



“HAIR” SET AS OPENING NIGHT FILM OF EBERTFEST 2017 INITIAL SLATE OF FILMS AND SPECIAL GUESTS ANNOUNCED

19th Annual Roger Ebert’s Film Festival to take place April 19-23, 2017 in Champaign, IL

CHAMPAIGN, ILL – March 23, 2017 – The 19th Annual Roger Ebert’s Film Festival co-founded and hosted by Chaz Ebert, also known as ‘Ebertfest,’ announced today that the beloved 1979 musical HAIR will open the 2017 festival—screening on 35mm from a new print on loan from Michael Moore and the UCLA Film Archive. The festival announces today an additional four films—and special guests including director Charles Burnett, special guest Robert Townsend, director Rick Goldsmith, former WNBA star Chamique Holdsclaw, director Tanya Wexler and actor Hugh Dancy. The festival will additionally include a performance by the Alloy Orchestra as accompaniment to a rarely-screened silent film.

These films will accompany previously announced screenings of ELLE and NORMAN LEAR: JUST ANOTHER VERSION OF YOU with special guests Oscar® nominee Isabelle Huppert (ELLE) and Emmy Award winner Norman Lear in attendance for Q&As following their screenings. The remaining selections of the carefully curated 12 film lineup and more festival guests will be announced at a later date.

“When Roger took his ‘leave of presence’ on April 4, 2013, he carefully chose the films for Ebertfest that year and uncharacteristically even dictated the order in which they were to be shown,” said Chaz Ebert. “I can tell you without reservation that he would be overjoyed at this lineup of films and talent, especially in this chaotic world in which we find ourselves. We will celebrate so many things at the festival, but especially the humanity that we will find on the screen and in each other.”

HAIR (1979) – Opening Night Film

Directed by Milos Forman, 121 mins, 35MM

Special Guest Michael Hausman, Assistant Director in attendance

Milos Forman’s critically acclaimed HAIR is the film adaption to the provocative Broadway musical of the same name that explores the hippie movement of the late 1960s. The film focuses on Claude, a Midwestern farm boy who travels to New York to join the army and fight in the Vietnam War. However, while in Central Park he meets a group of hippies and discovers the ideals of freedom, drugs and his first love Sheila. HAIR is an anti-war story full of hippie tenderness, psychedelic fantasies, and successful musical numbers.

Roger Ebert gave HAIR a four star review. In his review, he said “I walked into Hair with the gravest doubts that this artifact of 1960s social shock would transfer to our current, sleepier times. In the 1960s we went to angry musicals; now we line up for “La Cage aux Folles.” My doubts disappeared with the surge and bold authority of the first musical statement: This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius! So maybe it isn’t, really, and maybe the sun set on that particular age back around the time they pinched the Watergate burglars. But Milos Forman’s “Hair” opens with such confidence and joy, moves so swiftly and sustains itself so well that I wonder why I had any doubts. “Hair” is, amazingly, not a period piece but a freshly conceived and staged memory of the tribulations of the mid-sixties.”

TO SLEEP WITH ANGER (1990)

Directed by Charles Burnett, 102 mins, 4K DCP

Special Guests Charles Burnett, Director and Robert Townsend – to lead on-stage Q&A

TO SLEEP WITH ANGER, starring Danny Glover and Mary Alice, is the story of a middle-class black family in Los Angeles whose life is disturbed by the arrival of an old friend from the South. What starts out as a charming reminder of their past becomes quite threatening as the strained household heads towards an inevitable conflict.

In his 4 out of 4 star review, Chuck Bowen says that TO SLEEP WITH ANGER is “another neglected masterpiece of African-American cinema, along with NOTHING BUT A MAN, GANJA & HESS, LOSING GROUND, DAUGHTERS OF THE DUST and others that have been restored and re-released in a limited handful of theaters over the last few years” and that “Burnett sketches the details of the lives of Gideon and his family, bridging theatrical dialogue, portentous omens, and presentational acting with a grace that’s so masterful as to appear effortless, capturing enough life and subtext for several films.”

