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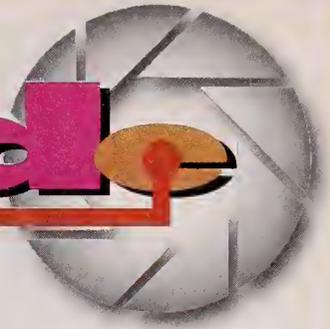
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COVER: Adrienne Shelly takes Manhattan in her directorial debut, *Sudden Manhattan*, written by and starring the actress. Photo: Anne K. Stenstad



AN OPEN LETTER

BY RUBY LERNER

When I made the transition from the performing arts world to independent film and video about eight years ago, I was shocked at how underdeveloped the infrastructure was for media, surely *the* art form of this century. Foundations that collectively invest millions of dollars to sustain the performing arts have failed to provide consistent, ongoing support for analogous efforts in our field. (There are a few notable exceptions—especially the visionary support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.)

And while the commercial industry—the Hollywood studios, the networks, the cable companies—has supported high-profile events in the field, it has virtually ignored the grassroots media organizations that have spent decades nurturing artists and building adventurous audiences. It could be argued that the commercial independent media industry is so dynamic right now *because* of the noncommercial infrastructure that has been in place for the past two decades.

I'm particularly concerned about the state of exhibition. Commercial theaters simply can't handle the volume of independent film that is now available to them. When independent work does get booked for a run, it is under tremendous pressure to perform extremely well immediately or it will get bumped. And just at the moment we are experiencing this incredible explosion in independent media production, many nonprofit venues are having to curtail their exhibition schedules. Media centers, museums, libraries, artist spaces, colleges, and universities

have all experienced public-sector budget cuts. Now even these venues are under pressure to look more carefully at the marketability of the work they exhibit.

Having been a small exhibitor myself, I know that exhibition of important or challenging work often must be subsidized.

Fed up, exhausted by years of censorship battles and budget cuts, many artists are now being seduced by the charms of the marketplace. And unquestionably it's thrilling to see the new opportunities for independents in cable, home video, and foreign markets. But I think it is important not to confuse the *opportunities* that are arising for *some* independents with the *system* of support for and dissemination of alternative work that has been in place for almost two decades.

Frankly, much of the work that excites me is not commercially viable in a traditional sense (perhaps contrary to the aspirations of its makers). A lot of it is appropriate for exhibition in noncommercial venues, which is why we need those existing venues to be strong and why we also need many new exhibition sites. I still believe in the power of the shared, communal experience of the live event, and I'm absolutely convinced that many more people would be interested in seeing independent media than presently have the opportunity to do so.

I think we've reached a critical crossroads in the life of our field. What needs to happen now?

1. Relatively speaking, we're a young field. Despite being undercapitalized, nonprofit media organizations have nonetheless nurtured countless artists by providing affordable access to equipment, training, information, and exhibition opportunities.

Now, as the field matures, our media organizations need revitalizing; many, including AIVE, have been in the process of reinventing themselves for a changed economic and technological environment.

But we all require—and deserve—increased financial assistance to continue our important work.

2. We also need to establish brand new exhibition venues in communities large and small. I don't think it's so farfetched to imagine cultivating three to five new media exhibition sites per state per year—at libraries, community colleges, and local arts councils, for example. Media centers could be a tremendous resource in this

process, demystifying equipment needs and providing information on working with distributors and building an audience—in effect, offering the kinds of hands-on workshops that have transformed performing arts presenting over the past two decades. After five years there would be at least 750 new exhibition sites for media throughout the country. If each community held just one screening per month, there would be almost 10,000 new screening opportunities each year.

3. I would also like to see the establishment of a Media Exhibition Fund of several million dollars per year, the primary purpose of which would be to encourage independent media exhibition in communities or neighborhoods that do not have such programs.

I sometimes fear we are running the risk of becoming a society of isolated individuals locked away in our home entertainment fortresses. What is the antidote to this? A lively and diverse public media culture permeating every city and town. I can imagine screenings of independent work every night of the week in hundreds of communities all across the country; I can see film and video producers at those screenings presenting their work in person; and I can see audiences, engaged, passionate, excited about what they are experiencing.

I estimate that with \$6-8 million a year (*much* less than the cost of one Stallone action film), noncommercial media exhibition in the United States could be radically transformed. And everybody wins. Artists benefit. Distributors benefit. The industry benefits. And communities all across the country get access to work they might not otherwise see.

What would it take to make this happen? A summit meeting with representatives from the commercial industry, artist service organizations, independent media exhibitors and distributors, and foundation leaders might be a good place to start. Such a gathering might result in new collaborations between exhibitors and distributors, between foundations and the industry, and eventually, in the creation of a funding pool that will nourish and sustain these dreams.

Ruby Lerner is publisher of The Independent Film & Video Monthly and executive director of the Association of Independent Film and Video (AIVF).

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Bill Gets Billing

To the editor:

We enjoyed reading the article on Steve Buscemi's *Trees Lounge* [October 1996]. You mentioned all of the main actors, but you left out one of the best performances by a great character actor. His picture is on the cover with Steve's and he played the part of "Bill" in the lounge. He is not only a marvelous actor, he is also a playwright. His play *The Last New Yorker* is to be done soon on Theater Row. His name is Bronson Dudley.

Caroline Dudley
Manhattan, NY

Not Worthy? Is So!

To the editor:

I read with great interest author Rob Rownd's article "I'm Not Worthy!" [October 1996]. While Mr. Rownd's criticisms of Sony's overall slow response to marketing promised accessories to its new digital camcorders is just, some of the other statements in the article are questionable.

For example, Mr. Rownd states, "the biggest drawback for the [camera] is its single audio jack.... Not only has Sony not released a mic [for this camera], but...unless you're willing to risk frying either the camera or the mic, you're stuck with the existing on-camera mic or using a slate and a separate Nagra or DAT package to record sound."

Not only does Sony make a microphone for this camera, but it is widely available at any video dealer. I purchased mine from Sony direct via their National Parts Center [8281 NW 107th Terrace, Kansas City, MO 64153, 800-488-7669; fax: 816-891-2580]. Sony itself recommends either their ECM-K57 (a basic unidirectional) or the ECM-Z157 (which has an optional telescoping shotgun cardioid to omnidirectional).

As for wireless or boom mic situations, no problem. The key: use a low impedance stereo mini-plug and add no gain or signal processing. Any high impedance mic won't work; likewise, a mono plug will not rest securely within the camera's input jack. While it is lamentable Sony did not have the foresight simply to make the mic jack input a more reliable size, you at least have the knowledge that you're rivalling even a good DAT or mini-disc for sound quality, with the added bonus of not having to sync up later.

Later, Mr. Rownd states, "the DXC-1000 doesn't do well with non-saturated hues in low light." If you only use the camera's onboard automatic exposure and/or lock the manual exposure at the lowest F-stop equivalent, this is true. But I recently shot in a nightclub with the camera that only had disco balls, laser lights, etc.: a true videographer's nightmare. By simply setting the light level for an average light source with the auto exposure and then locking it into manual (a very nice feature the camera has for fast "grab and go" footage taking), I was able to produce deep color saturations and rich blacks that were as good as anything I've ever shot.

Mr. Rownd further states, "compatible matte boxes aren't available from Sony or third-party vendors." You can purchase one from Ambico for less than \$30 that attaches to any video/film camera. Failing that, you can always make a matte box yourself out of a shoe box! Surely with all this high tech gadgetry at our fingertips, we haven't forgotten that a little old-fashioned imagination never hurt behind the camera as well as in front of it.

More of Mr. Rownd's disappointment: "the Firewire digital interface is [currently unavailable]." Probably true as of his writing, but Sony is now marketing it as well as a dedicated digital nonlinear editor. Also, Miro, a West German manufacturer, plans to introduce a stripped-down Firewire slot card for the PC later this spring.

And the final insult: "the DXC-1000 doesn't offer more than any other top-line consumer camcorder." Is he kidding? Five hundred lines of digital quality video? CD-quality sound? The ability to make your final edited copy a literal first-generation master? A state-of-the-art image stabilizer? The ability to do wipes, dissolves, animation, and glitch-free edits in camera? Image quality that makes some Betacam owners frankly nervous? That also takes 600 digital-quality images on a one-hour tape? That has digital effects filters built-in for motion blur photography, time lapse, etc? That produces better resolution than live network broadcast feeds for only \$25 per hour? What other consumer camcorder on the market can offer such features at any price?

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All in all, quite a feat for a camera that Mr. Rownd dismisses as unworthy of being considered "more than a very good consumer product."

David Coleman, Kudzu New Media Studios
(kudzumedia@worldnet.att.net)

Discrediting Credit Cards

To the editor:

Hopefully, a sad and disturbing irony was not lost on readers when you ran both "The Rise and Fall of *American Playhouse*" and "Buy Now, Pay Later: The Pros and Cons of Credit Card Financing" in the June issue. Are we supposed to laugh hysterically or scream with rage? The health and vibrancy of independent filmmaking is in sorry shape if people can be led to believe that financing a film through credit cards is a serious option.

Rare is the no-to-low budget independent film made outside a support system that will ever get the kind of distribution necessary to be able to repay those credit card bills. Once again, insane risk and sacrifice are placed on the backs of well-meaning filmmakers with stardust in their eyes, while distributors who troll the festivals to pick up product still require lucky producers like Jim McKay (*Girlstown*) to pay for the 35mm blow-up and soundtrack remix. If you are young, rich, and innocent, you may survive the credit card financing game once. But it is hardly possible to repeat it over the long run.

More to the point, we have to understand and analyze an American media landscape where stable funding has disappeared—no more *American Playhouse* and few federal, regional, and foundations grants. We're looking at a culture where public TV has retreated into conservative sonambulism, bottom-line entertainment conglomerates rule the exhibition pathways, and alternative venues for interesting, difficult, or small films are closing.

The truth is that credit card films aren't going to receive the attention they desire because there is no place for them in our saturated, market- and trend-driven media economy. Merely a short-term illusory fix, credit cards will not replace a production entity like *American Playhouse* or help filmmakers compete against corporate product.

Films are not made in a vacuum. Without an infrastructure of production companies, distributors, exhibitors, critics, and audiences willing to take risks, there will be no authentic and sustainable American independent film culture where profit isn't the only guide. The sacrificial solo effort might see the light of day, but then what? A quick career jump to Hollywood's development hell?

Helen De Michiel, producer/director
Albany, California

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SAG REVAMPS LOW-BUDGET AGREEMENTS TO ATTRACT INDIES

EDITED BY DANA HARRIS

IN AN EFFORT TO ALLOW ITS MEMBERS TO BENEFIT from the recent boom in extremely low-budget filmmaking, the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) recently revised three of its low-budget film contracts: the Modified Low-Budget Agreement, the Experimental Film Agreement, and the Limited Exhibition Agreement.

Although most of the terms and rate discounts under the relatively new Modified Agreement remain unchanged [see "SAG Accommodates Lowest Budget Indies," November 1995], it raises the ceiling on a film's total production cost from less than \$300,000 to \$500,000. In addition, SAG now offers this agreement to producers throughout the United States. This includes the Los Angeles area, which was previously excluded.

For independent producers, one of the Modified Agreement's major benefits is it cuts the rates producers must pay SAG members by 54 percent. Under the revised agreement, productions must pay SAG performers daily and weekly rates of at least \$248 per day and \$864 per week. Under the old Low-Budget Agreement, those rates were \$466 and \$1,620, respectively.

SAG's lowest low-budget agreement, the Experimental Film Agreement, also saw significant reform. Under the revised agreement, SAG raised a film's budget ceiling from \$35,000 to \$75,000. The agreement is also now available for feature films of any running time. Previously, the Experimental Film Agreement applied only to films with running times of 35 minutes or less. In addition, SAG doubled the residuals rate under this agreement from 3.6 to 7.2 percent of the distributor's worldwide gross receipts, if and when a film is licensed to free television, basic and premium cable, or home video.

Many other terms of the agreement remain unchanged. The shooting schedule can't run over 30 days or six weeks, whichever comes

first. However, one of the Experimental Film Agreement's major benefits is that SAG members' salaries and residuals are entirely deferred until the film is commercially exhibited. That exhibition doesn't include film festival and Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences screenings; one-week Oscar-qualifying runs in a paying theater; non-paying, non-public screenings to showcase talent before "established industry members;" or up to one year of screenings on a public access channel. If a film receives a commercial release, SAG members should receive their deferred compensation based on the SAG Low-Budget Agreement.

Finally, for the first time in several years, SAG made its Limited Exhibition Agreement (LEA) available to feature-film producers in the Los Angeles area. The LEA includes only film festivals, "showcase" or "arthouse" runs of up to two weeks, certain public television and non-commercial, non-pay basic cable airings, and home video self-distribution by producers. Under these rules, the LEA day rate is \$100 per day if a SAG performer is guaranteed one or two days of work and \$75 per day if three or more days of work are guaranteed. The budget

limit for qualifying films is up to \$200,000 without deferrals or \$500,000 with deferrals.

However, like the Experimental Film Agreement, the LEA stipulates that exhibition beyond the parameters of the agreement means that producers must renegotiate a deal with the SAG actors as well as seek SAG's approval. Like the Modified Low-Budget Agreement, any residuals are generally double the standard rate. That means actors receive 7.2 percent of the worldwide distributor's gross receipts for a television release. For a videocassette release, SAG actors would take 9 percent on the first \$1 million of worldwide distributor's gross receipts and 10.8 percent of worldwide distributor's gross receipts in excess of \$1 million, payable on a deferred basis as a distributor takes in receipts [see "Navigating the SAG Limited Exhibition Agreement," Jan./Feb. 1995].

Unlike the Modified Low-Budget Agreement, which requires producers to hire SAG performers, the Limited Exhibition and Experimental Film Agreements permit producers to combine SAG and non-SAG performers in a cast. (The SAG agreements also apply to professional performers in other

Modified Low-Budget Agreement

Before:

- ceiling on film's total production is \$300,000
- Los Angeles area excluded.
- Rates of \$466 per day and \$1,620 per week

After:

- \$500,000 ceiling
- available to producers throughout United States.
- Rates of at least \$248 per day and \$864 per week

Experimental Film Agreement

Before:

- Budget ceiling of \$35,000
- Applied only to films with running times of 35 minutes or less
- Residuals rate of 3.6%

After:

- Budget ceiling of \$75,000
- Available for feature films of any running time
- Residuals rate of 7.2%

Limited Exhibition Agreement

Before:

- Unavailable in Los Angeles

After:

- Available in Los Angeles



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unions such as AFTRA and Equity.)

"The fact is, you have to work with the union," remarks one producer at the New York production company Shooting Gallery. "But this shows they're trying to work with independents by making their talent more affordable."

ROBERT L. SEIGEL & RYAN DEUSSING

Robert L. Seigel is a NYC entertainment attorney and a principal in the Cinema Film Consulting firm. Ryan Deussing is the editorial assistant at The Independent.

Bill May Add 20 Years to Copyright Terms

IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE MEETING DEADLINES, here's fresh inspiration: anyone who hopes to use footage that's just been freed from its copyright restrictions should act now or risk losing that clip for another 20 year. A bill now in Congress threatens to extend copyright terms in order to allow U.S. laws to match those of Europe.

Last May, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary voted 12 to 6 in favor of passing the Copyright Term Extension Act of 1996 (S.483), a bill authored by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Diane Feinstein (D-CA), and Fred Thompson (R-TN) that would extend the terms of copyright for an additional 20 years. While the bill failed to clear Congress last fall, the authors plan to revive it when Congress reconvenes in early 1997. With lobbyists for entertainment heavyweights such as the Motion Picture Association of America and ASCAP testifying on behalf of the bill, there seems to be a strong possibility that it will pass in the near future.

For now, copyright laws are defined by the Copyright Act of 1976, the fourth copyright bill passed by Congress since 1790. The act stipulates that all copyrighted works registered prior to 1978 and renewed by their holders before expiration of the initial 28-year terms of copyright are entitled to 75 years of protection from original date of publication or 100 years from creation, whichever comes first.

Currently, works created by individual authors (i.e., songs and novels) after 1976 are copyrighted for the entire life of the author, plus an additional 50 years. "Corporate authors," which include movie studios that copyright their films, are protected for an additional 75 years. Under S.483, the life-plus-50 provision would extend to life-plus-70, and corporate authors would be protected for 95 years from the original date of publication or 120

years from creation, whichever came first.

The revised copyright bill was inspired by the European Union's introduction of a life-plus-70 copyright clause in October 1993. The Hatch-Thompson-Feinstein bill is designed to match these terms as a means of protecting intellectual property rights overseas. The committee warned of calamitous financial losses for audio-visual providers if their products were not adequately protected by a universally accepted copyright law, particularly when being used within the "information superhighway."

However, the cultural losses of such a change could equal any financial repercussions. "The transition's going to be murder," predicts Kenn Rabin, a 16-year veteran of archival research and rights clearance, whose credits include *Eyes on the Prize, Vietnam: A Television History*, and Marlon

Copyright Terms Before:

- Copyright laws are defined by the Copyright Act of 1976.
- All copyrighted works registered prior to 1978 and renewed by their holders before expiration of the initial 28-year terms of copyright are entitled to 75 years of protection from original date of publication or 100 years from creation, whichever comes first.
- Works created by individual authors after 1976 are copyrighted for the entire life of the author, plus an additional 50 years.
- "Corporate authors," which include movie studios that copyright their films, are protected for 75 years beyond the work's publication or creation.

After:

- The new laws would come under the Copyright Term Extension Act of 1996 (S.483).
- The terms of copyright would be 95 years of protection from the original date of publication or 120 years from creation, whichever comes first.
- The life-plus-50 provision would extend to life-plus-70.
- Corporate authors would be protected for 95 years from the original date of publication or 120 years from creation, whichever came first.

Riggs' history of blacks on television, *Color Adjustment*.

"Life-plus means that the generation that existed when the work was created will never have [free] access to it," says Rabin. "Corporate greed being what it is...people have forgotten that the purpose of the copyright law was to provide protection for new pieces of work for a period of time, after which they would belong to the public. People have tried to subvert that for so long,

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and now they really seem to be succeeding.”

Among the ways entertainment companies currently dodge public domain is the “versioning” loophole. If a “new” edition of a movie is created by technically altering it, it can qualify for a new copyright. These methods can be as bold as computer-coloring a black-and-white film or as subtle as editing or rescoring a classic.

What particularly worries Rabin is that the politicians’ efforts to create international copyright uniformity could make some public domain material revert to copyright holders in certain territories. For example, the 1926 version of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* is a public domain title in the U.S. but is still copyrighted in its native Germany.

A new copyright law could also complicate matters for those who use what Rabin calls “repurposed” footage—material created for one purpose and recycled for another. “A lot of filmmakers use material that we think of as orphan material,” says Rabin. “What if you’ve got a 30-second piece of footage and the copyright was never renewed on it [but] now that little piece of work is buried in a larger, copyrighted work like a PBS documentary? The whole legal status for that 30-second excerpt is changed.”

Minority votes against the Hatch-Thompson-Feinstein bill included Hank Brown (R-CO) and Herb Kohl (D-WI), both of whom spoke in defense of educational and cultural institutions getting access to public domain works in order to avoid having to pay steep royalties. Rabin adds that powerful people in the audio-visual industries perceive public domain as being akin to public assistance programs and a free ride for the general public.

As someone whose livelihood depends on chronicling the events of the 20th century history, Rabin can’t help but sense the potential cultural losses brought upon by increased forms of copyright legislation. “We’re taking this huge gift [of recorded historical material] and basically saying that you can’t use it for 100 or 75 years.”

While PBS-affiliated projects might be able to pay the costly rates for copyrighted material, smaller mediamakers, Rabin warns, will be devastated as foundation grants continue to disappear. “There’s a huge amount of our personal history that is owned by other people,” says Rabin. “That problem will only get worse the more the copyright extension occurs.”

MAX J. ALVAREZ

Max J. Alvarez is a Washington, D.C. writer who reported on media arts censorship in the August/September issue

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TAKE ME HOME

Will CineBlast! put short films on the video rental map?

BY RYAN DEUSSING

SOMEDAY SOON, VIDEO STORES FROM MAINE TO San Francisco will carry short films from around the world—that is, if producer Gill Holland can realize his plans for CineBlast!, his “quarterly video review for the independent short film.” Holland, a half-Norwegian native of Davidson, North Carolina, got the idea for a short film anthology during two-and-a-half years of working the festival circuit with the French Film Office in New York. As the coordinator of the American delegation to Cannes, he came into contact with hundreds of young filmmakers who were looking for a way to get their shorts seen and realized he’d stumbled upon a vast, untapped market.

“Of course, everyone said I was insane when I told them I wanted to put out short films on video,” he recalls. At the Sarasota French Film Festival, however, Holland found a partner in Cinema Parallel’s Rob Tregenza, whose company distributes predominantly European shorts and features on both film and video.

Whereas Holland’s experiences at Cannes and elsewhere (including a stint reading scripts at October Films) left him with a list overflowing with the names of films and filmmakers, it was Tregenza’s record as an independent distributor that made the CineBlast! project feasible. Of his distributor, Holland remarks that “it’s really rare to come across such an enlightened person in the film industry.” Combining Parallel’s contacts with the national video distributor Ingram Entertainment with their own aggressive marketing strategy, Tregenza and Holland were able to get the first edition of CineBlast! on the shelves this summer. Marketing responsibilities are shared, with both the Cinema Parallel and CineBlast! offices contributing to telephone and direct-mail campaigns, which are targeted to individual video stores as well as national chains. Ingram’s 25 regional distribution centers, meanwhile, are ready to spread CineBlast!



across the country as soon as the title is picked up by Blockbuster or another national chain.

However, just how many stores are now carrying the 111-minute tape is a matter they won't discuss. “Let’s just say it’s growing,” offers Tregenza. “People have an aversion to short films, and CineBlast! is working to change their minds as we continue to establish ourselves.”

While CineBlast! Volume One has been available since June, the fact that the second quarterly volume was not released until November 15 does not discourage Holland. He plans to keep the operation small for as long as he must, but he continues to plan for the future. Stressing that “there’s power in numbers,” he hopes to nurture CineBlast! until he can approach public TV and cable networks

with a full ten-and-a-half hours of programming, perhaps even scoring a deal for a series of CineBlast! programs. Plans are also underway to make a 35mm print of selected CineBlast! shorts for theatrical release.

The videos themselves, which feature eight films each, combine very promising material with shorts that won't quite “shape the future of cinema,” as the box hypothesizes. Volume One offers interesting films from Aiyana Elliot, Paul Tickell, and Dave Burris, whose *The Side of the Road* features a cameo by Jared Harris (*I Shot Andy Warhol*). Volume One also features two great experimental films: Garine Torossian’s *The Girl From Moush* and Matthias Freier’s *Fishmind*.

Apparently, CineBlast! is opening doors for some of its filmmakers. “It’s out there, and

it seems like a lot of people have seen it," says Toronto-based Torossian, who has heard from several potential music video clients since her film appeared in the first CineBlast! "People in this business know about it," remarks Burris. "It's like, 'Yeah, I heard about that tape'—it seems to be sparking interest."

Volume Two features *An Autumn Wind*, visual haikus directed by Iara Lee, whose documentary feature *Synthetic Pleasures* was released this summer, as well as Brian D. Cange's *A Counter Fancy* and Morgan J. Freeman's *Boom*, which stars Brendan Sexton, Jr. (*Welcome to the Dollhouse*). Freeman's first feature, *Hurricane*, was produced by Holland and will premiere in January, as will *Myth America*, Holland's feature project with producing partner Galt Niederhoffer. Asked about Mimi Steinberg's *Call Waiting*, however, which seems below par for a review hoping to feature "the best short films the world has to offer," Holland admits that it was included with commerce in mind. "I hate to refer to a film as product, because it's art, but the fact is I'm hoping that film is the kind of New York 'slice-of-life' that will appeal to a European audience."

A labor of love, CineBlast! "has been a very by-the-seat-of-the-pants venture," Holland admits. "We can't afford to run seductive ads in all the trade magazines, so we rely heavily upon our own contacts and word-of-mouth for publicity." Holland also mentions that he's been working without a salary for as long as CineBlast! has been off the ground and will have racked up more than \$35,000 on his Visa card by the time Volume Three is released in late February.

Adopting the titles of "publisher" and "editor," respectively, Tregenza and Holland say they have followed the model of the *Paris Review*, a quarterly literary magazine that rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most prestigious magazines of serious literature. Of his goal for the video review, Holland says, "What I really hope is that one day people will look back at CineBlast! and at all of the filmmakers it featured and say, 'How did Gill Holland know all those people?', the same way it's so amazing to look back at the *Paris Review* and see how many of its contributors went on to make a name for themselves."

For more information and submission guidelines, contact CineBlast! at (212) 965-0684 or Cinema Parallel at (800) 860-8896.

Ryan Deussing (ryan@thing.net) is a freelance writer and editorial assistant at The Independent.

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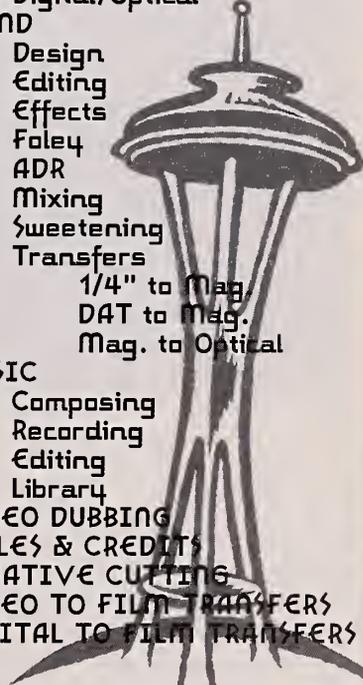
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GADFLY IN THE OINTMENT

SLAMDANCE ENTERS ITS THIRD YEAR
VOWING TO STAND ON ITS OWN,
BUT WHERE DOES IT STAND?

Donovan and the group Nancy Boy, from *The Size of Watermelons*, Courtesy Norstar Entertainment; inset, Slamdance directors Peter Baxter (l) & Jon Fitzgerald. Photo: Edward Herrera



BY DANA HARRIS

LAST SEPTEMBER, SLAMDANCE FESTIVAL DIRECTOR Jon Fitzgerald flew to Utah on Friday the 13th to meet the man who has say over anything that happens in January at Park City. Conversations on the phone had been surprisingly friendly, but Fitzgerald knew that if he was going to get permission to hold Slamdance for the third year, a face-to-face meeting was necessary. So, he spent \$110 to fly from L.A. for a conversation with Park City Police Chief Frank Bell.

"It was a good meeting," says Fitzgerald. "There were three main things Chief Bell wanted to know: What were our intentions; why Park City; and why the same time as

Sundance?"

It sounds like the Chief's time in Park City has honed his indie film sensibilities; many in the industry would ask the same questions. Much has changed for the Slamdance film festival as it enters its third year.

Initiated by three independent filmmakers angry and inspired with rejection, Slamdance was still waffling between an idle thought and a last-minute effort in November 1993; in 1996, Slamdance had received some 800 entries by its November 8 deadline, with another 200 or so expected to slip in under the wire. As this article went to press, a few films had already been selected: Kari Skoglund's *The Size of Watermelons* will be in the dramatic competition, and Eric Schaeffer's *Fall* and Steven Soderbergh's *Schizopolis* will each

receive special screenings.

Slamdance's most infamous detail remains unchanged: it's best known for being the thorn in Sundance's side. This reputation comes courtesy of the festival's pucky name; some early, cocky Slamdance press releases, and most of all, Slamdance's copycat scheduling. This year, Slamdance will go so far as to show its films at the Treasure Mountain Inn, across the street from the Egyptian Theater, Sundance's premiere screening spot.

However, Fitzgerald says that's not what Slamdance will be known for in the future: His plans for Slamdance don't include remaining the gadfly in the ointment. His reimagining of Slamdance includes workshops, an elaborate website, and maybe even

some sort of "coalition" in which filmmakers buy a membership in order to be connected with production resources. Fitzgerald is considering changing Slamdance's time, location, even its name.

Or, he might not. "It doesn't do any good if we move to a hole-in-the-wall city where no one's going to come," says Fitzgerald. "We're not going to move for the sake of moving. It's not a cultural or audience-driven film festival. Our main objective is to give filmmakers a one-up in the film business. We want people to recognize we're not here to be a pain."

If Slamdance isn't a pain, then what is it? A Sundance wannabe? A home for renegade films, or the ones that Sundance lets slip away? The festival Slamdance brings to Park City this year isn't exactly having an identity crisis; it's more like an identity showdown. With so many possibilities vying for attention, Slamdance may discover that the process of finding a way to survive on its own could be an operation as risky as separating Siamese twins.

IN 1995, SLAMDANCE HAD THE AURA OF A COLLEGE prank: filmmakers Fitzgerald (*Self-Portrait*), Dan Mirvish (*Omaha: The Movie*), and Shane Kuhn (*Redneck*) saw their films rejected by the Sundance Film Festival, got mad, and decided to hold their own festival concurrent with Sundance.

The filmmakers hurriedly gathered nine other features and twelve shorts (all Sundance rejects) and sent out a press release. They held a press conference on Park City's Main Street, although the actual festival took place 40 minutes away in Salt Lake City. The upstart festival programmers were rewarded with a generous amount of coverage: journalists didn't have much to say for the films, but they were fascinated by the maverick event that dared to tread on Sundance's territory.

Sundance was less enthralled. "In their initial announcement, the way they did it was definitely slamming Sundance by mischaracterizing it as a festival for Hollywood wannabes and for filmmakers with deep pockets," says independent consultant Bob Hawk, a member of Sundance's advisory selection committee. "I thought it insulted every low and no-budget filmmaker who was at Sundance that year."

Soderbergh, who produced *The Daytrippers* and helped bring it to last year's Slamdance after Sundance turned it away, sees the festival in a much kinder light. "We'd always considered it an option. It was really fun. I think Slamdance is exciting, inevitable, necessary,

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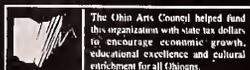
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and good. 'DIY' [do it yourself] is the whole idea behind indie filmmaking, and it doesn't stop when the film is done."

Kuhn and Mirvish moved on to other projects after Slamdance's first year, but Fitzgerald brought Slamdance back to Utah in 1996. He even staked a claim in Park City at The Yarrow, a hotel that also served as a stop on Sundance's shuttle service.

Of the 50 films Slamdance offered last year, several went on to prove themselves worthy at a number of other festivals. After winning Slamdance's Grand Jury prize, *The Daytrippers* screened in the International Critic's Week section of the Cannes Film Festival and won the Grand Prix and Prix du Public at the Deauville Film Festival. *The Delicate Art of the Rifle* won Best Picture at the Chicago and North Carolina Film Festivals; and *Blossom Time* won the grand prize at the Florida Film Festival. *The Sadness of Sex* will be handled by Tara Releasing and *Glory Days* (formerly *Last Call*) was picked up by Seventh Art Releasing. And, *Swingers* was scheduled to be at Slamdance '96 (before it was picked up by Miramax), but an incomplete sound mix forced the filmmakers to pull the film at the last minute.

Fitzgerald and creative director Peter Baxter intend to build on that momentum this January with a lineup of 10 films culled from the thousand, as well as a number of special screenings and a panel on music rights for film coordinated by RCA consultant Michael Solomon. They've also acquired a number of sponsors, including Panavision, Cinepix Film Properties (distributor of *The Daytrippers*), and Red Rock Brewery Co.

Then there's the plans designed to make Slamdance a year-round institution. Screenplay workshops are in the works for '97, and in 1996 Slamdance held a screenplay contest that received just under 1,000 entries (at \$35-\$55 each, depending on the deadline) for a chance at a \$2,500 first prize and being one of three scripts read by The Gersh Agency and Fox Searchlight. On the website, Fitzgerald plans to offer filmmakers production tips and a "digital market" in which they can upload 30-second QuickTime clips of their works-in-progress as well as screenplay synopses.

Workshops. Year-round activities designed to hook up filmmakers with helpful resources. While Fitzgerald admits that these increasingly sophisticated and wide-ranging ideas bear a certain resemblance to those of an institute that also holds a Park City film festival, he says Slamdance will offer something unique.

"The website is key," he says. "Companies can put up trailers to raise the funding to finish their movie, and screenwriters can get exposure in the industry to get contacts. Our web is going to have directories and bulletin boards so filmmakers can talk to each other, and I'm trying to work on a deal with one of the agencies that will let us use some of their talent to work on these new projects. Even though Sundance has done a lot with their festival and workshops, they haven't taken as

Eric Schaeffer and Amanda De Cadanet in Schaeffer's *Fall* Courtesy filmmaker



much personal attention with as many filmmakers."

Sundance program director John Cooper says he finds that attitude mystifying. "We've helped so many filmmakers. I took *Daytrippers* with me down to Brazil's Rio Cine festival because I liked the film. We're nonprofit, we're not in the studio system. We're just not 'the big man.'"

While Fitzgerald says Slamdance isn't in competition with Sundance ("They're the number one festival. I've always said that."), he takes pleasure in describing how a studio executive reportedly told a filmmaker, "You don't want to go to Sundance; go to Slamdance." He also describes the acquisition of Schaeffer's *Fall* as "coming over to our side of the fence."

HOWEVER SLAMDANCE CURRENTLY DEFINES itself, some industry members accept it as a

member of the festival circuit. "We would plan to cover everything at Slamdance from an acquisitions angle," says Bob Aaronson, vice president of production and acquisitions for Twentieth Century-Fox. "It's certainly an opportunity to see a significant number of American independent films that are not available at that time of year anywhere else."

Others see Slamdance in a less flattering light. "Slamdance started out as a bunch of whiners who grossly misrepresented the state



of Sundance to make a mark," says producer's representative John Pierson. "They had horrible presentation [sound and projection] in their first year and the films were pretty bad, too. Second year: Had a much better lineup, still completely unacceptable presentation. And they had less sympathy because they were going down the road the second time and they should have had their shit together."

Nor does Pierson have sympathy for Slamdance's identity as a Sundance alternative. "Sundance had the world's worst opening and closing night films last year, but it was *Welcome to the Dollhouse* that took the jury prize. That film could have fit in the Sundance lineup just as well any other year."

However, Hawk points out that in at least one respect, Slamdance has had a positive effect on Sundance. He credits the festival with encouraging Sundance to establish its

noncompetitive sidebar, the American Spectrum.

"I certainly assume that it was to some degree an answer to Slamdance," says Hawk. "It was only a natural result of where [Sundance festival director] Geoff Gilmore is coming from, but maybe the advent of Slamdance pushed things along. There was already a full representation, but now there are a few more films that won't be rejected. Sundance will never be able to show everything that might be worth seeing."

Most filmmakers would go to great lengths to be one of those films; in fact, taking on \$50,000 in credit-card debt could seem much less risky than not submitting a film to Sundance. However, Skoglund committed her first feature, *The Size of Watermelons*, to Slamdance a month before Sundance's October deadline. "We chose them over Sundance," she says. "We decided not to participate because Slamdance was going to commit to our film much earlier."

Skoglund says she doesn't feel that Slamdance hurts her film's chances for distribution. "They're not just orphan films. The response I've been getting from distributors is they love the idea of an alternative festival that represents the independents in a more genuine way. Sundance used to be an alternative festival, and I think it's [now] more mainstream."

Terrence Michael, producer of *Fall*, agrees. Although he says his agent submitted a Sundance application for the film, Michael and Schaeffer asked that it be withdrawn when Slamdance offered to feature *Fall* as a premiere. "It's been great working with them," says Michael. "Slamdance seemed smaller and less political, so we said, 'Let's take a chance. They're doing what we're doing.'"

However, filmmakers who have already attended Slamdance give the festival mixed reviews. *Delicate Art of the Rifle* director Dante Harper says he resented the pressure he felt from Slamdance to commit to the festival before Sundance had made its decision.

"They tried to get us to say 'yes' before Sundance, but that's incredibly wrong," says Harper. "Slamdance should be about the films Sundance wasn't smart enough to get. Sundance is there for a reason, and if you show there you're going to have a much better chance to be picked up. I totally believe in what [Slamdance] is doing, but if you're \$65,000 in debt, are you going to go to Slamdance over Sundance?"

Previous Slamdance filmmakers also say that

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the festival's good intentions don't necessarily make up for state-of-the-artless screenings. For Mottola, shoddy projection equipment made for a brutal debut.

"The first screening was a nonscreening," he says. "It was marred by horrifically bad sound. The first five rows had their fingers in their ears, and the last five couldn't hear anything."

Producer Soderbergh admits the screening was rough. "But all of us knew it went with the territory and the audiences were very understanding of the circumstances." And Mottola adds, "The second screening was one hundred times better."

Harper says that if he knew how harrowing his screening *The Delicate Art of the Rifle* was going to be, he's unsure he would have gone to Slamdance. "If I were going back with a film this year, I would make damn sure that it was going to be projected in a way that would make the most out of my film. It's one hell of a learning experience."

This year Slamdance will have one screen set up in a Treasure Island conference room,

number of events, then do the big one in the summer."

As many sources point out, it's difficult to assess any festival without knowing the time of year or where it will be held. But in a festival calendar that already offers little breathing room, when and where could that be? Michael suggests Santa Barbara or San Francisco, "in between the American Film Market and Cannes. Summertime wouldn't be bad." Mottola jokingly suggests, "Another resort town. Vegas."

Some filmmakers admit that part of Slamdance's identity they now like is its proximity to Sundance. "I would be dishonest if I said it wasn't," says Skoglund. "The fact that it's at the same time means you are maximizing an opportunity. Sundance is a gathering of the top acquisitions people and I want this film to be close to that, certainly. We're showcased as being different, but we're in Park City."

But if Slamdance's identity was to be divorced from Sundance's, would the film-

The festival Slamdance brings to Park City this year isn't exactly having an identity crisis; it's more like an identity showdown.

and Fitzgerald promises that the projection quality will be much improved. In addition to hiring Boston Light and Sound for on-site projection booth assembly, the projectors will be thoroughly tested before the festival. "That was a luxury we didn't have last year," says Fitzgerald.

TALKING ABOUT SLAMDANCE LEADS HAWK TO pose a slew of hypothetical questions. "Slamdance's whole reason for being is Sundance. If they leave, what are they going to do? How are they going to define themselves? If they are going to try to coexist, why are they in Park City at the same time?"

Hawk's queries are similar to the ones Slamdance is trying to figure out for itself. "We'd probably have the festival after Berlin—it's close enough after Sundance and still has impact," muses Fitzgerald. "But there's no solid fest for indies in summer—that's another possibility. Another is to go to Park City at Sundance and have a presence with a small

makers still come? "Absolutely," says Michael. "It's the fact that they're willing to take good films and showcase them to national distributors."

Of course, that presumes that if Slamdance stood alone, the distributors would still mark the festival on their calendars. Mottola thinks it would be difficult for Slamdance to find another time and place that offered as much easy appeal.

"Personally, I think Slamdance is a good thing, but I think the hope is you have this captive audience," he says. "I would love to see another festival where important distributors came, but these are incredibly busy people who don't have to see movies if they don't want to."

Aaronson agrees. "It would really have to depend on when and where it was. We'd certainly want to see all the films somehow. There are a lot of different reasons to go to festivals. You decide on a case-by-case and year-by-year basis. Maybe Sundance should think about making Slamdance a kind of

sanctioned sidebar," he laughs. "That will probably not be an idea that Sundance will jump at any time soon. They'd be happier if Slamdance just got out of town. Isn't that what they did in the old West?"

Harper believes that losing three years' worth of identity isn't Slamdance's greatest risk: he feels that as long as Slamdance is held in Park City, it's hard to call it a Sundance alternative. "Can you even go up to Park City and do something that's not Sundance in one way or another? It's a real tar baby," says Harper. "They have to decide: are they going to be just another festival? Show what Sundance doesn't show? What others don't show?"

Wherever Slamdance chooses to be, Harper says he hopes they don't lose their intent. "The reason Slamdance did as well as they did is because Sundance dropped the ball," he says. "People have to know that if your film doesn't go to Sundance, that's not the end. They cannot have all the good films. I think Slamdance is always going to be a thorn in Sundance's side; I just hope they keep it. That's a fine and beautiful economy."

Cooper agrees that Sundance will never have 'all the good films.' "We try to be as fair as we can—in fact, we're obsessed with it—[but] let's hope we make some mistakes on some films every year, please!"

In any case, Fitzgerald says he isn't designing Slamdance to serve as Sundance's conscience. While Fitzgerald says he's proud to have proven that "it's not Sundance do or die," he claims the reason he'll be across the street from Sundance this year is a matter of supply and demand. "This isn't about picking up what Sundance doesn't. The fact that we're back there this year is because there was enough of a demand. The consensus was we have to go back there and really do it right, get films picked up, and prove people that it's not to just piss off Sundance."

Reconciliation might suggest a name change in Slamdance's future, but don't count on it. Besides, Fitzgerald sees it as something of a tribute. "We've considered it, but there's something to be said for remembering where you came from. Without Sundance and the need for accommodating more films in Park City, we wouldn't have happened. If someone gets picked up or gets noticed, then we're doing our job. We're not doing it for ourselves, we're doing it for indie filmmakers."

Dana Harris is the managing editor of The Independent.

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OUT OF VORTEX

WITH *SUDDEN MANHATTAN*,
ADRIENNE SHELLY
WRITES AND DIRECTS HER FUTURE

“YOU DON’T MIND IF I SMOKE, DO YOU?” ADRIENNE SHELLY ASKS inside the car. “I get kind of rattled after a screening; need to relax a bit.”

Like her characters on screen, Shelly isn’t an intimidating, imposing figure. She’s a tiny thing, with a lion’s mane of hair and a voice that makes you think of a cartoon princess. She leans a bit closer to me.

“Did you see that fat man in the back row?”

“No,” I reply.

“He had these cards on the sides of his glasses.”

“Playing cards?” I ask, confused.

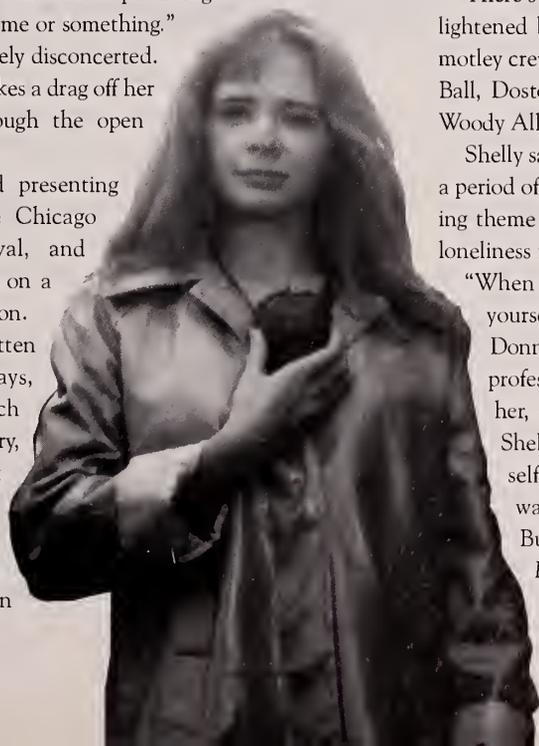
“Yeah, miniature playing cards. He kept staring at me like he was going to kill me or something.”

“Weird” I concur, genuinely disconcerted.

Thus unburdened, she takes a drag off her cigarette and exhales through the open window.

Shelly has just finished presenting *Sudden Manhattan* at the Chicago International Film Festival, and we’re heading to her hotel on a crisp, blue, October afternoon.

Although Shelly has written and directed several plays, *Sudden Manhattan*, which opens theatrically in February, marks her first attempt at writing, directing, and starring in a feature film. In it, Shelly again masters the aura of a feminine Holden



BY DEIRDRE GUTHRIE

Caulfield. Her character, Donna, is an aimless, analytical loner who wanders Manhattan’s streets looking for wisdom in graffiti philosophy and fortune-teller prophecy. The guidance she finds there is bleak: “The meek shall inherit shit” reads a spray-painted wall. And Dominga the omniscient gypsy, played by Louise Lasser, predicts, “All is suffering, torture; and then you die.”

There’s an undertone of despair and cynicism in Shelly’s writing; it’s lightened by humor, but is weighty nonetheless. I’m thinking of the motley crew she’s named as mentors: people like Carol Burnett, Lucille Ball, Dostoevsky, Camus, Ingmar Bergman, Patricia Rosemont, and Woody Allen.

Shelly says the writing of *Sudden Manhattan* three years ago followed a period of depression in her life and no doubt reflects it. The underlying theme of her film, she notes, is an exploration of “the humorous loneliness in our lives.”

“When I began *Sudden*,” she says, “I was thinking ‘Okay, now write yourself a future.’”

Donna attracts needy, inadequate men like Murphy, an English professor who sadistically lusts after his own idealized image of her, and Adam, a struggling young actor who can’t get it up. Shelly has Donna glide down city streets, attempting to lift herself from despair by doing her best Mary Tyler Moore imitation, waving a flimsy wrist and grinning pathetically at passers-by. But the fortune teller’s words ring over and over in her mind:

I am in a vortex. I am in a vortex.

“Donna is definitely an exaggerated version of me in my

twenties," Shelly admits. "Back then I was living like her character—scouring the underbelly of Manhattan, floating in my own fantasy world, getting entangled in bad relationships." She laughs, "As Lily Tomlin says, I was 'searching for signs of intelligent life in the universe.'"

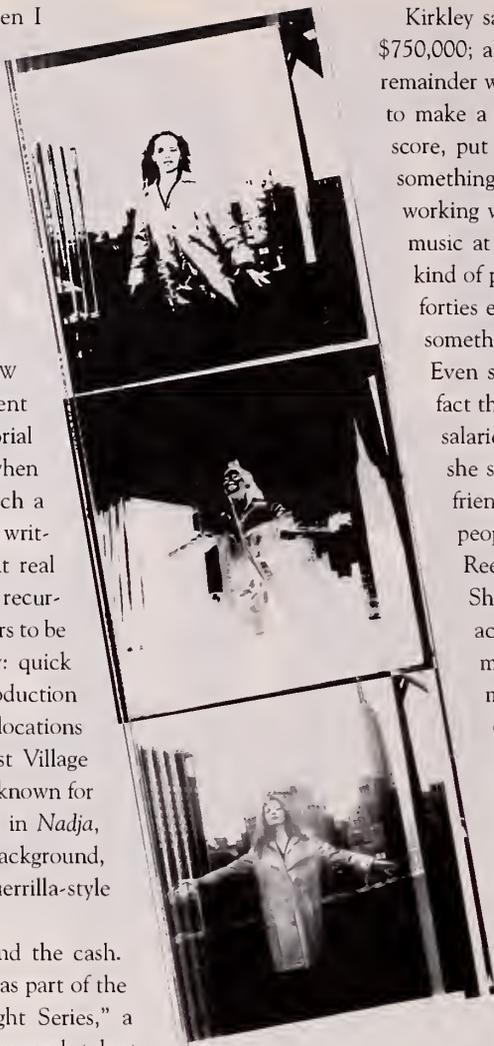
FROM THE OUTSET, SHELLY KNEW she'd be following an independent low-budget course with her directorial debut—a fact she kept in mind when writing the script. "I knew that such a film wouldn't find funding if it were written for a large budget, so I kept it real small—few locations, a couple of recurring characters, lots of street exteriors to be shot in a guerrilla filmmaking way: quick and on the fly," she says in her production notes. She condensed all the film's locations to within a few blocks of her West Village home. And she hired Jim Denault, known for his award-winning cinematography in *Nadja*, because he came from a lighting background, and "what suffers most in quick, guerrilla-style filming is lighting."

By early 1995 it was time to find the cash. Shelly's script had a public reading as part of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe's "Fifth Night Series," a hotbed for ambitious screenwriters and talent scouts. The next day she had more than 20 calls from interested producers. Marcia Kirkley, then acquisitions director at October Films, was among those in the audience who was impressed. Shelly found Kirkley to be a convincing suitor and credits her as being the "first important door" that opened.

Kirkley and I spoke over the phone. "Adrienne's script was one of the funniest, smartest, and most original scripts I had ever encountered," she said. At first she took the script to October, which "seriously considered" it for a while but eventually declined. "They weren't making many low-budget films then," says Kirkley, adding, "and still aren't."

So Kirkley used her business connections and MBA smarts to put together a comprehensive financial package that convinced 16 savvy private investment bankers to finance the film. She says her investors didn't know who Shelly was and probably didn't care.

When asked how she convinced such straight and narrow businessmen to finance a risky, artistic endeavor like an independent film, Kirkley says, "These people know me and my experience. But ultimately, they had to go on faith." With their support, Kirkley left October in August to start her own production company, Homegrown Pictures, and within weeks the cameras were rolling. (Kirkley has associate-produced two low-budget 35mm features shot in New York: *Bad Girls* by Amos Kolleck and *Zero Cool* by Isac Zepel; and executive produced Eve Annenberg's indie feature *Dogs: The Rise and Fall of an All-Girl Bookie Joint*.)



Kirkley says *Sudden Manhattan* was put together with a budget of \$750,000; about \$500,000 was the operational cash budget and the remainder was deferred. Luckily, Shelly found it a delicious challenge to make a film with so little money. She offers her creative music score, put together by Pat Irwin of B-52s fame, as an example of something wonderful that might not have happened had she been working with a bigger budget. Irwin found several pieces of mood music at low cost at the Corelli Jacobs music library. This is the kind of place, Shelly says, where "You can go in and say 'I need a forties early reggae piece reminiscent of Sinatra,' and they'll find something for you."

Even so, Shelly laments the downside of low budgets, like the fact that many members of her cast and crew agreed to deferred salaries. "I can't wait until I can pay people what they're worth," she says. It probably helps that her cast is made up largely of friends and acquaintances, although a few parts were given to people she'd never worked with, like Louise Lasser, Roger Rees, and Hynden Walch.

Shelly is grateful she wasn't pressured to cast more famous actors. "I didn't have to worry about expensive trailers, meals, special treatment, hissy fits. There just wasn't the money for attitude." She and casting director Ellen Parks (*Flirting with Disaster*) chose people for their talent as well as their ability to handle "no-frills" conditions.

Probably her most difficult casting decision was putting herself in the lead role. After auditioning 80 actresses, Shelly realized that "in writing Donna, I had written myself. Either someone was going to have to do a really good imitation of me, or I would have to play the part. In the end, it was a storytelling decision."

ON A STORMY HALLOW'S EVE, SHELLY AND I continue our interview by phone. Her cat purrs at her feet, and my dog snores beside me on the couch. It's 9 p.m. and she's been directing a screenplay she wrote for Lifetime's Independent Woman's Film Fest since four in the morning. With a weary sigh, Shelly lets out a little low-budget frustration. "One day I'd like to shoot everything just the way I wrote it." Today a scene involving 40 extras in a ballroom ended up being shot with two couples in a living room.

The movie's main character, Lois, is loosely based on Shelly's own mother. (Her mother also makes a cameo in *Sudden Manhattan* as the "bunny lady.") Shelly describes the story's plot: "Lois is a suburban, middle-aged housewife who reads Harlequin romances, fantasizes about the lawnboy, and plays mahjongg all day."

Shelly, born in a suburban Queens neighborhood that's 95 percent Jewish, "couldn't wait to escape," so she started acting at age fifteen, studied theater in Manhattan, and performed in summer stock. After graduating from high school on Long Island, Shelly studied film at Boston University where she "learned nothing." But her education was cut short when she took ill her junior year. "I caught a virus, Bell's Palsy, that paralyzed half of my face. It had happened once before when I was fifteen and lasted a month. It wasn't supposed to come back, but it did."

The therapy included large doses of Cortisone that left Shelly deranged and wandering about seeing halos. "I'm not sure what was happening to me biochemically, but it was very scary. I told myself then

that if this ended, I would quit school and follow my real heart's desire to Manhattan and pursue a career in acting." Within a year, she found her acting coach, Richard Niles (who is still with her today), and indie director Hal Hartley, who put her on the map with his first two films, *The Unbelievable Truth* (1990) and *Trust* (1991). Shelly snared the role of Audrey in *The Unbelievable Truth* by answering an ad in *Backstage*. She sent in her headshot, got called back with 200 other women, and then had to audition three times for the part.

Her performance in these films garnered her international appeal as a kind of underground cult heroine. Shelly laughs at this image, but agrees, "I do appeal to a certain audience. And if they are underground, that's fine with me." She says she has turned down high-paying TV parts in order to preserve a certain level of anonymity that she enjoys in the United States.

It is true that she may be better known abroad. This December, there was a retrospective of her work in Taiwan, while in Chicago a lady in the audience tells Shelly, "You were very natural in the film. Have you ever pursued acting?" Shelly smiles and says, yes, actually she's done twelve films.

And yet Shelly has a loyal following among American audiences.



She spoke of two nervous eighteen-year-old film students who came up to her after the screening to let her know how much they appreciated her work. "They also told me, as aspiring female filmmakers, how hard it is to be heard, how no one cares. It is depressing at times. For instance, I was the only American woman invited to the Chicago Film Festival." Her advice to the young female filmmakers was to resist being silenced and "never apologize or feel like what you have to say isn't important."

She credits Hartley with inspiring her tenacious attitude. "With Hal, well, there's nothing namby-pamby about him. He has a specific style and idea and he bluntly, forcefully, yet kindly, carries it through." She continues, "We as women have been encouraged to accommodate everybody, not step on anyone's toes, follow the ol' rule book. Hal helped teach me to aggressively pursue my vision."

In directing *Sudden Manhattan*, Shelly needed to maintain this kind of confidence. "For instance," says Shelly, "I used a playback monitor to direct but couldn't let myself get self-conscious. I literally looked at

myself as a piece of set furniture. I was only interested in how I was working in the scene as a whole."

Sometimes she faltered. Shelly recalls a scene where everyone had just arrived at Donna's apartment. Looking at replays of the scene, Shelly felt she was acting "too neurotic." It brought up another Hartley lesson: how important it is for the central character in a comedy to remain grounded.

"It's tempting when your supporting actors are going nuts to join the party, but I had to relate to the audience and therefore be somewhat normal," she says. "Donna may doubt her sanity in my film, but her behavior itself isn't batty. That's why my performance in that scene was giving me trouble."

She had the same problem in directing Tim Guinee as Adam. "When he started to go *boing* with the other actors, I'd remind him 'Tim, *leading man*.' Above all, the storytelling, the hero's journey, has to be a bit universal."

She found that stumbling blocks for a first-time director are inevitable. But in retrospect, her worst experiences during the making of *Sudden Manhattan* were due to circumstances beyond her control. She says the key is not to panic when a) your DP, who is supposed to shoot in three weeks, quits for a higher-paying job; b) you catch a stomach virus and have to go to the hospital for dehydration two weeks before shooting; c) you break up with your boyfriend during the sound mix; or d) your apartment is completely cleaned out by thieves during editing.

Her advice to aspiring filmmakers is "Don't show a film before it's ready." She thinks she jumped the gun by showing *Sudden Manhattan* in L.A. before tightening it up and doing some test screenings. "When you have to edit that fast, it's so easy to become entrenched in the work and lose all objectivity, because you just want to show that finished product."

Phaedra Cinema, a new independent distributor and production company out of L.A., has picked up *Sudden Manhattan* as its first release. Greg Hatanaka, president of Phaedra and CEO of Filmopolis, a new theatrical distributor (which handled *Ma Saison Preferee* with Catherine Deneuve), says, "Phaedra seeks to give low-budget films exposure." This support for female, independent talent is what attracted Shelly and Kirkley, who declined an offer from a bigger distributor in favor of Phaedra, which ultimately will open the film in a greater number of cities.

When asked whether she'd like to move on to bigger budgets as a director, Shelly says she's happy in the independent arena. "I like the freedom of independent film, the spontaneous, industrious process whereby you have to think by the seat of your pants."

Although she wouldn't refuse a bigger budget, Shelly doesn't think her writing will attract Hollywood anytime soon. "The women in my films are not window-dressing."

When all is said and done, Shelly remains true to her heart's desire. "My films are not a calling card," she declares. "They're my life."

Deirdre Guthrie is a freelance writer published in the Village Voice and is currently writing a piece based on her travels with the Big Apple Circus.

BY MAX J. ALVAREZ

POWER
STRUGGLE
ARTHOUSE
ARENA

THE NUMBER OF ARTHOUSE THEATERS HAS GROWN. SO WHY IS IT STILL SO HARD FOR INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS TO CLAIM THEIR SPACE? :

Filmmaker

←.....
 Lara Lee had every reason to believe the September 13 New York opening of her documentary *Synthetic Pleasures* would go off without a hitch. As distributor of her own film, Lee had lined up two high-profile art theaters—the Cinema Village on East 12th Street and City Cinema on West 59th—and had supported these bookings with \$65,000 in pre-opening newspaper and magazine ads. Then Lee got a taste of how the film business operates.

One day before the Friday opening, she was informed by City Cinema that *Synthetic Pleasures'* booking was being cancelled. Miramax, she was told, wanted to hold over *Trainspotting*, and City Cinema wanted to accommodate them without interfering with Orion's *American Buffalo*, which was scheduled to open on the same day as *Synthetic Pleasures*. In the resulting reshuffling, the circuit held

Trainspotting in its Cinema 2 and gave Cinema 3 to Orion for *Buffalo*.

Synthetic Pleasures wound up playing only the Cinema Village, and by then it was too late to correct most of the ads in the *New York Times*, *New York Post*, *Newsday*, *Time Out*, and the *Village Voice* in time for the opening weekend engagement.

"They were really rude," said Lee of City Cinema. "They said, 'We have to screw someone, and who are we going to screw? You.'"

Even jaded industry people were taken aback by the last-minute dumping of *Synthetic Pleasures*, given that exhibitors usually provide a one- to two-week warning for cancellations. The circuit also declined

to offer Lee a "moveover" to a different City Cinema theater to compensate for the loss. "Now all they are offering me is a midnight screening at the Angelika, and I have to swallow that. I'm getting very bitter about the film industry."

Lee is not the only one. The same week as the *Synthetic Pleasures*

848 simultaneous playdates (as it did in mid-September) would support the notion of a healthy demand for arthouse fare. But the term

How many "art houses" are there, anyway?

IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF SPECIALTY CINEMAS in the United States, since this information is tracked by neither the National Association of Theatre Owners nor Entertainment Data, Inc.—the main industry statisticians.

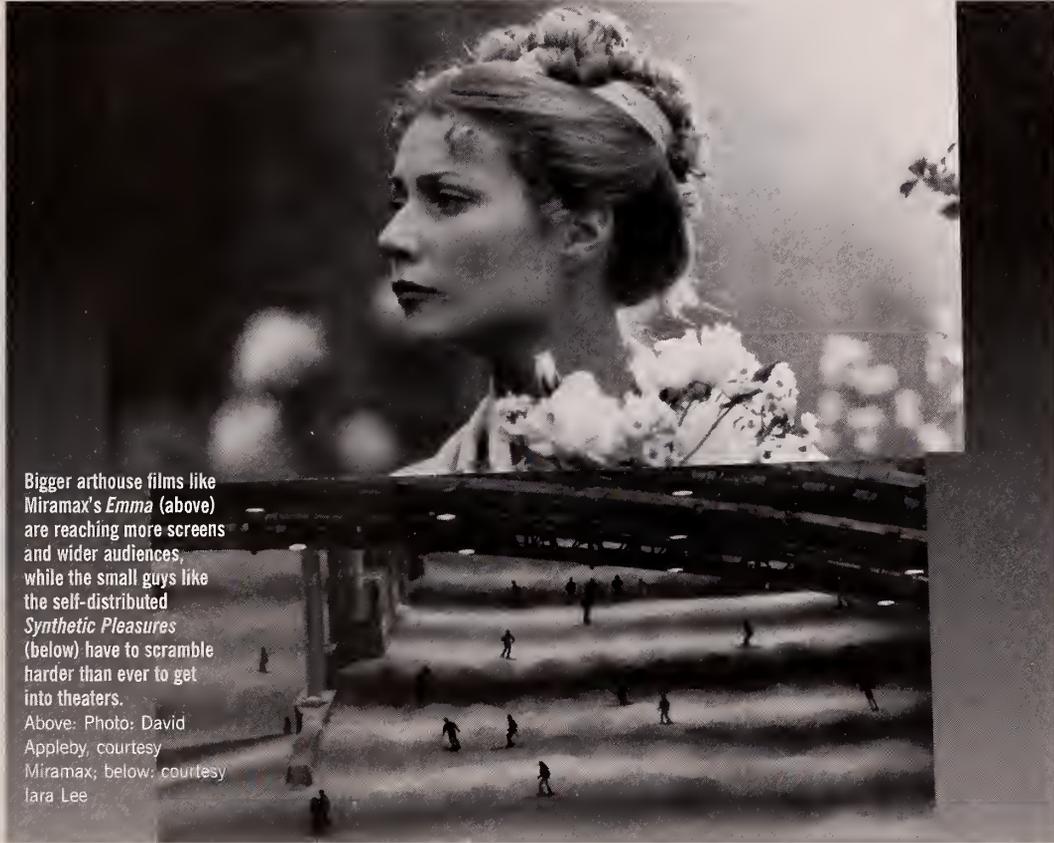
Bill Banning of the San Francisco-based Roxie Releasing estimates there are around 500 screens that show art product, including those mixing and matching specialty films with more commercial releases.

While most agree that exhibition of the most prominent specialized releases has increased, many believe there has been serious slippage in the number of independent calendar houses that historically favored booking foreign and independent films. Says Marcus Hu of Strand Releasing, "I would say it has diminished by 60 to 70 percent over twenty years."

Similarly, *Z* magazine film critic Michael Bronski reported that the number of U.S. independent art and repertory screens shrank from 290 to 60 between the years 1984 and 1989.

Print orders for specialized films fluctuate dramatically (and are further confused by the ability of multiplexes to project a single print in more than one auditorium through automated interlocking projection systems). Strand, for example, was able to play its 150-200 dates of *Stonewall* by bicycling 20 prints around the country. *Zeitgeist* used even fewer prints (12) of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* for nearly as many playdates. Sony made more than 100 prints for its platform release of *Welcome to the Dollhouse*. Fox Searchlight, on the other hand, had *The Brothers McMullen* on 367 screens by the eighth week of release.

— M. A.



Bigger arthouse films like Miramax's *Emma* (above) are reaching more screens and wider audiences, while the small guys like the self-distributed *Synthetic Pleasures* (below) have to scramble harder than ever to get into theaters.

Above: Photo: David Appleby, courtesy Miramax; below: courtesy Jara Lee

debacle, documentarians Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky presumed they were opening *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills* on two screens at the Quad Cinema in Manhattan. Days before the scheduled opening (and after an expenditure of \$20,000 in advertising costs), the self-distributors were informed that one of the screens was being pulled because Sony Pictures Classics wanted to hold over the German film *Brother of Sleep*.

Both *Synthetic Pleasures* and *Paradise Lost* were casualties in the film food chain, where the strong devour the weak in the struggle for screen time. Their experiences raise serious questions about the availability of art screens to small independent films—a situation that will presumably worsen as the Darwinian struggle intensifies and the methods used by specialty distributors and exhibitors begin to rival the ruthlessness of the Hollywood majors.

A building binge

HOW DO SUCH TALES OF WOE CONFORM TO OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF A booming market for art movies? The key is whom you ask and where they fit in the food chain. From the broader industry perspective, Miramax's arty *Emma* is a specialized release. The fact that it secured

"arthouse fare" obscures the differences between films like *Emma* and those like *Synthetic Pleasures* that don't have Miramax/Disney's marketing clout, P&A budget, and power over exhibitors.

From the top, the outlook is positive. "There's a tremendous proliferation of art screens nationally," says Dick Morris, a Sarasota, Florida, film booker who handles 20 art cinemas (comprising 50 to 60 screens) in as many Southern cities. "If you live in a moderately-sized city or even a city of more than 100,000 people, you can access close to fifty of the so-called art films."

This parallels a 16.8 percent growth in the number of U.S. theater screens over the past decade. In the boom theater-building year of 1986, there were an estimated 22,765 screens in the country. In 1994 (the most recent year for which figures are available from the Motion Picture Association of America) there were 26,586 screens. Currently there are an estimated 29,000 screens.

Greg Laemmle, vice president of the Los Angeles-based art circuit

Laemmle Theatres, believes the theatrical market for specialty films is healthier now than it was five years ago. "The [distribution] companies are in a better position to spend marketing dollars and take the gambles inherent in putting together large advertising campaigns. And I see the films crossing over to larger audiences. You know business is good when you don't have enough screens to show the product."

All this encouraging news, however, depends upon how one defines art screens. When considering the increase in art screens nationally, it is important to determine whether the screens in question are full-time or sporadic art venues and whether their bookers are simply cherry-picking from the largest specialty distributors—the Miramax, Fine Lines, and so on—and ignoring the smaller distributors and self-distributing filmmakers. "Some of the people we used to do business with, very disturbingly, are using bookers who have relationships with the five biggest companies," says Zeitgeist Films co-president Nancy Gerstman. She is concerned about the recent tendency for the few remaining owners of individual screens to use bookers who block book films into groups of independent theaters. The bottom line is that even a theater with consistent specialized booking policies offers no guarantees that its doors will be open to small art product.

In a similar vein, one's level of optimism about the arthouse market hinges on how one defines independent film. "I don't know whether you can call *Emma* or *Trainspotting* really independent films," says Kino International general manager Gary Palmucci. It is films such as these that, more often than not, grab the art screens in the multiplexes—and stay there.

"Theaters are getting advised now that it makes more economic sense to hold *Trainspotting* or *Emma* or *Lone Star* for five, six, seven, eight weeks, rather than take a chance on a smaller film for a one- or two-week engagement which might require [the theater] to get out and thump the tub a little bit, do some of that grassroots publicity," says Palmucci. He estimates that this philosophy has resulted in Kino losing access to half a dozen major U.S. cities, largely in Maryland, Virginia, and Vermont.

"Those films are getting hundreds and hundreds of playdates, which is unheard of for art films. I remember United Artists Classics saying in 1981 they had 185 playdates for [François Truffaut's] *The Last Metro*, and they considered that a smashing success at the time. If we had maybe 100 to 125 playdates, that would be considered a terrific success as well. Our most successful film—[Julie Dash's 1991 drama] *Daughters of the Dust*—had maybe 200 to 250 playdates. I think there's been a net loss in the number of playdates for the more narrowly specialized art film releases."

The exhibition food chain

THE REASON WHY IS SIMPLE: IN THIS DOG-EAT-DOG WORLD, ARTHOUSES are having to book more commercial films in order to subsidize the truly independent fare. This chips away at available screens, but it also keeps independents' theatrical allies afloat. Landmark Theatre Corporation, for instance, is a 148-screen circuit that is the largest exhibitor of foreign language and independent fare in North America, responsible for 25–50 percent of all art film revenue in the U.S. Relatively speaking, however, it is a very small chain, competing with

circuits of 2,000 screens. Now 24 years old, Landmark was "on the edge of bankruptcy for 15 years," senior vice president of film buying and marketing Bert Manzari said on a panel at this year's Independent Feature Film Market. "We're now profitable because, one, the audience has increased, and two, we'll play *A River Runs Through It* because it can make money."

Echoes Dick Morris, "We're getting a lot of 'tweeners—pictures that could play commercially but are required on the art screens, so



How do you define arthouse? Specialty films now make it into all types of theaters: from (L-R) the tiny, filmmaker-friendly Quad to the largest circuit dedicated to arthouse product, to AMC's new megaplexes, such as the 24-screen theater in Dallas.

Courtesy AMC & Landmark; Quad photo: Patricia Thomson

the theaters can afford to play *Lamerica* and *Rendezvous in Paris*."

Ironically, Landmark must now contend with competition from the infinitely more powerful Cineplex Odeon (835 U.S. screens at 182 locations) and AMC (1,807 screens at 230 locations), both of which have made inroads into specialty film exhibition over the years. Many of the 150–200 playdates for Strand Releasing's *Stonewall* (1996) for example, were from these circuits, reports Strand co-president Marcus Hu.

"I personally have been responsible, for better or for worse, for the introduction of the art screens in the multiplexes," admits Morris, who began this booking method in the Ft. Lauderdale market after he found little interest in art films from the smaller exhibitors. Morris managed to coax the AMC and Carmike chains into reserving a few of their multiplex screens for specialized releases.

"The commercial guys, until recently, filled a void in the community by devoting one or two screens to art," says Morris. "That is now changing rapidly. The change is the [24-screen] megaplexes are now devoting a couple of screens to art, competing for the larger-grossing art movies with the very theaters that promoted the films initially in the city, that created an appetite in the market for it."

What remains to be seen is whether these new megaplexes will drive the smaller chains out of business. Many believe they won't, if only out of skepticism about their long-term commitment to specialty exhibition. Says Palmucci, "AMC has said they were going to have art screens...and it always fails, because they really aren't willing to do that enormous outreach that you have to do to have an independent screen."

Morris, who regards megaplexes as "Walmart with popcorn," adds that their interest in specialized movies is limited to whatever pictures make an impressive showing on *Variety's* weekly box-office charts.

More directly affecting independent exhibition is the impact of the mega- and multiplexes on single theaters, which are slowly disappearing. One independent art theater owner compared the arrival of a

Landmark theater to a Starbucks franchise opening down the street from a small coffee house.

Manzari does not deny the impact his circuit has had on independent theaters. "We never go into the marketplace with the intent to hurt anybody, generally speaking, because no matter how many screens we build, there's never enough to go around." Manzari adds that there are many specialty films that Landmark simply cannot play, and that this should encourage independent exhibitors to counter-program

Landmark's crowded schedule.

Bill Banning knows a thing or two about counter-programming. As owner of the 300-seat Roxie cinema in San Francisco, Banning has witnessed first-hand how larger circuits lure art product away from independent houses. Banning's theater has survived by programming the types of obscure and eclectic films that other local exhibitors tend not to pursue. The Roxie also benefits from being used as a launching pad for films acquired by Banning's distribution arm, Roxie Releasing (John Dahl's *Red Rock West* began its theatrical life in this theater). "You just have to go with the flow," explains

Banning of the highly competitive marketplace. "If there are no French films out there, you show Hong Kong or the best of the American independents."

Pressure points

THEN THERE IS THE EXPLOSIVE MATTER OF EVICTIONS—FILMS BEING prematurely ejected from screens in order to accommodate product from larger, more influential distributors. "It can be very problematic and stressful," says Kino's Palmucci. "You're often in situations where you get pushed off a screen because of the volume of films that a company like Miramax is releasing and the fact that a company like Landmark is often obligated to try to accommodate them as generously as possible... We've been on the receiving end of that many times."

"There is clearly pressure from the larger distributors of specialized films," concedes Landmark's Manzari. "When someone has thirty films a year, they tend to get a lot more attention than someone with five or ten."

Greg Laemmle admits to not booking as many small independent films in his 24-screen chain as he did five years ago, even if the filmmaker or distributor is willing to four-wall a screen. "Customer relations are important, and you have to make sure you are servicing your regular customers. I tell the smaller distributors that if they're on screen, [then] Miramax, Sony, or whatever are *not* on screen, and whatever [the smaller distributors'] films are doing [at the box office]—it's at least *something*."

Of course, this principle is operative all the way down the food chain, from the studios to the mini-majors to the smaller distributors to the self-distributor. A low-budget documentary like Doug Pray's *Hype* falls low on the chain, but it still had the clout to knock another independent documentary, *Paradise Lost*, off a Landmark screen in

Portland, Oregon, three days earlier than scheduled. In addition to *Hype*'s obvious regional appeal—the film is about the rise of Seattle grunge bands and the hype surrounding that—it also had the advantage of having a distributor supporting it. Small as Cinepix Film Properties may be, it still has more product in the pipeline than the filmmaking team of Berlinger and Sinofsky.

There's also the issue of timing. Manzari expresses frustration at smaller independents openly trying to compete during the prime exhibition seasons. Landmark, he claims, was desperate for indie product in the late summer/early fall of this year, but too many independents chose to open in the more prestigious mid-fall to winter season—resulting in what Manzari claims to be the most crowded period of films he's seen in his two decades in the business. "We had to be just draconian.... We had to say: 'This film cannot play in this time period.'"

Zeitgeist had the good fortune not to get trapped in a crowded release environment during last year's reissue of Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. "We were able to book 150 playdates during [April-June], which was really a miracle, because before that time we had a lot of trouble even getting [our] films into independent theaters," explains Gerstman. "But I did notice that once July came and *Trainspotting* and *Emma* and *Lone Star* and all of these films started opening...those theaters were completely closed to us. We were just closed off."

Call in the Cavalry

JEFF LIPSKY, CO-FOUNDER OF OCTOBER FILMS AND WRITER-DIRECTOR OF the independent film *Childhood's End*, is baffled by the lack of people willing to invest in specialized exhibition. "Almost nobody has invested significant money in art theaters," he says with exasperation. "I'm not talking New York City. I'm talking markets like Las Vegas, Philly—where there is only one art exhibitor. I'm talking Boston, where every single theater [in the city proper] is owned by the same circuit."

Lipsky believes an art operation must have at least five to six screens to survive. While he agrees there has been an overall increase in the number of art screens, art complexes have not been on the rise. (These cost about \$2 million to open nowadays, according to Landmark's Manzari.) Moreover, "what is entirely absent are entrepreneurs whose soul and passion is exclusively art product," says Lipsky.

One noteworthy exception praised by Lipsky is Ray Posel, owner of the new Ritz Voorhees in Voorhees, New Jersey, a 12-screen multiplex situated 25 miles east of Philadelphia. Amazingly, as of early October, all 12 Ritz screens, much to Lipsky's delight, were exhibiting art releases from many prominent specialized distributors. The question remains as to whether the Ritz will be able to continue this policy, or whether it will gradually phase in more mainstream fare, as the popular Angelika Film Center in Manhattan has been known to do.

Ed Arentz, who runs the 238-seat Cinema Village—New York's only independent single-screen arthouse—remains very bullish on arthouse exhibition. "You have to be very resourceful and creative, kind of like any other business," he explains. "The major circuits will never be able to provide a setting that's going to be appropriate for a full range of specialty/art/foreign product that washes ashore here. It requires too much attention that they're not able to give. Primarily they're in the real estate and popcorn business."

Max J. Alvarez is a Washington, D.C., writer who reported on the U.S. film commission in the October issue of The Independent.

[feature:exhibition]

You're sitting on the world's greatest undiscovered film. Although your opinion may be somewhat biased because you made that film, you're baffled that no one has even offered to pick up rights for North Dakota. You can't get the major festival programmers to bite, and even the smallest, hard-working distributor can't see a marketing hook. You've given two years to something cryptically called art—and suddenly this is the end of the line? Not necessarily. You can always four-wall.

Four what?

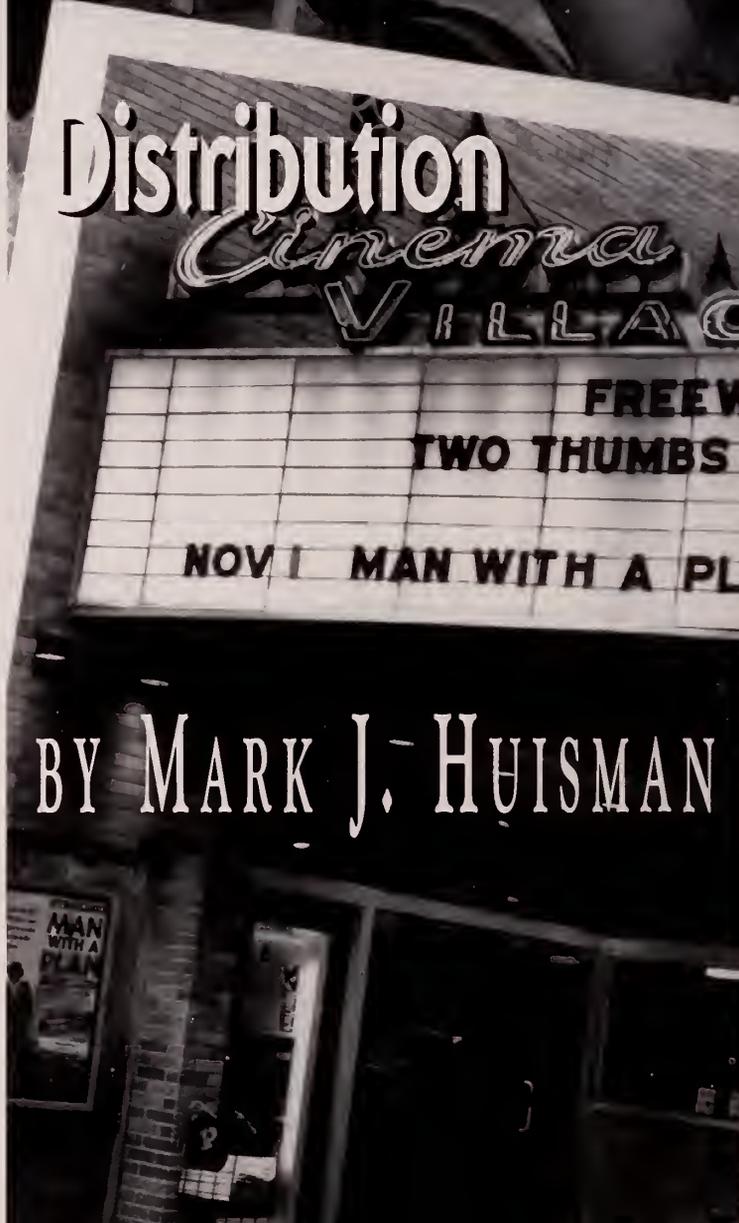
Four-walling is another method of self-distribution, defined as the practice of renting a theater—literally taking control of its four walls—to exhibit a film. The exhibitor sets a rental fee based on the theater's expenses (referred to as the "nut"), and the filmmaker who pays that fee can spool his or her print at the theater for a specified period of time. The filmmaker keeps all box office receipts; the theater gets nothing. If the film takes in less than the rental fee, you lose money. But whatever you take above the rental, you take home. Cover your costs and keep the profit. Sounds terrific, right?

Like every other aspect of independent filmmaking, four-walling is more complex than it sounds, an undertaking with complex mitigating factors that warrant serious deliberation before you even pick up the phone. First, there are the drawbacks, including substantial up-front costs. The theater fee usually has to be paid at least a week and sometimes a month in advance. Because the exhibitor gives up his portion of the box office, all related costs, like advertising and other promotional efforts, are yours and yours only. And because you do not have a distributor, expenses like print shipping and travel costs come from your piggy bank. Adding to the list are hidden factors like the policies of local publications, whose advertising departments often require prepayment. And even if you cover all these bases, plenty more can go wrong.

"Often exhibitors just don't give it the kind of respect they give other films," says director Robert Munich, who four-walled his film *The Pros and Cons of Breathing* around the country last year. "You're like some schmuck dragging your print around. [It] gets ripped, cigarette ashes all over it, they spool the reels in the wrong order.... There was even one projectionist who Windexed the window in the booth during



The Fine Art of Four-Walling: Do-It-Yourself



Distribution

BY MARK J. HUISMAN

A sampling of theaters that participate in 4-walling.

Theater	Location	Contact	Phone
Plaza Twin	Brooklyn, NY	Delphi	(718) 636-0110
The Quad	New York, NY	Ron Lesser	(212) 925-4776
Cinema Village	New York, NY	Ed Arentz	(212) 431-5119
The Brattle	Boston, MA	Connie White	(617) 739-2901
Coolidge Corner	Boston, MA	Sasha Berman	(617) 734-2501
Lefont Theaters	Atlanta, GA	George Lefont	(404) 261-1070
CineMagic	Pittsburgh, PA	Arlene Wiener	(412) 281-9893
Ritz Theater	Philadelphia, PA	Ray Bosel	(941) 349-9597
Wilmette Theater	Chicago, IL	Richard Stern	(847) 251-7411
Drexel Theaters	Columbus, OH	Jeff Frank	(614) 231-1050
Key Theater	Washington, D.C.	Karen O'Hara	(202).965.4401

the movie." Worse, says Munich, is the fleeting chance you have to attract an audience. "By the end of our run we were selling out," recalls Munich of his starting run in hometown Chicago, "but [the exhibitor] pulled the film. Other theaters hear about that and don't even want to book it." Munich said he felt like P. T. Barnum at times. "It's like you're on-call," he marvels. "A theater from San Francisco will call on Monday and say your run starts Friday. You can't get into the local paper because it closed yesterday....It's a trip."

"I'm not sure I would recommend that filmmakers start going out and four-walling," says distributor Sande Zeig of Artistic License. "You have to have a substantial amount of cash...you sometimes have to bring in your own staff to collect the money, tear tickets, count heads, and deposit the money in the bank....You might make more money, but the risk is all your own."

Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky became self-distribution legends with *Brother's Keeper* in 1995. But after some brief flings with four-walling, the duo formed their own distribution company to book their films, including last year's Sundance entry *Paradise Lost*, in traditional percentage versus guarantee fashion. "We do not four-wall," Berlinger says. "If you think your film is going to perform and you can convince the theater it's going to perform, it's always better to share the risk."

But what if you have a small, truly unique film and no one will share that burden? Michael Seitzman, director of Arrow Releasing's current *Farmer and Chase*, took one foray into four-walling when he distributed *Vukovar* (which he did not direct), a foreign-language film about war-torn Bosnia. Finding a few exhibitors skittish about the film, Seitzman began researching a theater's nut ahead of time, so he knew when he was being offered a fair deal and when the theater was jacking up the price. As a result, he got some good deals. "Sometimes it's difficult to get a theater to commit because there's such a glut in the market," Seitzman says, "but many places aren't filling their houses. Everything is a matter of timing—what's coming out, the season, what the competition is."

Exhibitors also have concerns. Arlene Wiener of CineMagic Theaters in Pittsburgh worries that filmmakers are unaware of how expensive the practice has become. But, she says, "We surely consider it. CineMagic Theaters are available for four-walling." Ed Arentz, the booker for New York's Cinema Village, says he considers four-walling

when he likes a film that's not commercial enough for a traditional run. But, he adds, "we can't rent the theater to just anyone. Even though it's suggested that as an exhibitor your costs are covered, if it causes you disaster among your base audience and local critics, you'll have a difficult time convincing them to come back next time."

Ron Lesser, of New York's Quad Theater, the exhibitor most often praised by distributors and filmmakers for its indie-friendly attitude, says "the non-success is the rule, not the exception, although a New York venue does have some meaning when you make a video or foreign sale." Lesser prefers straight "90/10" deals, the industry standard. First, the theater takes box office receipts until its house expenses are met.

Thereafter, 90 cents of every dollar goes to the distributor (or filmmaker) and the remaining 10 cents to the theater. Often a guarantee is built into the deal, which specifies a minimum amount the distributor (or filmmaker) will receive regardless of the total box office receipts. "We give an filmmaker directly the same deal we give to the majors," says Lesser. "The small guys, they need help more than the big guys. I'm a small guy. I understand that."

At the Coolidge Corner, Boston's only nonprofit theater, Sasha Berman says the most successful four-wall in her experience is not an individual film, but a festival or special program like *Spike and Mike's Animation Festival*. "[It] comes to us twice a year. There's no risk on our part, because we are guaranteed a dollar amount," Berman explains. "They have a successful run because people look for it." Coolidge Corner also rents to filmmakers whose films fit into themes, like their Monday night Hong Kong series, and to entities like the Boston Jewish Film Festival. The Coolidge promotes four-walls like one of their own, with calendar listings and fliers. But Berman also says the absence of an advertising budget hurts: "Your chances for exposure are certainly decreased."

Nonetheless, four-walling has distinct advantages for independent filmmakers, chief among them the ability to position a film in a certain market at a specific time. "Suddenly, you're in a position of strength," Zeig says. "If you have the money, you can get exactly the dates you want...which can help you do a grassroots marketing campaign or reach a certain community a month in advance of your film's arrival." Kay Shaw, who helped director Haile Gerima self-distribute *Sankofa* prior to joining indie distributor New Millenia Films, points out that four-walling gives you greater managerial flexibility. "How do you target your audience? Attract press? Allocate resources? What's your next market?" she asks. "Those decisions are yours. Not somebody else's." Then there's the money. "You can collect your grosses quickly and protect yourself."

SOW DO YOU FOUR-WALL? LOOSELY, THE PROCESS INVOLVES FOUR distinct phases: 1) evaluating your product and the process; 2) researching potential markets and securing dates; 3) promoting your film; and 4) forming a strategy to widen your release. Shaw says a realistic appraisal of who and where your audience is is crucial. "Everybody thinks everybody wants to see their film," says Shaw. "Get a grip. It's not going to happen." Marketing—that is, positioning the film in a given city and theater to make it accessible to its target audience—is

Above: Director John O'Brien with Fred Tuttle, the star of *Man With a Plan*.

Photo: Jack Rowell

Below: Cinema Village, where O'Brien four-walled for his week-long run in New York.

Photo: Patricia Thomson

key to your success. Since you're probably not the best judge of your own material, second opinions can help. After a few hard lessons, Zeig listens more closely to exhibitors. "They said 'I don't think this film is going to work in my theater.' And they were right."

Marlin Adams, General Manager of KJM3, a distribution agent initially formed to act as marketing consultant for Kino's release of Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* and also for *Sankofa*, says filmmakers need to evaluate the process as well. "If you can't find even one of the micro-distributors able to put the product in the marketplace for a fee, then you're looking at creating all these relationships yourself—the exhibitors, the local critics, the audience," he says. "You must get into the markets yourself and reach the communities that will patronize this product."

Filmmakers should consider the length of time it takes to bring a film into markets across the country—anywhere between 18 months and two years. You can't make your next film simultaneously. And be realistic about resources: Most successful four-walling efforts start with "war chests" between \$5,000 and \$10,000. "The lowest I've ever four-walled is \$2,000 a week in Baltimore," says Shaw. "The highest was \$10,000 a week in New York. It's no joke." The lowest amount of money you need to four-wall, Shaw says with a wink, "is the amount of your rental and going to Kinko's" to copy fliers, laser-printed mini-posters, and press kits.

Where to start is a difficult but important choice, given the thousands of markets available and the competitiveness gripping the top ten. Do careful research and find screens that have played similar product. "Look at similar films you yourself have seen," Adams says, "and find out what theaters those films have opened at....Talk to those people."

A good rule of thumb is to take your film first to a market where you have a base, like your home town, the city where the film was made, or a locale relevant to your subject matter. If your film is about a military base, get to Norfolk, Virginia. If it's about young people, go to university towns. If there are prominent story lines featuring minorities, go to cities with similar populations. Once you locate your first market, Shaw advocates a preview screening (check with film schools and revival houses for cheap one-night stands) to which you invite people you think represent your core audience. Attend the screening and listen to the response. Is it working? Talk with and listen to the audience afterwards, maybe even use a questionnaire to probe their feelings, asking if they'd tell a friend to see the movie.

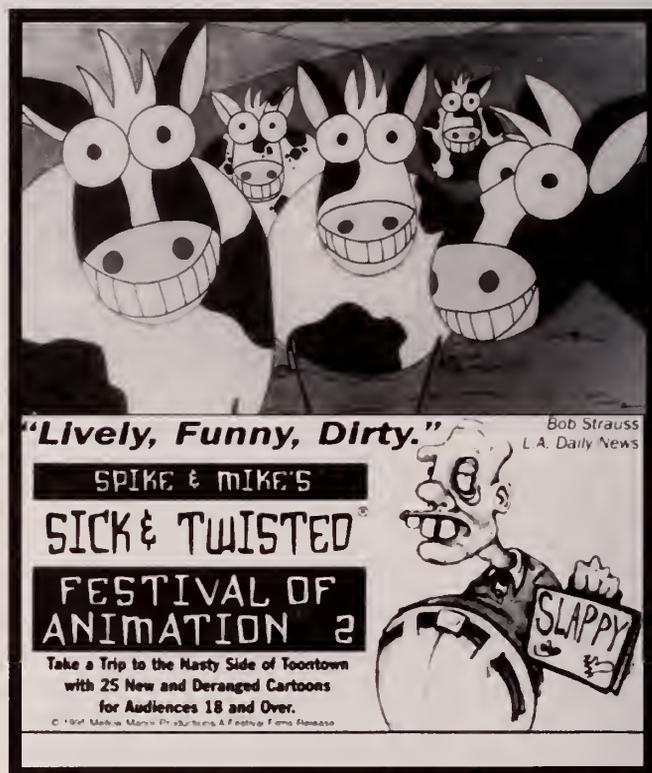
As for scheduling, indies are booked more easily during the theatrical off-season: any time outside the summer or the Thanksgiving-Christmas-New Year's holiday corridor, when theaters do most of their yearly business. Late winter and spring, right before Memorial Day, are considered the best times for self-distributed indies.

Homework is also important when making a deal. "The house expense in different markets really does vary," Zeig says. Familiarize yourself with the trade magazines, learn how to read the gross charts. "You can do a four-wall at an L.A. theater with 100 seats for \$3,000 and at the same time get 300 seats in Boston or Pittsburgh for \$5,000. Without a little experience, I think people can be taken advantage of." And the actual terms of a rental depend on your own goals. Even though each theater will work differently, those terms are usually negotiable. A realistic, modest goal would be to break even. Is it more realistic to expect profits or to concentrate on getting your work, and your name, before an audience, so the next time is easier?

The gross of your first booking is, quite literally, either the game's

first run or its last out. It's important to pull an audience in during the first week, so the theater will hold your dates and possibly extend your run. Promoting your film once you have marketed it is essential. As distinguished from marketing, promotion involves the tools—like paid advertising, press campaigns, and word of mouth—used to reach a target audience so they identify your film as the film to see.

Adams speaks of a community's "cultural grapevine"—that network that can expose a constituency to a product. This can include community leaders, educators, and journalists for neighborhood publications who can help you make contacts at schools, churches, museums, lecture venues, and recreational centers. "Saturation advertising



Animation programs generally attract a devoted following and are among the most steadily successful at four-walling. Pictured: *Better Than Grass*, by Bonnie Leick, featured in the feature-length compilation, *Spike and Mike's Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation 2* Courtesy Festival Films

does not net automatic results," Adams says. "We've gotten a response without doing print and broadcast campaigns."

Filmmaker John O'Brien, who recently four-walled his *Man with a Plan*, a mock documentary about a plain-spoken Vermont farmer running for Congress, concurs. "Advertising is highly overrated," he says. Pointing to the "three-hit" rule (the idea that a moviegoer needs exposure to a given property at least three times, like an ad, a review, and a poster, before making a decision to see the film), O'Brien says only major distributors can afford to abide by the rule and saturate markets. His film featured local personalities—a newscaster, a former employee of a statewide news bureau, and a former legislator from the Vermont House of Representatives—so he used them to hook media interest in his home state of Vermont. The movie's character drove a manure-spreader with the bumper sticker "Spread Fred," so the filmmaker made bumper stickers. Soon they were all over the state, O'Brien was given a reception in Washington, D.C., by the state's Congressional

delegation and the Governor gave him a quote for a TV spot. (O'Brien recalls the taping: "We were coaching him: 'Would you say the film is hilarious?' 'Oh, yeah!' he'd say, 'it's hilarious!' ")

"Word of mouth is the most potent form of advertising your film can get," Shaw says. "It can boost your film or kill it." To maximize "good word," consult people from your target audience. Find out what local radio stations and talk shows are popular with your target audience and get yourself on the air. Get referrals to relevant cultural events, local neighborhood newspapers (which often have cheap advertising rates), and the places the community congregates, from coffee shops and corner stores to community centers and apartment buildings. Fliers should go everywhere; if you're lucky, people will circulate them further.

Even with his initial success, O'Brien was blindsided in a few areas. He laser-printed several dozen one-sheets and put them up as posters only to see them days later, blowing down the street, torn and stained. Finally, he had to have posters commercially printed at a cost of \$4,000. Due to the voluminous news coverage in Vermont, O'Brien deemed a trailer unnecessary, something that hurt him when he expanded into Boston, the nearest major market. "It takes so much effort to think ahead, months ahead," he says.

Remember that advertising is not just newspaper ads, but preview trailers and TV and radio spots. "Think about your images," Shaw advises. "Learn how to cut an effective trailer and broadcast spot." While you might not have the money to use them right away, you'll be sorry if you don't have the spots when you need them. You'll also need photographic material for news articles and reviews. Jeff Hill of Clein + White Public Relations encourages filmmakers to think of just this moment when shooting their film.

"Always, always, even if you're doing it yourself, take photographs from your production," he advises. "Always with your actors and in both black-and-white and color. Capture something from the film, with a still camera while you're actually shooting a few scenes." Hill also deems it wise for filmmakers to record their thoughts about the production, from how the film was cast to the choices they made, either in a journal or on tape. These can be used to create production notes, which are immensely valuable in publicizing a film. What about publicity during your shoot? "If anyone tells you they can get you press, don't listen to them," Hill says. "Have confidence in getting your movie made. Just shoot your film, get it in the can."

If your initial bow is successful, you will have a short window of opportunity to secure other markets; being ready to pounce is essential. Where you go next depends on what that first market was. If it was in the top ten, and you get a great review, it can become the core of an advertising campaign and be useful in convincing exhibitors in other top and secondary markets to book the film. Other than that, go where the interest is: Even if you only get one offer after your first week, book it and worry about the next date later. If you only have a handful of prints, Adams suggests going into the largest markets on both coasts first, which allows you to spend money where the audience is largest, and you can achieve bigger hits that will lead smaller markets to knock. "If you open big, the whole circuit will hear about it. Audiences will hear about it and critics will hear about it." In fact, some secondary markets will take their cues only from larger markets nearby and won't book a film unless it's played there. A few examples are Norfolk, Virginia, where theaters usually want a film to have played Baltimore or Washington, D.C., and Phoenix, where films are more easily booked if they've played Texas or southern California. While building your

release is sometimes about proximity, sometimes it's about opportunity. You might be closer to, say, Boston, but if some Chicago critic saw your film in a festival and raved about it in an article, you might want to head there instead.

One note of caution: make sure your box office grosses warrant widening your release. Although a theater's nut can range widely—from under \$2,000 to \$10,000 or more—conventional wisdom dictates that a successful opening in a major market is a healthy five-figure sum: \$15,000 to \$25,000 per screen. After that week, you can weather a decline in receipts of 20 percent at most. If you fall off less than 20 percent, you might be justified in striking another print and getting a second screen; if you do so for two weeks in a row, that's a terrific indication your film is working in the market and your promotional efforts are paying off. Use such a position to strike deals in as many other markets as possible. A fall-off of 25–30 percent pretty much indicates your film is on its way out. Whether or not it's worth holding on to that screen depends on the options you have for that print. "If you have a winner on your hands," says Adams, "you want to be in ten of the top markets simultaneously. You can have one print per market, or more if possible. It's not unrealistic to put three or four prints into New York at once." Think of prints as buckets catching rain—when it's pouring box office, get more buckets out before the rain stops, which always happens eventually.

SO WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT WHEN FOUR-WALLING? THE BEST ANSWER may be that everything is the most important thing. As Adams says: "A lot of this business is to do your homework and be very prepared to be very lucky." Luck aside, creativity and organization are key.

"Don't underestimate the resources you have in your own family and circle of friends," Shaw asserts. "This is about resourcefulness.... You need to be specific, clear, and task-oriented." Recalling her four-walling baptism during *Sankofa*, Shaw says, "I made up my own rules, because I didn't know what I was doing. But mystifying the process doesn't make it easier to get your film out there. Talk to people about it, get information, share your needs.... People can be very enthusiastic about helping a first-time filmmaker.... But you can't be afraid to ask."

On the road with Fred, O'Brien has developed a four-walling crib sheet. "You need to have a pretty good film," he says. "Most people aren't going to replicate *Brother's Keeper*." And don't go overboard in shelling out cash. "Think very carefully about money," he says. "Save by doing less [rather] than more advertising, and target a specific group, buy a mailing list, put up a Web page." O'Brien also encourages filmmakers not to skim off the top for themselves. As of October, *Man with a Plan* grossed \$200,000 nationwide. Two-thirds of that sum went to ongoing expenses; the remainder was plowed back into the film—striking more prints, printing more posters, sending out more media kits, booking more markets.

"Try to get your dates as far ahead as possible, especially in the major markets," O'Brien advises. "This whole world works in ridiculous deadlines, and you can get tripped up. So buy yourself some time. Then use that time. Get on the phone, return calls the same day. Don't wait to do anything because you feel you've got some breathing space. You don't. You never will."

Mark J. Huisman is a New York-based independent producer.

A Room of One's Own:

Screening Rooms

in New York and L.A.

BY ANDREA MEYER
& ROBERTO
QUEZADA - DARDON

YOU'VE COMPLETED YOUR FILM AND YOU'RE ON THE HUNT FOR DISTRIBUTION. There's some interest—maybe even a few contacts in the industry love it and want to show it to some of their contacts. Either way, you need a big screen.

In both New York and L.A., there are a number of options of varying size, capacity, cost, and friendliness of bookers. The problem is not finding a screening room—especially in L.A., where they're more plentiful than palm trees—it's finding an affordable one, or the right one. Naturally, the size of your audience and who you've invited help determine how much you should spend, so here's a list that represents a wide range of what's available:

New York

The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. Contact: Henry Hershkowitz, (212) 334-2100

One of the newest and shiniest of the bunch, the Screening Room operates primarily as an arthouse movie theater with an attached restaurant, bar, and lounge. If you can afford it, you've got a one-stop premiere and after-party. Bonus points: If anyone dares leave your film to go to the restroom, there's speakers in the bathroom so they won't miss a word.

- Seats: 262, including 7 loveseats.
- Formats: 35 and 16mm; video projection.
- There are also three private dining/screening rooms and i-rooms (interactive rooms) equipped for video, laser disc, and modem hook up. Rates run between \$40 and \$100 per hour, depending on the room, time, and day.
- Hershkowitz says that the management would "find ways to give struggling independent filmmakers a break."
- Rates: Before 1 p.m., \$225/hr; 1-6 p.m., \$325/hr; after 6 p.m., \$625/hr. Evening screenings available only Mon. – Wed.

Angelika 57, 225 West 57th St. Contact: Joe Faleh, (212) 956-5015

This large movie theater comes with a balcony. The management doesn't really want to rent for screenings, but will for the right price.

- Seats: 570
- Formats: 16 and 35mm.
- Price varies, depending on time, day, and "who's calling."
- Rates: Before noon on a weekday: \$300/screening; weekend night, up to \$3,000.

The Broadway Screening Room, 1619 Broadway. Contact: Nina Wallace, (212) 307-0990

They primarily do press screenings arranged through publicists and postproduction screenings for filmmakers like Woody Allen, Al Pacino, and Milos Forman. Stresses Wallace: "There's no eating or drinking, no smoking or lapdancing, no making out."

- Seats: 50 chairs that are probably more comfortable than anything you have at home.
- Formats: 16 and 35mm.
- Projectionist/booker Wallace says they're occasionally willing to make a deal or work out a better time. "It depends on the soap opera story. But basically, the price is the price."
- Rates: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. \$200/hr; 6-10 p.m. \$300/hr.

Magno Sound & Video, 729 Broadway. Contact: Barbara Laing or Camille Way-Pene, (212) 302-2505 x3

Magno offers three screening rooms of varying capacity, comfort, and cost. Students and Independent Feature Project members get a 10% discount. Filmmakers who are doing or have done postproduction work at Magno may also qualify for a discount.

- **Review 1:** 68 seats, any format print. Rates: Before 6 p.m., \$175/hr; 6-10 p.m., \$250/hr.
- **Review 2:** 37 seats, 35mm capacity as well as 1/2" and 3/4" video.

Pictured left: the Tribeca screening room
Courtesy Tribeca Film Center

Rates: Before 6 p.m. \$150/hr; 6 p.m.-10 p.m. \$200/hr.

- **Preview 9:** 67 less-than-comfortable seats. All 35mm composites (except digital) and 16mm; no changeover capabilities. Rates: Before 6 p.m. \$150/hr; 6 p.m.-10 p.m. \$200/hr.

Millennium, 66 East 4th St. Contact: Howard Guttenplan, (212) 673-0090

A preview/reception bargain combo. Millennium has a large receiving area, and eating and drinking are permitted in the screening room. This is an indie-friendly organization sympathetic to independent film and video of all kinds. Guttenplan says: "The more independent, the better."

- Seats: 100
- Formats: 16mm, super-8, and video
- Rates: 7-10:30 p.m., \$70/hr for noncommercial, nonprofit screenings; \$90/hr if charging admission. Before 7 p.m. or after 10:30 p.m. (when facilities are usually closed), \$95/hr; \$115/hr if charging admission. Rates are doubled for commercial organizations.

Planet Hollywood, 140 W. 57th St. Contact: Sally Strasser, (212) 333-7827, x229

You can do the snazzy premiere thing here, but it'll cost you: Planet Hollywood must do the catering. Also, availability is minimal; it's generally booked with in-house events.

- Seats: 52
- Formats: 16 and 35mm, 3/4", and 1/2" video
- Rates: Noon-5 p.m. \$200/hr; 5-10 p.m. \$300/hr. For dailies, a \$200 flat rate for 2 hours.

Den of Cin, 42-44 Avenue A at 3rd St. Contact: Philip Hartman or Doris Kornish, (212) 254-1919

This screening room lies below Hartman and Kornish's new Two Boots Pizzeria and Video Store (with a library of 3,000 videos). The owners are also filmmakers, so you know they'll be sympathetic to your sob stories.

- Seats: 40-50, on a variety of couches and chairs
- Formats: Video projection only.
- Food from Two Boots' Cajun-Italian menu is available (and at a 10 percent discount to AIVF members); there's also a small bar.

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• Rates: "I really can't say; we just opened," says Hartman. "But we're softies for independent filmmakers."

Tribeca Film Center, 375 Greenwich St.
Contact: Barry Manasch, (212) 941-3930
or Nancy Friedman, (212) 941-4003

Offers the charm of an old-time movie theater, only it's comfortable. Says Manasch: "Miramax is a big client because they're in the building, but it's only a small percentage." He says they'll rent to anyone.

- Seats: 72, with extra chairs available.
- Formats: Any.
- Manasch says he'll occasionally negotiate a deal, and he tries to be flexible.
- Rates: Before 10 a.m.-6 p.m., \$250/hr; before or after, \$350/hr. Same-day booking for dailies: day, \$150/hr; night, \$150/hr.

Los Angeles

Keith Harrier Production Services, 7070 Waring Ave. (near La Brea). Contact: 213-930-2720

If the size of the screen doesn't matter to you (it's 12-1/2 feet by 5-1/2 feet, but bigger than most TVs) and price does, this is the place you're looking for.

- Seats: 17 theater seats and 2 sofas
- Formats: 24 and 30 FPS projection. 35mm interlock as well as composite projection, but no 16mm facilities. 1:33, 1:85, 1:66, and Cinemascope formats.
- Rates: 8 a.m.-6 p.m.: \$55/hr; 6 p.m.-9 p.m.: \$100/hr; 9 a.m.-11 p.m.: \$200/hr; After 11 p.m.: \$300/hr; 6 a.m.-8 a.m.: \$100/hr; Saturday to 6 p.m.: \$100/hr; Sunday to 6 p.m.: \$200/hr.

Charles Aidikoff Screening Room, 150 S. Rodeo Dr., Suite 140. Contact: (310) 274-0866

This is who to use when Ovitz himself has RSVP'd your screening invitation. Charles Aidikoff is projectionist to the stars. The 81-year-old ex-New Yorker has been a Hollywood institution for 26 years, and was one of the first to build an off-lot projection room.

- Seats: 53
- Formats: 35mm and 16mm composite or interlock; Dolby, DTS Sound, or Magnetic soundtracks. Video: Beta SP, 3/4", 1/2" VHS, PAL, and SECAM capabilities.
- Rates: Call for rates. He's happy to give them, but they vary too much according to

the hour, day, and format to print here. However, they range from \$180/hr (a mono composite film screened between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.) to \$300/hr (a weekend screening of a 35mm interlock film with multi-track and in-theater mixing).

- If you want to rent the reception room, it's \$100/hr on weekdays and \$125/hr on weekends. Catering, wet bar, and limousine service are available.

Raleigh Studios, 650 N. Bronson Ave. (at Melrose Ave.). Contact: (213) 871-5649

Right across the street from Paramount Studios are three excellent mid-priced theaters (that also serve as home of the American Cinematheque's weekly Alternative Screenings). Any would be great for impressing your Aunt Matilda who flew in to see your film—they're all on a working soundstage lot. Very comfortable theaters, excellent projection and a really cool Canteen to hold receptions afterwards.

- The rates are for Monday-Friday only, although weekend rates are available.
- The Chaplin Theater: 150 seats. 8 a.m.-6 p.m.: \$140/hr.; 6 p.m.-12 a.m.: \$375/hr.
- The Fairbanks Theater: 24 seats. 8 a.m.-6 p.m.: \$95/hr.; 6 p.m.-12 a.m.: \$155/hr.
- The Pickford Theater: 19 seats. Same rates as Fairbanks.

- Formats: 35mm Dolby A, SR projection; 16mm optical projection; Video projection equipment. Interlock screenings—24 and 30 fps; all formats, including Super 1:85 (very hard to find) and 2:35 AR.

- A two-hour reception in the patio/cafe with two servers will run you about \$730 if you provide the caterer. Otherwise, they'll do everything for prices ranging from \$6.95 a person to \$16.95 a person, 75-person minimum.

Finally, without naming names, if you have (or know someone who has) used a lab's services in the past, try calling in a favor. Some labs look the other way while you use their comfortable, well-equipped projection facilities. After all, the projectionists and theaters are there whether or not someone pays for them.

Andrea Meyer is a freelance writer in New York City. Roberto Quezada-Dardon is an L.A. transplant who now lives in New York and is a frequent contributor to The Independent.



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THE REVOLUTION WE TELEVISED

Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited
by Deirdre Boyle
Oxford University Press, 1996 (\$39.95 cloth;
\$16.95 paper)

REVIEWED BY
LAURIE OUELLETTE

IN THE LATE SIXTIES, MEMBERS OF THE FIRST TV generation picked up portable video cameras, then fresh on the market, and tried to alter the course of American television. Fueled by New Left rhetoric and the student counterculture, collectives like Raindance, Videofreex, Ant Farm, Top Value TV, and Broadside TV challenged network oligopoly and pushed the aesthetic and political boundaries of the medium. At the core of the "guerrilla television" philosophy was the premise that if people had cameras, they could change the world. And yet by the close of the seventies, much of that optimism and many of those groups had disappeared.

Subject to Change is a fascinating and sometimes amusing history of the early video pioneers that offers an astute analysis of why their utopian dreams for television were doomed to fail. Beginning with the day Nam June Paik hopped a cab and recorded Pope John Paul VI's arrival in New York City with a portable video camera, Deirdre Boyle traces the influence of the media arts, political activism, community organizing, youth culture, and communal lifestyles on the various forms of guerrilla television. Boyle, who teaches media studies at the New School for Social Research in New York City and is author of *Video Classics: A Guide to Video Arts and Documentary Tapes* (1986), focuses on three vastly different video collectives working respectively at the national, regional, and local levels. She offers a behind-the-scenes account

of the major players, their differing approaches to television, and their successes and failures. Lucid, well written, and carefully researched, the book contributes an important, if frequently overlooked, chapter to the history of American television.

Boyle's talents as a media historian stem from her ability to blend rich detail with a broader social, economic, and policy context. *Subject to Change* is filled with juicy anecdotes, like the time the Videofreex collective made merry and trashed a pad CBS was paying for, or when Raindance told women they could serve the tea and granola bars but would have to give up their chairs to the guys when the seating ran short. With stories like these, Boyle avoids mythologizing the "founding fathers" of alternative video. If anything, she presents them as flawed individuals (mostly white, college-educated men) who were very much caught up in the countercultural milieu of the day. And yet, *Subject to Change* is sympathetic to the political energies and creative passions that motivated guerrilla television as a whole.

Several chapters focus on Broadside TV and University Community Video, lesser-known groups that were trying to develop local and community programs for cable and public television. Boyle also weaves in an examination of the FCC policies, funding obstacles, and internal contradictions that eventually restricted their success. But the most compelling story is the rise and fall of Top Value Television, or TVTV, the most prominent of the video collectives and the one to achieve the greatest notoriety.

Founded by Michael Shamberg, the young radical and Marshall McLuhan fan who had

penned the influential *Guerrilla Television* manifesto, TVTV seemed to embody the first TV generation's dream of remaking television—or at least making it more democratic. Part satire and part documentary, TVTV's videotapes cast a critical spin on dominant American institutions, from the Republican party to the Oscars, with a look and style that were hipper and more "happening" than anything ever seen on conventional television. Shamberg had originally argued for an alternative media system "because trying to reform broadcasting was trying to build a healthy dinosaur." And yet, TVTV's success led to negotiations with public television and then the networks who were interested in showing their work (NBC funded a TVTV pilot that opened with a home viewer being blasted off his sofa by a bullet, Boyle notes). The networks were more than happy to "polish the rough and vital ethos of 'guerrilla video' to a marketable gloss," Boyle writes. Within a decade, Shamberg was a major producer in Hollywood, responsible for hits like *The Big Chill* and *A Fish Called Wanda*.

Subject to Change analyzes the various factors leading up to the demise of TVTV and other video collectives, including the fragmentation of the Left, the failure of the "cable revolution" to materialize in a democratic way, burn out and self-doubt, and a lack of funding. But in the end, she seems to suggest that the most damage was done by the co-optation, dilution, and absorption of the techniques, if not the principles, of guerrilla television into the wider values of commercial media. Still, the video revolution marches on and, gazing out at the new generation of alternative videomakers, public access producers, and media activists, Boyle seems excited about the possibilities. Certainly, everyone who cares about the politics of television will find *Subject to Change* a gripping and relevant lesson from the past.

Laurie Ouellette is a media critic and a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.



TVTV's Doug Michels (L) at the 1972 convention. Photo: Chip Lord.



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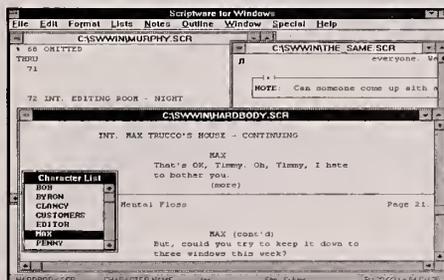
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LISTINGS DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT. SINCE SOME DETAILS MAY CHANGE AFTER THE MAGAZINE GOES TO PRESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONTACT THE FESTIVAL DIRECTLY BEFORE SENDING PREVIEW CASSETTES. DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING A CALL FOR ENTRIES IN THE FESTIVAL COLUMN IS THE 15TH OF THE MONTH TWO AND A HALF MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., JAN. 15 FOR APRIL ISSUE). ALL BLURBS SHOULD INCLUDE: FESTIVAL DATES, CATEGORIES, PRIZES, ENTRY FEES, DEADLINES, FORMATS & CONTACT INFO. TO IMPROVE OUR RELIABILITY AND MAKE THIS COLUMN MORE BENEFICIAL, WE ENCOURAGE ALL MEDIAMAKERS TO CONTACT FIVF WITH CHANGES, CRITICISM, OR PRAISE FOR FESTIVALS PROFILED.

DOMESTIC

ASIAN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, July, NY. Organized by Asian Cine Vision, NYC-based nat'l media arts center. Noncompetitive fest, created in 1978, country's oldest showcase for Asian & Asian American filmmakers. After its NY premiere, embarks on 10-month tour of N. America. Films produced, directed &/or written by artists of Asian heritage eligible. Features & shorts in all cats accepted. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette or 16mm. Entry fee: \$10. Deadline: mid-March. Contact: Asian American Film Int'l Film Festival, ACV, 32 East Broadway, 4th fl., NY, NY 10002; (212) 925-8685; fax: 925-8157; ACVinNYC@aol.com

ATHENS INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 2-9, OH Now in 24th yr, fest seeks entries that "evidence a high regard for artistic innovation, sensitivity to content & personal involvement w/ the medium." Deadline: Jan 31. Each entry pre-screened by committee of filmmakers, videomakers & others assoc. w/ Athens Center for Film & Video. Cash prizes awarded to competition winners in cats of Narrative (traditional & experimental); Doc (traditional & experimental); Experimental & Animation. Entry fee: \$25 plus prepaid return shipping/insurance. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2"; preview on cassette. Contact: Athens Int'l Film & Video Festival, Athens Center for Film & Video, Box 388, Athens, OH 45701; (614) 593-1330; fax: 593-1328; bradley@ouvaxa.cats.ohiou.edu.

CAROLINA FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 2-5, NC. Univ. of North Carolina fest, now in

7th yr, has goal of showcasing best student & ind. film & video in all genres, incl. animation, doc, experimental, narrative & hybrid. About 50 works screened in competition. Awards of \$2,500+ in cash & Kodak film stock. Entry fee: \$20 (students), \$30 (independents). Formats: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2"; pre-screening on VHS. Deadline: Mar. 10. Contact: Killian Heilsberg, Carolina Film & Video Festival, Broadcasting/Cinema Program, 100 Carmichael Bldg, UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412-5001; (910) 334-5360; fax: 334-5039; ldwarren@hamlet.uncg.edu; <http://www.uncg.edu/cbr/CFVF.html>.

CHARLOTTE FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, May, NC. Competitive fest "seeks to foster & encourage art of ind. film & videomakers, especially those with unique point of view." Ind. film & videomakers working in US eligible for fest, which awards \$7,000 in cash prizes. About 50 works (9% of entries) screened; all accepted work is paid cash. Features & shorts completed since 1/1/94 accepted. Cats: doc, narrative, experimental & animated. Exhibition sites incl. Mint Museum of Art, Afro-American Cultural Center, Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County, Light Factory Photographic Arts Center & Manor Theater Choice Cuts, traveling exhibit of work selected from fest, goes to selected venues in US; rental fees for each add'l screening. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, QuickTime, 1/2", Beta, CD-ROM. Entry fee: \$30. Deadline: Feb. 15. Contact: Robert West, dir., Charlotte Film & Video Festival, Mint Museum of Art, 2730 Randolph Road, Charlotte, NC 28207; (704) 337-2019; fax: 337-2101; film@mint.uncg.edu.

FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL, June, FL. 10-day event featuring foreign & U.S. ind. films (feature, short, doc, narrative, experimental, animation), seminars & Florida student competition. Held at Enzian Theater, major nonprofit cinema & media arts center, fest has evolved from exhibition-only fest to juried competition. In each cat has Jury Award, Audience Award & 1 other award at jury's discretion. Entries for competition must have at least 51% US funding. Features must be 60 min. or more. Video accepted for animation & student competition only. Fest also sponsors several curated sidebars, special events, seminars & receptions. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: \$15-30. Deadline: Mar. 1. Contact: Matthew Curtis, program dir., Florida Film Festival, Enzian Theatre, 1300 S. Orlando Ave., Maitland, FL 32571; (407) 629-1088; fax: 629-6870; filmfest@gate.net; <http://www.enzian.org>

HOMETOWN VIDEO FESTIVAL, July CA. Sponsored by Alliance for Community Media (formerly Nat'l Federation of Local Cable Programmers), a nat'l nonprofit membership org. committed to assuring access to electronic media, this competitive fest, begun in 1977, recognizes outstanding local programs produced for/by local orgs & PEG access operations. Fest receives over 1,700 entries from US & Canada. Awards: 4 special awards for overall excellence in PEG local origination programming; finalists, honorable mentions & winners in 36 cats. Some cats: performing arts; ethnic expression; entertainment; sports; by/for youth; live; municipal; religious; educational; instructional/training; informational; innovative; international; by/for seniors; PSA; doc; profile/event/public awareness; video art; music video; local news; magazine format; original teleplay.

Entries must have been produced w/in previous year. Awards ceremony held during Int'l Conference Trade Show of Alliance for Community Media. Deadline: March 1. Formats: 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$21-\$56. Contact: The Alliance Nat'l Office, Hometown Video Festival, 666 11th St. NW, Ste. 806, Washington DC 20001; (202) 393-2650; fax: 393-2653.

HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL/WORLDFEST-HOUSTON, April 4-13, TX. Large fest w/ many competition cats, now in 30th yr. New Remi Award is Grand Prize, going to top fest winners. Associated market for features, shorts, docs, video, ind./experimental & TV (\$300 entry fee). Student Awards Program offers \$2,500 cash for grand prize & \$500 cash & \$1,000 of Kodak film for best student film in each cat of high school, college & graduate. Scripts & screenplays also have competition. Cats: theatrical features; TV & video production; film & video production; short subjects film & videos; TV commercials; experimental films & videos, filmstrips/slide/multimedia programs; student films & videos; super 8mm film & videos; screenplays; music videos; new media; print advertising; radio advertising. Fest also offers 3-day seminar on writing screenplays, producing & directing, plus distribution & finance. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", super 8 (on videotape). Entry fee: \$50-\$200; market fee: \$300. Deadline: Feb. 15. Contact: J. Hunter Todd, festival dir., Houston Int'l Film & Video Festival/Worldfest-Houston, Box 56566, Houston, TX 77256; (713) 965-9955/(800) 524-1438; fax: (713) 965-9960; worldfest@aol.com

HUDSON VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL, spring, NY. Accepting feature, short, doc & screenplay entries. Deadline: Feb 1. Contact: Kathleen Cherry, Hudson Valley Film & Video Office, 40 Garden St, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601. (914) 473-0318; fax 473-0082.

MEDICINE WHEEL ANIMATION FESTIVAL. Touring collection of animated shorts by N. Amer. filmmakers; dedicated exclusively to independent, noncommercial & experimental animation rarely seen by public; looks for "historical, difficult, challenging, enlightening, beautiful & multicultural films." Fest has presented in such venues as Coolidge Corner (MA), George Eastman House (NY), Hallwalls (NY), IMAGE (GA), Rhode Island School of Design (RI). Filmmakers share 20% of profit on touring fest with a minimum of \$150. Entries must be under 25 min.; can be completed in any yr. Fest sponsored by Medicine Wheel Artists' Retreat. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: None. Deadline: Feb. 1. Contact: Cheri Amarna, project dir., Medicine Wheel Animation Festival, Box 1088, Groton, MA 01450-3088; (508) 488-3717; medwheel@tiac.net

MONITOR AWARDS, July, CA. Sponsored by Int'l Teleproduction Society, competition honors excellence in electronic production & post-production. Cats & craft areas incl. TV series; TV specials; theatrical releases; music video; nat'l commercials; local commercials; promos; children's programming; sports; docs; shorts; show reels; corporate communication; opens, closes & titles; transitions; logos & IDs. Awards: best

achievement honors to producers, directors, editors, etc. in each cat. Entries must have been produced or postproduced w/in previous calendar yr & entries originating on film must be postproduced electronically. Formats: Beta SP, 3/4", CD-ROM or URL address. Entry fee: \$175-\$200. Deadline: Jan 31. Contact: Int'l Monitor Awards, 2230 Gallows Rd, Suite 310, Dunn Loring, VA 22027 (703) 641-8770; fax: 641-8776.

NATIVE AMERICAN FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, October, NY. Showcases best new ind, doc & animated works produced by & about Native Americans & Native Hawaiians. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", Beta SP, 1/2"; preview on cassette. Entry fee: none. Deadline: April 1. Contact: Native American Film & Video Festival, Film & Video Center, Nat'l Museum of the American Indian, George Gustav Heye Center, One Bowling Green, NY, NY 10004; (212) 825-6894; fax: 825-8180.

NEW YORK VIDEO FESTIVAL, July, NY. Noncompetitive fest aims to present latest in electronic arts, incl. video, High Definition TV & CD-ROM. Originally presented as special event of New York Film Festival, fest is now an independent project, part of Lincoln Center summer festival. All videos shown single channel, projected in Film Society's 268-seat Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center. No cats/no awards. Average of 44 works presented in 14 programs; over 3,600 attend. Coverage in *NY Times* & *Village Voice* & some out-of-town & int'l coverage. Submitted works should be recent (w/in past 2 yrs); NY premieres preferred but not required. Formats: 3/4", 1/2", Beta, CD-ROM, HDTV; preview on 3/4", 1/2", CD-ROM. Entry fee: none. Deadline: early March. For application, send SASE to: Film Society of Lincoln Center, 70 Lincoln Center Plaza, NY, NY 10023; or download from website: <http://www.filmlinc.com>; (212) 875-5610; fax: 875-5636; filmlinc@dti.net.

PHILADELPHIA FESTIVAL OF WORLD CINEMA, Apr. 30-May 11, PA. 6th annual noncompetitive fest offers "enriching view of world culture & a diversity of filmmaking culminating in a city-wide celebration of cinema." Features US premieres of int'l & US independents, classic cinema, tributes, seminars, Cine Cafes, extensive local press coverage, parties & more. Last yr's fest included 100 features, docs & shorts from 37 countries, w/ audiences estimated at 22,000. Estab last yr, CinePulse is system for fest audience to evaluate cinematic experience, giving films various ratings. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta; preview on 1/2" preferred. Entry fee: \$20; \$25 for int'l entries. Deadline: Jan. 22. Contact: Denise Sneed, program coord. Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, 3701 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-6593; fax: 895-6562; pfwc@libertynet.org; <http://www.libertynet.org/~pfwc>

ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Apr. 30-May 3, NY. Sponsored by Movies on a Shoestring, group of western New York film buffs, fest founded in 1959 & open to films & videos of all genres. Out of about 140 entries each year, fest programs 24 entries (8 screenings a night). Entries should be under 40 min. Awards incl. Certificates of Merit, Honorable Mentions & Shoestring Trophy. Held at Int'l Museum of Film & Photography in



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Rochester. Selected films bought for nonprofit "Best of Festival" program, which travels New York State. Formats: 16mm, super 8, 1/2", 3/4". Entry fee: \$20. Deadline: March 1. Contact: Ellie Cherin, MOAS President, Rochester Int'l Film Festival, Movies on a Shoestring, Inc., Box 17746, Rochester, NY 14617; (716) 271-2116 (evenings); moas@wow.com

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, June, CA. Founded in 1976, this is one of world's largest & oldest events of its kind. Many works premiered in fest go on to be programmed or distributed nat'lly & int'lly. 3 diverse pre-screening committees review submissions from Nov.-March, accepting works at 1:3 ratio. Rough-cuts accepted for preview if submitted on 3/4" or 1/2". Fest especially encourages appl. from women & people of color. Entries must be San Francisco Bay Area premieres. Awards: Frameline Award, Audience Award. Fest produced by Frameline, nonprofit arts organization dedicated to lesbian & gay media arts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", multimedia, installations. Entry fee: \$20. Deadline: late Feb. Contact: Michael Lumpkin, fest. dir., San Francisco Int'l Lesbian & Gay Film & Video Festival, Frameline, 346 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 703-8650; fax: 861-1404.

SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, May 15-June 8, WA. Founded in 1974, fest one of largest non-competitive festivals in US, presenting more than 160 features & 75 short films to audience of over 120,000. Known for its eclectic programming encompassing all genres & styles, from latest in contemporary world cinema to premieres of American ind. & major studio releases. Special programs include New Directors Film Showcase/Award, Independent Filmmakers Forum, American Independent Filmmakers Award, Golden Space Needle Awards given in cats of feature film, director, actress, actor, doc & short story. Inclusion qualifies participants for entry in Independent Feature Project's Independent Spirit Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2". Deadline: Mar. 1. Contact: Darryl Macdonald, Seattle Int'l Film Festival, 801 E. Pine St., Seattle, WA 98122; (206) 324-9996; fax: 324-9998; entry@seattlefilm.com; http://www.seattlefilm.com

SILVER IMAGES FILM FESTIVAL, May 9-22, IL. Now in 4th edition, fest programs selection of best int'l & US films & videos—narrative, doc, experimental—that "honor and celebrate the lives of older adults." Filmmakers of all ages encouraged to enter work; fest especially encourages filmmakers 65+ to enter (these films need not concern aging or older adults). Fest held in several venues throughout Chicago & publicized in local & nat'l media. Events incl. opening night gala, screenings for older adult groups, screenings for gerontology professions & public screenings. 3 awards given during fest; no cash prizes. Deadline: Jan. 15 (extensions given). Contact: Becky Cowing, Silver Images Film Festival, Terra Nova Films, 9848 S. Winchester Ave., Chicago, IL 60643; (773) 881-6940; fax: 881-3368.

SLICE OF LIFE FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE mid-July, PA. Held at Penn State Univ., doc films & videos, incl. those using experimental techniques. Narrative works & works longer than 30 min. not

accepted; shorter entries encouraged. Winning producers receive cash prize & certificate. Entry fee: \$25. Formats: 16mm, 3/4"; preview on 16mm & 1/2". Deadline: April 1. Contact: Sedgwick Heskett, dir., Documentary Resource Center, 106 Boalsburg Rd., Box 909, Lemont, PA 16851; (814) 234-1945; fax: 2340939.

USA FILM FESTIVAL, April, TX. Fest has 3 major components: noncompetitive feature section (now in 27th yr); Nat'l Short Film & Video Competition (in 19th yr); KidFilm (held in mid-Jan). Feature section incl. premieres of major new films, new works from ind. & emerging filmmakers, special tributes, incl. Great Director award & retro, panel discussions. To enter, send preview cassette w/ publicity & production info. Short film & video competition showcases new & significant US work. Entries should be under 60 min., completed after Jan. 1, 1996. Cash prizes awarded in cats of narrative (\$1,000); nonfiction (\$1,000); animation (\$1,000); experimental (\$1,000); Texas Award (\$500); Student Award (\$500); advertising promo award; Family Award (\$500); 4 special jury awards (\$250). Grand Prize Winner flown to Dallas. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$40. Deadline: early March. Contact: Alonso Duralde, USA Film Festival, 2917 Swiss Ave., Dallas, TX 75204; (214) 821-6300; fax: 821-6364.

WASHINGTON DC INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Late April/early May, DC. Tenth anniv. of noncompetitive fest which brings "best in new world cinema" to nation's capitol. Known as Filmfest DC, fest presents over 60 feature premieres, restored classics & special events. All are Washington, DC premieres. Programs fiction, doc, animation, family & children's programs, educational panels & workshops. Fest "attempts to represent the broad geographical diversity of world cinema—the newest films of emerging countries and the latest work from newly recognized young directors." Attendance last edition totaled 22,000; fest is District-wide event which brings together city's major cultural institutions, incl. Smithsonian, Library of Congress, American Film Institute, Black Film Institute, University of the District of Columbia, DC Public Library, National Archives & commercial movie theaters. Special programs include Filmfest DC for Kids in libraries, hospitals & community centers; Global Rhythms, series of music films; & Cinema for Seniors. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Entry fee: \$30 features, \$15 shorts. Deadline: early Feb. Contact: Tony Gittens, fest dir., Washington DC Int'l Film Festival, Box 21396, Washington, DC 20009; (202) 274-6810; fax: 274-6828; filmfestdc@aol.com

WINDY CITY INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY, May 2-11, IL. Sponsored by Columbia College Chicago & Int'l Documentary Assoc., 3rd annual fest plans to bring representation of world's finest doc to Chicago. Screenings of Fest Jury's selections, plus showcase of invited docs. Ind. & student entries encouraged. Awards in professional/ind. & student cats. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", Hi8, 1/2"; preview on 1/2" (non-returnable). Entry fee: \$25 professional/ind., \$20 IDA cardholders; \$15 students, \$10 IDA cardholders. Deadline: Jan. 15. Contact: Windy City Int'l Doc Festival, Documentary Center, Columbia College, 600 S.

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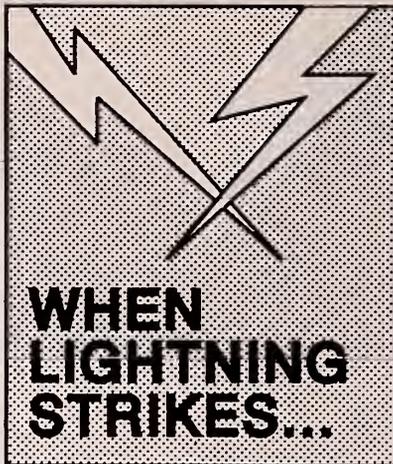
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FOREIGN

BANFF TELEVISION FESTIVAL, June, Canada. Founded in 1979, fest has 3 components: int'l competition, which awards coveted TV prize, the Banff Rockies; conference for TV professionals w/ important resource people; & informal environment in which to develop business relationships. Cats: TV features, limited series, continuing series, short dramas, TV comedies, social/political docs, science programs, arts docs, performance specials & children's programs. Competition entries must be made for TV (films in theatrical release ineligible). Entries originally in English or French must have TV premiere after 3/96. Producers of best programs in each of 12 cats receive "Rockies" sculptures. Grand Prize, incl \$5,000 Cdn., awarded Best of Fest. Jury may also make 2 Special Awards, incl \$2,500 Cdn. for outstanding achievements. "On demand" screening facilities for all TV programs invited or submitted to fest. Formats: 3/4". Entry fee: \$200. Deadline: early Feb. Contact: Jerry Ezekiel, president/fest dir., Banff Television Festival, Banff Centre, 204 Caribou St., #306, Box 1020, Banff, Alberta, Canada T0L 0C0; (403) 762-3060; fax: 762-5357.

CANNES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, May, France. Largest int'l film fest, attended by over 35,000 stars, directors, distributors, buyers & journalists. Round-the-clock screenings, parties, ceremonies, press conferences & one of world's largest film markets. Independent Feature Project serves as the official US rep. for the Directors Fortnight & facilitates preview screenings in the US. Cannes selection committee, appointed by Administration Board, chooses entries for Official Competition (about 20 films) and Un Certain Regard section. Films must have been made w/in prior 12 mo., released only in country of origin & not entered in other fests. Official component consists of 3 sections: 1) In Competition, for features & shorts competing for major awards; 2) special Out of Competition accepts features ineligible for competition (e.g. by previous winners of Palme d'Or); 3) Un Certain Regard, noncompetitive section for films of int'l quality that do not qualify for Competition, films by new directors, etc. Parallel sections incl. Quinzaine des Realisateurs (Directors Fortnight), main sidebar for new talent, sponsored by Assoc. of French Film Directors (deadline mid April); La Semaine de la Critique (Int'l Critics Week), 1st or 2nd features and docs chosen by French Film Critics Union (selections must be completed w/in 12 mos prior to fest); & Perspectives on French Cinema. Film market, administered separately, screens film in main venue and local theater. Top prizes incl. Official Competition's Palme d'Or (feature & short) and Camera d'Or (best first film in any section). For info & press accreditation from U.S., contact: Catherine Verret, French Film Office, 745 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10151; (212) 832-8860; fax: 755-0629. IFP contact: Milton Tabbot, 104 W. 29th St., 12th fl., NY, NY 10001; (212) 465-8200, ext. 207. Add'l info: Quinzaine des Realisateurs, Societe des Realisateurs de Films, 215 rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, 75008 Paris, France; tel: 011 33 1 45 61 01 66, fax: 011 33 1 40 74 07 96. Semaine International de la Critique, 73, rue de

Loumel, 75015 Paris, France; tel: 011 33 1 45 75 68
 27. Cannes Film Market, attn: Marcel Lathiere, 99
 boul. Maalesherbes, 75008 Paris, France; tel: 011 33
 1 45 61 66 09; fax: 011 33 1 45 61 97 59. Formats:
 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Deadline: early
 March. Contact: Cannes Int'l Film Festival, 99,
 Boulevard Maalesherbes, 75008 Paris, France; tel:
 011 33 1 45 61 66 00; fax: 011 33 1 45 61 97 60.

CARTAGENA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Mar. 7-15, Colombia. Fest now in 37th yr. First Latin American Short Film & Video Competition. Award to best short fiction. Narration should be in Spanish or subtitled. Formats: 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$30. Deadline: Jan. 30. Contact: Pedro Zurita, Videoteca del Sur, Box 20568, NY, NY 10009; (212) 674-5405; fax: 614-0464; Videl Sur96@aol.com

GOLDEN ROSE OF MONTREUX TELEVISION FESTIVAL, Apr. 24-29, Switzerland. Organized by Swiss Broadcasting Corporation and City of Montreux under auspices of European Broadcasting Union, this is Europe's largest fest for light entertainment TV, now in its 37th yr & attended by 1,000 professionals from 30 countries. Entries compete in cats of comedy, music & general light entertainment, w/ each cat having own int'l jury. Broadcasters & ind producers eligible to compete. 2 awards in each cat: Silver Rose, Bronze Rose. In comedy cat, 1st prize is Special Prize of City of Montreux. 3 1st prizes submitted to Grand Jury for Golden Rose of Montreux award for best entertainment program of all cats, w/ cash award of SFr. 10,000. Fest also awards Prix UNDA to program which best reflects human values, Press Prize & 3 add'l prizes at jury's discretion. Entries must have been completed after Jan 1 '96, w/ running time of 20-60 min. Complimentary Videokiosk screening facility. Heavy int'l press coverage. Entry fees payable only if program selected by pre-selection jury. Formats: Beta, Beta SP; 1/2" for VideoKiosk. Entry fee: SFr. 300. Deadline: mid-Feb. Fest address: Pierre Grandjean, secretary gen., Rose d'Or de Montreux, TV Suisse Romande, 20 Quai Ernest Ansermet, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland; tel: 011 41 22 708 89 98; fax: 011 41 22 781 52 49. US contact: John Nathan, Golden Rose of Montreux, (516) 726-7500; fax 726-7510.

HAMBURG INTERNATIONAL SHORT/NO BUDGET FILM FESTIVAL, June 18-22, Germany. Int'l short film competition awards Hamburg Short Film Award (Major Award), donated by Hamburg pay TV channel Premiere; Francois Ode Award (Jury's Special Award), Award for Best Animation, Premiere Prize (purchase of TV rights by Premiere & Canal +, France & Spain) & Viewers' Award. Fest also incl No Budget Competition for films produced w/o public subsidies or private sponsorship; foremost feature should be "realization of an idea"; technical quality of secondary importance; all competition entries should be under 20 min. No Budget Award (Jury Award) & Viewers' Award. Another fest feature is Three Minute Quickie competition, under different theme each yr; this yr's theme is "Revolution." Entries should be 3 min. max. 1995 fest inaugurated Int'l Hamburg Short Film Market, opp. to see all films and videos submitted & films in ShortFilmAgency's video archive. 1995 also debuted "Digital Video" section for digitally produced videos

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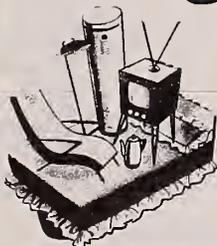
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w/ max length of 20 min. (Mac, IBM or Amiga compatible). Other programs: First Steps, a presentation of short films by well known directors; Shorts for Kiddies; Pre-Film Test (audiences can choose which int'l short films should be shown as pre-films in German cinemas); & New Films in Distribution. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, 3/4," 1/2," Beta SP; preview on video. Entry fee: None. Deadline: March 1. Contact: Hamburger Kurzfilmfestival, Kurz-FilmAgentur Hamburg e.V, No Budget-Buro, Filmhaus, Friedensallee 7, D-22765 Hamburg, Germany; 011 49 40 398 26 122; fax: 011 49 40 398 26 123.

LAON INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, Late March/early April. Fest for "high grade youth cinema promotion." Accepts features made for children & young people for competition, which shows about 10 films; entries should not have been released in France. No shorts. Awards: Grand Prize; CIFEJ Prize; Cash Prizes: City of Laon Prize (30,000 ff); Int'l Young People's Jury Prize (20,000 ff); Post Office's Jury Prize (20,000). All prizes offered to the French distributor. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Deadline: mid-Feb. Contact: MarieTherese Chambon, fest dir., Festival Int'l du Cinema Jeune Public de Laon, Maison des Arts et Loisirs, Place Aubry, B/P 526, 02001 Laon Cedex, France; tel: 011 33 23 20 38 61; fax: 011 33 23 20 28 99.

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, July, Australia. FIAPF-recognized fest celebrates 46th anniv. as one of Australia's 2 largest, and its oldest, fests. Eclectic mix of ind. work, w/ special interest in feature docs & shorts. Substantial program of new Australian cinema. Int'l short film competition important part of fest, w/ cash prizes in 7 cats: Grand Prix City of Melbourne Award for Best Film (\$5,000) & \$2,000 each in best Australian, experimental, animated, doc & fiction film cats. Additional special awards incl: Kino Cinemas Award for creative excellence in Australian short film (\$2,500); ANZAAS/ Scienceworks award for outstanding film or video dealing w/ science-related subject (\$1,500); Melbourne International Film Festival Awards for outstanding achievement in video production & best student production. Open to films of all kinds, except training & advertising films. Films 60 min. or less eligible for Int'l Short Film Competition; films over 60 min. can be entered in noncompetitive feature program. Video & super 8 productions considered for "out-of-competition" screenings. Entries must have been completed w/in previous yr & not screened in Melbourne or broadcast on Australian TV. Fest useful window to Australian theatrical & nontheatrical outlets, educ. distributors & Australian TV. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", super 8. Entry fee: \$20. Deadline: mid-April. Contact: Sandra Sdraulig, exec. dir., Melbourne Int'l Film Festival, 207 Johnston St., Box 2206, Fitzroy 3065 Australia; tel: 011 61 3 417 2011; fax: 011 61 3 417 3804; miff@netpace.net.au; http://www.cinemedia.net/ MIFF.

MIP/TV INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION PROGRAM MARKET, April 11-16, France. 1 of largest & most important markets for buying & selling of program rights & setting up coproduction agreements & joint ventures. Held at Cannes' Palais des Festivals. Several thousand TV buyers (public &

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MONS INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Mar. 20-23, Belgium. Founded in 1976, competitive fest showcases 75 35mm & 16mm shorts over 3 days before 6 int'l jury & audiences of over 1,000. Entries must have been completed w/in previous 2 years. Awards incl. Gold Monkeys, Special Prizes & cash. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: None. Deadline: early Feb.. Contact: Alain Cardon, pres., Mons Int'l Short Film Festival, Festival Int'l du Film Court de Mons, 106, rue des Arbalétriers, 7000 Mons, Belgium; tel: 011 32 65 31 81 75, fax: 011 32 65 31 30 27.

OBERHAUSEN INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, April. Germany. Founded in 1954, this important fest showcases innovative ind. & experimental short & doc films of all genres. Place of debates & controversial films, FIAPF-recognized competitive event programs social doc, new developments in animation, experimental & short features, student films (especially from film schools) & first films. Different sections & int'l competition screen films & videos up to 35 min., completed after 1/1/95. Awards: Grand Prize of Town of Oberhausen (DM10,000); 2 Principal Prizes (DM5,000 each); Special Prizes (DM1,000-5,000), incl. Eulenspiegel-Preis (Owlglass Prize) for Most Humorous (DM1,000); Alexander Scotti prize to best film on "Old Age and Death" (DM2,000); Best Film on Educ. Politics (DM5,000); Fipresci Prize (DM2,000); Prize of Catholic Film Assoc. (DM2,000); Prize of Protestant Film Centre (DM2,000). Fest also has concurrent market. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Super 8, Beta, Pal, 8mm. Entry fee: None. Deadline: early-Feb. Contact: Angela Haardt, Oberhausen Int'l Short Film Festival, Internationale Kurzfilmstage Oberhausen, Grillostrasse 34, D-46042 Oberhausen, Germany; tel: 011 49 208 825 2652; fax: 011 49 208 8255413; kurzfilmstage.oberhausen@uni.duisburg.de.

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL, June, Australia. This major FIAPF-recognized event is one of world's oldest (over 43 years old) & leading int'l showcase for new work. Noncompetitive int'l program incl. features & docs; experimental works; retro; competition for Australian shorts; late shows & forums w/ visiting directors. Many films shared w/ Melbourne Fest, which runs almost concurrently. Most Australian distributors & TV buyers attend. Fest has enthusiastic & loyal audience & is excellent opportunity for publicity & access to Australian markets.



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TRENTO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAIN AND EXPLORATION FILMS, Late April/early May, Italy. 1997 marks 45th edition of competitive fest devoted to mountain films; exploration films; & mountaineering, adventure & sports films. Long, medium & short films & telefilms (fiction & doc) eligible for competition. Awards: Gran Premio "Citta di Trento" (Gold Gentian & 10,000,000 lire); Silver Gentians & 3,000,000 lire each to best fiction feature, best film on mountaineering, best film on exploration &/or environmental conservation, best film on adventure, including RAI Award for best electronically created film. Special Jury Prize for Italian director & Special Prize for best photography. Films may also be shown out of competition. Deadline: early March. Contact: Gian Luigi Bozza, fest dir., Filmfestival Internazionale della Montagna e dell'Esplorazione, Via S. Croce 67, 38100 Trento, Italy; tel: 011 39 461 98 61 20; fax: 01139 461 23 18 32.

TURIN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF LESBIAN AND GAY FILMS, April 7-13, Italy. Now in 12th yr, one of longest-running int'l gay & lesbian events. Entries should be by lesbian/gay filmmakers or address lesbian/gay themes & issues. About 150 titles. Competition section divided btwn 3 juries: doc, long feature & short feature. Panorama section features new int'l productions. Award named after late fest co-founder, Ottavio Mai, presented to best screenplay for short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2" (PAL & NTSC). Entry fee: None. Deadline: early Feb. Contact: Angelo Acerbi, fest coord., Turin Int'l Festival of Lesbian and Gay Films, Da Sodoma a Hollywood, Via T. Tasso 11, 10122 Torino, Italy; tel: 011 39 11 534 888; fax: 011 39 11 535 796; glfilmfest@assioma.com; http://www.assioma.com/glfilmfest.

VUES D'AFRIQUE, April 17-27, Canada. Along with FESPACO, fest, founded in 1983, is imp. showcase for films from Africa & diaspora. Over 55,000 people attend. Cats incl. Panorama du cinema africain, Images creoles, Televisions Africaines, Regard Canadien, Ecrans Nord-Sud, Clips, Women's Images, Human Rights, and new section Franco-Sud. Expositions, info kiosks, music, dance, literature & food part of Salon Africain et Créole (African & Caribbean Fair) held at same time. Fiction & doc, long & short programmed. Fest also travels to other cities in Canada. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Deadline: late Feb. Contact: Henri-Paul Bolap, Vues d'Afrique, Les Journées du Cinema Africain et Creole, 67 rue Ste. Catherine Ouest, 5eme étage, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2X 1Z7; (514) 284-3322; fax: 845-0631.



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TENURE TRACK Dept. of Media Study at SUNY Buffalo has two tenure/tenure track openings for Sept. '97. One in film/media with emphasis on video, one in digital arts. MFA or equiv. preferred but creative excellence essential. Women/minorities encouraged to apply. EO/AA employer. See our website: http://wings.buffalo.edu/academic/departments/AandL/media_study/, or contact Roy Roussel (716) 645-6902; fax: 645-6979.

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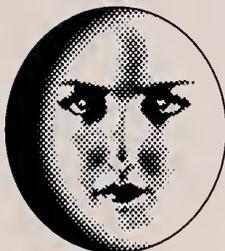
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COMPETITIONS

ATHENA AWARDS FOR LESBIAN EXCELLENCE IN FILM, the Latham Foundation's "Search of Excellence" Video Competition seeks videos completed and released btwn Jan. 1, 1990 & Dec. 31, 1996. Winners receive nat'l & local media attention, awards & publicity in a special issue of *Latham Letter*. For entry forms, send SASE to: Latham Foundation, Attn: Video Awards, Latham Plaza Building, Clement & Schiller Streets, Alameda, CA 94501; (510) 521-0920

HIP FLICK'S SCREENWRITING COMPETITION accepting entries through Jan. 31 Entrants notified by Mar. 31. Top 10 scripts receive cash awards. Winners eligible for possible production &/or option deal w/ company. Entry fee: \$30. SASE to: Hip Flicks, Box 8867, Atlanta, GA 30306-08647; (770) 418-1293; hipflick@atl.mindspring.com; www.mindspring.com/hipflick.

MONTEREY COUNTY FILM COMMISSION announces 1997 screenwriting competition. \$1,500 top prize. Contest open to writers who haven't yet earned money writing for TV or film. Submit 90-130 pg film or TV scripts. Entry fee: \$40/script, multiple submits accepted. Deadline: Jan 10. Send SASE to: MCFSC, Box 111, Monterey, CA 93942-0111; (408) 646-0910.

SCREENWRITING COMPETITION sponsored by Scorpio Pictures seeks innovative, commercial scripts for film/TV. All genres. \$500 cash prize with potential production options. \$35 entry fee. Deadline: Jan. 15. For rules, send SASE to: Scorpio Pictures, Box 1231, Sykesville, MD 21784-1231.

WRITERS WORKSHOP NATIONAL SCRIPTWRITING CONTEST accepting scripts. 5 to 6 winners will be chosen to receive \$500 award. Winners also receive free tuition for critical evaluation of scripts before panel of motion picture agents, producers, writers & directors. Deadline: Ongoing. For submission info, send legal size SASE w/ 60¢ postage to: Willard Rogers, Writers Workshop Nat'l Contest, Box 69799, L.A., CA 90069; (213) 933-9232.

CONFERENCES • WORKSHOPS

IFFCON '97 OPEN DAY: 4th Int'l Film Financing Conference announces Open Day, Jan.

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VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Not-for-profit Incorporation and Tax Exemption," & more. Reservations must be made: (212) 319-2910.

FILMS • TAPES WANTED

ASHLAND CABLE ACCESS seeks video shows. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" OK, any length or genre. For return, incl. sufficient SASE. Send w/ description & release to: Suzi Auferheide, Southern Oregon State College, RVTY, 1250 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland, OR 97520; (541) 552-6898.

AUSTIN, TX, ind. producer w/ cable access venue for ind. films & videos, all genres & subjects. Shorts & music videos linked by discussions on ind. films. Films/videos running longer than 40 min. may be aired in series of 2 consecutive shows. Send release & info about film/filmmaker. 1/4" & 3/4" preferable. No payment, but credit & exposure. James Shelton, Tex-Cinema Productions, Box 3633, Austin, TX 78764-3633; (512) 867-9901.

AXLEGREASE, Buffalo cable access program of ind. film & video, accepting all genres under 28 min., 1/2", 3/4", 8mm, Hi8. Send labeled w/ name, address, title, length, additional info & SASE for tape return to: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; (716) 884-7172, wheel@freenet.buffalo.edu; http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel.

BLACK BOOT MEDIA PROJECT of Perry County Ind. Media Arts Center seeks ind. film & video works for regular series of roving screenings at various industrial, commercial & residential venues in Philadelphia & Harrisburg area. Submit S-8, 16mm, VHS or S-VHS w/ SASE to: PCIMAC, Lower Bailey Rd., RR2-Box 65, Newport, PA 17074. For info contact: Jeff Dardozi (215) 545-7884.

BURLE AVANT curating "530 Lines of Resolution," digital video art night at Den of Thieves on Lower East Side in NYC. Video artists encouraged to submit works; no entry fees required. Send NTSC VHS tapes under 15 min. by UPS or hand deliver to: 530 Lines of Resolution, c/o The Outpost, 118 North 11 St., 4th fl, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 599-2385

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS travelling exhibition and anthology on racial and sexual indeterminacy. Send slides, abstracts, info and SASE to Erin Valentino, Dept. of Art and Art History, University of Connecticut, 875 Coventry Road U-99, Storrs, CT 06269; fax (860) 486-3869; evalentino@finearts.sfa.uconn.edu

CHARISMATIC MASS TELEVISION seeks media art shorts for new monthly screening series. All genres accepted, any length. Ongoing deadline. Send artist statement, videotape & SASE. 3/4" preferred, Hi8 or 1/2" OK; returnable w/ SASE. Syracuse University, Art Media Studies, attn: Justine Wood, 102 Shaffer Art Bldg, Syracuse, NY 13244.

CUCALORUS FILM FEST seeks indie works of varying lengths and genres. Super 8, 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", Beta and SVHS video. Preview copies on VHS



only. \$10 entry fee before Feb 15, \$15 for entries before March 1. P.O. Box 2763, Wilmington, NC 28402; (910) 815-3818.

DANCE ON VIDEO wanted for *Spirit of Dance*, live 1-hr monthly program covering all types & aspects of dance. Under 5 min. or excerpts from longer works. S-VHS preferred. Call producers at (508) 430-1321, 759-7005; fax: 398-4520. Contact: Ken Glazebrook, 656 Depot St., Harwich, MA 02645.

DUTV-CABLE 54, progressive, nonprofit access channel in Philadelphia, seeks works by ind. producers. All genres & lengths considered. No payment; will return tapes. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" accepted. Contact: George McCollough or Maria Mongelli, DUTV-Cable 54, Drexel University, 33rd & Chesnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

FILMMAKERS UNITED presents monthly film series at Silent Movie Theatre in LA. Year-round venue for ind. short films. To submit a film (must have 16mm or 35 mm print for screening & be no longer than 40 min.,) send a 1/2" video copy w/ SASE to: Filmmakers United, 1260 N. Alexandria Ave., LA, CA 90029; (213) 427-8016.

FROG PRODUCTIONS seeks student/ind. films & videos for cable access TV show. Any length/genre, VHS preferred, 1/2" or 3/4" acceptable. Include info about work/artist, SASE if return desired. Frog Prods, Box 158, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370.

GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS seeks short videos (10 min or less) for *Living With AIDS*, half-hr magazine weekly seen in Manhattan, Queens & Brooklyn, produced by GMHC & NYC Dept. of Health. No budget for licensing programs, but opportunity to be seen by millions. VHS or 3/4" tapes (no originals) must deal w/ HIV/AIDS issues, or present person(s) infected/affected by HIV/AIDS in positive way. May not be sexually explicit. All tapes returned. Send to: Kristen Thomas, Living with AIDS Showcase of Independent Video, GMHC Multimedia Dept., 129 W. 20th St., NY, NY 10011; (212) 337-3655.

HANDI-CAPABLE IN THE MEDIA seeks videos of any length about people with disabilities. Programs will air on Atlanta's Cable 12. No fees, however credit & exposure to large viewing audience. VHS preferred, s-VHS, 3/4" acceptable. Sharon Douglas, Handi-Capable in the Media, Inc. 2625 Piedmont Rd. Suite 56-137 Atlanta, GA 30324.

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IN THE LIFE seeks gay/lesbian shorts for nat'l bdest during Gay Pride week. Up to 10 min., narrative or doc. Deadline: Jan. 17. Contact: In the Life Shorts Fest, 30 W. 26 St., 7 fl., NY, NY 10010; (212) 255-6012 x. 308.

IN THE MIX, nat'l PBS series, seeks short (2-8 min.) videos produced by teens or young adults. Any format. Send tape w/ description to: *In the Mix*, 102 E. 30th St., NY, NY 10016, attn: student videos.

IND. FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE, cable access show seeks student & ind. films & videos to give exposure. Send 3/4" format w/ paragraph about artist & work. The Independent Film & Video Showcase, 6755 Yucca St., #8, Hollywood, CA 90028, attn: Jerry Salata.

INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE, monthly screening program seeks experimental, avant-garde, doc, narrative. Possible monetary remuneration. Submit your films and/or videos on 1/2" or 8mm video. Clearly label tapes with title, length, name, address & phone. Include SASE if you wish tapes returned. Contact: Blackchair Prod., 2318 Second Ave., #313A Seattle, WA 98121; (206) 282-3592; joel@speakeasy.org.

KNITTING FACTORY VIDEO LOUNGE seeks VHS tapes for on-going weekly series of theme-based screenings. Any genre or subject. Send tape w/ brief bio to: Joanna Spitzner, Box 1220 Canal St. Station, NY, NY, 10012. If tape return desired, include self-addressed envelope w/ sufficient postage.

LA VOZ LATINA III: LATINA/O VIDEO ART FROM THE U.S.A. Looking for videos by Latinas/os (inclusive term that describes Chicanos, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Caribbeans, Central/South Americans, etc., from the U.S.) for possible inclusion in curated program of video tapes to be presented at the Festival Internacional de Video del Cono Sur taking place in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay and the Festival de Cine Latinoamericano in Italy during 1997. Deadline: Jan. 10, 1997. Send VHS preview w/ description, reviews, resume, bio & S.A.S.E for return of tape to: Luis Valdovino, Ass't Professor, Fine Arts., Univ. of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309; (303) 492-5482; fax: (303) 492-4886.

LO BUDJIT FILMZ AND VIDEOS seeks submissions for VHS or Less, show focusing on camcorder movies. Embarrass old friends, showcase your dusty old tapes. Large bi-coastal audience. Send to: 147 Ave A, Box 1R NY, NY 10009; (212) 533-0866.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TELEVISION seeking story proposals from U.S. citizen or permanent resident minority filmmakers for National Geographic *Explorer*, award-winning doc series. To request appl. for CDP (Cultural Diversity Project), call: (202) 862-8637.

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS, series broadcast-ing selected works statewide on public TV, seeks works of any genre (except corporate/instructional) produced by ind. artists currently residing in NC. Modest monetary compensation & telecast filmmaker interview of artist for works selected. Entry fee: \$15 for individuals, \$5 for students & NC Media Arts

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technical, and legal matters. Plus festival listings, funding deadlines, exhibition venues, and announcements of member activities and new programs and services. Special issues highlight regional activity and focus on subjects including media education and the new technologies.

INSURANCE

Members are eligible to purchase discounted personal and production insurance plans through AIVF suppliers. A range of health insurance options are available, as well as special liability, E&O, and production plans tailored for the needs of low-budget mediamakers.

TRADE DISCOUNTS

A growing list of businesses across the country offer AIVF members discounts on equipment and auto rentals, film processing, transfers, editing, and other production necessities. Plus long-distance and overnight courier services are available at special rates for AIVF members from national companies. In New York, members receive discounted rates at two hotels to make attendance at our programs and other important events more convenient.

CONFERENCE/SCREENING ROOM

AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

INFORMATION

We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

WORKSHOPS, PANELS, AND SEMINARS

Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

ADVOCACY

Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

COMMUNITY

AIVF sponsors monthly member get-togethers in cities across the country; call the office for the one nearest you. Plus members are carrying on active dialogue online—creating a "virtual community" for independents to share information, resources, and ideas. Another way to reach fellow independents to let them know about your screenings, business services, and other announcements is by renting our mailing list, available at a discount to members.

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<http://www.virtualfilm.com/AIVF/>

Alliance members; separate fee for each submission. Contact: Ellen Walters, NC Visions, Broadcasting/Cinema Program, 100 Carmichael Bldg, UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412-5001; fax (910) 334-5039; ncvision@hamlet.uncg.edu.

OCULAR ARCADE, on ACTV in Columbus, OH, showcases ind. video (art, doc, experimental). Send Hi8, VHS, or 3/4" dub to: *Ocular Arcade*, D. Master, 135 West 1st Ave., Columbus, OH 43201.

OCULARIS: New screening room seeks 16mm shorts for regular screenings in East Village/Williamsburg area of NYC, particularly by local filmmakers. Please call or send SASE for info: *Ocularis*, 91 N. 4th St., #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-8713.

PAUL ROBESON BIRTHDAY COMMITTEE seeks film artists who have produced films about Robeson, or would consider doing so. DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place, Chicago, IL 60637; (312) 373-0994, fx (708) 386-2414.

PERIPHERAL PRODUCE currently seeking all short films & videos for weekly late night TV program & local screenings. Submit VHS tape/info (& SASE for return) to: *Peripheral Produce*, Box 40835, Portland, OR 97240-0835.

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SAN FRANCISCO SHORT FILMS, new org. dedicated to supporting short narrative film as unique art form, seeks films under 35 min. for screening programs. Must be resident of 415, 510, 408, 707, 916, or 209 area codes in Northern CA. Films must have been completed after Jan. 1, 1993. All formats OK; submit VHS preview to: Box 424520, San Francisco, CA 94142. Submissions can also be brought to monthly meeting, first Thursday ea. month, 7 pm, at Colossal Studios, 15th St. & DeHaro.

SAUCE GALLERY AND MOMENTA ART, two alternative spaces in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, currently accepting entries for on-going film/video series. Mission is to identify and exhibit compelling new work no longer than 30 min. All formats & genres. Submit in VHS w/ SASE & brief description of work to: *Sauce Gallery*, 173A North 3rd St., Brooklyn, NY 11211; attn: Lisa Schroeder (718) 486-8992 or Laura Parnes (718) 782-8907.

SEEKS FOOTAGE: Tigress Productions seeks 8mm or S-8 footage of 42nd St./Times Square area from 1960s & 70s for doc. All film returned, some paid, film credit. Contact: June Lang (212) 977-2634.

SEEKS FOOTAGE: TV-1 Productions seeks footage on Cuba for upcoming doc. Every aspect of life in the island welcome. Formats: Hi8, SVHS, 3/4", Beta, DVD, 8mm & 16mm. Tapes returned. Payment negotiable. For more info, contact: Marcos N. Suarez, 2102 Empire Central, Dallas, TX 75235; (214) 357-2186.

