

OAKLAND PRESS SUBURBAN LIFE

More than 50 Michigan-made films showcased at festival



Charlie Haviland, Royal Starr Film Festival Communications Director (from left); Larry Kantor, Royal Starr president and Billy Whitehouse, secretary and treasury, are ready for their inaugural event Oct. 14 - 16. Photo submitted by Billy Whitehouse

By **Monica Drake**, *The Oakland Press*

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One-hundred independent films — half by Michigan filmmakers — will play at the [Royal Starr Arts Institute and Film Festival](#)'s inaugural event Oct. 14-16 at Emagine Theater in Royal Oak.

These films were selected from 300 submissions nationwide, said Billy Whitehouse, secretary and treasurer of Royal Starr Institute.

“There’s really incredible stuff we’re going to showcase,” he said.

Paul Glantz, co-founder and chairman of Emagine Entertainment, said, “There aren’t as many feature films released by Hollywood this time of year. So, it’s a great time for us to partner with the community to show independently produced films that are of high quality.”

“I’m always interested in helping those who are early in their film career. I believe strongly that everybody needs a start. ... One of these folks could turn out to be the next Steven Spielberg.”



IAMSHADO Photography - Robert Butler of Ortonville works with actress Julie Kline of Lake Orion on his film “The Girl on the Mat.”

Glantz helped produce a documentary, directed by Keith Famie of West Bloomfield, which will be shown at 3 p.m. Saturday. “[Maire’s Journey](#)” follows the last months of 24-year-old Milford native and former U.S. Army PFC Maire Kent’s life as she battled cancer.

“It’s a very touching story,” said Glantz.

Judge Damon Keith, Senior Judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and a lifelong civil rights activist, will be at the film festival at 7 p.m. Saturday for a question and answer session following the documentary about his career “Walk with Me.”

Other featured movies by local residents are “The Girl on the Mat,” which will be shown at 11 a.m. Friday and 9:30 p.m. Saturday, and “Spin,” which will be shown at 1 p.m. Friday and 7 p.m. Saturday.

“[The Girl on the Mat](#)” is directed by Robert Butler of Ortonville and stars Julie Kline of Lake Orion, who plays Hayden, the only female wrestler on her high school wrestling team.

Butler, who used to wrestle in school, said he wanted to create a female driven story.

“(Wrestling) is one of the few sports in high school where the girls can compete with the boys,” said Butler. “My goal is to ... empower and hopefully inspire women of all demographics by creating stories with strong female lead characters.”

“Spin,” which was released on Amazon Prime this summer, was directed and written by [Bret Hall of Oxford](#) and his nephew [James Henry Hall](#) of Clawson. “Spin” is about five strangers who enlist in a game of Russian Roulette where the last person alive wins \$500,000.

James said, “Artists aren’t centralized solely to New York or Los Angeles. Sure, there may be a sense of saturation there, but they are also sprinkled in the nooks and crannies in between.”

“Your barber could be as prolific as an ‘A-lister,’ if only someone had access to his work. Local festivals are a great way for the artists to break out of hiding and be seen.”

In addition, the film festival will also host a competition for high school filmmakers. Their movies will be shown at noon on Saturday and an award ceremony at 5 p.m. will announce the winning student, who will be flown to Los Angeles for a red carpet tour of Paramount Studios.

Emagine Royal Oak is located at 200 N. Main Street. To purchase tickets for the film festival, visit royalstarrfilmfestival.com.

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