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Christopher Coppola teaches digital film students to live in the moment

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) Director/actor **Christopher Coppola** will stage a mini-**digital** media festival Saturday **in** Crystal Lake, **in** partnership with **the** Raue Center for **the** Arts. Project Accessible Hollywood, dubbed "PAH-Fest," uses video-enabled mobile phones - "smart" phones - **to** celebrate **the** stories and voices of everyday people. **The** idea is **to** democratize storytelling, **Coppola** said during a recent visit **to** Lakeside Legacy Arts Park. Its motto is: Think it. Shoot it. Share it.

"I'm more interested **in** what **the** plumber has **to** say," **Coppola** said. "It's from **the** heart, **to** **the** heart."

Examples of previous effort are available for viewing at www.pahnation.com. Raue Executive Director Richard Kuranda didn't have **to** do much research before his interest piqued.

"We're a big fan of **the** moving image and we're trying **to** get this whole thing going with local filmmakers," he said. "We thought **the** whole use of cell phones **to** make a **film** is really interesting."

Coppola apprenticed **to** composer Carmine **Coppola**, his grandfather, on **the** film "Apocalypse Now." He later studied composition at University of Redlands **in** California. But **the** Californian's restless mind quickly turned **to** acting and directing.

Coppola studied **film** at **the** San Francisco Art Institute and later pursued **digital** production for **film**, television, and new media through his company, Plaster City **Digital Post in** Los Angeles, and Ears XXI - a state-of-**the-art** **digital** studio headed by **Coppola** and partner Elyse Roberts of Barrington Hills. It was Roberts who helped bring **the** mini-PAH Fest **to** Crystal Lake.

Coppola has been making movies for 20 years. But he embraced **digital film** in 1998 after **the** negatives of his black comedy "Palmer's Pick-Up" almost were destroyed. He saved **the** Super 16 **film** by transferring it **to digital** and got hooked. His other movies include: "G-Men From Hell," "Dracula's Widow," "Gunfighter," "Deadfall" and "Bel-Air." Recent projects include work with Premier Retail Networks **to** produce three-minute video art portraits airing on **the** Wal-Mart's **in**-store television network. **Coppola** described Hollywood as "stodgy" and obsessed with appearance over substance. Little wonder his American hero is **the** plain-speaking humorist, Mark Twain.

"I'm tired of **the** people who want **to** be **the** next Hollywood director," he said. "Hollywood is so exclusive. We should be doing something that is available **to** everybody. ... I know everyone is goal oriented. I have always been process-oriented."

That is not **to** say his quest **to** find others fulfill their creative ambitions is not without occasional indulgences. He has a passion for motorcycles and anything Native-American. During his January visit **to** Lakeside Legacy Arts Park, he paired a buckskin, fringed jacket and turquoise jewelry with black leather pants, moon boots and do-rag - tucked under a felt fedora. **Coppola** admitted his is an eclectic look, but he remains true **to** himself.

"We were **the** poor Coppolas from Long Beach," he said with a grin. "My dad [August] and Francis are brothers."

It is that genuineness that appealed **to** Roberts and prompted her **to** join him **in** creating Ears XXI and collaborate **in** a host of other business ventures. They met after she filed a trademark infringement lawsuit on behalf of a business partner. **Coppola** was "shocked" **to** discover his misstep, Roberts said. But it led **to** a dinner invitation six years ago and a thriving friendship. "We just kind of fit together like gloves," she said. "He is refreshing and has an exquisite mentality. ... He has a tremendous capacity **to** embrace new and intriguing concepts."

They since collaborated on **the** 2004 **film**, "Creature of **the** Sunnyside Trailer Park," and a weeklong PAH-Fest - which began two years ago **in** New Mexico. **Coppola** and his team since have developed PAH Fests, which challenge participants **to** shoot a two-minute video, and create cell phone art and "DigiPortraits" - a 2-minute self-portrait or video of another.

Their latest project is "**The** Biker Chef," a cultural cooking adventure reality series that he hopes **to** bring **to** **the** new Italian-American Network. **Coppola** likened himself **to** a "modern-day Marco Polo," traveling **the** country and meeting people.

"I kind of lean into him and do **the film** background work," Roberts said. "There is no end **to** his theatrical talents, and he's a **Coppola**. They are **the** biggest **film** family **in** history. ...There are eight Academy Awards **in** three generations."

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