

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 7-13, 2011 A GUIDE TO THE GREATER FORT MYERS ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT SCENE

**STARRING
SW FLORIDA**

DAY OF THE DEAD

COURTESY PHOTO

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

ewilliams@floridaweekly.com

THERE'S A SPECIAL THRILL THAT COMES WITH SEEING your hometown in a movie.

All those familiar sights and sites, up there on the big screen: *Look, there's downtown! There's the beach! There's the courthouse!*

Maybe it's the satisfaction of knowing firsthand what's behind the scenes and around the corner.

Or perhaps it's the sneaking suspicion that if your locale is good enough to be featured in a film, maybe *you* could be movie material, too.

It's an odd experience, where you focus on the background, and wish the actors would move out of the way because they're blocking a familiar view.

While it's far from a thriving movie destination like New York City, a number of films have been shot locally, on what the Collier County Film Commission calls "the Paradise Coast." From the Everglades to Fort Myers, directors have captured our beaches, islands, palm trees, sun and small towns on celluloid and digital video.

Of course, not all of them are necessarily

SEE STARRING, C4 ►

INSIDE



Sandy Days, Salty Nights

Disaster's common denominator. C2 ►



Summer Movie Recap

A lighthearted look back at the last four months in cinema. C11 ►

WineTrail set to be downtown's next big thing

BY IDA VAYNBERG

Special to Florida Weekly

Be it a huge block party with three stages for live music, hundreds of zombies running in the streets at Zombicon or a night when the downtown art galleries showcase their creative forces to meandering crowds, these downtown Fort Myers events all have one thing in common — they all began with a good idea. The latest good idea to breathe life into the River District is the Fort Myers WineTrail, A Walk of Wine Discovery.

The first WineTrail happens Friday and Saturday, Sept. 30 and Oct. 1. It is a celebration of the great variety and choices of wine now available in Fort Myers hotels and restaurants.

WineTrail starts each day off with an expert teach-in at Harborside on the world's different wine regions and grape varieties. Experts will explain why the same grape from two dif-

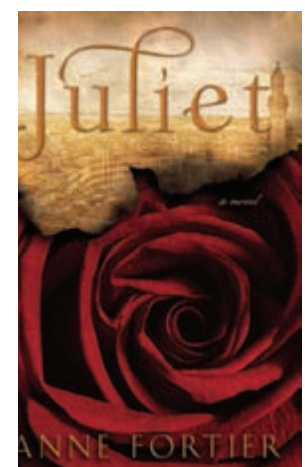


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Pam Lemmerman, right, owner of The French Connection Café, discusses WineTrail wine selections with Angie Koher, district manager for OPICI Wine Co. of Florida.

ferent regions can taste so different. offer complimentary tastings of top Winetrail participating restaurants, bars, hotels and local galleries will

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'Juliet'

A romantic thriller that's a lot of fun to read.

C3 ►



Taste of the Arts

Sample culinary delights and culture. C18 ►

STARRING

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great art. On a scale of one to 10 (with 10 being excellent), many of them rate only twos or threes on the online site IMDb (The Internet Movie Data Base.) One even had its notoriety officially confirmed by being featured in the documentary “The 50 Worst Films of All Time.”

Perhaps the most famous Southwest Florida movie is George A. Romero’s 1985 “Day of the Dead,” which was shot in downtown Fort Myers. A cult favorite and the last of Mr. Romero’s zombie trilogy, it follows the undead who roam the earth while a group of survivors hunker down in underground bunkers.

Scenes shot along Main and Hendry streets and Edwards Drive show the former Fort Myers post office/federal building (now the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center) and the old Edison Theatre (which maintained the marquee but now houses lawyers).

The cinematic apocalypse comes to life every October when the city hosts Zombicon (coming up for the fifth year Saturday, Oct. 11).

With perhaps unintended humor, www.deadplaces.net compares scenes from “Day of the Dead” to how the same locations look today.

“We traveled to this location in the sweltering Summer of 2004, expecting to find many changes since 1985. What we found, however (and we think you’ll agree) is shockingly unmistakable,” write the anonymous posters.

Local flicks your probably missed

Fort Myers’ downtown can be seen in the background as actor Woody Harrelson crosses a street in the 1998 film “Palmetto.”

