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Flicks at the Farm featured 'Tapia,' key announcements for WSIFF

Film festival slated for Sept. 3 - 7

Sun-News report

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LAS CRUCES >> An eclectic mix from the boxing world and the film industry met to celebrate the Las Cruces premiere of documentary "Tapia" during Thursday night's Flicks at the Farm fundraiser for the White Sands International Film Festival.

The film was shown at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum, and features five-time world champion boxer Johnny Tapia, a New Mexico native.

"This was the last year of his life," said Teresa Tapia, Johnny's widow, who attended the local premiere with Tapia's father, Jerry Padilla Sr.

"I feel like I'm home again," she said with a catch in her throat, as she talked about her late husband and their time in Las Cruces, where the couple lived for five years.

"I hope we've done him justice," she said before the opening credits rolled.

After the film, Teresa Tapia and Padilla had a Q&A session with the audience. Producer Julian Royalt also announced the actors that will portray Johnny, Teresa and Johnny's mom in the feature film, which will still be made despite Johnny's death. Shiloh Hernandez will play Johnny, and Vanessa Hudgens and Jessica Alba will portray Teresa and his mom, respectively.

Las Cruces boxer Austin Trout attended the event with his wife, Taylor, and renowned boxer and Trout's trainer Louis Burke.

Half of the proceeds from Flicks at the Farm went to the Johnny Tapia Foundation, which supports young athletes, women and at-risk children.

The other half of the proceeds went to the WSIFF to help bring in big-name stars and interesting films for the festival, which will be held in Las Cruces in September.

"The White Sands Film Festival is in its 10th year, and it's exciting to see how the interest in independent film has been exploding in Southern New Mexico," WSIFF board president Rob Sharp said in an email to the Sun-News. "Our mission is to showcase not only the best in New Mexico film, but also national and international entries."

And at Thursday night's event, WSIFF artistic director David Salcido gave attendees a little taste of the caliber of films to expect from this year's festival, as well as announced a new award category this year for New Mexico-made films.

"The batch we have this year is truly exceptional — a great selection of films," Salcido said of the submissions the WSIFF board has received, locally, nationally and internationally.

The film "Boardwalk" — by Stephen Verona, who wrote and directed "The Lords of Flatbush," which launched the career of film heavy-hitter Sylvester Stallone — will be shown at the festival for only the third time ever.

Myriad workshops will be available to aspiring local filmmakers, including a cinematography workshop by Michael Goi, who does the cinematography for hit television shows like "American Horror Story," "Glee" and "My Name is Earl."

Salcido recognized a few aspiring filmmakers already making their way into the local film industry as the winners of WSIFF's Student Film Promo Contest, where local students were encouraged to submit a promotional film for the festival. The winners were chosen from three categories:

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- College: "Treasure" by Rowan Baxa, a student at New Mexico State Univeristy's Creative Media Institute.

Clips from the three winning films were shown and each student was recognized in front of the Flicks audience.

Also announced on Thursday was the film schedule for the festival:

- Sept. 3: The opening night film is "Odd Way Home," directed by Rajeev Nirmalakhandan of the Creative Media Institute. The film is set in "a nowhere town New Mexico" and follows an odd couple on their journey through the American Southwest, where they find happiness in the unlikeliest of places and see in each other what no one else has seen before, according to the film's website theodddwayhome.com (<http://theodddwayhome.com>). Salcido described it as a snapshot of the "true face of autism in the real world."
- Sept. 4: The showing of the 48-Hour Film Competition contestants' films.
- Sept. 5: An award ceremony at the Rio Grande Theatre, and VIP and Enchantment Award Winner Party to be held at St. Clair Winery and Bistro.
- Sept. 6: A filmmaker social and screening of the Audience Choice film. The festival hopes this will take place at the White Sands National Monument on the dunes, but planning for all events for the festival is still ongoing. A complete schedule will be released as events are confirmed. As in years past, film screenings of all submitted films will take place at Allen Theatres Cineport 10 throughout the festival.

Salcido said that, at the conclusion of Flicks at the Farm, several people who attended the event had never been to the festival, but were very interested in learning more about it.

"That's two big wins in my book," he said. "I think we're off to a great start this year and am hoping we can build on the excitement (Flicks at the Farm) created to make the festival in September bigger and better than before."

For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit WSIFF.com (<http://WSIFF.com>) or find White Sands International Film Festival on Facebook.

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3. [La Mesa woman dies a week after head-on crash near Anthony, N.M.](http://www.lcsun-news.com/popular/ci_26331955?source=most_viewed) (http://www.lcsun-news.com/popular/ci_26331955?source=most_viewed)

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