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EUGENE FILM

Local filmmakers showcase talent

at Celebration BY ANDREW HITZ

Film in Eugene is a different animal from the sleek, ultra-refined cinematic beast of Hollywood. What reigns supreme in this dank, rugged environment is something truly unique and truly Cascadian. Let's face it; in Oregon things are just a little different — a little more grimy, a little more earthbound and a little more badass. This weekend at the Eugene Celebration, the award-winning work of local filmmakers will be screened for all to see, acquainting Eugene with varied and eccentrically diverse hometown cinema talent. Here are a few choice picks for film fanatics to groove on.

THE SHAGGY DOG PROJECT: Like many people that come to Eugene, seven years ago Tom Blank was looking for a way to plug into the community. Freshly retired from working at the Directors Guild of America and with over 40 years of Hollywood production experience, Blank thought he might be able to contribute to the film scene around Eugene, so he walked downtown and on into DIVA. Since then, Blank has helped create projects like "Behind the Lens," a weekly screening and discussion of film at DIVA, and his Shaggy Dog Project.

Blank says that the Shaggy Dog Project came out of the DIVA screenwriters' workshop he was running several years ago.

It then morphed into what is now a community filmmakers' resource that has produced a number of short films, one of which will be screened at this weekend's festival. Since retiring, Blank has focused on sharing his skills with the Eugene community and the aspiring filmmakers here.

"The project is really a community organization that provides a service for people who want to learn to make film," Blank says. "I'm dedicated to the idea of serving a community."

Information on the The Shaggy Dog Project will be available after the screening of the short film *Enforcers*, and Blank along with other members of the screening panel will be on hand to chat and answer questions.

HEALING STORIES: Differing slightly in content and style, but similarly in line with the Eugene ethos is the Trauma Healing Project's presentation of "Healing Stories: A Digital Storytelling Festival."

"We're using [digital storytelling] to provide an opportunity for people to share and process stories that mean something more personal to them," Elaine Walters, executive director of the Trauma Healing Project, says. "The only requirement is that it be a story that involves them."

This vision took shape nine years ago in Eugene and the project has been supporting itself as a nonprofit, while also acting as a multidisciplinary effort to eliminate violence and heal trauma.

"It's about a 25 to 30 hour process — it's intensive, it's bonding, it's healing," Walters says, adding that the storytellers "sometimes share stories that they've never shared before and the process of taking a story that's been haunting you and then turning it into a work of art is really powerful and is really empowering for people."

Walters invites the Eugene audience to witness transformation and power reclaimed by the storytellers as they unearth their physical and emotional selves.

CINEMA PACIFIC WINNERS: Screenings of three of Cinema Pacific's Adrenaline Film Project (AFP) winners will be coming courtesy of the UO. The university's annual film competition gives participants 72 hours to brainstorm ideas, write, film, edit and master a five-minute short, which is then judged by a panel of industry pros.

"It really comes down to who can use their time, prop and line of dialogue in the best way," director and grand-prize winner Justin Crowe says. "In the end it is all about the story. Storytelling is the heart of filmmaking and that is really what AFP tests you on."

Crowe and his production crew won with their short film *Revelation*, a post-apocalyptic zombie film with a twisted Christopher Nolan-esque ending.

"I end the film on a question and allow the audience to draw their own conclusion," Crowe says.

Though the Eugene Celebration's range of music, contests and chaos are all well-worth enjoying, carve some time out of your partying schedule to sit down and appreciate Eugene's local filmmaking talent.

EW

For a full listing of films and screening times go to www.Eugenecelebration.com/film_festival.html



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