



Wednesday, November 3, 2004

Celebrated film director to visit OU

Chris Eyre, the celebrated Native American film director of "Smoke Signals," will be on campus to screen his feature-length film and join in a discussion with the audience on Monday, Nov. 15, at 7 p.m. in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms A and B. Eyre's visit also will include meeting with selected classes from the departments of English, Anthropology and Film Studies.

The award-winning film "Smoke Signals" is the first feature film written, directed and starring Native Americans. Shown at the 1998 Sundance Festival, it won the coveted Audience Award and the Filmmaker's Trophy for Eyre. Subsequently, "Smoke Signals" was released to critical acclaim by Miramax and has grossed more than \$6.5 million.

The screenplay, written by poet/novelist Sherman Alexie, follows the adventures of two Coeur d'Alene youths who venture from the reservation to Arizona to collect the remains of the father of one of them. A variation of the classical road trip/buddy movie, this film mixes hilarious comedy with darker, sharply poignant moments. It explores contemporary Native American experience and explodes Indian stereotypes such as the Vanishing Indian and romanticized versions of the warrior and the shaman.

In an interview with novelist Delphine Red Shirt, Eyre states: "Self-representation of Indians is important to me. It is one of the last frontiers after a hundred years of cinema. It is a territory that the world still doesn't know."

Eyre has been intrigued with visual storytelling from an early age. He majored in media at the University of Arizona and received his masters from the New York University Film School.

In addition to "Smoke Signals," some of his other films include "Skins," which premiered in 2002, and more recently he directed adaptations of two Tony Hillerman novels, "Skinwalkers" and "Thief of Time," both produced by Robert Redford for the PBS Mystery series.

Eyre is a Rockefeller Foundation Intercultural Film Fellow and the recipient of numerous awards including the Gotham Open Palm Award, Warner Brothers Martin Scorsese Post-Production Award and 1995 Sundance Cinema 100 Award.

He is keenly interested in film projects that communicate with the audience.

"When I was in film school, people used to say if nobody understood their film, then it was their problem. And that's a total cop-out," Eyre said. "My goal is to make spiritually – I hesitate to use the word – nourishing films that enrich humanity and people's souls. The reason is to contribute to humanity, to give people laughter . . . to let people escape. It's about putting yourself in someone else's shoes and forgetting about yourself for awhile."

The Nov. 15 event, sponsored by the Department of English, the College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Programs Fund, and the Office of the Provost, is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served the hour before the event.

SUMMARY

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