

a premiere ATTRACTION



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Cincinnati World Cinema offers film lovers works they can't get anywhere else in the city

By Lauren Bishop

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You know that movie starring John Malkovich as a Amazing Kreskin-esque mentalist who stages a comeback in Cincinnati? No?

That could be because the movie, "The Great Buck Howard," hasn't yet opened in the city where much of it takes place.

But thanks to a 7-year-old, volunteer-run organization called Cincinnati World Cinema, the movie will open April 26 for a three-day run at the Redmoor on Mount Lookout Square.

MOVIES The Redmoor, formerly Jasper's and before that the Mount Lookout Cinema Grille, will serve as Cincinnati World Cinema's interim home, following the end of the organization's partnership with the Cincinnati Art Museum.

"We're a one-of-a-kind organization in this community," says Cincinnati World Cinema co-founder and executive director Tim Swallow. "We're filling a void, and people have responded well to us."



Magnolia Pictures

John Malkovich's "The Great Buck Howard" is set in Cincinnati and will be screened at the Redmoor over a three-day period starting next Sunday.

A retired marketer in his mid-50's who lives in Northern Kentucky, Swallow started Cincinnati World Cinema to bring films to Cincinnati that otherwise might not show up at the multiplexes or even art-house theaters like the Esquire/Mariemont. He looks for and shows independent, international films, documentaries, locally produced works and the perennially popular Oscar-nominated short films which he first brought to Cincinnati eight years ago.

This year, a diverse audience of about 1,100 have attended six screenings of the Oscar Shorts, Swallow says.

"It was really a complete blank sheet of paper when Tim started it," says Leonora Polonsky, 47, of Montgomery, who's been attending screenings since 2002. "He built it from nothing to be a great contribution to the arts in this city."

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Colin Hanks and Steve Zahn in "The Great Buck Howard," with Cincinnati skyline in the background.

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COVER STORY

Group screens films not at major theaters

CINEMA FROM PAGE D1

Cincinnati World Cinema is able to land films such as "The Great Buck Howard" because of the time that Swallow and a small group of volunteers have invested in researching films and developing relationships with filmmakers and distributors. The group's publicity is primarily through e-mail newsletters, word of mouth, radio and print advertising, and ticket sales alone fund the screenings, which typically number just one or two a month.

"We're very picky, and we're looking for top quality," Swallow says.

The well-reviewed "Buck Howard" was a no-brainer for Swallow, a Malkovich fan; the Cincinnati connection was another reason to bring the film here.

Filmmakers shot little of the movie here, although it shows the Cincinnati skyline, WXIX-TV (Channel 19) anchor Sheila Gray announcing that Buck Howard (Malkovich) has collapsed at an event and was rushed to University Hospital and a line by Fox 19 anchor Rob Williams.

If You Go

What: Cincinnati premiere of "The Great Buck Howard," presented by Cincinnati World Cinema

When: 3 p.m. next Sunday and 7:30 p.m. April 27 and 28

Where: The Redmoor, 3187 Linwood Ave., Mt. Lookout

Tickets: \$8 in advance online at www.cincyworldcinema.org or 877-548-3237; \$10 at the door. Dinner and drinks available before screening. Free parking behind theater.

Info: www.cincyworldcinema.org, 859-781-8151

But there are lots of Cincinnati references. Middletown native Debra Monk plays Doreen, who introduces herself as a member of "the Cincinnati chapter of the Red Hat Society" when welcoming Howard. Howard is there to perform at a venue called "the Cincinnati Arts Complex" (yes, that's a set-up for a joke).

Later, at the event that Howard hopes will put him back on the mentalist map, members of the local media rush out after they hear that Jerry Springer has gotten into a car accident on Columbia Parkway. Howard's road manager, Troy Gable (Colin Hanks, son of Tom) then must explain to the furious Howard that Springer not only has a TV show, but that he also was once the mayor of Cincinnati.

Although "The Great Buck Howard" recently became available on-demand on both Time Warner and Insight digital cable, the Redmoor offers moviegoers the option of having a drink or dinner before screenings and participating in an informal discussion afterward.

Not all Cincinnati World Cinema screenings will take place at the Redmoor, because it isn't equipped to show 35-mm films, Swallow says. But wherever Cincinnati World Cinema goes, its loyal viewers - including Dave Velzy of Montgomery, 58 - will no doubt follow.

"You just don't get this kind of intellectual stimulation elsewhere," he says.

REVIEW

'Great Buck Howard'

satiric yet warm

By Stephen Holden
The New York Times

"The Great Buck Howard" an agreeable show business satire with a warm heart, was inspired by the career of the Amazing Kreskin, aka George Joseph Kresge Jr., the 1970s television mind reader who still pops up on the tube now and then.

Playing Buck Howard, an entertainer with a similar career trajectory, John Malkovich exaggerates the familiar mannerisms of this self-described professional mentalist to create a barbed but affectionate portrait of a second string trouper struggling for a comeback.

Buck greets people with an exaggerated arm-pumping parody of Kreskin's vigorous handshake. As interpreted by Malkovich, Kreskin's courtly geniality assumes a slightly creepy edge of self-deluding egomania.

Offstage, Buck can veer in seconds from a charmer to a nit-picking, tantrum-throwing diva. But he is less a tyrant than an eccentric. Buck can exude a witheringly ice hauteur one moment and a disorienting aura of not being entirely present the next. In front of an audience, however, he is shamelessly, happily obsequious, and the crowds eat it up.

Much of Buck's sense of self-worth depends on his successful execution of Kreskin's signature stunt of inviting audience members to hide the fee for his performance while he is secluded offstage.

When he returns he uses — extra-sensory powers, Sherlock Holmes detective skills, or whatever they are — to find the money. In a 2007 interview, Mr. Kresge, now 74, boasted that he had failed only nine times in his career to locate it.

Buck, however has a perfect record. His difficulty in sniffing out the money at a Las Vegas where he is making his big-time comeback is the movie's dramatic turning point.

Written and directed by Sean McGinly, "The Great Buck Howard" also stars Colin Hanks as Troy Gable, a law-school dropout and aspiring writer who impulsively takes a job as Buck's road manager. As Troy, Hanks (the son of Tom, who is a producer of the movie and who appears in two scenes as Troy's sternly disapproving father) narrates the story while following Buck from city to city.

Buck selects Cincinnati, a stronghold of fan support, as the place to recapture show business glory (and perhaps an invitation to appear on Jay Leno's "Tonight Show") with an exhibition of mass hypnosis. While in Cincinnati, Troy has a fling with a hard-boiled publicist (Emily Blunt) who stands up to a petulant Buck.

Ms. Blunt, who has the officious, mechanical airs of a contemporary publicist down pat, lends the movie pungent comic undertones, as do Debra Monk and Steve Zahn as a pair of besotted Buck Howard fans who insist on shepherding their idol around the city.



Magnolia Pictures

Buck Howard (John Malkovich) attempts to make a comeback in Cincinnati.