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Cobain, Pearl Jam Docs Showing at Rolan Festival

By Alli Rath

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A Kurt Cobain doc will be shown.

The Beat Film Festival returns to Moscow bringing five critically acclaimed documentaries, four American and one Swedish, all with some kind of musical theme.

“What brings these films together is that they expand boundaries of the genre, showing that “documentary” is no more than a dull technical term,” said Alyona Bocharova, one of the organizers of the festival running at Rolan Cinema.

Most of the movies showing at the festival complement one another quite uniquely, although organizers say that happened by chance.

“The Devil and Daniel Johnston,” winner of the Director’s Award at the Sundance Film Festival in 2005, chronicles the life, art and mental illness of singer, songwriter, musician and artist Daniel Johnston and has a link with three other films being shown.

“Pearl Jam 20,” which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival only a month ago, features rare and never-before-seen footage of and interviews with the iconic American rock band. Interestingly, Pearl Jam covered a Johnston song in 1994, and lead singer Eddie Vedder would later open every concert in his 2008 solo tour with this same song.

Kurt Cobain, another man whose endorsement contributed to Johnston’s rise as a cult artist, is represented at the festival with the 2006 documentary “Kurt Cobain: About a Son.”

The last film that plays into the Johnston connection is “Dragonslayer,” a newly released film that follows a young skate legend from southern California with a soundtrack of songs from local indie bands. The film took Best Documentary and Best Cinematography at the South by Southwest film festival in 2011. One of the producers of “Dragonslayer,” Christine Vachon, also produced the controversial 1995 film “Kids,” for which Daniel Johnston contributed two songs.

Young up-and-coming Russian fashion designer Gosha Rubchinsky will introduce “Dragonslayer.” Rubchinsky recently filmed a documentary about the local skating scene in Moscow, a portion of which will be shown at the festival.

The final film showing at the festival is “The Extraordinary Ordinary Life of Jose Gonzalez,” a Swedish documentary studying the life, emotions and artistic process of Swedish indie musician Jose Gonzalez, who has opened for Arcade Fire.

“Beat Film Festival” runs Oct. 18-23 at Rolan Cinema. 12A Chistoprudny Bulvar. Metro Chistiye Prudy. Tel. 916-9169. www.beatfilmfestival.ru

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