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# Opinion

## Hardacre a worthy challenge

Word is getting around that Tipton's own Hardacre Film & Cinema Festival is back for its 10th installment this summer, and I couldn't be more pleased. The festival, the first of its kind in Iowa, has been knocked around a bit over the past 12 months, but with a lot of hard work and a little luck it looks as though, in true cinematic style, the fest will come away from the controversy with a new sense of purpose (and a few bumps and bruises).

The challenges for a small Midwestern film festival are daunting to say the least:

- It's not located in a large metropolitan area (Tipton's population is about 3,200);

- Last year it was canceled with no plans to return;

- Everybody and their brother has a film festival nowadays (there are a few thousand worldwide) so it'd be easy for Hardacre to get lost in the crowd; and

- The perception that, except for a few notable



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exceptions, Iowa really isn't a cinematic hotbed.

After some thorough discussion, the Tipton Chamber of Commerce decided to take on the festival and bring it back for 2007, quickly appointing me as its director (I immediately volunteered) and assigning a small budget. This was in mid-March, with only 4½ months until the event.

Luckily for today's film festivals, the digital filmmaking revolution has made quasi-professional production more accessible than ever, which means more and more people are creating films — both short and feature-length — and want to get them shown at festivals.

True, the Hardacre probably won't attract the films that eventually will



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receive large-scale theatrical distribution; Iowa isn't a large market. There's a reason that the producers of "The Final Season" — produced largely in the Cedar Rapids area — chose the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City for their World Premiere instead of the recently held Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival. However, the Hardacre Festival always have had a very strong program full of cutting-edge, thought-provoking and entertaining

pieces, both from Iowa filmmakers and from around the world.

Actually, promotion of the festival's call for entries has been more successful after only a little more than a month than I had hoped for. Armed with a new Web site, a profile on MySpace (239 friends and counting!) and a listing on WithoutABox.com that allows online submissions, I'm happy to report that we're approaching 50 entries already — with the deadline more than a month

and a half away. More importantly, a lot of them look really promising.

Lots of entries are great, but that creates a new wrinkle: somebody has to screen every single one of them — even the bad ones. Watching this volume of work could prove to be the biggest challenge of all — especially if more than a few of the filmmakers utilize the "look-I'm-so-indie-with-my-shaky-handheld-camera" aesthetic.

All of the challenges and hard work will be worth it when filmmakers and film lovers come together in August in Tipton's historic Hardacre Theater. The festival brings something to Eastern Iowans that they probably would never get to see otherwise: great independent films created for the love of the craft and art of cinema.

Travis B. Alden is Tipton's community development director as well as director of the Hardacre Film & Cinema Festival. For information on the Aug. 3-4 festival, visit [www.hardacrefilmfestival.com](http://www.hardacrefilmfestival.com).