

Film Insider Series offers a unique experience and early opportunity to view upcoming films

BY JEANNE FERRIS

Beginning in February and ending in July, once a month at Arlight Cinemas in the UTC Westfield Mall, the nonprofit San Diego Film Foundation hosts the Film Insider Series (FIS). This series precedes the film festival in October. FIS screens not-yet-released premieres of films that can often be transformative and informative. Parking is available in the new subterranean garage with an easy walk from the elevator to the escalator. First two hours are free and Arlight offers an additional two-hour validation.

A FIS pass includes a pre-screening of fine wine and gourmet appetizers. The ubiquitous red carpet is a fun way to Instagram and encourages dressing in something other than the San Diego casual of flip-flops and shorts. The Q&A afterward provides great conversation and/or insight on "behind the camera perspectives" of filmmakers. It is the best bargain around town for date night or



AMANDA SAN MARTIN

"I'm Not Here" actor JK Simmons with director Michelle Schumacher and San Diego International Film Festival's CEO and Artistic Director Tonya Mantooth

friends' night out.

Sometimes, Academy Award winners like JK Simmons will show up in support of his North American premiere, "I'm Not Here." Simmons joined director Michelle Schumacher and San Diego International Film Festival's (SDIFF) CEO and Artistic Director Tonya Mantooth at the Q&A. Mantooth curates all SDIFF films that are screened (many attain Oscar nominations and win) as well as moderates most of

the Q&A with guests in relation to film content. The intimacy of the small theater and Mantooth's warm hospitality is inclusive and encourages audience participation.

Schumacher is married to Simmons and is a San Diegan native. "I attended Chula Vista High School of Performing Arts and studied with so many incredible teachers," Schumacher said. "My brother, Randle Schumacher, also lives here

SEE FILMS, B18

FROM FILMS, B2

and was our producer. With such great talent here, we want to bring more films to San Diego." Hollywood insiders who are also San Diego alumni like Schumacher frequently attend the FIS and SDIFF, which elevate audience interaction to a more personal level.

This film festival also gives back by helping the local high school film communities interested in seeking this career path with its FOCUS On Impact Film Program.

The next film in the series will be "Longshot" with Seth Rogen and Charlize Theron. The screening will be held April 10 at 6:30 p.m. Visit www.sdfilmfest.com