



Wed., Mar. 28, 2007

## GI festival salutes Sinise Attendees to screen favorite war films

By JOHN CLARKE JR.

The inaugural GI Film Festival, a three-day festival celebrating film and the military, will kick off Memorial Day weekend and honor thespian Gary Sinise.

Held at the Ronald Reagan Intl. Trade Center in Washington, D.C., May 26-28, event will feature shorts, docs and features.

Kudofest also hosts panel discussions featuring soldiers, journalists, authors and filmmakers who will discuss the relationship between Hollywood and the military.

Another panel, called War Stories, will feature...authors Andy Carroll and Michael Yon, who will share and discuss tales of war.



As part of the new festival, various attendees will screen favorites. Screenwriter Ron Maxwell will screen "Verna: USO Girl"; helmer John Dahl shows "The Great Raid"; Sinise unspools "Forrest Gump"; director John Millius screens "Red Dawn"; and Pat Boone screens a self-made docu about the National Guard.

Fest also has invited advisory committee members Ernest Borgnine and Chuck Norris. No word on what films they may screen.

Considering the hotly debated U.S. presence in Iraq, organizers admit it is a contentious time to start a film festival focused on the military. However, organizers maintain the fest is more about the individual, rather than the politics behind the conflict.

Fest is open to all filmmakers, with awards going to winners of three main categories: feature, documentary and film shorts.

There are no guidelines for submissions, other than the film must depict servicemen and -women with dignity and respect.

"All we require is that they show respect for soldiers," said event founder Brandon Millett. "This is not about having one position on any one conflict."

The mission, he said, is to honor soldiers' successes and sacrifices.

"They don't choose the conflict they're in," he said. "They just lace up their boots and put on their helmets and go to work."

Organizers expect to release film lineup next week.