



EBERTFEST ANNOUNCES INITIAL SLATE OF FILMS AND SPECIAL GUESTS FOR 2016 FESTIVAL

18th Annual Roger Ebert's Film Festival to take place April 13-17, 2016 in Champaign, IL

CHAMPAIGN, ILL – February 22, 2016 – The 18th Annual Roger Ebert's Film Festival hosted by Chaz Ebert, also known as 'Ebertfest,' is pleased to announce the initial slate of films in this year's festival with special guests including Gil Robertson, president of the African American Film Critics Association, actress Nancy Allen, composer Renee Baker & The Chicago Modern Orchestra Project, filmmaker Paul Cox, crew veteran Angela Allen and director Michael Polish set to attend.

These films will accompany previously announced CRIMSON PEAK, which will open this year's festival with director Guillermo Del Toro in attendance. Look for the remaining selections of the 12 film lineup and more festival guests to be announced at a later date.

"We are so pleased that Gil Robertson will be with us," said Chaz Ebert. "As president of the African American Film Critics Association, he is perfectly placed to lead our panel discussion on diversity in Hollywood, an issue that will be in sharp focus at this year's festival."

Ebertfest will take place April 13-17, 2016 in Champaign, IL at the Virginia Theatre.

BLOW OUT (1981)

Directed by Brian De Palma, 108 Mins, 35MM

Special Guest Nancy Allen in attendance

Roger Ebert considered "Blow Out" to be Brian de Palma's finest film. From his review of "Blow Out": "Blow Out" stands by itself. It reminds us of the violence of 'Dressed to Kill,' the startling images of 'The Fury,' the clouded identities of 'Sisters,' the uncertainty of historical 'facts' from 'Obsession,' and it ends with the bleak nihilism of 'Carrie'.. But it moves beyond those films, because this time De Palma is more successful than ever before at populating his plot with three-dimensional characters."

BODY & SOUL [silent film] (1925)

Directed by Oscar Micheaux, 102 Mins, DCP

Special Guests Composer Renee Baker & the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project in Attendance

"Body and Soul" marks the debut of actor Paul Robeson, best known for his unforgettable performance of "Ol' Man River" in 1936's "Showboat." He stars in a dual role as a wicked preacher and his righteous brother, two ideologically opposed siblings whose rivalry reaches its peak once they set their sights on a particularly lovely member of the congregation.

On October 1, 2015, Renee Baker & the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project screened and performed with the film in Chicago to rave reviews. In an interview with Chaz Ebert, Renee stated, "The screening came about when I contacted Floyd Webb about additional screening opportunities for my recently finished/produced score for 'Body and Soul.' I am a composer and also a music director of a full symphony in Chicago, the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project. My producer, Don DiNicola, had heard some of my music and suggested that we collaborate on this project. I happen to be an African-American woman with a full orchestra that I formed in 2010. After marrying the music to this marvelous

film, we discovered that we had given BNS what amounts to musical dialogue. So our approach was quite unique, giving voices to the characters and allowing them to establish sonic dialogues.”

FORCE OF DESTINY (2015)

Directed by Paul Cox, 109 Mins, DCP

Special Guest Director Paul Cox in Attendance

Australian filmmaker Paul Cox makes his 6th visit to Ebertfest with his new feature film “Force of Destiny”.

In his blog, Roger wrote of Paul: “Paul Cox is here. Over the years I've admired his films (“A Woman’s Tale” and “Innocence” were at Ebertfest), and his spirit. He's one of the warriors, an independent director who does nothing for hire, who makes only films close to his heart, whose humanism you could call spiritual.”

“Force of Destiny” is a semi-autobiographical story of a man who falls in love while on a transplant waiting list. A journey of hope, courage and sacrifice, the film tells the story of an artist who finds salvation through a life-saving liver transplant.

NORTHFORK (2003)

Directed by Michael Polish, 103 Mins, 35mm

Special Guest Director Michael Polish in Attendance

Roger Ebert gave “Northfork” a **4 star** review. In his review, Roger said, “There has never been a movie quite like ‘Northfork,’ but if you wanted to put it on a list, you would also include ‘Days of Heaven’ and ‘Wings of Desire.’ It has the desolate open spaces of the first, the angels of the second, and the feeling in both of deep sadness and pity. The movie is visionary and elegiac, more a fable than a story, and frame by frame, it looks like a portfolio of spaces so wide, so open, that men must wonder if they have a role beneath such indifferent skies.”

THE THIRD MAN (1949)

Directed by Carol Reed, 104 Mins, New 4K Restoration

Special Guest Angela Allen, an 87 year old legend in the British Film Industry who began her career working with director Carol Reed, will be in attendance

Roger Ebert gave “The Third Man” a **4 star** review. “Of all the movies I have seen, [The Third Man] most completely embodies the romance of going to the movies,” said Ebert. “I saw it first on a rainy day in a tiny, smoke-filled cinema on the Left Bank in Paris. It told a story of existential loss and betrayal. It was weary and knowing, and its glorious style was an act of defiance against the corrupt world it pictured. Seeing it, I realized how many Hollywood movies were like the pulp Westerns that Holly Martins wrote: naive formulas supplying happy endings for passive consumption. I read the other day that they plan to remake “The Third Man.” Do you think Anna will cave in to Holly--or will she remain true to her bitter cynicism and unspeakable knowledge?”

Major filmmakers, stars, historians, critics and film-lovers from all over the world come to experience this annual celebration that includes films from lists Roger drew up over the first 15 years of the festival, as well as others selected by Chaz Ebert and Festival Director Nate Kohn based on Roger’s established criteria for an Ebertfest film.

Festival passes are available for \$150, plus processing with only one thousand being available. Passes can be purchased through the festival website, the theater website, or the theater box office, 203 W. Park Ave.,

Champaign (217-356-9063). Individual tickets for each screening will go on sale Friday, April 1st, 2016, and are \$15 (\$13 for students and seniors). Ebertfest is a special event of the College of Media at the University of Illinois.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.ebertfest.com/>.

###

Contact:

PMK*BNC

Lee Meltzer

(212) 373-6142

Lee.Meltzer@pmkbnc.com

Rebecca Fisher

(310) 854-4897

Rebecca.Fisher@pmkbnc.com