

# ARTS & CULTURE

PHOTO BY TODD SPENCER



## Neptune Festival

**A DAY AT THE BEACH:** Yearning for an excuse to spend the day at the Ocean Front? We've got the perfect one! The **34<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Beach Neptune Festival** is looking for volunteers for the **Sandman Triathlon** (Sept. 16), the **Neptune 8k Run** (Sept. 29), and the **Grand Parade** (Sept. 29). Positions range from acting as **Course/Block Marshall** to ensure the safety of all participants, to assisting with **check-in, packet pick-up, hospitality** and **water stops**. Volunteers are also needed for **Boardwalk Weekend** (Sept. 28-30). Use your muscles and help set up or break down the boardwalk, provide transportation from the airport for the Master Artists of the Sandsculpting Competition, or assist with clean-up after the event! There is a position for every one, so contact **Volunteer Coordinator Sherry Roebuck** now at **(757) 498-0215**.

**NEW AGE PIANO TEACHER:** And we mean "New Age" quite literally. **Edward Weiss**, a pianist/composer who has been teach-



FILM

## Lights, Cameras, It's Time to Take Action

BY FAREINE SUAREZ

**WHEN JEFFERY FRIZZELL** of the Hampton Roads Film Office told me that *Movie Maker* magazine named Virginia one of the up-and-coming states to live, work, and make movies in, I was surprised. Very surprised. Yes, we are one of the few states blessed with both mountains and beaches. We do have a plethora of historical sites that take us back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the country's capitol is sitting in our backyard, but does Virginia really have what it takes to make Hollywood-quality material?

Apparently so.

Do the film titles *Dirty Dancing*, *Cold Mountain*, and *GI Jane* ring a bell? That's right, they were all shot in Virginia. How about *The New World* and *Mission Impossible III*? Both featured scenes from right here in Hampton Roads.

Obviously, Hollywood and *Movie Maker* recognize Virginia's star potential, but what about the people, here in the heart of the Seven Cities?

If the founders of Channel 757 have anything to say, it's that the local film community is growing. There's no doubt about it. With the combined efforts of the Cinema Café Art House and Channel 757, filmmakers young and old have the opportunity to showcase their films to anyone in the community.

On the first Thursday of each month, Cinema Café Art House sponsors Open Film Night—a night when anyone can submit a short film of under 10 minutes for the audience to view and judge to their liking. If the audience finds the film uninteresting, then a chosen audience member will hit the gong provided at the front of the theater, signaling the end of the current film and the beginning of a new one.

Channel 757, a network for directors, writers, and actors, strives to provide an outlet for filmmakers to showcase their talent. Through their website, channel757.com, and seasonal film festivals, Channel 757 has shown work from filmmakers of all levels, from first-time high school amateurs to Emmy Award winners.

"Channel 757 exists specifically to showcase effort," said PR and Marketing Manager Tom White, "to show what our film communi-

ty can do and what they're capable of."

But after talking to White and Channel 757's Technology Director Scott Hansen, I found that there are some opposing viewpoints about the future of the local filmmaking community.

To White, the film community's biggest challenge is to stand on its own legs. While opportunities for filmmakers in this region are available and still growing, too many filmmakers are concerned only with their own projects.

"We need to stop thinking of each other as separate entities and start thinking of each other as a whole," said White. "We need to support each other. We can't forget the community that will help us get there."

Hansen, on the other hand, is concerned with the lack of support the city seems to have for filmmakers. A graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design, Hansen never had trouble acquiring a city permit to shut down parts of Savannah to film scenes for his projects. Both the city government and the community strongly supported filmmakers, and readily volunteered its streets for filming. However, once Hansen returned to his native Virginia Beach, he faced more problems acquiring a film permit to shoot his latest project than he ever had in Savannah.

First, he had to pay a \$75 processing fee to file each permit (Savannah processes film permits for free), and then there was the issue of time. While he was able to obtain film permits within one or two days in Savannah, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Portsmouth, he waited as long as three weeks to receive a permit in Virginia Beach.

48 Hour Film Project  
Screening  
June 20-21  
Cinema Café Art House  
8 p.m.

Although he admits that the formation of the Hampton Roads Film Office, which opened in July 2006 to provide location assistance, a crew database, and to serve as a liaison between filmmakers and cities, does help, he still feels a lack of support from the city of Virginia Beach.

"I feel like film's looked down upon in Virginia Beach," he said. "Savannah really encourages film and the arts. I think Norfolk's even putting money into film. I don't get why Virginia Beach, which is even bigger than Norfolk, can't have that kind of support too."

