



Starry Night Theater: Windmill Market will host new series of independent films

By **Thomas B. Harrison**

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FAIRHOPE, Ala. — Independent films have another venue in Mobile-Baldwin, which is splendid news for cinema lovers weary of teens, 'toons and blockbusters.

The Windmill Market in downtown Fairhope is light-years from the multiplex. By day, the open-air market owned by Mac and Gina Walcott is a haven for vendors and shoppers alike, with fresh produce, Serda's coffee, fresh-baked bread and much more including fine art. The market is often transformed as a venue for special events, such as fundraisers.

Fairhope artist Ameri'ca Jones-Gallaspy considered it the perfect site for her latest arts venture, Starry Night Theater, which will present "Movie at the Market" at 7:30 p.m. every third Thursday. The series begins April 15 and runs through Sept. 16, but area film buffs will have an opportunity to experience the series with a preview from 7 to 9 p.m. April 1 at The Windmill Market.

The preview will showcase three short films by Fairhope filmmaker Dusty Bias, including a trailer from Bias' first feature-length production "Prairie Love."

Starry Night Theater (www.StarryNightTheater.org) will present newly released, award-winning independent films every third Thursday of the month through Sept. 16. Tickets are \$10 and seating at The Windmill is limited. Season tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available.

Patrons are encouraged to arrive early and hungry. Moe's barbecue will open its Windmill Market location for "Movies at the Market" to serve Alabama-style barbecue along with beer and wine. After the film, those who attend can trade their ticket stubs for a complimentary beer at My Place Bar across the street.

All proceeds from "Movie at the Market" benefit Jones-Gallaspy's BayART Project, a local nonprofit organization promoting the creation of public artwork by youth. The BayART Project is currently collaborating with the Baldwin County Trailblazers to create 14 murals to be installed on the map kiosks stationed along the Eastern Shore Trail, from Battleship Park to Weeks Bay Reserve.

When she began mulling over the idea of a film series, Jones-Gallaspy didn't have far to look for a location. The Windmill Market is across the street from her studio on Bancroft Street.

"I think I just looked over there one evening and thought, 'That would be a good place to show a movie,'"



she says. It just sort of evolved. My interest (is) in looking at film as an art, which is part of the mission of the BayART Project, to expand public art in Mobile and Baldwin counties — and film and performance art is something I don't see a lot of here.

"To have something on the Eastern Shore sort of fits in with the summertime atmosphere of Fairhope, visitors and the locals, kind of an easy, laid-back lifestyle," she says. "It made sense to try it. . . . I wanted it to be something that people would enjoy and get something out of."



(Press-Register/Victor Calhoun)

Gina Walcott, left, with her husband Mac and artist Ameri'ca Jones-Gallaspy at 6,600-square-foot Windmill Market in Fairhope. The Walcotts are local architects whose open-air market will host Jones-Gallaspy's Starry Night Theater/"Movie at the Market" monthly independent film series, which opens April 15. The series kickoff will be at 7 p.m. April 1 at the market.

Gina Walcott says a film series certainly fits in with the original concept for The Windmill Market.

"The idea was to include the community in any form," she says, "and people are starting to call. It's taken a while for all the moving parts to come together, but that's been the most fun part about operating a venue like this — people are coming up with a lot of different ways to use it."

Walcott says the Starry Night film series will occupy approximately one-third of the market's 6,000 square feet and should seat 50 to 100 visitors. The space can be manipulated to accommodate especially large crowds.

Still, space is limited and patrons are encouraged to arrive early and sample Moe's barbecue and perhaps some beer and wine. The atmosphere will be festive.

Jones-Gallaspy didn't have to post a search for a director. She attended Bayside Academy with Bias' wife (and co-producer) Ashley, and she knew they were working on a feature-length production titled "Prairie Love."

Bias studied film at Montana State University and is an accomplished writer, director and producer. He has written and produced several short films such as "Four Corners" (2005), directed by Douglas Mueller.

"Four Corners" is about a cyclist who encounters a traffic light at a four-way intersection in the middle of the desert. The film had a popular run on the festival circuit and won second place at the Seattle Science Fiction Film Festival.

Bias also wrote and produced "1 Phone, 2 Phone, 3 Phone, 4" (2006), directed by Darren Leis. The film is about a series of ringing telephones that leads the protagonist to a group of people.

The filmmaker describes it as an existential meditation on the meaning of life. The film received a Panavision Filmmakers Grant and was screened at more than a dozen film festivals including Birmingham's Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival.

"Four Corners" and "1 Phone . . .," about 12 minutes each, are two of the three films that will be screened Thursday at The Windmill Market. The other is "Destination Lost," which Bias wrote, produced and directed.

"Movie at the Market" gets under way in earnest April 15 with Mina



Shum's "Happiness, Long Life and Prosperity" (2002) starring Sandra Oh, in which an adolescent girl tries to fix the world with magic. The movie "tells three interconnected stories about family, love and hope, always with a light and deft touch," according to the Starry Night Theater Web site.

Mueller/Courtesy of Dusty Bias)

Independent filmmaker Dusty Bias (left)

The second film on the schedule is "A Simple Curve" (2005), about a family of woodworkers. Future films include "Arranged" (2007), about arranged marriages, and "The Rage in Placid Lake" (2003) about a young man trying to be someone he isn't.

Jones-Gallaspy has high hopes for the film series, which she intends to present stories and characters that appeal to a broad range of audiences. She also hints at a big finish for the inaugural season, a film of enormous interest of Alabamians. More on that later.

"A year from now?" she says. "I'd just like to be getting ready for season two."

Information:

WHAT: Starry Night Theater presents "Movie at the Market"

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. every third Thursday. The series begins April 15 and runs through Sept. 16

WHERE: The Windmill Market, Bancroft and Equality streets in downtown Fairhope

PREVIEW: The series of independent films kicks off with a preview from 7 to 9 p.m. April 1 featuring three short works by Fairhope filmmaker Dusty Bias: "Destination: Lost," "1 Phone, 2 Phone, 3 Phone, 4," and "Four Corners." Plus a trailer from Bias' feature-length production "Prairie Love." Web:

www.prairielove.com.

LINK: www.StarryNightTheater.org

TICKETS: \$10; seating is limited

ORGANIZER: America Jones-Gallaspy

NOTE: All proceeds benefit the BayART Project, a local nonprofit organization promoting the creation of youth public artwork. Web: www.TheBayArtProject.org.

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