

Manchester — 10/20/2009

Silk City Flick Fest hosts gala reception

BY JAMES JEDRZIEWSKI ReminderNews

Charity sponsor MARC , Inc ., was decorated with artwork by local artists . Live music filtered through the room . The lights were turned down low , and the crowd gathered . Three thousand miles away from Hollywood , aspiring filmmakers came to Manchester to mingle with industry professionals to kick off what organizers hope will be the start of something special for yearsto come : The Silk City Flick Fest .



Click the thumbnails above to see the full size pictures.

After more than a year of preparation and promotion , event founders Justin Morales and John Ramaglia , Jr ., could finally call “ Action ! ” as they watched their vision take shape . Panel discussions and demonstrations were offered , and dozens of films were screened during the four-day festival , held Oct . 8-11 .

Festival Co-Director Ryan Maloney spoke of the vision he shared with Morales , his former high school football buddy . “ We hope it will grow every year, with the town behind it , ” he said .

Manchester Mayor Louis Spadaccini said , “ I’m very proud to have the only film festival east of the [Connecticut] River here . I think it’s great for Manchester , which I believe is a cultural center . The arts community is very strong here . ”

While “ Best Flick ” awards had to wait until the festival’s closing gala , the first Silk City Independent Spirit Award was presented to Neal Thomassen at the opening night gala . Morales noted Thomassen’s accomplishments as indie artist , media teacher and industry activist .

The room buzzed all evening , as kindred spirits shared their love of motion picture storytelling . Actors , writers , directors , producers and cinematographers discussed their filmmaking experience , which ranged from first steps to a lifetime in the industry .

Anyone talking with Hollywood insider Tom Kane reduced their six degrees of separation to one for such industry giants as Robert De Niro , John Huston and Jack Nicholson . Kane , whose film credits include “ Raging Bull , ” “ Kramer vs Kramer , ” “ Prizzi’s Honor ” and the original “ Stepford Wives ” invited guests to attend his film production workshop , which he holds in destination cities around the globe . On how to obtain financing for a film project , Kane quipped , “ Marry well . ”

Kane’s advice on breaking into show business was “ to get on the board . Write something small , get it made . ” He then conceded that everyone’s start in show business

is a unique story . He said he got his first gig “ because my mother’s podiatrist knew somebody . ” He was quick to add that after the introduction , he still needed enthusiasm , smarts , personality and ideas to land a job .

An actor with Connecticut roots , Ron Palillo , discussed his 50-year career . At age 10 , after his father died , Palillo developed a stutter . His mother suggested acting . He stuck with it and found himself on national television in a classroom with John Travolta on the program , “ Welcome Back Kotter . ” Thirty years later , he still sees acting as a service . “

I believe it’s what God put me here for , ” he said . He’s also done some writing and producing over the years and is excited about a recent teaching position he’s accepted at a magnet school in Florida .

In addition to many Connecticut-made movies , films for the festival were submitted from the U . S . , Australia , Ireland , the U . K . and South Africa . Local resident Marci Labelle invited her internet friend , Dutch director Renée Scheltema , who traveled from her current home in South Africa . She spoke of her documentary , “ Something Unknown ... ” , which explores the truth of psychic phenomena and the invisible draw toward a collective consciousness . “ We are spiritually connected , ” said Scheltema , “ With our minds , our intentions , we can affect our world . ”

Those connections , and a common desire to affect the world , were clearly evident at the opening gala of the First Annual Silk City Flick Fest . As Ron Palillo tells his students : “ Acting is a service . The audience is giving you the ultimate compliment – their time . All we have in life is time . ”

For those attending the opening night gala , it was time well spent .