Books. Tickets to "An Evening with John Waters" are also available at the Hult Center.