



Victoria's Free-B Film Festival presents Spice World at Cameron Bandshell on Friday.

Free-B film fest a crowd pleaser

What: Free-B Film Festival
Where: Cameron Bandshell, Beacon Hill Park
When: Fridays and Saturdays, 9 p.m.
Until: Aug. 19
Admission: Free

MICHAEL D. REID
 Times Colonist

Don't be misled by the title of the Free-B Film Festival, cautions programmer Donovan Aikman. "B-movies aren't bad movies — they're just made differently," says Aikman.

In fact, Victoria's Free-B Film Festival's annual batch of family-friendly outdoor screenings is carefully curated to reflect the tastes of its audience.

(While the phrase is often misused to suggest a film of inferior quality, a B-movie is typically a lower-budget genre film of varying quality. Many were once cranked out to accompany first-run features.)

The 18th annual edition of what festival director Kathy Kay describes as "Victoria's coolest tradition" during the hot-weather season features films from a list of suggested titles compiled year-round by staff.

Friday's entry is *Spice World*, a 1997 romp featuring the Spice Girls, which Aikman said he booked in response to popular demand.

"A lot of people scratch their heads over that, but I get a lot of requests and I always take them seriously," he said.

"It embodies classic B-movies in a weird way. Yes, it's a B-movie with famous stars, but on the other hand, they cheap out in a fun, cheeky sort of way."

Aikman recalled a car-chase



Free-B Film Festival runs Fridays and Saturdays until Aug. 19.

sequence featuring "a cheesy little car model" that does amazing things on London Bridge.

"It looks like the set was built in somebody's basement," he noted with a laugh. "It's got the fun factor."

The Free-B Film Festival's enduring popularity was evident last Friday, when 2,000 film buffs filled the lawn of the B.C. legislature to watch *Jumanji*, the 1995 fantasy-adventure starring the late Robin Williams.

"We were super-happy with the opening-night turnout. A lot of families came out," Aikman said, recalling the magical effects of clear skies and a deep-red moon that illuminated the crowd as the evening wore on. The next night, Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps was among the crowd watching *Rush Hour*, and posted pictures on social media, he said. *Spice World* will screen Friday

at 9 p.m. at Beacon Hill Park's Cameron Bandshell, the venue for the rest of this year's showings, followed Saturday at the same time by *The Outsiders*.

Aikman said Francis Ford Coppola's 1983 film, based on S.E. Hinton's 1967 novel about rival adolescent gangs in rural Oklahoma, was selected in part because many people are familiar with the novel. The film helped launch the careers of Matt Dillon, Robby Mustie and C. Thomas Hall, who played members of the Greasers.

"The movie's a throwback to the B-movie genre of juvenile-delinquent movies, but with great actors at the beginning of their careers," he said.

The remaining features, all preceded by a short, include the Catskills dance classic *Dirty Dancing* (Aug. 18) and the return of *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* (Aug. 19), the 1971 original starring Gene Wilder.

"We've been avoiding doing repeats, just because there's so much material and so much ground to cover, but we've been asked about (*Willy Wonka*) multiple times," said Aikman.

"We're also trying to keep it family-friendly, trying to keep away from the *Top Guns*, the *Pirates of the Caribbean*, the *Ferris Buellers*. They've been done and there's a whole world of incredible movies out there."

Film buffs are asked to bring their own blankets, flashlights and snacks. Screenings will be held rain or shine, Aikman said. For more information and the full schedule, go to FreeBFilmFest.com, mreid@timescolonist.com

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Patriotic Wolf Warrior 2 China's top domestic film

The Associated Press

BEIJING — A patriotic film reportedly inspired by evacuations of Chinese civilians in Libya and Yemen has become China's biggest-ever grossing domestic movie.

By Wednesday, action movie *Wolf Warrior 2* had raked in more than 3.4 billion yuan (\$644 million Cdn) since its release on July 27, overtaking Hong Kong director Stephen Chow's 2016 fantasy comedy *The Mermaid* in the record books.

Wolf Warrior 2 depicts a former special-forces soldier battling against insurgents and mercenaries in Africa to save trapped Chinese workers. Chinese media have reported that it is based on the evacuations of Chinese civilians from Libya in 2011 and Yemen in 2015 that were assisted by the military.

State media reported that cinema showings are sold out and audiences have been giving the movie standing ovations. The official Xinhua News Agency said the film had "grabbed the heart of the nation."

The film has been helped by the summer blackout period

when major foreign films are not released in an effort to give a lift to Chinese films. But it has also been stirring up patriotism among appreciating audiences taking pride in its message of a confident China with the means and will to protect its citizens abroad.

Cinema-goers have especially praised the pride-stirring combat scenes and the performance of lead actor Wu Jing, a martial artist who also directed the film.

"The patriotism theme is good and it stirred up our patriotic feelings," said media-company employee Zhao Yunyun, 26.

"I feel very proud of a powerful China and of being Chinese." The movie was playing last week amid celebrations of the 90th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army, the world's largest standing military. Those included a military parade during which President Xi Jinping declared China would never allow the loss of any part of its territory to the resounding applause of the troops.

The first *Wolf Warrior* in 2015 was about the same soldier featured in the sequel, and pulled in about 500 million (\$95 million).

The Butchart Gardens

THIS WEEK

THURSDAY AUG. 10	FRIDAY AUG. 11	SATURDAY AUG. 12
Jesse Cobb Both bluegrass & contemporary mandolin 8pm	Groove Kitchen Soul, funk, latin & reggae. Good Fun! 8pm	Mad Day Out The Beatles live on! 6:15pm Fireworks 9:15pm
SUNDAY AUG. 13	MONDAY AUG. 14	TUESDAY AUG. 15
Odyssey String Quartet Classical, gypsy, swing & pop 8pm	10 Strings & a Goat Skin Irish, Cape Breton & Acadian music 8pm	Chris Millington & Dancin' Pop classics with dancing on stage 8pm

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 9:15pm

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Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder

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Entertainment Calendar: butchartgardens.com/entertain or Tel 250.652.5256

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