

VAIL FILM FESTIVAL 2004

Screening and edgy future for Vail



First annual Vail Film Festival comes to town April 1 — 3/25/04

by Erik Vienneau — Vail Trail

As a valley known for “safe art” and a conservative performance art scene, Vail is at a crossroads as its old guard is joined by the next generation of culture-hungry visitors. It’s uncertain whether Vail will become a retirement enclave for conservative CEOs from across the globe or a hot spot for a new breed of hip, young second (or third) homeowner millionaires.

With two contemporary art galleries finally on the Vail scene (Minturn’s Soke and Eagle Vail’s The Collaborative) and a private gallery located in a Vail residence (featuring Damien Hirst and Andy Warhol) it appears Vail may be coming out of its conservative visual arts closet.

With the independent Vail Film Festival on its way to town April 1 - 4, those tired of bronze bear sculptures and paintings of idyllic Aspen trees will be getting a dose of the culture they crave. It’s something unique, something touching, and even something edgy.

Festival founders Scott and Sean Cross and Denis Jensen are actors and filmmakers that visited Vail for skiing over the last 20 years. They decided a few years back that it was time for Vail to host its own film festival. After meeting with both the Town of Vail and Vail Resorts the three were amazed at the positive response they received. With corporate sponsors from United Airlines to Cosmopolitan Magazine now onboard and 2,500 - 4,000 festival goers expected this April, the Cross brothers say they are thrilled to present the first annual Vail Film Festival.

“The Vail Film Festival is about art and expression, about broadening the medium’s boundaries,” says Scott Cross. “We want filmgoers and filmmakers to come together and celebrate their passion. We’d like to bring a sense of discovery back to the festival experience.”

The festival is featuring films regarding everything from bizarre realities and random sexual encounters (as in “Noise,”) to stories of twisted minds (including a documentary on famed writer Charles Bukowski), to the story of a hate-based attempted murder of two Mexican day laborers (as in “Farm-ingville”) to the story of outlaw journalist Hunter S. Thompson. So it appears the Vail Film Festival will bring some diverse offerings to Vail’s conservative artistic norm.

Recent visits to Vail by high-profile actors such as Cameron Diaz and Luke and Owen Wilson may be a sign that the valley has a chance to escape its stuffy art image, says Cross. “Over the last couple of years I’ve noticed that some of the young Hollywood hipsters that used to go to Aspen are starting to come to Vail, bringing a more cosmopolitan image to the area,” he says. “There are people that are hungry for some-

thing different.” The Vail Film Festival aims to become an annual tradition, drawing talented filmmakers from across the globe.

“I think the world is waiting to see how the next generation of independent filmmakers will change the landscape of film,” says Sean Cross. “We’d like the Vail Film Festival to help usher in the next century of film making and filmmakers.”

A decidedly major-studio free event, the Cross brothers agree that the films presented will be on-the-edge passionate and thought-provoking by Vail standards.

“Most filmmakers don’t have much money behind them when they don’t have studio support,” Scott Cross says. “You tend to be a lot more passionate about film making when you are independent and have to struggle and work hard to get the funding.”

Besides being creative and often lower-budget, the films presented at the Vail Film Festival promise to be more unique than the average studio-backed block-buster. “Studio films tend to be cookie cutter,” he says. “This isn’t the same stuff that’s been done a thousand times.”

From Program Screenings and Panel Discussions to a Festival Music Showcase and VIP Parties galore, the Vail Film Festival seems to have it all. Kicking off Thursday, April 1 with a Filmmaker Reception and Music Showcase at the Red Lion, festival goers can check out a screening of “Asylum” (an Academy Award nominated short film), followed by the feature film “Human Error” at local theaters and then catch the after-party at the Vail Cascade Resort.

Also, in the lineup is the North American premier of Richard Linkletter’s, “Before Sunset” featuring Hollywood favorite Ethan Hawke. This film is the most recognized in the series and is the first from Warner Independent. All other films are completely independent of major studio support - which is exactly how the Cross brothers envision the event.

“The goal isn’t to feature blockbuster films...you can see them anywhere,” Sean Cross says. “The goal here is to shine a light on film makers and independent films. There will be a sense of discovery; people will find that a new moviemaker’s work is pretty exciting.”

Vail Film Festival events are scheduled, April 1 - 4, at the Crossroads and Cascade Theaters, the Vail Cascade’s Centennial Ballroom (for all digital films) and over at the Tap Room and Red Lion where panel discussions and live music from seven (four of them Grammy nominated) performers including Sally Taylor (James’ daughter) will perform. Call 333-9689 or go to www.vailfilmfestival.org for info and tickets to the event. ■