

FILM

By Julian Wise

Sharing the power of story

Bigger, bolder, and ready to blow the late winter doldrums away, the 2006 Martha's Vineyard Independent Festival returns this weekend to the Chilmark Community Center with a roster of films ready to prod, provoke, stimulate, and move audience members. From avant garde short films to cutting-edge work by internationally acclaimed directors, the festival covers a broad spectrum of work that's unified by the power of film to strike a direct connection to our intellectual and emotional core.

The 2006 lineup of 32 films explores the slums of Brazil ("Favela Rising"), lyrical mariners ("Fisher Poets"), Native American rights ("Homeland"), Middle Eastern politics ("West Bank Story"), the anguish and ecstasy of marriage ("In-laws and Outlaws"), law and gender in Cameroon ("Sisters In Law"), transsexuality ("Breakfast on Pluto"), and the undeniable beauty of Paris ("Paris, Je T'aime"). The selection includes work from directors Wes Craven, Greg Araki, and Neil Jordan. Panel discussions will include dialogues with writer/director Drew Emery ("In Laws and Outlaws"), octogenarian Zelda Kaplan (subject of the documentary "Her

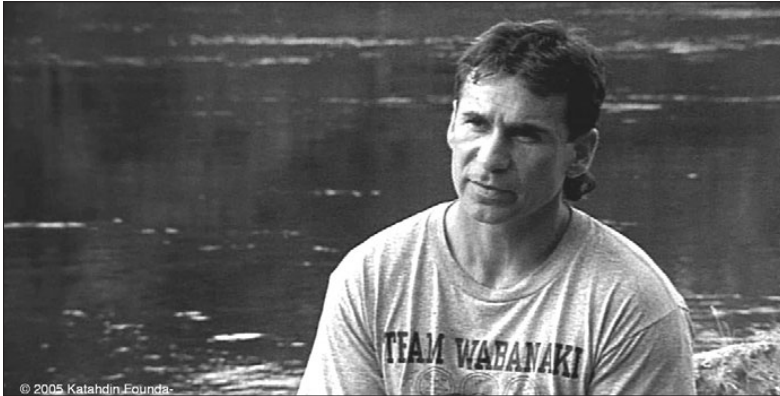
For more about the film festival, visit www.mvtimes.com

Name is Zelda"), producer Jeffrey Levy-Hinte ("Mysterious Skin"), and other filmmakers. An art installation by visual artist Rhonda Hershey will compliment live music by Angus Martin, Cara Bertman, Wes Look, and Isaac Taylor. Savory cooking by Scottish Bakehouse wizard Danielle Dominick will satisfy appetites between screenings.

Festival founder Thomas Bena, Assistant Programmer Anna Molitor, and creative ace Jeremy Mayhew have spent months assembling the festival with help from over 42 individuals and businesses, ranging from projectionists Chris Mara and David Kann to Cape Air and Barnes



Straight from the favelas (ghettos) in Rio de Janeiro, festival organizers say "Favela Rising" is a must-see.



Co-sponsored with the Wampanoag Tribe, "Homeland: Four Portraits of Native Action" will screen on Saturday afternoon at 12:30 pm.

Trucking. Festival founder Thomas Bena says the growth in the festival has been a remarkable phenomenon. "The initial impetus was more like a hunch," he says. "I had no idea that it would grow into a three-day international film festival. We simply imagined what our ideal movie watching scenario would look like and created it."

While the lineup includes films from national and international artists, many of the feature films reflect the demographics of the Island community. The documentary "Favela Rising" explores the struggle for rights and dignity amid Brazil's dangerous slums, while the festival has teamed with the Wampanoag Tribe to present "Homeland," a piercing look at the efforts of four Native American tribes to fight the US Government's ongoing pollution of native lands. The Net Result fish market is cosponsoring "Fisher Poets," an



The producer and director of "In Laws and Outlaws" will travel to the festival from Seattle to host a post-film discussion.

homage to the fishing culture that has been a vital piece of the Island's history.

Mr. Bena says the open format of the festival, with screenings punctuated by live music and exquisite food, is designed to foster interaction and community development.

"Our mission is to create a space where community dialogue is encouraged," he says. "I often feel like most screenings I attend are missed opportunities, where people gather together to witness a powerful film and then, within minutes, everyone

is in their cars racing home." The festival's post-film discussions and lengthy intermissions are designed to encourage attendees to relax and interact with each other. In line with the socially conscious theme of many of the films, the festival offers sweatshop-free merchandise and works with sponsors (Prius, Equal Exchange, Steaz Organic Sodas) that conduct business in a socially responsible manner.