Maybe hope is on the way. Channel 757 canceled a film festival planned for this summer, but not without good reason. This past weekend, they sponsored something bigger, an event that they hope will bring the film community together and show filmmakers that their hard work isn't going unnoticed. This event is called the 48 Hour Film Project (48HFP).

48HFP originated in Washington DC six years ago, when founder Mark Ruppert came up with the crazy idea to make a film in 48 hours. The idea caught fire, and now 48HFP tours in over 50 U.S. cities and 11 international cities to see what filmmakers all over the world can do in that 48-hour time slot. Virginia Beach was added to the lineup for this year.

On Friday evening, a little shy of 7 p.m., 24 different teams gathered at the Cinema Café Art House. Some filmmakers were college graduates working for private film companies, others were high school students making films for the first time. Most drove less than 20 minutes to get to the theater, but a few dedicated filmmakers drove for three hours, coming from northern Virginia. There were teams that had a full production crew and state-of-the-art equipment, and others that had nothing but their dad's miniDV camcorder and a few friends. However, all of them had one thing in common: They wouldn't be getting much sleep that weekend.

Each team was assigned a random genre. A few possible choices included the gener-

ic “drama” and “comedy” and then the not-so-generic “Western” and “Film de Femme.” Those who didn’t like their genre were given the opportunity to trade it in for a Wild Card genre, which could be an Animal Film, a Children’s Film, a Historical Fiction, a Silent Film... you get the point. Then they announced a mandatory prop, line of dialogue, and character that each team would have to include in their short. When all was said and done, the teams were kicked out of the theatre. All that was left to do was write, produce, and edit their films.

The deadline was Sunday, 7:30 p.m. at the Cinema Café Premier location. Anything turned in at 7:31 or later was disqualified.

So who won the competition? Go and see for yourself. All 48HFP Virginia Beach films will be screened at the Cinema Café Art House on Wednesday and Thursday, June 20 and 21 at 8 p.m. The winner will go on to represent Virginia Beach in the inter-

national competition and compete for exposure, prize money, and equipment—every filmmaker’s dream.

The local film community is growing. And hopefully, with 48HFP coming through Virginia Beach, filmmakers, the non-filming community, and the seven cities will realize that and continue to increase their level of support.

**READY, SET FILM:**  
Teams in the 48  
Hour Film Project  
have two days to  
write and produce  
a motion picture.

Tom White was downright paternal about the nascent filmmaking community in Virginia Beach.

“The filmmaking community, as it is right now, is still a baby,” he said. “Babies have to be made, nurtured. Without nurturing them, they will grow weak and die. It’s our responsibility to nurture and see this child through to adulthood.” ●



PHOTO BY KATHY KEENEY

ing for 14 years, is now offering **online piano lessons** to students from all over the world. Through **video instruction, downloadable workbooks** and **audio clips**, students can practice anytime between school, work, tennis, theater, and any other activity. Weiss offers lessons at only **\$19.97 a month**, so students save both time (remember, travel is nonexistent!) and money. Go to [www.quiescencemusic.com](http://www.quiescencemusic.com) for more information.

**JUMP ON A BENCH!** That’s what the *Cirque du Soleil’s* “Saltimbanco” means. This innovative troupe combines **acrobatics, theatre, dance, and music** to bring viewers on an eclectic, allegorical journey into the heart of **urban life**. They will enter the world of the people who live there, their idiosyncrasies and daily habits, their families, the hustle and bustle of the street and the towering heights of skyscrapers. *Saltimbanco* is sure to enrich the cultural roots of the people around them, and show that **diversity** is a cause for **hope**. See them **Oct. 3-7** at the **Norfolk Scope**.

**NOTABLE, NATIONAL:** New York has LaGuardia Arts. Miami, its New World School of the Arts High School. Washington, D.C., its Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Heck, even Norfolk has the Governor’s School for the Arts. What does **Chicago** have? Nothing—until now. Plans are being sketched for a **Chicago High School for the Arts**, an idea enthusiastically supported by **70 prominent arts and educational institutions** and several other organizations. If the design framework is approved, this pre-professional school for the arts can open as early as **2008**, admitting 150 freshmen in its first entering class. Academics would be taught in the morning, while the arts would be taught in the afternoon. Extra rehearsals, studio time and tutoring would be provided, as well as **special education** and **English-as-a-second-language** courses. Chicago is the only city of its size without a pre-professional arts school, so it’s about time they get one!