

ARTS

Film festival focuses on mental illness

Reel Madness zeroes in on drug addiction and troubled youth

BY MICHAEL D. REID
Times Colonist staff

Just eight days after the annual Victoria Independent Film and Video Festival wrapped, another festival with a narrower but significant focus is set to unspool.

Reel Madness, the Movie Monday Society's annual showcase of films and special events with themes of mental illness and recovery, gets underway on Monday at the Movie Monday Theatre in the Eric Martin Pavilion.

Monday's opening feature, preceded by Clive Holden's short "video poem" *Nanaimo Station*, is *From Grief to Action*, a documentary about families whose children have become addicted to drugs in Vancouver's Kerrisdale area.

The festival continues next Friday with

Standup Samurai, a documentary about emerging comedians on the small-town standup circuit in Western Canada who meditate on the role of mental illness in comedy.

On March 1, writer-director Scott Smith will be on hand for a Q&A following a screening of *Rollercoaster*, his film about five troubled youths from a group home who, fuelled by booze, drugs and dangerous restlessness, confront their demons and find themselves having to make some hard choices after sneaking onto the deserted midway at the Pacific National Exhibition grounds.

The Vancouver filmmaker, currently in post production on his \$4-million adaptation of Barbara Gowdy's *Falling Angels*, will conduct a seminar on filmmaking on March 2 from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

On March 3, three days after *Fix: The Story of an Addicted City* begins a limited engagement at the Odeon, Vancouver filmmaker Nettie Wild's wrenching documentary about Vancouver's notorious drug problems will be screened.

Wild and Dean Wilson of the Vancouver

Area Network of Drug Users will lead a two-hour seminar March 2 at noon on the challenges of making a film in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside that deals with such a controversial subject.

The festival concludes March 10 at 7 p.m. with a doublebill. *Life's a Twitch* features a young man with Tourette's syndrome who has received his PhD and is determined to educate the public about his misunderstood condition. The Genie-nominated *Remembrance* focuses on a man burdened with a perfect memory — a gift that isn't always as beneficial as you might imagine.

Admission to Reel Madness screenings is by donation. The *Fix* filmmaking seminar is \$7 (\$5 for MediaNet members), and the day-long Scott Smith seminar is \$30 (\$25 for MediaNet members), which includes lunch.

For more information, call 595-FLIC or check out the Movie Monday Web site at <http://www.islandnet.com/mm>.

Screening time for all films is 7 p.m. The Eric Martin Pavilion is located in the 1900 block of Fort Street.



The Reel Madness logo shows the chaos of mental illness.

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