

WISCONSIN FILM FESTIVAL

Choice cuts: *The A.V. Club's* Wisconsin Film Festival planner for April 21



"Raiders Of The Lost Ark: The Adaptation"

By Andrew Winistorfer April 12, 2012

The **Wisconsin Film Festival** (April 18-22) has done it again, and likely most movie buffs have already pored over the program to pick out the films they want to see. But due to our human inability to be in multiple places at once, decisions have to be made between films, either because of scheduling conflicts or geographic challenges. We've looked over the days and put off choosing between overlapping films, but with the festival approaching, the time has come for us to consider the head-to-heads, settle on a winner, and hope we get second chances to see the other movies on our list.

Saturday, April 21

***Paul Williams Still Alive* (1:30 p.m., Bartell) versus *Raiders Of The Lost Ark: The Adaptation* (1:30 p.m., Orpheum)**

The schedule for Saturday screenings during the Wisconsin Film Festival is packed, and the potential scheduling conflicts start early. Deciding between *Paul Williams Still Alive* and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark: The Adaptation* is a tough one. *Still Alive* is a portrait of Paul Williams, writer of "Rainbow Connection" (and singer-songwriter of other non-"Rainbow Connection" things), as he lives out the twilight of his career. Things have gotten less shiny for Williams over the years, and the doc takes that head on, following Williams as he plays for thinning crowds and gets increasingly angry at being the subject for a documentary. *Raiders: The Adaptation* is the infamous nearly shot-for-shot remake of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* by a bunch of Mississippi teenagers, filmed over seven years. The results are obviously amateur, but the ambition of a bunch of teenagers who think they can replicate the greatest adventure film of all time is enticing. So the choice comes down to a prickly subject being interviewed about his youth and continued career of diminishing returns, versus a bunch of kids pulling off the greatest accomplishment of their lives. We said this one was tough. You could always see *Paul Williams* on Wednesday, April 18, (9 p.m., Bartell) and spare yourself the agonizing decision.

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***I Have Always Been A Dreamer* (1:15 p.m., Union South) versus *The Entertainers* (1:30 p.m., Cinematheque)**

Two very different, but pretty quirky, documentaries square off on campus in the afternoon on Saturday. *The Entertainers* follows the—apparently existent, unless this is a new *Catfish*—world of competitive ragtime pianists, as six people try to win the world championship of old-time piano-playing in Peoria, Illinois. Will the pianists win the honor of being the best at an anachronistic way of playing the piano? Or will they crash and burn when the vaudeville lights are on them? *I Have Always Been A Dreamer*, meanwhile, is a travelogue directed by former UW professor Sabine Gruffat, who travels to the disparate (but, spoiler alert: similar) locales of Detroit and Dubai, as she looks at the differing political and social climates of each city. *The Entertainers* seems to be built like *Air Guitar Nation*, in that it's a contest doc about a contest you didn't know existed, but which is dominated by weird personalities. *I Have Always Been A Dreamer*, meanwhile, seems like a two-part *No Reservations* episode that finds surprising parallels between two dissimilar cities. The choice comes down to, basically, picking between wallowing in the misery of Detroit and exploited workers in Dubai, or the misery of losing ragtime piano players—though you could always just see *The Entertainers* on Friday, April 20 (9:30 p.m., Chazen).

***Filthy Theater: A Film About Joel Gersmann* (3:30 p.m., Union South) versus *4:44 Last Day On Earth* (4:44 p.m., Orpheum)**

Turns out it's not just a clever title: *Filthy Theater: A Film About Joel Gersmann* is a film about Joel Gersmann, founder of the staunchly independent and controversial theater company **Broom Street Theater**. The film follows Gersmann in 1993, as he prepares a play about Catholic priest sexual abuse, and has talking-head interviews about Gersmann's process and the importance of Broom Street Theater. Being that Broom Street often eschews recording works for posterity, or at least did during Gersmann's days, the film is something of a primer on the history of Broom Street's multi-decade run on Williamson Street. Seeing *Filthy Theater* on Saturday means you give up seeing *4:44 Last Day On Earth* at the appropriate time of 4:44 p.m. In the Abel Ferrara (*Bad Lieutenant*) film, Willem Dafoe and Shanyyn Leigh play an actor and a painter who spend their last day on earth before the apocalypse comes at 4:44 a.m. doing it, arguing, and considering how meaningless their iPad is as the world ends. You can expect the film to take wild left turns too, given Dafoe's track record for taking on difficult projects, as well as Ferrara's prickly nature. So, do you watch a documentary about