That’s good cinema, cher
Cinema on the Bayou swings into town for 13th time

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Celebrating its 13th year on the bayou, Cinema on the Bayou Film Festival kicked off this year at The Acadiana Center for the Arts with the world premiere of short film “Rifles and Rosary Beads” on Wednesday, Jan. 24.

The short documentary by Joshua Britt and Neilson Hubbard kicked off the cultural film festival by focusing on the work singer songwriter Mary Gauthier does with the SongwritingWithSoldiers program. In SW-S, Gauthier, along with other musicians, goes on retreats with veterans, their spouses are also invited, and works with them to write a song about their war experiences. The film features footage taken directly from the songwriting process and includes confessional with Gauthier and a few of the veterans who go to the retreats, talking about their personal experiences with the program.

Shortly after the film, Gauthier, Britt and Hubbard performed seven of the songs Gauthier wrote with the soldiers, all of which are on her new record, "Rifles and Rosary Beads." Before each song, Gauthier told the audience a bit about the story behind the song and what the lyrics meant. The album was available for early purchase at the premier, then later went public on Jan. 26, and is available on marygauthier.com.

Gauthier initially got involved with the SW-S program when the founder, Darden Smith, invited her to do a workshop with veterans.

"From that first retreat I just begged him to put me on more retreats," Gauthier said during a Q&A with the film-goers.

Over the four and a half years Gauthier has been doing SW-S, she has accumulated over 35 songs, at which point she decided it was time to make an album.

"I think a lot of songs have been written about soldiers," Gauthier later said. "I don’t know if many have been written with soldiers, and that’s a huge distinction. It’s their words."

Aside from making documentaries, Britt and Hubbard make music videos, which they upload to their website, NeighborhoodsApart.com. They decided to make "Rifles and Rosary Beads" when Gauthier chose Hubbard to produce her album with Britt recording. They didn’t finish a moment too soon, given that the final due date for submissions was only an hour after they exported the final product.

While the film isn’t currently available to watch online, Britt said they are sure they will upload it eventually, either on their own website or on Gauthier’s website.

Cinema on the Bayou was founded in 2005 by filmmaker Pat Mire and takes place in venues around the Lafayette area. Festivities last until Wednesday, Jan. 31, with the final film, "This Side of the Dirt" and a closing night reception.

Of the 1,200 submissions to Cinema on the Bayou, 180 films were accepted. These 180 films, half of which were directed by women, covered a wide range of genres, from horror films to comedies to documentaries, and came from filmmakers both inside and outside the U.S.

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"What’s different about this festival is that it lets people see themselves as creators of meaning," Fayette Veverka, Cinema on the Bayou attendee, said.

Fayette and Jim Veverka have been coming to Cinema on the Bayou for about three years, and Veverka said he loves being able to see all of the original work showcased at the festival.

"Here the interaction of the creative folks, as well as seeing the final product of what they do, is a much more fulfilling experience," he said. "I think it’s a real gift to Acadiana."