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Island Life

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Posted on: Wednesday, June 15, 2005

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MAUI FILM FESTIVAL AT WAILEA

Full plate of films, food

By Michael Tsai
Advertiser Staff Writer

Tickets? Check.

Binoculars? Wiped and ready.

Diet plan? Duly forgotten.

It's time for the Maui Film Festival.

Now in its sixth year, the festival has become one of the state's premier film-watching, star-gazing, fine-dining events.

It opens tonight with a twilight reception at the Fairmont Kea Lani and a second party at Mulligan's on the Blue, both in Wailea.

A full schedule of film screenings follows at the Pacific Terrace in the Wailea Marriott Resort, Maui Arts & Cultural Center's Castle Theater and McCoy Theater, and the festival's signature venue, the Celestial Cinema at the Wailea Golf Club. (Wailea Beach also serves as a venue for the SandDance Theater on Saturday.)

Festival founder and director Barry Rivers said he and his staff screened some 1,200 "mini-major" and studio films before choosing the 60-odd features and shorts that will screen over the next five days.

"We're not trying to be one of those festivals with 150 or 300 films because, frankly, there usually aren't that many good films out there," Rivers said.

The lineup features the world premiere of Hawai'i surfers Laird Hamilton's and David



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Kalama's new film, "All Aboard the Crazy Train," a visual chronicle of the 2004-05 winter surf season at Peahi, Maui set to a score by Ben Harper.



Hamilton and Kalama will be on hand to receive the festival's Beacon Award. "All Aboard the Crazy Train" screens at 8 p.m. Sunday at the Celestial Cinema.

Other films include British Academy of Film and Television Arts award-winner "My Summer of Love" ("best picture"), Werner Herzog's "Grizzly Man," 2005 Sundance opener "Happy Endings," and the underwater documentary "Deep Blue."



Rounding out the schedule are several films with Hawai'i connections, notably Edgy Lee's "The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit," University of Hawai'i professor Vilsoni Hereniko's "The Land Has Eyes," "Hula Girls" and "Kamakakehua: The Precious Gift."

"I'm very conscious about integrating Hawaiian culture into our programming," Rivers said. "I want to expose people to a culture that has inspired me for more than 30 years."

From top: Entries for the Maui Film Festival include "All Aboard the Crazy Train," "Deep Blue," "The Wendell Baker Story," "Grizzly Man" and "The Land Has Eyes." The festival, now in its sixth year, will screen more than 60 features and shorts over the next five days.

Photos provided by Maui Film Festival

Rivers said the festival draws an even split of residents and visitors. Attendance at last year's festival was more than 20,000, up by a couple of thousand from the previous year.



The festival has drawn considerable national and international media attention over the past few years, in large part because of the high-profile actors it has been able to bring in with its various awards.

Hawai'i filmmaker Edgy Lee's "The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit" will be part of the festival.

Edgy Lee

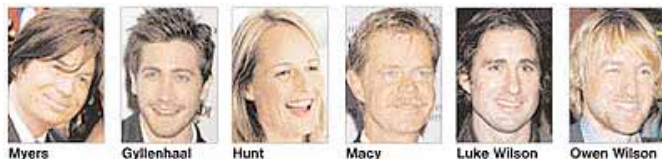
This year should be no different with CNN, VH-1 Classic and other entertainment media sending crews to cover appearances by frequent Maui visitor Mike Myers (Sword Award), Jake Gyllenhaal (Shining Star Award), Helen Hunt (Stella Award), William H. Macy (Rainmaker Award), and Wilson brothers Owen, Luke and Andrew (Shooting Star Award).

The Wilson brothers collaborated on the new comedy "The Wendell Baker Story," which screens tomorrow at the festival.

Two other appearances to note:

Musician and composer Michael Franti will perform songs and answer questions about "I Know I Am Not Alone," a film that chronicles his musical exploration of the Middle East. The film screens at 8 p.m. tomorrow.

Also, former Maui resident Paul Gilman, who is also the director of the Palm Springs symphony, and friends will perform at Saturday's screening of "Ocean Odyssey."



The festival has come to be known as much for fine eats as fine films. The Taste of Wailea event (\$175 and \$195) features haute cuisine from the Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea, the Grand Wailea Resort Hotel & Spa, Spago, Capische? and others.

While some sniff at the festival's Hollywood soiree-style proceedings, Rivers makes no apologies. "We just want to give people the best," he said.

Reach Michael Tsai at 535-2461 or mtsai@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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Maui Film Festival

Today through Sunday

Films: More than 60 features and shorts, including "All Aboard the Crazy Train," "My Summer of Love," "Howl's Moving Castle," "Hustle & Flow," "Grizzly Man" and "March of the Penguins"

Venues: Pacific Terrace in the Wailea Marriott Resort, Maui Arts & Cultural Center's Castle Theater and McCoy Theater, the Celestial Cinema at the Wailea Golf Club, and Wailea Beach

Information: (808) 572-3456, www.mauifilmfestival.com

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