Gallup Film Fest brings stars to the stage

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 07 September 2018 03:25







Sixth annual festival offers movies, music and SURPRISES

Since its inception in 2013, the Gallup Film Festival has gone from a small event with just three films to an annual celebration with upward of 60 movies screened across three days.

Knifewing Segura, the head of Knifewing Productions and director of the Gallup Film Festival, said the growth of the festival has been remarkable.

“I think it’s been constantly growing,” he said in a Sept. 5 phone interview. “People love the idea of the festival growing.”

Segura said part of the festival’s strategy was to watch how other film festivals grew and then figure out how to take those procedures and apply them in Gallup.

The steps the Gallup festival has taken have paid off in the past three years, as the GFF has begun to draw the interest of filmmakers and prominent actors in the movie industry.

“Competition is going to get tougher, but it will bring out the best of the best,” Segura said about the growing number of entrants.

The appeal of the Gallup Film Festival has reached international filmmakers in India, Russia, and beyond, who want to get involved with various aspects of the festival.

But despite the growing interest from abroad, Segura also aims to appeal to local filmmakers, sharing the creative spark of people from this area with the rest of the world.

“[There are] stories about Gallup that need to get on out there,” he said. “I’m excited for what it’s going to do in the Gallup area.”

In addition to screenings of over 40 films from a dozen countries, the headline of the 2018 Gallup Film Festival is the special guest appearance by actor and musician Wes Studi, who has appeared in over 80 television and film productions including *Dances with Wolves*, The *Last of the Mohicans*
,
Heat
,
Avatar
and most recently,
Hostiles
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“Everyone involved is really excited,” Segura said about the opportunity to have Wes Studi attend the festival. “And he’s pretty excited about the festival.”

In addition to Studi, renowned comedian Marc Yaffee will also make a special appearance at the festival. The Native American writer, comedian and actor will be featured Sept. 10 at the Comedy Night Fundraiser held at the Downtown Conference Center at 6:30 pm.

Segura spoke about setting up meetings with directors for screening at the festival. He said the public’s reception to GFF news has been positive. The increase in audience interest has led the Gallup Film Festival to move from the Gallup Downtown Conference Center to the El Morro Theatre, and then to the El Morro Event Center and the Gallup Cultural Center.

“Movies are growing, so the building [spaces] are growing,” Segura said.

The presence of features like *Mankiller*, *Defending the Fire* and *My Amish World*, as well as the many features by other filmmakers impressed Segura with their ability to talk about a variety of subjects in new and remarkable ways, he said.

“I’m really impressed with a lot of them,” he said. “Some movies tell an incredible story.”

Segura emphasized the importance of the festival’s location in Gallup, a town of

both cultural and historical significance. He said he hopes the people and locations will spur both new and veteran filmmakers to continue producing and presenting their best work.

“You can’t get a better place than Gallup,” he said.

The festival is held Sept. 13 through 15, with tickets available at the Gallup Downtown Conference Center, 204 W. Coal Ave. The Q&A and Meet and Greet with Wes Studi takes place Sept. 13 at the Conference Center for $25.

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