

Filmmakers see fruition of work at Breckenridge Festival of Film

Event kicks off Thursday and goes through Sunday

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At the Breckenridge Festival of Film, the filmmakers are as interesting as the films themselves.

Doing what they love, they persevere through obstacles to find a rewarding finish in attending festivals where their movies are screened.

Greg Chwerchak, filmmaker behind "Greetings From the Shore," wanted to make a movie akin to the ones he loved growing up, citing classics like "Better Off Dead," "The Breakfast Club" and "Dirty Dancing."

"They were a little tongue-in-cheek, a little cheesy ..." he said.

His film, which is playing at the Breckenridge Theatre at noon on Saturday and at 3 p.m. on Sunday, follows one young woman's last summer on the Jersey Shore.

The filmmaker took a chance on actress Kim Shaw, who was just out of drama school when she beat out 400 others for her role in "Greetings From the Shore."

Shaw has since been seen on "Gossip Girl" and is in the "Sex and the City" movie.

Chwerchak has shown the film at more than 60 festivals in the last nine months, and it will have a limited theatrical release on Aug. 8.

Silence is golden

Jonathan Browning is the creator of "The Job," a short comedy playing at 10:01 a.m. on Friday at the Town Hall Amphitheater and again at 9 p.m. on Saturday at the Breckenridge Theatre.

While filming his "satirical look at day laborers," Browning discovered that a camera malfunction lost nearly all the sound.

Without the finances to record it again, Browning was forced to rethink the project. He said he realized: "The dialogue didn't add anything ... I think (with the dialogue), it would've been bloated and really long."

He has since taken his comedy to 75 festivals, including Paris, where he won best of fest.

"To have the opportunity to see the world because of a three-minute film is pretty incredible," he said. Browning also noted, "I'm never going to sell it, never going to make any money. The reason to make a short film is to meet people and grow as an artist. To not go (to the festivals) is a huge waste."

From maven to mogul

Filmmaker Brad Rothchild, whose drama "Homeland" will play at the Breckenridge Theatre at 1:08 p.m. today and at 6 p.m. on Saturday, left his corporate gig with Citigroup to put his idea onto film.

As a former Israeli ambassador for the United Nations, Rothchild described the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as "always at the top of my consciousness."

His film "Homeland" is the story of a young Israeli man who meets a beautiful Palestinian girl in New York City.

"I felt this was a story I had to make," he said. "I wanted to write a story that kind of explained the conflict and also shows a solution to it."

A labor of love

Tom Khazoyan, one of the makers of "Yai Wanonabalewa: The Enemy God," which will play at 9:30 a.m. today at the Breckenridge Theatre and 6 p.m. Saturday at the Breckenridge Christian Ministries, has spent eight years creating his labor of love.

His film production company 10X is a non-profit organization which works to tell the "spiritual stories of the varied peoples of the world." "An Enemy God," the company's first film, certainly had its challenges.

The idea of documenting the indigenous Yanomamö people of Venezuela came when a member of the highly studied group came to the filmmakers asking to tell their story from their own perspective.

After visiting the region and speaking with the elders, the film crew had set up a village near the real village to shoot in and were poised to create the film in the indigenous language, using people from the group as actors.

However, in 2005 just before filming, the political landscape in Venezuela was changing under President Hugo Chavez, who has sparred verbally with President Bush.

"Since then, they told us if you come down here we'll throw you in jail and take away your equipment," Khazoyan said.

After waiting it out for about a year, they began looking for alternative locales to shoot, and found a serendipitous spot in Belize.

They found another group, indigenous to that area, and in 2006 shifted production to the new location.

Khazoyan used the K'ekchi' as actors in the film, speaking their language, but portraying the Yanomamö.

Khazoyan said they will share any profits from the film with the Yanomamö and K'ekchi', along with working to make more movies of this kind.

These filmmakers and many others will be in attendance at the Breckenridge Festival of Film for the forums and available for questions after their respective screenings.

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