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SIFF rolls out 160-plus film programs in its final full week

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P-I MOVIE CRITIC

The 33rd Seattle International Film Festival enters its last full week Friday.

During the next seven days, it plans to showcase more than 160 film programs in its seven venues: SIFF Cinema, Egyptian, Harvard Exit, Neptune, Pacific Place, Lincoln Square and Northwest Film Forum.

Week 3's highest-profile international offering is "The Boss of It All," a change-of-pace work from the controversial Danish director Lars von Trier, which the festival program describes as a "breezy office comedy." It's the Weekend Gala, at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Egyptian.

Also getting a special platform this week are two Spanish films billed as Special Presentations: "Goya's Ghosts," a biographical drama about the artist and his times directed by Milos Forman (6:30 p.m. Saturday, Neptune); and "Madrigal," an "atmospheric story of doomed love" directed by Fernando Perez (6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Neptune).

Another special event of the week will be a revival of the 1976 Dutch historical epic, "Max Havelaar" (3:30 p.m. Saturday, SIFF Cinema). Slated to be introduced by SIFF cofounder Dan Ireland, the screening is in memoriam to Fons Rademakers, the film's Oscar-winning director ("The Assault") who died last year and was a great friend and supporter of SIFF in its early years.

Yet another SIFF film this week that has turned out to be a memorial of sorts, though unplanned this time, is "The Life of Reilly," a concert film version of TV game-show legend Charles Nelson Reilly's one-man stage show, "Save It for the Stage" (4 p.m. Sunday, Harvard Exit). Reilly died last Friday in Los Angeles at age 76.

On Monday, the new SIFF Cinema will host an evening of classic Hollywood film noir, with a 7 p.m. showing of Joseph H. Lewis' 1955 "The Big Combo," one of the great gangster melodramas of its decade, and a 9:15 p.m. showing of 1950's "The Damned Don't Cry," with Joan Crawford as a Virginia Hill-like gang moll doing whatever it takes to rise to the top.

Both films will be introduced by noir-expert author Eddie Muller.

Other oldies in the lineup are the colorful and campy 1944 Maria Montez adventure "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" (1:30 p.m. Saturday, SIFF Cinema); the 1929 British silent, "A Cottage on Dartmoor," directed by Anthony Asquith (7:30 p.m. Wednesday, SIFF Cinema) and the 2005 dance documentary, "Ballets Russes"; which is being hosted by Pacific Northwest Ballet director Peter Boal in the last of SIFF '07's Talking Pictures programs (6:30 p.m. Monday, Harvard Exit).

In a series of four filmmaker seminars this weekend at the Northwest Film Forum, a panel of successful film

producers, financiers and distributors will "share their wisdom and insights on how to get a movie sold." The programs are: "Reaching an Audience" (10 a.m. Saturday); "Getting a Film to the Industry" (12:30 p.m. Saturday); "Selling to a Financier" (10 a.m. Sunday); and "Selling to a Producer" (12:30 p.m. Sunday).

Here are selected capsule reviews of movies playing through Sunday at the Seattle International Film Festival. Abbreviated capsule reviews for films debuting on subsequent weekdays will be posted at seattlepi.com. Reviews for showings on ensuing weekends will appear each Friday in What's Happening during the festival, which ends June 17.

The reviewers, identified at the end of each capsule by his or her initials, are William Arnold, Sean Axmaker, Winda Benedetti, Paula Nechak, Gianni Truzzi and Bill White.

FRIDAY

SHARKWATER

(Canada, documentary)

Sharks aren't the man-killers they're portrayed to be, says biologist Rob Stewart, and his vivid underwater footage of them will persuade you to his idea of beauty. But the rare sightings of schools of hammerheads and teams of tiger sharks gliding through the tropical blue of the Galapagos are only the beginning of Stewart's mission to save them from commercial catastrophe. While only five people a year die from shark bites, 15,000 sharks will be killed in the time it took to watch his movie, to feed an Asian shark fin market that has thinned their numbers by 90 percent. It's an effective spur to action against the cruel and shortsighted trade, especially after witnessing his harrowing escape, along with the enviro-fighters of Paul Watson's "Sea Shepherd," from Costa Rica after discovering a corrupt government/mafia alliance. (G.T.)

