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## Film lovers delight: Houston Cinema Arts Fest packed with movie stars, major directors & great movies

BY JOE LEYDON 10.15.13 | 6 pm













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Houston-born filmmaker Richard Linklater will be among the luminaries lending their star power to the 2013 Houston Cinema Arts Festival. But wait: There's more. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tracy Letts (August: Osage County),

are some of the other notables expected to be on hand for the Nov. 6-10 event. HCAF officials announced the festival's full 2013 line-up of feature films, installations, live performances and celebrity guests Tuesday evening during a launch party at the Sam Houston Hotel.

legendary experimental filmmaker Jonas Mekas, veteran producer Ron

Yerxa (Cold Mountain, Little Miss Sunshine) and acclaimed violinist Alicia

Svigals, founder of the Grammy Award-winning ensemble The Klezmatics,

Zachary Heinzerling's critically hailed documentary about the individual achievements and 40-year marriage of boxing painter Ushio Shinohara and artist Noriko Shinohara, both of whom will join Heinzerling for the Nov. 6 HCAF screening at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Other festival highlights include:

The opening-night attraction: Cutie and the Boxer, Houston-born filmmaker

#### Nebraska

Montana-to-Nebraska road trip taken by a boozy golden-ager (Bruce Dern) who's convinced he has won \$1 million in a Publishers Clearing House-like sweepstakes. Also along for the ride: The cantankerous coot's estranged son (Will Forte), who joins his father largely to take a vacation from his own dead-end life. Forte will be on hand for the HCAF screening, along with the film's producer, Ron Yerxa, who's being honored by the festival with special tribute screenings of his latest two movies. Dazed and Confused

The latest idiosyncratic dramedy from director Alexander Payne (Sideways, The Descendants) focuses on an eventful

### Wow, dudes. Can it really be two decades since Richard Linklater followed up his breakthrough indie Slacker with this free-

wheelingly funny comedy - his first major studio release! - about music, marijuana and misadventures on the last day before summer vacation at an Austin high school? Well, yes. But that's not the only reason why HCAF has slotted a special 20<sup>th</sup>-anniversary screening of the flick featuring such then-rising stars as Matthew McConaughey, Milla Jovovich, Ben Affleck and Renée Zellweger. Linklater will be this year's recipient of the festival's prestigious Levantine Cinema Arts Award, a prize that last year went to Robert Redford. Thomas Haden Church and TBA

## The Emmy-winning and Oscar-nominated actor will be at the Houston Cinema Arts Festival with one of his two new

movies currently awaiting theatrical release. Trouble is, HCAF spokespeople claim they can't yet tell us which one it will be, because of the festival's non-disclosure agreement with the film's distributor. All they'll tell us is that Church will be accompanied by the film's director - Megan Griffith, who won an audience award for narrative feature at the 2012 SXSW Film Festival with her harrowing indie drama, Eden – and producer/co-writer Emily Wachtel. Of course, any reasonably sentient human being could do a cross-check of those names on IMDB.com if they really were curious. Or they could, you know, just search "Thomas Haden Church" on Variety.com, and come up with this. Charlie Countryman

# The other Ron Yerxa production in the HCAF lineup is an offbeat comedy-drama featuring Shia LaBeouf as a hapless

adrift in Romania. Director Frederik Bond will be at the festival to introduce his indie feature, which recently was picked up for release by Millennium Entertainment. Jonas Mekas

Chicagoan who falls in love with the beautiful ex-wife (Evan Rachel Wood) of a brutish crime boss (Mads Mikkelsen) while

# At the ripe young age of 90, Mekas - a.k.a. The Godfather of American Avant-Garde Cinema - shows no signs of slowing

down. Indeed, he won't be content to simply screen his latest feature - Sleepless Nights Stories, a visual diary in which he rubs shoulders with Yoko Ono, Patti Smith, Harmony Korine and other artist friends - at HCAF 2013. No, Mekas also intends to conduct a tour of his exhibition Life Goes On... I Keep Singing at the Deborah Colton Gallery during the festival. Maybe while he's here in H-Town, he'll be offering health tips on how to remain eternally youthful? I mean, does this dude bathe in the blood of virgins every full moon, or what? The Yellow Ticket

#### In this most famous of several silent-era movies based on playwright Michael Morton's 1914 Broadway play, the great Pola Negri stars as a young Jewish woman in Czarist Russia who's forced to degrade herself by obtaining a "yellow

passport" usually reserved for prostitutes so she can travel freely to visit her ailing father in St. Petersburg. The Houston Cinema Arts Festival will screen film historian Kevin Brownlow's restored version of the 1918 classic Nov. 7 at MFAH with live musical accompaniment by klezmer violinist Alicia Svigals and jazz pianist virtuoso Marilyn Lerner. (Music lovers and film buffs, take note: Svigals also will take part in a festival-sponsored event, Meet the Makers: Scoring for Silent Film, at 1 p.m. Nov. 8 at HCAF Headquarters, 1201 Main St.) Paris, Texas After programming Harry Dean Stanton: Partly Fiction, Sophie Huber's tribute to the venerated character actor, and

Shepard & Dark, Treva Wurmfeld's study of the friendship between playwright Sam Shepard and actor Johnny Dark, the HCAF movers and shakers decided, hey, let's go for the gusto and make it a triple bill. Which is why the festival will follow those two documentaries at the Sundance Cinemas with a special revival screening of Paris, Texas, Wim Wenders' 1984 masterwork -- partly filmed right here in Houston -- starring Stanton in the performance of a lifetime as a dazed drifter in search of redemption and co-written (with L.M. Kit Carson) by Shepard. Good choice. Tracy Letts

# As we reported Monday, HCAF will present the H-Town premiere of August: Osage County as part of its 2013 festivities.

What we didn't report then – because we didn't know yet – is that playwright/screenwriter Tracy Letts will be here to introduce director John Wells' star-studded adaptation of his award-winning play about the singularly strong-willed women of an Oklahoma family. A family, Letts freely admits, that's a lot like his own.

"I've never shied away from discussing openly that it's based on true family history," Letts told me after the film's premiere last month at the Toronto Film Festival. "My grandfather committed suicide by drowning when I was 10 years

old. My grandmother then descended into years of downer addiction. And both of these things had great resonance in my family. Not only then, 38 years ago, but it has ripples in my family even to this day. "But the truth is, we've all got some dark patches in our family history. And anybody who says they don't - they're either lying, or they just haven't been paying attention. Because those things are there.

"So, yes, the play is drawn from autobiographical elements. But it's certainly not my autobiography. This is a recognizable family to me in some ways. But in other ways, it's very different from my actual family. You pick and choose the things

Complete details about 2013 Houston Cinema Arts Festival attractions and presentation venues can be obtained at the festival's website.

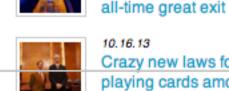
that are helpful to you: Actual things from real life, totally made up things, things from other people's families."

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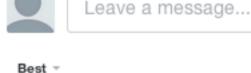
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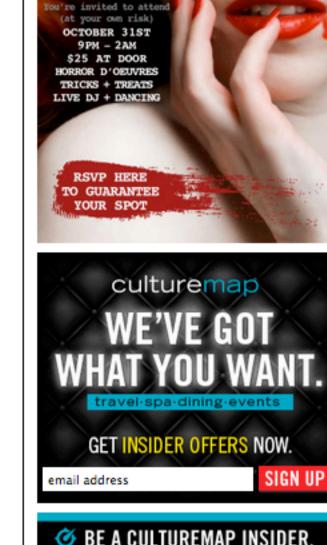
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