

# Calendar

## Modest at the Star

*Independent Film Society*

"I'm an entrepreneur," says Dan Hare, "and my philosophy is, you call 12 friends and say, 'Hey, you want to have a party?' And you tell each of them to call 12 friends. And you decentralize responsibility and the sense of ownership. So that's going to be the secret of our success."

What he wants to succeed is the Independent Film Society, which he founded three years ago "as a way to bring the film festival experience to Main Street, as it were." Never mind Robert Redford's annual event in Park City, Utah. Same goes for the ones in Palm Springs, Toronto, Seattle, and Cannes. Hare shows films on screens at

### LOCAL EVENTS

La Costa Canyon High School, Carlsbad Village Theater, and La Paloma

Theater in downtown Encinitas.

There are advantages to modest venues. Rather than face the prospect of choosing among umpteen films in ten days, as international festival participants must, Hare's society members enjoy what he calls "a bite-size format" — a film once a month. "So that when the next one comes up, people aren't burned out. They're ready for it. It's like, 'Hey, yeah, that's a cool thing.'"

What is more, *vive la difference* between the audience for the famous festivals and for his society's films, says Hare. Being discreet with his phrasing, he defines the crowd at Sundance, et al., as "a certain segment that has seen a lot of films." In San Diego, by contrast, "You have a group of people who see movies and they chat about them, but it's not like it's overdone. It's not an obsession."

Opportunities to "chat" are built into the society's programming. Its latest venue, the Star Theatre in



Dan Hare

Oceanside, was chosen with just such chats in mind. "The facility has the space to host a reception before the screening," says Hare of what is currently San Diego's largest theater, with 900-plus seats. Foreclosed in the

mid-1990s after a stint as an X-rated movie house, the Star was bought and renovated in the late 1990s by Jim Heiser. It boasts a mammoth screen, 40-by-20 feet, as well as a superior sound system. Recently it has changed hands again. Its new owner is the Poinsettia Theater of the

Performing Arts — "a nonprofit group, thank God," says Hare, who was asked to be its "producing partner on the film end of it."

The kinds of films screened by the society are ones "that basically you can't see anywhere else, because they're not in wide-area release." Anybody can go to the multiplex and see Tom Cruise "for weeks and weeks on end." These are "smaller, character-driven films" and documentaries.

Here is Hare's process for choosing the films. The first hurdle is "the good, old-fashioned, If-I-like-the-movie one. Then I've got some people that I share it with, to double-take a look at it. Thirdly, it depends on if the director can come down for a Q&A. Even if I like the movie a little less [than others], if the director's available, that adds points to it."

Last month, the society showed *The Port of Last Resort*, a 1998

documentary about Jewish refugees who left Europe for Shanghai during the Nazi era. Instead of hearing from the director in that case, the audience was introduced to John Stoesinger, distinguished visiting professor at the University of San Diego, who himself saw Hitler roll into Austria and fled to Shanghai's "Little Vienna."

Hare's probable choice for the opening of the society's third season, in May, is *Out of the Black*. A feature set in Western Pennsylvania's coal-mining country, it was cowritten and directed by San Diego-based Karl Kozak and scored by Oceanside resident Larry Groupé. "Among other things, Groupé did the score for *The Contender* — that's up for an Academy [award]," says Hare, who claims to have introduced Kozak and Groupé to each other.

In July, Hare hopes to show a sneak preview of a film being produced by Rancho Santa Fe resident Robert Glenn Smith. It's "loosely inspired" by the Ian Spiro incident of some years ago, says Smith. Hare glosses the old news clippings: "Guy comes home, his wife and three kids are shot, and he's found dead three days later in the desert by cyanide." When the incident occurred, it was thought to be a murder-suicide: Spiro was \$5 million in debt. But, says Hare, "There's heavy evidence that it was a conspiracy by terrorists."

The film interweaves four other stories of fictional North County residents — migrant workers who live in a makeshift camp. Tentatively titled *El Campo*, it will be half English, half Spanish, with subtitles for each, "so everyone can watch it together," says Smith.

Hare calls the society "a little, nonprofit, growing-up-by-its-bootstraps organization." Translation: his formula for success requires a paying membership and volunteers for ushering and other tasks. On Sunday at the Star, the group will host a reception and informational meeting designed to bring more people into the fold. Tours of the nostalgia-tinged, neon-signed theater are part of the afternoon's scheduled activities.

— Jeanne Schinto

**Reception and Informational Meeting  
Independent Film Society  
Sunday, March 25, 3:00 p.m.  
Star Theatre  
402 North Coast Highway,  
Oceanside  
Free  
Info: 760-942-5988**



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