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Sunday A&E: Wild Rose film fest flourishes

34 finalists are gleaned from almost 400 worldwide entries submitted this year

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Mason City native Tanna Frederick, standing, stars in the movie '45 Minutes from Broadway,' a finalist in the 10th annual Wild Rose Independent Film Festival. / Special to the Register

Written by **Michael Morain**

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No matter what plant metaphor you use, the Wild Rose Independent Film Festival is growing like a weed.

“The Wild Rose is starting to be one of the cool independent film festivals on the grapevine, so to speak,” said Kimberly Busbee of Des Moines, who founded the annual Des Moines festival 10 years ago.

This time around, she received almost 400 entries from around the world. She and a jury spent hundreds of hours culling the pile to just 34 finalists — features, shorts, documentaries — which will be screened from Thursday to Nov. 15 at the Fleur Cinema & Cafe. An awards ceremony is set for Saturday.

The quality of entries has significantly improved over the last few years, Busbee said, in part because good cameras and equipment have become much less expensive. Filmmakers can edit their

projects with basic software on ordinary laptops.

“It’s amazing to me,” she said. “You’ll see something that looks like Hollywood, but it’s from some dinky little operation.”

It hasn’t hurt that big-studio budgets have dwindled in recent years.

“Actors like a good script. And if they like a project — even a short film — they’ll lend their support to it,” Busbee said.

That’s why this year’s festival includes a smattering of recognizable stars like Beth Behrs (“Two Broke Girls”) and Curtis Armstrong (“Risky Business”) in “Route 30, Too!”; Eric Roberts (“The Dark Knight”) and Kevin Brown (“30 Rock”) in

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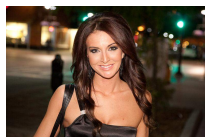
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10th Annual Wild Rose Independent Film Festival

WHEN: The eight-day festival begins Thursday at the Fleur Cinema & Cafe, 4545 Fleur Drive.

INFO: Find a complete schedule of screenings, awards events, workshops (with actor Tom Bower) and more at www.wildrosefilmfest.com.

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“This Shining Night”; and Steve Guttenberg (“Police Academy”) and Beverly D’Angelo (“European Vacation”) in “I (Heart) Shakey.” This year’s festivalgoers will also see the world premiere of a British thriller called “Confine,” a day before it’s screened in its filmmakers’ native country.

But Busbee received a higher percentage of Iowa-based films than ever, despite the recent brouhaha over tax credits for the Iowa film industry.

“Filmmaking never went away,” she said.

“Sure, we can’t have the really huge films unless we get some state support, but there are still tons of smaller projects all across the state.”

HIGHLIGHTS

Here are a few of the festival films with Iowa connections:

- **“America’s Darling”** documents the life of the influential Des Moines Register cartoonist and pioneering conservationist Jay “Ding” Darling, who won two Pulitzer Prizes during his career here in Iowa. Producer Samuel Koltinsky boiled down three years of research, 12,000 cartoons and 300 hours of audio recordings into the 75-minute film, which received its premiere last month at the Temple for Performing Arts. 7 p.m. Nov. 11 (followed by a panel discussion about conservation) and 8:15 p.m. Nov. 15 (followed by a talk with Koltinsky).
- **“Shimmer,”** which was shot in 1993 in Toledo and Waterloo, tells the fictional story of a young boy at a 1950s juvenile home whose unusual perspective helps him survive. 5 p.m. Nov. 11 (followed by a talk with director John Hanson and star Tom Bower) and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 12.
- **“I (Heart) Shakey”** is a comedy about a 10-year-old girl and her dog, starring Steve Guttenberg, Beverly D’Angelo and Rylie Behr of Grimes. 12:45 p.m. Saturday (followed by a talk with Behr) and 5:30 p.m. Nov. 13.
- **“Just 45 Minutes from Broadway”** traces the blurry line between one showbiz family’s acting careers and their real lives. It features Mason City native Tanna Frederick, who works in Hollywood and founded an Iowa film initiative called Project Cornlight. 8:50 p.m. Friday and 5:30 p.m. Nov. 15 (followed by a talk with Frederick and film editor Ron Vignone).
- **“The Vindication of Ronald Clay”** ties together the stories of five patrons at a coffee shop. The film — part sci-fi, part drama, part

comedy — was created in Fairfield with elaborate special effects. 6:50 p.m. Friday (followed by a talk with director Cullen Thomas and producer Donald Revolinski) and 5:30 p.m. Nov. 14.

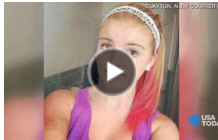
• **“Game of Chance”** follows a group of friends on their regular poker night, and the mysterious guest who ups the ante. It was shot in Des Moines by director Scott Thompson. 8 p.m. Thursday (followed by a talk with Thompson).

• **“Easton’s Article”** is set in 1997, when a 40-year-old man discovers his own obituary on the then-new World Wide Web, prompting him to rewrite his future. The movie was shot in Dubuque by director Tim Connery. 5:30 p.m. Nov. 12 (followed by a talk with Connery) and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 13.

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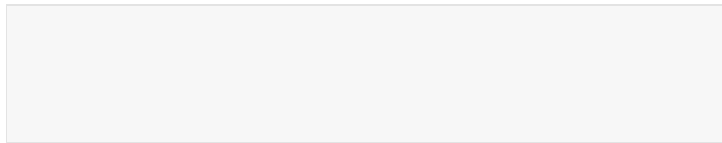
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