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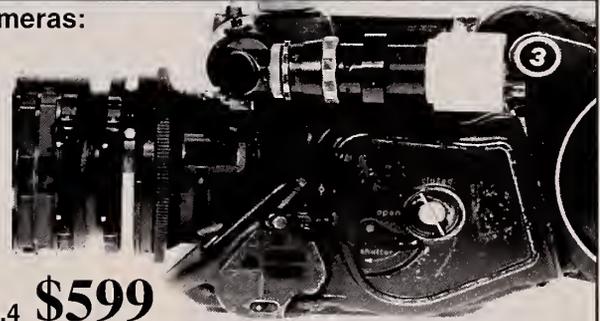
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SHORT FILM & VIDEO: All genres, any medium, 1 min. to 1 hr. Unconventional, signature work in VHS or 3/4" for nat'l broadcast. Submit to: Edge TV, 7805 Sunset Blvd., ste. 203, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

SHOW YOUR SHORTS, cable access program seeks shorts. Aired on Ch. 34 on first Sunday of every month at 4:30 pm. Send VHS copies of films no longer than 20 min. to: Catherine Delbuono, Box 987 NY, NY 10011.

SUPER-8 FILM OPPORTUNITY Send previews of short films no more than 20 min. on VHS or super-8 prints. Enclose short bio, description, running time, filmography & any stills or portraits you have. Enclose \$5, SASE, and self-addressed stamped postcard. Send previews ASAP to: Barbara Rosenthal, 727 Ave. of Americas, NY, NY 10010-2712; (212) 924-4893.

TYME TOWER ENTERTAINMENT seeks feature-length & short films for Ind. Filmmakers video series. 16mm, 35mm, B/W or color. Send 3/4" or 1/2" VHS copy to: Tyme Tower Entertainment, c/o Tyme Tower Home Video, 810 E. Coliseum Blvd., ste. 107, Fort Wayne, IN 46805-1234; (219) 481-5807.

UNQUOTE TV, 1/2 hr nonprofit program dedicated to exposing new, innovative film & video artists, seeks ind. doc, narrative, experimental, performance works under 28 min. Seen on over 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: Unquote TV, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

VIDEOSPACE AT DECORDOVA MEDIA ARTS ARCHIVE: DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park seeks VHS copies of video art & documentation of performance, installation art & new genres from New England artists for inclusion in new media arts archive. Send for info & guidelines: Videospace at DeCordova, DeCordova Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Rd., Lincoln, MA 01773-2600.

VIDEOSPACE BOSTON seeks creative videos for fall & spring programming. Any genre and length. Nonprofit/no payment. Send VHS, Hi 8 or 3/4" w/ description, name, phone & SASE to: VideoSpace, attn: general submissions, 9 Myrtle St, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

WORLD OF INSANITY looking for videos & films to air on local cable access channel. Any length. One hour weekly show w/ videos followed by info on the makers. Send VHS or SVHS to: World of Insanity, Box 954, Veneta, OR 97487; (541) 935-5538.

PUBLICATIONS

ART ON FILM DATABASE index to 19,000 productions, seeks info on films & videos with visual art subject matter. Send info to Art on Film, 2875 Broadway, 2nd fl., NY, NY 10025

DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO, organized by Int'l Media Resources Exchange, seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info:

Karen Ranucci, IMRE, 124 Washington Place, NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108.

MEDIA MATTERS, Media Alliance's newsletter, provides comprehensive listings of New York area events & opportunities for media artists. For a free copy, call Media Alliance at (212) 560-2919 or visit their web site at <http://www.mediaalliance.org>.

MEDIANET: Guide to the Internet for Video and Filmmakers. Available free at <http://www.infi.net/~riddle/medianet.htm>, or e-mail riddle@infi.net.

MILLENNIUM FILM JOURNAL No. 29, Fall '96: Video/Video Installation. "Did the Videopak Cause Video Art?"; Bill Horn on Gary Hill; Bill Viola's "Buried Secrets"; Clay Debevoise on "Video Spaces" at MoMa, much more. \$6. Published by Millennium Film Workshop, 66 E. 4th St, NYC, 10003; (212) 673-0090.

NEH ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE; National Endowment for the Humanities' 30th Annual Report is available for free. Contains descriptions of programs as well as a complete listing of all Endowment grants for FY 1995. Readers may view or download report by visiting NEH website: <http://www.neh.fed.us> For a hard copy, write: NEH 1995 Annual Report, Room 402, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20506; email: info@neh.fed.us

SHORT VIDEO MOVIES: To finish our handbook on the short video prod. process, we want to include your experiences w/ improvised scenarios or scripts, nonprofessionals or pros. Let's trade reels. Contact: David Shepherd, Group Creativity, 2 Washington Sq. Vill. #70, New York, NY 10012; (212) 777-7830.

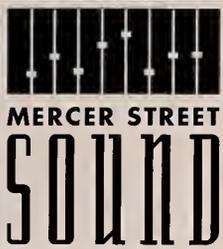
THE SQUEALER, quarterly journal w/ upstate NY spin on media-related subjects. Once a year, *The Squealer* publishes "State of the State," a comprehensive resource issue w/ detailed info on upstate media arts organizations, access centers, schools & coalitions. Subscriptions \$15/year. Contact: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel/>

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APERTURE INC., a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit corp., offers grant of \$10,000 to first-time filmmaker shooting a 5-30 min. film. For info on 1996 Aperture Grant, send SASE to: Aperture, 12335 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 174, Los Angeles, CA 90025, or call (310) 772-8294.

BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from ind. producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Reviewed on ongoing basis. Contact BFFV for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; bffv@aol.com

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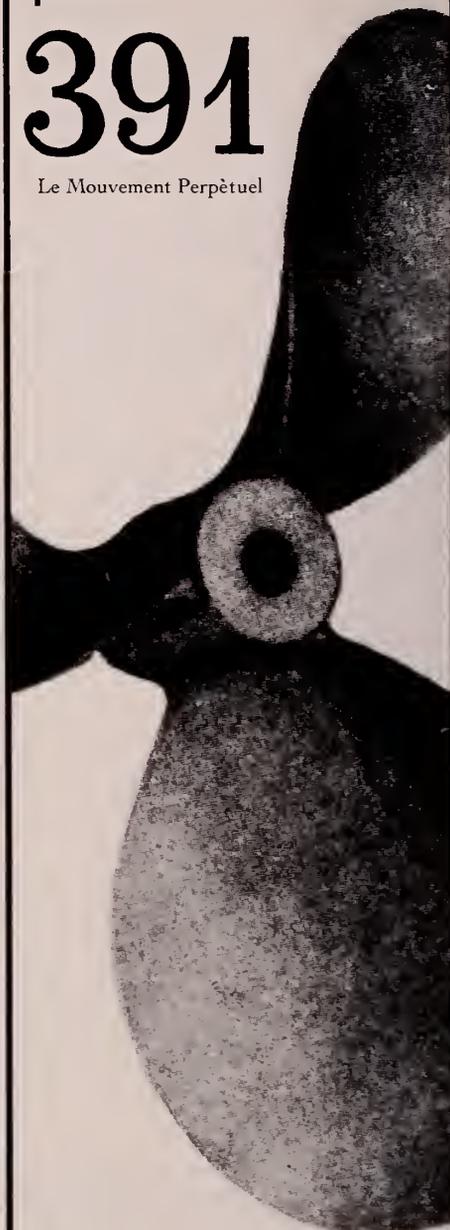
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MEDIA ALLIANCE assists NYC artists & non-profit organizations in using state-of-art equipment, postprod. & prod. facilities at reduced rates. Contact: Media Alliance, c/o WNET, 356 W. 58th St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 560-2919.

OPEN STUDIO: THE ARTS ONLINE, new \$500,000 joint initiative of the NEA and Benton Foundation, offers funds to help artists and art organizations get online. Funds available for 100 Access Sites—where the public is given Internet access—and 10 Mentor Sites—which will receive \$35,000 each to serve as mentors to 10 local cultural organizations and 10 local artists, teaching them how to become effective info providers on the Web. Deadline: Jan 15. Contact: Anne Green, Project Coord. (202) 638-5770; fax: 638-5771; <http://www.openstudio.org>.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS provides grants for development of nat'l public TV broadcast programming by & about

indigenous Pacific Islanders. For appl: PIC, 1221 Kapiolani Blvd., #6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814; (808) 591-1114; piccom@elele.peacesat.hawaii.edu.

POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION gives financial assistance to artists of recognizable merit & financial need working as mixed-media or installation artists. Grants awarded throughout yr: \$1,000-\$30,000. For guidelines, write: Pollock-Krasner Foundation, 725 Park Ave., NY, NY 10021.

SOROS DOCUMENTARY FUND supports ind. doc. film & video on human rights, freedom of expression, social justice & civil liberties. 2 levels considered: works-in-progress & preproduction seed money. Grant awards for recommended works-in-progress range up to \$50,000, w/ average of \$25,000. Awards for seed funds range from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Send proposals to: Diane Weyermann, Open Society, 888 7th Ave., #3100, NY, NY 10106.

STANDBY PROGRAM provides artists & nonprofits access to broadcast quality video postprod. services at reduced rates. For guidelines & appl. contact: Standby Program, Box 184, NY, NY 10012-0004; (212) 219-0951; fax: 219-0563.

TEACHERS MEDIA CENTER dedicated to educators interested in video technology as learning tool in the classroom. Latest project is setting up nat'l & int'l video pen pal exchanges; would like to hear from interested schools, individuals, or organizations. Also interested in creating nat'l network of educators interested in any or all aspects of growing multimedia & media literacy movements in education. Contact: Teachers Media Center, 158 Beach 122nd St.,

Rockaway Beach, NY 11694; (718) 634-3823.

VISUAL STUDIES WORKSHOP MEDIA CENTER in Rochester, NY, accepts proposals on ongoing basis for its Media Access program. Artists, ind. producers & nonprofits awarded access at reduced rates, prod. & postprod. equipment for work on noncommercial projects. For appl., tour, or more info, call (716) 442-8676.

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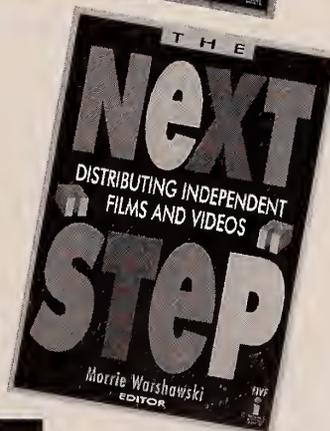
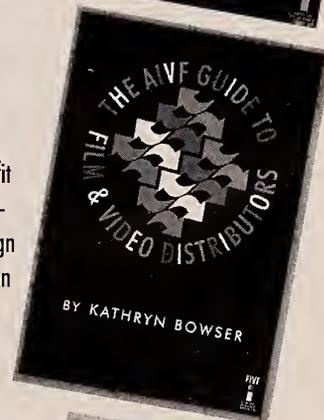
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MEET AND GREETs

These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. Free; open to AIVF members only. Limited to 20 participants. RSVP required: (212) 807-1400 x301. Please leave your name, phone number, and the event for which you're making a reservation.

VIDEO PRESERVATION

Join Jay Lindner, President of VidiPax, and Dara Meyers-Kingsley, freelance curator and programmer, as they discuss the proper care and storage of video tape and the importance of preserving one of the 20th century's most valuable recorders of history. Tuesday, February 11, 6:30 pm

SANDE ZEIG

President, Artistic License Films

Artistic License Films provides independent filmmakers, producers, and distribution companies with individualized services to ensure the successful theatrical release of a film.

Tuesday, March 18, 6:30 pm

SEMINARS

CREATING DIGITAL VIDEO

Get all the information you need to help you evaluate if digital video is right for you. Attend a free demonstration of the Media 100 digital editing system. This event is co-sponsored by AIVF, F/VA and Moviola Digital. To reserve a space call (212) 247-0972 or (212) 807-1400 x301. Limited seating.

When: January 28, time: tba

Where: F/VA, 817 Broadway, 2nd fl.

USING NON-BROADCAST VIDEO IN A BROADCAST CONTEXT

This seminar will address independent producers concerns of meeting television broadcast standards: the stringency of PBS specifications, inconsistencies with non-linear edit systems and equipment problems. Panelists include former Standby Program editor, Marshall Reese and Bill Topazio, Vice President of Engineering at Manhattan Transfer. The event is co-sponsored by AIVF and the Standby Program and is free of charge. For more information contact: Maria Venaa (212) 219-0951. To RSVP call (212) 807-1400 x301.

When: March 12, 7:00 pm

Where: AIVF office

TRADE DISCOUNT UPDATE

C&S International Insurance Brokers, Inc.

Coulter & Sands Insurance Brokers are now C&S International Insurance Brokers, Inc. Their new address and telephone are: 20 Vesey Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10007; (212) 406-4499; fax: 406-7588; staff@csins.com; http://www.csins.com.

TEIGIT CALIFORNIA OPEN ENROLLMENT

TEIGIT is required by California Insurance Department regulations to offer a 30-day open enrollment period once each year for the CIGNA Health plans to all California members of TEIGIT associations. During the open enrollment period any California-resident member who applies will be automatically accepted, regardless of medical history, provided that the applicant was an AIVF member in good standing prior to the start of the open enrollment period. Open Enrollment starts Jan. 1, 1997 and ends Jan. 30, 1997. For details, contact TEIGIT at (212) 758-5675; (800) 886-7504; fax: (212) 888-4916; or write TEIGIT at 845 Third Avenue, NY, NY 10022.

WALTERRY INSURANCE PROGRAM CANCELLED

Walterry Insurance Brokers will no longer offer discount public liability, equipment coverage, or libel insurance plans. Please note that projects currently insured by one or all three plans will not be affected. AIVF regrets the loss of this special discount to our members and we are actively seeking a comparable replacement. We will keep you posted.

Washington, DC-based Yellow Cat Productions offers AIVF members 15% off a full day video shoot with a 2-person crew and 15% off any Avid editing in their charming townhouse on Capitol Hill. Contact: Mary Flannery (202) 543-2221, fax: 543-2287.

If you want to offer AIVF members discounts on any product or service, please contact Leslie Fields at (212) 807-1400 x222.

Not Receiving Your Independent?

If you have any problems receiving *The Independent* or questions regarding your AIVF membership, please call Oscar Cervera at (212) 807-1400 x236 or Leslie Fields x222, Monday - Friday, 10 am to 6 pm EST. They will be happy to assist to you.

MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our copy deadline is two months in advance, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6 p.m.

Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.

Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.

Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street

Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time
Where: Ozzie's, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.

Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 pm.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver, CO

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125

Houston, TX:

When: Last Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: David Mendel, (713) 529-4185

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 pm.

Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.

Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

Norwalk, CT:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.

Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

Call for dates and times.

Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW

Contact: DC Salon hotline (202) 554-3263 x4.

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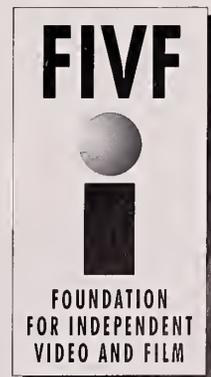
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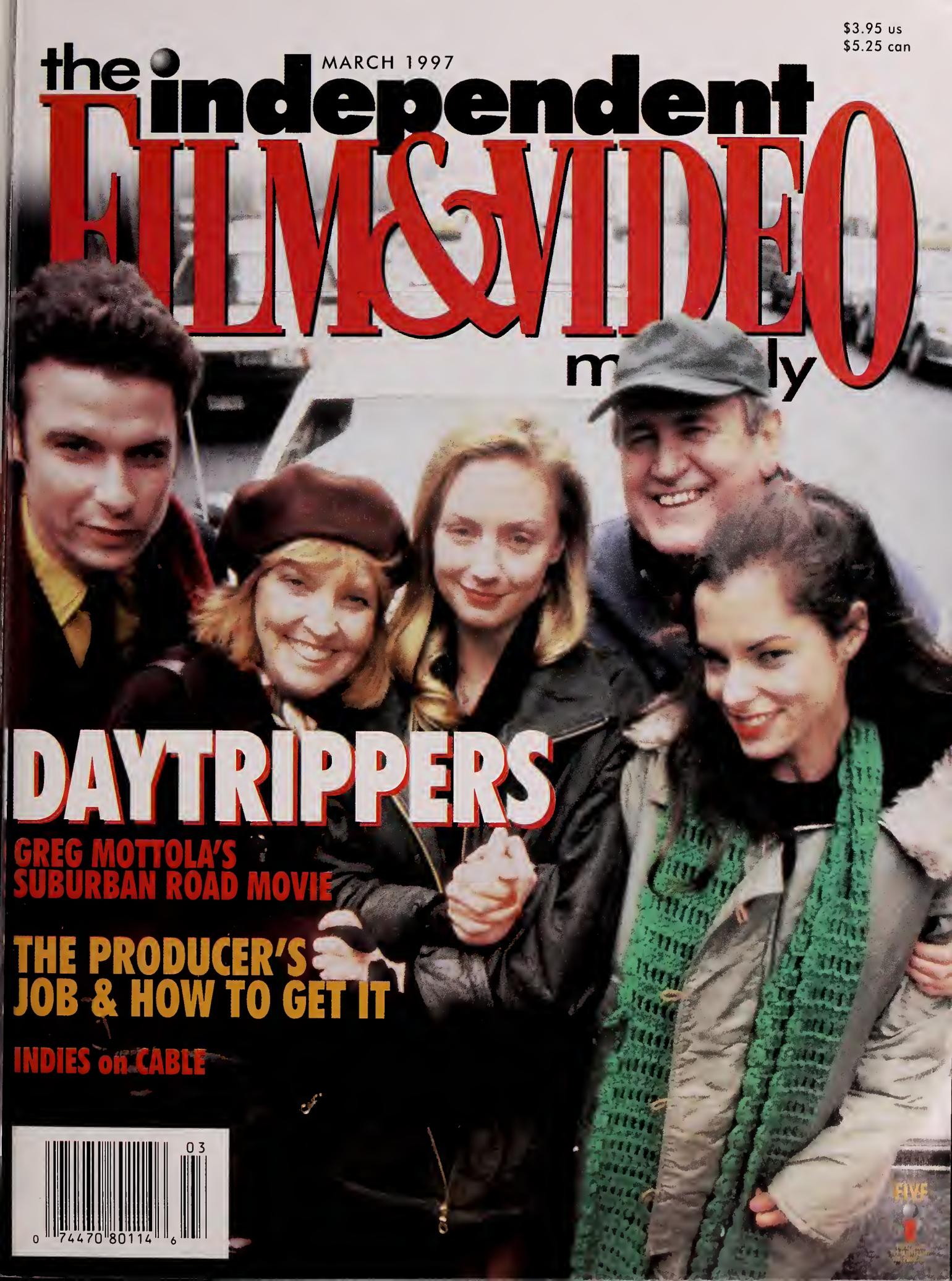
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COVER: (L-R) Liev Schreiber, Anne Meara, Hope Davis, Pat McNamara, and Parker Posey, cast of *The Daytrippers*, a festival favorite now in theaters. The saga of its development, production, and distribution is a classic tale of the little engine that could. Photo: Graham Haber

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BY LISSA GIBBS

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Ken Burns' Vision of Peter Hutton

To the editor:

I read with interest Scott MacDonald's interview with Peter Hutton ["A Moment of Seeing: The Private Vision of Peter Hutton," December 1996]. Hutton is one of our great national treasures; an utterly American, exquisitely gifted artist who reminds us in nearly every frame of every film what the real possibilities of the medium are. He has been a powerful influence on me and dozens of others. I can still remember the sublime first moment of recognition that came with seeing the opening silent images of his *July '71 in San Francisco* film. I would flatter myself if I came as close to the central ideas of film in 25 years of producing as Peter did with those first few images. He is a master and hardly the "old relic" he claims I see him as. In fact, he is far, far out ahead of the rest of us and at the same time reassuringly rooted in the very creation of cinema.

One complaint. MacDonald, in his opening paragraph, describes me as a "commercial filmmaker." My films have on occasion been popular successes, for which I am extremely grateful, but I am decidedly *not* a commercial filmmaker—never have been. I am my only client, like Hutton.

The best part of the interview, though, was to be called, after a quarter century of filmmaking, a "sweet kid" by Hutton. That was a real treat.

Keep up the good work.

Ken Burns
Walpole, NH

10 + 1 Artist Colonies

To the editor,

Reading Peter Steinberg's "Far From the Madding Crowd: 10 Artists Colonies" [Dec. 1996], I was startled to see my name credited as the founder of Canyon Cinema. That honor belongs to Bruce Baille, Chick Strand, and others who saw it through its early years. My connection to Canyon came in 1969 and '70—a decade later—when I helped Loren Sears and Edith Kramer run Canyon's Cinematheque screenings at the old Intersection Church on Union Street, and even hosted a number of board meetings in my living room.

Along with the Djerassi Foundation, which was a wonderful experience, there is a venue for media artists and writers that should be added to Steinberg's list of artist colonies. It is the Headlands Center for the Arts, which is beautifully situated in the coastal Marin Headlands just northwest of the Golden Gate Bridge. There are year-long residencies for Bay Area artists, slots available through a number of collaborations with state arts councils, such as Ohio and North Carolina, as well as international residencies. Write for current information and deadlines to: Headlands Center for the Arts, AIR Program Info, Fort Barry, Sausalito, CA 94965.

Pat Ferrero
San Francisco, CA

A Fulfilling Relationship

To the editor:

Your article "Shooting for the Classroom: A Producer's Primer to Self-Distribution to the Educational Market" [Dec. 1996] was quite good. It will be useful to anyone who wants to go into the educational video business.

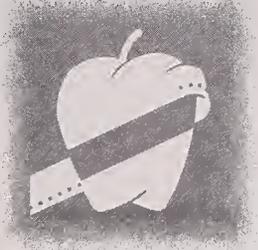
There was one significant omission, however. Although the article mentions fulfillment houses, it does not list any. And it does not adequately explain that a fulfillment house can do practically all the day-to-day chores of distribution. A fulfillment house answers calls, faxes, and email and actually ships out videos and receives returns. It invoices customers and supplies the filmmaker with weekly copies of the invoices, so you know what's selling and to whom.

For many years, I have used Transit Media (22D Hollywood Ave., Hohokus, NJ 07423; 201-642-1989). I do all my own advertising and direct mail but leave the physical chores of distribution to Transit. Their fees are reasonable, although they have a minimum monthly charge that may make them inappropriate for the smallest independent. The cop New Day Films is one of the many large independent film distributors that use Transit. There are, of course, other fulfillment houses.

Because of Transit, I am able to travel freely and concentrate on making new videos. I worry about marketing only when I have a new film that requires a new brochure or when it's time to get out a mailing.

Henry Bass
Belmont, MA

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“*Picture Bride*” ”

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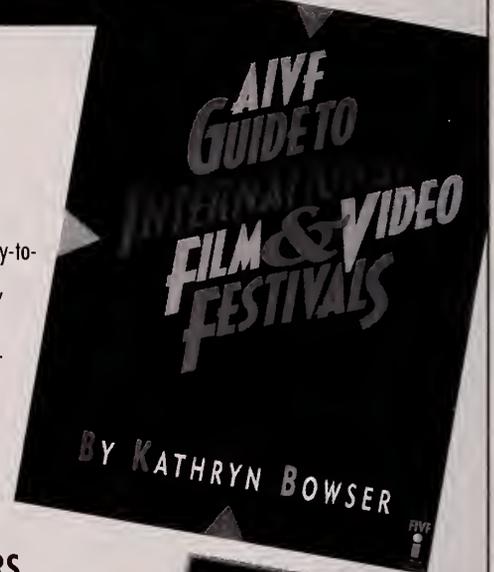
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ITVS EYES DISTRIBUTION

Small distributors glare



EDITED BY DANA HARRIS

THE INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS), the Congressionally mandated and perpetually embattled public TV production fund, has been studying the possibility of going into distribution. The news has rattled the ITVS board and rocked the field by raising both financial issues and questions about the service's fundamental mandate.

Created by Congress in 1989, ITVS is the product of a concerted lobbying effort by independent film- and videomakers (led by the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, among others) who pressured public TV to allocate time and money to innovative independent production, especially that serving underserved audiences. ITVS currently spends \$5.5 million annually in production grants.

Since its birth, ITVS has been embroiled in controversy from within about how to allocate its limited resources and has suffered high-profile attacks from without, especially from Republican legislators eager to find fuel for media coverage and items easy to slash from the budget. Since 1994, along with all of public broadcasting, it has faced unrelenting Republican demands to find ways to become self-supporting.

ITVS executive director James Yee says that current discussion of distribution proposals responds more to market pressure than to political pressure. "The marketplace is changing dramatically," he says. "The broadcast window public television provides is crucial to us, but it cannot be our only consideration." Yee points to last year's success in selling ITVS programs to cable (several programs to the then-prototypical Sundance Channel and one sale to Black Entertainment Television) and to an increasing trend toward international coproductions. He sees proposals for domestic distribution as part of this move toward full-service handling of ITVS-

funded productions.

"We don't expect distribution to be much of a money-maker, unlike cable and overseas sales," he said. "But it's a service we think we owe our producers; it's part of our mandate."

The ITVS staff clearly takes the notion seriously. It prepared a proposal in October for ITVS board review and has begun writing contracts that extend ITVS control over rights. The ITVS board, however, reportedly raised serious objections, and as a result ITVS contracted the consulting team of Dan Adams and Arlene Goldbard to conduct a survey of the distribution field. Results were due at the next ITVS board meeting in February.

In background conversations with *The Independent*, veteran distributors were deeply skeptical that an ITVS distribution business would either make financial sense or help independent production

gain visibility. Some problems: ITVS productions are distinctive from one another, and thereby require vastly different marketing strategies; producers who would most want ITVS' distribution are likely to be those with the least marketable projects; ITVS does not have a highly defined product image—an idea that could even seem to contradict its original mandate of diversity and originality; and finally, ITVS has no experience in the distribution field. Distributors were also greatly skeptical that the proposed investment of \$230,500 would be sufficient to start this new business, or that projected gains (for instance, \$130,000 the first year for domestic cable sales) are realistic.

Debbie Zimmerman, executive director of distributor Women Make Movies, believes veteran distributors like her own company have much to offer ITVS, which could collaborate creatively without competing directly by distributing works itself. "We do need closer and more collegial relationships as the fields of exhibition and distribution change rapidly," says Zimmerman.

For some, the proposal harks back to the debate in the late eighties over National Video Resources (NVR). NVR began as a Rockefeller Foundation proposal to launch a nonprofit distributor that would handle commercially slight-

Veteran distributors are deeply skeptical that an ITVS distribution business would make financial sense.

ed independent work. However, for-profit distributors of material largely aimed at the educational market argued that viable businesses such as theirs were doing that job and would only be weakened by a nonprofit competitor. They successfully led a campaign to change the function of NVR to that of a support service for the field.

Lawrence Daressa, director of niche distributor California Newsreel and a former ITVS board member, believes that ITVS' distribution plans are a dangerous distraction from the realities of political attacks on the very concept of publicly funded programming.

"It's fiddling while Rome burns," he says. He

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fears that ITVS will pour its capital into what it hopes will be a successor business should ITVS lose public funding, but that it instead will end up squandering public investment.

"We're back to the same old question of how can we make money differently from commercial television," Daressa says. "The answer is, we can't. There are some kinds of programming that don't pay for themselves, and the solution is public funding." He advocates that ITVS focus on creative approaches to carving out and using electronic public spaces—public TV, cable access, and computer-assisted "telecenters."

For independent producer Barbara Abrash, executive producer of the ITVS-funded production *Signal to Noise*, much more is at stake than a battle between small businesses. "The business is becoming much more complex with more channels and new technologies," she admits. "Everyone from Microsoft to Disney to ITVS wants to get control of intellectual property in order to have as many options as possible."

What's distinctive here, says Abrash, are the aspirations that drove the field to establish ITVS. "The real question, for all of us who have worked all these years to build support for art that can enrich the quality of our lives together, is what will ITVS bring to the project of independent public exchange?"

Pat Aufderheide is an associate professor in the School of Communication at American University in Washington, D.C.

New England's *Mixed Signals* Goes Off the Air

MIXED SIGNALS, NEW ENGLAND'S OLDEST CABLE television series of independent film and video, is going off the air. The 11-year-old program, which took pride in showing many new and experimental works, featured artists such as Jem Cohen, Spalding Gray, and Su Friedrich.

The mission of *Mixed Signals* was to provide an alternative to most of what was on television and to take independent film and television to a wider audience. The result was a mix of established artists and people who had never been televised before. Gray's *Grey Area* showed in 1986, and Cohen's *This Is a History of New York* appeared in 1990. Skip Blumberg, Woody Vasulka, and Branda Miller are among the many well-known experimental video and filmmakers who aired in early *Mixed Signal* shows.

Produced by the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), *Mixed Signals* made inde-

pendent film and video available by satellite to over 200 cable stations throughout the six New England states for free. At its peak, *Mixed Signals* produced two series per year, each comprising eight half-hour shows

***Mixed Signals*
asked 200
stations if
they wanted
free tapes.
Only 35
responded.**

grouped around a single theme. But with the loss of its donated satellite feed two years ago as well as the more recent cuts in NEA funding, NEFA has decided to discontinue the program.

Produced and curated for the last seven years by Julie Levinson, *Mixed Signals* was a show of national and some international work designed to take advantage of the need for interesting programming on both public access and local origination cable channels. Though at first it only reached 14 stations, it got a large boost early on when the Sports Channel and the New England Cable Television Association (NECTA) provided free satellite transmission to cable television stations throughout New England. "They were great," Levinson remembers. "Sometimes if a station told us they had missed the transmission, they would even replay it." The stations would then record the broadcast for replay later.

But when both NECTA and the Sports Channel changed hands and directions two years ago, the satellite link was no longer free. *Mixed Signals* paid for its own satellite time in 1995, but the expense ate a large part of its already shrinking budget. For its 1996 program, "All Worked Up" (a four-part series consisting of 14 works), NEFA went back to bicycling the tapes to whatever station wanted them. Also, *Mixed Signals* sent more than 200 letters asking if the stations were interested in free tapes for two showings, but only 35 stations responded positively.

The final blow came last year when the NEA changed their funding guidelines and allowed organizations to apply only for a single grant. Though *Mixed Signals* had also received support in the past from other sources, including the Warhol Foundation, the NEA was its primary funder. NEFA chose another program to submit in its NEA application, so *Mixed Signals* never had a chance. With this change in NEA policy, it is expected that other programs could face similar fates.

One concern throughout *Mixed Signals'* run was the lack of any hard data on how many people it reached. "We never had a handle on how many stations showed it and how many people watched it," says Levinson. In an attempt to coordinate publicity and word-of-mouth enthusiasm, the producers would try to get the cable stations, who were not paying for the programming, to all try to air it at the same time.

"We requested stations to broadcast the show on Monday nights at 8:30 pm," says Jane Buchbinder, *Mixed Signals'* executive producer. But all stations could not comply. "Some stations already had pee-wee hockey in that time slot," Levinson says. She estimates that "in our glory days," more than 100 stations aired the program. Anecdotal evidence supporting this came in the form of letters and station support. One year, a Manchester, New Hampshire station produced their own advertising spot for the series.

In some communities, a local public access station showed the series; in others it was the cable company's own local origination channel. "In some communities, like Cambridge, it was both," Levenson adds. Over the years, however, the local cable channels themselves have lost viewers to the larger cable station explosion. "The time for this kind of programming is kind of over," Buchbinder says. "If we [NEFA] are going to do something in film and video, it's time for something new."

Mixed Signals always paid the artists based on the length of the work. In years when they ran two series, this meant they provided up to \$15,000 total in fees to independent media artists. One year they were even able to commission several works, and many years they produced interviews with the artists. But the various series were only seen in a

limited fashion through New England cable stations because of the contractual agreements with the artists.

Over the years, there was some censorship by different stations when they were confronted by new and sometimes difficult work. In 1991, the Sports Channel said that they could not beam a series up to the satellite because of nudity in the film *Coffee Colored Children* by Ngozi Onwurah, a powerful British video about racism. Levinson wrote an impassioned plea to the president of the Sports Channel, who viewed the tape himself and allowed the feed to take place.

"We looked for work that was a bit edgy, worked that stretched the conception of television," Levinson says proudly. "*Mixed Signals* served two different constituencies. First was the people who watched it and second was the artists. I'm sorry it's done with."

George Fifield (gwf@tiac.net) is a video artist, curator, and the director of Video Space, an alternative media arts organization in Boston.



Seattle's Grand Illusion Theatre, built in 1967, has a new lease on life. Courtesy Northwest Film Forum

Seattle's Wiggly World Takes on Nonprofit Exhibition

JAMIE HOOK AND PARTNER DEBBIE GIRDWOOD, co-founders of the Northwest Film Forum and its nonprofit production arm, Wiggly World Studios, are now taking the brave step into nonprofit film exhibition with the purchase of Seattle's Grand Illusion Theater.

Hook hopes the theater will fulfill the Northwest Film Forum's vision of making and showing films that "have the incredible conviction that you can change lives." Ideally, the Grand Illusion would sit among the ranks of the few truly independent venues around the coun-

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According to Hook, the 29-year-old theater, with its plush red velvet seats and old-fashioned wood paneled ceiling, has "years of movie-watching soaked into its walls." However, despite the Grand Illusion's revered place in Seattle film audiences' hearts, the theater slowly succumbed to financial ruin, a victim of fierce commercial theater competition and poor advertising. Last summer, owner Paul Doyle put the Grand Illusion up for sale and approached local cinema organizations—including 911 Media Arts Center and Scarecrow Video's Sanctuary Theater—with an asking price of \$65,000. When Hook made a counter offer of \$20,000, Doyle accepted.

The acquisition of the theater was a thrilling, if premature, chance for Wiggly World to move beyond being a postproduction resource. As executive director of Wiggly World Studios, Hook explains that he always meant to purchase or build a theater, but planned to do two years of post and production work and fund-raise first. The struggling, grant-funded production studio was suddenly faced with having to raise a \$15,000 down payment in four months.

How Hook and Girdwood raised the money to purchase the theater was as ambitious as the vision for the theater. In September, they got a confirmed grant of \$4,000 and set about raising the \$11,000 needed for the down payment due January 1. After mailing out a Wiggly World membership and "Save the Grand Illusion" drive, they received a \$2,000 challenge grant to be awarded when they raised \$10,000. Other small grants and contributions trickled in. Finally, their efforts to reach local arts patrons paid off, when one family put up a \$10,000 challenge grant toward the running of the theater once it opens. They made the down payment just before Christmas.

The theater will likely run on a per-program funding basis; its grand re-opening was partially supported by Washington's Commission for the Humanities. Hook says the theater's non-profit status enables the operation to "focus on something other than asses in seats."

But how to recruit a dedicated audience among a public whose perception of film is so steeped in commercial value? Says Hook, "Having a theater is the perfect way to do this. You have to convince people that it's important to see films. In a truly good theater, there is a communication between the audience and the theater, people experience something universal

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However, Seattle does not have a built-in audience for daring and innovative work. The Pike Street Cinema closed last year, and owner/archivist Dennis Nyback relocated to New York. "Lots of people didn't go to the Pike Street Cinema because they never knew what was playing there," says Girdwood. "It wasn't publicized very much. But everybody has a

Hook says the theater's nonprofit status enables the operation to "focus on something other than asses in seats."

fondness for it, and probably wanted to go there regularly."

Robert Grays, programmer of several film series in the Seattle area, including the Sanctuary Theater, the OK Hotel Film Series, and the Olympia Film Society, expresses doubt as to Wiggly World's plans to train Seattle audiences for independent film. "Considering the lack of challenging programming in this city, they have the potential to do great things. But it's really hard to encourage people to get out there and see films. In my experience, there's really a very small group of people who regularly attend."

Hook disagrees. "The way to get people to attend the theater is to not be afraid to market it. If you can get a core audience to believe in you, who develop a habit of going to see things at the Grand Illusion, then that translates into a bigger thing. But you have to let them know it's there in order for that to happen."

The theater re-opened its doors January 31. Independent film scholar Ray Carney made a keynote presentation before a screening of John Cassavetes' *A Woman Under the Influence*. The program continued with showings of works by Su Friedrich as well as local filmmakers Rick Schmidt and Caveh Zahedi. A panel discussion with local filmmakers and screenings of their short film work rounded out the weekend.

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Future theater programming includes showings of independent cinema from around the world, repertory specials (likely the theater's most stable endeavor), and retrospectives of great directors' work.

"We want to not only show films, but also be able to inspire people," says Hook. "A theater can be incredibly inspiring to filmmakers; if they can see what's out there, they will continue to have faith in what they're doing. The sad thing about Hollywood and mass media is the loss of local culture, which is where true culture and truly independent ideas begin."

Noelia Santos is a freelance writer living in Seattle. Her work also appears in the Seattle Weekly.

Hard to Beat: Free Film Stock for Documentaries

Eastman Kodak has announced plans to cultivate American documentary production by donating 200,000 feet of 16mm stock—enough for 80 hours of production—to the Los Angeles-based International Documentary Association (IDA).

The IDA is a nonprofit organization with 1,400 members in 24 countries that serves as a forum for non-fiction filmmakers. The IDA also conducts an annual Distinguished Achievement Awards competition to recognize excellence in the documentary field.

"We believe all important documentaries should be originated on film," says Kodak's John Mason. "It provides more flexibility for production and display on current television and future HDTV systems, as well as in theaters. Film is also a much more enduring archival medium than magnetic tape."

Kodak refers to the donation as a "pilot project," perhaps indicating that plans exist to develop a regular grant program. Reminding filmmakers of the advantages of film may also encourage them to buy more—an important concern for Kodak as high-end video production becomes increasingly popular among documentarians.

IDA executive director Betsy McLane points out that Kodak has long been a supporter of her organization. "They are a true friend—this donation will provide tangible support for deserving nonfiction producers and help to ensure the efficacy of their work."

For more information, call Kamla Maya Franklin at IDA: (310) 284-8422; fax: 785-9334.

Ryan Deussing is the editorial assistant at The Independent.



THE SICHEL SISTERS

writer & director

ALL OVER ME

BY ELIZA BERRY

THE STREETS OF HELL'S KITCHEN AND RIOT grrrl rock set the stage for *All Over Me*, the first feature from a triumvirate of gutsy New York women: producer Dolly Hall, director Alex Sichel, and writer Sylvia Sichel. *All Over Me* is a dark, gritty, coming-of-age story told from a lesbian, feminist point of view and driven by a roaring punk-rock soundtrack.

This labor of love started three years ago, when Alex Sichel received a grant from the Princess Grace Foundation to work on a script set in the riot grrrl music scene. A graduate of Columbia University's film program, Alex collaborated on the screenplay with her younger sister Sylvia, who had studied creative writing at Oberlin College and has seen her plays performed Off Off Broadway.

The sisters have an easy rapport. Over coffee in a downtown cafe, Alex's strident manner of expression is neatly balanced by Sylvia's demure, self-effacing air. Fortunately, their differences were complementary during the writing and film-making process. While Alex was drawn to the riot grrrl scene, Sylvia was more interested in the noir terrain of a relationship between two adolescent girls. *All Over Me* combines both elements as it describes the story of Claude, an aspiring grunge rocker, and her troubled best friend and first crush, Ellen. As their friendship disintegrates after a boyfriend and a homophobic murder alter their lives, Claude—tenderly portrayed by Allison Folland (*To Die For*)—is transformed and ultimately liberated.

Claude's internal struggle was a challenge for first-time writer Sylvia, who nonetheless experienced her own sense of liberation in moving from stage to screenwriting. "It was thrilling for me to explore the character in such an internal way," she says. "I had much more control over what the audience would focus on." Her sister agrees, saying, "I was really striving to use film in a very vertical way, to go deeper than the average linear story."

Both women are adamant about the necessity of rewrites (Sylvia spent a year and a half on



All Over Me writer Sylvia Sichel and director Alex Sichel.
Photo: Laurie E. Seid
(inset) Tara Subkoff and Alison Folland in *All Over Me*
Photo: Bill Foley, courtesy Fine Line Features

hers). "It's really important to spend the time," notes Alex. "I just don't believe those people who say they did it in a few weeks. Either they're lying or the scripts they write are shit."

While the sisters were working on the script, producer Dolly Hall was beginning to look for a new project. Hall had just finished coproducing the lesbian farce *The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love*, and the film's director, Maria Maggenti, suggested the Sichel sisters.

Hall had no shortage of potential projects. Ever since she line-produced Ang Lee's *The*

Wedding Banquet (which cost \$600,000 and grossed \$38-million worldwide), she says, "My phone never really stopped ringing."

The Sichel project seemed a perfect fit. Hall related strongly to the script. "I really believed in this story," she says. "I had lived it. I fell in love, got cheated. It is universal and particular all at once."

The sisters and Hall formed Medusa Pictures and started to look for financing. Or as Alex jokes, "We all looked and Dolly found it." Hall believed in the film so much that when push came to shove, she invested her own

money, using her profits on *The Incredibly True Adventures* to float the production. "My lawyer will tell you I'm insane, but I knew we'd get it financed. 'If we build it, they will come' is my motto." Ten days after they wrapped the movie, she closed the financing with two private investors.

The film was finished in April 1996, a difficult time of year to try to garner attention. The Sundance Film Festival had come and gone, and the next big domestic festival wasn't until Toronto in September. The filmmakers faced the challenge of stirring up interest without the benefit of festival hype.

The trio's lawyer, Ezra Doner, was instrumental in strategizing with Hall. Together they came up with a plan to screen the film on both coasts two days apart.

"We invited cast and crew and invested our last few dollars in airline tickets between L.A. and New York. It was a gamble," explains Alex. Executives at all the major distribution companies had previously expressed interest, but no one had committed any money. "All these female executives said, 'Oh God, yes, this film has to get made. Call me when it's done,'" Alex wryly notes. "It takes a lot for someone to write a check."

Their gamble paid off. Liz Mann from Fine Line saw the film and called her boss, Ruth Vitale, immediately. Two days later, *All Over Me* was sold to Fine Line. The film is scheduled to open March 28.

he sisters' story of preparation, determination, and conviction is echoed in their heroine's triumphant tale. "Claude is our hero. She actually succeeds in sticking up for herself which, for a girl at her age in our society, is really hard," says Sylvia.

Like their hero, the Sichel sisters have succeeded in standing up for themselves. "You really have to stay involved," says Alex, stressing the importance of staying with the film even after distribution has been secured. Without missing a beat, her sister finishes the thought: "No one cares as much about your film as you do."

Eliza Berry is a filmmaker in postproduction on her debut feature, Le Femme de Nulle Part (The Girl from Nowhere).

ROB NILSSON

director

CHALK

BY MICHAEL FOX

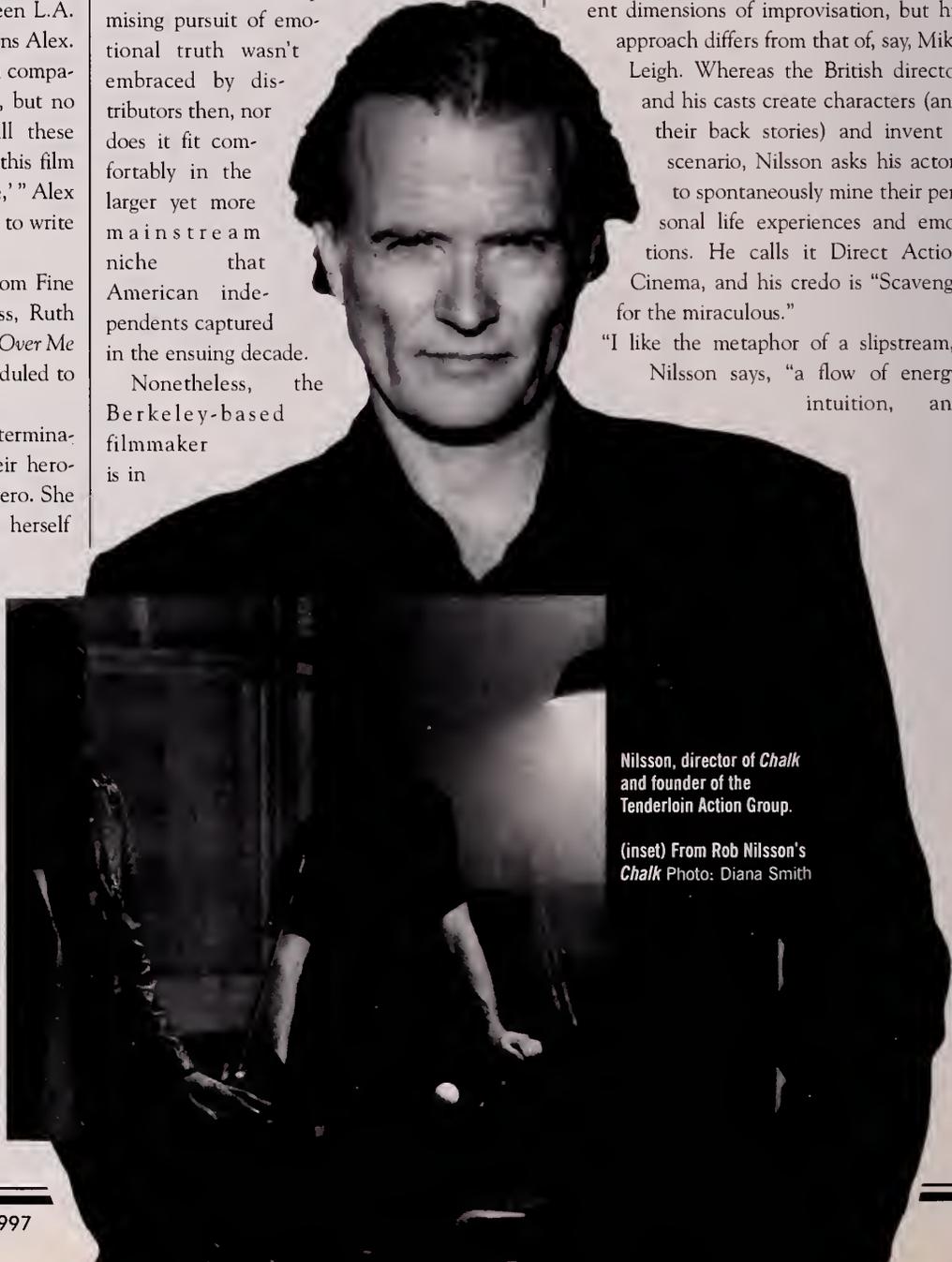
AS FAR AS THE FILM INDUSTRY IS CONCERNED, Rob Nilsson dropped off the radar about 15 minutes after he won the grand prize at the 1988 U.S. Film Festival (subsequently rechristened the Sundance Film Festival) for *Heat and Sunlight* and hasn't been sighted since. Nilsson's uncompromising pursuit of emotional truth wasn't embraced by distributors then, nor does it fit comfortably in the larger yet more mainstream niche that American independents captured in the ensuing decade.

Nonetheless, the Berkeley-based filmmaker is in

the midst of a creative whirlwind, thanks to the combination of inexpensive new technology and his own restless energy. *Chalk*, his latest take-no-prisoners drama of outsiders jousting for scraps and self-respect in a low-rent pool hall, premiered last spring at the San Francisco International Film Festival and will have its theatrical premiere this spring. (If the discussions he was having with distributors at press-time yield no results, Nilsson won't hesitate to self-distribute *Chalk*, as he did *Heat and Sunlight*.) Four years in the making, this story of family resentments boasts a mostly nonprofessional cast culled from the Tenderloin Action Group, an intensive acting and production workshop founded by Nilsson that matches volunteer filmmakers with recently homeless Bay Area denizens.

Nilsson is committed to exploring different dimensions of improvisation, but his approach differs from that of, say, Mike Leigh. Whereas the British director and his casts create characters (and their back stories) and invent a scenario, Nilsson asks his actors to spontaneously mine their personal life experiences and emotions. He calls it Direct Action Cinema, and his credo is "Scavenge for the miraculous."

"I like the metaphor of a slipstream," Nilsson says, "a flow of energy, intuition, and



Nilsson, director of *Chalk* and founder of the Tenderloin Action Group.

(inset) From Rob Nilsson's *Chalk* Photo: Diana Smith

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experience. When we're filming, we're recording it in real time, receiving this slipstream of information, feeling, and emotion that links everybody. I trained for 30 years to do this."

Nilsson's relentless probing for the emotional heart of the moment—in rehearsal as well as in filmed performance—hearkens to another maverick, John Cassavetes, but he's plugged into the future when it comes to cutting the cost of getting films in the can. *Chalk and Singing*, the first installment in Nilsson's ambitious new series of nine theatrical features, *Nine at Night*, was shot on Betacam SP, cut on an Avid, and blown up to 35mm. Another plus to the lightweight camera, from Nilsson's perspective, is the flexibility in shooting on the run in urban landscapes.

"More and more," Nilsson says, "I'm trying to dip into stuff that's germane to the streets, that's already in the streets. It's free-form, it's an experiment as to where the chaos is and where the order is and how to blend the two. We're mixing the ridiculous and the demonic and everything in between." As far as Nilsson is concerned, you can keep your magic hour; after dark is when the action begins. "It's the time when paradoxes occur: We dare more, but we fear more, leading to adventures we don't have in the day."

Nine at Night veers closer to Kieslowski's *Three Colors* trilogy than his *Decalogue*, as characters from one film surface in the background of another. Nilsson is cobbling together the money through a limited partnership and foreign presales. His goal is to keep making movies; five of the *Nine at Night* have already been shot, although *Singing* is the only one so far to be cut.

Tall and lanky with his omnipresent black motorcycle jacket, Nilsson doesn't look like he's in his mid-fifties, although his hair is now streaked with grey. One would never describe the man as mellowing, especially after reading his hilariously vituperative essays dissecting Tarantino and other wunderkinder. As far as his vision and approach, Nilsson asserts, "I'm not going anywhere that I wasn't going before," and he's right: the impassioned themes of the new film—individual responsibility and the inseparability of the personal and the political—are the same ones that have dominated Nilsson's work since he broke onto the scene with *Northern Lights* in 1979.

Nilsson was honored with a retrospective in December at the Harvard Film Archive, but unfortunately there are few other signs that the American public has overdosed on special-

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effects movies and is ready for the unglamorous characters and emotional honesty that Nilsson traffics in. Seemingly Sundance won't champion that brand of truly independent work, either; its top prize hasn't gone to a film of equivalent uncompromising intensity since Nilsson's triumph in 1988. Nilsson doesn't blame anybody but his fellow filmmakers, however, with their calling-card movies.

"Film is going way of the training-wheel endeavor," he says with equal parts exasperation and resignation, "to get into the big show—Hollywood. Most of the young filmmakers don't have an anti-Hollywood view. They don't perceive the commercialization of Hollywood as bad. They're looking to join the club."

For more information about *Chalk*, contact producers Rand Crook and Ethan Sing, Pacific Rim Media, 539 Natoma St., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 255-7872; fax: 255-7864.

Michael Fox is a Bay Area freelance writer and a longtime contributor to The Independent.

○
MICHAEL BENSON

documentarian

**PREDICTIONS
OF FIRE**

BY RYAN DEUSSING

IN 1991, MICHAEL BENSON TRAVELED TO Slovenia to begin production on what was supposed to be his second-year film for New York University's graduate film program. Nonplussed after two years of film school, Benson decided to take a shot at a professional TV production, leaving the door open at NYU only in case his plans fell through. When the project began to take off, it became clear that the film meant more to him than school, and he never went back. "The main positive aspect of film school was the people who went there," he recalls. "Once you start to work with them, it doesn't make much sense to continue paying \$20,000 a year."

Benson intended to make a film about the controversial Slovenian art

collective Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), whose exploits he'd been following since the mid-eighties.

Fresh out of college, Benson had landed a job at the *New York Times*, where he came across a wire-story about one of NSK's first scandals: they had entered a poster from Nazi Germany (with slight adjustments) in a contest commemorating the birthday of Yugoslavian dictator Josip Broz Tito—and won. The Yugoslavian government was chagrined when they realized the iconography they sanctioned was hardly distinguishable from Fascist propaganda.

"It was a fascinating strategy—questioning and revealing the mechanisms of totalitarian power—and something that I was already very interested in," says Benson. "I said to myself, 'I've gotta meet them.'" Soon thereafter, he made his first trip to Slovenia to write a story about NSK for *The Nation*.



"I never did write the story, for various reasons, but I met the NSK people and it was a great experience—their interest in the questions of power and manipulation was in complete sync with my own."

Benson's interest in NSK and the politics of Eastern Europe may be a function of his background; he was born in Europe and lived

for years in both Moscow and Belgrade, where his father was an American diplomat. "I was constantly flying back and forth between East and West and seeing first-hand the hypocrisies of both worlds." Benson eventually stayed in the East, freelancing for publications including *The Nation*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *New York Times*, and gathering material for what would

later become the award-winning NSK documentary, *Predictions of Fire*.

"It was during this period that I turned 27 and had a sort of 'dark night of the soul' experience," he recalls. "I realized that what I really wanted to do was make films, but I was totally scared by the idea." After several years of journalism, Benson realized that if he didn't find



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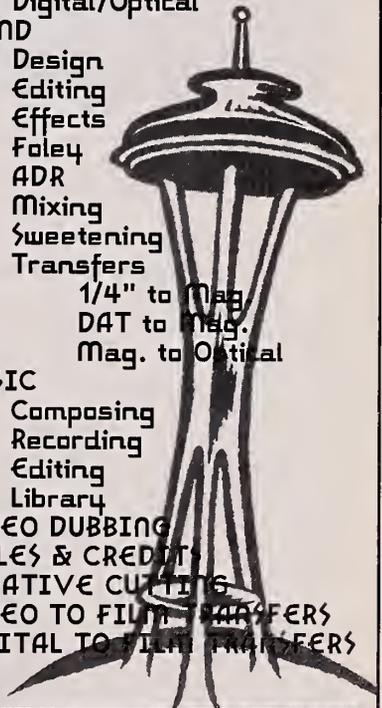
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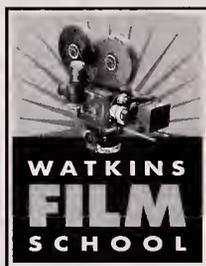
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the courage to try filmmaking, he would probably never forgive himself. He applied to NYU, was accepted, and headed to New York.

Benson had trouble coming up with dramatic shorts—the staple product of film school—perhaps because his thoughts focused on finding a way to make a film about NSK. “It occurred to me that it was the perfect way to trade in on my journalistic experience—to make a documentary film as innovative as possible in an essayistic, Euro-style mode.”

The result is a film about art, politics, and war in which Benson chronicles the NSK phenomenon, focusing on the band Laibach, whose distinctive blend of German lyrics, industrial beats, and what some see as fascist iconography attracted both attention and outrage throughout Europe. In addition to footage from Laibach concerts and NSK “art actions,” *Predictions* features excerpts from Yugoslavian newsreels, Communist propaganda films, and videos shot during the recent Balkan war.

“As far as I’m concerned, the mystery of mankind’s manipulability is right at the center of the twentieth century, and that’s the subject of the film—how are we so easily manipulated?”

While the film’s experimental combination of documentary and “staged” footage aims to provoke viewers into thinking seriously about its subject, the result may prove too dense for audiences whose interest in Yugoslavian issues begins and ends with Christian Amanpour. Although *Predictions* has screened in 25 U.S. cities and garnered rave reviews, American television has yet to bite. Meanwhile, the film has been televised in Australia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina (TV-Sarajevo), Austria, Finland, and Hungary. A bootleg copy was even broadcast illegally by Belgrade’s TVB late last year.

Predictions was screened in the new “Frontier” section at last year’s Sundance and won first prize in both Vancouver and St. Petersburg. Benson also recently finished shooting his second film, which, like his first, is being coproduced by TV Slovenia. He refers to the film, currently titled *Transnationala*, as an “artistic doc-comedy road-movie” that follows six Slovenians, three Russians, and an American on a “mission of discovery” through 20 American states in two RV’s. “Just imagine three Russian Jewish conceptualist intellectual artists hitting Las Vegas, and you’ll get the general idea.”

Predictions of Fire, Artistic License Films (212) 265-9119; Kinetikon Pictures: <http://lois.kud-fp.si/kinetikon/>

Ryan Deussing (ryan@thing.net) is a freelance writer and editorial assistant for The Independent.

The Hamptons Film Festival: MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE?



A four-year-old festival weighs regional charm vs. industry clout

BY DANA HARRIS

THERE'S ANY NUMBER OF REASONS FOR A film festival's appeal—quirky choices, regional selections, lots of premieres—but the four-year-old Hamptons International Film Festival has a trump card: there aren't a lot of ways to spend October 16-20 that are more pleasant than hanging out in the tony village of East Hampton, Long Island.

The allure of fall weather has remained consistent, but with three festival directors over the last four years, the festival has had to struggle to establish an identity. While it's possible that 1996 will prove its breakthrough year—the festival's grand prize was shared by *Mugshot* and *Puddle Cruiser*, a film that led ABC-TV to invite the director to write a pilot for the network—the Hamptons has some unusual sources of support.

It could be argued that when Sundance began discussing its "premieres only" policy in 1995 and singled out the Hamptons, it was a sort of benediction. (If they threaten Sundance, they have to be good, right?) And timing the festival to coincide with the last glimmer of Indian summer does more than bring out leaf-happy movie buffs; it helps entice industry watchers who might otherwise be tempted to skip the three-hour trip from Manhattan and track the festival via the trades.

However, these blessings are mixed in the respect that while they push the Hamptons toward a higher profile, that profile defines the Hamptons as being more of an industry festival than a regional one.

As for first-time festival director Ken Tabachnick, he isn't ready to come down on



Two stars of the Hamptons Film Festival: A stretch of good weather and a small-town feel. Photo: Patricia Thomson.

either side. While he acknowledges that locale is a large part of the festival's charm, he says the Hamptons—which this year offered 48 features (10 of which competed for the top Golden Starfish Award), 13 documentaries, and 37 shorts—has more to offer than good weather and proximity to Manhattan.

"We want to provide a supportive and hospitable environment for films with a strong artistic and creative voice and to nourish filmmaking talent," says Tabachnick. "That sort of expands to building the profile and presence of the festival within the film industry, so that the industry and the public recognize us as a serious proponent of the filmmaking art. We intend to become a major cultural resource on the east end of Long Island."

Sam Maser, who served as the programming director for the 1996 festival, sees the Hamptons festival as benefiting the local community. "There's enormous interest from both the year-round and summer people, and this seems to bring both together," she says. However, she admits that the Hamptons name seems to captivate New York distributors. Among those who attended the 1996 festival were ABC Entertainment president Jamie

Tarses, Miramax vice president Amy Israel, and Twentieth Century Fox vice president Bob Aaronson.

"There's a lot of festivals, but there aren't a lot that get a lot of attention," says Maser, who says the Hamptons seems to be perceived as a 'New York festival'—i.e., one that will receive national attention—rather than a regional event. "The distributors look at it differently than a regional festival in Texas or Massachusetts. There were films we couldn't have because they [the filmmakers] were afraid of what a negative New York review would do for them. I thought that was interesting—people perceived us as having the power to launch."

Both Maser and Tabachnick were new to the festival in 1996, but only Tabachnick stayed on. (Among other reasons, Maser wanted a job that didn't require a long-distance relationship with her husband, who works in Manhattan.)

With a background in live, video, and film production, Tabachnick spent the last three years as the corporate director of the Independent Feature Project and the producer of the Gotham Awards.

Since this is his first year to direct the festi-



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val, Tabachnick says he'd "like to reserve judgment" on assessing its strengths. However, he mentions several highlights. "We actually give awards and services, and the community is a particularly sophisticated one and is intelligent and responsive to the work of the filmmakers."

While Maser acknowledges buyers as welcome participants, she sees the Hamptons as being concerned with the more intimate aspects of festival-going. "Other festivals have become [targeted] for distributors or buyers, but that's what markets are for," she says. "Regional festivals mean that the audience can interact with the person who created [the film]. A lot of distribution companies were calling me about certain titles, but that's not what it's about. People don't usually get the chance to talk to the filmmakers."

Steven Soderbergh, who had three films at

the festival (*Schizopolis*, *Gray's Anatomy*, and *The Daytrippers*, which he executive produced) says whatever the Hamptons is offering, it's just right. "The people who run the festival were nice, the location was spectacular, and it hasn't turned into a market yet. There's a sense that the people are there because they want to see movies rather than make deals. When you remove that element, it's amazing how different that is. That whole side of the business is not present. It takes

There aren't a lot of ways more pleasant to spend October 16-20 than hanging out in East Hampton, Long Island.

the *sex, lies...* scenario at Sundance, where some film achieves notoriety," he says, referring to his own film that caused both his career and Sundance's profile to skyrocket.

Screenings for *Breathing Room* didn't have much; despite a driving storm, the film packed the house. Courtesy Arrow Releasing.



While the Hamptons may not be notorious for anything other than housing costs just yet, filmmakers liked the less frenetic pace. Mark Wexler, who directed the autobiographical documentary *Me and My Matchmaker*, says he appreciated the chance to talk with his audience, although he notes, "Everyone was incredibly rich."

Not that he held that against them. "Variety said [*Matchmaker*] was one of the top five audience favorites." As for his own assessment of the festival's intent, he saw the Hamptons as straddling both sides of the fence. "It seems kind of split between an audience festival and a filmmaker's festival."

Carlton Prickett, whose dark comedy *Winterlude* took the top prize in the short film competition, says that the festival offered a balance within the buzz. "It was busy enough to make me feel it was an accomplishment to be there, but not so busy that I couldn't relax," he says. "I went to Sundance three years ago as a viewer and it was such a melee that I all I wanted to do was go skiing; I didn't want to deal with movies."

However, the Hamptons received a record number of entries in 1996, and some filmmak-

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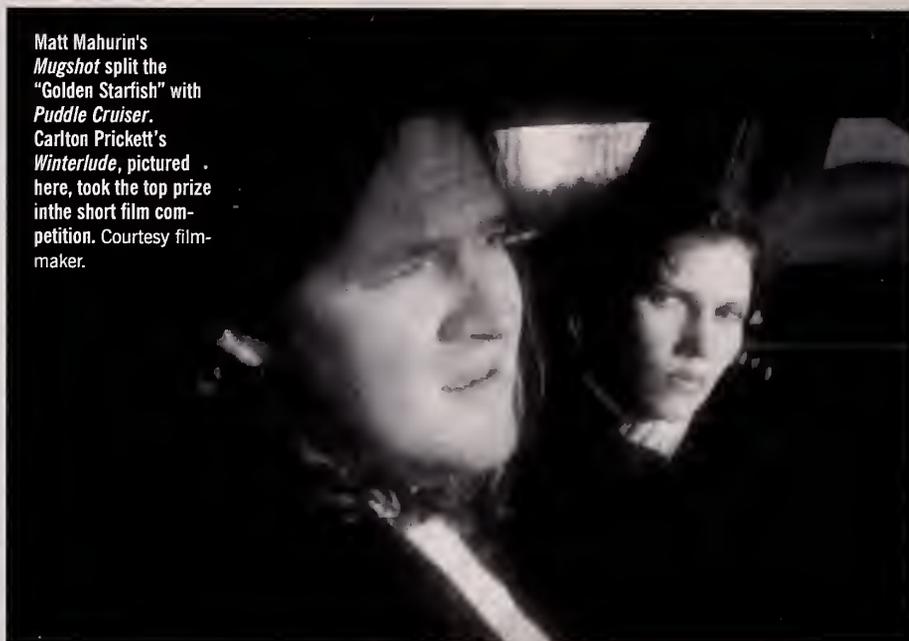
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Matt Mahurin's *Mugshot* split the "Golden Starfish" with *Puddle Cruiser*. Carlton Prickett's *Winterlude*, pictured here, took the top prize in the short film competition. Courtesy filmmaker.



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ers felt the festival wasn't prepared for its own growth. Fire marshals were called in when *The Daytrippers*' capacity-plus audience overwhelmed the theater. And Jon Sherman, whose film *Breathing Room* drew a full house despite a dramatic storm that knocked out much of East Hampton's power, says that he felt the festival often suffered from a failure to communicate.

"I don't think they did a good job of letting us know what went on when. I didn't know what press were there. I didn't know if agents were there or not or if they got to my screenings," he says. "It felt kind of nebulous. It was hard to get in touch with people."

However, Sherman is quick to add that he hardly blames the festival planners. "They're very nice people. Sam Maser was extraordinarily kind to us. I think they just weren't prepared for their growth."

It's a fair assessment. Maser was hired just four months before the festival was scheduled to begin and, as she puts it, "I had to get the show on the road. '96 was not a year to reconfigure." As a result, the programs varied between independent titles in competition, premieres of small-scale studio releases with an independent feel (the Irish political drama *Some Mother's Son* and Nick Cassavetes' *Unhook the Stars*) and a tribute to Alan J. Pakula (*Khute, All the President's Men*, and the upcoming *Devil's Own*, starring Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt). And panels on filmmaking entitled "The Look," "The Story," and "The Sound" seemed designed more for audience members than aspiring filmmakers.

There was also a high behind-the-scenes celebrity quotient in several short films. One of

the short film sequences was built on celebrity shorts directed by Jeff Goldblum (*Little Surprises*, which also was nominated for a 1996 Academy Award) and Rob Lowe (*American Untitled*). Richard Dreyfuss' short *Present Tense, Past Perfect* and Angelica Huston's much-beleaguered *Bastard Out of Carolina* also made their debuts.

A documentary jury composed of Michael Benson (*Predictions of Fire*), John Reilly (co-founder and co-director of the Global Village Documentary Festival), and Chris Hegedus (*The War Room*) presented Nikita Mikhalkov (*Burnt by the Sun*) the Documentary Award for his film, *Anna*.

Jury members for the dramatic competition, which included actor Roy Scheider and director David O. Russell, selected Jay Chandrasekhar's *Puddle Cruiser* and Matt Mahurin's *Mugshot* to share the Starfish prize of more than \$100,000 in production-related facilities, materials, and services provided by the likes of DuArt Film Laboratories, R.E.I. Media Group, and Tribeca Film Center.

Mahurin, whose resume includes videos for Peter Gabriel, U2, REM, and David Byrne, photographs and illustrations for *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *The New York Times*, and photographs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's permanent collection, says that the award will be "very, very helpful." Laughing, he adds, "Of course, I don't think anything is as valuable as cash, but you have the opportunity to establish new relationships and you get the feeling that they're supportive."

As for the future of his film, which

screened at the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival and Prague International Film Festival before it came to the Hamptons, Mahurin says, "Some people got interested in it. But there hasn't been time for anything to become real."

Meanwhile, *Puddle Cruiser* is gathering so much speed that it threatens to be the Hampton's breakthrough hit. "The head of ABC-TV was at the awards ceremony when we won and we had a screening in L.A. the week after," says Chandrasekhar, who made the film with the help of the Broken Lizard Comedy Group, the theater troupe he co-founded in 1992. "CAA saw us at the [Independent Feature Film] Market and wanted to sign us then. Out of the Hamptons, we signed up with them, and the fact that Jamie Tarses was there, we signed a deal to do a pilot show with ABC."

The former assistant to entertainment attorney John Sloss still seems stunned by his good fortune. "I'm getting to talk to Kevin Smith and David Russell and Chris Columbus—all these people who are seeing the movie and want to do something," says Chandrasekhar as he tightens his film for its appearance in Sundance's American Spectrum. "Having been on the outside of the door for so long, it seems to open so wide."

However, he notes that while he's honored by the generous services provided through the Hampton's Golden Starfish Award, there's a limit to his gratitude. "Obviously, [entering the Hamptons] wouldn't have been worth it if Sundance hadn't let us in."

While Tabachnick might flinch at that assessment, he isn't necessarily looking to become the next Sundance—or any other festival, for that matter. "We look at parts of Berlin, Telluride, Sundance, New York, Cannes, Toronto—there are so many little elements of the way people do things that are interesting to us. We want to be an organization that the community and the industry can utilize. We hope to continue to bring films to the marketplace, but we won't become like Rotterdam or Toronto. That's not our goal for the future. We are interested in films that have not found a home in the marketplace; premieres are not a concern. We're trying to serve as wide a group of films as possible."

Adds Maser, "Hopefully, with Ken they'll have the continuity they need to move forward. I was there for a transitory time, and I'll be interested to see where they go from there."

Dana Harris is managing editor of The Independent.

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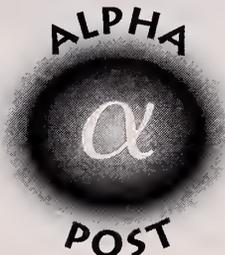
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OUT OF HIBERNATION

Argentina's Mar del Plata Film Festival returns after a 26-year hiatus

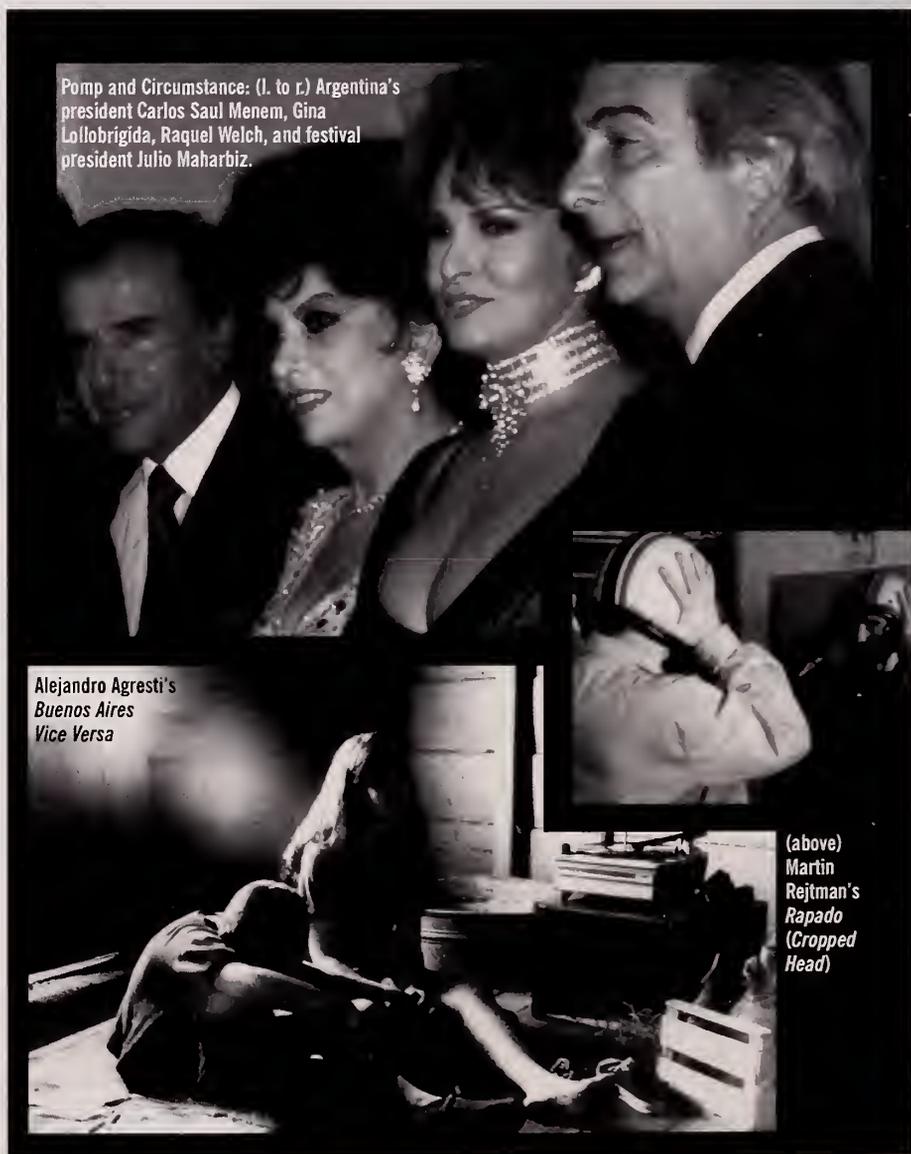
BY HOWARD FEINSTEIN

"IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO GET INTO THAT SMALL fraction—something like 1.5 percent—of the American market for foreign-language pictures." That's Héctor Olivera's (*Funny Dirty Little War*) fatalistic take on why U.S. distributors took so little interest in the 12th Festival Internacional de Ciné de Mar del Plata, held November 7-16 in Argentina's legendary middle-class seaside resort. "We invited Miramax and Sony Classics. Maybe the attitude is wait and see."

The veteran Buenos Aires-based director is vice president of the festival, vice president of the nonprofit foundation that organizes it, and president of the Argentine producers' organization—not to mention the most commercially viable and internationally recognized producer-director in the country. (He is definitely the festival's in-house cinephile and intellectual.) Olivera's pessimistic view of the potential for Spanish-language movies to find a foothold in the U.S. might help explain why most of these films screened at the festival lacked subtitles or simultaneous translation.

This omission affected the large number of movies shown in Panorama del Ciné Argentino and Pantalla Iberoamericana, plus a sprinkling of Latin American product in sections like *Detrás de la Cámara* (Behind the Camera), *La Mujer y el Ciné* (Women and Film), *Contra-campo* (Reverse Shot), and the official competition itself (a mixed bag at best). As one of two non-Spanish-speaking members of the FIPRESCI jury, a body of international critics mandated to give one prize for the competition and one for the Latin American selections, I fought for, and belatedly received, a wonderful live translator, who sat next to me in the cinemas and spoke out loud.

But what about the other international guests who speak the language and could potentially spread the word about this relatively invisible cinema? "We are not interested in



Pomp and Circumstance: (l. to r.) Argentina's president Carlos Saul Menem, Gina Lollobrigida, Raquel Welch, and festival president Julio Mahabiz.

Alejandro Agresti's *Buenos Aires Vice Versa*

(above) Martin Rejtman's *Rapado* (Cropped Head)

one another's films," says Olivera. "Venezuelan films do not interest people in Argentina, for example. This is the main problem that we, a Spanish-speaking community of 300 million, face." He adds that in Argentina, the number of movie houses has decreased from 1,600 to 300 in 10 years, and that "80 percent of the screens, and 90 percent in the rest of Latin America, are committed to Hollywood studio

films."

The festival, which ended a 26-year hiatus for what was once South America's largest and most prestigious film festival, focused its energy mostly on premiering international films (at least those that showed up on time or were not the victims of projector breakdowns); deploying a mutant glamour formula to create a national media buzz (Gina

Lolobrigida, Raquel Welch, and Jacqueline Bisset, none of whom were in a festival film, were paid and flown in for the kitschy opening night ceremony); and shamelessly building the profiles of artistic director Oscar Barney Finn (a minor film director) and festival president Julio Maharbiz, a close pal of Argentinian president Carlos Saúl Menem (a much-disliked faux-Peronist whose attempts to privatize the nation's economy have drastically increased unemployment levels to nearly 20 percent nationally and 40 percent in Mar del Plata). The local papers accused Maharbiz, who is also president of the national film school, of pocketing some of the festival's huge \$5 million budget (from federal, provincial, and local government sources), while Finn went on stage at the garish closing night festivities to accept the \$650,000 first prize for Pilar Miró's Spanish film (*The Dog in the Manger*), while the movie's producer was seated in the audience.

Still, the nine cinemas that screened nearly 170 feature films were often packed, despite the fact that Mar del Plata, a fairly small city, is a long drive (400 kilometers) from Buenos Aires, which contains one-third of the nation's 33 million inhabitants. "Ten to twenty years ago, arthouses didn't exist in Argentina," says Olivera. "Films by Bergman, Fellini, and Ichikawa were shown successfully in commercial cinemas. Even last year, 51 French films were shown in Argentina." A hungry domestic audience, presumably more accustomed to, and tolerant of, the kind of bureaucratic disorganization that plagued this festival, is clearly in place. The question is whether those at the top of the festival are willing to reassess its structure (inefficiently hierarchical, nepotistic) and priorities (self-promotion on the backs of filmmakers, cheap spectacles like fireworks, emphasis on imports rather than exports).

A few North American independent films made the competition this go-round: Dan Ireland's *The Whole Wide World* (Renee Zellweger took the Best Actress prize), Canadian Srinivas Krishna's *Lulu*, and Robert M. Young's *Caught*. Most of the Latin American films proved to be banal, technically incompetent, or both, but a few pearls

made life bearable. (Unfortunately, most are pretty unlikely to be shown in the U.S., save for an occasional national cinema retrospective at a place like New York's Walter Reade Theater. Pepe Vargas, director of the Chicago Latino Film Festival, was the only North American programmer at the festival.) The well-known Mexican director Arturo Ripstein, a fest juror, showed his brilliant black comedy *Profundo Carmesi* (*Deep Crimson*), based on the same true story about a fat woman and a slick gigolo who conspire to murder wealthy widows that inspired *The Honeymoon Killers*.

All three juries gave awards to the magnificent *Buenos Aires Vice Versa*, by Alejandro Agresti, who, until last year, was a politically motivated expatriate living in the Netherlands (still the source of much of his funding). In the

film, Agresti skillfully interweaves the tales of several survivors of the period (1976-83) when the

Argentine military ruled and tortured, with related stories of a younger generation still affected by its excesses. He makes it clear that you can't pin all the blame for the country's ills on right-wing rule: Cultural constants still in place threaten renewed repression.

Two other remarkable Spanish-language films also received coproduction financing from Europe: Buenos Aires-born Martin Rejtman's *Rapado* (*Cropped Head*), a spare, almost Bressonian exercise in urban angst backed with money from Argentina and the Netherlands (with additional help from the Rotterdam Festival's Hubert Bals Fund); and renowned Peruvian filmmaker Francisco J. Lombardi's *Bajo la Piel* (*Under the Skin*), a sharp, Chabrol-like thriller about sex and jealousy in a remote village, which had help from a Spanish production company. (Word was excellent on two films with experimental narratives, unseen by this writer, by young Argentinian directors: Gustavo Mosquera-R's *Moebius*, a collaborative effort by Mosquera-R's film school students, and Esteban Sapir's 16mm *Picado Fino* (*Minced Meat*), a first feature.) The economic and spiritual future of good South American cinema depends on the ability of new filmmakers to work systems outside their own borders. The people at home have either given up or don't give a damn.

Howard Feinstein is a New York-based film critic.

Raquel Welch wasn't in a festival film, but she was paid to fly in for the opening ceremonies.

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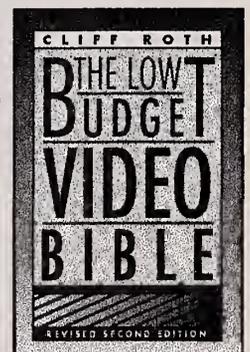
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I LOVE PARIS WHEN IT SIZZLES

Rencontres Internationale de Cinema à Paris

BY WANDA BERSHEN

ARRIVING IN PARIS IS LIKE BEING SET DOWN IN A candy store, not knowing which of its infinite pleasures to sample first. As the home of serious cinephiles par excellence, one glance at the weekly *Pariscope* (the equivalent of *Time Out New York*) requires choosing among the overwhelming variety of treats displayed on the 350 movie screens in the City of Light. And hard as it may be to believe, 100 of those are the equivalent of "art cinemas" in the U.S. We are definitely not in Kansas anymore.

Equally amazing is the fact that there are 130 million filmgoers in France, of whom 21 million attend arthouse theaters, which number 850 nationwide. That is close to 17 percent of the viewing public. And it turns out that this cornucopia of screens and the hordes of eager viewers are just the beginning of the story. The Center National de Cinématographie (CNC), a division of the Ministry of Culture devoted to the support of film production, distribution, and exhibition, receives funds annually via an 11 percent tax on every film ticket sold. In effect every ticket yields about 85 cents that goes back into the till for the next year's productions, coproductions, and distribution—adding up to roughly \$110 million annually.

One of the most exciting new events made possible by these extraordinary (from an American viewpoint) cultural funding practices is the *Rencontres Internationale de Cinema à Paris* (The International Festival of Cinema in Paris), held October 9-20, 1996, at the Videotheque de Paris. The Videotheque is a marvel in itself, a full-scale cinematheque established and funded in part through the Office of the Mayor of Paris, lying under an open pedestrian plaza called Forum-Les Halles, about a 10-minute walk from the Seine. An impressive facility, it has three screening rooms equipped for all formats of film and tape, a library of 5,600 films on tape, a viewing room with 40 carrels, and a cybercafe with 10 com-



Festival directors Michel Reilhac and Marie-Pierre Macia. Photo: Theresa Murphy

puter stations. The center's beautifully printed program calendar describes a year's worth of imaginative thematic series and special events. An equally handsome catalog for the festival makes it clear that this is an ambitious and well-supported organization.

The *Rencontres* was established in 1995 by Michel Reilhac, director of the Videotheque, and Marie-Pierre Macia, program director for the festival, with the explicit aim of introducing the work of new directors from throughout the world to the public and the industry. Helping these films find French distribution is their major priority, and the results so far have been excellent. Of the 31 films presented in 1995 (including 6 shorts and 25 documentary and dramatic features), 11 found theatrical distributors during or after the *Rencontres*. This year's program was substantially larger, totaling 50 films (33 features and 17 shorts).

Given a box office increase of 22 percent over 1995 and its youthful audience (60 per-

cent are under 25), the *Rencontres* is shaping up to be a very successful showcase for the work of new directors. The organizers do major outreach to get industry professionals to attend the screenings, seminars, and receptions, and they help set up meetings for the directors with distributors, sales agents, programmers, and producers while they are in Paris. Press coverage in print, radio, and television is rewardingly extensive. Clearly the organizers know how to get the word out, an essential part of giving these films a proper launch. The festival offered an excellent series of morning seminars on funding policy, production, distribution, building audiences, and working with new technologies. These provided concrete information about how things work in France and other European countries, and are beginning to explore how things work in the U.S. as well.

The *Rencontres* is committed to building an international network of independents,

and this year included a fascinating case study by Turbulent Arts' Mark Smolowitz of his experience opening the French film *Bye Bye* in New York City. A terrific first feature by Karim Didi, which benefited enormously by being chosen as the opening night film of the New Directors/New Films festival, *Bye Bye* garnered rave reviews. However, after one week-end of respectable but not sensational box office in a New York arthouse, the film was bumped in order to make room for a film from a large distributor. *Bye Bye* did go on to open in several other cities, and Didi found his U.S. experience useful and remarked how impressed he was with the curiosity and professionalism of American journalists.

Another interesting discussion was offered by Caroline Benjo and Carole Scotta of the French arthouse distributor Haut et Court. In 1995 they received funds from the French Ministry of Culture to travel in the U.S. for three months in order to survey the distribution environment for foreign films. They are preparing a report which will constitute an interesting and current survey of the U.S. market for foreign films. The two distributors came back with a strong sense of the difficulties encountered by foreign film distributors in the U.S. These smaller companies are trying to compete in a marketplace glutted with large distributors who can afford to advertise every week (thus getting discounted rates), which makes their films far less risky for even the most sympathetic exhibitors.

In contrast to this free-market approach, France makes funds available via several agencies to distributors like Haut et Court for things like making prints. These funds are competitive, awarded on the basis of a film's quality and the promotion plan presented. Distributors can also receive funds from the CNC after a film has been distributed based on the number of admissions sold. Additional support for distribution expenses can come through the union of theaters and an association of arthouses.

North American indies have done well at the Rencontres. After the first festival in 1995, five films found French distributors for a theatrical run. These were *The Addiction* (directed by Abel Ferrara), *Doom Generation* (Gregg Araki), *The Secret of Roan Inish* (John Sayles), *Careful* (Guy Maddin), and *Crumb* (Terry Zwickoff). This year's Rencontres included Ferrara's *The Funeral*, Alan Taylor's *Palookaville*, Ed Burns' *She's the One*, and four strong shorts. Negotiations with various Paris-

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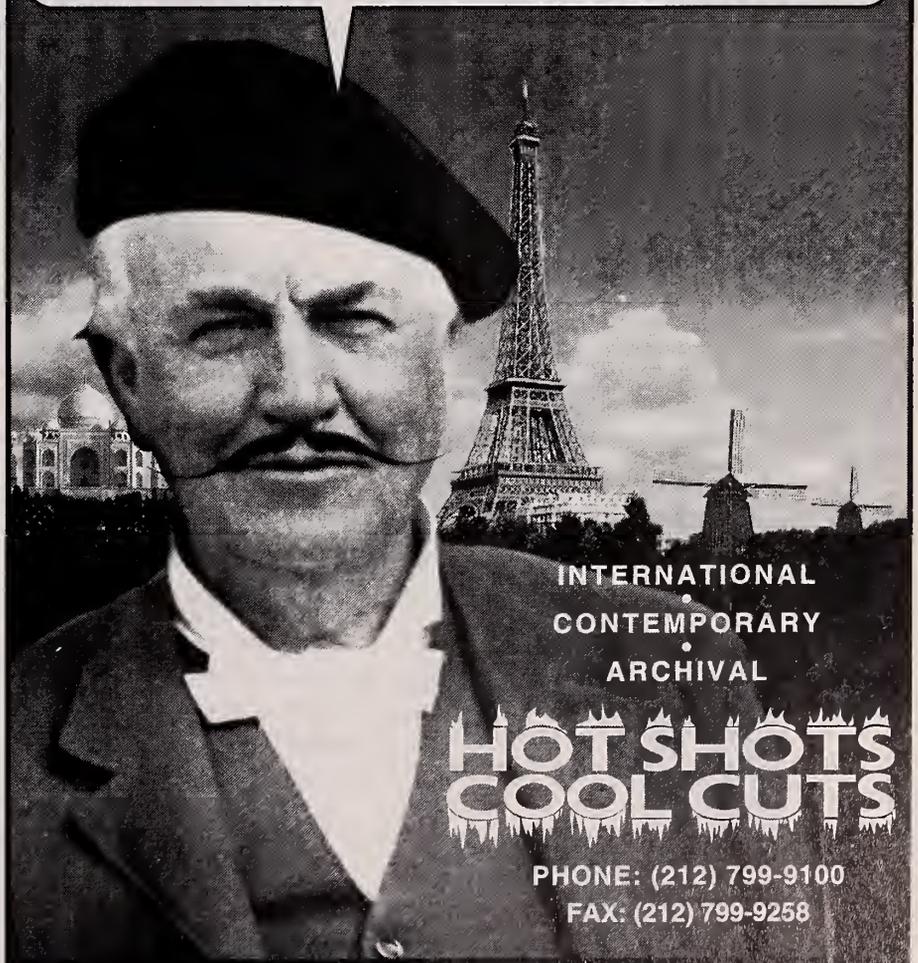
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based distributors and sales agents are in progress and look good as this goes to press.

Talking with Reilhac and Macia about differences in taste on our respective sides of the Atlantic was interesting. American indies are trendy with the young French crowd at present, but while *Welcome to the Dollhouse* and *Denise Calls Up* were big hits in France, *Living in Oblivion* and *Walking and Talking* bombed. Even 25-year-olds are particular in the City of Light.

Three prizes were awarded this year. Two films received the Prix Georges and Ruta Sadoul for first and second features: *Biography of a Young Accordionist* (S. Narymbetos, Kazakhstan) and *Reprise* (Herve Le Roux, France). Both will receive substantial support for lab costs and advertising to aid their distribution in France. The Grand Prix du Public went to the audience favorite, *Le Moindre des Choses*, a documentary set in a psychiatric clinic as preparations are made for a theater performance. The film will receive lab services, free advertising, and some cash—all towards its distribution in France. All three will likely be regarded as far too specialized for U.S. distribution other than at festival showings, much less to a youth audience. Another indication of the nature and breadth of audience taste here is the list of runners-up for the Audience Favorite, which included (in order of preference) *Fire* (Deepa Mehta), *Palookaville*, *Frantz Fanon* (Isaac Julien), and *Grains of Sand* (R. Hashiguchi).

Future plans are to continue the Rencontres as a showcase for fresh new work from around the globe without letting it grow too large. Right now, the quality of personal attention is refreshingly high. The delicious lunch with wine served daily after the seminars offers a truly civilized opportunity to meet and talk with professional colleagues. That kind of hospitality permeates everything about the Rencontres and Videothèque. These people really love film—and filmmakers—and will go to the mat for you. If you ever get an invitation from them, clear your schedule and get on a plane. Distribution deal or no, you'll come back feeling rewarded personally and professionally—indeed a rare festival experience.

Wanda Bershen was director of the Broadcast Archive and International Film Festival at the Jewish Museum 1989-95. She established Red Diaper Productions in 1995 to work with international film and TV as an independent curator, distributor, production consultant, and writer.

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< Director Greg Mottola, who labored seven long years to get his debut feature made and into theaters.

Photo: K.C. Bailey, all photos courtesy CFP

The Cat With Nine Lives

Greg Mottola & The Daytrippers

BY PATRICIA THOMSON

ON DAY ONE OF *THE DAYTRIPPERS*' 16-DAY SHOOT, DP JOHN INWOOD was loading up the truck when he noticed a case was missing. With a sinking feeling he realized it was the most important case—the one containing the camera. He had no doubt some of New York City's notorious camera thieves had been at work.

"There we are, with no camera," Inwood recalls. "We didn't freak out, partially because we were literally in shock. We just kept ourselves busy trying to do something productive." So they started lighting and had three scenes done by the time a replacement camera arrived several hours later.

Nonetheless, the stolen Aaton felt like the kiss of death. "Talk about omens," says Inwood. "But when we survived the first day, it was a good omen. We actually had the day's shot, in spite of that."

And so it went for *The Daytrippers*. Time and again, from preproduction through its long distribution quest, it would seem about to bite the dust, then it would spring to its feet again, like a cat with nine lives.

While *The Daytrippers* offers its share of micro-budget tips, its most important lesson is one of longevity. Although the film's director, Greg Mottola, appears to be another fresh young face suddenly popping up on the indie charts, this 32-year-old has actually pushed his rock up the hill for seven long years, if one goes all the way back to the day he first got a call from director Steven Soderbergh and producer Nancy Tenenbaum offering to executive produce his debut feature.

Seven years and nine lives later, *The Daytrippers* is finally bowing in theaters. But it's more than luck that got it there; it's old-fashioned persistence, endurance, and, not incidentally, Mottola's considerable knack for writing and directing comedy.

The Daytrippers is a suburban road movie set on the Long Island Expressway and the streets of Manhattan. It tells the story of a young wife, Eliza D'Amico (Hope Davis), who finds what appears to be a love letter to her husband, Louis (Stanley Tucci). At a loss, she shows it to her mom (Anne Meara), who insists she confront her husband with it—in person. So Eliza heads to Manhattan, accompanied by her whole family: overbearing mom, hen-pecked dad (Pat McNamara), visiting sis (Parker Posey), and her pretentious boyfriend (Liev Schreiber). They arrive at Louis's office only to discover he left work early. But rifling through his desk, they find an incriminating photo of him with a woman. Borrowing techniques from *Matlock*, the family follows his trail, staking out the blue door visible in the photo, until they finally catch up with him and learn the truth in the film's surprise denouement.

It's a fairly simple plot. What makes *The Daytrippers* so appealing is its clever writing, laced with great one-liners and shaggy dog stories. But what grows on you



is its astute portrait of complicated family dynamics, and its running theme of the lies people tell—to themselves as well as to others. *The Daytrippers* is a comedy with content. It's much like its maker—smart but unassuming, sincere but unsentimental. But pity Mottola's mother if she had as difficult a birth as he did with this baby.

THE INFAMOUS BLUE DOOR IS ACTUALLY THE ENTRY TO Mottola's Soho apartment building. On this grey November day, his apartment is quiet and cozy, not the whirlwind of activity it was during production, when it

housed craft services (coffee and 50 cent cookies), while his neighbor across the hall provided the sole dressing room. Film memorabilia, books, and scripts are scattered about. There's Louise Brooks on the screensaver; a poster of *Citizen Kane* glaring above the kitchen table; and volumes of Fellini lining the bookshelves ("my biggest hero," says Mottola). A quiet type with steel wire-rims and hereditary baby-smooth baldness, Mottola recalls how growing up in Huntington, Long Island, he obsessively wrote plays and comic books. Thanks to his par-

laugh. These included a horror thriller, "because I knew I wanted to get it out of my system, so I would never do it again. I called it *Man Being Chased in the Woods by a Psycho Killer*. It ended in some really absurd way, where the two actors fall out of character and get angry at the director and tell him to grow up."

Five more shorts followed, including a "surrealist, mini-Buñuel film" and a stab at working-class realism ("an earnest and boring movie"). While in Pittsburgh, he also had his one and only experience as a PA on a commercial film. "I worked for a week on *Day of the Dead* making fake zombie vomit," Mottola says. Then he headed to film school at Columbia University. It was here he hit his stride, making the short that ultimately paved the way to *The Daytrippers*.

Swingin' in the Painter's Room (1989) already contains the types who populate *The Daytrippers*: cheating couples, artsy-fartsy poseurs, and heart-broken innocents. The film is set entirely in one room—an artist's bedroom, where people throw their coats during a party. People come and go, they seduce, succumb, repel, do mischief, steal, eavesdrop, and change partners, all in 13 minutes. In homage to Hitchcock's *Rope*, the black-and-white film was set up as one continuous take. That's a trick one might expect out of a clever film student, but what's most invigorating is its fresh dialogue, identifiable characters, and true comic flair.

An agent spotted the film at a showcase of Columbia student work and sent it to Steven Soderbergh. "I thought it was absolutely hilarious," recalls the director, who at that time was on the cusp of his own breakthrough, with *sex, lies & videotape*. He in turn passed it on to his executive producer, Nancy Tenenbaum. "Most students were spending fifteen to twenty thousand dollars—essentially their entire trust funds," she says. "Greg had nothing. In working with nothing, I found that he had told a very funny, effective, interesting story. To me that was incredibly

impressive."

"We called him up," Soderbergh continues, "and said, 'Are you planning to write a feature-length script?' and he said 'Yeah.'" Mottola was halfway through *Lush Life*, which he describes as "a quasi *Sweet Smell of Success—La Dolce Vita* story" about "a few weeks in the life of a journalist—his personal life and a specific kind of celebrity puff piece he's writing and how these various strands of his life all crash together."

Lush Life seemed like an ace in the hole. Soderbergh and Tenenbaum gave it credibility, actors Campbell Scott and Anabella Sciorra signed on, and the 1992 Sundance Filmmakers and Screenwriters Lab accepted it, giving it that extra cachet. But for near-

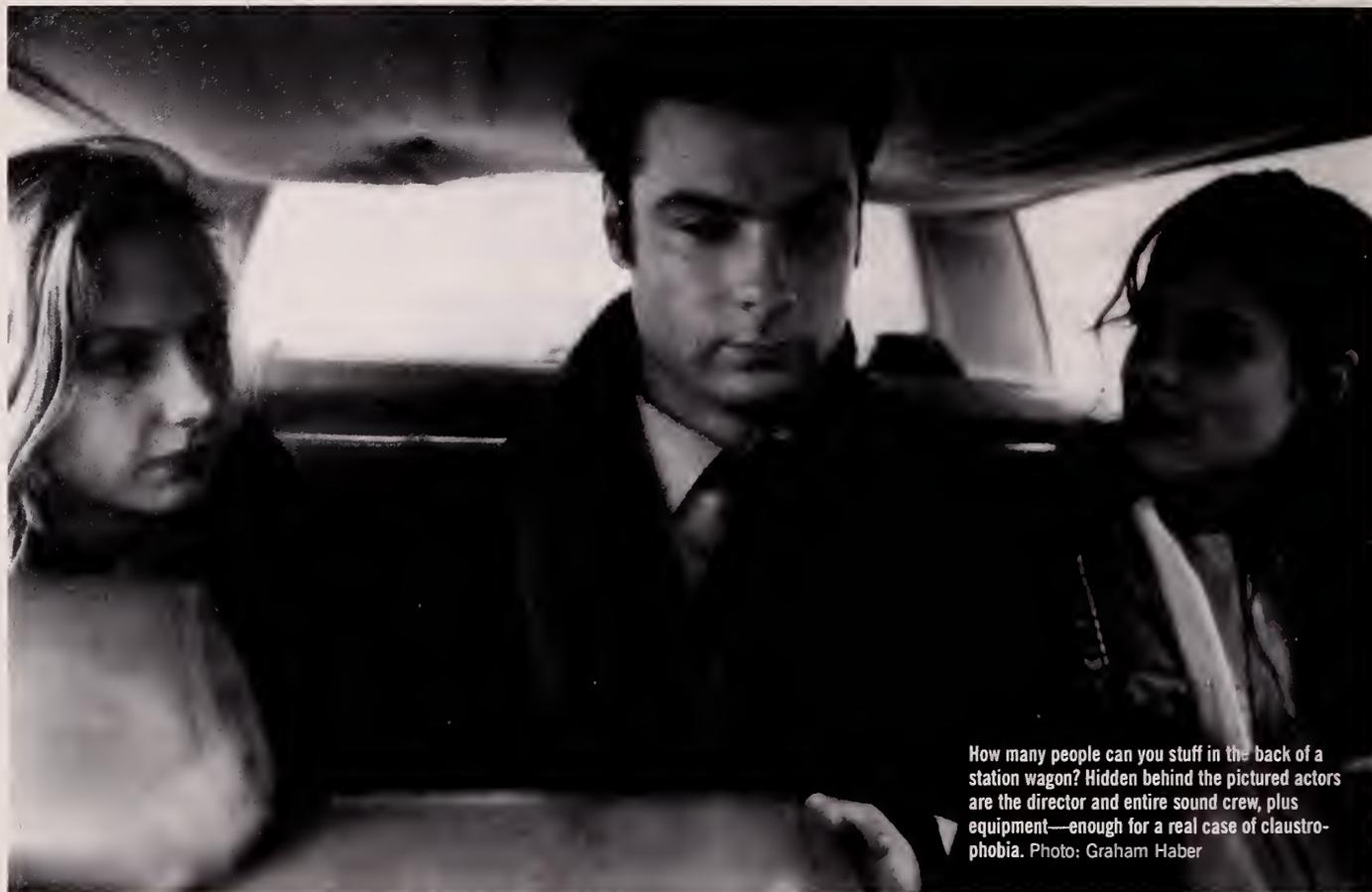


The daytrippers were troopers on this shoestring production (from left): Liev Schreiber, Parker Posey, Anne Meara, Hope Davis, and Pat McNamara. Photo: K.C. Bailey

ents—a middle manager at the Long Island Lighting Company and a housewife—Mottola also got a healthy dose of Hollywood's Golden Era. "My father would tell me to watch stuff on TV, like Fred Astaire." His epiphany came when his parents took him to a double-feature of *Bananas* and *Play It Again Sam*. "I was 11 and really digging it. That was the first time I took film seriously," he says.

Mottola didn't head directly to film school, but became a studio art major at Carnegie Mellon. Since it didn't offer film courses, he bought a wind-up Bolex and started learning the basics at Pittsburgh Filmmakers under the tutelage of Tony Buba.

"I started making very immature films," the director recalls with a



How many people can you stuff in the back of a station wagon? Hidden behind the pictured actors are the director and entire sound crew, plus equipment—enough for a real case of claustrophobia. Photo: Graham Haber

ly three maddening years, it went nowhere. "It was disheartening, because we developed it to death, just on our own, and I don't think we made it any better," says Soderbergh. In Mottola's opinion, investors were leery of his greenhorn status combined with the \$1.5 to 2 million budget (necessitated by multiple party scenes calling for 600 extras), and were put off by its ambiguous ending. In Soderbergh's view, "I think there's clearly a problem at the center of that script that we have not solved. No matter how much we rewrote it, we couldn't unlock it. I know that's true now, because when we told Greg, 'Just write something we can shoot guerrilla style,' he wrote *The Daytrippers* in four weeks, and everyone who read it said, 'This works!' There was none of that uneasiness like, 'Gee, why don't I feel blah, blah, blah.' We knew just, great, let's go."

Like *sex, lies & videotape*, which essentially has four characters and three settings, Mottola's new script was tightly contained—a small cast and a handful of locations, virtually all of which were donated by cast, family, or friends. And it was to be shot on Super 16mm.

To get the ball rolling, Tenenbaum and Soderbergh gathered \$60,000 from their own pockets and a small circle of supporters (including Campbell Scott and *Juice* producer David Heyman, among others). But as soon as they ventured outside this group, the project threatened to mutate. "Immediately people were asking for changes in the script, cast changes," says Mottola. (Robert Mitchum came up in one conversation.) Ultimately, says the director, the amount they would add "was not enough money to change a script for." So they stuck to their original no-frills plan. By late 1994—five years after Soderbergh and Tenenbaum first made contact—Mottola had a script that hummed, a cast of up-and-coming indie actors, and \$60,000 in the till. His feature debut was finally off and running.

Oh, Light of My Life

DP John Inwood shot *The Daytrippers* with an Aaton camera and super 16 Kodak—his first feature using this stock. "You have to be very careful with focus," he cautions, "and need to overexpose for a nice, dense negative. You have to get the exposure right, because there's less tolerance—you have to go this extra generation and enlarge it so much."

The following is *The Daytrippers*' compact lighting package, devised for a compact crew:

4 Inkys	1 200 watt HMI fresnel
2 Tweenies	2 575 watt HMI fresnel
2 750 Babies	2 1200 watt HMI par
1 Baby 2K	2 4' 4 bulb Kinoflos
1 Mighty Mole	2 4' 2 bulb Kinoflos
1 Baby 5K	2 2' 2 bulb Kinoflos
	2 6" 12 volt Miniflos

Or so it seemed. Then the camera was stolen. After that, the lead actress broke her ankle tripping on a roll of gaffer's tape, a PA caught pneumonia standing in the cold November drizzle, and the DP bruised his rib while contorting inside the station wagon, where they shot for five days. The cast was lucky; they survived the Long Island Expressway. "It's amazing that we all lived through this," says Hope Davis. "Pat McNamara was driving, who really is just like the father—changing lanes without looking, with trucks whizzing by."

Budgetarily, a camera car was out of the question. So everyone simply piled into the station wagon, a mildewy, noisy old tank that Tenenbaum eventually sold for \$75. "There were about 16 people in that car," Davis says, with minimal exaggeration. "The truth is," Mottola says, "I really wanted it to seem claustrophobic; I wanted the camera to be in there with them, in everyone's face."

He got his wish, and no one could blame Mottola if he felt the most claustrophobic, squeezed in the back of the station wagon between the sound equipment and crew. "We had to put an Army blanket over Greg's head," says Davis, "because we would catch a reflection of his bald head in the windows and rear-view mirrors." So Mottola directed sight unseen from under a blanket, shouting lines over the drone of the engine as they swerved down the LIE. Forget guerrilla production, this was kamikaze filmmaking.

Yet Parker Posey can say without a trace of irony, "This is the lowest-budget movie I've done, and it was very smooth shooting."

Inwood concurs. "It was very challenging—and yet there was a certain calm and professionalism about it. Greg is a pretty remarkable guy because he hasn't directed all that much, but he's very calm on set. He doesn't freak out; he knows what he wants and he really understands his writing—how he wants to put in on screen."

The cast loved him. "He left actors a lot of space," says Anne Meara. "He wouldn't clutter it up with a lot of murky directory things. He'd say, 'Maybe a little more' or 'A little less.' A director is basically looking at the total picture; he's not an acting coach."

"Actors have this incredible resource, and that is the other actors," Liev Schreiber says. "Greg allowed that. I think Greg was in such awe of his cast—he loved his cast so much—they would act and he'd just go, 'Yeah, yeah, go ahead, whatever you want.' Given that slack, actors can either destroy a film or make it great. And this was a group of actors who were very conscious about making it as good as they could. It was fun."

They also liked the fast pace—up to 12 pages a day. "Two takes and move on," says Parker Posey. According to Davis, "Shooting fast is great for the actors, because you're able to do a huge scene in a day and get a through-line." However, she acknowledges, "the crew really suffers."

"Crew? What crew?" jokes Inwood. The only regulars, aside from the producer, production manager, and production coordinator, were

three of Inwood's friends who served as gaffer (Sean Sheridan), key grip (Keith Devlin), and camera assistant (Luke Eder). "Otherwise, it was literally grip du jour, sound person du jour," he says.

What kept Inwood and Mottola from losing their minds was pre-planning, "so we didn't have to relight," says Inwood. Equally important was a lighting package a small group could handle [see box p. 34]. Inwood relied on "a Kinoflo 12-volt kit that you plug into a lighter. Kinoflos are a popular light now—a high intensity fluorescent unit that's color corrected. It's a flattering soft light. Since we were in small spaces and had to light fast, these were great. They made it possible to work fast and make it look pretty good."

"Pretty good" is a vast improvement over the bare bones, guerrilla-style approach Mottola started with—"not even put up a light bulb in the middle of the set," says Inwood. "It wouldn't look good, but as long as we got an image, he'd have a film. But I said, 'No, we don't have to do that.'

"After the first set of dailies, we all began to realize, hey, this film is bigger than we thought," Inwood continues. "It's a real film, not just 'run around with a camera and a light on a stick.' This is going to look like something."

If Mottola saw the light at the end of the tunnel when production wrapped in early 1995, it was a cruel mirage. Another year and a half passed before *The Daytrippers* found domestic theatrical distribution. Worse, the film hit a wall early on and very nearly vanished into video store oblivion.

The initial game plan was to screen a director's cut with temp music to distributors in New York and LA. "This was possibly a mistake," Mottola admits, "though we did need money [to finish] and almost made a deal."

Initially, people went wild for it, and numerous distributors threw their hats in the ring. They took the largest offer—\$1 million—and a deal memo was to arrive on Tenenbaum's desk that Monday. But on Tuesday, "that company withdrew the offer," says Mottola. "Then one by one, everyone else withdrew their offers. In four days, I went from ecstatic to suicidal."

Pack paranoia had set in among distributors. As Tenenbaum describes it, "The people who were screaming about it—saying it was the best movie they'd ever seen, couldn't believe it was available, and wanted it no matter what—were the same people who were saying, 'Well, maybe it's a difficult movie to market.' They started to think, 'If this company reneged, maybe we should have cold feet, too.'" In the end, she says, "We felt like we were left with damaged goods."

But they still needed money to finish the sound work, music, titles, editing, and blow-up. Some new investors were interested, but had so many conditions attached—control of the negative, an outrageous return on their investment—that they passed. "So in the spirit of the way we started it, we ended it," says Tenenbaum. The original investors doled out some more cash, then the whole lot of them begged favors, deferments, and bargains of every vendor and post house they knew.

The next blow was a rejection by Sundance. The director opted to go to Slamdance and even came away with the Grand Jury Prize, but

Actor Andy Brown, who lives across the hall from Mottola, volunteered his apartment for wardrobe and makeup. The director's housed craft services. Locations were donated by cast, friends, and family. Photo: Andy Brown



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that didn't help. "The problem was, all the distributors had seen the rough-cut, and they didn't care to see it again" Mottola explains. "They didn't come to Slamdance—not for us. So we were kind of written off," he says. "Things were really grim."

The next two months were quiet—unnervingly so. Then Alliance International came aboard as foreign sales agent, *The Daytrippers* was accepted into Cannes, and the hex was broken. Another couple of domestic offers trickled in before the festival,

but one was too small to afford and the other too weaselly to stick with. "It was a constant negotiation, renegeing, negotiation, renegeing," Tenenbaum recalls with exasperation. "We also found they were making excuses even before we started about why this movie is potentially going to fail." They took a gamble and rejected it. "I'm pretty sure they would have given it a bad release or dumped this straight to video," Mottola explains.

The Daytrippers came away from Cannes with sales to Italy and France, and many more European sales have followed in waves. "It was surreal," says Mottola. "I thought it would only get distribution in the U.S.," where he ended up having the toughest time. "Cannes was a great, lucky thing for me," he adds. "I'm thinking in the future, I'll probably go to Europe for financing. Theoretically, if there is an audience outside of the U.S., it gives me a little leverage, insofar as I'm not absolutely beholden to go to Hollywood and say, 'Okay, I'll cast it the way you want to cast it, and I'll write the ending the way you see it.' I really do want to write and direct my own stuff and keep it small and make movies at a logical budget, so they make back their money, but don't have to be blockbusters."

Shortly after Cannes, *The Daytrippers* finally found its domestic distributor: Cinepix Film Properties (CFP), in conjunction with Columbia/Tri Star Home Video. While their \$100,000 advance was less than previous offers, says Mottola, "ultimately I'm really glad we held out. They care much more about how the film does theatrically." (Between this and foreign sales, all technical deferrals and cast have already been paid; the crew will also get their due, Tenenbaum assures. All told, the film wound up costing in the ballpark of \$500,000.)

The picture brightened even further after *The Daytrippers*' screening at the Toronto International Film festival. This was the first time CFP saw it with an audience—and the crowds loved it. "I could tell their thinking about the film evolved," says Mottola. "They were seeing it as something that could go a little more broadly."

If there's a silver lining to *The Daytrippers*' long and drawn-out distribution saga, it's that its stars have risen in the meantime, boosting *The Daytrippers*' theatrical prospects. Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott had their *Big Night*, and Liev Schreiber became hot in *Walking and Talking* and *Ransom*. At Sundance this year, Hope Davis starred in Michael Lindsay-Hogg's *Guy* and Bart Freundlich's *The Myth of Fingerprints*, while Parker Posey racked up four films, yanking the crown from Lili Taylor: *The House of Yes* by Mark Waters (for which she received a special prize



Looks serious, but between takes Meara (left) kept the cast in stitches, sending Hope Davis running out of the room to regain her composure, which led to her tripping on gaffers tape and busting her ankle. Photo: K.C. Bailey



for acting); *The Clockwatchers* by Jill Sprecher; *Sub-Urbia* by Richard Linklater; and *Waiting for Guffman* by Christopher Guest.

Meanwhile, Mottola feels like he's having an out-of-body experience. "What's surreal is I got to meet Mike Leigh this year, I met Robert Altman, I had dessert with Al Pacino. It's like, whose life am I living?"

Though the struggle may be over (until the next film), it's not likely Mottola will forget his former

life, nor the people who stuck by him all those years. "Nancy [Tenenbaum] gets the primary credit for the day-to-day fight to see that the film gets released and not fall off the face of the earth—because it came close to that," Mottola says. The two are partnering up on his future projects.

He's equally grateful to Soderbergh, who, like Tenenbaum, didn't make a red cent for years on *The Daytrippers*. "It's given me a perspective," says Mottola. "I've been struggling for a long time to get anything produced sort of on my own terms, so I've rejected a lot of potential opportunities. If as a result of this film I'm able to have a career, I'd definitely think seriously about what Steven did for me and pass that along. I don't know if I would have thought that way. I look at someone like Woody Allen whom I admire so much, and he doesn't do anything for anybody; he just makes his movies. But Steven is incredibly prolific, and he still found time to help me out." In an industry not noted for its altruism, this is perhaps the most important lesson Mottola learned from *The Daytrippers*. "I feel really lucky," he purrs.

Independent editor Patricia Thomson wrote about Steve Buscemi's *Trees Lounge* in the October issue.

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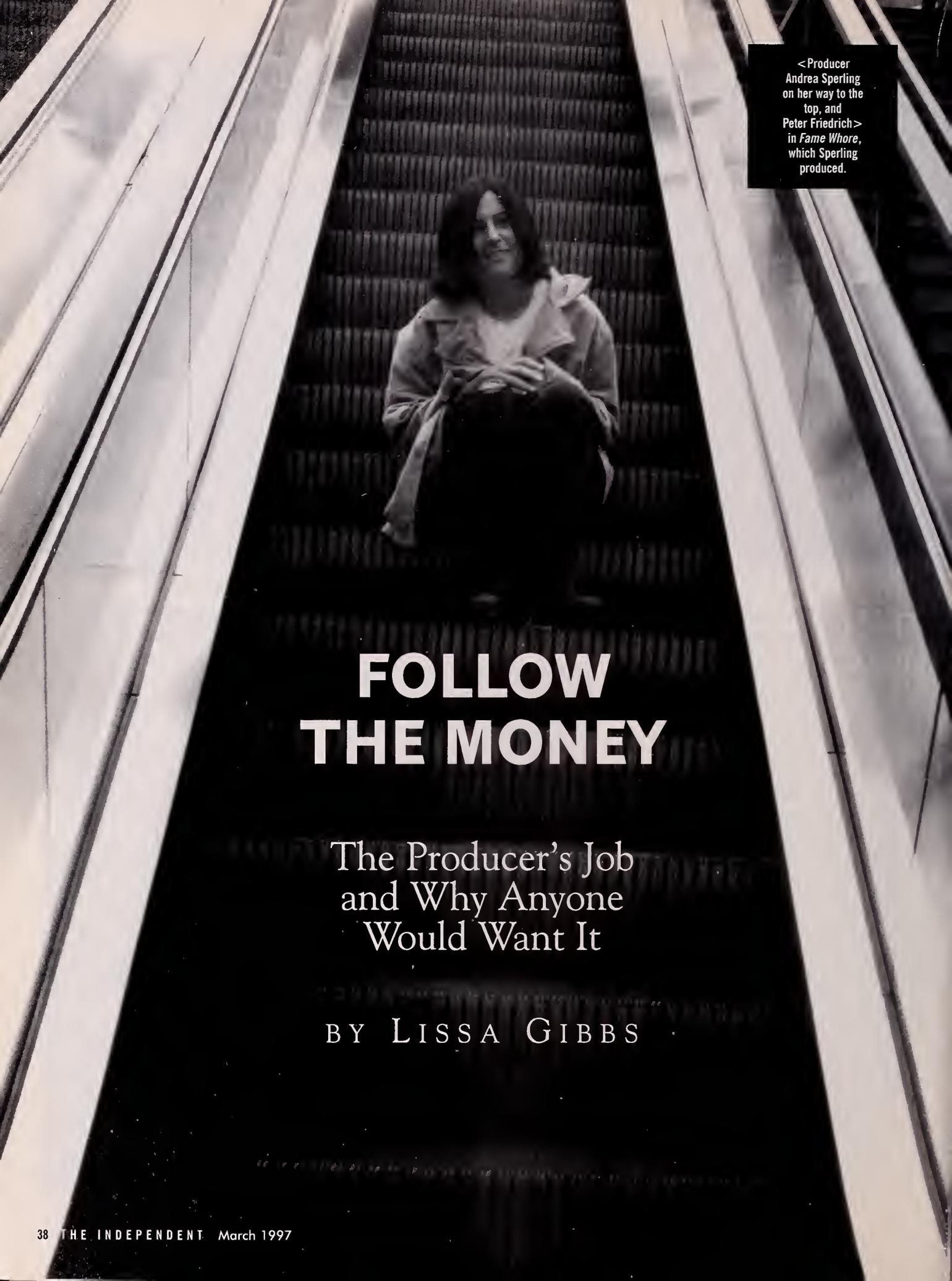
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Andrea Sperling
on her way to the
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in *Fame Whore*,
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FOLLOW THE MONEY

The Producer's Job
and Why Anyone
Would Want It

BY LISSA GIBBS



FOR MOST FILMMAKERS, DEALING WITH MONEY IS about as appealing as root canal. And like that surgery, it's painful but necessary. Finding money for low-budget films has become increasingly tricky and complicated. The pool of public funds has shrunk dramatically, while private financing through equity and investment structures can require a keen understanding of corporate law, not to mention access to

Ethnics in Film course at UC-Berkeley. There really weren't that many, so he and I set out to write a proposal for a series of documentaries about the different types of Jews around the world. I started as a researcher only and became the producer."

Andrea Sperling's love of avant-garde film is what motivated her initial producing efforts. The fact that she would work without pay helped her get started. "My enthusiasm and dedication to the film were the greatest things I had to offer," she says. "That I was willing to work for free and commit to that meant a lot to the filmmaker."

For Jürgen Brüning and Henry Rosenthal, it was more a function of circumstance. "My friends decided for me," says Brüning, who began producing in the Berlin underground film scene during the early eighties. "They said, 'You're good with money. You be the producer.'"

"I was tricked," says Henry Rosenthal of his first film project. "I thought I was organizing a live concert. The next thing I knew, we're doing a documentary film about it."

people with cash to spare. European television funds have filled some financing gaps, but monies available to North Americans through pre-sales and coproduction deals have begun to see cutbacks as well.

Then there's the challenge of stretching what funds you have to last long enough to translate a story to the screen. Generally this "fun" job falls to the producer. Since in the independent film world the producer and the director are often one and the same, successful completion of a film is all the more difficult.

Producing is largely an unsung and uncelebrated craft. But the skills required to navigate the increasingly complex waters of independent production while staying true to an artistic vision take a special kind of person, one who combines business acumen with interpersonal and creative abilities.

I spoke with eight critically successful independent producers about their decision to produce, how they got where they are now, and what advice they have for aspiring producers. Whether you plan to produce or are a director looking for a producer, their words of experience will serve you well.

Getting Started

For some, deciding to become a producer was an accidental career choice. For others, it was an intentional and carefully considered path fueled by a drive to make films that mattered. Regardless, all experienced a personal turning point when they realized they were not going to direct—that this wasn't what they enjoyed most or did best.

Vivian Kleiman's transition from curator to documentary producer was prompted "by dint of content," she says. "I was working at the Jewish Museum in Berkeley in the mid-seventies, and a man came in asking if we could recommend any titles about Jews for his Images of



Producer Marcus Hu (inset), co-founder and co-president of Strand Releasing, and a still from Strand's *Stonewall*.

Margot Bridger and Camelia Frieberg followed a more predictable career path, working as producers' assistants, production managers, location managers, and assistant directors until they gained the knowledge, experience, and contacts to produce on their own. "There was a time in the beginning when everything I was working on had 'balls' as part of its description—odd-ball, screwball," says Frieberg. "They were really dreadful films. But I did learn a lot from those jobs—especially that time equals money—and was able to import that equation later into independent projects."

Still others, like Marcus Hu and Scott Macaulay, had already begun parallel careers in film presenta-

tion, Hu as co-founder of Strand Releasing and Macaulay as program director of The Kitchen, an alternative performance and theater space in New York. Both established business partnerships with former co-workers and friends who possessed complementary skills, set up production companies, then went about finding directors with whom to collaborate (Hu with Gregg Araki on the West Coast, Macaulay and Robin O'Hara with Tom Noonan in New York).

There is no sure path or special secret to becoming a successful producer, but several bits of practical advice can be gleaned from these producers' beginnings:

- Be willing to work for free when you first start out.
- Know the difference between being an independent producer and a Hollywood producer.
- Be willing to relocate temporarily to work on a particular film or with particular people.
- Consider working as an office P.A. on a film project or for a distribution or production company for a short time. What you'll learn in these offices can't be taught at school.
- Work (or volunteer) for a nonprofit media organization where

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- Go to film screenings and festivals where you'll see the work of directors who are also starting out.

- Produce short films.
- Remember that producing is about long-term goals, not short-term ones.

Making Collaborations Work

So what makes a good producer? Certain qualities leapt to everyone's lips: patient, tenacious, dedicated, flexible, calm, optimistic, hard-working, self-confident, generous, thorough, and detail-oriented. A good producer knows when to take risks and when not to; doesn't take no for an answer (but remains polite); has the mental and physical stamina to see a project through (for periods as short as a few months to as long as 15 years); can get people to work together; and makes sure that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Successful producers also excel at multitasking. "So many women are good producers because they already have to do so much of this juggling in their everyday lives," says Frieberg, commenting on the disproportionate number of female producers to female directors.

The ability to see long-term goals is another critical component. As Rosenthal says, "Low-budget films do not move at a human time scale. They move at something more akin to a geological time scale. As a producer, it's my job to understand everything that's happening and how all of the pieces fit together over the whole arc of time."

It also takes a long time to accumulate knowledge about funding sources. Sperling describes her learning curve on this highly sensitive area: "When I first started out, I wanted to ask all these producers on panels if there was some sort of list, some book, which listed funding sources and contact

Rosenthal and director Lynn Hershman Leeson on the set of *Conceiving Ada*. >



< Producer
Harry S. Rosenthal



Credit Roll

Margot Bridger, NYC: producer of Ira Sachs's *The Delta* and Hannah Weyer's *Arresting Gena*, production manager, location manager, production coordinator, and producer's assistant on films by Mira Nair, Norman Rene, Bruce Leddy, Tony Drazan, and John Madden.

Jürgen Brüning, Germany: producer of Bruce LaBruce's three features—*No Skin Off My Ass*, *Super 8 1/2*, and *Hustler White*—several features and documentaries for German television, and Program Director of the Leipzig Documentary Film Festival.

Camelia Frieberg, Toronto: producer of five features by Atom Egoyan, most recently *Exotica*, Jeremy Podeswa's *Eclipse*, Srinivas Krishna's *Masala*; also associate producer, production manager, assistant director, and location manager on films by Peter Mettler, Patricia Rozema, Bruce MacDonald, Adrienne Mitchell, and Charles Burnett.

Marcus Hu, Los Angeles: producer of Gregg Araki's *The Living End* and Todd Verow's *Frisk*, executive producer of films by Bruce LaBruce, Richard Glatzer, Jon Moritsugu, and Nick Katsapetses, in development on Nancy Savoca's *Two-Bit Tango*; co-founder and co-president of Strand Releasing.

Vivian Kleiman, Berkeley: producer and consulting producer on Marlon Riggs's *Color Adjustment* and *Ethnic Notions*, Ellen Spiro's *Roam Sweet Home*, and numerous documentaries; producer/director of her own doc, *My Body's My Business*.

Scott Macaulay, NYC: producer with partner Robin O'Hara of Tom Noonan's *What Happened Was...* and *The Wife*, Herbert Beigel's *Camp Stories*, Tamara Jenkins' short *Family Remains*, Lewis Klair's animated short *The Pharaoh's Belt*; editor of *Filmmaker Magazine*.

Henry Rosenthal, San Francisco: producer of *Conceiving Ada* by Lynn Hershman Leeson, Caveh Zahedi's *I Don't Hate Las Vegas Anymore*, Jon Moritsugu's *Mod Fuck Explosion*, five feature films by Jon Jost, shorts by Rhoderyc Montgomery and Monika Treut, executive producer on Gregg Araki's *The Living End*.

Andrea Sperling, Los Angeles: producer of Gregg Araki's *Nowhere*, *The Doom Generation*, *Totally F***ED Up*, *The Living End*; Jon Moritsugu's *Fame Whore*, *Mod Fuck Explosion*, *Terminal USA*; Christopher Münch's *Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day*; Mary Kuryla's *Memory Circus*; Jennifer Gentile's *My Pretty Little Girlfriend*; and Britta Sjogren's *A Small Domain*.

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names and numbers. Or if they could just give me that information. I now know those books don't exist, and even though everyone approaches the same people for funding, no one shares that information very openly. It's kind of ridiculous, but I understand why people are that way. It's just something you learn over time."

Facilitating someone else's vision, keeping track of the cash flow, and making sure all of the big and small elements of a shoot come together on time can be an incredibly frustrating challenge. Add to this the fact that the role of the producer is often misunderstood, if not outright ignored, by the public. "Directors get almost all of the recognition," says Rosenthal, "and very rarely does a director carry a producer with him as he ascends the ranks."

Nonetheless, all but one of the producers interviewed said they had almost no desire to direct a film of their own. That owes to the fact that all have found room for their own creative identities within the context of their collaborations with directors. "It's not just about money, the crew, and the schedule; our partnership is about ideas, a shared impulse," explains Bridger. Yet, as several producers point out, it is also important to have something that is completely one's own. This might be something as simple as gardening or as complex as another professional identity, like Hu's as a distributor.

Making a Living

Making a living as an independent producer can be very difficult, especially at the start. All of the producers interviewed have had other sources of income as needed throughout their careers, including work-for-hire on commercial productions, part-time work as magazine editors or festival directors, unrelated business ventures, or family money. Most of them have chosen to live simply and inexpensively.

"It's not incredibly glamorous, but I'm happiest being able to do the work I want to do, so I don't really mind," says Bridger. Kleiman explains, "I live in a place [Berkeley] where it's easy to live an elegant and healthy life with a limited budget. I get royalty checks which cover the 'nut' of my living expenses, and I freelance as a consulting producer as well as teach."

For several, the decision to produce dramatic features is one of economic necessity. Nonfiction films, even those with a theatric-

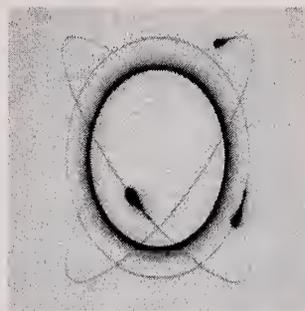
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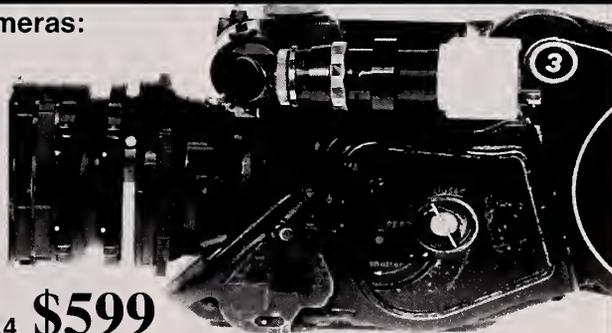
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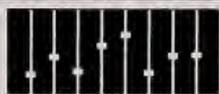


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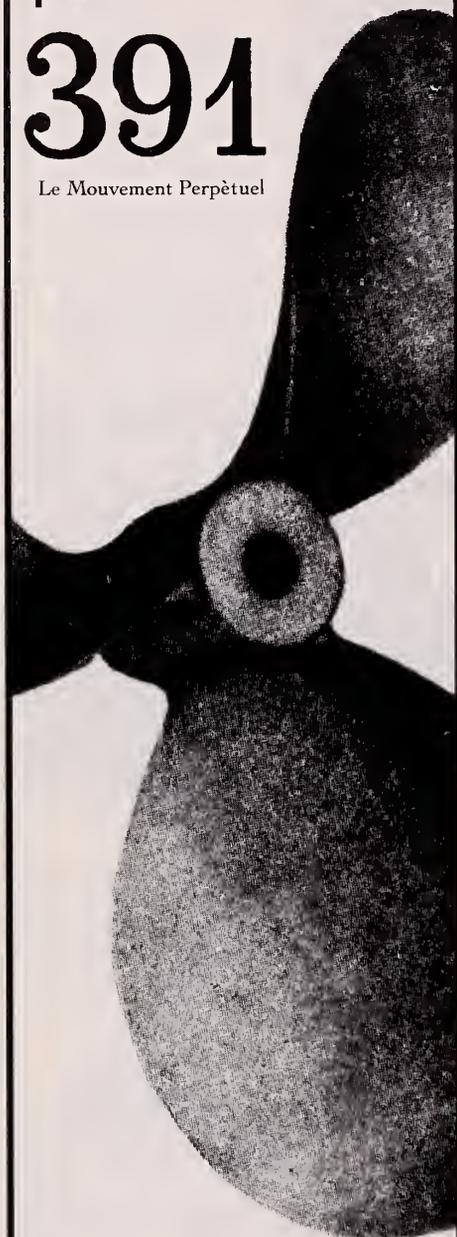
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What's in a Title?

Not all films have each of these positions, and on low budget films, many are filled by the same person.

Executive Producer: An honorary title, this person is most often the top executive in the production company making the film or the individual who supplied the financial backing for the film. Not to be confused with a **Producer's Representative**, who is hired or brought into a film for percentage points as the film nears completion and whose job it is to sell the film to a distributor. An executive producer usually has very little or nothing to do with the actual making of the film and much more to do with dealmaking and contractual maneuverings.

Producer: The person who bears the ultimate administrative and financial responsibility for a film, this person works on virtually every phase of the film: development, production, distribution, and promotion. In practice, the role of a producer is often very broad and may include artistic involvement.

Co-producer: Generally the credit which appears when two or more production companies or producers—often from different countries—have worked jointly as producing partners on a film.

Series Producer: A term used in television production, this person is responsible for the overall production of a series, the individual parts of which may be written, directed, or produced by different people.

Line Producer: This person is hired by the production company or producer to run the actual shooting of the film when the producer does not have the time or the experience necessary for this particular shoot. Generally this job is limited to only one phase of the production, the shoot, and is paid for on a flat-fee basis.



Margot Bridger on the set of Hannah Weyer's *Arresting Gena* and a still from Ira Sach's *The Delta*, which she also produced.

cal or semi-theatrical life, "don't pay the mortgage," Frieberg explains, unless you have a company that is set up to produce pieces on "diseases of the week, tragedy of the month, or supposedly controversial subjects" for TV.

As producers like Macaulay, Bridger, Brüning, and Sperling have grown in experience, so have their producing fees increased, but it's still a struggle. "Of course, I make sure to have percentage points in each film," says Bridger, "but for now I know that I need to be working with more than two directors in order to make a living." Brüning notes that any money he makes from a film goes right back into his company for future productions. As a result, he's not planning to leave his day job as programmer for the Leipzig Documentary Film Festival anytime soon.

Production Manager: The person in charge of the day-to-day details of production. Somewhat more nuts and bolts than a line producer, this person works closely with the producer, line producer, director, and assistant director to manage the crew during a shoot. Sometimes this person is also involved in casting.

Associate Producer: Frequently an honorary title accorded a person for his or her financial contribution to a film, this vague term can also refer to someone who has assisted the producer in creative or business matters relating to the production.

Production Assistant: Sounds exactly like what it is. Responsibilities can range from getting lunch for everyone at a meeting to helping the producer keep track of the entire production. Generally a thankless but extremely educational job, which can lead to associate producing and eventually producing.

— L.G.

Plunging In

Getting started involves making contacts and getting whatever experience one can muster. These eight producers gained the knowledge and practical experience that enabled them to find directors and produce films by getting out in the "real world" of film sets, production offices, film festivals, nonprofit filmmaking collectives, theater workshops, and through friends and acquaintances.

On top of that, the eight have a few practical tips: Macaulay and Sperling suggest that aspiring producers diligently read the trades and attend conferences, film festivals, and seminars—but "not too many," adds Macaulay. Rosenthal and Kleiman urge producers to learn as much as they can about new technologies and how these can further one's budget. Bridger advises taking time when choosing projects and directors—in order to do so wisely. Hu suggests talking to producers who have done similar projects on similar budgets and says always to anticipate overages in postproduction. And Frieberg simply exhorts, "Courage. Don't give up hope. Nothing is impossible."

Lissa Gibbs is a Bay Area-based producer, writer, and curator. She is currently in production on Rose Hansen's Pleasure Merchants and Deke Weaver's theater and video performance GIRLFRIEND.

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THREE'S A CHARM

Raw Footage, Split Screen, and Edgewise widen the visibility of independent film on cable

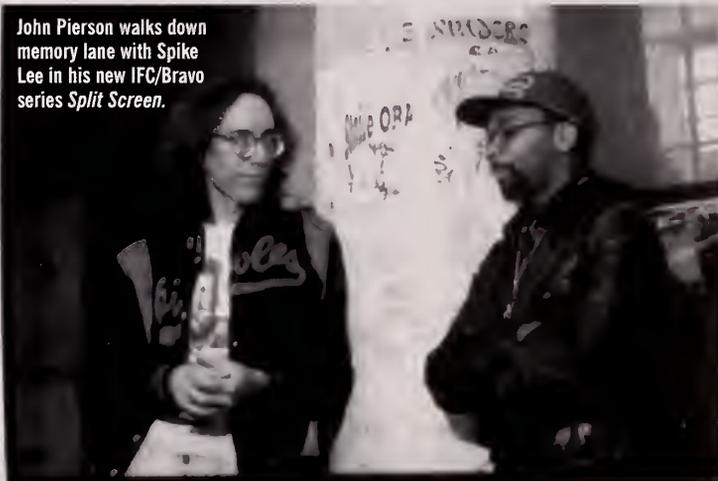
BY MITCH ALBERT

THREE NEW CABLE SERIES HAVE CROPPED UP since last fall that will introduce mainstream audiences to the diverse range of independent filmmakers. The Independent Film Channel/Bravo's *Raw Footage*, hosted by Alec Baldwin, is an ardent look at the inner workings of documentaries and independent features; *Split Screen*, also on IFC/Bravo, breaks out the party bus as John Pierson conducts an irreverent tour of indie film culture past, present, and future; and MSNBC's *Edgewise* is a news-magazine hosted by John Hockenberry which includes the idiosyncratic perspectives of a variety of filmmakers in an anything-goes format.

Last October, the Independent Film Channel (IFC) introduced *Raw Footage*, an hour-long, interview-format program featuring documentary filmmakers. The periodic series is produced by documentary producer Mark Mori (*Blood Ties: The Life and Work of Sally Mann*) and hosted by Baldwin, a rare Hollywood star who is able to articulate a sincere social conscience. According to Mori, the show's mandate is to draw attention to "works of high quality and strong social or political content that have not gotten wide exposure."

Mori says the concept grew out of a plan, developed with Baldwin, to stage a "Banned by PBS Festival" featuring a rash of documentaries denied airtime by PBS. Among them was Mori's own Oscar-nominated documentary, *Building Bombs*, spurned on grounds that "it wasn't 'balanced,'" he says, though the broadcasters might have been more alarmed by the film's revelation of the extensive involvement of multinational corporations—some of which sponsor PBS—in the nuclear weapons industry. Baldwin was one of the signatories to a full-page ad in *Variety* (sponsored by Mori's Coalition Against PBS Censorship) protesting PBS's closed doors. It was then that Mori "discovered a commonality of opposition against

John Pierson walks down memory lane with Spike Lee in his new IFC/Bravo series *Split Screen*.



editorial censorship" with Baldwin, and *Raw Footage* evolved from this point.

A sour reception from PBS, of course, is not a criterion for inclusion on the new show. Filmmakers invited to speak about their work include Barbara Trent (*The Panama Deception*), AIVF board member Robert Richter (*The School of Assassins*), and Frieda Mock (*Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*). The episodes may focus on a single film or several works linked by a common theme.

In January, IFC pledged to renew the show for three more months, with further extension a possibility. The series will pick up again later this spring, according to a Bravo spokesperson. Mori says *Raw Footage* will expand to include narrative films and may eventually welcome unsolicited submissions, though at present there is "no mechanism to deal with that." Mori does promise that those filmmakers fortunate enough to get tapped for the series will be able to sell video cassettes using an 800 number at the end of the show—something

PBS guidelines generally prohibit to individuals presenting their own work.

WITH HIS 1995 book *Spike, Mike, Slackers, and Dykes*, John Pierson emerged from behind the scenes as a producer's rep to become the most visible

chronicler of the past decade of independent feature production. The book, in turn, has begotten *Split Screen*, a new series that peers inside the independent scene.



John Hockenberry speaks with Michael Moore as the host of MSNBC's *Edgewise*.

"I toured a lot with the book when it came out," Pierson says, "and I would show demo reels and unseen footage—quite the dog-and-pony show; people enjoyed that. I also started being interviewed a lot on radio and TV, and it just dawned on me to turn the book into a show."

Split Screen "will make a point, maybe, but it will certainly also provide entertainment value," says Pierson, who, as the show's host, combines an insider's perspective with the informality of an MTV veejay. The series pilot features directors Spike Lee and Richard Linklater waxing nostalgic about the early days of the independent renaissance; Minnesota residents commenting on *Fargo*; and chats with aspiring directors attending Pierson's annual weekend retreat at Cold Spring, New York, about why they want to be filmmakers. A future episode may include a juicy assignment for *Roger & Me's* Michael Moore to pin down Miramax honcho Harvey Weinstein.

"I don't want to do anything conventional," Pierson says. While the show may cover festivals like Sundance, "If you ever see me standing with a microphone at the Egyptian Theater in Park City with a little snow or something, the show's dead," he says. "Turn it off and never watch it again." (A special preview of the show, in fact, was among the events at this year's Slamdance, the counter-festival to Sundance.)

For certain segments, *Split Screen* contracts

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Host Alec Baldwin with guests David Van Taylor and RJ Cutler on IFC/Bravo's *Raw Footage*.

"young, independent filmmakers, who are given access to produce an original [short] work on their own," producer Howard Bernstein says. "John wants to give people a chance to pitch an idea, and, if he likes it, to follow through."

THEN THERE'S *EDGEWISE*, AN MSNBC AFFAIR produced by R. J. Cutler (who examined the art of political maneuvering in his coproductions *The War Room* and *A Perfect Candidate*. He and *Perfect Candidate* coproducer David Van Taylor appeared on the first episode of *Raw Footage*.) *Edgewise* is a news magazine hosted by Über-correspondent John Hockenberry, a veteran of Middle Eastern crises and stints at ABC, NPR, and NBC. The weekly, hour-long series, which premiered last September, is an unpredictable gumbo: in one installment, Hockenberry recites his own poetry and interviews Allen Ginsberg; airs a short video probing the rationales of teen smokers; and memorializes an obscure mathematics genius. Each show also allocates chunks of time to short, independently produced films and videos.

Edgewise's overall agenda is "to be curious and provocative," Cutler says. To this end, he has hired a number of luminaries to produce short works on whatever subjects strike their fancy. "Kevin Rafferty (*Feed*) is doing a piece, and David [Van Taylor], and D. A. Pennebaker (*The War Room*)," says Cutler. "We're talking to Terry Zwigoff (*Crumb*), and [Joe] Berlinger and [Bruce] Sinofsky (*Brother's Keeper*). I'm in a fortunate position, because these are all colleagues and friends of mine. It's an opportunity to call them up and say, 'We have six minutes for you, and we can pay; what would you like to do?'"

According to Cutler, *Edgewise* is "committed to a balanced look at the world, mixed with a healthy skepticism." The show's political edge

occasionally involves aggressive commentary by Hockenberry; other times it appears quite level, as when Hockenberry chats nonconfrontationally with New Jersey governor Christine Whitman or probes the subjectivity of political allegiance with a Democratic mother and her Republican daughter. Other topics hatched by the *Edgewise* team include a look at hipness in politics; a rundown of President Clinton's betrayals; and a short film by Josh Kornbluth imagining a resurrected Ben Franklin. Overall, Cutler emphasizes, *Edgewise* explores as many facets of the culture as possible. "We can't really understand public affairs and culture separately," he says. "We decided, for example, to take interview segments and include documentaries, to understand public affairs from the filmmaker's point of view."

Cutler invites submissions, including works-in-progress. "We're a late-night show on a 24-hour cable network that wants to be as plugged in as possible to the independent film community."

Raw Footage, on IFC/Bravo, 150 Crossways Park West, Woodbury, NY 11797.

Split Screen, Mondays at 9 p.m. EST on IFC; the first two episodes debut March 10 at 8 p.m. on IFC and March 14 at 9 p.m. on Bravo.

Edgewise, on MSNBC, Saturdays and Sundays at 11 p.m. EST; *Edgewise*, 226 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001.

Mitch Albert is a documentary filmmaker/journalist/aspiring screenwriter/neophyte student of Oriental medicine living a too-short life in New York City.

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BY RYAN DEUSSING

WHEN THE CABLE SPECTRUM FINALLY EXPANDS with the onset of digital technology, a Virginia company called Ovation is determined to be among the first new channels on the dial. With rapid growth in mind, this year-and-a-half-old arts network has been satisfying its need for programming with a schedule consisting of 90 percent acquisitions—good news for independent media-makers who have arts-related work to sell.

Ovation currently picks up between 500 and 600 hours of programming annually and plans to develop a library of up to 3,000 hours within the next few years. Meanwhile, its original programming and coproduction schedule involves between 50 and 80 projects per year and should continue to grow. The overall weekly schedule includes slots for various types of programming, including visual arts, performance, stage drama, music, architecture/design, and opera.

Susan Wittenberg, Ovation's vice president for production and programming, (and an AIVF board member) describes the channel as "an arts network in the broadest sense." In a given week, Ovation devotes time to a wide range of cultural and artistic themes. A good portion of the schedule consists of profiles of artists in various mediums, such as *Alvin Ailey: The Stack up and Cry*, *August Wilson*, and *Face to Face with Salman Rushdie*.

Also strongly featured are performance programs, such as *Barbara Hendricks in Leningrad*, or *My Night with Handel*, for which the network received a 1996 Ace Award nomination. With J. Carter Brown of Washington's National Gallery of Art as the channel's founder and chairman of the board, it's no surprise that Ovation also focuses on museum exhibitions, such as *Happy Birthday Mr. Johnson*—about a Museum of Modern Art exhibition of works donated by Philip



Still/Here, co-produced by Ovation, *Alive TV*, *LaSept/Arte*, and *Maya Distribution*, received a 1996 Ace Award nomination.

Johnson—and *Modern Painters*, both Ovation original productions.

"Our acquisitions come either from big-name distributors, other networks (often foreign, such as the BBC or Channel 4), or independents," Wittenberg says. "We very often purchase the cable rights for a program that has already aired on public television," she explains. "This way, Ovation is able to get very high quality programming for very low dollars."

At an average acquisition fee of \$3,500 per hour (or about \$60/minute), Ovation's rates are significantly lower than public television's (e.g., P.O.V. pays approximately \$375/minute, and *Alive TV* \$230/minute; *Frontline*, *Nova*, and *American Experience* are in the \$100,000/hour range; and PBS noncore acquisitions range from approximately \$0-\$25,000/hr for national broadcast and up to \$10,000 for regional). However, if a broadcast sale has already been made, this \$3,500 can be icing on the cake. Otherwise, it's welcome revenue for independents looking to sell material that may have few other television outlets.

Seattle-based independent Justin Harris, whose half-hour documentary *Dare to Dance* was recently acquired by Ovation, is happy with the deal. "Originally I was in discussions with A&E, but it seems they're quite wary of ven-

turing outside of their programming formula," he explains. "Partly by nature of its newness, Ovation is more willing to take risks." Sometimes a risk will pay off: *Still/Here*, a performance program featuring controversial choreographer and dancer Bill T. Jones, was coproduced by Ovation, *Alive TV*, *La Sept/Arte*, and *Maya Distribution* and also received a 1996 Ace Award nomination.

Original programming and coproductions make up the remaining 10 percent of the schedule. Though the network is able to support coproductions with funds of up to \$25,000, Wittenberg is careful to point out the unlikelihood of Ovation "making a project happen." "Don't come to us first," she advises. "We can only begin thinking realistically about getting involved when the vast majority of your funding is already in place."

Ultimately, Wittenberg would like to see sustained growth in the number of Ovation's coproductions, which tend to have bigger budgets and yield higher returns. "Coproductions are good investments," she explains, "They usually have a more mainstream appeal, which means guaranteed returns." These types of projects are very often music, dance, or theater performances from around the world and involve cooperation with another major fun-

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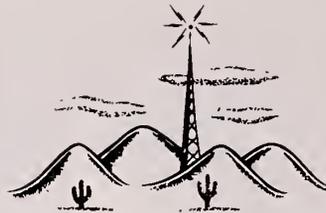
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der; Ovation has worked on coproductions with such foreign networks as Arte and the UK's Channel 4. As Ovation grows and generates a library of tapes, the ratio of acquisitions to other programming is likely to approach 50:50, Wittenberg predicts. If filmmakers have work to sell, it would seem that there's no time like the present.

Asked about the type of work Ovation is seeking, Wittenberg stresses the network's commitment to the visual arts. "We are always looking for 'museum' material, work that documents a particular exhibition or gallery show." The network also plans to produce *Art News*, a series that will report on the country's cultural scene. Wittenberg is open to ideas filmmakers may have concerning segments for *Art News*, but she stresses the importance of maintaining a national scope. "I know sometimes it feels like everything is happening right here in New York," she explains, "but remember that ours is a national audience." She adds, "At the moment we're concentrating on getting broadcast in the Los Angeles and Miami areas, and would love to see programming that features these regions."

Unfortunately, Ovation is not likely to help expand the market for dramatic shorts or independent features. "Quite frankly, 'independent film' is not one of our major categories," Wittenberg says. The primary reason is the existence of Bravo's Independent Film Channel and Showtime's Sundance Channel. With two major networks already airing such material, it makes better marketing sense for Ovation to distinguish itself as an "arts network," rather than another film channel. However, documentary profiles of renowned filmmakers may find room in Ovation's programming schedule. One such profile, a film about the life and work of Maya Deren, is already in the works.

With the exception of the planned *Art News*, the subjects of Ovation programming need not be cutting-edge; programming dealing with literature or art history can focus on older material, so long as the film or video itself does not appear dated.

The network is also interested in experimental and avant-garde work, though it may be relegated to a late-night slot. "With regard to this type of work, it's important to remember that all of our programming has to fit the needs of our advertisers," comments Wittenberg. "Experimental work that runs an hour or less is also much easier to find room for. From a programming perspective, there's a huge difference between 60 and 90 minutes."

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Diverse, committed, opinionated, and fiercely independent—these are the video and filmmakers who are members of AIVF. Documentary and feature filmmakers, animators, experimentalists, distributors, educators, students, curators—all concerned that their work make a difference—find the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, the national service organization for independent producers, vital to their professional lives. Whether it's our magazine, *The Independent Film & Video Monthly*, or the organization raising its collective voice to advocate for important issues, AIVF preserves your independence while letting you know you're not alone.

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INSURANCE

Members are eligible to purchase discounted personal and production insurance plans through AIVF suppliers. A range of health insurance options are available, as well as special liability, E&O, and production plans tailored for the needs of low-budget mediamakers.

TRADE DISCOUNTS

A growing list of businesses across the country offer AIVF members discounts on equipment and auto rentals, film processing, transfers, editing, and other production necessities. Plus long-distance and overnight courier services are available at special rates for AIVF members from national companies. In New York, members receive discounted rates at two hotels to make attendance at our programs and other important events more convenient.

CONFERENCE/SCREENING ROOM

AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

INFORMATION

We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

WORKSHOPS, PANELS, AND SEMINARS

Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

ADVOCACY

Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

COMMUNITY

AIVF sponsors monthly member get-togethers in cities across the country; call the office for the one nearest you. Plus members are carrying on active dialogue online—creating a "virtual community" for independents to share information, resources, and ideas. Another way to reach fellow independents to let them know about your screenings, business services, and other announcements is by renting our mailing list, available at a discount to members.

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Other categories for which Ovation seeks work include children's and family programming and foreign productions. In the case of foreign-language material, Wittenberg points out the importance of an English-language voiceover or dub for non-performance pieces and states clearly that "subtitles don't work." Programs suitable for children could also wind up as part of ArtSmart, a new educational initiative.

"Ovation is a true start-up network," explains Wittenberg. "Our hope is that as cable systems are able to accommodate more channels, Ovation will spread quickly. Until that point, we have to focus on individual cable companies and prove ourselves to them." Unlike most new cable channels, Ovation is neither a subsidiary of a larger media conglomerate, nor a spin-off of an existing cable network. Whereas MTV can preview its new M2 channel nation-wide within its own programming schedule, new companies like Ovation have to start from scratch and convince cable operators of their channel's potential before it is ever seen by actual viewers.

Currently Ovation is cablecast three hours a week to between 10 and 14 million homes through TCI's "Intro Television" preview service. It is also regularly previewed by regional cable operators, but Wittenberg is quick to point out that the process of getting carriage is not as simple as it seems. "We previewed in Washington, DC, for a month last spring," she explains, "and our market research reported that we did very well. They got back to us requesting more information—and we're still in the process of negotiating being carried by their operation. It's very complex." [See "Get a Load of the Competition," Aug./Sept. '96.] It can be even more difficult in areas like New York City, where a huge demand for programming space runs up against a near-monopoly on cable service. "It doesn't look like we'll be on Time-Warner for some time," she admits, although Liberty Cable, a "wireless" company utilizing rooftop satellite dishes, can offer New Yorkers Ovation.

You don't need to wait until Ovation is part of your cable service to talk to them about your work. To approach them about a potential sale or coproduction, contact Susan Wittenberg through the Ovation headquarters at 201 North Union St., Alexandria, VA, 22314; (703) 518-3095; fax: 518-3096; www.ovationtv.com.

Ryan Deussing (ryan@thing.net) is a freelance writer and editorial assistant for The Independent.

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the tribulation experienced by those who left the oppression of the Jim Crow South, only to find themselves in a complex and contentious cityscape. The program, directed by the team of Andrea Ades Vasquez, Pennee Bender, and Josh Brown, uses the story of northern migration to cover issues including the rise of Black politics, the July 1919 race riot, and the "New Negro" movement. American Social History Project, 99 Hudson St., NY, NY, 10013; (212) 966-4248.



The PBS special *Talk to Me: Americans in Conversation* features many American "voices" and creates a unique vision of our history. Courtesy: The Smithsonian Institute

BY RYAN DEUSSING

AMERICA AS A WORK-IN-PROGRESS—THAT'S THE image director Andrea Simon wants to create with *Talk to Me: Americans in Conversation*, her one-hour film featuring interviews with residents of American communities as disparate as the Espanola Valley of northern New Mexico and the "Lincoln Country" of southern Illinois. The film juxtaposes imagery of American icons with very personal reflections by Americans about who they are and where they come from. Weaving cultural lineage and national identity to create a portrait of America on a personal scale, the film, which debuted on PBS on January 17, raises provocative questions about the forces that hold a nation like America together, as well as those that could pull it apart. Arcadia Pictures, 157 West 79th St., NY, NY, 10024; (212) 580-1299.

Narrated by a Mississippi barber and a sharecropper who organized migration clubs from the South to Chicago, *Up South* (30 min.) portrays the dramatic story of African-American migration to northern industrial cities during WWI. Through letters, stories, songs, photographs, and art, the film depicts

Tell the Truth and Run: George Seldes and the American Press, Rick Goldsmith's debut feature-length documentary, was recently named Best of Festival at November's Northwest Documentary Film Fest in Seattle and received the John O'Connor Film Award from the American Historical Association in January. A remarkable and unsung figure, the journalist George Seldes covered WWI, the Russian Revolution, the rise of European fascism, the dawn of the Cold War, and the McCarthy era, offending people from Gen. George Pershing to Benito Mussolini along the way. He also published his own weekly journal of muckraking and investigative reporting that exposed fraud, censorship, and the collusion between big business and the media. The film is narrated by Susan Sarandon and features a dramatic reading of Seldes's written words by Edward Asner. Goldsmith Productions, (510) 849-3225; Rgoldfilm@aol.com.

Violence is treated seriously in *Never, Again, Forever* (60 min.), which traces the story of the Jewish Defense League from its founding in Brooklyn to the controversy surrounding its activities in Israel, particularly in the occupied territories. Directors Danae Elon and Pierre Chainet describe their documentary

as "a film about the sensation of hatred" which aims to expose the truth about all forms of fundamentalism—"paved with good intentions, it is a road to hell." The film premiered at the Hampton's International Film Festival and also screened at the Jewish Film/Video Festival at Lincoln Center Danae Elon/Pierre Chainet, 303 E. Houston St., NYC 10002.

Currently in postproduction and seeking completion funds, *Visas and Virtues* (30 min.) tells the more uplifting story of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who dared to rescue thousands of European Jews in 1940 by issuing transit visas, which allowed them free passage to safety. Shot in one week and utilizing a crew of over 200 volunteers, the film has received recognition by Yad Vashem, the Israeli government entity which declared Sugihara "Righteous Among Nations," the highest honor and recognition from the Jewish people. Cedar Grove Productions, Box 29772, LA, CA 90029-0772; tmt@tmisp.com

Filmmaker Danny Plotnick warns audiences to brace themselves for the most resplendent footnotes of rock'n'roll anti-history ever to grace the screen: *I'm Not Fascinating: The Movie!* (50 min.). The super 8 feature chronicles the pointless shenanigans of Bay Area ne'er-do-wells the Icky Boyfriends and their futile quest for rock stardom. The *San Francisco Bay Guardian* calls *I'm Not Fascinating* "a weirdly beautiful spectacle of self-defeat." Danny Plotnick (415) 821-9322; s8romeo@aol.com; www.sirius.com/~sstark/mkr/dp/dp-bio.html.

ATTENTION AIVF MEMBERS

The "In & Out of Production" column is a regular feature in *The Independent*, designed to give AIVF members an opportunity to keep the organization and others interested in independent media informed about current work. We profile works-in-progress as well as recent releases. These are not critical reviews, but informational descriptions. AIVF members are invited to submit detailed information about their latest project for inclusion in the column. Send descriptions and black & white photos to: *The Independent*, In & Out of Production, 304 Hudson St., 6th fl., NY, NY 10013.

LISTINGS DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT. SINCE SOME DETAILS MAY CHANGE AFTER THE MAGAZINE GOES TO PRESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONTACT THE FESTIVAL DIRECTLY BEFORE SENDING PREVIEW CASSETTES. DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING A CALL FOR ENTRIES IN THE FESTIVAL COLUMN IS 2-1/2 MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., MARCH 15 FOR JUNE ISSUE). ALL BLURBS SHOULD INCLUDE: FESTIVAL DATES, CATEGORIES, PRIZES, ENTRY FEES, DEADLINES, FORMATS & CONTACT INFO. TO IMPROVE OUR RELIABILITY AND MAKE THIS COLUMN MORE BENEFICIAL, WE ENCOURAGE ALL MEDIAMAKERS TO CONTACT FIVE WITH CHANGES, CRITICISM, OR PRAISE FOR FESTIVALS PROFILED.

DOMESTIC

CHICAGO UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 13-17, IL. Now in its 4th year, competitive festival encourages low-budget film/video makers and provides a venue for underground, ind. and experimental film/video works "outside of the entertainment mainstream." Controversial, cutting edge, transgressive, politically incorrect & beyond. Both first-time directors & professionals welcome. Past guests have included Richard Kern, Kenneth Anger, Guy Maddin, George Kuchar. 1997 guests to be announced. CUFF also presents special screenings throughout the year. Awards given to best feature, short, experimental, doc., and viewers' choice. Entry fee: \$25 shorts (under 60 min.); \$35 feature. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, S-8, S-VHS, VHS, Beta, 3/4", Hi8, pixelvision, CD-ROM; preview on 1/2". Deadline May 15th. Contact Jay Bliznick, Festival Director or Bryan Wendorf, Programmer/Publicity Director. Chicago Underground Film Festival (submissions), 2501 North Lincoln Ave., Ste. 278, Chicago, IL 60614; (773) 866-8660; fax (773) 866-8660; danute13@aol.com.

DOMINIQUE DUNNE MEMORIAL VIDEO COMPETITION AND FESTIVAL, May, CO. 27th yr of int'l competition for originally produced videos by high school students, open to high school grades 9-12 or college freshman entering a film produced w/in past 12 mos. Entries must be sole work of student filmmaker or filmmakers, w/ 2/3 original content. Awards in dramatic/narrative (8-24 min.), experimental (3-12 min.), stop action/computer animated (non prize cat). 1st prize \$300, 2nd prize \$200, 3rd prize \$100. Entry fee: \$10 & SASE. Formats: 1/2". Deadline: Apr. 12. Contact: David Manley, fest coordinator, Dominique Dunne Memorial Video Competition & Festival, Fountain Valley School of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO 80911; (719) 392-2657.

JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL, July, CA. Estab in 1980, noncompetitive fest (under annual theme Independent Filmmakers: Looking at Ourselves) showcases new Ind American Jewish-subject cinema & diverse selection of foreign films. Fest presents dramatic, doc, experimental & animated shorts & features about Jewish history, culture & identity. Filmmakers need not be Jewish, films

selected by subject. Special programs vary from yr to yr & have include Russian, Sephardic & Latino programs. 30-35 films showcased each yr. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Deadline: Mar. 15. Contact: Janis Plotkin, director or Sam Ball, assistant director, Jewish Film Festival, 346 9th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 621-0556; fax: (415) 548-0536; Jewishfilm@aol.com.

JEWISH VIDEO COMPETITION, June, CA. Now in 4th yr, competition accepts entries on Jewish themes from every level & cat of prod, incl. audio & interactive media. All original formats accepted but entries must be submitted on VHS-NTSC, produced w/in preceding 3 1/2 yrs & be under 100 min. Awards: Jurors' Choice (share \$750); Jurors' Citation (share \$500), Directors' Choice (share \$250); Honorable Mention (certificate & screenings); Lindheim Award for program that best explores political & social relationship between Jews & other ethnic & religious groups. Winners screened at Magnes Museum for 2 mos, as well as cable & other venues. Formats: 3/4", 1/2", Beta. Entry fee \$25 under 30 min., \$35 over 31 min. Deadline: Mar. 31. Contact: Bill Chayes, video competition coordinator, Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2911 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94705; (510) 549-6952; fax: (510) 849-3673; jew-video@slip.net or wchayes@aol.com, <http://www.slip.net/~jewvideo>.

MARIN COUNTY NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF SHORT FILMS, July 2-6, CA. Competitive fest accepting films under 30 min. Up to \$2,400 awarded in cats of student, independent & animated. Films screened during Marin County Fair. Early entry fee: \$20. Late entry fee: \$25. Early deadline: Mar. 21. Late deadline: Apr. 11. Contact: Marin County Fair & Exposition, Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA 94903; (415) 499-6400.

NANTUCKET FILM FESTIVAL, June 17-22, MA. 2nd yr. Fest honors screenwriters & their craft, held on Nantucket Island. Focus on art of storytelling though film, include short & feature length films, docs, Q&A w/ filmmakers, staged readings, panel discussions w/ industry leaders. Entries must not have had commercial distribution or US broadcast. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 3/4" or 1/2". Entry fee: \$40 & SASE. Deadline: Apr. 18. Contact: Jill Goode, Nantucket Film Festival, Box 688, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012; (212) 642-6339; <http://www.nantucketfilmfestival.org>.

NEWARK BLACK FILM FESTIVAL, July, NJ. 6-wk summer fest of films by African-American filmmakers & films featuring history & culture of Black people in America & elsewhere. Fest, now over 2 decades, has screened over 500 films before total audiences of almost 85,000. Paul Robeson Awards are biennial competition. Fest accepts noncommercial, ind. films & videos completed in previous 2 yrs in cats of doc, non-doc, animation & experimental. Original 16mm films & videos released w/in previous 2 yrs considered; industrial, commercial or studio prods ineligible. Cash prizes awarded at discretion of judges. Entry fee: \$25 (Robeson competition). Deadline: early March. Contact: Program Coordinator, Newark Black Film Festival, Newark Museum, 49 Washington Street, Box 540, Newark, NJ 07101-0540; (201) 596-6550; fax: (201) 642-0459.



