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Other Venice Film Festival screens independent films with Venice twist

The Venice Film Festival has been a tradition in Italy since 1932, but local residents Kris Ellenberg, Gary Ellenberg and Ruben de las Casas believed that the other Venice — Venice, California — should have one, too.

Now in its fourth year, the Other Venice Film Festival will take place Thursday through Sunday, March 15th to 18th, at the Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave., Venice, and at Switch Studios, 316 Venice Blvd., Venice. Tickets are \$10 to \$20 per festival event.

This year's festival features 90 film screenings, 60 premieres, live music, art and parties with an emphasis on underground and alternative cinema. All of the films shown either involve local Venetians, were shot in Venice or in some way exemplify the spirit, energy and diversity of the artsy coastal community, according to Kris Ellenberg.

Festival highlights include an independent film competition, a children's film program, DJs, live music and music video screenings, short film screenings and question-and-answer sessions with film directors.

A staged reading of the screenplay *Riding the Pine*, with local actors Camryn Manheim, Steven Weber, Chris Mulkey and Lee Arenberg is scheduled for 4 p.m. Sunday, March 18th.

Featured film screenings at the festival include *Novel Romance*, directed by Emily Skopov and starring Traci Lords, Sherilyn Fenn, Mariette Hartley and Paul Johansson, about a "top-shelf literary editor who publishes a struggling writer in exchange for his gifted sperm."

Jam, directed by Craig Serling, tells five interwoven stories about travelers who get in a car collision trying to avoid a dog in the road.

The Death of Captain Pilecki, directed by Ryszard Bugajski, is about a Polish underground soldier, who voluntarily walked into a trap to be sent to Auschwitz, the Nazi concentration camp, so he could try to help liberate its prisoners.

Cake: A Wedding Comedy, directed by Will Wallace, is about two star-crossed lovers whose wedding plans go awry and pit two groups of families and friends against each other.

The Rat Thing, by local director Kevin Keresey, is about two down-and-out friends who hatch a get-rich-quick scheme that involves one of them being bitten by a rat in a major supermarket with the hope of winning a huge settlement.

Behind the Mask, directed by Shannon Keith, is a documentary about people who risk life and freedom for the liberation of animals.

Welcome 2 the Hen House, directed by Harlan Steinberger and Tucker Stille, shows Ray Manzarak, Fishbone, John Densmore, Boom Shaka and Trulio Disgracious, who frequent the Hen House music venue with various creative projects.

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