

2012 Psychotronic Film Festival opens with features and documentaries

Posted: January 19, 2012 - 12:42am

By Linda Sickler

He has one of those faces.

Actor/comedian/writer Fred Stoller is pretty much recognizable at a glance, even though he's not exactly a household name. "Oh, I know you," you might excitedly exclaim, even as you think, "But why?"

Stoller has some excellent acting chops. He's been on television shows such as "Seinfeld," "Friends" and "Everybody Loves Raymond," and stars in a feature film he also wrote.

"Fred & Vinnie" will be presented as part of Savannah's 2012 Psychotronic Film Festival, which runs Sunday through Jan. 28.

"Steve Skrovan, the director and producer, suggested I write a short story about my funny/sad friendship with Vinnie," Stoller says.

The film is winning awards and racking up fans because viewers see themselves in the characters. "A lot of people say they know a Vinnie, or have really known isolation and the need for companionship, but without it driving you bad."

Stoller is no fan of the broad "bromance" comedies that are all the rage. "I like real-life uncomfortable situations.

"I was not at all a class clown. I was very shy. I got into stand-up comedy not even thinking or knowing I was funny," Stoller says. "It just seemed accessible to getting to be a character actor, something I thought I wanted to be."

"Fred & Vinnie" is exactly the type of film Psychotronic Film Society of Savannah founder and artistic director Jim Reed wants to promote.

"Part of my role is trying to research and discover films that are in some way overlooked ... that haven't gotten their due," he says.

That means turning up a few gems like "Fred & Vinnie," but the festival's signature is breathing new life into bizarre rarities.

Take for example Rudy Ray Moore's "Petey Wheatstraw: The Devil's Son-in-Law," a raunchy, occult, Blaxploitation comedy.

Moore was a rhythm-and-blues singer and comedian best known as "Dolemite, the Human Tornado." Peter Wheatstraw was a lesser-known character he created.

"It's really crude, politically incorrect, racial humor with an occult angle to it," Reed says. "It's a masterpiece because it's so ineptly made."

Another flick-gone-wrong that's worth catching: "Deafula," a trippy American Sign Language vampire film that lacks sound effects and music and is only sparsely dubbed. No joke.

Among the gems, filmmakers Mike Malloy and Lev Anderson will be on hand to discuss their cinematic Western, "The Scarlet Worm," which they put together on a shoestring, \$25,000 budget.

"Actually, it's only that much when you add up all the deferments and everything that hasn't even been paid yet," Malloy says. "Our core group of six filmmakers all worked unpaid, and we all pulled triple and quadruple duty — the lead actor is also the composer, for instance.

"And the six of us even took care of our own travel expenses, trekking to the Southern California desert from as far as Atlanta and Miami," he adds. "We did it out of an extreme love for the project. Fortunately, we found some veteran Western actors who felt the same way, so they too did it primarily out of interest for the project."

And for Reed, one of the highlights of the festival will be the East Coast premiere of the animated film "Chico & Rita," a romance set in 1940s Cuba. Like the rest of the festival's movies, it's not for children.

"It's about politics and jazz," Reed says. "I would love for the house to be packed for this one."

IF YOU GO

What: 2012 Psychotronic Film Festival

When: Jan. 22-28

Where:

Muse Arts Warehouse, 703B Louisville Road

Cost: Single films \$9 each; \$15 for two films Monday-Friday; \$22 for three films Saturday-Sunday

Info: musesavannah.org
psychotronicfilmsavannah.org

Jan. 22

2 p.m. "Adhisaya Piravi"

5 p.m. "The Innocents"

8 p.m. "Chico & Rita"

Jan. 23

6:30 p.m. "The Cat O'Nine Tails"

9 p.m. "The Scarlet Worm"

Jan. 24

6:30 p.m. "Petey Wheatstraw — The Devil's Son-In-Law"

9 p.m. "Fred & Vinnie"

Jan. 25

6:30 p.m. "Deafula"

9 p.m. "Goke, the Bodysnatcher from Hell"

Jan. 26

6:30 p.m. "Everyday Sunshine"

9 p.m. Mystery screening

Jan. 27

6:30 p.m. "Blast of Silence"

9 p.m. "Au Hasard Balthazar"

Jan. 28

2 p.m. "Small Town Murder Songs"

5 p.m. "Machete Maidens Unleashed"

8 p.m. "The Room"

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