

FILM FESTIVAL EXPLORES GENDER, POLITICS, JAZZ AND MORE

10th annual Astoria International Film Festival offers films at the Liberty Theater Oct. 21, 22 & 23

By KATE GIESE
Submitted photos

Hey, it's time to get your film groove on! It's autumn, and the 10th annual Astoria International Film Festival is taking place Friday to Sunday, Oct. 21 to 23, presenting a wide range of documentary, feature and short films, both domestic and international. All the action will take place at Astoria's historic Liberty Theater. Tickets may be purchased at the box office: \$5 for one film or \$40 for a complete festival pass.

As to why he started the festival here, Executive Director Ron Craig points to his fascination with all the history in this area. He remembers experiencing a kind of spiritual epiphany that this was the spot for a film festival. (Among his many fine qualities, Craig possesses the heart of a mystic, on occasion open to signs and portents and things like past lives.) More importantly, according to him, his overarching drive to make the fes-

tival a reality came out of a highly grounded notion. As an African American filmmaker, he knew the power of film to tell stories that need telling first hand — most often the stories of women and minorities, of injustice in general.

These factors get at the very core of the Astoria International Film Festival. The nonprofit has quite a lofty mission when you think about it: emphasizing the art of movie-making and empowerment — as he puts it, “giving someone back their story” in film and empowering film goers, too, when they see that film. Add to this heady mix 1) encouraging dialogue and a healthy exchange of ideas, 2) an education component and 3) lots of local involvement. Voila!

So sit back and enjoy the fruits of Craig on his yearly mission: to foster mutual understanding through films, forums and festivals, with a little jazz thrown in for good measure. Why? Because, as his grandma used to say, “We all learn from each other.”

FRIDAY, OCT. 21
Various short films
5:30 to 7:15 p.m.

The film festival officially kicks off at 5:30 p.m. Friday with a selection of short films. Some are from the 42nd NW Filmmakers' Festival, which took place in Portland last November. The documentary short “Tender,” by filmmaker Nurri Kim, follows the interaction between the carer and the cared-for in a small Finnish town; the film was an official selection at the Nordic International Film Festival in New York City. Survival drama “Remain,” directed by 2010 Warrenton High School graduate Michael Anthony Cain, tells the story of a mother and daughter in a disaster-ridden world.

'Vanport Mosaic'
7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Built in 1942 on swampy land near today's Portland Expo Center, Vanport was meant to be a temporary solution to Portland's housing shortage. Many minority laborers

who came to live there worked in shipyards during World War II. With a population of 40,000, Vanport was Oregon's second largest city and the largest World War II federal public housing project.

But on Memorial Day in 1948, one of the dikes surrounding Vanport broke, flooding the city and wiping it out.

'Valley of Ditches'
9 to 10:30 p.m.

Chris Lang, a 2002 Astoria High School graduate and filmmaker, will bring his independent survival/crime/horror thriller “Valley of Ditches” to the festival. Some may remember a preview screening of the then-unfinished film back in February at the Columbian Theater. This isn't Lang's first time having one of his films in the Astoria film festival; his film “Our Life in Make Believe” was on the 2014 schedule.

In “Valley of Ditches,” a young woman bound in the front seat of a parked car watches helplessly as her captor methodically digs a grave in the desert ground, the body of her boyfriend visible in the rearview mirror. But it's only the beginning of a brutal struggle where survival could be worse than death.

SATURDAY, OCT. 22
'Tango'
Noon to 2 p.m.

In his role as festival curator, Craig says, “I always try to (pick films) that describe what's going on socially and culturally in our world.” Many of the selections are also relevant to Astoria, the Northwest and Oregon. A case in point is the musical drama “Tango,” a 1998 film by Spanish director Carlos Saura, who is famous for combining passion and dance in his films. Showing this foreign film is a nod to an existing tango contingent in Astoria and the Astoria Arts and Movement Center's new October series of Argentine tango classes, taking place on Saturdays.

'Equal Means Equal'
2:30 to 3:40 p.m.

The highly-regarded 2016 documentary “Equal Means Equal,” directed by Kamala Lopez and executive produced by Patricia Arquette, promises to be a festival highlight. Through real-life stories and legal cases, the film examines how women are treated in the U.S. and uncovers how discriminatory

Continued on Pg. 5

