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EDITORIAL

Films we thank for LIIFE as we know it

Posted July 21, 2022

“*Film festivals like LIIFE are labors of love, with the only real reward to put productions on the screen we may not otherwise see.*”

A road trip in a yellow Volkswagen Microbus so a young girl, played by Abigail Breslin, could compete in a beauty pageant.

The plight of a man looking for his wife’s murderer, while unable to make long-term memories, in a story told in reverse, starring Guy Pearce.

What it was like to grow up in Texas, a story told over nine years, allowing its young protagonist, played by Ellar Coltrane, to literally grow up in front of the cameras.

Racial tensions at a fictional Ivy League school exposed, thanks to an extraordinary, can’t-miss performance by Tessa Thompson.

We’ve seen, or at least heard of, all these films — “Little Miss Sunshine,” “Memento,” “Boyhood,” “Dear White People.” They have joined countless others that have not only provided a little bit of escape from our daily lives, but have stayed with us. And maybe even made us think.

But none of these films would have even been part of the conversation if it weren’t for film festivals.

It’s not Cannes or Sundance, but the Long Island International Film Festival — or LIIFE, as we all know it — is one of hundreds of such festivals across the country and around the world that give filmmakers from all walks of life a chance to be seen. And maybe even to be remembered. And it’s that very reason why it’s important that we continue to support such festivals, not just with some of our county dollars, but maybe a few of our own, too.

You don’t have to look any further than Michael and Michayla Scully, the father-daughter team that pieced together the dramedy “Montauk 77” with nothing more than \$30,000 and a dream. They put together a small crew to film the pair as a ride-hail driver and young teenaged passenger at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, and put together a film that delighted audiences at Bellmore Movies & Showplace last week.

Their dream is to have their film available on a streaming service near you (and they will) — something that wouldn’t even be remotely possible if it weren’t for film festivals like LIIFE.

American film studios produce several hundred movies every year, but when you include independent filmmakers who have nowhere near the financial resources of these behemoths, we get well over a thousand — maybe two. Each year.

Film festivals like LIIFE are labors of love, with the only real reward to put productions on the screen we may not otherwise see. The hard work of people like Debra Markowitz and both Henry and Anne Stampfel can’t be — and shouldn’t be — ignored.

When LIIFE started 25 years ago, most filmmakers had to choose between making a run for theaters or going directly to DVD. Today the distribution model is wide, from streaming to cable to just about anything. And it’s exciting.

In fact, one might say, why do we need film festivals when someone with something worth seeing could turn to something like YouTube to get exposure on their own?

But it’s really not that easy. Even after the long hours, days, weeks and months that went into making a film are over, their creators are tasked with finding venue after venue to showcase their work, hoping they can poke their head above so many others seeking the same thing.

LIIFE is over for this year, but in just a few weeks, Markowitz and the Stampfels will be back at it again, planning for next year. And they’ll be waiting for you — maybe with the next “Blair Witch Project.” Or the next “Precious.” Or maybe even the next “Montauk 77.”

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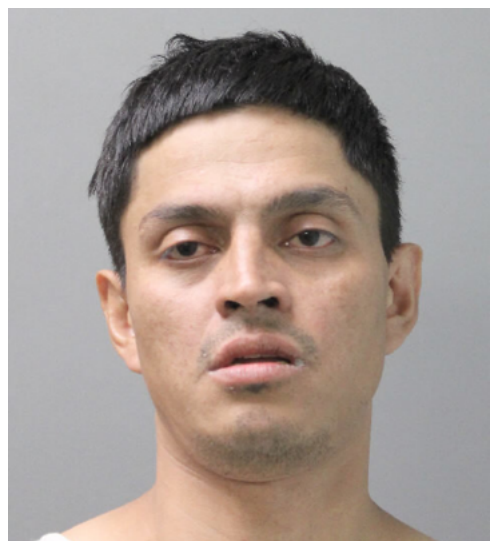
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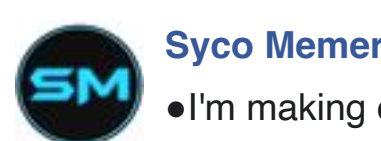
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