MIND/GAME: THE UNQUIET JOURNEY OF CHAMIQUE HOLDSCLAW (2015)

Directed by Rick Goldsmith, 56 mins, Blu-ray

Special Guests Rick Goldsmith, Director and Chamique Holdsclaw

This film is sponsored by the Alliance for Inclusion and Respect, an organization that embodies the four principles this year’s EbertFest is dedicated to - the principles of empathy, compassion, kindness and forgiveness— principles Roger believed cinema could generate.

Recruited from the rough-edged courts of New York City by Coach Pat Summitt for the University of Tennessee’s Lady Vols, Chamique Holdsclaw was hailed as the “female Michael Jordan,” impressing crowds with her artistry, athleticism and drive. A three-time NCAA champ and Number One draft pick in the WNBA, Holdsclaw seemed destined for a spectacular professional career—until her long-suppressed battle with mental disorders emerged to derail her career and threaten her life.

MIND/GAME intimately chronicles Holdsclaw’s athletic accomplishments and personal setbacks, and her decision, despite public stigma, to become an outspoken mental health advocate. Still, she would face dramatic, unexpected challenges to her own recovery. The film, narrated by Glenn Close, tells a powerful story of courage, struggle, and redemption.

In his review, Matt Fagerholm called MIND/GAME “an inspiring portrait of an extraordinary female warrior” and said that “The open-ended quality of the film’s ending is entirely appropriate since Ms Holdsclaw’s story is far from over. I cannot wait for the sequel.”

HYSTERIA (2011)

Directed by Tanya Wexler, 100 mins, DCP

Special Guests Tanya Wexler, Director and Hugh Dancy, Actor

HYSTERIA, starring Academy Award® nominee Maggie Gyllenhaal and Hugh Dancy, is a lighthearted romantic comedy that tells the surprising story of the birth of the electro-mechanical vibrator at the very peak of Victorian prudishness.

Roger gave HYSTERIA a 3 star review. In his review, Roger said, "Tanya Wexler's quietly saucy "Hysteria" takes place in London at a time when medical authorities didn't know the word for or the concept of "orgasm," and apparently many women never experienced them. His treatments consisted of modestly covering a patient's private regions with a little tent, reaching delicately beneath it and using digital stimulation to effect a cure. How he hit upon this method must be attributed to sheer genius." And continued, "One of the pleasures of Wexler's third feature is how elegantly it sets its story in the period. The costumes, the sets, the locations and the behavior are all flawless, and the British characters in the screenplay by Stephen Dyer and Jonah Lisa Dyer are all masters of never quite saying what they mean."

VARIÉTÉ (1925)

Directed by Ewald Andre Dupont, 72 mins, DCP

Silent Film with musical accompaniment by Alloy Orchestra

Directed by Ewald Andre Dupont, VARIÉTÉ is a silent German film filled with jealousy, obsession and murder, set against the backdrop of the circus. The film is based on the novel *Der Eid des Stephan Huller* by Felix Hollaender.

Critic Richard Neupert said, "VARIÉTÉ remains Dupont's most fascinating work... Ewald André Dupont offers a splendid example of both German and European film style of the mid-1920s." Neupert further stated, "Dupont is now considered one of the great cinematic figures of the 1920s, helping usher in the era of the European auteur-director."

Ebertfest is a special event held in collaboration with the College of Media at the University of Illinois and will take place April 19-23, 2017 in Champaign, IL at the Virginia Theatre. 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, and for the first time, festival-goers will receive a discount when they purchase a four-pack priced at \$510 instead of \$600, or 15 percent off. Additionally, a small number of U. of I. student passes will be made available priced at \$100 each.

Tickets for individual movies will be available April 1. Admission is \$15 for adults and \$13 for students and seniors. All passes can be purchased through www.ebertfest.com, www.thevirginia.org or at the Virginia Theater box office, 203 W. Park Ave., Champaign, 217-356-9063.

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

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Contact:

PMK*BNC

Lee Meltzer

(212) 373-6142

Lee.Meltzer@pmkbnc.com

Alison Deknatel

(310) 967-7247

Alison.Deknatel@pmkbnc.com