SLICE OF LIFE FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE, mid-July, PA. Held at Penn State Univ., 15th edition features observational doc films & videos, incl. those using experimental techniques. Fest "brings high quality doc work from around the country to large, intelligent, appreciative central PA audiences." Narrative works & works longer than 30 min. not accepted; shorter entries encouraged. Winning producers receive cash prize & certificate. Entry fee: \$25. Formats: 16mm, 3/4"; preview on 16mm & 1/2". Deadline: April 1. Contact: Sedgwick Heskett, dir., Documentary Resource Center, 106 Boalsburg Rd., Box 909, Lemont, PA 16851; (814) 234-1945; fax: 234-0939.

SMOKY MOUNTAIN/NANTAHALA MEDIA FESTIVAL, Apr. 11-13, NC. All lengths & formats of works in several cats accepted: feature film, drama/short features, doc, experimental/visual art, animation/graphic, industrial, commercial/promotional, student, audio/experimental, audio soundtrack, scriptwriting, CD multimedia. Special awards given to outdoor subjects, themes & artists in all divisions. Entry fee: general \$19, student \$10, distributor \$25, colleges & universities \$100 per 20 entries. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, 3/4", 1/2". Deadline: Mar. 14 (Mar. 28 w/ \$10 additional fee). Contact: Smoky Mountain Art Center, Box 1068, Bryson City, NC 28713.

WEST PALM BEACH INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, May 30-June 1, FL. Showcase for film & video from Florida. Competition open to prof., amateur, student work. Cats: fiction, doc, experimental, music video, animation. Send 3/4" or 1/2" only w/ synopsis, all screenings video. Deadline: April 1. Entry fee: \$10. Contact: Kris Kemp, TWPBIF, 528A Clematis St., West Palm Beach, FL 33401; (561)804-9171; fax 833-9966.

FOREIGN

CANNES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL/INTERNATIONAL CRITICS WEEK, May 9-21, France. Now in 36th edition, this is the section of the Cannes Film Festival devoted to work of first or second-time directors. Feature-length fiction & docs eligible. Productions must have been completed after April 1996 and cannot have been previously presented in competition section of major European film fest (e.g. Venice, San Sebastian, Berlin). Section also features short films under 30 min. Awards: Best Feature Prize: 100,000FF (\$20,000) & Best Short Film Prize: 50,000FF (\$10,000). Jean Roy, chief of Int'l Critics Week, will be in NYC Mar. 18-25 to screen new

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American features, docs & short films at Tribeca Film Center Screening Room; entries can be screened in 16mm, super 16mm or 35mm. Works-in-progress can be screened in interlock system or video projection (but completed film must be ready for fest presentation). Screening fees to participate in NY screenings: \$325 features, \$275 docs, \$95 shorts, \$75 student shorts. Deadline: Mar. 10; deadline for receiving prints at Tribeca: Mar. 14. Contact fest's US rep: Sandy Mandelberger, Int'l Media Resources, 599 Broadway, 8th fl, New York, NY 10012; (212) 941-1464; fax: (212) 431-0329; intlmed@sunset.net

EUROPEAN MEDIA ART FESTIVAL, May 7-11, Germany. Over 140 experimental films & videos, as well as computer & video installations. CD-ROM, text contributions & Internet projects showcased at this fest, one of largest annual events for innovative & experimental works in those fields. Open to "experiments, to the extraordinary, to all those working methods which, using the most diverse media, create intelligent, radical or ironic worlds of symbols & signs in today's digital age." All film & video works must have been completed w/in previous yr. Awards go to best German experimental film or video prod. Best of cat media awards. In special programs, current political, societal & artistic topics explored. An int'l student forum, retros, workshops & open air events are also held. Appl. for installations, expanded media & exhibition projects should enclose detailed calculation of costs, precise description, photo material & video documentation if possible. Selected films/ videos compensated w/DM40/minute with a minimum of DM40 & maximum DM160. No entry fee (but return of preview material requires DM20). Deadline: Mar. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-8, Beta, 8mm, installations, Internet. CD-ROM. Entry fee: None. Contact: Alfred Rotert, director, European Media Art Festival, Box 1861, Hasestrasse 45a, D-49008 Osnabruck, Germany; tel. 011 49 541 21658; fax: 28327; emaf@bionic.zerberus.de; http://www.emaf.de.

HUESCA INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, June 6-14, Spain. Founded in 1971, competitive showcase for Spanish & foreign short films has aim of "the dissemination of image as a contribution to the better knowledge & fraternity among the nations of the world." Awards: "Ciudad de Huesca" Golden Danzante (1,000,000 ptas.); Silver Danzante (500,000 ptas.); Bronze Danzante (250,000 ptas.). Other awards: Award "Cacho Pallero" to best Latin American short film, Award "Joaquin Costa" of the Instituto de Estudios Aloaragoneses to best Spanish short film; Award "Francisco Garcia De Paso" to short film that best emphasizes human values; Award "Casa de America" to best Latin American photography director. No thematic restrictions except no films dealing w/ tourism or publicity. Entries must be unawarded in other fests in Spain, produced after 1996, and be under 30 min. Of approx. 400 entries received each year, about 170 shown. Deadline: April 1. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: Jose Mana Escriche, comite de direccion, Festival International Cortometraje "Ciudad de Huesca", Apartado 174, 22080 Huesca, Spain; tel: 011 34 9 74 21 25 82; fax 011 34 9 74 21 00 65.

KROK INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FILM

FESTIVAL, Aug. 12-26, Russia/Ukraine. ASIFA-recognized fest is held aboard ship bound for voyage Kiev-Dnepropetrovsk-Zaporozhy-Odessa-Sevastopol-Gourzuf (Artek, an int'l camp for children)-Kherson-Kanev-Kiev. Fest is only event in Community of Independent States (CIS) sponsored by both Russia & Ukraine. Aim of fest is familiarization, exchange of information & experience w/in professional animation environment & promotion of creative incentives for participants to seek new ideas, styles, techniques & technologies. Program includes variety of film screenings (competition & non-competition program from about 40 countries, retros of prominent animation masters, presentations of national animation schools) & 3-day animation show at Artek. US Contact: Anne Borin, c/o Donnell Media Center, 10 W 53rd St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 362-3412; fax: 496-1090. Address in Ukraine: Krok International Animation Festival, 6, Saksaganary St., Kiev 252033, Ukraine; tel: 011 38 044 2275280; fax: 011 38044 227 3130/2960908.

MERRANO TELEVISION FESTIVAL, June, Italy. Now in 2nd edition, fest is concentrating part of its programming on American TV. Looking for independently produced television pilots of any kind. Contact: Merano TV Festival, 80 4th Ave., 3rd fl., New York, NY 10003; (212) 979-6305; fax: (212) 979-5513.

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CINEMA AND NEW MEDIA, June 5-15, Canada. A successor to the Festival International du Nouveau Cinema et de la Video de Montreal, which was founded in 1971 as a showcase for innovative, ind. features & shorts of all genres, the first edition of this event, directed toward the future of cinema, will take place this year. Fest is supported by Daniel Langlois, president & founder of Softimage, & Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art & Technology, as well as Telefilm Canada, SODEC, MUC Arts Council & City of Montreal. The foundation is also supporting the forthcoming creation of a new cinema & multimedia arts complex in association w/ Cinéma Parallele; the complex will house a variety of activities relating to new media, including 3 cinemas, a video club specializing in auteur cinema, a cafe & exhibition hall. Structure also includes interactive web site w/ wealth of information on cinema & electronic arts, operated in collaboration w/ Virtual Film Festival. Fest includes int'l selection which "will exemplify all the new trends in cinema & electronic arts by presenting the latest work along w/ retrospectives, homages & special events" & will include an int'l short film competition and "devote a night to an explosive cocktail of short films." Deadline: Mar. 15. Formats 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", 8-8, Beta, 8mm, installations. Entry fee: feature \$50Cdn, short \$30Cdn. Contact: Claude Chamberlain, director/Bernard Boulad, executive manager, Festival International du Cinéma et des Nouveaux Médias de Montreal, 3668 Boul. Saint-Laurent, Montréal, Quebec, Canada H2x 2V4; (514) 843-4711; fax: (514) 843-9398.

PESARO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF NEW CINEMA, June, Italy. Founded in 1965, non-competitive fest is showcase for films by young directors &/or ind. works & or works coming from countries new to film prods. Since late '70s, fest devoted



1997 Call For Entries



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ST. PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR DOCUMENTARY, SHORT & ANIMATED FILMS, "MESSAGE TO MAN," June 22-29. Russia. Now in 7th edition, FIAPF-recognized fest accepts feature doc (up to 120 min.), short doc (up to 40 min.) short fiction (up to 60 min.), animated films (up to 60 min.). Program incl int'l competition, best debut (1st professional as well as student & graduate films), int'l competition & special programs. Entries must have been completed after Jan. 1, 1996. Awards: Grand Prix "Golden Centaur" & \$5000 for best fest film; Prize "Centaur" & \$2000 for best feature-length doc, best short doc, best short feature & best animated film. Prizes in Debut Films Competition are Prize "Centaur" & \$3000, Festival Diploma & \$1000 (2 awards. Films screened in main competition hall & St. Petersburg art houses. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2" VHS. Entry fee: \$35 (incl shipping costs; feature-length films may incur more shipping costs). Deadline: April 7. Contact U.S. coordinator Anne Borin, St. Petersburg Film Festival, c/o Donnell Media Center, 10 W 53rd St., NY, NY 10019; (212)

362-3412. Fest address: Mikhail Litviakov, St. Petersburg International Film Festival "Message to Man," 12 Karavannaya 191011, St. Petersburg, Russia; tel: 011 7 812 235 2660/230 2200; fax: 011 7 812 135 3995.

TORONTO WORLDWIDE SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, June 2-8, Canada. Founded in 1994, competitive fest is largest independent short film fest in N. America & only one w/ marketplace for shorts. Marketplace attracts buyers, distributors, fests & networks from around world & has all films submitted to fest (over 1,000 in 1996). Awards for Best Film in Animation, Drama, Doc, Experimental & Children's cats. Fest also has competition where films can be selected to screen in Famous Players in Canada & on Air Canada internationally. Cash awards given for Best Int'l & Best Canadian Film. Other programs are Students & Famous Actors films. Short film entries should be under 40 min. Entries must have been completed w/in 2 yrs prior to deadline. Rated one of 5 top short film fests in world in *NY Times*. No entry fee. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Deadline: Mar. 15. Contact: Brenda Sherwood, executive director, Toronto Worldwide Short Film Fest, 60 Atlantic Ave., Ste. 110, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6K 1X9; (416) 535-8506; fax: (416) 535-8342; twsff@idirect.com.

WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL, July, New Zealand. Noncompetitive fest, now in its 26th yr, presented by New Film Festival, a nonprofit charitable trust dedicated to increasing options available to New Zealand filmgoers & showcase opportunities available to filmmakers. From core program of 120

features (& as many shorts), fest simultaneously presents Auckland & Wellington Film Festivals, along w/ smaller "selected highlights," programs that travel to the South Island cities of Dunedin & Christchurch. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta. No entry fee. Preview tapes by invitation only. Deadline: late April. Contact: Bill Gosden, New Zealand Film Festival, Box 9544, Te Aro, Wellington, New Zealand; tel: 011 64 4 385 0162; fax: 011 64 4 801 7304; enzedff@actrix.gen.nz; http://www.enzedff.conz (includes entry details & forms).

YAMAGATA INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 6-13, Japan. Biennial festival promotes the "best works of documentary art" in competition and a variety of special events. Sponsored by Yamagata City, 360 km north-east of Tokyo. Entries should be unreleased publicly in Japan prior to the festival, produced after April 1 of the year 2 years before each festival, and feature length. Grand Prize, known as the Robert and Frances Flaherty Prize (¥3,000,000); Mayor's Prize (¥1,000,000); two runner up prizes (¥300,000 each), and one special prize (¥300,000). U.S. contact: Gordon Hitchens, 214 West 85th Street, Apt. 3W, New York, NY 10024-3914; tel/fax: (212) 877-6856. Entry fee: None. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Deadline: March 31. Contact: Kazuyuki Yano, director, Tokyo Office, Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, Tokyo Office, Kitagawa Bldg, 4th fl., 6-42 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162, Japan; 011(81-3) 3266-9704; fax: 011(81-3) 3266-9700; yidff@bekkoame.or.jp

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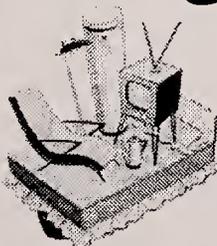
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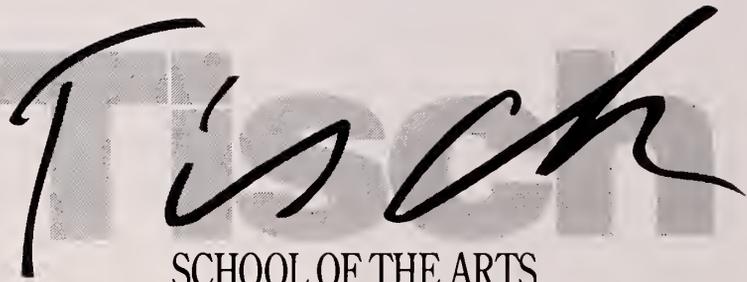
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AXLEGREASE Buffalo cable access program of ind. film & video, accepting all genres under 28 min., 1/2", 3/4", 8mm, Hi8. Send labeled w/ name, address, title, length, additional info & SASE for tape return to: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; (716) 884-7172, wheel@freenet.buffalo.edu; http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel

BLACK BOOT MEDIA PROJECT of Perry County Ind. Media Arts Center seeks ind. film & video works for regular series of roving screenings at various industrial, commercial & residential venues in Philadelphia & Harrisburg area. Submit S-8, 16mm, VHS or S-VHS w/ SASE to: PCIMAC, Lower Bailey Rd., RR2-Box 65, Newport, PA 17074. For info contact: Jeff Dardozi (215) 545-7884.

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DUTV-CABLE 54 progressive, nonprofit access channel in Philadelphia, seeks works by ind. producers. All genres & lengths considered. No payment; will return tapes. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" accepted. Contact: George McCollough or Maria Mongelli, DUTV-Cable 54, Drexel University, 33rd & Chesnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.



FILMMAKERS UNITED nonprofit org., presents monthly film series at Silent Movie Theatre in Los Angeles. Year-round venue for ind. short films. To submit a film (must have 16mm or 35mm print for screening & be no longer than 40 min.,) send a 1/2" video copy w/ SASE to: Filmmakers United, 1260 N. Alexandria Ave., LA, CA 90029; (213) 427-8016.

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IN THE MIX nat'l PBS series, seeks short (2-8 min.) videos produced by teens or young adults. Any format. Send w/ description, name & phone # to: In the Mix, 102 E. 30th St., NY, NY 10016.

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OCULARIS New screening room seeks 16mm shorts for regular screenings in East Village/ Williamsburg area of NYC, particularly by local filmmakers. Please call or send SASE for info: Ocularis, 91 N. 4th St., #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-8713.

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DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO organized by Int'l Media Resources Exchange seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info: Karen Ranucci, IMRE, 124 Washington Place, NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108.

MEDIA MATTERS Media Alliance's newsletter, provides comprehensive listings of New York area events & opportunities for media artists. For a free copy, call Media Alliance at (212) 560-2919 or visit web site at <http://www.mediaalliance.org>.

MEDIANET Guide to the Internet for Video and Filmmakers. Available free at <http://www.infi.net/~riddle/medianet.htm>, or e-mail riddle@infi.net

NEH ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE National Endowment for the Humanities' 30th Annual Report is available for free. Contains descriptions of programs as well as a complete listing of all Endowment grants for FY 1995. Readers may view or download report by visiting NEH website: <http://www.neh.fed.us> For a hard copy, write or email: NEH 1995 Annual Report, Room 402, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20506; email: info@neh.fed.us

RESOURCES • FUNDS

BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from ind. producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Reviewed on ongoing basis. Contact BFFV for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; bffv@aol.com

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PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS provides grants for development of nat'l public TV broadcast programming by & about indigenous Pacific Islanders. Appls available from: PIC, 1221 Kapiolani Blvd., #6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814; (808) 591-0059; fax: 591-1114; piccom@elele.peacesat.hawaii.edu

POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION gives financial assistance to artists of recognizable merit & financial need working as mixed-media or installation artists. Grants awarded throughout yr: \$1,000-\$30,000. For guidelines, write: Pollock-Krasner Foundation, 725 Park Ave., NY, NY 10021.

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STAFF

Many thanks to *Oscar Cervera* who served as our Membership Associate over the past year. Oscar spent many hours redesigning our database and logging in all of those new and renewing members. He's moved to Chicago where word has it he's going to start a Chicago AIVF Salon, among other things. We'll miss you!

On that note we welcome *Brent Renaud* to the AIVF staff as our new Membership Associate. In addition the AIVF/FIVF board members would like to welcome student representatives, *Laala Matias* and *Todd Cohen* to the FIVF board. Both are undergraduates at NYU and will serve a one year term.

SPRING EVENTS

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The AIVF annual membership meeting will be held Friday evening, April 18, at Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., NYC. *The meeting is open to all*; AIVF members will receive a separate notice in the mail

MEET AND GREETES

These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. *Free; open to AIVF members only*. Limited to 20 participants. *RSVP required*: (212) 807-1400 x301. Please leave name, phone number, and event for which you are making a reservation.

SANDE ZEIG

President, Artistic License Films

Artistic License Films provides independent companies with *individualized* services to ensure the successful theatrical release of a film.

Tuesday, March 18, 6:30 pm

ROBERT SEIGEL

Attorney at Law, Cinema Film Consulting

Cinema Film Consulting provides professional

legal services to the media industry. Find out why legal counsel for independent films is important at all levels of production.

Tuesday, April 8, 6:30 pm

SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS

USING NONBROADCAST VIDEO IN A BROADCAST CONTEXT

This seminar will address independent producers' concerns of meeting television broadcast standards: the stringency of PBS specifications, inconsistencies with nonlinear edit systems, and equipment problems. Panelists include former Standby Program editor *Marshall Reese* and *Bill Topazio*, VP of Engineering at Manhattan Transfer. This event is *free of charge*. For more information contact: *Maria Venuto*, (212) 219-0951. To RSVP call (212) 807-1400 x301.

When: March 12, 7 pm

Where: AIVF office

WOMEN AND THE ART OF MULTIMEDIA

A conference for media professionals and an international exhibition of multimedia work by and about women. WAM! will assess the position of independent women producers in relation to new media, and provide women in the field with professional development opportunities. *AIVF members receive a \$50 discount on registration fees*. Contact: *Terry Lawler* at (212) 673-5589; email: *tlawler@echonyc.com*
When: May 29 - 31 in Washington, DC

ADVOCACY

Get your videotape copy of the Dec. 4, 1996 advocacy forum *Who Owns The Airwaves?* Contact *LaTrice Dixon* at (212) 807-1400 x 233.

TRADE DISCOUNT UPDATE

The Law Offices of *Stephen Mark Goldstein* have recently moved. Their new address and telephone are: 186 Riverside Drive, NYC 10024; (212) 878-4078; fax: 579-4445.

MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. *Note*: Since our deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 pm

Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.

Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 pm.

Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street

Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday each month; call for time

Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave.

Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 pm.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver, CO

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125

Houston, TX:

When: Last Wednesday of each month, 7 pm.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: David Mendel, (713) 529-4185

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday each month, 7:30 pm.

Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.

Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

Norwalk, CT:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

Sacramento, CA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 pm.

Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.

Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

Call for dates and times.

Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW; *Contact*: DC Salon hotline (202) 554-3263 x4. Discussion on *Mediamakers & CD-ROM*, presented by *Margaret Buckley*, Discovery Television. *When*: March 11, 7 pm at Herb's Restaurant.

TRADE DISCOUNTS FOR AIVF MEMBERS

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AIVF MEMBERS:

CALIFORNIA

Rick Caine Productions

856 1/2 N. Occidental Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026; (213) 413-3222/ Contact: Rick Caine or Debbie Melnyk
15% discount on Sony Betacam SP equipment, crew rentals, duplication and offline editing.

Mill Valley Film Group

104 Eucalyptus Knoll, Mill Valley, CA 94941; (415) 461-8334/ Contact: Will Parrinello
35% discounts on Beta SP production packages, production personnel & VHS off-line editing facilities. Rates further negotiable for selected projects.

Studio Film and Tape

6674 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90038; (213) 466-8101/ Contact: Carole Dean
5% discount on Kodak short-ends & recams; 10% discount on new Fuji film (20% to students w/i.d.).

COLORADO

MovieMaker

4730 Table Mesa Dr., Suite B-100, Boulder, CO 80303; (303) 499-6300 / Contact: Susan Lyle Kinney
15% discount on video production services including shooting, editing, script consultation.

FLORIDA

DHA Production

2375 No. Tamiami Trail, Naples 33940; (813) 263-3939/ Contact: George Steinhoff
Discounted hourly rate of \$325 for edit suite, a Beta SP Component Digital Sony series 6000, including use of Abekas A-65, Sony DME-500 and Chyron Max.

Film Friends

4019 No. Meridian Ave., Miami Beach 33140; (305) 532-6966 or (800) 235-2713/ Contact: Mik Cribben
30% discount on extensive range of equipment rentals - camera, lighting, sound, grip, editing.

ILLINOIS

Brella Productions

1840 Oak Ave., Evanston 60201; (708) 866-1884/ Contact: Bernadette Burke
35% off nonlinear editing & 3D animation work.

EditMasters

17 W. 755 Butterfield Rd., Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181; (708) 515-4340/ Contact: Michael Sorenson
30-50% discount on digital nonlinear post-production services.

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BCS Broadcast Store, Inc.

460 West 34th Street, 4th Fl., NY 10001; (212) 268-8800/ Contact: Michael Rose
10-15% discount on all used video equipment.

Best Shot Video

81 Pondfield Rd., Bronxville, NY 10708; (914) 664-1943/ Contact: Adam Shanker
10% discount on video editing, duplication & production services.

Bill Creston

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/ Contact: Barbara Rosenthal
5% discounts on all Super-8 film & sound production services, including editing, sound transfers, VHS to VHS dubs. Also: low-cost services on Amiga computer & still photography.

Downtown Community TV Center

87 Lafayette St., NYC 10013-4435; (212) 966-4510, (800) VIDEO-NY, (212) 219-0248 fax/ Contact: Hye Jung Park or Paul Pittman
10-20% discount on video workshops & seminars; 10-30% discount on all editing services & equipment packages for nonprofit projects; Avid nonlinear editing, CMX editing, off-line editing, Beta SP & EVW300 Hi8 camera pkg rental.

DuArt Film and Video

245 West 55th Street, NY 10019; (212) 757-4580 x 637/ Contact: David Fisher
Negotiable discounts on color negative developing, workprinting, blow-ups from 16mm and S16mm to 35mm, and titles

Film Friends

16 East 17th St., NY 10003; (212) 620-0084/ Contact: Mike Gallagher
30% discount on extensive range of equipment rentals - camera, lighting, sound, grip, editing.

Media Loft

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/ Contact: Barbara Rosenthal
5% discount on 3/4" VHS & interformat editing, titling, dubbing, special effects, Hi8, Amiga computer, slides & photos to tape, S-8.

Mercer Street Sound

133 Mercer St., NYC 10012; (212) 966-6794/ Contact: Bill Seery
50% discount off corporate book rate for audio postproduction

Metrovision Production Services

138 East 26th Street, NYC 10010; (212) 689-7900/ Contact: John Brown
Discount on video and film equipment packages

L. Matthew Miller Associates, Ltd.

48 West 25th Street, 11th Fl., NYC 10010; (212) 741-8011 x 229/ Contact: Steve Cohen
Discounted videotape and hardware.

Picture This Music

50 West 34th Street, Suite 9C9, NYC 10001; (212) 947-6107/ Contact: Paul D. Goldman
10-30% off digital audio postproduction: music, voice-over, sound design, SFX, audio mixing (ProTools work stations).

Post Digital

236 West 27th Street, 3rd Fl., NYC 10001; (212) 366-5353/ Contact: Michael Helman
40% discount off nonlinear offline editing facility; duplication; animation production

PrimaLux Video

30 West 26th St., NYC 10010; (212) 206-1402/ Contact: Matt Clarke
10% or more discounts (nonprofits encouraged) on services including: studio production facilities, remote production packages, and postproduction.

Rafik

814 Broadway, NYC 10003; (212) 475-7884/ Contact: Charles Kephart
25% discounts on used cassettes over \$100, 10% on single invoices over \$100 for video services, editing, duplication, viewing, film-to-tape transfers.

Sound Dimensions Editorial

321 West 44th Street, #602, NYC 10036; (212) 757-5147/ Contact: Brian Langman
15% discount on transfers, effects, and sound studio services: Foley, ADR, narration, mixing.

Star Tech

152 West 72nd Street, #2FE, NYC 10023; (212) 757-5147/ Contact: John Hampton
Discounts on paging equipment & services & 10% off Audio Limited wireless mics & accessories.

Studio Film and Tape

630 9th Avenue, NYC 10036; (212) 977-9330/ Contact: John Troyan
5% discount on Kodak short-ends & recams; 10% discount on new Fuji film (20% w/ student i.d.).

Suite 2410

330 West 42nd St., Ste. 2410, NYC 10036; (212) 947-1417/ Contact: Madeleine Solano
10% discount on all editing services and facilities: 16 mm; 3/4" to 3/4"; Betacam to Betacam; AVID; Betacam SP to Betacam SP - A/B Roll, Chyron, Digital Effects.

Technicolor Inc., East Coast Division

321 West 44th St., NYC 10036; (212) 582-7310/ Contact: Ray Chung
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BY PATRICIA THOMSON

Bizarre, funny, indulgent, and beyond the pale, *Schizopolis* is also Soderbergh's lowest-budget feature ever. In this interview, the director talks about why he jumped off his career track to return to no-budget filmmaking, and what was on his mind when writing this comedy about New Age gurus, *doppelgangers*, and dentists.



Schizopolis

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BY PAUL CULLUM

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Location, location, location

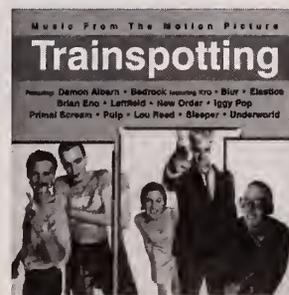
BY CHRIS CHOMYN

Location scouting isn't just about finding a place that looks right. Unless you know what to check for, your dream spot may turn out to be a logistical nightmare.

The Do-Re-Mi's of Soundtrack Deals

BY JEFF RABHAN

What you need to know before approaching record companies about releasing your film's soundtrack.



COVER: Steven Soderbergh, playing a New Age speechwriter in his film *Schizopolis*, takes a moment to reflect in the bathroom mirror. Courtesy filmmaker.

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Systems No Longer Apply?

I agree with many of the points made by AIVF executive director Ruby Lerner in her "Open Letter" [Jan/Feb. '97]. Independent film and video is at a crisis point. In a period of growth in the number of film and videomakers and technological advances that make grassroots video more accessible, indies are faced with disappearing opportunities for funds, "lock out" from mainstream or alternative broadcast and distribution, and a lack of access to (very overpriced) basic tools for completion of work.

However, despite all the talk in the pages of *The Independent* about the grassroots, I see little action by the organization toward empowerment. If anything, AIVF and *The Independent* have headed blindly toward a great "sell out" and centralization of media in this country.

Four years ago, I made the decision to make my first feature-length documentary, a controversial piece that looks at a Greensboro, North Carolina-based Leather/SM organization. At first, I saw *The Independent* and AIVF as a great potential resource, providing information on festivals I could enter, opportunities for grants or seed money, and advice on the process of making a no-budget documentary.

I quickly learned that the systems and methods touted by AIVF no longer apply. Granting organizations, with a glut of applications, weren't interested in my small-budget video, instead giving funds to more "high impact" pieces with a larger potential audience and freer of controversial themes. A media center here in North Carolina wouldn't give me access to editing equipment, even though they saw value in my work. They were "afraid of losing grant money" because I was tackling difficult subject matter.

Cable access was out of the question. My city's facility barely has the basic tools for live in-studio programs, let alone editing equipment that could be used to piece together a feature-length video from 34 hours of footage. When my documentary was completed, festivals and distributors—even those touted as "alterna-

tive" by AIVF—passed, giving their time and resources to more marketable and banal material.

I decided to take the bull by the horns to get my documentary directly to my audience. I networked within the Gay and Lesbian community to arrange charity showings, and over the past year I have had small but enthusiastic showings in Raleigh, Toronto, Indianapolis, Washington DC, and Dallas. I set up a Web site for the video that received more than 30,000 visitors over the past year and offered the video for sale there. I sent review copies to as many publications as I could afford and received a handful of reviews.

After a year of "guerrilla marketing," the video has been picked up for distribution by a San Francisco-based company that specializes in porn directed at the Leather/SM community—highly ironic, considering that my documentary contains no foul language and only two brief scenes of nudity. In February, my documentary [was] screened at the University of Kentucky as part of a conference on popular culture and I have been nominated for an annual round of community service awards by a national Leather/SM organization.

The sale and distribution of my documentary will likely never pay back the loan I made to myself using a credit card. However, I was able to produce a documentary on a controversial subject in the heart of the Bible Belt and live to tell the tale. I learned an expensive three-year lesson on how limited and controlled "alternative" media can be in this country when you are located outside the great city of New York, refuse to see your work as a mass market production, or do not see your work as a stepping stone to PBS or a major studio.

AIVF should realize that the rules have changed. Unless the organization recognizes that "art houses" and "alternative media" are just as commercially oriented and limiting to different points of view as Disney or Time Warner and acknowledges the existence of video- and filmmakers who operate outside of "the system," the organization will continue to be irrelevant to more and more of its members.

Randy A. Riddle

Producer/Director, CCD Productions
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Ruby Lerner replies:

You have raised a number of very important issues in your letter, and I wanted to respond to a few that I consider key. I don't think we're in disagreement about the state of exhibition, either commercial or alternative. I pointed out in my article that even alternative venues "are under pressure to look more carefully at the

marketability of the work they exhibit." I think this is an unhealthy situation, but without enlightened subsidy, a very real one. But what most struck me about your letter is the reminder that censorship is alive and well, even though sensationalism in the public sphere may have momentarily subsided. Censorship, it appears, has been steadily evolving into its more subtle manifestation as self-censorship.

As to AIVF's commitment to producers operating outside the system, I feel very proud of a number of the projects we've been working on the past couple of years—both in the magazine and organization-wide. We began to recognize the changing rules you so accurately characterize in your letter a few years ago, and we've been trying to respond on several fronts.

First, the magazine has already published and will continue to publish articles on self-distribution, a route we think an increasing number of producers will either choose or be forced to take. Second, we're collecting those articles, commissioning new pieces, and collecting producers' experiences for a toolkit on self-distribution, which should be ready this summer.

We have also made a commitment to publishing regional spotlights in the magazine, to help counter the centralization you noted. We're working our way around the country; we've already profiled Boston, the Bay Area, the Rocky Mountains, the Pacific Northwest, Texas, and Chicago. The Ohio River Valley region is coming up in the fall.

Third, we're working on an exhibitors guide. We have about 1,000 entries on the database right now, and we hope this will become a constantly expanding information resource about exhibition opportunities, whether well-established or ad hoc venues. We know we'll need producers to help us keep that information current and as comprehensive as possible.

Fourth, and the most promising to me, are the salons that have been created by members in a number of cities across the country, and which now involve about 1,000 producers. With our members' help, we will continue to identify other activities.

Ultimately though, your experience is very heartening, because as difficult as it has been, you prove that with persistence and initiative, it is possible for a maker to make a connection with his/her audience. I hope it will serve as an inspiration to other producers.

Errata

In "ITVS Eyes Distribution" [March '97], *Signal to Noise's* Cara Mertes and Barbara Abrash were misidentified. They are, respectively, executive producer, director and writer; and senior producer.

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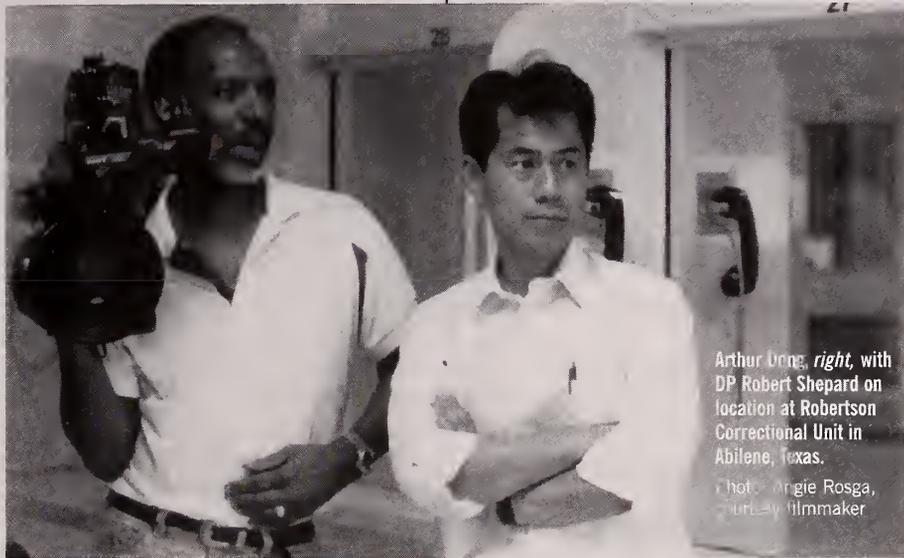
documentarian

LICENSED TO KILL

BY CARA MERTES

thought were "queers." That night also marked the beginning of a search for a way to explore the relationship between violence, sexual identity, and homophobia.

"I learned that the world is not a better place" says Dong. "I was brought up in San Francisco in the sixties, so my political ideals were shaped by that period. There was so much hope; the world was going to be a good place in a decade or two. But I don't see the heart of the



Arthur Dong, right, with DP Robert Shepard on location at Robertson Correctional Unit in Abilene, Texas.

Photo: Angie Rosga, *Portrait* filmmaker

"I WAS THE POSTER CHILD OF DISASTER," SAYS documentarian Arthur Dong about his recent experience at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival: an early screening of *Licensed to Kill* left him with a mangled print. After Dong had another print flown in, the film went on to garner two documentary awards: the Filmmaker's Trophy and Best Directing.

San Francisco-based Dong is already well known as the maker of the Oscar-nominated *Sewing Woman* (1987), *Forbidden City, U.S.A.* (1989), and *Coming Out Under Fire* (1994). His newest—and in many ways, most accomplished—film is both elegy and indictment; a tabloid story given grace through Dong's sure hand as producer, director, and, for the first time since 1988, his own editor.

Licensed to Kill is based on interviews with seven imprisoned men convicted of murder between 1991 and 1994. Between them, they killed 11 people and wounded one in homophobic attacks. The film combines these interviews with local news footage, police footage of the crime scenes, stills of the victims and murderers, and off-air footage.

On the face of it, *Licensed to Kill* took a year and a half to complete, but for Dong the journey started one night about 20 years ago when he was attacked on the street by a gang looking for some "fun"—beating people they

world changing."

It is, in fact, a quality of "heart" that makes *Licensed to Kill* so effective, as Dong uses the film to, in a sense, embrace the enemy. Instead of assuming that these men are deranged, stupid, or simply evil, Dong approached his subjects as people who had answers to the question that drives the entire film: "Why did you do it?"

Conducting the interviews, says Dong, inspired mixed emotions. "They were the most difficult, because it took me two decades to gather the strength to do them. They were the easiest, because I took all of my experience into the room with me. I knew I had to be a 'friend' to them and bring all that into the moment. I wasn't scared; I knew what I wanted." It shows. The clarity and soul-searching quality of these interviews is markedly different from the standard "parole-board" speeches inmates often give to media when they want to impress others with their good behavior.

Drawing from a National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' annual report listing more than 200 convicted murderers, Dong had two criteria for inclusion in the film—the men admitted the killings, and they knowingly targeted gay men to kill or admitted to acting out of homophobia. Eleven were interviewed; six were used. The seventh interview is a police interrogation that Dong weaves throughout the film.



In each interview, Dong allows the men to speak for themselves, using simple questions and silence as his interviewing tools. By steering clear of judgment, Dong allows the men to connect their crimes to their experience of the world. What Dong painstakingly reveals are lives wrecked by violence and of a society rife with contradiction. The individual stories amplify cultural influences and explore our common experiences of media, childhood, and society in a search for the reason these men felt "licensed to kill."

Dong did not have to look far. He shows us clips of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell sermons preaching intolerance and homophobia, and many of the men interviewed cite religious beliefs as bolstering their homophobia. Some talk about being sexually abused as children. Others say they felt threatened when they were sexually propositioned by other men. Dong's films combine strong personal stories with historical and political themes, but he has moved away from personal-essay documentaries and chosen an increasingly journalistic persona. He did not tell his subjects in this film, for instance, that he is gay, or that he had been attacked. "I felt it would violate the relationship. It never came up. I knew if it had come up, I would be frank with them. But the film is not only a personal story, it was more universal."

Dong believes that as homosexuality becomes increasingly visible and accepted, reactions against it will become more pronounced. In Dong's estimation, increased tolerance also results in more extreme reactions. "As we progress, we see how strong our enemies are. You see the contempt. We are forcing that part of the world out in the open, out of the closet."

Dong is influenced by cinematic loners, including Stanley Kubrick, Orson Welles, Francois Truffaut, and documentary-maker Fred Wiseman, each who carved out their own visual terrain. Dong's spare approach to this film hinges on sophisticated simplicity; silences well-placed, a soundtrack so effective that it seems to do its work subliminally, and a restrained, no-nonsense directing style. The

film also depends on an intelligent audience.

"I wanted to leave enough space for the audience to participate," Dong says. "I want them to be able to make up their own minds about what the issues are and even whether people are telling the truth or not."

After playing at Sundance, the Berlin Film Festival, and the London Gay Film Festival, *Licensed to Kill* is scheduled to open theatrically in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and at New York's Film Forum this month. Dong is also targeting high schools, where many issues of psycho-social identity formation are grounded. He hopes the film will inspire all audiences to think twice about homophobia in their own lives and perhaps even recognize something of themselves in the men profiled.

Licensed to Kill, DeepFocus Productions, Box 16720, San Francisco, CA, 94116-1621; (415) 665-9669; AdongLA@aol.com.

Cara Mertes is an independent producer, programmer, and media consultant based in New York City. She is currently teaching and a producer for New Television, public television's annual video art series.



SUSAN STREITFELD

director

FEMALE PERVERSIONS

BY MARK J. HUISMAN

"WHEN YOU SAY 'PERVERSION,' PEOPLE THINK IT'S kinky sex," says L.A.-based writer/director Susan Streitfeld. "Leather. Whips. Sexual perversions. That's not a false definition, but most people don't incorporate the psychological part. I was looking to redefine the word *perversion*." Streitfeld has done just that in her audacious, visually stunning debut feature, *Female Perversions*. The film, due out from October Films this month, is based on Louise Kaplan's eponymous book, a provocative exploration of how society reinforces stereotypes about sexuality and gender.

Female Perversions tells the story of an attractive, affluent, seemingly successful, and sexually liberated lawyer named Eve Stephens (magnificently played by Tilda Swinton). Up for a judicial appointment, Eve's life starts to slowly unravel when her sister (Amy Madigan) is arrested for shoplifting.

"You cannot get away from your family," Streitfeld insists. "I have a sister myself. And that relationship is unique—that competing for success, attention from your father. Everything

is at a pinnacle for Eve. And something has to break." It does. With Kaplan's text as both textual and visual backdrop (look for quotes from the book slipped into everything from bus stops to magazine ads), Streitfeld created a richly layered story about the relationships between a group of sexually and psychologically diverse women. In addition to the sisters, there are Maddy's lovelorn landlady (Laila Robbins), her wide-eyed 12-year-old daughter (Dale Shuger), and their boarder, a stripper played with sexy abandon by Frances Fisher. There are also Eve's lovers (Clancy Brown and Karen Sillas) and another beautiful lawyer (Paulina Porizkova) hired to take over Eve's job. It's a crowded canvas, but full of sure-handed strokes of nuanced characterization, laced with a boldly refreshing eroticism.

Streitfeld is used to entanglements. The second of five children, each born two years apart ("My mother was very specific"), Streitfeld passed her Ohio childhood without movies or TV, which her father derided as "the video box." A child psychologist, Streitfeld's father studied his own children. "I would play with blocks and he would watch me," she laughs. Streitfeld enrolled in Syracuse University to study painting, but the blank canvas "terrified"

struck by lightning, she had a very bad car crash, and her father died. "I just had to change what I was doing." Accidentally, Streitfeld became an agent. "I was getting these independent scripts nobody knew what to do with," she says. "I didn't know I was doing deals, but I was." Streitfeld caught the very beginning of the indie wave, working on projects like *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *My Left Foot*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and *To Sleep with Anger*. But despite her glowing credits, she was restless. She left the agency, Triad, specifically to direct a movie.

"I knew I wanted to make a film about contemporary women, power, and Western culture," she recalls. "But I had read so many scripts in my life, they'd probably go to the moon and back. Twice. I just didn't feel I was going to find what I was looking for." She then read Kaplan's book and convinced the author to give her an option.

Having ventured into film to collaborate, Streitfeld sat down to write and got a surprise. "You're alone," she says with astonishment. "The amount of faith and patience you need to write a script is so immense. It takes a long time to wear down your ego, to have some kind of dialogue with darker parts of

Susan Streitfeld on location shooting her directorial debut *Female Perversions*.

Photo: Gillian Lefkowitz, courtesy October Films



her, so she dropped out. On a sojourn to Mexico, she met a professional cinematographer. "Film seemed like a really great field that I could be creative in and not have to do alone," she recalls. Streitfeld attended NYU, but got her education from around-the-clock double bills of European art films. Because the industry hadn't taken root in New York, she grudgingly moved to L.A., directing and producing theater for the next seven years.

The year Streitfeld turned 30, her house was

yourself." The writing consumed three years, including an 18-month collaboration with playwright Julie Hebert. "The money raising and the casting and all of that stuff was far easier than the creation of the material," Streitfeld says.

After *Female Perversions* debuted at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival, Streitfeld engaged in some uneasy give-and-take with distributors worldwide. The film's rights had been pre-sold to raise the budget and not

everyone was happy with the finished product, especially the fantasy sequences. Streitfeld made some adjustments, but held firm and kept the fantasies in. "It's part of the process," she says. "Filmmakers want to realize their vision, and distributors want to make money. Both are legitimate."

She admits it's been difficult to end her "relationship" with *Female Perversions* and find another subject, but says there's no hurry. "The process I went through with *Female Perversions* is my process," Streitfeld says. "Some people have methods that work faster. My way is organic for me. Besides, not to have this project as part of my life when it's been there for six years? My child is going off to school! It's going to form other relationships. I want that, but it's difficult and it's painful and it's scary not knowing what's coming next." She pauses. "A few months ago I tried to start thinking about a central image for my new film. That always makes me feel like I'm on an object as big as a raft sailing out to sea, praying a ship gets built underneath me before I capsize. It's about sacrifice."

Mark J. Huisman is a New York-based writer and independent producer.



ANDREI UJICA

director

OUT OF THE PRESENT

BY MICHAEL BENSON

ASK ANDREI UJICA WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO SHOOT his second feature documentary, *Out of the Present*, and you won't get a pedestrian reply. A Romanian expatriate academic living in Germany, Ujica prefers loftier words. "A cosmic shot is all the time a shot with two or three objects in eternity," he explains in his born-in-Timisoara accent. "You have the earth, the sun, the space station—in eternity."

We are talking about how to frame, time, and light in conditions no 20th-century film school would ever prepare a director for: in earth orbit, specifically during the approach to the Russian space station, Mir.

Apart from its considerable other achievements, *Out of the Present* features the first 35mm motion picture film ever exposed in space for cinematic purposes. To get this exceptional footage, Ujica and Russian cinematographer Vadim Yusov (DP on Tarkovsky's *Solaris*) taught Russian cosmonauts how to use a 35mm

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camera and work with lighting provided by sheer, unfiltered solar power. A lengthy consultation with engineers and technicians of the Russian Space Agency was necessary. Cooperation was so close that the spacecraft's trajectory was actually planned to create the best lighting. "You have only 45 minutes of light per orbital day," Ujica explains, "and in that 45, you have probably only 10 minutes with a good lighting situation to make your shot. And the shot is four minutes [long]."

Out of the Present begins with a mesmerizing ghostly black-and-white TV image of the jewel-like Mir space station. Cradled in a web-work of Cyrillic lettering and spinning numerals of telemetry and accompanied by the methodical chatter of cosmonauts, the image already has a strangely mythical quality. But then, just when the audience has time to register that a docking procedure is underway, the blurry black-and-white image cuts abruptly—with the force of a revelation—to

the immaculate purity of a 35mm color film frame. The effect is shocking: a sudden, high-resolution catapult into orbit.

All this may sound very high-tech, but *Out of the Present* is no specialized science doc. It's a piece of film art, complete with clever references to both *2001* and *Solaris*. At its core is a story about Soviet Cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev, who was in orbit in Mir when the revolution that destroyed the USSR took place below. He left the ground a Soviet citizen and landed 10 months later—the long delay being partly for political reasons—a cosmonaut of the Russian republic. The mesmerizing footage of Earth in space, largely shot on Beta and Hi8, is intercut with images of tanks rumbling through the Moscow streets, headed for the barricades surrounding the Russian White House during the August 1991 putsch.

Interviewed by radio from Moscow, Cosmonaut Krikalev is asked which of the changes back home impresses him the most.

"Hard to say," he replies. "So much has happened. But what surprises me most of all, perhaps, is this: Just now it was night, but now it's light and the seasons rush past. That's most impressive of all you can see from up here..." His voice fades to silence, engulfed in a vast vacuum at the end of an era.

Out of the Present contains many other virtues. The images of Earth, moon, and sun from orbit rank with the most exquisite ever

recorded. And the extraction of the returned cosmonauts from the tiny, charred cinder of their capsule after a blazing hot, old-fashioned heat-shield reentry is inexpressibly moving. Covered with sweat, disoriented, unable to walk unassisted after months of weightlessness, the voyagers have to be physically wrestled out of the narrow hatch; it's a scene of recovery redolent with overtones of rebirth. Sitting feebly in a folding chair, a cosmonaut is handed a steaming cup. He takes a sip and closes his

eyes. "Lovely tea," he sighs. Leaning his head back, we see sunlight reflect from his wet forehead. His hair ruffles in the breeze. "And the weather, it's wonderful."

After becoming a surprise audience hit at the Rotterdam Film Festival in early 1996 (per *Variety*), *Out of the Present* went into something of an orbit of its own, winning a number of awards at various international film festivals, including Best Director at the San Marino International Film Festival. It will open theatrically in selected cities in the U.S. during the course of the year.

Ujica's first film was *Videogramme einer Revolution* (1992), a film essay made in collaboration with German director Harun Farocki, which skillfully deconstructed the role of state television during the Romanian revolution. His next will be a fiction narrative shot in Hong Kong, also with Vadim Yusov behind the camera. "A deep friendship developed between us," the filmmaker explains on the phone from

Berlin. His voice echoes eerily across the satellite bounce.

Out of the Present, c/o Noon Pictures, 611 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; (212) 254-4118; fax: 254-3154.

Michael Benson (michael.benson@pristop.si) is director of the award-winning feature documentary *Predictions of Fire* (<http://lois.kud-fp.si/kinetikon/>).



DENISE MARIKA

video installation artist
MORE WEIGHT

BY GEORGE FIFIELD

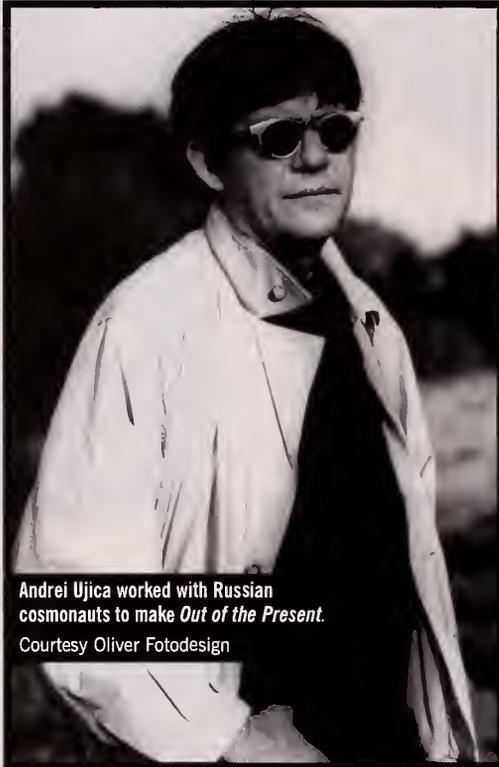
VIDEO INSTALLATION ARTIST DENISE MARIKA begins with the gesture. From a video of a simple human movement, she can transform the image by taking it out of its moment, repeating it, and giving it a new context. The results transform the commonplace into the universal.

More Weight, shown at the Museum of Modern Art last fall, begins when viewers walk into a darkened gallery to see, within the folds of a massive cube of felt, the video-projected images of a man (apparently unconscious) being carried in the arms of a staggering woman. The felt cube is held by two metal sides, and a vise-like metal beam crushes it from above. The room is filled with the sound of her labored breathing as she bears his weight, walking back and forth within the folds, forever.

Marika, 42, turned to video as a sculptural medium while she was working on her masters in fine arts at UCLA. "I realized that [traditional] materials alone did not speak to the way we think and live," says Marika. "The performance aspect can capture activity and document what's occurred. It's important for the way we see the world."

However, Marika says that video alone wouldn't be enough, either. "Sculpture gives the work a physical body, but it doesn't let it breathe," she says. "One-channel video is dissatisfying because it's disembodied."

As a result, her work embodies three distinct elements: the physical sculpture; her personal exploration of an activity; and the video that captures her exploration. This process ("You have to do a lot of juggling," she says) often necessitates that she act as her own model.



Andrei Ujica worked with Russian cosmonauts to make *Out of the Present*.
Courtesy Oliver Fotodesign

"In order to explore the activity, I need to get myself in that exact place," says Marika. "I do the performed act over an extended period of time. The experience becomes very real and I react to the situation I set up."

It's Marika who bears the burden in *More Weight*, a piece that gains resonance from the fact that the video image seems entirely divorced from technology. The naked figures appear preclassical, evoking a timeless sense of heroic struggle. "I did a lot of research,"

work. "The most satisfying part [of the MoMA show] was the number of people who came through that museum. To feel that the piece could contact that many people is very unusual. That's as public as it gets for my work and that's very important to me. I want art to relate to us the way we relate to each other."

Marika's work can meet that goal even in the most austere spaces. When she was invited to install a one-person show at Boston's venerable Isabella Stewart Gardner museum in 1994,



Denise Marika (standing) in her video sculpture *More Weight*.
Photo: Denise Marika

says Marika. "I really want some historical basis. The research started with Madonna/child imagery. But knowing that I was going to be carrying a man quickly segued into war images, which are the only ones where you find a woman carrying a man." She describes *More Weight* as being about "those kind of relationship issues of who can control, who is carrying responsibility, who is burdened" as well as "the idea of challenging yourself to do something clearly beyond yourself."

For Marika, that also means taking cultural risks. She installed her most controversial work near her home in Brookline, Massachusetts. *Crossing* (1994), sponsored by a local council on the arts, was composed of two transparencies mounted in crosswalk signal lights on a pole at a quiet intersection. The images are of a nude mother and child—Marika and her son—and the gesture suggests protecting the child from running into danger. Although the work contained no sexual elements, the nudity set off a blizzard of complaints. The controversy resulted in a series of community forums on the role of public art—and the work stayed up.

Marika says her point was not to inspire outrage, but to gain a public forum for her

she projected the images of four nude men and women lying down and curled under the concrete benches in the museum's central indoor garden. Entitled *Nameless*, it looked as if architectural caryatids climbed off their romanescque pedestals and crawled under the benches to sneak a short nap from their centuries of standing. The sleeping figures also evoked the many homeless who slept on benches just outside the museum.

"That was so much fun because I said to them, 'Well, I want to do something in the courtyard,'" says Marika. This didn't sit well with Gardner trustees; the museum usually reserves a small room for contemporary art and under Mrs. Gardner's will, the Gardner Museum is under strict instruction not to modify the 19th century home.

"At first they [responded], 'We can't do anything, we can't change anything,'" says Marika, who used video's weightless nature to help them change their minds: "Tell your lawyers it's light. We are just playing with light."

George Fifield (gwf@tiac.net) is a video artist, adjunct curator at the DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park, and director of VideoSpace, an alternative media arts organization in Boston.

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Silent Spring Builds Bridge between CD-ROMs and the Web

TURN ON THE NEW CD-ROM *WITNESS TO THE Future: The Legacy of Silent Spring* and first thing you hear are bucolic sounds that filmmaker and CD-ROM producer Branda Miller recorded in her backyard in upstate New York. A few birds chirp, or are they crickets? Then brown leaves appear on screen to offer you options. Do you want to read *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson's 1962 book which kicked off the environmental movement? Or maybe you'd like to watch some videos that examine environmental catastrophes today?

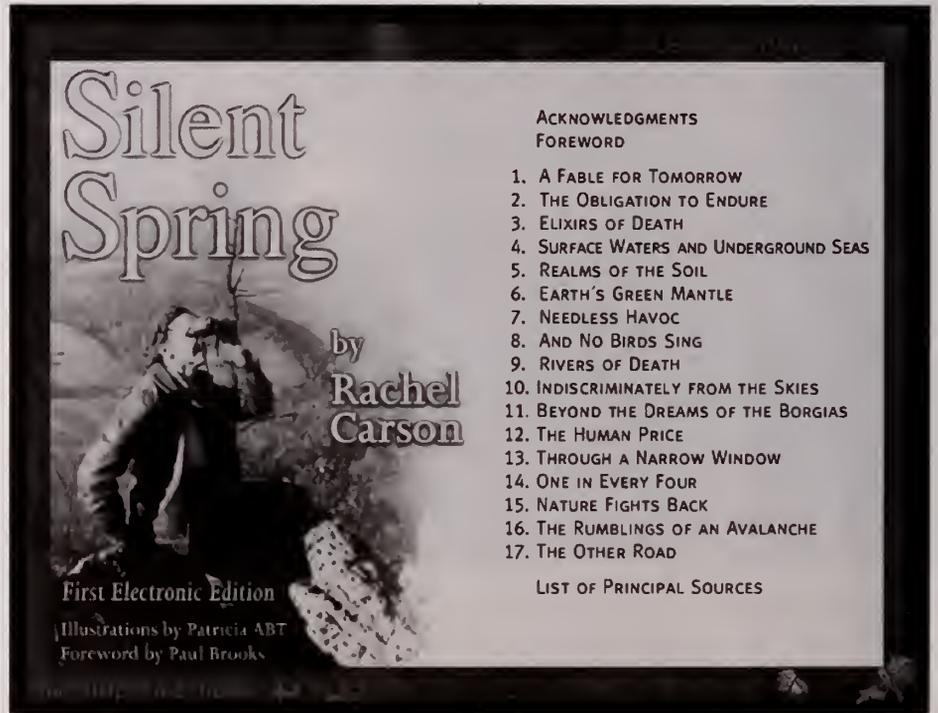
No matter where you go, a little bluebird follows. Perched in the upper right corner of your screen, it points to the most unique part of this CD-ROM: Web links one can access with a click of a mouse. "Every page has the ability to hold a Web link," Miller says.

Linking an informationally static CD-ROM to the ever-changing Web solves one of the greatest drawbacks of CD-ROMs. Like books, they stay current only so long. But by connecting to specific Web sites that are constantly updated, the CD-ROM can serve as the armature for up-to-date research on a topic, in this case, the environment.

Witness to the Future's hybrid technology was developed by Miller, the techies at the interactive media publishing company Voyager, and Joseph Annino, a computer-minded student of Miller's at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, who found it more difficult to do research on environmental groups in the library than on the Internet. He located and helped program links to more than 500 Web sites.

The project began in the early nineties when Miller, an activist and educator, became frustrated with the limits of documentary filmmaking. She began experimenting with the documentary form, particularly ways in which the subject had more of a voice and was not censored or manipulated by edits and cuts.

"I wanted to readdress the imbalance in the media," Miller says. "Every time an environmental issue is discussed, we are hearing from the so-called experts. A person in the commu-



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOREWORD

1. A FABLE FOR TOMORROW
2. THE OBLIGATION TO ENDURE
3. ELIXIRS OF DEATH
4. SURFACE WATERS AND UNDERGROUND SEAS
5. REALMS OF THE SOIL
6. EARTH'S GREEN MANTLE
7. NEEDLESS HAVOC
8. AND NO BIRDS SING
9. RIVERS OF DEATH
10. INDISCRIMINATELY FROM THE SKIES
11. BEYOND THE DREAMS OF THE BORGHIAS
12. THE HUMAN PRICE
13. THROUGH A NARROW WINDOW
14. ONE IN EVERY FOUR
15. NATURE FIGHTS BACK
16. THE RUMBLINGS OF AN AVALANCHE
17. THE OTHER ROAD

LIST OF PRINCIPAL SOURCES

nity is who becomes the best expert." And so Miller went to citizen activists in three areas: the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in eastern Washington, the San Joaquin Valley in California, and "Cancer Alley" along the Mississippi in rural Louisiana near New Orleans. These regions were chosen by Miller to address the three vital issues in the environmental movement: air, water, and earth. Shooting over five years during her vacation time as a professor of Integrated Electronic Arts, Miller worked in collaboration with local producers and media arts centers: in Washington, with the 911 Media Arts Center (the project's fiscal sponsor) and associate producer Robin Reidy Oppenheimer; and, in Louisiana, New Orleans's NOVAC Media Center.

The imbedded video component of *Witness to the Future* lasts a total of 50 minutes. But the CD-ROM includes transcribed interviews with all of the subjects. So if Marta Salinas, a farm worker in the San Joaquin Valley, moves you

and you want to hear the whole story, just click and the entire transcript appears.

"Having just two minutes to speak into a camera didn't work," says Miller. "The subject is at the mercy of the mediamaker. But this way a person could deconstruct the video and become their own mediamaker." Users can access other points of view—say, the government or other more traditional "experts"—through the Web links. The CD-ROM itself contains background information on Rachel Carson and the three profiled communities. Intended as a teaching tool, the package also includes supporting curricula for teachers and community leaders.

When Miller was producing the videos, Rachel Carson's name kept coming up. Many of the interviewees said they became activists after being inspired by Carson and *Silent Spring*. So when Miller began discussing the CD-ROM with Bob Stein, then head of Voyager, he agreed to buy the rights to *Silent Spring* and work with Miller in producing her

CD-ROM. It was Stein who pushed the idea of linking the CD-ROM to the Internet.

The project was on somewhat shaky ground when Stein was pushed out of Voyager late last year along with 30 percent of its workforce after the board decided to eliminate Voyager's CD-ROM division and focus on laser disc publishing. Nonetheless, Voyager will distribute *Witness to the Future* (along with the existing CD-ROM titles in its catalogue), working with Forest Technologies to sell it to the K-12 educational market. The Oakland-based Video Project will distribute the separate 50-minute video to the environmental market, while Video Data Bank and Electronic Arts Intermix will distribute it to the art world.

The CD-ROM will hit the stores in April. But the *Witness to the Future* Web site is currently up and running (<http://www.witness.tothefuture.com>). It contains the curriculum resource list, order forms, and an "add your own voice" section for citizen activists dealing with environmental reform in their own backyards. It will also contain the Web-link list that users can download to their hard drives. This will be updated twice a year, so the research stays current. "This is a project that doesn't end," Miller says with equal parts pride and trepidation.

ROSE PALAZZOLO

Rose Palazzolo is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn.

Short Cinema Aims High

"TAPE IS TOAST," PROCLAIMS THE PROMOTIONAL brochure for *Short Cinema Journal*, a new "magazine" of short films published on digital video disc (DVD).

Big, bold, fightin' words—but that's always been the case when a new format comes along. As of this month, DVD is still spanking new—to consumers, at least. [For a history of DVD's development since 1994 by a startlingly harmonious alliance of video and computer manufacturers, see Luke Hones' "The Digital Versatile Disc," June 1996.] Last month Panasonic was first out of the gate with its DVD player, and will soon be followed by Sony, Zenith, Toshiba, and others.

DVD outdoes videotape on several fronts. First, it has great resolution: 700 pixels per line (versus 320 on a standard VHS image). It also boasts six channels of Dolby AC-3 5.1 Surround Sound. Plus, it's a durable disc that looks modest enough—like a CD clone—but it carries seven times the capacity of a CD-ROM. Currently, a single-layer DVD holds 4.7 GBytes (vs. a CD-ROM's 680 megabytes). Later this year, dual-layer discs will hold 8.5 GBytes.

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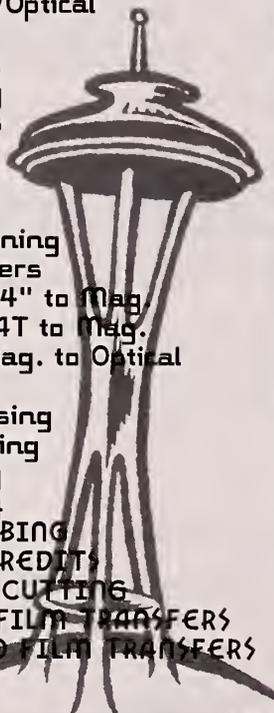
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Down the road, double-sided dual-layer discs will hold 17 GBytes. All this storage capacity means that a complete feature-length film can fit onto a single disc. Those currently on the market hold about two hours of broadcast-quality video (utilizing an MPEG-2 video format).

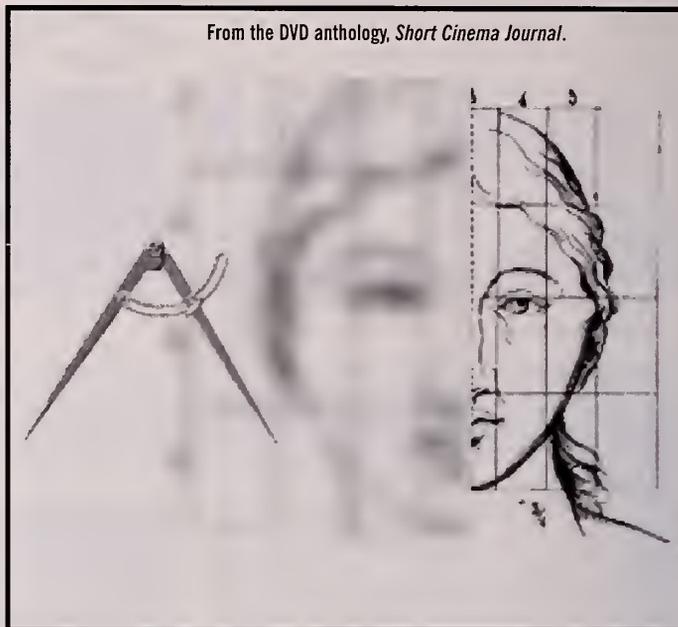
But the advantage of DVD technology is almost wasted on feature films, which most people watch from beginning to end. With DVD you can jump between tracks at the touch of a button, just like an audio CD. Which is why the concept of a DVD magazine or journal with multiple items makes such great sense.

Such is the thinking, at least, of the founders of *Short Cinema Journal*, Ninan Kurien and Bob Fuchs. These two investment bankers and their partners are launching a series of DVD journals on various topics, including architecture, music, and travel. The film journal, which had its public debut at the Sundance Film Festival, will combine short films with interviews, editorials, and ads ("but only ones that you'd want to see!" the publicity material claims).

Whereas most DVD suppliers are thinking along the lines of Hollywood films or entertainment games, Kurien and Fuchs have a different idea in mind. "The model they keep throwing out is the *New Yorker* or *Vanity Fair* on film," says Holly Willis, West Coast editor of *Film-maker* magazine and primary curator of the *Short Cinema Journal*. The premiere issue mixes up narrative shorts like Billy Bob Thornton's *Some Folks Call it a Sling Blade* (precursor to his feature *Sling Blade*), experimental classics like Chick Strand's 1979 *Kristallnacht*, 3-D animations like Tim Watts and David Stoten's *The Big Story*, and a 15-minute interview with director Michael Apted (*35 Up*, *Gorillas in the Mist*). "Each issue will be theme-based. The first issue is *Invention*," says Willis, "and the next will be *Dreams*."

While they hope to produce new editions of *Short Cinema Journal* on a monthly basis, that will depend on financing, which was still coming together at the time of the journal's January debut. A marketing plan has been drawn up that will take *Short Cinema Journal* into book-

From the DVD anthology, *Short Cinema Journal*.



stores, newsstands, video rental outlets, and other retail stores, as well as make it available by subscription (for approximately \$84/yr).

In the meantime, Willis is scouring the short film circuit for interesting work and indicates that she's wide open to submissions. For the first issue, they paid a flat fee of approximately \$1,000 per work. "We'll probably build back-end into the contracts later," she notes.

Willis accepts work on toast—er, half-inch tape. Submissions should be sent to: Holly Willis, *Short Cinema Journal*, 2014 Pacific Ave., Venice, CA 90210; (310) 821-9843; fax: 921-4661; www.shortcinema.com.

PATRICIA THOMSON

Patricia Thomson is editor in chief of The Independent.

Homepage, Sweet Homepage

IN HIS VIDEO-IN-PROGRESS *HOMEPAGE*, DOUG Block trains his wry, analytical lens on personal Web sites, and in the process, finds a parallel universe.

The main subject of Block's video is Justin Hall, a charismatic Swarthmore student and Web proselytizer whose homepage (<http://www.links.net/>) receives 20,000 hits a month and elicits over 1,000 emails.

What makes Justin Hall's home page so appealing? The best home pages—like the best documentaries—have at their center an engaging character with a well-told story. Justin's homepage has Justin. Fortunately for Luddites, so does Block's film. As the veteran documentary maker says, "Justin lives an

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interesting life filled with conflict and drama and humor, and he just writes about it." Not only that, but, as Hall is quick to point out, in the early days he wrote "a lot about sex" with his college girlfriends. When Block visits one of them, she admits she has to check Hall's Web site to see how they're doing and nervously admit she isn't sure how she feels about being so, uhm, revealed. (While verbose in his Web journals, Hall is tightlipped when dealing with his girlfriends in person—one of the many ironies Block captures.)

Hall has quite a sphere of influence, especially now that the mainstream media has grabbed onto his story. (It was a *New Yorker* story that first tipped Block off about Hall, in addition to a personal connection through his stepson, a classmate of Hall's.) In one hilarious scene, we see Hall, a 20-year-old with a pineapple hardy and wrinkled *Reservoir Dogs* suit, addressing the National Press Corps. It's a great shot—a room full of well-dressed, middle-aged journalists listening intently as young Master Hall lectures articulately on how to remain relevant in this age of Web communication.

This is just one of the stops Block made with Hall while shooting *Home Page*. In the film, Block follows the Webmaster as he traverses the country by train in order to make personal contact with friends and colleagues. Among them, the film's secondary characters are Howard Rheingold, founder/publisher of the Web site *Electric Minds* (www.minds.com); Julie Petersen (www.awaken.org), former managing editor of *HotWired*; Carl Steadman and Joey Anuff, cofounders and publishers of *Suck* (www.suck.com); Stefanie Syman, copublisher/coeditor of *Feed* (www.feedmag.com); Aliza Sherman, aka *cybergrrl* (www.cybergrrl.com), and geek soap star Rebecca Eisenberg (www.geekcereal.com).

But the conceptual heart of the film—and the reason why it will be of interest to so many filmmakers—is the way in which the activities of Doug Block, the personal documentary filmmaker, and Justin Hall, the personal Webmaster, oddly mirror each other. It's a point that's not lost on either, who each

incorporate the other's documentary process into their opus. Block starts appearing as a subject in Hall's home page, and at one point Hall finagles the camera away from Block and embarrasses the interviewer with a few questions of his own.

Block admits that much of the year was spent in mortal combat with Justin "for control of how we would present each other in each of our published diaries." Some of that may well appear in the final film; Block shot a four-hour discussion between the two on how home pages and documentary journals differ, what the filmmaker and his subject have in common, and how the shooting of *Home Page* and being discussed on a home page affected each other.

As a 43-year-old filmmaker trying to create his first Web site, Block learned much from Hall and his 20-year-old friends, and says his home page carries as much weight as the film.



Justin Hall,
Web guru,
on his
homepage.

"By excerpting the transcripts and linking the references the characters make to each other, the reader can take his own nonlinear voyage through the story," Block says. "And they can go so much deeper into the Web and into who these people are—because all these people are pioneers doing

what I think is the best work on the Web."

Hanging around these web gurus, especially Hall, Block came to realize an important difference between his film and home page: "The Web is not about perfection. It's not like a documentary, where you work real hard to get this final piece perfected as best you can and then ship it out into the world for people to see," he says. "The site goes up unformed into cyberspace, and you just keep working on it. A home page is a never-ending work-in-progress. That was a real revelation.

"Bottom-line, it's all an experiment," he says of his Web version of the documentary. "It's all fun. And it'll probably outlast the film."

For the Web according to Justin (and tips on how to create your own homepage), go to <http://www.links.net/dox/forg.html>. Doug Block's home page is at <http://www.d-word.com>.

ROBERTO QUEZADA-DARDON

Roberto Quezada-Dardon is the website designer for Amnesty International-USA (www.amnesty-usa.org).

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SURVIVING THE GOLDRUSH

BY PATRICIA THOMSON

MAYBE BLOOD BOILS QUICKER IN THIN MOUNTAIN air. Certainly tempers were flaring up in the Wasatch Range as a record-breaking 11,000 visitors to the Sundance Film Festival jostled and elbowed their way into capacity-crowd parties and screenings. "Go ahead, call the police!" bellowed one furious filmgoer as he pushed past the beleaguered ticket takers into a sold-out theater. Reports of grown men coming to blows over their place in a stand-by line were not uncommon—nor that surprising, given how often people came away from these two-hour waits empty-handed.

Long gone are Sundance's halcyon days when, as *Variety* critic Todd McCarthy recalls, "you used to be able to ski every day, never see a film before 4 p.m., have dinner each evening, attend the one nightly party where you knew that virtually everyone at the fest would be present, and where there were perhaps 12 to 15 world premieres."

There's barely a trace of this camp-like atmosphere in Sundance's present incarnation as a world-class festival-cum-market. Although Robert Redford & Co. try to keep a lid on the number of films presented and ticket packages sold, they can't control the mass migration of single-ticket hopefuls to Park City—the swelling industry entourages and hangers-on who flock to this ski resort town like miners to the Gold Rush.

People seemed particularly grumpy this year not only because of the mad crush; there was also the fact that no one struck pay dirt. There was no *Big Night*, *Shine*, or *Welcome to the Dollhouse* in the dramatic circle (Kevin Smith's *Chasing Amy* probably came closest), nor, on the documentary side, any *Crumb*, *Hoop Dreams*, or *Unzipped*—that is, no film that lit people's fire and had commercial potential.

Which isn't to say there weren't terrific films lurking in the schedule. In *the Company of Men*, *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, *Licensed to Kill*, and *Sick* were some that got people's juices going, but each is too tough in its own way to be anything but a marketing nightmare from a

SUNDANCE '97

Donald Aldrich, convicted of murdering a homosexual man, awaits interrogation from Arthur Dong, who explored the minds of such killers in his documentary *Licensed to Kill*, one of Sundance's must-sees.

Photo: Arthur Dong, courtesy Deep Focus Productions



commercial distributor's perspective. (Can you imagine: "Sadistic yuppies? No problem! A nail through the penis? Sensational hook!")

Still, it's ironic how people grouched, given that just a year or two ago everyone was complaining how commercial Sundance was becoming, how it had lost its edge. Now when there's edge aplenty, people either wince or let these films pass below their radar when pontificating on the "disappointing" 1997 line-up.

The dour mood didn't put a damper on business, however. Films were acquired by Fox Searchlight (*Star Maps*), Trimark (*Box of Moonlight*), Sony Pictures Classics (*Fast, Cheap & Out of Control* and *When the Cat's Away*), Miramax (*House of Yes*), Goldwyn (*I Love You...Don't Touch Me*), Lakeshore Entertainment (*Dream with the Fishes*), Gramercy (*Going All the Way*), Mayfair Entertainment (*Hurricane*), and Roxie Releasing (*The Last Time I Committed Suicide*). Selling prices were saner than last year, with no one coming close to the hyperinflated \$10 million Castlerock shelled out for *Care of the Spitfire Grill*.

From the festival programmers' perspective, the 1997 line-up demonstrated two trends. First, the rising tide of independent feature films hasn't hit a high-water mark yet. Director

of programming Geoffrey Gilmore didn't think it possible to out-do 1996's 500 dramatic film submissions, but this year the number climbed to 600. And that's double the number of four years ago. "This is unbelievable. Where do they come from?" Gilmore says, shaking his head. Given the romance of independent filmmaking these days, that number is likely to keep climbing.

Second, the micro-budget feature hasn't fallen off the map, as was previously rumored. In fact, a quarter of the films submitted were made for under \$100,000, according to Gilmore. The rest were evenly split between the \$250,000 range, the \$750,000 range, and those higher.

It's natural that all of them want into Sundance. Each year, it seems the festival can't grow any more in status and power, and yet it does. This year it took steps to further solidify its position, initiating a new premiere policy for competition films. Previously Sundance had allowed prior screenings at one or two domestic festivals. This year, "We demand U.S. premieres for competition—period," says Gilmore. "I don't think there's a single major film festival in the world that doesn't have this policy on its competition."

While this is true—the battles between top European festivals for films are legendary and worthy of Homer or perhaps Machiavelli—in the U.S., there's no other festival in Sundance's league. A premiere policy is unlikely to lure any more power players; everyone comes to Sundance anyway. (While South by Southwest, the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, and the Hampsons are trying to grow into competing industry events, they just haven't arrived yet.)

So what's the problem with a premiere policy? In a nutshell, it hurts other festivals, particularly the regional festivals which don't give a fig about competing with Sundance or attracting industry types, but are geared to local film enthusiasts. Fall festivals like Denver, Mill Valley, Olympia, Film Arts Foundation, and Hawaii are now finding that filmmakers are saving themselves for Sundance, passing up the regional events in the hope that their film becomes one of those 36 out of 600 that gets a precious competition slot. "We're seriously considering changing the date of our festival," says FAF executive director Gail Silva. Because filmmakers kept dropping out of the selection process or, in a couple of cases, the final lineup, FAF's festival brochure went out late to potential subscribers. As a result, says Silva, "We had a lower pre-sale this year." She is also concerned about what might happen if all the hot regional films are unavailable. "Regional films are all we show; we can't pull in international features," she says. Since FAF is competing with 17 other film festivals in the Bay Area, it needs at least one sure-fire attraction to pull in press. Otherwise, "we have a problem." While Silva notes that the goals of Sundance are the same as FAF—to promote independent filmmaking—she adds, "I don't want people to have to choose between entering Film Arts, where their heart is, versus the commerce of Sundance."

Gilmore believes the impact of the premiere policy is overstated. "Eighty percent of the films I'm looking at aren't ready for those regional festivals," he says. "They're not finished. Do you know how many wet prints we got in this year?"

What's more, he found that some filmmakers and festivals abused the earlier policy. "I got films that were showing in five domestic festivals because each person was being told, 'Don't worry; Geoff doesn't care.' Each festival was using that as an argument that that's okay. It didn't work."

The *coup d' grace* for Gilmore was how non-premieres were being ignored during Sundance. "They get overshadowed. Everyone's saying, 'What's new? Oh, that film's

old; we've already seen that. Let's not pay any attention to it,'" he explains. "I found myself in a situation where some films in competition were being overlooked by writers because they were considered old news. And I didn't want that to happen anymore."

The bottom line is, Sundance can evolve however it wants—to a degree. What was most interesting this year was seeing how the event is changing in ways it can't control. It's like a three-ring circus, with Sundance only in charge of the center ring. On the periphery were unaffiliated companies hawking products and publicizing plans: Northwest Airlines and IFP/North announced their "Independents in Flight" series; *Filmmaker* publisher Karol Martesko unveiled his new tech magazine *Res*; the DVD publication *Short Cinema Journal* had its debut, and so on. Directly flanking center ring were the renegade festivals: the increasingly self-serious Slamdance, now three years old, and the far funkier newcomer Slumdance, which was pulled together at the last minute via the Web by a half-dozen filmmakers.

These upstarts may point to Sundance's

The Official Awards

Grand Jury Prizés

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Doc: *Girls Like Us* (J. Wagner & T. DiFelicitantonio)

Audience Award

Dramatic: *Hurricane* (Morgan J. Freeman) and *love jones* (Theodore Witcher)

Doc: *Paul Monette: The Brink of Summer's End* (Lesli Klainberg)

Filmmakers Trophy

Dramatic: *In the Company of Men* (Neil LaBute)

Doc: *Licensed to Kill* (Arthur Dong)

Directing Award

Dramatic: *Hurricane* (Morgan J. Freeman)

Doc: *Licensed to Kill* (Arthur Dong)

Cinematography Award

Dramatic: *Hurricane* (Morgan J. Freeman)

Doc: *My America...or Honk if You Love Buddha* (Renee Tajima-Peña)

Freedom of Expression Award

Family Name (Macky Alston) and *Fear & Learning at Hoover Elementary* (Laura Angelica Simón)

Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award

Sunday (J. Nossiter & J. Lasdun)

Special Jury Prize

Sick: The Life & Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist (Kirby Dick); acting: Parker Posey in *House of Yes* (Mark Waters); production design: Therese DePrez, for *Going All the Way* (Mark Pellington)

Special Recognition in Latin American Cinema

Landscapes of Memory (José Araújo)

Special Recognition in Short Filmmaking

Man About Town (Kris Isacson)

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Nick Deocampo *Memories of Old Manila*, 1992

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future: as a major festival with independent satellite events which gradually become part and parcel of the whole affair. The alternative Fringe section at Edinburgh's performing arts festival got started this way, as did the now well-established Forum section at the Berlin Film Festival. While the Slumdancers may not be around long enough to follow this course, there are plenty of other ambitious souls out there who are sure to take their place.

And the *other* winners are....

BY PATRICIA THOMSON & CARA MERTES

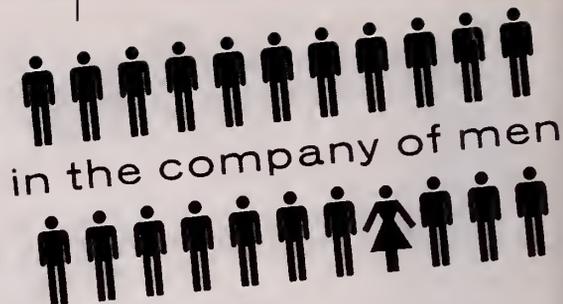
In addition to recognizing the films that received official awards, *The Independent* here presents its own meritorious honors:

Least likely "date film"

That is, unless your idea of a good time is butting heads over whether *In the Company of Men* is a case of misogyny or male bashing, as viewers variously argued. One thing is certain: this was one of the most thought provoking and funny features in the festival.

Ft. Wayne, Indiana, writer/director Neil LaBute uses black humor to leaven his creepy story of male one-upmanship. Two corporate yuppies who have recently been spurned by their lovers hatch a plan: both will seduce some vulnerable babe, then drop her like hot cakes. While their anger is directed at women in general, the target of their pay-back scheme is quite specific: a pretty but deaf temp worker. Needless to say, things go awry. But in the end, male cunning of the worst kind triumphs.

The festival buzz was electric, with men cau-



triously probing women's reactions and vice versa. By the end of the festival, Alliance Communications had picked up worldwide rights, excluding North America. It won't be an easy film to market, but let's hope they're up to the challenge; the film deserves it.

Biggest financial gamble

After raising \$10,000 toward production of *Mr. Vincent*, an American Spectrum entry, director Robert Celestino headed down to Atlantic City with his old buddy and producer, Phil Hartman, and laid every penny on the gambling table—all in one shot. "It was a bet on red or black, so the stakes were fifty-fifty," says Hartman, as if that makes it less crazy. It turned out to be their lucky day; they won \$20,000. The filmmakers quit while ahead and raised the rest of the financing through more traditional means.

Shot in black and white in Yonkers, Celestino's home turf, *Mr. Vincent* tells the story of an indifferent schoolteacher who falls for a new love. When spurned, he becomes a stalker. While sold to Germany at Sundance, the filmmakers are still looking for a domestic deal, hoping for another lucky day.

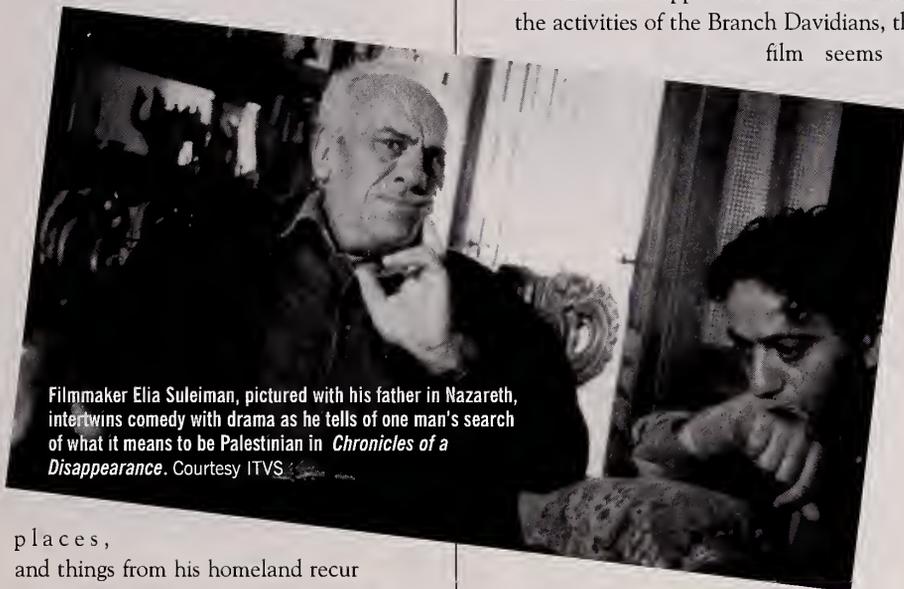
The Branch Davidian compound, described by a former Houston fire chief as being like a "pot bellied stove" after FBI tanks smashed holes through the walls, was ignited by gunfire, according to *Waco*, which became a must-see film at Sundance. Courtesy filmmakers



Most often described as "brilliant"

Tucked away in the Frontier section was Elia Suleiman's subtle and altogether winning new feature, *Chronicle of a Disappearance*. But word spread quickly about this offbeat feature, and audiences grew with each screening. Having already won Best First Feature at the Venice Film Festival, *Chronicle* is unquestionably European in its influences and distinctly un-Sundance. There was not a quick cut, gratuitous sex scene, or whip pan to be found, though male angst of a different sort was in evidence.

Writer/director Suleiman stars in the film as a Palestinian filmmaker, E.S., who has recently returned home. Moving between Jerusalem and Nazareth, E.S. is trying to write his next film. In the process, short vignettes of people,



Filmmaker Elia Suleiman, pictured with his father in Nazareth, intertwines comedy with drama as he tells of one man's search of what it means to be Palestinian in *Chronicles of a Disappearance*. Courtesy ITVS.

places, and things from his homeland recur as if in a dream. In *E.S.*, Suleiman has ingeniously created a character with no dialogue, only intent, and he has perfected a curious, impassive air that harks back to the screen presence of silent film great Buster Keaton, right down to the quiet hint of despair. In a rare international coproduction, *Chronicle* was ITVS funded and will be offered to public television for broadcast.

Most likely to be suppressed

He worked at MacNeil-Lehrer and CNN; she is a self-described tabloid babe, having worked at *Current Affair*. Together, Amy Sommer Gifford and her husband Don Gifford executive-produced a powerful documentary about one of America's most misunderstood events, the disastrous FBI-led assault on an obscure religious sect outside of Waco, Texas.

On April 19, 1993, during an assault on the Branch Davidian compound, 76 Branch Davidians died in a blazing fire. The government said the Davidians committed mass suicide. The evidence shows otherwise. "Our goal going into the documentary was to figure out how this happened," says Ms. Gifford of their 165-minute film *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*. "The real tragedy is that everyone thought they were doing the right thing. The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

With director/co-writer/editor William Gazecki, the Giffords spent almost two years producing the film. Its detailed analysis of those fateful 51 days is based on previously unseen footage shot by the Davidians during the siege, amateur video by an FBI sniper, infrared surveillance footage of the fire, news footage of government hearings about the fiasco, and interviews with survivors.

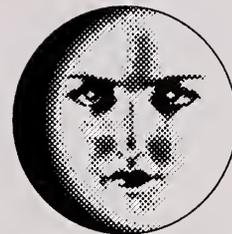
In its uncritical support of David Koresh and the activities of the Branch Davidians, the film seems at

times driven by an anti-government conspiracy-theory agenda, but it unearths important material in the search for what happened at Waco. When asked what prompted their interest in the subject, Ms. Gifford says, "200 years of uninterrupted democratic rule is something I, as an American, am very proud of. I think that, as a country, we have the strength to look at this event."

Most difficult film to watch

Filmmaker Kirby Dick manages to concoct an experience so exquisitely uncomfortable that one can't help but leave the theater with a newfound personal understanding of sado-masochism. Arguably the most disgusting film in the documentary selection, *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist*, was nevertheless disgusting for a reason. Sadism, masochism, chronic illness, pain, dying, and,

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finally, death, have their really appalling moments, and the film's subject, the late poet/artist/performer/camp counselor Bob Flanagan, does not spare us.

The filmmaker was a friend of Flanagan's, and what he so eloquently reveals is that Flanagan had his reasons. Born with cystic fibrosis, Flanagan lived most of his life in pain,

changes."

Like getting rid of Tolstoy's pro-Russian perspective and turning this tale of fortitude into a powerful anti-war drama. Setting *Prisoner of the Mountains* (an Orion Pictures release) in the present, Bodrov avoids overtly naming the Chechen conflict, "but in Russia, they'll know." Bodrov bought in a Muslim writer from



The director's son, Sergei Bodrov Jr., portrayed Vania, a raw, young Russian army recruit captured by a Chechnyan in Sergei Bodrov's *Prisoner of the Mountains*, loosely based on a children's story by Leo Tolstoy. Courtesy Orion Pictures

waiting to die any minute. Pain could only be borne, in effect, by welcoming it. This Flanagan does with gusto, and the film culminates with his infamous performance piece in which he nails his penis to a board. Relentless though it is, the film is well-crafted, intimate, and behind its shock value lies a gentle hand that seems to accompany a good friend down a long and difficult road.

The filmmaker hopes to reach a audience wider than long-time Flanagan fans. But don't expect to see this coming soon to a TV near you. So far, S/M is not an official TV rating.

Best literary adaptation

Somehow it's the English and American writers who have hogged the literary adaptations of late: Jane Austen, Henry James, William Shakespeare. But there's plenty of psychological drama elsewhere—like Russia, home of the great nineteenth-century novelists.

Curiously, when Sergei Bodrov chose to turn a Tolstoy tale into a film, he picked a children's story. Tolstoy's *Prisoner of the Mountain* is about two Russian soldiers captured by Caucasians and held for ransom. The rich one's parents pay up; the poor one's can't, but he manages to escape using his cunning. The moral of the story? "You have to be strong," says the 49-year-old Russian director. "Even if you're poor, don't worry, be strong." He laughs. "I made a lot of

Azerbaijan to help flesh out the Chechens' perspective. Far more than Tolstoy, the director provides glimpses into the lives of the captors. With novelistic detail, he peers into the homes and relationships of these mountain villagers, whose ways have changed little since Tolstoy's day. Likewise the ethnic conflict. "I was amazed," says Bodrov. "It's the same situation as 150 years ago—same place, same people." Sadly, this is why some war stories are timeless.

Best outreach & organizing

It was when she was talking to Robert Redford about the links between her documentary and Utah's problems with nerve gas incinerator contamination that producer/director Judith Helfand was at her best: making connections. Unlike many others at the festival, she wasn't just interested in connecting with stars. With the help of outreach coordinator Pam Calvert, *A Healthy Baby Girl* connected with an astonishing number of local environmental activists who gathered at Sundance to see the premiere of Helfand's moving personal documentary about being a DES-exposed daughter.

For Helfand, making the connection between public and private, local and national, her bout with cancer and millions of others exposed to chemical contamination, is a life, not simply a film. Six weeks of research, phone calls, and meetings with Utah activists before

Sundance resulted in three local television appearances, soldout screenings, and at least one major article in the local paper. In a festival known for ignoring the locals, *A Healthy Baby Girl* was an example of the good old-fashioned skill of grassroots organizing. Helfand and Calvert plan to replicate that kind of work around the country.

When the Sundance program first listed their documentary about gays and lesbians on the job, *Out at Work*, as *Out of Work*, producer/directors Kelly Anderson and Tami Gold thought they might be in for a less-than-satisfying experience. Things started looking up quickly, though, and the exposure gained at Sundance has helped them launch a major distribution effort that includes working with gay and lesbian organizations as well as labor unions to organize local and regional screenings.

Long-time organizers and activists as well as producers, Anderson and Gold want their film to draw attention to the fact that it is still legal in 41 states to fire people because they are gay or lesbian. The three people profiled in the documentary struggle with discrimination in the workplace, and each works with unions to get help. Their struggles to achieve equality in the workplace had mixed results and are poignant reminders that discrimination is far from over.

Best give-away

One only needs so many extra-large t-shirts. Ditto those logo-emblazoned baseball caps. So when Starbucks joined the throng of festival sponsors, they spared us the closet clutter and offered something every festival-goer craves: unlimited amounts of free coffee. And as everyone knows, Starbucks is effective coffee, with three times the caffeine of your average deli variety. So bless them for helping the bleary-eyed see and the brain-dead think.

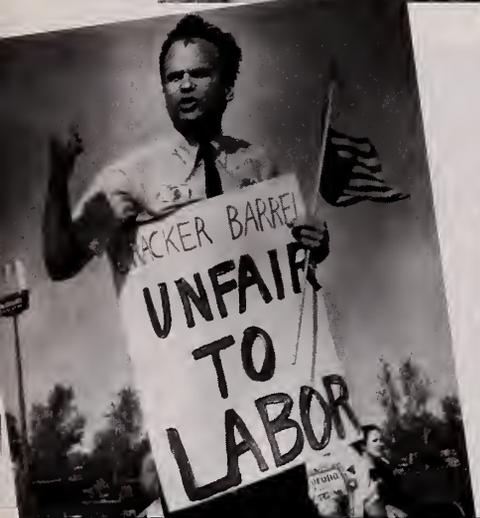
The good vibes award

Even Geoff Gilmore smiled broadly at the mention of Slumdance, the upstart alternative festival encamped at the top of Main



Street. The renegade organizers, all wearing neon orange caps with the Slumdance smiley face logo, had the right bodacious spirit. (To sample, visit their web site: <http://www.slumdance.com>). The "slum"—a faux tent city with monitors tucked in various corners—offered free soup,

Florence Helfand was prescribed the drug, diethylstilbestrol (DES) when she was pregnant with Judith Helfand, who later developed DES-related cervical cancer, prompting the shooting of her video diary, *A Healthy Baby Girl*. Courtesy Ted Helfand and ITVS



Ron Woods, auto electrician and UAW member, protested anti-gay and anti-labor policies of a newly opened Cracker Barrel restaurant in Michigan in *Out at Work*. Photo: Bob McKeown, courtesy AndersonGold Films

slumber party, films galore, nightly parties, and a special excursion to a local tourist trap, the Park City Silver Mine. Events included the spontaneous "Hands across Main Street" (linking them in brotherly love to Slamdancers based across the street) and a technical awards ceremony during which prewritten acceptance speeches were thrust upon unwitting passers-by (ranging from Roger Ebert, who ad-libbed his speech after proclaiming "I'm a writer!", to a dog, who remained speechless). They ultimately decided not to give out their main awards—squeaky plastic rats sprayed with gold paint—"because we're not that kind of festival," says coorganizer and Slumdance webmaster Brian Flemming. Will they be back next year? "I don't know," says Flemming. "Maybe we'll do a rock opera instead."

Patricia Thomson is editor-in-chief of The Independent. Cara Mertes is a programmer and media consultant currently producing for New Television, public television's annual video art series.

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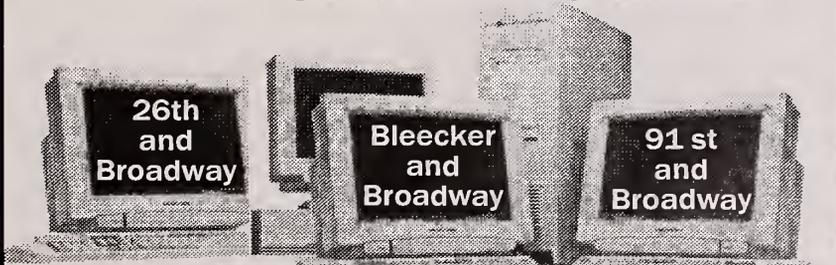
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TO THE KIDS' CREDIT

Pacoima Middle School Student Feature Bows at Sundance

BY PAUL CULLUM

AT THE CLOSE OF *HEARTS OF DARKNESS*, THE *Apocalypse Now* documentary, Francis Ford Coppola makes an eloquent (and visionary) plea for the day when proliferating technologies will enable some little girl somewhere out in the heartland to make a completely self-realized film, one completely free of corporate or monetary oversight, which will in turn reveal her as the next Mozart.

Sadie Benning aside, such a tyro utopia still seems a distant point on the learning curve—at least until the digital studio places the means of production once and for all back in the hands of the ambitious of heart, where God and Marx intended it to be. Until such time, any process that could put the odd Arriflex, Nagra, or stinger into the hands of the maturity-challenged seems an admirable first step—especially when its candidates are probably not destined for \$60,000 film degrees or sleepovers in the leagues of ivy. And if such a process could also manage to wrangle some freebies out of an industry not generally noted for its magnanimity or sense of fair play, then so much the better.

Enter James Gleason, a respected videomaker and teacher at Pacoima Middle School, a performing arts public school in the San Fernando Valley north of L.A., on the lip of the high desert. For four years running, Gleason has taken a group of his film students to the Sundance Film Festival, where they could study the cream of the independent film

world's Lotto winners in their first blush of glory.

Maybe it was just too much time spent growing up amid Chinatown's endless orange

realized they were sitting on a hole card that could exert a profound influence. By placing the project under the auspices of a nonprofit group—which they named Next Generation



Schoolteacher James Gleason's four trips to Sundance with his middle school students led to *Common Bonds*, (shown here), the product of teenage filmmakers—with a lot of help from their friends. Courtesy Next Generation Productions, Inc.

groves, conjured from thin dirt by dreamers, but inevitably the students decided early on they would make a film of their own.

Now, 36 months later, the resulting full-length feature, *Common Bonds*, had its premiere at Sundance this year outside the festival's official lineup. It also played recently at the Santa Clarita Family Film Festival and was bought sight unseen by Encore Media (home of the Starz and Encore pay cable networks) for broadcast on their new children's start-up, WAM! America's Kidz Network.

While indie filmmakers have traditionally been divided into two categories—those with room still left on their credit cards and those without—Gleason's bootstrap idealists soon

Productions (NGP)—and expanding the open call to schools throughout the Greater Los Angeles area (eventually fielding a crew at least one-half non-white that ran the gamut from subsistence-level to Beverly Hills), they successfully struck a chord with an industry whose civic high-mindedness is matched only by its vaunted sense of self.

According to Evelyn Seubert, NGP's executive director and, along with Gleason, one of two adults who served as de facto executive producers on the project, Hollywood was soon beating down their door with its offers of free gifts and deferred services. "We pulled in over 100 mentors from the industry, plus a slew of parent volunteers and virtually any-

one we could grab off the street who we needed help from, or who were able to donate," says Seubert. "And we had donated services out the wazoo."

Initial financial benefactors included the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, ARCO, Great Western Financial, and Warner Bros. Records. Postproduction heavy hitters such as Todd-AO, Sony, Avid, Apple Computers, Panavision, and Hollywood Rental Company volunteered their services free of charge. Agfa contributed the film stock, and Sundance itself kept apprised of their progress, offering names to call and encouragement as it could.

In all, some \$250,000 was raised in donations and deferrals, leaving them still \$50,000 shy of their targeted production budget. (The TV deal just barely managed to cover it at the last minute.)

After a year spent readying the script and six months of intensive training, the initial crew of 12 had grown to 40. Antonio Manriquez, the film's 14-year-old director, was hand-picked by Gleason from one of his classes. Outside of that, all positions were up for grabs.

"We basically had kids tell us what they wanted to do," says Seubert. "We had a lot of extra people for the camera crew, more than we could accommodate, but it seemed to work out alright. Even with the camera crew and DP, we put them through this intensive training program, and we found that those who were really interested in it stuck with it, and those who weren't fell away."

The most interesting aspect of the project, though, was its extensive "mentor" process. Patterned after a similar Independent Feature Project-West program that paired working filmmakers with women in their twenties to produce a 45-minute short, *Common Bonds* had more than 100 industry professionals volunteering their time and know-how to make sure things went smoothly.

Through Directors Guild President Gene Reynolds, such name directors as Donald Petrie (*Grumpy Old Men*) and Jeremy Kagan (*Chicago Hope*) came aboard to oversee the project. A series of six extensive test shoots were arranged, with a rotating crew of technical advisors on set at all times to provide rigorous hands-on training.

Director Bill Duke (*Deep Cover*), just then steeped in his own production, brought the kids out to his house and delivered an extemporaneous 30-minute monologue on the rewards and responsibilities of filmmaking, which earned him the title "Production

Philosopher" in the tail credits and more than once served as a rousing half-time speech when things looked their bleakest.

A gaffer mentor remained on set at all times to oversee electrical decisions and a professional sound crew helped out in postproduction. Outside of that, all work was created and delivered entirely by the student crew. Thirteen writers (seven original, six for rewrite, all duly noted in the credits) conceived the story and produced the script. This provoked at least one potential Writers Guild mentor to bow out, saying he couldn't in good conscience support a film with that many writing credits.

Seubert deflects any criticism of too many cooks. "Our goal was that every part of this—from the writing to the filming to the editing to post—was their doing, that every creative decision reflected their vision," says Seubert. "That and to demonstrate by example, to instill a sense of appreciation in them, and to let them know that if you do your job well, and you're easy to work with, you will be hired."

So what of the finished product? Does the finished film exhibit a spontaneous innocence or willful adolescent enthusiasm sorely missing from more polished studio product?

Well, to be charitable, the conception seems to have outdistanced the execution. Despite a somewhat promising opening—three teens running amok in a spinster's suburban mausoleum, equal parts *Manson-Family Feud* and *Degrassi Junior High*—flashy editing and showy camera angles all but get the better of an uninspired storyline.

The writer's maxim "write what you know" seems to have eluded the mentor's process, with the film predominantly set within the confines of a nursing home. With the exception of two brief interludes, all the characters but one are between 40 and infinity, a range within which amateur acting seems far less a hallmark of naturalism. Moreover, the last half ratchets down into a knotty, belabored thriller concerning Medicare fraud, all at the expense of character, and with truck-sized holes in its logic.

By contrast, the one scene populated entirely by young people—a brief romantic betrayal of the lead actress—all but leaps out of the narrative and suggests something closer to *Kids* or *Girls Town*, or the upcoming *Gummo* or *Whatever*, which might have been a more tenable narrative strategy. And while it's no doubt churlish to criticize teenagers in a field where seasoned professionals can't seem to get it right with alarming frequency, the fact that teenagers made a film is the reason we're being asked to take note.

Sundance, to its credit, refused the film an automatic place in the festival, preferring

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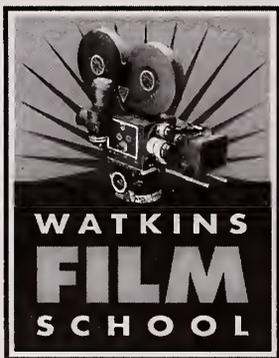
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instead to work behind the scenes to arrange a screening for a group of senior citizens visiting Park City on an educational junket, where by all accounts it was received very well. Sundance's caution also served to teach what is perhaps the hardest lesson to learn about any field of endeavor: will and determination only hold so much sway with the governing laws of the marketplace.

Yet take the long, unsentimental view of Sundance and—Tarantino, Burns, Smith, et. al. aside—the festival might seem little more than a glorified (albeit commendable) affirmative action program for successive waves of African-American filmmakers, women filmmakers, gay and lesbian filmmakers, and all those cultural non-elites who traditionally have been centrifuged to the outer edges of the industry's sphere of influence. If so, then it would seem a short leap to actual on-the-job training—and who better to finally reap such rewards than junior high school students? To this degree, Gleason and Next Generation Productions seem to have accomplished—at least informally—what all but the very top-line academic programs routinely fail to do: provide at least a measure of access to rank and file positions in the industry, if only on an apprentice basis.

"You hand a kid a camera that he knows how to use, we are talking major self-esteem, major empowerment, you can change a kid's life," says Seubert. "He or she can go out there and work on an American Film Institute film. I've had people call up from New York asking for some of our crew members. I mean, they work for free, but still. A lot of these kids would never have been able to get the money together for a reel or any thing like that. Now they've got a shot at a career."

And on the strength of its first round of graduates, Next Generation's goals seem to be paying off. Cinematographer Karen Chow has worked on some 15 films since the summer of 1995. Vin Nguyen, the chief camera operator, has since crewed on two AFI shorts, two independent features, and three music videos. Director Tony Manriquez is working as a sound tech. Many original crew members report continuing contact with their mentors, visiting their homes, or tagging along on jobs, and many of these relationships will no doubt bear fruit. And recently, through Los Angeles City Councilman Richard Alarcon's office, in association with Kaiser Permanente Health Care group, NGP has begun a series of Public Service Announcements promoting racial harmony, with future projects in the works.

And as a purely incidental by-product, *Common Bonds* might just boast the most com-

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prehensive, maybe even morally responsible, set of end credits in the history of feature films. In a 5:30 running time, not only are all 13 writers listed by name and all crew member names affixed with their age at the time of production, but all mentors are listed, effectively doubling the credits. Any donated service or production facility is included, along with contact names. Sources of funding are duly noted, including individual investors (no addresses or phone numbers, unfortunately).

Then there's the "Special Thanks" section, which lists five Encore executives, seven from Todd-AO, six from Sony, and officials of the Valley View Retirement Home, where most of the film was shot. Sundance and IFP West get three names apiece, as does the DGA. Every location in the film and area business that contributed are on copious display (that's the Kinko's in both Studio City and Woodland Hills). Representatives of Pacoima Middle School and the Los Angeles United School District are also listed.

And finally, Next Generation Productions gets its own listing of officials (five), advisors (25; among its number *Courage Under Fire* author Patrick Sheane Duncan, *The Usual Suspects* team of Bryan Singer and Chris McQuarrie, as well as actor Kevin Spacey), and "special friends" (36). This before we even get to the music credits. Outside of possibly the final budget and number of shooting days running in a crawl along the bottom of the screen, this is exactly what low-budget film needs.

So can the controlled environment of a student film, even one as grandiose as this, ultimately provide an education in the world of professional filmmaking? Was the production rife with those building blocks of the studio process that breed character on most Hollywood sets—production crises, raging egos, competing agendas? Betrayal, deceit, possibly fisticuffs in the editing room? Seubert appears philosophical.

"Well, it's a funny thing," she says. "I mean, yeah, but not how you'd think. For instance, we had people who were quite competent to light a set, but they couldn't drive themselves to work in the morning. Half our time was spent going to pick people up. Or we'd have somebody who couldn't make the calls for the day's production schedule because she was grounded and couldn't use the phone. We lost our original sound team just days before principal photography was to begin when their parents pulled them out for poor grades. And that's not to even mention the issue of stage parents. I think frankly, for a lot of these kids, from here on out it's going to be a piece of cake."

Paul Cullum is a freelance writer in Los Angeles.

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Be Your Own Bookie

Self-Distributors Reveal Their Trade Secrets

BY SUZANNE MYERS



Filmmaker Dan Mirvish directing the film he later self distributed, *Omaha: The Movie*. Courtesy filmmaker

JOHN O'BRIEN, DIRECTOR OF *MAN WITH A PLAN*, CALLS FROM THE ROAD at 7 a.m. It's a short conversation. "I'm in Rochester," he says. "I'll try back in an hour from my next stop."

We've been trying to talk for two weeks, but he's always driving to Cleveland or hauling large batches of videocassettes around his home state of Vermont. For O'Brien, who's been booking his own film around the country, that's how it's been for the last year.

Theoretically, all you need to become a self-distributor is your film and the will to see it in theaters. In practice, the process of booking your own film—deciding which theaters to approach (and how), as well as figuring out which cities to target and how much money you'll need—is mystifying and time-consuming, if not daunting. However, this arduous route can be the best one when distributors don't want your film, or don't want it badly enough.

Distribution methods have traditionally been well-guarded secrets, and until recently few filmmakers felt confident to attempt it themselves. But following the self-distribution success of Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky with *Brother's Keeper*, more independent films are going it alone, and more filmmakers are sharing notes on how to tackle this uncharted terrain.

"We got some small distribution offers [from] companies, with 'Arts' in the title and no money, to open the film just in New York and L.A.," says Dan Mirvish, director of *Omaha: The Movie*. "That's fine if the film does great, but otherwise it's over in a week."

O'Brien's first film, *Vermont Is for Lovers*, was released by Zeitgeist and while he says he was happy with the job they did, this time he

opted to do it himself. "If you're a regional filmmaker, it makes more sense to do it yourself, because you know your audience better. Every film needs to be handled specifically, and sometimes distributors aren't able to do that." He set out on his own, and learned by trial and error as he went.

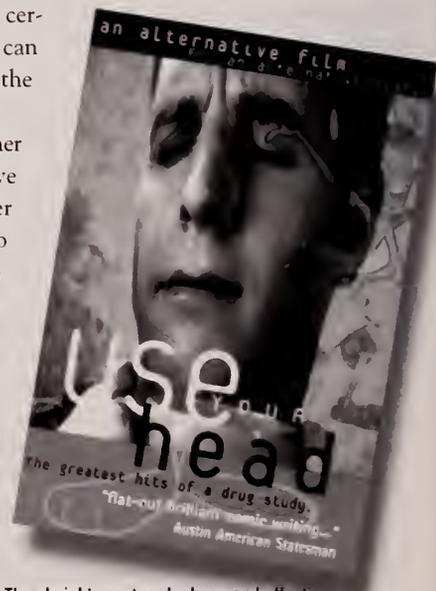
The Exhibitor & the Booker

The finely woven network of bookers and exhibitors is difficult for filmmakers to penetrate. "[Filmmakers] just don't have the connections," says Connie White, who books the Brattle and Coolidge Corners Theaters in Cambridge, Massa-

chusetts. "You're not going to be able to get a good deal from an exhibitor without having a relationship with them. How can you compete against the small distributors who do, much less Miramax?"

Normally, a theater is owned by an exhibitor—either a chain or an individual—and booked by a separate booker. In a few theaters (and fewer all the time), the owner and booker are the same person. The distributor negotiates a deal with the booker, who guarantees a certain length run and then can extend it depending on how the film performs.

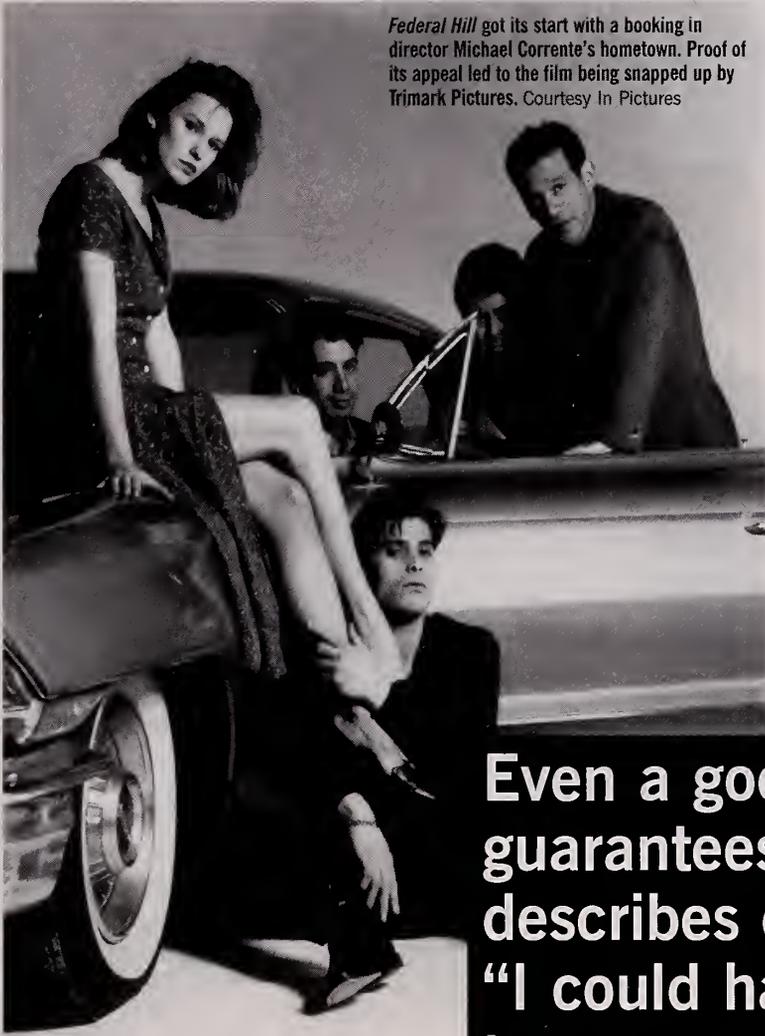
If you're Miramax or another major distributor, you have leverage—you could offer another popular movie to accompany or follow the one you're trying to book, or threaten not to book a big film at the theater later. A big distributor can also book an entire chain of theaters, whereas a filmmaker who books his or her own movie is lucky to convince one theater in



The almighty postcard: cheap and effective promotion for *Use Your Head*. Courtesy filmmakers

Where to Start

Federal Hill got its start with a booking in director Michael Corrente's hometown. Proof of its appeal led to the film being snapped up by TriMark Pictures. Courtesy In Pictures



Things have changed a lot from the days of Cassavetes driving prints around in a truck. With the recent "boom" in independent film, distributors and exhibitors once pleased with a one-to-two-million box-office gross are unhappy with less than five.

What's more, the exhibition climate underwent a sea change in the eighties, thanks to the nullification of a major antitrust decision passed in 1948 that banned studios from owning and controlling blocks of theaters. Today, studios are again free to monopolize chains and control most of the screens across the country.

As a result, that friendly neighborhood arthouse on your block might be owned by an enormous and impenetrable chain or studio, while the multiplex at the mall might have a special screen reserved for little independent gems like yours. It's also possible that they both have the same booker. It's hard to know where to start, and once you do, it's a case-by-case situation.

To open in just one town, you'll need a minimum of two prints and a budget of \$10,000 for advertising; a much more

Even a good review provides no guarantees. John O'Brien describes one New York screening: "I could have gotten more people to see my film if I had screened it in a parking lot at midnight."

a chain to take a chance.

That's not to say that booking your own film doesn't have its advantages. Even White admits, "If you have a good plan, a realistic sense of what's involved, and a lot of patience, you might end up keeping more of the money your film makes than with a small distributor."

However, self distributors must also bear the burden of proving that their films will pay for their space. White, who generally prefers to work with distributors, says she'll consider self-distributed films if they have regional appeal, cult value, a built-in audience, or guaranteed good press.

Good festival play can also convince exhibitors that your film is worth a shot. Scott Dinger of the Dobie Theater in Austin, Texas, invited New York filmmakers Lee Skaife and Loch Phillips to show their film, *Use Your Head*, after an enthusiastic screening in 1996 at the city's South by Southwest Festival. Skaife and Phillips hope that their booking career ends here; the filmmakers' gamble is that the run, which began on February 14, will be successful enough to prove to distributors that there's an audience for the film.

comfortable budget would be four to six prints and \$30,000-\$40,000 for materials, shipping, and advertising. The hope is you'll be able to recycle the money you make back into the film's distribution as you go. Most theaters book three to six months in advance, often longer at theaters like New York's Film Forum, or less time if the theater is anxious to show your film. The extra print is in case of emergency and, more importantly, so you can begin to fan out your release and not lose momentum.

Mirvish armed himself with his own enthusiasm, the Federal Express number of United Talent Agency (which then provided his representation), a poster, two prints, and an \$800 trailer. He opted to skip New York and start in the Midwest, expanding slowly from the movie's namesake city. *Omaha's* release spanned almost a year and he booked the film in 30 cities, closing with an 11-week run at a Los Angeles Laemmle theater and grossed around \$60,000, enough to cover the film's budget.

Surprisingly, Mirvish found that multiplexes and theater chains were among the most responsive. "They had to get used to the film-festival director-introducing-the-film idea, but once they did, they were really excited," he says. "One week, we were second behind *While You*

If you're a regional filmmaker, it makes sense to do it yourself: You know your audience best.

Were Sleeping."

There can be good reason for opening your film in the cinema meccas of New York

and Los Angeles: the *New York Times* or *Los Angeles Times* will review you, and great press can fuel the rest of your film's tour. However, the on-screen competition in these cities is relentless and even a good review makes no guarantees. Although *Man with a Plan* broke a 15-year box office record in Montpelier, Vermont, O'Brien's one-week run at New York's Cinema Village was miserable. As O'Brien describes it, "I could have gotten more people to see my film if I had screened it in a parking lot at midnight." Ironically, *Man with a Plan* made it onto the front page of the *New York Times* and into the *New Yorker*—but both pieces ran just after the film closed.

There's an inherent advantage to starting close to home. Not only can the angle of "local boy/girl makes good" soften an exhibitor's heart enough to give you screen time, it can attract press. Advertising costs are also lower. Mirvish says he got more for his money in smaller cities and college towns because there's less competition and word of mouth travels more easily.

Many filmmakers end up feeling that the money they spend for ad space in big cities generates profit only for the newspaper in which they run their ad, but it's an inevitable cost. Some theaters will even ask you to commit a certain ad budget before they'll book your film, as was the case for O'Brien in Boston.

The regional approach can also lead to a film proving its marketability and possibly capturing distributor interest. Director Michael Corrente had great success with this tactic; producer's representatives In Pictures sold *Federal Hill* to Trimark Pictures after Corrente set up a run at the Showcase Cinema theater in his hometown of Providence, Rhode Island.

Once you figure out where you want to start, you'll need research to discover which theaters are appropriate for your film, and who books the theaters. Choose theaters that either book similar films, films from smaller distributors, are individually owned, or have calendar scheduling.

There are underground lists of exhibitors and bookers floating around on the Internet and in the hands of filmmakers who have done it themselves, and AIVF is currently compiling such a list for publication. You can also go to the library and look at out-of-town newspapers' film listings to discover which theaters are most likely to book your film. Mirvish suggests calling local critics and asking their advice, thus killing two birds: the critics will already be aware of your film when it does screen.

Once you find the theater, the next step is convincing the exhibitor to give some of his space to your film. Send a tape, press kits, reviews, and ad slicks, then follow up over the phone. Of course, seeing the film is the most important factor in the decision. Some exhibitors will need to be courted for a while before agreeing, or may be swayed later if you

can prove success in another city.

If you get the exhibitor to commit, you'll need to negotiate your split.

In a standard deal, theaters will pay you about 35 percent of their box office receipts. If you're having a hard time winning over an exhibitor, flexibility is key. You might offer to take only 25 percent, or to reduce your percentage if the film doesn't perform well after a week or the first weekend.

Ed Arentz, who owns and operates the Cinema Village, says theaters sometimes make a deal where the filmmaker gets 90 percent of the box office beyond the "house nut"—that is, a weekly figure determined by the theater that guarantees they make a certain amount before they pay anything out.

Depending on the theater, an exhibitor will usually only commit to one week, or sometimes only a

few days. If you book a regular house, they can choose to extend the run if the film does well. In a calendar house, the schedule is less flexible. And a self distributor always runs the risk of being bumped. Competition is stiff, and an exhibitor is unlikely to extend your run (or even complete it) if a bigger film looms or is held over.

Once you book your film, decide how you'll get the word out. Some theaters make you guarantee to spend a certain amount on ads, while others share the ad costs or do advertising themselves. Make sure the critics (or, more importantly, the ones likely to enjoy your film) receive a press screening on tape or in a theater. Suggest an angle for a feature story; it's even more desirable (and less risky) than a review. And plan ahead; O'Brien found that in many cases, magazines had lead times up to six months ahead. However, three or four months is more common.

Although collecting the money from the exhibitor is always rumored to be the most difficult step, many filmmakers report that isn't necessarily the case. "We only encountered one company who tried to cheat us," reports Mirvish.

So far, O'Brien's film has made \$400,000, both theatrically and on video, which he is also self-distributing. It's enough to make a dent into paying back his investors.

"It's been somewhat empowering," he says. "Too many artists don't worry about sales and marketing at all. That's not to say you should make art with that end in mind, but you should know how it works."

Suzanne Myers is a independent filmmaker and writer living in New York.

This article is part of The Independent's on-going series on self-distribution that has included selling to the educational market (December '96) and the power struggle over arthouse screens (Jan./Feb. '97). Next month: how to book your film with a multiplex. These articles and others will be compiled by AIVF into a Self-Distribution Toolkit, available this summer.



O'Brien distributed *Vermont Is for Lovers* (pictured) through Zeitgeist Films, but decided to go it alone for *Man with a Plan*. Courtesy filmmaker

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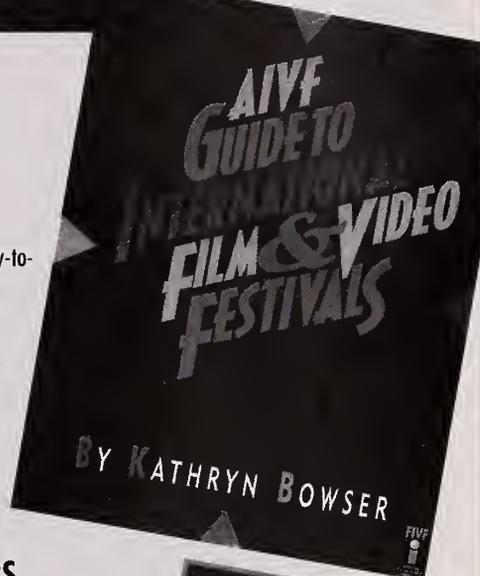
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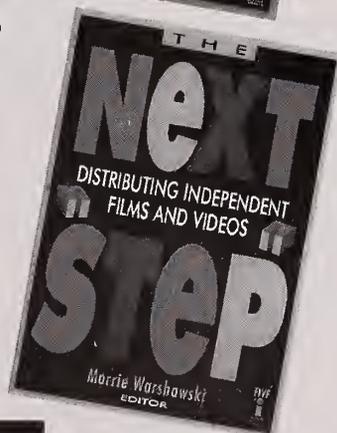
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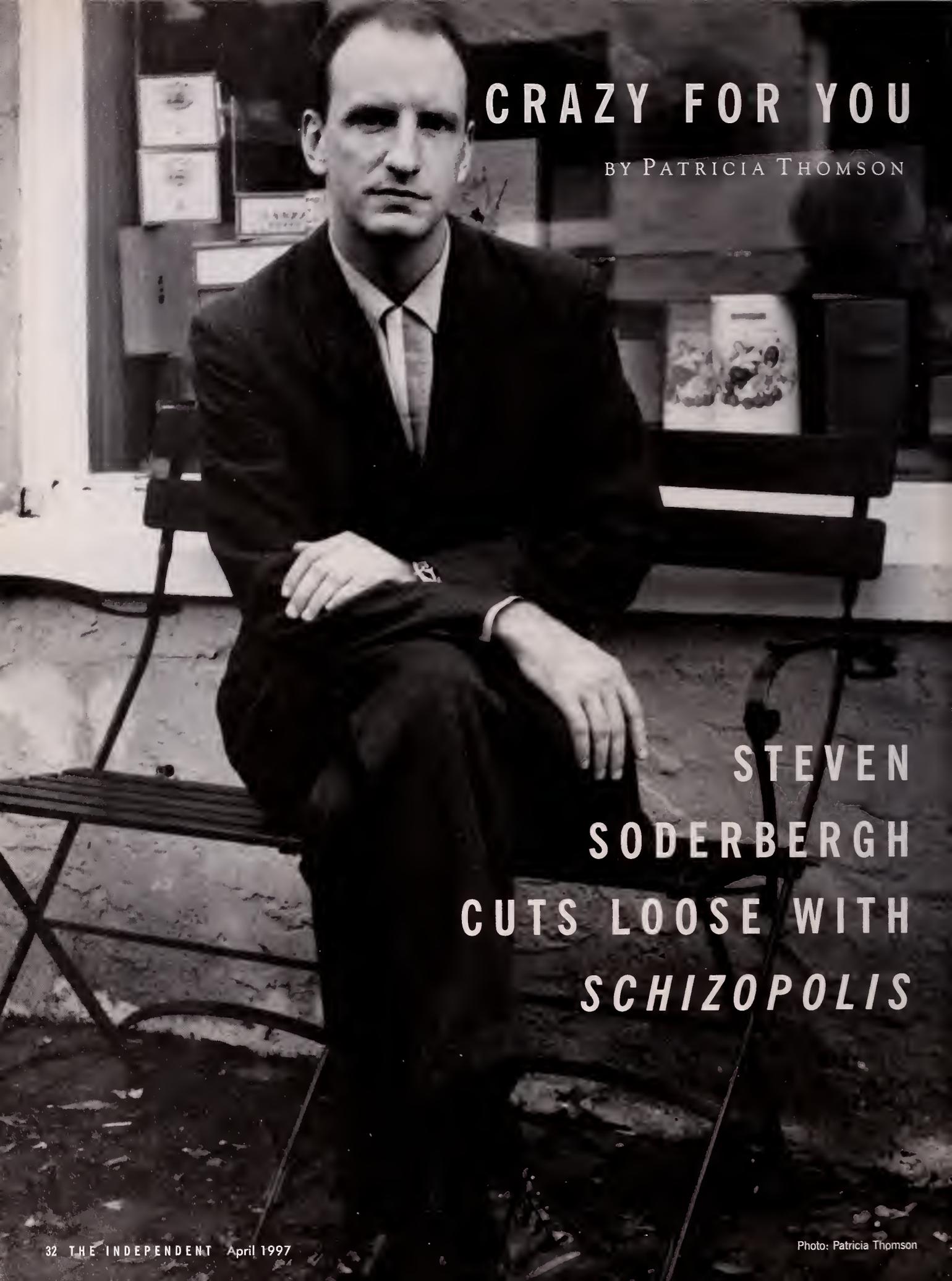
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BY PATRICIA THOMSON

STEVEN
SODERBERGH
CUTS LOOSE WITH
SCHIZOPOLIS

SCHIZOPOLIS OPENS WITH A LONG SHOT OF A MANIC CRAZYMEN CLAD only in a tee-shirt fleeing across a green lawn with two men in white in hot pursuit. It's a situation the film's director, Steven Soderbergh, likens to being an independent filmmaker: "You want to be free, but everyone's trying to tackle you and bring you down."

With *Schizopolis*, Soderbergh refused to be wrestled into conformity. His fifth feature is an idiosyncratic, energetic, and blissfully uncommercial comedy that represents a complete departure from the director's expected career track—a screeching U-turn, in fact, that takes him back to the world of no-budget filmmaking. Shot over a 10-month period in Soderbergh's hometown of Baton Rouge, *Schizopolis* came together with the help of friends who took deferred salaries and sometimes doubled as crew and cast. For his part, Soderbergh not only wrote and directed the film, but also served as cinematographer and played two of the leads.

For indie directors who envy the kind of studio deals and comfortable budgets Soderbergh had previously managed to land, *Schizopolis* is a surprising career twist. But it's no fluke; the writer/director is already at work on a sequel.

As the whole world knows, Soderbergh made his remarkable debut in 1989 with *sex, lies & videotape*, which cost \$1.2 million and grossed almost \$25 million domestically after winning the Palme d'Or at Cannes and making it into multiplexes everywhere. Its critical and financial success marks a milestone in independent film history, launching the current chapter in which indie film is taken seriously by industry, audiences, and college career counselors. From there Soderbergh went on to direct *Kafka* (1991), produced by Barry Levinson and backed by French financiers to the tune of \$11 million; Universal's *King of the Hill* (1993), made for \$8 million; and the \$6.5 million *The Underneath* (1995), also made with Universal. *Schizopolis*, in contrast, cost a mere \$250,000—about one-fourth the budget of *sex, lies & videotape*.

Film-goers who have caught *Schizopolis* on the festival circuit have called it everything from "brilliant" to "the worst movie ever made." Filmmakers tend to love it, especially its freewheeling energy and wacky, witty film jokes that recall the cinematic shenanigans of Richard Lester (the subject of a book Soderbergh is writing), Monty Python, and the French New Wave. But critics thus far have tended to hold their heads and groan.

Schizopolis is a wild ride, to say the least, and it's giddy fun for those willing to lay back and let it happen. Bursting with an exuberant sense of experimentation, *Schizopolis* is loaded with verbal and visual jokes, bizarre non sequiturs, and goofy slapstick. While it sticks to a three-act structure (watch for the numbers), the plot careens like a drunken sailor between its story of double *doppelgangers*, involving a corporate-drone speechwriter for a New Age guru and a randy dentist (both played by Soderbergh), and their love interests (played by the director's ex-wife, Betsy Brantley). But beneath its jokey surface lie some more serious concerns: anxiety in the workplace, the loss of meaningful communication at home, and the vaporous content of New Age gurus who pretend to offer solutions to a society that's adrift and alienated.

Schizopolis was a tough sell to distributors, most of whom were stumped by the question of how to market such a feature. Northern Arts, a small but growing distributor based in Massachusetts, took up the challenge, picking up domestic theatrical rights. (Previous releases include *Drunks*, *Tokyo Decadence*, *I Just Wasn't Made for These*

Times, *Wallace & Gromit: A Close Shave* and *The Best of Aardman*, and *Chameleon Street*.) Fox Lorber has domestic video rights and will handle world sales. *Schizopolis* opens in theaters this month.

The Independent caught up with Soderbergh at the Toronto and Hamptons film festivals, where he was presenting both his film of a Spalding Gray monologue, *Gray's Anatomy* (an Independent Film Channel commission), and the surreal, irrepressible *Schizopolis*.

Let's begin with the genesis of *Schizopolis*. How long were the ideas for the various strands floating around—the *doppelganger* theme, the New Age religion, your play on the language of cinema—and when did they coalesce? Or did the idea for the film come as a piece?

It was a little bit of everything. Some of the ideas I'd been carrying around for a long time. Some were discovered when I began to write the screenplay. Others happened while we were shooting.

How did the pseudo-Scientology theme, here called "Eventualism," develop?

It grew out of my interest in gurus and people's desire to find a way to order their lives in a world they're finding increasingly hostile and complicated. I'm always fascinated when people relinquish control of their lives to someone else, especially a stranger. That's always struck me as odd.

I didn't really have Scientology in mind specifically. I don't find Scientology stranger than any religion. Personally, I find them all weird. But Scientology is one of the few religions that advertises on television and has images that are instantly recognizable that I could appropriate—the volcano, the book. You see that image and it conjures up something.

And it's not the Methodist Church.

Right. So there was that and also it played into the idea of paranoia and in-fighting within a company. That sort of thing tends to be more pronounced in an organization that is run by one very mercurial personality.

Have you ever worked at a place like that?

Sure. When I was doing odd jobs, I worked for companies that were basically run by autocrats and they were very unpredictable. Your life hung in the balance seemingly every half-hour.

You play the two main characters: Fletcher Munson, the speechwriter for the New Age guru, and a dentist who has an affair with Munson's wife. I saw these characters as two different people. But when the dentist says, "I'm having an affair with my own wife," that throws that interpretation into a tailspin. What's that line about?

Well, basically what's happened is he's jumped rails onto somebody else's life, but is aware of that. So when he realizes "I've jumped into somebody's else's life" and it turns out that somebody was having an affair with his wife, he's a little freaked out by that, as anybody would be.

So in the first part of the film with Fletcher Munson, which takes place over the course of two or three days, when he jumps ship to this other life, he has been reliving those two or three days as the dentist—sort of skipping backwards. Then in the third act we see those days from [the wife's] perspective. That grew out of my interest in parallel time structures.

Where did the two main characters come from? They're off the

beaten track, and I doubt they came from your immediate sphere....

Oh, sure, why wouldn't they be? I've seen a lot of dentists.

Reaching that age where your fillings fall out?

No, I've just had a long history of correction and bullshit. I actually have come into contact with a lot of dentists. So I picked a profession and a type I thought I knew well.

But the idea of *doppelgangers*, parallel universes, and parallel time frames is something that's always interested me. I had an idea to do something about that for several years. But it wasn't until I was making *The Underneath* that I decided it was time to change what I was doing and how I was doing it. Sort of start over again.

In terms of what? The scale of production? Narrative structure?

Everything. Just start over again. Rediscover the joy of filmmaking, which I'd slowly begun to lose over the course of the four films I directed.

Why was that?

I don't know. I was just drifting off course. I'm sure there are tons of reasons, some personal and some professional. The bottom line was I sort of woke up in the middle of *The Underneath* and felt I was making a movie I wasn't interested in. When I began to question whether or not I wanted to make movies anymore, I realized that what I needed to do was change what I was doing.

So it's a progression, in a weird sort of way. Even though *The Underneath* is my least favorite, in retrospect it may have been my most important film, because the dissatisfaction drove me into a new area.

Is this direction related to your earlier shorts?

The shorts I made were very similar.

In what respect?

Energy, comic stance.

When watching *Schizopolis*, if you're into the humor—and some people weren't...

How could you *not* be?

Well, some people really weren't—the overall feeling is that you're simply having a lark, that you yourself weren't taking the film too seriously.

I needed a lark. *Schizopolis* is extreme in one way, and I think what will happen is I'll end up applying a lot of the things that I got out of *Schizopolis* to something a little less schizophrenic in terms of its story. The follow-up to *Schizopolis* that I'm getting ready to write is going to have the same energy, be made in the same way, and have the same m.o., but be a bit of a more linear story and not quite so complicated.

This thing, I just had to get a lot of it out of my system. Now I think I can see a balance between *Schizopolis* and a "normal" movie, whatever that is. I'm hoping I can apply some of what I've learned making *Schizopolis* to that film—just a way of working that is interesting and allows me more freedom.

Freedom in terms of what specifically?

Stripping the crew down, getting rid of things that have been getting in the way, both from a technical standpoint and a practical crew standpoint. Things like video assist. You know, we made *Gray's Anatomy* with a crew of about a dozen, when it came right down to it. *Meet the Parents* [Soderbergh's remake of a low-budget first feature by Chicagoan Greg Gliana, which is now in development] could easily be made with a crew that size. A lot of things like that—operating the camera myself, trying to strip it down. I've decided that anybody who's not actively involved in what's going on in front of the camera needs

to be eliminated, that somebody who's just standing there is an energy vacuum.

What kinds of changes did this freedom and flexibility allow you to make to the *Schizopolis* script during production?

Sometimes you couldn't do what you thought you'd be able to do from a practical standpoint. You'd sit around—there'd be the four of us, or the five of us, if we were lucky—and say, "Hmm, I just don't think this is working." You'd go eat lunch and talk about why it wasn't working. And you'd drive around, see another location, and think, "Maybe the problem is location." You know, it was all very loose and informal, and it was strictly based on, do you feel it at the time? Do you feel like it's really happening? If it's not, let's not do it, and let's figure out why.

Did that create structural changes?

Sometimes; not major ones. But some of the best things in the film resulted from either accidents or problems that were turned into advantages.

One of my favorite scenes is where [Eventualism guru T. Azimuth] Schwitters is going down the list of people who sent him condolences [for an assassination attempt]. In the script it's a scene between him and his wife. Well, the actress who played the wife had left town and not told anyone [he laughs]. So I said, "Does anybody know a girl in her early twenties who we could use to play his assistant?" Somebody goes off to make the phone call. In the meantime, I sit down and think, "Alright, here's the scene: They're in there, the right-hand man is pacing, and she's reading out this list." We wrote the list right there. The girl showed up, we gave her the note pad, and we shot it. It's one of my favorite things in the movie.

The whole movie was like that. The analogy in sports would be when you're in the zone. I just felt in the zone all the time. I just felt [snapping his fingers] every decision was the right decision. Things just would fall into place, even when mistakes occurred.

Did *Schizopolis* come together in a substantial way in the editing stage?

There's a lot of stuff we cut out of it, but I'd say the biggest changes were during shooting, just things that would occur to me. We started cutting while we were still shooting, so I was able to see if I needed things.

The great thing about it being a movie made by just a handful of people with your own equipment was we literally could sit in the editing room and say, for instance, "We need a shot of an airplane landing" and go to the office, get the equipment, and go shoot an airplane. So the amount of time between idea and execution was very small. It was great.

Who were the other five people?

John Hardy, my producer. David Jensen, who's a grip and also an actor; he plays Elmo Oxygen; he's worked on all my movies. Paul Ledford, who's my production sound mixer, also worked on all my movies. Mike Malone, who played Schwitters, was an on-set dresser in *The Underneath*; he was there for a large part of the shoot. And then there was usually a sort of rotating fifth person.

Several of the main themes in *Schizopolis* were also present in *sex, lies & videotape*, namely the problem of communication between couples and the difficulty of marriage. Are these both personal films?

Oh, sure. *Schizopolis* more so, despite its abstract, surreal quality; it's a closer representation of my experience of the difficulties in maintaining communications in a relationship than *sex, lies* was. It's all tied in

together [with] what I see as the gradual simplification and almost destruction of our language. We've gotten lazy with it, and it's used to obscure instead of illuminate. So the struggle to keep life meaningful is getting more and more difficult.

Tell me about the scenes in the bathroom, when you're making faces in the mirror and masturbating in the stall. What was your intent?

Well, you know, all that is intended to be amusing—the guy's chronic masturbation and all that—but what it means to me is not so funny. And that is, the culture, in the States especially, is so noisy and so overwhelming, and the forces that divide you from other people and from your community are so strong. The Me period that everybody went through yielded so little. I think the end result of all these things is a guy sitting there by himself looking in the mirror like that. This is where it's all leading if we're not careful—that specific type of emptiness.

I'd rather people laugh at it. But a couple of people have picked up on that, who said, "That stuff was really funny, but at the same time it was really sad."

That was a one-taker, you know. I just sort of did it. **I've been hearing a lot of positive word of mouth about your acting in *Schizopolis*. Is this something you would like to do again?**

Well, it wasn't acting. Those are just variations on my personality. It wasn't really a performance, as far as I was concerned. When there are four or five of you, and I'm lighting it and setting the shot, I go from behind the camera, then I walk and sit in the chair in front of

the camera, and we roll. The whole thing was so fluid that you never really thought about it. Which is great! I don't know if I'd be that comfortable under the conditions that movies are normally made under. I don't really have any desire to find out.

Could you walk through the stages of financing *Schizopolis*?

What happened was I called Universal during *The Underneath* and said, "I'm going to make this movie; I don't have a script. It's a comedy and it's in color, but that's all I know. I want you to buy North American video for 75 grand right now." And they did.

Then after we finished shooting, I said, "Look, I want to do another film like this, and I also need more money to finish *Schizopolis*. So for the second film, I'll sell you North American video and theatrical for \$400,000 and you get the two films for \$475,000"—always with the agreement that I could buy those rights back in order to get a distribution deal, which is what we ended up doing. When Fox Lorber came in, I used the money that Fox Lorber was paying to buy back the video rights for *Schizopolis*.

So at the end of the day, *Schizopolis* will end up costing about \$250,275,000, and with the remaining money, we'll make the sequel.

So Universal is handling nothing, and they've been paid back...

They've been paid back for *Schizopolis*. They did it as a favor for me.

Did they take first look for theatrical?

I think they knew. I told them, "You're not going to want this movie. This is just to keep me going." You know, I've had a good experience there. I made two movies there that didn't make them any money, and

they've left me completely alone and still would like me to make a film there.

Are they asking to see the sequel's script?

No. For them, this amount of money is infinitesimal. They pay that amount for writers to do a couple months of work on a script.

What else were you doing during the 10 months of off-and-on production?

Writing scripts for other people, and then, late in *Schizopolis*, we started making *Gray's Anatomy*. So it was a pretty busy time.

What other scripts?

One of them was *Nightwatch*, a Miramax film. I did some work on *Mimic*, which is shooting [in Toronto] now, although I don't think much of my work survived. I just turned in a draft of a script I'm writing for Henry Selleck [*James and the Giant Peach*], so I've been writing for hire back to back during the production of both films.

Do you see this as a way of continuing the new low-budget, stripped-down direction you're taking?

Yeah, because I haven't taken a salary on a movie since I finished *The Underneath* in November of '94, so it's my only source of income. But I don't enjoy it, because I don't like to write. It's been hard, but it's my only option. I don't want to go direct for money, because it's too hard and it's a year-and-a-half. And commercials don't interest me.

In *10 Feet in 10 Days*, Marina Zenovich's documentary-

in-progress about Slam-
dance, you state: "Independent films are creeping towards the mainstream, and I feel there needs to be another wave of really outrageously independent

films.... People are not feeling as independent as they used to...because [they] are thinking they can make money. That's what people who make studio movies think. It's gotten to the point where people, before they're making their films, are wondering, 'Is this the kind of film that's going to get into Sundance?' As soon as that happens, it's really over. That's not what you're supposed to have in your head."

Do you believe independent film is seriously off-course?

Maybe parts of it are, but there's always going to be someone who's not. I don't worry about interesting films getting made; I worry about how they're going to get seen. Because as the stakes get higher and it gets more and more expensive to release a movie, the distributors are going to be less willing to take a risk.

That's what I found. It was a frustrating summer, toting *Gray's Anatomy* and *Schizopolis* around and having everybody say, "I don't think we can make this work." We had one company say, "We ran the numbers and we decided that we actually could turn a profit with this film, but not enough of a profit to make it worth our time." And I thought, "Gee, if you can say that about all 12 films you release this year, that's a good year."

It was interesting both on *Schizopolis* and *Gray's* to reimmerse myself in an area I hadn't been in since *sex, lies*, which is the "We've made a film, now what do we do with it?" arena. It's changed. Yeah, getting the movie made is only half of it.

Patricia Thomson is editor-in-chief of *The Independent*.



I've decided that anybody who's not actively involved in what's going on in front of the camera, who's just standing there, is an energy vacuum.



Seeing Double

The Strategies behind Mock Docs

THIS PAST FALL THE MARGARET Mead Film Festival marked two historic occasions: the 20th anniversary of the documentary festival, and the introduction of a special sidebar featuring documentary parodies, fake documentaries, and invented biographies and autobiographies. Originally dedicated to films and videos that explore cultural traditions and diasporas, crosscultural conflicts, and human rights issues, the Mead festival now also celebrates a subversive subgenre that has blossomed of late and challenges the basic notion of documentary-as-truth.

"This kind of genre seems to be flourishing cross-culturally as medi makers internationally are beginning to experiment with these blurred genres," notes Elaine Charnov, organizer of the festival. "Because it was the twentieth anniversary, I wanted to program work that would be reflexive about the documentary film. This genre is one

of the more spirited ways to look at how we come to understand this thing called 'reality.'"

These films are the latest in a genre with a long history. As

pointed out by anthropology professor Faye Ginsburg during the festival's symposium "Sometimes You Have to Lie to Tell the Truth," one can trace this genre all the way back to the recreations of Robert Flaherty (who said the symposium's title when asked about the staged scenes in *Nanook of the North*) and Edward Curtis's *In the Land of the Headhunters*.

Some precedents were resurrected at the Mead festival. There was Jim McBride's 1973 classic *David Holzman's Diary*, a mock verité diary that covers a few days in the life of an earnest young filmmaker whose girlfriend has just left him because of his incessant filming. Unlike documentary parodies, it never gives the audience any clue about its "fakeness." At the time of its release, *David Holzman's Diary* was a response to the pitfalls of cinema verité. "There was this false glee that if you pointed a camera at anything, the truth would come out," says McBride. "I became interested in this myth, because filmmakers seriously alter the realities they are capturing. For me, the film is really an aesthetic version of the Heisenberg Principle."

Also in the line-up was the late Peter Adair's *Some of These Stories*



Marlon Fuentes's fake yet profound narrative, *Bontoc Eulogy*, follows his Filipino grandfather, one of the 1,100 tribal natives displayed as anthropological specimens at the 1904 World's Fair.

Courtesy American Museum of Natural History

Are True (1981). Shot in the talking-heads style used by many oral history documentaries during the seventies and eighties, Adair's film includes long anecdotes from five people about significant moments in their lives. As the title indicates, some of their stories are true; some are not. In the process of viewing, the audience must decide how important veracity is to them; does it change how they feel about the tale or the teller?

As symposium moderator Jay Ruby noted, such films "try to disabuse audiences of the idea that all images are true; they remind us that images are constructed." He stressed that this tra-

dition is really as old as any prototype of electronic media and that these films play on "the need to believe" that audiences demonstrate in seemingly irrational ways.

In efforts to rewrite history or oppose a history of domination, a few provocative films featured at the festival employed what filmmaker Marlon Fuentes calls a "dichotic" viewing style—employing irony and parody to emphasize the artificial and constructed nature of filmmaking, so the audience's attention shifts back and forth between the narrative and the process of storytelling. The most blatant cases disassociate themselves completely from the concept of an essential truth. Their real interests revolve around issues of construction and purpose, the process of filmmaking, and the mixing of techniques. Specifically, Marlon Fuentes's *Bontoc Eulogy*, Ruth Ozeki Lounsbury's *Halving the Bones*, and Shashwati Talukdar's *My Life as a Poster* have a parallel interest in addressing the Western gaze. They are successful because the films' structures are premised on the model of personal storytelling and the use of an extreme subjectivity. The personal nature of these films allows the filmmakers to tell the story the way they see it.

IN *HALVING THE BONES*, RUTH OZEKI LOUNSBURY'S STRATEGY IS TO create an illusion that makes the audience complicit in a fantasy about family history and cultural confusion. Lounsbury tells the story of inheriting her Japanese grandmother's bones. As the filmmaker gets ready to deliver the bones to her mother, Lounsbury relates her grandmother's history, told with the help of home movies of the young Japanese bride in Hawaii. But these home movies are all faked. "My cameraman, Jim Healy, pretended to be my grandfather lurking in the palms with a new camera and a brand new wife. And my grandmother in the diaphanous dress is in fact me," the director says. (Healy had shot the Calvin Klein ads of Kate Moss and Christy Turlington in

"I'm trying to create a Frankenstein. And I want to let the seams show. But that doesn't lessen his power."

—Marlon Fuentes

Seeing Double

BY ERIKA MUHAMMAD

diaphanous underwear, to which this black-and-white footage bears some resemblance.) Lounsbury tweaked the color and popped the soundtrack to make the film appear more “real.” But at the same time, she gave them French titles that subtly reveal their faux texture.

“I took enormous poetic license with the grandfather’s home movies,” she recalls. “At the end of the scene, I use a little rock music, which is really pushing the concept of archival footage. This whole scene of my grandfather’s home movies feels very contemporary, but at the same time you’re buying it as being authentic.” At least, most people do. “My mom said that my grandmother would never have run around in underwear like that,” she notes with a laugh. But even aside from that, the filmmaker felt she had left enough clues to tip off a knowing audience. Instead, what she discovered is that when you include enough gratuitous detail, people actually start buying your story. “The French titling sequence is what actually convinces a lot of people that the film is real. I didn’t expect that at all.”

Lounsbury also fakes various voiceovers, such as the Japanese-accented narrator who introduces the “Ruth” character. (Though a personal documentary, Lounsbury thinks of herself as a character in the film, and distinguishes between her screen presence and herself.) A quarter of the way into the film, Lounsbury confesses to her audience that much of the material is made up: the home movies, the accented voice-over (it’s Lounsbury), even her grandmother’s diary. She is no longer a reliable narrator. It’s a daring confession, for she risks alienating her audience. The director is quick to say that she is not out to manipulate spectators. “It’s an inclusive, not an exclusive act,” she explains. “You have to constantly treat the audience as your best friend. You are going to play a trick on them because you love them so much.”

More important, she wants them to take part in her fantasy about her grandmother. A native of Connecticut, Lounsbury admits she grew up exoticizing her Japanese relatives. “So in the first twenty minutes, I create a world of my subjective fantasy, but in a way the audience has to experience and believe it with me. They’re complicit in a cultural confusion.

“My mother is Japanese and my father is an anthropologist, so the issue of recollection is built into my genetic code. I think I practice ethnography on myself, so the voyeurism is actually internalized.”

— Ruth Ozeki Lounsbury



When telling the story of inheriting her Japanese grandmother’s bones in *Halving the Bones*, Ruth Ozeki Lounsbury makes the audience complicit in her cultural confusion.

Courtesy filmmaker

“Here in North America, most of us come from other places,” she comments. “This was not something unique in my case; this was something I felt an audience could understand. I’m half. My mother is Japanese and my father is an anthropologist, so the issue of recollection is built into my genetic code. I’m used to examining myself. In fact, I think I practice ethnography on myself, so the voyeurism is actually internalized. What I tried to do is use the metaphor of half, of fractured history, to talk about what I think

is at the core of fake documentary, which is the use of various types of consciousness splitting and fracturing to create a larger type of truth.”

The shifting subjectivities of *Halving the Bones* are also reflected in the various narrators. There’s the Japanese voiceover, then Lounsbury takes over and starts talking about her grandmother. Then her mother comes in and talks about Lounsbury and the grandmother. It’s the first time in the film someone speaks directly to the camera in sync sound. “Mom saves the day,” Lounsbury says. “This is where the ‘real’ documentary starts.” But it’s no more valid than the recreated parts. “There are lots of points of view shifting throughout the film. I’m probably in violation of every cinematic rule in the book, but what I’m doing is insisting on the fundamental subjectivity of the world I’m trying to create.”

A “FAKE” NARRATIVE ABOUT THE FILMMAKER’S ATTEMPT to learn about the history of his Filipino grandfather, Marlon Fuentes’s *Bontoc Eulogy* offers a postmodern critique of colonialism. *Bontoc Eulogy*, (which is included in the upcoming ITVS series *American Independents*, on air this month and next) unfolds through the perspective of two characters: the narrator, a Filipino immigrant, and his grandfather, Markod, an Igot warrior on display at the St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904. The film traces the grandfather’s tribal days in the Philippines; how he and his peers were convinced to come to America and rebuild their village as a way of educating others about their lives; and the rude awakening in St. Louis, where they’re virtually held captive with 1,100 tribal natives displayed as anthropological specimens at the World’s Fair.

Using all his resources as a researcher to track down traces of this past, the filmmaker comes up with a variety of archival stills and movie

fragments that he stitches together to form the narrative chronology. *Bontoc Eulogy* includes actual footage of the 1904 World's Fair from the Human Studies Film Archive at the Smithsonian, historical faked footage of the Phillipine-American war, 1898 newsreels, reconstructed sound based on turn of the century original Bontoc orchestrations, and stock wildlife sound, in addition to the contemporary material.

In telling his grandfather's story, Fuentes' recreation incorporates older recreations, sometimes crosscutting between real and faked footage. When the narrator talks about the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898, we see footage shown at the 1904 St. Louis World Fair that was a recreation using miniature ships in a bathtub. Like Lounsbury, Fuentes tried to leave the audience clues about all the levels of fakery. "I thought about whether I should slow down the film [to 18 fps], so it looks like real boats or if I should leave the footage as is at [24 fps], which allows a certain kind of tension about whether this is a recreation or not. I decided to use the speeded up version as a form of intervention, to try to illustrate the scene of filmmaking itself."

Similarly, the name of his "grandfather" is a clue to his emblematic status. "The way in which the story is told uses a fictional, cinematic conceit of the myth of the grandfather," Fuentes explains. "However, the presentation of the myth of the grandfather has a certain kind of system. In Bontoc literature, 'Markod' is a mythical narrator who validates any type of storyteller. Markod is also the name of the grandfather and the mythical narrator in the film."

Fuentes' act of naming fuses history, memory, and imagination. Formally, Fuentes maintains what he refers to as "dichotic listening," created by the oscillation between a) the historical investment of the argument and the formal construction of the film; and b) the possibility of a cinematic conceit. "Here, I wanted to inject something else: not just the reflection of the filmmaker, but his nervousness in making the piece," he says. "I'm trying to create a Frankenstein. And I want to let the seams show. But that doesn't lessen his power."

"My film is all about framing," he continues. "Your reading distance will determine if you feel duped." Instead of interpreting *Bontoc Eulogy* as a fake construction, it's perhaps more useful to consider the film as a text that sets its stakes in seldom-explored territories of imagination. Simultaneously autobiography, detective story, and a meditation on cultural abduction and social voyeurism, it is a unique simulacra of "historical" cinema.

SHASHWATI TALUKDAR'S 1995 VIDEO *MY LIFE AS A POSTER* BLENDS parody with fake autobiography as it explores stereotypical notions about Indian culture, the marginalizing aspects of identity politics, and

the First World's expectations of Third World filmmakers.

This work, which is featured in the Whitney Museum's Biennial Exhibition (held through June 1), tells the fictional story of the filmmaker's sister's death in India and her family's subsequent move to the U.S. While the narrator talks about her family members in voiceover, the film pans across an old Indian movie posters of well-known melodramatic actors, cutting to close-ups of the illustration when various family members are named.

"The film was really a reaction and response to personal documentary, a form that has been useful in bringing out stories that have been

suppressed, ignored, or simply erased," explains Talukdar. The problem for her and other filmmakers categorized as Third World is that they find themselves restrained in the types of stories they are expected to tell. "The speaker is seen as expert on themselves and nothing else," she says. *My Life as a Poster* tackles issues of misrepresentation when film-

makers examine those unlike themselves but are exhorted to tell personal stories in an effort to "give voice" to their culture. Talukdar's *My Life as a Poster* challenges that through its parody of personal document-

tary. Using the film posters, Talukdar comments on the notion of identity and the power of visual icons. Through the use of irony, the film reveals this notion and its inscription in visual culture as unnatural and undesirable. For example, her representation of her father is a parody of the repressive, old-world Indian patriarch. He is described as a warden who preserves tigers and strides about with his gun.

Talukdar stresses, "There are obvious false constructions in the film, but I reveal this conceit with conscious slippage. It's a fake parody, and I try to say that. I don't try to dupe the audience. I really want to take the audience along with me."

The obvious slippages present in the aforementioned films undermine the authority of the images on screen. Audiences who accept the challenge realize that a larger truth is being commented upon—a truth about cultural displacement, erosion, and recovery. Lounsbury, Fuentes, and Talukdar open up the process of filmmaking to remind audiences that the formation of identity in their films is a construction—not an unmitigated reality.

Erika Muhammad is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Cinema Studies at New York University and an independent film/video curator.



Some of the stand-ins for Talukdar's "family" in *My Life as a Poster*. Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art

"The Third World speaker is seen as expert on themselves and nothing else."

— Shashwati Talukdar

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LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Location scouting isn't just about finding a place that looks right. Unless you know what to check for, your dream spot may turn out to be a logistical nightmare

BY CHRIS CHOMYN

Selecting the right location for a film can be as critical as casting the right actor or hiring the right cinematographer. But anyone scouting locations needs to consider much more than what a place looks like. It has to be *usable*.

In the world of low-budget filmmaking, there's not always time for department heads to do a technical scout—that pilgrimage taken to analyze the logistics of shooting in a location that looked perfect in the photographs. This task often falls to the location scout. His or her job is not only to determine whether a location will satisfy the director's requirements, but also to ascertain whether it will be satisfactory for production, transportation, camera, grip/electrical, and sound. If it's not, then it doesn't serve the director's needs either.

What are the keys to proper location scouting? The first is obvious: find the location that



Cellular phone, notepad, compass and camera are a few of the essential weapons to carry in your filmmaking arsenal when scouting for the right location to shoot your movie.

Photo: Patricia Thomson

matches the description and fulfills the needs as described in the shooting script as closely as possible. The second is: find alternate locations.

Once done, there are reams of additional details to assess that will prove invaluable to the production. A few tools are essential for this purpose: a script breakdown (including descriptions of each location and the action to take place), a notebook, a pencil, a compass, a watch, a 35mm still camera and film, measuring tape, and local maps. A cell phone and pager are also extremely useful. The following checklist should provide a good starting point for the conscientious location scout.

Production

Production is the department responsible for allocating the budget and managing the daily business of a film. Their concerns relate to economy and efficiency while delivering quality. They will want to know:

1. How much is the location per day and per week?
2. Is there a reduced fee for prep and wrap days?
3. Is the location available for the anticipated dates?
4. Is it available at other times in case the schedule changes?
5. Is it necessary to hire a private security company?
6. What are the town's restrictions regarding filming?
7. Do you need a permit? How much is it?
8. Are police and fire inspectors required? Under what conditions? At what expense?
9. Will neighbors be cooperative?
10. Will other companies film in the area at the same time?
11. What are the local traffic patterns? Are special parking permits required?
12. Where will craft services set up? Where will the caterer set up?

Transportation

Transportation is the department responsible for moving and securing all vehicles associated with production. They need to know that the roads will provide access to their trucks. If not, it may be necessary to establish a "base of operations" and shuttle the cast, crew, and equipment to the location using smaller vehicles. Transportation will want to know:

1. Do access roads have weight restrictions?
2. Are there alternate routes available?
3. Are roads wide enough for their vehicles?
4. Is there enough overhead clearance?
5. Is adequate parking available?
6. Once the vehicles are in place, will they have to be moved to accommodate shooting plans (like exterior reverse angles)? Where? How long will it take?

Camera

The cinematographer is mainly concerned with angles and light. It is critical to photograph thoroughly the exterior and interior of each location. That means shooting 360-degree panoramas, so the cinematographer can know in advance what he or she has to contend with. The cinematographer will want to know:

1. Compass orientation of each view (N, S, E, or W).
2. On what date and at what time each scouting photo was taken.
3. How large is the space being photographed? (Use known objects or people to give scale.)
4. The focal length of the lens used for the scouting photos.
5. What are the room dimensions? Ceiling height? ("Top view" diagrams are very helpful.)
6. Compass orientation of each room.
7. Where are the windows? How large are they? Which way do they face?
8. On distant locations, what are the normal weather conditions for the scheduled shoot dates?
9. Anticipated time of sunrise, sunset?

Grip/Electrical

The grips are in charge of set operations, rigging, and safety on the set. They will want to park the grip truck as close to the location as possible, within the requirements of the production and local ordinances. They will be moving a variety of large and heavy pieces of equipment, and cooperation from locations is essential to keep the company moving efficient-

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ly. The grips will want to know:

1. How close will their truck be parked?
2. How wide are the various doorways?
3. How high are the ceilings?
4. What are the room dimensions?
5. What are the floors made of in each room? Wood? Tile? Stone? Carpet?
6. What are the walls made of? Concrete? Sheet Rock? Wood?
7. Where is their designated staging area?
8. Are there any trees or other obstacles around the exterior of the location?

It's unlikely that every location will be perfect for everyone.

The electricians are responsible for operating the production generator, cabling the location for electricity, and operating the lights the cinematographer calls for. The electricians will want to know:

1. How close will their truck be parked? (If they have their own truck, they will want to park it as close as possible. Often they share a truck with the grips.)
2. Where is the closest secure and level platform on which to park their generator?
3. What are the dimensions of the exterior property and the interior rooms—both those used as a location and those that provide access?
4. What is the best cable access to the location? How far is it from the generator?
5. Once inside, what will be the best cable route? (The shorter the better—as long as it's out of camera shot.)
6. Where are the doors and windows?
7. Will the cable have to cross any public thoroughfares (walkways, driveways, roads)?
8. If using house power, where are the circuit breakers? Is access restricted? If so, who has the key and how do we contact him or her?
9. Is there roof access?
10. If the need arises, is there access to adjoining properties?
11. At night, where can we park a condor (a hydraulic lift for lights)?

Sound

The sound department is the most overlooked department on any set. It is the sound mixer's job to record clean sound in a world full of noise. He must work as unobtrusively as possible, weaving in and out of the camera and lighting crew. He is not given his own time to set up, yet must be poised and ready to go when the director calls action. The sound mixer will want to know:

1. If there are any major roads or highways nearby?
2. Is there an airport nearby, or is the location in the flight path of an airport?
3. Are there any electrical transformers, power plants, or heavy machinery operating nearby?
4. Is there any local construction?
5. What are the ambient sounds? Is one time of day more noisy than another?
6. Is there a school or a playground nearby?
7. What are the room dimensions of the location?
8. What are the materials used in construction?
9. Stop and listen: does the space have an echo? Reverberation? Rattling pipes? Noisy ventilation system? Loud refrigerator? Do the floors creak?
10. Where will the electricians put their generator? Will it be too close for sound?

