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Rockin' the Wall

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A University of Dayton professor is launching a movie production studio in Dayton and will premiere the studio's first film downtown next Thursday.

Rockin' the Wall tells the story of rock 'n' roll music's part in ending the Cold War and bringing about the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. The feature-length documentary is based on a chapter in University of Dayton history professor Larry Schweikart's latest book, 7 Events that Made America America: And Proved that the Founding Fathers Were Right All Along.

The premiere is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 16, at the Dayton Engineer's Club, 110 E. Monument St. General admission tickets are $7 in advance and $10 at the door. University of Dayton students with a student ID will be admitted free if seating is available after paid guests. A second showing may be arranged to accommodate demand. Purchase tickets in advance at The Dublin Pub, 300 Wayne Ave., online at http://www.rockinthewall.com or e-mail rtwstudios@gmail.com.

"The communists kept out television and literature, but as Mikhail Gorbachev said, 'We couldn't keep out rock 'n' roll,' " said Schweikart, who will host a question-and-answer session after the premiere.

As a result of his collaboration with Hollywood producers on the film, Schweikart has launched Rockin' the Wall Motion Picture Studios in Dayton primarily for documentary and feature films. Four films are currently in the works, with two in pre-production, including a sequel to Rockin' the Wall and a dark thriller about a beautiful hit woman.

"We want to tell stories about freedom, liberty and morality," Schweikart said, adding that work on the films will be kept local as much as possible.

A DVD of Rockin' the Wall is available for order at http://www.rockinthewall.com and the soundtrack for the movie is available on iTunes and Amazon. It contains 14 new songs and original performances, including three cover songs and an original by Dayton band Mays Gone featuring University of Dayton student Jarret Kelly.

The documentary is told from the perspective of rockers who played on both sides of the Iron Curtain and from survivors of communist regimes who recalled the lifeline that rock music provided. Schweikart's message is that behind the Iron Curtain, where the mere act of expressing one's individuality constituted a potential act of revolution, music provided a unifying force upon which the anti-communist struggle gained ground.

The movie features interviews with Robby Krieger of The Doors, David Paich of Toto, Hollywood composer John Van Tongeren, Jimmy Haslip of the Yellowjackets, and Leslie Mandoki, a European star who escaped from communism. Mother's Finest, and Mark Stein of Vanilla Fudge also have appearances in the movie.

Portions of the film were shot on the University of Dayton campus, at St. Paul's Orthodox Church in Dayton and at the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

"Rock music is expressly American," said Schweikart, who was a drummer in a rock band for more than 10 years, opening for bands such as Steppenwolf and Mother's Finest. "The music starts together and ends together, but there's always a solo in the middle. Americans know how to come together to work for a common goal, but we also have to be able to express our individuality."

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