

Festival showcases new, independent films

By Cristina Moreno

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Nowadays, tickets for a movie can run anywhere from \$8 to \$10 to even \$15 per ticket. As broke college students know, this can hinder the amount of times one can go out to see the latest Hollywood blockbuster. A trip down Sunset Boulevard to Sunset Gower Studios, however, can have you watching short films, a documentary or a feature length film, all from new directors, for only \$5 a ticket.

This is all part of NewFilmmakers LA, a program that is dedicated to both showcasing new filmmakers' work from around the world, as well as providing filmgoers in Los Angeles with a constant supply of new films. Today's lineup, for example, includes the short film "I'm Not Matt Damon," about a Matt Damon look-alike actor; the Italian short film "Angels" about the American economic crisis; and more than a dozen other short films.

NewFilmmakers LA

Jan. 19, 6 p.m. Sunset Gower Studios,
\$5

The NewFilmmakers program started in New York more than 11 years ago. Held at the Anthology Film Archives, independent films like "The Blair Witch Project" have gotten their start at the festival. Three years ago the program

expanded to Los Angeles, and NewFilmmakers LA was formed. Now held at the Sunset Gower Studios, the festivals run every month, showing short films, documentaries and feature length films.

Larry Laboe, the Los Angeles coordinator for NewFilmmakers LA said he believes the group offers moviegoers a unique experience. After each screening, there is a question and answer section with each film's director, allowing the audience members the chance to talk to the director and give feedback, benefiting both directors and the audience. The question and answer portion is then followed by an after party, complete with a DJ.

Tickets for each program are \$5 (there are three programs throughout the night), or \$50 for the full year, which also includes perks such as complimentary drinks.



“We keep (the program) inexpensive to encourage everyone who wants to see the films to come out,” Laboe said.

He also said that their audience usually ranges from Emmy Award winners to film students, from those just starting out to those winning some of the biggest awards in Los Angeles.

The program aims to offer student filmmakers a helpful experience as

well.

“Unlike a lot of the other festivals that last a month, (NewFilmmakers LA) goes on all year long,” said Susie Kim, program director for NewFilmmakers LA.



This not only gives audience members more chances to see films, but it also gives new filmmakers more chances to have their films shown. Aside from their own newsletter, the program also works with MovieMaker Magazine, a publication that shares NewFilmmakers LA’s emphasis on independent films. The magazine publishes interviews with the directors of the chosen films, giving them further

exposure outside of Los Angeles.

Unlike many other festivals, organizers do not judge the submissions. Instead, NewFilmmakers LA is designed to help aspiring filmmakers meet and network with

industry officials, fans and the press through both the question and answer sessions and the after parties.

“Networking is important,” said Michelle Casale, a third-year communication studies student who is pursuing a minor in film. “Programs like this are a good way to get in contact with people who can help your career.”

However, other film students are not as impressed.

Robyn Charles, a graduate student in directing, said as a student she felt that she did not know enough about the program to consider submitting one of her films to it.

“They should try to build a relationship with UCLA”, Charles said, introducing an idea she said would make her more likely to try to participate in the program.

NewFilmmakers LA currently does have a month dedicated solely to USC films, but for other schools they still offer student discounts for the submission fees when entering films into the festival.

Regardless, Kim said she believes that the program is beneficial to any and all filmmakers who apply.

“We help network. ... We attract a lot of interests from distribution to managers to agencies to the press as well,” Kim said. “Everyone involved in the program has had it help their career.”

For aspiring filmmakers and film buffs alike, NewFilmmakers LA might be just the ticket, and a cheap one at that.
