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Take Me To The Moon

LUNAFEST brings female films to screen

By Jeremiah Robert Wierenga

What does a vegan nutrition snack have to do with female empowerment and the movie industry? The answer is LUNAFEST, created by the makers of the LUNAbar. Sponsored by Reel Women of the West and shown at The Flicks, this unique short-film showcase is screened across the United States between September and May, highlighting the work of female filmmakers from Canada, England, Portugal and the United States and donating 100 percent of its proceeds back to

charity—15 percent to the LUNA company's primary cause partner, the Breast Cancer Fund, and the remaining 85 percent to the Reel Women of the West.

Jenessa Carson, the Reel Women of the West member responsible for organizing this year's LUNAFEST, had previously attended the festival and wanted to continue the tradition of exposing Treasure Valley audiences to a side of filmmaking often overshadowed by a male-dominated industry.

"[These] stories don't get told as often, and especially not by women," she says. "It's just really refreshing to have a whole festival that's totally devoted to women's stories ... That's what makes it special and so fun."

Reel Women of the West, founded in 2004, holds monthly gatherings for female filmmakers and also welcomes curious community members to meet, discuss business and network for future projects. The club also

hosts informal "chew and view" events at which members share a potluck and screen each other's work. As a collective, they've created 12 short films, showcased at both the annual i48 competition and the now-defunct True West Cinema Festival, and held an annual script-writing contest. Sponsoring LUNAFEST seemed like a natural next step.

"When I spoke to the organizers at LUNAFEST, they were really excited that we were an organization of women-filmmakers, and that we wanted to put it on," Carson says. "Especially since their mission and our mission at Reel Women [is] so similar: giving women voices ... They just thought it was a really great fit."



"Coke Contest"



"Grappling Girls"

Celebrating women's lives as well as demonstrating the globe's remarkable female talent, these 10 films range in scope from hand-drawn animation to short-form documentary to fictional comedy. Director Renuka Jeyapalan brings a playful tale of one-upmanship between a young girl and her mother's suitor in *Big Girl*. An inside look at the mannequin industry, its roots



"My First Crush"

in religious statuary and the modern worship of fashion and beauty is found in *34x25x36*, directed by Jesse Erica Epstein. Director Julia Pott's *My First Crush*, charmingly pairs animated animals with voice-over reminiscences of puppy love.

Having previously screened at festivals across the globe, including SXSW in Texas, the Festival Cinema Paris and the International Film Festival South Africa, these films comprise the nearly two-hour LUNAFEST, showing off some of the best work of today's female filmmakers, and even premiering some new shorts, such as wrestling documentary *Grappling Girls* from director Lisa Blackstone.

Whether your taste runs more toward the wicked humor of director Jennifer Halley's *Sarah in the Dark* or the gentle reminiscences of a centenarian as captured in *Kuna Ni Nanang*, directed by Jessica Sison, the diversity of stories creates an enjoyable affair for all.



"Red Wednesday"

But LUNAFEST is not just an event for women, Carson is quick to remind.

"Just like women can go to a [male-directed] movie and still enjoy it, men can come to this festival and get an appreciation for these stories, an appreciation for the strength these women have."



"Sarah In The Dark"

April 11, 3 p.m., \$8 advance, 2 for \$15 advance or \$9 door. The Flicks, 646 Fulton St., 208-342-4222, theflicksboise.com.

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