



EVENTS

# Fantastic Fest 2013



Photo Credit: movies.com

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Story by: *Jordan Gass-Poore*

Fantastic Fest, touted as the largest genre film festival in the country, wrapped Thursday in Austin after its ninth year of subversive entertainment at the new Alamo Drafthouse Lakeline.

This was the first year since Fantastic Fest's inception in 2005 that the eight-day festival was not held at the Alamo Drafthouse South Lamar, causing some annual festivalgoers to reminisce about their glory days bowling and drinking at The Highball, which was located in the same strip center as the theater.

There was also some complaint among festivalgoers about the Alamo Drafthouse Lakeline location being in the heart of neo-hipster suburbia, a conglomerate of words I heard while people waited to get in the theater for the "Machete Kills" Q&A. The film's world premiere was Fantastic Fest's opening night film.

But much like Austin-based filmmaker Robert Rodriguez's anti-hero, Machete, some festivalgoers are crossing their fingers that Fantastic Fest will return to the Alamo Drafthouse South Lamar next year... with a vengeance.

Despite the venue change, festivalgoers and industry insiders alike seemed to live in the moment, wearing their badges or holding their tickets with pride.

Fantastic Fest regular, actor Elijah Wood was in attendance this year to promote his new film "Grand Piano," whose North American rights were recently acquired by Austin-based Magnet Releasing.

Did I mention Wood touched my shoulder?  
He did. And that his middle name is my name  
- Jordan? And that we both love the city of  
Barcelona? And both took piano lessons as a  
child? I think we were meant to be.

Anywho.

The recent, might I say adorable, Austin transplant stars in this thriller about a pianist who takes the stage after a long-awaited hiatus because of stage fright, only to find himself the target of a sadistic cat-and-mouse game.



Photo Credit: sippinglemonade.com

Director of “Grand Piano,” Spaniard Eugenio Mira said the film’s premise was one of the craziest he has had the chance to work with, comparing its themes to the work of filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock.

Mira, a musician himself, says he was Wood’s piano double in the film.

” “Not like a genius or anything, I just knew the language, and that helped the feeling to have the cadence, the rhythm that is so helpful [in] designing scenes. ... To me, music and cinema both belong to sequential order as a discipline and I embrace that.”

– Eugenio Mira

Wood admitted that he was nervous about telling Mira about his few years of childhood piano lessons for fear that it would be taken out of context.

He says Mira seemed in some ways so confident that he would be able to pull off the role.

” “... And I was petrified, I mean the learning curve is so intense because the character is a genius pianist and the pieces of music that we were playing were incredibly dense and really fast in terms of their pace. So, the whole time I’m like, ‘I think he thinks that I have more knowledge about my instrument than I really do.’”

– Elijah Wood

For three weeks prior to filming “Grand Piano” in Barcelona, Wood said he worked with a teacher to improve his instrument skills, and then again two weeks prior to shooting.

Actor Keanu Reeves worked with teacher-turned-star, Tiger Chen, to perfect his on-screen martial arts skills in his directorial debut “Man of Thai Chi.”

The action flick follows a young Chinese man whose tai chi skills land him in a lucrative underground fight club.

Although Reeves does not practice tai chi, he said he first became aware of the martial art in his youth.

Reeves said he first worked with Chen on the “Matrix” trilogy. Chen was part of the films’ action team and assigned to help them with kung fu and wire techniques.

Over the years, Reeves says he and Chen became friends.

” “And he wanted to act, so we started developing a story,” said Reeves. “Over the years we worked together and it eventually became “The Man of Tai Chi,””  
– Keanu Reeves

Chen says he became involved with project in 2006.

The script for “Man of Tai Chi” went through a few incarnations, Reeves says.

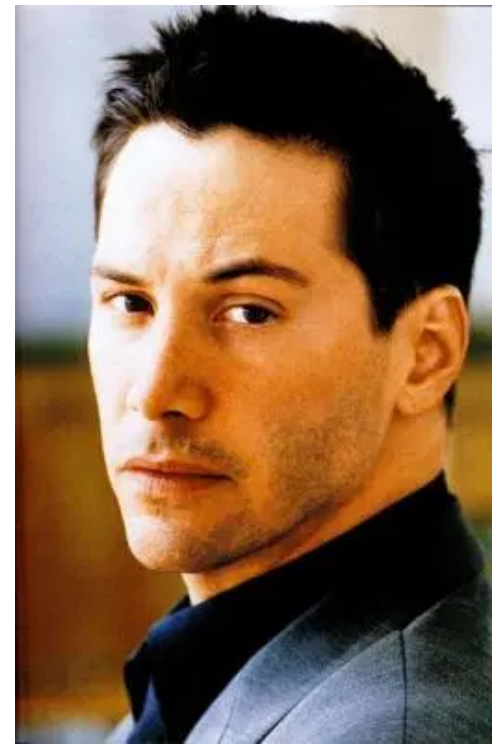


Photo Credit: abagond.wordpress.com

” “... But that’s fun, you’re getting to know your story. I was really happy where we ended up.”  
– Keanu Reeves

And, after more than a decade of my mom gushing over Reeves, he was able to provide me with a free gift for her upcoming forty-seventh birthday.

My mom was really disappointed she didn’t take me up on the offer to join me on the red carpet as my photographer.

For Other Side Drive, this is Jordan Gass-Poore’.

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OCTOBER 1, 2013

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FERNIE ESPINOSA

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# ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE, # ELIJAH WOOD, # EUGENIO MIRA, # FANTASTIC FEST, # GRAND PIANO, # JORDAN GASS-POORE’, # KEANU REEVES, # MACHETE KILLS, # MAN OF TAI CHI, # ROBERT RODRIGUEZ, # TIGER CHEN

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