

Festival to feature famous, less famous writers

SPOTLIGHT

Event to showcase UNL, planner says

By Liesl Klinzman
Staff Reporter

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln will be the host of the third annual Nebraska Literature Festival Friday and Saturday.

The festival's goal is to increase interest in literature and Nebraska authors, and it has been very successful, said Steven Shively, co-director of the festival.

One of the festival's main attractions is a

book fair that will feature 30 book dealers.

"People like to browse," said Shively, a teaching assistant in the English department. "And there will be a variety of new and used books. It should be a fun time for everyone."

Another attraction is the open reading section, which runs all day Saturday, Shively said. Writers will have the opportunity to read their writing in front of an audience. English professor Robert Narveson, co-director of the festival, said professional writers also would read selections from their works, as well as give advice to new writers.

"We have well-known writers reading poetry and fiction writing. We also have workshops on children's writing and screenwriting."

"We're using the strengths of the people speaking and conducting workshops to attract the public and students," he said.

This year's festival has placed extra emphasis on high school students, Narveson said.

"Last year at Kearney was the first high

“*The workshops are set up to help students develop their writing skills and to become better writers.*”

—Ford
associate professor of English

school day, and over 500 students showed up. This year, I'm still getting calls from high schools wanting to attend the festivities," he said.

James Ford, associate professor of English, is in charge of the festival's high school activities. He said many students planned to share their work at the festival.

"Out of 500 students, 200 are bringing their

writing to share in the workshops," Ford said.

"The workshops are set up to help students develop their writing skills and to become better writers," he said.

Students should leave the festival not only as better writers but also more excited about the art of writing, Narveson said.

"When students go home, they should be enthusiastic and charged up about writing," Narveson said.

The festival is sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book, an affiliate of the national center, which is an arm of the Library of Congress, Shively said.

The first festival was held at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1991, he said. Last year's festival was held at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Most of the festival's events will be held at the Nebraska Union, where registration will be early Saturday.

Strange love in 'Romance' lets Slater, Arquette shine

"True Romance"



If a biography of Christian Slater is ever made for the big screen, they could call it: "The Good, Bad, and Absolutely Weird."

That title best represents his list of movies, with the "good" referring to "Pump Up The Volume" and "Heathers", "Kuffs" for the "bad", and his latest film "True Romance" for the "weird".

There are, of course, other words that could be used to describe the general feeling of "True Romance", such as bizarre, odd, or downright freaky, but "weird" will do.

Slater portrays Clarence Worley, a lone-wolf type of guy that loves comic books and old kung fu movies. He even has Elvis as his mentor, although the King will only appear in bathrooms.

On his birthday, he meets up with a call girl named Alabama (Patricia Arquette from "Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors") at a "Street Fighter" movie triple feature.

She's only in her third day of business, but she falls for Clarence anyway. They have a whirlwind made-for-cinema romance that ends with a justice-of-the-peace marriage.

Clarence wastes Alabama's former pimp in an act that is meant to defend her honor. He then intends to take back all her belongings, but accidentally leaves with a suitcase full of cocaine.

Thus begins the adventures of Alabama and Clarence.



photo courtesy Warner Bros.

Clarence (Christian Slater) and Alabama (Patricia Arquette) are two unlikely lovers who double-cross the Detroit mob by stealing a load of contraband and fleeing to Los Angeles.

They drive to Hollywood in their mega-purple Cadillac to sell the stuff and to start a new life in Cancun, while trying to avoid the mob and police at the same time.

"True Romance" also features an all-star cast, which includes Val Kilmer, Gary Oldman, Dennis Hopper, and Christopher Walken.

Even if it is a weird film, it's a good film. The audience is kept

hypnotized from the first frame all the way to the end, particularly through the chemistry between Slater and Arquette.

What helps this film attain the status of "weird" is the style of characters that director Tony Scott ("Top Gun" and "Beverly Hills Cop 2") has brought to the screen, and the way that they interact with one another.

One minute, we have a tense situation between Slater ventilating Alabama's pimp (Oldman), the next has Alabama crying about how romantic it is of Clarence to shoot someone in her honor.

We also have lots of stuff that has nothing to do with the storyline, but are interesting to see, like Brad Pitt using a Sue Bee honey bottle as a bong and Gary Oldman sporting

a head full of dreadlocks and a scar-covered face.

See? It's just ... weird. A romantic-action movie with one heckuva twist, it's definitely worth checking out, but don't try to follow the plot with any sense of logic. Just go with the flow.

—Gerry Beltz

Lousy vampire novel lacks soul, exploits and explains Nothing



"Lost Souls" Poppy Z. Brite Dell/Abyss Horror

A word of warning: "Lost Souls" is not for squeamish, or the tasteful.

If you are not troubled by endless drug abuse, rape, bisexuality or homosexual incest, even find it titillating, then this book's for you. You might even want to check out Poppy Z. Brite's second book, coming in November, entitled "Drawing Blood."

Brite's first novel follows on a string of short stories published in anthology collections. "Lost Souls" is a modern remake of the vampire tale that resembles "Dracula" crossed with "Less Than Zero" or "Generation X,"

a flashy tale that is surprisingly hollow at its core.

The story revolves around Nothing, born of a vampire father and a human mother. After killing his mother at birth, Nothing is left on a doorstep and raised as a normal child—but he turns into a nihilistic, black-clad, going-nowhere-fast adolescent. He runs away from home, choosing a North Carolina town as his destination. The town was given as the address of a band whose locally-produced cassette he received as a gift.

Once there, he meets a trio of male vampires, and he immediately falls in love with one of them. The problem is, this particular vampire is his father, but that matters little to Nothing.

Thrown into the mix are two members of the band, called—what else?—Lost Souls?, and the lead guitarists' ex-girlfriend, who becomes impregnated by Nothing's father/lover.

"Lost Souls" is the perfect embodiment of a horror novel for the "twentynothing" generation. All the

characters are empty and angst-ridden. They lead meaningless existences, so that one really doesn't care when they die. In fact, you might find yourself relieved.

Brite's novel is a stumbling, drug-induced wandering through an endless succession of black leather-clad and heavily-rouged landscapes of wasted youth. There's plenty of sex, most of it homosexual, and the sex generally is mechanistic and gratuitous, devoid of any emotion.

"Lost Souls" is a logical, X-rated extension of Anne Rice's less graphic novels, and Francis Ford Coppola's erotically charged "Dracula." However, like Coppola's effort, "Lost Souls" founders on too much style, and not enough true substance, banking a little too much on the eroticism to carry it. Brite runs the risk of turning the vampire genre into nothing more than a sick, twisted version of the Harlequin Romance.

—Sam Kepfield



James Mehling/DN