

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2013

Friday Harbor Film Festival – Here Next Weekend!

Why have a documentary film festival here on San Juan Island?

- To give islanders and guests the opportunity to see a variety of interesting and important films – some that are new, and some that are worthy but haven't been widely distributed. First-run films that are still playing in commercial theaters include *Blackfish* (about the captive orca Tilikum, who killed its trainer), *Girl Rising* (about young women from third world countries who are uncompromising in their quest to get an education), and the recently remade *Kon-Tiki* (about a young Norwegian explorer's 1947 trip across the Pacific Ocean on a wooden raft).
- To highlight films that have an island connection, such as *Brightwood*, which was filmed here; *Honor & Sacrifice*, which is about local resident Roy Matsumoto, a Japanese-American who served with distinction as an American soldier in World War II; and three full-length films (*Blackfish*, *The Whale*, and *Keiko – The Untold Story of the Star of Free Willy*) that are about orcas, the magnificent creatures who inhabit our local waters
- To present films about compelling environmental issues: *Coal* (highlighting the current debate raging over whether or not to build a terminal in Bellingham), *Pandora's Promise* (about the controversial future of nuclear energy), and *Black Wave* (which describes the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska)
- To give residents and visitors alike the enriching experience of hearing the 15 special guests -- filmmakers and others associated with the featured films -- talk about their personal perspectives as documentary filmmakers and answer questions from those in attendance
- To inspire our island kids to make quality films about their world by screening films made by children, including local children, at the *Kidz Cinema* on Saturday afternoon
- To help our island's economy, by encouraging tourists to visit during our "shoulder season"
- To be able at some time in the future to award grants that will fund research efforts relating to the challenges facing our area of the world, the Pacific Rim

Tickets: With the Film Festival coming right up, it is time to get your tickets!

San Juan County Residents: Ask For Your Locals' Discount by Phone or in Person!

Purchase tickets from the San Juan Community Theatre box office in person (100 Second St.), by telephone at 360-378-3210 or on-line at <http://www.sjctheatre.org/>. Festival information is available at www.fhff.org.

- **Captain Pass:** 3-Day All Access Film Festival Pass with first priority seating, including all special events for \$250 adults, \$200 students
- **Mariner Pass:** 3-Day All Access Film Festival Pass with second priority seating, including some special events for \$150 adults, \$120 students

- **Deck Hand Pass:** One Day All Access Film Festival Pass, including all special events on the day chosen, for \$55 adults, \$45 students
- **Crew Pass:** Single Film Access Pass for \$15 adults, \$12 students

A Film Not To Be Missed: *Keiko-The Untold Story Of The Star Of Free Willy*

In this film, fans of the international icon Keiko learn what happened when the *Free Willy* star became the first and only captive orca to be released back into the wild. Torn from his family at the tender age of two, Keiko spent 14 years in captivity as a performing tourist attraction before Hollywood discovered him for the title role in the 1993 blockbuster movie, *Free Willy*. When his millions of fans realized that Keiko was not free like his on-screen character, a crusade was launched to save him. The decision was ultimately made to return Keiko to his native waters off Iceland. After spending two years in Oregon regaining his health, he was airlifted to Iceland in the fall of 1998, and lived his last years in freedom. But until now, exactly what happened after he went back to his native waters has never been revealed.

Four years in the making, this compelling documentary by filmmaker Theresa Demarest follows Keiko from the time it was decided to move him from unacceptable living conditions at an amusement park in Mexico City to his return to Iceland. The film contains never before seen footage of Keiko in the wild, along with exclusive accounts of his day-to-day existence by Keiko's last two caretakers, Colin Baird and Thorbjorg (Tobba) Valdis Kristjansdottir. Along the way, the film provides insight into the unique culture of orcas, including the impact that being taken from his pod had on Keiko.

More than a decade after Keiko's death in 2003 from pneumonia, many people are still debating whether the whale's return to the wild was a success. Even though he was technically "free," Keiko continued to rely on humans and was never reunited with his family. The film leaves it to the viewers to decide for themselves whether or not the mission was ultimately successful, and this question continues to frame the debate regarding the fate of the other 42 orcas still held in captivity around the world.

Running time: 1 hour 15 minutes.

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