Grade: B+

7 p.m., SIFF Cinema; again Sunday at 11 a.m., SIFF Cinema

THE POINT

(Canada; drama)

Some 40 teens from one of Montreal's roughest neighborhoods (known as The Point) joined forces with a group of Canadian filmmakers for the making of this movie. Using some of their own experiences, the kids helped the screenwriters flesh out the story while playing themselves in front of the camera. Ultimately, "The Point" is a raw, sprawling tale of urban teens dealing with drugs, sex, heartbreak and the tornado of emotions those awkward, awful years bring. Here, dozens of lives come careening toward each other as the mysterious disappearance of a girl begins to unravel. Populated with a young and inexperienced cast, the film is -- not surprisingly -- a bit rough around the edges. But fans of movies like "Kids" and "Thirteen" will find it a satisfying if difficult viewing experience. (W.B.) **Grade: B**

4:30 p.m., Lincoln Square; again Monday at 4:30 p.m., Pacific Place

PRAGUE

(Denmark, drama)

can be overcome, it's just something that makes the adulterous romance between Mya and Ben seem a lot less important as the corpses of neighbors cut down with hedge clippers clutter the halls. Once the point of view shifts to the jealous and hallucinating cuckold Lewis, it revels in campy fun in which grisliness is played for laughs. The final return to thriller mode, however, demands indulgence that's harder to grant. (G.T.) **Grade: D**

Midnight, Neptune; again Tuesday at 9:30 p.m., Egyptian

SUNDAY

AMERICAN SHOPPER

(U.S., documentary)

Shopping for style is one thing, but an earnest Missouri insurance salesman would have us shop with style, dancing through the grocery store with costumes and a pimped-out cart, competing for points. Bewilderment and sniggers greet his initial pitches for his fevered brainchild sport, "aisling," but the quests for economic revitalization, bolstered sales and self-expression in Middle America converge to bring it to life at Schnuks Food and Drug. What begins as mere commercial whimsy becomes an unlikely source of renewal and liberation for a former beauty pageant queen, a lapsed actor, a mature free spirit and a guns-and-gusto plainsman, all of whom compete for the \$10,000 prize. This real-life "Waiting for Guffman" demonstrates the surprising healing power of the ridiculous. (G.T) **Grade: A-**

1:30 p.m., Harvard Exit

SALTY AIR

(Italy; drama)

When a young man working as a teacher in a Roman prison finally meets his father for the first time in more than 20 years, the encounter isn't exactly what he'd hoped. His father, who doesn't recognize him, is a convicted murderer unrepentant for the things he's done. What follows is a thoughtfully executed story of forgiveness and redemption. "Salty Air" weaves together some excellent performances as it slowly builds momentum. As the son studies the father he's always longed to know and eventually gets him a day pass to visit the outside world, the film wonders if anyone can ever truly start over. (W.B.) **Grade: B+**

11 a.m., Lincoln Square

OH LA LA!

(France, comedy)

Anne Fontaine's deft and deceptively simple comedy follows a freelance theatrical entrepreneur (Jean-Christien Sibertin-Blanc as a sweet, slightly daft dreamer) who turns a simple commission into an ambitious classical revival with a forgotten operetta star of yesteryear (Danielle Darrieux) and a glamorous but impulsive TV actress (Arielle Dombasle). Fontaine maintains a light comic touch throughout, even as the ensemble is divided in emotional tangles and personality clashes and their private lives echo their stage characters' fates. If her ideas exceed her reach, her gift for suggestion and understatement give comic scenes