As the festival expands each year, the dynamic between change and continuity creates a creative tension that opens the festival to a broader range of artistic expression. Yet Mr. Bena maintains that one common denominator remains: the power of film to move the viewer.

"As we grow, one thing is certain," he says. "Our work is to share the power of story." ♦

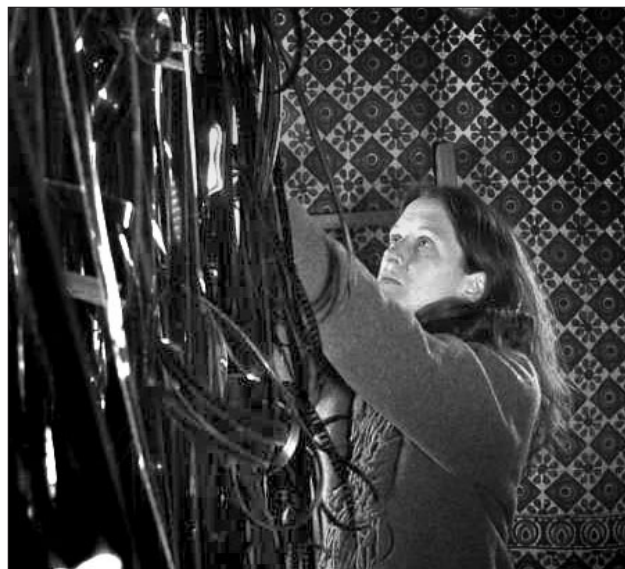
Martha's Vineyard Independent Film Festival starts Friday, March 17, at 7 pm; Saturday, March 18, at 10:30 am; and Sunday, March 19, at 12 noon. For more information



"Fisher Poets" pays homage to fishermen and fisherwomen. Several fisher poets and the filmmakers will travel to the Island to read their works after the screening.



One of the stars of the special shorts for kids program. Several of the filmmakers, some of them children will attend the screening for a discussion afterwards.



Charter School teacher Rhonda Hershey created "unreel," this year's art installation.

Offshore Ale Co.

St. Patrick's Day Eve
Thursday, March 16
NEW STOUT TAPPING
 \$5 Personal Pizzas

St. Patrick's Day
Friday, March 17
 Dollar Oysters and Ten Cent Wings
Live Irish Music with
Billy Kelly
 5-9:30 pm
Corned Beef and Cabbage
 All Day Long

Saturday, March 18
Kahoots
 w/Nikki Sudden
 All ages

Every Sunday
Live Jazz in the afternoon with
"The Jazz Fellowship"
 2-4 pm
 If you haven't checked this out, join us!

Every Monday Night
Blue Monday
 w/Pauly Size
 9 pm Open Blues Jam
 2 for 1 Entrees

the Wharf

RESTAURANT AND PUB

Lower Main St., Edgartown
508.627.9966
 SERVING THE ISLAND WITH FOOD & DRINK YEAR-ROUND
 LUNCH AND DINNER SERVED DAILY

Reopening
Friday, March 17
Prime Rib Night
 and St. Paddy's Day
 Specials

Sat. March 18
Tristan Israel and Paul Thurlow
 8:30-10:30 pm

SUNDAYS
 SUNDAY BRUNCH
 LOBSTER HASH SPECIAL

MONDAYS
 LUNCH SPECIAL:
 SOUP & SANDWICH
TUESDAYS
 SOUTHWEST NIGHT

Happy St. Paddy's Day

SEASONS
 Eatery & Pub

MARCH MADNESS WEEK
THURSDAY, MARCH 16

MIKE BENJAMIN AND FRIENDS
 10 pm-12:30 am

FRIDAY, MARCH 17
ST. PADDY'S DAY CELEBRATION

Dinner Specials • Lots to give away
 Harp • Guinness
 Green Beer

JERRY BENNET BAND
 W/ BYRD TAYLOR
 8 pm-12:30 am

SATURDAY, MARCH 18
KARAOKE
 OVER 10,000 SONGS TO CHOOSE FROM
 9:30 pm-12:30 am

SUNDAY, MARCH 19
MARCH MADNESS
WATCH ALL THE GAMES
 ON 16 SATELLITE TVs

MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS ONLY

\$10.95
3-COURSE MEALS ALL NIGHT

TUESDAY, MARCH 21
KARAOKE
 W/HOST VAMP THAT'S RIGHT
 OVER 10,000 SONGS TO CHOOSE FROM
 9:30 pm-12:30 am

CIRCUIT AVE., OAK BLUFFS



THE RITZ CAFE
 OAK BLUFFS

Thursday, March 16
Tristan Israel & Paul Thurlow

Friday, March 17
Dance Party with DJ D.W.

Saturday, March 18
Mercy Beat Band

Circuit Avenue, Oak Bluffs