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Ideally, the head of each department would be able to scout every location to weigh the pros and cons of each before making the ultimate decision. In the real world, this is usually not possible or practical and so the responsibility falls to you, the location manager.

Find the best location, understand the logistics as they pertain to each department, consider all the variables, and make the best selection. It's unlikely that every location will be perfect for everyone. All you can hope for is that each location serves the film in the best way possible. The best way to do that is to follow the scout's motto: Be Prepared.

One final note: Every film serves as an emissary for future productions, so protect the location from unnecessary damage and take care to restore and clean each location before you leave. It will make it easier for the rest of us.

Chris Chomyn, a cinematographer for nine years, is currently producing and shooting the independent feature Joe Joe Angel & the Dead Guy.

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THE DO-RE-MI'S OF SOUNDTRACK DEALS

BY JEFF RABHAN

AS A MUSIC SUPERVISOR, I AM OFTEN ON THE receiving end of the following call: "We made our film for (insert insanely small amount here) although it looks like a (insert oversized price here). It's in the can and we are ready to go to festivals. We were hoping that you could help us get a soundtrack deal for the project..."

This is a good example of bad timing. As experienced filmmakers know, if you want a great soundtrack, you need to begin thinking about music at the diaper stage of your film. In fact, you should be humming a few bars as you type the first draft. Similarly, you need to start approaching record companies once you have completed a draft that you feel is close to representing a final shooting script.

After the release of soundtracks from *The Big Chill* and the TV show *The Wonder Years* in the early 1980s, we witnessed an explosion of soundtracks due to the tremendous marketing benefit that studios and record companies have experienced (not to mention record sales in the millions). Now it is rare to find a director/producer who doesn't expect a soundtrack release to coincide with their film, whether their film is music intensive or not. Are soundtracks lucrative? They can be. But your odds are better in Las Vegas. Hip-hop soundtracks show relatively stronger sales figures, but overall soundtracks tend to fail. And those same producers/directors who see dollar signs instead of creative tie-ins have made record labels extremely cautious. The price of acquiring soundtracks has skyrocketed. Atlantic spent over \$2 million on *Batman*, Elektra over \$1.5 million on *Set It Off*. It is exactly these deals that will make it more difficult for you.

Feeling lucky?

Mercury Records' Allison Hamamura, who helped create the soundtrack for Jim McKay's *Girls Town*, believes that soundtracks are the most difficult type of release to market successfully. "Major labels have the problem of spread-



Filmmakers can gain an edge by knowing which record companies handle what kinds of music. The hip-hop soundtrack for *Girls Town* found a home at Mercury; Angel released the folksy, bluegrass sound of *Brother's Keeper*; Capitol shared its alternative groups with *Trainspotting*; and the Oscar-nominated *Mandela* hooked up with Island for its South African soundtrack.

ing themselves too thin too often," she says. "Generally, we release approximately 20 to 30 records per month, and a soundtrack is not treated any differently in most cases. If the majority of staffers haven't seen the movie, it is next to impossible to cheerlead for a soundtrack when they already have a dozen or more other records on their plate to deal with. Unless the label has an experienced soundtrack executive in control, many shy away from big-budget deals."

This is because many record companies have been burned. Smart money says that when a film fails at the box office, the record is soon to follow. Most recently, Atlantic Records spent over \$1 million on the *Escape From LA*

soundtrack only to see the film unable to generate the box office grosses they counted on. No soundtracks are currently in production at Atlantic. Last year, Elektra Records disbanded their soundtrack division when it was time to cut budgets. While attempting to tap into the zeitgeist of films like *Beautiful Girls*, the records were unable to stand on their own. My informal L.A. area survey supports the notion that when the film leaves the theater, record sales freeze. One employee at Tower Records on Sunset Boulevard noted that the soundtracks that continue to sell are good records in their own right, with or without the film, calling up the likes of *Forrest Gump* and *Trainspotting*. Otherwise,

soundtracks have the highest rate of return (i.e., retailers returning unsold records to distributors) in the business.

But there is an upside to this scenario. Although labels have shied away from huge-budget records, they all are still very interested in being in the soundtrack business.

The Basics

There are essentially two types of soundtracks: the Original Motion Picture Soundtrack and Original Score to the Motion Picture. The difference is simply this: The *soundtrack* is comprised of "source cues"—actual songs in the film, either licensed or original (e.g., R.E.M.'s "Losing My Religion" or a new song written by The Cranberries specifically for a film). It sometimes includes a piece of "score" (music your hired

Record labels are like car dealerships; each has different products, reputations, and deals, smarter or pushier salespeople, but most importantly, different warranties. You need to shop around.

composer wrote for a scene, usually an instrumental piece) as the last track. On a *score soundtrack*, the album will feature only the original pieces of music written specifically for the film by the composer. It has become increasingly common to find soundtrack with the title "Music Inspired by the Film," which is the controversial practice of creating soundtracks with new songs by well-known bands for the record, but which don't appear in the film.

When it comes to striking a soundtrack deal, you must educate yourself as to the strengths and weaknesses of specific labels. There are several labels that are quite experienced in the marketing of score albums. Therefore, why go elsewhere? If you are looking to license pre-existing tracks for your

soundtrack and six out of 10 artists can be found on the same label, then that's where you'll start. If you want all original music recorded for your film by new bands, then you'll need to approach a wide variety of labels to determine where your best situation can be found. Remember, labels are like car dealerships; each has different products, reputations, and deals, smarter or pushier salespeople, but most importantly, different warranties. You need to shop around.

Strategy

Believe it or not, low-budget films like yours have a distinct advantage. The massive budgets of studio film soundtracks (not to mention the over-saturation of the market) have compromised creative integrity in exchange for marketing tie-ins. When a lot of money is at stake, bands that don't meet your creative vision are pushed into the film. McDonalds wants to use

a particular band for their TV commercial linked to the film. The list goes on.

You are not in that position. This is not to say that you will have complete creative control; making a record for a film requires give and take by both parties. However, this advantage, coupled with the prominence independent film has achieved over the past five years, makes your position stronger than you might think.

So, assess your goals for both the film and the record. Are you looking for a studio pickup? Independent distribution? Festivals only? Who is the audience? What type of music best suits the film and them? Make a simple checklist that objectively categorizes the demographics of your film. Once this task is accomplished, you have successfully increased your chances of getting a soundtrack deal, because now you can talk intelligently about your film and why it would be of interest to record labels. The same quality that labels look for in musicians holds true to filmmakers: creative, vision-oriented individuals who are smart enough to know the business as well.

Reality check

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Mandela, directed by Jo Menell (left), benefited from company synergy, with Island Pictures handling its theatrical release and Island Records its soundtrack. Courtesy Island

well as big-budget studio releases that hog recording label's available funds. Even if you have a decent distributor lined up, searching for a soundtrack deal without any directive is sure to fail.

But that isn't you. You planned ahead. You realized the importance of timing. You took the time and grasped the ideas that shaped the musical fiber of your film. And if the music you have carefully chosen matches the demographics you derived from your checklist, then you have unconsciously leapt over the highest hurdle: creating a thread that links all the music together with the characters, dialogue, and plot. Your film has become a cohesive body of work.

Many films never see their CD come to fruition for one reason: filmmakers do not know how record labels work, nor do they understand the process by which soundtrack rights are purchased or records or made, or the politics of selling themselves. Though not your fault, it's like asking you to translate a language you cannot speak. This is where a supervisor comes in handy: he/she can you help navigate the rough sea of sales.

But if a supervisor is beyond your means, do your own homework. Invest \$20 and buy a music business book. Pick up a few issues of *Billboard*, or, better yet, spend a few hours at the bookstore looking over the different guide-books (e.g., *The Yellow Pages of Rock*) that list record label rosters, artist management contacts, as well as record label staff. These will teach you which record label is best suited to the musical genre of your film. You'll learn which artists are on what label, who to contact if you want to license a particular track, where to get information, and which labels are best suited to market and promote a soundtrack coordinated with your film.

Used cars

How good a salesman are you? If you're capable of verbalizing the audio-visual connection between your film and a soundtrack, you have increased your odds significantly. If you've targeted the right labels and have a music-driven film, all that's left is to assemble a screening copy of your film that showcases music you must have, the "wishlist" tracks, etc. The goal is to make your film as good as possible, just as if you were showing it to distributors.

Every deal is different. In most cases, independent films are offered advances of \$25,000 to \$100,000 for the rights to release the soundtrack. Part of that money may go towards completion of the film or finishing the score. The money most likely will be directed toward master and sync fees to place the music in the film. If a label wants you to include more music (as long as it doesn't compromise the film), make sure they pay for it as well.

Expect the label to want you to include some of their artists in the film. That's part of the give and take. Remember that you are both on the same team, even though each player has a different definition of the word "win." They want to sell records first. If you can make the music great for your film and sell records, then both sides win.

"We remained true to many of our original choices, made a good film, and were lucky enough to get a soundtrack deal from a label that was willing to release the music we had worked so hard to choose," says James Mangold, writer/director of *Heavy* and the upcoming *Copland*. "We got exactly what we wanted out of the soundtrack, and the label paid what they felt comfortable paying." Mangold was not expecting a \$500,000 soundtrack deal for a film that cost about that much to produce. He was realistic, and his soundtrack reflected just that for under \$50,000.

Increasing your odds

If you've memorized the *Yellow Pages of Rock*, then you have learned there are several labels that specialize in "score albums" (just the instrumental music created by your composer). TVT Records and Milan are famous for picking up the tab and releasing score albums. Patricia Joseph, the executive in charge of soundtracks for TVT, most recently released *Big Night* because she "found the score to be as compelling as the film. It was one of those

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instances where the music truly made a difference in terms of how the film came across." So if you find yourself in a situation where your film is short on source cues but long on unique score, consider this an option.

If this is the case, perhaps you should think twice about Jimmy the bongo player composing for your film. A majority of world-famous musicians will later become composers. Danny Elfman did it. Jon Bon Jovi did it. Believe it or not, artists are always looking to flex their creative wings. Take a shot by contacting a big-name artist to compose for your film. Many are looking for opportunities to expand into film.

Beau Flynn, producer of *Johns*, got jazz great Junior Brown to compose for the film and has a soundtrack that was released in February. "I simply called him up and got him a screening copy of the film. It was something he never considered doing before, but he jumped at the idea," says Flynn. A name commodity like that makes a difference. Have the faith in yourself and the confidence in your film to believe that "name" musicians will work with you.

Soundtracks swelling

The hype surrounding soundtracks has grown to rival that bolstering the films they support. It is standard to find record label mentions in all print advertising, as well as dead-card listing of bands on the record on all television and trailer prints. Unquestionably, there is a phenomenal glut of soundtracks in the marketplace. In fact, many record stores have set aside soundtrack sections to accommodate the increasing numbers. We have reached a point where studio executives and independent filmmakers alike expect a soundtrack with their film, often without any rhyme or reason. It is exactly these folks who are making the competition tougher than it should be. But that's of concern only when you're selling your film. Once sold, there's a whole new set of problems, such as timing the record release with that of the film, licensing and clearance debacles, and internal record company strife, to name a few.

Confidence boost

Most likely, your film is attempting to tap into a specific idea that relates to a specific audience. Hold tight to that driving element that fueled the film from the start, avoiding the temptation to turn your soundtrack into something it is not. You will marvel at the response a good film with realistic musical aspirations will receive from labels. Who knows; you may even sell a record or two.

Jeff Rabhan is an independent music supervisor in L.A. He most recently supervised Wes Craven's Scream.

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BY RYAN DEUSSING

LISTINGS DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT. SINCE SOME DETAILS MAY CHANGE AFTER THE MAGAZINE GOES TO PRESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONTACT THE FESTIVAL DIRECTLY BEFORE SENDING PREVIEW CASSETTES. DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING A CALL FOR ENTRIES IN THE FESTIVAL COLUMN IS THE 15TH OF THE MONTH TWO-AND-A-HALF MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., APRIL 15 FOR JULY ISSUE). ALL BLURBS SHOULD INCLUDE: FESTIVAL DATES, CATEGORIES, PRIZES, ENTRY FEES, DEADLINES, FORMATS & CONTACT INFO. TO IMPROVE OUR RELIABILITY AND MAKE THIS COLUMN MORE BENEFICIAL, WE ENCOURAGE ALL MEDIAMAKERS TO CONTACT FIVF WITH CHANGES, CRITICISM, OR PRAISE FOR FESTIVALS PROFILED.

DOMESTIC

BLACK HARVEST INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL July, IL. Deadline: Late May; fee: none. Estab. in 1995, 10-day fest screens film & video. Features many directors in person for audience discussion. Sidebar events. Fest mission is to bring contemporary & quality cinema from Black diaspora to Chicago area. Recent prods & archival restorations accepted; any films not previously screened in Chicago considered. Ind. African-American & African, Caribbean, Canadian & British Black films programmed. Sponsored by Film Center at School of Art Institute of Chicago as part of yr-round exhibition program of int'l cinema. Community-based program committee incl. local Black filmmakers, critics & academics who review entries & make selections. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Contact: Barbara Scharres, Film Center director, Black Harvest Int'l Film & Video Fest, Film Center at School of Art Institute of Chicago, Columbus Drive & Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60603; (312) 443-3733; fax: (312) 332-5859; bschar@artic.edu

CINELATINO! FESTIVAL Sept. 18-28, CA. Deadline: May 17; fee: \$35. Organized by San Francisco-based Cine Acción, fest seeks film & video works that reflect the dignity & diversity of Latino, Latin American & Caribbean communities. Film & video works by and/or about Latinos in the US as well as works from Latin America & the Caribbean encouraged for submission. This year's focus is on films dealing w/ (im)migration, ethnic diversity, Latino contributions to US culture/history, youth issues, & Latin American responses to oppression & injustice. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, NTSC 3/4" & 1/2" video. Contact: Cine Acción, 346 9th St., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 553-8135; CineAccion@aol.com

LONG ISLAND FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL July 18-Aug 3, NY. Deadline: May 1; fee: \$50-\$75. Orig conceived in 1984 as showcase for Long Island filmmakers, fest has become regional showcase for ind. prod. features, docs, videos & short films. Held at Huntington Cinema Arts Centre, regional theatre exhibiting ind. films yr-round. Competitive fest awards in cats of Best Feature, Best Actor/Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best

Art Direction/Prod. Design, Best Special F/X/Make-Up, Best Screenplay, Grand Jury Prize, Producer of the Year, On-Location Award, Best of Fest, Audience Award, First Feature Award (drama, comedy), Best Experimental Feature, Best Animated Film, Best Short Film, Student Film (drama, experimental, doc, music video), Best Doc (work in progress, historical, series), Sales & Marketing, Student Video. Add'l contact: Long Island Film/TV Foundation, Box 2157, Saint James, NY 11780. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Contact: Director, Long Island Film & Video Fest, Suffolk County Motion Picture & TV Commission, Dennison Bldg, 11th fl., Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, NY 11788; (516) 853-4800; (800) 762-4769; www.lifilm.org

MARGARET MEAD FILM FESTIVAL Nov., NY. Deadline: May 3; fee: none. Premiere fest in US for anthropological & ethnographic film & video. Each yr works programmed on different themes; 1995 themes were films on & about children, works by media collectives/community-produced media & any non-fiction work looking at general cultural themes in West & non-West. Only non-fiction works accepted; all lengths eligible & no restrictions on premiere or date of completion. Film- & videomakers whose works are selected receive certificate of participation & pass to all fest events; some financial assistance & housing available. Est public audiences for programs over 5,000. After NY fest presentation, many titles packaged & tour to ind. film centers, museums & universities as part of Margaret Mead traveling film/video fest. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Contact: Elaine Charnov, director, Margaret Mead Film Fest, American Museum of Natural History, Department of Education, Central Park West at 79th St., New York, NY 10024; (212) 769-5305; fax: 5329.

NATIVE AMERICAN FILM & FESTIVAL Oct. 30-Nov. 3, NYC. Deadline: April 30; fee: none. In 10th yr, fest. organized by Nat'l Museum of the American Indian features prods. made by native media makers and works reflecting native perspectives including ind. features, doc's, experimental works & tribal community prods. Open to film, video, radio & CD-ROM prods. from North, South, & Central America & Hawaii. Only work produced in 1995 or later eligible. Submissions must be accompanied by an entry form avail. from Film & Video Center (212) 825-6894.

NORTHAMPTON FILM FESTIVAL Nov. 6-9, MA. Deadline: June 30; fee: \$25. Film & video prods. by established & emerging US artists are the focus of this festival now going into 3rd yr. Cash awards & prizes presented in various cat's: animation, narrative, experimental & doc. No commercial, industrial or promotional works. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4" & 1/2". Submissions on VHS only. Contact: Northampton Film Assoc., 351 Pleasant St. #137, Northampton, MA 01060; (413) 586-3471; fax: 584-4432; filmfest@nohofilm.org; www.nohofilm.org

OUT ON THE SCREEN July, CA. Deadline: April 11; fee: \$10-\$20. This is 15th annual OUTFEST, which seeks films & videos by and/or about gay men, lesbians, bisexuals & transgenders. Open to narrative & doc. features & shorts on 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", or 1/2" video. Ten cast awards ranging from \$500 to \$2,000. Contact: Out on the Screen, 8455 Beverly Boulevard, Suite 309, LA, CA 90048; (213) 951-1247; fax: 951-0721; outfest@aol.com



SINKING CREEK FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL November, Nashville, TN. Deadline: Mid-May. Entry fee: \$25-\$55. Founded in 1969, this is the oldest southern film festival w/ focus on indep. media & nat'l reputation for support & encouragement of ind. work. Incl., noncommercial & student film/video of all lengths eligible. \$10,000 in cash awards presented. Entries must have been completed w/in previous 2 yrs. & not submitted to previous fests. About 75 films & videos showcased each year. Past special programs have included African-American issues, women's issues, coming out on film, films for the environment, art on film & other cultural issues. This yr. features new Feature cat. Festival held on campus of Vanderbilt University. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Contact: Scarlett Graham, exec. director, Sinking Creek Film & Video Fest., 402 Sarratt Student Center, Vanderbilt Univ., Nashville, TN 37240; (615) 343-3419; fax: 343-9461.

UFVA STUDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, August, PA. Deadline: May 31; fee: \$15, \$10 UFVA members. Fest founded in 1993 to "survey & exhibit the very best in current student film & video worldwide." Emphasizes independence, creativity & new approaches to visual media. All entries must have been created by students enrolled in a college, university, or graduate school at time of prod. & should have been completed no earlier than May of previous 2 yrs. Work may have originated in any format but must be submitted for preview on VHS. Works considered in cats of animation, doc, experimental & narrative. All works prescreened by panel of film/video makers, teachers & curators. Finalists sent to judges. Over \$8,000 in prizes awarded. Awards ceremony & fest held at annual conference of UFVA, which takes place at different location each yr. About 35 works showcased each yr. National tour of selected fest winners & finalists begins after fest at venues TBA. Past venues have incl. American Cinematheque (LA); Rhode Island School of Design; Films from the Margin (Boston); Stanford University; Neighborhood Film/Video Project (Philadelphia); Montana State University; American University; Jackson Hole Cultural Council. UFVA is int'l org dedicated to arts & sciences of film & video & development of motion pictures as medium of communication; publishes UFVA Int'l Fest Directory for Students. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", 8mm. Contact: UFVA Student Film & Video Fest, Department of Radio-TV-Film, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122; (800) 499-UFVA.

VERMILLION INT'L FILM FESTIVAL June 19-23, SD. Deadline: May 10; fee: none. Billed as "the only non-competitive, non-commercial int'l fest."

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WINE COUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL July 17-Aug. 10, CA. Deadline: April 30th; fee \$25. In 11th yr., fest. features competitive and noncompetitive programs in the heart of California's wine country, 60 miles north of S.F. Open to features, shorts, doc's & animation. Fest. includes Blockbuster Short Film Competition, David Wolper Doc. Prize, New Director Prize. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, some video. All submissions on 1/2" VHS. Wine Country Film Fest., 12000 Henno Rd., Box 303, Glen Ellen, CA 95442; (707) 996-2536; fax: 996-6964; wcfilmfest@aol.com; www.winezone.com

FOREIGN

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL July, UK. Deadline: Late May; fee: none. Based at Arts Cinema in center of Cambridge, fest annually presents 18 day int'l panorama of best of world cinema, retros & classic revivals. Screenings complemented by debates btw audiences & filmmakers, industry professionals & critics. Also features program of over 50 British premieres of films from Cannes, Berlin, Sundance & other int'l fests. Features (fiction, doc & animation) accepted. Over 50 short films featured at weekend event (deadline for submission of shorts is early May). Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Contact: Francois Ballay, director, Cambridge Int'l Film Fest, Arts Cinema, 8 Market Passage, Cambridge CB2 3PF UK; tel: 011 44 1 223 462 666; fax: 011 44 1 223 462 555; e-mail: hieran@cambartarts.cityscape.co.uk

DRAMBUIE EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL August, Scotland. Deadline: Mid May; fee: £10-£80, depending on budget. Formerly Edinburgh Int'l Film Fest. "Fest of discovery, celebration of cinema, centre of debate, & catalyst for new directors & first films." Began in 1947 as a doc film fest & is particularly interested in non-fiction; also in any film which has not been shown in public before. Showcases about 300 new films each yr; shows live action & animated shorts before every film in every section. In 1995 initiated major section of world premieres of int'l films & New British Expo, which attempts to show every British feature film made w/in previous yr. All films screened to public audiences; also screenings for press, delegates & attending guests. Awards go to Best New British Film, Best First Feature & Best Animation. Formats: 70mm, 35mm, 16mm, Beta; preview on 1/2". Contact: Mark Cousins, director, Drambuie Edinburgh Int'l Film Fest, Filmhouse, 88 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, EH3 9BZ, Scotland, United Kingdom; tel: 011 44 31 228 4051; fax: 011 44 31 229 5501; info@edfilmfest.org.uk; www.edfilmfest.org.uk

FESTIVAL OF NATIONS June 15-21, Austria. Deadline: May 1; fee: none. Competitive fest. open to all "non-commercial" films & videos regardless of topic. Int'l jury awards Ebenseer Bear in gold, silver,

& bronze as well as special certificates and award for best experimental film. Contact: Erich Riess, A-4060 Linz, Gaumbergstr. 82; 011-43-732-673693 (ph/fax).

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE July 7-18, Uruguay. Deadline: May 12. Festival takes place annually w/ purpose of presenting overview of new film prods. for children & adolescents & facilitating access to best & most diverse material. Competitive program judged by jury, UNESCO, UNICEF & OCIC also award prizes, as does separate jury of children. Films in competition must not have been previously screened in Uruguay; all submissions must be on PAL U-Matic or NTSC VHS or S-VHS. Cat's: feature, short, animation & doc. Non-competitive program open to features, shorts & TV prods. All screenings will be on PAL U-Matic. Contact: Cinemateca Uruguay, 011-598-2-494572; cinemuy@chasque.apc.org

INTERNATIONAL MYSTERY FILM FESTIVAL June 22-28, Italy. Deadline: May 10; fee: none. 18th yr. of fest. held in town of Cattolica. Open to mystery, crime, detective & thriller films, feature length only. Films must not have been previously screened in Italy. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. All submissions on VHS; subtitles not required. Contact: Mystfest, Piazzale Nettuno 1, 47033 Cattolica Italy; 011-39-541-968214; fax: 958137; mystfest@cattolica.net; www.cattolica.net

JERUSALEM FILM FESTIVAL July 10-19, Israel. Deadline: May 15; fee: none. 14th annual fest. will screen over 150 films in many cat's, including int'l

cinema, doc., shorts, animation, new directors, American indep., Israeli cinema, Mediterranean cinema, avant garde, jewish themes & restorations. Awards include Wolgin Awards for Israeli cinema, Lipper Award for best Israeli script, Wim van Leer Award (int'l competition), Mediterranean Cinema Award, Films on Jewish Theme Award (int'l comp.). Entries must not have previously screened in Israel. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video. Contact: Lia van Leer, Director, Box 8561, Derech Hebron, Jerusalem 91083; tel: 011-9722-672-4131; fax: 673-3076; jer_cine@inter.net.il; www.cine.jer.org.il

MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL July, Russia. Deadline: Mid May. Founded in 1959, fest incl. competition of not more than 18 full-length films presenting wide range of modern world film prod.; out of competition screenings (Panorama); retros & tributes. Organized by Moscow government, Russian State Committee for the Cinema & Union of Filmmakers of Russia. In 1995, fest received a \$12 million grant from the Russian government to revamp event, w/ \$3 million to be spent refurbishing local cinemas. Only feature films completed after Jan 1 of preceding yr & unscreened in competitive section of other int'l fests eligible for competition. Awards: Main Prize (\$50,000 & sculpture of St. George, symbol of the City of Moscow); Special Jury Prize (\$20,000); Best Director (\$20,000); Best Actor (\$20,000); Best Actress (\$20,000); each film receives Diploma of Participation. Bolshoi Theater is site of fest's opening & closing ceremonies; outdoor celebrations held in Red Square & Moscow parks. Fest also sponsors film market & now has modern press center. Formats: 70mm, 35mm. Contact: Alexandre

Alanesyan, general director, Moscow International Film Fest, Interfest, Khokhlovsky Per., 10/1, Moscow 109028, Russia; tel: 011 95 917 2486; 916 0107 fax.

MUNICH FILM FESTIVAL June 28-July 5, Germany. Deadline: May 1; fee: none. Open to all genres w/ awards for Best Int'l TV Film & One Future Prize, as well as special awards for German filmmakers. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Contact: Eberhard Hauff, Director, Filfest München, Kaiserstr. 39, D-80801 München, Germany; 011-49-89-38-19040; fax: 190426.

WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL, July, New Zealand. Noncompetitive fest, now in its 26th year, is presented every July by New Zealand Federation of Film Societies & the Wellington Film Society, both of which are nonprofit organizations with the "aims of fostering interest in the motion picture and encouraging high standards of film appreciation." Fest developed to encourage screening of new films that might not otherwise have been brought to New Zealand. Selections limited to feature & short films that have not previously screened in the country. Festival annually showcases invited program of about 100 features & almost as many shorts. The Wellington Film Festival is sister of Auckland Film Festival, which presents same basic program about a week later. Highlights of both fests selected to screen in traveling film fest in cities of Hamilton, Palmerston North, Christchurch & Dunedin. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta. Entry fee: None. Contact: Bill Gosden, festival director, Box 9544, Te Aro, Wellington, New Zealand; tel: 011 64 4 850 162; fax: 801 7304; enzedff@actrix.gen.nz

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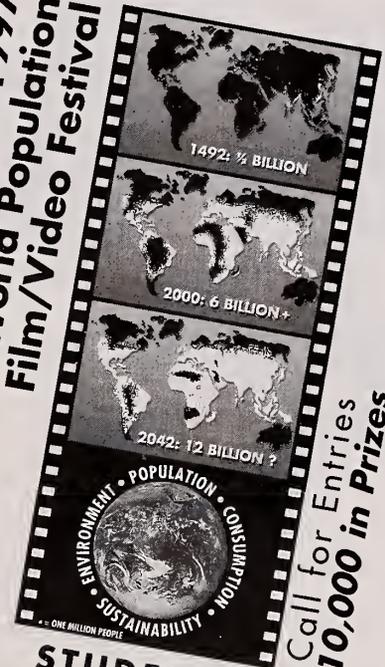
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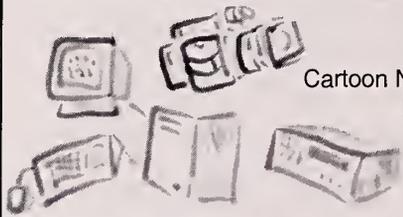
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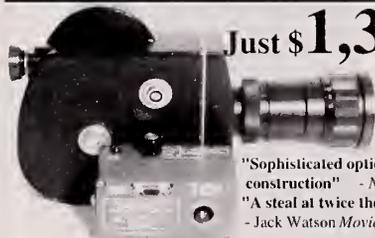
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GORDON PARKS INDEPENDENT FILM AWARDS for achievement by black ind. filmmakers, introduced by IFFM in assoc. w/ Viacom Inc.—a collaboration of several divisions spearheaded by MTV Films and including Nickelodeon Movies, Paramount Pictures & Showtime Networks. Two winners in screenwriting and directing categories will receive \$10,000 and have opp. to discuss distribution w/ one of Viacom's divisions.

URBAN INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS (UICA) announces call for entries for nat'l juried exhibition "Myth America." Exhibit invites works that explore the many myths contributing to American cultural identity; all media eligible. No entry fee. Dates for exhibition: Sep. 5-Oct. 17, 1997. Deadline for submission: June 2. For prospectus, contact: UICA-Myth America, 88 Monroe NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503; (616) 454-7000.

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ASHLAND CABLE ACCESS seeks video shows. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" okay, any length or genre. For return, incl. sufficient SASE. Send w/ description & release to: Suzi Aufderheide, Southern Oregon State College, RVTV, 1250 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland, OR 97520; (541) 552-6898.

AUSTIN, TX ind. producer offering cable access venue to showcase ind. films & videos, all genres & subjects. Shorts & music videos linked by discussions on ind. films. Films/videos running longer than 40 min. may be aired in series of 2 consecutive shows. Send release & info about film/filmmaker. 1/4" & 3/4" preferable. No payment, but credit & exposure. James Shelton, Tex-Cinema Prod., Box 3633, Austin, TX 78764-3633; (512) 867-9901.

AXLEGREASE Buffalo cable access program of ind. film & video, accepting all genres under 28 min., 1/2", 3/4", 8mm, Hi8. Send labeled w/ name, address, title, length, additional info & SASE for tape return to: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; (716) 884-7172, wheel@freenet.buffalo.edu; http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel

BLACK BOOT MEDIA PROJECT of Perry County Ind. Media Arts Center seeks ind. film & video works for regular series of roving screenings at various industrial, commercial & residential venues in Philadelphia & Harrisburg area. Submit S-8, 16mm, VHS or S-VHS w/ SASE to: PCIMAC, Lower Bailey Rd, RR2-Box 65, Newport, PA 17074. For info contact: Jeff Dardozi (215) 545-7884.

BURLE AVANT curating "530 Lines of Resolution," digital video art night at Den of Thieves on Lower East Side in NYC. Video artists encouraged to submit works; no entry fee. Send NTSC VHS tapes under 15 min. by UPS or hand deliver to: 530 Lines of Resolution, c/o The Outpost, 118 North 11 St., 4th fl, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 599-2385

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS traveling exhibition and illustrated critical anthology about racial and sexual indeterminacy, fall 1999. Send slides, abstracts, resume or CV and SASE to: Erin Valentino, Dept. of Art and Art History, University of Connecticut, 875 Coventry Road U-99, Storrs, CT 06269; (860) 486-3930; fax 486-3869; evalentino@finearts.sfa.uconn.edu

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KNITTING FACTORY VIDEO LOUNGE seeks VHS tapes for on-going weekly series of theme-based screenings. Any genre or subject. Send tape w/ brief bio to: Joanna Spitzner, Box 1220 Canal St. Station, NY, NY, 10012. If tape return desired, include self-addressed envelope w/ sufficient postage.

LAUGHING HORSE PRODUCTIONS Seattle-based company, is holding a screenplay contest. Winner awarded \$500. Entry fee: \$30. Possibility of having script optioned and sent to major agents, producers and directors. For more info, call: (206) 762-5525.

LO BUDJIT FILMZ AND VIDEOS seeks submissions for VHS or Less, show focusing on camcorder movies. Embarrass old friends, showcase your dusty old tapes. Large bi-coastal audience. Send to: Lo Budjit, 147 Ave A, Box1R NY, NY 10009; (212) 533-0866.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TELEVISION seeking story proposals from U.S. citizen or permanent resident minority filmmakers for National Geographic Explorer, award-winning doc series. To request appl. for CDP (Cultural Diversity Project), call: (202) 862-8637.

NEW BREED FESTIVAL seeks student/ind. shorts—narrative only—for bi-monthly cafe screenings in Lambertville, NJ & on NJ & PA public access. Send 1/2" VHS + info w/ SASE to New Breed, 217 N. Union St., Lambertville, NJ 08530.

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS series calls for entries. No entry fee. Contact: Anita Harris Alexander, NC Visions, Fayetteville/Cumberland Arts Council, Box 318, Fayetteville, NC 28302; (910) 323-1776; fax: (910) 323-1727; artscncl@foto.infi.net.

OCULARIS: New screening room seeks 16mm shorts for regular screenings in East Village/Williamsburg area of NYC, particularly by local filmmakers. Please call or send SASE for info: Ocularis, 91 N. 4th St., #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-8713.

REAL TV looking for dynamic videos: news, weather, sports, bloopers, busts, "caught in the act." Real TV, syndicated, daily video magazine, will showcase compelling videos from around the world—from professionals as well as amateurs who capture video snapshots of life in the '90s. Tapes will not be returned. Contact: Real TV, Hollywood Center Studios, Stage 2, 1040 N. Las Palmas, Los Angeles, CA 90038; (213) 860-0100.

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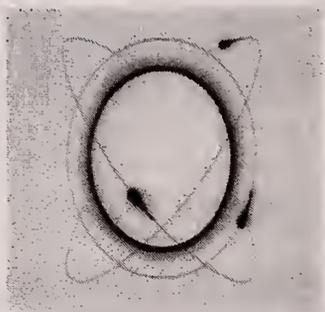
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alternative spaces in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, currently accepting entries for on-going film/video series. Mission is to identify and exhibit compelling new work no longer than 30 min. All formats & genres. Submit in VHS w/ SASE & brief description of work to: Sauce Gallery, 173A North 3rd St., Brooklyn, NY 11211; attn: Lisa Schroeder (718) 486-8992 or Laura Parnes (718) 782-8907.

SHOW YOUR SHORTS monthly NYC public access program seeks short films for 1hr special to air this summer, first Sunday of each month at 4:30 pm on channel 34. For more info and application, write to Catherine DelBuno, Box 987, New York, NY 10011.

THE AMERICAN CINEMATHEQUE is accepting entries for its ongoing program, The Alternative Screen: A Forum for Independent Film Exhibition and Beyond. Send submissions on 1/2" VHS tape. Independent film, music video and new media projects wanted. For more info, call (213) 466-FILM.

TIGRESS PRODUCTIONS seeking 8mm or S-8 footage of 42nd St./Times Square area from 1960s & 70s for doc. All film returned, some paid, film credit. Contact: June Lang (212) 977-2634.

TV-1 PRODUCTIONS seeking footage on Cuba for upcoming doc. Every aspect of life in the island welcome. Formats: Hi8, SVHS, 3/4", Beta, DVD, 8mm & 16mm. Tapes returned. Payment negotiable. For more info, contact: Marcos N. Suarez, 2102 Empire Central, Dallas, TX 75235; (214) 357-2186.

TYME TOWER ENTERTAINMENT seeks feature-length & short films for Ind. Filmmakers video series. 16mm, 35mm, B/W or color. Send 3/4" or 1/2" VHS copy to: Tyme Tower Entertainment, c/o Tyme Tower Home Video, 810 E. Coliseum Blvd., ste. 107, Fort Wayne, IN 46805-1234; (219) 481-5807.

UNQUOTE TV 1/2 hr nonprofit program dedicated to exposing new, innovative film & video artists, seeks ind. doc, narrative, experimental, performance works under 28 min. Seen on over 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: Unquote TV, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

VIDEOSPACE AT DECORDOVA MEDIA ARTS ARCHIVE: DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park seeks VHS copies of video art & documentation of performance, installation art & new genres from New England artists for inclusion in new media arts archive. Send for info & guidelines: Videospace at DeCordova, DeCordova Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Rd., Lincoln, MA 01773-2600.

PUBLICATIONS

APERTURE INC. new 501(c)(3) nonprofit corp., offers grant of \$10,000 to first-time filmmaker shooting a 5-30 min. film. For info on 1996 Aperture Grant, send SASE to: Aperture, 12335 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 174, Los Angeles, CA 90025, or call (310) 772-8294.

ART ON FILM DATABASE wants to know: Have you produced film, video or video disc on visual arts? Send info on prod. to Program for Art on Film Database, computer index to over 19,000 prods. Interested in prods on all visual arts topics. Welcome



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DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO organized by Int'l Media Resources Exchange seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info: Karen Ranucci, IMRE, 124 Washington Place, NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108.

MEDIA MATTERS Media Alliance's newsletter, provides comprehensive listings of New York area events & opportunities for media artists. For a free copy, call Media Alliance at (212) 560-2919 or visit their web site at <http://www.mediaalliance.org>.

MEDIANET: Guide to the Internet for Video and Filmmakers. Available free at <http://www.infi.net/~riddle/medianet.htm>, or e-mail riddle@infi.net.

THE SQUEALER quarterly journal produced by Squeaky Wheel puts an upstate NY spin on media-related subjects. Once a year, The Squealer publishes "State of the State," a comprehensive resource issue w/ detailed info on upstate media arts organizations, access centers, schools & coalitions. Subscriptions \$15/year. Contact: Andrea Mancuso, Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel/>

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BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from ind. producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Reviewed on ongoing basis. Contact BFFV for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; bffv@aol.com.

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MEDIA ALLIANCE assists NYC artists & nonprofit organizations in using state-of-art equipment, postprod. & prod. facilities at reduced rates. Contact: Media Alliance, c/o WNET, 356 W. 58th St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 560-2919.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS provides grants for development of nat'l public TV broadcast programming by & about indigenous Pacific Islanders. Appls available from: PIC, 1221 Kapiolani Blvd., #6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814, (808) 591-0059; fax: 591-1114; piccom@elele.peacesat.hawaii.edu.

POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION gives financial assistance to artists of recognizable merit & financial need working as mixed-media or installation artists. Grants awarded throughout yr: \$1,000-\$30,000. For guidelines, write: Pollock-Krasner Foundation, 725 Park Ave., NY, NY 10021.

RESIDENCIES supports US organizations to host artists & arts managers, known as ArtsLink Fellows, from Central & Eastern Europe. ArtsLink Residencies grants provide funding to cover the living, working, and materials costs for the five-week residency, as well as modest administrative expenses for the host organization. Grant amounts will generally range from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Deadline for application: June 9, 1997. CEC Int'l, (212) 643-1985.

SOROS DOCUMENTARY FUND supports ind. doc. film & video on human rights, freedom of expression, social justice & civil liberties. 2 levels considered: works-in-progress & preprod. seed money. Grant awards for recommended works-in-progress range up to \$50,000, w/ average of \$25,000. Awards for seed funds range from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Send proposals to: Diane Weyermann, Director of Arts and Cultural Regional Program, Open Society Institute, 888 7th Ave., #3100, NY, NY 10106.

STANDBY PROGRAM provides artists & nonprofits access to broadcast quality video postprod. services at reduced rates. For guidelines & appl. contact: Standby Program, Box 184, NY, NY 10012-0004; (212) 219-0951; fax: 219-0563.

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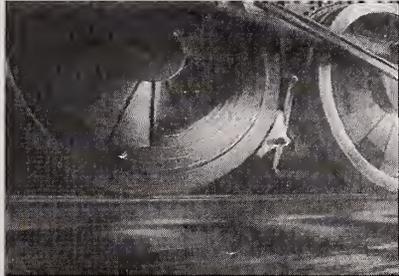
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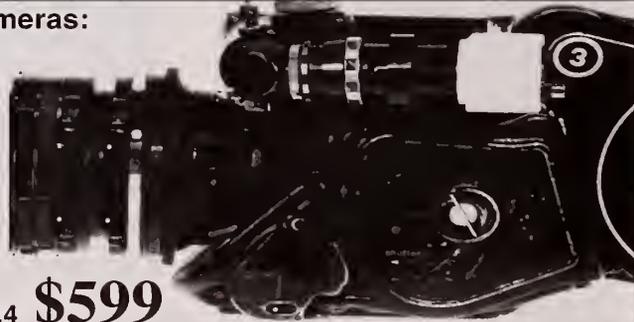
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The AIVF Annual Membership Meeting will be held Friday evening, April 18, at Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., NYC, at 6:30 p.m. *The meeting is open to all; AIVF members will receive a separate notice.*

MEET AND GREETs

These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. *Free; open to AIVF members only.* Limited to 20 participants. RSVP required: (212) 807-1400 x301. Please leave name, phone number, and event for which you are making a reservation.

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Tuesday, April 8, 6:30 pm

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Sundance Channel is a new cable venture and three-way partnership between the Sundance Institute, Showtime Networks, and Polygram Filmed Entertainment. Eaton was formerly with Fine Line Features, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Brattle Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Tuesday, May 13, 6:30 pm

WORKSHOPS

Workshop: Digital Video Cameras

This workshop will explore the new frontier of DVCs. See the new DVCs developed by Panasonic and Sony and participate in a hands on demonstration. Panelists currently include AIVF board member Bart Weiss. \$10 fee. For

more info contact *Leslie Fields, (212) 807-1400 x 222. RSVP call (212) 807-1400 x301.*

When: Thursday, April 24, 6:30 - 9:00

Where: The Lighthouse, 111 E. 59th St., NYC

Women and the Art of Multimedia (WAM!)

A conference for media professionals and an international exhibition of multimedia work by and about women. WAM! will assess the position of independent women producers in relation to new media, and provide women in the field with professional development opportunities. *AIVF members receive a \$50 discount on registration fees.* Contact: *Terry Lawler at (212) 673-5589; email: tlawler@echonyc.com.*

When: May 29 - 31 in Washington, DC

SALON ACTIVITIES

Writing for Television, Washington, DC

Presented by *Darryl Wharton*, writer for *Homicide*.

When: April 8, 7:00 pm at Herb's Restaurant (see address under salon listing). Contact the DC Salon Hotline for more information.

AIVF FESTIVAL GUIDE ERRATA & UPDATES

GOTEBORG FILM FESTIVAL

The deadline is *November 1* and not early December as printed in the guide.

If you discover an error or change in our Festival Guide, please notify us so we can publish it in the magazine and include the information in updates we publish periodically.

MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wed. of each month, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.

Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.

Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street

Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time

Where: Ozzie's Coffeeshouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.

Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver, CO

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125

Houston, TX:

When: Last Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: David Mendel, (713) 529-4185

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.

Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

NYC

When: 1st Mon. and 3rd Sun. of the month.

Where: Pink Pony Theater, 176 Ludlow St.

Contact: Jane Gang, (212) 254-5273

Norwalk, CT:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

Sacramento, CA

call for dates and locations.

Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.

Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

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Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW

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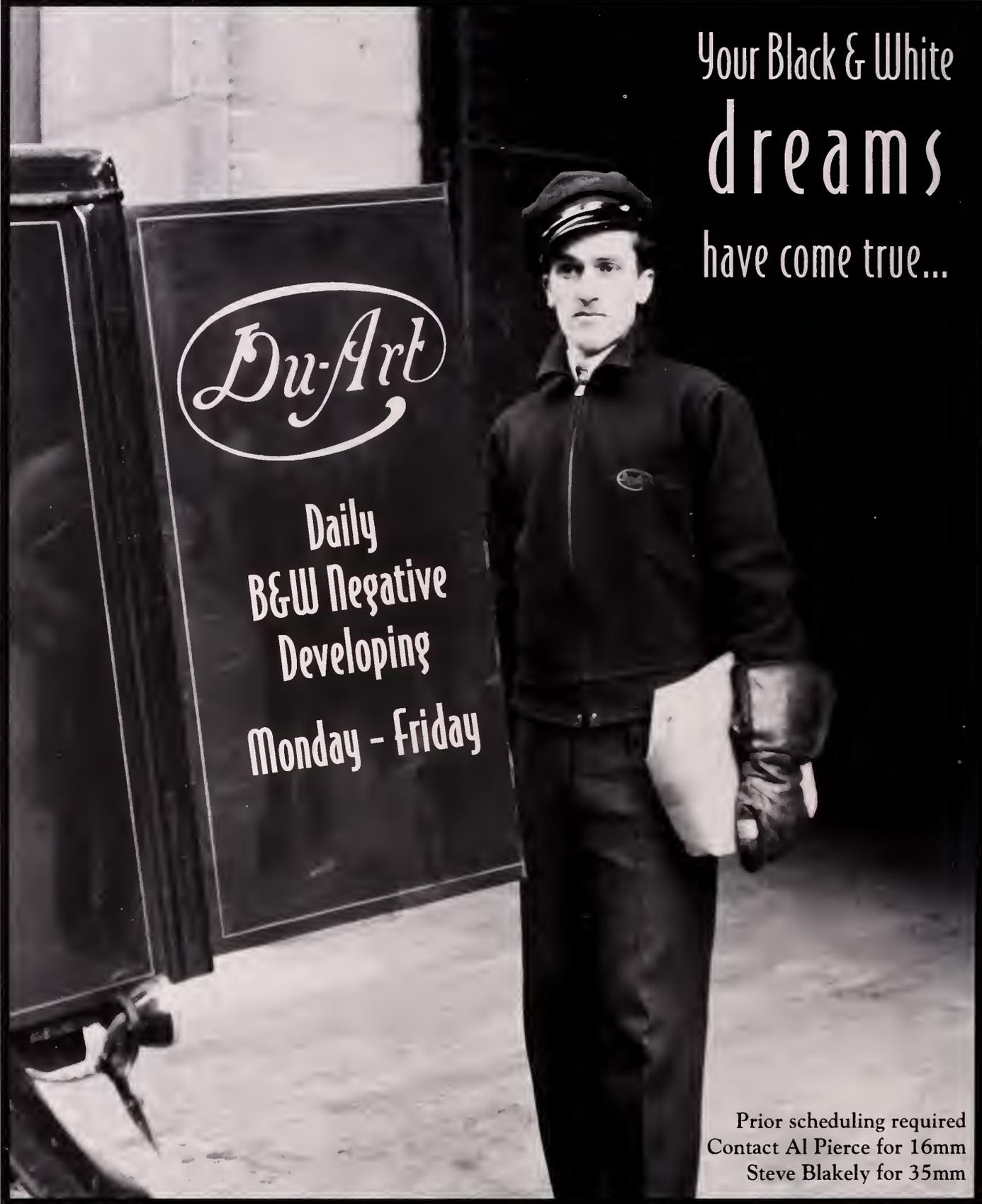
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COVER: Alan Berliner (L) turns the camera on his father, Oscar, in his new documentary, *Nobody's Business*. Writer Mitch Albert talks to the director about the delicate art of using family members as subject matter. Photo D. W. Leitner, courtesy filmmaker

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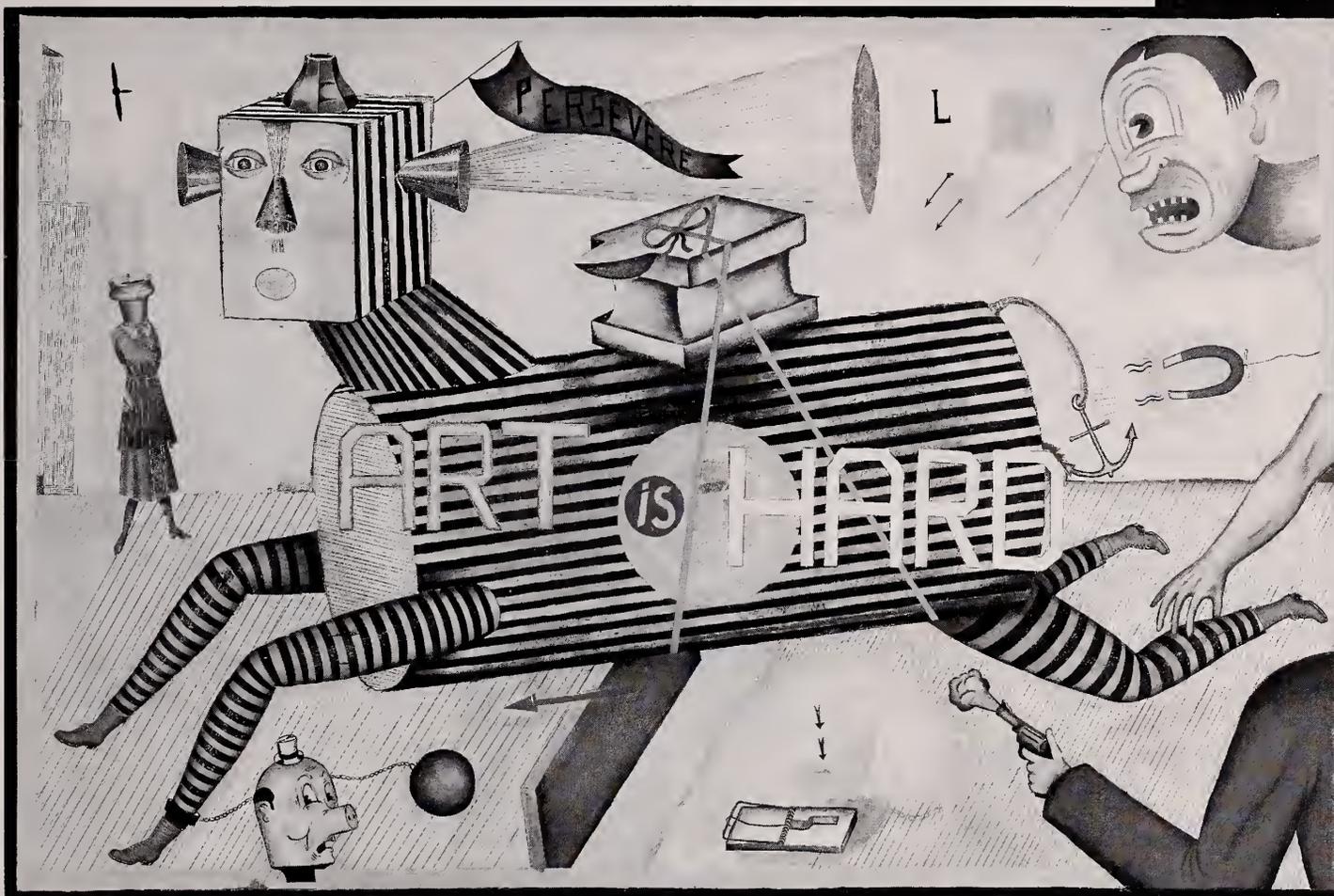
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Martin Scorsese, Child Pornographer?

New Porn Bill Fails to Define Its Terms

THERE WAS A DEAFENING SILENCE FROM THE media arts community when the Child Pornography Prevention Act of 1996 was signed into law last October by President Clinton. Section 2256 of the act specifically defines child pornography as "any visual depiction, including any photograph, film, video, picture, or computer or computer-generated image or picture, whether made or produced by electronic, mechanical, or other means, of sexually explicit conduct" involving minors. But it also identifies as child pornography instances where "such visual depiction is, or appears to be, of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct."

Since the act never defines what "sexually explicit conduct" is, it could, if taken literally, effectively ban the exhibition of films such as Adrian Lyne's forthcoming *Lolita* remake (which received an R rating from the Motion Picture Association of America in February) and clear video store shelves of *Carrie* and *Animal House* cassettes.

The bill could also essentially ban anything in which the sexuality of actual minors is concerned. This latter move would spell trouble not only for most of Bernardo Bertolucci's major works but for films by Martin Scorsese (*Raging Bull*), Peter Bogdanovich (*The Last Picture Show*), Federico Fellini (*Amarcord*), Louis Malle (*Pretty Baby*), Milos Forman (*Valmont*), and Woody Allen.

While the act, also known as S. 1237, was concealed within a massive spending bill (the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act 1997), it was hardly a well-guarded secret. However, the lack of public comment could be construed as a fear of appearing to support child pornography rather than a lack of support for free artistic expression. As a result of this silence from the arts community, the dissenting

Jennifer Montgomery's *Art for Teachers of Children*—a fictionalized account of the director's relationship with her photography teacher—could be banned by the Child Pornography Act of 1996. Courtesy filmmaker



voices come from the wicked stepsister of the film and video community—the adult entertainment industry.

"This is an indefensible law," says Jeffrey J. Douglas, a Santa Monica lawyer and chair of the Free Speech Coalition, the trade association of the adult entertainment industry. The coalition filed a suit on January 27 in San Francisco Federal District Court against Janet Reno and the U.S. Department of Justice for failing to challenge the unconstitutional aspects of the Child Pornography Prevention Act.

"The law does not address anything to do with children," says Douglas. "It makes it illegal for an adult to play a role in which they engage in actual or simulated sex, when the character the adult is playing appears to be 17 years and

364 days old."

S. 1237 is the creation of senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Joseph Biden (D-DE), who are, respectively, the chair and the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Charles Grassley (R-IA) also helped draft the bill. But since these conservative Republicans and centrist Democrats were unable to agree on how far the bill should go, it stalled in the Judiciary Committee for two years. According to Douglas,

the Justice Department never conducted an analysis of S. 1237 and the bill initially failed to gain widespread congressional support. However, Hatch also sits on the conference committee and was able to persuade that com-

Like arts advocacy groups, Hollywood and its powerful Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) lobbying arm have declined to take any initiative against the act.

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mittee to pass S. 1237 and attach it to the spending bill just days prior to the Clinton signing. The Hatch-Biden bill then went to the House and Senate, where last September Biden attempted—and failed—to amend sections of the bill he felt were too excessive.

Speaking to Clinton from the Senate floor, Biden voiced concerns about the act's minimum 10-year and maximum 20-year prison sentences for first-time offenders. He also objected to the restrictions on persons over 18 portraying what appear to be sexually active minors. However, his speech came too late for the controversial portions of S. 1237 to be amended. The act had already been attached to the spending bill, and Congress was not willing to vote down an entire omnibus bill in order to appease those concerned about certain contents of the Child Pornography Prevention Act.

Co-plaintiffs with the Free Speech Coalition in the lawsuit against the Justice Department are Bold Type, Inc., (publishers of *California Guide to Nude Beaches*), erotic photographer Ron Raffaelli, and South Hamptons painter James Gingerich, who specializes in large-scale landscapes and nudes. The suit was filed by H. Louis Sirkin, the civil rights attorney who successfully defended Dennis Barrie of Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center against obscenity charges brought in connection with Robert Mapplethorpe's "The Perfect Moment" photo exhibit in 1990.

Sirkin's nine-page complaint called for the Justice Department to halt enforcement of S. 1237 on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. "The language in the bill is entirely contrary to the Supreme Court's *Ferber* decision in New York," says Sirkin of the 1982 case *New York vs. Ferber*, in which the high court made child pornography exempt from First Amendment protection. "My hope is that the unconstitutional provisions will be eliminated by the courts."

At press time, Sirkin and the Free Speech Coalition were awaiting a response from the Department of Justice. "It's been very frustrating trying to find out who in the Justice Department was handling the lawsuit. The left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing," says Sirkin.

The four plaintiffs have found themselves fighting a lonely battle. Like arts advocacy groups, Hollywood and its powerful Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) lobbying arm have declined to take any initiative against the act. Douglas believes the industry

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It's Academic: George Eastman House School Preserves the Fine Art of Film Preservation

Film buffs and wine lovers share a considerable amount of common ground: in addition to a fondness for foreign products, both often claim that the old stuff is the best. But when it comes to film, there's one aspect that doesn't age well: the stock on which it's printed.

Only recently did the filmmaking communi-

even authorized expenditures for preserving films. And the AFI is currently conducting an informational campaign to solicit funds for preservation.

However, the most encouraging sign in the fight against decaying celluloid is the establishment of the George Eastman House School of Film and Video Preservation (GEHS). The first school to cover film preservation theory, philosophy, and methodology as well as film programming, management, and copyright, GEHS was created by the George Eastman House and Interna-

tional Museum of Photography and Film in Rochester, New York, with a grant from the Louis B. Mayer Foundation.

"The window of opportunity for restoring early films grows smaller each year," says Anthony Bannon, the museum's director. "We feel an imperative to share our knowledge with the international film community." Until now, the process of film preservation has

rarely been codified into a formal education. "Around the world, film and sound archiving is maturing from the do-it-yourself, learn-on-the-job vocation of the past, into a recognized and formal discipline," says Ray Edmondson, deputy curator of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia. "The program prepares students for the broad spectrum of curating and archiving, not only exposing them to chemistry and technology but to almost any possibility within the area of museum work in film."

The initial admission was small, with just 10 students registering for the two-semester certificate program last fall. However, they came to Rochester from points as disparate as California and Spain, and school co-director Paolo Cherchi-Usai says that number is bound to grow.

has unofficially entrusted the adult entertainment representatives with challenging the Hatch-Biden law because of its strong anti-child pornography credentials in recent decades.

"The studios are just sort of crossing their fingers and holding their breath and assuming their enormous economic clout and cultural importance would protect them from the enforcement of this incredibly asinine law," says Douglas. "It's sad that the reality is that producers who are deeply affected by this are relying on their distaff cousins to do their work for them."

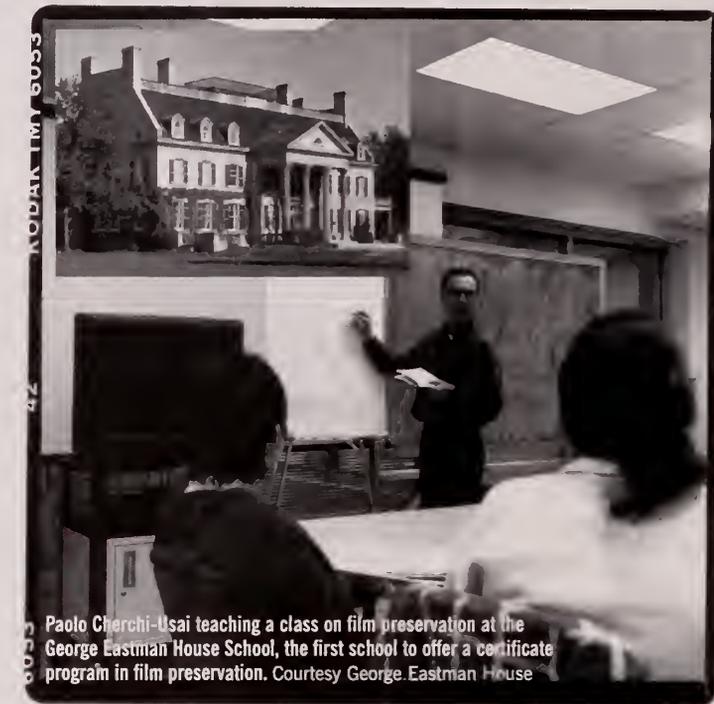
Douglas reports a cryptic leak from Sen. Hatch's staff suggesting that "legitimate mainstream films would not be at risk of censorship," Douglas says he understands that to mean films submitted for an MPAA rating are exempt from the law. However, that's a qualification many independent films fail to meet.

One independent filmmaker who found herself unwittingly drawn into the censorship issue is Jennifer Montgomery, whose autobiographical 1995 film *Art for Teachers of Children* dealt with an affair between a 14-year-old girl and the adult male teacher who photographs her in the nude. Although the girl in Montgomery's film is played by an actress of legal age (Caitlin Grace), the film clearly would not hold up under the existing Hatch-Biden law.

Montgomery says that when she screened her film, she was often asked to comment on pending child pornography cases and invasion of privacy issues. "I was called upon to give a legal opinion, in a sense," says Montgomery. "I became less conclusive in my own views than before. I saw a lot of polarization going on...people looking to me to give them some kind of closure, which is exactly the opposite of what I presented in the film. I initially made the film as a response to what I saw was a conflation of what was going on with a lot of artists [facing censorship]."

As to the potential effects of the Hatch-Biden bill, Montgomery believes artists habitually react to intimidation tactics by becoming even more outrageous in their work. "This is really something that will push them farther, even to the margins."

Max J. Alvarez is a Washington, D.C., writer who wrote about the state of arthouse exhibition in the January/February issue.



Paolo Cherchi-Usai teaching a class on film preservation at the George Eastman House School, the first school to offer a certificate program in film preservation. Courtesy George Eastman House

ty come to terms with just how delicate celluloid can be. Already, the American Film Institute (AFI) approximates that 85 percent of silent films and almost half of all films made before 1950—when they were shot on more-fragile nitrate stock—have shrunk, cracked, and become gummy from lack of proper care.

If neglect has had a positive side effect, it's that America currently appears to be trying to make up for lost time. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), long a pioneer in collecting and honoring film, opened a 36,000-square-foot storage and preservation center in Hamlin, Pennsylvania in 1996. The \$11.2 million facility is dedicated to the preservation, storage, and cataloguing of the museum's more than 13,000 films, with titles that date back to Thomas Edison's 1894 Kinetoscopes. Congress now designates some titles as national treasures and has

"The George Eastman House program is the only one of its kind," says Cherchi-Usai, who is also the museum's senior curator of motion pictures as well as an associate professor of film studies at the University of Rochester. "The International Federation of Film Archivists conducts short courses irregularly in London and Berlin, and the University of East Anglia offers a degree in film archiving, but we offer academic training that prepares students to work not only in laboratory and technological areas, but in a broad range of positions."

Cherchi-Usai and Grant Romer, the museum's director of conservation and museum studies, head a visiting faculty from both the United States and abroad. Lecturers have come from the UCLA Film and Television Archive, the Library of Congress, the Haguefilm Archives in Amsterdam, and the British Film Institute.

In classroom and laboratory environments, students learn archival theory, methods, and practice; documentation and cataloguing; and the physical treatment, conservation, and restoration of film and video. Under the direction of a faculty member, each student also works on a final project involving some aspect of film or video handling, condition analysis, preservation planning, and laboratory process.

The program's admissions requirements specify only an undergraduate degree and aptitude for the program. However, visiting lecturer Stephen Higgins, a curator of MoMA's film collection, reports being deeply impressed by the background of the students. "They displayed a knowledge of film history, criticism, and theory as well as the usual archival matters." While some students intend to take up curatorial positions or are museum curators whose institutions are beginning to collect and display moving image artifacts, Higgins believes the program can prepare students for archiving positions beyond the museum world, including Hollywood studios and television networks.

Cherchi-Usai says he hopes to eventually expand the program into a full-fledged academic entity that grants master's degrees in film archiving and preservation, possibly by drawing on the resources of the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Rochester. Establishing a formal degree program could also serve to maintain awareness about film preservation once American Movie Classics no longer runs public service announcements alerting the public that classic films are currently turning to dust.

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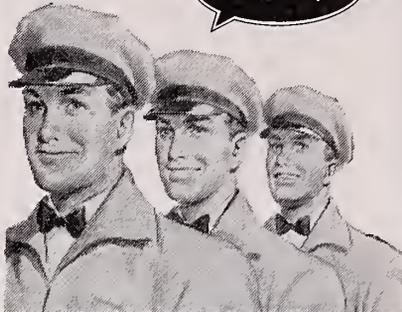


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gating the chemistry behind the deterioration of photographic stock, and the various methods of prevention, preservation, and cure in seminars like "Vinegar Syndrome and the Microenvironment." It seems that good films, like fine wines, can also turn to vinegar.

GEORGE GRELLA

George Grella is a professor of English and film studies at the University of Rochester and is the film critic for City Newspaper and WXXI-FM, both in Rochester.

Northwest Airlines Screens Independent Film to Captive Audiences

It may be the perfect exhibition program: filmmakers are virtually guaranteed that, no matter how unusual, unconventional, or provocative their work is, no audience member will walk out. This foolproof screening plan is Independents in Flight, a new entertainment option on international Northwest Airlines flights that comes courtesy of the airline and the Independent Feature Project (IFP/North).

Each month, Northwest offers a different four-hour block of independently produced features, shorts, documentaries, and animated works in first and business-class seating sections, which are equipped with personal viewing devices.

Northwest launched Independents in Flight in February in response to the fact that more traditional in-flight entertainment are increasingly available in other venues. "What we [were] showing on board can really be seen anywhere," says Dean Haehnel, Northwest on-board communications manager. "[Passengers] go to their hotel and see the same movies."

The Minneapolis-based IFP/North is currently accepting submissions of any genre, length, or format on an on-going basis for the program. Although Northwest retains final approval rights—and, in fact, has vetoed at least one IFP selection—programmer Christine Walker insists she's been given relatively free rein to choose what she considers worthy. Her only directive is to avoid material about air disasters. Otherwise, she says, "the field is wide open."

Unlike films shown in other seating sections and projected on screens visible to many passengers, the Independents in Flight films are not edited for content. "Given the limited audience and the other options they have available, [Northwest] feels comfortable putting on a

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variety of films with different subject matter that might even be controversial," says Walker.

Filmmakers selected for Independents in Flight receive a \$15-per-minute honorarium for their work. The real reward of being included in the program, however, is the ease with which an artist can reach a previously remote audience.

"So many people are flying on these flights, probably thousands of them in one month, but you don't have the cost of supporting a huge venue like a theater," says Hayden Grooms, whose *Family Tree*, a documentary about his return to Ottumwa, Iowa, to investigate a murder in his family's past, was included on the inaugural Independents in Flight bill. "I was happy to know that someone from Paris or Cairo or wherever Northwest flies might watch not only an American independent film but a film that takes place in a small Midwestern town. It's not your normal New York or Los Angeles story. I thought this would be an interesting slice of America for an international traveler to see."

Julia Wolfe, IFP program associate, agrees. "Normally you see *Congo*."

To submit work for Independents in Flight, filmmakers must provide a VHS copy of a finished work, plus press materials. Contact Christine Walker at (612) 338-0871 for more information.

SCOTT BRIGGS

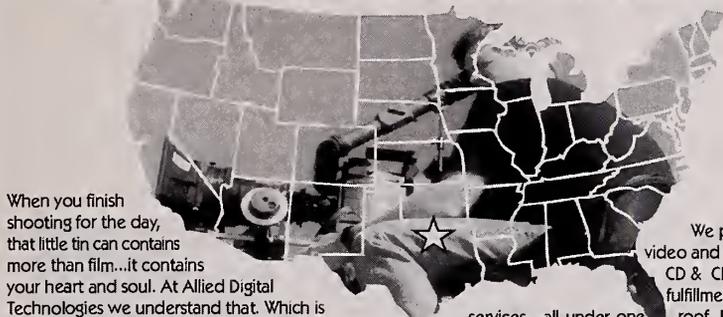
Scott Briggs is a freelance writer in Minneapolis.

ITVS Moves to San Francisco

On March 10, the board of directors announced that the Independent Television Service (ITVS) will relocate its offices to the San Francisco Bay Area by mid-summer. ITVS has been based in St. Paul since it was

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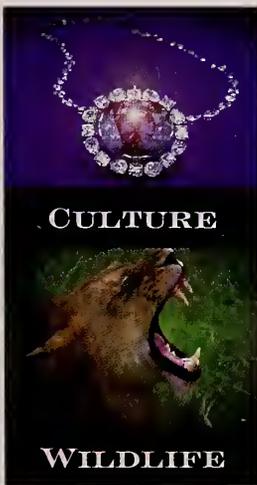
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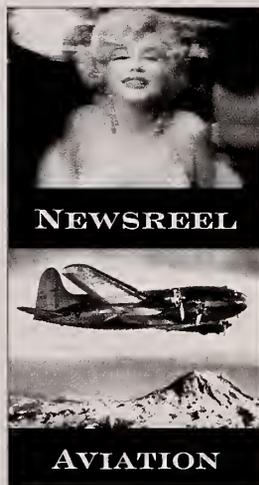


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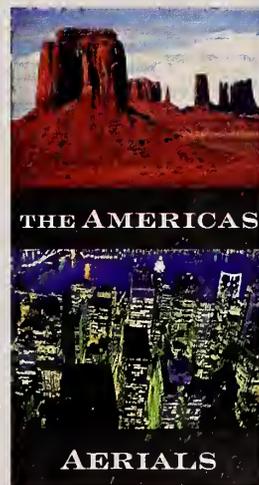


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Explaining the rationale behind the move, ITVS board president Dee Davis cited the need to "seize the opportunity to forge new partnerships and create new income streams." Davis said he believed relocating ITVS in an area where "breakthroughs of the digital era are happening" would increase the service organization's chance of success.

ITVS currently has 18 employees, some of whom will receive offers to move with the organization. "They're planning to operate a more lean operation," says ITVS spokesperson Deborah Blakely. "They're providing pretty extensive support to help people find new employment as well as severance packages."

James Yee, the executive director of ITVS, says that they plan "continued collaborations" with Twin Cities Public Television as well as Minnesota-based producers and media organizations.—D.H.

IFFM Inaugurates Cash Award for Black Filmmakers

Black filmmakers at this year's Independent Feature Film Market (IFFM) have a chance to win a \$10,000 cash prize and a shot at distribution, thanks to the Gordon Parks Independent Film Awards.

A panel of judges, including Julie Dash (*Daughters of the Dust*), Spike Lee, George C. Wolfe (*Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*) as well as the award's namesake, Gordon Parks Sr. (*Shaft*), will select a film from participants at the 1997 IFFM, to be held September 14-21. Both the screenwriter and the director will receive \$10,000.

The award also carries an opportunity to discuss distribution with a division of award-sponsor Viacom, and a screening at Independents Night, the monthly film series presented by the Independent Feature Project (IFP) and the Film Society of Lincoln Center at the Walter Reade Theater.

The award is named for Gordon Parks, one of Hollywood's first black directors. Before he made his first film in 1969 (*The Learning Tree*), Parks had spent 20 years as one of *LIFE Magazine's* top photojournalists.

For more information about the Gordon Parks Independent Film Awards, contact IFP program director Karen Schwartzman at: 104 West 29th St., 12th fl., New York, NY 10001; (212) 465-8200; fax: 465-8525.



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Berlin '97: Just Happy to be Here

At a cautious market, business cards and handshakes satisfied most filmmakers—for now.

BY DANA HARRIS

THE EUROPEAN FILM MARKET IS AN OFFICIAL part of the Berlin International Film Festival, but culturally it's a separate beast altogether. At non-market screenings, it's understood that you will arrive on time or risk not being admitted after the screening starts. And while viewers occasionally leave after 30 minutes due to scheduling or boredom, most stay put.

But what's good for the cinephile makes crazy the buyers, who are renowned for their wayward ways. "That's the one thing I couldn't get used to, people going in and out of the screenings," says Steven Kaminsky, producer of *Pousse Cafe*.

However, these quickies often produce what attentive audiences can't: festival invitations, business cards, and screening cassette requests. That's why some official festival films were also market films. Hannah Weyer's *Arresting Gena* and Marc Huestis' *Another Goddamn Benefit* were part of the Panorama; *Isle of Lesbos* was in the International Forum.

And if you were in the market, you needed a place to call home. For \$500 any filmmaker could book a screening in one of the market's boxy projection rooms, but without a booth in the market, you might as well have saved the plane fare.

"If you don't have a physical place, it's very disconcerting," says Michelle Byrd, executive director of the Independent Feature Project (IFP). "People aren't going to run up to your hotel and leave a message. It's easier to network with other people in the booth and hear what's going on."

In Byrd's case, "the booth" is American Independents at Berlin, co-sponsored by IFP and Kodak, and home to 27 American independent filmmakers and 30 film-related organizations (including AIVF). This was the IFP's first year with an official Berlin presence; previously, the operation was handled by the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), with varying degrees of success.

"The IFP is a membership organization that provides services year-round. In a lot of ways it makes more sense that the IFP is running the



Work, a selection of the 1996 New Directors/New Films fest, was still seeking distribution at the 1997 Berlin Film Festival.

Photo: Leslie J. Laufer

booth rather than NYFA, which is a funding organization," says Byrd.

The booth's size and prime location—near the market's entrance—helped it stand out among the convention-center anonymity. Another advantage, but more difficult to quantify, was the spirit of unity between IFP representatives and the filmmakers. People traded buyer notes and party invitations, and shared cabs to go into East Berlin for late-night pub-crawling.

"I've never worked with the IFP before, and

it was a really good experience," says producer Quentin Lee (*Shopping for Fangs*). "The energy's great. It's like grassroots promotion."

However, unlike most Market booths, the IFP wasn't out to sell. "We provide messaging service, we have somebody at your screenings, and we put out your promotional material," says Byrd. "We are not representing films. We are not acting on behalf of individual filmmakers."

The IFP did scoot the profile of some filmmakers a little higher with a sidebar program

called AIM, or American Independents in the Market. Filmmakers began applying to the program last TK, and the selection was narrowed to 10 films, nine of which screened at the market. (*Eye of God* dropped out at the last moment.) In addition to being identified as an "AIM" film, these filmmakers received free screening space as well as a \$500 travel stipend.

Two flights up from the IFP was The Independents Showcase, operated by former Independent Feature Film Market director Sandy Mandelberger. Both booths provided space for flyers and promotional postcards; both published a booklet listing all represented films. The IFP charges \$500; the for-profit Showcase charges \$700 for documentaries, \$850 for features.

So what does the extra cash get you? Unlike the IFP, Mandelberger recommends

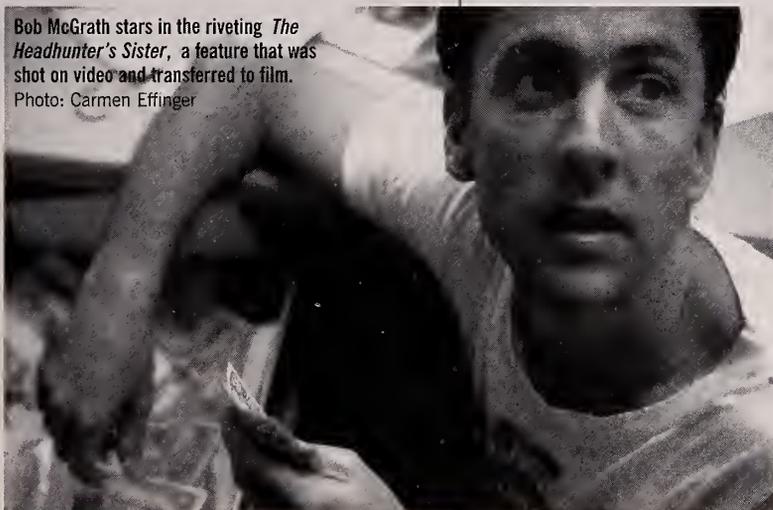
he says. "We got a lot of information about how Berlin should be handled for first-timers, and that's important. Sandy really went out of his way to impress us with providing information about buyers and acquisition people."

"That's territory that not-for-profit can't even delve into," says Mandelberger. "And I think the industry is big enough and diverse enough so that's good. Between the two of us, we're helping lots of people."

To date, the help from both organizations has translated into future possibilities rather than current sales. Most filmmakers said that results were currently limited to the occasional festival invite and what Chuck Parelo, director of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer 2*, described as "lots of interest from a bunch of places." (An exception: director Scott Saunders personally sold *The Headhunter's Sister* to SHB Films for theatrical release in Israel.) For many, those elements

were enough to make it worth the trip. "It definitely gave [the film] a legitimacy," says Parelo. However, Rachel Reichman, director of *Work*, says that she was hoping for more than business cards and

Bob McGrath stars in the riveting *The Headhunter's Sister*, a feature that was shot on video and transferred to film. Photo: Carmen Effinger



films to buyers and allows filmmakers to display film posters at the booth. For an extra fee, he'll also act as a producer's representative, as he did for five of the 17 films he brought to the market.

"I never answer a question like, 'What is your best movie?'" says Mandelberger. "But if they have a particular bent to their company or their film festival, I want to be able to specialize for them."

As to how he differentiates between films he reps and those he doesn't, Mandelberger says he tries to play fair. "On films I represent at the Market, we work out a limited arrangement for just a few months," he says. "People who hire just my marketing and PR services, I can advise them to a certain point and not beyond."

While Kaminsky didn't hire Mandelberger as a rep, he chose the Showcase for *Pousse Cafe*. "There were fewer films and we felt like Sandy would give us more personal support,"

festival screenings. "I think you need a foreign sales agent to sell in Berlin," she says. "We've gotten a perpetuation of interest, but I thought we'd sell."

"Deals don't happen at the market unless they were arranged in advance," says Mandelberger. "It's tough for American independents who are new out of the gate because one of the legitimate questions a European distributor will ask you is 'Is there a U.S. distribution deal in place?'"

While there was relatively little market gossip about deal-making, there was a buzz about the collapse of a once-assured market: European TV sales.

"Ten years ago, if we had a decent independent feature film, we could sell it to 20 countries for television," says foreign sales agent Jan Rofekamp of Films Transit. "Together, you could rake up some real cash. That's gone."

The reason, he says, is the international death of public television. "Ratings became

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Jeanne Chin and John Cho star in *Shopping for Fangs*, billed as (accurately enough) "a genre-hopping Generation X comedy."

Courtesy filmmaker



important. This is why I got out of the feature film business. Even the most loyal buyers—Channel Four in the UK—they won't buy these films anymore."

Today, Rofekamp makes his living selling documentaries, for which the market is more secure. Still, there's no guarantees. "The minute it's not an Oscar nominee it will be a little harder to sell," he says. "Our company will have one or two films that will break all those rules because they're so strong. [But] recent films like *Family Name* and *Licensed to Kill*—they're not topics that generate automatically a lot of promotion. If you throw them out in the market, buyers won't come rushing. You have to work for it."

ONCE YOU ENTER THE MARKET, IT'S HARD TO remember that just outside is an alternate festival universe just as dizzying. Eleven days is not a lot of time to show nearly 400 films, but the Berlin International Film Festival pulls it off in style. Films are shown in enormous movie palaces—the kind that have been subdivided out of existence in the U.S. Screenings start on time. And best of all, the theaters are packed with eager and appreciative viewers, many of whom don't care about budgets or if the films would sell tickets in one of those American crackerboxes.

Still, German efficiency isn't enough to make sense of exactly which films are playing in each section, or why. Then there's the awards, which are distributed by more than a dozen different juries. Here, then, are thumbnail sketches of three primary festival sections, and a little dish on each. Dig in and enjoy.

Official Competition

This is the section with the highest profile, the the greatest amount of press attention, and the most fallow ground for independent films. (Last one in these parts was Alison Anders' *Gas Food Lodging* in 19TK.) In addition to foreign films like Taiwan's *He Liu (The River)* and Great Britain's *Twin Town*, it's also home to Hollywood fare such as *The English Patient* and *The Crucible*. There's a number of "special screenings," including Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!* Also includes an "homage" to a star and a director; this year's recipients were Kim Novak (*Vertigo*) and G.W. Pabst (*Pandora's Box*).

Best Scandal: When the protagonist dies and the audience cheers, you know your screening is going badly. Documentarian and essayist Bernard Henri-Levi made his feature debut with *Day and Night*, a film that will be best remembered for the heartfelt boos and nisses it received when the director and stars (Lauren Bacall and Alain Delon) made their way to the stage for the Q&A session.

Biggest Disappointment: Chris Marker's *Level Five*. Marker's *La Jetee* is credited as the muse behind *12 Monkeys*, but his much-anticipated film was the subject of much grousing the morning after its debut.

Panorama

This festival sidebar is renowned for its focus on gay and lesbian themes as well as quirky independent films. Panorama has three subsections: the noncompetitive "Special" (Kevin Smith's *Chasing Amy*, Sogo Ishii's *Labyrinth of Dreams*); documentary (Arthur Dong's *Licensed to Kill*, Philip B. Roth's *I Was a Jewish Sex Worker*); and "art & essai," which contains both feature and documentary films, including Su Friedrich's *Hide and Seek*, Alex Sichel's *All Over Me*, and Ela Troyano's *Latin Boys Go to Hell*.

Short and Semisweet: As the New York Film Academy's choice of best short film, Simone Horrocks' (*Spindrift*) of Great Britain received a \$4,000 scholarship for their basic eight-week filmmaking course—room, board, and travel not included.

Pain Is Pleasure: In honor of the climactic scene of his documentary, *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist*, director Kirby Dick distributed promotional nails labeled with the time and place of his film's final screening.

International Forum

The Forum is the crazy quilt of the Berlinale. Formed by the Friends of the German Film Archive in 1971 to serve as a platform for independent films, it is independently operated yet considered an intrinsic part of the festival.



Steven Kaminsky, director of *Pousse Cafe*, says he loved the Berlin film market, with one exception: "I hated watching everyone come in and out of my screenings." Courtesy filmmaker

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The promo card for Kirby Dick's *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist*. Dick also distributed promotional nails, a reference to the most difficult scene to watch in his brilliant but tough-to-take documentary. Courtesy filmmaker

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The Forum defines itself as being "especially devoted to films with experimental esthetics," but doesn't exclude genres or formats. This year, films included Nick Gomez's *Illtown*, Alan Berliner's *Nobody's Business*, and Jo Andres' *Black Kites* (one of the few films under 60 minutes). The Forum also contracts with filmmakers to show their work in noncommercial cinemas and other festivals.

Sometimes the magic works...: Todd Verow (*Frisk*) wrote, lit, shot, and directed *Little Shots of Happiness*, a grainy, jazzy film that skips and swings between light and dark.

...and sometimes it doesn't: At one screening of *Isle of Lesbos*, audiences swarmed a theater lobby in anticipation of the low-budget, high-camp homage to the Hollywood musical. Laughter spiraled down to deadly silence as bathroom humor and painfully hammy acting overwhelmed its Technicolor high spirits.

Then there was the occasional random weirdness. At the market's cafe, filmmakers Susan MacIntosh (*Circus Lives*) and Kirby Dick were discussing Scientology with producer Doug Lindeman (*Picture This!* Entertainment), who participated in the controversial religion fifteen years ago but had nothing untoward to say about it. "All of a sudden, two 60-year-old German men at the next table stood up and began yelling at us, 'Bullshit! Bullshit!' I was totally shaken up," says MacIntosh. "But Doug remained calm through the whole thing. That's how I knew he was going to make a great producer."

Dana Harris is managing editor of *The Independent*.

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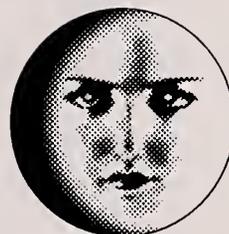


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PICK YOUR PITCH

If you've got the nerve,
Amsterdam's Cofinancing Forum
might have the money.

BY DAVID HOUTS

ON THE EDGE OF THE OLD CITY IN AMSTERDAM sits a deconsecrated nineteenth-century church called the Paradiso. It is now a venue for art happenings and live music, a "rock temple" as the locals describe it. However, for three days last December it became a meeting hall for documentary filmmakers seeking production financing.

Sitting in bleachers where the altar and pews once stood and where sweaty teenagers more recently danced to the beat of a different drummer, these documentarians were on hand to pay homage to yet another god: Mammon. One by one they stood before the assembly of broadcasters from all over Europe and asked for money. Most got what they came for.

This event is called the Forum for International Cofinancing of Documentaries, and it is part of the annual celebration of documentary that takes place every December in Amsterdam, the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA). Last year, the festival's ninth, more than 200 documentary features and shorts were shown for 10 days on eight screens to some 48,000 people in the center of Amsterdam.

To an American documentary filmmaker like myself, who's used to working on the margins of the media world, being there was like arriving in paradise. Gathered in one place was an interested and intelligent public, a sensitive and thoughtfully run institutional structure, and an international community of documentarians. Plus, there was the chance to see documentaries from 45 countries. The American entries in competition were Frederick Weisman's latest, *La Comedie Francaise ou Lamour Joue*, Larry Locke's *Pin Gods*, Mark Wexler's *Me and My Matchmaker*, Ronald Levaco's *Round Eyes in the Middle Kingdom*, and Adam Simon's *The Typewriter, the Rifle and the Movie Camera*, with many other U.S. docs showing out of competition.



But it is the Forum that makes the Amsterdam celebration extraordinary to the American eye. It is an institutional attempt to make the pursuit of international coproduction financing for documentaries easier for independents. The Forum is sponsored by the European Community's MEDIA Programme, the European Documentary Network, and the IDFA—all of which receive government subsidies. It's a profound contrast to the U.S., where the prospect for any kind of government funding for the arts now seems to be treated with derision by the political establishment. And it is that kind of attitude which stands in the way of the formation of innovative public/private partnerships like the Forum, which doesn't dole out grants but uses public dollars to stimulate the commercial marketplace for creative work.

Among markets, the Forum is unique because it's only for works-in-progress, and the number of projects is very limited—so much so that documentary commissioning editors outnumber projects. Ninety-six commissioning editors were on hand at the most recent Forum, representing 57 broadcasters from 18 countries,

mostly European. Judging from 1995's statistics, the editors come away pleased with what they saw. About two-thirds of the projects pitched that year got some of the funding they needed following the Forum. According to Forum manager Jolanda Klarenbeek, of the 68 projects pitched there in 1995, the Forum has received updates on 53. Of these, 20 are finished, 21 are in production, nine are in development, two are on hold, and one has been cancelled.

To be considered for the Forum, projects must have 25 percent of their financing in place (with a maximum of 75 percent) and the commitment of at least one broadcaster. Of the 154 proposals submitted in 1996, 107 met these criteria and 64 were selected. This means that the producers attending the Forum have met a rigorous standard, which makes the whole event very dynamic and concentrated.

Veteran documentary maker Barbara Kopple discovered the Forum just two years ago, when she was invited to be the keynote speaker at the IDFA and to show her films. "I didn't know the Forum existed, and I was

struggling to make *Woodstock '94*, so I asked if I could join," she recalls. "They said, 'No Americans.'" Up until last year, the Forum was open exclusively to European filmmakers. "I was crestfallen, but I did my own little event for *Woodstock '94* as a seminar anyway. But then I found out they were allowing 10 percent of the pitches from Americans this time, so I applied."

Kopple's *Woodstock '94* was one of three U.S. projects to make the cut. In addition, Jonathan Stack brought his proposal for *The Farm*, about a year in the life of the oldest penitentiary in America, and Lucille Carra and Brian Cotnoir made their pitch for *Dvorak and America*, which chronicles the journey of composer Antonin Dvorak to the United States.

Kopple continues, "I came because you don't often get to meet many European documentarians, and because it is even more difficult to meet people from all over the world who can actually give you money. It was a gift to be able to come. The weird thing is the pitching. I only had 10 minutes, and it felt as though it was over before I had begun. But at the end, everybody there said they would take the film, and it is great to know that I'm on the right track."

THE FORUM REVOLVES AROUND THESE PITCHES, which are equal parts business and theater, sales spiel and melodrama. Filmmakers get five or 10 minutes to try to sell their program proposals to the assembled commissioning editors—while everyone else is watching.

The Forum takes its name from the Roman Forum, which was the main public square in every Roman city, a place where business was conducted and public meetings were held. At this modern incarnation, 40 commissioning editors are seated at an oval-shaped arrangement of tables. At one end are two moderators and at the other are the "pitchers," blinded by the lights, trying to make the best impression in the least amount of time. The rest of the audience—fellow filmmakers, more commissioning editors, distributors, consultants, and film board representatives—surrounds them on the bleachers. In total, about 380 people attended last year.

The pressure to perform is palpable. The faint hearted and tongue-tied need not apply.

In contrast to the U.S., the European broadcast market is a more viable home for stylistically varied and challenging documentaries. But it's getting harder to find financing there as well. As a consequence, broadcasters on both side of the Atlantic are more willing to get involved with international coproductions. The Forum is a response to

this trend. In addition to being a place to put deals together, it also offers an opportunity to observe the thought processes of commissioning editors as they evaluate program ideas. Most of the commissioning editors are from European countries; in 1996, probably 85 were European and the other 11 were American and Australian. It is a real education to hear them discuss what they want, because Europeans' taste in documentaries is so different from their counterparts in the U.S. Predilections not only vary from country to country, but often strands are shaped by the personal sensibilities of individual commissioning editors.

The Forum's organizers do everything they can to make the process as successful and easy as possible for all concerned. They invite consultants specializing in international contracts, distribution, and coproduction who are available for individual meetings. They hold a pitching seminar for the inexperienced to polish their presentations. The pitches are scheduled between long coffee breaks, lunches, and evening parties where lots of business get done and friendships are formed. "The purpose of the Forum is not only to get specific projects financed," says Klarenbeek, "but to hook up producers with different kinds of ideas. Networking is 50 percent of the Forum. Commissioning editors want to get a feeling for the state of affairs in creative documentary and producers want to know what commissioning editors are thinking and to learn more about coproducing and cofinancing, so combining the Forum with the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam makes it the natural platform for that to take place."

There are certainly moments when the whole affair seems like a bit of a junior United Nations, with simultaneous translation for French and English speakers (to the continuing irritation of the Germans) and an unending succession of national idiosyncrasies on display. The British are at times concise and a little bit condescending, the French can make incredibly



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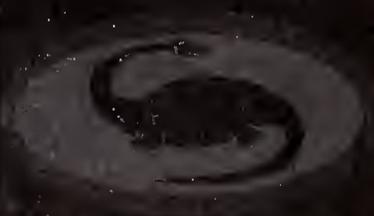
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intellectual pitches (one producer spent half of her allotted time deconstructing the spelling of Gulag), Germans can get very defensive when challenged about material dealing with Nazism, and producers from the Nordic countries often have trouble making eye contact.

The environment is collegial and encouraging, but the pressure to perform is also palpable. The faint-hearted and tongue-tied need not apply. It can be a brutal reminder that the commissioning of documentaries can seem very capricious. Many things unrelated to the merits of a film can get in the way—from its length to the fact that a broadcaster recently ran a series on a similar subject. There is the added element of chance; the person who might be most inclined to buy a project could be late returning from lunch and miss the pitch.

In fact, sometimes it felt less like a classical forum and more like a Coliseum with Christians being fed to the lions. A Dutch team pitched a 50-minute observational documentary about four

truckers traveling between Russia and Western Europe. They had done their preliminary research trips, taken photos, and shot a few hours of Hi8 tape. They had found their

characters and were poised to go into production; all they needed was some more money. But when they finished their pitch and the moderator queried the commissioning editors, we heard that German, French, and Finnish broadcasters were about to air their own programs on exactly the same subject. Nothing the Dutch could have said about their brilliance as filmmakers or novelty of approach could have rescued their project. Everyone in the room felt for these guys; the only thing they could do was say "thank you," leave, and file away all that lovingly collected research.

Jonathan Stack had a much a happier experience. With partial funding in place for *The Farm* from Arts & Entertainment, he needed to match the amount A&E was putting up with European financing. And he did. Now three months later, he has commitments from WDR in Germany and Channel 4 in the UK, and is

well into production.

Stack has a good sense of perspective on the role the Forum can play in fundraising. "The pitch itself is only five minutes, with another five minutes for the discussion," he says. "It looks like it is really stressful, that there is a lot riding on it. But you shouldn't put pressure on yourself; just enjoy it like a good piece of theater. Do just enough to impress them, then you can follow up with the people who are interested. That's where the hard work comes in. You should put all your heart and soul into it, but it doesn't determine your quality as a person or a filmmaker.

"The Forum was a chance for me to be there in front of these people who I don't have the money to meet one by one," Stack continues. "And it worked. I didn't do any deals in Amsterdam, but it led to the WDR deal and it helped clinch the one with Channel 4. Going in, the big question for me

Jonathan Stack's prison documentary *The Farm* was picked up by WDR & Channel Four. Courtesy filmmaker



Arts-related films like Lucille Carra & Brian Cotnoir's *Dvorak and America* were a tougher sell in Amsterdam than social issue docs, even though the subject of the Czech composer's trip to the U.S. is a logical fit for a U.S./European coproduction. Courtesy filmmaker

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was, 'Do I shoot on tape or film?' And now I'm shooting on film."

Stack found the contacts he made with filmmakers to be as valuable as those with commissioning editors. "Part of how I work is that I involve producers in these countries with the project. So I get the benefit of their reputation, which makes the commissioning editors more comfortable. The local producer handles a lot of the day-to-day stuff with the broadcaster, which is time-consuming and hard to manage with a five or six hour time difference.

"I also get the help and support of other filmmakers whose work I respect. The Forum is ideal for building those kinds of relationships. Another part of it is that they bring me projects they have initiated in their home countries. We can use each others' networks to leverage money and create alliances."

Lucille Carra and Brian Cotnoir also had a positive experience presenting *Dvorak and America*, although it didn't feel like that at the beginning. "We had finished our pitch and it seemed like people weren't that interested," says Carra "I think the bias among the commissioning editors there is more towards social and political documentaries. People looking for arts films like ours, or nature documentaries for that matter, weren't well represented. But after we finished and were walking away from the table, one of the commissioning editors turned around and tugged at my sleeve. She said she'd like to see more of our footage. We are still negotiating with her, and I'm optimistic that we will get funding."

So, if you have a documentary proposal, run, don't walk, to the Forum. Its 5th edition will be held on December 1-3, 1997, and the application deadline is September 19. If you have finished a film or need a vacation and some inspiration, the 10th IDFA runs from November 26 to December 4, and that application deadline is August 25th. For further information and entry guidelines, contact the Foundation Forum and IDFA at: Kleine-Gartmanplantsoen 10, 1017 RR Amsterdam, The Netherlands; tel: (31) 20-627-33-29; fax: (31) 20-638-53-88; idfa@xs4all.nl

Next time I go back to the Forum, I'm shedding my press credentials and going with a pitch.

David Houts makes documentaries with his partner, Daniel Elias, for their company, Hybrid Films, Inc. Their most recent program, Choc-O-Rama, was commissioned by Arte and broadcast throughout Europe in January. They are currently coproducing a jazz documentary for the BBC.

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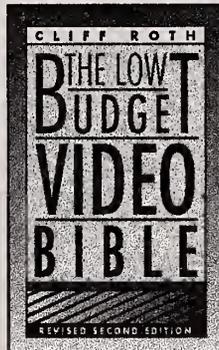
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MIAMI NICE

Miami Film Festival cracks open its door to indie film and video

BY HOWIE
MOVSHOVITZ

THE 14TH MIAMI FILM FESTIVAL (JAN. 31—FEB. 9) presented an interesting program of 32 features and a number of seminars, but as a venue for independent film it was something of a mixed bag. In the context of an all-purpose festival—with a line-up ranging from Bob Rafelson's *Blood and Wine* to Carlos Saura's *Taxi* to a 30th anniversary screening of *Bonnie and Clyde*, with director Arthur Penn on hand to speak—three new American independent features reflects a fair balance. Yet that's not enough to mark the festival as a major site for the exhibition of independent cinema. And while the festival has ambitions for the future, as of 1997 it's not yet a serious market.

The audience was enthusiastic, appreciative, and interested, but not a professional audience, as one might find at Sundance, Cannes, Toronto, or the smaller festival/markets. Like the city as a whole, the Miami audience was largely bilingual and showed special warmth for the 11 films in Spanish.

Independent filmmakers, though, shouldn't underestimate the value of a gracious audience—and a large one—in a beautiful theater. For most of the films, the 1,700 seats of the Gusman center were filled, and when the lights go down in this wonderfully ornate (and restored) 1930s movie house, a night sky with twinkling stars appears above.

The three American independent films—Michael Lindsay-Hogg's *Guy*, Richard Linklater's *subUrbia*, and Greg Mottola's *The Daytrippers*—had distribution deals before their festival screenings, but they probably developed some good word-of-mouth both locally and among the several dozen journalists who flew in from around the country.

Festival programmer Nat Chediak intends for the Miami Film Festival to become a significant national event with some degree of market activity. It certainly is friendly to indepen-



Nat Chediak, festival director
Photo: Scott Singer

dent media. The seminar program, directed by videomaker Robert Rosenberg, devoted three of its seven events exclusively to independent film and video production. One discussion focused on the making of *The Daytrippers* and gave director Greg Mottola (with actor Hope Davis) a good 90 minutes to talk about how he brought the film into being. The seminar was called "Making Movies: A Case Study of *The Daytrippers*," but turned into a lesson in the difference between studio and independent production.

The seminar "Crisis in American Independent Filmmaking: Where's the Audience?" continued to pursue the question of what makes a film independent, but with a hard look at the market potential for independent films. The panel included Mark Gill of Miramax; Sony Classics executive Michael Barker; John Pierson, producer's rep and author of *Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes*; and arts reporter David D'Arcy.

Moderator Reed Rosefelt, a veteran publicist and head of the new marketing firm Magic Lantern, was blunt: "Six hundred films were submitted to Sundance. Geoff Gilmore chooses maybe 60 or so. Maybe six of them are not a complete catastrophe in theaters."

The rest of the panel agreed—repeatedly—that there are too many films coming out for

the current market, that (especially) young filmmakers are overly optimistic, and that, in spite of a few recent successes, independent films have lost ground in their share of the overall film market.

Panelists also expressed concern that many independent filmmakers are really making résumés—expensive ones—for

the mainstream film industry. As Pierson cautioned a hopeful filmmaker in the audience, "Don't be so fast to call it 'product.'"

THE ONE PROGRAM WHERE THOSE BITS OF information and advice made little difference, though, was the video sidebar, "The United States of Video." For this day-long colloquium, the festival brought in eight videomakers and one distributor (Women Make Movies' Deborah Zimmerman) to present and discuss work. "It's the Trojan horse," says Rosenberg of the colloquium's effort to wedge video into the context of a feature film festival.

This took place in what is often called an "all-purpose" or "media" room at Miami-Dade Community College. No one among either the audience or the videomakers harbored any illusions, or even much interest, about markets or profits. Nor did anyone express doubts about the meaning of the word independent.

The videos were a mix of old and new. Says Rosenberg, "I wanted to show the range of the whole [video] field." The morning session included work by Julie Gustafson (*The Politics of Intimacy and Desire*), AIDS activist Gregg Bordowitz (*Fast Trip/Long Drop*), and Lawrence Andrews (*And They Came Riding into Town on Black and Silver Horses*). Cara



From Vincent Carelli's provocative *Video in the Villages*.
Courtesy videomaker

Mertes showed excerpts from her ITVS series *Signal to Noise*, which offers an analysis of television, while Mexican documentarist Gloria Ribe came with *The Tequila Effect*. The afternoon session included screenings of Kip Fulbeck's *Some Questions for 28 Kisses*, excerpts from Tami Gold's *Juggling Gender*, *Out at Work* (coproduced by Kelly Anderson), and a work-in-progress, plus *Video in the Villages*, a project of Brazilian Vincent Carelli.

For a writer who has spent much (but not all) of his professional life around the makers of theatrical films, "The United States of Video" was particularly refreshing. There was little talk of budgets and no questions from the audience about "How did you get distribution?" or "Can you help me get my film made?"

For a full day the talk was about the substance of the videos, what the makers were trying to do—questions of meaning, artistic intent, and achievement, questions of substance. Although old phrases like "subverting the dominant medium" tolled like a particularly grim bell, hearing talk about politics, social activism, and the stuff of video, instead of business, gave the program a juice absent from the other seminars.

The screening highlight for me was Carelli's *Video in the Villages*. For this project, Carelli introduced video cameras and recorders to tribespeople in the most remote areas of the Amazon basin, and his tape showed a man from one tribe presenting video to members of another.

Carelli took plenty of heat for some people who thought he was committing an act of cultural genocide by bringing this technology to people who use crude bows and arrows to hunt spider monkeys. But Carelli believes these groups are about to be overrun and that they will certainly disappear without this vital tool. His was the most engaging program I saw in the entire festival.

Howie Movshovitz is critic for Colorado Public Radio, contributes to NPR's Morning Edition, and teaches at the University of Colorado at Boulder. In November he was deposed as film critic of the Denver Post.

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BY DAN MIRVISH

GOING MAINSTREAM

THE INDEPENDENT FILM COMMUNITY MAY HAVE QUESTIONED the "independence" of *Pulp Fiction*—a film that cost \$8 million and was released by a company owned by Disney—but when it comes to reaching mainstream audiences, Quentin Tarantino has bestowed a good name on all independent filmmakers. The recent crossover success of independent films has whetted America's appetite for small, critically driven, low-budget movies, and on the exhibition frontier that means it's now much easier to get independent films—even self-distributed ones—into the multiplexes.

Of course, it wasn't QT alone who primed the pump. The media now sees Sundance as deserving major annual coverage, and outlets like *Entertainment Tonight* and the E! Channel love to highlight the annual Cinderella story. The proliferation of local film festivals around the country also helps raise public awareness of independent film. Then there's the prime seats that independent films—or at least relatively low-budget studio fare—take at the Oscars. And two nationwide cable channels devoted to independent film have emerged—and although they aren't actually in many homes, their advertising is.

Then there's the filmmakers themselves, who are becoming more numerous and geographically diverse. There are now film schools all over the country, with mini film centers in places like Austin, Atlanta, Seattle, the Carolinas, and Minneapolis. The propagation of fanzines and filmmaking magazines seems to have inspired everyone with a camcorder, a light bulb, and a water pistol to become a backyard auteur. Finally, the Internet brings festival coverage, release dates, and big-city reviewers onto laptops from coast to coast.

NOT ONLY ARE BIG MULTIPLEX COMPANIES AWARE OF THE GROWING interest in indies, but they have the room to respond to it. To draw audiences away from their VCRs, the sterile 8-plexes of the eighties are giving way to 21-plexes replete with gourmet pizza, espresso, and cupholders. And with indie films comes arthouse demographics: movie buffs aren't the sort to skimp on a slice of brie to go with their double-double-decaf.

Best of all, the leap in screen space means that multiplexes can afford to take a chance on you. As far as the big chains are concerned, it's a lot less risky to show one no-budget indie film when you know you'll be making money on 20 Hollywood screens. "The more screens they build, the better off we are, regardless of what's on them," says Joel Roodman, whose Gotham Entertainment is working with self-distributors Bruce Sinofsky and Joe Berlinger on distributing their latest film, *Paradise Lost*.

Exhibitors say there's a trend to designate a single screen in a big multiplex as the "art screen." In some cities, especially one where a single company dominates, an entire 4- or 6-plex can be devoted to showing "specialized films."

"As much as possible, we are increasing the number of towns [where] we're devoting one screen to the art films—especially where we have a large number of screens in that area," says Tony Rhead, vice president of film for Carmike Cinemas, the largest circuit in the country.

Granted, a multiplex owner might see anything with a budget under \$20 million as "independent." That's why some of these independent screens are informally dubbed "Miramax screens" for that certain branch of Disney that has a virtual lock on them. But don't blame the Weinsteins: imitate them.

A lot of bookers and theater managers don't follow the world of independent cinema and aren't aware of small distributors, much less individual filmmakers peddling their own product. But that doesn't mean they're opposed to us. And unlike some arthouses that are totally dependent on maintaining good relationships with Miramax and Fine Line (and saving them screen space, no matter what the film), the theater chains are sometimes big enough to be above those concerns—they've always got more screens.

"Overall, I've seen a greater willingness in the last two years to even consider our brand of more limited product," says Jonathan Cordish of Seventh Arts Releasing. Cordish says that in addition to more traditional specialized venues, "last year we worked with Sony, United Artists, and Regal. It's been interesting to see films play from the Quad in New York to a multiplex in a shopping mall in Santa Cruz."

Now, does that mean any indie filmmaker can waltz into their neighborhood AMC and expect to get a booking? Well, maybe. "We are seeing more films self-distributed," says Carmike's Rhead. "We do get quite a few calls from independent producers and we'll try the film if it has any merit at all." But before you start dialing Tony's number, there are a few things you might want to think about first.

Number One: A film. Specifically, a feature-length, 35mm film. Almost no multiplexes have 16mm equipment, so unless you bring your own, don't expect to play your 16 or Super 16 opus without a costly blow-up.

Self-Distribution

Number Two: Marketing materials. It really helps to have a theatrical trailer. While some arthouses will let you slide on this one, it's tougher with the multis. But the advantage here is that if you've got a lot of copies of the trailer, they can run them in multiple screens at the complex as well as (hopefully) across town at another company-owned multiplex.

There's a few other important things: posters, press kits, stills, and ad slicks—pretty much the same supplies that help your film run in any theater. But those things are essential for both booking and succeeding in a multiplex. "Dealing with the multiplexes is very much different than with the arthouse chain in that it puts a greater need on the distributor to really make sure that all the marketing is done the right way," says Cordish. "You're not going to get the support that you would from an arthouse chain like Landmark."

Number Three: A track record. Hopefully, your stint on the festival circuit has produced a press kit. Even program descriptions from festivals look good. Multiplex bookers are very impressed by festivals, but they're not especially savvy (or snobby, for that matter) about which fests are more important than others, or which one you premiered at, or which ones are competitive. Any proof that an audience

To a theater chain, it's less risky to show one no-budget indie film when they're making money on 20 screens of Hollywood films.

showed up (and preferably paid money) to see the film—whether it be a standing-room-only festival audience, or your hometown cast and crew screening—is good news for a skittish booker.

Reviews are also impressive, but *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* aren't the only trades that mainstream exhibitors read. You should also contact magazines like *Box Office*, *Film Journal*, and the *Independent Marketing Edge* newsletter and angle for reviews or other coverage.

One thing you *don't* need: an MPAA rating. If the film is heading into NC-17 territory and you get it rated, this could hurt your chances for advertising. If it's not rated, and the theaters decide to book it anyway, don't worry about it. Getting a rating costs at least \$2,000. You could beg for a poverty deferral and pay only \$500 up front, but it scarcely seems worth the trouble. Use the nice little pamphlet the MPAA will send you to explain their ratings system, and tell people and the press what the film *would* be rated if it were. Often filmgoers will call the theater in advance, so it's important to give the hypothetical rating to the theater staff just in case. The absence of a rating tends to have a psychological effect—people assume the film's an NC-17 even if it isn't.

OKAY, SO YOU'VE GOT YOUR FILM, TRAILERS, AND ALL THAT OTHER STUFF. Compared to arthouses, the first thing that's different about multiplexes is they have bookers on staff, although a few use third-party bookers. It's a little different with each chain, and it can take a few phone calls to figure out the right person to talk to. Some companies have bookers who work strictly on a geographical basis, while others will devote a single booker to handle specialized films nationwide. When in doubt, start by calling the theater managers.

Once you've tracked down the appropriate person for the city or cities you want to play in, it's pretty much the same as booking a film

to Multiplexes

in an arthouse: you send a tape, press kit, reviews, maybe a poster, and hope for the best.

In my experience, multiplex bookers—if they're predisposed to book specialized films in the first place—are no more concerned with prior box office grosses or distribution track records than any independent theater. In some cases, they're a little less shrewd about the independent world and find it kind of a kick to deal directly with the filmmakers rather than the eight studio guys they talk to every day.

Once you've booked a film, make sure everyone is clear on the "settlement terms." Unlike major studios, which usually make complicated deals involving "house allowances" (also called the "house nut") followed by percentage splits, most indie and self-distributors make simple percentage deals that typically range from 35–50% of the box office gross. You're lucky to get more than 35%, but don't accept anything less. And unlike some art and college theaters, don't expect to get any kind of a guarantee. As for sending out a contract, you can either get your hands on a studio boilerplate contract and modify it for your own company, or more often than not, don't bother with it at all. When it comes to exhibitors, they're either going to pay you or they're not. A contract would only be worthwhile if you were to sue them for

lack of payment, but the sums we're talking about aren't worth the time and money that it would take to drag them into court. Ironically, I used a contract with the theater that gave me the most grief about being paid.

Once the film is booked, the first thing to do is call the theater manager (in some cases, there may be an additional city manager to talk to). As with any booking, the first thing to discover is the local press situation. Who are the local reviewers? Are there any radio stations that do promos with the theater? Any chance of TV coverage? Unlike most arthouses, which are usually happy to organize advance press screenings, this is more of a rarity in a multiplex. In some cases you may be charged for it, especially if they have to pay union projectionists overtime.

Make sure that everyone working at the theater is familiar with your film—either by seeing it or reading your press kit—and knows roughly what your rating would be. You'd be surprised how many people go "to the movies" rather than to a specific movie—and very often it's the kid in the box office who steers them to one rather than another.

Toward that end, it's a good idea to make fliers and send them to the theater. There's usually a place to put them near the box office, as well

as one inside the box office for employee use. And if you or a friend is going to be at the theater during your run, try standing in front of other screens at the multiplex (or for that matter, at some other multiplex) and handing out fliers directly; this is especially effective on Friday nights. Give them to people while they're standing in the ticket line.

One big difference between the multiplexes and arthouses is in advertising. Many arthouses use a calendar or run small newspaper ads. Multis use extensive newspaper advertising. These are usually paid for on a "co-op" basis, which means the costs are split 50/50 between the theater company and the distributor. While you can always place an ad in a newspaper yourself, the theaters usually have standing discounts with the papers. Who you have to deal with to place the ads varies: usually it's the theater manager, but some companies have a national marketing office you have to talk to first.

Another important variation is in who pays for the ads and how. In most cases, the ad fees are billed against receipts, which means you



Dan Mirvish leaned how to knock 'em dead when marketing his film *Omaha* (the movie) (pictured) to multiplexes. Courtesy filmmaker

never have to shell out any hard cash for advertising. But a few companies keep the two accounts separate and may require ad money up front. In any case, most multis have two kinds of ads: the directory listings, which list all the movies playing at a given theater, and the individual movie ads. The directory ads are usually free, but it's up to you to decide how big an individual ad to get for your film.

This is where playing at a big multiplex in a small town really pays off. In a big-city daily paper, you might pay \$100 or more per column inch for advertising. But in a small town, those rates can drop as low as \$12 per column inch. And remember, your costs are split with the theater. On this level, you can really compete on equal footing with the Hollywood movies. Ask the theater what size ads other distributors are running. Other good places to advertise are in the weekly alternatives and college papers. You'll find that some multiplexes don't normally run ads in those papers, but there's no reason you can't do it yourself.

It always pays to call the newspaper ad departments directly to make sure your ads are being placed. In *really* small papers, talking to the ad person might also help you on the editorial side. Another advantage of playing in small towns is that the entertainment writers rarely get calls from directors. They're usually less cynical than their big-city counterparts and thus more inclined to give you a good review if you've buttered them up prior to their seeing the film. They're also more likely to do a feature story and run stills. Small town or big, you should always try to contact reviewers directly—it's almost always more reliable than going through the theater managers.

One frustration: Some small newspapers don't have their own reviewers and rely on wire-service reviews. And at big-city dailies, if the critic is too busy to go to a press screening, they too will rely on a wire review. You can always try to foist one of your non-wire reviews on them and hope they reprint it verbatim.

Radio is terrific. There's almost always one station that will have an on-going relationship with the theater you're playing in. Just call the promotions person at the station and tell them to organize a ticket giveaway with the theater manager. Once they're committed to the tickets, it's pretty easy to parlay that into a short phone-in interview on at least one of their shows. And just because a radio station's never done a ticket giveaway doesn't mean they won't.

If it's an extensive promotion, sometimes a station will want an exclusive deal. But usually you're free to try as many stations as you can find. Even if they're not doing a ticket giveaway, many will still want to do a little interview. And don't limit yourself to your target demographic. All those Rush Limbaugh, talk/news, AM stations need all the interviews they can get—and their ratings often dwarf those of the hip, alternative station in town.

The nice thing about working with a multiplex theater is that they're usually staffed by a lot of high school kids who have never met a filmmaker before, much less one who shows up at the theater wearing a sandwich board and carrying 3,000 fliers. They have a lot of good word-of-mouth potential; if you can get them excited about the film, it can go a long way toward making the movie a success.

Finally, it never hurts to be a little paranoid about your prints. Be sure they're shipped to the theater on time (remember, UPS is just another way of spelling "oops"). Then make sure that the projectionist knows your aspect ratio (it had better be 1.85 or Scope; the multis don't get many 1.66s) and sound system (for practical purposes, Ultrastereo is the same as Dolby A, but who knows what they'll do if you give them something in Mono).

Keep in mind that most multiplexes use a platter system: While that's good in that there's no unsettling reel changes, you should be forewarned that projectionists usually hack frames from the heads and tails of every reel (something you should keep in mind when you're editing the film). Also, watch out for any reel that starts or ends with full black frames even if there's still voiceover or music running: most projectionists will assume this is leader and cut it off. And even if you carefully label any peculiarities you might have, most prints will go directly from theater to theater and those labels have a way of disappearing.

Speaking of disappearing, don't count on trailers ever coming back. And if they do, they might not be your own. That's one reason to keep trailers relatively short—the labs charge on a per-foot basis when you order new ones.

On the Monday morning after your opening weekend, call your booker and see if you can hold over an extra week. But don't count on it. "There's more films being released, making it harder to hold over," says Roodman. And while it's to your advantage to be flexible in your initial scheduling, you're eventually going to run into firm release-date commitments the theater has with the big distributors.

The final thing you need to worry about is getting paid. In my experience, this is less of a problem with the big chains than with independent theaters, but you still have to be aggressive. Try to keep your own approximate box-office records by calling the theater every day or so and talking directly to whoever's working the box office. In some cases, you may have to send the theater chain an invoice before you get paid, and you can only do that after they've sent you the box-office reports. In other words, it can take a while.

Like any other form of theatrical distribution, reaching out to the multiplexes can be very rewarding on a personal level, but not particularly profitable in the short run. It is very time-consuming to do it right, but if your release is spread over a long period of time, you don't need vast amounts of prints and advertising money to play your film in a large number of cities, to a wide range of people.

Slamdance Film Festival co-founder Dan Mirvish self-distributed his film Omaha (the movie) last year to 32 cities. Recently he worked at Disney's Buena Vista Distribution as a temp.

This article is part of The Independent's series on self-distribution. In December '96 Becky Smith covered selling to the educational market, and in January/February '97 Mark Huisman examined the practice of four-walling. In an upcoming issue, Huisman will look at independent film tours: foolhardy or the future? And watch for AIVF's Self-Distribution Toolkit, which will be available later this year.

Cheap Tricks

The following is a list of Mirvish's own secrets, shortcuts, and other sneaky methods to get the most out of your adventure in self distribution.

- A cheap way to do a blow-up: go to the former Czechoslovakia. You can fly yourself and the negative to the lab in Prague and save about \$20,000 over doing it in the States.

- Multiplex managers are less dependent on local press than their arthouse counterparts (who often live or die by the local critics), so they may not have a list of players on hand. If it means making them look up every television and radio station in the phone book under the "Ks" or "Ws", so be it.

- Keep in mind that if you've been reviewed in the New York Times or LA Times, those reviews will wind up on those papers' respective wire services—both of which are heavily subscribed to, as are those of the Chicago Thumb Boys. Of course, if any of those write-ups are bad, you're screwed.

- The Friday morning drive-time shows are the best slot to shoot for; most wacky morning-show hosts are actor-wannabes who just love to kiss up to a film director. And if the local NPR station says they're in the midst of a fund-drive and can't help you out, tell them to offer free tickets as a membership premium.

- If you're really desperate, tell people who are waiting in line to buy a ticket to your movie and sneak into the one they really want to see. The theaters usually don't care, so you may as well stick it to the studios.—D.M.

ALAN BERLINER HAS DEVOTED A SIGNIFICANT PART OF HIS CAREER TO the interconnectedness of family, self, and world. Watching *The Family Album* (1986), viewers may have felt their own histories evoked by the snippets of old, anonymous home movies that Berliner randomly salvaged from estate sales. In *Intimate Stranger* (1991), Berliner narrows the focus to his own maternal grandfather. With *Nobody's Business* (1996) he scrutinizes his father, Oscar Berliner—and Oscar returns the gaze, often harshly.

With this latest documentary, the filmmaker says he is personally "raising the stakes." In his previous film, Berliner's sub-

This belief meshes with the worldview of the Mormons, who have assembled the largest genealogical archive in existence. In *Nobody's Business*, Berliner (who is Jewish) documents his journey to the great vault at Granite Mountain, Utah, where he tries to unearth the family history his father is unwilling or unable to supply. The film integrates this material with family interviews, ironically employed stock footage (classic boxing footage, for example, is used as recurring punctuation when father and son square off), and artifacts from his father's life: photographs, home movies, and footage from his father's daily routine.

The unasked question facing the viewer is: Who's being more

The Reluctant Witness

Alan Berliner goes home again to document his father, who says his life is "Nobody's Business."

ject was a man already deceased, and one whose biography would be of interest to almost anyone. An intense Italian Jew who worked in Egypt and Japan as a cotton trader, he became an unofficial diplomat whose life story is tied in with world events. (To his family, however, he remained a virtual stranger.)

In *Nobody's Business*, Berliner attempts to get a bead on quite another man, one who's very much alive and is loudly protesting the intrusion. What's more, the son's relationship with the father is fraught with tense personal issues. He wants to unlock not only his father's store of secrets, but also to reclaim his family history through this oldest remaining relative.

Oscar, at 79, is a tough sell. His crinkled, basset-hound features become most animated when contradicting, insulting, insinuating, refusing, negating, or denouncing something in response to his son's ceaseless inquiries. A good part of this obstinacy stems from the reclusive man's sincere belief that a film about his ordinary life is an utterly useless project—in addition to being nobody's business. He complies at least somewhat with his son's efforts to document him, as a father indulging a foolish child, but never for a moment buys the premise that every soul is deserving of enumeration, that no life is devoid of significance.



Alan Berliner at home (above) and deep inside the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, where he uncovered his family's social security records, birth certificates, and immigration papers. All photos courtesy filmmaker; top photo: Cori Wells Braun

unreasonable? The filmmaker, pressuring his father to open up? Or the father, pressuring his son to let the matter drop? Oscar remains unyielding, but Berliner is fully aware that this intransigence makes for dramatic tension and therefore a crackling good film. At the same time, as this man's son he struggles to penetrate his steely negativity and resolve a relationship even as he documents it.

As personal as *Nobody's Business* is, the film seems to have spoken to quite a few people. This project, funded by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), has received impressive acclaim worldwide, beginning with its premiere at the New York Film Festival last fall. The film went on to win a Golden Spire Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival and a threefold honor at the 1997 Berlin Fest: the FIPRESCI Award from the International Association of Film Critics; the Caligari Film Prize; and the Churches of the Ecumenical Jury Prize. It has also been picked up by Japanese, French, and Australian television networks. And on June 3, *Nobody's Business* will lead off the 10th anniversary season of *P.O.V.* on PBS.

WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU TO MAKE THIS FILM?

So much of my father's life has been a mystery to me. I've always needed to know why he's chosen to live the way he lives—reclusive, pessimistic, cynical about life. Over the years, no matter how hard I tried, I could never change him, could never affect him, or even *infect* him with my own enthusiasm.

Whether they are alive or dead, our parents send us messages about life; consciously or unconsciously those messages become a part of who we are. The kinds of messages I was getting from my father were becoming very difficult for me to accept.

WHAT WERE THOSE MESSAGES?

That the misfortunes of his life had overtaken him. That he had somehow become a victim of circumstances. My father has so often said to me that he's "in the autumn of his life," "that his future is behind him," that he doesn't have long to live. It's as if he's been in God's waiting room ever since I can remember. In the film I challenge him about his negativity, about the fact that he's alone all the time and doesn't have any friends. These are difficult subjects to talk about, but they have been troubling me for a very long time.

My father is also quite adamant about his own insignificance, taking almost a perverse pride in having lived an ordinary, average, unremarkable life. Once again, unacceptable! Oscar Berliner cannot live for 79 years and tell me his life is nothing, was nothing. I'm much too alive as a human being to accept that attitude from him. So the more he articulated his own ordinariness, the more motivated I became to prove him wrong. To attempt to give his life a new meaning, if not for him, then at least for me.

WHAT WAS THE GENESIS OF THIS FILM?

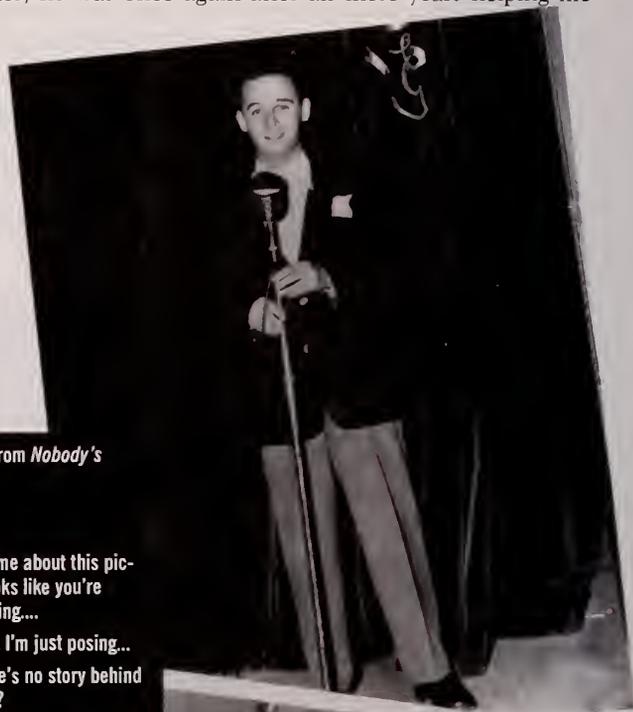
In 1986 I made a film called *The Family Album*, using 16mm home movies from more than 70 different anonymous American families and a soundtrack composed from oral histories, audio letters, recordings of birthday parties, weddings, holidays, music lessons, etc., most of which were also anonymous. The film dealt with the conflicts and contradictions of family life and the falsely idealized nature of home movies as representations of socialization and the aging process. At the same time, because most of the raw materials I was working with were impersonal, I was left with a gnawing desire to raise the stakes, to make something that derived more from my own life, my own personal relationship to family.

In 1991 I completed *Intimate Stranger*, a biography of Joseph Cassuto, my maternal grandfather, who died suddenly in 1974, before completing his autobiography. The film, which ultimately became a journey through my maternal family heritage, was only temporarily satisfying. Over time, the emotional distance between dead grandparent and filmmaker/grandson seemed to widen as I began to take measure of what I wanted to do next. Once again I felt an inner urging, a need to again raise the bar, the level of challenge. To go even closer to the edge of personal revelation. In a way I see *Nobody's Business* as the last in a trilogy of films, moving closer and closer to a kind of human truth, zooming in on the emotional power of family relationships, each one revealing more of me but also demanding more of me.

Actually I didn't really have to look very far. My father, who I am happy to say is still very much alive, has always loomed as an incredibly compelling character to me.

DID YOU EVER GUESS THAT YOUR FATHER MIGHT NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

Remember, his history is also a part of my history. There are things that only he knows and only he can tell me about both of our lives. He had no idea what kind of film I was going to make and was incredulous of the idea that a film about someone like him could even be made at all. But he respected me and trusted me, and decided that if I was so committed to doing this, he would help me. I suppose, in some way, by agreeing to cooperate, he was once again after all these years helping me



Excerpts from *Nobody's Business*.

ABOVE:

Alan: Tell me about this picture. It looks like you're about to sing....

Oscar: No, I'm just posing...

Alan: There's no story behind the image?

Oscar: Well, you want me to make up stories? Alan, before we go any further, let me tell you something. I'm just an ordinary guy who's led an ordinary life. I was in the army, I got married, I raised a family—worked hard, I had my own business. That's all. That's nothing to make a picture about.

RIGHT:

Oscar with the camera that shot the Berliner home movies.



with my homework. Maybe that made him feel good, feel needed.

In many respects we became partners in making *Nobody's Business*. One review refers to the film as a "verbal slapstick duet," as if our conversations were a kind of comedy routine. I think there's a strong element of that, but at the same time we were in absolutely serious emotional territory. He told me when I was out of bounds, when there were things he did not want to discuss, and at several points during the interviews he threat-

ened to take the microphone off and walk away. But he never did.

I think also, that behind this cranky-old-man persona there's still a bit of a vanity in him. Regardless of how insignificant he thinks his life is, at a certain point he's got to be thrilled someone is asking questions about it. It's only human, I suppose.

HAVE YOU HAD THAT DISCUSSION WITH HIM?

He denies it, although late in the film, when I'm talking about human general-



ABOVE:

Alan: Solomon Isaac Berliner, your grandfather. What do you think about the way he looks?

Oscar: He looks like another Jew with a yamulka. What else can I tell you? I have no emotional response. He means nothing to me.

LEFT:

Alan: You looked like you were on top of the world in these pictures.

Oscar: Hey, I owned the world. I was a handsome young man...

Alan: Did you ever spend the night with [this woman]?

Oscar: The answer is no. Can you move onto something else? You want to talk baseball?



ogy and genetics he interrupts me and says, "What's this got to do with my biography?!" It's as if he really wants the conversation directed back to him.

WHAT TOPICS DIDNT HE WANT TO DISCUSS?

Mostly questions surrounding his marriage to my mother, the reasons for their divorce, and the effects of the divorce on the

rest of his life. In general, though, his disinclination to talk reflected his own modest sense of himself. As he says in the film, "I got married, I raised a family, worked hard, had my own business, that's all. That's nothing to make a picture about." The integrity and consistency of his indifference was remarkable to me; that in itself was a kind of exuberance—something I wanted to capture in the film. And mid-way through the film he expresses what I always felt was the key to his participation: "I'm not fooled. In your own tenacious way you're making me talk and talk, and eventually you're getting what you want." It was then that I knew that he had things to say, and somehow, was allowing me to get him to say them.

DID YOU HAVE IN MIND TO PORTRAY HIM IN ANY SPECIFIC WAYS?

No. I never work like that. I always let the subject come to me. I wanted to let him generate the pieces that would form the puzzle, to let him be exactly who he is. I knew that none of the family history issues interested him, but I hoped that our agreement to disagree could form the basis of a quintessential parent/child dialogue. It also made me realize that the film would be as much a portrait of our relationship as it would be a biography of his life. After I tell him, "The more you say you're not interested, the more it makes me want to change your mind," he responds, "You have one bad habit. You think if something's important to you, it's got to be important to somebody else," and warns me that the film will be a flop if I don't heed his advice. That establishes the polemic of the film: my romanticism versus his stoicism.

YOU PERFORM QUITE A BALANCING ACT: NEVER TOO MUCH OUTSIDE NOR INSIDE.

There's a part of me that always wanted to protect him, yet I knew that if the film was going to be meaningful, I had to place our relationship outside of the safe harbor of sentimentality and throw us out onto the high seas, where, if you will, fictional characters live. There's no protection out there. For either of us. People project all sorts of things upon you. That's one of the risks of personal filmmaking.

WERE THERE ANY PAINFUL INSTANCES ABOUT WHICH YOU HAD DOUBTS?

In what I consider the emotional core of the film, my father pleads, "When your head hurts you, when you can't walk, when making conversation is a problem...it's not that I choose to be alone, I have to be alone! I can't cope!" Not just his words but the desperate tone of their delivery was profoundly etched in my mind. I was amazed that he was finally articulating his pain, something I'd never really heard before.

On the other hand, there's another point in the film when I ask him about two of his brothers who died in infancy, and he abruptly announces, "I don't want to talk about it!" I can only respond with "Why don't you want to talk about it?" He refuses to even answer that question. Back and forth we go. Finally he threatens to end the interview if I don't change the subject. Our uneasy standoff actually went on for almost four minutes, becoming a kind of meta-argument about the very boundaries of our relationship. Originally, I left about two minutes of it in the film, because it was so extraordinary; father and son in a

profound battle of wills.

WHY DID YOU CUT IT DOWN?

My friend Spencer Seidman, who became a story consultant, saw a rough cut and told me this scene made him want to stop watching. That he felt incredibly claustrophobic listening to such protracted raw emotion, what my cousin later describes in the film as a battle between “the irresistible force versus the immovable object.” It was also too soon in the film to introduce such an emotional crescendo. So I decided to shorten it substantially. To this day I still don’t know about those two dead children—who would have been my uncles had they lived—or why he wouldn’t discuss them. I asked. I persisted. But in the end, I had to drop the subject.

we have with our parents are amongst the most intense and powerful we will ever have. I’d like to think some of our tense exchanges are just another way of expressing love, if only because it breaks down boundaries; boundaries that usually keep us at a distance from one another.

I also believe that regardless of class, nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion, everyone who sees *Nobody’s Business* already has experience in this area. They understand the struggle, the dance of negotiations between me and my father. The fact that we do it in public only deepens its resonance. In the end, whether the viewer is either a parent or someone’s child—and that



DID YOU THINK SOME PEOPLE MIGHT GET TURNED OFF BY YOUR UNRELENTING PERSISTENCE WITH AN UNWILLING SUBJECT?

My parents’ divorce felt like an atomic bomb had been dropped on our family. Each one of us was wounded in a different way. My quest to understand, my need to confront my father, is, I believe, an attempt at healing. For both of us. And I think deep down he knows that, too. For better or worse, the relationships

Alan: I want to look at some of the army pictures
Oscar: I served in the army. Big deal. Eleven million men served in the army. You can make me out a big hero, maybe I won the war by myself.
[...]

Alan: You can relate to your army buddies more than you can relate to your own grandparents?

Oscar: Absolutely. No question about it. I lived with those guys seven days a week and we were trained to kill or be killed. I think until the day I die I’ll never forget about them.

pretty much encompasses everybody, doesn’t it?—I hope they will be recognize something familiar in our relationship.

HOW DID YOU NEGOTIATE THE ALTERNATING HUMOR AND PAIN THAT PERVADES THE FILM?

Initially my father’s protests are funny. Here’s a man who refuses even to pretend interest in virtually anything I

throw at him, especially anything to do with his own family history. It's humorous also because he's so at ease with his disinterest; he's a natural. At some point though, the levity takes on a darker shading when you realize that his attitude is grounded in his sad predicament; that he is a man who has been wounded by life. To this day I remain especially haunted by an exchange of dialogue in the film: When I told my father that he could have remarried after the divorce (and thereby perhaps have a more comfortable old age), he responds, "Once burned, twice shy." To which I reply, "People say that time heals." His matter of fact response was simply, "Not always." That resonated with me for a very long time. Still does. Even though I tend to agree with him—although thank God I'm still young enough to hold out some hope—no one had ever said that to me before. And of course, when a parent says it, it takes on an even deeper significance.

THAT DISCLOSURE OF PRIVATE PAIN BOOSTS OUR EMPATHY WITH HIM.

Yes. Then you understand where all of his resistance comes from, that he's not intending to be funny, which, ironically, frees you up to laugh again. Having articulated his emotional and physical pain, he begins to grow as a character. It provides him with a certain dignity and courage.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE BOXING MATCH AS A RECURRING MOTIF?

I wanted the prize fighting scenes to acknowledge the Oedipal drama of our relationship and at the same time place it in a recognizable context as a kind of "verbal sparring." You'll notice that there are no knockouts in the boxing footage, just a lot of punching, scuffling, exchanging jabs. And so it is on the soundtrack. I was careful to include several of my father's verbal put-downs and admonishments of me. For instance, when I ask him about his divorce, he declares that I have "a lack of understanding...a lack of sympathy...a lack of empathy...for what this means" to him. Those words hurt me. And later, at the end of the film when I tell him that he's never more alert, never more alive than when we have these conversations, and that the film is an expression of love to him, he replies, "Bullshit!" It also hurt me to hear him say that. But again, it's all part of the back-and-forth, punch/counterpunch of our relationship. To continue the metaphor, my father is "the champion." I am very much "the challenger."

HOW DID YOU DEVISE THE SCENES DEPICTING A TYPICAL DAY IN HIS LIFE?

For a long period of time, I had asked him repeatedly to share the details of how he spends a typical day. He continually refused. Then suddenly, one day he said yes. Maybe he'd forgotten that he'd said no, maybe he changed his mind. I was dumbstruck at finally getting him to open a window that had been closed to me for so long. I still find it one of the most moving parts of the film and the one that I had the most difficulty editing. He actually went on for 10 minutes, describing the minutiae of shaving, preparing his breakfast, making his bed...He's most vulnerable at that point in the film. I see that section as a meditation on growing old, on loneliness, on the importance of routine when one reaches a certain stage in life,

and of my father's struggle with all of it.

TOWARD THE END OF THE FILM, YOU CONNECT OSCAR QUITE INGENUOUSLY TO THE HUMAN FAMILY HE SHUNS.

My father is always quick to say that he's "one of billions of people." Even when we began talking about his army years, he snapped, "Big deal, there were eleven million men in the army." He likes to hide in these large rhetorical crowds. Now, when you go someplace like the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, as I do in the film, and you're surrounded by the records of more than two billion people who've lived and died over the past 500 years, you begin to realize that people are far more closely related to one another than is generally recognized. In fact, many professional genealogists speculate that most people in the world, of whatever race, nationality, ethnicity, or religion, are no further related than 50th cousin. And that most of us are a lot closer than that! It's an idea that has always fascinated me, and I wanted to use my father—as a single, "unremarkable" human being, a face in the crowd, so to speak—as the key that opens the door to thinking about a "human family tree." Of course, he wants no part of it.

WHEN DID YOU MAP OUT THIS STRATEGY OF CONNECTING YOUR FATHER'S STORY TO THE BROADER GENEALOGICAL THEME?

I didn't have it fully figured out at first. It was a wisp of intuition, of potential. My initial investigations took me to various libraries, archives, museums, Jewish Genealogical Society meetings, even a trip to Poland—all in search of my Berliner family history. My father's heritage. My heritage. Our heritage! Then I'd come home and attempt to share some of my excitement, some of my discoveries, and it was like hitting a stone wall.

My father refuses to be related to anyone he does not or did not know, living or dead, whether they are related to him or not. And he is especially not interested in being related to any of the billions of "ordinary" people—his "50th cousins"—with whom he claims to blend in with so well. He's not interested in the social or political implications of a broad human family tree nor will he ever be convinced. He also claims that more people will agree with him than with me.

HE REFUSES RELATION TO EVERYONE EXCEPT HIS CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILD.

My sister Lynn and I are his main links to the world. Early in the film I show him a picture of his own grandparents, neither of whom he has ever seen before, and he responds by saying, "I don't give a shit about them." But later on in the film, he is seen doting on and playing with his granddaughter, Jade. It's the only time in the film that you see him smile. His explanation for these "expressions of love" is that "you have to be a grandfather to understand..."

BUT HE DOESN'T SEE ANY CONNECTION.

No. I remind him that he stands in the same relationship to Jade that his own grandparents once stood to him. He reminds me that he knows Jade, that Jade knows him, but that he never

Continued on p. 48

BY PATRICIA THOMSON

IT SEEMED APPROPRIATE THAT ON THE MORNING OF MY INTERVIEW with Ross McElwee during the Sundance Film Festival, the proprietor of my bed-and-breakfast sat at the long breakfast table and read aloud one newspaper story after another, shaking her head and clucking at the tragedies all around us: the avalanche nearby that crashed through a house, burying a woman and daughter under six feet of snow in their own kitchen; the car crashes and murders; the sundry other tragedies met by people in the wrong place at the wrong time.

This impromptu oratory was a prelude to the world of unforeseen hazards, freak accidents, and unlucky victims that McElwee infiltrates in *The Six O'Clock News*, the third of his autobiographical features (the trilogy also comprises *Sherman's March*, 1986, and *Time Indefinite*, 1993). It's a world he stumbled into after becoming a new house-bound father who spent more time watching television and was transfixed by its parade of disasters. Then, after the sudden death of his father, McElwee

investigative news series, *Frontline*. McElwee spoke with *The Independent* about his unusual *Frontline* deal, his arduous writing process, and the trouble with first-person documentaries.

***The Six O'Clock News* is an unusual program for *Frontline* to acquire, being a personal documentary. How did this sale come about?**

It was pretty serendipitous. I, also, felt this was a pretty unusual film for *Frontline*. I felt that so strongly I didn't bother to send it over. I do have contacts at WGBH, and I always send them a copy of my completed films. In fact, the person I'd been working with the most, Peter McGhee, an executive in production, had seen the film in various cuts along the way, so I gave him the final cut. Peter passed it on to *Frontline*.

Meanwhile, I had gone about figuring out how to release it theatrically, because I had a 35mm print bumped up from super 16. I thought I would go the usual route—do some festivals, probably stay with First Run Features, my distributor in New York—but I also wanted to shop it around. Then maybe a year

Ross McElwee's High Wire Act

felt the need to investigate how other people cope with personal tragedy. So he hit the road, seeking out individuals who had momentarily appeared on the local news because of some calamity: a Korean wig shop owner whose wife had been murdered; a couple whose trailer home had been miraculously spared by a tornado; a man who had been pinned under concrete for eight hours after the Los Angeles earthquake. But his initial stop was to see his old friend Charlene, whose first home had been burned to the ground by (and with) her suicidal husband, and whose new home had been hit by Hurricane Hugo.

As McElwee probes how these people's lives were affected by tragedy, he also pursues two other paths: One leads to Hollywood, where he begins talks with some producers about directing a "real movie" for Miramax; the other takes us inside TV news, which purports to bring the "real world" into our homes. Filming himself being interviewed by a Boston news magazine show, McElwee reveals the tricks of the trade. Here and throughout *The Six O'Clock News*, McElwee pulls back the curtain and shows us the staged, nonspontaneous aspect of soft news, and the hit-and-run journalistic practices of hard news.

Even though *The Six O'Clock News* is ostensibly about other people, their tragedies, and the news media that feeds off of them, it is ultimately a film about McElwee—his reflections, his fears, his choices. We're steeped in his thoughts. Like a lyric poet, this is a man not heard, but overheard. And like the best film diarists, McElwee's gentle stream of words imbue the ordinary objects of his attention with new meaning and resonance.

After premiering at the Hawaii Film Festival, *The Six O'Clock News* went on to Sundance's American Spectrum section. Probably for the first time in Sundance's history, the film was nationally broadcast during the festival, appearing on PBS's



Salvador Pena (on stretcher) was the center of media attention when pinned under concrete for eight hours after the Los Angeles earthquake. In *The Six O'Clock News*, McElwee tracks down people like Pena to explore how they handled their personal catastrophes. Photos courtesy *Frontline*

from now, it would be on television.

Well, *Frontline*'s [executive producer] David Fanning called me and said, "We have one spot. It's in January." Now, this was November. "We like this film very much. We think it's a bit of a stretch for *Frontline*, but we'd like to try it. We're trying to open up people's concepts when they think of *Frontline* programs. Would you be interested?" I said, "Well, yes. Ideally, I'd hoped to wait a year before it would be on television, but I'd be interested."

I had roughly a week to make up my mind. It was a very difficult decision. If I were to put it on PBS, there are only two places I would really consider: *Frontline* and P.O.V. I hadn't shown it to anybody at P.O.V. yet; I thought I had all the time in the world. *Frontline* certainly seemed to have a great reach to a large audience; they were well-known. I thought that would be wonderful.

On the other hand, I realized what it would do to theatrical distribution: it would severely cut it, if not make it impossible. Plus, I just didn't know how it would work on television. I think of it as a film to be shown in theaters. I was very uneasy about [television].

But on the other hand, I'd accumulated a lot of lab bills, and I needed to move on to the next project. Frankly, more for the reason of bailing myself out, I felt I had to accept the offer. So I gave it to PBS; it went on in a slightly shorter version than the theatrical version: 85 minutes versus 103 minutes.

So will First Run Features be picking this up?

Nontheatrical is what they do mostly. Yes, they said they'd take it and do what they could with it. He encouraged me to take the offer from *Frontline*, because he said, "Frankly, it's probably larger than any advance you'll be given by any distributor like Fine Line, October, or Sony Classics."

How much did *Frontline* pay?

I'd prefer not to say, but it was certainly more that I'd been paid before for a television release.

You worked on this film for a long time—off and on since 1989. At what stage did its various funders come aboard?

Channel Four [in England] helped fund at the beginning. [The Corporation for Public Broadcasting] gave me some money, most of which went to *Time Indefinite*. CPB had a Documentary Initiative Fund and gave money to three filmmakers: myself, Rob Epstein, and Renee Tajima-Peña.

At first, *Time Indefinite* and *The Six O'Clock News* were intended to be one film. It became so unwieldy that I broke them into two films. A lot of events occurred in my life with *Time Indefinite* that I had not foreseen, primarily the death of my father. What was going to be a prologue to *The Six O'Clock News* broke off and became a second film.

***Time Indefinite* is such a personal film. In it, you grapple with major life issues—marriage, birth, the death of a parent. Did *The Six O'Clock News* offer you some kind of relief from this introspection, allowing you to go outside yourself and find a balance in the external world?**

That's exactly right. The last shot in *Time Indefinite* is the first shot in *The Six O'Clock News*, so it's meant to be linked, but it's also quite autonomous. And what you say is exactly true—not that anyone would ever see the two films back to back or remember enough of the first to let that offer perspective on the second. But certainly for me as a filmmaker, *The Six O'Clock News* provided a way to look out onto catastrophes and disasters other people have experienced.

Geoff Gilmore said at the Sundance Film Festival's press conference for the documentary competition that one third of all the documentaries they received were video diaries.

That's amazing.

What's your thinking on this explosion of video diaries? And are many of your own students working in this vein?

Are you saying it's my fault? [laughs] Well, I do get a lot of letters and emails from people who want to become filmmakers. Fifteen years ago, the equipment, the technology, the logistics were so daunting that you wouldn't get those kinds of calls. People would assume that moviemaking was beyond them.

Back then, I would just have had to restrict my journalistic/diaristic impulses to the written page. Now, of course, everyone knows what video cameras can do, so people are making that leap. I certainly don't encourage that kind of filmmaking when I'm teaching, but there will always be one or two students who want to do it out of a class of 15. I don't think it's for everyone. I'm surprised there were that many submissions to Sundance. I hesitate to say what exactly that suggests, except that people really feel some need to express inner feelings in a world that may be seeming more impersonal. But who knows? That's a grandiose statement, and I don't know how you'd ever quantify it. I think mainly it's just the proliferation of video.

What's the most common problem among personal diary films?

It looks easier than it is to make these films work. Indeed, with my own films, I'm sure there are many people who feel this style is suspect, it's not worth pursuing. But within the genre, there is also a line you reach where clearly it's working or clearly it isn't. It's like walking a tightrope; if you fall off, you fall into this vast sea of narcissism, self-indulgence, and solipsism. Those are the dangers—and a lot of people fall off. I'm sure I occasionally slip on the tightrope. My problem is I keep climbing up and getting back on it again.

How do you keep from falling? Some kind of sounding board must be absolutely essential when writing.

Oh, yes. I rely on my friends. I can tell a lot just by sitting in the room with them watching the film—whether it's working, whether it drags, whether there's too much voiceover, and so on. I rely on the point of view of other people who've had the experience of making documentaries and know what it is you're going through, who can help me pinpoint where the film's gone amiss. Then I do test screenings. I throw up a couple versions and invite people who are not filmmakers, people who are, people I know well, and people I don't really know at all. I do at least two of those.

As I've gone on, I do less of that—for better or for worse—relying more on my own intuition. I could never make a film in a vacuum, although I know filmmakers who do, who trust their innate sensibilities. Robert Gardner is like that; he's very, very confident about his own writing. I'm not like that; I'm very insecure about my films.

What's the hardest part of the documentary process for you?

The editing; it's excruciating. Of editing, it's the writing of the voiceover that's most difficult. I actually enjoy the editing process per se—making the cuts. But I find writing the voiceover extremely hard, because it's very hard to gain objectivity as to whether the voiceover is working. I look at the text of my narration and think, "There's nothing complex about this syntactically; it's simple, straightforward prose. There's nothing poetic about it. So why does it take me so long to get the right words? Twenty, forty, fifty written versions! Twenty recorded versions! Ten or fifteen mag track versions before I finally get something that works.

Mediocre or solipsistic writing is one of the hazards of personal documentary. Another is the danger of exploiting the people who appear in your film.

Yes, but that's true for all documentaries. To me it's the single

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stickiest component of all documentary filmmaking, whether it's the pure cinema verité of Frederick Wiseman or—stretching the definition of documentary—whether it's *60 Minutes* and their investigative showmanship, or whether it's first-person singular documentary.



But it comes more to the forefront in first-person. Well, in some ways it does and

in some ways it doesn't. If you're just behind the camera, recording life, and you exploit someone's personality or situation negatively, in some ways that's worse than doing it as a first-person filmmaker, because at least in the first-person genre the audience is fully aware of who is responsible for this mistreatment. In a way, you can say it's a little more honest to be putting yourself into the film where these trespasses are occurring.

But for me it's the single element that makes me question whether I want to continue to make documentary films—more so than the financial problems connected to it. And I think I'm pretty tame in how I treat people in my films. I try to be decent. But there's always again another line; you're watching all these lines as you make these films.

When do you stop yourself from crossing the line? While shooting or while editing?

It's hard to say. It's a scene-by-scene approach, but always in the editing the real decisions are made. After awhile, there is a point at which you realize that really, really foolish people who are depicted in a terrible light are in the long run going to damage the structure and style of your film anyway. In *Sherman's March*, I found some outrageous people who were pure fools, if I can put myself in the position of judging them. These scenes were complicated and wonderful and hilarious. But after numerous screenings, I dropped some of them. Overall they were damaging to the film. Whatever the integrity of the film is, its tensile strength, somehow they undermined that, because these people were

pathetic.

In *Sherman's March*, the one time I really let people hang themselves was with the survivalists on the mountain-side, who were ranting about the American government and isolationism. These guys deserve it, in a way; this is part of a virus that's in our culture, at least in my opinion. I'm going to let them show themselves to be who they are.

I think it also depends if people are in a position of power. Most people are more or less powerless.

In the scene with Mr. Im, you put your camera down after he says he doesn't want to talk about his wife's death on camera, and yet you continue recording audio. Does he know you're recording sound?

Oh, yes, in the film—if you're listening carefully—he says, "It's very hard talking to the camera." And I say, "It's easier to the tape recorder?" And he says, "Yes, much easier to the tape recorder." He's willing to talk to the tape recorder, but not to the camera; he feels self-conscious. I put that in there, because it would be very troubling to think that I was eavesdropping on him.

During all the footage of local news crews, you did not overtly criticize them or their methods. Was that because that's been done to death, or was it a matter of empathy?

Of course [it was empathy]. Also, to set myself up as some superior media to the news would have been very presumptuous. There's no way I could get away with that. The other factor is, people lampoon the news quite a bit already. I didn't need to add my voice to the chorus. The way the news operates is implicit the film's little [news] montages, as well as the ways in which I've recorded the news crews gathering their material.

But for me to claim that just because I don't ask them to walk in the door three times or repeat gestures or start over, that my reality is more real than theirs is an absurd assumption to make. They're doing something very different from what I do. The film is not meant to be a critique of the news. It's something else altogether. One of the things I'm playing with is notions of "reality" and the hall of mirrors we inhabit—media filming media. I'm trying to have a little fun.

Patricia Thomson is editor of The Independent.

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Not Worth the Gamble

Think no one will notice if you sneak some off-air footage into your film? Or that it's okay if it's public domain? Think again—and memorize the following Top 10 misconceptions about archival rights & clearances.

BY KENN RABIN

AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE OF TEACHING archival footage workshops, I can usually anticipate the questions I'll be asked. They are usually about the licensing and clearance of archival footage, stills, and music. Many have an unspoken agenda, as if the filmmaker wanted my permission to let something slide. Each question is really a variation on the same theme: I don't really have to pay for this, do I? And my answer is almost always, Well, yes, actually you do. Sorry!

It's hard to apologize for the way things are. The responses I get vary from disappointment to frustration to anger—sometimes at me. Often students tell me outright that they plan to steal a film clip or piece of music. I understand their frustration, because we do not, in fact, own the rights to our own audiovisual history. Those of us who would like to use media to make the world a slightly better place do not necessarily have free and unlimited access to the raw materials we need. Sometimes those materials are expensive. Sometimes they are downright unavailable. On the other hand, archives are expensive businesses to run. Most of their owners are not Scrooges, but rather people who love collecting film, and who are faced with escalating costs for vault space, lab prices, and personnel salaries and benefits, as well as with physically deteriorating holdings.

So, to set the record straight, here are Ten Common Misconceptions Producers Have Regarding Footage, Stills, and Music Clearances. These aren't the only 10, nor does space allow more than a paragraph on each, but at least this may get you thinking about some of the issues involved.

1. "If I'm making a documentary, it's fair use."

Fair use is the clause in the copyright law that allows certain users to excerpt from copyright-



Photo courtesy Archive Films

ed material under certain conditions without obtaining permission from the copyright holder. Fair use is a defense against copyright infringement, not a protection against someone dragging you into court. If the work you are creating is for educational use, that is one of the factors taken into consideration by the courts. But are you only distributing to schools? What about other, more commercial, markets—even for the future? Fair use criteria also take into account how much of the entire copyrighted item you are using, and whether

you're damaging the copyright holder's ability to make money from his or her ownership. Finally, the most important consideration may be the "nature of the work"—whether your film includes, say, a clip from a television news broadcast in order to make an important comment about how an event was portrayed in the media (a strong fair use case), or whether you're just using it as a placeholder to indicate that an event happened (a weak one).

2. "Under X seconds is fair use."

Traditionally, fair use does extend some such extra protections to spot news, because it is considered ephemeral and needs to get on the air so fast that normal licensing may not be practical. However, producers should never assume that x is 10 seconds, 50 words, eight bars of music, or even that there is an x. Always make a good-faith effort to clear the material, even if it's a phone call. If a copyright holder responds with, "It's short enough, we can't be bothered; go ahead and use it," or "We consider an excerpt that short to be fair use," get them to give it to you in writing—even if just by fax.

3. "Anything before 1920 is in the public domain."

While most film, photograph, artwork, and music synchronization rights dating from before 1920 are likely to have lapsed, there are exceptions, since the "twice 28 years" rule was changed in the mid-seventies and the laws are still in flux [see Media News, Jan./Feb. 1997]. Nowadays, an item previously in the public domain may even have new copyright protection extended to it (such as in the case of the Frank Capra film, *It's a Wonderful Life*). It's always best to make sure by doing a copyright search through the Library of Congress or an intellectual property law firm. Also be aware of "underlying rights" issues and differing rules in various countries: that Rembrandt painting is in the public domain, but the photographic reproduction you are using probably is not. And that Mozart concerto is fine, but who owns the recording? That clip from Fritz Lang's 1925 film *Metropolis*?—well, the film is in the public domain in the United States but not in Germany (are you distributing internationally?), and certain versions (such as the restored print released some years ago with a rock soundtrack) are under copyright protection.

4. "Public domain footage is free."

You will almost always have to pay the cost of duplication, regardless of where material comes from. As far as other fees are concerned, anyone furnishing you with materials may charge you some kind of fee for their use. Many commercial archives have copies of public domain

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footage but will charge you a "license fee" to use it, even though there is technically no copyright involved. Why? Because they have collected the material, and what they are really charging is a fee for their efforts, overhead, and your timely use of their elements. Although you may find the same clips in a collection that doesn't charge usage fees (such as the National Archives or Library of Congress), you may have to wait weeks to get your copies from them.

5. "Archives don't really check to see if their footage is used. Besides, I'm just a little guy. They don't care about me."

Little guys get caught all the time, and an archive can get a fast injunction against the distribution of your entire film until or unless you pay them or remove their material. Also, archives are increasingly protecting themselves against piracy by not releasing "clean" masters until licensing fees are paid. Scratch prints or burned-in videotape really sticks out in a finished film, as does that videotape from the Vanderbilt University News Collection, with the character-generated date, time, and network on it.

6. "If I buy it, I can use it—again and again."

Check your contract. Unless you have made an unusual arrangement with an archive or are dealing with government archives in certain foreign countries such as Cuba or Poland, you are usually purchasing "one-time nonexclusive rights" to use the footage only in the film or series episode indicated in your contract. If you want to use the same clip in another project, contact the archive again. If you enter a new market with your current product, you also must renegotiate with most archives, unless you've already bought those rights. Also, although some archives sell in perpetuity, most have time limits, so you are only buying rights for a given number of years. If your product is still in distribution after that, you must "re-up" the rights.

7. "If I pay the archive for the footage, I'm covered."

Well, you may be. But, again, check your con-

tract; most include what's known as a "quit claim," saying you are responsible for the clearance of any underlying or subsidiary rights. Does that news clip show people dancing to a recognizable song? You may not have the right to use that song, even if the archive furnished the sound to you. If you bought the Fox Movietone clip of Marilyn Monroe singing to JFK, you'd better pay synchronization rights for the song "Happy Birthday." Also, if you are obtaining that clip so you can digitally drop Marilyn into a Diet Coke commercial or manipulate video reality so that President Clinton is shaking hands with her, you'd better check with her estate; they actually hold a trademark on her likeness and will levy a stiff penalty if you use it without their approval. In fact, these days, in most states, celebrity likenesses are protected from certain non-news uses.

8. "We'll choose our music in postproduction."

Music rights are far more complex than we can explore here [see "For the Price of a Song: Music Rights Clearance," by Robert Seigel, May 1992], and getting permission to use a certain piece of music may take months. Often, you have to clear two types of rights: synchronization rights (payments to a music publisher to cover the song's composer, lyricist, and arranger) and master use (payments to a record label to clear a particular recording and the musicians who performed it). Both processes are notoriously slow, unless you have a lot of money to spend. And often independent filmmakers who can't come up with major bucks are ignored or turned down cold (at the last minute). So unless you've navigated these treacherous waters before, begin planning your music as early as possible, and consult right away, even if it's only for a day, with someone who works specifically on music rights clearances.

9. "If I'm producing for PBS, I don't have to clear music or stills."

There is a nucleus of truth to this, but it's gotten exaggerated through hearsay. It is currently true that you do not have to clear music rights for the PBS broadcast of your

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program, although you must completely fill out a PBS Music Cue Sheet and submit it with your finished show. PBS will administer the rights for any music appearing on their stations. (Do not allow any music publisher or record company to sell you PBS broadcast rights.) However, if you are distributing your show in any other market, you must clear music rights for those markets. Regarding stills, they are not free for PBS use. However, the 1976 Copyright Law established a tribunal that set low rates for use of grabbed graphics in public television programs. By "grabbed graphics," I mean images filmed directly out of books, magazines, and other publicly available sources, as opposed to photography acquired directly from commercial archives or museums, or glossy photos received from a magazine or newspaper publisher for the express purpose of being used in the program. You can check with PBS to find out what the current tribunal rate is, but remember that this rate only applies to PBS broadcast and often refers only to a copy of the image that is less than ideal quality, usually containing a dot pattern. In any case, you must negotiate with the copyright holder for any ancillary markets in which you plan to distribute.

10. "Stock footage is cheap!"

By now, you should have a good sense that this is the biggest misconception of all. Also, perhaps you are getting a glimmer that the whole thing's much more difficult than it should be, and that no one in their right mind would ever want to bother using third-party material. Rights clearance is a difficult field and getting more complex all the time, but before you despair, think of all the important documentaries and fiction projects that have been immeasurably enriched by producers willing to run this particular obstacle course. For there's nothing like the textural richness and authenticity that archival moving images, vintage graphics, and historically correct music contribute to a well-conceived and well-executed project. So go out there armed with some knowledge of the pitfalls, and prepare to be persistent and diplomatic.

Kenn Rabin, president of San Francisco-based Fulcrum Media Services, has worked on such award-winning series as Eyes on the Prize, Vietnam: A Television History, The American Experience, 500 Nations, and many other documentaries and features.

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How to Turn Old Footage into Long-term Dividends

Stock houses seek the beautiful and the mundane.

BY KAREN KRAMER

YOU'VE MADE A TERRIFIC DOCUMENTARY, MAYBE several, and you want to get the most out of all that hard-earned footage. Many filmmakers have found they are able to reap financial rewards again and again by consigning their work to a stock footage library.

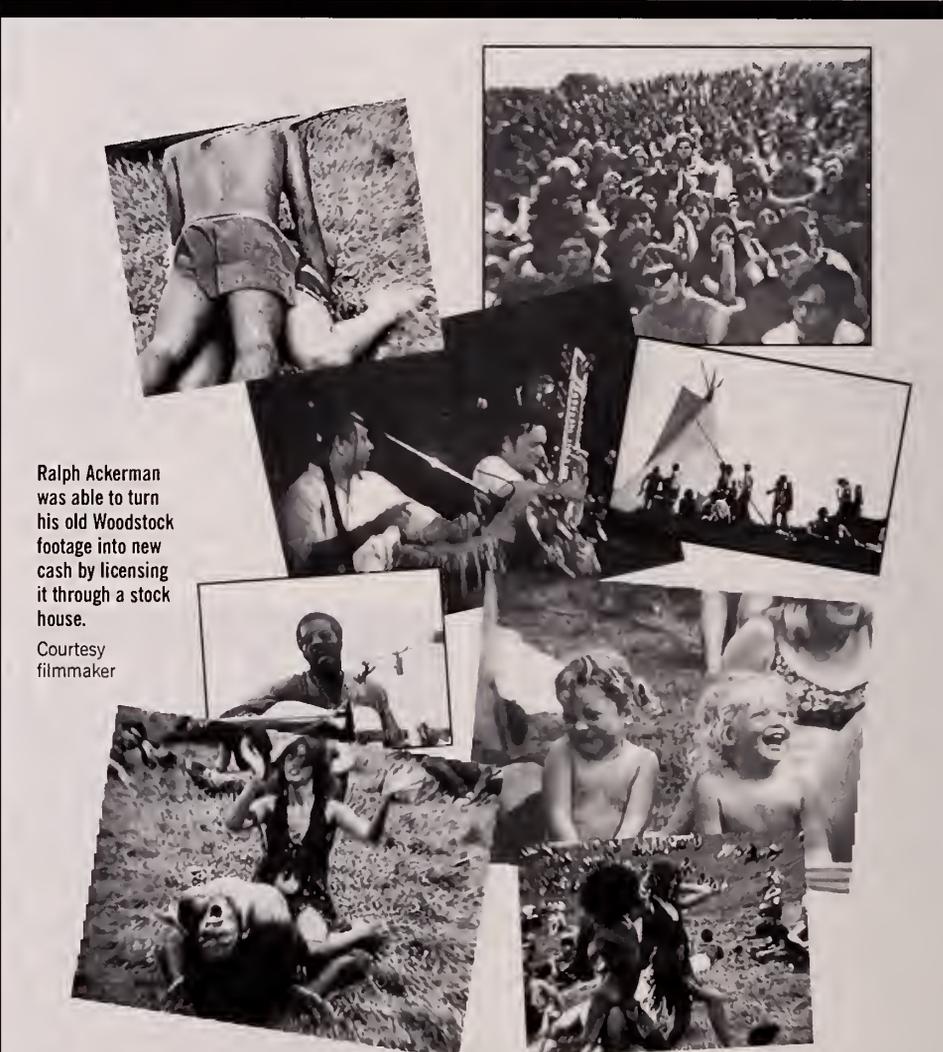
Independent filmmaker Ralph Ackerman, for example, sold some 1969 footage of Woodstock to the Toronto-based stock company Fabulous Footage. "I made a couple of thousand dollars a month ago for a couple of seconds of footage," he says. Ironically, "It was for an anti-drug PSA."

