

Star Guide: Sci-fi film festival returns to Reno

By Tony Berendsen

"In the final decade of the 21st century...men and women in rocket ships landed on the moon. By 2200 A.D., they had reached the other planets of our solar system. Almost at once there followed the discovery of hyper-drive through which the speed of light was first attained...and later greatly surpassed. And so at last, mankind began the conquest...and colonization of deep space."

Those are the beginning lines of my favorite science fiction movie "Forbidden Planet," a 1956 classic starring Leslie Nielsen on a mission to the main sequence star Altair. I have revisited the movie over and over again to experience an amazing science fiction adventure, to wonder about the mysteries of the cosmos, and the future of the human race.

For those of you, like me, that enjoy sci-fi movies, the second year of the biggest little science fiction film festival in the world "Sci-On!" begins June 1 at the National Automobile Museum in Reno.

The festival opens with a screening of the Dome Show "Seeing," narrated by Neil deGrasse Tyson, and introduced by Melodi Rodrigue, UNR astrophysicist. Additionally, there will be virtual reality demos from "Apollo 11", "The Martian," "Star Trek," and festival finalists from VR media makers around the world.

The festival continues on June 2 with live sci-fi readings, by scientists, educators, critics and artists at the UNR Knowledge Center, Wells Fargo Theater. Later in the day there will be showings of the International Student Film Finalists of Animated and live action shorts at the National Automobile

Museum.

Paul McFarland, lead flight director of the Challenger Center of Northern Nevada, had this to say about the festival, "The Sci-On! International Film Festival grew out of a passion for science, science fiction, and filmmaking. We partnered with an international organization of filmmakers and the entries started pouring in – with outstanding animation and live action projects from over 24 countries. Many of these gems are five to 10 minutes long, with production quality equal to Academy Award-nominated short films."

On June 3 the festival peaks with an exciting list of events, including the official opening of the Be the Astronaut exhibit, a science fiction panel discussion, viewing of live action short film finalists, and a new spacecraft simulator at the Challenger Learning Center will be christened the USS Roddenberry. Attending the ceremony will be Rod Roddenberry, son of Gene Roddenberry and executive producer of a new "Star Trek" series, accompanied by his wife Heidi Roddenberry, president of the Roddenberry Foundation.

Members of the public are invited to join the Roddenberry's for a luncheon to launch the exhibit and the first ever Nevada Space Center Hall of Fame Awards, with a screening of "Trek Nation" and Q&A following. Tickets are available **online**.

Proceeds from the film festival events go to help reconstruct the nonprofit Challenger Learning Center project at the National Automobile Museum, which is helping co-sponsor the festival, with support from the Renaissance Hotel in Reno.

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