

KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

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Kalamazoo film fest stars ... the bicycle

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By Mark Wedel | Special to the Kalamazoo Gazette

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A bike seems simple, but it is many things. It is a piece of sporting equipment, a gas-free way to commute to work, a way to explore your neighborhood, transportation to a mini-adventure.

Brian Moon, local triathlete and bike enthusiast, is organizing the second annual Kalamazoo Bicycle Film Festival. The night of short films — “bike shorts” — will show the diversity of the biking culture, Moon said.

“There’s all sorts of bike riding out there, and the program mimics that in the way that there’s so many different types of films,” Moon said.

A shorter event

Unlike last year’s inaugural four-day event, this year’s fest is only for one night at one location: Saturday, at Western Michigan University’s Little Theater.

“Last year spread the resources a little thin,” Moon said, adding the first festival “went well” nonetheless.

The Kalamazoo Bicycle Club offered support for this year’s fest, and Village Cyclery, Breakaway Bicycles and Pedal Bicycles got on as sponsors.

Moon said the bicycle culture has grown in recent years.

“Obviously, the gas situation, I think, is a catalyst for that,” he said.

Development of bike trails such as the Kal-Haven Trail, the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail and the Portage Bicentennial Park Trail also has encouraged more pedal-powered travel, he said.



Well wheeled: A scene from the film "With My Own Two Wheels," a 2011 documentary about how peoples' lives are changed by their bicycles.

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Earlier this year, Moon, his wife and their 2-year-old (in a bike trailer), rode the Kal-Haven to Bloomingdale, spent the day at a bluegrass festival, camped overnight and biked home the next day. To be able to ride from his Oakland Drive neighborhood to connect with the trail “is so awesome,” Moon said.

About the films

Some people in the world prize bikes for more than just recreation. “With My Own Two Wheels” (2011, director Jacob Seigel-Boettner), the festival’s longest short at 44 minutes, is a documentary showing how bicycles improve the lives of people — arguably even save lives, in some cases.

The film shows health workers in Zambia who need to visit patients living miles apart, girls in India who can’t go to school without transportation, youth in California who need to get to jobs and others needing cheap, mechanically simple transport.

“How simple is a bicycle? You kind of take it for granted,” Moon said. “(But) a means of transportation as simple as a bicycle can make such a difference.”

Other longer shorts include “Bring the Riding to the People” (2011, Elastic Lab, 31 minutes), a documentary on municipal mountain bike parks, where off-road trails with hills and obstacles are built for urban riders. There’s also “The Cycle” (2010, Roy Clovis, 16 minutes), a drama about how a teen’s theft of an 8-year-old’s bike in Brooklyn ignites class tensions.

In all, the festival features 13 films from around the globe in various genres: documentary, drama, comedy and animation.

“There’s even a short horror film,” Moon said.

“The Line” (2010, Jose Pedro Lopes, 5 minutes) is a Portuguese story of magic chalk, bike racers and lines in the road that may cause heads to explode.

Real biking, however, won’t make your head blow up. You’ll get healthier, save on gas and see your world in a new way, Moon said. The film fest is one way to tout those benefits, he said.

If You Go

Kalamazoo Bicycle Film Festival

When: 8 p.m. Saturday

Where: Little Theater, Oliver Lane and Oakland Drive, Western Michigan University

Cost: \$8

Contact: candoactive.com/kzooff.aspx, candoactive@hotmail.com

“I think (the fest) is just a fun way to promote (biking) and to give a venue to people who are bikers ... where they can get together and socialize.”

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