

Hill Country Film Festival begins today

FREDERICKSBURG — Texas native Chad Mathews, executive director of the nonprofit Hill Country Film Festival, spent 15 years in the epicenter of the U.S. film industry — Los Angeles. There, he worked as an actor, producer and filmmaker before leaving the West Coast and returning to his home — the Hill Country.



Mathews

“Our hope is that anyone and everyone who appreciates the art of filmmaking will take the opportunity to check out the festival, see some great work by some great independent filmmakers, and help us continue to do what we do.”

Chad Mathews,
Executive director, Hill Country Film Festival

“I’d been to dozens of film festivals, and I couldn’t believe there wasn’t one in the Hill Country, so as soon as I returned, I got to work on the Hill Country Film Festival,” said Mathews, whose acting credits include “The Wanda Sykes Show,” “Profiler,” “General Hospital” and “Sniper: Inside the Crosshairs,” among others.

“Everyone should have the opportunity to attend a film festival. There’s nothing like it.” The 6th annual Hill Country Film Festival, a four-day independent film event, begins today and continues through Sunday.

Eight feature films and 90 short films that represent 15 countries — along with Q&A session, panel discussions, a closing night party and awards program and a sendoff reception — are scheduled.

The festival kicks off at 1 p.m. today with a panel discussion with actor-writer-director-producer Gary Weeks.



Weeks

Weeks is credited in more than 80 film, TV and commercial appearances, including “Zombie Apocalypse,” “Parks and Recreation,” “Burn Notice,” “The Walking Dead,” “The Office,” “Resurrection” and “Complications.”

At 8:30 p.m. today, there will be a free, family-friendly outdoor screening at the Marktplatz, Fredericksburg’s main plaza.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a lawn chair or a blanket for the screenings of “Peter Pix,” a comedy (Denmark); “The Dove Scouts,” a comedy (U.S.A.); “Lily’s Big Day,” an animated film (Canada); “Gnarly in Pink,” a documentary (U.S.A.); “Little Big Hero,” an animated film (Australia); “The Granny Globetrotter,” a documentary (U.S.A.) and “The OceanMaker, an animated film (U.S.A.).

All other screenings are at Fritztown Cinema, 2554 U.S. Highway 87, and Q&A sessions take place after a film block has ended.

At that point, the director and/or any of the film’s creative team come to the front of the theater to answer audience questions and talk about the process of making their film, Mathews said.

“I think one of the greatest things about the festival is the Q&A,” Mathews said. “It gives people a chance to hear from filmmakers, to find out the backstory to the film. Most people think filmmaking is easy, but it’s not. There’s a tremendous amount of time, effort and expense, and there’s a lot of heartache and heartbreak along the

way,” Mathews said. “Independent films are typically made outside of the Hollywood studio system, which means they are privately financed projects that tend to be on a smaller budget scale. Filmmakers persevere because they love films. That’s why it looks easy, even if it’s not.”

Every film is a labor of love, he said, “and once people hear the backstory to how these films were conceived and made — and everything that went into — they embrace the film even more than they initially thought.”

Panel discussions are industry-themed conversations that are moderated by one of the festival’s team members, and invited guests provide insight on a number of topics. Members of the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions after the panel has concluded its discussion.

“These panels are really interesting, and any question is welcome. This is a chance for people to ask what they’ve always wanted to know about the process,” Mathews said.

“There is no one way to make a film. People come at it from different directions, and that is part of the thrill. The panel can provide insight about the realities of creating a film and share creative solutions to challenges they have encountered along the way.”

Discussion panels are on Friday and Saturday with filmmakers or industry professionals proving insight into independent filmmaking. Panels are open to filmmakers and All-Access Badge holders only. A light breakfast will be provided at each morning panel.

About the festival

The festival features short films that last from 30 seconds to 30 minutes, feature-length films, music videos, art films, animation, musicals, comedies, thrillers, dramas and documentaries.

Tickets to the festival can be purchased online or at the theater during the festival, subject to availability. There are three ticketing options:

- All-Access Badge \$125: Enjoy access to all screenings during the festival. All Access Badge holders enjoy VIP status with access to all festival screenings with priority seating, social events, exclusive festival parties, panel discussions and the Filmmaker Lounge, which includes complimentary drinks and food at various events while supplies last.



Left “The OceanMaker” is an animated short film from director Lucas Martell that tells the story of a courageous young female pilot who fights against vicious sky pirates for control of the last remaining source of water after the seas have disappeared: The clouds.

Below: A Tropical Sunday is a dramatic short film shot in Mozambique about Lisa, Babu, Gito, and Nuno who live on the streets and spend their Sunday at a fair looking for a chance to jump on a ride.

Courtesy photos

At a glance

- **What:** 6th annual Hill Country Film Festival
- **When:** Opens today and continues through Sunday
- **Where:** Outdoor screening at Marketplatz, and indoor screenings at Fritztown Cinema, 2554 U.S. Highway 87
- **Tickets:** There are three options: All-Access Badge for \$125; Day Pass (Friday Only or Saturday only) for \$40; Individual tickets for \$10
- **Info:** Visit www.hillcountryff.com/festival/schedule

- Day Pass (Friday Only or Saturday Only) \$40: Day Pass includes access to all screenings on Friday or Saturday, plus priority seating ahead of single block ticket holders.
- Individual Tickets \$10: Single block tickets will be available for purchase at the door as available, based on All-Access Badge and Day Pass sales.

Mathews said his dream is to expand the festival, but funding is crucial.

“We are a nonprofit, and the money raised at the festival doesn’t really allow us — at this



point, anyway — to expand,” Mathews said. “Our hope is that anyone and everyone who appreciates the art of filmmaking will take the opportunity to check out the festival, see some great work by some great independent filmmakers, and help us continue to do what we do.”



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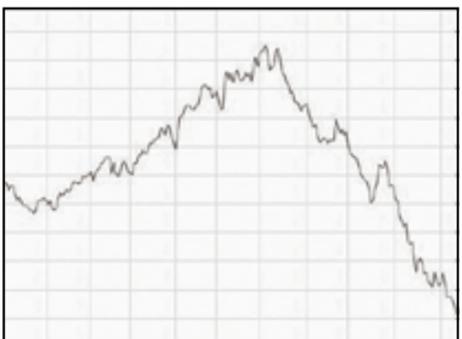
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