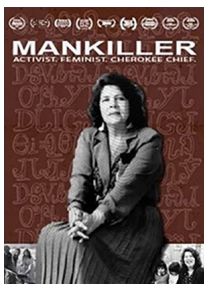


Spotlight on Gallup Film Festival featured screenings

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 28 September 2018 08:52



The sixth annual Gallup Film Festival, Sept. 13-15, featured a number of documentaries, as well as feature, student and short films made by local and international filmmakers.

Three entries were selected as featured screenings and are detailed below:

Defending the Fire

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The featured documentary that kicked off the film festival on Sept. 13 was *Defending the Fire*, written by Maura Dhu Studi and directed by David Aubrey. It was produced by Silver Bullet Productions in Santa Fe and narrated by Wes Studi.

“Native American Warriors have navigated a unique cultural and spiritual path, relying on the tenets of the Warrior in ancient and modern warfare,” the company’s site states.

The story of the warrior is presented in the documentary, highlighting the importance of cultures in modern quests, and the lessons of war through the lens of these cultures.

With a cast of elders and historians from New Mexico tribes, and veterans of World War II and the Korean, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, the documentary shows the distinct motive, preparation, conflict and healing of tribal soldiers.

After the film was screened at the El Morro Theatre on opening night, Silver Bullet writer/producer Lisa Lucas, feature writer Maura Dhu Studi and veteran actor and narrator Wes Studi answered questions from the audience.

“[The film] is just as important as the reason you’re in the audience,” Wes Studi said when asked about the importance of the film to the crew. “People are interested in the topic.”

Maura Dhu Studi said Native Americans have a natural instinct to protect and defend their home country.

“[We want] to dispel the stereotype of the ‘savage warrior,’” she said.

“We’ve lived up to the treaties we agreed to; we’ve allowed our young men to become warriors,” Wes said.

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Mankiller

Mankiller screened Sept. 14 at the festival and was directed and produced by Valerie Red-Horse Mohl.

According to the documentary's website, Wilma Mankiller, the protagonist, ought to be noted alongside Robert Kennedy, Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King, Jr., as someone who defied incredible odds and obstacles to fight injustice and give a voice to those who did not have one.

"This is the story of an American legend, Wilma Mankiller, who overcame rampant sexism and personal challenges to emerge as the Cherokee Nation's first woman Principal Chief in 1985," the site states.

The documentary explores the history and legacy of Mankiller, and marks the third collaboration between Gale Anne Hurd, of Valhalla Entertainment, and Valerie Red-Horse Mohl.

Red-Horse Mohl is of Cherokee ancestry and the owner/founder of Red-Horse Native Productions, Inc. Her company has become a frontrunner in collaborating with Native American tribes to ensure their stories are accurately and respectfully brought to the big screen.

While Red-Horse Mohl did not attend the Gallup Film Festival, she provided a Sept. 25 written statement about the Gallup region and extended her thanks for the screening.

"I purchased a lot of beautiful jewelry in town and loved the accommodations," she wrote. "I have worked in and around the Navajo Nation a lot and really love the area."

Prior to *Mankiller*, Red-Horse Mohl and her crew spent time in Gallup filming her PBS documentary *True Whispers: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers*.

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My Amish World

The festival's closing feature on Sept. 15 was *My Amish World*, a narrative film written by Tony Fauscett and Sam Wickey, who is also the director.

The film, based on true events, follows an Amish family and explores themes of oppression and hope, the expression of love and the freedom to leave the Amish.

Since its debut in 2017, the film has received accolades from numerous organizations including the Fort Myers Beach Film Festival, the Accolade Global Film Competition and the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival.

Wickey, who did not attend this year's film festival, responded to the *Sun* in a Sept. 25 statement.

"At some of the festivals where we had a big audience of sometimes about 450 people, they always give a standing ovation," he said. "People cry and the Q&A is endless. The feedback from people is totally awesome!"

By Cody Begaye

Sun Correspondent