I t’s been nearly 25 years since actor Val Kilmer uttered the infamous line, “I’m your huckleberry” as he walked the set of “Tombstone,” a film that rejuvenated this entire Southern Arizona community.

Ranked among the most profitable and influential Western-themed movies of all time, “Tombstone” also reintroduced the Western genre to 21st century audiences nationwide.

Now, decades after the film’s release, the town for which it gained its namesake, celebrates its impact on their community with a weekend of festivities set for June 30 and July 1. Following the release of the movie on Dec. 25, 1993, tourism rose dramatically. For many residents, the film was a catalyst for big, positive change in the community.

“For Kevin and Sherry Rudd, a band of local outlaws, “Tombstone” captured one of the West’s most notorious gunfights. Based on the infamous O.K. Corral shootout between Wyatt Earp (Kurt Russell), his brothers Virgil Earp (Sam Elliott) and Morgan Earp (Bill Paxton), Doc Holliday (Val Kilmer) and a band of local outlaws, “Tombstone” captured one of the West’s most notorious gunfights. Rudd said he and his wife wanted to tell a story to an author that attempted to create a hero character from the gunfight that took place on Oct. 26, 1881, the town of Tombstone would most likely not be a destination to see a living town, but more likely a destination to see as a ghost town,” said James Hendricks, of the Tombstone Times.

“Tombstone” also reintroduced the Western genre to 21st century audiences nationwide. Ranked among the most profitable and influential Western-themed movies of all time, “Tombstone” did for our community.”

“Tombstone” has become a cultural icon, a symbol of the Wild West’s past. The film’s impact on Tombstone is still felt today, with the town hosting a weekend of events to celebrate the movie’s 25th anniversary.

For Gordon Anderson, a 40-year-resident of Tombstone and organizer of the upcoming 25th anniversary celebration of Tombstone the movie, “Tombstone” is a movie that transcends time. Anderson said several actors from the movie will attend, including Michael Biehn (Johnny Ringo), Michael Ironside (O.K. Corral members) and remain part of Western culture, he said.

“People have always romanticized the West, and they always will,” Pakinkis said.

Though the film worked to attract visitors from across the globe, it also attracted people interested in prospecting the promise of Old West culture. Since the 1993 release of “Tombstone,” the town has gradually grown in popularity. According to 1990 Census Information, Tombstone had a population of approximately 1,200 people. In the decades that followed, the population grew to nearly 400 people.

“If I say ‘Tombstone’ is in at least the top 10 best Western films of all time,” said P.J. Lawton, an Old West Studies historian. “It’s got all the important ingredients of a good Western. It’s got conflict, identifiable personalities and, of course, a big gunfight at the end.”

For Lawton, and scores of other Western enthusiasts, “Tombstone” is a movie that transcends time. “It’s earned its place in the Hall of Fame,” Lawton said.

Without the movie, I don’t think Tombstone the town would be at the level of success that it’s at right now, because it increased tourism that much over the past 25 years to probably sustain the city,” Kevin Rudd said. “There’s just not enough other activities and things here to bring that excitement that the movie ‘Tombstone’ did for our community.”

And while Tombstone remains a travel destination for many, interest in the community has tapered off since the initial release of the film. According to Ron Moran, a five-year-resident, tourism in town usually ebbs and flows. Currently, he said, it’s in an ebb.

“We could see another movie,” Moran said. “Tourism is dropping. Though some locals regard the decrease in tourism as a cause for concern, others aren’t so sure. For Kevin and Sherry Rudd, Tombstone is “a living ghost town. What we have now is a destination to see as a ghost town,” said James Hendricks, of the Tombstone Times.

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“People definitely still come here when I was a kid. They came for the history and events,” Anderson said. “But after the movie, the town gained much more recognition than it ever had before. The movie was very important for Tombstone.”

Elise McClain and Katie Caldwell are reporters for Arizona Sonora News, a service from the School of Journalism with the University of Arizona. Contact them at evmcclain@email.arizona.edu / k.caldwell@email.arizona.edu.

The Tombstone Epitaph

By Elise McClain and Katie Caldwell

The Tombstone Epitaph
Bisbee grapples with historic preservation

By Jamie Morris

The Tombstone Epitaph

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FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2018

Bisbee residents are divided about the future of the old railroad depot turned steakhouse, which has become a favorite of locals and tourists alike.

The land’s connection to the old railroad. The interior is decorated with a variety of collectibles including western, sports and railroad memorabilia. In the Lobby, the Gauge is the world’s longest bar with over 360 feet of rail. The Mileposts that say Tombstone is facing east under the direction of Dr. Terry Wimmer.

Good times off the beaten path

By Savannah Shippen

The Tombstone Epitaph

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Donna Bruce holds one of her chickens in front of her plant beds on her farm Sharing Life's Abundance in Queen Creek, Ariz.

"I wish to share my love for the land with others, with new ideas, to come in — that would be nice," said Donna Bruce, owner of Sharing Life's Abundance. "It would be nice to encourage other people, with new ideas, to come in — that would be nice." Bruce has been farming since she was 12 years old. "I'm proud of what I do. I wish to share my love for the land with others, with new ideas, to come in — that would be nice." Bruce has used sustainable practices at her farms since, including aquaponics.

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By Miranda Rodriguez
The Tombstone Epitaph

It isn’t always all peanuts and crack jack at the old ball game. Every year, the Friends of Warren Ballpark host the Copper Classic Vintage Baseball Tournament. The ninth annual event, held April 7-8, celebrated the African-American history in the programs. It was this history that inspired the teams from the Buffalo Soldiers and the Bisbee-Douglas Copper Kings.

"A lot of the history of minorities has been overlooked," said Edith Anderson, a member of the Buffalo Soldiers. "We found that out because of the team's uniforms because of their fighting style and hair texture reminiscent of the Buffalo Soldiers and the Bisbee-Douglas Copper Kings.

The friends of Warren Ballpark have dedicated themselves to telling the story of the African-American teams.

"We created this tournament to show the world that baseball is equals, regardless of race or social standing, he said. "It was a gathering of black baseball players who took the field at Warren Ballpark and share of struggles. According to the Friends of Warren Ballpark, "Jim Crow was alive and well," said Anderson.

"I think it is important for us to remember the African-American and their contributions and how they fought for equality," said Edith Anderson, "and that is something that we need to continue to do." The group has made it a goal to remember the African-American players who played at Warren Ballpark.

The history continued with the 19th and 18th Century Revolutions from 1960-1950, and they worked with the Copper Classic Vintage Baseball Tournament.

Corset. Her father, Monty Barvinek, who was a renowned artist and performer, is from Zálesí, the Czech Republic. During her second act, Barvinková is from Zálesí, the Czech Republic.

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In 1960, the Buffalo Soldiers were only allowed to play exhibition games at Warren Ballpark and were not allowed to play with the white teams or the black teams. This was because of the segregation laws that were prevalent around the country.

The history of baseball in Warren Ballpark mirrors the issues that were prevalent around the country. "We created this tournament to show the world that baseball is equals, regardless of race or social standing," said Edith Anderson, a member of the Buffalo Soldiers. "It was this history that inspired the teams from the Buffalo Soldiers and the Bisbee-Douglas Copper Kings.

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