



Memorial Day Event Honors Armed Forces

Film Industry Highlights Soldiers

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WASHINGTON -- This Memorial Day weekend, Hollywood will shine its bright lights on Washington and the troops who put their lives on the line for their country with the G.I. Film Festival.

"We've got all these great new films, films that have never been seen before -- all of them focusing on the courage and selflessness of our men and women in uniform," said Brandon Milliett, founder of the G.I. Film Festival.

Organizers said the festival is the first of its kind. During the four-day-long event, filmmakers will screen more than 20 films. Festival organizers said most of the films will be new, but attendees will also be able to check out some war classics.

Actor R. Lee Erney, probably best-known for his role as the in-your-face drill sergeant in "Full Metal Jacket," will be on-hand to kick off the event.

"It does honor the military guys and gals, you know. We need to recognize them more for what they do for this country," he said.

Comedian Jeff Ross will show his award-winning documentary, "Patriot Act," during the event. Ross said the film is his first-person account of his first trip to Iraq. He said that comedy has allowed him to connect to the troops.

"You're entertaining troops who are in combat. If you can make a punchline penetrate a bulletproof vest, that is a great feeling for a comedian," said Ross. Many soldiers said they are grateful the event is taking place.

"I feel honored, especially since we're in a wartime situation right now. I think it's fabulous that they're doing that," said Army Sgt. Amy Lugo.

"I'm grateful that agencies such as this would take the opportunity to recognize us for our efforts," said Army Maj. Monica Griffin.

The G.I. Film Festival is taking place at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center at 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in Northwest.

It runs through Monday with screenings beginning as early as 8 a.m. Tickets for most individual screenings are \$12-25 dollars and all are open to the public.