
BACKSEAT

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That is, of course, until the festival moves on to the nightly after parties, which will take place at different establishments around the neighborhood.

Still, Backseat is striving to keep the focus of the screenings on the movies themselves — and rightfully so, given the impressive resume lined up for this year's festival.

The first weekend will see a solid batch of movies, including Saturday night's showing of animator Bill Plympton's "Idiots and Angels" at 7 p.m. followed by the premier of local boy Adam Ahlbrandt's "The Burnt House" at 9:30.

A Sunday night powerhouse combo of features leads off with Canadian filmmaker Lee Demarbre's "Vampiro" and is followed up by West Chester native Bam Margera's "Minghags."

"Vampiro" is a documentary about Canadian native Ian Hodgkinson's life as a famous lucha libre wrestler in Mexico.

"It's such a typical Canadian success story," explained Demarbre with a chuckle. "If you want to be successful in the entertainment industry, you have to leave the country."

The film follows Hodgkinson as he travels around the world and struggles with life at his home in Mexico.

"You walk the streets of Canada and Europe and the United States with him, and people notice him for the tattoos and all," explained Demarbre. "You can't walk around Mexico with him . . . people just swarm you."

"They've successfully hybrid the feel of an underground festival while simultaneously keeping the promotional elements of a mainstream festival."

► **Joe Frantz, Minghags co-writer/co-producer.**

"Minghags" is a lighter narrative feature by Margera and the rest of the gang that brought 2003's "Haggard:The Movie" to life.

According to writer/producer Joe Frantz, the term Minghags is a fictional word that is a "slang plural noun for socially inept, emotionally maladjusted individuals," and was coined by the gang themselves.

The film, which is a loose sequel to "Haggard: The Movie," is a true independent film in the sense that the financial backing came from Margera himself, not a studio.

"Studios don't understand movies like this on paper," explained Frantz. "You can't deliver a script like this to a studio and expect them to understand it."

"This is the first time that 'Minghags' will be seen in its entirety by an audience," added Frantz.

Why the Backseat Film Festival?

"They've successfully hybrid the feel of an underground festival while simultaneously keeping the promotional elements of a mainstream festival," says Frantz.

This is all just a precursor to next week's tribute to longtime filmmaker Adam Rifkin ("Detroit Rock City"), whose work will be featured throughout the week and will have his 17-year-old feature, "The Dark Backward," premiered in Philly after his newest movie "Homo Erectus."

Movies, however, aren't all that will be featured at this year's festival.

"With the festival is the grand opening of the (941 Theatre) as a proper movie theater," added Sakmann. "It's also the launching point for our Philadelphia Friends of the Projected Arts" group.

The gang announced both the theatre and the PFPA initiative at last year's festival, and spent a good part of time between then and now organizing the efforts.

Added Ulkucu, "Everything we do is interrelated anyway so, on one level, the whole mission of the PFPA is to remind people how important it is to preserve the theatrical experience in terms of watching movies."

That mission, they say, is the whole impetus for 941 Theatre.

"I think we've established a personality among the film community of the kinds of films we like to show," explained Ulkucu.

That personality will be on display in full force over the next two weeks.

For those who can't get enough, 941 will also be presenting a "Best Of The Backseat Film Festival" showing at the Philadelphia Film Festival/CineFest this year.

That fest will kick off citywide on March 26.●●
