

TXFF 2000

College Station's film festival gears up for seventh year

BY MATT MCCORMICK
The Battalion

Though Texas A&M is known for its dedication to the sciences more so than the arts, it is also home to the largest student-run film festival in the nation, the Texas Film Festival.

This year A&M will host the seventh Texas Film Festival, an event dedicated to giving independent and student filmmakers a chance to showcase their efforts.

Planned, organized and sponsored by the MSC Film Society, this festival has had a history of bringing some of the top names in the business to the A&M campus. The first festival in 1993 drew director Spike Lee (*Do the Right Thing* and *He Got Game*) to College Station.

Since then festivals have included such featured guests as Oliver Stone (director of *JFK* and *Natural Born Killers*), John Sayles (director of *Lone Star*) and last year's guest, Tim McGonigles (director of *Dancer, Texas*, *Pop 81*).

The Texas Film Festival consists of five nights of feature films and shorts with filmmaking workshops held in the afternoons.

The MSC Film Society received over a 150 submissions for the festival; committee members had to select the submissions they thought were best.

"The films we received this year were some of the best we have seen, but obviously we could not show every film. So we had to go through and select the cream of the crop," said Casey Starr, festival director and a senior industrial distribution major.

"For this festival we have the best films we have had in years," said Logan Youree, vice-chair person for Film Society and a junior speech communications major.

This year's festival also features more short films and documentaries than normal.

"We are bringing about 10 more short films this year as well as showing three documentaries," Starr said.

Each night, a question-and-answer session will be held with the film's director after the showing.

"I believe that the sessions with the directors will prove to be informational to anyone interested in film," Starr said.

There will also be workshops hosted by many of the directors and producers of the films featured at the festival that will provide information about many aspects of filmmaking. The workshops are free and will be geared toward a broader audience than in the past.

"The workshops this semester are artistic but they are going to be of more interest to the general public [and] are more likely to draw members of the population who are not necessarily heavy-duty into film," Starr said.

The festival has grown and changed from a student involvement perspective as well.

"Administratively, we have more student involvement in this year's festival," said Ryan Whitworth, chair of Film Society and a senior biomedical science major.

This year's festival features acclaimed director Robert Rodriguez as the guest to close the festival. His film credits include *El Mariachi*, *Desperado*, *From Dusk Til Dawn* and *The Faculty*. Rodriguez will be

hosting a special screening of his landmark film *El Mariachi* on the closing night of the festival and will be available for a question and answer session from the audience.

Rodriguez has exhibited a strong influence in filmmaking over only a few short years, and he is one of the most influential guests that students will have the opportunity to see.

"I think with a director like Rodriguez in a town like College Station, that we can count on a pretty big turnout," Starr said.

The festival also gained some attention with the announcement that actress Sandra Bullock (who starred in *Speed* and *Forces of Nature*) would be attending the festival.

"Essentially, Sandra Bullock approached us about attending the festival. She had heard about it and called up and expressed interest. I think we are finally getting a reputation within the industry," Youree said.

However, because the production date of her next film was moved up, Bullock cannot attend the festival.

Another demonstration of the prestige the festival has gained is in its acquisition the short films, *Culture* and *Radiation*, which were shown at the Sundance Film Festival. *Culture* has been called "the best minute in film" by critics present at this year's Sundance Festival.

The festival is the MSC Film Society's single-largest event of the year, and is sponsored by several local businesses this year who have helped raise funds to bring high-quality films and guests. This is also the first year the MSC Film Society has been co-sponsored by MSC Icons, an organization dedicated to bringing notable people to campus.

Prices for the screenings vary by event, but there is a festival pass available for \$30. More information on the Texas Film Festival can be obtained by contacting the MSC Film Society at 847-8478 or by visiting the festival's Web page at <http://films.tamu.edu/festival>.

See Pages 6 and 7 for more information.

TEXAS FILM FESTIVAL 2000

Liberal Arts Career Week

Tonight: Interviewing Workshop
7:00 - 8:15 p.m.
Rudder 510

Tomorrow: Networking Workshop
7:00 - 8:15 p.m.
Rudder 410

Thursday: Alumni Forum
6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Reed Arena
Social
8:00 - 9:00 p.m. Reed Arena

Friday: Career Fair
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Rudder Exhibit Hall



Social Justice in

Islam

&

Christianity

An Inter-faith Dialogue Presented by the
Muslim Students' Association

Thursday, Feb. 17th
MSC 224-225 @ 7pm

Dr. Ihsan Bagby

(Shaw University, North Carolina)

Dr. Bob Mayfield

(Dir. of Baptist Student Ministry, TAMU)

Free Admission!

Refreshments served!

For more info, email islam101@tamu.edu or call 693-5463