

Despite snags, Thin Line festival delivers

By AMBER GAUDET

As far as local traditions go, the Thin Line festival is still finding its footing after more than a decade – but with a little work, it could soon be running strong.

The annual Thin Line film festival ran Wednesday, April 10 through April 14. The free event centered mainly on films, though it also featured several evening musical performances, two photo galleries and a hodgepodge of other local events. Events were held at different venues and times, allowing most Dentonites at least one opportunity to experience what the festival had to offer.

The festival featured the premiere of more than 20 full-length films and six film shorts from around the world. Screenings were held at the recently opened Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, a theater that, like Thin Line, is quickly becoming a cornerstone of Denton's cultural landscape.

Documentaries explored everything from Italian lip-syncing scandals to how totalitarianism in Iran threatens artists' autonomy. One of the short films, *Mack Minded*, centered around the story of a Texas Woman's University professor, Pauline Beery Mack, whose scientific research on bone density provided valuable knowledge that contributed to NASA's efforts in manned spaceflight. Mack earned a Silver Snoopy award in 1970 for her work, pioneering STEM research at a time when women received little recognition for professional achievements.

No film – or film festival – would be complete without an impressive soundtrack, which Thin Line achieved this year. Thin Line musicians performed at some of Denton's most popular venues such as Dan's Silverleaf, Harvest House, Andy's and Mulberry Street Cantina. The lineup featured artists that spanned several genres including jazz,

country, rock and techno. The festival featured mostly Texas-based musicians, including several from Denton's own growing music scene.

Thin Line also featured several events, from a crawfish boil to a photojournalism class. Although activities mostly centered around photography, there were a few events for food and fine art connoisseurs alike.

Given the array of events offered, though, the festival did not go off without a hitch.

Although this is the 12th year of the festival, the frequent changes that the organizers continue to facilitate leave guests a little unsure of what to expect.

Though photos are a headlining feature of Thin Line, they felt like an afterthought in this year's festival. The cramped space of the Hickory Street gallery crossed from "intimate" to "awkward" as gallery-goers were forced to walk around partitions featuring falling-down photos, apparently the result of haphazard stapling by event organizers. The lack of space may not have presented much of a real problem, though, if Thursday afternoon's empty gallery was any indication of interest generated by the exhibits.

A few other issues persisted as the festival progressed. The event being spread across venues at different times prevented real immersion in the culture of the festival. A lack of detail on the online schedule created confusion for attendees looking to see specific shorts as they often were lumped together under one name. Some events did not seem to match up with the schedule at all, such as the photo exhibit that was supposed to be up at Armadillo Ale Works but featured only blank canvas boards Thursday afternoon.

Overall, though, the laid-back, guest-centric feel of this festival worked in a way that made up for what did not. While the festival is still a work-in-progress, its ambitious lineup and diverse entertainment offered attendees a unique experience. From movie buffs to music gurus, this year's Thin Line had a little something for everyone and, with a little work, the festival could solidify its place as an important part of Denton's culture.

