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SMC's March French Film Festival

By Sophie Braccini

The curtain has gone down on this year's California Independent Film Festival, but Saint Mary's College is ready with a new opportunity for the cinema enthusiast: the Tournées Festival. Five recent French films will be shown at the Soda Activity Center during the month of March. Most of the films have already screened locally, but if you missed them this is a great opportunity to brush up on your French-fear not, the films are subtitled-and see some truly excellent films for just a few dollars.

The Tournées Festival aims at bringing contemporary French cinema to American college and university campuses. Now in its 16th year, the program is offered by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy and the French Ministry of Culture.

At SMC, the Festival is organized by the Department of Modern Languages and the French Club. Dr. Helga Lenart-Cheng put forward the application to bring the Festival to the campus. "I asked my students for recommendations. We chose a mix of films: some of them appeal to large audiences, others may take us outside our comfort zones," she says, "but they all are beautiful reflections on life that will surely inspire positive soul-searching."

She hopes to reach out to the Bay Area's Francophile community, "In particular our neighbors from the Lamorinda community," she adds.

Middle and high school students are also invited, but if an entire class wishes to come the organizers ask that the teacher get in touch with them in advance so that they can plan accordingly. For more information, contact Helga Lenart-Cheng, Department of Modern Languages, Saint Mary's College: hl4@stmarys-ca.edu.

All shows start at 7:00 p.m. in the Soda Activity Center, Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga. Tickets are \$3 for non-students (free for students).

Thursday March 1st: "Coco Avant Chanel (Coco before Chanel)" explores the pre-fame life of the world's greatest fashion designer focusing on Coco Chanel during the Belle Epoque, ending with World War I.

Thursday, March 8: "La Môme La Vie En Rose" features Marion Cotillard (Midnight in Paris) as Edith Piaf in her constant battle to sing and survive, to live and love.

Sunday, March 11: "Des Dieux Et Des Hommes (Of Gods and Men)" is a sublime tale of faith and doubt based on a real incident. The film chronicles the story of eight French Trappist monks living in an impoverished Algerian village.

Tuesday, March 20: Un Prophete (A Prophet) is the clear-eyed examination of the ambiguous figure Malik, a 19-year-old uneducated French-Arab entering prison, as he maneuvers the laws and loyalties of the violent prison world.

Monday, March 26: "Entre Les Murs (The Class)" is the winner of the 2008 Palme d'Or at Cannes. The film follows a class at a diverse Parisian public junior high school.

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