

Must-see movies at the London Film Festival

Nearly 200 films to be screened over next few weeks

By DeeDee Doke, Special to Stars and Stripes

Movie mania arrives in London on Oct. 19 when the 49th edition of The Times bfi London Film Festival gets under way.

Until Nov. 3, there will be screenings of more than 180 new mainstream and experimental films (280 if you count short ones) from around the world, question-and-answer sessions with directors and actors, plus lectures, workshops and other film-focused events. They are aimed at armchair auteurs, aspiring filmmakers and most importantly, people who just love movies.

Since the festival is happening in super-cool London, the correct word to refer to the moving pictures on the screen is "film," and the proper name for the venue at which one views a film is "cinema."

But don't be put off by the names. The festival is a grab bag of the great, the odd, the unusual, the cerebral and the simply entertaining, whose makers hope their investments will lead to good word-of-mouth notice, or buzz.

And naturally, if the films get good buzz, big box office receipts may follow — although most filmmakers whose works are showcased at film festivals would probably be hesitant to admit that making money matters. It's the artistry that's important, you see.

American movies are among those getting a moment under the klieg lights. A few of the most highly anticipated shown include:

- **"Elizabethtown,"** comedy, starring Orlando Bloom and Kirsten Dunst. Directed by Cameron Crowe ("Almost Famous," "Jerry Maguire.") An unlikely romance develops against the backdrop of an elaborate memorial service. Show times: 8:30 p.m. Oct. 20, and 12:45 p.m. Oct. 21; Odeon West End, Screen 2, Leicester Square.
- **"Derailroaded,"** documentary. Directed by Josh Rubin. The late Frank Zappa discovered Larry "Wild Man" Fischer on the streets of Los Angeles, where Fischer was selling his songs (half-barked, bizarre and funny observations) for 10 cents to passers-by. Fischer, a paranoid schizophrenic, was institutionalized at 16 for stabbing his mother but nevertheless crafted a 30-year musical career. Show times: 9 p.m., Oct. 22, ICA Cinema; 4:15 p.m. Oct. 24, National Film Theatre.
- **"New York Doll,"** documentary. Directed by Greg Whitely. Story of the late Arthur "Killer" Kane, bass player for the flamboyant cross-dressing, proto-punk band the New York Dolls. Show times: 6:30 p.m. Oct. 22, and 4 p.m. Oct. 25. Venue: Odeon West End, Screen 1.
- **"March of the Penguins,"** family film. (France-U.S.A.) Directed by Luc Jacquet. The remarkable journey of a group of emperor penguins traveling 70 miles away from home to breed. Show times: 6 p.m. Oct. 25, and 1:30 p.m. Oct. 26. Venue: Odeon West End, Screen 2.
- **"Bubble,"** murder mystery. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. One of six films shot on hi-definition video and released simultaneously in U.S. movie theatres, on DVD and on television. Show times: 2 p.m. Oct. 26, National Film Theatre; 6:30 p.m. Oct. 29, Odeon West End, Screen 1.
- **"Walk the Line,"** biopic, starring Joaquin Phoenix, Reese Witherspoon. Directed by James Mangold. The Johnny Cash story comes to the big screen with Phoenix in the role of the Man in Black and Witherspoon as the love of his life, June Carter Cash. Music, drama, a love story — it's all here, folks. Show times: 8:30 p.m. Oct. 27, and 12:30 p.m. Oct. 30. Venue: Odeon West End, Screen 2. (This is presented as The Times Gala.)
- **"Lonesome Jim,"** comedy/drama, starring Casey Affleck, Liv Tyler. Directed by Steve Buscemi. A character-driven story about a would-be writer who goes home to his family in the Midwest after failing to make his dreams a reality in New York. Show times: 6:30 p.m. Oct. 27, and 4 p.m. Oct. 28. Venue: Odeon West End.
- **"Good Night, and Good Luck,"** political thriller, starring David Strathairn, Robert Downey Jr. Directed by George Clooney. A reconstruction of a 1954 confrontation between renowned newscaster Edward R. Murrow and Sen. Joseph McCarthy. Selected as the Closing Night Gala for the 2005 London Film Festival. Show time: 7 p.m. Nov. 3. Venue: Odeon Leicester Square.

Film synopses edited from information provided by the London Film Festival.

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