“Terror Inside,” a 2008 film starring Corey Feldman and Tanya Memme, has scenes set in Fort Myers and Cape Coral. According to IMDb, the crew was composed of 37 film students from Valencia Community College in Orlando and 10 professional filmmakers.

“Coupe de Ville,” a 1990 film starring Patrick Dempsey, Daniel Stern and Annabeth Gish, also contains scenes shot in Fort Myers and Cape Coral.

“Escape from Cuba,” a 2003 movie that went directly to video, was shot in Cape Coral. The lone user review on IMDb says, “Might appeal to some women, but expect that nearly all male and female audiences will skip this film.”

Local filmmaker John Biffar wrote and directed “Captiva Island,” an 85-minute indie film set on Captiva and starring Ernest Borgnine, Arte Johnson (of TV’s “Laugh-In” fame) and Bill Cobbs (who recently starred in “Low Down” and hosted this year’s Arts for ACT auction in Fort Myers).

“Night Moves,” a 1975 movie featuring Gene Hackman as a private detective pursuing a missing persons case, has scenes of Sanibel Island in it. The late Arthur Penn, who also made classics such as “Bonnie and Clyde,” “The Miracle Worker,” “Alice’s Restaurant” and “Little Big Man,” directed.

The 1995 mystery “Just Cause,” with Sean Connery, Lawrence Fishburne and Kate Capshaw, was shot on location in Fort Myers, Bonita Springs and Collier County.

“Gone Fishin’,” a 1997 buddy movie starring Danny Glover and Joe Pesci, was filmed in various places around Southwest Florida, including Fort Myers, Estero, Marco Island and Everglades National Park.

And according to the official site of Fort Myers & Sanibel Florida Travel & Vacation Information, “Blue Sky,” starring Jessica Lange and Tommy Lee



Arte Johnson, Ernest Borgnine and John Biffar on the set of “Captiva Island.”

COURTESY PHOTO



Jesse Zeigler and Amy Bush starred in “Captiva Island.”

COURTESY PHOTO

Jones, was shot in part in Fort Myers and North Captiva Island. Ms. Lange won an Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in this movie.

So bad, they’re...horrible

“The Cotton Pickin’ Chicken Pluckers” is a serious contender for the corniest, most-redneck movie ever made. Shot in 1967 in Lehigh Acres, the movie features “Hee-Haw”-esque country songs and lazy hillbillies who drink moonshine out of jugs.

It sets back the image of the South at least 50 years, reinforcing almost every stereotype.

The movie’s tagline — “It’s a swamp romp” — isn’t exactly appealing either, unless you’re a frog.

But the 1966 movie “The Fat Spy,” filmed in Cape Coral, surely takes the prize as oddest Southwest Florida flick. This is the aforementioned film whose claim to fame is that it was featured in “The 50 Worst Films of All Time.”

Directed by Joseph Cates, “The Fat Spy” stars Phyllis Diller (who wields a riding crop throughout most of the movie), Jack E. Leonard (playing identi-

cal twins) and Jayne Mansfield (who at one point slowly leans over directly in front of the camera lens, her cleavage filling the screen).

It’s difficult to determine whether the makers of “The Fat Spy” were attempting to replicate the teen beach movies of the time, or spoof them.

Young people in bathing suits sing and dance on the sands of Cape Coral, which is presented as a nearly deserted island that contains the Fountain of Youth. One teen couple is making out on the beach when the boy bursts into song. Then all of a sudden, he’s dressed in a dark three-piece suit and tie, and seated on a horse. (And this predates the ingenious Old Spice commercials by more than three decades.) The couple also winds up singing by the Iwo Jima replica monument.

Sample dialogue: “I dig this barren wastin’ blazing sun!”

There’s also this witty repartee with Mr. Leonard and Ms. Diller:

Mr. Leonard: “Your eyes! They’re so beautiful! Where did you get these eyes?”

Ms. Diller: “They came with the head.”

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And according to IMDb: “Perhaps because the production had run out of money, a final portion of this movie was never actually shot; instead, the camera simply pans over the script pages describing what occurred in the missing scenes.”

Some might say this is a perfect reflection of the area, but others might argue that the quintessential Southwest Floridian film has yet to be made. In the meantime, we can enjoy our spectacular gulf sunsets in real life, unencumbered by wooden acting, bad dialogue and implausible plots. ■