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Aspen Academy Screenings goes inside the Nixon family

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GLENWOOD SPRINGS — For valley dwellers with a taste for arty cinema, don't fear. Aspen Film is here to satiate you. Continuing through this Saturday, the organization is bringing tons of the most talked about films of the year to Aspen, right in time for Oscar season. The 18th annual Aspen Academy Screenings features movies of all stripes, one being Ron Howard's latest piece, "Frost/Nixon." The story revolves around the real-life, televised showdown between a dapper young talk show host David Frost and former president Richard Nixon.

Recently, Jenn Gotzon, who plays Nixon's daughter, Trisha, had a couple of minutes to spare to talk about the film. Bubbly and cheery, she was having the absolutely Coloradan experience of trying to be interviewed by phone while waiting for a ski lift at Winter Park.

Did playing Nixon's daughter sort of change your opinion of Nixon as a historical figure? "Absolutely it did. For me, after studying and realizing how much he loved his daughters, and his daughters loved their dad so much, my heart just broke for the entire family and all the pain that went on that day in history. It was a wrong choice that he made, and that's unfortunate, but we're all humans, and no one is fault-free, and no one is without error. And unfortunately, this was a biggie. It was a biggie, and naturally one has grace for human error, but this was a biggie. His penalty and his consequence were due, though his children didn't believe it. His children believed that their father was innocent. And they supported their father, even down to the last moment, before getting onto the stage there, to say goodbye, in the final resignation speech. I think it's documented in the biography of Pat Nixon by Julie Nixon-Eisenhower how in the elevator going down, the girls are saying 'Daddy, you don't have to do this. Don't do this.'"

In your role, what did you want to really impart to the audience? "My hope was very much to be able to bring the humanity

into the family life, because when you hear about Richard Nixon, immediately people have a negative reaction. And his children just loved and adored him, and so my hope, very much, would be able to bring that love and humanity in and be able to support my father in the best way I possibly can, so people can recognize the love that the family had for him, that maybe you wouldn't necessarily see in every aspect."

You wouldn't get another chance to see that really. "No, and that's one of the neatest things for me. In fact, it just brings tears of joy to my eyes. What a blessing, to be able to bring to life a moment in history, of our political history, probably one of the most traumatic times, when the president resigned. And to be able to bring that to life and relive that and understand for myself what Trisha felt and a glimpse of what their family must have went through. And we, we as a people, we don't see that. We just see, you know, Watergate and the decision. But we don't see the pain and the turmoil. And I think Ron Howard just does an outstanding job to just bring a balanced viewpoint regarding the standpoint of Nixon. And so you see such an element of great humanity that Frank Langella just knocks out of the park. He just captures the character with every aspect of his body, and he just brings every nuance alive."

As an actor, what's the important thing in your life? "The most important thing for me as an actor is to be part of content that has the ability to inspire and impact audiences through the art of storytelling in film. I chose content that have messages, that have redemption, hope, that the audience can be entertained and educated. And hopefully at the end of the movie, they would walk away with an aspect of hope for their life, ability to not only be able to walk away laughing or crying or whatever the mood of the movie creates but they would be able to, later on in their life when they cross paths with a similar situation that the story presented, that maybe they would be able to find themselves making better choices in life. So it's



Jenn Gotzon plays opposite Frank Langella in the new film "Frost/Nixon." The film screens tonight as part of the 18th annual Aspen Academy Screenings.

Aspen Academy Screenings

For more information on Aspen Film's 18th annual Aspen Academy Screenings, continuing at Harris Concert Hall in Aspen through Saturday, visit www.aspenfilm.org. There, you will find a complete schedule and information on tickets. For more information on Jenn Gotzon, one of the stars of "Frost/Nixon," visit www.jenngotzon.com. The movie plays at 5:30 p.m. tonight — and Gotzon's planning on being there.

a way that I just have such a passion to be able to give back to everyone. And I guess that started when I was 15. I remember going into movies and after a movie that was really good, I would walk out and I would be so excited inside, and I finally understood what it was, was that movie made me passionate about life. It made me passionate about wanting to be a better person, wanting to just strive for my dreams and desires. And I realized I really wanted to do that for other people."

Do movies still make you feel that way,

even now that you work with them on a daily basis? "They do. They do. In fact, movies that I'm in, it takes me maybe one or two times to watch it, and then, after that, I'm able to watch it and enjoy it for the cinematic aspects. But the first few times through, I'm analyzing all the elements, but after that, I'm enjoying the story. But movies in general, if it's a good movie, man, I'm just engaged, and I love going on the adventure that the director brings us on."