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Looking for something harder than SIFF? Try STIFF

By Mark Rahner
Seattle Times staff reporter

If SIFF is like film college, then *STIFF* is like film recess.

That's how the organizers of Seattle's True Independent Film Festival explain their ongoing decision to stage their event at the same time as the Seattle International Film Festival, the nation's largest and longest. Starting its fourth year Friday, the 10-day fest features 138 long and short low-budget indie works of every stripe at three spread-out locations — Central Cinema, the Jewel Box Theater at the Rendezvous and the Capitol Hill Arts Center. Also returning: STIFF licks, live local music and comedy following the evening screenings at the Jewel Box.

With an increase in venues, films and screenings (some movies will get multiple showings for the first time), STIFF folks are predicting attendance to balloon accordingly to an estimated 9,000 or 10,000.

As STIFF continues growing — a double entendre the organizers would likely approve given their "Stiffy" prize — it's begun to attract celebrities, too. Make that a celebrity: recording artist Moby will perform Sunday at Neumo's and he'll judge the Weekend Film Challenge June 9. Seven filmmaking teams get a weekend to shoot and a week of postproduction time, with such "wrinkles" in the contest as having to share actors and locations. Moby offers his music for free to makers of noncommercial or nonprofit films, video and shorts on www.mobygratis.com, and contestants in the Weekend Film Challenge will use songs from the site in their entries. (For any films

STIFF — Seattle's True Independent Film Festival

Friday through June 15, at Central Cinema, 1411 21st Ave., The Jewel Box Theater at Rendezvous, 2322 Second Ave., and Capitol Hill Arts Center, 1621 12th Ave. Tickets are \$50 for whole festival and various prices for individual events. For more information visit www.trueindependent.org.

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killer whale

UPDATE - 01:10 PM
Chris Rock says pover

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using his music that actually make money, Moby asks that it be given to the Humane Society.)

"He's got a strong support for independent films, so we're happy to have him," said STIFF spokesman Pete Voss.

Some STIFF numbers:

- 500 entries were submitted.
- Of the 138 accepted, 45 of this year's STIFF films are from local filmmakers.
- The same number, 45, are feature films.
- 20 movies will get "encore" showings this year.
- \$50: the cost of an all-access badge. Individual events range in cost.
- 2.4 miles: the distance between Central Cinema on Capitol Hill and the Jewel Box Theater in Belltown.

"No matter what kind of movie you like, I think there'll be something there that any moviegoer will want to see," Voss said. Even within the documentary genre alone, titles range from light to heavy to messed-up-disturbing. For instance:

- "Wiener Takes All: A Dogumentary," about the cutthroat world of dachshund competitions, by Nova Scotia's Shane McDougall.
- "Frank & Cindy," young Los Angeles filmmaker G.J. Echternkamp's quirky portrait of his stepfather, formerly in an '80s one-hit-wonder band and now living in his wife's basement where he drinks all day and urinates in a coffee can.
- "Holler Back — [not] Voting in an American Town," New York City director Lulu Fries'dat's well-crafted but utterly depressing look at why more people aren't bothering to vote. In Allentown, Pa., for the 2004 presidential election, she captures the range from ignorance to futility.
- "Snuff — a Documentary About Killing on Camera," Minneapolis director Paul von Stoetzel's exploration of the taboo subject, which doesn't contain actual snuff footage but does show deeply unsettling real death footage from sources that include outlaw video from Middle Eastern snipers taking out American soldiers.

Rough recess.

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