When independents hear about the large sums possible from stock footage sales, they tend to jump without looking. But as with any distribution outlet, it's important to do your research, then proceed with caution.

THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF STOCK FOOTAGE houses. Some deal with specialized footage (sports, nature, waves, etc.), while others offer a broad spectrum of material. Archives Films, for instance, which is one of the largest libraries, with more than 14,000 hours of footage, specializes in historical material (pre-1970). Generally they don't look for "beauty shots," but are more concerned with content.

The New York-based Imageways, on the other hand, wants the beauty shots. "Let's say a filmmaker is in Hawaii shooting *Hawaii 5-0* or whatever," says Imageways owner Ken Powell. "I don't want to see the episode of *Hawaii 5-0*; I want to see the shot of the palm tree right next to where you are, or what establishes Hawaii. A beauty shot. Sometimes what seems to be mundane is what makes stock footage."

When approaching a stock house, a filmmaker first makes contact with the acquisitions person on staff. The company usually asks for a videocassette of the finished film; if they're interested, they may ask to see some outtakes as well. The reason for this, according to Rick



Ralph Ackerman was able to turn his old Woodstock footage into new cash by licensing it through a stock house.

Courtesy filmmaker

Gell, owner of the three co-owned New York-based stock companies Second Line Search, Hot Shots/Cool Cuts, and Sports, Action, Adventure, is they assume your best material is in the cut.

Arwyn Gosford, senior art director and representative at Fabulous Footage, says, "We look at a film and try to identify the best sequences we can sell, and then try to find a longer cut." Lee Shoulders, acquisitions manager of the New York-based Archive Films, also notes, "We don't need to see everything that somebody has. We just need to see enough to know

that we're interested, and then we will catalog and transfer whatever someone wants to give us."

"I have standard questions when filmmakers come to me," says Gell. "The [status of] rights is number one." Gell makes sure the filmmaker has rights to all the outtakes, as well as to what's in the finished piece. Second, he asks, "In what format does the material exist? Ninety percent of what we do is in tape... [and] the client is looking for a tape master. I also want to know if a filmmaker can provide a good highlight reel, a

good list of what is in the collection, what type of deal they want, and the talent issues involved."

Gell also recommends that filmmakers have information on the footage and out-takes well organized, both the material that is in the hands of the stock house and that which isn't. "There's the material that we want to have mastered, on hand, and ready to go at a moment's notice. But the important thing is if there's a need to go further, you have the information in your database or in your files, so that you can access it in a timely fashion," he says. This helps negotiations proceed more quickly.

Very rarely will a company buy the footage outright; rather, they keep it on a consignment basis, paying only when there is a sale. Most companies don't demand exclusive rights and will draw up contracts for a limited period of time. After the contract is up, the filmmaker can renew or get the material back. The filmmaker is responsible for supplying good screening copies and a viable way to obtain the master quickly, should some footage be sold. Most stock houses want the footage to originate on film, though they sell it in tape format. The client buys footage on a per-second basis, and the fee varies dramatically according to the showcase. When a sale occurs, the standard split is 50/50.

"Footage licensing can range anywhere from \$2,000 to \$2,500 per shot for a high-quality image that's used in a national television commercial," says Gell. "For a multimedia production, they can be paying as low as \$900 a minute. I think that's a range a filmmaker can anticipate."

If a filmmaker is concerned that selling footage from the film itself might undercut its distribution potential, some stock houses, such as Archive Films, will put a clause in the contract specifying that no more than five minutes can be used without permission of the filmmaker.

Because Imageway's Powell and his partner are also filmmakers, they understand how nervous some independents might be about turning over their footage. "I try to make it real clear that they can come see my set-up," Powell says. "I only take time-coded cassettes. With some filmmakers I set up a deal where they can keep the material at a lab of their choice." Powell also cautions filmmakers about the unpredictability of sales—and the benefit of patience. "I try to

tell filmmakers that stock footage is like peanut butter. It can sit up on a shelf for a long time, and a little goes a long way. You never know when you're going to make money. That's why I encourage filmmakers to give me what they've got."

BUT BEFORE HANDING OVER THE GOODS TO ANYONE, a filmmaker should check with peers about a company's reputation. "Filmmakers get ripped off left, right, and center, and there are a lot of lawsuits that go on," says one filmmaker who spoke from experience and prefers to remain anonymous. "A lot of the major houses are not run by the most ethical people. A lot of people do not end up getting paid. I don't think it happens every day, but it happens as often as it can. That means never, never release your original, your masters, to a stock house. And anything you do release, you need to have time-code burned in."

Archivist and consultant Rick Prelinger offers additional advice. "Investigate the business and see who's got material in your subject and who doesn't. You need to sign with a place that won't be competitive—in other words, they won't have other collections that are likely to compete with your material for sales.

"The second thing that you absolutely need to do is to get references from other people they represent. Ask them if they feel the stock footage company is on [top of] promotion, and ask them about marketing. Ask them if they are quick to get material on tape so it can be easily sent out to clients. Do they pay their bills regularly? Are they offering a percentage equal to what others are paying?"

Although stock libraries can be a viable way to sell footage, Prelinger sees no reason why independent filmmakers couldn't get together through a coop or consortium and market their own footage. "I think we should very much look forward to that type of development," he says. "There's no reason why commercial alternatives should be the *only* alternative. There are literally thousands of people who have images that are of some interest, and they should have a place to go with these images that is not necessarily commercial."

But until that day comes, Prelinger offers one last bit of sage advice to filmmakers dealing with the commercial stock houses: "Everything is open to negotiation; it all depends on how valuable your material is."

Karen Kramer is an independent filmmaker who has produced several documentaries.

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The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship

THE CASABLANCA
NONLINEAR EDITOR

BY DAVID COLEMAN

ERIC KLOOR IS ONE ENTHUSIASTIC ENTREPRENEUR. With his Denver-based DraCo Systems set to introduce the first stand-alone, nonlinear digital editor that produces up to 45 minutes of broadcast-quality video for under \$5,700, he may have good reason to be a proud papa. Even more revolutionary is that the editor—called the Casablanca—does not require you to have a computer to operate it. It is self-contained, meaning past headaches associated with the rapidly evolving digital editing field such as parallel storage problems, pipe-burst cache, system conflicts, and migraine-inducing “geek speak” are a thing of the past. The Casablanca is billed as “quite possibly the world’s easiest editor to use,” and for once, the hype is right; the prod-



All you need to do is take the unit out of its box, plug it into a monitor or television, and you're ready to begin editing.

stripped down list of editing options grouped by function into three areas. The first block of choices is labelled “Settings.” These control how you will digitize the raw footage. If you select a lower option, such as “VHS,” the Casablanca will sample the video footage you’re sending into it from your camcorder at an approximate compression ratio of 40:1. This means you’ll get picture quality that’s comparable to a low-end VHS videocassette. If you select a higher-end sampling rate such as “Betacam SP,” the Casablanca will record at a

compression ratio of 5:1 and produce results that are virtually identical to the original footage. The choices of compression range along the spectrum and include such options as “Hi8” and “S-VHS,” but what’s really great is that you don’t have to worry about choos-

uct actually delivers.

The unit is the size of a VCR and arguably easier to use, especially if you’ve ever attempted to set your VCR’s blinking clock or program record timer. All you need to do is take the unit out of its box, plug it into a monitor or televi-

sion, plug in any standard computer mouse in the back, and you’re ready to begin editing. No need to hook it up to an editing deck or your computer, as all the software and hardware is tucked inside.

What appears on your television screen is a

ing a ratio based on some complicated compression formula or understand engineering-speak. Rather, you simply make a choice comparable to the format of your source material. So if you shot in Hi8, you click "Hi8," and the Casablanca does the rest.

Of course, higher-quality digitization of source material means your storage space is rapidly devoured. This is a real drawback when using an off-the-shelf computer with nonlinear editing software, since that requires many additional hard drives to network with your computer in order to edit all of your material. But the engineers of the Casablanca pre-planned for this by having an easy-to-remove hard drive. You literally pop out one SCSI II hard drive from the unit's front slot and replace it with another. And since each 9 Gbyte hard drive holds up to 45 minutes of broadcast-quality video, even a feature-length documentary would require only a few additional hard drives in order to hold the entire production. This ability to easily remove and add hard drives also makes the Casablanca a potentially valuable editing system for community-based editing facilities or film schools that would like to have multiple user access without having to "dump" the editing contents of the hard drive. Each user can simply insert his or her own hard drive and begin editing.

So much for the technical stuff. The really exciting aspects of the Casablanca are the creative abilities it opens up to users who previously would have had to spend hundreds of dollars per hour in an expensive, state-of-the-art editing bay to achieve the same results. Here is just a small sample of the Casablanca's various build-in features: over 30 visual transitional devices, such as wipes, fades, page turns, dissolves, and related effects; an image-processing button that allows you to adjust the image as it's imported—negatizing, darkening, embossing, changing colors, and sharpening or softening it; an audio mix/dub capacity that includes three stereo channels, each independently controlled and adjustable along a visual timeline; and a basic though effective titling software that produces non-jagged, broadcast-quality titles that can be scrolled, flipped, and endlessly composited over a source image without subsequent generation loss (since the effect is being achieved digitally). If that doesn't make you drool, you probably prefer the *Playhouse 90* days of cutting Kinescoped video with a pair of scissors and Scotch tape.

Perhaps the best feature of the Casablanca is its ease of use. Even novice editors who have

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never cut video will have little difficulty mastering its simple "point and click" on-screen icon menu system. Unlike more complicated nonlinear editors which feature pull-down menus and hundreds of command possibilities, the Casablanca keeps things graphically simple by always allowing the user to be only a few mouse clicks away from a return to the main screen. In other words, it's impossible to get "lost" while navigating the editing screen, which switches from the cut or effect you wish to select to the full-screen video image to show you how it will look. That said, even professional editors won't be disappointed by the range of options available, such as doing timeline-based thumbnail image editing, previewing in a small window to see the transitional effects, rendering effects at a fast speed, and easily rearranging scenes by merely adjusting their in and out points digitally. If you want to use the titler or log shots in a storyboard, you can either use the built-in on-screen keyboard (which is quite functional) or plug any standard computer keyboard into the unit's rear.

For all its accomplishments, the current version (1.2) does have some minor flaws. The biggest is perhaps the audio insert capabilities, which aren't as powerful as the system's video imaging abilities. It's not that what's there isn't good, but that compared to the Casablanca's video processing, you can't help but wish the audio was as creatively designed. However, should you purchase one of the units, you won't have to wish for long: DraCo will be releasing the software upgrade (version 2.0) by summer. The upgrade features a more dynamic audio editing package with audio mix sliders, audio looping capacity, and much more. Version 2.0 will be shipped free to registered 1.2 owners and subsequent upgrades should cost \$79. Which brings up another major plus of the Casablanca: it has a computer slot designed for the expected quarterly updates, so all you have to do to is pop them in as soon as you receive them. The unit automatically detects the new upgrade and self-installs it. For those who have ever pulled out hair by the clumpfuls loading "easy-to-install" software, this feature alone may make the unit worth your inquiry. It also opens up the possibility that DraCo as well as third-party vendors can create new software editing tools down the line that Casablanca owners can download/purchase to endlessly upgrade their system.

A final feature of the unit shows just how much the German manufacturing company Siemens, in conjunction with DraCo, has

planned for the future of nonlinear editing in this price range: the editing unit includes an input for the much-anticipated (and endlessly delayed) Firewire. For those not into reading thick technical manuals written in broken English, the Firewire is the digital in/out cable that connects to Sony's line of new MiniDV digital camcorders. Unlike all other analog formats, which must first squash the signal in order for it to be fed into an editing deck (whether it is nonlinear or analog), the Firewire will allow you to take your footage out of the camcorder with digital clarity (i.e., no picture loss), edit it, then dump it back into your camcorder with literal first-generation quality. The process is so good that Sony calls it "cloning" rather than "copying," and, given that the final edited product produces 500 lines of visual resolution (American networks broadcast at far less), it's no wonder. Once Firewire is available, you'll need to install a slot board in the Casablanca, which will cost you an additional \$1,500 or so.

The Casablanca comes in two versions. The cheaper model is the 68040-25, which is shipped with two Gbytes of storage space and has suggested retail price of \$3,995. The 68060-50 is a "render accelerated system," having a faster processor built in. With two Gbytes, it ships at \$5,295; with nine, it's about \$5,700. The 040 system is perfect for those doing mainly hard cuts and 2D effects or for those on a limited budget. But if you're doing lots of titles and 3D effects or if you can afford the extra \$1,300, go for the 060 version.

With nothing else on the horizon coming close to the Casablanca's unique position in the market as a stand-alone nonlinear editor, one wonders: will everyone be coming to DraCo? Or will Sony and other major hardware conglomerates enviously note DraCo's anticipated market splash and rush to put out their own versions? It could be a real David vs. Goliath battle, but so far, Eric Kloor and DraCo seem to have the upper hand, as their bargain-priced Casablanca is already available for purchase. And whatever the long-term outcome, one thing is certain: the world of creative possibility for the independent film- and videomaker has just taken one giant leap forward.

For more information on the Casablanca, contact DraCo at (303) 440-5311 or on the Web at <http://www.draco.com/draco>.

David Coleman (david@kudzunet.com) is a reformed Hollywood screenwriter who now runs his own new media company, Kudzu New Media Studios (www.kudzunet.com).

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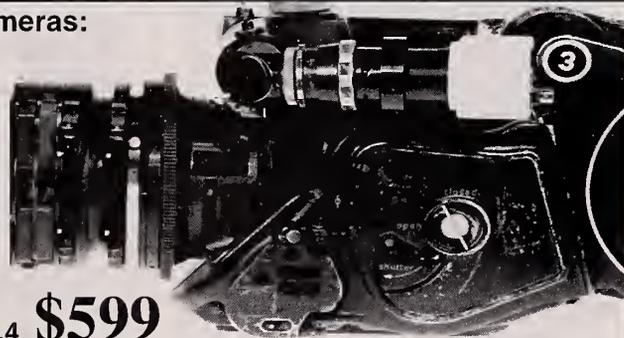
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Alan: This is a drawing of what the town of Raigrod looked like in 1913.
Oscar: What does it matter?
Alan: Your ancestors walked on that block..
Oscar: Really, what does it matter?



BERLINER: continued from p. 33

knew his grandparents, that they could be characters taken out of a storybook. Fair enough. But then I tell him that someone far into the future might say the same thing about him one day, might casually shrug off any connection to a photograph of him, to his memory, to his existence. His response? "Big deal. Who cares?" His indifference has a certain power and logic. But at the same time, I got tremendous personal satisfaction trying to learn as much as I could about the lives of my great-grandparents. I'm not implying that I'm right and he's wrong, because I think there's room for both perspectives.

HOW HAS YOUR FATHER REACTED TO SEEING THE FILM?

He saw it for the first time at the world premiere at the New York Film Festival, and because of his hearing problem, he had trouble understanding much of the soundtrack. My sense is that it was all very abstract for him, very exciting, and probably very frightening. But he knows that something very special happened that night, especially when 1100 people gave him a standing ovation!

WHAT DID MAKING NOBODY'S BUSINESS TEACH YOU?

In many ways the film has been profoundly liberating for me. Cathartic. I can honestly say we're much closer now than ever before. It's almost as if the process of making the film has dissipated the tensions between us. I've come to realize that if I can't change him, at least I can try to understand him better. And part of understanding is letting go; letting go means accepting.

HOW DO YOU THINK HE'S BEEN AFFECTED BY THE FILM?

Perhaps he's had little epiphanies, too. I don't think you can partake in this kind of experience and walk away untouched. Ironically, it took making a film about him to finally show him what it is that I do. He probably still wishes I was an accountant or a lawyer, but at least I've earned his respect. A family friend told me that my father had said the New York Film Festival premiere was "the happiest day of his life." About three weeks after the screening, I went to his apartment and noticed that he had framed the postcard announcement for the film and put it on his bookshelf. He's never done anything like that before! My sister Lynn remarked that if there's such a thing as a personal growth meter, then that gesture certainly went way off the scale.

IT CERTAINLY SEEMS SIGNIFICANT.

He knows that we shared a journey. That it took mutual courage to undertake this project. He understands that all the questions I asked about his life, even the troubling

ones, were all part of something truly authentic and important. For both of us. Throughout the process of making the film, during both shooting and editing, there was always the danger that I might lose my relationship with my father, that things could fly out of control at any time. That fear somehow gave me energy, became the fuel that made *Nobody's Business* the most intense project I've ever attempted.

Fortunately, we can now look back and smile. He sees the reviews of the film, he watches as I go off to film festi-



Oscar as a young boy.

vals to show it. He's aware that it's going to be broadcast on public television in June. It's both shocking and amusing to him. And as a parent, as a father, I detect him taking a vicarious pride in the film, as if we've both done well on our homework assignment. But at the same time I can't fool myself. I'm still quite sure that he's never going to ask to see those photographs of his grandparents again.

Mitch Albert is a shapeshifter who morphs from documentarian to journalist to screenwriter to student of Oriental medicine and back again, all in New York.

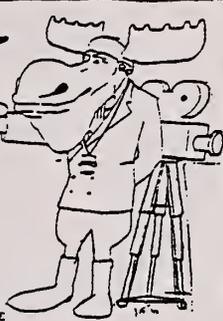
Alan Berliner's films are available from: Cinematix, 13 Vestry St., 4 fl., NY, NY 10013; tel/fax: (212) 226-5213; and from Museum of Modern Art's Circulating Film & Video Library, 11 W. 53rd St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 708-9530; fax: (212) 708-9531.



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BY RYAN DEUSSING

LISTINGS DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT. SINCE DETAILS MAY CHANGE AFTER THE MAGAZINE GOES TO PRESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONTACT THE FESTIVAL DIRECTLY BEFORE SENDING PREVIEW CASSETTES. DEADLINE FOR FESTIVAL COLUMN: TWO-AND-A-HALF MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., MAY 15 FOR AUG./SEPT. ISSUE). ALL BLURBS SHOULD INCLUDE: FESTIVAL DATES, CATEGORIES, PRIZES, ENTRY FEES, DEADLINES, FORMATS & CONTACT INFO.

DOMESTIC

BRECKENRIDGE FESTIVAL OF FILM Sept. 18-21, CO. Deadline: May 31 (scripts), June 30 (films); fee: \$35. 17th annual fest features approx. 50 ind. films selected from over 300 entries. Best of Fest awarded in 5 cat's: drama, comedy, alternative, doc & family/children. Features 1st annual Screenplay Competition. Lodging & on ground transportation discounts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". All submissions on VHS. Scripts should meet US Motion Picture Industry standards & be 90-130 pgs. Contact: Teresa Keil, Breckenridge Fest. of Film, Box 718, Riverwalk Center/150 Adams, Breckenridge, CO 80424; (970) 453-6299; 2692 fax; filmfest@brecknet.com

DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL Dec 13-14, NY. Deadline: May 15. Now in 26th year, fest is collaboration between Dance Films Assoc. & Film Society of Lincoln Center. Prefer exp., doc, & narrative projects. Entrants must not have shown in NYC, on U.S. TV, or been submitted to previous Dance on Camera Festival. Contact: Dance Films Assoc., 31 W. 21st St., 3rd fl., New York, NY 10010; (212) 727-0764; fax: 675-9657; spllg@cunyvm.cuny.edu

IMAGEOUT: ROCHESTER LESBIAN AND GAY FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL October 17-24, NY. Deadline: June 15. Now in 5th yr, fest seeks all types of film & video. Special category for makers in US & Canada residing w/in 200-mile radius of Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Seaway. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry fee: none. Contact: Kelly Hankin, Rochester Lesbian & Gay Film & Video Fest, Gay Alliance of the Genessee Valley, 713 Monroe Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607; (716) 271-2640; dool@uhura.cc.rochester.edu

INTERCOM INT'L COMMUNICATION FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL August, IL. Deadline: June 1; fee: \$60-\$200. Now in 33rd yr. Industrial, sponsored & educational prods eligible. Aim is "to showcase technical & creative energy behind sponsored prods & highlight importance of media arts in business communications." Cats incl. dental science,

doc, drug abuse, educational, environment/ecology, fashion/music video, fundraising, human relations, medicine, personal counseling, public relations, public service & information, religion, research, safety, sales/marketing, sports/recreation, training, travel/transportation & video news release. Achievement awards: acting, cinematography/ videography, computer graphics/animation, directing, editing, graphics, humor, music, special effects & writing. Gold & Silver Hugos to top prods in each cat. Entries must be produced btwn June of preceding year & date of entry. All formats accepted. Intercom, 32 West Randolph St., Suite 600, Chicago, IL 60601; (312) 425-9400; fax: 425-0944; filmfest@wwa.com; www.chicago.ddbn.com/ filmfest

LONG ISLAND FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL July 18-Aug 3, NY. Deadline: May 1; fee: \$50-\$75. Regional showcase for ind. prod. features, docs, videos & short films held at Staller Center for the Arts, Univ. of Stonybrook. Competitive fest awards Best Feature, Best Actor/Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Art Direction/Prod. Design, Best Special F/X/Make-Up, Best Screenplay, Grand Jury Prize, Producer of the Year, On-Location Award, Best of Fest Award, Audience Award, First Feature Award (drama, comedy), Best Experimental Feature, Best Animated Film, Best Short Film, Student Film (drama, experimental, doc, music video), Best Doc (work in progress, historical, series), Sales & Marketing, Student Video. Long Island Film/TV Foundation, Box 13243, Saint James, NY 11780. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Contact: Director, Long Island Film & Video Fest (516) 853-4800; fax: 853-4888; (800) 762-4769; www.lifilm.org

MAINE STUDENT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL June, ME. Deadline: May 15. Founded in 1977, fest is open to Maine residents 19 yrs of age & under. Features public screenings & awards presentation at Portland Museum of Art. Cat's include Pre-Teen division (grades K-6); Junior division (7-9); Senior division (10-12). Works must be 30 min. or shorter. Since 1995 grand prize is scholarship to Int'l Film & TV Workshops in Rockport (\$1200). Formats: 3/4", 1/2", Hi-8, Super-8. Entry fee: none. Contact: Maine Student Film & Video Festival, Box 4320, Portland, ME 04101-0520; (207) 773-1130; hueyfilm@nllis.net

MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL AND VIDEO FEST October 2-12, CA. Deadline: May 31 (early), June 30 (final); fee: \$20 (early), \$25 (final). Invitational, noncompetitive fest screens American ind., narrative, doc, animated, short (up to 15 min.) & experimental films/videos in over 40 programs. Fest has become premiere West Coast event, w/ commitment to bringing new & innovative works to Northern CA audiences. Filmmakers, distributors, press & large local audience meet in "an atmosphere where professional relationships thrive." All genres encouraged. Fest incl. around 100 programs of ind. features, docs, shorts & video works, as well as interactive exhibits, tributes, seminars & special events. Entries must have been completed w/in previous 18 mo.; industrial, promotional or instructional works not appropriate; premieres & new works emphasized. Annual audiences estimated at 35,000. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta, multimedia. Contact: Mark Fishkin, founder/director, Mill Valley Film Fest & Videofest, Mill Creek Plaza, 38 Miller Avenue, Ste

6, Mill Valley, CA 94941; (415) 383-5256; fax: 383-8606; mvff@well.com

NEW LATINO FILMMAKERS FILM COMPETITION June, CA. Designed to showcase Latino student & ind. filmmakers. Seeks short narrative or doc films by Latinos or w/ Latino themes. Student films must be produced under an educational institution & ind. films must not have been produced, financed, or initiated by a major studio. Entries be completed w/in previous two yrs & be under 30 min. & in English. Cash prizes awarded in narrative and doc cats to top student & ind. films. 4 films honored w/ screening at DGA Theatre as part of annual DGA Latino Committee showcase. New Latino Filmmakers Association "affirms & promotes the existence of Latino film- & videomakers, producers, writers, animators & film scholars." Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, 3/4", 1/2", Beta. Entry fee: \$25 ind., \$15 student. Deadline: Early May. Contact: director, New Latino Filmmakers Film Competition, New Latino Filmmakers Association, Box 76647, Los Angeles, CA 90076; (818) 578-1252.

NORTHAMPTON FILM FESTIVAL Nov. 6-9, MA. Deadline: June 30; fee: \$25. Film & video prods. by established & emerging US artists are focus of this festival, now going into 3rd yr. Cash awards & prizes presented in various cat's: animation, narrative, experimental & doc. No commercial, industrial, or promotional works. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4" & 1/2". Submissions on VHS only. Contact: Northampton Film Associates, Inc., 351 Pleasant St. #137, Northampton, MA 01060; (413) 586-3471; fax: 584-4432; filmfest@noho film.org; www.nohofilm.org

WORLD POPULATION FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL September, MA. Deadline: June 15. Secondary & college students eligible to submit works that address population growth, resource consumption, environment & common global future. Drama, animation, image-montage, docs of any length accepted in film, video & multimedia. Total of \$10,000 in prizes awarded to top 3 entries in secondary & college cats. "Best of Fest '97" VHS tapes made available to secondary schools & colleges & may be broadcast on MTV, Turner & PBS. Preview on VHS. Contact: Rawn Fulton, executive director, World Population Film/Video Fest, 46 Fox Hill Rd., Bernardston, MA 01337; (800) 638-9464; fax: (413) 648-9204; popvidfest@aol.com

FOREIGN

ATLANTIC FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL September 19-27, Canada. Deadline: June 13. Founded in 1981, fest has emphasis on film & video productions from Atlantic Canada as well as selected int'l productions. Since 1992, fest section ScreenScene has focused on films for children. Entries must have been completed w/in previous yr. Awards: best film on video under 60 min. (\$1,000), over 60 min. (\$2,500) & others. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$45-\$75. Contact: Natalie Angelucci, Atlantic Film Festival, Box 36139, Halifax, NS B3J 3S9 Canada; (902) 422-3486; fax: 422-4006; ag881@gfn.cs.dal.ca

BRITISH SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, September 18-25, UK. Deadline: June 9. Competitive fest for short film productions under 40 min., completed in previous yr. Sections incl. the Best of British; Atlantic Crossing; British & Int'l Short Films; Focus on Japan; Art of Cinematography; Italian Short Films. Seminars held on Hitting Hollywood & Adapted Literature. Awards presented in cats of Best Film, Best Drama Production, Best Student Production, Best Ind Production, Best Short Film Script, Audience Award. No entry fee. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on VHS only. Contact: British Short Film Festival, Room 313, BBC Threshold House, 65-69 Shepherds Bush Green, London W12 7RJ England; tel: 011-44-181-743-8000 x62222; fax: 740-8540.

HUNGARIAN MULTICULTURAL CENTER FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL Sept. 20-22, Hungary. Deadline: Apr. 28. Fest accepts film, video & animated works. Entry fee: \$35. Contact: Hungarian Multicultural Center, Inc., 6723 Forest Lane, Dallas, TX 75230. Or Beata Szechy, tel/fax: (972) 308-8191.

LOCARNO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL August 6-16, Switzerland. Deadline: May 30; fee: none. In 50th yr, this major Swiss cultural/cinematic all-feature event has reputation for innovative programming & support of alternative visions from ind. directors. Program incl. retro section, sidebar sections, new Swiss cinema & film market. Competition accepts fiction features by new directors, art films, low budget films, work from Third World countries. New section is Leopards of Tomorrow, short films & works from film schools around world. Entries must have been completed w/in previous yr. Films that won prizes at other FIAPF-recognized fests ineligible for competition. Preferences given to world or European premieres. Educational, advertising & scientific films ineligible. Awards: Grand Prix of Fest (Golden Leopard) together w/ Grand Prix of the City of Locarno (Sfr 30,000) to best film in competition; the City of Locarno (SF4 15,000); Third Prize (Bronze Leopard) together w/ Third Prize of the City of Locarno (Sfr 10,000), Fourth Prize (Bronze Leopard) & Special Prize (Bronze Leopard), to actor or actress of exceptional merit in film in competition; Special Jury Award (Sfr 10,000). 2 reps of each competition film will be fest guests for 5 days. Over 250 prods shown each yr. Covered by 750 journalists from 30 countries. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Contact: Marco Müller, director, Locarno Int'l Film Fest (Fest Internazionale del Film di Locarno), Via della Posta 6, Box 1621, CH-6600 Locarno, Switzerland; tel: 011-41-91-751-0232; fax: 751-7465; infopardo@tinet.ch; www.pardo.ch; US contact: Wang & Gluck, (212) 941-1425.

LOCARNO VIDEOART/INTERNATIONAL VIDEO & ELECTRONIC ART FESTIVAL August, Switzerland. Deadline: Late May. Founded in 1980, competitive annual fest programs all video along w/ installations & multimedia shows. Described as place "where artists, critics & philosophers meet to discuss the evolution between arts & technologies." Competition accepts works produced after June of preceding yr & unawarded in other fests. Competition criteria incl. any work that falls under the heading "video art" where "artistic research & creativity overshadow both the technical means employed & the reference category chosen by the



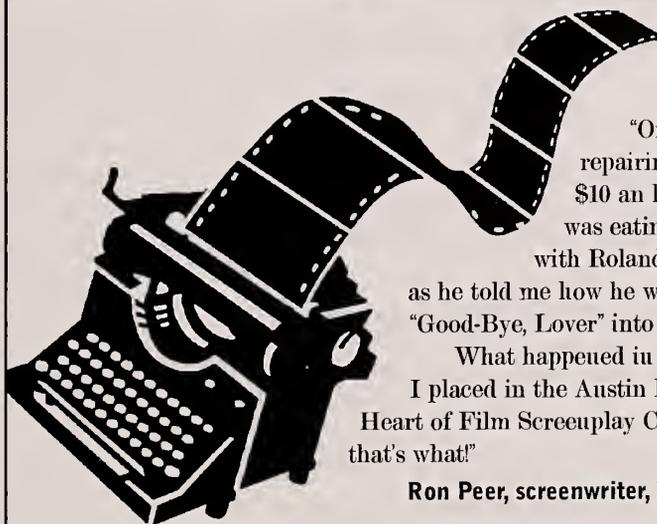
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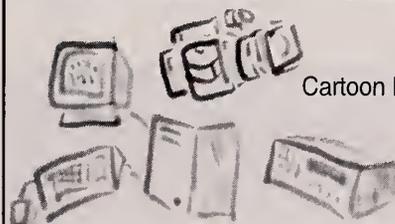
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THE OTHER AMERICAN CINEMA FESTIVAL
August, Italy. Deadline: June 1. First annual touring program, traveling to venues across Italy. Fest dedicated to showcasing new American experimental media. Seeks to bring work of American makers to Italian contemporaries & to facilitate intercultural dialogue grounded in this unique encounter of sub-cultural images & ideas. Encourages submission of "strongly visual work". Shorts on film or video, under 30min. eligible; noncompetitive, no entry fee. Formats: 16mm, video. Preview on 1/2" or 3/4" video. Contact: Melissa Nix c/o Pt Edit, 936 Broadway, 3rd fl., New York, NY 10010; (718) 783-9823; 254-0501 fax; Melissa.Nix@soundtrackgroup.com

TELESCIENCE (formerly Quebec Int'l Science Festival), Oct 23-Nov 2, Canada. Deadline: Mid May. Founded in 1990, fest is one of largest int'l scientific film events, selecting about 60 films for its int'l program & 23 for competition. Strongly connected to network of scientific film fests throughout world, fest offers producers/directors opportunity to make their work known to organizers of other fests & foreign specialists attending. Competition offers awards in 9 cats: film for young people; science/nature (wildlife resources); environment; film of scientific research; Québec film or video; scientific popularization; excellence in film or TV; scientific excellence & Northern Telecom Grand Prize. Also large North American & European markets. Entries must have been completed after Jan. 1 of preceding 2 yrs. Formats: 16mm, 3/4," Beta. Entry fee: \$50Cdn. Contact: MIDOS, 15 Rue de la Commune Quest, Montreal Quebec H2Y 2C6; (514) 849-1617; fax: 982-0064; http://cite.artech.org/festival; festival@artech.org

SÃO PAULO INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL August 21-30, Brazil. Deadline: May 20. Founded in 1990, noncompetitive fest quickly established itself as important part of int'l shorts fest scene. Aims to allow for greater access to best int'l short films of past & present & continue to "exhibit films that contribute to development of the short film." Entries should have max running time of 35 min. and must have been produced in 1996/97; all genres accepted. Very enthusiastic local audience consistently fills screenings & debates all types of films. Past programs incl. extensive panoramas of American ind. short films, tributes, exhibits & special screenings. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: Zita Carvalhosa, director, São Paulo Int'l Short Film Fest (Fest Internacional de Curtas-Metragens de São Paulo), Associacao Cultural Kinoforum, Rua Cristiano Viana 907, 05411.001 Sao Paulo, Brazil; tel/fax: 011 55 11 852 9601; spshort@ibm.net; www.estacao.ignnet.com.br/kinoforum/saoshortfest

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CONFERENCE/SCREENING ROOM

AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

INFORMATION

We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

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Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

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Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

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COMPETITIONS

ARC REGIONAL IV calls for entries in all media. Cash awards. Entry deadline is May 21, 1997. Juror: Ann Sass, Whitney Museum, NY. Artists must live in KY, IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, WI. Send SASE for prospectus to: ARC Regional IV, ARC Gallery, 1040 W. Huron, Chicago, IL 60622.

LAUGHING HORSE PRODUCTIONS, a Seattle-based company, is holding a screenplay contest. Winner awarded \$500. Entry fee: \$30. Possibility of having script optioned and sent to major agents, producers and directors. For more info, call: (206) 762-5525.

URBAN INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS announces call for entries for nat'l juried exhibition, "Myth America." Exhibit invites works that explore the many myths contributing to American cultural identity, all media eligible. No entry fee. Dates for exhibition: Sept. 5-Oct. 17. Deadline for submission: June 2. For a prospectus contact UICA-Myth America, 88 Monroe NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503; (616) 454-7000.

CONFERENCES • WORKSHOPS

ANNUAL CONFERENCE University Film & Video Association conference to be held Aug. 5-9 at the Univ. of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Traditional academic paper presentations + workshops in new media technologies, video art & WWW production, documentary & scriptwriting. Critic screenings of members' work & premiere screening of winners of 1997 UFVA Student Film & Video Festival. Contact Karla Berry (414) 424-3132; berry@vaxa.cis.uwosh.edu

MAME-LOSHN '97, a meeting of filmmakers, producers, screenwriters, actors & composers to brainstorm about the making of a Yiddish film. How can we collaborate to make this happen? Aim to compile a resource & address list to facilitate further communication. Let's bring a roughcut to next year's Mame-Loshn. (718) 499-2829; skurnik@idt.net

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AXLEGREASE Buffalo cable access program of ind. film & video, accepting all genres under 28 min., 1/2", 3/4", 8mm, Hi8. Send labeled w/ name, address, title, length, additional info & SASE for tape return to: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; (716) 884-7172, wheel@freenet.buffalo.edu; <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel>

BLACK BOOT MEDIA PROJECT of Perry County Ind. Media Arts Center seeks ind. film & video works for regular series of roving screenings at various industrial, commercial & residential venues in Philadelphia & Harrisburg area. Submit S-8, 16mm, VHS or S-VHS w/ SASE to: PCIMAC, Lower Bailey Rd., RR2-Box 65, Newport, PA 17074. For info, contact Jeff Dardozi, (215) 545-7884.

CLIPS, an industry showcase of selected shorts & works-in-progress by emerging directors, seeks entries for 3rd edition. Event created by Cinematografia Production in an effort to bring together creative & commercial forces of NY indie film & create opportunity for reps in entertainment industry to speak with tomorrow's filmmakers about current & upcoming projects. Deadline: May 31; screening date: June 23; location: The Screening Room, Canal St. @ Varick. For more information, call: (212) 971-5846.

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FLOATING IMAGE seeks film/video animation & shorts for public/commercial TV program. Send VHS or SVHS to Floating Image Productions, PO Box 7017, Santa Monica, CA 90406 (include SASE for return). (310) 313-6935; www.artnet.net/~floatingimage

GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS seeks short videos (10 min or less) for Living With AIDS, half-hr magazine weekly seen in Manhattan, Queens & Brooklyn, produced by GMHC & NYC Dept. of Health. No budget for licensing programs, but opportunity to be seen by millions. VHS or 3/4" tapes (no originals) must deal w/ HIV/AIDS issues, or present person(s) infected/affected by HIV/AIDS in positive way. May not be sexually explicit. All tapes returned. Send to: Kristen Thomas, Living with AIDS Showcase of Independent Video, GMHC Multimedia Dept., 129 W. 20th St., NY, NY 10011; (212) 337-3655.

HANDI-CAPABLE IN THE MEDIA seeks videos of any length about people with disabilities. Programs will air on Atlanta's Cable 12. No fees, however credit & exposure to large viewing audience. VHS preferred, s-VHS, 3/4" acceptable. Sharon Douglas, Handi-Capable in the Media, Inc. 2625 Piedmont Rd. Suite 56-137 Atlanta, GA 30324.

IN SHORT a 1/2-hr program that airs bi-monthly, seeks submissions for public access show in NY. Preference given to works created w/ digital video. On every 4th program, work produced by or featuring women highlighted. Works up to 28 min., submitted on VHS for preview, available in 3/4". Send sub. to: In Short, 240 East 27th St., Suite 17N, NY, NY 10016; (212) 689-0505.

INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE monthly screening program seeks experimental, avant-garde, doc, narrative. Possible monetary remuneration. Submit your films and/or videos on 1/2" or 8mm video. Clearly label tapes with title, length, name, address & phone. Include SASE if you wish tapes returned. Contact: Blackchair Prod., 2318 Second Ave., #313A Seattle, WA 98121; (206) 282-3592; joel@speakeasy.org

IND. FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE, a weekly TV series & live monthly screening, seeks student & ind. films/video to give artists exposure. Submit on 1/2" or 3/4" video w/ paragraph about artist and work. Send to: IFVS, 6755 Yucca St. #8, Hollywood, CA 90028, Attn: Jerry Salata; jsalata@Freemark.com

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52 East 78th St., 9D
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212-717-4495 ask for Doug

KHOU CHANNEL 11, a CBS affiliate in Houston, TX, is now accepting submissions for its upcoming variety program. All broadcast-quality videos, documentaries, shorts, films, animation, performance, art, sketches, QuickTimes, etc. are eligible. All formats welcomed. Call (713) 268-1631.

KNITTING FACTORY VIDEO LOUNGE seeks VHS tapes for ongoing weekly series of theme-based screenings. Any genre or subject. Send tape w/ brief bio to: Joanna Spitzner, Box 1220 Canal St. Station, NY, NY, 10012. If tape return desired, include self-addressed envelope w/ sufficient postage.

LO BUDJIT FILMZ AND VIDEOS seeks submissions for VHS or Less, show focusing on camcorder movies. Embarrass old friends, showcase your dusty old tapes. Large bi-coastal audience. Send to: Lo Budjit, 147 Ave A, Box1R NY, NY 10009; (212) 533-0866.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TELEVISION seeking story proposals from U.S. citizen or permanent resident minority filmmakers for National Geographic Explorer, award-winning doc series. To request appl. for CDP (Cultural Diversity Project), call: (202) 862-8637.

NEW BREED FESTIVAL seeks student/ind. shorts (narrative only) for bi-monthly cafe screenings in Lambertville, NJ & on NJ & PA public access. Send 1/2" VHS + info w/ SASE to New Breed, 217 N. Union St., Lambertville, NJ 08530.

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS series broadcasting selected works statewide on public TV, seeks works of any genre (except corporate/instructional) produced by ind. artists currently residing in NC. Modest monetary compensation & telecast filmmaker interview of artist for works selected. Entry fee: \$15 for individuals, \$5 for students & NC Media Arts Alliance members; separate fee for each submission. Contact: Ellen Walters, NC Visions, Broadcasting/ Cinema Program, 100 Carmichael Bldg., UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412-5001; (910) 334-5360; fax: 334-5039; ncvision@hamlet.uncg.edu

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS series calls for entries. No entry fee. Contact: Anita Harris Alexander, NC Visions, Fayetteville/Cumberland Arts Council, Box 318, Fayetteville, NC 28302; telephone (910) 323-1776, fax (910) 323-1727 or e-mail artsncnl@foto.infi.net

OCULARIS: New screening room seeks 16mm shorts for regular screenings in East Village/Williamsburg area of NYC, particularly by local filmmakers. Call or send SASE for info: Ocularis, 91 N. 4th St., #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-8713.

REAL TV looking for dynamic videos: news, weather, sports, bloopers, busts, "caught in the act." Real TV, syndicated, daily video magazine, will showcase compelling videos from around the world—from professionals as well as amateurs who capture video snapshots of life in the 90s. Tapes will not be returned. Contact: Real TV, Hollywood Center Studios, Stage 2, 1040 N. Las Palmas, Los Angeles, CA 90038; (213) 860-0100.

SAUCE GALLERY AND MOMENTA ART, two alternative spaces in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, cur-

rently accepting entries for ongoing film/video series. Mission is to identify and exhibit compelling new work no longer than 30 min. All formats & genres. Submit in VHS w/ SASE & brief description of work to: Sauce Gallery, 173A North 3rd St., Brooklyn, NY 11211; attn: Lisa Schroeder (718) 486-8992 or Laura Parnes (718) 782-8907.

SHOW YOUR SHORTS, monthly NYC public access program seeks short films for 1-hr. special to air this summer, first Sunday of each month at 4:30 p.m. on Channel 34. For more info and application, write to Catherine DelBuno, Box 987, New York, NY 10011.

TV-1 PRODUCTIONS seeking footage on Cuba for upcoming doc. Every aspect of life in the island welcome. Formats: Hi8, SVHS, 3/4", Beta, DVD, 8mm & 16mm. Tapes returned. Payment negotiable. For more info, contact: Marcos N. Suarez, 2102 Empire Central, Dallas, TX 75235; (214) 357-2186.

Tyme Tower Entertainment seeks feature-length & short films for Ind. Filmmakers video series. 16mm, 35mm, B/W or color. Send 3/4" or 1/2" VHS copy to: Tyme Tower Entertainment, c/o Tyme Tower Home Video, 810 E. Coliseum Blvd., ste. 107, Fort Wayne, IN 46805-1234; (219) 481-5807.

UNQUOTE TV, 1/2 hr nonprofit program dedicated to exposing new, innovative film & video artists, seeks ind. doc, narrative, experimental, performance works under 28 min. Seen on more than 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: Unquote TV, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

VIDEOSPACE AT DECORDOVA MEDIA ARTS ARCHIVE: DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park seeks VHS copies of video art & documentation of performance, installation art & new genres from New England artists for inclusion in new media arts archive. Send for info & guidelines: Videospace at DeCordova, DeCordova Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Rd., Lincoln, MA 01773-2600.

RESOURCES • FUNDS

THIRD ANNUAL LAURA NAPOR FILM GRANT provides film stock, processing, lighting equip. Deadline: May 7. For full info. call (412) 937-7700 or (800) FILM-WRS.

AVID FEATURE FILM CAMP seeks independent feature-length projects that need free nonlinear post production facilities and asst. eds. on our Avid Media Composers. Students work as asst. eds. with credit on your feature and attend Avid authorized classes in exchange for free use of systems during the six week period. Four projects and four alternates will be selected. Send cover letter with info (script preferred, will accept outlines and treatments) to: Jaime Fowler, AFFC Director, Digital Media Education Center, 5201 SW Westgate Dr., Suite 210, Portland, OR 97221; (503) 297-2324; fax: 297-2191; affc@dmec.com

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BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from ind. producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Reviewed on ongoing basis. Contact BFVF for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; bfvf@aol.com

CREATIVE PROJECT GRANTS: Subsidized use of VHS, interformat & 3/4" editing suite for ind. creative projects. Doc, political, propaganda, promotional & commercial projects are not eligible. Editor/instructor avail. Video work may be done in combination w/ S-8, Hi8, audio, performance, photography, artists, books, etc. Studio includes Amiga, special effects, A&B roll, transfers, dubbing, etc. Send SASE for guidelines to: The Media Loft, 727 6th Ave., NY, NY 10010; (212) 924-4893.

ILLINOIS ARTS COUNCIL (IAC) SPECIAL ASSISTANCE ARTS PROGRAM: Matching grants of up to \$1,500 avail. to IL artists for specific projects. Activities that may be funded: registration fees & travel to attend conferences, seminars, or workshops; consultant fees for resolution of specific artistic problems; exhibits, performances, publications, screenings; materials, supplies, or services. Funds awarded based on quality of work submitted & impact of proposed project on artist's professional development. Appl's. must be received at least 8 wks. prior to project starting date. Degree students not eligible. (312) 814-6750.

MEDIA ALLIANCE assists NYC artists & non-profit organizations in using state-of-art equipment, postprod. & prod. facilities at reduced rates.

Contact: Media Alliance, c/o WNET, 356 W. 58th St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 560-2919.

NAATA, Nat'l Asian American Telecom. Assoc., seeks submissions for 1997 Media Fund for Public Television. Awards averaging \$30,000 given to film & video makers working on projects presenting fresh & provocative takes on Asians/Asian Americans. Deadline: May 16. Contact: Charles McCue (415) 863-0814; mediafund@naatanet.org

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS provides grants for development of nat'l public TV broadcast programming by & about indigenous Pacific Islanders. Appl's. available from: PIC, 1221 Kapiolani Blvd., #6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814; (808) 591-0059; fax: 591-1114; piccom@elele.peacesat.hawaii.edu

POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION gives financial assistance to artists of recognizable merit & financial need working as mixed-media or installation artists. Grants awarded throughout yr: \$1,000-\$30,000. For guidelines, write: Pollock-Krasner Foundation, 725 Park Ave., NY, NY 10021.

RESIDENCIES supports US organizations to host artists & arts managers, known as ArtsLink Fellows, from Central & Eastern Europe. ArtsLink Residencies grants provide funding to cover the living, working, and materials costs for the five-week residency, as well as modest administrative expenses for the host organization. Grant amounts will generally range from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Deadline for application: June 9. (212) 643-1985 x22.

ROY W. DEAN FILM GRANT w/ goal of helping to produce films which make a unique contribution to society and might otherwise never get made seeks applications. Over \$20,000 in in-kind awards. Deadline: June 15. Contact: Studio Film & Tape, 1215 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood, CA 90038; www.sftweb.com

SOROS DOCUMENTARY FUND supports ind. doc. film & video on human rights, freedom of expression, social justice & civil liberties. 2 levels considered: works-in-progress & preproduction seed money. Grant awards for recommended works-in-progress range up to \$50,000, w/ average of \$25,000. Awards for seed funds range from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Send proposals to: Diane Weyermann, dir., Arts & Cultural Regional Program, Open Society Institute, 888 7th Ave., #3100, NY, NY 10106.

STANDBY PROGRAM provides artists & nonprof- its access to broadcast quality video postprod. services at reduced rates. For guidelines & appl. contact: Standby Program, Box 184, NY, NY 10012-0004; (212) 219-0951; fax: 219-0563.

TEACHERS MEDIA CENTER, dedicated to educators interested in video technology as learning tool in the classroom. Latest project is setting up nat'l & int'l video pen pal exchanges; would like to hear from interested schools, individuals, or organizations. Also interested in creating nat'l network of educators interested in any or all aspects of growing multimedia & media literacy movements in education. Contact: Teachers Media Center, 158 122nd St., Rockaway Beach, NY 11694; (718) 634-3823.

NOTICES



7th Annual Gravity Free Film & Video Competition
Sponsored by The Lucy-Desi Museum and Time Warner Cable

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

★ Entries must be comedy "shorts," 30 minutes in length – or less	★ Submission must be in NTSC 1/2" VHS format for evaluation
★ Entries must have been completed since January 1, 1991	★ Finalists must have 16mm or S-VHS print available for festival viewing
★ Live Action or Animated	★ Suitable for television broadcast
★ B & W or Color	★ Sound Sync or Silent
★ Material may be shot in any format	

SUBMISSION DEADLINE JUNE 1, 1997

\$20 Entry fee for each title submitted. Only one entry per tape. Send SASE if you would like your tape returned.

CASH PRIZES \$250 each for four finalists. \$250 more for Juror's Award and Popular Pick Award. Prizes awarded at Festival; travel will be provided.

JUDORS Representatives from Comedy Central, HBO, and Bravo/The Independent Film Channel

TO ENTER Send video(s), Entry Fee(s) and Biographical Material to:
THE GRAVITY FREE FILM FESTIVAL ★ 116 EAST THIRD STREET ★ JAMESTOWN, NY 14701
PHONE 716-664-2465 ★ FAX 716-661-3829

**Broadcast Hi-8
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COMPLETE ENG PRODUCTION PACKAGES INCLUDE:
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e-mail: blessbless@aol.com

TRADE DISCOUNTS

CALIFORNIA

Cinetopia Production

923 E. 3rd St. #112, Los Angeles, CA 90013; (213) 617-2429/Contact: Steve Choe. Complete Arri BL4 pkg, camera, grip, truck & more. Negotiable low rates for AIVF members

Rick Caine Productions

856 1/2 N. Occidental Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026; (213) 413-3222/Contact: Rick Caine or Debbie Melnyk. 15% discount on Sony Betacam SP equipment, crew rentals, dups & offline editing.

Mill Valley Film Group

104 Eucalyptus Knoll, Mill Valley, CA 94941; (415) 461-8334/Contact: Will Parrinello. 35% discounts on Beta SP production packages, production personnel & VHS off-line editing facilities. Rates further negotiable for selected projects.

Studio Film and Tape

6674 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90038; (213) 466-8101/Contact: Carole Dean. 5% discount on Kodak short-ends & recams; 10% discount on new Fuji film (20% to students w/i.d.).

Sudborough Productions

8548 Minuet Pl., LA, CA 90038; (818) 895-1194 Contact: Ric Sudborough. 50% discount on 1" editing & Production, portable 1" deck & camera, film, lighting equipment, and post sound studio.

COLORADO

MovieMaker

4730 Table Mesa Dr., Ste B-100, Boulder, CO 80303; (303) 499-6300 /Contact: Susan Lyle Kinney. 15% discount on video production services including shooting, editing, script consultation.

PME Studios

2201 South Cherry St. Denver, CO 80222; (303) 692-8519/Contact: Craig Patterson. 15% discount on all soundtrack and audio production services including composition, scoring and recording.

FLORIDA

DHA Production

2375 No. Tamiami Trail, Naples 33940; (813) 263-3939/Contact: George Steinhoff. Discounted hourly rate of \$325 for edit suite, a Beta SP Component Digital Sony series 6000, including use of Abekas A-65, Sony DME-500 and Chyron Max.

Film Friends

4019 No. Meridian Ave., Miami Beach 33140; (305) 532-6966 or (800) 235-2713/Contact: Mik Cribben. 30% discount on extensive range of equipment rentals - camera, lighting, sound, grip, editing.

ILLINOIS

Brella Productions

1840 Oak Ave., Evanston 60201; (708) 866-1884/Contact: Bernadette Burke. 35% off nonlinear editing & 3D animation work.

EditMasters

17 W. 755 Butterfield Rd., Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181; (708) 515-4340/Contact: Michael Sorenson. 30-50% discount on digital nonlinear post-production services.

Picture Start Productions

1727 W. Catalpa Ave., Chicago, IL 60640; (312) 769-2489/Contact: Jeff Helyer. 40-60% discount on Avid editings; Beta-SP, Hi8, 3/4", VHS.

NEW YORK

BCS Broadcast Store, Inc.

460 West 34th St., 4th fl., NY 10001; (212) 268-8800/Contact: Michael Rose. 10-15% discount on all used video equipment.

Best Shot Video

81 Pondfield Rd., Bronxville, NY 10708; (914) 664-1943/Contact: Adam Shanker. 10% discount on video editing, duplication & production services.

Bill Creston

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/Contact: Barbara Rosenthal. 5% discounts on all Super-8 film & sound production services, including editing, sound transfers, VHS to VHS dubs. Also: low-cost services on Amiga computer & still photography.

Cup O'Joe Productions

21 W. 85th St., #2A, NYC 10024; (212) 362-1056 Contact: David Fuhrer. 10% discount on VHS & SVHS editing equipment rentals of one week or more.

Downtown Community TV Center

87 Lafayette St., NYC 10013-4435; (212) 966-4510, (800) VIDEO-NY, (212) 219-0248 fax/Contact: Hye Jung Park or Paul Pittman. 10-20% discount on video workshops & seminars; 10-30% discount on all editing services & equipment packages for nonprofit projects; Avid nonlinear editing, CMX editing, off-line editing, Beta SP & EVW300 Hi8 camera pkg rental.

DuArt Film and Video

245 West 55th Street, NYC 10019; (212) 757-4580 x 637/Contact: David Fisher. Negotiable discounts on color negative developing, workprinting, blow-ups from 16mm & S16mm to 35mm, & titles.

Film Friends

16 East 17th St., NY 10003; (212) 620-0084/Contact: Mike Gallagher. 30% discount on extensive range of equipment rentals - camera, lighting, sound, grip, editing.

Harmonoc Ranch

59 Franklin St., NYC 10013; (212) 966-3141/Contact: Brooks Williams. Discounts on sound editing, music, mixing and sound design.

Media Loft

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/Contact: Barbara Rosenthal. 5% discount on 3/4" VHS & inter-format editing, titling, dubbing, special effects, Hi8, Amiga computer, slides & photos to tape, S-8.

Mercer Street Sound

133 Mercer St., NYC 10012; (212) 966-6794/Contact: Bill Seery. 50% discount off corporate book rate for audio postproduction

Metrovision Production Services

138 East 26th Street, NYC 10010; (212) 689-7900/Contact: John Brown. Discount on video and film equipment packages

L. Matthew Miller Associates, Ltd.

48 West 25th Street, 11th Fl., NYC 10010; (212) 741-8011 x 229/Contact: Steve Cohen. Discounted videotape and hardware.

Picture This Music

50 West 34th Street, Suite 9C9, NYC 10001; (212) 947-6107/Contact: Paul D. Goldman. 10-30% off digital audio postproduction: music, voice-over, sound design, SFX, audio mixing (ProTools work stations).

Post Digital

236 West 27th Street, 3rd Fl., NYC 10001; (212) 366-5353/Contact: Michael Helman. 40% discount off nonlinear offline editing facility; duplication; animation production

PrimaLux Video

30 West 26th St., NYC 10010; (212) 206-1402/Contact: Matt Clarke. 10%+ discounts (nonprofits encouraged) on studio production facilities, remote production packages, postproduction & more.

Rafik

814 Broadway, NYC 10003; (212) 475-7884/

FOR AIVF MEMBERS

Contact: Charles Kephart. 25% discounts on used cassettes over \$100, 10% on single invoices over \$100 for video services, editing, duplication, viewing, film-to-tape transfers.

Sound Dimensions Editorial

321 West 44th Street, #602, NYC 10036; (212) 757-5147/ Contact: Brian Langman. 15% discount on transfers, effects, and sound studio services: Foley, ADR, narration, mixing.

Star Tech

152 West 72nd Street, #2FE, NYC 10023; (212) 757-5147/ Contact: John Hampton. Discounts on paging equipment & services & 10% off Audio Limited wireless mics & accessories.

Studio Film and Tape

630 9th Avenue, NYC 10036; (212) 977-9330/ Contact: John Troyan. 5% discount on Kodak short-ends & recans; 10% discount on new Fuji film (20% w/ student i.d.).

Suite 2410

330 West 42nd St., Ste. 2410, NYC 10036; (212) 947-1417/ Contact: Madeleine Solano. 10% discount on all editing services and facilities: 16 mm; 3/4" to 3/4"; Betacam to Betacam; AVID; Betacam SP to Betacam SP - A/B Roll, Chyron, Digital FX.

Technicolor Inc., East Coast Division

321 West 44th St., NYC 10036; (212) 582-7310/ Contact: Ray Chung. Discounts on processing; deeper discounts available to students and feature-length projects.

NORTH CAROLINA

The Empowerment Project

3403 Highway 54 West, Chapel Hill, NC 27516; (919) 967-1863/ Contact: David Kasper. 20% discount on video editing; up to 35% discount for selected projects.

PENNSYLVANIA

Lemonwood Productions

711 S. Braddock Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15221; (412) 241-3544/ Contact: Dean Lemon. 15% discount on all productions and editing services. Beta Cam SP, SVHS, 3/4", Amiga, slides, and still photography.

TEXAS

R.W. Productions

(713) 522-4701/ Contact: Ken Herbert. 10%-25% discounts on production and post production equipment and rentals.

Texcam

3263 Brenard Ave, Houston, 77098; (713)

524-2774; (800) 735-2774
Up to 15% discounts on film camera packages.

WASHINGTON, DC

Five Star Film and Video

1919 Park Rd., NW Washington, DC 20010; (202) 232-3605 Contact: Carolyn Projansky. 20% discount on scriptwriting; 15% discount (20% to all non profits) on all video production services including shooting, editing and distribution.

Yellow Cat Productions

505 11th St., SE, Washington, DC 20003; (202) 543-2221/ Contact: Mary Flannery. 15% off a full-day video shoot with a 2 person crew; 15% off any Avid editing.

PRODUCTION-RELATED INSURANCE PLANS

Alliance Brokerage Corp.

990 Westbury Rd., Westbury, NY 11590; (516) 333-7300; fax: (516) 333-5698/ Contact: Jay Levy. Offers "all risk" coverage for owned equipment.

C&S International Insurance Brokers, Inc.

20 Vesey Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10007; (212) 406-4499; Fax: (212) 406-7588/ Contact: Jennifer Del Percio. Offers special discounted rates on commercial General Liability Insurance to AIVF members.

Marvin S. Kaplan Insurance Agency, Inc.

68 Fargo Street, Boston, MA 02210; Tel: (617) 345-0666; Fax: (617) 261-0666/ Contact: Marvin Kaplan. Offers coverage of equipment owned or rented. Policy covers all states.

LEGAL/CONSULTING

The following law firms offer special rates to AIVF members.

Cinema Film Consulting

333 W. 52nd St., NYC 10008; (212) 307-7533/ Contact: Robert Seigel.

Cowan, Gold, DeBaets, Abrahams & Sheppard

40 W. 57th St., NYC 10019; (212) 974-7474/

Contact: Timothy DeBaets.

Stephen Mark Goldstein

186 Riverside Dr., NYC, 10024; (212) 878-4078/ Contact: Stephen Goldstein.

OVERNIGHT MAILING SERVICES

Airborne Express

1-800- 642-4292. Discount Code: 1340130100. Save up to 40% on overnight air express services. Member rate is \$9.75 for an 8 oz. overnight letter express. Further discounts for volumes over 10 packages a month.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Comparing health insurance plans is very confusing, and we at AIVF are not specialists in the field. Please contact the following agents who will be happy to talk things through with you..

Meyer Briereman

(718) 965-3505

Diamond Insurance Group Trust

(212) 758-5656; (800) 886-7504/ Contact: Burt Diamond

Jeff Bader

(718) 291-5433

DENTAL INSURANCE

CIGNA

Contact Burt Diamond listed above.

Community Dental Program, Inc. (800)

906-CDPI.

Northeast Dental Plan

(212) 688-5555; (800) 828-2222.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Creative and Career Development

19 W. 34th Street, Penthouse Suite, NY, 10001; (212) 957-9376

Contact: Michelle Frank, CSW

Licensed psychotherapist with film and TV experience assists indie filmmakers with creative and career development. 10% discount on individual sessions. AIVF members only.

We are constantly expanding this list and are particularly interested in developing discounts for members outside NYC. If you have a business or service you can offer, contact Leslie Fields, (212) 807-1400.

MEMORANDA. continued from p. 64

Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.
Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:
Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:
Call for dates and times.
Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave.,
NW, Contact: DC Salon hotline (202) 554-3263 x4.

MINUTES OF THE AIVF/FIVF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The board of directors of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) and Foundation for Independent Video and Film (FIVF) met in New York on January 25-26, 1997. Attending were Robb Moss (Chair), Bart Weiss (Co-President), Loni Ding (Co-President), Susan Wittenberg (Vice President), Robert Richter (Treasurer), Diane Markrow (Secretary), Carroll Blue, Todd Cohen, Barbara Hammer, Cynthia Lopez, Laalah Matias, Peter Lewnes, Jim McKay, and Ruby Lerner (ex officio). Absent were James Schamus and Norman Wang. The board welcomed two student representatives to the FIVF board, Todd Cohen and Laalah Matias. Both are undergraduates in the film department at New York University.

Lerner updated the board as to where we stand on

the production of the *Self-Distribution Toolkit*. Lerner reported that some of the articles have already been commissioned and the Toolkit should be finished by summer of 1997. *The Exhibitor's Guide* should also be finished by summer of 1997.

The AIVF board elected its officers for this year. They are as follows: Robb Moss, Chair; Bart Weiss and Loni Ding, Co-Presidents; Susan Wittenberg, Vice President; Robert Richter, Treasurer; Diane Markrow, Secretary.

The annual member meeting was officially set for April 18. The board re-examined the new AIVF nominations schedule, which changed the nomination period from April to early June to the end of July to early September. The board agreed stay with the new nomination schedule.

The board agreed to officially kick off the *Millennium Fund Campaign* at the annual meeting. The *Millennium Fund* will include a \$50,000 emergency loan fund and a \$100,000 reserve fund to be used for developing new projects or expanding existing ones. It will operate as a revolving line of credit for the organization. Salons chairs will be contacted to enlist in the campaign.

Lerner is hopeful that we will receive some funding from the New York State Council on the Arts' Challenge Grant for the Millennium Fund (\$15,000 was subsequently awarded). AIVF would have to raise at least \$45,000 in one year to match the grant. The organization has received \$35,000 from the NEA and \$25,000 from the Warhol Foundation for promotional efforts.

The board voted to send a letter of thanks to Pamela Calvert, AIVF's former Director of Programs

and Services.

Lerner reported that AIVF has purchased two new computers and four refurbished ones. In addition, a 32" Sony television set was purchased for use in the screening room.

Membership Coordinator Leslie Fields reported on programs and events. The Meet and Greet program is set for the spring with the following guests: Jay Lindner & Dara Meyers Kingsley, February; Sande Zeig, March; Robert Seigel, April; and Sarah Eaton, May. AIVF will co-sponsor an event with the Standby Program, "Using Non Broadcast Video in a Broadcast Context" on March 12, 1997.

LaTrice Dixon was hired as the membership assistant in October of last year. She is dividing her time between the membership department and advocacy department. Fields and Lerner will fill the membership associate position by the end of the week. The hiree will start the first week in February. Fields reported that marketing plans are already underway to college and university libraries, public libraries, and lapsed members.

LaTrice Dixon briefed the board on the success of the Advocacy Forum in December. The forum aired on Manhattan Neighborhood Network in early January. Tapes were sent to other public access stations in NYC. She is also processing tape orders.

Ryan Deussing informed the board that the redesign of the AIVF web site is in progress. He reported that the future of the site will include a member skills database, classifieds, and possible chat rooms.

The next meeting of the board was set for Saturday and Sunday, April 19-20, 1997.

Betacam SP Editing

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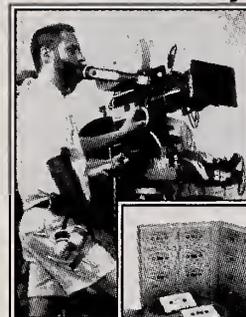
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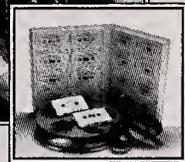
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INTERNATIONAL TV & THEATRICAL DISTRIBUTION *Washington, DC*

Panel discussion with *Haile Gerima*, producer/director of the film *Sankofa*, and *Max Alvarez*, freelance writer and regular contributor to *The Independent*.

When: May 13, 7:00 p.m.

Where: Herb's Restaurant (see address under salon listing). Contact DC Salon Hotline for more info.

AIVF FESTIVAL GUIDE ERRATA & UPDATES

Wellington Film Festival

The correct phone number is 011-64-4-3850-162.

Sydney Film Festival

The correct phone number is 011-61-2-9660-3844

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MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our copy deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.

Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.

Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street

Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time

Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln

Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Cleveland, OH

Call for dates and locations

Contact: Annetta Marion, (216) 781-1755

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver, CO

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125

Houston, TX:

When: Last Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: David Mendel, (713) 529-4185

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.

Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

New York City, NY

When: 1st Monday & 3rd Sunday of each month.

Where: Pink Pony Theater, 176 Ludlow St.

Contact: Jane Gang, (212) 254-5273

Norwalk, CT:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

Sacramento, CA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

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Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.

Continued on p. 62

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When people ask me how and what festivals to enter, I simply refer them to AIVF/FIVF's Guide. Not only is it the most comprehensive and up to date listing I've seen but the indexes slice and dice the festivals into every conceivable category. It's absolutely indispensable for independent producers.

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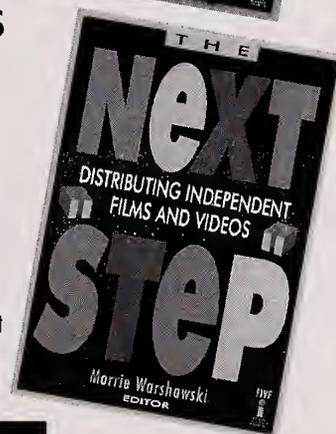
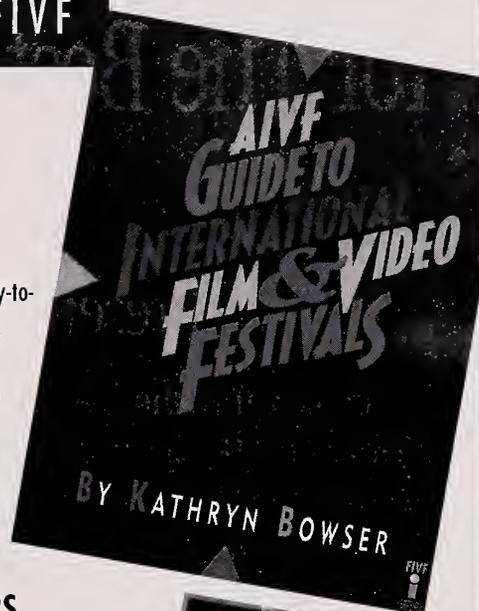
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For complete Entry Guidelines, an Entry Form or further information, please contact IDA Awards, 1551 S. Robertson Blvd. Suite 201, Los Angeles, CA 90035-4257. Phone: (310) 284-8422. Fax: (310) 785-9334.

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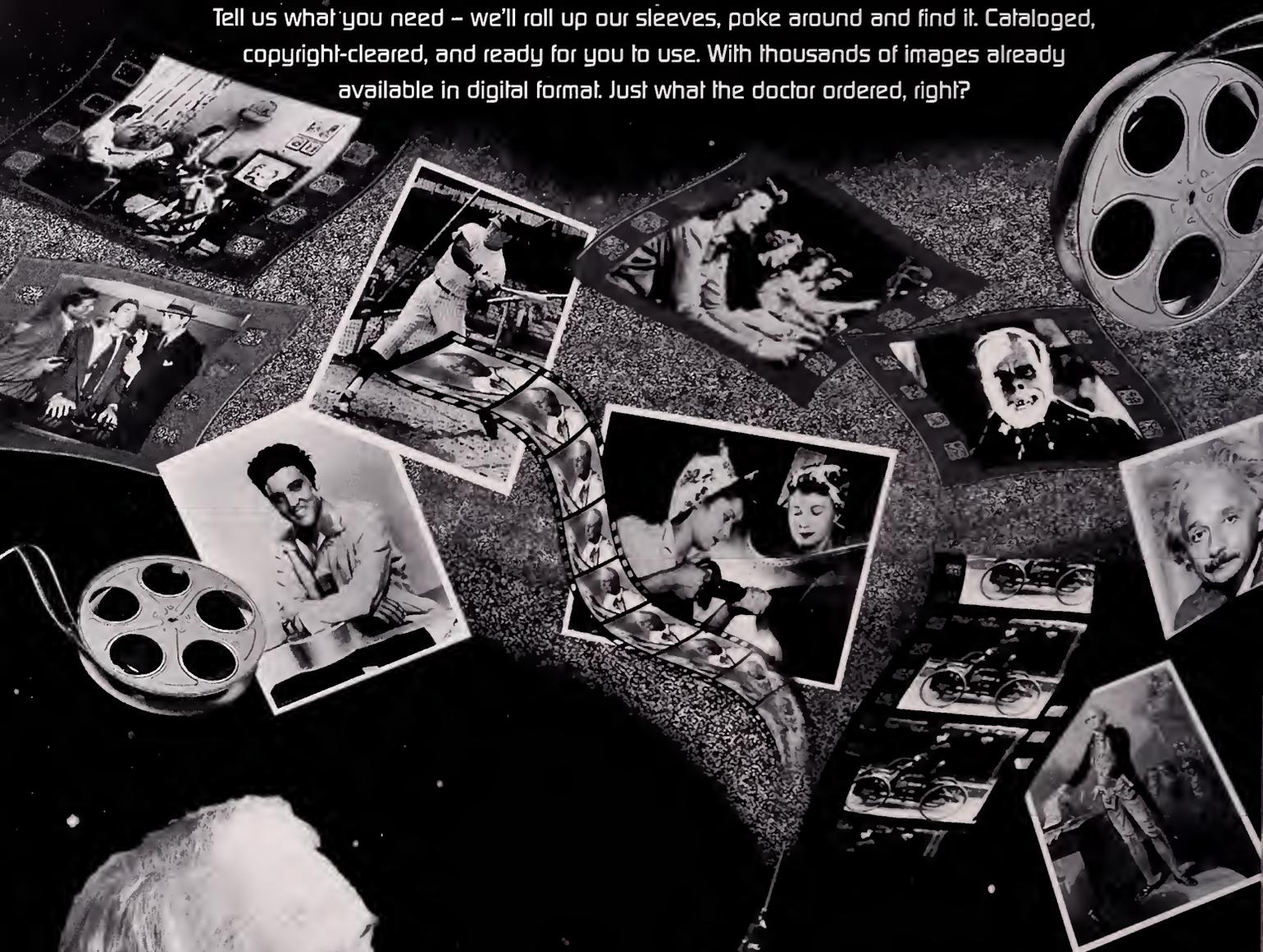


Peter Fonda in *Ulee's Gold*



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EDITED BY RYAN DEUSSING



THE NEA IS DEAD! LONG LIVE THE NEA!

Final Showdown for the National Endowment for the Arts?

"[T]he practice of art and the study of the humanities requires constant dedication and devotion [and], while no government can call a great artist or scholar into existence, it is necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent."

—*The National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, which established the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities, passed by the 89th Congress, September 29, 1965*

"We should challenge all Americans in the arts and humanities to join with their fellow citizens to make the year 2000 a national celebration of the American spirit in every community, a celebration of our common culture in the century that is past and in the new one to come in a new millennium so that we can remain the world's beacon not only of liberty but of creativity long after the fireworks have faded."

—*President William Jefferson Clinton, State of the Union Address, January, 1997*

VIRTUALLY SINCE ITS INCEPTION, THE NATIONAL Endowment for the Arts has been the focus of a debate ranging from a constructive discourse on the role of the artist in a democratic society to a squabbling free-for-all about obscenity that, at best, resembles recess on an elementary school playground. Democrats and Republicans alike have engaged in demagoguery, leaving artists to endure the unusually harsh spotlight of a public with increasingly unrealistic expectations about the creative process. Through it all, the endowment has managed at least partially to carry out its mission of bringing the arts to as many American citizens as possible. But, despite President Clinton's clarification call—the first statement of support for the agency from a high-ranking public official in nearly a year—the very existence of the NEA hangs by the thinnest possible thread. After failing for the last decade to accomplish their

Even though it's not front-page news, the NEA is again feeling the heat from conservative legislators, who keep calling up past controversies (like funding for performance artist Karen Finley and photographer Robert Mapplethorpe) in their current efforts to shoot down the agency.

Photos: Dana Ann McAdams (Finley) & Denise Dorrane



long-standing goal of eliminating the agency, conservative activists have before them a strange confluence of events that presents the most favorable environment ever in which to do just that.

Congressional Procedure

Federal law requires that every agency receiving tax money have a statute authorizing its

existence. The NEA's original 1965 authorizing legislation is quoted above. When an agency is authorized, it can receive an appropriation, that is, funding for a specific period, typically a single fiscal year (FY). When the authorization expires, appropriations are supposed to stop. In the House, if an appropriations bill reaches the floor without the corresponding authorizing legislation, any member

can formally object by raising a point of order, asking that provision be stricken or that program be eliminated because it is not authorized. This effectively tables the bill and prevents its passage. But the House Rules Committee—which establishes the procedural rules for each Congress—can send an appropriations bill to the floor with a **protected rule**. This waives the authorizing requirement by preventing points of order, allowing debate.

The NEA was last authorized for a three-year period in FY 1991, with appropriations through FY 1993. For FY '94, however, the NEA's authorizing legislation had expired, so Democrats, then the majority, gave the endowment's appropriations bill a protected rule and approved the budget. This is not uncommon; over the years both parties have used this practice to fund numerous agencies. After the Republicans gained control of Congress in 1994, they decided to phase out the endowment once and for all. But the Republicans caused a government shutdown in 1995 and the NEA appropriations bill for FY '96 was included in a huge continuing resolution. A similar situation in 1996 allowed NEA supporters to wedge NEA spending for FY '97 into an omnibus (overall) spending bill that included everything from the Pentagon to school lunches. But the Republicans agreed amongst themselves that these two years of appropriations would be the NEA's last.

Recent NEA Events

During House floor debate on June 19, 1996, Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI) attacked Cheryl Dunye's film *The Watermelon Woman* for lesbianism and "depiction of casual drug use," offering an amendment to reduce NEA funding by the amount of her grant [*The Independent*, "Faux Pas de Deux: The Watermelon Woman Is the Newest NEA Whipping Boy," October 1996]. Hoekstra's efforts were defeated, and the NEA was funded through September 1997, now a mere four months away.

When the same budget was debated by the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources on July 12, 1996, four Republican senators—Robert Bennett (UT), Thad Cochran (MS), Pete Domenici (NM), and Slade Gorton (WA)—noted in their report that "the Senate supports continued funding of the NEA and expects the authorizing



Looking for demons:
Newt Gingrich

issues to be resolved by the legislative committees in the House and Senate." With a single sentence, these Senators notified the House that, despite its belief the NEA was in its final year of funding, lawmakers would be raising the

Republicans soon went on a vociferous offensive, demonstrating that the NEA's prospects depend not so much on the battle between Democrats and Republicans, but between the House and Senate and within the Republican party itself.

issue again in the next Congress, which is now in session.

But Hoekstra soon flexed another muscle as the Chairman of the Subcommittee Oversight and Investigations, writing to NEA Chairwoman Jane Alexander several times last fall. "The Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities is charged with insuring the effective and efficient operations of the National Endowment for the Arts, that the activities of the NEA comply with all applicable laws, and that such activities are in accordance with the intent of Congress," Hoekstra wrote. He requested extensive files on dozens of NEA grant recipients, including 13 people who previously received individual artists grants and 16 organizations that received seasonal support, despite the fact that the NEA is now prohibited by law from awarding either kind of grant.

Alarmed at the letters and a December 19 *Washington Times* article that said Hoekstra's staffers were assembling a "rogue's gallery" of unpopular grant recipients, Alexander wrote to Rep. William F. Goodling (R-PA), the chairman of the Committee on Economic and Educa-

tional Opportunities, which oversees Hoekstra's subcommittee and is the NEA's reauthorizing body in the House. "I am concerned that these documents will be used out of context in a way as to embarrass the Endowment and its supporters during this critical time," Alexander stated presciently. "I am convinced that the Oversight Subcommittee may be more interested in revisiting old controversies than pursuing constructive solutions."

In January, President Clinton called for support of the arts in his State of the Union Address and requested \$136 million for the NEA in his FY 1998 budget, a 37% increase from FY '97.

Rep. Rick Lazio (R-NY), one of the "Lunch Bunch," a group of Republican moderates (including 29 who supported the NEA last year by writing Speaker Newt Gingrich) met with Alexander and planned to lobby the entire freshman class (mostly Democrats) and meet with influential lawmakers like Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), the Chairman of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, where House discussion of NEA funding starts.

On March 5, Regula's committee heard supportive testimony from opera star Denyce Graves, who grew up in an impoverished Washington, D.C. neighborhood near the Kennedy Center, which she visited for the first time through an NEA-funded program.

A Florida Deputy Sheriff also testified that an after-school, NEA-supported arts program directly corresponds to his area's marked reduction in juvenile crime. During Arts Advocacy Days on March 10 and 11, private citizens and artists like Alec Baldwin and Maya Angelou rallied to the NEA's defense. Baldwin met privately with Gingrich in what the Speaker's own staff described as a "genial conversation." Rep. Dick Armey (R-TX), a foe of the NEA since the 1980s, surprised reporters by saying Republicans lacked the 218 votes needed to kill the agency.

Alexander appeared before Regula's committee on March 13, to mostly favorable comments and questions. "The \$136 million you are requesting," Rep. David Obey (D-WI) said to Alexander, "would run the Pentagon for about five hours. That's hardly budgetary overreach." Rep. Zack Wamp (R-TN) said both private and corporate giving to the arts in his own district had declined.

"Perhaps now that the Cold War is over, we should be revisiting some of our priorities," he said. Because Wamp had spearheaded the

Republican agreement to de-fund the NEA after FY '97, his comments were a surprise. A stunned Alexander could only reply, "Wow." These combined events led to widespread speculation that the House leadership was softening its hard-line stance.

But Republicans soon went on a vociferous offensive, demonstrating that the NEA's prospects depend not so much on the battle between Democrats and Republicans, but between the House and Senate and within the Republican party itself. Angry that his statements were being interpreted to the endowment's advantage, Arney fired off a strongly worded, perfectly clear letter to Alexander on March 25. "I am writing to advise you of my intent to continue pursuing elimination of the NEA," Arney wrote. "It would be fiscally irresponsible to continue this program, which robs the poor to entertain the rich, when other programs have a much greater claim to both need and effectiveness." Given that letter, Arney's earlier comment was less a concession that Republicans faced an uphill battle than a rallying cry that his party could not take the NEA's abolition for granted. Other representatives seem to have gotten the point.

Waump's spokesperson, Dick Kopper, resoundingly denied an about-face. "Mr. Waump did not state that he was in favor of continued funding for the NEA," Kopper insists. "Rep. Waump remains opposed to the funding of the NEA. He has not—repeat *not*—changed his position." Kopper declined to elaborate on Waump's actual intent at the hearing and refused to speculate on how things would turn out for the NEA.

Gingrich, Arney, Majority whip Tom Delay (R-TX) and numerous other Republicans reiterated their goal of closing down the NEA in a news conference on April 10. "This is not about money," Gingrich said, making an indirect attack on Baldwin. "If the people who come to lobby us who are famous and rich would simply dedicate one percent of their gross income to an American endowment for the arts, they would fund a bigger system than the National Endowment for the Arts."

House appropriations hearings continued through April, and the NEA's Senate appropriations and reauthorizing committees took up the matter as well. Only Goodling's House

reauthorizing committee had not acted by the time this issue went to press. But then long-time arts advocate Rep. Sidney Yates (D-IL) does not think it will.

"The real problem is the leadership," Yates says. "Gingrich, Arney, and Delay. And the committee chairmen. Goodling is opposed. Solomon is opposed. I think Regula was looking for Gingrich not to express himself on this matter. And now he has. I doubt [Regula] will buck his leadership." Spokespersons for

does. If [Republicans] shut down the endowment on a technicality, it's going to be an extremely unpopular decision with the public," she says. Recent news coverage about Gingrich's anti-NEA stance may actually work in the agency's favor. Simon says they have been flooded with calls: "Newt's trying to shut you down?" they say," she says. "What can we do to help?"

The NEA's continuing decimation was underscored April 10 when it announced a sharply reduced slate of grants for the first complete funding cycle subject to Congressional rules preventing individual artists grants and seasonal support grants and limiting sponsoring organizations to a single application. At least two organizations targeted by conservatives in recent years, New York-based Women Make Movies and San Francisco-based Canyon Cinema, did not receive funding. Of those decisions, Simon says only "The endowment does not comment on rejected applicants." Deborah Zimmerman, Executive Director of Women Make Movies, who first read that her group was a target during the Sundance Film Festival, was out of the country and unavailable for comment.

Spokesperson Jon Brandt denied Hoekstra considered this a victory and insisted his actions were in line with his committee's oversight function. "We have only asked for information about some of these grants," he insists. "We saw some materials produced by these organizations and thought they were not appropriate. We are doing our job, which is the first serious oversight of the NEA in nearly twenty years." But pressed on the reason for that oversight, Brandt admitted "We have a long-term goal in regard to eliminating the NEA in regard to the agreement made several years ago." Brandt also says there have been no discussions about whether or not Hoekstra himself would raise a point of order in an attempt to shut down the endowment: "As far as what directions things take, I can't say."

John Doty, a legislative aide to Rep. Jerold Nadler (D-NY), a staunch NEA supporter, says even an unprotected appropriations bill is not the end of the game. "You can object to the point of order," he says, "And then that

CANYON CINEMA



Canyon Cinema's NEA funding was zeroed out in the last round, perhaps a result of the sexually suggestive titles and photo or two included in its latest catalog.

Goodling and Regula declined comment, but a spokesperson for Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-NY), who chairs the powerful Rules Committee, confirmed the Congressman's position, albeit with some wiggle room: "Currently, Mr. Solomon would abide by the rules. He would not use the protective waiver that was used in the past." Thus it seems entirely possible that the actions of a single member could end discussion of NEA funding for this Congressional cycle.

NEA spokesperson Cherie Simon agrees the NEA is vulnerable to this action but says it would come back to haunt Republicans. "There have been all kinds of ordinary people, business leaders, mayors, school superintendents, law enforcement officials, meeting with lawmakers to explain what this agency really

has to be voted on." Overriding it, however, would take a majority: 218 votes, the same number Republicans are trying to get to kill the endowment forever. Nadler himself expressed his anger at the opposition when 17 representatives who form part of a bipartisan coalition appeared immediately after Gingrich's news conference to defend the NEA. "These attacks are outdated and irrelevant—and some are blatantly false," Nadler said about a series of hostile "Dear Colleague" letters listing hot-button grants and being circulated by conservatives. "To argue that we must eliminate the NEA on the basis that some past grants were controversial is absurd. It's like calling for the elimination of funding for cancer research because a few grants did not result in a cure."

But Yates understands the attacks. "It's apparently one of the bases for the conservative philosophy. They've always been opposed to art," he said. "But they're not going to eliminate the Navy because of Tailhook, or the Army because of the Aberdeen proving ground." Yates is working on strategy with colleagues but admits the confluence of the expired authorization and the leadership's unwillingness to bend creates a big problem for the NEA. "I'm optimistic," he maintains, adding, "It will be a fight." "We've made some progress," Rep. Nadler told *The Independent*. "And some legislators are listening. But certain members of Congress think they can score political points with right-wing conservatives by calling for the elimination of the NEA. We've got to show them that more Americans want federal funding for the arts."

The NEA's Long-Term Future

One absolute certainty is this: Continued funding of the NEA is as horrific to some Republicans as the whole-scale elimination of the NEA is to some Democrats. But, given the current political and budgetary climate, both goals are somewhat untenable in the long run. If they eliminate the NEA, House Republicans might think they have succeeded in halting "government-financed obscenity." But the nonprofit arts sector would virtually disappear if forced to compete with the much-vaunted, \$9 billion, free-market industry Republicans are so fond of citing.

The resulting elimination of popular programs is something for which Republicans would not like to be blamed. But for the Democrats and moderate Republicans to keep alive an agency that is continually forced to butcher its grant-making process under the

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rubric of free expression and liberal nobility is no great favor to the artistic community either: it is still another form of censorship, regardless of how lightly the budget ax falls.

The terms of the debate over public funding of the arts have permanently shifted, and that might not be such a bad thing. What is truly needed is a permanent solution to this recurring stream of bickering, posturing, and last-minute compromise that satisfies no one. In this writer's view, the only real, long-term answer is a massive infusion of capital—public and private—into an arts agency that becomes completely independent of the government in both funding and oversight. What better way to meet President Clinton's State of the Union Address challenge than to make the NEA a freestanding, self-sustaining, nonprofit organization that is not impeded by political pandering or hindered by limited resources?

The Congress should immediately move to give the endowment a one-time infusion of \$500,000,000 over the next three years, leading into the first year of the new century. The endowment would be required to match these funds dollar for dollar from the private sector. Of course, current law prohibiting federal employees from soliciting funds for government agencies would have to be changed so endowment officials could engage in the necessary fundraising. And the endowment would have to be re-chartered as a public, nonprofit foundation, creating a new mission statement and bylaws and filing for IRS tax exemption. (Perhaps that would finally be something on which even all Republicans could agree.)

By the year 2001, the National Endowment for the Arts—perhaps renamed but certainly much-empowered—would stand firmly on its own as an independent foundation with one billion dollars in capital. It would be free from partisan bickering and would have the challenge, which all other arts organizations now face, of managing its own resources to ensure its survival. Arts organizations of all stripes, particularly nonprofit enterprises and youth-oriented programs, which would suffer egregiously should the agency be eliminated, would be bolstered in untold ways. The endowment would be in a position to fund commercially viable works of art, most notably feature-length films, books, and plays, that could actually return revenues to the pot and fund even more work. Preposterous? Perhaps, but certainly less so than the simplistic alternatives repeatedly bantered about. It's not as simple as abolishing the NEA or securing ever-increased funding. The NEA's own embattled history proves that

neither "side" is likely to "win" any time soon. Perhaps it's time for all parties to work together to find a way so that, when the dust settles, everyone is still standing.

You Can Make a Difference

Call your Representative and Senator immediately. The Capitol switchboard, (202) 224-3121, can connect any call to any lawmaker. Insist on speaking with the Legislative Aide for NEA matters. If you get voice mail, indicate your support for the NEA, leave your name and telephone number, and request a call back. Influential players in the NEA debate are also listed in the Advocacy section of the AIVF Web site at www.aivf.org.

MARK HUISMAN

Mark Huisman is a New York-based independent producer.

Everything You Wanted to Know about Being a Production Assistant, but Were Afraid to Ask

ANYONE WHO TOOK HIS OR HER FIRST STEP into film production as a production assistant, or PA, knows that the position offers little compensation, even less rank, and overwhelming responsibility. Without fail, you're expected to go where (and do as) you're told, ask smart questions, and remember the answers.

Sandy Curry's *Production Assistant Guidelines* is a boon for would-be PAs. However, those who have

a copy of this little red book may discover that they aren't PAs for long; they'll soon be production managers and assistant directors.

In her introduction to the palm-sized manual, Curry notes, "Production Assistants are the essential ingredient for moving all this material and all these people. The rest of us are completely dependent on you. Anybody who treats you as though you're disposable just doesn't get it."

Those words sound as if they could have been written by a PA, and they were: Curry, a production manager on commercial shoots,



began her career 10 years ago as a PA when she was responsible for a bus of 46 extras destined for a Wheaties spot.

Curry says the guide is designed to help both PAs and their production managers. "On the high pressure of a shoot day, no one can take the time to explain why things are done, and as a result some PAs are criticized without knowing why," she says.

"The 'green' PAs are really grateful," says Curry. "Grips and gaffers read it and say they wished they had something like it when they were PAs."

While the book isn't much larger than an index card, it contains a glut of invaluable information. From the big picture (Q: Who does a PA work for? A: Everybody) to the facts that build the business (write down what you're told, know the names of everybody on set), Curry outlines not only what's expected of a PA (everything from setting up craft service to taking the exposed film to the lab), but how to meet those expectations. The 42-page guide also contains infinitesimally detailed shoot-day and rental vehicle checklists as well as a list of things the crew never wants to hear from a PA (number one: "Nobody told me...").

Curry admits that PAs who already have done a year's worth of PA time are less likely to be excited by the how-to-do pamphlet. By then, they already know the answers to frequently asked questions like, "Why do the PAs eat last?" As Curry explains on page 21, the answer is a matter of money, not rank: The crew is being paid on the clock until the last crew member goes through the food line. "That's the kind of stuff you don't have time to detail when on the job," she says.

With nearly 400 copies sold via word-of-mouth and a mention in *Film Crew* magazine, Curry's already getting requests for the sequel. "Somebody suggested I write the production coordinator guidelines," says Curry. "I've gotten calls from people asking, 'I'd like to order the grip book and the gaffer book.' She laughs, "I tell them, 'Honey, if I had them, I'd send them to you.'

To order *Production Assistant Guidelines*, send check or money order for \$6 plus \$1 shipping & handling (plus \$.50 if you live in New York State) for each book to either: AIVE, 304 Hudson, NY, NY 10013; (212) 807-1400 x. 235, or Sandy Curry, 333 Berry St., Brooklyn, NY 11211-5113. For information regarding discount rates and rush orders call (718) 387-1251 or visit www.paguidelines.com.

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Dana Harris writes for The Hollywood Reporter.



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SCOTT SAUNDERS

director

THE HEADHUNTER'S SISTER

BY DANA HARRIS

WHEN TALKING ABOUT MOVIES, "FLUIDITY" OFTEN sounds like a nice way of saying a film looks pretty but doesn't have a plot. That's certainly not the case with Scott Saunders' *The Headhunter's Sister*, but what makes the movie so memorable is—well, its fluidity. If it weren't for the close-ups, you might believe that someone made this compelling and disturbing film by planting hidden cameras on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Some of that realism stems from Saunders' screenwriting process, which included more than a year of discussion and improvisation with the film's lead as well as incorporating many of the actors' personal experiences. But what really sets *The Headhunter's Sister* apart is what happened when it came time to shoot: Saunders turned on his Betacam and let the tape roll and roll and roll.

The result is a film that observes the life of Ray, a headhunter—that is, an employment recruiter—who evades responsibility for anything larger than what he can carry in his back pocket. He recently married a woman who speaks only Spanish and makes her living as a phone-sex operator, and his best friend is a functioning heroin addict. While the characters sound like refugees from a film by the Coen brothers, Saunders makes their bumper-car culture clashes seem almost documentary.

It's a visit by Ray's sister (who gives the film its title) that provides the viewer entree, but it's the flexibility of Saunders' video camera that provides the film with much of its verité energy. Saunders says that while budget was one of the factors that led him to shoot on tape and transfer to film, he was also attracted to video



Courtesy filmmaker

for aesthetic reasons.

Not long after Saunders moved to New York in 1985, he saw a program of video shorts by George Kuchar that redefined his filmmaking perspective. "They were edited in camera," says Saunders. "The cassette determined the piece. It achieved a kind of filmmaking that was entirely different and very spontaneous." Inspired, Saunders began shooting super 8 and Hi8 shorts as if they were sprints—each shoot was completed in 30 minutes or less. "I went to midtown and shot people, movement, face and motion studies," says Saunders.

With these rapid-fire shorts came a screening facility to match: FilmCrash, a filmmakers' collective composed of Saunders and fellow filmmakers Karl Nussbaum and founder Matthew Harrison (*Rhythm Thief*). "It was totally uncurated," says Saunders. "We packed a lot of people into a tiny space and would show any film that walked in the door. Everyone was wondering what was next, including us."

With FilmCrash screenings scheduled every six weeks, Saunders discovered that he had more than a home for his shorts: he had a deadline. "We had to have a film in every show. Sometimes I'd finish the movie as the audience came in and throw it across the room to Karl.

Everyone saw it for the first time at the same time."

However, the only way Saunders could screen his work was by transferring it to film. "I liked being able to shoot video, and we only had a film projector," he says. "I had to find a way to bring to the two together."

He experimented with the most rudimentary of tape-to-film transfers—shooting on Hi8, playing back the edited tape on a television, and pointing a film camera at the screen to capture the results. Later, he worked with a lab to develop a more refined transfer process. Saunders discovered that the technique they developed—one that he doesn't want to describe in too much detail—allowed him to have the flexibility and affordability of videotape with much of the polish that comes from film.

His first film to use this technique was an experimental piece called *The Beating Chamber*. Saunders was pleased with the results, but the high quality of the transfer seemed to have an inverse effect on the film and video communities. "Film people looked down on it, and video people felt betrayed," says Saunders.

Nonetheless, he decided he'd use the process to shoot his first feature, *The Lost*

Words (1994). "It became clear that to raise money to shoot film as a first-time director would take a very long time," he says. The film went on to play many festivals and was picked up by Headliner Releasing for distribution moments before the company went under. However, Saunders self-distributed the film and began working on the story that became *The Headhunter's Sister*.

Given the flexibility video afforded the production, Saunders was able to request a great deal of improvisation over the 12-day shoot. "I knew the script would change as it was shot," he says. "The actors could indulge ideas, and in some scenes every take is different."

With a surplus of material, it took Saunders a year to edit the film. "It was an editing nightmare, but it was like collecting material for a documentary. I was interested in how the story would emerge out of the situation."

While the film is an impressive achievement technically as well as artistically, Saunders says he's been cautioned to play down "the video issue." "There's a perceived quality," he says. "Some people have the idea that the sanctity of the film form should not be violated."

While Saunders certainly disagrees with that notion, he's quick to admit video's limitations. "Video isn't a substitute for film; you have to treat it differently or it's going to be bad," he says. "I know how to make it look good, but it limits the palette. There is a pure formal beauty about film that you cannot create in video. I'd like to make a film that has a slower visual beauty, and I don't think that can work in video. Still, I think that as video technology gets better, the line between film and video will vanish."

For now, Saunders' film-video hybrid is making the festival circuit as he looks for a distributor. And he still measures his words when people ask him, "What did you use?"—a question recently posed by a Kodak representative who also happened to be the host of the dinner Saunders was eating during the Berlin Film Market.

So, Saunders told the truth. "I said we used Kodak," he says. "That's what it's printed on."

Scott Saunders, 631 11th St. #12A, NY, NY 10009; (212) 420-1097; fax: 420-1206.

Dana Harris covers international film for The Hollywood Reporter. She is the former managing editor of The Independent.



NEIL LaBUTE

writer/director

IN THE COMPANY OF MEN

By MITCH ALBERT

NEIL LABUTE'S *IN THE COMPANY OF MEN* IS A fetid little burst of poison that unfolds at a deceptively laconic pace. LeBute's debut feature smokes out the psychopathology of everyday male life, especially as it plays itself out in

ence. When the two are assigned to a Midwestern town for a six-week tour of duty, Chad proposes they divert themselves from the tedium of the office by selecting a naïve young woman to jointly seduce and abandon ostensibly in retribution for the shoddy ways women have treated them in the past. Howard, passive and pressured to comply, agrees. A pretty, deaf, and emotionally vulnerable temp (Stacy Edwards) becomes their target, but the cruelty demonstrated by this plan is only a hint of even deeper hatreds.

So who is the storyteller responsible for this layered depiction of malevolence? LaBute, 34,



Photo: Francois Dischinger

the office between predators and putzes. The lead culprit is an executive whose inhumanity appears casual and whose mind games are just one more detail slotted in between departmental meetings and power lunches. The film has it in for men in general and company men in particular. Even so, Sony Classics picked up after it set audiences buzzing at the Sundance and New Directors/New Films festivals.

Chad (Aaron Eckhart) is a manipulative young buck muscling his way to a top slot in the firm, but he's second to Howard (Matt Malloy), a milquetoast manager prone to Chad's influ-

is an Indiana-based husband and father of two who counts New York University and Brigham Young University as alma maters. Theater is LaBute's first love, which he currently teaches at St. Francis College in Ft. Wayne. He has staged many productions in addition to receiving a fellowship to the Royal Court Theater in London and a stint at the Sundance Institute Playwrights Lab.

In the Company of Men is "an exaggeration," he says, because "everything is to the side of drama. You paint in broad strokes to serve the story." Nevertheless, LaBute knows the details,

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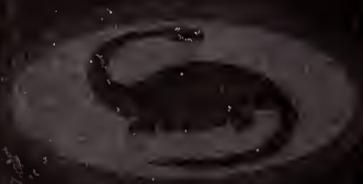
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having put in his fair share of white-collar hours in New York and Chicago and gotten "a good taste of corporate culture" from a father, brother, and friends who are in the life. (Tellingly, LaBute, whose wife is a therapist, also spent a lot of time working on psychiatric wards in state hospitals.)

"I think [the corporate environment] creates a very difficult dynamic for a human being," LaBute says. "When I was going to NYU, I lived in Westchester, and I'd ride home on the train at 11:00 at night. I'd see men and women coming home, and you just know they'd been in the city since morning. I mean, they're putting in 15 hours out of 24 immersed in this culture, which basically proclaims things like, 'Never lose control,' and 'Watch your back.'"

LaBute says he's fond of characters who obsessively attempt to stay top dog at any cost. Chad, the more sociopathic of the two execs, often stands with his back to the camera and wears sunglasses constantly.

"When you don't have that valuable tool of looking in someone's eyes, you just have to accept what they say, and that's a very dangerous game to play," LaBute explains. "It's that whole business again of spending so much time going for broke toward a certain set of goals that don't necessarily include the human factor. To morph into a different kind of person on the way home from Grand Central, to become someone who can come home and lose arguments and be gentle and giving, is a difficult transition for many people. You begin to use tactics that have worked successfully in business on your personal relationships."

In the Company of Men became possible after friends of the director received a windfall insurance settlement from a car accident. LaBute persuaded them to sink money into his screenplay. While he had several other screenplays ready and waiting, he pulled out *In the Company of Men* because "it was the script that [called for] the fewest number of actors to house. I cut my neighbors' lawn all summer so I could use their home for the actors while they were on vacation. I was swinging those kinds of deals, because at a certain level, everything is economics. You try to disguise it as artistry and hope that people think, 'Oh, that's the way they wanted it to be.' That's the great trick in independent filmmaking, and it worked out well for me because I'm a minimalist anyway."

LaBute says he organized his shots carefully in order to minimize the amount of postproduction work the film would require. It was another effort to balance art and economics. "I

knew that if I could make a picture that needed less editing, I'd have a better chance at getting it done and getting it out there," he says. "Hopefully it works in tandem with what the film is saying. I tried to cut away without establishing shots. I don't think I have one insert in the entire film, or if I do, you see the people in them. It's not like, 'Here's the outside of Roseanne's house, in case you've forgotten.' These characters move so little; these guys are absolutely the center of their universe."

The film builds up to not one but two horrific humiliations, but because its malevolent centerpiece involves a woman, LaBute has had to contend with charges of misogyny. "Some of [those] remarks really amuse me," he says, "because I think the film is so far toward feminism that if a woman had made it, she'd be stoned for having written this polemic against men. I don't think there is a male character in the film who is particularly good. The people who react with a knee-jerk see 'two guys playing cat and mouse with a woman equals misogyny.' It's certainly more profound than that. She's really nothing more than a device."

LaBute is used to fielding barbs from people uncomfortable with his writing, having launched productions as a student that furrowed some brows. "[Brigham Young] has the biggest pool of acting talent I've ever seen. But there is an incredibly narrow vision in terms of what one can say artistically there; they really don't believe that by showing something bad you can get to something good, so you often run the risk of the message and the messenger getting confused."

The filmmaker recalls that the "heated" atmosphere at NYU's Graduate Dramatic Writing Program didn't encourage any greater artistic freedom than at the Mormon-run school in Utah. "Everyone was so militant, whether they were militantly lesbian or militantly Republican," he says. "They had no qualms about telling you what they thought of your particular leanings. But I rarely give a clean idea of how I feel. I much prefer that Eric Rohmer approach—just setting it out there, so folks can make their own decisions. That can frustrate a certain kind of person."

"One instructor pulled one of my plays from being done because it was about AIDS and had these cynical, ambivalent people discussing it, and I took no ground. He took me into his office and complained that there was 'no payoff.' He said, 'You're jerking us off

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and not letting us come.' It was one of those rare moments of clarity for me. I said, 'Well, I'm doing the jerking, but you're going to have to come on your own.' I don't think he ever spoke to me the rest of the two years I was there."

Mitch Albert is a New York-based writer and editor, whose leanings toward documentary filmmaking and the study of Oriental medicine have persuaded him that life is too short.

©
**REBECCA GUBERMAN &
 JENNIFER JAKO**

video activists

BLOOD LINES

BY HEATHER VON ROHR



Jennifer Jako(l) and
 Rebecca Guberman
 Photo. Gus Van Sant

AT A SOLD-OUT ROCK SHOW IN PORTLAND, Oregon, a hush fell over the room as the crowd listened to the testimony of HIV-positive youth featured in Rebecca Guberman and Jennifer Jako's documentary-in-progress, *Blood Lines*. The benefit concert, held in January 1996, raised \$6,000 for their project, but it is this moment of rapt attention that stands out in Jako's mind as she describes the

event. "It was magical; probably nine hundred people, many in their teens, sitting down and watching this video silently. And they were hearing the message that this is happening to youth."

Now in their mid-twenties, both Guberman and Jako were infected and diagnosed with HIV in their late teens. Guberman's initial response was to withdraw into her anger and fear. She gradually began to express her feelings about the virus in her photography, and last year her lyrical images of blood and other body fluids won the thesis award at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Jako's diagnosis compelled her to begin speaking publicly about the disease. She has addressed groups ranging from high school students to the Seattle Supersonics, yet she, too, felt isolated. "I needed so badly to hear from someone like Rebecca, another youth who was dealing with the same issues I was."

They met in 1995 and, inspired by the connection they felt as they exchanged stories, began planning a video project. Although neither one had made a video before, they were soon scrambling for resources to shoot an ambitious portrait of a generation of youth affected by HIV. Since then they have traveled around the U.S. and Europe interviewing nearly 80 young men and women. Most are now in their twenties and were infected as teenagers, but the diversity of their backgrounds is as

important as the common threads among their stories. As the videomakers prepare to edit, a guiding idea is that "everyone in the audience should be able to identify with someone in at least a small way."

One man states the case of many who have had unsafe sex: "I just couldn't find the words to speak up for myself." For Guberman and Jako, AIDS demands that we find those words, whether it is to tell a partner to use a condom



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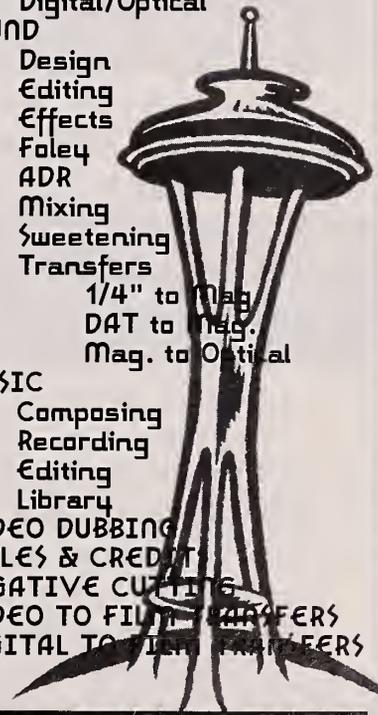
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or to tell the government to increase spending on AIDS programs. Guberman says, "This disease really has put a fist in the air and said 'fight!'—for your life, for your self-worth, for your dignity, for your race, for your values."

This call to arms also applies to the hard work of making and funding their video. Guberman notes, "We're not filmmakers. We're not fundraisers. We're definitely two crazy broads who thought we could create a full-length documentary that costs a hundred grand or so to make." It has been a struggle at times, but from the start their vision has had tremendous support from the Portland community.

Fundraising began with a phone call to a local gallery owner who contributed \$300 towards a Hi8 camera. Once they had some footage, they started organizing benefits—art auctions, concerts, yard sales—and raised nearly \$30,000. This allowed them to travel and to upgrade to digital video. Help came in other forms as well. Portland-based director Gus Van Sant shot publicity stills and wrote a letter of endorsement. The Northwest Film Center donated the use of their editing facilities, and equipment rental fees were waived or discounted by other local organizations. Nonetheless, they began to feel discouraged in the fall of 1996, when they returned from their last round of interviews exhausted and in debt.

That's when Judith Rizzio, a friend and prominent AIDS activist, decided to organize a committee to help them out. The group, which includes AIDS educators, media producers, and an accountant, is currently working with the videomakers to find completion funds and enlist the help of industry professionals as they go into postproduction. Mac Cosmetics, whose Viva Glam lipsticks raise money to support people living with AIDS, has expressed interest in the project, and Amy Duddleston, who assistant edited several of Van Sant's films, has offered to edit on a deferred basis.

Though fundraising is still underway, Guberman and Jako hope to premiere the video on AIDS Awareness Day on December 1. The finished piece will be a fluid collage of narration, interviews, artistic footage, and music by local bands. Jako says, "We want this film to feel like water, with an ebb and flow of emotion." Guberman completes the thought. "Yet at the same time—bam! bam! bam!" She punches the air. "We're gonna hit hard."

Blood Lines, Rebecca Guberman & Jennifer Jako, 625 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 337C, Portland, OR 97205-2788; (503) 497-4242.

Heather von Rohr is a writer and filmmaker living in Portland, Oregon.

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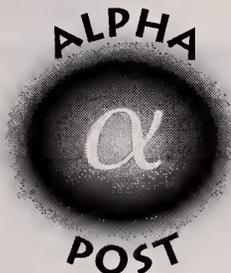
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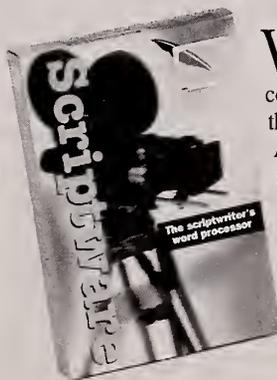
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Web TV: In Search of an Audience



NEW MEDIA FORTUNE TELLERS HAVE LONG POSTULATED the convergence of television and the PC. Finally, after a series of expensive missteps and misbegotten forays, several TV/PC products have made their way to the consumer market in the last year. For all the limitations of this current incarnation of the technology, the movement towards convergence—and all that it implies for the viewing experience of both TV and the Web—seems inevitable.

Fueled by the extraordinary hype surrounding the World Wide Web, consumer electronics companies have partnered with software developers to deliver a new product that seemed as sure-fire as it was revolutionary: Web TV. Buoyed by a lot of rhetoric about how this device would reinvent television, the manufacturers seemed to feel this was the best thing to happen to the business since the VCR—a set-top box that plugs into any television and offers a no-tech solution to consumer curiosity about the Internet. They would surf on couches, remote in hand, by the millions. Developed in 1995 by three former Apple Computer scientists, Web TV is a “convergence product” known in the trade as an Internet Appliance. Priced at around \$350, it sounds great from the marketing angle: “Internet” is a phrase most consumers have heard by now, usually shrouded in mystery and promise, while the appliance that’s being referred to, the television, is already in every home. Around this time America Online, Microsoft Network, and AT&T began airing catchy spots on television for their own on-line services. The Internet experience seemed poised for primetime.

For its initial launch, timed with the 1996 Christmas shopping season, Web TV partnered with two television manufacturers, Sony and Phillips Magnavox. Magnavox was particularly aggressive in their advertising campaign, splashing sepia-toned scenarios of Internet awe amidst the reassuring backdrop of comfortable home life and cobble-stoned Old World charm. The thrust is global connectivity, an

Internet education for the world’s children, infinite exploration by remote control. Nowhere is the fear of Web chaos aroused, the miasma of porn and make-your-own-A-bomb pages you hear so much about. Indeed, Web TV makes much of its kid friendliness: filtering software called Surfwatch is an integral part.

Curiosity is one thing; sales are another. To date 60,000 of these Internet appliances have gone into homes, according to trade reports—still a far cry from mass media. Some elements of public reluctance certainly have to do with the fact that consumers cannot want what they don’t fully understand. But another factor is

The basic problem here is that we’re talking about the Web. On TV. For all its interactivity, luminous graphics, and infinite diversity, the Web involves a lot of text, and reading on a low-resolution TV monitor is neither that pleasant nor much of a group activity.

the fact that television and the Web are two very different media, with different relationships to their viewers.

Sony hands out a 400 page paperback with the purchase of its Web TV set-top box, a fat tome that looks like a month’s worth of *TV Guide*. It lists hundreds of Web sites with thumbnail descriptions and “jump” numbers—like the kind you program into your VCR—to simplify the sometimes cryptic URL addresses common to the Web. All this seems very consumer friendly, consistent with the claims of Sony’s Web TV literature: “Rather than worrying about the Internet, now you can enjoy it...explore it and share it at your leisure, with your family and friends.”

Magnavox, the other Web TV manufacturing partner, gives it a slightly different spin in the promotional copy on their Web site: Web TV invites the viewer into the exciting, “connected” world of the Internet, “without the cost and hassle of a personal computer.” Web TV Networks’ own catch phrase, “Tune into

What You’re into,” carries on the idea that this is about specialized programming, niche-market entertainment. It rings something like the promise of 500 cable TV channels they were making a couple of years ago.

But the basic problem here is that we’re talking about the Web. On TV. For all its interactivity, luminous graphics, and infinite diversity (niche marketing taken to a mind-numbing extreme), the Web involves a lot of text, and reading on a low-resolution TV monitor is neither that pleasant nor much of a group activity. Non-computer types, when confronted with its messy sprawl, whimsical server connections, and sluggish downloads (even on the relatively fast 33.6 modems of Web TV) are sure to be stunned or stupefied. This is the Web? For an audience used to TV tempos, watching interlaced graphics resolve is not going to cut it. The comparison invited by putting TV and the Internet on the same screen is bound to reflect poorly on the Web as entertainment.

Nonetheless, some Internet functions should intrigue the television audience. Newcomers to the Internet gravitate to the sports statistics, stock prices, and news filtered and customized to their own specific interests. Email, available on Web TV, requires viewers to buy the additional keyboard, a computer artifact not everyone wants in their living room, but the “connectivity” is certainly appealing. “Interactive” programming like MTV Yaks—where chat sessions scroll under music videos—could gain broader appeal, especially if adult audiences (with presumably more to say than “cool” and “this sucks”) could be brought into the dialog for issue-oriented programs.

Ten months ago, the sites touted for their traffic, entertainment value, and—most unusual of all—their ability to generate advertising revenue were Web soap operas like *Ferndale*, *The Spot* and *The East Village*. It’s really no surprise that these sites are mod-

eled on TV, "repurposed" to the new medium, because they're in a format people understand, an episodic one that works well on the page-by-page mode of the Web. Companies like Microsoft, which has set up multimedia shops on both coasts, and AOL, whose recent hiring of former TV exec Brandon Tartikoff should tell you something, are both trying to market the Web after the television model. Microsoft talks about Web-based "shows," while AOL and others divide their content into "channels." These companies would like to see the Web become more like TV, a broadcast medium they can understand, control—and charge for.

But the economics of original content on the Web is a losing game, for the same reasons that make the Internet interesting. The incredible diversity, the boggling clutter of it all, is the Web's fascination. And some of the best sites are those made by individuals, not big companies, for no reason beyond the creators' desire to get their voices and visions out there—not unlike the motivations of independent filmmakers. But with so many sites available, viewership is obviously diluted. Advertisers like eyeballs, but the eyeballs are all over the place, roving the back alleys and distant provinces of the Internet. Now even the Web soap operas face the same problematic economics and are being forced to cut their staffs and scale back. In perverse circularity, *The East Village* is being developed as a television show.

The success of the first generation of Internet Appliances will depend on consumers finding the Web interesting enough to watch on TV. To a degree, this will rely on design and content development that takes into consideration how all this will come across on Web TV, from across the room, with all the constraints and peculiarities of this new mode of viewing. It's a chicken-and-egg problem common to new media: Can Web TV gain the market share necessary to prompt developers to design for the limitations of TV-style viewing (the kind of interface re-think required to take full advantage of the medium, where most Web sites still look, well, unwatchable)?

The irresistible pull of convergence will almost certainly continue. Software behemoth and mass media aspirant Microsoft certainly thinks so, as its recent \$425 million purchase of Web TV attests. But it's up to "content providers" (as goes the strangely antiseptic nomenclature of new media, coined by those for whom content is a necessary evil) to make the melding of these media worth the wait.

ADAM PINCUS

Adam Pincus is producer of Sundancechannel.com.

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PINCH ME, PLEASE

Documentary Rules at the Hot Docs! Film Festival

BY CHRISTINA CRATON & TIM SCHWAB

HOT DOCS!, THE CANADIAN International Documentary Festival, Awards, and Conference, is billed as North America's premier documentary event, and this year it lived up to its reputation. From March 18th to 23rd, close to 700 film- and videomakers, broadcasters, and industry professionals gathered in Toronto to screen over 100 films and videos, take part in panel discussions, make deals, and watch the increasingly famous Pitch Session, where a handful of filmmakers pitch their projects before a large audience of commissioning editors and fellow medi makers. Now in its fourth year, the festival added three international categories, accepting entries from other countries for the first time. Out of nearly 100 films in competition, 16 were from outside Canada, and five were from the U.S. There were filmmakers and commissioning editors from as far away as Iceland and Australia, as well as an official contingent from Europe. The festival is heavily industry-oriented, and deals actually do get made here. The closing night awards gala is a great indicator of how seriously Canadians take their docs: the event (coinciding with a full lunar eclipse) was staged and taped by CBC's *Newsworld* and cablecast a week later throughout Canada.

From an American perspective, one could say that documentary is alive and well and living in Canada. More than any other country, Canada is renowned for its documentary tradition, which goes back to the 1930s and the establishment of the federally funded National Film Board (NFB) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Canada also has a cultural policy that supports and promotes media with a distinctly Canadian point of view,



Annie get your gun: Wendy Rowland's *Packing Heat* looks at how the gun lobby is targeting women. Courtesy NFB



Child's play. Phillipe Baylaucq's *Lotereria* nominated for Best Doc Short. Courtesy filmmaker

with the help of organizations such as the Canada Council and Telefilm, as well as provincial agencies such as the Ontario Film Development Corporation. Documentary thrives here, and so it is not surprising that this country with a population of about thirty million hosts a festival devoted entirely to nonfiction

film.

In order to round up funding from these various government agencies, Canadian independent producers must navigate an elaborate infrastructure that includes obtaining a "guarantee" for television broadcast and the pre-selling of "windows" to broadcasters and

the rapidly multiplying specialty cable channels. As a result, documentary production in Canada, as elsewhere, has become almost completely TV driven. So while Canadian independents face problems and challenges similar to their American counterparts—funding cutbacks, changing technologies, and the demands of the ratings game—the most active Canadian producers are able to work steadily, creating large bodies of quality work and earning something approaching a

knew were “either teaching at a university or spending Aunt Bessie’s inheritance.”

The venerable National Film Board was a strong presence at the festival. The NFB continues to turn out some of the best nonfiction films seen anywhere, in both French and English, despite the fact that the organization is reeling from federal funding cuts, which have led to the closure of major programs and facilities and persistent rumors of impending death. A sampling of the NFB productions and coproductions at Hot Docs!

includes such notables as Ann Kennard’s *The Powder Room*, an often hilarious exploration of what women talk about in bathrooms, saunas, and other male-free locations; Wendy Rowland’s *Packing Heat*, a subtly balanced look at the gun lobby’s courting of women; *Les Marches de Londres* (*The Markets of London*) by Mi-reille Dansereau, a highly original and impressionistic study of love, memory, and place; and Philippe Baylaucq’s *Lodola*, a visually stunning dance/film collaboration in the tradition of the patron saint of the NFB, Norman McLaren.

One of the many pleasurable aspects of Hot Docs! is that it is one of the few festivals (INPUT is another) with the good sense to screen video entries as God intended—on quality monitors with a decent sound system rather than subjecting the audience to the blurry, headache-inducing phenomenon

too politely known as “video projection.” This means that one can actually see and enjoy visually and sonically rich video entries like Ian McLaren’s rainforest study *Secrets of the Choco*.

The film screenings were held at a multiplex several blocks from the conference site and were well-attended and well-run, although more time could have been allowed for post-screening discussions, and several filmmakers were traumatized by the dreaded “hair-in-the-gate” during projection. The videotape library was also well used and well run, and non-entrants were encouraged to submit their work so people could have a chance to screen films and videos not in competition.

The Financier’s Club, a program adapted from Rotterdam’s CineMart [see story p. 26], premiered this year with about 25 producers paying a fee of \$200 to be included in a project handbook given to buyers and to get a copy of the attending buyers roster. Hot Docs! staff then arranged meetings between the two. Initial buzz from several filmmakers indicated that they thought the Club was worth the price of admission.

There were a few recurring complaints. There was the inevitable whining about the notable lack of free food (the filmmakers attending were mostly independents, after all) and there was also grumbling from some Europeans who were baffled by Toronto’s brand new and very strict no-smoking laws. But the complaints amounted to minor grouching rather than any real unhappiness, and the festival worked surprisingly well. The result was a nice blending of panels, screenings, and parties organized by the fest’s executive director, Debbie Nightingale, with help from a core staff and plenty of committed volunteers who bent over backwards to smooth out problems and accommodate requests. The many after-hours social events were crowded, lively, and fun.

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING TO LOOK FOR TRENDS at film festivals, and there were a few in evidence at Hot Docs!. One was the multitude of films featuring stories about children and “youth at risk.” Many of these focus on young people whose lives have been shaped by the immigration experience and scarred by violence, as in Michael Kot’s *Let Freedom Ring*. The grand tradition of documentary as political rabble-rousing was also much in evidence. In *Bitter Paradise: The Sell-out of East Timor*, producer Elaine Brière takes Canadian business and government to task for their complicity in Indonesia’s brutal subjugation of that island.



Ann Kennard was nominated for Best Cultural Doc for *The Powder Room*.
Courtesy NFB



Mike Hoolboom picked up Best Experimental Short for *Letters from Home*.
Courtesy filmmaker

living, a feat most American indies only dream about. George Stoney, former NFB producer and long-time New York University professor, made note of the contrast during a panel discussion, when he said that virtually all the American documentary producers he

able aspects of Hot Docs! is that it is one of the few festivals (INPUT is another) with the good sense to screen video entries as God intended—on quality monitors with a decent sound system rather than subjecting the audience to the blurry, headache-inducing phenomenon

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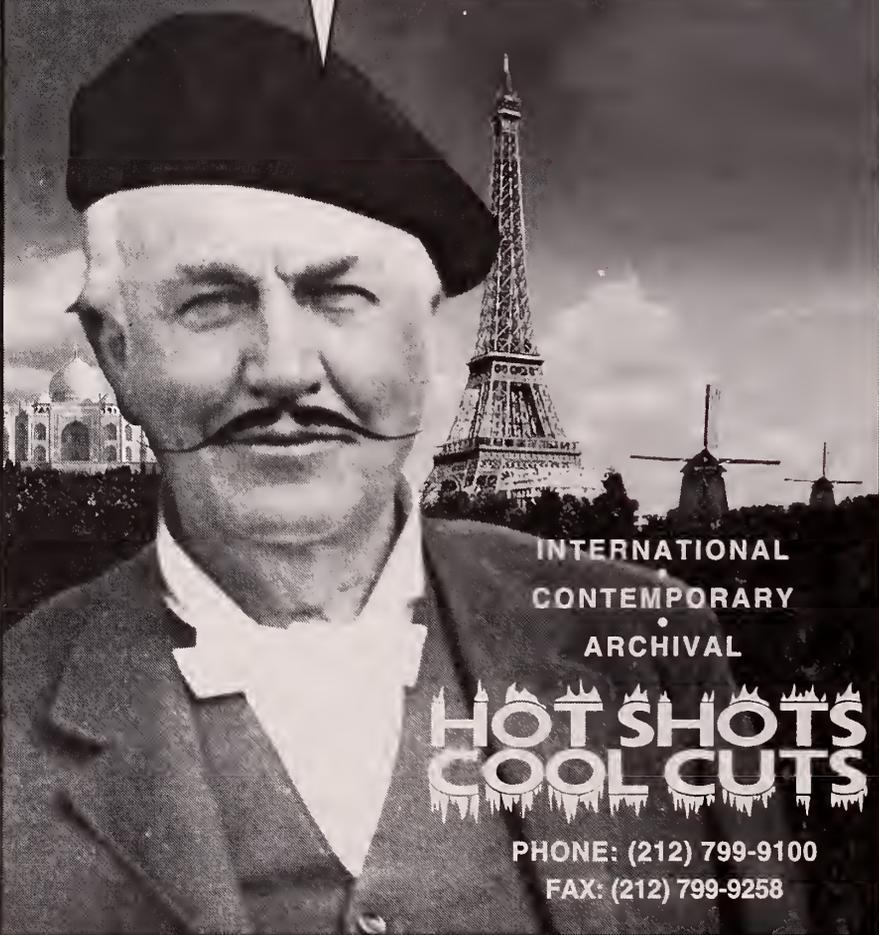
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Magnus Isacson and Glen Salzman's *Power* is an inspiring David and Goliath story documenting the Cree Nation's long and ultimately successful campaign to stop a massive hydroelectric project in northern Québec. Isacson also contributed *Le Grand Tumulte* (*The Big Upheaval*), a history of the bitter 1972 labor strikes that reshaped Québec politics. There was also a wealth of films and videos on the environment, ranging from Greg Lawrence's whimsical *Human Nature*, profiling people trying to make the world more wildlife friendly, to *The Sound and the Fury*, Halya Kuchmij's essay on noise pollution.

Entries from the U.S. included Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelincic's *Calling the Ghosts*, Mark Wexler's *Me and My Matchmaker*, and Sandra and Joseph Consentino's *Muhammed Ali: The Whole Story*; *The Burning Barrel*, by the authors; and Lasta Drachlovitch and Bob Englehardt's *Investigative Reports: Behind Bars*. Two of the five, *The Burning Barrel* and *Muhammed Ali*, won their categories.

The big winner at the festival was Yvan Patry and Daniele Lacourse's *Chronique d'un Genocide Annoncé* (*Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold*), a harrowing account of the massacres in Rwanda, that won both Best Feature Documentary and Best of Festival. The People's Choice Award went to Daniel Cross' *The Street*, which documents six years in the complex and sometimes difficult relationship between the filmmakers and their subjects, three homeless men who congregate in a Montréal subway station.

For American independent producers, *Hot Docs!* offers opportunities to see great work, meet producers and industry professionals from around the world, and deal face to face with the folks who have checkbooks—all in a great city that's within reasonable reach of the U.S. But a word of caution. If American producers hope to gain access to the funding opportunities outside the USA, they must arrive with a global perspective and a willingness to enter the complicated world of co-production.

Christina Craton and Tim Schwab of First Light Films International are independent filmmakers who recently moved from the USA to Montréal.

Their latest film, The Burning Barrel, won Best International Short at Hot Docs!, and aired on PBS stations in April.

RAIDING THE PARTY

Field Reports

Indies bust open the gates of the American Film Market

BY SHEILA GREENE

UNDER THE ATRIUM OF THE LOEWS SANTA Monica hotel, the sound of American Film Market (AFM) rises like the tide until civil conversations are shouted in an attempt to be heard above the cacophony. You can step outside for a moment's peace in the beachy air, but as soon as your ears get accustomed to the ocean air pressure the buzz returns like weak but insistent radio signals—conversation snippets drifting by and looking for somewhere to stick.

In previous years, the schmooze might have stemmed from films with titles like *Midnight Heat* and *SnakeEater III*. But in 1997, the biggest in its 17-year history, AFM repositioned itself to suit the growing international taste for quality independent films.

Initially conceived to challenge the supremacy of Cannes' annual film market, the AFM is now the world's largest motion picture trade event and (mostly) non-studio companies gather to sell titles to television and theatrical outlets worldwide. And while arthouse films like Gillian Armstrong's *The Last Days of Chez Nous* or Hal Hartley's *Simple Men* have always had an AFM presence, these were the exception. The rule was erotic thrillers, slasher pics, and Corey Feldman vehicles.

That's why the big news at the 1997 market was not the 223 films screened—the most ever at AFM—but the fact that 43 came straight from Sundance, about two-thirds of the films that premiered at the Park City festival. They included Alex Sichel's *All Over Me*, Britain's *Twin Town* (from the producers of *Trainspotting*), the award-winning *Hurricane*, Mark Pellington's *Going All the*

Tearing up the town in *Twin Town*, by Welsh director Kevin Allen, one of the arthouse films that made its way into AFM.

Photo: Paul Chedlow, courtesy Gramercy Pictures



"Our buyers still love action movies," says Shane Bitterling of Brimstone Entertainment. "But they've got to be television friendly. Buyers want quality, a great script, and names help, too." And that's where the first-rate indie product comes in.

Way, and the Parker Posey—star *The House of Yes*.

Other AFM independents included the mock-doc *Dadetown*, Danny Leiner's *Layin' Low*, Tim McCann's *Desolation Angels*, and the Seattle music documentary *Hype!*

While the growth of independent filmmaking is a contributing factor in the AFM's newly hospitable climate, another reason is the decline of the direct-to-video market.

"There's some heavy depressants on the marketplace," says Tom Moore of international distribution company Reel Movies International. Domestically, those downers include the growing number of cable TV stations and the popularity of the Internet, but the market has also been flattened by the sheer weight of too many studio films.

"Major [studios] have the power with Blockbuster," says Moore, referring to America's ubiquitous video rental chain.

"When Blockbuster buys 'A' films, that means fewer indie films can be stocked in their shelf space. And a few years ago, Blockbuster would pay \$40 for an indie film. Now it's \$25."

Today, television is the market of choice. "Since the deregulation of European television in the late eighties, there's been a great proliferation of satellite and cable stations," says Moore. Indeed, American Film Marketing Association members report that television now makes up 50 percent of their overall revenues.

With that TV sensibility comes a more conservative programming perspective, a frame of mind that requires readjustment for some AFM attendees. As Troma Entertainment's Harrison Kordestani explains drily, "You have to think about toning down graphic scenes—sex and violence—and eliminating the gratuitous ones altogether."

Not that the world movie market is going the way of Merchant-Ivory. "Our buyers still love action movies," says Shane Bitterling of distributor Brimstone Entertainment. "But they've got to be television friendly. Buyers

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want quality, a great script, and names help, too."

And that's where the first-rate indie product comes in. "Sundance films seem to be doing very well this year," says Alan Miller of distributor MLR Films International. "They haven't always gotten this kind of appreciation."

However, not even the Sundance cachet guaranteed buyers. While *Clockwatchers* arrived at the AFM as a Sundance premiere with big indie names like Toni Collette and current It-Girl Posey, the Goldcrest Films International-represented film suffered from a print that wasn't ready for early screenings as well as a tepid *Variety* review.

Other indie films sold sight unseen. Todd Haynes' (*Safe*) upcoming *Velvet Goldmine* saw its North American rights snapped up by Miramax before a single frame was shot and Lakeshore Entertainment's *Homegrown*, starring Billy Bob Thornton and now in postproduction, was being courted by distributors as well.

Curiously, these (presumably) high-quality low-budget films have also required a change in buyer behavior. "A good indie film requires sitting down and watching," says Rafael Guadalupe of distributor Arrow Films International. "This year buyers are spending more time viewing films—they used to be quicker to the trigger, to say 'yea' or 'nay.' That change in pace is good for independent films, because so many of them don't have the big names that cause quicker decisions. Fortunately, buyers have figured out that a good film is a good film even when there's no one known in them."

Other companies are exploiting this advantage even further. Amazing Movies makes its bread and butter representing international rights to films like *Switchblade Sisters*, which received its U.S. theatrical rerelease in 1996 from Quentin Tarantino's Miramax-bankrolled *Rolling Thunder*.

"We realized that a market niche was opening up in the gay and lesbian arthouse and cult status films," says Doug Witkins of Amazing Movies and Picture This Entertainment. "We believed the audiences would be there and we decided we wanted that business, so we started Picture This."

With eight titles at the AFM, Picture This received attention for films like *Isle of Lesbos*, fresh from the Berlin International Film Festival. "There are still opportunities to be found," says Witkins.

The indie influx turned AFM rookie

Lakeshore International into a major player. Minted in October 1996 as the in-house foreign sales, acquisition, and distribution division of Paramount-based Lakeshore Entertainment, Lakeshore represented *Homegrown* as well as Tom DiCillo's new film, *The Real Blonde*. The company also acquired both *Dreams with the Fishes* and *Going All the Way* at Sundance and sold several foreign territories at the AFM.

However, despite the currently healthy state of independent film, some AFM veterans sounded a cautionary note. "The market is really volatile," says Troma's Kordestani. "I was looking through an old mailing list, and so few of those production or distribution companies are here anymore. Right now, there's a glut of A-list titles from the studios, and there's a prevailing belief that anyone who can get their hands on a nice camera can make an independent film, and a lot of them aren't very good and aren't going to sell."

Despite its unofficial reign as the King of Tacky, Troma stands as part of the AFM's old guard. The company that brought the world *The Class of Nuk'em High* and *Surf Nazis Must Die!* trotted out miniskirted "Tromettes" and a living, breathing Toxic Avenger to ensure that their prominently located suite attracted attention.

Nonetheless, their most impressive schtick was a newfound attention to quality films. "The Troma name means films have certain elements that our fans look for, and Troma isn't going to stop being what we've been successful at," says Kordestani. "But we've also recognized that there's an up market for quality films, so we've started another label."

That label is 50th Street Films, and its first target is period pieces and arthouse films. Posters for *Young Goodman Brown* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* were displayed side by side with *Tromeo and Juliet*, *Cannibal: The Musical*, and the upcoming *Killer Condom*.

But is this passion for quality a serious uptick in the AFM aesthetic, or is it just another fad destined to go the way of the "artsploitation" and genre films of previous years?

"There's a real appreciation for quality films now that just wasn't always there," says Guadalupe. "American audiences are becoming sophisticated enough to enjoy a beautiful foreign film with subtitles or a film festival winner. That makes me happy because I love good films. And it's very good for business."

Sheila Greene is a freelance writer and the producer of Ramming Speed, which recently premiered at the USA Film Festival in Dallas.

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Field Reports

ROTTERDAM'S CINEMART

Creating the Template for
Film Financing Events

BY WANDA BERSHEN

THE ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL has the deserved reputation of being one of the most user-friendly festivals on the circuit. What's more, it actively supports independent film from much of the Third World, as well as America and Europe. Having celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1996, this year's event (held January 29 to February 9) marks two debuts: that of a new director, Simon Field, former head of the film program at London's Institute of Contemporary Art; and a new location, the dazzling Pathé multiplex recently erected on the centrally located Schouwbergplatz.

Following the dictates of its visionary founder, Hubert Bals, the Rotterdam festival and its concurrent Cinemart not only continue the event's staunch support of filmmakers working with limited resources, volatile political topics, and stylistic experimental aesthetics, but also address in an integrated and unique manner film's connected stages of development, production, distribution, and exhibition.

The widely imitated Cinemart is a five-day whirlwind of meetings, seminars, receptions, and late-night moderated discussions with filmmakers. The market showcases approximately 40 projects in stages ranging from script to postproduction. Attending the Cinemart allows a producer or director the chance to accomplish in one week what would otherwise take many months. A month prior to the market, a catalog with vital information on each of the selected projects is mailed out to participants—most importantly, to the many buyers who attend. By doing extensive pre-festival preparation, it's possible to fill your five-day schedule with back-to-back meetings with the army of buyers, commissioning editors, financiers, and producers looking for new work.

That group grows every year. This time around, the U.S. had company representatives from Strand Releasing, Turbulent Arts, Good



Strolling the Schouwbergplatz, ground zero for the Cinemart. Courtesy Rotterdam Cinemart

Machine, International Film Circuit, the Independent Feature Project, the Independent Television Service, as well as Miramax, HBO, Orion, Fine Line, and Samuel Goldwyn. Many of the major European buyers, sales agents, and producers now come regularly to the Cinemart. This year one could find reps from Germany's ZDF, WDR, and Arté (German and French), Polygram International, BBC, Channel 4, British Screen, Canal Plus, Celluloid Dreams, Ateliers de Cinema Européen (Paris), as well as numerous mid-sized production companies from all corners of the globe. Total accredited guests at Rotterdam this year numbered 1,400, a 20 percent increase over 1996.

As part of its integrated approach to media, funds are awarded each year for the development of new film projects from the Third World. (These awards are offered by the Hubert Bals Fund, a private fund with money from the Dutch Ministry of Development, and from some private companies that invest in developing countries.) Over the past six years, the Hubert Bals Fund has contributed to 154 projects. Half have been completed, including some of the most impressive and international-

ly successful films of recent years, such as *The Silences of the Palace* (Moufida Tlatli), *Bab El-Oued City* (Merzak Allouache), *Postman* (He Jianhun) and *Po Di Sangui* (Flora Gomes), to name only a few. Films made with Hubert Bals funds are given their world premieres at Rotterdam. With \$600,000 at its disposal per year, the fund's stated objective (also part of official Dutch government policy) is "to promote the advancement of independent film industries in developing countries...and to support...productions characterized by artistic excellence which positively influence the image of Third World countries."

The most recent expansion of these policies is the Tiger Awards, introduced in 1995 and sponsored by VPRO, one of the Dutch public television organizations. Three cash prizes of \$10,000 are awarded to completed works by new filmmakers (chosen from 125 entries). Over the past couple of years, the beneficiaries have ranged from veteran indie directors like Mani Kaul (India), Clara Law (Hong Kong), and John Greyson (Canada) to newcomers Amir Karakulov for *Last Holiday* (Kazakhstan), Patrick Keillor for *Robinson in*

Space (UK), and Hong San-Soo for *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well* (South Korea), winners of the 1997 Tigers.

While Third World filmmakers are singled out for some awards, U.S. independents have also fared well at this event. Cinemart success stories among North Americans include *Heavy* (James Mangold), *Calendar* (Atom Egoyan), *Trees Lounge* (Steve Buscemi), and *Celluloid Closet* (Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman).

Talking to participants in this year's Cinemart revealed a wide range of expectations and results—and notably few disappointments. Tony Gerber, with a background in TV production and shorts for downtown theater (most recently *Rent*), came with a script, *Side Streets*. He started down the long road to his first low-budget feature with \$15,000 from the New York State Council on the Arts and the sale of his mother's car. The script consists of five New York stories set in different ethnic neighborhoods, which he plans to weave together in a manner resembling Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*. Initially able to finance one section as a short, called *Small Taste of Heaven*, about a Romanian butcher in Queens, he took this to the No Borders section of the IFP Market in September 1996 and was subsequently invited to the 1997 Cinemart. At that point, he asked Bruce Weiss (producer for Hal Hartley and Bruce Beresford) to work on the project. Together they were able to get commitments from several major stars (Irene Jacob, Shashi Kapoor, Shabana Azmi), find some equity financing from U.S. investors, and make a couple of pre-sales to foreign territories. Gerber and Weiss made some valuable new contacts at Cinemart and expect to have full financing in place by spring, with plans to shoot by summer.

Melvie Arslanian is another American independent who came to the Cinemart pitching her first feature-length film: *Tabula Rasa*, a story of two half-sisters rebelling against their father's carefully constructed double life. Arslanian's prior credits include several shorts that were made during the eighties and well received on the festival circuit. Having taken several years to write three scripts as well as raise her kids, Arslanian arrived at the Cinemart with \$500,000 in place and partnerships with director Atom Egoyan's company in Canada and producer Ruth Waldberger's Vega Films in Switzerland. Having come away with potential coproduction partners from Belgium and Germany and a host of excellent contacts, Arslanian is now interested in finding a good U.S. producer to help her take the film to the

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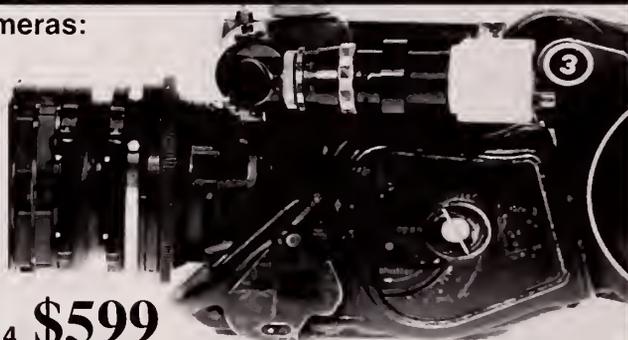


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production stage. Cinemart was an excellent re-immersion into the production world for Arslanian, who found the event well organized, with a friendly and helpful staff to facilitate introductions and meetings.

For veteran Iranian theater and film director Bahram Beyzaie, forbidden to work in Iran since 1991, the Cinemart is an essential step in connecting with partners and financing outside of Iran. Beyzaie was previously awarded Hubert Bals funding, and his earlier films were very well received internationally. His latest script, *Maqsad*, was selected for the Cinemart, and he came accompanied by Istanbul producer Behrooz Hashemian and the Amsterdam-based Film Company. *Maqsad* received verbal guarantees for half of its \$1 million budget, as well as coproduction offers and considerable interest from a couple of leading sales agents. Beyzaie and his producers expect to complete financing by the time of the Cannes film festival in May.

The high rate of success for Cinemart projects is a function of both the level of talent among applicants and the highly competitive selection process. Submissions run between 250 and 400 per year. Cinemart co-directors Wouter Barendrecht and Janette Koukema find many more intriguing projects than can be included, but have kept the selections down to 40 in order to maintain the Cinemart's focus and efficiency.

As an American at the Cinemart, I was struck by the genuine internationalism, the quality of projects, and the caliber of people both buying and selling. There's no glitz here, no big stars or fancy parties. Rather, there's an enormous number of people working very hard to get films made and exhibited—notably work by young directors with little or no track record, by directors in difficult political circumstances, and by producers from small countries (like Slovenia and Turkey) with even smaller resources. The number of young directors from all parts of Asia, Indonesia, North Africa, and the Middle East is truly impressive (although the likelihood of an American seeing their work without crossing the Atlantic is unfortunately slim).

So here we have Holland, a country the size of New Jersey, generating an extraordinary amount of energy, cash, and professional expertise not only on behalf of Dutch professionals, but for those members of the international film community who may not yet have access to the resources available in Europe or in the U.S. (In fact, material and cultural aid given together are part of official Dutch government policy.)



New festival director Simon Field, formerly of London's ICA.
Courtesy Rotterdam Cinemart

In addition to the Tiger Awards and Hubert Bals Fund, there is funding available from HIVOS, a private Dutch fund that sponsors cultural projects in developing countries and believes media projects are an important aspect of that work.

What's wrong with this picture? Why is Rotterdam's Cinemart (and every other European market) full of American independents desperate for funding? How is it that most of the developed world regards culture (including media production) as an integral part of economic development and national identity, while recent cultural policy in the U.S. is characterized by virulent attacks against the existence of public television and pressure to eliminate Federal funds for arts and humanities (always less per person than in any other developed country).

In the U.S., the three organizations currently trying to address some of the goals of the Cinemart receive few public dollars (in contrast to the Cinemart), relying largely on funds from private individuals, corporate donations, fees to participants, and some foundation support. The Sundance Institute,

probably the largest and most visible, works primarily with feature films on the low end of industry budgets. The 25-year-old IFP holds an annual market in New York City for features, documentaries, and shorts, attracting a sizable slate of buyers, producers, and distributors. Two years ago they introduced the No Borders market-within-the-market (as a formal collaboration with the Cinemart) to facilitate individual meetings between selected filmmakers and potential buyers.

The newest player on the scene is the four-year-old International Film Financing Conference (IFFCON), conceived by two independent producers, Wendy Braitman and Michael Ehrenzweig, on their way home from Rotterdam in 1993. Also

modelled after the Cinemart, IFFCON is specifically designed to help U.S. and Canadian producers connect with international dollars. The three-day event in San Francisco has attracted reps from HBO, Miramax, and Turner Productions, as well as major French, German, Canadian, British, and several Asian companies.

American Independent film and video is often perceived abroad as a highly refreshing change from the steady stream of American popular media that dominates foreign screens. Most European public TV has quotas limiting such programming, in order to protect their national media industries. Perhaps it is time for those controlling the public purse strings in the U.S. to recognize the indie production sector as one of America's strongest resources for global goodwill and to pony up some cash to support that effort. We could even call it a Dutch Treat.

Wanda Bershen was director of the broadcast archive and international film festival at the Jewish Museum from 1989 to 1995. She established Red Diaper Productions in 1995 to work with international film and TV as an independent curator, distributor, production consultant, and writer.

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**Festival Chief
Angela Haardt Ankles After
Seven Years at the Helm**

BY KAREN ROSENBERG



ANGELA HAARDT, THE OUTGOING DIRECTOR of the International Short Film Festival in Oberhausen, Germany, has done much to promote this disadvantaged form since she assumed

office in January, 1990. Rather than envisioning short film as a small feature, Haardt has defended it as a genre with a range of possibilities. Because it is generally noncommercial, filmmakers who employ it can be more radical in their auteurship, questioning how story and image are perceived, she claims. Aesthetic issues, rather than technology, are what primarily concern her, though Oberhausen has reflected the shift to video and digital work in recent decades.

Although the festival has had difficulties making its mission understood in the city of Oberhausen, one third of its 1994 audience (the most recent for which statistics are available) was a local and regional one. In Germany, the commercial film market is dominated by American product, and while television does broadcast some more adventurous programs, including short films, you must read the schedules carefully to find them and have a cassette on hand to record them, since they often appear at odd, late hours.

"More and more people don't get to see what they want and turn to festivals for alternatives," Haardt observes. The proliferation of festivals in Germany since the mid-eighties has created a differentiated film market. Each festival has its own profile, and Oberhausen—as the largest and oldest international short film festival—enjoys a firm reputation within that set of choices.



Angela Haardt (left) and the Oberhausen administrative team (above), pulling it together. Photo: Ekko von Schwichow

But that is not how the city of Oberhausen sees it—and the festival is run under its aegis. The city says it wants an event that attracts more local residents, even though the festival halls are full on weekends. "My leaving is tied to this change to a more popular festival," Haardt reveals. Of course, neither the politicians nor the bureaucrats know what it means to run a large festival, and Haardt, who does, says, "It takes years to change the audience." But, without bitterness, she adds, "A change of director is not a problem if you have a good crew."

The festival staff includes people with various specializations, such as art history, film, video, and computer art. "[People] should have a broad background but, at present, film critics generally aren't acquainted with the history of video art, while art critics are helpless in front of an installation that requires three hours, and computer experts don't know enough about fine art. We are trying to be prepared for everything, since we are one of the few festivals that isn't narrowly focused, and we can't say what direction media art will take."

Under Haardt's leadership, Oberhausen has been open to many artistic developments, including video installations by sculptors. This involved establishing the festival as a place where visitors make an effort to understand what they view, the way they would at an art exhibition. A film festival is more often seen as an entertainment event, where you simply

enjoy yourself, she notes. But Haardt conceived of Oberhausen as a site of discussion about the state of the arts.

This also means that artistic and ideological changes in Eastern Europe have been foregrounded at the festival. At present, she says, old-style films are no longer seen as valid (gone are the tales of heroic fishermen and farmers). The documentaries that are coming to Oberhausen's selection committee from Russia suggest a world in dissolution; as structures break down, so does the sense of meaning. "The handicraft is good, but filmmakers are saying less and less," she concludes.

How does this kind of serious confrontation with aesthetic and ideational developments fit into the film scene? In the movie business, as in the book world, blockbusters are expected, she complains: commercial films are supposed to win large audiences in an increasingly short time. The more avant-garde the offering, the smaller the public, of course. Yet Haardt rejects the old adage that if there's not much of an audience, it must be art. "It could just be a bad film," she quips. "But neither is it true that a full house means a film is good. While [shorts festival] Clermont-Ferrand wants to prove that there is an audience for the short film, artistic questions are more important for us."

Rather than a mass audience, Oberhausen attracts an interest group that is willing to travel: in 1994, about one third of the visitors

came from other parts of Germany or abroad, while another third came from more distant parts of the German state where Oberhausen is located, North Rhein-Westphalia. "The Monday morning or Tuesday afternoon audience is not from here, because this is not a university town like Clermont-Ferrand, for instance. At those screenings, you'll find people from film-related professions, including programmers from foreign festivals, journalists interested in the production of a specific country, and buyers from television, especially from the art-oriented stations."

Another means by which buyers find wares is through the festival data bank, which includes a one-sentence synopsis of each preview video submitted to the selection committee. (Oberhausen sends cassettes back only if requested.) This means that entries sent on film only do not enter the Oberhausen market—filmmakers beware! But film is made available to curators through the festival archive.

Through tours of selected festival films, primarily in noncommercial venues, Oberhausen's entries—especially the prize-winners—have reached new audiences. In Germany, they have played in universities, film schools, and museums; abroad, they have been shown in cinematheques and festivals, often with the financial and administrative support of the Goethe Institute. Haardt has made sure that prints are checked and repaired or replaced if necessary.

Oberhausen pays a small license fee to filmmakers for use of each print acquired by the archive, but Haardt is aware that the financial compensation for film art is inadequate—and worsening. A short is no longer shown in theaters before the feature, the school market has shifted to video, and there are fewer youth clubs where films are screened. In addition, filmmakers are getting less money from television for the same amount of airtime. But she encourages filmmakers to take advantage of the sales possibilities that exist.

"Since there are more channels, it is possible to sell a film more than once. A short film that wins a prize and is then sold to an educational institution and a TV station makes money three times." The market for short films is always changing, she remarks, commenting in depth on the differences between France, Australia, Brazil, Norway, and Israel. Can the film world afford to lose her knowledge and advocacy?

Karen Rosenberg publishes fiction and cultural criticism in Western Europe, Canada & the U.S. Her article on the documentary filmmaker Harun Farocki will appear in the book *Der ständige Ärger mit den Bildern*.

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Good as Gold

In *Ulee's Gold*, Victor Nunez takes the story of a Florida beekeeper and combines it with two legends: the ancient saga of returning war veteran Ulysses and American acting legend Peter Fonda.

BY PATRICIA THOMSON

MANY YEARS AGO, DIRECTOR VICTOR NUNEZ NOTICED A NEWSPAPER photo of an old man and young child gathering honey deep in the marshes of the Florida Panhandle, where the tupelo trees grow. A "strange and beautiful" image, according to the filmmaker, it came floating back to him some 15 or 20 years later and became the starting point for his latest film, *Ulee's Gold*.

Nunez's fourth feature is about a tupelo beekeeper named Ulysses Jackson, nicknamed Ulee. A former Vietnam vet, Ulee has become a solitary and emotionally constrained man since the death of his wife and dissolution of his family—his son is in jail and his daughter-in-law has run off. Ulee (played with gravity and depth by Peter Fonda) nonetheless attempts to raise his two granddaughters, but fails to connect emotionally with anyone. But one day his routines are disrupted when he's contacted by two former "business partners" of his son, who have found out about the son's betrayal—a secret stash of money from their heist. The thugs reveal that they're holding Ulee's daughter-in-law, Helen, now a junkie. They'll return her if Ulee convinces his son to give up the information on where the money is hidden. Thus begins Ulee's personal transformation as he's forced to go outside himself to help others—and ask for help himself.

Though it involves drugs, guns, and thugs, *Ulee's Gold* is a far cry from your typical indie outlaw film. It has a languorous rhythm, as if slowed by the sultry, perfumed air of Florida when the tupelo trees drop their white blossoms like snow over the swamps. The film has long, wordless sequences depicting the physical labor of the beekeepers as they harvest, filter, and bottle the honey, their liquid gold. And it has characters whose actions are as plausible and as surprising as in real life—most of all Ulee, a war veteran who would sooner kick away a gun than use it.

In what must be a film history first, Ulee Jackson was named "beekeeper of the year" by the Florida Beekeeper's Association. It's an indi-

cation of how far into a lifestyle Nunez delves when creating his narratives. Like the Southern writers he admires, Nunez has long adopted the view that character, place, and story are inextricably linked. It's a premise evident in all of Nunez's features: *Gal Young 'Un* (1979), *A Flash of Green* (1984), *Ruby in Paradise* (1992), and now *Ulee's Gold*, which was shot in northern Florida, not far from Nunez's Tallahassee home.

Ulee's Gold premiered at this year's Sundance Film Festival, where this interview took place. An Orion Pictures release, it opens in theaters this month.

One thing that makes quite an impression in *Ulee's Gold* is the visibility of work. We see it directly in the scenes inside the honey factory and at the hives, and indirectly through Ulee, for whom work is the center of his life. It's particularly noticeable because in so many television shows and movies, people are rarely shown at their jobs.

By in large, work is not very interesting; maybe that's why American films don't show it. You can dramatize a lawyer doing a deal or dramatize winning a contract, but actual day-in-and-out nuts-and-bolts work—the subtle things—it's very hard to show.



Ulee Jackson (Peter Fonda), with his two grandchildren (Jessica Biel & Vanessa Zima) in Victor Nunez's *Ulee's Gold*.

All photos John Bramley, courtesy Orion

But work has always been a part of my interest in characters and how story takes place in the context of the balances of a real person's life. You may be having a romance along the side, but in the meantime you've got to be worrying about nine-to-five. In the case of Ulee, work has become an essential rhythm; it's a sustaining thing. For me, there's a bittersweet quality in presenting the kind of work he does, because I think it's fast disappearing from American life.

One could say he's escaping family pressures by becoming immersed in work.

If you expand it to the notion of life in general, then yes. But he has the kind of work that has a certain sustaining quality to it. There are a lot more workaholics who aren't beekeepers.

A lot of them are here at Sundance, too.

Yes. I always kid, that if you're a healthy, sane, human individual, you're not going to be in filmmaking, because there's no absolutely rational reason for devoting so much life and energy into the creation of two hours of fantasy.

So what do you consider yourself?

The answer is obvious.

But living down in Florida, it's got to be a bit more sane.

It's a bit sustaining. Yes, it has been a way to survive the ups and downs of the process.

You have said that the link between character, place, and story is very important to you. This seems to come out of a novelist's sensibility.

Some critic somewhere called it the Italian Neorealist triad. That has a nice ring to it. But I think it is more novelist.

But you also use classic myths. Can you talk about that?

Maybe it's a way to counterbalance the business of being a regional person, so you don't fall into certain provincial traps, but all my films have what for me is a private presence of a myth. It's a way to deal with the structure and be surprised by things.

In this one, Ulee Jackson is Ulysses, back from Vietnam now 10 years. He's had this misfortune: Penelope, the reason he fought his way back home, has died. What does Ulysses do? He has to go find Helen; he has to go save her and bring her home. So that was how the story came about.

I remember years ago reading the *Odyssey*, this incredible struggle to get home...and then it ends. There have been several versions where the wanderlust that Ulysses had made it unbearable to stay home. But I remember how reluctant he was to leave.

And so, this isolated beekeeper in north Florida—I said, well, he's got to be a veteran. And what are the earliest veteran stories? Ulysses. So Ulysses came back, and he loses the very thing he came back for. I didn't have to do anything else; I knew exactly who Ulee was.

Are you a vet?

No. I'm of that generation, on the young side of it, and I've often wondered about all that. It's funny; it's daring to do a story about a young woman (*Ruby in Paradise*); it's daring to do a story about a vet. In many

ways, they're both just as difficult, or as easy. You have to try to get inside what a person is, where they've been, and where they feel they want to go.

My wife gave me a book for Christmas just as I was doing a final draft, about relating the *Iliad* to Vietnam and traumatic stress syndrome. It's a very moving book. What was amazing to me was, I'd spent a year working on this little metaphor privately, and the Achilles book ends with a quote from Ulysses: "When you hear these war stories, it makes you want to cry and cry." And that was another little light bulb in terms of who Ulysses was, who Ulee is.

Again, you forget all of that. I'm only bringing it up because Peter [Fonda] always does. Originally, I wasn't going to say anything about all of that, because people can get turned off. Some people did not like all the references to Jane Austen in *Ruby*; they thought it was like inside jokes. They're there because they helped me write that story. If somebody knows them and wants to enjoy them, fine. But if they don't, it's not important.

What's interesting is, if you were a novelist, you wouldn't be making apologies for referencing other pieces of literature. And yet as a filmmaker you feel you have to.

Because it's dangerous. It's so easy to overdo these things.

What are the mythic structures in your other films?

In *Ruby*, I went back to the same well. These are little, silly things that no one has to know, but they help me with the film. On the wall of Mike's house, the second boyfriend, is a poster of the Calypso. Basically, my view was that what he was offering *Ruby* was the same thing Calypso was offering Ulysses. *Flash of Green* was

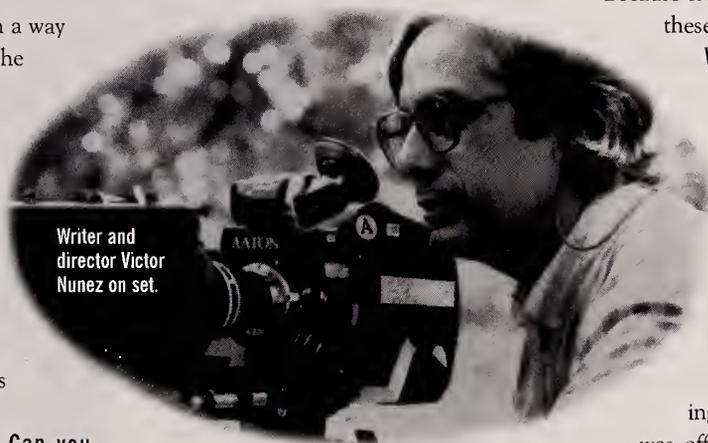
Biblical. It's Jonah, the reluctant prophet. And

Gal Young' Un, it's a wonderful myth in which a young man is brilliant, wonderful, and impervious, and his mother has gone to the gods for this. Then he becomes spoiled and terribly reckless, so the gods say, if you throw this log in the fire, all of his strength will be gone. So in that story, she has a lot of fires to burn.

They're just things for patterns, ways to somehow give it a larger frame. It's always helped me to do that. I think it's a way to get at the deeper qualities of characters.

One of the things Peter Fonda mentioned very early—cause he loved the aspect of the Ulysses myth—was we've really got to have somebody say "Ulysses." I said, "You're right, Peter. Who would say that?" That last scene coming back from the swamp, when Eddie says, "Ulysses Jackson, you haven't done much with your life, have you?" was written because of that statement from Peter. It was a scary scene for me, because it's *right there*; I mean, that's the statement of the film. And I hope it's veiled enough that you don't feel like you're being hit on the head with it. But I love that little scene, and Peter was absolutely right.

What was wonderful—and this is one of those "thank the film gods" things that happened in casting Peter—is that he brings a different kind of mythology. And so you have this bizarre intersection of this



Writer and director Victor Nunez on set.

crazy regional filmmaker, and this ancient myth, and this American myth. It was a wonderful amalgam or synthesis.

Getting back to the work aspect of *Ulee's Gold*. The production notes mention the special bond that grew up between the crew and the beekeepers you used as consultants. And in the credits, there seem to be as many beekeepers as PAs.

Well, not quite. There were a *lot* of PAs.

How did you find these people?

There are not that many tupelo beekeepers. I had known of the Leniers, because that honey had been around for years. Actually Ben Lenier's father had been in articles from time to time, because he's a real character. Through them I met Warren Johnson, who is state apitary inspector for that area. And through him, I met a lot of people. I learned something from everyone.

One of the things that's interesting when you go looking for patterns of life, is the ones you're looking for are the ones who are most taken for granted. This is classic anthropology. They're the last ones people will tell you about. You have to really ask, over and over.

Was their input more important during production or when you were writing the script?

When I had written for about three months on this script—I had the basic story in terms of the family and what was going to happen—I knew I needed to know more about beekeeping. I'd read the books, I travelled around and just looked from a distance. So I met the people in the credits; they all basically opened their hearts and their bee yards.

For whatever reason, it's always been very important for me to understand the real work people are doing, the difficulties and challenges. Along with trying to bring in the myths, you bring in the reality of the work and the story, and you let that all mix. Every time I went, I would learn something else about tupelo honey and taking care of bees, and I'd have to go back and change something in the script. Even in the course of production, we still made little adjustments.

Logistically it was very difficult, because we had to shoot around the actual harvest. It was like shooting in a department store during Christmas season. You're not going to stop things. For whatever reason, tupelo [blossoms] drives bees crazy. Bees will gather more honey in the week-and-a-half to two-and-a-half weeks that tupelo is blooming than they will usually gather in three months.

So we hired a documentary filmmaker, Melissa Shepard Sykes, who had worked in that area before and done a documentary with the Leniers 10 or 15 years ago. She came on for a month just to deal with the logistics of all the locations with bees. You had to bring together locations, bees, honey, vehicles, and actors. That all had to be there. It was a lot of fun, but it was a real circus.

Did you have bee wranglers?

