

## CONNECTICUT POST

### 'Reel Law' series features Oscar-winning documentary

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Published on the Internet on Sept. 1 and in print on Sept. 2, 2014



The Oscar-winning 2001 documentary "Murder on a Sunday Morning" will be featured in the "Reel Law" series at the Bijou Theatre in Bridgeport on Thursday, September 4. Photo: Contributed Photo

Hollywood's take on the law and lawyers has been the subject of a unique Bridgeport film series for the past two years.

The city firm of Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder has been sponsoring "Reel Law" as a way to support the Bijou Theatre and to give movie buffs an insider's view of the portrayal of the legal profession in everything from "12 Angry Men" to "My Cousin Vinny."

The series will spotlight the 2001 Oscar-winning documentary "Murder on a Sunday Morning" on Thursday, Sept. 4.

French documentary moviemaker Jean-Xavier de Lestrade -- who would later make the highly acclaimed Sundance Channel series "The Staircase" -- examines a criminal case in which a 15-year-old Florida boy was wrongfully accused of the murder of a tourist in Jacksonville, Fla.

"The hallmark of our series is that the films have to show the legal profession in an honest light," attorney Josh Koskoff said in a phone interview last week. "We try to stay away from anything with rank stereotypes. They don't have to show lawyers in the greatest light, but not as caricatures."

After each screening, a legal expert is on hand to discuss the issues raised by the film.

The series began with one of Koskoff's favorite movies, "To Kill a Mockingbird."

"Who's a bigger movie hero than Atticus Finch?," Koskoff said of Gregory Peck's Oscar-winning performance as a Southern lawyer.

"Everything after 'To Kill a Mockingbird' is downhill," the lawyer joked.

"Reel Law" has featured several films about lawyers who take on unpopular cases. For instance, next month's movie is "The People vs.

Larry Flynt" about the defense of the notorious publisher of Hustler magazine.

"Hopefully, these films remind viewers of the important role lawyers play in our society. ... They are easy (to attack) if you don't need one. But when something (bad) happens, you want one," Koskoff said.

The series is programmed by Koskoff and his associates, who have also solicited suggestions from the public.

"'Murder on a Sunday Morning' absolutely blew me away ... it's an exceptional documentary," the lawyer said, adding that he is also a fan of "The Staircase," the filmmaker's examination of another complicated murder case. Koskoff said his favorite legal movies cover a wide range of characters and issues.

"I like 'Breaker Morant' because it shows that everyone deserves a defense. ... 'The Verdict' is just a classic underdog story and it shows that juries can sometimes see through (a bad legal presentation) and get to the truth ... and 'My Cousin Vinny' takes things to an extreme, but it is one of the most realistic films when it comes to cross-examination," he said.

Koskoff likes the fact that "Reel Law" can bring movie fans out of their homes in this age of streaming to see good films and then have spirited discussions afterwards.

"There was also a strong feeling in the firm that we wanted to partner with the Bijou Theatre. It's a special place. We were blown away when we saw what they did with that space. ... They are helping to invigorate downtown Bridgeport," he said.

Bijou Theater, 275 Fairfield Ave., Bridgeport. Thursday, Sept. 4, 7 p.m. \$12-\$10. 203-332-3228. [www.thebijoutheatre.com](http://www.thebijoutheatre.com).