

New WV Labor Films at WVLA State Conference Oct. 2

On Tuesday , October 2 at 3:45 PM, Steve Fesenmaier will introduce two new films on labor issues in West Virginia. In May 2007 he programmed the two films in conjunction with The South Charleston Museum and West Virginia Labor History Association for their annual WV labor film night. Luis Argeo, the Spanish director of AsturianUS, flew from Madrid to Charleston to present the American premiere of his film. Shawn Bennett flew in from Los Angeles, Ca. to introduce his film, The Battle of Local 5668, which had its world premiere at the Reel Work Film Festival and was shown at the Apline Theater in Ripley and several Ohio film theaters.

More on Shawn Bennett and The Battle of Local 5668

Shawn Bennett, was born and raised in Parkersburg, WV. His father worked for the Ravenswood Aluminum plant for decades. This is Mr. Bennett's first feature documentary. It was shot on video by Bennett and New York native Nicole Wittig over the course of five years starting in 2002. The 54 minute film was edited by Kevin Jones who recently edited "A Lion in the House" by Academy Award nominated filmmaker Julia Reichert. The original soundtrack was written, composed and scored by San Diego native Daniel Fickle of the band The Station Myth.

The film centers on local union 5668 of the United Steelworkers of America. In 1992, the prospects for labor were bleak. Reagan had just fired the air traffic controllers, big business was given free reign. 1700 men and women in rural West Virginia refused to give in to Big Business and fought for their rights as workers and individuals. It is a story that depicts a modern-day David and Goliath story.

This film is an in depth, straight journalistic account told by the men and women who were directly involved in the dispute. Even with 10 years reflection the passion and tenacity of the steelworkers in the small town of Ravenswood, WV still shocks and amazes.

Shawn Bennett is a community activist living and working in Los Angeles CA in the music video and television commercial industry. He has worked with Ang Lee, Wong Kar Wai, Guy Ritchie, Alejandro González Iñárritu (director of "Babel"), Bob Richardson, Lance Acord, Julian Temple, Alison MacLean, and others. This is his first feature length documentary. He has produced a number of short films and has written and produced a feature currently being edited. He is currently involved in the struggle to unionize production managers and coordinators in the entertainment industry.

"Battle" will have its world premiere at The Reel Work May Day Film Festival on Friday, April 27th at Cabrillo College Watsonville Center in Santa Cruz County, near San Francisco. It will be shown with a new film from Appalshop by Helen Lewis, "Morristown: In the Air and Sun" about a factory in eastern Tennessee. (Website for Reel Work May Day Film Festival - <http://www.reelwork.org/>.) This showing will be the second showing of the film that will also be shown in Spencer at The Alpine Theater and the 2007 Labor Day Film Festival in Paden City, WV.

WVLHA induced the entire local into its WV Labor Hall of Honor in 1993. Barbara Kopple, double Oscar winning documentary filmmaker for "Harlan County, USA" and "American Dream," and most recently director of "Shut Up and Sing" made a short documentary about the Ravenswood Lockout, "Locked Out in America" in 1992.

More on Luis Argeo and AsturianUS

Luis Argeo is a Spanish filmmaker who had been working in Madrid and elsewhere in the film business. This is his first film as director and producer. He was born and raised in the Asturias province of northern Spain. The film had its world premiere at The Gijon International Film Festival on November 26, 2006. It will also be shown at the Documenta Madrid in May 2007. This showing will be the U.S. premiere.

Description written by Mr. Argeo - The town of Arnao (Asturias, northern Spain) grew under the wing of the Royal Mining Company. After the closure of its mine and the limitations of its factory at the beginning of the 20th century, many of its employees emigrated to similar factories located far from the sea, at the foot of the mountains of West Virginia. Several new towns were created: Spelter and Anmoore. 90% of the towns' population was from Asturias, Spain.

WVPBS broadcast a story on the making of this film. You can view it at - http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Luis+Argeo&search=Search