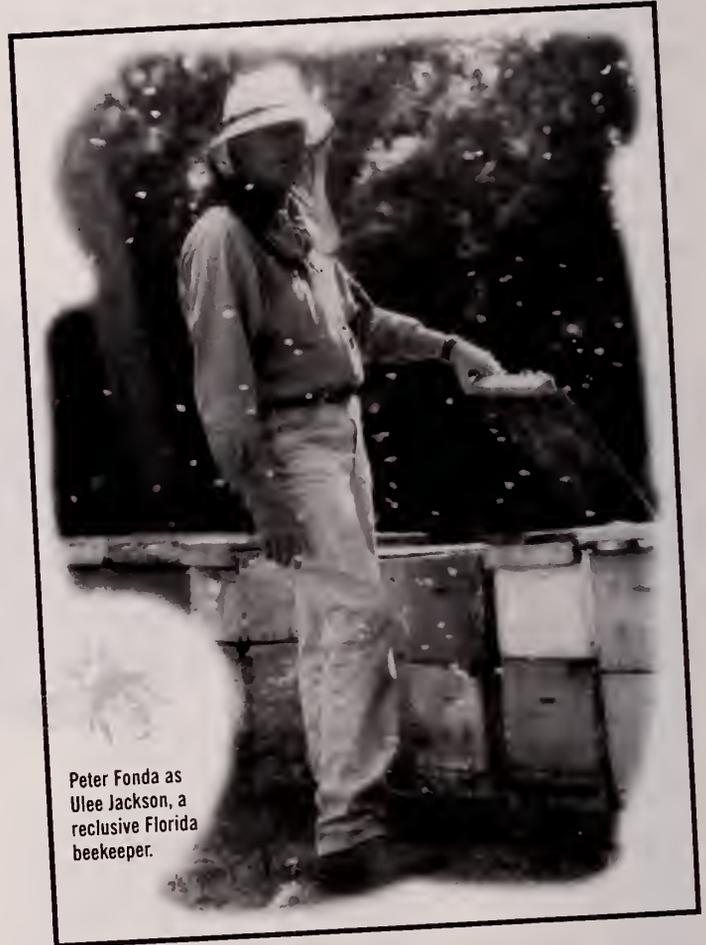
Well, we had the bee people there and some very good people in our crew who were able to move the bees.

There's always war stories in a film, and we had an interesting set of challenges. For example, shooting the scene with the truck mired in that swamp. We had our schedule all blocked out, then we learned that the Army Corp of Engineers was going to pull the dike in the dam. For whatever reason, they wanted the water to drop four feet. Had it dropped four feet, there would be no more water around our truck. We asked, "Pretty please?" and they said, "What do you mean? You're just a movie." We had to turn our entire schedule on its head and shoot that scene two weeks earlier than anticipated. As it worked out, it was fine. But we had to reorder everything.

When did you learn this?

About four days before. What you have to do as a filmmaker is hope that you have enough of your infrastructure in place and that it's flexible enough so that you can adjust to the inevitable changes. Especially in a low budget picture, you have to be really creative and really quick on your feet. Because anything can be a disaster. We were lucky there were no serious storms. We lost only half-days to rain.

You have to know when to compromise your "perfect vision." It's like, it would be nice to have that shot only with a clear sky, but then a cloud comes over. And you think, we have to shoot it anyway. Maybe I can shoot it against a background so you don't realize the light has



Peter Fonda as Ulee Jackson, a reclusive Florida beekeeper.

changed.

During the press conference for Sundance's dramatic competition, there were a lot of questions about the compromises independent filmmakers make when they go to Hollywood to join the big guys. But one filmmaker pointed out that "this panel is filled with expert compromisers"—that you have to compromise on things when you have a small budget.

But there's a significant difference. I really believe in this Platonic model: there's this film up there and your job is to get yourself and everyone working on the film to know that film up there and bring it down to earth and make it happen. If in an independent film the whole constellation of energy around a project—all the production people—are doing that process, yes, there will be compromises, but they're the whim of the film gods. They laugh at you.

It's different from having somebody outside saying, "Gee, I don't

think you've got enough sex in that scene. Put some more in." Or, "We want to change your ending because it won't play well in Pasadena."

Now, someone could argue that that's the same process. Yes, you have to have enough light to expose the film, you have to try to keep your lens in focus, you have to be sure your actors are wearing the same shirt from one day to the next if it's the same scene—but there's a big difference. Filmmakers forget that. They say, "It would be wonderful if I had \$20 million and could do what I want." They'll never have the freedom they had with their \$100,000 film.

How much did *Ulee* cost?

\$2.6 million.

That's a big increase from *Ruby in Paradise*.

It is; three times.

Why don't you walk through the process of getting the money.

I had actually prepared the budget at around one million. I was thinking basically *Ruby* with inflation. As Ira Deutchman says, the easiest dollar to raise is the one you don't spend. I was prepared to do that. The French distributor for *Ruby*



Patricia Richardson as Connie Hope, *Ulee's* sympathetic neighbor.

in *Paradise* had expressed some interest; there were several other options. It was going to be a kind of combination of things.

Then my agent—I do have an agent, but that's another story; it's only because he's crazy enough to keep me on all these years—at any rate, he had been talking to [Jonathan Demme's production company] Clinica Estetico. I had known Demme off and on through friends, but I would never have taken the project to him. I didn't even know he was in the business of making other people's films.

They said, "Next time Victor's in New York, come by." So I went to Clinica Estetico and met with Valerie Thomas. She was very clear to say, "We don't really do this, but we'd love to read your script."

The one thing that was nice was she didn't bring in her assistant. There's a certain pattern to these meetings. When you do a pitch, you meet the first person, and five minutes later the assistant comes in, then the two of them talk, and thirty minutes later, you leave. I had forgotten the number of times I've had those meetings—forgetting is part of the way to keep your sanity.

That was December, 1996—13 months ago. The holidays came and went, and I thought, "Well, that's just another silent pass." Then I got a call. They'd all read it, they liked the script a lot, and they said they would like to be part of getting this movie made. Now, that's music to any filmmaker's ears.

Also at that time, [co-executive producer] John Sloss came on. John was someone they'd been talking with for years; they'd been wanting to work together as well. So it was one of those little hybrid things.

The deal was, we'd have six months [to develop]. If in six months we couldn't get the movie done, it was all over and we'd all go our separate ways. There was a certain time problem, though, because tupelo season was in April and I knew that either I was going to make the movie in April and May or I wasn't going to make the movie this year. Basically, I was prepared to make the movie for \$900,000. It looked like we had a good shot at it, and I was going to go down that road. The first two weeks of preproduction, we truly didn't know what was going to happen. All of the decisions for the first two weeks were based on a budget of \$900,000. And the entire crew was prepared to work for that, which meant they'd get a little more than they got for *Ruby*, but not much more.

So the Clinica Estetico people are literally on the case for a week, and Edward Saxon has a luncheon meeting with Len White at Orion Pictures to discuss old and new business; they started a relationship over *Silence of the Lambs*. Edward Saxon said, "We have this little film in Florida that we really love, and we're trying to figure out how to get it made." And Len White said, "If you guys like it, we'll make it." So I got this call and said, "You've got to be kidding." So this film is the happy result of some very generous shirt tails. Then we did a lot of phone calls and trading of budgets, with my budget going up and theirs coming down. Finally, Julie Landau says, "You know, this is the lowest budget Orion has ever done." And I said, "Well you know, Julie. This is the biggest we've ever made, so I think we'll do fine."

You've stuck to an independent approach to filmmaking for years. Yet you've made a point of saying that you're "well aware of the ironies and contradictions implicit in the term 'independent.'" What advice would you give to younger filmmakers who want to go this route?

One thing that's happened recently is a kind of cynical view that you can make a formula independent film like you can make a genre karate picture or a genre horror movie. If an independent film is about anything, it's about people. It can be stylized; it can be very personal; it can be very European; but it first has to be honestly about people. Many of the makers today say, "I'm going to make a movie that will get me a deal in Hollywood." When you do that, you've blown it. Nobody can tell a young whipper-snapper director that; he or she has to figure it out for themselves.

Whatever reason you think that you're making it, remember that you're getting this incredible privilege of making a film. It's an incredible opportunity. Don't blow it just because you think you're getting ready for the next one. Do *this* one; put the heart in this one, because you may not get that next chance, and you may be left with this shell, a glorious, high-production value, slick, glossy, just empty thing. That's tragic when it happens.

The only thing that has a reality is whether you've created a very specific, unique moment in front of the camera. Just go for it—but know that there have been a zillion people before you and will be a zillion people after you.

Patricia Thomson is editor in chief of *The Independent*.

Today every Tom, Dick,
and Harrietta wants to put on
a film festival. BUT it's not as
easy as it looks—not to do it
right. Here's a behind-the-scenes
look at how one successful
festival pulls itself together.

BY KATE SCHULTZ

**PARTY
GEN**

I USED TO
IMAGINE THAT
WORKING ON
A FILM FESTIVAL
WOULD BE A
HOLIDAY com-
pared to film-
making. Selecting
great films and exposing them

to an appreciative crowd sounds like a breezy excuse for a job. The hundreds of film festivals around the world only reinforced my assumption that it must be an easy task to pull off. But my stint with the Gen Art Film Festival sobered me up to reality pretty quickly. I discovered that the labor—finding funding, maintaining standards on a minimal budget, and round-the-clock workdays—is not unlike the agony that goes into producing an independent film. And there are just as many bad festivals as there are bad films.

The first Gen Art Film Festival in 1996—which presented seven features and seven parties over the course of seven nights—had arguably more than its share of challenges, as it found itself competing against dozens of other distracting film events in New York City. Yet Gen Art did remarkably well in its first year. It sold out a number of screenings, including opening night at Lincoln Center's 800-seat Alice Tully Hall. It was able to snag such sponsors as Ralph Lauren, Absolut Vodka, *Entertainment Weekly*, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and Got Milk? In addition to splashy coverage in *New York* magazine, the *New York Post*, the *Village Voice*, *Detour*, and the *Hollywood Reporter*, Gen Art also invented a brilliant poster and ad campaign ("Seven

Films, Seven Parties") and plastered New York with it, creating a visual identity. It almost seemed on sheer force of personality alone that the folks at Gen Art created a buzz about young filmmakers and promoted itself.

When Gen Art added film to its mission in 1996, it seemed a natural outgrowth of its previous efforts. For four years, Gen Art has been a nonprofit support system in fine art and fashion "dedicated to audiences and artists, not to the industry," says Stefan Gerard, who cofounded the organization along with his brother Ian. Gen Art, which also has offices in Los Angeles and San Francisco, sponsors art exhibits, fashion shows, and educational programs for students and young collectors.

The film festival comes together through the efforts of Gen Art staff and a host of volunteers. All are participants in the Film Group, which meets every other Tuesday night to discuss festival business in general. The Film Group is further subdivided into the executive, selection, screening, publicity, and events committees. The executive committee could be seen as the Gen Art elders, in charge of establishing policies, creating an overall budget, and heading up the sub-committees. Some of these executive members also serve on other committees, such as the selection committee (a group of seven who ultimately have the

strongest
hand in
determin-
ing the fes-
tival slate)
or the
screening
committee
(the nine

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people who watch and review festival submissions during weekly screening committee meetings). Members of these committees may subsequently join the publicity and events committees to start spreading the word and planning events.

When I joined the Gen Art Film Group and screening committee, I wanted to express my dedication to filmmaking in a more selfless way than through my work in film production. Because I have a background in journalism, I offered to keep notes of the Film Group meetings. Gradually my personal commentaries turned into an insider's view of our progress. What follows is my record of Gen Art's struggles and victories and includes the search for films and theaters, event planning, advertising campaign building, corporate sponsor recruiting, as well as a little personal drama along the way.

November 19, 1996

First Film Group Meeting

Before tonight's meeting, I had heard a few stories about the Gen Art Film Festival. I'd heard it was run by society/media-savvy kids with connections to funding that the rest of us salivate after. I'd heard they

threw mean parties every night of the week-long festival. I'd heard lots of people showed up and they had a very, very good time.

I discover, however, that Gen Art is not really a group of brats using film as an excuse for a party. Film comes first for these serious cineastes. As we begin, it is clear the movers and shakers are executive committee members Stefan Gerard, Lauren Mansfield, and Graham Leggat. Stefan sets an easy tone by offering drinks and self-effacing jokes. Lauren, the chic festival producer, then takes the floor and introduces herself by explaining that she got involved with Gen Art as a sponsor, working at Absolut Vodka in their public relations and events department. She subsequently quit her job at Absolut to pursue Gen Art. Also on hand is director of programming Graham Leggat, the elegant and English-bred film curator returning for his second year.

After reminding the Film Group that there are just five months until the festival (April 22-28, 1997), Lauren says the first item on our agenda is finding a theater. Do we think Alice Tully Hall fits the festival profile?— an under-35 film savvy crowd. Someone throws out other possibilities, like the Ziegfeld Theater, the classic and ornate midtown movie house that dips into the retro movement every now and then. Lauren says we could possibly share space with the Angelika Film Center, the indie/alternative multiplex in Soho. Its preexisting, ultra-hip audience would be ideal for Gen Art—an added benefit. An otherwise quiet guy in the back row says the Independent Feature Project “owns” the Angelika, at least in a perceived sense, because they hold their annual film market there every fall. Lauren plans to visit some of these sites this week.

December 2

I stop by the Gen Art office in Chelsea to pitch in and address invitations to the first fundraiser at Irving Plaza, the expansive dance/live music club east of Union Square. This party is going to be of the same caliber as last year's affairs—ten bucks admission will buy you plenty of beverages at the open bar and plenty of hobnobbing with filmmakers, film industry types, and the club-oriented art crowd.

Greeting me at the door is Deena Juras, Gen Art's new director, who just arrived from the Pacific Northwest, where she worked at the Seattle International Film Festival for seven years. While we talk about movies, she teaches me the five-fingered short cut to stamping, stopping only to answer the Gen Art phone. Deena's not only smart, but unique in that she seems to want to like you. She laughs at the mere suggestion of humor. As we talk about her background in festivals (she also worked at the Edinburgh film festival for three seasons), I find her inspiring—trotting the globe with this honorable mission of bringing good films to people and good deals to the films.

December 10

Film Group Meeting

Before the meeting I chat with Brian Wimer, a Film Group member who describes himself as a producer/director who makes his rent money working as a freelance copywriter for ad agencies. One of them is Nick and Paul, a Kirshenbaum and Bond spin-off that is donating its services to Gen Art. Brian and agency producer Deb Freeman are working on the pro bono ad campaign. Brian describes the agency as “a little, hot shop trying to be big rollers, selling their souls for advertising and doing nice things for people like these.”

Graphics from the pro bono ad campaign provided by the Nick & Paul agency
Courtesy Nick & Paul



January 8, 1997
Film Group Meeting

The festival is gaining momentum. At the second meeting the group seemed paltry and mute. Now I see that's the ebb and flow of this process, because tonight the Film Group parades in, grabs some of Stefan's beers, and starts checking each other out. It's a dynamic little social scene.

As people introduce themselves, I'm impressed at how many different young film industry professionals are represented: a casting director, an agent, a lawyer, a real estate agent/actress, a TV news producer, a film publicist, an independent filmmaker, a writer/director/filmmaker, even a voiceover actress.

We revisit the issue of finding a theater, which is top priority now that it's proving to be a bigger challenge than first anticipated.

Deena and Lauren had a discouraging meeting with City Cinemas. (She tells me and Graham in a cab that they'd asked for an astronomical amount. I comment that I don't make that in a year in film production and they laugh like that's some kind of joke.) The other option is Angelika 57, where the staff is enthusiastic about the festival and has the dates free. Deena seems optimistic. “It looks like in the next couple of weeks we will have a home.”

Lauren takes the floor to present the first phase in Nick and Paul's ad campaign. She holds up a black cardboard sign with the words “Filtered For You.” Filtered for me? The

next card is a picture of a Warholesque bottle of oil that reads: “Gen Art.” The next is a bottle of spring water. The third a bag of coffee. The common factor: Things That Are Filtered.

Lauren asked for everyone's impressions. “I just don't understand the ‘filtered’ idea,” I offer. “Is that filtered, as in the selection process?” Yes, she answers. I hold my tongue. Graham Leggat, dapper as ever in his suit and tie, speaks up, saying Gen Art is about “films that aren't products in the way that mainstream films are” and the packaging may give the opposite impression.

The agency, as it turns out, doesn't mean to suggest that Gen Art is mainstream, but is aiming to attract sophisticated 20 to 30-something adults. The Nick and Paul creatives were ultimately impressed by the "zenlike" format of the festival, which they see as the "brand DNA of the product." Because the festival is pared down to seven nights and seven films, it has the advantage of being constituted of "purified, concentrated film" and stands out from other film festivals, where variety and frequency of films can be fairly dizzying.

Later, as we are breaking up into committees (screening, selection, and publicity), I duck behind an office partition into an area I think of as the inner sanctum, where festival cofounder Stefan Gerard works. I notice that he is generally by himself back there during Film Group meetings. I think this curious, as I expected him to take a more active role. I find Stefan approachable, even though he wears ultra trendy yellow-tinted glasses and speaks in the slow, drawled-out manner of the jaded.

"I'm writing someone about how to get free booze," he explains. It has become an area of expertise for him since starting Gen Art, and he's had numerous requests from other nonprofits seeking to supply events with alcohol. I look at his computer screen and it appears

to contain a treatise on the subject. I bet Stefan has single-handedly doubled business for Absolut with Gen Art's open bar policy.

By the time I sit down again, Graham is talking to the screening committee about the need to maintain a unified vision. "It's really important that a group develops an identity and develop a communal set of values," he coaches. Marcus Spiegel, a young filmmaker, asks Graham to define these values. "Originality of vision, independence of spirit or means, an unusual skill in one or more aspects of filmmaking, [the film's] hipness, its ability to not be commonplace," he replies.

January 22

Screening Committee Meeting

Like all the other committee members, I have seen about 10 movies this week. The Screening Committee functions by checking out tapes in library fashion. After we watch the entire film at home, we fill out

evaluation forms, rating the film and writing comments.

There's been a bit of a friendly competition to see who can view the most films, and tonight we discuss them for the first time. Later we put in tapes of other films and watch them together.

I start thinking about the phrase "everyone's a critic" and how it's becoming more literal as more people, particularly of our generation, are becoming well-versed in the language of film. But I fear all of us on the screening committee will become ornery know-it-alls, each playing devil's advocate for the sake of hearing our own orations.

That isn't the case. I find myself implicitly trusting the other screening committee members, mainly because they have all established themselves in the film biz, and it's clear they love film enough to haul their asses to the flower district after work to discuss films that may not see the light of day elsewhere.

Gwin von Ludwig, the disciplined head of the screening committee, tosses out the films that scored low with at least three of us. At first,



(L-R): The talk flows like wine: Lauren Mansfield, Mia Choi, Stefan Gerard, and Alison Berglaf at work. Photo: Kate Schultz

there's some collective flinching over the harshness of the process. We're all sympathetic to the difficulty of making a film. Yet the essence of the film reveals itself with total clarity, and it becomes easy to be confident about choices. The cream rises to the top, and there's no mysterious method for finding the better films.

February 4

Our advisory board is shaping up. It's a group of celebrities, industry leaders, and others who lend their name in support of Gen Art. Last year it boasted Ed Burns, Griffin Dunne, Michael Stipe, Wayne Wang, Ted Hope, Christine Vachon, and Sara Vogel. At the Film Group meeting tonight, Deena tells us that Mary Meagher, a William Morris literary agent who reps indie filmmakers, and Ruby Lerner, executive director of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, have joined. Other good news: Robert Hawk, with both Sundance and



Director Dan Zukovic emulating Edvard Munch's "The Scream" in *The Last Big Thing*
Photos p. 39-40 courtesy Gen Art



the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, has joined and provided titles of films, contact information, and even the actual films. Gen Art's tentacles are spreading into the New York film world.

While there may be a buzz about the festival, finding a home is still an obstacle. We know now that the run will be at Angelika 57, but our opening night situation is becoming nightmarish. (They decide on a separate venue for opening night to make more of a splash.) The Paris, which we were counting on a week ago, just fell through. The normally ebullient Deena looks visibly concerned.

Independent of the screening committee's recommendations, the selection committee has already committed to *Day at the Beach*, by New York-based filmmaker Nick Veronis. I ask Graham about it, and he says it's about three ravioli factory workers who get caught up in "an accidental death by briefcase, a theft from the mafia, a road trip, a kidnapping, and a coming of age."

"It's a deftly written piece," Graham continues. "It's like a little puzzle. It's not a mystery, but it has interlocking parts that are handled very craftily by the close of the film."

Lauren shows us the revised advertising campaign. The 'filter' idea has taken on a less dominant role, and though it still looks like packaged products, it is at least graphically appealing. She shows us two more ads, which transform a Power Bar and a box of laundry detergent. It's better; at least we're advertising that we have a potent and cleansing film festival.

I have been writing up the Film Evaluation Forms with abandon, unaware that other screening committee members have access to them. Tonight Brian Wimer, the Nick and Paul freelancer, confronts me about *Circus Lives*, a promising but undisciplined film.

Frankly, I had pretty much erased the details of the film from my memory and almost blurt that out, but there's something personal

about the way he asks about my negative response. After hedging, Brian admits that yes, he not only sunk lots of money into the film, but he's the set designer. "What scenes didn't you like?" All I can think is, how did this guy get on the screening committee with this conflict of interest? I wriggle out of the discussion, albeit ungracefully.

After everyone learns about Brian's interest, he is asked to leave whenever *Circus Lives* come up for discussion. On his way out he starts to pitch the group on scenes we should re-watch. "Deena, is Brian allowed to do this?," I say. She responds, "No. Goodbye, Brian." He's not the only one with connections to films in the running. Dan Rosen, who serves on the selection committee, edited *Ties to Rachel*, which we've already thrown out. (Actually, the editing is great on that one.)

February 23

Selection Committee Meeting

The selection committee agreed to let me observe their weekly Sunday marathon meeting. They meet at the Filmmakers Collaborative in Soho. I notice the level of film criticism is much more respectful than our irreverent screening committee. They would not, for instance, shout out obscenities in frustration during a poor moment of a film.

The selection committee takes a verbal poll on the films they saw over the last week. As they trade off-the-cuff reviews, they seem some-

thing like Siskel and Ebert at home with the cast of *The Real World*.

"I thought it was a good alternate," says editor Dan Rosen, referring to a



Featured filmmakers (right) and guests (below) at GenArt's launch party.
Photos: William Hannigan



much talked-about feature. "I thought it had a peculiar magic to it."

"I got tired of all the dick jokes," says Mia Choi, a dynamo from IFP/West who came on in February as associate producer. "I realized it was a young person's take on *Rear Window*... It's a little young, a little MTV, and it ended up being a little predictable."

"It's almost like a stage piece, because it's in a very constrained environment," adds Dan.

As they scrutinize the films, some agree they're unpleasantly moved by films that have been lauded in other circles. The pass on several that were the rave of Sundance, got great reviews in *Variety*, or went overseas to Berlin. Yet there are those moments when they come across one that is outstanding, and the tenor of the conversation shifts from highly critical to highly eager.

Tonight everyone is excited about *Love God*. This film, produced by New York-based Good Machine, is described as a cross between a Japanese horror film and a kitsch comedy.

Graham and Deena remind everyone that films with distribution deals will be harder to get. Gen Art is in the unenviable position of being a two-year-old festival with little clout, competing against New

Directors New Films, one of the world's top festivals that is also held in New York in the spring.

"Being in New York is a double-edged sword," Graham says. "If it's a film that is unencumbered, it can have this big New York opening. If it's a film that has some attachments, then everyone is very cautious about opening here."

Selection committee member Doug Turner, who works in special events at Miramax, adds that filmmakers being considered for distribution deals will be ultra cautious about where and how often they show the film. "If it plays at Gen Art and gets a bad buzz, it will kill a distribution deal," Doug explains. Of course, Deena remarks, we could negotiate by embargoing reviews until the film is released.

After more discussion, the group pulls down the roll-up movie screen and commences a grueling few hours of watching films as a group. They watch Evan Brenner's *The Riddle*, a beautiful film about a young Russian boy who is not told how his mother died. I would wager, just by looking at all the dewy-eyed people in the room, that this rare film will find its way into the festival.

the director's and producer's hands.

March 3

I've done a bit of poking around to find out what else is being considered by the selection committee. The films include:

- *Hang Your Dog in the Wind*, a slacker comedy by filmmaker Brian



Pasha Ivanov as Sasha in *The Riddle*, Evan Brenner's Russian-language US-indie film.



Martha Plimpton as Ainsley Dupree in Tim Blake Nelson's *Eye of God*

Fleming. Graham describes it as "natural and blasé.... The dialogue is banal, but it's hilarious."

- *Strawberry Fields*, by experimental documentary videomaker Rea Tajiri, who's doing her first feature about a young Japanese American woman in the early seventies.

- *Green Chimneys*, a hard-hitting documentary by Constance Harris about an exceptional school for adolescents who have troubles at home.

- *Shooting Lily*, by Arthur Borman, is a funny, Woody Allen-esque pic about a man who constantly videotapes his wife and destroys his marriage.

- *Eye of God*, by Tim Black Nelson, a serious drama starring Martha Plimpton and Hal Holbrook.

March 11

I stop by the Gen Art office to ask Lauren and Mia Choi about the sponsorship saga. They are looking for "visionary" companies that could not only recognize Gen Art's current strength, but its future potential and be interested in building a partnership that continues over the long haul. In November they sent out 200 partnership proposals to a targeted group of sponsors, fashion, liquor, and film companies who are young, hip, and have an attitude. About 30 serious conversations later, eight people bit.

"It was painful," says Mia. Nonetheless the festival ends up with an excellent sponsorship list: Absolut, Armani Exchange, Jones Soda, Kodak, the Independent Film Channel, AIVE, *Filmmaker* magazine, and the *New York Times*.

Of course, Absolut will be providing the much-coveted liquor for the nightly parties. Absolut is seriously immersed in film and has compiled a reel of 10 famous animators doing their versions of the Absolut print ads. A computer demo of the animations will be set up in the

February 28

I call the Gen Art office to ask Deena if she knows of some not-so-awful films that haven't been checked out by other screening committee members. She is practically shrieking with joy, because she nailed a theater for opening night. With only days to find a space, the Sony Lincoln Square not only booked us, but gave us a whole bunch of other amenities." I'm wondering if I'm getting in some sort of weird mania stage, I'm so happy," Deena says.

Meanwhile, there's a March 10 deadline for determining the festival slate. *The Riddle* and *Day at the Beach* have been invited and have accepted. Gen Art receives its first rejection, *The Delta* was picked up by Alliance at Rotterdam and thus participation in festivals is out of

lobby of Angelika 57 during the run of the festival. They say it's good work.

Armani Exchange plans to advertise the festival in creative ways, including dressing windows and store displays using themes that reflect those of the films.

Jones Soda understood Gen Art from the get go. Lauren spotted the unusual bottle in a convenience store. Turns out, this company is more interested in doing good than in being skeptical. They like Gen Art and even talked about creating bottle labels from the film stills. They already have a policy of changing the labels every few weeks. Now that's visionary.



Derya Berti & Steve Wilcox in Brian Flemming's *Hang Your Dog in the Wind*

March 13

I meet Deena, Lauren, Stefan, Mia, Graham, and Allison for drinks at Café Noir. Three bottles of red wine are on the table, one already opened and consumed. After a series of sudden changes that drove everyone crazy, a slate has been determined: *Eye of God* opens the festival. The rest of the line-up includes *Shooting Lily*, *The Last Big Thing*, by Dan Zukovic, *Love God*, by Frank Grow, *Day at the Beach*, *The Riddle*, *Hang Your Dog in the Wind*. All the features, except on opening night, will be opened by a short. These include Bill Tomlinson's *Shaft of Light*, Steve Moore's *Redux Riding Hood*; R.J. Cutler's *Anita Liberty*, Tina DiFelicianantonio and Jane C. Wagner's *Two or Three Things, But Nothing for Sure*, Ivy Brooks's *Kiss and Tell*, and Kris Isaacson's *Man About Town*.

I expect a celebration, but the mood is somewhat sober. I can't figure out if it's exhaustion, putting on airs, or what. But they are ahead of me, already obsessing about their next worries: the catalog, publicity materials, party planning. "Now we actually have to make it happen," Lauren cautions.

Stefan is unusually at ease. As he looks over the menu, I ask him how he thinks things are going. This year Gen Art is clear on its mission, sense of priorities, allocating resources, and expectations, he says. "My greatest alarm is that I'm so used to the frantic action that comes with having starting something new, that to have everything proceed in a rational manner is such a relief. I almost assume we're overlooking something," he says. "This year there seem to be fairly obvious answers

to everything."

March 29

Making the Gen Art trailer (directed by *Man About Town*'s Kris Isaacson) symbolically marks the transition from preproduction to production. Gen Art also has its first publicity hits, with blurbs in *Variety* and the *New York Post* and ads in *The Independent* and *Filmmaker*.

Deena tells me that a few days later that *Weekly Variety* picked up the blurb from *Daily Variety*. The headline is a true miracle: "God Blesses the Opening of Gen Art." We all get a kick out of that. Naturally, seeing the festival in print boosts everyone just as burnout is starting to rear its ugly head.

I stop by the bar on the Upper East Side where the trailer shoot is taking place. Some of the Film Group members have volunteered to be extras. Once again, I'm amused about how they are game for action, even at 10:30 on a Saturday morning. Deena strolls in looking more calm than I've seen in weeks, though she says her latest anxiety is getting people to sell tickets, which officially go on sale Monday.

She's also mentally prepping for a live radio interview on WNYC with *Eye of God* director Tim Blake Nelson. They'll be on the Leonard Lopate show, New York's premiere afternoon culture talk show. Two other interviews are expected on WBAI and WFMU with the other New York directors in the festival, Nick Veronis and Kris Isaacson.

Just as other committees have had moments of intensity, the publicity committee

is now turning up the heat. (Luckily, this may be Gen Art's most professionally experienced group, as its roster includes a producer from Calvin Klein Advertising, a publicist from Miramax, a publicist from *TV Guide*, one from Wenner Media, and two from other nonprofits.) In addition to the radio spots, articles and/or photos have been promised in *Time Out New York*, the *Village Voice*, *New York* magazine, and the *New York Observer*. Clearly, the New York press is interested.

This week press coordinator Allison Berglas moves into high gear, and the office gets covered in paper—press invites, mailers, posters, and filmmakers' written materials. About 700 press releases are sent to print, radio, TV, society, photographers, and electronic press. Invitations to the press screenings are in the mail.

The press launch party next week seems uppermost on everyone's mind. It's a crucial evening, as the press will become aware of our existence and, if successful, our efficacy. Hopefully they'll get interested in more extensive coverage.

Because parties are such an important aspect of the festival, Lauren and Mia are putting in a lot of hours scouting out possible venues. The tough part is convincing an owner to ignore thousands of dollars in business to host Gen Art for an evening. In one of their event-planning strokes of genius, Lauren and Mia find a new club called Fred's Beauty, which will essentially open the night of the Gen Art Press Launch. This weekend four of the eight party venues were selected, Lauren reports. Most of her work from now on will be party planning, including finding props and visuals to make things even more lively.

Continued on p. 63



A FEMINIST DISTRIBUTOR HITS 25 AT FULL GALLOP

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Poster art for Women Make Movie's 25th anniversary. Courtesy WMM

BY BIENVENIDA MATIAS

CELEBRATIONS ARE UNDERWAY FOR THE 25TH anniversary of Women Make Movies, the leading distributor of women's films and videos in North America. The Museum of Modern Art kicked off the birthday gala this April with a month-long retrospective. Some of the best known independent filmmakers represented in this retrospective, including Julie Dash (*Daughters of the Dust*) and Jane Campion (*The Piano*), have been part of the WMM family for a long time. Others like Valeria Sarmiento (*A Man, When He is a Man*), Judith Helfand (*A*

Health Baby Girl), and Malinda Maynor (*Real Indians*) may not be household names, but their films and videos greatly contribute to the organization's ongoing success.

For young females breaking into films today, Women Make Movies (WMM) is considered "a safe haven," according to Francis Negrón-Muntaner, director of *Brincando el Charco: Portrait of a Puerto Rican*. Her film, now distributed by WMM, was fiscally sponsored by WMM as part of their production assistance program that helps makers secure production funds. Pointing to the tremendous diversity in the WMM catalogue, Negrón-Muntaner says she likes "keeping company" with a rainbow of

women from around the world who are producing films and videos about healthcare, gender crossing, cultural identity, lesbian relationships, and the arts.

Yet distribution and diversity were not always at the heart of WMM. A look at how WMM has transformed itself over these past 25 years tells the story of how one women's organization has managed to survive—and thrive—despite some very big bumps and potholes on the road to success.

The Early Years

Women Make Movies started out in 1972 as

a filmmaking workshop for women in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, an ethnically mixed working-class community. The idea was to encourage women to make films about the everyday events in their lives. At that time, "the issue of technology was a big thing," recalled co-founder Ariel Dougherty (with Sheila Page) in a 1990 interview in the *Village Voice*. "Women are taught not to want to deal with anything mechanical." According to Pennee Bender's 1990 unpublished paper, "Women Make Movies: Portrait of a Grassroots Women's Organization in the 1970s and 1980s," by WMM's second year over 50 women—mothers and workers who ranged in age from fourteen to their mid-sixties—were trained to shoot, edit, and screen their completed films. Early films included *How to Cut Up a Chicken* (first in a series on how to save money), *For Better or Worse* (a drama on how a woman's life changes after marriage), and *La Muchacha Solitaria* (a drama about a single woman in New York). Screenings of the films were held in laundromats, beauty parlors, libraries, and street corners in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn.

These early works were also screened at places like the Women's International Film Festival in Toronto. Reviews in women's newspapers and journals sparked requests for the films from women's centers and women's studies programs as well as community groups. Thus, WMM's early self-distribution ventures were a response to the lack of distribution and exhibition opportunities for women's films. But at the beginning, the revenue from these rentals and sales was a small part of the WMM budget; in 1973 the distribution income was \$6,000. (Today it's nearly \$786,000.)

By the mid-seventies these community workshops were phased out as young and middle-class women from outside the neighborhood who had an interest in filmmaking and women's issues joined in, turning WMM into a film production collective. The office moved from a church basement in the heart of a housing project to a loft in the commercial district of Chelsea. The focus was now feminist ideology. At the 1975 Feminist Film and Video Conference, representatives of some 70 women's media organizations stated in their "womanfesto" that "as feminists working collectively in film and video, we see our media as an on-going process both in terms of the way it is made and the way it is distributed and shown. We are committed to

feminist control of that entire process.... We see ourselves as part of the larger movement of women dedicated to changing society by struggling against oppression as it manifests itself in sexism, heterosexism, classism, racism, ageism, and imperialism."

In 1976, this shift away from community workshops to supporting women's productions led to the loss of their main funder, the New York State Council on the Arts. As the WMM staff explained to its membership, NYSCA believed that WMM's "collective structure meant that there was no leadership or accountability." The collective, predominantly white, middle-class women, had great enthusiasm for feminist ideals and its connections to filmmaking but they had few skills necessary for managing an emerging organization.

From the mid-seventies to the early eighties, a small staff, paid for by a C.E.T.A. (Comprehensive Employment Act) grant, ran the organization according to the directive of the WMM members and the policies set by the Board of Directors. This awkward decision-making process worked against the organization. After a while the professional staff drifted further away from members' interests. In 1981, renewed funding from NYSCA supported the staff's focus on distribution, allowing the staff to further divorce itself from the members' desire for production assistance. This division among staff, membership, and Board of Directors about which priorities to follow, coupled with the cutback in the C.E.T.A. program, created a vacuum of leadership. This was further complicated by charges of racism levied against the organization by the executive director, Amy Chen, who was one of the few women of color involved in WMM. In September 1982 the entire staff—director, distributor, and bookkeeper—quit.

The Eighties

Women Make Movies was walking a tight-rope between lack of funds and meeting the needs of the collective members when a young dynamic former intern, Deborah Zimmerman, assumed the role of executive director in 1983. Zimmerman transformed the organization with a combination of business savvy and an understanding of the potential this emerging women's media held for promoting a feminist point-of-view.

At this time, WMM faced two challenges. One was to convince filmmakers not associated with the organization that WMM could do an excellent job distributing their work. But the

second challenge was even harder. The organization need to convince women of color that it was open to their inclusion on the staff, board, and in the distribution roster. Linda Gibson, an experimental video artist and board member from 1984 to 1989, remembers that "the entire women's movement was not dealing with racism. They [at WMM] were up front with me; they said 'We have been told that we have to diversify.' As someone doing experimental work I did not have many options, many distributors were not interested in the work of women of color. I felt, 'Hell, women of color need more options.'"

Zimmerman's opening move was to attack both problems at once. With limited financial resources but with the support of film scholars, producers, and other women with connections to filmmakers here and in Latin America, WMM started "Punto de Vista: Latina" (Point of View), a community touring series of films and videos produced by Latinas. I was part of the group that volunteered to search for the films; we depended on friends to carry messages to women makers in Central and South America who had never heard of WMM. After titling the films, we showed them in storefront galleries, food pantries, and adult education centers in New York's Latino communities. This return to community screens with works that spoke to local residents about issues that were important to them—housing (*Mujeres del Planeta*), immigration and war (*After the Earthquake*), and women's work (*Y Su Mama Que Hace?/ And What Does Your Mother Do?*)—created a new presence for WMM as an organization that knew how to work with communities of color.

The Nineties

The "Punto de Vista" collection paved the way for other makers of color, often emerging makers, to feel comfortable that WMM would not only accept their work but find markets for it. Many of these works were raw films with few frills. It was the medi makers' passionate vision that carried the works as art and as advocacy for social change.

Patricia White, assistant professor of film studies at Swarthmore College and a former distribution coordinator at WMM, comments, "University libraries, women's studies, and film studies were strong supporter in the early days. The winners were the films like *Reassemblage* by Trinh T. Minh-ha, because the scholars were writing about the film. The works by women of color and lesbians that seemed risky were what



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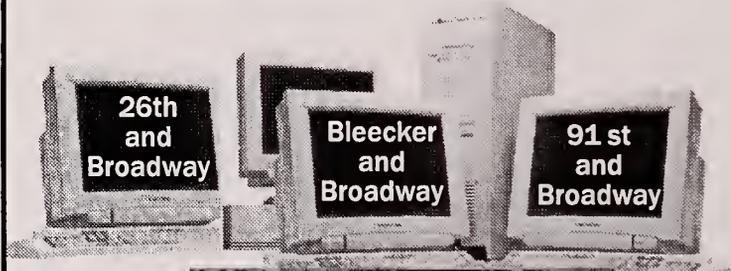
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made the collection." And by extension, they made the organization.

The present

When I worked closely with WMM as staff and then board member, from 1984 to 1991, I knew that it was extremely important to get out the work of women of color and lesbians. I didn't know that the response would be so positive among makers and audience. All of WMM's past challenges and growing pains have contributed to the making of a strong organization. Board member Joanne Sandler, who works with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, describes WMM today as "a business with a social concern core that struggles with issues of race, power, responsibility, and feminism."

But the challenges facing WMM are not over yet. It is now under attack by the Republican right wing in Congress for supporting Cheryl Dunye during the production of her film *Watermelon Woman*, a comedy about a young Black lesbian looking for love, which received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. This attack, led by Peter Hoekstra, a conservative representative from Michigan, is part of the strategy to defund the NEA [see story pg. 4]. The conservative legislators allege that the WMM collection offers the American public materials that they consider pornographic—lesbian sexuality and lifestyle—and that this should not be paid for with taxpayer dollars. The reality is that NEA money represents only a small percentage of WMM budget. In the last five years, NEA grants have totaled a scant \$80,000. Fortunately for WMM, its past struggles created an organization that knows how to roll with the punches.

Today, WMM boasts a staff of 11 and a collection of almost 400 film and videos from all over the world. In the last five years, WMM has paid over \$1 million in royalties to makers and has channeled another \$1.5 million in grants from individual donors, foundations, and government agencies to the makers in their production assistance program. In honor of its 25th anniversary, WMM is inaugurating a new production fund, the Jane Morrison and Jackie Shearer Memorial Fund, named for two pioneering filmmakers.

As Zimmerman says, "Who knew? Who knew that it could get this big..." Congratulations WMM—may the next 25 years push more buttons.

Bienvenida Matias is a independent documentary maker and executive director of the Center for Arts Criticism based in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

THE CABOOSE THAT DRIVES THE ENGINE



Home Video Companies Enter the Theatrical Release Business

BY ROBERT L. SEIGEL

IT'S INCREASINGLY AXIOMATIC THAT A FILM'S theatrical release is what drives its profitability—and these profits do not necessarily occur at the box office, but later, in ancillary markets like broadcast, cable, and home video. The reasoning is relatively self-evident: if a theatrical release is widely promoted and garners reviews and articles in local and national media, this raises the film's visibility in a cluttered entertainment marketplace. And high visibility usually translates into sales and rentals.

Home video companies have recognized this for some time. The video market is driven primarily by "A" films that have name directors, stars, extensive marketing campaigns, and significant budgets for film prints and advertising. (P&A funds pay for the preparation and booking of radio, TV, and print advertising, plus engaging the services of a publicist, ticket give aways, and promotions.)

But they're now realizing that the same goes for low-budget films: customers browsing in a video store are more likely to pick up an independent film if they'd heard about it, read a review, or noticed an ad during its theatrical run—however short that run might have been. The more visible the film, the more videocassette copies or "units" can be shipped and sold to wholesalers and video stores for rental or sale to customers.

Some video companies are seizing the bull by the horns and actively making theatrical releases happen. They're doing this through so-called "service deals," an arrangement by which a video distributor acquires both video and domestic theatrical rights, advances P&A funds to a theatrical distributor—often one of the smaller companies—and in effect subcontracts out a theatrical release. This article looks at a number of these video-

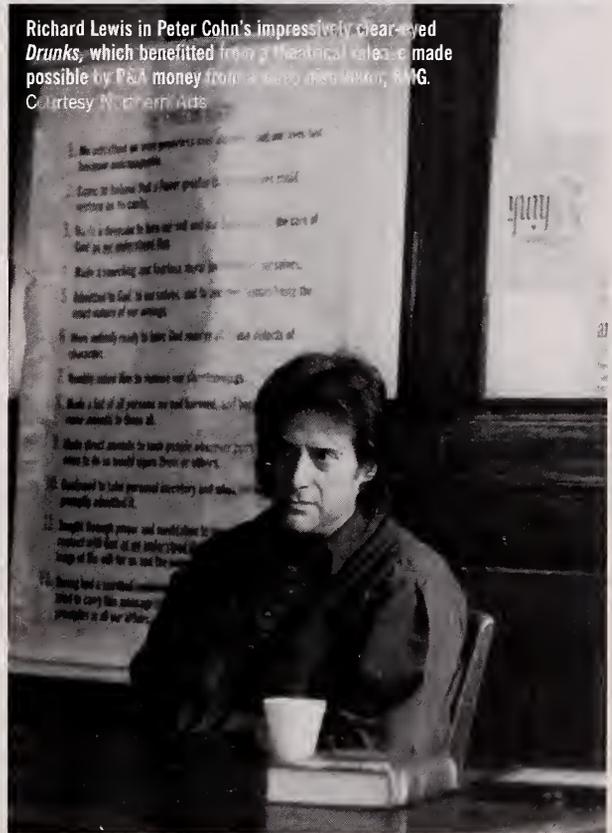
backed theatrical deals and demonstrates why filmmakers might consider approaching video companies, in addition to the usual suspects, when looking for theatrical distribution.

ONE VIDEO COMPANY THAT HAS embraced this strategy is New York-based BMG Independents. Some of the films they've dealt with in this way—acquiring North American or U.S. rights and providing P&A funds for their theatrical release—include Nick Broomfield's *Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam*, the hip comedy *The Pompatus of Love* by MTV veteran director Richard Schenkman, and *Drunks*, director Peter Cohn's clear-eyed look at the dreams and demons of alcoholics.

For *The Pompatus of Love*, a wry look at romance that features a name cast (including Jennifer Tilly, Roscoe Lee Brown, Fisher Stevens, Michael McKean, and coproducer Jon Cryer), BMG Independents entered into a relationship with two companies, providing P&A reportedly in the very low six-figure range. In addition, they designed the key art and produced the film's trailer in-house. BMG's partners were In Pictures, a New York-based international sales company and U.S. distributor that was acting as producer's rep on *The Pompatus of Love*, and also independent film distributor Cinepix Film Properties (CFP). BMG jobbed out the booking of the film in theaters to CFP, which got a flat fee, while In Pictures and BMG worked on marketing and publicity with CFP.

In Pictures received a minimum fee for its services, as well as a percentage of the box office after the film's theatrical revenues

Richard Lewis in Peter Cohn's impressively clear-eyed *Drunks*, which benefitted from a theatrical release made possible by P&A money from a video distributor, BMG. Courtesy: New Screen Arts



exceeded a certain amount. It is common practice for theatrical distributors that enter into service deals to receive a flat fee and/or a percentage of theatrical revenues. Occasionally they'll also get a percentage of the video revenues, either as a separate source of revenue or in order to recoup any losses taken in the theatrical release.

According to BMG's vice president Mindy Pickard, *Pompatus* played in approximately 10 markets with five prints rotated throughout the United States. Even though she acknowledges that the film only took off in New York, its theatrical exposure did lead to an increase in the number of home video units shipped and sold. (Approximately 17,000 units were reportedly sold. In today's market, an average low-budget independent feature, lacking such theatrical exposure, will sell anywhere from 7,000 to



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A more unusual case is *Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam*. This documentary had already been shown on television—the pay cable channel Cinemax—before BMG and In Pictures decided to take it into theaters. According to BMG's Pickard, the video company recognized the film's popularity and thought it might have a good chance at being a financial and critical success in a theatrical arena, even given its earlier cablecast.

"*Heidi Fleiss* had a subject who had become a controversial pop icon, and Nick Broomfield is a highly respected director who had been successful with another controversial figure in *Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer*," Pickard explains. *Heidi Fleiss* is a look inside the call-girl ring to the Hollywood elite and contains interviews with such subjects as the late doyen of Hollywood prostitution, Madam Alex, former Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates, and Fleiss herself,

BMG provided the P&A funds and released the film theatrically with In Pictures (which produced the film with HBO/Cinemax). It opened in New York and Los Angeles to critical acclaim from such periodicals as the *New York Times* and *Entertainment Weekly*, then began a national roll-out in approximately 50 markets.

Although the film was commercially and critically successful, In Pictures president Jamie Ader-Brown notes some problematic areas when a video company becomes involved in a theatrical release. As Ader-Brown explains, the "five figure" advance provided by BMG was used to launch the film in New York and Los Angeles. "However, after we knew the critics loved the film, we asked BMG to provide additional funds for an expanded [theatrical] release," she observes, and BMG declined to do so. Since *Heidi Fleiss* was shot in 16mm, the number of theaters capable of showing the film was limited. "There are [approximately] 200 theaters that can play 16mm," she says. "When we asked for the film to be blown up to 35mm so the film could play in more theaters, BMG said no." Although Ader-Brown acknowledges the limited theatrical market for most docu-

mentaries, she maintains that the film's positive reviews and its sexy and controversial subject matter would have justified the additional funding.

Pickard responds, "This was our first film, and we believed that there were enough theaters with 16mm projectors and calendar houses for the film to get further exposure."

In Pictures ended up raising additional P&A funds from elsewhere.

In the end, something caught video shoppers' eyes. Most documentaries sell anywhere from 1,000 to 4,000 units. In the end, according to BMG, *Heidi Fleiss* sold approximately double that: 10,000 units. "We knew the numbers [of units] would be better, since this is an entertainment, as opposed to a purely education documentary," Pickard observes.

MASSACHUSETTS-BASED INDEPENDENT THEATRICAL distributor Northern Arts Entertainment has done the fulfillment end of service deals for such films as Steven Soderbergh's *Gray's Anatomy* and *Schizopolis*, Peter Cohn's *Drunks*, and

Sam Kass' *The Search for One-Eyed Jimmy* (featuring Steve Buscemi, Jennifer Beals, and the Turturro acting clan of John, Nicholas, and Aida). According to Northern Arts' David Mazer, the company often receives a flat fee and approximately 15% of a film's theatrical revenues. In exchange, they create and implement a theatrical campaign (often in collaboration with the video company), book the theaters, and collect monies from the exhibitors.

He estimates that video companies have generally provided P&A funds in the amount of "several hundred thousand dollars," with an average of \$250,000. However, Mazer notes, "If a film is doing well theatrically, we can recycle some of the film's revenue for additional P&A."

Sometimes Northern Arts has been able to negotiate a percentage of overages from theatrical and other revenues after a certain level is reached in cases when it becomes involved earlier in a film's theatrical release.

As Mazer further explains, a film is often



The infamous star of *Heidi Fleiss-Hollywood Madam*, a doc that had a theatrical release after its cable airdate, thanks to a video-driven deal. Photo: Greg Gopman, courtesy In Pictures

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released theatrically in those markets where video wholesalers and rental stores are most likely to be interested in purchasing copies of that film.

Since a video company's P&A funds can rarely be spent on costly television ads or an extensive print campaign, the marketing for these films is generally publicity driven. Video companies and theatrical distributors both agree that having a "hook" helps warrant a film's theatrical release. Known cast members, a name director, festival exposure, awards, and provocative subject matter can help snag the attention of magazine and newspaper writers. This is one reason why *Drunks*, for instance, was considered a good bet, with a cast that includes Dianne Wiest, Faye Dunaway, Spalding Gray, Parker Posey, and Richard Lewis. As a result of its cast, favorable reviews and successful run at such theaters as the Quad in New York City, Pickard dis-

closes, BMG will be increasing its P&A expenditure. In the case of *Gray's Anatomy* and *Schizopolis*, Steven Soderbergh's name and reputation led Fox/Lorber Associates, a video distributor and sales agent, into a deal with Northern Arts. Fox/Lorber provided an advance earmarked for P&A and will now share with Northern Arts in the revenue generated from all rights and all media.

Ultimately, the distributors in a service deal have an eye on a film's quality and marketability. "Some marginal video product doesn't justify a theatrical release," Northern Arts' Mazer observes. "We're sensitive to a film's quality. We often look at a service deal for a film with the same criteria as if we were acquiring it."

A name director or cast isn't the only hook; occasionally a film's genre or potential niche market will attract distributors. According to Unapix Entertainment president Robert Baruc, "Sometimes it's not just a name game; we look at the film itself to see if it would appeal to a specific audience." Baruc cites Clement Virgo's *Rude*, a Canadian film

with an African American cast (including *Homicide's* Clark Johnson). Unapix provided P&A funds and engaged the services of KJM3, a small New York-based company that specializes in the marketing and release of films of the African diaspora. KJM3 held promotional parties ("Rude Nights") for *Rude* at bars and clubs and helped place articles in local newspapers. Although the film fared weakly at the box office in Miami, New York, and Washington D.C., its theatrical release on eight screens in these three cities led to Unapix selling approximately 15,000 units—approximately 7,000 more than projected.

Unapix also had success with such niche product as the Australian film *Sister, My Sister* (which Seventh Arts Releasing handled theatrically), as well as *The Fear*, a horror movie that Unapix itself released in eight theaters in three cities.

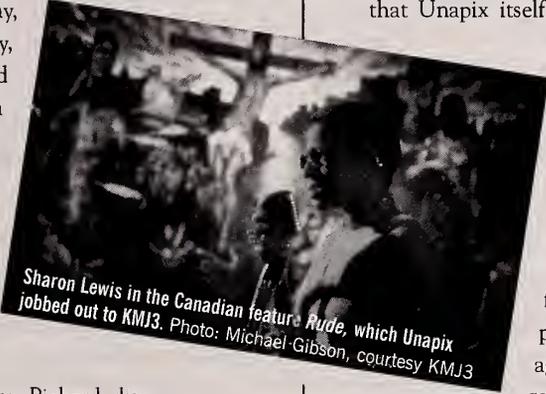
In its subsequent video release, *The Fear* sold approximately 10,000 units. Baruc explains, "Sometimes we pay the distributor a flat fee, and sometimes we pay a fee as an advance against a percentage of revenues from theatrical, home video, or televi-

sion." However, KJM3 general manager Marlin Adams observes that unless theatrical distributors put in a certain amount of P&A funding along with the video company or is a "name" theatrical distributor, they will rarely get to share in the video revenue.

Although their purposes overlap, the business philosophies of the video company and the theatrical distributor can differ. As Ader-Brown observes, there is a "passion, energy, and drive" that a theatrical distributor needs in order to get its films into theaters and attract an audience. The video companies, however, are more concerned with getting a film the exposure necessary for their customers—the wholesalers, retailers, and the rental stores.

But Northern Arts' Mazer sees an overall benefit for everyone involved—the film's producer, the theatrical distributor, and the video company: "No one is going to get booked to appear on the *David Letterman* show or appear on *Extra* for a straight-to-video movie. Home video can't get that news attention."

Robert L. Seigel is a NYC entertainment attorney and a principal in the Cinema Film Consulting company.



Sharon Lewis in the Canadian feature *Rude*, which Unapix jobbed out to KJM3. Photo: Michael Gibson, courtesy KJM3

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DOMESTIC

ASPEN FILMFEST, Sept. 23-28, CO. Set amidst the splendor of Rocky Mt. autumn, fest hosts intimate & casual 6-day event celebrating "the art of film at its finest." From U.S. indies to foreign films to in-person tributes & special presentations, fest presents the latest narrative & doc features. Considers features of all genres (except educ. or instructional). (Shorts go to Aspen Shortsfest; details avail. in Oct.) Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 70mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: \$20. Deadline: July 11. Contact: George Eldred, Aspen Filmfest, 110 East Hallam, Ste. 102, Aspen, CO 81612; (970) 925-6882; fax: 925-1967; geldred@aspenfilm.org; www.aspen.com/filmfest.

CENTRAL FLORIDA FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Sept. 26-Oct. Celebrating its 15th anniversary, Florida's oldest film & video festival is dedicated to the discovery of new and emerging artists from across the country. This year's 11-day festival will again demonstrate the broad use of independent film & video productions as artistic forms of expression. All entrants will receive viewer response sheets on each work entered. Cash awards and prizes will be given to winning artists in each category as well as Audience & Best of Fest awards. Festival accepts film and video shorts and features. All formats, genres, and categories (including animation, documentary, experimental, narrative, music videos, and features) are welcome. Entry fees range from \$20-\$40 depending on length of entry. Preview must be on 1/2" cassette (NTSC). Deadline: June 9. Late deadline (w/ additional \$15 fee): July 1. For more info & entry forms, contact: Central Florida Film & Video Festival, c/o Brenda Joyner, 15 1/2 N. Eola Dr., Ste. 5 Orlando, FL 32801; tel & fax: (407) 839-6045; www.cffvf.org

CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL Oct. 9-19. Deadline: June 25. In 33rd year, fest is organized and presented by Cinema/Chicago, a not-for-profit cultural and educational organization

founded in 1964 to seek and discover films representing the highest level of artistic excellence; to utilize cinema as a tool for education and discourse; and to promote international communication and celebrate cultural diversity through film. Cats include: features, docs, shorts, student films. Formats: 16mm, 35mm; video productions are ineligible. Awards: The Hugo Award is a symbol of prestige, discovery, success, w/ Gold Hugo festival's highest honor. Hugos awarded only to outstanding productions of incomparable excellence, creativity and originality. Plaques awarded to entries of superior quality that are among the best in their cat. Certificates of Merit awarded to productions juries feel contain strengths that deserve recognition. In honor of Emma & the late Oscar Getz, the Getz World Peace Award presented to filmmaker whose work has best contributed to a better understanding among people through film. Contact: (312) 425-9400; 425-0784 fax; filmfest@chiddbn.com; www.chicago.ddbn.com/filmfest

CHICAGO LESBIAN AND GAY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL: REELING 1997, Nov. 7-16, IL. Deadline: July 1. Second oldest fest of its kind in world, screening wide variety of int'l lesbian & gay film & video programs each yr Fest held at Music Box Theater, 750 seat cinema & at Kino-Eye Cinema, Chicago Filmmakers' 200-seat theatre. Offers good exposure, as well as potential follow-up engagements at Music Box. All formats, genres & lengths accepted. Each yr, approximately 120 films & videos showcased. Extensive local coverage, incl. *Chicago Tribune*, *Sun Times*, *Chicago Reader*, WGN-TV, public radio & gay press. Sponsored by Chicago Filmmakers, 2-decades old nonprofit media arts center w/ yr-round exhib. program of ind. film & video & int'l dist project incl. over 600 shorts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$20/\$15. Awards: Cash prizes totaling minimum of \$3000 for best docs, experimental/animation, and narratives. Contact: Reeling 1997, Chicago Lesbian & Gay Int'l Film Fest, Chicago Filmmakers, 1543 W. Division Street, Chicago, IL 60622; (312) 384-5533; fax: (312) 384-5532; chifilm@tezcat.com; www.tezcat.com/~chifilm/lgff

CINEMATEXAS FILM VIDEO & NEW MEDIA FESTIVAL, Sept. 25-28, TX. Deadline: July 15. Second annual int'l fest celebrating the latest tendencies in short format in both cinema & new media. Encourage submission primarily of films that are not industry calling cards but explorations of the genre of short film. Goal is to establish a forum for dialogue between "film school" & "real world" projects within the "independent, co-dependent & dependent world of media-tion" & to investigate the dissolving boundaries of traditional. digital, & interactive media. Cat's: (shorts only) narrative, doc, animation, alternative/new media. Max. length of 55 min. \$15,000 in cash, product, & service awards. Preview on video only (incl. new media). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", video, CD-Rom, www: Contact: Kyle Henry/Rachel Tsangari, CINEMATEXAS, Radio/TV/Film, CMA 6.118, Univ. of TX, Austin, TX 78712-1091; (512) 471-6657; fax: 471-4077; kyleh@mail.utexas.edu

COLUMBUS INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 22-24, OH. Deadline: July 1. One of older nontheatrical showcases in

country, competitive fest founded in 1952. Accepts ind & corporate prod. in 9 major divisions w/ about 10 cats. in each (97 cats. in all). These incl. Arts; Business & Industry; Education & Information; Humanities; Health & Medicine; Health & Medicine for the Professional; Religion; Science, Technology & Travel; Social Issues; TV & Advertising. Other cats incl. Media of Print (brochures/fliers, posters, press kits, study or resource guides, package design); Screenwriting; Student Competition (animation/exp, doc, drama/comedy, screenwriting). Chris Awards go to best of cat; 2nd place Bronze Plaques, Certificates of Honorable Mention & President's Award (best of fest) are also awarded. Cat winners can qualify for the Academy Award in short doc. Public screenings of selected winners for 2 nights last week in Oct & awards presentation banquet last Thurs in Oct. Organized & presented by Film Council of Greater Columbus, nonprofit educ. org. founded to encourage arts & sciences of film & videomaking, support ind. & corporate artists, improve public ed & elevate standards of quality in film & video literacy. Formats: 16mm, 1/2" VHS, CD-ROM. Entry fee: \$75 & up for professionals; \$35 and up for students. Contact: Joyce Long, awards admin., Columbus Int'l Film & Video Fest, Film Council of Greater Columbus, 5701 North High Street, Suite 204, Worthington, OH 43085; (614) 841-1666; fax: (614) 841-1666; chrisawd@infinet.com; http://www.infinet.com/~chrisawd

DALLAS VIDEO FESTIVAL, Early Nov., TX. Deadline: Late July. Dallas Museum of Art is showcase for annual fest of new works by ind artists, now beginning its second decade. Presented by Video Association of Dallas & Dallas Museum of Art, features general fest programming (state of medium—as art, as entertainment, as document, as archive & as commerce, basically all genres). The Lathen Award is a \$1200-\$1500 cash prize for excellence in emerging video artists, in memory of video artist and teacher Barbra Aronofsky Latham; rental fees paid to participants. Program features Texas Show, juried program of new works prod by Texas artists, Interactive Zone, for interactive works & KidVid, for works by & for children/teens. Entries must be prod or postprod on video or shot on film & transferred to video, or primarily meant to be exhibited or distributed on video or other electric media; works previously entered ineligible. Annual audiences est. at 5000-8000 for program of 150-250 works. Extensive local coverage. Formats: Beta sp 3/4", 1/2", multimedia, installations. Entry fee: \$30. Contact: Bart Weiss, fest director, Dallas Video Fest, Video Association of Dallas, 1405 Woodlawn ave Dallas, TX 75208; (214) 651-8600; fax: (214) 651-8600; bart@onramp.net; www.videofest.org

HOT SPRINGS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL, October 12-19, AR. Deadline *extended*: early June. Fest screens submitted docs along with Academy Award nominees in the doc category & IDA Award winners. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, VHS; preview on VHS cassette only. Entry fee: \$25. Contact: HSDFF, 211 Exchange St., Hot Springs, AR 71901; (501) 321-4747; fax 321-0211; hsdff@hotspringsar.com, www.hotspringsar.com/hsdff

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AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

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We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

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Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

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Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

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AIVF sponsors monthly member get-togethers in cities across the country; call the office for the one nearest you. Plus members are carrying on active dialogue online—creating a "virtual community" for independents to share information, resources, and ideas. Another way to reach fellow independents to let them know about your screenings, business services, and other announcements is by renting our mailing list, available at a discount to members.

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IMAGEOUT: ROCHESTER LESBIAN AND GAY FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL October 17-24, NY. Deadline: June 15. Now in 5th yr, fest seeks all types of film & video, special category for "work from the Third Coast": makers in US & Canada residing w/in 200-mile radius of Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Seaway. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Preview on VHS only. Entry fee: none. Contact: Kelly Hankin, Rochester Lesbian & Gay Film & Video Fest, Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, 713 Monroe Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607; (716) 271-2640; dool@uhura.cc.rochester.edu

NEW ORLEANS FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 10-16, LA. Deadline: July 15 (\$25 entry fee); July 25 (\$35 fee). Now in 9th yr, fest features local premieres of major releases from around world, world-class film industry guests & seminars. Special emphasis on ind film works of artistic, cultural & educational value. 1995 incl. over 100 films. Films shown in 2 groups: The Big House, for 35mm larger-budget features w/ distrib. & "Cinema 16" division, which hosts ind. film competition & shows works in all cats. All genres, styles, cats, lengths & formats considered; entries must have been completed w/in previous 2 yr. Awards: engraved lucite trophies. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", super 8; preview on VHS only. Contact: Victoria Klyce, New Orleans Film & Video Fest, 225 Baronne St., Suite 1712; New Orleans, LA 70112; (504) 523-3818; http://nettown.com/alpo/nofilm

NEW YORK EXPOSITION OF SHORT FILM & VIDEO Nov, NY. Deadline: July 1. in 31st yr, fest seeks narrative, animation, doc, experimental & dance film & video under 60 min., and digital new media works of any size. The Expo presents both unconventional, noncommercial works & classic shorts in all genres. Finalists are screened at The New School in Greenwich Village & are seen by distributors & exhibitors from NY media market. Distribution opt'ts available through Drift, the Expo's sister organization. Gold, Silver & Bronze awards granted in each cat, plus Blockbuster & Cyberfields cash awards and Eastman Kodak stock awards. Selected finalists will tour to other venues. Work must have been completed since 1995, new media since 1993. Student & int'l entries welcome. Formats: 16mm, 3/4" (35mm & Super-8 screened on video), CD-Rom, www. Entry fee: \$35. Contact: Robert Withers, NYExpo, 532 LaGuardia Place, Suite 330, NY, NY 10012; (212) 505-7742; rswbc@cunyvm.cuny.edu; www.yrd.com/nyexpo

NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL, late Sept./early Oct., NY. Deadline: Mid-July. Founded in 1963, New York Film Fest is one of major prestigious int'l film fests & uniquely New York film event. Presented by Film Society of Lincoln Center, fest presents average of 25 feature films & 20 shorts from throughout world, incl. U.S., over 17-day period each fall. No cats; all genres & lengths considered. Shorts presented on programs w/ feature films. Each film generally shown twice; docs, retros & the avant-garde program usually shown once. Fest is noncompetitive & there are no awards. All films selected by a committee consisting of two

permanent Film Society programmers & three film critics who serve 3-yr terms. They look over about 1,000 films from other fests & from ind. submissions. Fest well publicized, in various int'l & out-of-town press coverage (incl. major newspapers & journals); all film programs reviewed in the *New York Times* & the *Village Voice*. Fest programs virtually sell out (average 97% attendance), w/ audiences est. at about 50,000. Press conferences after each screening w/ directors, producers & actors. Film entries must have been completed w/in previous yr & must be NY premieres, w/ no prior public exhib or dist, either theatrically or on commercial, educational, or cable TV in the U.S. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: None. Contact: Sara Bensman, film coordinator, New York Film Fest, Film Society of Lincoln Center, 70 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023-6595; (212) 875-5610; fax: (212) 875-5636; www.filmlinc.com

NY COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL Oct 23-26, NYC. Deadline: July 15. In first yr, fest will highlight, promote, and encourage the work of comedic directors, screenwriters and actors. Cat's: features, shorts, animation. Awards will be given in each category. Preview on VHS only. Contact: NYCFF c/o One on One Prod., 126 W. 23rd St., NY, NY 10011.

NORTHAMPTON FILM FESTIVAL Nov. 6-9, MA. Deadline: June 30; fee: \$25. Film & video prods. by established & emerging US artists are the focus of this festival now going into 3rd yr. Cash awards & prizes presented in various cat's: animation, narrative, experimental & doc. No commercial, industrial or promotional works. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4" & 1/2". Submissions on VHS only. Contact: Northampton Film Associates, 351 Pleasant St. #137, Northampton, MA 01060; (413) 586-3471; fax: 584-4432; filmfest@nohofilm.org; www.noho film.org

NUBREED SYNERGY OF THE ARTS Oct 27, New York. Deadline: June 20, 1997. Now in 2nd yr, this festival at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall showcases emerging talent in various fields and seeks short works on film & video. 1996 fest showed work by over 100 artists from around the globe. Narrative and experimental shorts eligible, no music videos. All submissions on VHS, cannot be returned. Chosen works will be screened on 3/4" & Beta. Proceeds from fest go to fund arts programming & education for inner-city youth. Send entries to: NUbreed, c/o Pierce/Niebold, 412 Dean St., Brooklyn, NY 11217.

SEATTLE LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL Oct. 24-30, WA. Deadline: July 15. Presented by Seattle's Three Dollar Bill Cinema, fest invites submissions of films and videos of every genre. Three Dollar Bill Cinema was founded in 1995 and is staffed year-round by volunteers who produce the festival. Cat's: fiction, experimental, doc, rough cut. Preview on VHS only. Entry fee: \$10 per title before July 15, \$15 through Aug 1. Include SASE for return. Once a film is submitted, it may not be withdrawn. For more information, contact: Three Dollar Bill Cinema, 1122 E. Pike St. #1313, Seattle, WA 98122-3934; (206) 467-5014; fax: 467-7583; TDBcinema@aol.com

SINKING CREEK FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL Nov 13-16, TN. Deadline: June 30. Founded in 1969, Sinking Creek is the oldest southern film festival with

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a focus on independent media. The festival has a long, national reputation for its support and encouragement of independent media; many well-known film and video artists have had their work premiered at the festival. Independent, noncommercial and student films and videos of all lengths are eligible. The festival includes special presentations by important mediamakers and seminars in film analysis, as well as area premieres, children's matinees, and midnight screenings. Entries must have been completed within the previous two years. About 75 films and videos are showcased each year, and audience size is estimated at 3,000. Past special programs have included African-American Issues, Women's Issues, Coming Out on Film, Films for the Environment, Animation, The Cutting Edge of Experimental Film, Childrens' Matinees, Art on Film, Music Videos, and other cultural issues. Fest held on campus of Vanderbilt Univ. in Nashville. Cat's: animation, doc, experimental, feature, music video, young filmmakers (high school & under). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta; preview on VHS only. Entry fee: \$30-\$60, depending on length. Contact: Michael Catalano, dir., Sinking Creek, Vanderbilt Univ., 402 Sarratt Student Center, Nashville, TN 37240; (615) 343-3419; fax: 343-9461; creek@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu

SOUTH BRONX FILM & VIDEO FEST, Sept. 25-27, NY. 1st annual edition of fest to be held at The Point, new cultural institution in the South Bronx. Prizes awarded in following cats: narrative, doc, experimental, animation & films about the Bronx. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", 1/2"; preview on 1/2". Entry fee: \$10-\$30. Deadline: July 15 postmark. For appl. & info, contact: The Point CDC, 940 Garrison Ave., Bronx, NY 10474; (718) 542-4139.

TACOMA TORTURED ARTISTS FILM FESTIVAL Sept. 6, 12, 13, WA. Deadline: July 31. Now in 2nd yr, fest is a "no(n) profit venture" produced by Club Seven Studios and Broadway Center for the Performing Arts. Created to promote awareness of and support to the indep. community by screening every entry received. All genres accepted, no limitations on length or format. New this year are a series of educational lectures and workshops featuring Stewart Stern (*Rebel Without a Cause*). "Second Best" and "Honorable Mention" selections receive special screenings as well as winners. Each year the Alan Smithee Award presented to a member of the indep. film community. This year's winner: Steve Buscemi. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, video. Early submissions encouraged. Contact: James Hume or Kristen Revis, Club Seven Studios, 728A Pacific Ave., Tacoma WA 98402; (888) 20-CLUB7; (206) 627-1525; TacomaFilm@aol.com

TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, CO. Deadline: Late July. Over two decades old, fest has outstanding reputation as one of major showcases for new & ind film from around world. Open to professional & non-prof. filmmakers working in all aesthetic disciplines: doc, narrative, animation, exp, etc. Features & shorts of all styles & lengths eligible for consideration, provided that they are new works & remain unseen by public until fest's Labor Day Weekend opening. Major feature is that fest program not publicized in advance, creating aura of expectation & excitement for new, eclectic & undiscovered work. Selected short films play either w/ feature or as part of 3 specially selected programs of Filmmakers of

Tomorrow, featuring works by emerging film artists. Held in mountains of San Juan Range in SW Colorado; historic mining town of Telluride taken over by fest. In addition to premieres, fest incl. discussions, frequent opps for connection btwn filmmakers & film lovers, special events, retros, past treasures & 3 tributes. Fest attracts large amount of media attention & cross-section of professional media community & film industry (generally sell-out in advance). Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: \$20-75. Contact: Stella Pence, managing dir, Telluride Film Fest, Nat'l Film Preserve, 53 South Main St., Suite 212, Box B1156, Hanover, NH 03755; (603) 643-1255; fax: (603) 643-5938; Tellufilm@aol.com

VISIONS OF U.S. VIDEO CONTEST, Late August, CA. Deadline: June 15. Competition encourages original video production for artists, activists or amateurs. Submissions invited in 5 cats: fiction (using video to tell a story); non-fiction (creating your own doc); experimental (taking video medium to creative limits); music video (using original score or previously published music w/ written permission); young people (17 yrs & younger). Grand Prize winner selected from all entries, which must be originally produced & submitted in 8mm, Hi8, VHS, SVHS, VHSC or Beta; interformat editing allowed & no more than 25% of entry should incl. film transferred to video. Entries should not exceed 20 min. & originality considered most important factor. Awards are Sony equipment, incl. Grand Prize: CCD-TR700 Handycam Hi8 camcorder, EV-C100 Hi8 VCR & RM-E700 video editing controller. Sponsored by Sony Corporation & administered by American Film Institute. Formats accepted: 1/2", Beta, 8mm, Hi8. Entry fee: none. Contact: Contest Administrator, Visions of US Video Contest, Box 200, Hollywood, CA 90078; (213) 856-7749.

WORLD POPULATION FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL September, MA. Deadline: June 15. Secondary & college students eligible to submit works that address population growth, resource consumption, environment & common global future. Drama, animation, image-montage, docs of any length accepted in film, video & multimedia. Total of \$10,000 in prizes awarded to top 3 entries in secondary & college cats. "Best of Fest '97" VHS tapes made available to secondary schools & colleges & may be broadcast on MTV, Turner & PBS. Preview on VHS. Contact: Rawn Fulton, exec. dir., World Population Film/Video Fest, 46 Fox Hill Rd., Bernardston, MA 01337; (800) 638-9464; fax: (413) 648-9204; popvidfest@aol.com

FOREIGN

ATLANTIC FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL September 19-27, Canada. Deadline: June 13. Founded in 1981, fest has emphasis on film & video productions from Atlantic Canada as well as selected int'l productions. Since 1992, fest section ScreenScene has focused on films for children. Entries must have been completed w/in previous yr Awards: best film on video under 60 min. (\$1,000), over 60 min. (\$2,500) & others. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$45-\$75. Contact: Natalie Angelucci, Atlantic Film Festival, Box 36139, Halifax, NS B3J 3S9 Canada;

(902) 422-3486; fax: 422-4006; ag881@gfn.cs.dal.ca

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL FILM FESTIVAL, Early October, Canada. Deadline: July 15. Open to non-professional productions, competitive fest, founded in 1969, holds showings in several cities in Canada. Cats incl. amateur filmmakers, ind filmmakers & pre-professional students of film. About 30 prods showcased each yr Awards include best Canadian entry, scenario, doc, natural sciences, animation, experimental, editing, humor, teen 16-19, teen under 16. Max running time for entries is 30 min. Entries must have been completed in previous 5 yr Formats accepted: 16mm, 8mm, Super-8, 3/4", 1/2", Beta, 8mm. Entry fee: \$20-\$100. Contact: Ben Andrews, fest director, Canadian Int'l Annual Film Fest, 25 Eugenia Street, Barrie, Ontario, Canada L4M 1P6; (705) 737-2729 tel; fax: 737-2729; ciaff@iname.com

CORK INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 12-19, Ireland. Founded in 1956, aim is to "bring Irish audiences the best in world cinema in all its variety, to champion art of short film through its competitive section & provide a forum for creative interchange of ideas w/in film community." Fest's program is an eclectic one, bringing together new int'l films w/ other forms of film art, incl. doc, short, animation & exp film. Program also incl. retro sidebars, seminars & master classes. Entry cats incl. feature films, docs, short films. Entries must have been completed w/in previous 2 yrs to be eligible for competition sections & must not have screened previously in Ireland in theaters or on TV. Competitive for films under 30 min. Awards for best Int'l, European & Irish shorts. Also for shorts in black & white. Other sections incl. Irish Showcase & *Focus On* section devoted to filmmakers whose work "excites." Screenings take place at Cork Opera House, Kino Cinema & Triskel Arts Centre, which has a gallery & cafe & is meeting place/press center for fest. Deadline: July 6. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2". Entry fee: None. Contact: Michael Hannigan, fest director, Cork Int'l Film Fest, Féile Idirnáisiúnta Scannán Chorcaí, Hatfield House, Tobin Street, Cork, Ireland; tel: 011 353 21 27 17 11; fax: 011 353 21 27 59 45; ciff@indigo.ie

EUROPACINEMA, Sept. 20-26, Italy. Founded in 1984, feature fest programs about 100 films and attracts audiences est. at 60,000. Awards to best film, best actor/actress. Format: 35mm. Deadline: July 31. Contact: Monique Veaute, dir, Europacinema 96, Via Settembre, no.3 00187 Rome, Italy; tel: 011 39 6 42 01 11 84; fax: 011 39 6 42 01 05 99.

FIGUEIRA DA FOZ INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CINEMA, early Sept., Portugal. Deadline: early July. Fest presents, in official selection, competitive (fiction, doc, short films, films for children & videos) & in special programs (homages to directors & nat'l cinematographies) films chosen exclusively according to "criteria of expressive & aesthetic values & favors films w/ social, progressive themes, subjects or approaches." Fest has interest in discovery of new directors & promotion of not so well-known cinematographies, providing cultural framing w/ open debates, meetings w/ directors & other specialists, debates on selected films & publication of extensive material on critical issues of each film. Jury is selected from audience at fest. Sections: Official selection



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(fiction films for competition or information); *Images & Documents* (doc films, preferably w/ social themes); Short Films (15 min. max); Films for Children; Video Awards (artistic trophies & some cash prizes); Grand Prix for both fiction & doc, short film prize, three silver prizes (best directing, script, image, acting, sound track, music); Prize of Regional Tourism Office to innovative film; City of Figueira da Foz prize (best 1st or 2nd film), Glauber Rocha prize (best film from Third World), Figueira da Foz Discovery Award (\$4,500 to best 1st film), Prize Dr. João dos Santos for film concerning education for liberty; Figueira da Foz Prize for Children's Film; Jury Prize. Entries must have been completed w/in previous 1-1/2 yrs & be Portuguese premieres. Held on Atlantic coast, 200 km from Lisbon & near university city of Coimbra. Many American ind. filmmakers have participated in fest & received major awards; fest is considered a meeting point of world ind prod. Fest programs from 200-250 films each yr Fest is a member of Int'l Short Film Conference, Int'l Center of Films for Children and Young People, CIDALC-Comité Int'l pour la Diffusion des Arts et des Lettres par le Cinema, European Assoc. for Films for Children & Young People, FIAFF & CICAIE-Confederation Int'l des Cinemas d'Art et Essai. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: José Vieira Marques, fest director/Maria Cecília Marques, films management/Joaquim Augusto Vasco, film market, Figueira da Foz Int'l Fest of Cinema, Apartado dos Correios 50407, 1709 Lisbon Codex, Portugal; tel: 011 351 1 812 62 31; fax: 011 351 1 812 62 28; jose.marques@ficff.pt; www.ficff.pt

FILMFEST HAMBURG Sept. 25-Oct. 2, Germany. Deadline: June 30. Fest, founded in 1969, is noncompetitive survey of new int'l prods, incl. retro section, special section featuring country or region (in 1995 it was Hong Kong/China/Taiwan), children's films, shorts & presentations of Hamburg prods. Cat's: features, docs, animation, children's film. Entries must have been completed after June 30, 1996 & must not have been shown in Germany. About 100 films are showcased each yr Douglas Sirk lifetime achievement award awarded to Clint Eastwood in 1995 and to Stephen Frears in 1996. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: Josef Wutz, fest director, Filmfest Hamburg, Friedenstalle 7, 22765 Hamburg, Germany; tel: 011 49 40 39 82 62 10; fax: 011 49 40 39 82 62 11; filmfest-hamburg@t-online.de

GALWAY FILM FLEADH, July 8-13, Ireland. Located on West coast of Ireland, Galway is host to leading 2-week arts fest, of which film fest is part. Presents latest in Irish cinema & films from around world. Industry-oriented Fleadh Fair takes place July 11-13 & enables directors & distributors to interact & foster int'l coproduction. MEDIA-supported fair has strict selection process & requires development finance & finished screenplay. Noncompetitive fest (except for audience awards) accepts shorts & features in all categories. Entry fee: \$15. Preview on 1/2". Extended deadline: June 13. North American contact for submissions: Galway Film Fleadh, Rice Arts Management, 170 Ninth Ave., #117, NY, NY 10011; (212) 727-0249; fax: 929-7412; Galfilm@aol.com.

GRENOBLE FESTIVAL OF NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT FILMS, Feb., France. Deadline: June 15. Competitive annual fest, founded in 1972, is

open to narrative films & docs made after Jan 1 of preceding 2 yrs & films should focus on nature, ecology, or animals. Fest will provide food & lodging & participate in travel expenses for invited directors of selected films. Awards total 40,000 FF, divided among winners. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta. Entry fee: none. Contact: H. Binet, Head Officer, Grenoble Festival of Nature & Environment Films, Federation Rhone-Alpes de Protection de la Nature (FRAPNA), 5 place Bir Hakeim, 38 000 Grenoble, France; 011 33 04 76 42 64 08; fax 011 33 04 76 44 63 66.

HAIFA FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 16-21, Israel. Deadline: mid-July. Founded in 1983, fest held each yr during Jewish holiday Sucoth & is considered annual meeting of professionals associated w/ film industry in Israel: directors, critics, producers, actors, distributors & theater owners. Fest screens new features; hosts screenings w/ directors of new films not in Israeli commercial dist; holds promotional screenings open to critics & theatre owners of films soon to be distributed; shows Israeli & foreign short films; programs retro, doc & animation sections. Award: Israeli Critics Award, Golden Anchor Award (\$25,000) for best Mediterranean feature. Special programmatic emphasis put on Mediterranean cinema & Arabic pictures w/in context of int'l panorama. About 100 films showcased each yr. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Entry fee: None. Contact: Pnina Blayer, artistic di., Haifa Film Fest, 142 Hanassi Ave., Haifa 34633, Israel; 011 972 4 383 424; fax: 011 972 4 384 327.

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ORNITHOLOGICAL FILMS, Oct. 28-Nov. 2, France. Deadline: Early July. About 40 films on ornithological subjects are projected during this six day fest, founded in 1985. Associations & orgs concerned w/ environmental issues invited to present activities in various forums. Regional tours organized each day specifically in bird watching areas & children's activities around ornithological subjects are held. 15-20 artists present their photographs, paintings & sculpture. Cash prizes from 10,000FF to 30,000FF are awarded. Entries must be French premieres. Formats: 16mm, 1/2", Beta. Entry fee: None. Contact: Marie Christine Brouard, Int'l Fest of Ornithological Films, Fest Int'l du Film Ornithologique, B.P. 5, 79340 Menigoutte, France; tel: 011 33 5 49 69 90 09; fax: 011 33 5 49 69 97 25.

MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL, late Aug. 22-Sept. 2, Canada. Deadline: July 5. Only competitive film fest in N. America recognized by FIAPF. Founded in 1977, large & int'lly well-known fest boasts annual audiences of over 300,000 & programming hundreds of films. 9 cats: Official Competition (features & shorts); *Hors Concours* (official selection, noncompetitive); Focus on One Country's Cinema (TBA); Latin American Cinema; *Cinema of Today: Reflections of Our Time*; Cinema of Tomorrow: New Trends; Panorama Canada; TV Films; & Tributes. Jury for official competition awards: Grand Prix of the Americas to best film; Special Grand Prix of the Jury, Best Director, Best Actress/Actor; Best Screenplay & Best Artistic Contribution (awarded to technician). Short films compete for 1st & 2nd Prize. Second jury awards Prix de Montreal to

director of 1st fiction feature; all 1st fiction feature films presented in all cats eligible; other awards are Air Canada Prize for most popular feature film of fest, Prize for Best Canadian Feature Film awarded by public, Oecumenical Prize & FIPRESCI Prize. Features in official competition must be 70mm or 35mm, prod in 12 months preceding fest, not released commercially outside of country of origin & not entered in any competitive int'l film fest (unreleased films will be given priority). Films prod by & for TV eligible for official competition if their theatrical exploitation is planned; industrial, advertising & instructional films not eligible. Short films must be 70mm or 35mm & must not exceed 15 min. Fest held in 14 theatres, all in downtown Montreal w/in walking distance of fest headquarters. Some 2,500 film industry professionals are annually accredited, incl. directors, producers, actors, buyers, sellers, journalists & reps of other int'l fests. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Entry fee: None. Contact: Serge Losique, fest director, Montreal World Film Fest, Fest des Films du Monde, 1432 Bleury St, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 2J1; tel: (514) 848-3883 / 933-9699; fax: (514) 848-3886; ffm@Interlink.net; www.ffmpegontreal.org

PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 11-18, Italy. Deadline *extended*: early June. Fest, founded in 1982, is devoted to silent cinema, to films made before advent of sound or films discussing that period. Films lent by film archives or private collectors. Some recent retros are: 1995: *Non Fiction*; 1994: *Forgotten Laughter: Unknown American Comedians*; 1993: *Australia & New Zealand*; 1992: *Eclair/Disney*. The audience of about 1,000 generally incl about 500 specialists (archivists, historians, collectors). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: None. Contact: David Robinson, director, Pordenone Silent Film Fest, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, La Cineteca del Friuli, Via Osoppo 26, 33013 Gemona/Udine, Italy; tel: 011 39 432 980 458; fax: 011 39 432 970 542; pp.lj@proxima.conecta.it

SAINT HILAIRE DU TOUVET INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF HANG GLIDING FILMS, Mid Sept, France. Deadline: Mid July. Films related to parasailing, hang gliding, free-falling, parachuting, ballooning, muscular flying, sailplanes, elastic jumping & ultralights eligible for annual competitive fest, established in 1983. Awards: Grand Prix for all cats & prizes for best film script, most artistic film, best doc or news film, most humorous film, special jury prize, audience prize. Open to professional & amateur filmmakers. Entries must be under 30 min. Formats: video (Beta, VHS, Umatic). Entry fee: None. Contact: Martine Lange, secretary, Saint Hilaire du Touvet Int'l Fest of Hang Gliding Films, Fest Int'l du Film de Vol Libre, Office du Tourisme, 38660 St. Hilaire du Touvet, France; tel: 011 33 1 04 76 08 33 99; fax: 011 33 1 04 76 97 20 56.

SAN SEBASTIAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 18-27, Spain. Deadline: June 15. Held in an elegant Basque seaside city, San Sebastian, which celebrates its 45th year, is one of most imp't film fests in Spain, in terms of "glitter" sections, facilities, attendance (over 40,000, incl. 1,400 int'l guests), competition, partying & number of films. City is known for its food, beaches & quaint streets & fest attracts a number of int'l celebrities as well as wide selection of nat'l & int'l press. Fest shows features only—narrative, exp or exp/doc. Fest sections

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incl. Official Competition; *Zabaltegi* (open zone), section showing films from other fests, first films & films made by jury members; 4 retro cycles; Fipresci selection; selection of recent Spanish language films; films for children. In Official Section (18 features), only full length 35mm feature films, prod in preceding 12 mos, unawarded in any other competitive fest & not theatrically screened in Spain eligible. Int'l jury awards the following: Golden Shell to best film; Silver Shell to best director; best actor; best actress; Special Jury Award; two Special Mentions. Directors of selected films (in some cases, actors) invited to fest; round-trip expenses & minimum of 5 hotel nights covered. *Zabaltegi* section shows 30-40 features. Euskal Media Award of 25,000,000 ptas granted by Basque Government to best 1st or 2nd 35mm feature fiction, awarded as Euskal Media's contribution in role of co-producer of winner's next project (joint or individual). This prize will not be invested in film whose financing is complete prior to fest. Audience prize of 5,000,000 ptas awarded to distributor of best film in *Zabaltegi* not competing for Euskal Media Prize. Formats: 35mm (competition); 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: fest dir., San Sebastian Int'l Film Fest, Plaza de Oquendo s/n, Donostia, San Sebastian 20004, Spain; tel: 011 34 43 481 212; fax: 011 34 43 481 212; NY rep Joyce Pierpoline (212) 929-3303; fax: 929-3730; LA rep Berenice Reynaud, (805) 255-1050 x2421; fax: (213) 665-3440.

FESTIVAL

SÃO PAULO INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL Aug, Brazil. Deadline: June 16. Founded in 1990, noncompetitive fest quickly established itself as important part of the int'l shorts fest scene. Aims to exhibit short films produced in Brazil, present Latin America's unknown prods, allow for greater access to best int'l short films of past & present & continue to "exhibit films that may contribute to the development of the short film concerning its language, specific shape & way of production." Organized by Kinoforum. Entries should have max running time of 35 min; all genres accepted. Very enthusiastic local audience consistently fills screenings & debates all types of films. Past programs have incl extensive panoramas of American ind. short films as well as tributes, exhibits & special screenings. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Preview on VHS only; include dialogue transcript in English, Spanish or Portuguese. Contact: Andrea Seligmann, director, São Paulo Int'l Short Film Fest (Fest Internacional de Curtas-Metragens de São Paulo), rua Cristiano Viana, 907, 05411-001 São Paulo SP Brazil; 55-11-8529601 tel/fax; spshort@ibm.net; www.estacao.ignet.com.br/kinoforum/sao shortfest

TOKYO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 1-10, Japan. Deadline: July 15. Founded in 1985 as major int'l competitive Asian showcase, the annual FIAPF-accredited fest consists of Int'l Competition & Young Competition sections & film market. Int'l competition selects official entries from around world, w/ finalists screened during fest & int'l jury panel selecting winners for awards incl. Tokyo Grand Prix; Tokyo Special Jury Prize; Best Director, Best Actress, Best Actor, Best Artistic Contribution & Best Screenplay. Entries for this section must have been produced in 35mm or 70mm w/in 15-month period preceding fest, must not have taken part in competitive sections of other int'l fests & have running time of over 70 min. All films will have Japanese subtitles (cost borne by fest). Young Cinema Comp.

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TURIN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF YOUNG CINEMA (CINEMA GIOVANI) Nov.14-23, Italy. Deadline: Aug. 15 (shorts), Sept. 15 (features). Now celebrating 15th yr, fest is excellent competitive showcase for new directors & filmmaking trends. Held in northern Italy's Piedmont region. Sections: int'l Competition for Feature Films (35mm & 16mm Italian premieres completed after Sept. 1 1996); int'l Short Film competition (up to 30 min.); Noncompetitive Section (features & docs); important premieres & works by jury members. Italian Space Competition (35mm, 16mm & videos) accepts works by Italian directors. Turin Space accepts films & video by directors born or living in Piedmont region. Fest also features retros. Fest does not accept in competition any films already shown

in competition at Cannes, Berlin, Locarno or any Italian fests. Awards: int'l Feature Films Competition: 1st Prize 20 million lire; 2 special jury awards of 5 million lire each; int'l Short Films Competition: 1st Prize, 4 million lire; 2nd Prize 3 million lire; 3rd Prize 2 million lire; Italian Space Competition: 1st Prize 10 million lire in technical services & film, 2nd Prize 2 million lire; 3rd Prize 1 million lire; Turin Space Competition: 1st Prize 2 million lire; 2nd Prize 1 million lire; 3rd Prize 500,000 million lire. Local & foreign auds approach 45,000, with 25 nations represented & over 250 journalists accredited. About 300 films shown. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: \$15. U.S. contact: Cross Productions, 247 Centre St., 2nd fl., New York, NY 10013; (212) 226-6474; fax: 226-6721; sparkle@inch.com; www.webcom.com/~figc

VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, late Sept./early Oct., Canada. Deadline: July 15. Founded in 1982, fest presents approx. 300 films from 50 countries at 6 cinemas over 17 days. It has become 1 of N. America's larger int'l film fests (after Montreal & Toronto in terms of number of films, number of screenings & attendance). Est. 130,000 people attend, incl. about 300 invited guests representing filmmakers, stars, buyers & sellers, critics & other industry professionals from around world. Special sections of fest incl. *Dragons & Tigers: The Cinemas of East Asia* (one of largest annual selections of East Asian films anywhere outside of East Asia); *Canadian Images*, annual program of over 50 titles w/ special emphasis on Western Canada; Nonfiction Features, 25 film program devoted to current doc filmmaking, *Walk on the Wild Side*, midnight series of

films devoted to "lovers of extreme cinema"; Archival Series; The Screenwriter's Art & annual film & TV trade forum (a 3 day session of panel discussions, questions, schmoozing & parties). Awards: Air Canada Award for Most Popular Film; Federal Express Award for Most Popular Canadian Film; Dragon & Tigers Award for Young Cinema (\$5000 cash prize); Rogers Award for Best Canadian Screenplay (cash prize); Nat'l Film Board of Canada Awards for Best Doc Feature & Best Animated Film (cash prize). Fest accepts only feature length films that have not been screened commercially or broadcast in British Columbia. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: Alan Franey, fest dir., Vancouver int'l Film Fest, 1008 Homer St., #410, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6B 2X1; (604) 685-0260; fax: (604) 688-8221; viff@viff.org; http://viff.org/viff/

VIPER INTERNATIONAL FILM, VIDEO & MULTIMEDIA FESTIVAL LUCERNE, late Oct., Switzerland. Deadline: early July. Invitational fest, founded in 1980, presents & discusses developments & new tendencies in int'l exp & artistic media prods. int'l program selects about 50 new films & videos from about 15 countries; entries must be of exp & noncommercial, innovative & visual based character. Entries should have been completed in prev 2 yr Awards: Film Award donated by Regional Conference of Culture (Sfr. 5,000); Video Award donated by Panasonic (Sfr. 5,000); Award of the Canton of Lucerne (Sfr 5,000). Deadline: Early July (invitation). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4," 1/2," Beta. Entry fee: SFr. 20. Contact: Conny E. Voester, fest director, VIPER, Box 4929, 6002 Lucerne, Switzerland; tel: 011 41 1 450 6262; fax: 011 41 1 450 6261.

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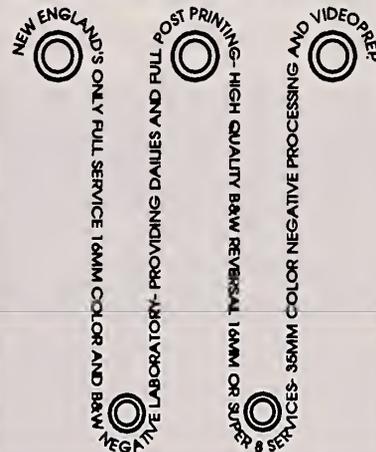
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COMPETITIONS

LAUGHING HORSE PRODUCTIONS, Seattle-based company, holding screenplay contest. Winner awarded \$500. Entry fee: \$30. Possibility of having script optioned & sent to major agents, producers & directors. For more info, call: (206) 762-5525.

SLAMDANCE SCREENPLAY COMPETITION: Deadline: July. Fest's 2nd annual competition, w/ aim to support new writers. Six finalists (incl. 3 grand prize winners) are submitted by fest to a major studio & literary agency. Also, cash prizes. Top prize winning screenplay will be read by actors to a festival audience at Slamdance '98. For info & entry forms, send s.a.s.e. to: Slamdance Screenplay Competition, 2633 Lincoln Blvd., #536, Santa Monica, CA 90405; (310) 204-7977.

URBAN INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS (UICA): call for entries for nat'l juried exhibition, "Myth America." Exhibit invites works that explore the many myths contributing to American cultural identity, all media eligible. No entry fee. Dates for exhibition: Sept. 5-Oct. 17. Deadline for submission: June 2. For a prospectus, contact: UICA-Myth America, 88 Monroe NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503; (616) 454-7000.

CONFERENCES • WORKSHOPS

ANNUAL CONFERENCE University Film & Video Association conference to be held Aug. 5-9 at Univ. of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Traditional academic paper presentations + workshops in new technologies, video art & WWW production, doc & scriptwriting. Critic screenings of members' work & premiere screening of winners of 1997 UFVA Student Film & Video Festival. Contact: Karla Berry (414) 424-3132; berry@vaxa.cis.uwosh.edu

FILMS • TAPES WANTED

AMERICAN CINEMATHEQUE accepting entries for on-going program, *The Alternative Screen: A Forum for Independent Film Exhibition & Beyond*. Send submissions on 1/2" VHS tape. Independent film, music video & new media projects wanted. For more info, call (213) 466-FILM.

ASHLAND CABLE ACCESS seeks video shows. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" OK, any length or genre. For return, incl. sufficient SASE. Send w/ & script to: & release to: Suzi Aufderheide, Southern Oregon

State College, RVTV, 1250 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland, OR 97520; (541) 552-6898.

AUSTIN, TX ind. producer offering cable access venue to showcase ind. films & videos, all genres & subjects. Shorts & music videos linked by discussions on ind. films. Films/videos running longer than 40 min. may be aired in series of 2 consecutive shows. Send release & info about film/filmmaker. 1/4" & 3/4" preferable. No payment, but credit & exposure. James Shelton, Tex-Cinema Productions, Box 3633, Austin, TX 78764-3633; (512) 867-9901.

AXLEGREASE Buffalo cable access program of ind. film & video, accepting all genres under 28 min., 1/2", 3/4", 8mm, Hi8. Send labeled w/ name, address, title, length, additional info & SASE for tape return to: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; (716) 884-7172, wheel@freenet.buffalo.edu; http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel

BLACK BOOT MEDIA PROJECT of Perry County Ind. Media Arts Center seeks ind. film & video works for regular series of roving screenings at various industrial, commercial & residential venues in Philadelphia & Harrisburg area. Submit S-8, 16mm, VHS or S-VHS w/ SASE to: PCIMAC, Lower Bailey Rd., RR2-Box 65, Newport, PA 17074. For info, contact Jeff Dardozi, (215) 545-7884.

BURLE AVANT curating "530 Lines of Resolution," digital video art night at Den of Thieves on Lower East Side in NYC. Video artists encouraged to submit works; no entry fees required. Send NTSC VHS tapes under 15 min. by UPS or hand deliver to: 530 Lines of Resolution, c/o The Outpost, 118 North 11 St., 4th fl, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 599-2385.

DANCE ON VIDEO wanted for *Spirit of Dance*, live 1-hr monthly program covering all types & aspects of dance. Under 5 min. or excerpts from longer works. S-VHS preferred. Call producers at (508) 430-1321, 759-7005; fax: 398-4520. Contact: Ken Glazebrook, 656 Depot St., Harwich, MA 02645.

DUTV-CABLE 54 progressive, nonprofit access channel in Philadelphia, seeks works by ind. producers. All genres & lengths considered. No payment; will return tapes. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" accepted. Contact: George McCollough or Maria Mongelli, DUTV-Cable 54, Drexel University, 33rd & Chesnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

EXHIBIT YOUR FILMS AT GRAND ILLUSION: The Northwest Film Forum in Seattle seeking 16mm & 35mm shorts (60 min. or less) for on-going exhibition. Selected works shown before regular programming at Seattle's only ind. art house theater, the Grand Illusion Cinema. Send submission on video (w/ SASE) to: NWWF c/o Grand Illusion, 1403 NE 50th, Seattle, WA 98105.

FILMMAKERS UNITED, nonprofit org., presents monthly film series at Silent Movie Theatre in Los Angeles. Year-round venue for ind. short films. To submit a film (must have 16mm or 35 mm print for screening & be no longer than 40 min.), send a 1/2" video copy w/ SASE to: Filmmakers United, 1260 N. Alexandria Ave., LA, CA 90029; (213) 427-8016.

FLOATING IMAGE seeks film/video animation & shorts for public/commercial TV program. Send VHS or SVHS to Floating Image Productions, Box 7017, Santa Monica, CA 90406 (include SASE for return).



(310) 313-6935; www.artnet.net/~floatingimage

GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS seeks short videos (10 min or less) for *Living w/ AIDS*, half-hr magazine weekly seen in Manhattan, Queens & Brooklyn, produced by GMHC & NYC Dept. of Health. No budget for licensing programs, but opportunity to be seen by millions. VHS or 3/4" tapes (no originals) must deal w/ HIV/AIDS issues, or present person(s) infected/affected by HIV/AIDS in positive way. May not be sexually explicit. All tapes returned. Send to: Kristen Thomas, Living with AIDS Showcase of Independent Video, GMHC Multimedia Dept., 129 W. 20th St., NY, NY 10011; (212) 337-3655.

HANDI-CAPABLE IN THE MEDIA seeks videos of any length about people with disabilities. Programs will air on Atlanta's Cable 12. No fees, however credit & exposure to large viewing audience. VHS preferred, S-VHS, 3/4" acceptable. Sharon Douglas, Handi-Capable in the Media, Inc. 2625 Piedmont Rd. Suite 56-137, Atlanta, GA 30324.

IN SHORT: a 1/2-hr program that airs bi-monthly, seeks submissions for public access show in NY. Preference given to works created w/ digital video. On every 4th program, work produced by or featuring women highlighted. Works up to 28 min., submitted on VHS for preview, available in 3/4". Send sub. to: In Short, 240 East 27th St., Suite 17N, NY, NY 10016; (212) 689-0505.

IND. FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE, weekly TV series & live monthly screening, seeks student & ind. films/video to give artists exposure. Submit on 1/2" or 3/4" video w/ paragraph about artist & work. Send to: IFVS, 6755 Yucca St. #8, Hollywood, CA 90028, Attn: Jerry Salata; jsalata@Freemark.com

INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE monthly screening program seeks experimental, avant-garde, doc, narrative. Possible monetary remuneration. Submit your films and/or videos on 1/2" or 8mm video. Clearly label tapes with title, length, name, address & phone. Include SASE if you wish tapes returned. Contact: Blackchair Prod., 2318 Second Ave., #313A Seattle, WA 98121; (206) 282-3592; joel@speakeasy.org

KHOU CHANNEL 11, CBS affiliate in Houston, TX, now accepting submissions for upcoming variety program. All broadcast-quality videos, docs, shorts, films, animation, performance, art, sketches, QuickTimes, etc. eligible. All formats welcome. Call (713) 268-1631.

KNITTING FACTORY VIDEO LOUNGE seeks VHS tapes for on-going weekly series of theme-based screenings. Any genre or subject. Send tape w/ brief bio to: Joanna Spitzner, Box 1220 Canal St. Station,

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NY, NY, 10012. If tape return desired, include self-addressed envelope w/ sufficient postage.

LO BUDJIT FILMZ & VIDEOS seeks submissions for *VHS or Less*, show focusing on camcorder movies. Embarrass old friends, showcase your dusty old tapes. Large bi-coastal audience. Send to: Lo Budjit, 147 Ave A, Box 1R NY, NY 10009; (212) 533-0866.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TV seeks story proposals from U.S. citizen or permanent resident minority filmmakers for *National Geographic Explorer*, award-winning doc series. To request appl. for CDP (Cultural Diversity Project), call: (202) 862-8637.

NEW BREED FESTIVAL seeks student/ind. shorts (narrative only) for bi-monthly cafe screenings in Lambertville, NJ & on NJ & PA public access. Send 1/2" VHS + info w/ SASE to: New Breed, 217 N. Union St., Lambertville, NJ 08530.

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS series broadcasting selected works statewide on public TV, seeks works of any genre (except corporate/instructional) produced by ind. artists currently residing in NC. Modest monetary compensation & telecast filmmaker interview of artist for works selected. Entry fee: \$15 for individuals, \$5 for students & NC Media Arts Alliance members; separate fee for each submission. Contact: Ellen Walters, *NC Visions*, Broadcasting/Cinema Program, 100 Carmichael Bldg., UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412-5001; (910) 334-5360; fax: 334-5039; ncvision@hamlet.uncg.edu

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS series calls for entries. No entry fee. Contact: Anita Harris Alexander, *NC Visions*, Fayetteville/Cumberland Arts Council, Box 318, Fayetteville, NC 28302; tel: (910) 323-1776; fax: (910) 323-1727; artscncl@foto.infi.net

OCULARIS: New screening room seeks 16mm shorts for regular screenings in East Village/Williamsburg area of NYC, particularly by local filmmakers. Please call or send SASE for info: Ocularis, 91 N. 4th St., #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-8713.

P.O.V. EARLY BIRD DEADLINE: The submission deadline for the 11th season has changed to July 31. Ind. nonfiction films sought for annual series. All styles eligible, incl. personal investigative, verité, compilation, traditional doc, plus experimental non-narrative approaches. If you film is at fine cut stage & you do not have financial resources to finish it, you may be eligible for completion funds. Call asap to receive call for entry form: (212) 989-2041 x. 318.

REAL TV looking for dynamic videos: news, weather, sports, bloopers, busts, "caught in the act." *Real TV*, syndicated, daily video magazine, will showcase compelling videos from around the world—from professionals as well as amateurs who capture video snapshots of life in the 90s. Tapes will not be returned. Contact: *Real TV*, Hollywood Center Studios, Stage 2, 1040 N. Las Palmas, Los Angeles, CA 90038; (213) 860-0100.

SAUCE GALLERY & MOMENTA ART, two alternative spaces in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, accepting entries for on-going film/video series. Mission is to identify & exhibit compelling new work no longer than 30 min. All formats & genres. Submit in VHS w/ SASE & brief description of work to: Sauce

Gallery, 173A North 3rd St., Brooklyn, NY 11211; attn: Lisa Schroeder (718) 486-8992 or Laura Parnes (718) 782-8907.

SHOW YOUR SHORTS, monthly NYC public access program seeks short films for 1-hr. special to air this summer, first Sunday of each month at 4:30 p.m. on Channel 34. For more info & application, write to Catherine DelBuno, PO Box 987, New York, NY 10011.

TV-1 PRODUCTIONS seeking footage on Cuba for upcoming doc. Every aspect of life in the island welcome. Formats: Hi8, SVHS, 3/4", Beta, DVD, 8mm & 16mm. Tapes returned. Payment negotiable. For more info, contact: Marcos N. Suarez, 2102 Empire Central, Dallas, TX 75235; (214) 357-2186.

TYME TOWER ENTERTAINMENT seeks feature-length & short films for Ind. Filmmakers video series. 16mm, 35mm, B/W or color. Send 3/4" or 1/2" VHS copy to: Tyme Tower Entertainment, c/o Tyme Tower Home Video, 810 E. Coliseum Blvd., ste. 107, Fort Wayne, IN 46805-1234; (219) 481-5807.

UNQUOTE TV, 1/2 hr nonprofit program dedicated to exposing new, innovative film & video artists, seeks ind. doc, narrative, experimental, performance works under 28 min. Seen on more than 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: Unquote TV, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

VIDEOSPACE AT DECORDOVA MEDIA ARTS ARCHIVE: DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park seeks VHS copies of video art & documentation of performance, installation art & new genres from New England artists for inclusion in new media arts archive. Send for info & guidelines: Videospace at DeCordova, DeCordova Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Rd., Lincoln, MA 01773-2600.

PUBLICATIONS

ART ON FILM DATABASE wants to know: Have you produced film, video or video disc on visual arts? Send info on prod. to Program for Art on Film Database, computer index to over 19,000 prods. Interested in prods on all visual arts topics. Welcome info on prods about artists of color & multicultural art projects. Send info to: Art on Film at Columbia University, 2875 Broadway, 2nd fl., NY, NY 10025; (212) 854-9570; fax: 854-9577.

DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO, organized by int'l Media Resources Exchange, seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info: Karen Ranucci, IMRE, 124 Washington Place, NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108.

MEDIA MATTERS, Media Alliance's newsletter, provides comprehensive listings of New York area events & opportunities for media artists. For a free copy, call Media Alliance at (212) 560-2919 or visit their web site at <http://www.mediaalliance.org>

MEDIANET: Guide to the Internet for Video & Filmmakers. Available free at <http://www.infi.net/~triddle/medianet.html> or email: rriddle@infi.net

THE SQUEALER: Quarterly journal produced by Squeaky Wheel puts an upstate NY spin on media-related subjects. Once a year, *The Squealer* publishes



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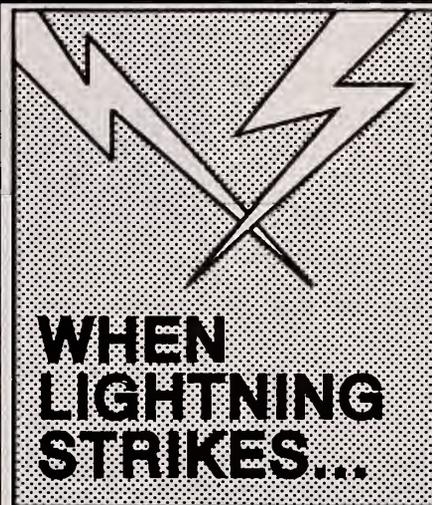
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"State of the State," a comprehensive resource issue w/ detailed info on upstate media arts organizations, access centers, schools & coalitions. Subscriptions \$15/year. Contact: Andrea Mancuso, Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel/>

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Not-for-profit Incorporation & Tax Exemption," & more. Reservations must be made: (212) 319-2910.

RESOURCES • FUNDS

AVID FEATURE FILM CAMP seeks independent feature-length projects that need free nonlinear post production facilities & asst. eds. on our Avid Media Composers. Students work as asst. eds. with credit on your feature & attend Avid authorized classes in exchange for free use of systems during the six week period. Four projects & four alternates will be selected. Send cover letter with info (script preferred, will accept outlines & treatments) to: Jaime Fowler, AFFC Director, Digital Media Education Center, 5701 SW Westgate Dr., Suite 210, Portland, OR 97221; (503) 297-2324; fax (503) 297-2191; affc@dmec.com

BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from ind. producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Reviewed on ongoing basis. Contact BFVF for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; bfvf@aol.com

CREATIVE PROJECT GRANTS: Subsidized use of VHS, interformat & 3/4" editing suite for ind. creative projects. Doc, political, propaganda, promotional & commercial projects are not eligible. Editor/instructor avail. Video work may be done in combination w/ S-8, Hi8, audio, performance, photography, artists, books, etc. Studio includes Amiga, special effects, A&B roll, transfers, dubbing, etc. Send SASE for guidelines to: The Media Loft, 727 6th Ave., NY, NY 10010; (212) 924-4893.

FILMCORE POSTPRODUCTION FUND
FilmCore, org. held accountable for NY Underground Film Festival, now accepting entries for its 1998 Postproduction Fund. Grants of \$500-\$2,000 will be awarded to ind. filmmakers seeking to complete projects of any length or genre on video, 16mm, or 35mm. Priority given to works that share NY Underground Festival's subversive, controversial & cutting-edge spirit. Deadline: Oct. 20. Contact: Ed Halter, FilmCore Postproduction Fund, 255 Lafayette St., Ste. 401, NYC, NY 10012; (212) 925-3440; fax: 925-3430; festival@nyuff.com.

ILLINOIS ARTS COUNCIL (IAC) SPECIAL ASSISTANCE ARTS PROGRAM: Matching grants of up to \$1,500 avail. to IL artists for specific projects. Activities that may be funded: registration fees & travel to attend conferences, seminars, or workshops; consultant fees for resolution of specific artistic problems; exhibits, performances, publications, screenings; materials, supplies, or services. Funds awarded based on quality of work submitted & impact of proposed project on artist's professional development. Appls. must be received at least 8 wks. prior to project starting date. Degree students not eligible. (312) 814-6750.

MEDIA ALLIANCE assists NYC artists & non-profit organizations in using state-of-art equipment, postprod. & prod. facilities at reduced rates. Contact: Media Alliance, c/o WNET, 356 W. 58th St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 560-2919.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS provides grants for development of nat'l public TV broadcast programming by & about indigenous Pacific Islanders. Appl's. available from: PIC, 1221 Kapiolani Blvd., #6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814; (808) 591-0059; fax: 591-1114; piccom@elele.peacesat.hawaii.edu

POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION gives financial assistance to artists of recognizable merit & financial need working as mixed-media or installation artists. Grants awarded throughout yr: \$1,000-\$30,000. For guidelines, write: Pollock-Krasner Foundation, 725 Park Ave., NY, NY 10021.

RESIDENCIES supports US organizations to host artists & arts managers, known as ArtsLink Fellows, from Central & Eastern Europe. ArtsLink Residencies grants provide funding to cover the living, working, and material costs for five-week residency, as well as modest administrative expenses for host organization. Grant amounts generally range from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Deadline for application: June 9. (212) 643-1985 x22.

RESIDENCY PROGRAM: Applications now being accepted for Residency Program at Experimental Television Center. Program offers artists opportunity to study techniques of video image processing during a 5-day intensive residency. Program open to artists from throughout US & supports all genres that approach video as unique art practice. Deadline: July 15. (607) 687-4341; etc@servtech.com

SOROS DOCUMENTARY FUND supports ind. doc. film & video on human rights, freedom of expression, social justice & civil liberties. 2 levels considered: works-in-progress & preproduction seed money. Grant awards for recommended works-in-progress range up to \$50,000, w/ average of \$25,000. Awards for seed funds range from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Send proposals to: Diane Weyermann, director of Arts & Cultural Regional Program, Open Society Institute, 888 7th Ave., #3100, NY, NY 10106.

STANDBY PROGRAM provides artists & non-profits access to broadcast quality video postprod. services at reduced rates. For guidelines & appl. contact: Standby Program, Box 184, NY, NY 10012-0004; (212) 219-0951; fax: 219-0563.

TEACHERS MEDIA CENTER, dedicated to educators interested in video technology as learning tool in the classroom. Latest project is setting up nat'l & int'l video pen pal exchanges; would like to hear from interested schools, individuals, or organizations. Also interested in creating nat'l network of educators interested in any or all aspects of growing multimedia & media literacy movements in education. Contact: Teachers Media Center, 158 122nd St., Rockaway Beach, NY 11694; (718) 634-3823.

Will Keenan in
Love God, directed
by Frank Grow



GENART: continued from p. 41

April 1 Film Group

We're strategizing how to handle the press screenings and launch party this week. Deena and Graham are lecturing us about the need to present a unified front. As Deena lists the filmmakers who will probably make an appearance at the press launch (including actress Martha Plimpton, star of *Eye of God*, who is prominently featured at several events), my mind starts to relax and wander.

As we wind down, I feel an affectionate vibe enveloping the Film Group. Everyone is smiling a lot, teasing each other, and talking with the intimacy of siblings. Our common mission has created a familial bond, and now we're preparing to watch our baby go forth into the film world.

In the midst of the frenetic activity of the meeting, Deena picks up on this unspoken bond and starts waxing poetic about the priceless volunteers. "I really want everyone to know how important the volunteers are," she says. "It's really about making a community, and everyone has worked so hard at making it happen. That is something you just cannot buy."

Kate Schultz is a location scout, video documentary maker, and journalist living in New York.

The Foundation for Independent Video and Film, the educational affiliate of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, supports a variety of programs and services for the independent media community, including publication of *The Independent*, workshops, and an information clearinghouse. None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

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MEET & GREETS

These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. *Free; open to AIVF members only.* Limited to 20 participants. RSVP required: (212) 807-1400 x 301. Please leave name and phone number, and specify event.

ED HALTER
Programmer

New York Underground Film Festival

Halter has programmed the *NY Underground Film Festival* since 1996. He was formerly the programming assistant at the *San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival*. He currently oversees FilmCore, the Underground Festival's year-round presenting organization.

Tuesday, July 15, 6:30 p.m.

SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS

VIDEO PRESERVATION: RESCHEDULED

Join Jim Lindner, President of VidiPax, and Dara Meyers-Kingsley, independent curator and restoration specialist, as they discuss the proper "care and feeding" of videotape. Issues to be discussed include choosing the right format for production and preservation, knowing what restoration options are available for damaged tapes and what to consider when preparing for long-term storage of video materials.

Tuesday, June 10, 6:30 pm

RETROSPECTIVE: THE FILMS OF YVONNE RAINER

Featuring the New York Premier of *Murder and Murder*. Tickets are \$8 for the general public and \$5 for Film Society and AIVF members (with membership card). For more information call Walter Reade Theater (212) 875-5600; web site: <http://www.film-linc.com>

Where: Walter Reade Theater, 165 W. 65th St., NYC

When: Friday, June 20 - Thursday, June 26

NEW IN THE LIBRARY

Film & Video Career Directory by B. Morgan and J. Palmisano.

A guide that will help you prepare a resume, tailor your cover letter, polish your interview technique and locate hundreds of companies with jobs and internships.

Ultimate Guide to Lesbian and Gay Film and Video by

Jenni Olson.

A listing of more than 2000 Lesbian and Gay-themed films and videos.

New York Production Guide 1997 Edition.

The New York bible of where to get whatever you need to start and complete a film or production.

Making Movies by J. Russo.

The inside guide to independent film production. Explains everything from beginning a project, filming, post production and marketing.

Hollywood, USA by R. Patrick and P. Kramer.

A directory of film and video related organizations and agencies listed by state.

Film Budgeting by Ralph Singleton.

A step by step guide to breaking down a budget for film.

Persistence of Vision by J. Gaspard.

A book of tactics designed to get a feature film made for under \$30,000.

Digital Nonlinear Editing by T. Ohanian.

Everything you need to know about editing a film or video in the digital format. Written by one of the designers of the Avid Media Composer.

AIVF FESTIVAL GUIDE ERRATA & UPDATES

Boston International Festival of Women's Cinema
New address and telephone number: *Running Art, 1691 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02146; (617) 739-2901.*

If you discover an error or change in our *Festival Guide*, please let us know so we can publish it in the magazine and include the information in the updates we publish periodically.

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If you have any problems receiving *The Independent* or questions regarding your AIVF membership, please call Brent Renaud, (212) 807-1400 x 236.

MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our copy deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.

Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.

Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street
Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time
Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.

Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Cleveland, OH

Call for date and location.

Contact: Annetta Marion, (216) 781-1755

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver, CO

When: June 26, 7 p.m.

Where: Kakes Studios, 2115 Pearl St., Boulder

Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125 or John Strout (303) 442-8445

Houston, TX:

When: Last Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Houston Salon Hotline (713) 227-1407

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.

Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

Norwalk, CT:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

Sacramento, CA

call for dates and locations.

Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.

Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

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Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW

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When people ask me how and what festivals to enter, I simply refer them to AIVF/FIVF's Guide. Not only is it the most comprehensive and up to date listing I've seen but the indexes slice and dice the festivals into every conceivable category. It's absolutely indispensable for independent producers.

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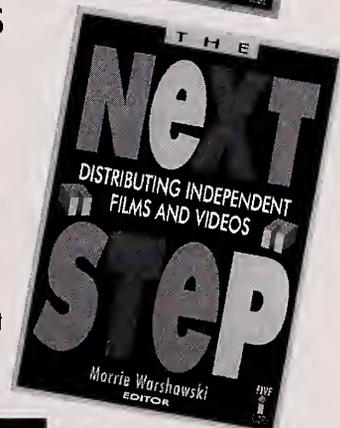
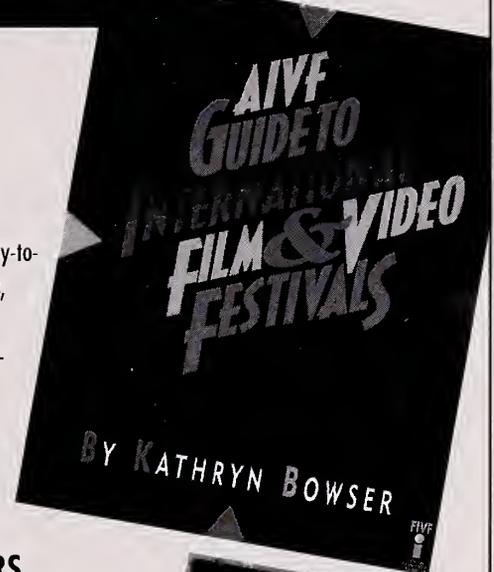
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For complete Entry Guidelines, an Entry Form or further information, please contact IDA Awards, 1551 S. Robertson Blvd. Suite 201, Los Angeles, CA 90035-4257. Phone: (310) 284-8422. Fax: (310) 785-9334.

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features

SPECIAL REPORT: EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA

In this issue, experimental film, video, and digital art get the spotlight. Featured articles include an interview with the prolific and provocative George Kuchar; comments from seven African American experimental medi makers; a profile of distributor Film-makers' Cooperative; a review of Video Data Bank's 17-part series on early video; and a round-up of four festivals that highlight experimental work.

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Cover: still from Portia Cobb's video *Don't Hurry Back...*
Courtesy Videomaker

56 classifieds

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ARTHOUSE ALTERNATIVES

DIY Exhibition Spaces on the Rise



THE SMALL, HAND-PAINTED SIGN outside the door on Manhattan's West 21st street looks promising. It says, "Guerrilla Cinema. \$5 admission. \$2 all-you-can consume popcorn and soda. Showcase for independent filmmakers." After following a maze of basement tunnels, you find your way to the box office, where two young entrepreneurs are waiting to greet you.

Brooks Elms and Andrew Rose, 25 and 26, respectively, are the only ones in the house so far, and it's getting close to show time. Elms, a recent New York University film school graduate, is showing his feature *Snapshots from a .500 Season* tonight. It's a coming-of-age story about a losing soccer team that can't quite get its act together. Elms says the film premiered on an outdoor soccer field.

When asked about the response so far to Guerrilla Cinema, a month-long film series that he and Rose conceived and financed, Elms shrugs and says, "The response has been good...but the turnout is bad."

Certainly there is a phenomenon of increased awareness and interest in independent film going on, yet not all indie filmmakers are feeling the impact. America's increasing open-mindedness toward independent film hasn't necessarily made it any easier for independents to get their work seen. While the DIY ethic has no doubt created a proliferation of independent films in the U.S. (Guerrilla Cinema estimates upwards of 1,200 features last year alone), the number of venues for these films remains insufficient. And in certain areas, the number has actually decreased due to arts funding cuts. Thus for the majority of independent filmmakers, where to show your film and how to get an



Tales Bookshop Café and Cinema in Los Angeles. Courtesy Tales Bookshop

audience remain difficult questions.

Alternative film spaces may provide an answer—and you don't have to live in New York or L.A. to get involved. Recently, the DIY impulse has taken hold in the exhibition realm as well, with all kinds of informal, impromptu, and low-overhead screenings taking place well outside the arthouse circuit. The fact is, people are hungry for interesting and affordable entertainment, but with box office ticket prices skyrocketing, many people are unwilling or unable to spend a night at the movies (especially after you throw in \$3 Cokes and \$2 Butterfingers). The biggest problem facing alternative spaces, however, is reaching people and convincing

them to come.

"We did get one write-up in the paper," Elms says, optimistically pointing to an article taped on the wall, "But it's in Italian. And I think it's slamming us, though I don't really know."

By the time the show starts, seven or eight people are in the theater, including two German guys who wandered in because they saw an ad in the *Village Voice*. The atmosphere is one of particular novelty that is unlike that in mainstream theaters. You get the sense that you are involved in something underground, where anything can and might happen. Will the film projector break down? Maybe. Will the cops or the fire marshal rush in at any moment and shut the place down? That would be exciting. It's a marked difference between the safe and sterile mainstream theater environment. The theater itself becomes half the fun.

Elms's film definitely shows some potential. More likely than not, however, had it been part of a film festival, *Snapshots from a .500 Season* might've been skipped over by most people in favor of a buzz film. At least here, he's got a captive audience.

As the lights come up, Elms doesn't appear defeated—even though his credit cards are maxed, the Germans left early, and it doesn't look like he and Rose are going to recoup much of the \$4,000 they invested in this venture, much less the \$50,000 he spent on his film.

"I envision independent film being something like going to see bands," he says with the idealism of a young filmmaker. "There's going to be all these places to go and so much to choose from."

Of course, this is Guerrilla Cinema's first shot, and they've learned a lot—it's best to plan a year in advance and see if you can pay the

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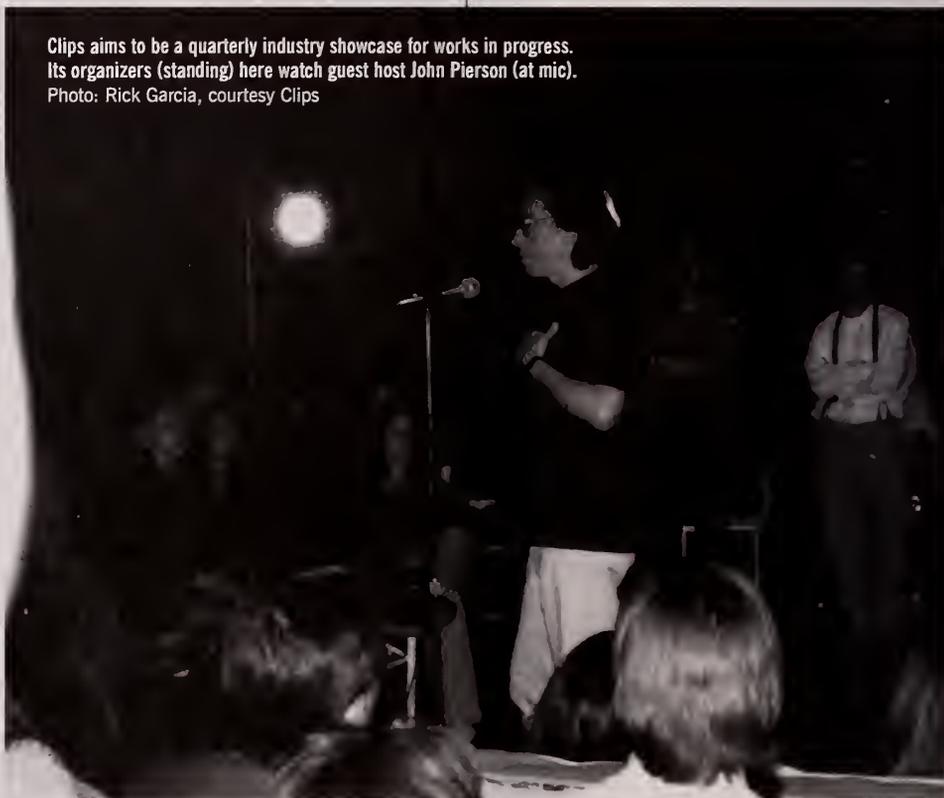
Had they spoken to Jaye Barry Jones, he might've saved these two young filmmakers a lot of trouble. Jones runs what is arguably the most well-known and well-respected alternative cinema space in Los Angeles, Tales Bookshop Cafe and Cinema. The indie film night has been going on there for about two years now and is quite successful, thanks to Jones's business-savvy approach. Tales draws audiences with special programming, which ranges from a *film noir* night to silent movies accompanied by live contemporary music. They

Vietnam protest movements of the sixties, they feature a bimonthly independent documentary series that draws a good number of submissions and viewers.

"It's packed every time," says cultural center director Vanessa Cropper, noting that the store's ideology is often reflected in the films. "It's a showcase for people who otherwise might not have gotten exposure. Some of it's quite risky—it'll give you a jolt."

Sarah Smiley has been a member of the Boston collective Videospace, a floating indie venue, for about two years. "I think the first year for us was a learning process," she says. "By the second year things came

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Clips aims to be a quarterly industry showcase for works in progress. Its organizers (standing) here watch guest host John Pierson (at mic). Photo: Rick Garcia, courtesy Clips

also use these attractions as a hook to draw larger crowds for the independent film night held on Wednesdays.

But it's not all glory, he says. "It's a positive/negative night," Jones explains. "We engage in a lot of discussion about 'Why was there no place for this film to go?' I think [film school] needs a mandatory course on exhibiting. You make a film, you spend your money or the money of investors on that film, and then what? Where are you gonna go with it? This is the kind of dialogue we have."

At Santa Monica's Midnight Special Bookstore, a different kind of dialogue is going on. A store rooted in the civil rights and

together a lot easier." The series focuses mainly on videos and uses venues like Mobius and Landowne St. Playhouse in Boston. They've had sold-out shows and busts, Smiley says, but they also focus on important discussion issues, such as how to get grants.

Cathy Bitetti of the Boston Artists' Foundation is also doing her part to get films shown. She's managed to re-open the foundation's video room, where shorts will be shown on a loop, accompanying the main gallery exhibits. "Massachusetts has lost a lot of venues for alternative cinema because of funding cuts, but it doesn't take a lot of

money to do this," she says, insisting that private organizations such as hers can help filmmakers explore new exhibition possibilities.

Funding cuts and the networking that helps link filmmakers with available funds present further reasons to consider alternative venues, such as L.A.'s Dobby's Dozen. Considered one of the best forums for new talent in town, as well as one of Hollywood's best-kept secrets, the monthly series aims to help African American filmmakers in particular get both funding and recognition for their work. Founder Eugene "Dobby" Williams says he and his partner Marceil Wright sift through about 30 to 40 films before selecting the final dozen

shorts that run on the last Wednesday of the month. And the number of submissions keeps going up, as does interest from major industry reps.

Like many of these venues, Dobby's Dozen features "a coffee house vibe" to attract a wider audience. Filmmakers have also successfully approached existing cafes to establish regular cinema nights, gaining exposure from places like the Speakeasy Cafe, a Seattle cybercafe that hosts an indie series on the last Thursday of every month.

Joel Bachar has hosted the Speakeasy series for about a year and a half now, and says the

combination of shorts, animation, and visiting programs from other West coast cities has been very successful, drawing about 60 people on average.

Back in New York, it's Monday night and Axis, a downtown theater space, is packed for an indie short film showing. Axis is drawing steady crowds and exposing a lot of people to short films by adopting a "pay-what-you-want" policy for their film series. Both Axis and another new downtown screening venue, Den of Cin, are very successful, comfortable spaces that are becoming hot meeting spots—not only for the film crowd, but also for young New Yorkers who are looking for cool and affordable

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hang-outs.

Then there's Clips, which though closed to the general public, has become the alternative cinema "boutique" of New York, according to Marco Masoni, who says he actually had to turn away industry reps at his second event because the quarterly series was so popular.

That Clips gathering was moderated by producers' rep and author John Pierson, "to feature someone who's a little farther ahead in their career and can offer advice to other filmmakers," says Masoni. The criteria for showing at Clips include, first, that "It's gotta be great." Second, the artist must be currently developing a project, so that filmmakers and industry reps will have something to talk about.

"I question what the function of a festival is," says Masoni. "It shouldn't be a place where a person who is famous shows his film. That's why we call ourselves a 'showcase.' We're basically a matchmaker between the creative and the commercial elements."

And they've even managed a few success stories in less than a year.

Jason Ruscio's short film *Eclipse* had gotten some good attention prior to its screening at Clips, but thanks to the showing, he managed to start talks with a major film company. "At first I was hesitant because it was such a small showing," says Ruscio. "My film had gotten some good attention already. But I said what the hell, and then I got a call from Miramax as a result." Ruscio encourages small scale screenings like Clips and similar alternative venues. "You never know who's out there watching," he says.

And with 2,800 applicants vying for a space at Sundance, that just might be your only alternative. All it takes is four walls, a screen, a projector, and the kind of DIY attitude that has proven so successful in the independent field.

RICHARD BAIMBRIDGE

Richard Baimbridge is a New York-based freelance writer who has written for Time Out-London and Livewire magazine

M E D I A N E W S

IFC Fronts Finishing Funds for Next Wave Films

With everyone from Aaron Spelling to Sylvester Stallone jumping on the independent bandwagon, it's instructive to remember that the thing which unites low-budget filmmakers is, well, they don't have very much money. Enter Peter Broderick, Independent Feature Project board member, whose series of articles



on *El Mariachi*, *Laws of Gravity*, and *Clerks* in *Filmmaker*—particularly the publication of their production budgets—became the faith that launched a thousand shoots. Now that maxing out your credit cards on location is no longer an act of desperation, but rather a rite of passage, Broderick is spearheading something called Next Wave Films, which will serve as a welcome source of capital for no-budget filmmakers.

Funded by a generous grant from the Independent Film Channel (the money will serve IFC as a kind of wide-net R&D investment), Next Wave Films is prepared to dedicate as much as \$100,000 apiece for up to four films a year, only specifying that the production budgets not exceed \$200,000. For that sum, the filmmaker promises basic cable rights to IFC—and possibly a laurel and hearty handshake at the end of the day.

"Our idea is to find movies that have theatrical distribution possibilities both in the U.S. and abroad," says Broderick. "But if we invest in a movie and we just can't find the distribution that we want, there is the possibility that we might be able to do some limited distribution of our own, in terms of theatrical. But in a worst-case scenario, from the filmmaker's standpoint, the movies would [at the least] eventually show up on the Independent Film Channel. And at that point I don't know,

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maybe there would be 15 or 20 million homes that would have access to them. The reason I'm enthusiastic about the idea is to help not just an individual film, but a filmmaker begin his or her career."

In addition, Next Wave will offer to serve as a producer's rep for the finished film, help develop and implement a festival strategy, and possibly assist in finding financing for future projects. The fund is open to English-language films from anywhere in the world (most probably first- or second-time filmmakers, although they seem willing bend the point), plus films in any language that originate within the U.S. And although they envision aiding mostly dramatic films, they will be open to the odd documentary as well. Next Wave will also develop a Web site that will feature budgets, relevant articles, and networking access to other filmmakers.

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To aid in this lofty endeavor, they have assembled a team of advisors which resembles a who's who of working role models: Charles Burnett, Carl Franklin, Victor Nunez, John Sayles, Robert Rodriguez and Kevin Smith. The list also includes a roster of filmmakers from outside the U.S.: from England, they've recruited Stephen Frears; from Australia, George Miller; from Ireland, Neil Jordan; from New Zealand, Peter Jackson; and from Canada, Atom Egoyan, Mina Shum, and Lynne Stopkewich, whose daring yet controlled first feature, *Kissed*—produced for a pittance as the gravy train of government financing was just winding down—is exactly the kind of project they might look for today.

"When advisors come across worthy projects, they will refer them to us. And in some cases, a number of the advisors have agreed to help in other ways—in post, in terms of helping us get lab deals, or whatever. So I think it'll be a nice combination of experience and ability, just to help things in various ways. It's not just a letterhead deal."

In a previous life, Broderick was assistant to Terrence Malick on *Days of Heaven* (about which he is still sworn to secrecy), where he no doubt observed close-up the delicate sutures binding artistic vision to economic necessity. More recently, he presided over the Swatch "Someone to Watch" award given out at IFP West Independent Spirit Awards, which provided \$20,000 grants to filmmakers Lodge Kerrigan (*Clean, Shaven*), Christopher Munch (*Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day*), and Larry Fessenden (*Habit*), basically to use any way they see fit.

"Going back a decade, John Sayles, David Lynch, Jim Jarmusch, Charles Burnett, Victor Nunez, Gus Van Sant all started making essentially no-budget movies," explains Broderick. "Those movies were all different from each other and pretty unique in their own right. I think the key is originality—something that people haven't seen before. Certainly the kind of miracles people are coming up with on tiny resources is where my heart lies."

Broderick is just beginning to get the word out, but encourages anyone seeking finishing funds who might fit the bill to contact him at: Next Wave Films, 708 Euclid St., Santa Monica, CA 90402; (310) 392-1720; paradigm@earthlink.net.

PAUL CULLUM

Paul Cullum is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles.

Independent's Day: A Distribution Revolution?

"Do you have a stack of rejection letters, from PBS to Paramount?," asks filmmaker Hilary Weisman, in a letter cum press release that she sent members of the independent community earlier this year. Weisman is stirring up interest in *Independent's Day*, a 24-hour national cable-cast of independent features and shorts that will attempt to utilize a medium most filmmakers have never considered: public access cable.

Weisman knows first-hand about the difficulty of gaining exposure and distribution and, with co-producer Marlise Carruth, has created *Independent's Day* as a means of promoting quality work that falls far enough outside of the mainstream to be overlooked by distributors. "Our effort will generate exposure not only for our own films, but for low-budget filmmaking in general," explains Weisman.

Independent's Day will air July 5th and 6th on a number of cable systems from coast to coast, and will be funded through advertising specific to each market. While Weisman hopes to enlist 25 cable systems, she has already gotten the green light in a number of cities, including San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, and New York.

"The means of exhibition and distribution aren't keeping up with the production of independent films," says Weisman. "We're attempting to use the means we have to expand the market."

For more information on *Independent's Day*, contact Gary Harrington or Todd Kauffman at (617) 244-1718 or FireflyInc@aol.com.

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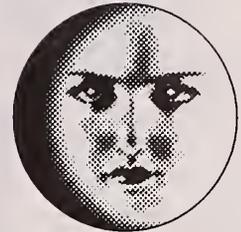
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*Clicking In:
Hot Links to a Digital
Culture* Edited by Lynn Hershman Leeson (Bay Press, 1996), 371 pp., \$24.95

IN THE SIXTIES, WHEN PROponents of the Art and Technology movement in America were developing a postmodern machine aesthetic intent on putting technological progress in the service of art, Marcel Duchamp commented that “art will be sunk or drowned by technology.” Meanwhile, Robert Rauschenberg advised persons uncomfortable with technology to “go to another place, because no place here is safe.”

In today’s digital age, the constant and radical reinvention of both art and technology is seen as a *fait accompli*, accompanied by well-crafted hype and cybercelebration. If the glorifying praise of new media is sometimes dogmatic, it can be so because it goes largely un-

answered. The rhetoric of the so-called “digerati” has yet to be subverted; no one has put a urinal on the Web and called it art.

The essays in *Clicking In: Hot Links to a Digital Culture* offer a refreshingly wide range of perspectives on the digital phenomenon and its cultural ramifications. Though not restricted to the subjects of art and technology, the essays collected in *Clicking In* reflect these particular fascinations of the book’s editor, Lynn Hershman Leeson, an artist whose interest in film, video, and interactive media is also evident in *Clicking On*, a CD-ROM that accompanies the book. As the title implies, *Clicking In* is essentially a book about the Internet, and as such some of its pieces convey information that is already “old news” by the digital standard. Other pieces get bogged down by “netspeak” and are marked by their authors’



Digital Venus, cover-art from *Clicking In*

myopic devotion to the emerging medium, but the collection also contains writing that takes a sober look at new technology and poses intelligent questions about its cultural significance.

“Selling Wine without Bottles,” contributed by Electronic Frontier Foundation cofounder John Perry Barlow, presents the Internet as a system of commerce where the old rules of trade no longer apply. Starting with an examination of patent law and the concept of intellectual property, Barlow goes on to examine the potential of a medium that offers direct access to information, circumventing the various products that have traditionally “contained” content. The problems posed by new media are taken most seriously by the media it threatens to replace: who will buy newspapers if news on the Internet is free and access to that information is nearly universal? How will

record companies make a profit if digital recordings are both downloadable and reproducible? What is the future of television if interactivity allows users to steer around commercials? Will people watch feature films on their computers?

The future of media, according to Barlow, will depend on a redesign of the service it provides consumers. The same law of commerce that allows a product—and not an idea—to be patented will dictate the commercial development of the Internet. Information economics, says Barlow, will be based more on relationship than on possession—a price tag will be placed on media’s relationship to the market, rather than on any particular product. Increasingly, access to continuously updated information and the possibility of interaction with the source of

such information will be the selling points of new media. Magazines will take on the form of news wires, while television drama is likely to break out of the time-slot and run continuously. Users, or viewers, will pay for access to a stream of information, rather than purchasing information in units (pages of paper or minutes of pay-per-view). Interactivity, meanwhile, will not be measured in mouse-clicks, but in the degree to which users are able to directly question the sources of new media; letters to the editor may be required to include a fee for response.

This type of new media landscape also promises to change the nature of entertainment. Sheldon Renan, a writer and technology expert, writes in his essay, "The Internet and the Future of Being Fictive," of the imminent evolution of dramatic form. According to Renan, the future of narrativity is stapled to the future of the global network, which will demand forms of narrative that are *scalable*, in that their perspective

will be flexible, and *linkable*, in that separate stories may link up and interconnect. This type of entertainment may well make use of "intelligent agents," according to MIT professor Pattie Maes. In "Artificial Life Meets Entertainment," Maes points to the use of software-based characters or agents in new media entertainment. Rather than animating on-screen characters by drafting each instant of movement (traditional animation), researchers are increasingly creating characters that perform actions in response to their perceived environment. The algorithms that generate such behavior are already being marketed to Hollywood as the future of computer animation; some of the bats in *Batman II* were actually "intelligent agents." Not all such agents are graphics-based, however; Maes also writes about "Julia," a text-based character consisting of multiple "experts" or separate identities which allow users to interact with a character that reacts to their questions and comments according to a library of programmed responses.

The very best *Clicking In* has to offer is the type of commentary provided by art critic Söke Dinkla and Whitney Museum director David A. Ross. Their essays place digital art

in a historical context, pointing to certain similarities between interactive art and its predecessors, particularly the classic avant garde and the video art movement. Dinkla draws a fascinating parallel between the current trend of interactivity and the efforts of Dada artists such as Max Ernst, who may have been the first artist to urge viewers to interact with his work: in 1920, he placed an ax next to one of his paintings and urged viewers to use it if they did not like what they saw.

Ross, meanwhile, discusses the similarities between the emergence of video art in the seventies and the explosion of digital art in this decade. His essay poses what is perhaps *Clicking In*'s most challenging question: If video art as a medium was largely eclipsed by the businesses

Clicking In is a valuable resource because it makes very clear, through the contributions of artists, academics, engineers, and entrepreneurs, the extent to which digital culture has shed its "virtual" aura and become reality.

that adopted video as their product, what hope is there for digital art in a cyberspace that is increasingly developed and even owned by corporations such as America On-line and Microsoft? Ross challenges artists to develop "radical software," (a favorite term of seventies video collectives) by which he means artwork that can be a transformative force within digital culture.

Ross's challenge, however, can barely hide his enthusiasm for the potentials of new media, and this is particularly indicative of the current state of digital art. Digital fever is rampant and has people everywhere from Redmond to Wall Street in a peculiar technology-inspired delirium. But while new media promises to reinvent aspects of both commerce and culture, the vast majority of us are still waiting for something significant to develop, something that is more than just a sign of what the future might hold. *Clicking In* is a valuable resource because it makes very clear, through the contributions of artists, academics, engineers, and entrepreneurs, the extent to which digital culture has shed its "virtual" aura and become reality. In the process, it has inspired debate about topics ranging from the constitution's protection of data encryption to the comparison of computer viruses with single-cell life-forms to the future of artistic creation. Even while the relationship between digital and traditional technology continues to evolve, new media is clearly poised to have a permanent effect on everything it touches.

RYAN DEUSSING

Ryan Deussing is managing editor of The Independent.

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No Establishing Shot: Shu Lea Cheang Gets Web Site Specific

WHILE MANY INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS SEE THE World Wide Web only as a promotional opportunity, others are colonizing the corporate space with installations, projections, cybercasts, and Web features. Shu Lea Cheang's work is emblematic of this trend towards the digital four-walling of cyberspace.

Cheang, a Taiwan-born New York-based media artist, has a history of exploring new domains for exhibition. Back in the eighties, her video installations could be found in laundromats as well as art galleries, and Cheang was among New York City's early explorers of public access television as a venue for alternative media.

When Cheang moved to feature film with

Internet, and its global and fluid possibilities. But Cheang's pieces are very site-specific, anchored to a physical space.

Bowling Alley (<http://bowlingalley.walker-art.org>) is a Web site that links an actual bowling alley with a set of texts by 10 Twin City artists that often mimic email messages about subway rides, random sexual encounters, and other urban scenes. As the pins are knocked down in the Bryant-Lake Bowl, Minneapolis, near the Walker Arts Center (which commissioned the piece), they trigger the Bowling Alley's "demolition apparatus": an ISDN trigger scrambles laserdisc projections of real-time bowling in the gallery installation and on the Web, rearranging the visual paths through the Web site. By connecting the dynamics of a Web installation to "real life" events, Cheang neatly subverts the objection many filmmakers have to new media—that it is too virtual, too sublime, too removed from the real. Additionally, like

the laundromat that housed her video installation, the bowling alley is traditionally a working class space. It brings to the forefront the very real issues of economic stratification and how this limits access to new technologies and information systems.

Another site-specific Web work by Cheang combines cybercast, traditional documentary, and interactive modules to tell the story of the

From *Elephant Cage Butterfly Locker*



Fresh Kill in 1994, she kept both feet firmly planted on experimental turf. The film itself had a fractured narrative structure, playing off multiple story-lines connected to the polluted Freshkill landfill in Staten Island, New York. Subsequent to its theatrical exhibition, Cheang gave *Fresh Kill* a mutating life as a Web site [<http://www.echonyc.com/~freshkill>]. The site breaks down the film into episodes, threads, and themes, allowing the user to travel through and own the story in a way not possible in a movie theater. It's something Cheang ultimately sees as an eco-activist strategy, allowing her to empower her audience in a way previously restricted to documentarians handing out "What you can do" flyers after a screening.

In 1995 Cheang left film behind altogether to create Web sites with a twist. Much has been made of the lack of a sense of place on the

crimes and incidents committed by the American military stationed on the island of Okinawa. (Since 1972, 4,700 cases have been filed.) Called *Elephant Cage Butterfly Locker* [<http://ec4.edu.u-ryukyu.ac.jp/tadarweb/>], the site addresses issues of race and class, which wide-eyed theorists insist have no on-line role. "Bowling Alley opens up the debate on public and private space," says Cheang, "while the Okinawa project eventually became the focus of censorship issues in Japan" when it was exhibited in Okinawa in August 1996.

"The Internet is a very structured and regulated space," she continues. In defiance of that, "Bowling Alley is conceived as 'actual bowling strikes virtual landscape,' and the Okinawa project would have the opening of a locker in Tokyo trigger the locked memory

on the Internet. The link, the connection (a sensor-triggered digi signal) is set up for 'scrambling' the rationale of the Net."

Cheang's current project, *Brandon*, is even more ambitious. Funded by a Moving Images Installation and Interactive Media Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, *Brandon* was sparked by the 1993 murder of Lisa Lambert, Phillip Devine, and Brandon Teena in Iowa. While the murders themselves were horrific, Brandon Teena's status as a transsexual has drawn specific attention to the case. Teena's body itself has become a site where wars are fought: Where is gender located? Where is sexuality? The shifting personas of this palimpsest are uniquely suited to Cheang's Web orientation.

"Conceptually, *Brandon* is designed as a one-year time-based narrative/installation constructed in various collaborative modes for the WWWebland," says Cheang. "The project is being developed with the Whitney Museum here in New York and we're also working with Amsterdam's Theater Anatomicum as a site for operating theater and virtual courtroom." Although the actual trial of Brandon's killers has concluded (both were found guilty), Cheang plans to expand the idea of courtroom and provide a space to debate both the facts and the issues of the case. Part monument, part call-to-action, the site is a live link between real-time events and the ever-changing contexts of memory, legalities, and gender laws.

"We want to do *Brandon* as a Web feature coded somehow in an automated narrative system," Cheang explains. "Brandon's story-line involves a raping and killing of a 'gender offender' as the multicas *Brandon* gets uploaded to cyberzone's playland. [The project] is Web only, but the Webtripping should be tangled with a Webcast roadtrip." At this early stage, Cheang refuses to specify, but one imagines a "Webcast roadtrip" as either a series of Clintonian town meetings uploaded to the Web, or perhaps a more experimental form of real-time documentation.

Cheang is carving out a new language as she goes, redefining the Web and what shape media art will take within it. "I have never considered the transition from one medium to the other as a matter of reloading. I do not think video is a more economical version of film, or that the Web should be a click-on screen for filmgoers," she states. "We all have to come to grips with Web work being fluid and ever-formulating."

MIKKI HALPIN

Mikki Halpin is editor in chief of www.stim.com.

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BY LISSA GIBBS

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Who are you?

Film-makers' Cooperative is a nonprofit artist owned and operated organization, with a very active, all film-maker Board of Directors. Staff: M. M. Serra (director since 1991, following the 28-year directorship of Leslie Trumbull), Julieta Lopez-Henriquez, Matt Priniz, and Dean Heady. Board of Directors: Ralph Ackerman, Karen Kramer, Jennifer Reeves, Lana Lin, Dave Gearey, Lynne Sachs, Margot Niederland, and Julie Murray.

How long have you been around?

35 years.

Unofficial motto:

Artist first and foremost.

What's a co-op and how does it differ from other distributors?

The Film-Makers' Cooperative was founded in 1962 by a group of 22 New York cinéastes. Led by Jonas Mekas, the group included filmmakers Lionel Rogosin, Peter Bogdanovich, Robert Frank, Alfred Leslie, Shirley Clarke, Gregory Markopoulos, and Edward Bland, plus actors Ben Carruthers and Argus Speare Juilliard, and distributors and producers Emile de Antonio, Lewis Allen, Daniel Talbot, Walter Gutman, and David Stone. These individuals committed themselves to cinema as "a personal expression," decrying the interference of producers and censors alike. They planned new forms of financing, a festival to represent the new cinema, and a cooperative distribution center. Though most of these never materialized in the form envisioned, the distribution center did.

Today the Co-op continues much as it was originally intended—as a distribution service for independent, noncommercial, avant-garde films that is run not by business people but by the filmmaker-members themselves. It is nonprofit, non-discriminating, and non-contractual, owning no rights to the films in its catalog. Nevertheless, it is the sole distributor for a great majori-

Head honcho M.M. Serra

Photo: Thomas Doran



ty of works in its collection and is the largest such cooperative distribution service in the world. It operates under guidelines formulated for the common good of all of its members and, as an organization, does not promote one filmmaker's career or work more than another. Since 1990, we've been distributing video.

What does "experimental" mean?

Work that is not a consumer product but is an exploration of aesthetics and ideas generated by personal perspective.

How does someone become a member?

Anyone who's made at least one film or video of any length and has a print that can reside within the Co-op's collection can become a member. We are inclusive. There's no curatorial gatekeeper. We do not demand exclusive distribution; in fact, we discourage it. Membership is \$40/year. So call or write us if you want to join.

What's your current operating budget and where does it come from?

Less than \$100,000. It all comes from rentals and sales of films and videos, grants from agencies like the New York State Council on the Arts, fundraising drives, membership dues, and exhibitions.

What's it spent on?

Staff salaries, maintenance of the office, communication

with members and renters, and printing of our catalog.

How do filmmakers get their rental income from you?

By asking for it.

Number of titles in collection:

Over 5,000.

Most popular titles:

The classic titles from

filmmakers like Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas, Hollis Frampton, Michael Snow, and Jack Smith, as well as works by contemporary filmmakers who have a body of work, like Abigail Childs, Mark Street, Lewis Klahr, Peggy Ahwesh, Janie Geiser, and Lynne Sachs.

Least popular titles:

Those by filmmakers who have only made one film and never promoted it.

Latest acquisitions:

New works by Peggy Ahwesh, Stan Brakhage, Abigail Childs, Ken Jacobs, Lisa DiIillo, Matthew Buckingham, Ralph Ackerman, 10 Austrian filmmakers, and Anne Charlotte Robertson's super 8 films on videotape.

Who rents from you?

Schools, art programs, museums, libraries, alternative exhibition venues, filmmakers and artists, archives, and museums with regular film and video programs.

How do programmers find out about your titles?

We publish printed catalogs and update supplements and have a Web site with new release information and news. We also hold screenings of works from our collection.

Milestones, both real and imagined:

Four main ones: 1) founding the organization; 2) successfully overcoming censorship battles, including the

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one over Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* in 1972; 3) making it to our 35th anniversary this year and being recognized for our unique work and the strength of our collection; and 4) laying the groundwork for audiences of the 21st century. We're still working on this one, but by using our Web site, curating thematic programs from our collection (Beat Generation films, experimental works on gay and lesbian themes, handmade films, found-footage films, experimental narratives, and others), and keeping our members all over the world informed about issues that affect their work, the Co-op will remain both dynamic and historically relevant.

When you're not working at the Co-op, what do you do?

I spend most of my time at the Co-op, and anything left over I spend creating my own work dealing with women and sexuality, curating programs of like work, and touring with these programs, often in Europe. The other staff members are students of film at New York universities.

Any famous last words?

Carpe Diem! Look to the past but seize the day to keep the future open, so artists can create and have their work be seen.



Distributor F.A.Q. is new monthly column in which independent film and video distributors are profiled via fax and phone interviews. If you are a distributor and want to be profiled or are a maker and want to see a particular distributor or sales agent profiled, contact Lissa Gibbs c/o The Independent, 304 Hudson St., 6th fl., New York, NY 10013, or drop an e-mail to: lissa@sirius.com

Lissa Gibbs is a Bay Area-based media savant and former Film Arts Foundation Fest director.

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The Festival that Rocks

Toronto's Images Festival of Independent Film and Video Revels in the Truly Alternative

BY BARBARA MAINGUY

THIS IS TORONTO AND THIS IS SPRING, YET A sharp wind blasts through the city streets. The temperature has been forced down to zero, and it looks like it might snow. Everyone's a little cranky. What better way to while away these bleak hours than in a dark, smoky basement watching scratchy black-and-white or super 8 film and video?

Unlike the other film festival for which Toronto is best known, the Images Festival of Independent Film and Video (held this year April 10-20) is not an industry gathering, but a filmmakers' fest that shows truly and exclusively independent work. It's the kind of festival that renews your faith in provocative, riotous, accountant-displeasing, bad-ass films that test your patience, your values, your politics—raw, handmade films that stay out too late, drink too much, and pick fights with conservatives on their way home.

This year—the festival's tenth—the proceedings take place at the Factory Theatre, an Edwardian mansion turned concert hall turned fringe theater turned underground screening parlor. In the makeshift atmosphere, the festival feels like a squatter in a decrepit mansion; there's an enticingly illicit feel to the place, made even better by the black-walled cafe and upstairs lounge that serve beer and wine (not to mention meal-sized slabs of homemade orange poundcake and giant soft-in-the-middle oatmeal cookies). But best is the work—"killer work," festival director Deirdre Logue says. "That's what we were looking for this year."

For its tenth anniversary, Images has a new strategy and a new identity to go with its new location. It also has a new audience. Whether by necessity or whim, the programmers, led by Logue, risked a fundamental shift in vision. At its inception, Images was meant to represent the disenfranchised in filmmaking, those whose voices were unheard at festivals and who were seldom represented on film. But the



(Clockwise from left)
Wrik Mead's *Warm*, David Munro's
First Love Second Planet, Rosa von
Praunheim's *Neurosia*
All photos courtesy Images

subsequent emergence in Toronto of the Asian Heritage Month Festival, the Desh Pardesh Festival for People of Colour, and the Inside/Out Gay and Lesbian film festival left Images with a diminished sense of purpose and feeling past its prime. The low-point in the fest's mid-life crisis occurred two years ago when, following deep government funding cuts, longtime director Karen Tisch accepted an offer she couldn't refuse and left to work for the federal funding magnate, the Canada Council. Soon thereafter the festival lost its venue when the struggling, cooperatively run Euclid Cinema finally failed, suffering the ultimate indignity of being converted to condos.

Logue was parachuted in at the last minute to guide the 1996 event. What she saw troubled her; she sensed that Images had become a diluted version of itself. Mandate-driven programming that in the past had broken new political ground had become safe, with old messages repeating themselves and aesthetic values secondary to intellectual ones.

Taking the reins completely this year, Logue, in consultation with the board and programmer Sarah Lightbody, took the single biggest risk in re-inventing Images: She replaced the peer-jury selection process with a no-apologies curatorial approach, using a pair of programmers who worked directly for the festival—Lightbody and programming partner Stefan St. Laurent. The programmers worked with a loose group of "screening consultants" who acted as advisors only and had no decision-making power. Logue provided support for risk-taking and passionate response to work, but little intervention. Lightbody and St. Laurent began going to other festivals, off-the-wall screenings, and scouring the independent community for hot new indie work. As Logue puts it, "I like it when the film's still being cut the week before the festival."

It worked. This year the festival felt like a war cry for inde-

pendents—with tight, energetic programs, heated panel discussions, Website connections, video and film installations, DJs and live performances after hours in the cafe, and surprise films (including one that was a surprise even to the programmers: *Animal Love*, the controversial banned-in-Austria documentary about peo-

It's the kind of festival that renews your faith in provocative, riotous, accountant-displeasing, bad-ass films that test your patience, your values, your politics.

ple who love their animals too much, turned up unannounced at the festival office). The end result was nearly double the attendance.

Images shows experimental narratives and documentaries in (mostly) evening screenings over a 10-day period and invites work from all over the world. This year about 35 filmmakers attended from outside Canada, representing the U.S., Belgium, Latin American countries, France, Japan, Switzerland, Austria, and Finland, to name a few countries. Guests get a contribution toward their travel and are put up at the home of (probably) a Toronto filmmaker (or festival programmer). Half of the festival's programming—altogether 180 films and videos—went to the International New Screen section, which features work no more than two years old. This section packaged titles into programs like *Neurotica*; *Safe-Sex Voodoo Dolls*; *Petrie Dish Encounters*; *Urban-a-rama*; *Astro-Girls and Moon Milk*; and *Zombies, Sluts, and Furry Girls that Bark*. The other 90 were spotlighted as student films, retrospectives, and showcases of work from artist-run video collective Trinity Video, the Quebec-based production collective Les films de l'autre, and the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre.

In spite of the change in the selection process, the community did not have to worry about inclusion; the entire scale of polymorphously perverse independent filmmaking was represented. Extremes ran from David Gatten's *Hardwood Process*, an experimental short that asks you to consider Heideggerian notions of object, time, and "the workliness of work," to Susan Terrill's simple three-minute beauty, *Straighten Up*, in which we witness the literal—and hilarious—claymation birth of a baby hockey star. Bruce Elder's 40-hour epic *The Book of All the Dead* was screened in its entirety. A cycle consisting of individual films of up to four hours in length, with text and images that merge and conflict, it is surprisingly watchable. This played alongside *Slave 13*, in which the insane and naked Koh Yamamoto undergoes torture and ultimately shits liquid poo into a food container and licks it up; it's a work that

asks you to consider—well—you decide. (Yamamoto was winner of the Suspect Video award for Most Extreme Film.) The point is, each of the works reflects the passionate engagement of the filmmaker and the programmers' commitment to images that are intense, extreme, and, as Logue says, "go where no one

else wants to go."

Besides the Suspect Award, Images presents two Canadian prizes: the \$1,000 (Canadian) Viacom Best Canadian Director Award which this year went to Kika Thorne for *October 25th & 26th*, about the Days of Action general protest that shut down the city of Toronto; and the \$5,000 Telefilm Best Canadian Film Award—actually a \$5,000 deal with Telefilm Canada—which went to experimental video artist Steve Reinke for *Everybody Loves Nothing*, based on found footage from the Prelinger Archives documenting testosterone implant studies performed on effeminate boys. The Director's Choice awards included Best Narrative, which went to the gritty *Snake Feed* by Deborah Granick; Best Experimental, to *Lost Book Found* by Jem Cohen, an evocative story of the discovery of a book containing a schematic to understanding urban life; Honorable Mention went to Bo Myers's *Tiny Bubbles*, and Best Documentary to Diane Nerwin's *Under the Skin Game*, which examined the political use of Norplant contraceptives.

The coveted Marion McMahon Memorial Award is presented to a woman filmmaker who espouses the qualities McMahon valued—handmade, personal, experimental, exploratory film. The prize is a week-long filmmaking/hand-processing workshop taught by filmmaker Phillip Hoffman at his farm north of Toronto. McMahon, Hoffman's partner, died of cancer late in 1996. This year's prize went to Jennifer Reeves for her experimental narrative *Chronic*, a story of psychosis and alienation, where a young girl is swept into mental illness.

