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Four films featured in festival

Three shorts, one full-length feature at Genitti's

By Nathan Menoian

SPECIAL WRITER

Three short films and one full-length film will be shown this weekend during the Arts & Acts celebration in downtown Northville.

Genitti's Hole-in-the-wall theatre will be presenting the films one night only on Saturday at 108 East Main Street (248-344-0497).

The doors will open at 7 p.m., and the films will start at 7:30. Tickets are \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door. Tickets are available at the Art House store, Gardenviews, Genitti's, and The Next Chapter Bookstore.

Raymond and Laurie Rodriguez, owners of Chimera Studios in Northville, organized this weekend's film festival. As members of the Northville Chamber of Commerce, they were invited to participate in Arts & Acts.

The three short films were all made in Michigan.

"Pria" is a 12-minute film about a high school girl made fun of by her peers because of her accent. A Michigan producer, who is a college professor in Canada, made the film.

"The Sculptor," a 15-minute film, is the biography of Lois Teither, a mother who went Eastern Michigan University to study sculpting late in life after raising her three children. Her son Josh produced the movie.

"Dog Gone," an eight-and-a-half-minute film, is a charming comedy about a little girl and her real pet dog. While searching through some old toys in the attic, the little girl's mother finds many of her own toys from her childhood; among them is a stuffed dog she cherished. She gives the old toy pet to her young daughter to enjoy, just as she did years ago.

"Unbeatable Harold" is a full-length Hollywood film, released in 2006, about an Elvis wannabe attempting to win the affections of his dream girl who has just left her old boyfriend.

Gordon Michaels wrote, produced, and stars in the movie, which also includes performances by Henry Winkler, Gladys Knight and Charles Durning, along with several other notable performers. The pink Cadillac, which appeared in "Unbeatable Harold," will be on display at Genitti's this weekend.

The Rodriguezs expect that there will be more short film entries in next year's film festival. Coming up in January 2011 there will be a 'call for entries' for people to send in short, family-friendly films. More information will be available through the Northville Art House.

"This will be a great way for people to get their little projects out and their name as well," Laurie said. "Short films are a popular venue and something that can be done quickly. They can be creative, funny, animated, serious -- but most of all they get a chance to show their stuff on the big screen."

"Michigan is holding onto a struggling automotive industry, so we've got to become more diversified. And the movie industry is the ticket," Raymond said.

Last year, a friend of theirs was making a documentary on the sport of roller derby, titled "Derby Girls," and she was conducting an interview in Farmington Hills with actress Drew Barrymore who was out promoting her new movie 'Whip It'. In the film, she starred as one of the team members of a professional roller derby team.

"Our friend asked us to shoot some video of her while she was actually interviewing Drew Barrymore. The place was jammed with all the local TV stations, reporters from all around the area, and we were allowed in to shoot footage for the documentary," Raymond said.

He believes for Michigan to reach its potential in the film industry, the state will have to continue proving itself to Hollywood, which it's been doing rather well over the past three years. The state is providing top-quality movie crews, caterers and even actors for Hollywood to depend upon, helping the film industry to quickly warm up to Michigan.

Chimera Studios does graphic design, animation and editing, oceanographics, videography, post-production and cinematography. Independent movie producers (some from Hollywood), asking for their help, are contacting them and so are some Michigan screenwriters who are putting movies together.

"Anyone can go out and make a movie, but the biggest thing to overcome is distribution. If you can't get that, then you've done all that work making the film for nothing," Raymond said.

A couple of movie producers Chimera Studios is working with already have the necessary financing, are finishing the script, and are working on distribution.

But for success in distribution, Raymond knows that networking is vital.

"When Hollywood big shots come to town, they go to parties. And that's where you have to make the contacts," he said.

"If they hear that everything else is set -- the money, the script, the cast, the shooting, etc. -- they're more than willing to put you in touch with legitimate distributors."

Hollywood always looks at what a film grosses and is constantly being reminded about what they've known all along -- family movies still make the most money.

"But all movies have a flat spot, and they have to find a way to bring the interest of the viewers up. That's the reason you see so many action movies," Raymond said.

Visit www.chimerastudios.net for the services they provide.

Nathan Menoian is a freelance writer living in Milford.