There was a rumor circulating at the festival that Bruce Elder had once bet a fellow filmmaker \$1,000 that there would never be a Canadian screening of the *Book of All the Dead* cycle that was appropriate to the film's tone. At the conclusion of the three-day marathon session held in the cafe (free coffee provided), Elder lost his bet.

Barbara Mainguy is a Toronto writer and filmmaker. Her four-minute film The Front Seat won the People's Choice Award. She swears the award in no way influenced the tone of this article.

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Experimental BE-IN

The Ann Arbor Film Festival hits its 35th year with its sixties esprit intact

BY CHRISTOPHER BORRELLI

HERE IS THE FIRST ENTRY IN THE REPORTER'S notebook I carried during the Ann Arbor Film Festival: "Opening night. Mar. 11. Tons of long, twirling, tangled pieces of film hang down from the ceiling like tentacles. The ticket booth is infested with dangling film strands. Outside the theater a mariachi band shivers. Their instruments packed in cases beside them. Waiting for a ride. One wears a black Cossack hat. He looks exactly like what you'd think a guitarist in a mariachi band should look like."

The Ann Arbor Film Festival has all the goofy, spontaneous Let's-Do-A-Show! attitude that you'd imagine some film festivals had for one, maybe two, years. But it's been going on for 35 years now. And it still manages to be an astonishingly self-conscious six days in this frigid, Michigan nook. People here seem to stumble in and out of the two nightly screenings thinking. You can see their brains at work. A disturbingly high number actually have goatees and black berets. These people tend to say things like "Whoa! That was *amazing*," and "It was disturbing—wonderfully disturbing, you know what I mean?" I catch two (2!) people reading David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* before one showing. Members of the festival committee were like a 16-year-old girl at her birthday party—stopped constantly, and aware that everyone knows who the center of the universe is—but friendly.

Clusters of regulars occupy the festival's movie church, the Michigan Theater, staking their ground with scarves and the kind of fraying mittens with ties that you might buy in the parking lot at a Grateful Dead concert. These groups are louder than the rest and tend to know each other. There don't seem to be many University of Michigan students. The regulars at this fest come in from around the country and take their vacation here.

At each of the festival's six nights—espe-

Dan Tice's *Thank You for not Smoking* (top), and Jennifer Stefanisko's *Dial M for Mars*
Photos courtesy filmmakers



cially Friday and Saturday—the gilt theater is crowded, not packed. It's a huge old movie house that holds a couple thousand, and Vicki Honeyman, the pixie-like festival director, seems a little relieved at the turnout, although rows and rows of seats are empty. Honeyman is responsible for this, one of America's oldest film festivals, a haven for experimental films and documentaries from around the world, all in 16mm. This year 92 films were featured in

the festival line-up. It's one of the best-kept secrets in the world, and certainly one of the most relaxed festivals I've been to.

Bruce Conner's *Looking for Mushrooms*—a traffic jam of hallucinations and double exposures shot during the early sixties and worked on for 25 years—is the festival's idea of a Saturday night treat. Conner's film is wonderful, made more perfect by its place in this 35th anniversary; Conner's films were as much a part

of the festival's beginnings as the police raids. It wins Conner the "Best Experimental Film" award, rounds of cheers at the screening, and obvious I-don't-get-it exchange of glances from dozens. The last seconds of the film, as loud as an orchestra's crescendo, hang in your head for days.

Mushrooms is preceded by the festival's scrappiest documentary, the terrific *Andre the*

Giant Has a Posse, by Providence-filmmaker Helen Stickler. But the theater's sound is up so loud *Andre* sounds like a tinny car stereo jacked to 10. Rather than drive people from the room, the sharp squeals compliment Stickler's tale of a Rhode Island School of Design student who starts an underground Andre-sticker sticking movement.

The festival's hits are Jane Wagner and Tina DiFeliciano's *Girls Like Us* (opening night film), Greta Snider's road trip hoot *Portland*, Jennifer Reeves' *Chronic* (Most Promising Filmmaker Award), David Gatten's *Hardwood Process* (Best of the Festival winner), Barbara Levine's *Life, Death, and Baseball*, the girl-surfer doc *Swell* by Charlotte Lagarde, and Dylan McNeil's *NY, The Lost Civilization* (Best Documentary Award), a deadpan, funny look at Manhattan where floating garbage bags become alien jellyfish. (The piece airs on P.O.V. on July 22.) Only *Girls* seems to have even any commercial potential. *Hardwood* is an experimental work of scratched emulsions that resembles a fever dream. *Chronic* is the creepy life of a girl who uses self-mutilation to deal with life. It's that kind of fest. Art for art's sake, Vicki reminds me. I start to feel guilty when I don't like something. But I never see one cell phone, and experimental filmmaker/curator Craig Baldwin's name appears in credits of, oh, three films.

At the post-festival party Cincinnati filmmaker Jim Duesing put everything in perspective: "In Cincinnati, we'd be happy to get 20 people to a night of experimental and documentary film. Look how many hundreds this one gets every night. And this town is one tenth the size."

ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, BRIGHT SUNSHINE screams outside the theater. So does snow. It snows hard. Then stops. Then starts, and does this all afternoon. Big flakes. Evidence of Thursday night's scary ice storm can still be seen in sidewalk trees that are bent to the point of resembling enormous sling shots. The weather seems to be as much a part of the festival as the films.

The night before the storm, we sit through Jake Mahaffy's *Egypt Hollow*, a terrific name for a pretentious, sometimes stirring photograph story of a boy being chased by a mysterious tall man. Yawn. I notice that laughs are conspicuously absent this year. When they do come, they're from the animators. Trixy S. Wattenbarger's *La Mujer Lagartija* is about a thing named Hairy who lost his shoes. It's irre-

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From Brien Burroughs' *Aquamorpheus*
Photo: courtesy filmmaker



Filmmakers Tina DiFelicianantonio and Jane Wagner (*Girls Like Us*)
Photo: courtesy filmmakers

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sistible. So is Don Hertzfeld's *Genre*. Based on a Ray Bradbury story, it follows a guy—the last person on Earth?—as he tries to answer a pay phone. This is termite art, as the great Manny Farber would have said, films not looking for recognition so much as enjoying themselves.

The backroom of Vicki's Wash 'n Wear is festival headquarters. She's a hairdresser during the week. No cut is more than \$22. Headquarters consists of a bunch of desks, an old pull-down high school movie screen, and a huge projector stand with projector. The floor is black and white checkerboard. The chairs are bean bags and molded plastic, neon jobs. On a typical night in February, you might see six selection committee members sitting on them weeding through the hundreds of submissions.

Like the event itself, the selection process is quite informal, as is their publicity machine and their treatment of festival guests. Final selections aren't usually made until a few days before the festival starts. Postcards are mailed to accepted filmmakers at this point, and if they make it to the festival, fine; if they don't, fine. When they do, the selection committee usually finds a way to house them for free, in their homes or elsewhere. Filmmakers have been known the stay in the back room of Honeyman's Wash 'n Wear.

In 1964, one year after the festival started, Pauline Kael was a judge. The year before, George Manupelli, then a University of Michigan art professor, started the festival to

prove that experimental film was everywhere, and you didn't have to send your work to Jonas Mekas to get it shown. That first year, when performance artist Pat Oleszko dressed like a giant penis and sat in the front row, Brian DePalma showed here.

Later, in 1968, George Lucas' student version of his film *THX-1138* won the festival's grand prize. Warhol showed here. Gus Van Sant was a regular contributor. Kenneth Anger as well. The Velvet Underground were paid \$350 to play at one festival. And taboos were broken every year. Performance art became a festival sideshow. Before Honeyman became festival director in 1987, she regularly played a mannequin outside the theater. By 1965,

Michigan authorities knew what was going on. Threats of a raid were so common that Manupelli had an elaborate system worked out: Secret knocks were devised for the projection booth. Only the film being shown was allowed in the booth. Others were hidden. If cops busted in, the film was snipped off the reel and lowered through the booth window to an audience member.

Thirty years later, the mayor of Ann Arbor helps open the festival and enormous banners proclaiming the annual March tradition swing across city streets. And for those who can't make it to Ann Arbor, there's a sampler of films that makes its way around the country in the months that follow the festival. (The last remaining stop in this year's tour is Kalamazoo, Michigan, on August 1-2.)

"What could this change into?" Honeyman asked later. "It can't become a video festival, because we have no place to show video. We can't become a conventional festival, because that's not what we are. I can't predict the future. I have no idea how long we'll exist. But, my god, 35 years... George started this because there was a need for it. And I don't see any reason for it to stop now."

Christopher Borrelli is media critic for the Toledo Blade and a freelance writer for Wired and Entertainment Weekly.

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

THE NEW YORK UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL



BY RYAN DEUSSING

"THE FACT IS, IT'S HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE films in our festival will have another life as industry calling cards," explains Ed Halter, programmer of the fourth annual New York Underground Film Festival, which screened March 19-23 at the New York Film Academy. Running the gamut from the offbeat to the truly bizarre, the films in this year's line-up make it clear that renegade, low budget filmmaking is alive and well, though you might not find it at every stop on the festival circuit.

Halter, who joined the NY Underground staff in the festival's third year, explains the strength of this year's program by pointing to trends within the independent community at large. While the first years of the festival were aimed at exposing the subversive element at the fringe of independent filmmaking, these days it seems the NY Underground has tapped the motherlode, lining up an impressive slate of films that are no less subversive—though arguably less underground—than the films in 1994, when NY Underground opened with the controversial *Chickenhawk*, a documentary about the North American Man-Boy Love Association.

"When we got started, we'd be the only festival venue for a film like *Rainbow Man/John 3:16*," explains Halter. "Now that film came to us from Sundance. We like to think that Sundance has met our challenge." *Rainbow Man*, a documentary that tells the sad and/or uproarious story of a man obsessed with the Bible and the power of television, won Best Documentary and is representative of the sort of filmmaking the NY Underground Festival seeks to support and popularize.

"We forged the DIY aesthetic," claims Halter, "but now a whole series of similar festivals has popped up across the country—Slamdance, Chicago Underground, Los Angeles Independent, Montreal Under-



Armed and dangerous or just wiggling out? From Sam Green's *The Rainbow Man/John 3:16*, which won Best Documentary.

Photo: Nick Gunderson, courtesy filmmaker

ground, the list grows every year." *Variety* swelled heads further, calling NY Underground "the mother of all anti-festivals."

While the program boasted several features, including Jon Moritsugu's *Fame Whore*, Todd Verow's *Little Shots of Happiness*, and the world premiere of Josh Becker's impressive real-time feature *Running Time*, the real strength of the festival lies in its programming of quality shorts and off-color documentaries. In a sidebar called "Sideshow USA," the festival highlights what is arguably the best it has to offer: films that focus on the freakish and unusual and blur the boundary between documentary and exploitation. Paul Davids' *Timothy Leary's Dead* began the sidebar, offering a subjective review of the life, times, and most unusual passing of this icon of the psychedelic era. The film purports to include graphic footage of Leary's head being removed for deep-freeze, though rumours were afloat that the scene was a hoax. Less shocking but ultimately scarier, Robert Edwards' *Paranoia* is a deadpan confrontation with insanity, as the filmmaker allows various conspiracy theorists

and lunatics to express themselves for posterity. Jeff Krulik's *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*, meanwhile, is a hilarious and eye-opening examination of southern culture on the skids. Shot outside of a Judas Priest concert in 1986, the film offers a fascinating glimpse of a spot where America's social fabric wears thin. Also fresh from Sundance, where it won the Grand Jury Prize for best documentary, Jane C. Wagner and Tina DeFeliciano's *Girls Like Us* follows the lives of several young women in urban Philadelphia and chronicles their encounters with poverty, sex, and violence over the course of four years.

On a different note, prank documentaries like Ken Hegan's *William Shatner Lent Me His Hairpiece*, Darren Hacker's *Velvet Welk* (which features Lawrence Welk's orchestra as you've never heard them before), and Huck Botko's *Baked Alaska* kept audiences either grinning or nauseous (beware: Botko's doc shows him cooking with road-kill, which he then feeds to his mother). The festival also included a number of ingenious shorts, such as Dan and Paul Dinello's *Shock Asylum*, Thomas Moore's stop-motion animation *Pangaea's Brood*, Robert Banks' *MPG (Motion Picture Genocide)*—an historical montage of blacks getting killed in the movies—and Julie Gaw's *Fuck-Shit*, which is either an attempt to deconstruct obscenity or just a film with very nasty language.

This year also marks the creation of Film Core, an organization that will give the festival a year-round presence and establish a community of like-minded filmmakers throughout the country. Film Core plans to organize curated screenings of festival films at other times of the year and to create a postproduction fund to support underground filmmaking. "A scene has definitely been created, and we think it's necessary to expand our scope," says Halter. "Our goal is really to create something in between Warhol's Factory and Manson's family."

Ryan Deussing is managing editor of The Independent



COMMUNITY KLATCH

CHICAGO'S WOMEN IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR SUPPORTS WOMEN AND THEIR WORK

BY CYNTHIA REID

THE OPENING RECEPTION OF THE 16TH ANNUAL Women in the Directors Chair (WIDC) International Film and Video Festival felt more like a family gathering than a high-stress industry affair. Artists in thrifted duds wandered about the modest lobby of Chicago Filmmakers, drinking wine from plastic cups and greeting friends. A donated buffet of veggie snacks and iced cappuccino lined an exposed brick wall in the viewing space. Minutes before showtime, the 200 seats were quickly occupied, forcing latecomers to the aisles. A buzz filled the cavernous space. Audience members anticipated the first program, "Homegirls," premiering local Chicagoans' work. It was one of the best attended events, along with Saturday night's sold-out "Dykes in the Director's Chair."

Chicago Filmmakers' Kino-Eye Cinema resides among a row of Mexican restaurants in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. Here you're just as likely to see Spanish on storefront signage as English, and Ukrainian Village lies just around the corner. A strong artists' community flourishes here: disheveled art school veterans share the streets with first and second generation immigrants. The spiffy gentrification of nearby hoods has not yet polished over Wicker Park.

Chicago Filmmakers is the central hub for WIDC festival, and in many respects the diversity of the Wicker Park neighborhood is echoed inside in the festival programming. Program director Wendy Quinn, who has been with the WIDC organization for four years and served as program director for two, says, "We're unique in that we are a women's festival. There aren't many around. And when you're talking about special festivals—Latino or Jewish or women's—I believe we serve an important function. The more mainstream festivals don't do a very good job of representing those 'special' people who remain special, meaning they are not given full representation in larger festi-



Demetria Royals,
director, *Conjure
Women*

Photo: courtesy
Women in the
Director's Chair

vals."

The bulk of the WIDC festival features short, experimental work. And the range of issues and cultural concerns addressed over the three-day event (held this year March 20-23) is staggering.

"We focus more on [non-narrative types] of work because we see ourselves as an alternative festival in lots of ways," Quinn says. "Experimental work doesn't get enough play. We receive a lot of narrative submissions, some very high production quality stuff, where the content just isn't that interesting to us. There are plenty of other venues for that work."

It's clear that the WIDC festival organizers are interested in work by women with content that speaks to women—not merely women's work that achieves some industry standard of technical proficiency. On opening night alone, pieces ranged from a student film about a young

girl's sexual harassment (*AP Biology*, by Kim Hassenfeld) to a video depicting young Arab American women's views on urban assimilation (*Benaat Chicago: Growing Up Arab and Female in Chicago*, by Mary Zerkel and Jennifer Bing-Canar) to a comedy about a Chinese-Canadian woman's fixation with the shape of her forehead (*Bangs*, by Carolynne Hew). The eclectic nature of the works' style and content that evening typified WIDC programming throughout.

As for the selection process, Quinn says other festivals can't believe the time and number of people involved in their process. More than 30 volunteer artists and community activists judge the roughly 500 submissions over two weekends of constant screenings. They narrow it down to about 200 pieces, which are further reviewed by a selection committee of eight WIDC associates

who reduce the numbers by at least half. The remaining films and videos are presented to the programming committee, which groups them according to common themes and cultural connections. But programmers also try to mix it up.

"The programs arise pretty organically from what's submitted," explains Quinn. "Sometimes we start out with a theme and look for work around those ideas. This year we had a lot of work from Native American artists and from Jewish women coming from a post-Holocaust position, exploring their memories and learning of the Holocaust. So we created programs around those similarities. But we also brought some of that work outside of those groupings."

On the relative dearth of comedies,

filmmakers. She said they place first efforts next to veteran's work in order to encourage the viewer to approach each piece on its own terms. They try to balance the number of new and experienced artists, but Quinn recognizes that WIDC plays an important role for new film- and videomakers.

"Small arts organizations can provide a starting ground for a lot of people; it's a place where people can make mistakes and develop. Without those places, how do you grow artists? You're not sprung fully formed from the forehead of Zeus as an accomplished artist. You have to grow, and if there's only the Chicago International Film Festival interested in pulling feature work, what are you going to do? Everybody doesn't get to make one of those their first time out."

Certainly, building community is a central focus of the festival. And WIDC staff efforts did not go unnoticed by the artists. Filmmaker Carolynne Hew, whose charming short *Bangs*

premiered at Toronto's International Film Festival to rave reviews, says, "I came mostly to meet other women filmmakers. This is one of the biggest and oldest women's festivals, and there's really a strong community feeling here. The staff have been incredibly friendly. They go out of their way to make the filmmakers feel welcome."

Local artist Kim Hassenfeld, whose experimental piece on sexual harassment, *AP Biology*, successfully challenged viewers' expectations by presenting an empowering outcome, says the festival was exciting for her. "I really enjoyed having a big screening outside an academic setting, mainly for the exposure and audience feedback. I heard other filmmakers' thoughts, and it was good to get new perspectives. I'm also hoping to continue my contact with WIDC and other artists involved."

Quinn stresses WIDC does seek to bring women film- and videomakers together and to facilitate connections, but also strives to broaden the reach and impact their work can have on a much larger community. The Saturday

It's clear that WIDC is interested in work by women with content that speaks to women—not merely women's work that achieves some industry standard of technical proficiency.

Quinn comments, "We're always looking for good comedies with issues of relevance to women. You know that because we're getting so much work that's on heavy and serious topics, this is the reality of women's lives. If this is what they're making work about, you know it's what they're thinking about."

The 90 films and videos of this year's festival were compiled into 20 programs screened at one of three Chicago venues: Chicago Filmmakers, the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute, and the DuSable Museum of African American History. Chicago Filmmakers hosted the majority of work, mainly because it is permanently set up to screen film and video, allowing for their fluid juxtaposition within a single program. This presents an ideal arrangement for the festival, which purposely aims to screen an equal representation of film and video. According to Quinn, "It's just another hierarchy we can break down."

Quinn also spoke of trying to equalize the attention given beginning and established

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program at the DuSable Museum of African American History included a panel discussion called "Badass Supermamas? Black Women Heroes from Foxy Brown to Set It Off." The panel and sold-out screenings—among them Demetria Royal's memorable documentary *Conjure Women*, which features four dynamic African American female artists—were well attended not only by film enthusiasts but also by Hyde Park locals interested in discussing their political experiences of the sixties and seventies in relation to the work presented.

F WIDC's community outreach work extends beyond the three-day festival to include a national WIDC Festival Tour. After a festival concludes, WIDC staff begins compiling three two-hour programs of work from the festival, which travel mainly to universities across the country.

R "It started out in Illinois only; the former program director basically bundled the tapes and films up in her car and took off across the state," Quinn relates. "This year we took it to Vassar, SUNY Binghamton, University of Florida at Gainesville. We'd like to take the tour to other countries; Canada would be the first logical extension," she says, adding, "We will always remain strongly based in the Midwest and Illinois."

E P O R T S In addition to the main tour, WIDC also sponsors a Youth Media Literacy Tour, which brings educational film and video programs to Chicago-area high schools, and the Prison Project, which brings independent films and video, guest lecturers, and media artists to women in Illinois prisons. Also, Quinn mentions, this year for the first time WIDC curated some programs in Chicago public libraries for Women's History Month. She says the organization will continue exploring ways in which to reach other niches in the city.

As for future festival goals, Quinn says, WIDC would like to expand its clout and visibility in terms of larger fundraisers and a substantially expanded budget. "Realistically, we're very happy we're still around and financially solid. The landscape of small and medium arts organizations is so grim. We're in a really good place."

Quinn attributes WIDC's good position to the organization's small overhead—only two



From *Bangs*, by Carolynne Hew
Photo: Rita Leistner, courtesy WIDC

full-time and one part-time staff—and to their consistent resourcefulness in tapping a large volunteer base. “We’re close to the ground in that way,” she muses. Quinn emphasizes the year-round commitment of their volunteer Board members who she says are very active and whose involvement is hands on.

On Sunday, the final day of the festival, a WIDC brunch is hosted in the loft space of a volunteer board member, so artists can mingle in a carefree environment and organizers can get feedback from participants on how WIDC might better serve their needs.

Among those impressed by the festival was Czech filmmaker Sarah Jane Lapp, who currently resides in Chicago and had two abstract and visually compelling films, *Mimo* (*Beyond*) and *Raj* (*Eden*), screened at the event. “I’m used to festivals where there’s a lot of schmoozing. The brunch was really down to earth and communal in a way I never presumed a festival environment could be. It’s nice that the organization seems to be part and parcel of a greater community.”

“Community” may be an elusive term for some. It’s been said that folks who wish for one never had the misfortune of having come from one, implying real communities are based in real oppression and are not desirable places to be. But after three days of viewing women’s work from divergent backgrounds, cultures, and points of view, I experienced a sense of solidarity that surpassed the visible and often invisible boundaries of difference. WIDC today is a resource for women in media and beyond.

Cynthia Reid is director of a community arts center in South Evanston and a Chicago-based choreographer, writer, and recently, videomaker. She holds a masters degree in theater from Northwestern University.

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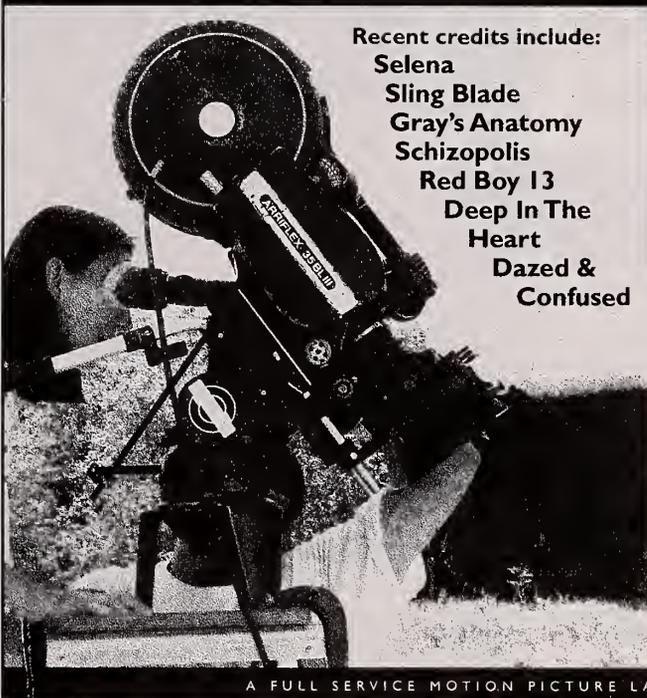
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I'M HAVING A FLASHBACK

Video Data Bank revisits video's formative years in *Surveying the First Decade*

BY DANIELLE
SCHWARTZ

WHAT BETTER WAY TO BEGIN A HISTORY of early video than with the image of a Chevy blasting through a wall of television monitors? Staged by the self-proclaimed video guerrillas Ant Farm for their video *Media Burn* (1975), the moment encapsulates the hope that video art would liberate America from the tyranny of television.

This explosive image is the perfect opening for *Surveying the First Decade: Video Art and Alternative Media in the United States, 1968-1980*, a 17-hour anthology series recently released by Video Data Bank (VDB) and produced in collaboration with Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) and the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC). A four person team—curator Chris Hill, collaborating editors Kate Horsfield and Maria Troy, and consulting editor and media scholar Deirdre Boyle—spent years developing and compiling this monumental tribute to early experimental and independent video. The survey presents a collage of video modes, uniting video art and activist documentary in a single series.

The series includes 34 complete videos and 27 excerpts by over 50 artists. Dating from 1968—the year Sony's half-inch open-reel Portapak first came on the market—to 1980, each piece contributes to the overarching theme of the survey: that video was deeply connected to the political agenda of the sixties. Ranging in format from the very experimental to video verité, the program encompasses the major early movements in



Witness the roots of video: Ant Farm is one of the collectives featured in VDB's ambitious 17-hour series *Surveying the First Decade*.

Courtesy Video Data Bank

independent American video production. The 17 hours are broken up into nine VHS cassettes. These are organized around eight broad themes, including conceptual-performance work, gender roles, artist-made video tools, community-based programming, and critiques of television. Linking video art with activist video, the survey attempts to break down the barriers between these genres. By piggybacking obscure activist and community-based work with well-known video art pieces, the creators were able to deepen awareness about the variety of work produced in the decade and its interrelatedness.

Artist-generated videos explore the formal properties of the medium, as in Peer Bode's kinetic *Video Locomotion* (1978) and Stephen Beck's colorful video weavings. Performance art is represented through the videos of Vito Acconci, Joan Jonas, and Shigeko Kubota, among others, who turn the television monitor into an intimate playground of desire and imagery. Videos by groups like People's Video Theater, Portable Channel, and Downtown Community Television broadly address questions of social, cultural, and political power. Many videos confront pressing issues of the time, including the war in Vietnam, the women's movement, the mass media, and healthcare issues.

Surveying the First Decade is accompanied by a book cleverly titled *Rewind*. This meaty 300+ page volume helps users navigate through the tapes by providing a historic overview by Chris Hill, pro-

gram notes that are brief but chock-full of quotes from contemporaneous artists and critics, and a useful discussion on developing a course based on the series by Boyle, senior faculty member of the Graduate Media Studies program at the New School for Social Research and author of *Subject to Change: Guerrilla TV Revisited*. There's also an extended bibliography, artists' biographies and videographies, articles on video preservation, and a guide to collections of early video.

Most importantly, *Rewind* also offers a vital compendium of primary documents from the era. This material includes manifestos, such as Students for a Democratic Society's manifesto for the New Left, the "Port Huron Statement," as well as more ephemeral material, such as the Raindance collective's periodical *Radical Software*, a utopian celebration of technology. Contemporary critical pieces give a modern spin on the period. This is social history at its very best—blending primary sources with historical videos to bring the period to life.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT WAS TO EDUCATE today's video producers and educators about this early movement for a democratic media. Nurtured by the radical climate, early participants in the video movement believed that real social change was possible and that video could play an important role in the creation of a new, more liberatory society. By the time Sony released the Portapak, making video accessible and relatively affordable, activists and artists alike were itching for a new aesthetic that could capture the excitement of the era. Not just a new toy, video was used as an organizing tool that was immediate, recyclable, and cheap yet visually substantial. Utopian demands for "All Media to the People," the Raindance mantra, were actually carried out by public access pioneers and independent producers. Fueled by energy generated by video collectives, producers created the template for a generation that would attempt to free the media from corporate clutches.

As we approach video's 30th anniversary, a whole new generation of makers and viewers has emerged, many of whom are unacquainted with the social and political roots of video. The survey organizers felt this history needed to be recalled—and physically retrieved before it was too late. "There is a rich vital history about to be lost," says Kate

Horsfield, executive director of Video Data Bank. "We want to insure that there is not just one history, the broadcast history, but that this other history be preserved."

When the organizers went looking for this early video work, they found that most of what's preserved in collections is by video artists. Harder to find initially was the activist and community-based work. "As I began to research the period, I found an explosion of material surrounding early video collectives," says Chris Hill. What began as a 10-hour collection blossomed into a full-scale research project, large enough to encompass the full spectrum of work from the period.

Much of the work retrieved by the team had not been seen since the seventies, especially the community-based videotapes, which were often buried in personal collections. The project coordinators mounted a bi-coastal preservation effort, paying particular attention to works with a high risk for invisibility. "Video preservation encompasses not only the physical refurbishing of the tapes, but the ethical and aesthetic decisions surrounding which tapes will be part of history," Troy explains. BAVC, which has facilities to preserve half-inch open-reel tape, partnered with VDB on the project and cleaned most of the tapes in the collection. Among the important tapes unearthed is a speech at Greenhaven Prison by black activist Queen Mother Moore (People's Communications Network, 1973) and a clip from a storytelling festival in Johnson City, Tennessee from Broadside TV (1974).

As the seventies begins to be studied seriously for the first time, the relevance of this period becomes clear. "Despite the historical distance, the issues remain the same, particularly concerning access and representation," explains Horsfield.

The most remarkable aspect of this collection is the way it forges a visual dialogue between video art and video made by activists. "We wanted to draw a line across these genres which were intimately connected at the time," explains Horsfield. "Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci were mostly discussed in the art world, but were part of this movement." Practitioners of video were driven by a common desire to subvert the forms of commercial television. However, video art is often isolated from this history. The project's goal is to repoliticize video art by putting it back into the context of broad social change. No longer isolated pieces by famous individuals, their work emerges as part of a larger movement.



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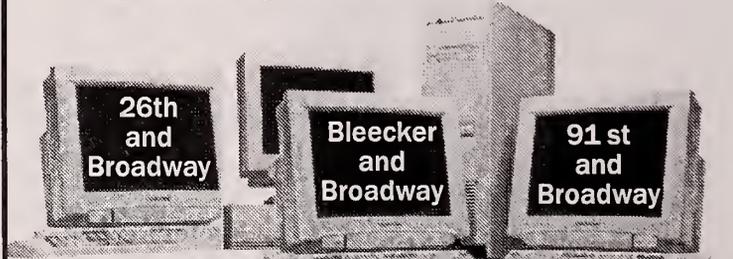
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CREATING A NEW LANGUAGE FOR THE EXPRESSION of radical and utopian ideas was a central project during this era. This is evident in video art such as Woody and Steina Vasulka's *Calligrams* (1970), which documents experiments with video analog. Some artists literally turned the camera upside down, such as Bruce Nauman with *Stamping in the Studio* (1968) or Joan Jonas in *Vertical Roll* (1972). Other producers used the medium to discuss the politics of seeing. Using extreme close-ups and direct address, early feminist videos teased out the power relations embedded in seeing, such as Martha Rosler's *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained* (1977), and Lynda Benglis's *Female Sensibility* (1973). Freed from the restraints of realism, producers could express new ideas in creative ways. These techniques enabled producers literally to talk back to television, as Richard Serra and Carlotta Fay Schoolman's *Television Delivers People* (1973). Others used the medium as a tool for communication, using playbacks of street interviews to foster dialogue between community groups, such as the work of the Alternative Media Center at New York University or the People's Video Theater.

Speaking directly to the camera and inviting the viewers into their lives, the artists broke down the barriers between themselves and their audiences. Literally inviting viewers into their studios, as in Steina's documentation of studio landscape in *Switch! Monitor! Drift!* (1976) or William Wegman's *Selected Works* (1972), artists stripped art-making of its aura. Some producers invited viewers to observe the process of creating a spectacle, as did Ant Farm and T.R. Uthco with *Eternal Frame* (1976), which reenacts the assassination of John F. Kennedy, or *Optic Nerve* with *Fifty Wonderful Years* (1973), which covers the Miss California Beauty Pageant.

Videomakers at the time didn't just document the scene, but were actively engaged in it. Woody and Steina Vasulka's *Participation* (1969-71) documents the underground theater scene in New York City in this do-it-yourself spirit. Similarly, David Cort and Curtis Ratcliff's *Mayday Realtime* records a 1971 demonstration against the Vietnam War from the perspective of a participant. Emphasis on public participation spurred demands by independent producers for broadcast on public television. Community activists struggled for and won public access facilities during this period. Represented in this collection are highlights from this movement, including the first trans-

mission of Austin Community Television in 1972 and Downtown Community Television's critique of the medical industry in *Healthcare: Your Money or Your Life* (1978).

IN *SURVEYING THE FIRST DECADE*, THE ORGANIZERS have constructed a series that accurately reflects the period, yet is responsive to the needs of educators and curators. Targeted towards universities, museums, and media centers, the materials can be mixed and matched according to need. A media literacy program questioning the "objectivity" of the media could incorporate such videos as TVTV's documentary on the Republican National Convention of 1972, *Four More Years*, or University Community Video's examination of commercial-driven news, *The Business of Local News* (1974). *Proto Media Primer* (1970), which features a showdown between Raindance's Portapak and a surveillance camera in a Safeway supermarket, is typical of the era's criticism of television as a means of social control. The productions of the People's Video Theater should help to reinvigorate debates about the role of the media in a democratic society.

Many of the works in the survey are excerpts, which can be frustrating at times. "Nobody likes excerpts," agrees Horsfield, yet she says there was no other way to include all this material, particularly on a format as accessible as VHS (versus the less ubiquitous CD-ROMs). For those who want to locate the entire work, ample information on distribution is provided in *Rewind*. Some of the videos are available from individual artists, most are available from EAI or VDB.

In breaking through the distinction between high and low art, bringing public access television into the academy, and blurring the boundaries between work by artists and by local communities, the organizers of *Surveying the First Decade* have made an important and timely contribution to the history of American visual culture. It is a must-have for university media centers, video library collections, and media literacy programs. Overall, the survey should be a cause for celebration among independent video producers who want to get back to their roots.

A national tour of the program with the producers is planned for the fall. For more information, contact: Video Data Bank; 112 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; (312) 345-3550.

Danielle Schwartz is a media studies teacher and writer who lives in New York City.

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HI-TECH

histories

Seven artists reflect on experimental media of the African Diaspora



Robert Banks

All photos courtesy mediamakers

BY ERIKA MUHAMMAD

FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS, ARTISTS OF COLOR HAVE BEEN PRODUCING A canon of experimental work that maintains a variance in form as it simultaneously reflects larger social conditions. These films, videos, and new media works do not merely challenge traditional narrative storytelling; they apply alternative techniques in an effort to desimplify, reunite, and rewrite African Diasporic social conditions and history. These images and identities are in a state of constant transformation as they locate and critique the concurrent histories of cultural hegemony and counter-hegemonic struggle.

There has been little critical examination, however, of how culture and politics have affected the emergence of Black high-tech art and vice versa. In an effort to explore the confluence of experimental aesthetics, emerging media, and the new areas of discourse being created by Black artists, *The Independent* went straight to the source. We asked seven mediamakers of various ages and experiences to comment on

these issues by responding to the following questions:

1. *Why do you choose an experimental approach to film/video?*
2. *How is this aesthetic relevant to the representation of African and Diaspora culture and its people?*
3. *How do we make this work more accessible to communities of color?*

Starting with video in the late sixties, the work of Ulysses Jenkins and Philip Mallory Jones has evolved with the development of new media technologies. Jones' focus is now primarily on digital media, while Jenkins is exploring the possibilities presented by Web sites and the Internet. In the realm of film, Robert Banks creates ultra-low budget grainy portraits that attack the commodification of culture and promote media literacy, while Reggie Woolery works with autobiography and documentary in video and digital media. Videomaker Portia Cobb and film/videomaker Cauleen Smith recruit African American audiences from community centers, hip-hop clubs, and local discussion groups. The politics of memory and identity are recurrent themes

in Cobb's work, while Smith translates oral narrative into the visual. Jocelyn Taylor's intimate portraits explore sexuality and family relationships.

The following questions and responses work as a point of departure, not an exercise in identity politics. The artists express their opinions about their work and that of their peers while they resist popular assumptions about the types of stories they are expected to tell. At the same time, their answers reveal how the accessibility of new technologies has affected the form of their work, as well as their capability to assert multiple subjectivities. The reinvention of the experimental form by these artists allows them to uniquely present the social and cultural realities of our society and to conceptualize the types of futures we wish to build and preserve in order to maintain the Diaspora heritage.

Robert Banks Cleveland, Ohio

1. Experimental media is a vehicle for me to express my personal opinions and passions, and when necessary, to serve as an outlet for my anger towards various issues, including race and class stereotypes in film and television. I literally stumbled upon an experimental format through a combination of things. I have a background in drawing and still photography, and when I was learning how to make film, I would play with the process. I wanted to get familiar with the medium, so I would manipulate the film, exposing it at different levels instead of simply shooting a scene and running it through a projector. Furthermore, I wasn't particularly interested in writing as a vehicle; I wanted to articulate myself strictly through a visual palette. It took me a while to figure out that experimental film was the medium for me. We have it embedded into our society that cinema is a narrative medium, and I try to challenge this assumption in my work. Experimental film tells stories in very cerebral, complex ways that aren't necessarily alienating.

2. Creative media in the hands of African Americans have over the years generated many strong voices in the visual arts. I saw a connection with certain aspects of Black music that could translate onto film, particularly the manipulation of rhythms. These elements fused with light, color, and motion created a unique language for me.

3. We are slowly experiencing public acceptance of this complex medium and form of expression. This will hopefully lead to support in the form of more television air-time and maybe workshops in community centers which would provide hands-on instruction of how film and video work. Many urban youth are given overwhelming doses of MTV and other controlled forms of media. Experimental media can tap into this audience and hopefully create a discourse around media literacy. Because of my limited access to new technologies, I use old, antiquated, and outdated cameras to make my films. Writing this article has been a challenge for me because I don't even have access to a fax or computer. Sometimes I feel I'm in a constant state of catch-up, but I still find a way to remain prolific in unique ways. It's called motivation. The average experimental film or video is produced by meager government funding and pocket change. Format choices are usually dependent upon the availability of equipment. This oftentimes results in variations in technical quality and innovative image exposure and presentation.

Portia Cobb Milwaukee, Wisconsin



Photo: Francis Ford

1. When I was preparing an answer for this question, it brought to mind this quote by Zora Neale Hurston:

"It is interesting to think—to know that for any act of mine, I shall get twice as much praise or twice as much blame. It is quite exciting to hold the center of the national stage,

with the spectators not knowing whether to laugh or to weep." (From the essay "How It Feels To Be Colored Me.")

I believe that my process as a maker is about discovery and exploration. I am constantly redefining, reinventing, and being redefined and reinvented as an artist by that approach. Even within this marginalized community of experimental makers, I am marginalized, because what we call "experimental" is rooted in a European avant-garde history. Its conventions have come to dictate what belongs in that canon. When I began to make work, the examples I followed weren't within that European canon. I didn't find my voice there. So this is why I say the approach is really one of discovery...seeking my own identity.



I think of my approach to videomaking in the same way I think of survival. Who's gonna tell my story if I don't? It's like stretching food to feed your family; my process is more like a "feeding a family" kind of instinct. It's as much about the economics of access and resources as it is about money. Looking back, my first video, three minutes in length, reflects the amount of time I could afford to pay for postproduction. I didn't have outside funding, and I couldn't wait on it. I had to be innovative and stretch what few resources I had. I layered and improvised,

and that has come to define my process. My departure from film into video was also this kind of choice. It was a decision based upon access, resources—economics.

2. I think that video can function for African and Diaspora culture and people as a cultural repository for memory. As this kind of technology becomes increasingly accessible to all, the people who will benefit from it most are those who have been misrepresented, under-represented, and literally written out of history. It will empower them by giving them an immediate means of representation. They will be able to historicize themselves more easily.

3. What can keep this kind of knowledge about this kind of work at bay is a very basic thing: access. When our work can't be seen on television and is accessible only in art galleries, this can be problematic. While I enjoy the challenge of bringing my work to those spaces, it endangers it because those spaces are perceived as sterile and alienating. In the community where I live and teach, my work as an artist, the very notion of it, is vague, as it is within the African American community at large. I have had to literally go out and recruit an African American audience. Most would never have gone looking in a gallery for the work. We have an obligation to reach the desired audience through a more innovative approach, and that approach must be an interactive one. The work must be installed somehow in the everyday spaces that our communities use.

Ulysses Jenkins
Inglewood, California



1. When I began painting and drawing at the beginning of my career, I ventured into experimentation because of the freedom it offered in determining how to approach a composition. Then when I made the move to video art, the elemental constructive process of the medium appealed to me. The ability to manipulate various media presented a heightened vocabulary.

The video imagery and audio tracks each have their own indigenous properties that could be woven together or distinguished and emphasized as needed. The formal properties of a creation didn't necessarily supersede the exploration of a composition's content, which brings forth other interests. This is not to say that the electronic arts are the sole area for experimentation in the visual arts, but certainly this is an area where experimental expressions have residency, whether in film, video, or digital media.

2. The history of African cultures is one of innovation and creation as they have sojourned around the globe. Anthropologists attribute the earliest constructs of human civilizations to African cultures. Their experimentations led to the earliest manifestations of religion, philosophy, science, and the arts. These factors are regenerative within the Diaspora, although they get referred to as a "collective unconscious."



The consciousness of African peoples has proven to be of tremendous influence wherever it has been found; most civilizations that have had contact with it are transfigured. This includes cases of resistance and/or repulsion by cultural purists. The power of ritualism and spiritualism underlies the ability of this aesthetic to empower an African presence. This strong character of experimentation has provided a certain stability and continuity of African-derived aesthetic expression when in unfamiliar circumstances. Diasporic African aesthetic practices have demonstrated an inherently experimental essence, resulting in artists who are originators of cultural shifts and paradigms.

3. Private community screenings at individual artists' studios or community art centers usually work, and the new possibilities presented by Web sites on the Internet may help in the future. Cable television held out hope to engage new audiences with public access, but that didn't hold true in all communities. The distribution and dissemination of work gets harder to advertise in communities of color due to the lack of finances within these communities. My hope is for an artistic infrastructure that supports fresh, insightful, and relevant information directed towards our communities. The art produced and shown can potentially inspire and motivate people to greatness, not the momentary appeal and shallow mediocrity often evidenced by commercial media.

Philip Mallory Jones
Tucson, Arizona

1. I do not see myself as choosing an "experimental" approach. I work with what is available in terms of tools, materials, and skills. The quest is to manifest the vision, and this I have pursued by whatever means possible and *simpatico*. I see a certain world and ask certain kinds of questions which I endeavor to answer through the work. This has not changed, whether writing novels, making sculpture in Plexiglas, creating 16mm animated films, working in the darkroom or in the digital realm. Making work is about exploring the nature of the medium and bringing something new into the world. From the beginning of my work in media (1969), I was attracted by the possibility of invention afforded by a medium that, for the first time, allowed a synthesis of all other forms. There were very few rules, and those of us who worked in the field defined it through our work. Due to the con-

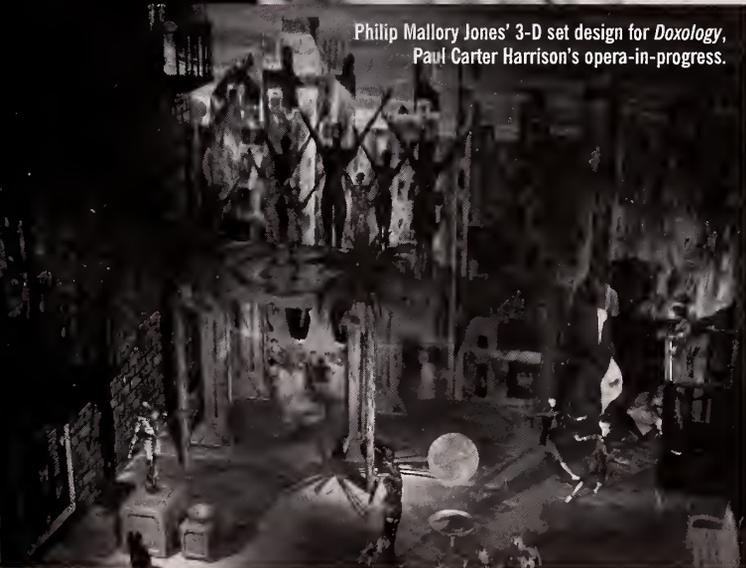
stant and rapid changes in technology, the frontier still exists.

2. The question of “aesthetic relevance” is irrelevant. Just as all aspects of life and experience of people of color are relevant subjects for expressive consideration, so too is the full spectrum of approaches valid. People of color are vastly varied, and not everyone’s story can be told the same way. The perception, or assumption, that “narrative” and “documentary” are somehow more relevant is part of a larger issue afflicting artists of color. We are generally expected to speak about people of color and in terms of sociopolitical issues or problems. This limits the scope of our discourse. Representation of African and Diaspora peoples and cultures is not necessarily the *raison d’être* of a work by an artist of color. Portrait artists working in paint or photography, for example, will sometimes use the subject as a vehicle for exploring the characteristics of the medium. Hopefully, the work expresses Truth, which need not be the same as objective reality. Peoples of color and our cultures are well served by the mature and well-crafted work of media artists producing in the full spectrum of genres.

3. Accessibility—in terms of making work available—is a problem



Philip Mallory Jones
Photo: Jeff Noble



Philip Mallory Jones' 3-D set design for *Doxology*, Paul Carter Harrison's opera-in-progress.

for presenters. It is also an issue of including the work of “experimental” media artists of color in the general canon of art. The work of artists of color has been generally segregated and lumped together based on ethnicity rather than creative approach. Accessibility—in terms of what is recognized as meaningful and valuable by audiences of color—is a problem of educating these audiences. Artists of color in other fields, most notably music (from Charlie Parker to Anthony Braxton) have explored the full range of their sensibilities and in the process have invented new forms and expanded all our understanding. Work that defines new forms is not always widely appreciated at first. But it may well point the way for other artists and the culture as a whole. If anything, the function of “experimental” art is to expand the discourse, thereby advancing the process of Liberation.

Cauleen Smith Los Angeles, CA



1. For me, experimentation is analogous to process. I’m always working it out—identity, politics, emotion, physicality, the technology. Experimentation facilitates fearless exploration. The impetus to create probably wells from my subconscious, but there is constant reworking. I synthesize memories, history; and I have the media itself. What can I do with this camera?

Why is video the thing for this idea instead of film, and animation right for another? Experimentation allows integration of content with materiality.

The works that exhilarate me are the ones where I feel a communion between myself and what’s on the screen. The history of experimental filmmaking in America suggests an inherent exclusion if one is not white and male. There was a time when I resisted this label “experimental” for those reasons. I disliked the content of many of the historically groundbreaking films and therefore dismissed the process. When I began to read how they made the work, I became less defensive about framing my work in this category. However, my internal sources and modes of expression come from a different place. The trajectory I’m sailing traces the experience of Africans abducted into the New World. Adaptation, experimentation, and appropriation have been essential to our survival, humanity, and creative expression.

2. Built into this question is the *assumption* that this kind of work would *not* be relevant to black folk. It is commonly accepted that if folks aren’t going to see it en masse and/or write about it in academic papers, it lacks relevance. I mean, what is commonly understood to be relevant? Documentaries about our plight in the ghetto and our dreams of getting into the NBA?

There is a certain spontaneity involved in discovering the links between image and sound and projection. I work in this spirit. If color, geography, and culture somehow jeopardize the relevance of these cinematic gestures, then I just don’t know what to say.

Now, having said that, I will express some frustration that my work tends to play in academic arenas where few have the opportunity to



from Cauleen Smith's
Chronicles of a Lying Spirit



tread. Limited exposure reflects some holes and gaps in distribution and accessibility.

3. Logistics. Where are the spheres where the black folks can come together and exchange ideas about the kind of images we create? My work has not yet received much critical attention from black or white scholars. Yeah, they wanna play my tape in class, but who has the time to address the work critically? Who would publish such an analysis? When experimental films play for a black audience, there is no mistaking that the experience is valued. However, this value does not translate into an infrastructure of feedback and exhibition. I don't think that black artists, commercial or not, can depend on mainstream media or academia to prop us up. We would want to rely on more than work of mouth. Let's build an inclusive infrastructure ourselves.

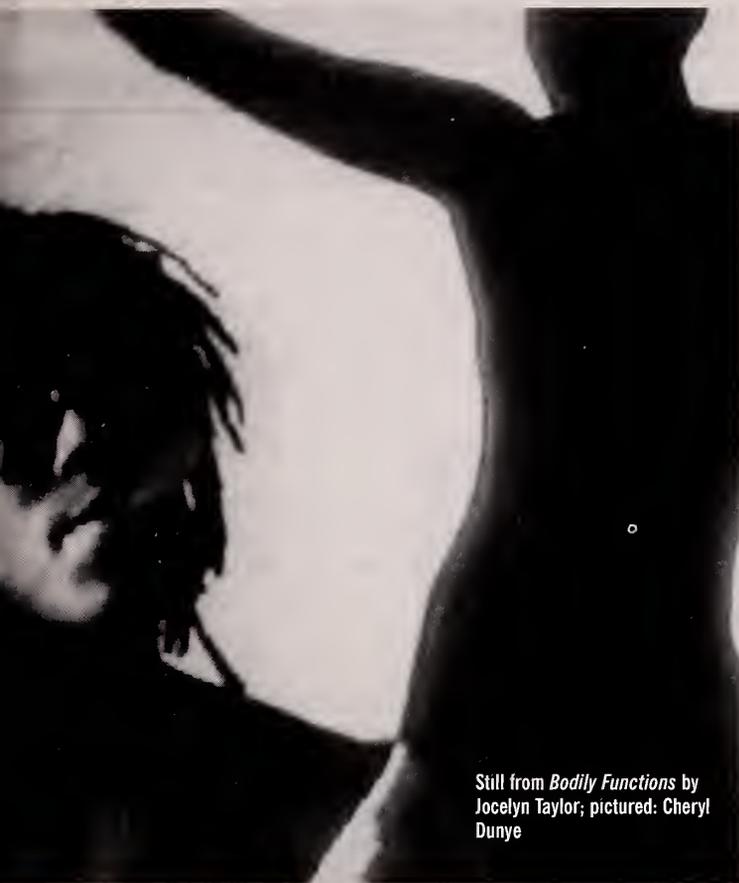
Jocelyn Taylor
New York, New York

1. Experimental approaches to video are interesting to me because I often don't want to come to any conclusions in my work. I simply want to express a series of ideas that have subtle, subversive connections. It's a more loose, creative space. When I was working on documentaries, I was very concerned about forgetting to include this or that important fact. Within experimental modes, I feel less constrained.

Currently I'm trying to develop video pieces about "transcendence" and "fantasy." I haven't precisely fleshed out how those two concepts will appear in my work. However, I believe that's how experimentation applies itself to my particular process; it allows a project to evolve in a smaller universe (my own head) based on research, memory, and artistic intention.

2. One way the experimental format becomes relevant to the representation of African and Disapora cultures is through the way it can expand narratives that we already know and are historically and socially entrenched in our consciousness. For example, the typical pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps slave narrative may be more interesting if unpredictable possibilities present themselves. We know that human stories of survival have been so much more complicated. From a creative perspective, I don't feel I have to repeat those more simplistic explanations of movement and struggle and or further grind them into my work. It becomes more interesting for me as an artist and for viewers if the story becomes more fantastic as I re-introduce, rewrite, or make-up histories, while making the organization of the images inventive.

3. The problem of access should be initially addressed by taking a look at who's programming what. By "programmers" I include educators in the classroom, librarians who purchase works for universities, festival curators, etc. Overall, there are a lot of exhibitions geared towards communities of color that are "non-believers" in experimental video. What has always been stressed and lauded is a depiction of "true stories" connected to identity that people can grab on to and acknowledge as a shared history. Everybody is concerned about how they look—and that's complicated for people of color, because we're very concerned about how and when we're mirrored in the culture. People appreciate being able to look at a video or film and say, "This is the way it really is. I can relate to that." An experimental video



Still from *Bodily Functions* by Jocelyn Taylor; pictured: Cheryl Dunye

might have no relationship to a known or shared reality; rather, it might stretch the envelope of what people want to believe is their self-representation. However, if more work was shown through existing venues, that work would become increasingly validated in our various communities. In short, there's no debate if folks don't get to see the work, and programming has a lot to do with it.

**Reggie Woolery
Brooklyn, New York**



1. *World Wide Web/Million Man March* (1997), my nonlinear CD-ROM, came about after traveling to the Million Man March in October 1995. The trip to Washington was spurred as much by the popular backlash to black masculinity after the first O.J. trial as by any curiosity or latent desire to participate in a

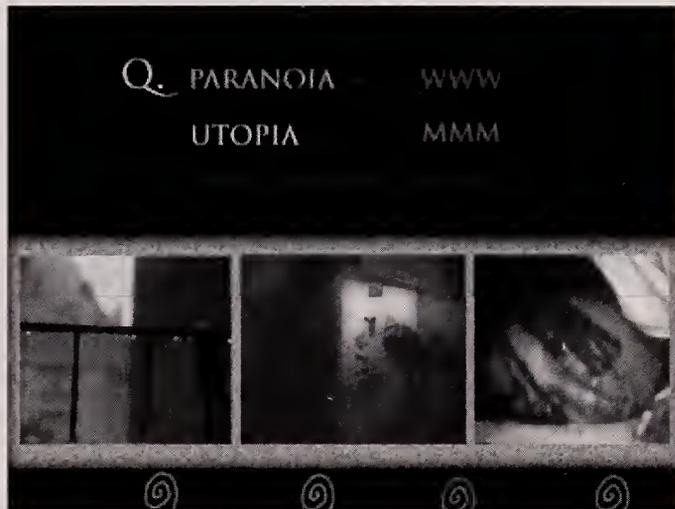
large-scale spiritual-political-mobilization formulated along the lines of gender and race.

Bringing this masculinity together with references from the *World Wide Web* came about after having experienced many derisive comments regarding the march by way of the Internet. Ironically, both of

these community/identity formations—WWW/MMM—are for many people in the U.S. the ultimate Self/Other binary, setting off paranoid nightmares and utopian dreams.

2. As a metaphor for hegemony, prisms bring Diaspora as a concept into being. *World Wide Web/Million Man March* is much like a prism. It makes what is invisible intelligible—light, origins, whiteness, purity—while suggesting temporal transitions—color, gradation, strands, off-spring. If I choose to engage the concept of Diaspora, it is to figure a difference in relation to certain historical/personal/technological markers (i.e., chattel slavery).

3. My article on “The Black Male Show” at the Whitney Museum of American Art (*Trans*, vol. 1, no. 1; also [www.itp.tsoa.nyu.edu/~student/reggie/publications.html]) best describes my commitment



Screen shot from Reggie Woolery's *WWW/MMM* CD-ROM

and anxieties toward Black shows, Black audiences, and Big Black museums. Interestingly, like museums, cyberspace is conceived as an “in the box” experience. But not all of cyberspace’s diffuse layers, inter-textuality, tool tinkering, and masquerade are happening within “the box.” Black and Latino “urban youth” (mostly boys) don’t necessarily dig medieval role-playing avatar games, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*. They are out in the streets or on the techno turntables playing gangster rap—one of the most global, “for real”, money-making, politically fraught fictive ventures across geographic networks today.

New tools/toys. I host a bi-weekly RealAudio radio show, “Sprocket,” on Better Living through Radio (BLTRadio.com), which is live through New York University’s Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP). As an artist and writer, I’m able to share quirky ideas sonically and visually through the Web, as well as get folks to log on to our chat window and post questions to me and each other. One successful Webcast, which can be retrieved in part from the BLTRadio archives, features Simin Farkhondeh, Labor at the Crossroads; Hye Jung Park, Downtown Community Television; Michael Eisenmenger, Paper Tiger TV; and Joe Plotkin, of Broadband Now!, with Amy Smith of ITP monitoring the chat. We explored the question, “What do you mean by media access?”

Erika Muhammad is doctoral candidate in the Department of Cinema Studies at New York University and an independent film/video curator.

George Kuchar Kicks up a Storm with Weather Diaries

BY SCOTT MACDONALD

SINCE THE LATE FIFTIES, GEORGE KUCHAR HAS BEEN A REMARKABLY PROLIFIC moving-image maker. At first he collaborated with his twin brother, Mike, on a series of 8mm melodramas that simultaneously imitated and critiqued the Hollywood films the brothers haunted local theaters to see. In films like *Lust for Ecstasy* (1963) and *A Town Called Tempest* (1963), they revealed considerable awareness of the rhetoric (and

absurdities) of Hollywood films. But because of their meager resources (the brothers were from a working-class Bronx family), their incorporation of this rhetoric inventively confronted viewers with the disparity between the lives depicted on screen and those of the ticket-buying audience. By the mid-sixties, the Kuchars, who were now working separately and in 16mm, had become fixtures of the New York underground scene.

While George Kuchar has continued to make films, the economic accessibility and improving technological options of video during the eighties resulted in his becoming committed to the new medium—and impatient with those film “purists” who were holding out against video. A prolific artist, his output in video has been staggering. The Video Data Bank, which produces a separate Kuchar catalogue, lists 64 videos produced between 1986 and 1991 and dozens more produced in the past five years.

For those interested in Kuchar’s career, the Kuchar brothers’ wonderful new book, *Reflections from a Cinematic Cesspool* (Berkeley: Zanja Press, 1997) is just the thing. *Reflections* is a heavily-illustrated collection of George and Mike Kuchar’s autobiographical writings, plus brief



Storm Chaser



Kuchar with the alien who abducts and takes him to the 1996 Flaherty Seminar, from *Vermin of the Vortex*
All photos courtesy Scott MacDonald

essays about them by collaborators and friends, and the most complete filmographies, videographies, and bibliographies on the Kuchar brothers available anywhere (compiled by Jack Stevenson). The book is introduced by John Waters, who claims, "George and Mike Kuchar's films were my first inspiration."

George Kuchar's work has always had personal dimensions. The melodramas are often close to psychodramas—*Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966), for example, is an intelligent, gorgeous, disarmingly funny meditation on Kuchar's own production/direction—and, from time to time, he has made "diary films": *Encyclopedia of the Blessed* (1968), for example, chronicles his travels with artists Red Grooms and Mimi Gross. But of all of Kuchar's work, the *Weather Diaries* seem the most personal: they are, in a sense, Kuchar's on-going meditation on himself.

Weather Diary 1 (1986), the prototype for the series, is a modern day Walden in which Kuchar confronts Nature not in the woods, but "in the sticks." The funkiness of Kuchar's cheap motel and his involvement with simple realities, including his own bodily processes, combine with the beauty of the landscape and skyscape in the heart of Oklahoma's "Tornado Alley" and with his sensitivity to the tiny beauties of nature in and around his motel to create a sometimes lovely, sometimes shocking, sometimes funny, sometimes poignant 81-minute evocation of a man alone with himself. Subsequent *Weather Diaries* have varied in mood and effectiveness. But at their best—e.g., *Weather Diary 2* (1987), *Weather Diary 9* (*Sunbelt Serenade*, 1993) and *Weather Diary 12* (*Season of Sorrow*, 1996)—they are as evocative and provocative as anything Kuchar has done.

The *Weather Diaries* are also remarkable as depictions of a certain type of American vernacular landscape, and not surprisingly, when Kathy High and Ruth Bradley were planning what would become "Landscape and Place," the 42nd Robert Flaherty Seminar, held at Wells College in Aurora, New York, from August 3-8, 1996, a selection of Kuchar's *Weather Diaries* seemed virtually inevitable. I was asked to introduce Kuchar and *Weather Diary 1* and was delighted to do so. That this presentation would detonate the annual seminar's most volatile discussion came as a total surprise to me, despite the fact that, a few months earlier, this very tape had created the most volatile discussion of my teaching year. I should have known better!

Kuchar's presentation came soon after several more overtly political videos, including *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* by Alanis Obomsawin and *Bastion Point* and *Patu* by Merata Mita, all of which witness volatile and frequently violent social confrontations between indigenous peoples (of Canada and New Zealand, respectively) and those who continue to consolidate the colonization of these regions. Within this context, Kuchar's slow-paced video, with its quiet, candid documentation of Kuchar's personal experiences, seemed outrageous to some seminarians, just another self-indulgence by a "middle-aged white guy".

When Kuchar sensed the barely repressed hostility that greeted him after the screening, he "outed" the hostility by attacking its unspoken assumptions. Referring to Obomsawin's and Mita's films, Kuchar complained,

To see movies used as a huge megaphone to put your cause across—I thought it was atrocious, a horrible thing. Flaherty would turn over in his grave. I've come here and sat through movies that to me are the most vile things I've ever seen in my life... I came here for free—they paid my way; I don't understand how the rest of you put up with it. So I'm from New York, and I'm considered a "white male"—I've already been labeled. But these people come from other countries and throw this garbage on you and you take it, and treat the people who do it like gods and goddesses. It's horrible to me. I hope I'm not talking too much! But to see that beautiful Flaherty film [*Louisiana Story* (1948)] that's survived all these decades and to hear it

trashed by people who only think in terms of their sex and their nation, and all these land fights... I go to bed having nightmares! There's no beauty in these films, no love of the image, no real care—just get the people being beat on the head and their bloody faces! It's disgusting.

It was a moment full of paradox. For those of us who admired the courage of Obomsawin and Mita in witnessing the frustrating and frightening events their films document, Kuchar's attack seemed excessive. As Claude Lanzmann, Peter Watkins, Alain Resnais, and Su Friedrich have shown, no contradiction necessarily exists

between witnessing social/political horror and a love of the image, and indeed, these two concerns can be fundamentally synergetic. At the same time, Kuchar had put his finger on something crucial, not so much about their films, but about the presentation and reception of such films at the seminar and in our lives. For most seminarians, the anger, pain, and violence witnessed in the Obomsawin and Mita films could be quickly put aside; after all, another film, another meal was scheduled: we could feel bad for a moment and then—as commercial TV has trained us to do—move on. But for Kuchar, witnessing these events and then walking over to enjoy dinner was obscene. It was giving him nightmares.

Another paradox of the Art-for-Art's-Sake-by-Privileged-White-Males response was that of all the recent films screened at the seminar, those by Obomsawin and Mita (and Flaherty) probably had the most substantial budgets and the most consistent institutional support (Obomsawin is a fixture at the National Film Board of Canada) and—despite being made by women with indigenous roots—looked pretty much like non-indigenously produced films that witness social confrontations: George Stoney's *You Are on Indian Land* (1969, also produced by the NFB), for example. While Obomsawin and Mita have struggled to achieve something like consistent access to conventional budgets and professional equipment, Kuchar has struggled to prove that challenging, intimate video work can be produced with virtually no budget at all and that struggling for access in the usual way is playing the industry's (undemocratic) game. That his film shook the Flaherty at least as powerfully as Obomsawin's or Mita's seems to prove his point.



Looking for a dog biscuit: Runt, a hopeful stray in *Weather Diary*.

In the end, I'm suspicious about the reaction to *Weather Diary 1* at the Flaherty. The objections seemed motivated by high-minded political concerns, but it was the close-up of Kuchar's turd that shook my class last year, and I suspect it instigated some of the storm at the Flaherty, as well. Kuchar has responded to the Flaherty incident both in video—*Vermis of the Vortex* (1996)—and in "The Big Stink," which concludes George Kuchar's extensive autobiographical writings in *Reflections from a Cinematic Cesspool*.

This interview took place in June 1996. Kuchar's films are available from Canyon Cinema in San Francisco and his videos from Video Data Bank in Chicago. One of his recent videos, *Cocktail Crooners*, will be shown at the New York Video Festival this month at Walter Reade Theater.



An underground cartoonist since his teens, Kuchar has devised his own fantasy film posters (above) and comic strips (right).

Your first job was working at a TV weather station, correct?

Yes. I worked for a company that serviced NBC. I was assigned to do weather maps for this local weatherman, Dr. Frank Field. Remember him?

Sure! When exactly was this?

In the early sixties. They didn't know weather was my hobby. I would put a sort of scientific realism into my rendering of the weather. If it was a warm front, a little nimbus cloud. Frank Field was shocked; he said, "How did you know the clouds looked like that?" I told him, "Weather is my hobby."

They used a two-projector set-

up for visuals. There were two light sources and you could dissolve from one to the other. I used to do moiré patterns by pulling one pattern over another negative to make a rippling effect. I devised all kinds of effects.

How early was weather your hobby?

Well, in New York, weather was nature to me. I used to look out at the weather sometimes and there'd be an electrical storm, or I'd go into the city and there'd be a big blizzard. To me, weather was the intrusion of nature into the city; and it was able to shut the city down at times. Except for living near Van Cortlandt Park, it was my only close-up experience with nature.

And then I started reading about it. The best books were by Eric Sloane. He was a painter and very interested in the weather. He painted beautiful pictures of clouds. He did books for museums like the Museum of Natural History. His books really turned me on, because they were an artist's view of weather, rather than a military kind of view, with mathematics and equations. At that time, the Weather Bureau was kind of regimented. There were a lot of military people and they had shifts, and they didn't speak when they were changing shifts. Things like that would kill your interest in the weather!

I remember years ago, when I was looking at your early 8mm film *A Town Called Tempest*, that you seemed aware of how to do a movie tornado. You and Mike

used toys and obviously home-made sets, but the tornado sequence really worked.

Every time I go out, I look at the clouds and I know their names. I always test myself.

Was your first trip to El Reno in 1977 when you made *Wild Night in El Reno*?

No, that was done maybe four years later. I used to go to Oklahoma City and stay at the YMCA, the one that got damaged when that bomb went off in 1995. I had been reading about all those Great Plains electrical storms and tornadoes and knew all kinds of stories of people witnessing those storms. I said to myself, "Maybe I'd better go and see what they're like instead of just going to the library and reading about them." So I flew to Oklahoma City. The first time I went, I only stayed two or three days, just to see what it was like. Then I went back to Oklahoma City the following year and found that YMCA. You got a very good room: one wall was all windows, and there was a good roof area you could go onto. The first time I stayed there, there were no storms for two weeks, but the last week was big. I've gone back ever since, but I always bring a project with me.

Oklahoma City was especially dead on weekends, so I decided maybe I ought to get out of the city and go west, beyond the farmlands and stuff. So I took a bus and I got off at this place, El Reno, thirty miles away. I thought El Reno was a nice place, so I started going there every year. Later, I learned that the town has a history. It's a place where the people who were in the Oklahoma land rush left from. The only other interesting thing about El Reno is that they have a big prison facility there; it's where they incarcerated that guy who blew up the building in Oklahoma City. [Filmmaker] Jon Jost was also locked up there when he was an antiwar demonstrator. Oh, and part of the Tom Cruise/Dustin Hoffman movie, *Rainman*, was shot there, in one of the motels I've stayed in.

There has always been an autobiographical, diaristic quality to your films, but when you started making the *Weather Diaries*, the autobiographical dimension became the foreground. It seems as if you're trying to come to terms with yourself while you're making these pieces. Were you also thinking, "I want to be more personal than I can be in the melodramas?"

Well, I was stuck, I guess. I wanted to make a video when I was in El Reno, and I wanted to include weather elements in it, but when I was there, there was all this time when not much was happening. I'd want to work on my picture, but nothing was going on. So I started making pictures of what *was* around—what I was eating, my daily activities, what was in the room. Also, I wanted some activity so I wouldn't get lethargic and watch television all the time. So I began putting myself into the videos. Then, since I was editing the early *Weather Diaries* in camera, staying there got to be fun. It kept me absorbed.

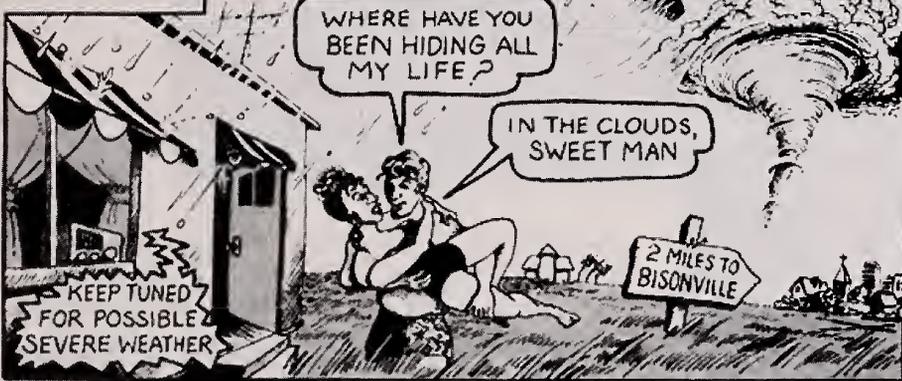
You said "edited in-camera." Did you then bring the footage back and edit *Weather Diary 1* at a second stage as well?

No. It was all done in the motel room there. *Weather Diary 2* was doctored up later, because I was starting to fall apart toward the end of my stay that year. A couple of years later, I edited that one at home, though whole sections were edited in-camera.

But *Weather Diary 1* was all edited in-camera. You can program my camera to turn off so it won't ruin what you want to keep and stick images right into the middle of a previous image, like punching in a scene. And the video cameras no longer do glitches, because they've got these flying erase heads. So you're able to edit cleanly. I was in El Reno three and a half weeks or so. When I came back from El Reno,



DEAFENED BY HER OWN HEARTBEAT... THE SOUNDS OF DANGER GO UNDETECTED



Weather Diary 1 was all finished.

It *looks* like you're on vacation, but you're really working. You've got to be thinking about the whole experience at all times.

Yes. But you never know what's coming next. So you're building it up, but then you backtrack into the tape either to add something, or if you don't like the way it looks, to drop something. You're embellishing as you go.

Weather Diary 3 takes place in El Reno and then you go to Milwaukee and make *Weather Diary 4*.

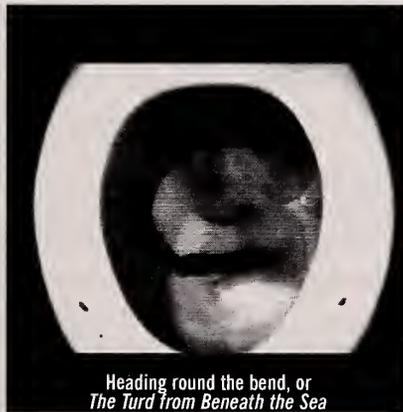
Weather Diary 3 was also all in-camera.

Had you planned to do two *Weather Diaries* that year?

No. I felt that since there were no storms in El Reno, I'd go to Milwaukee, and maybe there'd be storms there. It didn't work out that way. The video became about these people who were stuck in Milwaukee.

Weather Diary 6 was like a return to the style of *Wild Night in El Reno*: there's sync sound.

Yeah, just pictures and stuff. I have a second version of that one. I edited that in-camera with a camera that added dropout into the picture. For a few weeks after finishing it, I was happy. Then suddenly I noticed the dropout and it began to annoy me. All I could see was dropout . . . white dots here and there. So I decided, hey, how about if I just put a whole ton of white dots on the thing and have scratches on it? So the second version, which you probably haven't seen, looks like a film that was found in a garbage can where it had got-



Heading round the bend, or *The Turd from Beneath the Sea*

ten all scratched up. That's the version that I'm happy with now. It's also got a different soundtrack.

Every time I do a *Weather Diary*, I try to go in a new direction because I don't want to repeat the same thing. I'm always looking for new material. I've done a new one every year.

The Video Data Bank has a separate catalogue just for your video work. You're like some Greek mythological monster, spewing tapes from every orifice!

I make so many I forget to send them out. I don't even know what they have and don't have. Then I'm guilt-ridden—am I giving them *too many* tapes?

You were saying that each time you do a *Weather Diary* you want to do new things. Some of that is formal. *Weather Diary 6* is formally different from *Weather Diary 1*. But you also seem to keep yourself interested by doing things that play off earlier diaries. For example, there are these turd shots in *Diaries 1, 2, and 3*, and then, having created the expectation (at least in those viewers who see the *Weather Diaries* as

a series), you play off that expectation in funny ways. We hear you shitting in *Diary 4*. In *Diary 5* we see you sit down on the toilet and we're ready for a turd shot, but it doesn't happen, and then, in *Diary 6*, there's *animated* shit!

Last year, I did a short history of video for a first year honors course. I showed *Weather Diary 1* and the turd had the class staggering around for weeks. One or two people never recovered. It was like *The Turd from Beneath the Sea*. It was a big one! [laughter]

When you're traveling—maybe I'm giving away our age here!—bowel movements take on amazing psychic size. It's certainly true if I'm hiking, and it makes sense to me that since you're alone in your room for weeks, you're conscious of your bowels.

I was deprived of that aspect of life in other pictures. It seemed ridiculous, so I decided to put it into mine. And I'm always looking for new material!

You are producing your own material, for sure!

For me, it's fun. It's my version of splatter. I laugh, but then sometimes when I play the videos, I realize that people are absolutely horrified.

On some level, it's more horrifying to a lot of people than Divine eating poodle shit in *Pink Flamingos*. It's the personal intimacy of your videos that frightens people.

Yes. Everyday life has become more horrifying than heads being blown off.

As you go through the *Diaries*, you're also more and more open about your sexual desire for guys. In *Weather Diary 1* sexuality is a subject, but it's not gendered. But as we go through the *Diaries* that aspect of your desire is more and more clear. Is gay desire something you were conscious of revealing in those pieces?

Well, I was just interested in exploring different subjects. And I said to myself, "Well, you haven't done *this*." Know what I mean?

Do you think of yourself as gay or . . .

I never know what I am. Strange things are always surprising me. I say to myself, "Maybe I'm this," but then I see some other thing and I think, "Well, that's kind of weird, I wonder what *that's* about. I should try *that*."

In the *Weather* pictures, I'm always looking for new angles. I just thought it was time for that to come into the series.

Have you shown the tapes to the El Reno people?



ECU: Kuchar, the video diarist

No.

Do you think you'd never be allowed back into town?

[Laughter] No. You know how it is. It's Middle America: the people are a bit on the overweight side; mostly they like going shopping. They have no interest in *my* videos! I sent a tape to one woman and she never responded, so I thought maybe she thought it was disgusting or something, and finally on a later visit I

asked, "Did you get the tape I sent and did you like it?" And she said, "Oh, that tape. Yes, very nice."

They must see you as this Martian who lands every year, does this weird stuff, then disappears. Do they think of you as an artist or as just a tourist?

The people at the motel? They take me as a strange family member who comes every year. But they welcome it, they're grateful that I come and they take my money. I don't pay that much money, this motel is cheap—\$55 a week then (it's gone up to \$60 week).

Once some people at this little gallery in Tulsa found out about the *Weather Diaries* and showed a whole evening of them—two separate shows. People of all ages came to that Tulsa show: men in suits, elderly ladies . . . and they loved it. They were very proud that I would come to Oklahoma every year. They gave me \$500; they were very nice to me, and afterwards took me back to El Reno.

We see all this in *Sunbelt Serenade (Weather Diary 9, 1993)*.

That's right. That same year, a television crew from England was doing a piece on twisters and storm chasers, and somehow they had seen one of the *Weather Diaries* in England. The producer had called me up in San Francisco and said, "Can we come and see you in El Reno?" I said sure. He came to my room with a British lady producer and a crew with a cinematographer from Australia. They asked me about the storms, why I'm there, and it all wound up in their documentary about storm chasers. I think it turned out to be mainly a documentary about frustration, because that year nobody had come upon any storms.

Anyway they played it on Channel 4 in England, and I got a rave review! A woman wrote, "A star was born last night," and focused her review on me because, she said, everyone else seemed kind of frightening. I think the piece was called *Storm Chasers*. Later, it was broadcast here on the Discovery Channel, but I got chopped out—except for one close-up that couldn't possibly be removed. They must have thought I was too strange for the American audience!

Scott MacDonald is a regular contributor to The Independent. He teaches American Studies and Film Studies at Utica College of Syracuse University.

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Film TOURS

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Risky Business

BY MARK J. HUISMAN

IT IS A WELL DOCUMENTED PROBLEM THAT DISTRIBUTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR

independent film remain frustratingly deadlocked. The absence of any real, even near-immediate solutions has led filmmakers to take the reins themselves and attempt to reach audiences on their own. One alternative model has been the idea of film tours. Loosely modeled on traveling musical extravaganzas like the Lollapalooza festival, these tours—part roaming movie theater, part tailgate party—aim to book a group of films in select markets, with the hope that the runs will be successful and lead to bookings in more markets. But, as any filmmaker who has ever considered self-distribution knows, there are significant expenses involved in such an endeavor, particularly for marketing, to say nothing of prints, shipping, transportation, or lodging. These monetary demands have increasingly led film tour organizers to seek financial support from corporate entities, the very institutions that such tours were intended to supplant. Corporate sponsorship has been called both the road to new audiences and the price filmmakers must pay to get their work seen; reality, however, lies somewhere in between. When an independent filmmaker walks down the aisle with a for-profit entity, what ensures a happy marriage?

The Sundance Film Festival is the self-described “premiere showcase for American independent film.” Yet this year, as ever, mailboxes in the Kimball Arts Center exploded with promotions: *Entertainment Weekly* baseball caps,

Absolut sweatshirts, ITVS ski caps, *Myth of Fingerprints* gloves (that was clever), the ubiquitous Gap water. Rumors flew over what kind of car Parker Posey would drive in her next flick.

“There are sixty-three sponsors who give us cash and twenty-five who give us in-kind contributions. This whole group makes the festival work because it underwrites huge costs,” says Nicolle Guillumet, Managing Director of the Sundance Film Festival, ticking off the benefits to filmmakers. The participation of Absolut and The Gap, respectively, allowed the festival to provide transportation for directors in the American Spectrum and short film programs. Local Park City hotels donated lodging. *Entertainment Weekly* sponsored the Audience Awards, which are now major marketing tools for the winning films. The Writer’s Guild helps with the Screenplay Café; Hugo Boss is underwriting the first fellowships for the Sundance Institute’s summer filmmakers’ and screenwriters’ labs.

But sponsorship does not always go off without a hitch. Joel Roodman and Patrick McDarragh, founders of the indie distribution house Gotham Entertainment Group, learned that the hard way.

Former Miramax staffers who steered *Kids* through an amazingly successful run in college markets during 1995, Roodman and McDarragh

formed Gotham to specialize in bringing films to the college market. (Gotham also has a production arm with numerous projects in various stages of development and production.) Eager to repeat its *Kids* success on an expanded platform, Gotham upped its 1996 distribution slate to 15 films, including *Drunks* (Peter Cohn), *Paradise Lost* and *Brother’s Keeper* (Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky), *Synthetic Pleasures* (Iara Lee), *Hype* (Doug Pray), *Girls Town* (Jim McKay), and *Half-Cocked* (Suki Hawley). To up its marketing muscle, Gotham secured clothing manufacturer Guess, Inc. as a corporate sponsor and packaged the films into The Guess Independent Film Tour (GIFT). “We got the money to promote and market the films and the sponsor got to reach this desirable target audience,” says Roodman. “It wins both ways.”

Julie Kurtzman, of Guess Public Relations and Special Events says Gotham’s proposal appealed on two levels. “We liked that these films were gritty and provocative. We wanted to be able to make independent films accessible to college students and to reach a very desirable target audience

which is difficult to reach, since they live on campus.”

While the entire GIFT roster is marketed to college film programs, bookers are allowed to pick and choose one or more titles and can also select their own dates, although Gotham prefers to

match campus screenings with the film’s theatrical play dates in that school’s city or neighboring communities. “We do a quasi-theatrical release and move up the video window,” explains Roodman. “We know in advance where the film is going to play theatrically, and we book it into schools in those communities.” Tickets cost between \$2 and \$4, within reach of student budgets. “We work with campus newspapers and radio stations to do interviews with the makers. We give away soundtracks,” says Roodman. “The objective is to have as many people in the theater as possible.”

Gotham earns kudos from some tough customers. “We aggressively take our films from city to city and build markets,” says Berlinger of the efforts he and partner Sinofsky have made to distribute *Paradise Lost* and *Brother’s Keeper*. “It seemed a shame not to take advantage of all that publicity and add on to our grosses. That was possible through Gotham.” So, to augment their efforts with a semi-theatrical release aimed specifically at the college circuit, Berlinger and Sinofsky licensed their films to Gotham.

When BMG booked Peter Cohn’s *Drunks* at the Coolidge Corner in Boston, Gotham gave Cohn a list of college organizations so he could offer local students group rates, even though it was not a GIFT screening. “They realize there’s a connection between the campus and the market,” said



Pardon me, but are those Guess jeans you’re wearing? Ladies show their style in Jim McKay’s *Girls Town* (left). Photo: courtesy filmmaker

Cohn. "I give Gotham credit for not being turf conscious."

But neither the filmmakers or the distribution companies that licensed films to Roodman and McDarrah knew about their sponsorship deal. Despite the mutual enthusiasm between Gotham and Guess, their partnership was an uncomfortable fit for some. The resulting brouhaha exemplifies the potential pitfalls any indie film organization can experience when sponsorship is sought to ease the burden of marketing and promotion.

Since 1992, Guess and a number of its contractors have been investigated, cited, and fined by both California and federal labor authorities for minimum wage and overtime violations, sweatshop labor, and "home-work", a notorious way of skirting child labor laws. Suzanne Seiden, Acting Deputy Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor, says Guess was once on the Trendsetter list (www.dol.gov, click on "Hot Button"), a roster designed to highlight the voluntary efforts of manufacturers and retailers who demonstrate a commitment to labor laws, enforcement, and monitoring. "We investigated some of their contractors and found minimum wage and overtime violations and sweatshop activity," Seiden says. "Their monitoring programs, which are supposed to prevent this activity, were found to be ineffective." The DOL removed Guess from Trendsetters in November 1996 and gave the company a 60-day probation, which was extended in January.

These on-going problems led the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE), the National Organization of Women, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to boycott Guess. Catching Gotham and Guess by surprise, UNITE staged (and continues to stage) campus protests at tour screenings. When filmmaker Jim McKay (*Girls Town*) learned of Guess's association with Gotham, he was furious.

"I spent a lot of time and energy making a film that I think says some important things," McKay says of his film, which tells the story of five teenage girls who battle everything from rape to pregnancy as they struggle to complete high school. "The film was made in a hundred percent independent way—the financing, the creating, everything. Now my work is associated with a product whether I like it or not. Here is *Girls Town*, an unapologetic feminist film, being sponsored by a company that's being boycotted by the largest women's group in the country."

Some recent Guess ads were attacked by Boston-based magazine *Teen Voices*. In the ads, a teenage model looks toward the camera from a seat in a theater with her legs flung over the seats in front of her. Between her legs rests, alternately, a bowling ball or bag of popcorn. According to Anastasia Goodstein, the magazine's Associate Publisher, the model was underage. "We checked with the agency," says Goodstein, who wrote a harsh editorial, stating in part: "When girls are sexually abused, assaulted, harassed and raped every day in this country, it concerns us greatly that Guess thinks it is okay to put images of a teenage girl posed in a sexual way for everyone to see."

McKay also loathes the Guess commercial called "Cheat," which airs

before all tour screenings. McKay believes the spot, which features Juliette Lewis and Harry Dean Stanton, is about a prostitute and pimp. "[O]r was it 'dirty old man' and 'trampy, cheating, underaged girlfriend'—I couldn't tell—the ad was too cool," McKay wrote in an angry letter to Gotham. "This trendy fetishization of sexual exploitation goes against every principle that *Girls Town* stands for."

Kurtzman says what Guess's ads mean is a matter of perception. "We sell jeans. Those pictures are of a young girl, wearing jeans, eating popcorn. The idea that our images provoke different stories to different people is a good thing," Kurtzman says "Cheat" is really about a woman who hires a private investigator, with Lewis as the "moll" who sets up the woman's cheating husband. "There's no way Juliette Lewis is a prostitute. It has nothing to do with sex." She and McKay clearly have different "perceptions."

McKay's letter further chastises Gotham: "One of the basic tenets of independent filmmaking was a certain hands-on participation for the filmmaker. Many of us made films completely independent of outside money or influence. We recognized that bringing in a distributor meant losing some of that independence, but I don't think any of us knew that we had created advertisements rather than films and that, indeed, we wouldn't receive any compensation for our corporate complicity. Is this how the independent community cares for its own?"

Roodman and McDarrah met with McKay immediately and pledged to set aside some sponsorship money for filmmaker speaking fees. In addition, Gotham is trying to establish a corporate sponsorship advisory board. "We want to get people together from throughout the industry. Filmmakers, small distributors like Strand and CPE, trade organizations, presenting organizations, journalists, maybe even a corporate presence," explains Roodman. "We need to



Suzanne Meyers' *Alchemy*, one of four films in the Fuel Tour. Photo: courtesy filmmaker

make sure everyone understands our mutual goals. We want to really get together and to talk about how to build this market and do it right every time. And learn how to better articulate what we're doing to the community. Because it's important. And it's necessary." Roodman maintains he knew nothing about Guess's corporate history: "Obviously, if we knew then what we know now about Guess, we wouldn't have gone with them."

But Kurtzman insists Roodman did know. "Gotham was absolutely aware of these issues. Anybody who we're involved with, we make aware the unions are attacking us," Kurtzman says sternly. "I negotiated this deal, and I told them what had happened and offered to provide them with any information they might want, even the information from the DOL." Kurtzman says Gotham never asked any questions.

Roodman initially explained the "difference in opinion" by suggesting Kurtzman might have told a former Gotham staffer. But Kurtzman says she told Roodman herself during a face-to-face meeting. After taking several days to respond, Roodman made a statement addressing the issue only obliquely: "We've pretty much stated where we're at. We believe corporate sponsorship is a growing source of funding. At the time we signed Guess as a sponsor we were unaware of any business activities by them that conflicted with the goals of the film tour."

"This was the single largest sponsorship we've ever undertaken," Kurtzman says, adding that Guess has temporarily stopped making sponsorship arrangements. "It is extremely disappointing that this happened." Kurtzman also resents that only recently has Guess been given a chance to respond to the labor charges.

"We're all against sweatshops and unfair labor," she says with amazement. "Guess has been a leader in labor compliance for years. We developed the monitoring model and the government adopted it. Our contractors get one chance to fix the problem and then they're out." Seiden of the DOL doesn't consider Guess's program a blueprint, but confirms the company was the first to sign a monitoring agreement. As to whether Guess would get back on the Trendsetters list, Seiden says, "The company has made a commitment, but it's still under consideration."

Kurtzman further says provocative advertising has built Guess's image, of which the company is proud. But she does understand people who bristle when a commercial is called a short film: "We categorize something that's ninety seconds as a short film. But it's been called an ad, it's been called a spot. I can see a filmmaker feeling upset."

"Upset? For the pain of watching this, what do I get? Nothing!" boils McKay. "The profits don't make it back to the filmmaker, but the filmmaker's integrity is compromised. Not only are they degrading me and my film, they're profiting from that degradation. And that's not fostering independent film."

Other filmmakers on the Gotham tour have varying opinions. Suki Hawley (*Half Cocked*) resents not being informed. "I feel really strongly about being involved in the decision-making process," she says. "We weren't given the chance to think about it or to decide where we stood. There's such a small voice for independent filmmakers I think we need to stick together and remain as independent as we can."

Doug Pray (*Hype*) decided to keep his distance from the whole thing when UCLA's film coordinator told him a protest would coincide with his screening. "I didn't go, I didn't watch, I didn't read about it in the paper," Pray says. "I have no idea what the scope of the protest was." Pray thinks independent filmmakers have to compete however they can with studio marketing muscle. "It's so brutally hard to get people to go to the theater. These companies need help to market these films. What's really scary is if the logo or the company somehow gets completely identified with your film."

McKay thinks that's exactly what happened. Not only is the Guess logo on every film poster and its commercial playing before each screening, but Gotham's Website (Gothamcity.com) is also a popcorn circus of Guess triangles. The logo appears on virtually every page of the Website and ranges in size from a small, letterhead-like icon to huge version filling the entire screen. Often the Guess logo is anchored right next to a film's logo and title: It's impossible not to think the company and films are affiliated. In a prepared statement, Gotham responded that "Guess was not involved and is not involved in any part of the actual filmmaking, and the filmmakers of the 15 films in the tour do not necessarily endorse or oppose Guess. There is no connection between *Girls Town* and Guess Jeans other than the fact that *Girls Town* is made possible for screening by Guess. Gotham Entertainment Group is committed to these filmmakers and making their work available for both educational and entertainment purposes on college campuses."

But that could happen without corporate sponsorship, as it did when Gotham released *Kids*. Colleges book films whether or not the films have a sponsor; many schools spend significant sums on their programming. "The college market is certainly lucrative," McKay adds. "It's really not a question of [Gotham] not having enough money. It's about making a bigger profit."

Steve Wingate, the Director of International Film for the University of

Colorado at Boulder, who booked *Girls Town* and *Paradise Lost* through Gotham, thinks the college market is so profitable that the commercial markets will try to take it over. "I don't see why someone who owns these films is going to allow a third party to profit from the market." Wingate, who values his right to pick and choose his programming, eschews sponsorship for collegiate venues. "I don't want a corporation telling me what to play. True independent programming has really gone the way of the dodo."

Gotham admits Guess "paid for the privilege of being associated with these films" but insists it's not about profit. "Without Guess we would not have the funding to do this tour," Roodman says firmly. McDarragh says Gotham struck a large number of 16mm negatives and prints because some colleges can't project 35mm. Gotham maintains they would not have been able to cover the market effectively by striking one or two prints as they did with *Kids*. "We could instead have five or six prints to circulate," says McDarragh. "This was an extraordinary opportunity."

But filmmaker Suzanne Meyers (*Alchemy*) is uncomfortable with the whole idea. "Calling that thing a tour isn't really legitimate. It's just Gotham handling a semi-theatrical release." Meyers dismisses Gotham's financial claims as well. "There are distributors who already own those films. Prints exist. And distributors pay for new prints."

Executives at two distribution companies, who would not allow their names to be used, confirmed their responsibility for expenses incurred by their films that are licensed for nontheatrical release. Even if Gotham found it necessary to make new prints and paid for them, the costs would be advanced to them or come out of box office receipts before Gotham retained its fee. There are very few films on the tour that did not have theatrical distribution before Gotham's tour and it is unlikely those expenses were great enough to account for the Guess sponsorship, which seems, all things considered, primarily intended to cushion Gotham's marketing risk.

Gotham has, however, steered compensation toward filmmakers when possible. McKay has traveled to several campuses and received honorariums, which are going toward the pot for his next feature. Even though McKay may bristle at the Guess/Gotham partnership, he was paid for nontheatrical rights in the advance he received when he signed his deal with October. Even so, this situation is a cautionary tale for filmmakers negotiating deals while distribution channels change at a mind-boggling pace.

"When you make a deal with a distributor, they're talking about making money by owning all the potential rights down the road," says Sundance's Michelle Satter. "The Internet, digital broadcast, all these other rights are new forms of distribution. It should probably be a point in a contract now. It's the only legal way to protect yourself in terms of percentages." While there will always circumstances in which filmmakers are not justly compensated, options do exist, according to Satter. "Filmmakers can get together and talk about what they're going to require. There's strength in numbers."

For its part, Gotham intends to acquire rights prior to, rather than after, theatrical distribution deals. "We want to take the nontheatrical rights in advance," says Roodman. "That can be another selling point for the deal." *Drinks* director Cohn says that, as part of his business strategy, Gotham made a deal in which his distributor, BMG, receives the revenues but gives a percentage to the filmmakers. "We were able to negotiate that deal because we had talked to Gotham about nontheatrical," Cohn says.

On corporate sponsorship, Cohn quips: "My Absolut sweatshirt is very warm. And it was free." He thinks people are too cynical to buy jeans because of a screening and says it's possible BMG, which is also active in the music industry, might use *Drinks* to sell records or CDs. "After you spend four years working on a film and finally start getting it shown, it's difficult to get moralistic." But what if Absolut sponsored college screenings of



Drinks and gave away free samples? Cohn reconsiders: "That would be difficult."

CREATING EXHIBITION OPPORTUNITIES is the goal of the Texas Tour, a program being organized by the Austin Film Society.

Managing Director Elizabeth Peters realized there were venues throughout Texas that consistently support independent film. "Filmmakers should be able to network and reach more audiences when visiting the state," Peters says. "Beyond existing organizations, new ones are springing up all over. They want to see this work."

The Texas Tour will bring six filmmakers to Austin, and Peters hopes to arrange screenings at other venues throughout the state. Filmmakers will get a package including a budget worksheet, a site checklist (projection capabilities, video formats available, local places to get support and information), and marketing tips to help them on their trek through the state.

Peters hopes to find additional funds for those who elect to stay and travel around the state and—surprise—is looking for corporate sponsorship. Peters says that unless the government magically ups the ante for the National Endowment for the Arts, nonprofits don't have much of a choice. "Filmmakers make work so people can see it. If the company is willing to leave decisions to us, we'll work with them," she says. "But we don't want to start telling our audience to run out and buy some product. Our priority is to help the artist. They should get more than applause."

Meyers attempted to start up her own distribution vehicle, the Fuel Tour, a kind of traveling movie theater—modeled loosely on the Lollapalooza music tour—that would take a small number of films to 10 cities in the course of a month, then gradually expand the release to more cities. The tour was to be organized and run largely by the filmmakers (booking was to be handled by Artistic License Films), who would split the costs and, if any, the profits. Because the focus of the Fuel Tour was to be new markets, including college campuses and cities without arthouse cinemas, Meyers secured corporate sponsorship from The Sundance Channel, which was seeking ways to increase its nascent subscriber base. Both indie-friendly by nature, the Fuel Tour and the Sundance Channel seemed a perfect fit; the plan to provide a much-needed, new distribution option was much applauded. But as contracts were being finalized last December, the Channel pulled out of the tour, a decision that caught Meyers by complete surprise.

"[The Channel] was very perfunctory," Meyers says. "They said they had to go to their cable carriers and pressure them to carry the channel so they could get more subscribers. But having a tour that goes to ten cities and then another thirty would have gotten them a lot of press and a bigger audience that probably would become subscribers."

"We had to weigh a terrific opportunity against something that has to be paid for," says Sundance Channel spokesperson Sarah Eaton, who fairly

pleads for understanding. "Clearly, the ability to get on Time Warner's system in New York has to be of the highest priority." As to future film tours, Eaton said "Absolutely, we would re-visit the concept down the road."

As *The Independent* went to press, Meyers announced that the Fuel Tour was back on, this time with the backing of the Independent Film Channel. *Alchemy* (Meyers), *Delicate Art of the Rifle* (Dante Harper), *American Job* (Chris Smith), and a fourth film yet to be selected will have a 10-city run in October, followed by other dates to be determined. And, still facing expenses, Meyers is seeking additional corporate support. "It's tough to

have to do this," Meyers sighs. "But it won't happen any other way."

"I detest corporate sponsorship on every level," McKay says. "When I see 'Jack Kerouac wore khakis,' I want to cry. He didn't spend a life and career creating inspirational and beautiful material to sell some jeans." McKay also bemoans that 'independent' has come to mean 'hip' and 'trendy.' "Miramax, Fox Searchlight, they say they're making independent films. But they can fire their directors after two weeks. And nobody ever asks them why they don't give their directors final cut."

"There should be a common sense

law, or a decency law," offers Berlinger. "A distributor or presenter should say to a filmmaker, 'If you don't want us to put this film in this particular tour or venue, although it could be lucrative, we won't do it.' That would be the kind, smart way to do business." Sinofsky adds that directors need to speak up: "More filmmakers need to be protective of their images and their films."

Ironically, McKay discovered he had such protection. "My agreement with October prohibits commercial tie-ins, any merchandising with the film without my consultation," he says. "I think [what Gotham did with *Guess*] falls under those categories." Since the damage had already been done, McKay elected not to pursue the issue legally. He did, however, pen an open letter signed by seven other GIFT filmmakers, which protests *Guess's* labor practices and the affiliation of their films with the company.

But what happens when filmmakers are not vigilant about their existing contractual rights? It's important to have a choice or be involved in a process, but it's even more important to act on it. If filmmakers consistently waive their rights, they're going to disappear.

"This whole independent world is burgeoning so quickly we're encountering a new set of rules," says the Sundance Channel's Eaton. "Filmmakers had to become sophisticated about distribution. Now they have to become sophisticated about corporate sponsorship. I think it can be a terrific experience for both companies and filmmakers. I've seen it happen."

"You have to enter any arena, a distribution deal, a sponsorship agreement, with a clarity of what the needs and goals are," says Sundance's Satter. "What do people expect?" The bottom line for presenters and exhibitors should be integrity: The sponsorship must not affect the selection process or how a program is implemented. For filmmakers, accepting a check should not signal the surrender of artistic control. Satter firmly cautions the cash-poor, institution and artist alike. "Be extremely careful of where you get money. And what the conditions for that money are. Not all money is good money. Good money supports the vision of the filmmaker."

Mark J. Huisman is a New York-based writer and independent producer.



John Carstarphen's *Stealin' Home*, part of the Texas Tour. Photo: courtesy filmmaker



BY MITCH ALBERT

WHEN A PLAY GROWS UP IN HOLLYWOOD, IT becomes a film. The latest such offering to burst from its post-theater chrysalis is *The Confession*, a crowd-pleasing, one-act play turned short film. Executive director and star James DuMont tapped the usual sources to fund the transformation of playwright Steve Monroe's tale of a "gleefully sadistic" priest: school chums, family ties, credit cards, and, in a nice twist, the Catholic Church itself. *The Confession*, Steven Adams Entertainment, (213) 483-8837.

Woman loves man, man loves woman, they marry and live happily. Simple enough, right? Factor in racial politics, however, and you have *An American Love Story*. Producers Jennifer Fox and Jennifer Fleming lived with Bill Sims, Karen Wilson, and their two children for more than a year, documenting their life and love. Sims is black and Wilson white. The video project explores their 30 years together, recalling the outright violence, cold disdain, and general intolerance they (and their children) have faced just because they chose each other. Fox and Fleming shot more than 1,000 hours of life chez Wilson-Sims and have finally carved a rough-cut of this projected nine-part series for PBS. They are in search of finishing funds. *An American Love Story*, Zohe Film Productions, 116 Chambers St., New York, NY 10007; (212) 267-6750; fax: 267-5929; ZoheFilms@aol.com.

Before watching *Reel Women: The Untold Story*, an "illuminating journey celebrating women filmmakers from the silent era to the present day," grab a drink and some eats and settle down in front of...the computer. A new CD-ROM from Enteractive, Inc., the presentation is narrated by Jodie Foster and includes hours of interviews, documentary, and feature film clips, and even a trivia game. *Reel Women: The Untold Story*, Enteractive, Inc., 110 W. 40th St., New York, NY 10018; (212) 221-

6559; fax: 730-6045.

Lawrence F. Brose has crafted a queer little work of art with *De Profundis* (63 min., 16mm), the title echoing Oscar Wilde's sorrowful prison letter. The film comprises three parts, each emphasizing Wilde's transgressive use of language, from his saucy aphorisms to the

man's poetic soul eventually draws everyone in. Noted actors Roshan Seth (*Mississippi Masala*) and Saeed Jaffrey (*My Beautiful Launderette*) star, and producer James Schamus acted as consultant. *The Journey*, New Ray Films, Box 79086, Pittsburgh, PA15216; (412) 343-6515; fax: 344-6950; Hsaluja@aol.com; www.nb.net/



Azazel Jacobs' *Kirk and Kerry* blurs the line between fact and fiction
Photo: courtesy filmmaker

"romantic existentialism of personal redemption" of the letter (which Brose attempts to "contaminate" with pagan witch and drag performances). Using footage ranging from 1920s gay erotica to photographic processes suggesting decay and corrosive fear, and finally various hand-processing techniques that transform the film, Brose fashions a poetic inquiry into the pleasures and contradictions of contemporary gay sexuality while aggressively resisting the typical assessment of Wilde as a gay 'martyr.' *De Profundis*, Lawrence F. Brose, Box 819, Buffalo, NY 14205-0819; (716) 849-2792; fax: 856-2720.

"In India," says 50-year-old director Harish Saluja, "when you tell your parents you want to go make movies, what they hear is you want to go to Bombay and become a prostitute." After 25 years on these shores, Saluja has realized his dream and the result is considerably more empowering. *The Journey* (96 min.) tells the story of Kishan Singh, a widowed Indian schoolmaster who joins his son's family in the US. Old and new worldviews clash, but the old

~newray/

Tim Caster's *We Seminoles* (17 min., 35mm) is an oral history of the Native American Seminole tribe commissioned by the tribe's Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress. The film was shot for projection on five screens at once. After a playful opening scene set to tomtom percussion depicting the transformation of bingo cards into egrets, a canoe passes silently across three screens. The creation myths of the Seminoles are narrated in the traditional Creek and Mikasuki languages, while the more recent history of the tribe (including the 1800s war of resistance against the US government's forcible relocation program across the Trail of Tears) is told in English. The film is now a permanent museum exhibit. *We Seminoles*, abi Productions, Inc., 222 W. 23rd St., Suite 127, New York, NY 10011; (212) 620-7052.

Small-town girl Jill Kendal makes good in Miami's South Beach, hooking up with a passel of transsexuals and utterly confusing her

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steroidal, abusive, high-school sweetheart from back home. Of such stories is America made! Director and former adman Steve Kinsella knows there's Always Something Better (85 min., 16mm) out there. *Always Something Better*, Fierce Films, 1453 Corcoran St. NW, Washington, DC 20009; (202) 265-3885; fax: 332-4766; steve@fiercefirms.com.

If the spirit moves you.... A 150-year-old ghost falls in love with a mortal woman and yearns for earthly union with her. Grudgingly granted mortality by a disapproving celestial grand jury, the lovelorn ghost Maurice returns to earth in time to discover that the object of his desires has fallen comatose. Fifty years pass, and Maurice establishes himself as an actor, but never forgets the inspiration that returned him to this lesser realm. This is *The Nightingale and the Rose* (35mm), a film by Alfredo E. Rivas, a Puerto Rican student pursuing an MA in film studies at Emory University. *The Nightingale and the Rose*, Guernica Films, 4167 Mistymorn Way, Powder Springs, GA 30073; (770) 943-1251.

Yucatàn if you think Yucatàn. American producer/director Elly Friedman and Mexican filmmaker Andrea Alvarez have recently completed production on *Modern Rhapsody*, the story of a young choreographer and the producers' own "love letter to Mexico and the people of Yucatàn." The film stars American screen darling Karen Black and the newborn Jorge Faz Dance Company. Friedman, 75, once worked for the IRS as an agent and has been born again as a filmmaker. *Modern Rhapsody*, 47 South Palm Ave., #206, Sarasota, FL 34236; (941) 951-2378; fax: (941) 365-5377.

The Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum's We Seminoles
Photo: courtesy Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum



Death of a Winston Man: Tom McBride, a New York actor of classically masculine good looks who became the emblem of the cigarette brand, recently died of AIDS-related brain disease. Filmmaker Jay Corcoran documented his last months, and the result is *Life and Death*

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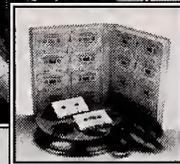
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Death by Design uses Busby Berkeley choreography to illustrate the movement of cells.
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on the A-List (video), to be released this summer. McBride was the height of glamour and desirability, epitomizing the party life and all the favors that accompany it. Corcoran's camera examines McBride's relationship to his disintegrating body, and as such, the desires of all gays and straights for the luminescence of sexual attractiveness and fulfilled lives. *Life and Death on the A-List*, WaterBearer Films, 205 West End Ave., Suite 24H, New York, NY 10023; (212) 580-8185; (800) 551-8304.

In *Death by Design*, a look at the secret life of cells, death is no big deal; in fact, it's a cytological imperative. Filmmaker Peter Friedman (*Silverlake Life*) and biologist Jean-François Brunet have delivered a wacky Busby Berkeley-style musical featuring human cells in a ceaseless choreography of division, replication, suicide, and other cell stuff. *Death by Design*, ITVS, 190 Fifth St., Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55101; (612) 225-9035; fax: 225-9102; itvs@maroon.tc.umn.edu; www.itvs.org/ITVS.

Azazel Jacobs—son of veteran experimental filmmaker Ken Jacobs—blurs the line between fact and fiction in his experimental narrative *Kirk and Kerry*. Jacobs uses the real-life relationship between his lead actors (Kirk Acevedo and Kerry Johnson) as the foundation for a drama that combines avant-garde technique with strong voyeuristic tendencies. *Kirk and Kerry*, Rudie Canned Film, 165 Ave. A #5, New York, NY 10009; (212) 475-8188.

Independent documentarian Paul Wagner recently sneaked into Chinese-occupied Tibet and shot *The Wind Horse*, the story of an aspiring Tibetan pop singer who faces a "crisis of conscience" when her Buddhist-nun cousin is tortured and imprisoned. His crew filmed for a week in Tibet and several more weeks in Kathmandu, Nepal. *The Wind Horse*, Paul Wagner Productions, 201 East Main St., Suite F, Charlottesville, VA 22902; (804) 293-6202; fax: 293-3249; pwagner@comet.net.

LISTINGS DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT. SINCE SOME DETAILS MAY CHANGE AFTER THE MAGAZINE GOES TO PRESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONTACT THE FESTIVAL DIRECTLY BEFORE SENDING PREVIEW CASSETTES. DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING A CALL FOR ENTRIES IN THE FESTIVAL COLUMN IS THE 15TH OF THE MONTH TWO-AND-A-HALF MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., JULY 15 FOR OCT. ISSUE). ALL BLURBS SHOULD INCLUDE: FESTIVAL DATES, CATEGORIES, PRIZES, ENTRY FEES, DEADLINES, FORMATS & CONTACT INFO. TO IMPROVE OUR RELIABILITY AND MAKE THIS COLUMN MORE BENEFICIAL, WE ENCOURAGE ALL MEDIAMAKERS TO CONTACT FIVF WITH CHANGES, CRITICISM, OR PRAISE FOR FESTIVALS PROFILED.

DOMESTIC

AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, CA. Oct 16-30. Deadline: Aug. 1. Large invitational feature film fest (shorts accepted) drawing on resources & contacts of AFI. Focused on groundbreaking int'l directors, large retros & tributes. Entries must be LA premieres w/ no previous local TV or theatrical exposure; no limitation on completion date. Fest receives wide print coverage in trades, *LA Times*, etc. & local & int'l TV. Fest encompasses AFI Nat'l Video Festival, which provides nat'l showcase for new works by ind. artists as well as screenings of int'l TV & historic US broadcast TV. Fest is open to public; videomakers not paid a fee. All video entries must have been prod on video or computer media. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4". Entry fee: \$25 film/video. Contact: Carla Sanders, AFI Los Angeles Int'l Film Fest, 2021 N. Western Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90027; (213) 856-7707; fax: 462-4049.

ARIZONA CINEMA SHORTS FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, AZ. Oct 17-19. Deadline: Sept 8. Competitive fest for films & videos 30 min. or less & made for \$3,000 or less. Fest dedicated to film/videomakers on low-to-no budget who "produce creative, noncommercial cinema art." All genres accepted. Cash awards. Formats: 16mm, Super 8, 8mm, video in any format (screened in 1/2" VHS). Entry fee: \$18-25 per entry. Contact: Larry Holloway, Cinema Arts Center of N. AZ., 17 N. San Francisco St., Ste. 3C, Flagstaff, AZ 86001; (520) 779-FILM.

ATHENS FILM FESTIVAL, Athens, GA. Oct. 17-24. Early deadline: July 1. All submissions due Aug. 15. Long considered fertile ground for emerging talent, this brand new fest started by NYU grad. will showcase emerging filmmakers. Features, docs & shorts. Screenplay competition. Formats: 35mm, 16mm & Super 8. Among those who've accepted invitations to screen new work are Gus Van Sant, Scott Saunders & Justin Vaughn. Kodak & R.E.M. among financial supporters. Contact fest office: (706) 613-7669; gafilm@negia.net; www.negia.net/~gafilm

CINDY COMPETITION, Sept. 30 & March 31, CA. Deadlines: July 31 (NE. US & E. Canada, NW. US & W. Canada, SE. US); Aug 31 (SW.

US, N. Central US). Now in 40th yr, Int'l CINDY (Cinema in Industry) Competition is one of world's longest-running audiovisual events. Founded in 1959 to honor talents of industrial filmmakers, fest now celebrates linear & interactive multimedia. Event held twice/yr. Fall event in San Diego, CA; spring in New Orleans, LA. Last yr's event drew over 2,300 entries from 17 countries, particularly in over 100 broadcast & nonbroadcast cats. Gold, Silver, Bronze & honorable mention awards presented, along w/ John Cleese Comedy Award, Wolfgang Bayer Cinematography Award & Robert Townsend Social Issues Award. 13 regional competitions worldwide. Regional winners automatically eligible for final judging for fest in San Diego. Contact: Int'l CINDY Competition, 9531 Jamacha Blvd, Ste. 263, Spring Valley, CA 91977-5628; (619) 461-1600; fax: 461-1606; www.cindys.com

EMPIRE STATE EXHIBITIONS, NY. Aug. 21-Sept. 20. Deadline: July 12. Int'l ind. film & video fest screens at the New York State Fair in Syracuse, Rochester, Ithaca, Albany & Saratoga Springs. Judged by industry professionals. Prizes awarded in cats of narrative feature, narrative short, doc, experimental, animation. For info & appl: (212) 802-4679 or Empire@aol.com. Empire State Exhibitions, Box 177, Mohawk, NY 13407.

HOYT FULLER FILM FESTIVAL, late Oct., GA. Deadline: early Aug. Presented by Atlanta African Film Society, invitational fest premieres media that celebrates Black aesthetic and honors producers who bring appreciation of Black art, culture & creativity. Many Atlanta premieres. 1995 fest presented Prized Pieces film tour, film premieres & 5 films. Fest named for late Hoyt Fuller, founder & publisher of *First World* magazine & editor of *Black World*. Formats: 16mm, 1/2". No entry fee. Contact: Program dir., Hoyt Fuller Film Fest, Atlanta African Film Society, Box 50319, Atlanta, GA 30302; (404) 818-6444.

LLANO ESTACADO VIDEO FESTIVAL at Texas Tech, Oct. Deadline: Aug. 1. Accepting works in VHS format up to 15 min. Open competition. For guidelines contact: Dr. Brown, Art History Assoc., Dept. of Art, Texas Tech University, Box 42081, Lubbock, TX 79409-2081; (806) 742-3825/3026.

MESILLA VALLEY FILM SOCIETY, Oct. 19-21, NM. Deadline Aug. 1. 3rd annual fest of films & videos w/ themes relevant to "The Border" region, incl. Mexico & southwestern US & idea of "border" as barrier, margin, bridge, or arbitrary line. Submission open to recently completed films & videos of all genres by ind. producers & students. Entry fee: \$10, plus return postage. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4", Beta-SP; preview on 1/2". Contact: Fred Salas, Mesilla Valley Film Society, Box 1139, Mesilla, NM 88046; (505) 647-3471.

MISSOURI VIDEO & SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 26-27, MO. Deadline: Aug. 15. Fest schedules all work entered & has expanded format to accept entries nationwide & include film as well as video. Cats: doc, narrative shorts, exp, animation, music video & special cats for students (narrative features not accepted). All work should have been completed since summer 1995. Cash awards in each cat. Also seeking nominations for Wendy Hearn Invitational Video Award. Formats: 16mm, 8mm, Beta, 1/2"; pre-



view on 1/2". Entry fee: \$25 per cat; \$15 student. Contact: Cindy Lazzari, Missouri Video & Short Film Fest, Midtown Arts Center, 3207 Washington Ave., St. Louis, MO 63103; (314) 531-2787.

NEW YORK FESTIVALS INTERNATIONAL NON-BROADCAST AWARDS, Jan., NY. Deadline: Aug. 2. Founded in '57, int'l competition for wide range of media, from "low-budget productions to multimedia extravaganza," incl. industrials, education & info, home video, short films, multi-image, business theater. Receives 1300 entries from 36 countries; awards presented at ceremony attended by 900. Competition cats: industrials, crafts, intros & lead-in titles, multi-image & slide prods, multi-image/film or video hybrid, business/industrial theater. Awards (in each competition cat): Grand Award "Best of Fest" Trophy; Gold, Silver & Bronze World Medals, Finalist Certificates of Recognition. Productions must have been produced &/or released after Aug. 3, 1996. Entry fees: \$110-250, depending on cat. & length. Formats: 3/4", 1/2". Multi-Image/Business Theater Prods must be submitted w/ presentation book. Contact: New York Festivals, 186 Fifth Ave, 7th fl., New York, NY 10010; (914) 238-4481; fax: 238-5040; www.nyfests.com

NORTHWEST FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Nov. 1-10, OR. Deadline: Aug. 1. Now in 24th yr, fest a juried survey of new moving image arts by ind. Northwest film & videomakers. Draws over 250 entries each yr; single juror (filmmaker, critic or programmer; in 1996 it was John Cooper, Sundance programmer). 30-35 shorts, features and docs. screened; 10-15 shorts selected for Best of the Northwest Tour Program. Total aucts. est. at 5,000. Awards: \$10,000 in prod., service & cash awards. Open to all perm. res. of OR, WA, MT, ID, AK, and British Columbia, and students therein. Entries must have been completed after Aug. 95. All genres. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Super 8. No entry fee (return shipping costs: \$10, \$15 for Canada). Contact: Lisa Pearson, coord., Northwest Film Center, 1219 Southwest Park Ave., Portland, OR 97205; (503) 221-1156; fax: 226-4842.

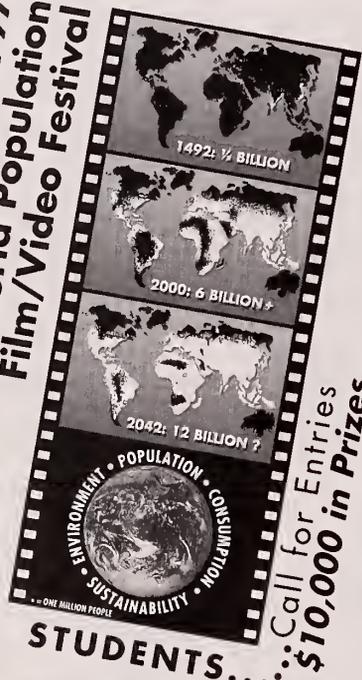
REELING '97: THE 17TH CHICAGO LESBIAN AND GAY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 7-16. Deadline: July 1. *Late entries:* July 15. Chicago Filmmakers seek wide variety of lesbian & gay films & videos for the second oldest fest of its kind in the world. Fest, which screens at the Music Box Theater and at the Kino-Eye Cinema, offers great exposure as well as potential follow-up engagements at the Music Box Theater. All formats, genres

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and lengths accepted. Cash prizes totalling \$3000 awarded in category: doc., narrative, experimental, animation. Entry Fee: \$20 (60 mins. plus), \$15 (under 60 min). \$5 discount for no return. Contact: REELING '97, Chicago Filmmakers, 1543 West Division, Chicago, IL 60622; (773) 384-5533; fax: (773) 384-5532; reeling@chicagofilmmakers.org; www.chicagofilmmakers.org/reeling

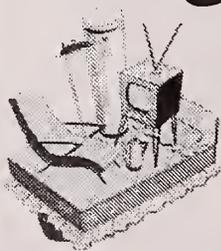
ROBERT FLAHERTY SEMINAR. Now in its 43rd year, this int'l forum for ind video & cinema professionals & supporters "enthusiastic about discovering new forms of personal & cultural expression" will replace their regular week-long seminar with a new program, "Flaherty on the Road," a regional travelling initiative comprising several "mini" Flaherty Seminars. Events programmed for Aug., Oct., & Nov. This is a collaboration of institutions & organizations around the U.S., aimed at connecting emerging film & video artists, students, scholars & other film professionals. On Aug. 6 & 7, 6-9 pm at Sony Music, New York City, Tee Collins, well-known animator of children's programming will present "Animated Images: An Exploration of Multicultural Talents", a program that includes a brief history of African Americans working in animation since the 1970s. She will also introduce the work of several young up-and-coming animators. Registration severely limited: \$25 deposit reserves space for each event. Contact: Michelle Materre, International Film Seminars, 462 Broadway, ste. 510, New York, NY 10013; (212) 925-3191; fax: 925-3482; ifsnyc@aol.com

SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR SHORT FILM FESTIVAL '97, Oct 4-5, Berkeley, CA. Deadline: Aug 1. Seeks orig. works of 30 min. & under. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on VHS only. Entry fee: \$20 (must include SASE for return). Contact: Syngenor, 601 Van Ness Ave, Ste E3227, San Francisco, CA 94119-2884; (415) 664-0909.

SHORT ATTENTION SPAN FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct 24, San Francisco; other dates/cities TBA. Deadline Aug 15. Now in its 8th yr, fest open showcase for short shorts. Entries must be non-commercial, 2 min or less & completed w/in previous 2 yrs. Range of styles & genres, incl. animation, music video, political commentary, comedy, exp. and narrative, plus "totally banal and truly grotesque." Best of Fest compilation made available for screening galleries around U.S., as well as on Viacom Channel 25 in San Francisco, Weird TV & Artists Television Access. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Super 8. Preview on 1/2". Entry fee: \$5. Contact: Sarah Anderson, Short Attention Span Film & Video Fest, Box 460316, San Francisco, CA. 94146; (415) 554-0964; www.creative.net/~weather

SUPER 8 FILM FESTIVAL, Sept 19-21, San Diego, CA. Deadline: Aug. 1. Followed by national tour (last year incl: The Knitting Factory NY, LACE, LA & Artists Access SF. Lots of prizes. Awards incl. Best of Fest, Audience, Exp., Animation & Best Basement Find. All genres. Silent films will be accompanied by live musical scores. Entry fee: \$5. Submissions on VHS. Contact: Melinda Stone, fest dir., Super 8 Festival, 3841 Fouth Ave. # 207, San Diego CA, 92103; (619) 534-7315; fax: 534-7315; mstone@web-er.ecsd.edu

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TAMPA INT'L LESBIAN & GAY PRIDE FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Sept. 19-28. Deadline: July 31. Now in its 8th yr, 10 day fest considers all genres of any length by, about & of interest to lesbians and gay men. Fest is "committed to presenting culturally inclusive & diverse programs" of video & film. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". No entry fee. Contact: Kathie Michael: (813) 932-7329, fax: (813) 932-7329.

TEMECULA VALLEY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 18-21, CA. Deadline: July 31. Open to all genres. Cat's: feature, short, student competition. Audience rates best feature, best short & best student film. Films which have been broadcast by network or released theatrically prior to fest not eligible for Viewers Choice award. Cash prizes & plaques given. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, preview on VHS only. Entry fee: \$15. Contact: Temecula Valley Int'l Film Fest, 27645 Jefferson Ave. Suite 104A, Temecula, CA 92590; (909) 699-6267; fax: 308-1414

TRIMMER'S ROCK INT'L FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Sept. 20-21, Newport, PA. Deadline: Sept. 1. 3rd annual event held in a big old barn features int'l blend of eclectic short films, videos and multimedia. Sponsored by Perry County Ind. Media Arts Center. Fest is juried, with combined awards of \$2500. No formal judging cats. Formats: 35mm, 16/Super 16mm, 8/Super 8mm, VHS, Hi8, Beta & PC/MAC-authored multimedia. Submissions on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: Trimmer's Rock Int'l Film & Video Festival, c/o PCIMAC, RD2 Box 65, Newport, PA 17074; (717) 567-3227; fax: (215) 545-7884; info@pcimac.com

TROUBADOURS FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 23-25, CA. Deadline: July 31. Now in 3rd yr, fest a showcase of film & video by ind. Christian producers & artists, or projects about Christian culture; aim is "to foster critique & evaluation of Christian media...Those that reflect diverse, unusual, paradoxical, alternative, experimental, funky, investigative, personal, unconventional, unique, extratraditional, instinctive, controversial, different & creative perspectives & works from producers/artists of all backgrounds, persuasions, orientations, political affiliations, races, genders & cultures." Projects by non-Christians that examine Christian culture also encouraged. Formats, 16mm, super 8, VHS. Entry fee: \$20. Contact: Bret Lutz, Troubadours Fest, Cathedral X, Box 192845, San Francisco, CA 94119; (415) 863-5201; cathedralx@aol.com

VERMONT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct.23-26, Burlington VT. Deadline extended to early July. Subtitled "Images and Issues for Social Change." Fest is competitive in cats. of "War and Peace," "Justice and Human Rights" & "The Environment." Accepts doc., narrative & animation. Showcase programs this year highlight Spanish Civil War films, Native American Filmmakers, Contemporary Middle Eastern Cinema, Vermont Ind. Filmmakers & Classic Docs. Formats: VHS, S-VHS, Beta, Hi8, 3/4", 1", PAL, SECAM, digital video, 8mm, 16mm, 35mm. (Submissions on VHS or 3/4".) Entry fee: \$65. Contact: VIFF, PO Box 531, Burlington VT 05402-0531; (802) 660-2600; fax: 860-9555.

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FOREIGN

BAHIA FILM FESTIVAL, mid-Sept., Brazil. Deadline: late July (competition); mid-Aug. (market). Por Um Mondo Mais Humano (For a More Humanistic World) is motto of fest & market. In its 24th ed. Fest open to Ibero-American prods as well as non-Iberoamerican prods on Latin Amer. subjects. Held in the Brazilian city "that best synthesizes the encounter of the Afro-Indian Iberian & American cultural inheritance." Program incl. film & video conquest, retros, symposia & exhibitions. Int'l jury awards: Tatu D'Ouro prizes in following cats: film/video doc; film/video-fiction; film/video animation/exp; film/video made by non-Iberoamerican about Latin America; best feature doc.; best video-clip; best dir.; best script; best photography; best editing; best sound. Market takes place during fest; objective: "to create an alternative space for commercialization & int'l distribution of exp & ind film & video prods." Entries must be on VHS (max length: 60 min.) Market will disseminate promotional materials sent by participants. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta. Entry fee: \$40 (market). Contact: Guidao Araujo, dir./Milena (asst.), Jornada Internacional de Cinema da Bahia, Rua Barao de Geremoabo s/n, Campus Universitario de Ondina, 40. 170-290 Salvador, Bahia, Brazil; tel: 011 55 71 235 4392.

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BARCELONA INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF GAY AND LESBIAN FILMS, Oct. 27-Nov. 7, Spain. Deadline: late Aug. 3rd yr. Non-competitive. Sections: Pink & Purple (current features), Homage, Special Screening & Stonewall (new Queer Cinema). All lengths considered. Audience Award, Best Short Film & Best Long Instructional. Screenings: Filmoteca de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government). Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on VHS. No entry fee. Contact: Xavier-Daniel, dir., Barcelona Int'l Exhibition of Gay & Lesbian Films, Mostra Internacional de Cinema Gai i Lesbic, Casal Lambda, Carrer Ample 5, 08002 Barcelona, Spain; 011 34 3 412 72 72, fax: 011 34 3 412 74 76.

CINANIMA INTERNATIONAL ANIMATED FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 5-10, Portugal. Deadline: Aug. 15. Espinho, small seaside city in northern Portugal, hosts this animated film event, now in 20th yr. Program comprises int'l competition & int'l non-competitive program, which incl. retros. Eligible: all works directed "frame by frame" or computer-assisted for cinema & TV, in film or video, completed w/in preceding 2 yrs. Competition cats: up to 6 min.; 6-13 min.; 13-26 min.; 26-52 min.; long feature; publicity & institutional; 1st film; didactic & information; title sequences; series. Awards: Great Prize Cinanima (trophy, certificate & pte 500,000; about \$3,200); Prize City of Espinho-Jury's Special Award (trophy, certificate & pta 250,000; about \$1,600); Prize for Best Film in each cat (trophies & certificates); Honorable Mentions; Prize Alves Costa (awarded by journalists at fest); Prize José Abel (special trophy & certificate); audience Prize. RTP Prize (special trophy and acquisition of broadcast rights). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", VHS. No entry fee. Contact: Cinanima Int'l Animated Film Festival, Festival Internacional de Cinema de Animacao,

Secretariado do Festival, Apartado 743, 4501 Espinho Codex, Portugal; tel: 011 351 2 724 611, fax: 011 351 2 726 015; www.awn.com/cinanima

LEEDS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 16-31, UK. Deadline: Aug. 1. Central theme runs through this 16-day fest, now in 11th yr, which features premieres, shorts, animations & docs. Each yr about 95 features & 45-50 shorts exhibited. Fest also features strong educ. content w/ seminars, workshops & lectures. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, broadcast-quality video. Entry fee: £5 (\$8) Contact: Liz Rymer, Leeds Int'l Film Fest, Town Hall, The Headrow, Leeds, LS1 3AD, United Kingdom; tel: 011 44 113 247 8389, fax: 011 44 113 247 8397.

LONDON INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 6-23, UK. Deadline: Aug 31. Festival, run continuously since 1957, is largest noncompetitive & invitational film fest in Europe. For several yrs, it has programmed one of Europe's largest forums of U.S. ind prods. Overall, 180 int'l features & short film showcase of 100 shorts. Sections incl. Shorts & Animation, British Cinema Now, Panorama France, Evening Standard "Film on the Square," European Cinema, World Cinema. Screenings held at Nat'l Film Theatre, Museum of the Moving Image, Odeon West End & ICA Cinema. Nearly 1,000 filmmakers, buyers & media attend & there is an Industry Office. Extensive media coverage 2nd only to competitive fests in Europe. Audiences over 100,000. Entries must be UK premieres produced w/in preceding 2 yrs. Fiction & doc works of all lengths & genres accepted. Send info (incl synopsis & press kit) only to fest;

preview cassettes will be requested. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Super 8, 8mm. No entry fee. Contact: Jane Ivey, administrator, London Int'l Film Festival, Nat'l Film Theatre, South Bank, Waterloo, London SE1 8XT, United Kingdom; 011 44 171 815 1322; fax: 011 44 171 633 0786; jane.ivey@bfi.org.uk

MIFED, Cinema and TV Int'l Multimedia Market, Oct. 19-24. Italy. Milan hosts this fest, one of the biggest int'l markets for TV and film. Now in its 64th ed. Over 80 countries. 2/3 of prticipants are prods. and distrs. 27 film theaters, 18 with Dolby. Sev. thousand sq. ft. exhib. & booth space. Facilities incl. commercial office space. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Entry fee: varies. After June 9 office space is subj. to availability. Contact: Elena Lloyd, prod. manager MIFED, Lgo. Domodossola,1/20145 Milano, Italy; tel: 011 3 92 48 01 29 12; fax: 011 3 92 49 97 70 20.

RAINDANCE FILM SHOWCASE, Oct. 10-19 UK. Now in 5th ed., this is only fest & market for int'l ind. film in England, held in London's West End week before MIFED. Market/fest presents British film industry w/ first look at ind. films in sections incl. Feature Films, Directors Reel (work in progress) Script Catalogue, Multimedia Showcase. Contact: Elliot Grove, Raindance Film Showcase & Market, 81 Berwick St., London W1V 3PF, United Kingdom; 011 44 171 287 3833; fax: 011 44 171 439 2243.

UPPSALA SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Oct 21-26, Sweden. Deadline: July 25. Located north of Stockholm in university town, fest, estab in '82, programs int'l docs & shorts (around 100) & children's films. Competition cats incl. short fiction films (max

20 min.; 20-60 min.), animation (max 60 min.), doc (max 60 min.), exp (max 60 min.) & children's films (max 60 min.). Awards in children's film cat. decided by special children's jury & an "audience choice" award. Films on all subjects welcomed, amateur as well as professional. Entries must be under 60 min., produced no more than 2 yrs prior to fest & not broadcast or commercially screened in Sweden. 6 films awarded w/ Uppsala Filmkaja. Program also incl retros, exhibits & seminars. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. No entry fee. Contact: Louise Bown, Uppsala Film Fest, Box 1746, S-75147 Uppsala, Sweden; 011 46 18 12 0025, fax: 011 46 18 12 13 50; nik@ALGO-NET.SE; www.algonet.se/~nik/festival.htm

VIENNALE—VIENNA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, mid-Oct., Austria. Deadline: mid-Aug. A "fest of fests," FIAF-recognized noncompetitive Viennale introduces local auds to major films of annual fest circuit. It is fest "in praise of ind politics & visions," emphasizing films off beaten track. Large retro every yr. on overlooked subjects, such as emigration of Austrian filmmakers to Hollywood (1993). Special programs, e.g (1995) focus on "film & music". Sections incl. Documentaries, Twilight Zone ("Midnight Movies"), Lost & Found (recently discovered or very rare films) & 2 tributes to directors/actors/prods. Entries not to have been sho-wn as 1st run films in Austria. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. No entry fee. Contact: Hans Hurch, Internationale Filmfestwochen Wien, Stiftgasse 6, A-1070 Vienna, Austria; tel: 011 43 1 52 65 947, fax: 011 43 1 52 34 172. office@viennale; www.viennale.or.at

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CONFERENCES • WORKSHOPS

UNIVERSITY FILM & VIDEO ASSOCIATION annual conference to be held Aug. 5-9 at Univ. of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Traditional academic paper presentations + workshops in new media technologies, video art & WWW production, doc & scriptwriting. Critic screenings of members' work & premiere screening of winners of 1997 UFVA Student Film & Video Festival. Contact: Karla Berry (414) 424-3132; berry@vaxa.cis.uwosh.edu

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Not-for-profit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made: (212) 319-2910.

WALT DISNEY NETWORK TELEVISION DIRECTORS TRAINING PROGRAM offers 8-week paid workshop for aspiring minority & female directors with min. 3 years experience. Deadline: July 10. Contact: Directors Training Program Administrator, Walt Disney Network Television, 500 South Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91521; voice mail: (818) 560-4000.

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ASHLAND CABLE ACCESS seeks video shows. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" OK, any length or genre. For return, incl. sufficient SASE. Send w/ description & release to: Suzi Aufderheide, Southern Oregon State College, RVTV, 1250 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland, OR 97520; (541) 552-6898.

AUSTIN, TX ind. producer offering cable access venue to showcase ind. films & videos, all genres & subjects. Shorts & music videos linked by discussions on ind. films. Films/videos running longer than 40 min. may be aired in series of 2 consecutive shows. Send release & info about film/filmmaker. 1/4" & 3/4" preferable. No payment, but credit & exposure. James Shelton, Tex-Cinema Productions, Box 3633, Austin, TX 78764-3633; (512) 867-9901.

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DUTV-CABLE 54 progressive, nonprofit access channel in Philadelphia, seeks works by ind. producers. All genres & lengths considered. No payment; will return tapes. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" accepted. Contact: George McCollough or Maria Mongelli, DUTV-Cable 54, Drexel University, 33rd & Chesnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

CINEMATOGRAFIA PRODUCTIONS accepting feature works-in-progress seeking distribution or exposure to financial resources for upcoming edition of CLIPS, an industry showcase in Manhattan. Contact: (212) 971-5846.

EXHIBIT YOUR FILMS AT GRAND ILLUSION: The Northwest Film Forum in Seattle seeks 16mm & 35mm shorts (60 min. or less) for on-going exhibition. Selected works shown before regular programming at Seattle's only ind. art house theater, the Grand Illusion Cinema. Send submission on video (w/ SASE) to: NWFF c/o Grand Illusion, 1403 NE 50th, Seattle, WA 98105.

FILMMAKERS UNITED, nonprofit org., presents monthly film series at Silent Movie Theatre in Los Angeles. Year-round venue for ind. short films. To submit a film (must have 16mm or 35 mm print for screening & be no longer than 40 min.), send a 1/2" video copy w/ SASE to: Filmmakers United, 1260 N. Alexandria Ave., LA, CA 90029; (213) 427-8016.

FLOATING IMAGE seeks film/video animation & shorts for public/commercial TV program. Send

VHS or SVHS to Floating Image Productions, Box 7017, Santa Monica, CA 90406 (include SASE for return); (310) 313-6935; www.artnet.net/~float-image

GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS seeks short videos (10 min or less) for *Living with AIDS*, half-hr magazine weekly seen in Manhattan, Queens & Brooklyn, produced by GMHC & NYC Dept. of Health. No budget for licensing programs, but opportunity to be seen by millions. VHS or 3/4" tapes (no originals) must deal w/ HIV/AIDS issues, or present person(s) infected/affected by HIV/AIDS in positive way. May not be sexually explicit. All tapes returned. Send to: Kristen Thomas, Living with AIDS Showcase of Independent Video, GMHC Multimedia Dept., 129 W. 20th St., NY, NY 10011; (212) 337-3655.

HANDI-CAPABLE IN THE MEDIA seeks videos of any length about people w/ disabilities. Programs will air on Atlanta's Cable 12. No fees. Credit & exposure to large viewing audience. VHS preferred, S-VHS, 3/4" acceptable. Sharon Douglas, Handi-Capable in the Media, Inc. 2625 Piedmont Rd. Suite 56-137 Atlanta, GA 30324.

IN SHORT, a 1/2-hr program that airs bimonthly, seeks submissions for public access show in NY. Preference given to works created w/ digital video. On every 4th program, work produced by or featuring women highlighted. Works up to 28 min., submitted on VHS for preview, available in 3/4". Send sub. to: P Lewis, c/o In Short, 315 West 102 St., Suite 3B, NY, NY 10025; (212) 655-4155.

IND. FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE, weekly TV series & live monthly screening, seeks student & ind. films/video to give artists exposure. Submit on 1/2" or 3/4" video w/ paragraph about artist & work. Send to: IFVS, 6755 Yucca St. #8, Hollywood, CA 90028. Attn: Jerry Salata; jsalata@Freemark.com

INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE monthly screening program seeks experimental, avant-garde, doc, narrative. Possible monetary remuneration. Submit your films and/or videos on 1/2" or 8mm video. Clearly label tapes with title, length, name, address & phone. Include SASE if you wish tapes returned. Contact: Blackchair Prod., 2318 Second Ave., #313A Seattle, WA 98121; (206) 282-3592; joel@speakeasy.org

INTERNET TELEVISION service is seeking shorts, animation, art film, etc. to be shown in streaming video formats on the Internet. Get your work shown worldwide. Looking for interesting & diverse content to offer our viewers. ISP-TV is world leader in cyber-event production & Internet "broadcasting" arenas. Tapes should be VHS or SVHS. (301) 847-6573; bradp@digex.net or visit website: isptv.digex.net.

KHOU CHANNEL 11, CBS affiliate in Houston, TX, now accepting submissions for upcoming variety program. All broadcast-quality videos, docs, shorts, films, animation, performance, art, sketches, QuickTimes, etc. eligible. All formats welcome. Call (713) 268-1631.

KNITTING FACTORY VIDEO LOUNGE seeks VHS tapes for on-going weekly series of

theme-based screenings. Any genre or subject. Send tape w/ brief bio to: Joanna Spitzner, Box 1220 Canal St. Station, NY, NY, 10012. If tape return desired, include SASE.

LO BUDJIT FILMZ & VIDEOS seeks submissions for VHS or Less, show focusing on camcorder movies. Embarrass old friends, showcase your dusty old tapes. Large bi-coastal audience. Send to: Lo Budjit, 147 Ave A, Box 1R, NY, NY 10009; (212) 533-0866.

MUSIC & COLLEGE VIDEOS WANTED. Producers of new nationally broadcast college-oriented show seek music videos & performance clips of indie bands. Select entries will be broadcast nationally & bands may be invited to perform live for a studio audience. Also seeking submissions relevant to college life &/or student-produced. Contact: Danny Ameri, Burly Bear Network, 201 Summer Street, Stamford, CT 06901; (203) 351-1177.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TELEVISION seeks story proposals from U.S. citizen or permanent resident minority filmmakers for *National Geographic Explorer*, award-winning doc series. To request appl. for CDP (Cultural Diversity Project), call: (202) 862-8637.

NEW BREED FESTIVAL seeks student/ind. shorts (narrative only) for bi-monthly cafe screenings in Lambertville, NJ & on NJ & PA public access. Send 1/2" VHS + info w/ SASE to: New Breed, 217 N. Union St., Lambertville, NJ 08530.

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS series broadcasting selected works statewide on public TV, seeks works of any genre (except corporate/instructional) produced by ind. artists currently residing in NC. Modest monetary compensation & telecast filmmaker interview of artist for works selected. Entry fee: \$15 for individuals, \$5 for students & NC Media Arts Alliance members; separate fee for each submission. Contact: Ellen Walters, NC Visions, Broadcasting/Cinema Program, 100 Carmichael Bldg., UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412-5001; (910) 334-5360; fax: 334-5039; ncvision@hamlet.uncg.edu

NORTH CAROLINA VISIONS series calls for entries. No entry fee. Contact: Anita Harris Alexander, NC Visions, Fayetteville/Cumberland Arts Council, Box 318, Fayetteville, NC 28302; (910) 323-1776; fax: 323-1727; artscncl@foto.infi.net.

OCULARIS: New screening room seeks 16mm shorts for regular screenings in East Village/Williamsburg area of NYC, particularly by local filmmakers. Call or send SASE for info: Ocularis, 91 N. 4th St., #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-8713.

PINK PONY seeks video submissions for regular screenings at Lower East Side alternative venue. VHS accepted. Send directly with SASE to: Jane Gang, Pink Pony, 176 Ludlow St., NY NY 10002; (212) 254-5273.

REAL TV looking for dynamic videos: news, weather, sports, bloopers, busts, "caught in the act." Real TV, syndicated, daily video magazine, will showcase compelling videos from around the world—from professionals as well as amateurs who capture video snapshots of life in the '90s. Tapes will not be returned. Contact: Real TV, Hollywood Center

THE STANDBY PROGRAM

A non-profit media arts organization providing access to broadcast quality video post-production services for artists & independent producers at drastically discounted rates.

— Standby also publishes **FELIX, A Journal of Media Arts and Communication.** —

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SAN FRANCISCO POETRY FILM WORKSHOP/LITERARY TELEVISION accepting short poetry or literary films, videos, docs & multimedia pieces for catalog, upcoming poetry festival. To request entry form, contact: SOMAR, 934 Brannan St., 2nd fl., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 552-9261; fax: 552-9271; <http://www.slip.net/~gamuse>

SAUCE GALLERY & MOMENTA ART, two alternative spaces in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, accepting entries for on-going film/video series. Mission is to identify & exhibit compelling new work no longer than 30 min. All formats & genres. Submit in VHS w/ SASE & brief description of work to: Sauce Gallery, 173A North 3rd St., Brooklyn, NY 11211; attn: Lisa Schroeder (718) 486-8992 or Laura Parnes (718) 782-8907.

SHOW YOUR SHORTS, monthly NYC public access program, seeks short films for 1-hr special to air this summer, first Sunday of each month at 4:30 p.m. on Channel 34. For more info & application, write to Catherine DelBuno, Box 987, New York, NY 10011.

TV-1 PRODUCTIONS seeking footage on Cuba for upcoming doc. Every aspect of life in the island welcome. Formats: Hi8, SVHS, 3/4", Beta, DVD, 8mm & 16mm. Tapes returned. Payment neg. Contact: Marcos N. Suarez, 2102 Empire Central, Dallas, TX 75235; (214) 357-2186.

Tyme Tower Entertainment seeks feature-length & short films for Ind. Filmmakers video series. 16mm, 35mm, B/W or color. Send 3/4" or 1/2" VHS copy to: Tyme Tower Entertainment, c/o Tyme Tower Home Video, 810 E. Coliseum Blvd., ste. 107, Fort Wayne, IN 46805-1234; (219) 481-5807.

UNQUOTE TV, 1/2-hr nonprofit program dedicated to exposing new, innovative film & video artists, seeks ind. doc, narrative, exp., performance works under 28 min. Seen on more than 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: Unquote TV, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

VIDEOSPACE AT DECORDOVA MEDIA ARTS ARCHIVE: DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park seeks VHS copies of video art & documentation of performance, installation art & new genres from New England artists for inclusion in new media arts archive. Send for info & guidelines: Videospace at DeCordova, DeCordova Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Rd., Lincoln, MA 01773-2600.

PUBLICATIONS

INTERNATIONAL FILM FINANCING CONFERENCE transcripts now available. Topics discussed by international financiers, commissioning eds. & producers include: Foreign TV as a Source for Funding, Int'l Distributors, Finding US Dollars & How to Pitch Your Idea. Send \$41 to: IFFCON, 360 Ritch St., San Francisco, CA 94107; (415) 281-9777.

MEDIANET: Guide to the Internet for Video & Filmmakers. Available free at <http://www.infi.net/>

~riddle/medianet.html or email: riddle@infi.net

SPECIAL EDITION: A GUIDE TO NETWORK TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY SERIES & SPECIAL NEWS REPORTS, 1980-1989, by UCLA television archivist Dan Einstein, details the production of more than 2,400 news series, special presentations & reports. Contact: UCLA Film & Television Archive, 302 East Melnitz, Box 951323, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

RESOURCES • FUNDS

AVID FEATURE FILM CAMP seeks ind. feature-length projects that need free nonlinear post-production facilities & asst. eds. on Avid Media Composers. Students work as asst. eds. with credit on your feature & attend Avid-authorized classes in exchange for free use of systems during six-week period. Four projects & four alternates selected. Send cover letter with info (script preferred, will accept outlines & treatments) to: Jaime Fowler, AFFC Director, Digital Media Education Center, 5201 SW Westgate Dr., Ste. 210, Portland, OR 97221; (503) 297-2324; fax: 297-2191; affc@dmec.com

BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from ind. producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Reviewed on on-going basis. Contact BFVF for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; bfvf@aol.com

CREATIVE PROJECT GRANTS: Subsidized use of VHS, interformat & 3/4" editing suite for ind. creative projects. Doc, political, propaganda, promotional & comm. projects ineligible. Editor/instructor avail. Video work may be done in combination w/ S-8, Hi8, audio, performance, photography, artists, books, etc. Studio includes Amiga, special effects, A&B roll, transfers, dubbing, etc. Send SASE for guidelines to: The Media Loft, 727 6th Ave., NY, NY 10010; (212) 924-4893.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER provides grants & presentation funds to electronic media/film artists & orgs. Program provides partial assistance; max. amount varies. Presentations must be open to the public; limited-enrollment workshops & publicly supported educ. institutions ineligible. Applications reviewed monthly. Contact: Program Director, ETC, 109 Lower Fairfield Rd., Newark Valley, NY 13811; (607) 687-4341. Also, appls now being accepted for Residency Program at ETC. Program offers artists opportunity to study techniques of video image processing during a 5-day intensive residency. Program open to artists from throughout US & supports all genres that approach video as unique art practice. Deadline: July 15. (607) 687-4341; etc@servtech.com

FILMCORE POSTPRODUCTION FUND FilmCore, org. held accountable for NY Underground Film Festival, now accepting entries for 1998 Postproduction Fund. Grants of \$500-\$2,000 will be awarded to ind. filmmakers seeking to com-

plete projects of any length or genre on video, 16mm, or 35mm. Priority given to works that share NY Underground Festival's subversive, controversial & cutting-edge spirit. Deadline: Oct. 20. Contact: Ed Halter, FilmCore Postproduction Fund, 255 Lafayette St., Ste. 401, NY, NY 10012; (212) 925-3440; fax: 925-3430; festival@nyuff.com.

ILLINOIS ARTS COUNCIL (IAC) SPECIAL ASSISTANCE ARTS PROGRAM: Matching grants of up to \$1,500 avail. to IL artists for specific projects. Activities that may be funded: registration fees; travel to attend conferences/seminars/workshops; consultant fees for resolution of specific artistic problems; exhibits, performances, publications, screenings; materials, supplies, or services. Funds awarded based on quality of work submitted & impact of proposed project on artist's professional development. Appl's must be received at least 8 wks prior to project starting date. Degree students not eligible. (312) 814-6750.

MEDIA ALLIANCE assists NYC artists & nonprofit organizations in using state-of-art equipment, postprod. & prod. facilities at reduced rates. Contact: Media Alliance, c/o WNET, 356 W. 58th St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 560-2919.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS provides grants for development of nat'l public TV broadcast programming by & about indigenous Pacific Islanders. Appl's available from: PIC, 1221 Kapiolani Blvd., #6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814; (808) 591-0059; fax: 591-1114; piccom@elele.peacesat.hawaii.edu

POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION gives financial assistance to artists of recognizable merit & financial need working as mixed-media or installation artists. Grants awarded throughout yr: \$1,000-\$30,000. For guidelines, write: Pollock-Krasner Foundation, 725 Park Ave., NY, NY 10021.

SOROS DOCUMENTARY FUND supports ind. doc. film & video on human rights, freedom of expression, social justice & civil liberties. 2 levels considered: works-in-progress & preproduction seed money. Grant awards for recommended works-in-progress, up to \$50,000, w/ average of \$25,000. Awards for seed funds from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Send proposals to: Diane Weyermann, director of Arts & Cultural Regional Program, Open Society Institute, 888 7th Ave., #3100, NY, NY 10106.

STANDBY PROGRAM provides artists & nonprofits access to broadcast quality video postprod. services at reduced rates. For guidelines & appl. contact: Standby Program, Box 184, NY, NY 10012-0004; (212) 219-0951; fax: 219-0563.

TEACHERS MEDIA CENTER, dedicated to educators interested in video technology as learning tool in the classroom. Latest project is setting up nat'l & int'l video pen pal exchanges; would like to hear from interested schools, individuals, or orgs. Also interested in creating nat'l network of educators interested in any or all aspects of growing multimedia & media literacy movements in education. Contact: Teachers Media Center, 158 122nd St., Rockaway Beach, NY 11694; (718) 634-3823.

The Foundation for Independent Video and Film (FIVF), the educational affiliate of the Association for Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), supports a variety of programs and services for the independent media community, including publication of *The Independent*, operation of the Festival Bureau, seminars and workshops, and an information clearing house. None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

The Center for Arts Criticism, Consolidated Edison Company of New York, John D. and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, National Video Resources, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York Community Trust, New York State Council on the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, and Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:

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Access Media Art Center, New Haven, CT; ACS Network Productions, Washington, DC; Alternate Current, New York, NY; American Civil Liberties Union, New York, NY; American Film Institute, Los Angeles, CA; Ann Arbor Community Access TV, Ann Arbor, MI; Ann Arbor Film Festival, Ann Arbor, MI; Appalshop, Whitesburg, KY; John Armstrong, Brooklyn, NY; The Asia Society, New York, NY; Assemblage, New York, NY; Athens Center for Film & Video, Athens, OH; AVFN International, Inc., Anchorage, AK; Bennu Productions, Yonkers, NY; Benton Foundation, Washington, DC; Black Planet Productions, New York, NY; Blackside, Inc., Boston, MA; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA; Carved Image Productions, New York, NY; Center for Investigative Reporting, San Francisco, CA; Center for New Media, New York, NY; Chicago Video Project, Chicago, IL; Citurna LTDA Film and Video Productions, Bogota, Columbia; Coe Film Associates, New York, NY; Colelli Productions, Columbus, OH; Columbia College, Chicago, IL; Columbus Community Cable Access, Columbus, OH; Command Communications, Rye Brook, NY; Common Voice Films, New York, NY; MHCC Communication Arts, Gresham, OR; Community Television Network, Chicago, IL; Denver Film Society, Denver, CO; State University of New York-Buffalo, Buffalo, NY; Dyke TV, New York, NY; Eclipse Communications, Springfield, MA; Edison-Black Maria Film Festival, Jersey City, NJ; Educational Video Center, New York, NY; Edwards Films, Eagle Bridge, NY; Eximus Company, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Fallout Shelter Productions, Mansfield, OH; The Film Crew, Woodland Hills, CA; Fox Chapel High School, Pittsburgh, PA; Great Lakes Film and Video, Milwaukee, WI; Idaho State University, Pocatello, ID; Image Film Video Center, Atlanta, GA; International Cultural Programming, New York, NY; International Audiochrome, Rye, NY; International Film Seminars, New York, NY; ITVS, St. Paul, MN; The Jewish Museum, New York, NY; Komplex Studio Merdeka, Selangor, Malaysia; KPBS, San Diego, CA; Little City Foundation/Media Arts, Palatine, IL; Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA; Manhattan Neighborhood Network, New York, NY; Media Resource Centre, Adelaide, Australia; Mesilla Valley Film Society, Mesilla, NM; Milestone Entertainment, Irving, TX; Miranda Smith Productions, Boulder, CO; Missoula Community Access, Missoula MT; NAATA, San Francisco, CA; NAMAC, Oakland, CA; National Latino Community Center/KCET, Los Angeles, CA; National Center for Film & Video Preservation, Los Angeles, CA; National Video Resources, New York, NY; Neighborhood Film/Video Project, Philadelphia, PA; Neon, Inc., New York, NY; New Image Productions, Las Vegas, NV; New Liberty Productions, Philadelphia, PA; New York Institute of Technology, Old Westbury, NY; 911 Media Arts Center, Seattle, WA; Ohio Arts Council, Columbus, OH; One Eighty One Productions, New York, NY; Outside in July, New York, NY; Paul Robeson Fund/Funding Exchange, New York, NY; Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA; Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Pittsburgh, PA; Pro Videographers, Morton Grove, IL; Promontory Point Films, Albany, NY; Rainy States Film Festival, Seattle, WA; Merlina Rich, New York, NY; Ross Film Theater, Lincoln, NE; Ross-Gafney, New York, NY; San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA; School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL; Scribe Video Center, Philadelphia, PA; Southwest Alternate Media Project, Houston, TX; Squeaky Wheel, Buffalo, NY; Strato Films, Hollywood, CA; Sundance Institute, Los Angeles, CA; SUNY/Buffalo-Dept. Media Studies, Buffalo, NY; Swiss Institute, New York, NY; Terrace Films, Brooklyn, NY; Trinity Square Video, Toronto, Ontario; Tucson Community Cable Corp., Tucson, AZ; UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles, CA; University of Southern Florida, Tampa, FL; University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ; University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI; UMAB/School of Social Work Media Center, Baltimore, MD; University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE; University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI; Vancouver Film School, Vancouver, British Columbia; Veritas International, Elsau, IL; Video Data Bank, Chicago, IL; Video Pool, Winnipeg, Manitoba; View Video, New York, NY; West Hollywood Public Access, West Hollywood, CA; Wexner Center, Columbus, OH; Women Make Movies, New York, NY; WTTW/Chicago, Chicago, IL; York University Libraries, North York, Ontario; Zeitgeist Film, NY, NY.



STAFF UPDATES

A fond farewell goes to **Dana Harris**, former managing editor of *The Independent*, who is taking up residence in L.A. at the *Hollywood Reporter*. We wish her luck in her new city and new job. Congratulations are in order for **Ryan Deussing**, our former assistant editor who was promoted to managing editor. We would also like to take this time to welcome **Laoise MacReamonn**, our new editorial assistant.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

It's time to think about nominations for the AIVF board of directors. Board members are elected to a three-year term; the board gathers four times per year in NYC for weekend meetings (AIVF pays travel costs). We have an active board; members must be prepared to set aside time to fulfill board responsibilities, which include:

- Attendance at all board meetings and participation in conference calls when necessary;
- Preparation for meetings by reading advance materials;
- Active participation in one or more committees as determined by organization's needs and as requested by board chair or executive director; fulfillment of commitments within agreed-upon guidelines;
- General support of executive director and staff.

Board nominations must be made by current AIVF members in good standing; you may nominate yourself. Board members must be at least 19 years old. To make a nomination mail or fax the name, address, and telephone number of the nominee and nominator (AIVF fax: 212/463-8519); we cannot accept nominations over the phone. Nominations should be sent to the attention of Leslie Fields. *The nomination period ends Sept. 19, 1997.*

MEET & GREETS

These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. *Free; open to AIVF members only.* Limited to 20 participants. RSVP required: (212) 807-1400 x 301. Please leave name and phone number, and specify event.

ED HALTER

Programmer, New York Underground Film Festival
Halter has programmed the NY Underground Film Festival since 1996. He was formerly the programming assistant at the San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival. He currently oversees

FilmCore, the Underground Festival's year-round presenting organization.

Tuesday, July 15, 6:30 pm

TRADE DISCOUNT UPDATES

Aries Post

1680 Vine St., Suite 216, Hollywood, CA 90028; (213) 463-6296. Contact: Kevin Glover

10% discount off rate card for all postproduction services; including Beta SP, Hi8, 3/4, video, SVHS, and DVC to BetaSP analog A/B editing and Avide nonlinear suite.

Filmmaker's Collaborative

29 Greene St., NYC, 10013; (212) 966-3030. Contact: Claire Davis.

10% discount on all office space rentals, short term and long term agreements available. Facility also has a conference/screening room, Avid systems & roof deck.

NOT RECEIVING YOUR INDEPENDENT?

If you have any problems receiving *The Independent* or questions regarding your AIVF membership, please call **Brent Renaud**, (212) 807-1400 x 236.

HOW TO START AN AIVF SALON

I have received a number of inquiries from AIVF members looking for salons in their area. If there isn't one in their vicinity, I always tell them that all of the AIVF salons were started by members who wanted to connect with local members. If you're interested in starting a salon in your city, please use the following guidelines:

- 1) Find a centrally located space that you can use for free for the next three to four months. The space can change as the salon builds membership, but until then, stick with one place. The type of space can vary depending on the salon's needs.
- 2) Once you have found a space and have set a date and time, then mail, fax, or email a flyer with the information to AIVF's main office and we'll do a special mailing to AIVF members in the area announcing the salon gathering. Make sure that you also advertise within the community at universities, colleges, and art and media centers. We want to encourage AIVF as well as non-AIVF members to attend the salons.

At the New York office we provide on-going support by placing announcements in this section of *The Independent* to advertise special salon events, and by sending quarterly copies of the *Salonista* newsletter, the communication organ for AIVF salons, to each salon.

If you intend on starting a salon, please speak with one of the other salon organizers listed below. If you have any other questions and/or concerns, contact Leslie Fields at (212) 807-1400 x222; fax: 463-8519; email: membership@aivf.com. Good luck!

MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. *Note: Since our copy deadline is two months before*

the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.

Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.

Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie St.

Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time

Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.

Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Cleveland, OH

Call for date and location.

Contact: Annetta Marion, (216) 781-1755

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver/Boulder, CO

When: Thursday, June 26, 8 p.m.

Where: Kakes Studios, 2115 Pearl St., Boulder

Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125 or John Stone (303) 442-8445.

Houston, TX:

When: Last Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Call for locations.

Contact: Houston Film Commission Hotline. (713) 227-1407

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.

Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

Norwalk, CT:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

Sacramento, CA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.

Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

Call for dates and times.

Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW

Contact: DC Salon hotline, (202) 554-3263 x4.

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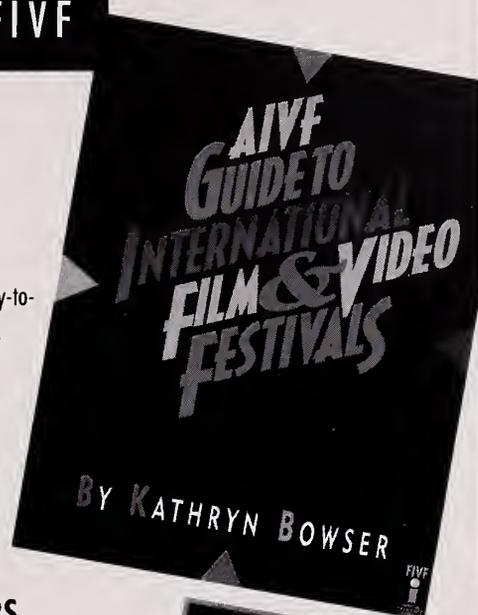
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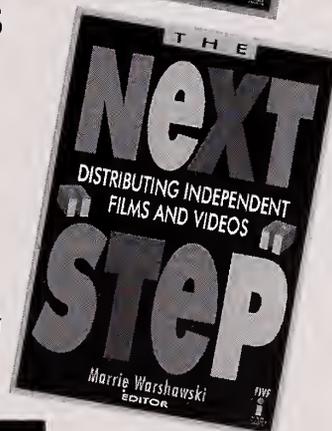
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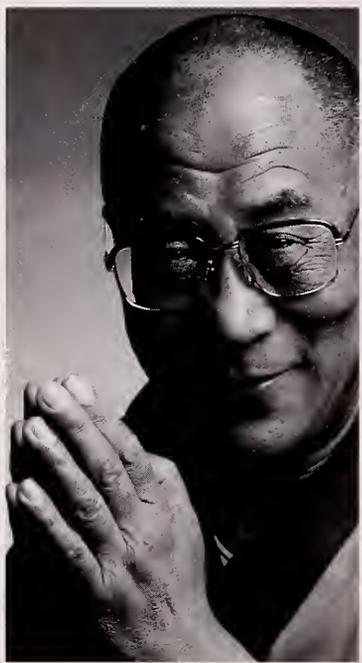
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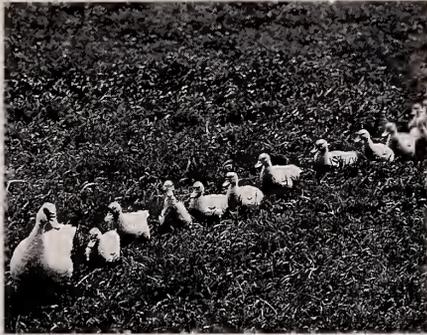
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Cover: Hope Davis bellies up to the bar in Brad Anderson's *Next Stop Wonderful*. In this issue, writer/director/editor Anderson shares his experiences inside the editing suite.

Photo: Claire Folger, courtesy Robbins Entertainment.

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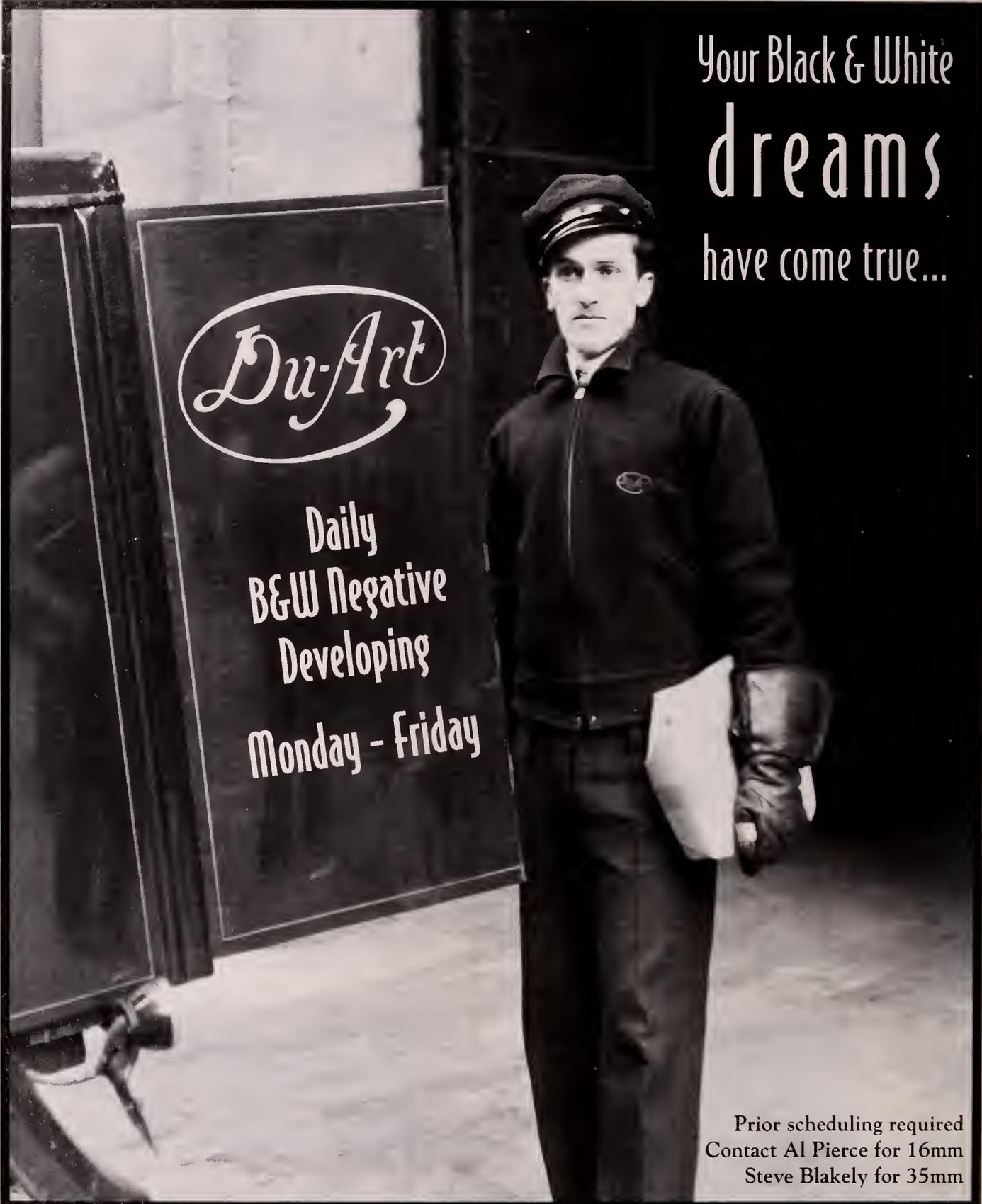
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BELTWAY BARGAINING

NEA Bills Offer Contrasting Fates



BY MARK J. HUISMAN

UNDER STEADY FIRE FROM OPPONENTS ACCUSING IT OF EVERYTHING FROM mismanagement to elitism, the National Endowment for the Arts slugged through the final round of Congressional hearings over its Fiscal Year 1998 budget during late April and May. At press time, with floor debate yet to come, the battle over whether the NEA stays alive and funded still raged.

Recent Congressional Action

The Interior Appropriations Subcommittee held its NEA budget hearing on April 24. Every senator in attendance, from both parties, spoke in support of the agency. Chairman Slade Gorton (R-WA) told *The Independent* he expects NEA funding to continue, but not beyond its current \$99.5 million. (The President requested \$136 million.) On April 29, NEA Chairperson Jane Alexander testified before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources in support of reauthorizing legislation to be introduced by committee chair James Jeffords (R-VT). The NEA's authorizing legislation, which expired three years ago, formally allows it to receive federal funds. In recent years, the agency has received funding without authorizing legislation [see "The NEA is Dead! Long Live the NEA," June 1997]. Opponents have vowed not to let this happen again.

Alexander focused on themes she has used throughout this process: showcasing grants and statistics demonstrating the NEA is making art accessible to more Americans; noting the significant changes—some mandated by Congress, others instituted at her direction—that have tightened granting processes, requirements, and reviews; pointing out recent research that backs the importance of arts education. But Sen. Tim Hutchinson (R-



NEA Chair Jane Alexander has been sparring with senators to keep the endowment alive. Courtesy: NEA

AR) was not convinced by some of Alexander's statements, and he let her know.

"This hearing is supposed to be about education and underserved communities," Hutchinson said. "So can you explain to me how a rural state like Arkansas only received one NEA grant even though it submitted twelve applications?" Alexander said programs like PBS's *Great Performances* series are broadcast nationally and pointed out that some states receive more grants because their concentration of artists is higher.

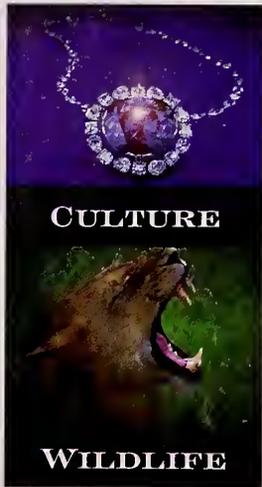
"I don't appreciate that characterization of my state," Hutchinson shot back, while NEA stalwarts like Jeffords and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) looked on. "One-third of Congressional

districts fail to get any direct funds and one-third of your direct grants go to six big cities." The exchange quickly devolved into a divisive debate. Hutchinson said the NEA was a tiny part of federal support for the arts (counting tax-deductions for charitable contributions); Alexander said the NEA provided half the arts budgets of numerous small states. Hutchinson's figures showed box office receipts and individual giving increasing; Alexander's showed them decreasing. Hutchinson accused Alexander of lax management and bloated administration; recounting budget cuts and layoffs, Alexander agreed to an outside audit.

Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT), who made his statements unarmed with charts or numbers, said he will introduce legislation that would provide permanent funding for the NEA and NEH. The Senate is currently considering the Copyright Extension Act, intended to automatically extend existing copyrights. Dodd would instead auction the copyrights, funding the endowments with the proceeds. Although opposition to such a plan would be certain from artists' estates and heirs accustomed to royalty payments, Dodd's plan would appease those parties by allowing them a percentage of auction proceeds. "What we need is a permanent revenue stream to fully fund these agencies," Dodd said. "What we have now are paltry sums, not endowments."

Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), chairman of the

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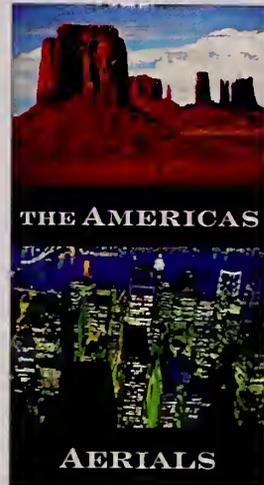


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Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, held a joint hearing with Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA), chairman of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families, which has jurisdiction over NEA reauthorizing legislation in the House. (Both subcommittees fall under the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, chaired by Rep. William Goodling (R-PA), who has publicly opposed such legislation.) Hoekstra conducted an intensive, four-month investigation of NEA grantees that he says

was needed to determine if funding the endowment is an appropriate federal role, if the NEA operates effectively and efficiently, and if the NEA is operating in accordance with Congressional intent. Hoekstra believes that, for reasons similar to those cited by Hutchinson, the answer to all three questions is "no."

The only notable development was an exchange between Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-TX) and William Castle (R-DE), who was present when the Republicans' intra-party agreement to de-fund the NEA was made several years ago. Castle said the agreement was supposed to be codified into law but, because that never happened, the deal is "null and void." Armey, however, said that zeroing out the NEA "would be good for the arts and freedom in the arts."

Future Congressional Action and Status of Legislation

Three bills aim to abolish the NEA: Rep. Phil Crane's (R-IL) the Privatization of Art Act (H.R.-122) and Sen. Jesse Helms's (R-NC) the NEA Termination Act (S-48); Helms is also sponsoring Crane's bill in the Senate (S-195). The last bill has been referred to Jeffords's committee, where it will probably die. Helms could, however, attempt to attach the bill to another as an amendment.

Joe Karpinsky, a spokesperson for the Senate Labor Committee, said Jeffords

"What we need is a permanent revenue stream to fully fund these agencies,"

Dodd said.

"What we have now are paltry sums, not endowments."

Armey, however, said that

zeroing out the NEA

"would be good for the arts and freedom in the arts."

containing NEA funding, which the Senate will act upon only after the House.

At press time, the only certainty about the House was that floor debate about the NEA would be extremely contentious. Committee chairmen, including Goodling and Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-NY) of the Rules Committee, are still aligned against the NEA, and Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), the chairman of the NEA's appropriations subcommittee, has publicly stated he will recommend the agency get nothing. NEA staffers maintain they have the votes to stay alive and funded; NEA opponents say they have the votes to kill the agency. Neither side will really know until the various bills come up for debate.

Has the NEA Abandoned Media?

"I'm very concerned about independent film and video," Alexander told *The Independent* (which recently received \$35,000 from the NEA through its publisher, FIVF) after a recent Senate hearing (and after receiving a letter from AIVF/FIVF executive director Ruby Lerner expressing concern that the independent media field has been especially hard hit by the NEA's cutbacks). "It costs so much to make a film, it takes so much time. It's easy to throw up your hands in despair...and just spend your life doing something you don't really love." Alexander says the agency will continue to support film and video projects. "We're going to pull together a 'think tank,' if you will. I'm inviting a small number of film and video pro-

would introduce his NEA reauthorization bill after Memorial Day. A similar bill last year was not enacted; prospects this year are uncertain. Also expected over the summer was a bill by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX) to merge the NEA and NEH. This bill, which contains language intended to prevent the funding of "obscene" art, was also introduced last year and did not pass. Although NEA supporters hope the Senate passes reauthorizing legislation, it is thought much more likely to approve a spending bill

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professionals to talk and find ways to be supportive of these artists."

Whether Alexander's statements will relieve filmmakers and nonprofit organizations is uncertain. While some see the NEA's situation as the inevitable result of partisan politics, many artists and institutions increasingly feel abandoned by the NEA. They think Alexander could have fought harder against Congress's 1996 elimination of individual artists and seasonal support grants and were doubly concerned when Alexander made changes not mandated by Congress, like limiting organizations to one application and ending fiscal sponsorship granting. Dominic Angerame of the nonprofit distribution company Canyon Cinema thinks his organization is caught in the squeeze.

"The NEA is receiving pressure from Congressional leaders," says Angerame, whose organization is appealing the rejection of one recent grant application. "I think this has caused the NEA to look at organizations in a way they have not before to be able to deny them funding."

"That's absolutely not true," says NEA spokesperson Cherie Simon. Asked if the sequence of events did not look suspicious, Simon said, "There are dozens of organizations Pete Hoekstra looked into. There are plenty of organizations receiving NEA funds that he's not happy about. That's too bad. We do not make grant decisions for political reasons." But the circumstances surrounding the Canyon grant is strange at best.

Last December, the NEA listed a \$15,000 grant to Canyon in a press release and sent them a preliminary award letter in early January. On March 15, with the Congressional hearing cycle just underway, a *New York Times* reporter phoned Angerame and said the organization was being attacked. Angerame called the NEA and was told the grant was in jeopardy. On March 17, Hoekstra wrote Alexander requesting information on Canyon. On March 28, the NEA Deputy Chairman Scott Sanders wrote Angerame that Canyon's grant had been denied. Only days later, on April 1, Alexander answered Hoekstra's letter, saying she had personally rejected Canyon's grant, because, "NEA has a long-standing policy of precluding grants for projects...where the selection or inclusion of work is based upon criteria other than artistic excellence. As a membership cooperative, Canyon Cinema's policy is to include material in the catalogue solely on the basis of payment of a membership fee, irre-

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spective of quality." Simon said the NEA considered Canyon's catalogue a "vanity press" and that the agency had long denied funding to such projects.

"We have standards," Angerame insists. "We had no reason to think this grant was in trouble." Canyon has had a curatorial review policy since April 1996, which was instituted over concern about snuff films and outright pornography, but Angerame says the NEA never asked if they did, even in their preliminary award letter. "We're on the same side as the NEA," he says, a touch of frustration in his voice. "But we don't want to see their policies dictated by Congressional leaders who want to determine what an artist is and what arts organizations are supposed to be."

Simon would not comment on the potential outcome of Canyon's appeal, but pointed out that the NEA gave \$6 million, 12 percent of its total, to film and video arts in 1997. (The other three major disciplines, theater, museums, and music, each receive 14 percent.) Simon also downplayed rumors that began after NEH Chairman Sheldon Hackney resigned this spring that Alexander herself would throw in the towel. "The chair will definitely finish her term, which expires at the end of October," Simon said. "She hasn't decided, beyond that, whether or not she would stay on if asked. She's had more pressing matters on her mind."

Aside from the Congressional battle, one such subject has been finding more sources of financing for the NEA, a prospect hampered by the fact that it is illegal for federal employees to solicit funds on the government's behalf. Nonetheless, Alexander welcomes ideas like Dodd's and says the NEA's Office of Enterprise Development continues to look for alternative revenue streams. And Alexander is eager to reassure artists about her commitment to the fight. "I've tried very hard to defend this agency and what it does," she says. "Regrettably, we've been forced by Congress to accept some limitations that artists are bound to view as compromising. We can only continue to fund artists within our means and rise to the challenge of finding increasingly inventive, effective ways to do that."

Mark J. Huisman is a New York-based writer and independent producer.

For current information on the NEA's fight for survival and what you can do, see the Advocacy section of AIVF's Web site: www.aivf.org

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DR. STREAM LOVE

Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Web

BY DAVID COLEMAN

THE DIGITAL AGE HAS GIVEN US THE CD, BUT that doesn't mean you can't continue to hoard audio cassettes, vinyl LPs, or even 8-tracks—if you can find something that still plays them. In fact, the speed and breadth of the digital revolution is capable of inspiring a sort of retro



fetish among consumers, so that an archaic record collection can be not just a testament to musical taste, but to style (sorry, but the same is not true for shelves of Beta videos).

Now observe the latest breakthrough on the digital scene, streaming video, which seems at once to be a great stride toward the future of electronic media and a giant step backwards, reminiscent of a technological primitivism roughly comparable to the initial efforts of Alexander Graham Bell when he rang for his assistant with the words, "Come quickly, Dr. Watson—I need you!"

Though online video promises to develop swiftly and has everyone from Hollywood to New York's Silicon Alley excited, the streaming-video on the Web now is little more than a fuzzy, flickering slide show. And though streaming-audio technology is somewhat advanced, streamed "soundtracks" don't sound any better than AM radio. Still, video-streaming has come a long distance in a short time. Whereas less than a year ago you could spend half an hour downloading a video clip that could only be viewed with another application (which could easily take another half hour to download), today you can view video as quick-

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ly as your Internet connection can deliver it to your Web browser. More impressive yet, the various codec schemes (short for compression/decompression), which squash massive amounts of binary data into manageable "packets," continue to evolve at breathtaking speed, promising future breakthroughs that should make what doubtless piques the interest of independent filmmakers—the potential to transmit their work online—an everyday reality. But beware that word: promise. Current technology, despite the hype, delivers crude video images that resemble flip-book animation. Still, with an eye towards the possibilities, here is an introduction to what may one day be the best opportunity for underexposed indie filmmakers to gain an audience for their work.

To view streaming-video on the Web, you'll need to download and install an appropriate plug-in, and it seems there are as many different software plug-ins as there are used cars at

your average auto dealership. What is a plug-in, you ask? No, it's not something you add to the already confusing mess of wires protruding from the rear of your computer; rather, it's the actual software application that is "plugged in" to your browser. The good news is that all of the companies mentioned in this article offer free versions of their software for you to try. The bad news is that some are so time-consuming to set up on your system you'll likely question whether the streaming-video experience is worth the wait.

Of all the systems currently on the market, Progressive Networks's [www.real.com] Real-Player was the best video-streaming application tested for a variety of reasons. Progressive Networks made its mark in Internet history by marketing RealAudio, the first successfully distributed and near universally accepted audio streaming plug-in, still widely in use. To give you a preview of how

far streaming-video might come in the near future, RealAudio players actually function quite well and transmit AM radio—quality voice and music files. Many large corporations, such as PBS, Time/Warner, NPR, and CNN, have sites with RealAudio files featuring excerpts from earlier broadcasts, upcoming music releases, etc. It's a relatively safe bet to assume that Progressive Networks's RealPlayer (which streams audio and video in synch) will become the dominant vehicle for streaming-video in the future. Sadly, its current beta version seems flawed when used in conjunction with a standard 28.8Kbps modem, which delivers the video files at a server-speed rate of .25 frames-per-second (they call it "music video rate" because it "emphasizes" audio). And no, that's not a typo. That's .25 fps, whereas the rate of even the crummiest videotape is 30 fps. And .25 fps is the rate at which the server streams a video file—the rate at which your computer receives files is ultimately dependent upon the status of your connection, which will seldom offer perfect throughput.

For those lucky users who have high-speed connections (probably via ISDN or T-1 lines at work), the news is much better. Viewing files with a high-speed modem will result in a more watchable 15 fps (half the speed of a VHS tape). But keep in mind, a low frame-rate doesn't slow down the action; rather, it drops out frames and simply advances to the next frame to create the "illusion" of persistence of vision. Though the quality of these images is hardly an improvement on the nickelodeon, just remember what those modest machines evolved into with time and money: your local multiplex.

With such growth in mind, Progressive Networks has begun aiming its marketing at filmmakers. Spike Lee got the ball rolling when he created three short videos especially for the RealPlayer plug-in.

Some of the other plug-ins available include VDOnet's [www.vdo.net] VDOLive plug-in, as well as Vivo Software's [www.vivo.com] VivoActive and Xing Technology's [www.xingtech.com] Stream-Works. All fail to measure up to the RealPlayer in terms of versatility and performance, and—like RealPlayer—all deliver a less-than-thrilling video image. However, each also has relative strengths worth noting. For example, VDOLive's personal streaming solution, which offers you the ability to install streaming-video on your own Web site, is completely free. Given the quality of all available

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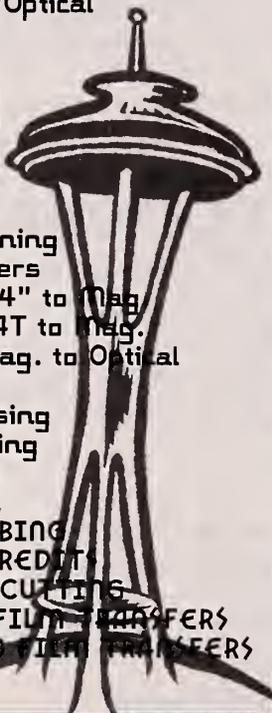
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Spike Lee's experiments with streaming-video, in a promotion for Progressive Networks' RealPlayer

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plug-ins, it may come as a shock to the average, underfunded independent filmmaker that these companies actually want to pay you to see your carefully composed works of art mutilated as they're squeezed through the Internet. You better believe it, however. The Xing StreamWorks server software, for example, costs anywhere from \$795 to \$14,950, depending on the number of streams you require (for example, four streams would allow four simultaneous connections to be made).

There's another "hidden" cost involved in streaming-video that applies to all tested plug-ins: having your Web server administrator install additional software. In a nutshell, your Webmaster needs to install and configure the software you purchase that actually tells the video how to be sent to your browser. Here again RealPlayer has the advantage because of their widely-accepted market dominance; most commercial servers already have the protocols installed and ready to use for you. All you will need to do if you use their streamer is correctly file-transfer-protocol your saved files into your server. Of course, you can purchase the other

streaming software mentioned herein if you prefer, but the odds are you will then have to pay your Webmaster an additional fee to install it on their server. A warning note: make sure you check with your Webmaster before you make your video-streaming purchase, as some software packages will not work properly with

all servers.

Another plus for both RealPlayer and VivoActive: they offer relatively simple "embed" style HTML coding, which means any indie filmmaker who currently designs and maintains his or her own Web site can probably handle the relatively simple coding necessary to stream video right off their pages.

Before you can start to stream video, you've got to have a way to digitize the video you want to serve. There are numerous ways of doing this—a good primer is the file called "Producing High Quality Video" on the Progressive Networks Web site [see list for address].

One might make the mistake of dismissing streaming-video as nothing more than a CB radio craze for the nineties. However, a more likely forerunner is actually the medium with which the Web seems destined to compete:

television. Don't forget that the initial, fuzzy broadcasts of early television were relegated to major metropolitan areas and deemed inferior to radio as a communication

medium. At the rate technology is advancing, it seems the Web has the potential to revolutionize the concept of independence in filmmaking as much as the introduction of 16mm and portable video recorders did in their day.

Furthermore, because high-speed fiber



optic and wireless networks will only shrink the transmission time and increase the picture clarity of streaming-video, and because digital technology is becoming more and more affordable, we're looking at a whole new approach to the one part of independent filmmaking that has always been the trickiest: distribution.

With more and more filmmakers looking at digital technology as an ally instead of an imperceptible evil, the future of digital media seems bright. One thing is for certain: somewhere amongst the thousands of hackers currently creating original Web content lurk the auteurs of an entirely new medium. Or perhaps hundreds of them, each able to connect with his or her own worldwide micro audience, generating enough interest and revenue to keep their independence of vision alive.

David Coleman (david@kudzunet.com) runs a new media Web site development company.

A Streaming-Video Sampler

The following are several sites that made use of streaming-video:

Timecast [www.timecast.com] is Progressive Networks's comprehensive guide to sites offering RealAudio and RealVideo.

WebActive [www.webactive.com], another Progressive Networks project, is a weekly publication covering activism and progressive politics on the Internet.

AFI OnLine [www.afionline.org] features classic shorts and animation on the Web site of the American Film Institute.

International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam [www.dds.nl/~damocles/idfa] has a Web site with festival info and filmclips.

Free Speech TV [www.freespeech.org] netcasts at least four hours of community-based, activist, progressive videos weekly.

New York Film/Video Council [www.yrd.com/NYFVC] is the oldest continuously operating nonprofit organization serving the nontheatrical and independent film/video community in New York City.

SEC Nixes On-Line Investment Offerings

GIVEN THE FACT THAT MEDIAMAKERS OFTEN possess in ingenuity what they lack in funds, it was inevitable that producers would turn to the Internet to attract publicity and financing for their projects. The advantages of the Internet

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for mediamakers are obvious: access to a global audience and potential investment pool at nearly no cost. The perils of their Internet use are less obvious.

In April, Destiny Pictures [www.indiepic.com], an independent production company, offered shares via the Internet in its upcoming film project, *Intimate Stranger*, resulting in approximately 200 people sending \$100 each to capitalize the \$200,000 film. However, Destiny Pictures came under investigation by the New York and California securities divisions since the production company had not complied with the states' securities or "Blue Sky" laws. Destiny Pictures ultimately had to stop their Internet offering and refund their investors' money.

Anyone who is offering shares or interests in a company or project generally must comply with securities laws on both the federal level with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) [www.sec.com/sec/sec.html] and the state level where any investor or potential investor might be located. Those who offer securities must file for registration or an exemption from registration for securities on the federal and state levels. A solicitation of possible investors via the Internet could constitute an interstate offering, thereby requiring compliance with both federal securities laws as well as the securities regulations of every state in the U.S., since the Internet reaches all 50 states. Some states and the SEC, in fact, forbid the advertisement of securities offerings unless an issuer complies with the appropriate laws.

Some producers have adopted certain strategies to circumvent securities laws, such as by placing "disclaimers" on the Web sites, indicating that these sites do not constitute an offering. But these mediamakers may still encounter inquiries from the SEC and state securities divisions,⁰ which may deem such notices as vague and inadequate protection for potential investors.

In addition, producers who form off-shore production entities in the mistaken belief that they can bypass securities laws should understand that such laws are based generally on the location of potential investors.

To avoid these difficulties, mediamakers must learn to distinguish between using the Internet to promote and provide general (i.e., non-investment) information about their projects and openly stating investment terms in an attempt to solicit investors. One enterprising company, Surfview Entertainment [[Netscape: Splash page for "Indie", a si
Location: <http://www.indiepic.com/html/body1.html>](http://www.sur-</p></div>
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A Short Message from the Site Director

by Daniel Reyes

April 26, 1997



FuseOne, the parent company of indiepic has suspended any attempt to sell shares to the Film "Intimate Stranger" through the internet. Company officials are currently restructuring the participation arrangement and a new system will be in place within 2 weeks.

We eagerly await the new system as interest in the film financing system throughout the film community has been high.

view.com], created a Web site where producers can post information about their projects for a fee of \$10 per month. Interested investors then can request any producer's business plan and investment information. (Producers still must comply with federal and state securities laws regarding whom producers send information, but the scope of such legal compliance is less than an open, online solicitation for investors.)

To ensure a project's legitimacy, Surfview requires that a project involve an established entertainment member (e.g., participation by a celebrity or entertainment guild member, a film festival award recipient, or one who is recommended by a film school or organization). Recently posted Surfview projects have involved such figures as Aretha Franklin and Ice-T.

Mediamakers also can access the site created by Web Cinema [www.Webcinema.org], a non-profit, New York-based organization that provides information to over 1,000 filmmakers and industry observers who are interested in how the Internet can be incorporated into media-making.

Finally, there is the Hollywood Stock Exchange [www.hsx.com], a group comprising former Wall Street investors and producers, which plans to finance a slate of films through on-line offers. However, according to Hollywood Stock Exchange co-founder Michael Burns in a recent *Weekly Variety* article, the company shall comply with the necessary federal and state securities laws and engage the services of experienced investment institutions and securities laws counsel.

ROBERT L. SEIGEL

Robert L. Seigel is a NYC entertainment attorney and a principal in the Cinema Film Consulting firm.

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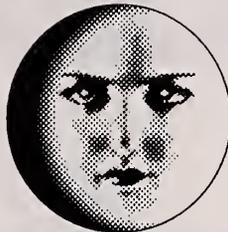
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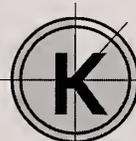
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Who are you?

Northern Arts consists of John Lawrence Ré, CEO, formerly an attorney at the Environmental Protection Agency and independent filmmaker; David Mazor, President/COO, formerly president of ASA Communications, a music film distributor; Michael Hill, Director of Development, former Creative Director at Mirage Studios and freelance scriptwriter; and Andrew Weeks, Director of Foreign Acquisitions, formerly an independent producer and scriptwriter.

Where are you located?

We're based in Williamsburg, Massachusetts.

Why there, and where is that exactly?

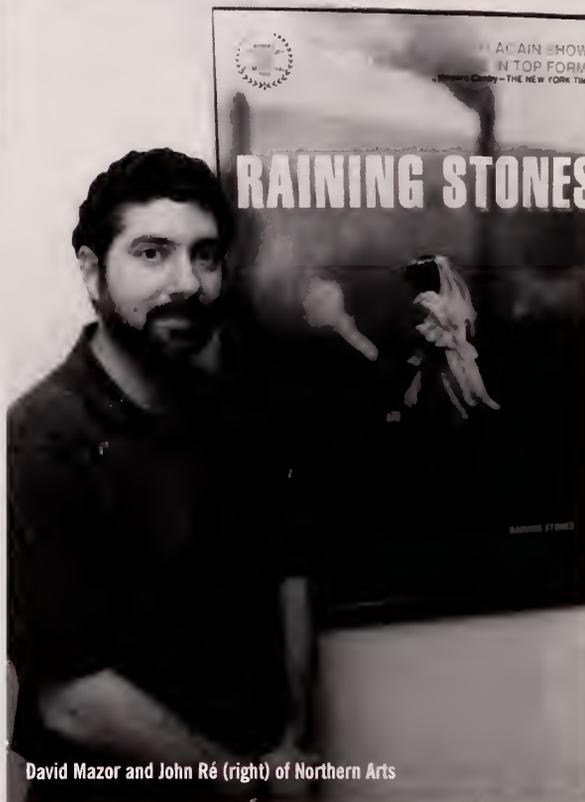
Williamsburg is a picturesque village nestled in the Berkshire Mountains. Only two hours from Boston and three hours from New York City, it's really a world away from the mean streets of the metropolis. We do have satellite offices in New York and Los Angeles, too. But from the beginning, it was one of our goals to be in a place that would allow a great quality of life—for both ourselves and our employees. It's a pastoral setting and we enjoy looking out our windows at the local farm's cows drinking from the Mill River at the side of our studio. Much better than looking out of some office tower and seeing our *doppelgangers* looking back at us.

How did Northern Arts come about?

John and I (David Mazor) got together in 1990, shortly after John had produced a brilliant film called *Dominoes: Portrait of a Decade about the Vietnam War Years in America*. We both felt there was a need for a distributor that handled cutting-edge films. It seemed to us that everyone at that time was focused on English costume dramas and nobody was handling edgier films like *Tokyo Decadence* and *Stepping Razor—Red X*. So we started a company that could.

Unofficial motto?

If we don't love your film, we're not going to distribute it.



David Mazor and John Ré (right) of Northern Arts

broadcast sales.

Best known title in the collection?

I am proud to say that it's *Wallace & Gromit: The Best of Aardman Animation*.

Least known title in collection?

Jit, by Michael Raeburn, a great comedy from Zimbabwe about a young kid trying to beat out the local gangster to impress a girl. It's filled with tons of Afro-pop music—a terrific soundtrack. It's done really well on video, but despite some really strong reviews it didn't do that well theatrically. But people who have seen it love it.

What are some of your U.S. indie titles?

Schizopolis, *Gray's Anatomy*, *Drunks, I Just Wasn't Made for These Times*, *Chameleon Street*, *Notes from Underground*, *Dirty Money*, *Darien Gap*, *Dead Beat*, *The Search for One-Eyed*

What distinguishes you from other distributors?

We will never give up on a film. As long as somebody wants to see it, we'll get it out there any way we can.

How many works are in your collection?

34 to date.

What types of works do you handle?

Mostly we deal with feature-length films—both fiction and documentary. However, that is not to say that we're actively looking for a particular genre or style. We look for great and interesting films. Period.

Do you consider shorts for larger packages?

Certainly. But I should point out that we look at shorts primarily for animation and lesbian-themed compilations.

Do you distribute to the home video market in addition to theatrical and semi-theatrical?

It depends on the picture. Sometimes it's better to have someone else do the video release. We do handle a lot of

Jimmy, and *November Men*. We also have a lot of imports, including *Tokyo Decadence*, *Mimbo—Or the Gentle Art of Japanese Extortion*, *Hedd Wyn*, *Stepping*



Razor-Red X, Temptation of a Monk, Angel Dust, and Midaq Alley.

Where do your titles show?

We concentrate on art house/specialty films, the majority of which show at art and rep houses across the country—from the Crystal Theater in Missoula, Montana, to the major art houses in New York and L.A. We're big supporters of independently owned theaters because they work hand-in-hand to support independent films. But, of course, if we can go wider and still maintain quality presentation, we're happy with that, too. It all depends on the film.

In a perfect world, where do you want your films to play?

In every theater of every city, town, and hamlet in America.

And until then?

We make sure that people who might have an interest in our films—including those in smaller markets—get a chance to see them.

You'll know Northern Arts has made it as a business when...

We start receiving more phone calls than we make.

What's your basic approach to launching a title?

Press screenings, press screenings, and more press screenings. We pitch to feature writers the "hooks" of our films—whether that's the marquee value of the actors involved or the director's previous works.

How do you decide which titles to acquire?

Usually by consensus—unless, of course, one of us feels so passionately about a film that he won't leave the rest of us alone until we acquire it.

Where do you find your titles, and how should filmmakers approach you for consideration?

We attend all of the major U.S. and European festivals

that showcase independent films: Sundance, Montreal, Toronto, Slamdance, Cannes, the Independent Feature Film Market, San Francisco, Seattle, Palm Springs, the Hamptons, Boston, Block Island, Palm Beach. And we look at everything that filmmakers submit to us directly.

What's the general range of production budgets of the works you distribute?

Between \$35,000 and \$2 million.

And the general range of your P&A budgets for a title or package?

Between \$50,000 and \$750,000.

How do film bookers and programmers find out about your titles?

We're on the phone night and day. The telephone is the distributor's best friend.

Any words of advice to indie filmmakers?

Please, please, please, *do not* remake something you saw last week. Develop your own vision.

Any words of advice to anyone thinking of starting a distribution company for independent film?

If you're a filmmaker and want to make films, *do not*, I repeat, *do not*, go into distribution. You'll spend years working on collecting the money from your last film when you should be preparing to shoot your next one.

As a company are you involved in co-productions or any form of actual production?

Absolutely. We're always pro-actively looking for co-productions. Right now we're co-producing a documentary on Cannes's 50th anniversary festival.

Hands down favorite film of all time?

Dr. Strangelove—as near a perfect film as I've ever seen.

What would be your dream film to distribute?

The Harder They Come, with reggae great Jimmy Cliff. Because no major studio would have a clue to what to do with it.

Upcoming releases?

Withnail and I, by Bruce Robinson, as a re-release; *Midaq Alley*, by Jorge Fons, featuring Salma Hayek; and a basketball doc called *Soul in the Hole*, by Lilibet Foster and Danielle Gardner.

Famous last words:

Go see a movie, preferably one of ours.

Distributor F.A.Q. is new monthly column conducted by fax questionnaire profiling a wide range of distributors of independent film and video. If you are a distributor and want to be profiled or are a maker and want to find out more about a particular distributor, contact Lissa Gibbs c/o *The Independent*, 304 Hudson St., 6th fl., NY, NY 10013, or drop an email to: lissa@sirius.com

Lissa Gibbs is a Bay Area-based media savant and former Film Arts Foundation Fest director.

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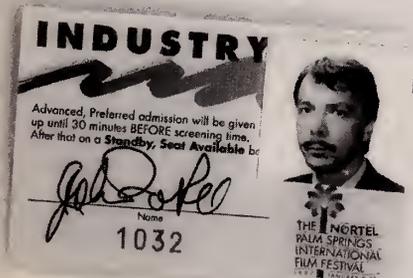
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SCREENPLAYS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Best Festivals Competitions, and Conferences for Film Scribes

BY BEN ZACKHEIM

FOR YEARS NOW, FILM FESTIVALS HAVE GIVEN the industry a forum for recruiting new talent. But "talent" usually means directors. Writers have remained wistful wallflowers at these events. Wouldn't it be wonderful, many have privately pondered, if screenwriters had a forum of their own? Yet the idea of a festival highlighting stacks of 8-1/2 x 11 paper seems akin to a recipe book festival. Which dish will come out best?

But this skepticism may be unfounded, as the recent proliferation of screenplay events shows. Script readings, competitions, and (here it comes) festivals are slowly working their way into the film world's networking scene. There are a good number of well-run weekends for unattached, unrepresented writers to mingle, pitch, and compete. The question for a dollar-conscious freelancer is, are they worth it? "Do you shell out 400 bucks for a festival or pay the rent?" asks director Jim McKay (*Girls Town*). It's a good question. What does a festival with screenplay panels and competitions really offer a career? Let's put the "festival or rent" criterion to the test.

The following screenplay events have two things in common: One, they provide opportunities for writers to mingle. Two, they offer a screenplay competition, giving the industry a chance to discover your prize-winning masterpiece. [If 1998 deadlines are not yet available, the deadlines for this past year are listed.]

The Top Tier

NOWHERE IS THE trend toward recognizing the script clearer than with the AUSTIN HEART OF FILM FESTIVAL (1600 Nuesces, Austin, TX 78701; 800-310-FEST; www.Instar.com/austin film; competition deadline: May 15, 1997; \$275-450 to attend).

Founded in 1994, Austin aims to "focus on the contribution of the screenwriter to filmmaking." With more years of experience than any other screenplay festival, Austin is the one to beat. This three-day weekend event held in October provides an impressive line-up of panelists, screenings of films with strong scripts, and opportunities to mingle and compete. The 40 panels on writing range from practical to inspiring. One of last year's most popular events was "The Doctor is In," a peek into the frightening world of script doctoring. Another was the self-explanatory and standing-room-only "Beauties, Bitches, and Businesswomen: Where are the Strong Female Characters?"

The festival is famous for after-hour encounters with respected writers prowling Austin for Texas-style entertainment. "The highlight of Heart of Film is the contact with guests," insists festival co-founder Marsha Milam. "You have to be willing to go up to [a stranger], which is really hard. But if you do, you'll find they're at the festival for a reason—to help other talent."

Austin opens its heart to screenwriters (right) and Nantucket recruits actors like Anne Meara and Ben Stiller (below) for its benefit screenplay readings. Courtesy festivals



Panelists like Chris McQuarrie (*Usual Suspects*), Whit Stillman (*Barcelona*), and Shane Black (*Lethal Weapon*) insure that attendees will have an opportunity to pose their perfectly crafted, professionally formatted questions to someone who knows film writing firsthand.

The most powerful tool at the festival may be the **Heart of Film Competition** (\$35 entry fee). Writers can compete for the \$3,500 prize and accompanying accolades in three categories (mature, children/family, student short). Of course, you will be up against 2,200 of your closest peers. But the finalists' and semi-finalists' works are included in a script library that the industry can and does access. Austin claims that 15 scripts have been optioned since 1994. Among them was Ron Peer's semi-finalist entry *Goodbye, Lover...* Roland Joffe loved the story and signed on to direct. The film stars Ellen

DeGeneres and is scheduled to be released this fall.

Richard Moore, a 1996 semi-finalist with *Maestro*, recommends Austin to anyone who needs reinforcement. "I can't imagine the festival being any better," he says. A number of agents and producers have approached him. "If you do place in the competition, definitely go. If you don't, be ready to make things happen [anyway]. It's a great place to mingle, if you know how."

"If their numbers grew, I'd be concerned," says one attendee of the festival. Milam is aware of this problem. "We may have to limit 1998's attendance. So get those applications in early."

IF AUSTIN IS THE REIGNING KING OF SCREENPLAY Fests, the rising challenger is the **NANTUCKET FILM FESTIVAL** (Box 688 Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012; 212 420-9308; www.nantucketfilmfestival.org; deadline: April 18, 1997; \$300 to attend).

Nantucket, now in its second year, also calls itself a screenwriters' festival and, like Austin, considers its film screenings an integral part of displaying the writer's work. In fact, Nantucket welcomes writers to submit not only their screenplays for competition but any produced films they've done as well.

Artistic director Jill Goode, who runs the festival with her brother, executive director Jonathan Burkhart, recognizes the growing trend toward writer/directors. Panelists tend to walk both sides of the fence, so their first piece of advice is to try to direct your own work. "The growing focus on the writer/director has been good for both roles," says Goode. "It's redefined the importance of writers and given them more influence. We plan on having readings of directors' scripts that are likely to go into production. That way we can follow the process from the start."

The festival takes place on the island of Nantucket, off the coast of Massachusetts. In June the quiet setting is dotted with screenings, readings, and panels, with a focus on strong writing. Last year one seminar, "Script to Screen," had John Shea hand out three scripted scenes from his film *Brass Ring*. These scenes were then projected, allowing attendees to discuss the transition from page to screen. Another innovative panel had actors like Mary Stuart Masterson discussing what they look for in a script. But the most popular happening was "Morning Coffee

with..." which recruited a number of pros to chat with attendees. Last year's participants included actress Nicole Burdette (*A River Runs Through It*) and director Nicole Holofcener (*Walking and Talking*).

Film screenings go on throughout the weekend at local theaters. Goode recommends that participants stay for the Q&A sessions afterward to discuss the process of turning paper into film.

For \$40 you can enter the screenplay competition, which is a growing focus of the event. This year, five finalists and one Grand Prize winner were chosen from 450 submissions (up from last year's 200). The winner receives a personal meeting with agents from ICM and William Morris, a "first look" for Showtime, and a chance to have the screenplay read at one of Nantucket's star-studded fundraisers.

Though the founders want to keep it small, the festival is already showing signs of expanding beyond expectations. This may make it a good time to send in your best.

THE CHARACTER OF SCREENPLAY FORUMS VARIES. Some eschew screenings, opting to help the writer through panels alone. A good example of this is **FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN**, an undertaking of the Independent Feature Project (104 W. 29 St., 12th fl., New York, NY 10001; 212-465-8200; www.ifp.org; deadline: March 21, 1997; \$135-260 to attend). Taking place in Manhattan over three days in April, the event provides an atmosphere of education and inspiration through example. This year, working joes like Terry George (*Some Mother's Son*) and Jules Feiffer exemplified the quality of recruiting for panels.

"The riskier the panel, the better the results," Karen Schwartzman, IFP event director, says of the conference philosophy. This year's events included "On the Spot," an hour-long session in which attendees pitched to agents, producers, and directors, who then gave them pointers on their pitching style. "Protecting Your Script" was popular as well, giving writers the chance to ask justifiably paranoid questions. John Turturro discussed the transition from actor to writer and back again. And Roland Legiardi-Laura, of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, moderated "Why Do Script Reading?" Two separate readings of a scene from *Girls Town* displayed the effectiveness of keeping the narrator's role to a minimum.

From Script to Screen is intended as a community-building event exclusively for the writer. Though one can hear a pitch from time

to time, the event is geared more towards questions. This allows for a unique atmosphere to the conference; most of the business being done is attendees hooking up with each other. Some think this should be the point. "Something to look for [at screenplay forums] is talent with your tastes," says McKay, a '97 panelist. "It's a good place to see you're not alone. You can get real inspired by finding someone who's responsive to your ideas."

With a good script and \$25, you can enter IFP's **Beigel Screenplay Competition**, which is open to all conference participants. The Grand Prize of \$5,000 goes to one screenplay. Out of this year's 250 submissions, four finalists were chosen, all of whom got press and industry attention. An unusual offering is the 20 minute private meeting with a professional script consultant, provided free for every submission. This service is unique to IFP.

T. H. Elmore, the 1996 winner for his screenplay *Elegy*, quickly found representation. "The phone didn't stop ringing for two weeks after the announcement," he says. "IFP took good care of me. They made sure the awards reception was well attended and the word was sent out immediately to the press." *Elegy* is now in preproduction. "I don't think From Script to Screen is where you're going to get rich quick," Elmore adds. "It's designed for the independent-minded storytellers. If you want to feel that the stories close to your heart are important and worth telling, then go to get a kick in the pants."

PERHAPS THE MOST PERSONABLE OF SCREENPLAY forums is **CINESTORY** (53 W. Jackson, Ste. 1224, Chicago, IL 60604; 1-800-6STORY6; deadline: November 1, 1997; \$150-295 to attend). Like IFP's event, Cinestory offers concentrated panels and workshops sans screenings.

"We are convinced that the discovery of film projects doesn't necessarily³⁵ begin with the director, but with the word visualized on paper," claims the Cinestory literature. Established in 1996, the organization is designed to recognize and nurture the writer and the writing process. "We are not a festival per se. First and foremost we want to help the writer write," says executive director Pam Pierce. "That doesn't mean just giving them war stories and letting them fend for themselves. It means sitting down and talking about what they can do to write a screenplay that's true to their vision." The intention, Pierce says, is to add a sense of pride to the craft of scriptwriting.

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Roland Legiardi-Laura of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe moderates a panel on how to stage script readings with *Girls Town* director Jim McKay, at IFP's From Script to Screen,

The Cinestory concept splits into two major areas. The first is a weekend tagged **Script Sessions** (March 7-9), a series of small gatherings designed to focus on the script's stages of development. Sessions like "Page on the Stage: Directors Directing Your Lines" and "Is ICM Accessible to New Writers?" provide opportunities to focus on specific areas of interest. With over 30 subjects to choose from, you won't have to worry about too much leisure time.

An unusual aspect of **Script Sessions** is the "Please Don't Pitch" rule. "How you insert yourself in the writing world is crucial, of course," says Pierce. "But **Script Sessions** is designed to be laid back." She points out that private meetings can be scheduled with attending pros by submitting your screenplay (and a \$100 consultation fee) to the second major part of the Cinestory concept, the **Cinestory Screenwriting Awards**.

The competition (\$35 submission fee) complements the **Script Sessions** and offers a number of benefits for its finalists. This year's winner out of the 800 applicants, Daniel Bernstein (*Phoebe in Wonderland*), received \$2,000, a possible mentorship with Jodie Foster's Egg Pictures, a lunch with producer and former distributor Ira Deutchman, a free budget and scheduling breakdown, detailed script notes from *The Usual Suspect's* Chris McQuarrie, and a reading at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in Manhattan. There are eight finalists and 16 semi-finalists named as well.

Todd Lippy, editor of *Scenario* magazine and a Cinestory participant, points out, "If you have someone like McQuarrie to help you for a half hour, that beats out any on-the-fly seminar. These pros are willing to travel to participate, so you know they're ready to get involved." If you attend Cinestory, make sure you visit "The Lounge," where VIPs go to hang out. It's here you'll find the best opportunity to politely corner your favorite pros and hit them with your wit and, if asked, your screenplay.

Other Contenders

THERE ARE A GOOD NUMBER OF FILM FESTIVALS offering forums for the writer. One is **SLAMDANCE** (2633 Lincoln Blvd. #536, Santa Monica, CA 90405; 310-204-7977; www.slamdance.com; deadline: July 17 1997; free to attend).

Slamdance set itself up in 1994 as an alternative to the Sundance Film Festival and benefits greatly from its proximity to the mega-event. Slamdance's growing number of entries and attendees has verified the need within the industry to offer more venues for films—and screenplays. "We've helped a lot of filmmakers get their foot in the door," says creative director Peter Baxter. "Now we plan to do the same for writers." For its first screenplay contest (\$35 fee) in 1997, six finalists were chosen by industry judges from a pool of 1,000. Three were then named Grand Prize winners. The cash prizes ranged from \$250 to \$2,000. More importantly, the three top scripts were submitted to Fox Searchlight Pictures and the Gersh Agency for consideration.

Though the focus on scripts is new, the festival has an intriguing advantage. With film directors and screenwriters competing in the same place at the same time, the possibility of creative collaboration becomes much more likely. It's possible that collaborative teams could get a boost from hybrid festivals such as this one. "We want filmmakers to have as many opportunities to meet their peers as possible," says Baxter. "Already, we've seen team-ups at Slamdance, and we expect that to intensify as we focus on writing as well."

Next year, Baxter is offering script readings of the winners during the festival. "You never know who's going to attend any given screening or event. There are always a couple of surprises."

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Other festivals to consider include the **HUDSON VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL** (40 Garden St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601; 914-473-0318; www.sandbook.com/hvfo; deadline: January 20, 1997. \$200 to attend). Though lacking a cash competition at this point, Hudson (May 30–June 7) does offer a reading slot in the festival to chosen scripts (there were 200 applicants in 1997). “We are quickly garnering a reputation as a place where you can not only see and hear new work, but meet and discuss first-hand the

submissions.

The **LONG ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL** (Box 13243, Hauppauge, NY 11788; 800-762-4769; deadline: July 1, 1997; \$25 submission fee; \$40 to attend) takes place from July 18–August 2. The festival is up to its second annual script competition. Winners (from a pool of 300) receive up to \$500 and a staged reading in Manhattan.

OUTFEST (8455 Beverly Blvd., #309 LA, CA 90048; 213-951-1247; www.outfest.com; deadline: May 16, 1997; \$15 submission fee; \$7 tickets, \$30–75 for events) takes place in July. It provides a \$1,000 prize for the winner (from over 200 entries) and a meeting with industry leaders to discuss the current market climate for gay- and lesbian-themed work.

“I believe this trend has legs,” Pam Pierce of Cinestory says about the proliferation of screenplay events. Any writer would tell you that any gesture toward recognition is welcome. But they’d hesitate before accepting this newfound attention as a genuine seismic shift. At the moment, it’s safe to say that these competitions are noticed by the industry and winning can set off a career. The bottom line is, it’s always easier for the agents and producers to find good work when the good work is all in one place.

As for the “festival or rent” criterion: if you want to make sure an event is worth the money, do the following. First, send for the literature, see who’s participating, and verify that the format will allow you to get to those people. You want the option to go up to a panelist and ask a couple of questions. Second, have a screenplay ready and, ideally, submit it for competition. If your bottom line is to sell a script, either win the competition or be ready to hustle; the odds are no worse than in the real world. But if you want to be inspired, meet some peers, and talk to your idols, then most of these events covered here will allow you to do just that.

It’s been said that if you want to be a writer and have some influence in the project, then write for television. Perhaps these forums will even the playing field a bit, giving film writers the opportunity to get their work and names recognized. Your rent will always loom. But it would seem so much cheaper with an option in your pocket.

Ben Zackheim has written for Nickelodeon, Big Sky Productions, and Tuba City Productions. Currently he is devising a plan to rule the world with his comic strip The Block.



The Usual Suspects screenwriter Chris McQuarrie holds court at Cinestory in Chicago. Courtesy Cinestory

impetus for a particular screenplay,” says executive director Denise Kasell.

Last year’s reading of Morna Martell’s *Belle and Her Boys* led to an option by Avnet/Kerner. With screenings of story-oriented films and year-round readings in Poughkeepsie, the organization provides support for new talent as well as accolades for the established.

A number of film festivals other than Slamdance offer screenplay competitions and events. Every spring for 12 days, the **PHILADELPHIA FESTIVAL OF WORLD CINEMA** (3701 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA. 19104-3195; 215-895-6593; www.libertynet.org/~pfwc; deadline: January 10, 1997; \$275 to attend) offers a hefty cash award of \$5,000 to the best screenplay. The story must include the city as one of its settings. Last year, there were 150

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THE TROJAN HORSE



Inside the Gates of Hollywood, the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Gains Ground

BY DIANA RICO

THE LOS ANGELES INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL (April 3-7) got off to a heady start when writer-director Robert Benabib's *Little City*, about the dysfunctional romances of some straight and gay San Francisco singles (played by Jon Bon Jovi, Josh Charles, Joanna Going, Annabella Sciorra, Penelope Ann Miller, and JoBeth Williams), was dramatically snatched up by Miramax for a reported \$2.8 million just before it opened the festival. Those Weinstein brothers do know how to create a buzz.

Not that the LAIFF needs the Weinsteins to create a buzz for it—the festival seems to be doing that quite well on its own, thank you very much. Now in its third year, the LAIFF is fast blossoming from what seemed at first like an impossibly loopy concept (an American independent festival in the heart of commercial Hollywood—and in April, no less, right on the heels of Sundance) into one of the hot tickets for the discovery of fresh voices on the U.S. scene.

This year's offerings included 16 world premieres among the 20 features and three feature-length documentaries, along with 34 thoughtfully programmed shorts; submissions topped 1,000, up from 300 in 1995. The screenings, held at the 150-seat Chaplin Theater at Raleigh Studios and the 290-seat Studio Theatre at Paramount Studios, were sold out and wait-listed (with only one screening per film). Overall attendance of films and accompanying events was over 12,000.

Actually, the choice of putting the festival smack in the middle of Hollywood helps ensure a serious industry presence at screenings, which is one of the advantages for filmmakers whose works are shown. "I had heard it had a really good reputation as a showcase for independent film, that it had industry attendance and would be taken very seriously," says experimental videomaker Rea Tajiri, who screened her first feature film, *Strawberry Fields*, a 1960s



Even in L.A.: Fans of indie film turn out in droves at Paramount's sold-out Studio Theatre. Courtesy LAIFF

coming-of-age drama about a Japanese American teenager who learns of her parents' internment-camp experiences.

Industry attention was certainly there. Fox Searchlight acquisitions VP Bob Aaronson, for example, said the LAIFF is on Fox's list of "must" festivals, alongside Sundance, Berlin, and Toronto. And producer's representative Jonathan Dana predicted the LAIFF "is becoming the next breakout festival for independent film in North America."

The industry is only one prong of the LAIFF's targeted audience, however. "We cater to three distinct audiences: the filmmaker, the industry, and the film-goer," says festival director and founder Robert Faust. "We are a very filmmaker-supportive and filmmaker-friendly event. The body of our festival is all undistributed work. We are very selective, we have minimal slots, and we are not a juried festival, which sometimes tends to inspire a competitiveness. We really try to foster a sense of community between filmmakers and film lovers."

One of the reasons for all the attention is simply that the LAIFF fills an important gap: "It is in fact defined as and devoted to independent American features, and there still aren't many of those," points out producer's

representative John Pierson. "Even Sundance, now that it's trying to be more global, isn't just devoted to the American independent feature. Anytime there is a very selective and highlighted group of American independent films that's not Sundance, that's good."

The emphasis in programming is on undiscovered works by fresh, uncommercial voices. "The films strike me as very independent minded and different. That unique voice of the filmmaker was the overriding aspect of each, as opposed to having certain producers attached, a name cast, that sort of thing," observes director-writer Chris Chan Lee, whose Asian American Gen-X ensemble comedy *Yellow* looks to be one of the potential breakout films of the festival.

LAIFF programming director Thomas Ethan Harris, who is passionately committed to nurturing "our next generation of artists," agrees with that assessment. "We weren't playing mainstream narrative films. We definitely challenged audiences with films like Hamilton Sterling's *Faith of Our Fathers*, which isn't in any narrative traditions outside of maybe Peter Greenaway and Wim Wenders, and Gregg Lachow's *The Wright Brothers*," a deadpan biopic in which Orville

Wright is played by Megan Murphy in full male drag and the script draws from, among other sources, Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* and *Three Sisters*.

Indeed, this year's festival seemed to focus on films depicting unconventional, complicated females of a sort we don't usually see in cinema, from Gary Tieche's ensemble drama *Nevada*, about a mysterious woman who becomes a catalyst for introspection in a desert town populated entirely by women, to Zack Winestine's moody *States of Control*, about a failed novelist searching for spiritual and sexual meaning. This year's offerings also included a smorgasbord of multiethnic stories—not only *Strawberry Fields* and *Yellow* but also Stephen Winter's serio-comic *Chocolate Babies*, about Black and Asian American HIV-positive guerrilla activist drag queens; Heather Johnston and Gordon

America theater and Soundstage 9 at Raleigh held substantial crowds for panels covering topics such as "Legal Aspects of Producing," "Festivals, Markets, and the Indie Filmmaker," "Music in Film," and "Working with Guilds and Unions on a Budget," and featuring the likes of producer's reps Pierson and Dana, Sundance's Geoff Gilmore, producers Beau Flynn, Andrea Sperling, and J. Todd Harris, and arthouse theater chain owner Greg Laemmle. New media was represented in several seminars (see p. 27) and in the WGA Storyteller and Internet Lounge. And then, there were the parties—one every night, with overflowing crowds, suggesting that Angelenos have a deeper need for community than one might suspect.

In addition to the much-publicized Miramax *Little City* deal, Will Geiger's sensitively written and realized *Ocean Tribe*, about a group of surfing buddies who journey to Mexico to allow a

dying friend to catch one last wave, landed a six-figure advance for foreign rights from London-based J&M. And Jon Harmon Feldman's *Lovelife*, about college-town singles grappling with the question of what is real love, was bought for limited territories by TriMark Pictures.

Beyond actual sales, filmmakers consistently report strong distributor presence. "It seems like every major distributor had someone at my screening," says *Yellow*'s Lee, "and I had meetings and two to three screenings afterward for each. It definitely was effective in getting it out to industry people." The other common theme is that interested distributors are now waiting to see how the LAIFF films do as they travel further along the festival route.

Perhaps as valuable as the industry showcase LAIFF provides is the personal attention given every filmmaker and every film, well before the festival even begins.

"I was on the phone with Thomas Harris an average of once a week—not me bugging him, but him calling me and just giving me advice on how to handle the film, from ideas about the poster to whether or not to do press screenings," says *Ocean Tribe*'s Geiger. "They really take you by the hand."

"The way I look at it," says Harris, who also co-programs the American Cinematheque's Alternative

Screen series, "is that the minute a filmmaker allows the LAIFF to be associated with their film and play it, that makes me the godfather for that film for the rest of its existence. I will do everything to help them, and that does include sitting down and talking to them about distribution, it means giving them advice on their marketing materials, explaining the benefit of having their films viewed not just at a distributors' screening but at a public screening with distributors there, and learning how to create a mystique around your film, not just dumping it out there."

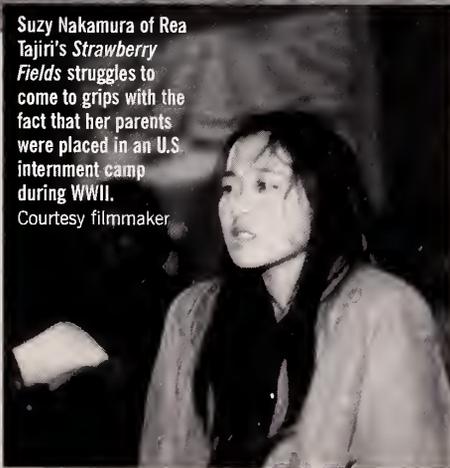
An *Ocean Tribe* surfer snaps Jeb (Troy Fazio) on his quest for the last great wave. Courtesy filmmaker

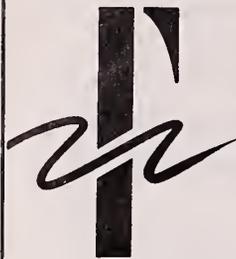


Ericson's *Lena's Dreams*, in which a light-skinned Cuban-American actress confronts stereotypes about "ethnic casting"; and Michele Ohayon's documentary *Colors Straight Up*, about Latino and Black Watts students in an innovative arts program. (This is an improvement over the 1996 festival, when I served on the programming committee and was disappointed by final choices, which seemed excessively Anglo-oriented.)

This year's LAIFF also served up a full menu of nuts-and-bolts seminars for the serious filmmaker. The large Directors Guild of

Suzu Nakamura of Rea Tajiri's *Strawberry Fields* struggles to come to grips with the fact that her parents were placed in an U.S. internment camp during WWII. Courtesy filmmaker





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All of this makes for one heck of a popular event—which poses to question: How to keep the LAIFF from turning into what Sundance has become? (The Sundance Channel, in fact, is the LAIFF's presenting sponsor, along with the nonprofit Filmmakers Foundation.) Faust is an advocate for "controlled growth. There's a certain feeling and character you want to give to any event, and for this event community is an important aspect. I definitely see us next year being able to screen everything twice and having bigger venues, but again the focus will be to keep the number of features very selective. It's about quality films and getting the right audience to see them."

This year, LAIFF's festivities ended aptly with Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini's *Off the Menu: The Last Days of Chasen's*, a documentary tracing the dying days of old Hollywood as seen through the demise of its most famous watering hole. An annual Indie Supporter Award went to Kodak's Toni Robertson, a behind-the-scenes champion of independent filmmaking. For the first time, four audience awards were presented. Best feature prize, with more than \$14,000 in stock, processing, and other services, went to Kirby Dick's powerful documentary *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Super Masochist*, covering the life and work of the publicly masochistic L.A. performance artist. The best writer award of \$2,500 cash was presented by the Writers Guild to *Lovelife's* Feldman. Geiger received the \$2,500 cash directing prize from the Directors Guild for his *Ocean Tribe*. And \$2,500 in services was awarded to the best short, *Fairfax Fandango*, Abby Kohn and Mark Silverstein's story of a romance butting up against religious taboos.

As for the LAIFF's featured filmmakers, nearly two months after the festival, many of them are still being nurtured along. "I still talk to all the filmmakers," says Harris. "Why not? They gave me an amazing experience that I will value for the rest of my life. There are so few people out there trying to express themselves honestly and creatively. I think independent filmmakers are heroes."

Diana Rico is a longtime film journalist and former editor of International Documentary. She recently completed a magical-realist poetry video, Siren Call, which headlined a program of alternative videos at the L.A. literary center Beyond Baroque.



Scott Billups and Jonathan Wells riding the next digital wave. Courtesy: LAIFF

New Media @LAIFF

BY DAVID COLEMAN

IN AN EFFORT TO CREATE SYNERGY BETWEEN INDIE FILMMAKERS AND NEW MEDIA, THE LAIFF offered two related seminars this year. The morning session was "Creating Content for the Internet" and included panelists Karol Martesko (publisher of *Filmmaker*), Brian Clark (GlobalMedia Design president), Scott Smith (Silver Planet Studio cofounder), Allison Hunter Joseph (an "online personality"), and moderator Peter Broderick (v.p. of IFP/West). The session's intent—to foster the idea that indie filmmakers can and should create original Web material—was somewhat hampered by the overall comic proceedings and the slightly incestuous (in a business sense only) nature of the panelists. The comedy came from the constant jockeying between Joseph, who appears as "Adrenaline Alli" in AOL's Sports section modeling swimsuits while providing sports analysis, and the other all-male panelists, who made it a point to ridicule her shameless self-promoting efforts throughout the proceedings. Ironically, the male panelists never missed an opportunity to equally hype their own co-dependent efforts (they are or have worked together in various capacities on various online projects).

In terms of hard information, the basic consensus seemed to be "think community." In short, if you're planning on building a Web site, design for a specific community of users (such as indie filmmakers) and keep the content fresh. Perhaps the summation of the seminar's overall impact was appropriately made when Martesko accidentally missed his chair after loading his site on the large-screen projector. (Martesko recovered beautifully and without serious injury.) In short, close but no cigar. Ultimately, the panelists failed to offer paradigms as to how filmmakers can establish their own sites on the Net.

The afternoon seminar was a bit more instructive. Titled "The Next Wave in Digital Filmmaking," it featured moderator Jonathan Wells (founder ResFest Digital Film Festival), Frank Grow (director of *Love God*, an all-digital feature), Jonathan and Valerie Dayton (directors of rock videos), and Scott Billups (computer effects maestro). The SRO audience was treated to many amusing anecdotes by the animated Grow, who described the thrill of seeing his digitally made film shown at the Rotterdam Fest, enlarged to 35mm and projected on a screen the size of a football field. Billups candidly admitted that the line between "prosumer" and "professional" has blurred. Any serious indie willing to master digital filmmaking could achieve feature film quality special effects on a home-based computer with proper diligence and the right software tools, most of which are readily available off-the-shelf at computer software stores. The Daytons told of their love affair with the new Sony DVC cameras and how they shot their MTV Award-winning *Smashing Pumpkins* video with a mixture of Hi8 and DVC. The audience was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and peppered panelists with questions about how best to shoot digital with an ultimate theatrical release in mind—the number one focus of discussion.

At the conclusion, one couldn't help but notice a gulf between the two seminars that neither adequately addressed—that is, the convergence of the two technologies offering a third, undiscussed possibility: indie filmmakers making indie films that are released directly over the Net without studio acquisition as the ultimate goal. Given the difficulty most independents find in securing domestic theatrical releases today, it was an obvious, missed opportunity to update filmmakers on the how and when of this scenario. All the more reason for next year's LAIFF to consider a bridge between the two seminars as video-streaming and related technologies arrive in the digital arena.

David Coleman (david@kudzunet.com) runs a new media Web site development company.

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CANARY IN A COAL MINE

THE HONG KONG FILM FESTIVAL

BY MICHAEL
BENSON

HONG KONG USED TO MAKE HEADLINES DUE TO its ultra-violent films and boat people, but it's leading the news these days for other reasons. The July 1st handover of the gleaming British colony to the world's largest totalitarian state, also known as the People's Republic of China, has a majestic, ominous drama to it. A roll-back of civil liberties, announced by the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, the Beijing-appointed Tung Chee-Hwa, hovers at the top of the list of reasons why.

Since these revisions to the city-state's legislative code were unveiled during the 21st Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF), which ran from March 25th to April 9th, one might think their shock-value would spill over to this event. The festival, after all, is a kind of central jewel in the crown of Hong Kong's cultural life. And although these legislative changes specifically curtail the right to public assembly—while giving more “freedom” to the police—their implications for larger questions of cultural liberties are obvious.

Actually, the long arm of Beijing had no discernible effect—this year, anyway. Hong Kong's Film Festival, run by the ubiquitous Urban Council, hummed like a machine—a microcosm, in fact, of the city itself. Screens on both sides of the mesmerizing green-water harbor flickered with 200 movies for 16 days and nights. Large crowds thronged “big” and “small” movies alike, and the festival was quickly followed by a four-day series of seminars and roundtables titled “Fifty Years of Electric Shadows,” which took a good long look at the Hong Kong film industry. Linked directly to this conference, the festival's retrospective section pulled together the best Hong Kong films from previous HKIFF retrospectives. The result was a startlingly eclectic look at a much-neglected filmic tradition—one far broader than the action films that have placed



In the light entertainment category was Yim Ho's adaptation of *Kitchen*, the beloved Banana Yoshimoto bestseller.

Courtesy Golden Harvest International Ltd

it on the international map. This year also saw a special section titled “I Have a Date with the Censors,” designed specifically to showcase films banned over the last 30 years in the colony, largely due to worries about the reaction of “the neighbors.”

These are symptoms, in short, of a healthy, independently curated event. In fact, when it came to this year's Hong Kong International Film Festival, the main problem (for a visitor anyway) wasn't mainland censorship or the nagging question of “what will happen after July 1st?” It was the distractions of the teeming, futuristic city itself, which functions as a kind of *Blade Runner* soundstage in 3-D real-time—only with a far more optimistic tone than in Ridley Scott's dystopia.

This positive buzz doesn't feel artificial. Despite Tung Chee-Hwa's announcement—and despite heated behind-the-scenes discussions at the highest levels of the city government about the potentially provocative nature of the festival's censorship section—the glittering skyscrapers and immaculate movie theaters aren't a facade hiding either cultural repression or capital flight. With its Hang Seng stock

index hitting new highs just seven weeks before the handover, Hong Kong has never been more prosperous. And although the film festival succeeded in showing only two films from mainland China this year, problems with programming films from the People's Republic are by no means unusual, nor are they unique to Hong Kong. The recent scandal at Cannes perpetrated by China's heavy-handed Film Bureau makes that clear enough. (In their patented style, the Bureau refused to release a print of Zhang Yimou's new film, *Keep Cool*—a “protest” against Cannes' refusal to withdraw mainland director Zhang Yuan's *East Palace, West Palace*, which deals with gay life in Beijing.)

Actually, one of the two Chinese films screened in Hong Kong, Huang Jianxin's scathingly satirical *Signal Left, Turn Right*, had to be hastily imported after one of the scheduled mainland films was inexplicably pulled at the last minute. The withdrawn film, *In Expectation*, is a virtually risk-free drama about the construction of a dam on the Yangtze river. By contrast, *Signal Left, Turn Right* could scarcely be more overtly critical of

the myriad cracks fissuring the mainland's "socialism with Chinese characteristics." From its startlingly explicit title to its ironic jokes about lies in the newspapers and bribe-hungry officials, this story of entrepreneurial student drivers (under the instruction of an army driving school, no less) is an eye-opener. It certainly can't be accused of being doctrinaire Socialist Realist filmmaking. The final effect of the shuffling of mainland films was bizarre and said far more about the relative successes of mainland directors in playing Beijing film politics than anything about the films' content.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said of the documentary *No. 16 Barkhor South Street*, the other Chinese entry and a nominally "independent" production. The film depicts the enlightened Chinese occupiers of the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, as represented by ubiquitous "resident committees." These political cadres serve as front-line social police, "advising" the population on proper attire for Chinese communist high holy days and keeping an eye out for deviant behavior (though the film depicts them tiptoeing, with respect and restraint, around Tibetan customs, if not the ruins of shattered temples).

The film must be shocking news for those exiled Tibetans still suffering from the delusion that they are political refugees. (For the record, Tibet was occupied by China in 1959 and has endured a devastating across-the-board assault on its culture ever since.) Even if *No. 16 Barkhor South Street* might not wholly persuade you to offer your own country—or in this case, colony—for occupation by the benevolent Chinese, it might make you wonder what the Dalai Lama has been complaining about all these years. (Until the lights come up, that is.)

As for homegrown Hong Kong films, it was not a particularly good year, despite some worthy contenders in the "light entertainment" category. *Kitchen*, Yim Ho's adaptation of Japanese pop novelist Banana Yoshimoto's book by the same name, tells a weightless love story in an appropriately lightweight way. A well-done, understated performance by Jordan Chan is unfortunately not met halfway by Tomita Yasuko, who seems too convinced of her own cuteness. Still, the film is beautifully shot and paced, and gets some comic kilometers from the depiction of the hero's mother, formerly his father before a sex-change operation. Despite a graphic murder and trips to the mainland (which had the Hong Kong audience chuckling knowingly at the bad food jokes), by the time all 124 minutes have all passed the

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whole exercise feels like too much ice cream.

An opposite effect is achieved by the bleakly humorous Taiwanese film *The River*, which features another kind of gay father—this one as grim as Yim Ho's "mother-father" is flamboyant. Director Tsai Ming-liang certainly can't be accused of wallowing in ice cream; in fact the opening sequence features the hard-luck teenage hero, Xiao Kang (Lee Kang-sheng), reluctantly agreeing to float face-down in greasy water beside a live sewage pipe—playing a "corpse" in a low budget film. From here Kang's luck only proceeds downhill. Nervous spasms resulting from his toxic river dunk lead inexorably to a motorcycle accident. The combination then turns him into a spastic near-cripple—a nice externalization of the governing principles of his dysfunctional family. By the time he arrives in a gay bathhouse towards the end, the script has other surprises in store.

Another Hong Kong film that deserves mention is Stanley Kwan's *Yang and Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema*, which continues some of the gay (and even the father-son) themes described above. Kwan's surprising documentary recontextualization seeks out provocative footage from across the spectrum of Chinese film history. When it comes to the broader picture of Asian cinema, always a leading draw at the HKIFF, another noteworthy offering was Korean director Hong Sang-Soo's *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well*. The film presents four lives intersecting, then colliding in contemporary Seoul. And the festival continues to present American independent films. This year's offerings included Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman*, Greg Mottola's *The Daytrippers*, and Christopher Munch's *Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day*, all well attended.

If the HKIFF maintained a well-deserved international reputation this year, some disquieting background stories gave evidence of the way the winds are blowing in Hong Kong these days. The festival is curated by film professionals contracted to the Urban Council, which essentially runs the city. They therefore exist in an uneasy relationship with bureaucrats sometimes overly anxious not to rock the boat, and who lately have been showing an interest in preempting potentially negative mainland reactions to the festival. It's clearly a recipe for self-



Toxic sludge wracks Lee Kang-Sheng in *The River*. Courtesy Central Motion Picture Corp.

ensorship; it also provides a diagram of the top-down way changes might be affected in the festival's "approach" in coming years. While in practice this mechanism didn't adversely affect programming decisions this year, the city's independent program-

mers are clearly manning one of the front lines where Hong Kong's promised cultural autonomy will be tested.

Li Cheuk-to, president of the Hong Kong Film Critics Society and the international programmer of the film festival, understandably takes pains to remind an interviewer that he's contractually bound to "have some reservations about speaking out too directly." Asked about Chinese censorship, Li instructs to "read between the lines"—then proceeds to say that the festival has suffered repeated requests by the China Film Bureau not to screen films, generally not because of subject matter but because they were independent productions shot in China without official approval. Still, says Li—with the cool intellectual defiance which may be a hallmark of the festival in the near future—the HKIFF, like "any other international film festival," shows films "not because of their nationality or production method but because they're good, because they're interesting to our audience. So [China's requests are] not a major concern for us, as long as the filmmaker or producer owns the copyright of the film." Asked if this could continue after July 1, Li considered his response carefully. "If no new rules are—well, forced—upon us, we'll keep doing this in the future." Might such rules be imposed? A pause. "Possibly. Very probably."

Actually, if the China Film Bureau's behavior this year is any guide, the Hong Kong International Film Festival could be in for a very rocky time indeed—despite the "one country, two systems" model promised the city-state in 1984 by the late Deng Xiaoping. Hong Kong's nuanced, excellent film festival has already earned the respect of the international film community. It deserves support and attention in the future.

Michael Benson's feature documentary Predictions of Fire was shown in the Truth or Dare: Documentaries East and West section of this year's Hong Kong International Film Festival.



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LANGUAGE

BY DAVID HOUTS

WHEN JONATHAN NOSSITER'S *SUNDAY* TOOK THE GRAND JURY PRIZE for best dramatic film and the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival, more than a few festival-goers scratched their heads in surprise. "We had the opposite of buzz," says Nossiter, "we had zzub." This compelling and achingly melancholy psychological drama about the desperate passions of mature people does not produce the adolescent adrenaline rush that often whips into festival buzz. Nonetheless, the jury at Sundance recognized its excellence and uniqueness, as subsequently did programmers at New Directors/New Films and at Cannes' *Un Certain Regarde* section. It will be theatrically released by Cinepix Film Properties on August 22.

Sunday is a psychological whodunit built around an ostensible case of mistaken identity. Madeline, an out-of-work English actress (Lisa Harrow), believes Oliver, a former IBM employee (David Suchet, best known for his portrayal of Agatha Christie's Belgian detective, Poirot, on television) to be a famous film director. For a time Oliver plays along, hiding the painful fact that he is living in a homeless shelter, the victim of corporate downsizing. Shot on location in Queens and Brooklyn, the film counterpoints the two characters' tenuous and desperate relationship with the experiences of Oliver's fellow shelter residents over the course of one Sunday. (The cast includes real-life shelter residents and workers.)

Nossiter has directed one other feature, *Resident Alien*, a documentary about English expatriate Quentin Crisp, which was theatrically released in 1992. Nossiter lives in New York and works as a *sommelier* consulting for restaurants when he isn't making films.

The Independent met with Nossiter in May to talk about his collaboration with poet and short-story writer James Lasdun, their research in homeless shelters, and how working with nonprofessional actors helped shape the script of this award-winning film.

***Sunday* is your first dramatic feature. Was it your first script?**

No, I've written a dozen scripts myself and in collaboration with other people. It's a beauty pageant to determine which is ugliest. I can safely say I have written a series of truly awful scripts. It took me a

long time to realize that I wasn't a scriptwriter. So I tried writing with several people. It is a delicate thing to find a collaborator. I feel incredibly lucky to have come across a collaborator I hope I will work with forever, James Lasdun. We have similar reactions to things that annoy us in people, and I think we admire similar characteristics. But we are radically different in personality and temperament. So it is a great combination. There is enough deep common ground for us to wish to express things together, and enough fundamental differences for us to provoke and engage each other.

How did you meet?

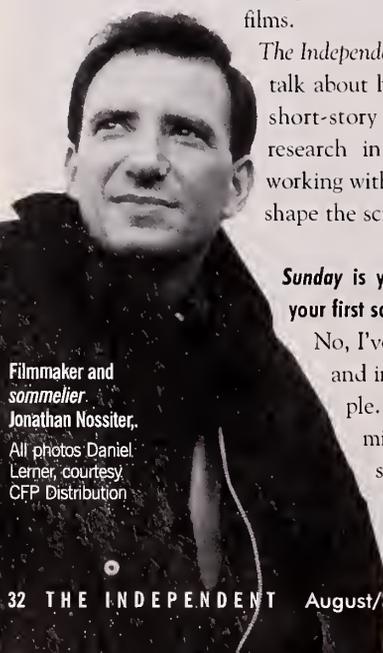
At a dinner party. I told him I worked in the wine business. He already knew I made films, and he thought I was a fraud. I liked him; he is quite a well-known English poet. I knew he had something of a reputation, and I went out and bought his short stories and got struck by a plot twist in one of them. I thought it would make a good basis for a film, at least a situation for a film, and we worked from there.

He was very flattering at first, very English and polite. Then he showed up and said he went through my notes and thought my ideas were extremely stupid. Which annoyed me, but I didn't really care. What was true was that if we were going to collaborate together, we needed to work from scratch on a democratic basis. Often in director-writer relationships there is a kind of dominance that suppresses the imagination and talent of the other person. It was very democratic the way we built the script. I unequivocally give James credit for any panache in the writing. He's a very great poet actually and a wonderful short story writer. I'm not a real writer, but I think I am sufficiently schooled in writing to be able to collaborate. At least I have some idea as to what interests me as a director, so I can work closely with a writer in constructing a script that will be useful material for me. James is a pure writer with no ambitions to direct, so there is not that competitiveness that often creeps in.

Had he ever written a script before?

No. But as a poet he is predisposed to see the world in terms of images, and as a short story writer he is very adept at finding a concise narrative. I don't think novelists make great screenwriters. Novels are about interior dialogues, interior monologues, and tend to have sprawling narratives. Those are not qualities that are very useful for movies.

I think it was a very good collaboration because we both got to explore human problems that interested us. Sometimes I would allow him his personal indulgences in terms of a story or character that obsessed or compelled him, and he seemed equally if not more tolerant of my little obsessions. It is a very intimate relationship. There has to be a degree of trust and just pleasure in exchanging. And there was. I would look forward to getting together with him. He lives upstate in Woodstock, so sometimes a few weeks would go by, sometimes we



Filmmaker and *sommelier* Jonathan Nossiter. All photos Daniel Lerner, courtesy CFP Distribution

The Scripting
of *Sunday*:
An Interview with
Jonathan Nossiter

SKILLS

would see each other a few times a week. It had a nice random, sporadic quality. The nature of the collaboration seemed to take on a life of its own. It was interesting, and it surprised me constantly.

The credits on the film say it was inspired by James's story "Ate Menos or the Miracle." What does "inspired" mean?

I read the story and said, "Hey, here's a situation and a plot twist that interests me and this is what I want to go with." So it's not based on the short story. I'm not a big believer in literary adaptation. I think literature has its purpose and film has its own purpose, and they tend not to be related. I'd rather base a film on a painting, honestly.

I am struck by the consistency of feeling between the story and the film, regardless of how the plot changed. Both are about the power of happenstance and identity and the potential emptiness of time.

Look, when films are interesting, you feel the force of many personalities at work. Hopefully you feel a guiding hand, but you should also feel there is enough liberty in the making of it that it's not some sort of fascist egotistical expression. When I look at the film, I can feel my own spirit, but I can also feel James's spirit, David Suchet's, Lisa Harrow's, editor Madeline Gavin's. When a film seems to be alive, you can feel a chorus of voices. Hopefully they are singing more or less the same tune. Even if they are all out of tune, at least it's the same tune.

One of the great pleasures of working with James was that he was very willing to abandon his short story for the purpose of making a film. There was never any discussion of "Well, in the story it says X, therefore we should do X." He was as willing, more willing than most people, to try to create a film from scratch and just use something as a point of departure. Inevitably if you see parallels between the story and



Under the Queens subway, Nossiter directs the mistaken identity encounter between *Sunday* co-stars David Suchet (center) and Lisa Harrow (right).



Nossiter and Suchet on the set of *Sunday*, a film that counterpoints the story of an IBM exec who lost his job with the experiences of his fellow homeless shelter residents.

the film, that is a sign of vitality that James's spirit is also present in the film.

How long were you writing before you started looking for money?

We both did other jobs full-time while writing. We worked pretty quickly, though. We started in January 1994 and by the end of April we had essentially our first draft—the basic outline and probably fifty to sixty percent of the final dialogue. The film would have been much worse had we filmed that script. So huge improvements were made. But the basic thing was there in the first spurt.

Then I spent a month polishing, rejiggering, honing, while James went off to write a book with his wife in Italy. But it was basically just to try to make it presentable to producers. I then spent the summer tracking down producers. Found a bunch of them, they all turned out to be straw men and women. You know, a lot of promises, a lot of putative interest, a lot of bullshit and blind alleys.

After about six months we thought the development money was imminent. We then said, "Now it is time to do a serious rewrite." So James and I sat down and said, "Okay, these are the problems based on conversations with 30 or 40 people who have read the script at this point." It is one of the trickiest things in writing a script, just like in editing; you have to be solicitous of other people's opinions. You are not talking about a private monologue; you are talking about a film, which should be a public thing. You really can't be egomaniacal and think you are a genius and only you have the answer. You really do have to listen to people—and enjoy listening to people—or you shouldn't be a filmmaker. One of the pleasures is actually listening, getting opinions. The tough thing is knowing how to discount them. Twenty percent, thirty percent discount, maybe a little cheap resale here or there...

So there were 30 or 40 people who gave useful opinions at one level or another over the course of the year between the first draft and the rewrite. One of the luxuries of poverty is time. You have time to sit, time to absorb. That is underestimated. So these things percolated. Then James and I sat down for two solid months in June and July; this

was our primary focus then. We did not do a radical rewrite, but a very useful rewrite. We probably rewrote twenty to thirty percent of the dialogue and did a twenty percent structural change. But little shifts make a big difference.

You spent a lot of time in the homeless shelter as part of the writing process. Tell me about that.

To me, the pleasure of making a film is not that I have a message to communicate; it's that I wish to engage with the world in a way that my ordinary life wouldn't allow. The cliché about the process being the most important thing is true. What you come up with as a final product is to a great extent determined by how you go about constructing that product.

There are all sorts of key elements that went into making this film. One of them was a ten-year relationship with photographing certain parts of Queens. Then in the two years leading

up to the actual shooting, going there on very specific location scouts. You know, once every couple of weeks, bumming around in a car with some friends and a camera and just trying to develop a physical relationship to the different spaces. Obviously the key locations, like the homeless shelter, have huge resonances. Generally they are treated in a very glib way. Look at *The Saint of Fort Washington*, a film about a shelter. I don't know how much time those people actually spent in shelters. Maybe they did; unfortunately the film they made I don't think reflected that. I didn't get any real sense of the texture of the lives there. James and his wife, Pia Davis, spent three years working as volunteers at the shelter. They did it out of political conviction. So when James and I decided that our main character was a middle-class man who has been downsized to the underclass and is in the shelter, I started working there as a volunteer. I spent the year-and-a-half leading up to the shoot working there. I would go a couple times a month and spend the night. I started to take notes, quietly, privately, and built up a relationship with the people who work there, like Jimmy Broadway, who runs the shelter on a day-to-day basis. By the time it came to film, I had his trust, enough certainly that he acted in the film and played himself. But that took time.

It comes back to this other thing: The terrible disadvantage of being a low-budget filmmaker is that you have no money, no time when you are shooting, no equipment. The advantages, often overlooked, are total freedom if your imagination can expand to fit your limitations, and huge amounts of time leading up to the shooting. If you budget that time, you can build up relationships to people and places that will yield incredible dividends when you actually shoot.

By the time we shot in the shelter, we only had one week for a lot of dialogue, a lot of pages, a lot of scenes. But James knew that place intimately, and I knew it intimately. After about six months of working there, I started to introduce a video camera. For almost a year I would periodically shoot there. By the time I came with a crew, I knew the angles. I didn't know them as abstract aesthetic choices. The

angles had something to do with an emotional and psychological relationship to people and the physical space. Whether the scenes in the shelter are interesting to the viewer or not, I have no idea; but I don't think that anyone can say that they are fake.

You have both professional and amateur actors in the film. Did you rehearse with them differently?

Having come out of documentaries, you end up developing a bedside manner which can help you. I think doing documentaries is the best preparation for features. What you learn is that you don't accept the people you are going to film, the non-actors, at face value. You learn in a sense to direct them. But you learn a kind of weird language that isn't the language of a director with an actor, to bring something human out, to get them to talk about certain things they don't necessarily want to talk about, to get them to express things. That has a nice spillover.

How much of the cast were non-actors?

There are at least four or five non-actors. Each and every one was treated differently. Jimmy Broadway, for instance, all his dialogue is actually taken from my videotaping him over the course of a year. It was transcribed, slightly modified, then given to him. But I gave him the dialogue the morning of the shoot. I didn't want him to study his own words. As a non-actor, he wouldn't know how to process them, and they would end up coming out stilted. But I showed him his words in the morning and it was enough for him just to look at them. It was almost like a mnemonic device. Then he gave me like a jazz riff on them, and that's all I wanted. It was the basic dialogue, enough so he could interact with real actors.

I did a dinner at my house and I invited all the people who either were or were playing people at the shelter. They came over sort of in character, and we had dinner and hung out, and a lot of the dialogue was shaped that evening.

The whole construction of the film had a kind of jazz improv quality. There are definite tunes, definite melodies, definitely a structure; but it felt open and free enough at each stage to improvise and do riffs.

Both David Suchet and Lisa Harrow came over from the UK for this shoot. How did you work with them?

They are a totally different story. They are classically trained Royal Shakespeare Company actors. We budgeted three weeks of rehearsal, which is fairly unusual for a low-budget independent film. Again, that is something very important to me. I have worked in the theater as a means of training for the movies, and I care about the process of discovery. James and I had a script that we thought was okay, but I wanted to do work, real text work, with the actors. So I tried to prepare thoroughly so I could get my shot lists, location scouting, and tech scouts out of the way. All that was done three weeks before the first day of principal photography. That way I could spend eight to ten hours a day with the actors. That was a real luxury, but was a luxury we worked for.

There are a lot of directors and actors who say "Oh, don't prepare; discover it all in the moment." That's fine for some people. My hat's off to any genius who is so brilliant and inventive that every moment they discover is worth gold. The rest of us schlubs, you make up for a lack of genius with preparation. What it meant was during those three

weeks with the two leads, we fought through a lot of problems, a lot of disagreements, and a lot of discoveries. It meant that when we sat down and did a difficult scene, we had already worked through a lot of problems, so we were actually free to invent based on something hopefully substantial. But if we weren't in a terribly inventive mood, at least we had something to rely on from recent memory. And they could get in front of the camera and not feel totally naked and exposed, and I could put the camera more or less in a position that I thought wasn't ridiculous and get something that made sense for the overall film. In the end it didn't cost us any more, partly thanks to the generosity of the actors, but also because we started prepping three months ahead.

How much of the script changed from before you started working with the actors to when you started rolling?

Not a huge amount on the page, but that is one the peculiarities of working with English actors. They are much more respectful of working with text, since they have grown up with Shakespeare and Webster and Marlowe. They are also very generous in their assessments even when they are dealing with texts that aren't Shakespeare and Webster and Marlowe. So not much changed on the page. But the force did; that is also the strength of English actors. They have so much control over their voice box and physical gestures that they can actually effect the same emotional, psychological changes just by their inflection that an American Method actor would do by changing the words. It is one of the great joys of working with brilliant classically trained English actors.

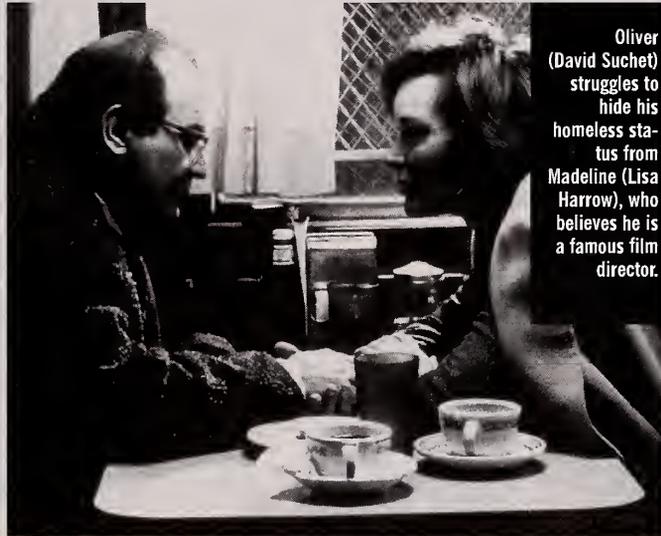
Did you know you wanted David Suchet to play the role?

Absolutely, he was my first choice all the way, although it is sort of

weird, isn't it, to have an English actor play an archetypal American.

Did you know he could do an American accent?

No, I hoped. But the one thing I knew is that I consider him one of the greatest actors in the world. I know his training as a Shakespearean actor allows him to do accents in



Oliver (David Suchet) struggles to hide his homeless status from Madeline (Lisa Harrow), who believes he is a famous film director.

a way that is not superficial. I had also seen him do a Russian accent for *The Falcon and the Snowman*, a South African accent for *A World Apart*, his stylized French accent for *Hercule Poirot*. I know that he had won the equivalent of a Tony award for a David Mamet play in London. This guy, if you asked him to do cartwheels on the needle of the Empire State Building, he could probably do it for you. That's probably the single smartest thing you can do as a first-time director: surround yourself with people who know what they are doing.

David Houts is the co-owner of Hybrid Films, Inc., a documentary production company in New York City

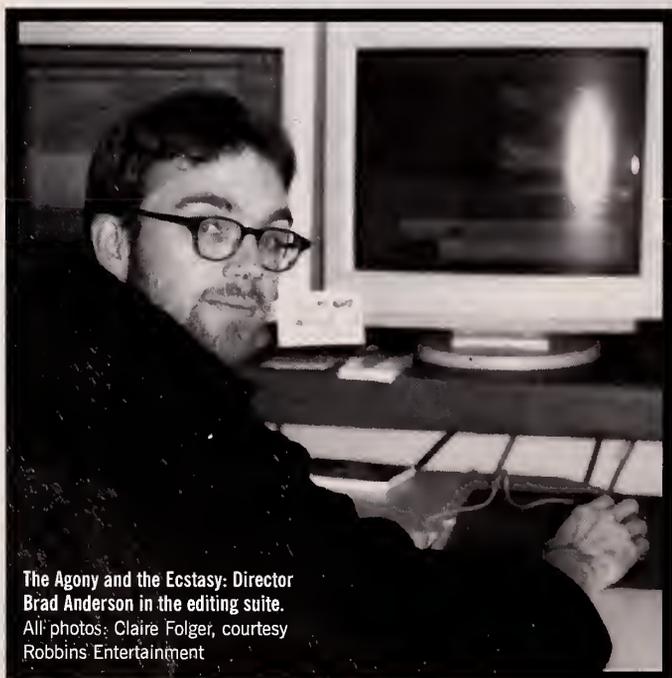
BY BRAD ANDERSON

Solitary. Dark. Lonely. Obsessed. Such is the editor's existence during postproduction.

But life in the editing suite has its rewards, as writer/director/editor Brad Anderson (*The Darien Gap*) reveals in this diary for his second feature, *Next Stop Wonderland*. Anderson, who teaches editing at Boston Film/Video Foundation, here offers his musings on the difference an Avid makes, how to best edit improvisational scenes, and the big battles and infinitesimally small choices every editor faces.

TALES

EDITING



The Agony and the Ecstasy: Director Brad Anderson in the editing suite.
All photos: Claire Folger, courtesy Robbins Entertainment



January 18, 1997
Prospector Hotel, Sundance Film Festival

Today we screened some clips from *Next Stop Wonderland* to nine of the major distributors. We wrapped shooting only last month, and we're now trying to build a buzz. Response to the clips is very good, but typically restrained—distributors never show their cards until they're ready to gamble. The guys from Miramax seemed to dig it. October also seemed intrigued, although I worried that Bingham Ray wouldn't remove his sunglasses (he did). The only major bomb is a company that seems concerned only with whether we treated our animal actors ethically. I vouched that neither the balloonfish, the cat, nor the penguin were harmed; they don't seem convinced. My producer, Mitchell

FROM THE CRYPT

Next Stop Wonderland



Are Richard Rees and Cara Buono flirting? Is it harassment? We'll never know, since this scene is one of the many that ended up in the Trash file during the editing process.

Robbins, and co-writer, Lyn Vaus, diligently sit through all nine screenings. I admire their stamina, but question their sanity.

January 20

I'm headed home to three-and-a-half months of confinement in a dark broom closet with no windows, no ventilation, and the incessant whirring of two huge memory towers. This is my first time editing on an Avid. Up to this point I've cut films the old fashioned way—on a flatbed with a splicer and tape.

Perversely, advances in technology have made editing an even more lonesome affair. Cutting on a nonlinear digital system allows me to edit without an assistant. I have one, Lisa Faircloth, but she comes and goes

when I'm not around, stealthily digitizing and logging the 50-some hours of film we shot. Meanwhile, my life of desperate solitude begins to fall into a steady routine.

January 28

My editing approach for this film will be first to lay out the goal—the last scene—and work backwards. I want everything to aim dramatically towards this last scene. I don't edit chronologically. I like editing in random bursts and piecing it all together at the end.

As you begin to edit a film, you settle on a particular style dictated in part by the kind of coverage you shot. In *The Darien Gap*, I did a lot of jump-cutting, primarily because I lacked crucial coverage in certain

scenes. I thought I would do the same for this film, but I'm discovering that I can cut scenes pretty seamlessly because we got so much coverage. So much coverage. 50 hours worth.

February 1

It's 2:15 a.m. and I'm cutting the pivotal last scene—the moment when the two parallel stories finally converge. It's a key emotional moment for Hope Davis's character (Erin), and all this emotion must play on her face. I spend hours quibbling over a particular cut, extending her close-up by four frames, then reducing it by two, extending it three frames, reducing it by six. This is what's known in trade parlance as "frame fucking." It's too easy to do on an Avid—click the mouse. I'm in the *danger zone*, losing perspective. An infinite number of possible editing combinations present themselves. It's like spinning a Rubik's Cube: you get the red side, then the blue side is fucked up, so you spin and get the blue side and now the red side is fucked up...and you haven't even started on the yellow, orange, and white sides.

February 3

Who made up the rule that one script page equals one minute of screen time!? I have this in my script:

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Erin hangs up the phone. She walks into the living room and takes a book from the shelf. She walks over to the bay window and stares out at the small park below. She opens the book to a random page, closes her eyes, and randomly chooses a word.

One eighth of a page—should be maybe 10–15 seconds, right? It clocks in at more than one minute! Edited together, I find the scene needs length to be effective, something I wasn't aware of while writing it. I begin to worry about running time.

I try not to consult a script when I edit. Trying to edit a scene precisely the way it was written sometimes works. But often the best solutions have little correspondence to the written page. If you become too attached to the script, you tend not to see other solutions.

February 8

I've begun cutting a big improvisation scene. I like to do a lot of improv on the set. You often get the most interesting performances when the actors are winging it. Of course, you end up shooting a lot of footage. We shot more than two hours for a scene that will total seven minutes. How to cut this?

What I do is first select a few "keystone" moments from the improv material. In other words, identify key lines that will be the cornerstones for building the whole scene. Usually I find a good middle moment for the scene, a good way to enter the scene, and then a good way to exit. The editing then becomes a process of finding the best solutions for connecting these moments, like connecting the dots.

What I usually focus on first is the dialogue, not really worrying about whether the camera is "on" an actor during certain lines. Once the scene is cut for the dialogue, I go back and patch it up with cut-



No, it's not an episode of ER: Davis takes the lead as the nurse lookin' for love in *Next Stop Wonderland*.

aways and reaction shots. I always make sure to get a lot of reaction shots. You can never have too many.

We shot this film hand-held. Combining this shooting style with the improvisation and inevitably you're faced with continuity problems and technical hiccups, particularly focus and unacceptable camera movement. It's the kind of filmmaking where you have to be willing to trust that you'll be able to sort it all out in the editing room.

One way I sort it out as a director/editor is to cut first and foremost for performance. An audience will forgive you a technical problem or continuity error long before they'll forgive a bad performance. Ideally you'll want to get the performance and the technical polish together in the same take. But the best takes for performance tend to be the first one or two, when the actors are fresh and daring. Alas, these tend to be the worst technically because the DP and AC

haven't perfected the camera move, lighting, or focus pull.

February 15

My mouse is slow. If I were cutting real film, would I be pondering a slow mouse right now? How has this digital process changed my cutting style?

A lot. When you edit film, you CUT! and SPLICE! with a sharp GUILLOTINE splicing block! OW! With an Avid, you essentially fondle a mouse. That's a big difference. With film editing, you smell, touch, even taste the film sometimes. You wake up with the smell of Eastman Kodak 7245 in your hair. Film can cut you, wrap itself around you, break, snap, purr through the sprockets...you get the point. With a computer-based digital system, the sex is gone. It's a clinical, unsensual process—a perfect analog for the neutered nineties.

Despite all this, I'm unequivocally hooked. I could never cut film again.

February 17

Danger zone! I'm mired in indecisiveness. Scene 52: "Erin calls Kevin." I've already cut seven versions, and those are just the obvious possibilities. The Rubik's cube is spinning. My mind tumbles, lights flash behind my eyes. I feel the bile and coffee assault my stomach and decide to cut my losses. I go for version #3: Open with the wide shot, cut to mid-shot, end with close up. I think it's good.

February 18

Version #3 sucks! Opening with the wide lacks oomph. I decide to open with the close-up instead. But then I begin to wonder if I should keep the early wide shot to help orient the audience? I'm beginning to realize why some great directors shot primarily in wide-shot masters. It made it harder for the studio meddlers to re-edit your work (because they lacked coverage), and it's a snap to edit. Just string the best takes together and *voilà!*

February 26

One of our "name" actors is ending up on the cutting room floor. I admit, we expanded his scene in the script to get him to commit to the project. Now I'm having to cut him back to the original smaller role. Hope he understands the maxim "less is more."

March 20

Mitch and I continue to haggle over final cut. He wants it. I want it. A typical director/producer scenario. I wonder what would happen to this film if it were taken out of my hands and re-edited by someone else. Maybe it would be better; maybe not. It would be a very different film. Ultimately, there's no guarantee that you can make a film better by adding talent upon talent until no single person's vision guides the process. It makes more sense to let one person guide a movie from beginning to end—from writing to directing to editing it. You save money and you get a clearly definable vision. Blame or praise can be easily assigned. Ultimately, Mitch and I agree to resolve any creative differences mutually. The final cut will be neither his nor mine but ours.

March 23

Too much exposition! Maxim: Always submerge exposition beneath character.

April 3

About one week until we screen the rough cut. Nearly every scene has been cut. All that's left is to assemble the scenes end-to-end to figure out approximately how long the movie is. I go to dinner. I'm worried. Most scenes seem pretty tight. I've already cut out two that I loved. What if it's enormously long?

I rush back, fire up the drives, and begin assembling the movie. With each added scene, the film chain grows longer, longer, like some endless conga line. I finally have three-quarters of the movie together, minus the first 15 minutes. I tentatively put the cursor at the start of the timeline. It says 1:42. *142 minutes!*? Ohmigod! That's two hours and 22 minutes! My heart plummets. It's over. Over! In my head I start composing the last ditch voiceover that will fill in the gargantuan plot holes. *Wait... 1:42?* That's not minutes! It means 1 hour: 42 minutes.

That's 102 minutes! With the opening scenes, the entire length is somewhere around 120 minutes. The voiceover scenario dissolves like a bad dream, and I breathe again. My goal is achievable. Just lose about 10-15 minutes. But where?

April 5

The English Patient won the Oscar for best editing. Why? Look at *Breaking the Waves*. That was daring editing. How do you decide on what constitutes good editing? A fantastic editor might take crap dailies and make a pretty good movie. Isn't this more of an achievement than a mediocre editor taking great dailies and making a pretty good movie? The point is that the pretty good movie is no indication of the skills of the editor. It's a perverse and damning logic, and it's why editors tend to be quiet, reclusive people who don't seek out praise.

April 12

Rough cut screening: the first time anyone has seen a cut of the film from beginning to end. 60-70 people are packed into this little screening room, many on foldable chairs in the aisles. They are an odd assortment of friends, acquaintances, colleagues. (Later I'll learn a few are mortal enemies.) I'm a little disconcerted when a girl who has a 10-second cameo arrives with her entire extended family, everyone toting bags of popcorn. Little girl's Grandmother: "We're all so excited!"

I wish I could say the same. I'm introduced and slur off some sleep-deprived comments about how crappy it's going to look and how crappy it's going to sound...but enjoy the show anyhow. It begins and I stand in the back, near the emergency exit. A heaping wave of self-doubt crashes on me. What if nothing makes sense? Panic sets in. Prey's instinct to flee. Run! The first image comes up: "A Brad Anderson Film." I cringe at the utter pomposity. Then I remember it's standard procedure, written into my director's contract. Relax.

The opening gets some laughs. It all seems to move so fast. I mentally note where the laughs occur and especially where they don't. One line gets a huge burst of laughter, which scares me. I never thought it was *that* funny. Maybe my instincts are off. It's pretty easy to gauge if the funny stuff works. But the sad, pensive moments—are they working? How do you tell? During a particularly serious moment, a guy in the third row leans forward and rests his head on the seat in front of him. I do that at movies when I'm bored. I start to panic again.

Just then I hear talking from the back row. A man is loudly vocalizing! He hates it and gets up to leave. He's gotta be French! No, actually he's the AV coordinator, who just entered and discovered too many people in the room. He's pissed and trying to get people to clear the aisles. He and the associate producer pow-wow in the back just as the funniest scene begins to unspool. I hear him say, "I don't care, I want everyone out." He escorts people sitting in the aisles out of their chairs. He brusquely tells me to leave. "But I'm the director..." Pause. "Okay, you can stay."

April 19

Just read the 40 questionnaires from the screening. Very interesting reactions—some very positive, some very



Continued on pg. 60

ESPERANTO FOR DIRECTORS

Or, How to be Safe, Not Sorry, When Shooting Abroad

BY DAVID GIANCOLA

LAST SUMMER, MY BUSINESS PARTNER, PETER BECKWITH, AND I WERE preparing to produce a feature film called *Pressure Point*. Our Vermont-based company, Edgewood Productions, specializes in action-adventure films that look like they cost a lot more than they really do, ensuring a profit for us and a continuing career as a film director for me. (I am the only one not working in the family construction business.) Our plan was to film the bulk of *Pressure Point* in the middle of summer, then shut down the production until winter and shoot a spectacular James Bond-9style opening sequence at a neighboring ski resort.

This plan held until our largest investor and the star of the film, Don Mogavero, came up with a "better" idea. He had a contact in Santiago, Chile, who could let us film at a resort in the Andes mountains and would cover the cost of our travel and lodging. It seems the Chilean government was dying to get foreign productions into the country, and Don's friend had a uncle who was a high-ranking general who could additionally offer us use of military troops and vehicles. The next thing I knew, I found myself on an endless 17-hour flight to Chile with Don, his wife, and cinematographer Grove Hafela, a veteran of many faraway location shoots.

I hate flying, always have, always will. My discomfort isn't helped by the fact that the DP is also a pilot and makes a point of showing me all the unsafe conditions aboard our Aerolineas jet.

"Jesus, this is an Airbus 310, the Yugo of the sky. I did a shoot in the factory where they assemble these; I saw 12-year-olds putting these planes together," he tells me. "Do you realize we have only two engines and will be flying the entire length of the Amazon?" I try to calm myself by joking that if we crashed in the Andes, no matter how hungry I was, I wouldn't eat him. He doesn't laugh. He tells me not to make promises I might not be able to keep.

We land the next morning to be greeted by Don's friend Alex Flores and his assistant, Rodrigo. "We have the best crew in all of Chile ready for you! No problem," exclaims Alex. He proudly shows off the 50 rolls of motion picture film he picked up at Kodak in Chile. We spend half an hour explaining that we had ordered 15 rolls, not 50. He proffers our Visa receipt; we were billed for only 15 rolls. We could shoot the whole movie with 50 rolls, so we decide to keep quiet. We're a small production; if Kodak wants to bonus us over \$4,000 in film, who are we to refuse? Maybe it's a local custom.

We travel another two hours up to our lodging in the Andes. We've arrived a day early to give ourselves time to acclimate to the altitude before the filming begins. People have been known to have trouble adjusting to the thin atmosphere—getting nosebleeds, hyperventilating, or basically freaking out. I immediately start testing my body's reaction by mixing the thin air with the local *cerveza* and find it to be the perfect



The director (left) in the Andes; (above) the cast has a laugh about local press's mischaracterization of their shoot.

Photos courtesy filmmaker

sleep tonic. On my way to bed, I stop by Grove's room to find him organizing a massive array of toiletries, medicine, and vitamins. The one thing Grove learned in all of his years of travel was to be prepared. Everything from Melatonin to Pepto Bismol is at his fingertips. "Do you have anything in there for hypochondria?" I ask. "You don't really care how much of the film is in focus, do you?" he replies. I head for bed.

A day later we're on a mountain road at 6:00 a.m. to start filming. The scene is supposed to be a simple shot of a limousine carrying the Chilean ambassador up to a resort for a party. We watch the sun rise over the mountains. The Andes are a spectacular sight. This is starting to seem like a great idea. Grove muses that the morning light is perfect, and if we can start shooting within the next hour, the footage will be gorgeous.

But by 9:00 a.m., the best crew in all of Chile has still not arrived, the gorgeous morning light is turning into glare, and we have a long day ahead of us. Worse, there is no coffee. Not just on set; nowhere in the entire country. During the entire trip, all I could ever find was weak Nescafé. I tried getting an explanation as to why there's no coffee in Chile, but all they would say was, "We don't trust the Colombians."

While we're waiting, Grove mentions that he never could get a straight answer about what camera the local crew was going to bring. At 9:30 a small truck pulls up. The camera assistant gets out and proudly opens the back of the truck. It is completely empty except for one case. It's the camera—an Aaton. That's not what we were expecting, but it's just fine for what we need; we've got film, and maybe Alex will show up with the limo. "Let's set up," I order.

By 10:00 more trucks begin to arrive and guys who look like crew get out and stand around. Normally I would be very happy about this, but Alex, who was supposed to be our translator, has not yet arrived, and my Spanish is limited to, "*Uno más cerveza, por favor.*" Slowly we communicate through hand signals and a small Berlitz dictionary and begin to get ready. Finally Alex arrives, bringing a Mercedes instead of a limo. He explains that the limo wouldn't make it through the switchbacks up the mountain.

"Where are the actors' doubles?" I ask. "Doubles?" says Alex. This was the beginning of a very annoying game we played. I would ask for something that we had agreed upon by fax, and Alex would look at me blankly.

"Screw it, Grove, shoot this baby as wide as you can. Let's go." I lie to myself that we should be showing off the beautiful Andes anyway. We get the car in position, but an argument begins around the camera. Grove strolls over to me with the news, "They forgot the screw." "What screw?" "The screw that holds the camera on the tripod." "You're kidding! This is supposed to be the best crew in all of Chile!" Grove glances back at the crew. They smile at us. "Chile's not that big, Dave."

Finally, we get the car into position around a bend. I call "action" into the walkie-talkie, but the car doesn't come. I then discover that no one charged the walkie-talkie batteries. We have to send another car to get the Mercedes. I look off to the sky. The beautiful early morning light is now completely gone.

By noon we finally get the shot, and everyone applauds at the great spirit of international cooperation that allowed us to spend half a day shooting a wide shot of a Mercedes in lousy light with the camera duct-taped to the tripod.

We arrive at the resort by 1:00 p.m. and begin to set up a scene

where the ambassador is hustled out of the resort by his security force. "Okay, Alex, bring in the security guards." "Security guards?" Ski instructors from the resort are recruited and filming resumes—until take four, when the ski instructors decide that moviemaking is too boring and repetitive. They figure we must not be doing it right. That's okay; the rest of the shots mostly involve Don. He seems to be the one thing that is working out better than expected. Even in the thin atmosphere, he runs, jumps, does his own stunts, and looks really cool. Every time a stunt comes up, Don offers to do it, then his wife approaches me five minutes later and asks, "Don't we have stuntmen for this?" "Yes," I reply, "we have the best stuntmen in all of Chile. They're relaxing in the ski lodge sipping Nescafé."

One of our biggest problems with the large Chilean crew is that they seem to have adapted the specialized-task, Hollywood way of working—that is, a grip won't touch the camera, and a camera assistant won't move a light, even an inch. I hate this way of working and discourage it on my sets in Vermont, but since I don't know who does what on this crew, I have to translate my orders three or four times to get anything done. We solve this technical problem by writing the position of each crew member on strips of gaffer tape and affixing them to their jackets.

By 2:00 p.m. things have started moving along at a pretty fast clip—until Alex arrives with the media. He had told them that a big Hollywood film crew was filming and they bought it. It appears if you're filming internationally and you are from America, you are "Hollywood." One local T.V. station even hired a helicopter to get shots of us filming in remote parts of the mountains, ruining numerous takes. "How do you like working with Chilean crews?" they ask. I say something pithy about how much better Chilean crews are compared to my experience with Hollywood crews. (It's no lie, since I've never worked with a Hollywood crew.) When the news segment airs days later, I discover that we're working on an HBO movie budgeted at over one million dollars and that Alex is directing.

ALEX'S ASSISTANT, RODRIGO, FERRIES ME BY SNOWMOBILE TO THE SPOT outside the resort where the crew is setting up our last shot of the day. I'm carrying up the most delicate cargo: lenses for the camera. While scaling one of the steep slopes, the snowmobile sputters and the clutch gives out. We slide backwards down the hill at increasing speed until we slam into a snow bank. I make the world's deepest faceplant, and the lens case goes flying. Most of the lenses are now in much worse shape than I am, which means we've got to do the last shot with a 80mm, whether I like it or not. I walk the rest of the way.

As originally planned, this sequence involved a chase through the snow that ended in the fiery destruction of the hero's snowmobile. In Vermont, we would have simply bought a used snowmobile for \$100 and set it on fire. But in Chile there are no old snowmobiles, so we had to ship our \$100 snowmobile at a cost of \$3,000.

"You are going to love this, David. They want to show you a test. They are the best explosives experts in Chile." Alex hustles me over to a group of men who are surrounded by gas cans and car batteries. They ask me how big I want the explosion. I'm no dummy. "Really big. Hiroshima big!" "No problem," they say. We back away to where the rest of the crew waits. A small puff of smoke spurts from the ground. The experts look sheepishly in our direction. "What the hell was that?" asks Grove "That," I snicker, "was the work of the best explosives experts in all of Chile."

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By 5 p.m. we are losing the light. We have only one chance to get the destruction of the snowmobile before dark, and we must be in Santiago tomorrow. The experts must have heard us mocking them, because the explosion they set off shakes the ground, blowing apart our \$3,100 imported snowmobile in a large ball of flame that shoots high into the sky. "Cool!" I say. The tourists at the resort panic, however, and call the police, assuming the news helicopter has just crashed.

"That's a wrap!" The crew understands this universal signal for quittin' time, pack up the equipment, and hop on the snowmobiles. I am beat. "Only six more days to go," quips Grove as he jumps on a departing snowmobile. I seriously consider calling my brother and asking for a position in the family construction business. To top it all off, there is an irate Kodak sales representative waiting for me at the inn wanting to know who stole 35 rolls of film.

So what have I learned from my first experience filming in another country? Basically, that Murphy's Law expands exponentially when filming outside the U.S. The things that are important to prepare for when filming in your backyard are doubly important when filming overseas. Here are some tips that will help make your international shoot go a lot smoother:

1. Preproduction is critical.

A survey trip to the intended locations would probably have solved most of our problems. We didn't have the budget for that, but were I to do this again, I'd spend more time during preproduction trying to locate an American living in that country to act as cultural translator and facilitator. (We eventually hired a ski bum from Utah vacationing at the resort who turned into a great Assistant Director.) In any case, find a contact that you can trust in that country. Equally important, get written confirmations on everything if you can and bring them with you. Assume nothing unless it is down on paper and signed.

2. Gather information.

What is the climate like? Will it affect filming? (Extreme cold, heat, or moisture mostly likely will.) What is the political climate like? Is it about to change? Will local customs, religions, or attitudes affect your shoot in any way? Consider every detail and how it may affect production. If you know a fellow filmmaker who has shot in the area or a friend who has traveled there, buy them lunch and pick their brain.

3. The ability to communicate is everything.

It is very important to know at least a little of the native language. This may seem like an obvious suggestion, but it becomes harder to keep in mind during the throes of preproduction. I purchased a dictionary and a phrase cassette to listen to in my car, but as our departure date got closer, I focused on easier problems, assuming that English is the "universal" language. I was wrong. Even if you know quite a bit of the language, it's best to have a trustworthy translator around at all times.

4. Money is a "universal translator."

I quickly discovered that many problems are solved by keeping local currency handy for petty cash. Have a wad of cash available to grease the wheel, whether for customs, garnering extras, or whatever else comes up. In addition, have back-up finances in place just in case you are robbed or anything else goes wrong. (Grove carried an "escape kit"—passport, driver's license, traveler's checks, local and U.S. currency—with him at all times inside a money belt.)

5. Take care of all paperwork before you go.

Make sure you are aware of any government customs issues pertaining to the transport of equipment, film, actors, and crew in and out of the country. We had to have reams of documents ready just to bring in one back-up camera.

6. Protect your investment.

The most important thing you will bring back from your trip is your film or video originals. Protect them. Even though we had to return the extra rolls to Kodak, it made better sense to purchase and develop our film in Chile than to risk sending undeveloped film through a foreign airport's X-ray machine. (It turned out that there is an excellent lab in Santiago.) Don't let airport X-ray technicians tell you, "It's okay to go through the x-ray." Demand a hand check of your carry-on items. This is standard procedure for news crews. If you are carrying a video camera, have a battery and tape handy, as you will be asked to turn it on during the check. *Never*

trust film or delicate equipment to airline baggage handlers.

7. *Understand "tomorrow."*

A friend once tried to get permission to film in a government building on the isle of Cypress. The official in charge always replied, "We'll get to it tomorrow." Two months later, he finally gave permission. Although I found Chilean crews to be fairly efficient, many of my friends have experienced this attitude of "whenever" among crew members and often entire cultures. We American filmmakers operate by the belief that "time is money." Film professionals in other countries are often paid by the week and treat film production more like a nine-to-five job than the intense military operation we make out of it. Unfortunately, the only way to fix "tomorrow" (and sometimes you can't) is to start handing out the "universal translator."

8. *Find out the financial benefits.*

Many countries are actively courting foreign productions. They offer tax breaks, free locations, discounted crew rates, etc. Can you benefit from this? *Locations* magazine, *Hollywood Reporter*, and other trades sometimes advertise this information. No matter where you go, check the exchange rate. Will it save or cost you?

9. *Milk the Hollywood angle (if it helps).*

In Chile we were considered a "Hollywood" production simply because we were from America. If you milk this a bit, you can use it to get free crew, actors, and less hassle on locations. But *beware*; this can backfire, since it also means you are viewed as having deep pockets.

10. *Go with the flow.*

This is the most important tip. Be flexible. If a limousine turns into a Mercedes, don't panic. This will distract you, and you won't be prepared when something great happens.

Although some of these suggestions may seem nitpicky, it's better to be safe than sorry. With good planning and forethought, you can have a smooth shoot anywhere in the world. Good luck! By the way, know any good stories that could be filmed in Vermont next summer?

David Giancola's company, Edgewood Productions, has produced numerous television commercials, videos, and three feature films, the most recent of which, Pressure Point, is due to be released this fall. For his free report on getting into the business, Five Things You Must Know Before Starting Your Independent Film, call (800) 548-7309.

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AFI 1997 FESTIVAL, October 23-Nov 1. Deadline: Aug 29. Fee: features \$50, shorts \$40. AFI Fest combines film programming w/ exciting special events, capturing cultural diversity of Los Angeles & providing new filmmakers w/ exposure to industry. Cats: Dramatic Comp., First Features, Short Subjects. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video. Contact: AFI Fest, 2021 N. Western Ave., LA, CA 90027; (213) 856-7707; fax 462-4049; afifest@afionline.org

AUSTIN HEART OF FILM FESTIVAL AND SCREENWRITERS' CONFERENCE, Oct, TX. Deadline: Aug. 15. Fest extended to a full week to "cater for the insatiable demand of the Austin audience for significant, exciting and leading edge cinema." Cats: feature, short, student short. Cash awards. Screen-play awards: \$3,500, participation in Heart of Film Mentorship program; airfare and accommodation to attend the Heart of Film Screenwriter's conference; the HOF Bronze Award. Judges are industry professionals. Past judges incl. reps from Bravo, HBO, ICM, Tri-mark, the Independent Film Channel and Columbia Pictures. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Films must be completed no earlier than June 1996. Entry fee: \$35. Contact: The Austin Film Festival, 1600 Nueces, Austin, TX 78701; 1-800-310-FEST.

CHARLESTON INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL/WORLD-FEST CHARLESTON, Nov. 1-9, SC. Deadline: Sept. 1. Founded in 1993, this is sister fest to World-Fest Houston. Fest incl. about 25 premieres of new American ind & foreign films & expanded juried competition in numerous cats, incl. features, shorts, docs, interactive media, student films, exp, TV prod., TV commercials, music videos, screenplays & the MUSC

medical film & video awards. Awards: Remi Gold Grand Award for Best Entry in each of major cats; Gold Special Jury Award, & Gold, Silver, Bronze & Finalist Awards for Best Entry in Sub-cat. Student entries compete for \$2,500 cash award for best entry & \$500 award in each sub-cat. Screenplay & film script entries compete for Gold, Silver, Bronze & Finalist awards, incl. \$2,500 cash option for winner & \$100,000 writers fee on production. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: \$50-\$200. Contact: Hunter Todd, Charleston Int'l Film & Video Festival/WorldFest Charleston, Box 838, Charleston, SC 29402-0838; (713) 965-9955; fax: 965-9960; worldfest@aol.com; www.vanevar.com/worldfest

CINEQUEST: THE ANNUAL SAN JOSE FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 29-Feb. 4, CA. Deadline: Oct. 10. "Maverick Filmmaking" is the annual theme of Cinequest, founded in 1990, which showcases "an eclectic mix of ind films & filmmakers demonstrating the qualities of the maverick: individuality, innovation, intelligence." Fest offers "personal & intimate environment" for filmmakers, buyers & fans. Special sections incl. Digital & High-Tech, Latino & After Hours. Introducing a Gay & Lesbian presentation. Local showcase. Film Feasts (thematic events of film, food & entertainment). Ind. feature & short films of artistic, social or stylistic merit eligible. There is significant Bay Area coverage & nat'l & int'l press is growing. This is only int'l film fest in San Jose. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: \$25. Contact: Mike Rabehl, programming, Cinequest: The Annual San Jose Film Festival, P.O. Box 720040, San Jose, CA 95172; (408) 995-6305; fax: 995-5713; sjfest@aol.com

FORT LAUDERDALE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AND MARKET, Oct. 29-Nov. 16, FL. Deadline: Sept. 1. Now in its 12th yr, 10-day competitive fest (beginning w/ 9-day mini fest in Boca Raton) showcasing ind. produced films, dedicated to "emphasizing film as a means of cultural awareness as well as for entertainment." Comp. cats incl. professional full-length features, docs & short subjects (up to 10 mins.). Of 60-75 features in fest, approx. 15 invited into competition. All docs & shorts eligible for awards in respective cats. Feature films considered for Director, Actor, Actress, Golden Palm Award & Audience Award. Special Jury prizes awarded. Since 1989, fest has honored outstanding student films in Nat'l Student Competition in cats of student narrative (25-50 min.), short narrative (under 25 min.), doc, animation & music video. All winners receive cash prizes, plaque & product grant from Eastman Kodak. Fest also has Art On Film doc series. Comp. features receive own page in fest program, which is inserted into 250,000 Ft. Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel* Friday editions, as well as mailed to other fests, distributors & producers. Program also incl. galas & parties, award ceremonies, tributes (incl. Lifetime Achievement Awards) & seminars. Formats accepted: 16mm, 35mm, 70mm. Entry fee: \$40 features; \$30 shorts; \$25 student. Contact: Bonnie Adams, education coordinator, Fort Lauderdale Int'l Film Fest, 2625 East Sunrise Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304; (954) 563-0500; fax: 564-1206; Brofilm@aol.com; www.vcn.net/filmfest

HAMPTONS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 15-19 NY. Deadline: Aug. 8. Created in

1993 "to provide a forum for filmmakers around the world who express an ind. vision." 60 films & 30 shorts shown each yr. Fest's top prize for best Amer. ind. feature, the Golden Starfish Award, includes a package of in-kind services valued at \$125,000. Prizes are also awarded to Best Director, Score, Doc, Short, and Audience Favorite. Also cash prizes to student filmmakers (please request student entry form). Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: \$50 feature, \$25 short. Contact: Stephen Gallagher, program dir., Hamptons Int'l Film Festival, 3 Newtown Mews, East Hampton, NY 11937; (516) 324-4600; fax: 324-5116; www.peconic.net/arts/hamptons/film-festival

HONOLULU UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Nov 16-23, HI. Deadline: Aug 30. Hawaii's alternative film fest, this annual int'l competition features the whole gamut of films and videos. All genres and lengths accepted. Features and shorts in all cats: 2D animation, docs, comedy, horror, drama, action, adventure. Fest also includes the HUFF Best of Fest awards. Format for selection: VHS (NTSC). Entry fee \$20. Enclose SASE. Contact: Christopher Kahunahana, director, Box 240-120, Honolulu, HI 96824-0120; (808) 735-2242; fax: 737-3343.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MEDIA FESTIVAL, Feb., MD. Deadline: Oct. 1. Purpose of fest is to recognize original student work. Students encouraged to create their own stories & produce own visuals & own audio; preferred that script, music, sound effects, photography, artwork, video footage, computer graphics, animation, etc. all be student work. Producers compete only against students of approx same age. Grade classifications are: K-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, college/university. Entry cats: Comedy, Drama, News, Doc, Instructional, Promotional, Music Videos, PSA's, Sports. Entries may be produced by individual student, group, class, or club. All submissions should be under 7 min. Fest administered by Assoc. for Educational Communications & Technology; event chairs in different states select works in different cats & age groups. Formats: 1/2". Entry fee: \$10. Contact: Mike Masczenski, TIS, Int'l Student Media Festival, A.A.C.P.S., 2644 Riva Road, Annapolis, MD 21401; (410) 222-5000; fax: 222-5601.

IOWA INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 10-11, IA. Deadline: Sept. 5. Fest highlights film and video from 12 state mid-western region: IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, NE, ND, OH, ID, SD, WI. Only film/videomakers from or living in this region, or films produced in this region are eligible. Videos & films under 30 min. in narrative, doc, exp & animation cats. Student entries encouraged. Best of Show award. Formats accepted: VHS, Hi8. Entry fee: \$20 one entry; \$30, two. Contact: Christopher Martin, Electronic Media Division, Univ. of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0139; (319) 273-2372; martin@c@uni.edu

LOUISVILLE FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, November 5-9, KY. Deadline: Aug. 1. Fest of features, docs and shorts. Cash awards in cats: Best Feature, Best Non-Feature, Best Short, Best Music Video and Best Student Entry. Fest is partner of Artswatch, a nonprofit Louisville-based contem-

porary arts organization. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", super 8, Beta, 8mm. Entry fee: \$10-\$30. Contact: Andy Perry, exec. dir., Louisville Film & Video Festival, Artswatch, 2337 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, KY 40206; tel/fax: (502) 893-9661; lvvf@artsw-atrch.org

MOBIUS ADVERTISING AWARDS, February, IL. Deadline: Early Oct. Open to TV, cinema, in-flight, cable & radio commercials & print & package design produced, screened or aired nat'lly, regionally or locally after Oct. 1 of preceding yr. Newly produced advertising as well as previously produced, still appearing or reintroduced also eligible. Cats: automotive, children's products, clothing, commercial products, food & beverages, home care & maintenance products, home furnishings, personal products, personal articles & gift items, pet products, pharmaceutical, recreation, services, misc. Technique/specialty cats: animation (computer, non-computer), copywriting, direction, art direction, editing, humor, illustration, music (adaptation, original), overall production, photo, product demo, set design, special effects, talent. Mobius Statuettes awarded. Formats accepted: 3/4". Entry fee: \$110; \$160 (campaign of 3). Contact: J.W. Anderson, Chairman, Mobius Advertising Awards, U.S. Festivals Association, 841 N. Addison Ave., Elmhurst, IL 60126-1291; (630) 834-7773; fax: 834-5565; MOBIUSAWARDS@compuserve.com

NORTH CAROLINA FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Nov., NC. Deadline: Sept. 2. Fest open to ind. works by filmmakers with a NC connection as well as films made in or concerning North Carolina. "This event is devoted to bringing these films, filmmakers and North Carolina audiences together" says fest dir. Marjorie Putnam. Entries accepted in cats: feature, doc, dramatic short (under 60 min.), animated, music video, miscellaneous and student (under 18 yrs.) Entry fee: \$10-\$20. Entry fee entitles filmmaker to attend entire festival free of charge. Contact: Marjorie Putnam, NCFVF dir., Box 46318, Raleigh, NC 27620; tel/fax: (919) 212-0690; ncfvf@aol.com

PEACHTREE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. GA. Deadline: Aug.1. Founded in 1994, fest is dedicated "to films for film lovers." Incls tribute to film personality, filmmaker retro, discussions, parties & family/children's program, with many Atlanta premieres of domestic & foreign feature films. Audience Award given, other special awards may also be created. Each yr, 1 evening is devoted to films of selected country. To submit feature or short, send preview cassette w/ publicity info. All films submitted automatically considered for the Peachtree Int'l Film Society's yr-round screening series. Formats accepted: 70mm, 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Super 8, Beta, 8mm. Entry fee: \$15. Contact: Michelle Forren, executive dir., Peachtree Int'l Film Fest, Peachtree Int'l Film Society, 2180 Pleasant Hill Road, Suite A-5221, Duluth, GA 30136; (770) 729-8487; fax: 263-0652; film@peachtreefilm.org

PRIZED PIECES INTERNATIONAL FILM & VIDEO COMPETITION, Nov., Pittsburgh, PA. Deadline: August 22. (Late deadline w/ fee assessed \$25 after Aug. 29.) Major annual media event estab. in 1981 showcases recent positive, non-stereotypical Black film/video productions that address issues & concerns of people of African

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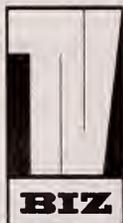


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SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL ASIAN AMERICAN FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, March, CA. Deadline: Mid-Oct. Founded in 1982, fest has grown to be one of largest & most prominent showcases for works from Asian America & Asia, offering unique mix of features (20-30) w/ strong ind & exp works, for total of 100-120 works. Fest is "lively venue for filmmakers, industry & Asian communities" worldwide, & is also ideal launching venue for West Coast. Extensive local coverage by media, industry press. Also special events, panels, installations, galas. Fest sponsored by Nat'l Asian American Telecommunications Assoc. (NAATA), an exhibitor & resource center for funding, production, distribution & broadcast of Asian American, Asian Pacific American & Asian works. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, NTSC video formats Beta, 3/4", 1". Entry fee: \$10. Contact: Corey Tong, fest dir, NAATA, 346 Ninth Street, 2nd fl., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 863-0814; fax: 863-7428; naata@sirius.com

SHORTS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL Nov., NY. Deadline: Sept. 15. Fest held in Manhattan at Sony Theaters Lincoln Square; winning films will tour Sony theaters nationwide. In first yr, fest aims "to put shorts back on the map" and boasts advisory board incl. the Coen Bros., Susan Seidelman, Ang Lee & Annette Insdorf. Cat's: animation, comedy, doc., drama, experimental, foreign, & student. Formats: 16mm, 35mm; preview on VHS. Length: 40 min. or less. Films must have been completed after June 1996. Grand Prize of \$2000 to winning director in each cat. Entry fee: \$25. Shorts Int'l Film Fest, 10 Columbus Circle, 10th floor, New York, NY 10019; (212) 489-3648; fax: 459-9462; www.shorts.org

SKYLINE LATINO FILM/VIDEO FESTIVAL, Nov., NY. Deadline: Sept 30. Skyline is nat'l non-profit org devoted to urban minority youth through doc. First yr for major NYC Latino Fest that is sponsored to expose the "best kept secrets" by Latin Americans living or born in U.S. who celebrate the cultural diaspora. Children, teen, college, post grad work only. Large screening in theater open to metro NY audience. All formats, genres, cats welcome. Spanish lang works must be subtitled. Length under 31 min. Previews VHS (NTSC); SASE for returns. Contact: Louis E. Perego Moreno, Skyline Community, 325 W. 45th St, #212, NY, NY 10036;

(212) 974-7766; fax: (212) 956-3115.

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, January, UT. Deadline: Mid-Oct. Founded in 1985 to "recognize independent filmmaking in all of its diversity," Sundance is premiere U.S. competitive showcase for new ind. films; many important works have premiered at fest & launched theatrical lives. Showcase for domestic & int'l films, incl. competition of new American ind. feature films, non-competitive program of both new American ind. and foreign feature films & shorts. Both dramatic & doc entries must have significant U.S. financing & be completed no earlier than Oct. 15 of preceding 2 yrs. Running time for all dramatic film entries films must be no less than 70 min., 50 min. for doc. To be eligible for Competition, entries may not open theatrically before Feb. 1 of yr of fest in more than 3 N. American markets or be broadcast nationally. Competition entries may not play in any domestic film fest prior to Sundance. Films may play in up to 2 foreign fests. Films produced, financed or initiated by major motion picture studio not eligible for comp.; however, any film conforming to above guidelines & produced, financed or initiated by independent division of studio, or purchased by studio after completion is eligible. Foreign feature films (less than 51% U.S. financed) not eligible for Competition, but may be submitted for consideration for fest screening & must be subtitled in English. Running time for all dramatic short film entries must be less than 70 mins, & running time for all doc shorts must be less than 50 mins. One rep of each Competition film will be invited to attend as fest's guest. Films selected for Ind Feature Film Competition awards Grand Prize, Cinematography Award and Audience Award (popular ballot.) Films selected in dramatic cat will also be competing for Screenwriters Award & films in Doc cat will also be competing for Freedom of Expression Award. Films selected for Competition become eligible for inclusion in Sundance Film Festival in Tokyo (SFFT). American films selected in short film cat eligible for special award. Other special programs have incl. Latin American section & New World Cinema. About 200 works selected for each fest, & large audience of 75,000 incl major distributors, programmers, journalists, critics & agents. Int'l press coverage quite extensive. Fest's administrative address: Sundance Institute, Box 16450, Salt Lake City, UT 84116. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2". Entry fee: \$20-\$50. Contact: Geoffrey Gilmore, director of programming/John Cooper assoc. dir programming, Sundance Film Festival, 225 Santa Monica Blvd., 8th Floor, Santa Monica, CA 90401; (310) 394-4662; fax: 394-8553; www.sundance.com

THREE RIVERS FILM FESTIVAL, Nov., PA. Deadline: Mid-Sept. Founded in 1982, this is noncompetitive feature film fest presenting 30-40 films at 5 area theaters. 14-day fest is heavily promoted throughout the region via print & broadcast media; 50,000 fest brochures published. Cats incl American Mavericks, World Cinema, Special Premieres & Midnight Madness. American inds "are always a fest highlight, foreign features are always appreciated." Limited funds available for personal appearances. Format: 35mm, 16mm,

3/4". Entry fee: None. Contact: Exhibitions coordinator, Three Rivers Film Festival, Pittsburgh Filmmakers, 477 Melwood Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213; (412) 681-5449; fax: 681-5503.

VIDEO TUSCULUM, Nov., TN. Deadline: Early Oct. 2-day nat'l fest of videos produced on consumer (VHS, VHS-C, SVHS, Hi8) equipment. Workshops & fest for students & ind producers. Cash prizes awarded. Cats: Ind, Middle School, High School, College, Class Project. Format: 1/2", Hi8. Entry fee: \$6. Contact: Wess DuBrisk, Video Tusculum, Box 5638, Greeneville, TN 37743; (423) 636-7300 x340; fax: 638-7166.

WOMEN IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, March, IL. Deadline: Postmarked no later than Sept. 15. WIDC is largest & longest running women's fest in country, founded in 1979 & held every yr in celebration of Women's History Month & Int'l Women's Day. Fest, which features work of nearly 100 ind film & video artists from around country & world (drawn from nearly 600 entries), seeks works which "represent a diverse cross section of women's ideas; bringing to audiences innovative work that is not ordinarily accessible through mainstream media." All genres & lengths presented. Annual audiences are estimated at 4,000. Formats accepted: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$30 non-members; \$20 members. Contact: Wendy Quinn, program dir., Women in the Director's Chair Film & Video Festival, 3435 N. Sheffield Avenue #202, Chicago, IL 60657; (773) 281-4988; fax: 281-4999.

FOREIGN

ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE FESTIVAL OF INTERNATIONAL CINEMA, Oct 25-30, Canada. Deadline: Sept. 1. All types of films, incl fiction, doc & animation, accepted. Fest, now in 16th yr, programs over 80 short, medium & feature-length films during run in Rouyn-Noranda in Québec. Past editions incl. films from over 20 countries. All entries must have been completed after Jan. 1 of preceding yr & not shown commercially in Canada. Awards: Grand Prix Hydro-Québec, awarded by public; Prix Télé-bec, presented to best short or med. length feature by regional jury selected by fest organizer (\$1,000 prize); Prix Animé, awarded by public to most appreciated animation film in comp. Special presentations for students held during 3 fest days. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: None. Contact: Jacques Matte, dir., Abitibi-Témiscamingue Festival of Int'l Cinema, Festival du Cinéma Int'l en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 215 Avenue Mercier, Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, Canada J9X 5W8; (819) 762-6212; fax: 762-6762.

AMIENS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AND MARKET, Nov. 6-17, France. Deadline: Sept. 8. Competitive focuses on films that explore cultural

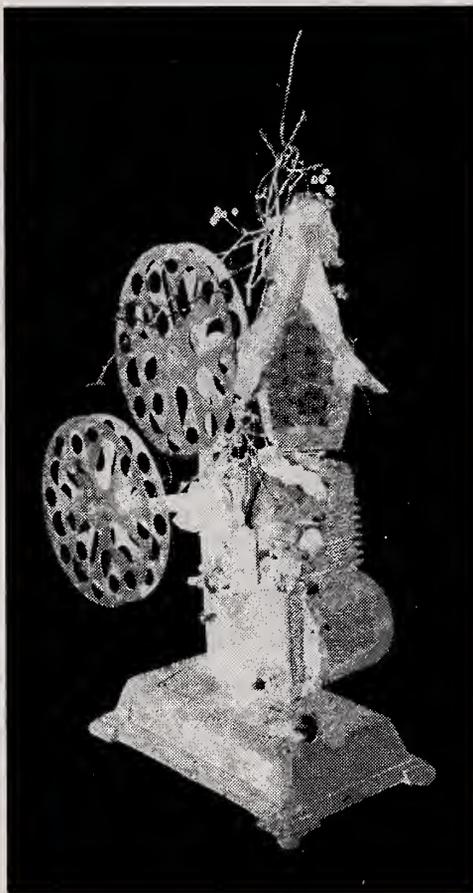
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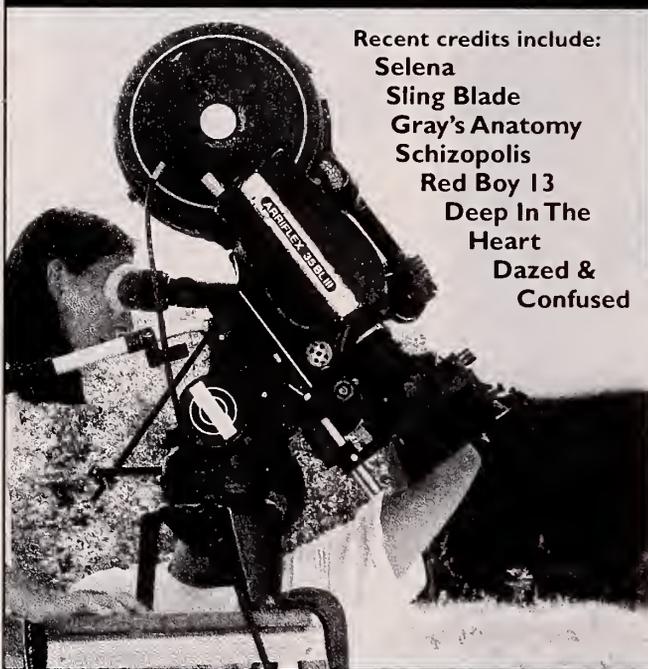
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identity, minority groups & ethnic issues, w/ particular emphasis on little known world cinemas & multi-cultural film production. Feature length, short, fiction or doc films that address identity of a people or ethnic minority, racism, or issues of representation & differences eligible. In competitive section, entries must have been completed betwn. Sept of previous yr & October of yr of edition & must not have been shown in France. Awards: Grand Prix to best feature (fiction); Jury Award, "Ville d'Amiens" Award; Grand Prix to best short film. In past yrs, the fest has presented retros, panoramas & tributes to the cinema of the people of Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Native America, Africa America & Asia. Each yr, the fest pays tribute to a director & a country. Programs this yr: Don Siegel, Gypsies in European Cinema. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Entry fee: None. Contact: Jean-Pierre Garcia, managing director, Amiens Int'l Film Festival & Market, Festival Int'l du Film d'Amiens, Association pour les Journées Cinématographiques d'Amiens, MCA Place Léon Gentier, 8000 Amiens, France; 011 33 3 22 72 35 70; fax: 011 33 3 22 92 53 04.

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AUTRANS INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN AND ADVENTURE FILM FESTIVAL, Dec., France. Deadline: Mid-Sept. Now in 14th edition, competitive fest open to professional & non-professional filmmakers. Seeking films that "contribute positively to knowledge on the one hand of the snow & ice world & on the other to developing & exalting human resources in adventure & evasion." Cats: snow & ice films, sporting & sports instruction, social ethnology, adventure & exploration, & expedition docs. Entries should have been completed in previous 4 yrs. Awards: Grand Prix d'Autrans (approx. 50,000FF for fiction, 15,000FF for doc), best of category, young director. Format: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Betacam. Entry fee: None. Contact: Chiocca Mirreille, Autrans Int'l Mountain & Adventure Film Festival, Centre Sportif Nordique, 38880 Autrans (Vercors), France; 011 4 33 76 95 30 70, fax: 011 33 4 76 95 38 63.

BANFF FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAIN FILMS, Nov. 1-9, Canada. Deadline: Sept. 19. Now in 22nd yr, fest is juried int'l film competition which seeks out best films & videos on mountains & their spirit of adventure. Entries compete in 6 cats: Grand Prize (\$2,000), Best Film on Climbing (\$2,000), Best Film on Mountain Sports (\$2,000), Best Film on Mountain Environment (\$2,000), People's Choice Award (\$2,000), Best Film on Mountain Culture (\$2,000) & Bill Roberts Award for Young Filmmakers for films which demonstrate "best spirit of alpine climbing or mountaineering adventure or promise of a creative film or TV talent" by filmmakers under 25 w/ max of four yrs. of amateur film or TV experience (\$500). Winning films become part of int'l tour, for which producers are paid fee. All lengths. Cats: narrative, animated, or experimental. Fest in Canadian Rockies has become one of largest of its kind in world, attracting audiences of over 6,000 annually. In addition to film & video screenings, also int'l guest speakers, adventure trade fair, mountain craft sale, climbing wall & seminars on mountain subjects. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Entry fee: \$50 Cdn. Contact: Karen Turnbull, Banff Festival of Mountain Films, The Banff Center, Box 1020, Stn. 38, Banff, Alberta, Canada T0L 0C0; (403) 762-6441; fax: 762-

6277; MFF@BanffCentre.ab.ca; www.banffcentre.ab.ca/CMC/

BARCELONA FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO, January, Spain. Deadline: Late Sept. Now in its 4th yr, fest shows int'l selection of video art, ind docs, alternative TV, video combat & video performance, w/ 300 tapes selected. Held in Centre de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona, which is a co-sponsor of fest & which accommodated 2,500 people at the last round in 1995. Rental fee of approx 8,000 ptas. (\$65) will be paid for selected works. Format: 3/4," 1/2," Beta (preferably in PAL). Entry fee: None. Contact: Núria Canal/Joan Leandre/Toni Serra, Barcelona Festival of Ind Video, Mostra de Video Ind, Centre de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona, Casa de Caritat Montalegre, 5, Barcelona, Spain; tel: 011 34 93 41 20781; fax: 011 34 93 41 20520.

BREST FESTIVAL OF SHORT FILMS, Nov. 4-11, France. Deadline: Aug. 31. Open to all short films, provided entry is prod./co-prod. by EU country. Awards: Grand Prix of Brest European Short Film Festival; 1st Film Award; Audience Award; Best Actor Award. Max length: 52 min., completed after 7/31 of previous yr. Approx. 40 films accepted for competition, plus 30 incl. in "fringe" screenings. No entry fee. Format: 35mm, 16mm; preview on VHS. Contact: Gilbert LeTraon/Mirabelle Fréville, artistic directors, Brest Festival of Short Films, Festival du Film Court de Brest, Association Cote Ouest, 40 bis, Rue de la République, B.P. 173, 29269 Brest Cedex, France; 011 33 2 98 44 03 94; fax: 011 33 2 98 80252; Film.Festival@brest.com; www. Film.Festival.brest.com

BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT FILM, Nov., Belgium. Deadline: Late Sept. Founded in 1978, competitive fest began as major showcase for Super 8 film, now open to all formats in film & video. Each yr, more than 60 countries participate. Fest welcomes many different disciplines, incl. painting, photos, sculpture, performances by artists & workshops on new technologies. Entries must not have been broadcast in world premiere. Cash awards for Best Director, Best Doc, Best Scenario, Best Photo, Special Jury Award & Prize of Tomorrow's Cinema. Special Competition "Filmed Creation of Deaf People," for films made by deaf directors. Important cash prizes. Each yr a new country is spotlighted & special programs have been set up by different countries. Program also incl. retros, computer animation, video dance & short films. All formats. Entry fee: None. Contact: Robert Malengreau, fest dir: Brussels Int'l Festival of Super 8 Film & Video, Mondial de la Video, Rue Paul Emile Janson 12, 1000 Brussels, Belgium; 011 322 649 3340; fax: 011 322 649 3340.

CHATEAUX INDEPENDENT CINEMA ENCOUNTERS, Dec., France. Deadline: Sept. 15. Fest focuses on independent films of all genres. Competition awards: Cad d'Or, Cad d'Argent, Prix du Public. Cash prizes total 20,000FF Films must be subtitled in French. Special sections incl. several programs such as retro, Programme Light Cone (experimental cinema), Nuit du Cinéma, cinematographic & music performances. About 50

films showcased each yr. Format: 35mm, 16mm, Super 8. Entry fee: None. Contact: Agnès Rabaté, Chateauroux Independent Encounters, Rencontres du Cinéma Indépendant de Chateauroux, Bande A Parte, 16 rue de Metz, 36000 Chateauroux, France; tel/fax: 011 33 2 54 34 24 70.

FESTIVAL DEI POPOLI INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY FILM, Dec. 6-12, Italy. Deadline: Sept. 1. Established int'l fests completely devoted to doc film. Competition section (open to docs completed after Sept. 1, 1996). Anthropological section with triennial project "The Human & the Divine: Mankind & the Supernatural: Past & Present," this yr. dedicated to "The New Religious Movements in Industrialised Countries and Traditional Cultures." Invites docs and fiction films dealing with any form of syncretism, any cult, sect or guru movement born since World War II. Also a program of features, docs and shorts on the theme "European Cinema: the Challenge of Reality." Panel discussions. Comp entries must be Italian premieres; participation restricted to films invited by fest itself. Int'l jury awards prizes to Best Doc (20 million lire) & Best Research Film (5 million lire); & Giampaolo Paoli silver plaque to best anthropological film. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 34/", Beta; VHS for preselection only. Entry fee: None. Contact: Mario Simondi, sec. general, Festival dei Popoli Int'l Review of Social Documentary Film, Borgo Pinti 68-82R, 50121 Florence, Italy; 011 39 55 294 353; fax: 011 39 55 213 698; fespopol@dada.it

FLICKERFEST INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Jan., Sydney, Australia. Deadline: Sept. 30. In its 7th yr., fest is competitive and open to any film or video production under 60 min. 1998 fest will include int'l short and doc. market. All formats acceptable, but entries must be on film for competition, and on 35mm, 16mm or U-Matic for screening. Entries must be in English or have English subtitles. Preference given to films completed w/in last 2 yrs. Entry fee: AUS\$25 (extra if you wish your tape returned). Contact: Flickerfest 98, Fearless Promotions, Box 52, Haymarket, Sydney, NSW 1240, Australia; 011 61 2 9211 7133; fax: 011 61 2 9211 8278; flickerf@tmx.com.au

GIJON INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, Nov., Spain. Deadline: late Sept. Recognized by FIAPF & CIFEJ, fest celebrates its 34th anniv. this yr. Fest aims to "present the newest tendencies of young cinema worldwide." Sections incl official section for films in competition, for long or short films produced after Jan. 1 of preceding yr. Informative section incl. Outlines, Cycles, Retrospectives of films "adding certain cultural elements considered to be interesting to young spectators." Awards: Principado de Asturias to Best Feature (ap-prox. \$15,000) & Best Short (approx. \$3,750), Best Director, Best Actress, Best Actor, Gil Parrondo Prize to Best Art Direction, Special Jury Prize. Jury of 50 young people ages 17-29 award the Prize of Young Jury to Best Short film & Best Feature. Format: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: None. Contact: Jose Luis Cienfuegos, director Gijon Int'l Film Festival for Young People, Festival Internacional de Cine de Gijon, Box 76. 33205 Gijón, Spain; 011 34 98 534 37 39; fax: 011 34 98 535 41 52; festcine@airastur.es

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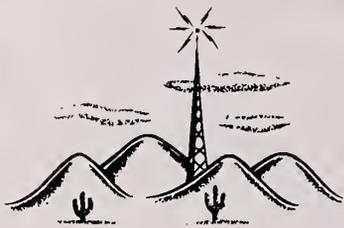
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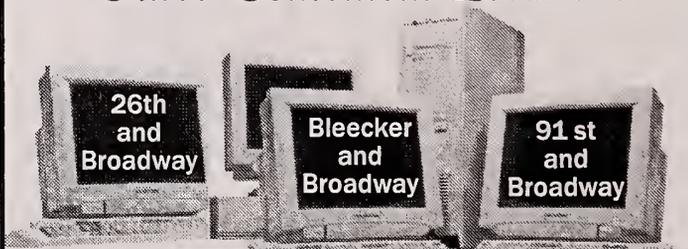
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HAVANA INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF NEW LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA, Dec., Cuba. Deadline: Late Sept. Sponsored by ICAIC, Cuban Film Institute, this is world's largest showcase of Latin American & Caribbean film/video. About 400 productions from around the world are showcased each yr, w/ half a million spectators. Entries may be made by non-Latin American filmmakers on Latin American & Caribbean issues & all entries to be dubbed or subtitled in Spanish. Also screenings at several cinema & video venues, retros & seminars. Cats: best fiction, doc, animation, children's editing, acting, script, photo, sound & design. Coral Award given to best films & videos contributing to Latin American cultural identity. Special award given for best unproduced script. Fest market, MECLA, is meeting point for Latin American cinematographers & int'l guests. Format: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta. Entry fee: None. Contact: Ivan Giroud, Havana Int'l Festival of New Latin American Cinema, Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, ICAIC Int'l Film Distributors, Calle 23, No. 1155, Havana, Cuba; 011 53 7 360-72/34169; fax: 011 53 7 334273/333078; sitcine@teniai.cu

HUY WORLD FESTIVAL OF SHORT FILMS, Oct., Belgium. Deadline: Early Sept. Founded in 1961, fest is open to independent short film productions in 3 classes: (1) professional; (2) ind. or student prod.; (3) amateur/hobby. Entries must have been completed since April of preceding yr. Int'l jury awards 3 Grand Prix to 35mm, 16mm, & super 8 productions. Cash prizes up to \$7000; Gold, Silver & Bronze Medals in each cat w/ 10 special prizes. Entries must be under 30 min. About 50-60 films selected. Format: 35mm, 16mm, super 8. Entry fee: \$30. Contact: Roger Closset, president, Huy World Fest of Short Films, Festival Mondial du Cinema de Courts Metrages de Huy, 5 rue Nokin 4520 Wance (Huy), Belgium; tel/fax: 011 32 85 21 78 29

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM-FESTIVAL AMSTERDAM, Nov. 22-30, Amsterdam. Deadline: Aug. 25. Europe's largest fest for independent doc producers. Ind. production companies registered in MEDIA Programme member countries eligible to enter new docs having commitment of at least one broadcaster, film board or film institute. Max. of three projects per company. Restricted number of non-MEDIA projects will also be viewed. Contact: Foundation FORUM Netherlands/IDFA Kleine-Gartmanplantsoen 10, 1017 RR Amsterdam; tel: 31 20 6273329; fax" 31 20 6385388; idfa@xs4all.nl; www.dds.nl/~damocles/idfa

JACA INTERNATIONAL SPORTS FILM FESTIVAL, Dec., Spain. Deadline: Late Oct. Film & video productions about "sports as cultural development" are accepted into competitive fest. All entries must have sports as central theme, not have been produced before Jan 1 of preceding 3 yrs, max. duration 45 mins. Official Sections: short films (up to 15 min.); feature films (up to 45 mins.); instructional films. Official prizes: Grand Prize "City of Jaca" Gold Deer & 500,000 ptas; Silver Deer & 100,000 ptas for best short; Silver Deer & 100,000 ptas for best feature; Silver Deer & 100,000 ptas for best didactic production; Bronze Deer & 50,000 ptas awarded at Jury's disposition; People's Prize; & Special Prizes. Format: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4" (PAL),

Betacam. Entry fee: None. Contact: Joaquin Liendo, fest dir., JACA Int'l Sports Film Festival, Festival Internacional de Cine Deportivo, "Ciudad de Jaca," Palacio de Congresos, Avenida Juan XXIII, 17 Apartado 33, 22700 Jaca (Huesca), Spain; tel/fax: 011 34 74 3552; FESTJACA@pirinet.com; www.pirinet.com/FEST JACA

LEIPZIG INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL FOR DOCUMENTARY AND ANIMATED FILMS, Oct., Germany. Deadline: Early Sept. Under theme Films of the World for Human Dignity, this fest, founded in 1955, is established int'l competitive event for doc format. Fest program consists of Int'l Competition, special programs, retros. Competition incl. cinema or TV doc films of all genres, productions on video (doc & animation) & animation. There is also a film & video market. Int'l jury awards prizes incl Golden & Silver Doves, Ecumenical Jury Prize, FIPRESCI Jury Prize, Mercedes Benz Prize. Entries for competition or info programs must not have been shown in public prior to June 1 of preceding yr. About 230 productions showcased each yr. Format: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Entry fee: None. Contact: Fred Gehler, Leipzig Int'l Festival for Documentary & Animated Films Internationales, Leipziger Festival für Dokumentarund Animationsfilm, Box 940, 04009 Leipzig, Germany; 011 49 34 1 980 3921, fax: 011 49 34 980 4828

MIPCOM INTERNATIONAL FILM AND PROGRAMME MARKET FOR TV, VIDEO, CABLE AND SATELLITE, Oct. 7-11, France. Deadline: Early Sept. Over 10,500 professionals from over 80 countries (incl. about 800 exhibitors & 2,000 companies) participate in market, held in Cannes, which is one of world's major markets for programming industry. Producers, distributors, journalists, broadcasters, buyers & co-producers conduct business annually here; market is meeting place for buying & selling of program rights & setting up of co-production agreements & joint ventures. MIPCOM provides hotel reservations, welcome & transport services, parties, club for participants w/ stands, int'l press services, law center, seminars & special events planning. It also publishes a guide to participants (cross referenced by country, branch of industry, & names of key executives), pre-news detailing major market events, a daily newspaper, & billboards. It is possible to participate w/out stand; that contract covers entrance for 3 employees, use of participants club, & listing in MIPCOM Guide. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta. Entry fee: varies. US Contact: Reed Midem Organization, 475 Park Avenue South, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10016; (212) 689-4220; fax: 689-4348. Contact: Jacques Gibout, int'l sales director, MIPCOM Int'l Film & Programme Market for TV, Video, Cable & Satellite, Marché Int'l des Films et des Programmes pour la TV, la Video, le Cable et le Satellite, Reed Midem Organisation, 179 avenue Victor Hugo, 75116 Paris, France; 011 33 1 44 34 44 44; fax: 011 33 1 44 34 44 09.

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF FILMS AND VIDEOS ON ART, Mar 10-15, Canada. Deadline: Mid-Oct. In its 16th yr., fest is competitive for productions related to the arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, design, crafts, fashion, decorative arts, museology, restoration, photography, cinema (profiles of directors & actors, film shoots,



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special effects), literature, dance, music, theater. Fest is not designed for exp film or video but for productions on art-related subjects. Features & shorts accepted. Sections: Creative Crossroads (films & videos in competition); Trajectories (panorama of recent films & videos); Focus (tribute to noted producer, filmmaker or distributor); Reflections (films & videos by artists); Artificial Paradise (films & videos related to cinema as art form, i.e. profiles of producers, directors, actors, scriptwriters, musicians, etc.); Time Recaptured (archival films, late artists, anniversaries). Entries in comp. must have been completed in 3 yrs preceding fest; (no date restrictions on other sections). Awards: Grand, Jury, Creativity, Best Portrait, Best Essay, Best Film for TV, Best Media Work, Best Educational Film. In 1997, fest showcased 164 works from 25 countries. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4"; pre-selection on VHS. Entry fee: \$35. Contact: René Rozon, Montreal Int'l Festival of Films & Videos on Art, Festival Int'l du Film et de la Video sur l'Art, 640 St. Paul Street West, Ste 406, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 1L9; (514) 874-1637; fax: 874-9929; fifa@maniacom.com; www.maniacom.com/fifa.html

NANTES FESTIVAL OF THREE CONTINENTS, Nov. 19-26, France. Deadline: Early Oct., Founded in 1979, Nantes is a major European competitive forum/showcase for feature-length fiction films from Asia, Africa, Latin America & African America. Features 70 films (12 in competition), offering awards Montgolfière d'Or & Montgolfière d'Argent. This was one of the original fests focusing on cinema of Third World. Format: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: Philippe Jalladeau & Alain Jalladeau, directors, Nantes Festival of Three Continents, 19A Passage Pommeraye, B.P. 43302, 44003 Nantes Cedex 1, France; 011 33 2 40 69 74 14; fax: 011 33 2 40 73 55 22.

OULU INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL, Nov., Finland. Deadline: Mid-Sept. Founded in 1982, fest seeks to introduce new trends in children's films & locate distributors for children's films in Finland. Main program comprises screenings of 15 new int'l children's films. Special program presents world of children to adult audience, retros & Finnish children's films. Since 1992, children's jury has awarded prize of 3,000 ecus & Kaleva newspaper's Starboy figurine to director of the best film in main program. In addition to screenings, fest program incl. meetings w/ directors, exhibitions & seminars. Max. length 45 mins. Format: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2". Entry fee: None. Contact: Eszter Vuojala, fest sec., Oulu Int'l Children's Film Festival, Oulun kansainvälinen lastenelokuvien festivaali, Torikatu 8, 901-00, Oulu, Finland; 011 358 8 881 1293; fax: 011 358 8 881 1290.

SÃO PAULO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 17-31, Brazil. Deadline: Mid-Sept. Recognized by FIAPF, competitive fest, now celebrating 20th edition, presents 2 major sections: Int'l Perspective & New Filmmakers Competition (up to 3rd film of director). Fest also awards Critics Prize & Audience Prize. Feature, short & doc films of all cats & themes accepted. Entries must have been produced in preceding 2 yrs & be Brazilian premières. Winning entries receive *Bandeira Paulista*. About 150 films showcased each yr. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: Festival Director,

São Paulo Int'l Film Fest, Mostra Inter-nacional de Cinema em São Paulo, Alameda Lorena, 937-Cj. 303, 01424 001 São Paulo - SP, Brazil; tel: 011 55 11 8835137; fax: 011 55 11853 7936; info@mostra.org; www.mostra.org

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 21-30, Greece. Deadline: Sept. 30. Fest of new trends in world cinema is oldest & largest film event in Greece. Targets new generation of filmmakers & showcases high quality films by "grand talents" of int'l ind cinema. Cats: Int'l Competition for 1st or 2nd features; Greek Film Comp. & Info section. Retro this yr honors Claude Chabrol. Focus on Balkans with best films from neighboring countries; New Horizons info section; special events such as galas, exhibitions, etc. Awards incl. Golden Alexander (appr. \$50,000) & Silver Alexander (appr. \$30,000). All participating films should be nat'l premieres. Films should have been shown in very few int'l fests. Format: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. US contact: Valerie Kontakos, One Art Prod., 140 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011; (212) 929-4230; fax: 675-5061. Contact: Michel Demopoulos, Secretariat of Thessaloniki Int'l Film Festival, 36 Sina Street, Athens, Greece 10672; 011 30 1 361 0418; fax: 011 30 1 362 1023.

TORELLO MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL, Nov., Spain. Deadline: Late Sept. Torello's fest themes incl all aspects of mountains: mountaineering (climbing, expeditions, excursions), mountain sports (speleology, ski, sports climbing, parachuting, canoeing-rafting, adventure), mountain environment (nature protection, flora, fauna, ethnology). Entries must have been produced in previous 5 yrs. Awards: Grand Prize "Vila de Torelló" (Edelweiss of gold & 500,000 ptas) for best film; Prize Fundacio "la Caixa" (Edelweiss of silver & 100,000 ptas) for best mountaineering film; Edelweiss of silver & 150,000 ptas each for best mountain sports film, best film of mountain environment, best video; Jury Prize. Special prizes given for best script, best Spanish filmmaker & best mountain protection film. Formats accepted: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta. Entry fee: None. Contact: Joan Salarich, Festival Director, Torelló Mountain Film Festival, Festival Internacional de Cinema de Muntanya, Anselm Clave 5, P.O. Box 19, 08570 Torelló (Barcelona), Spain; 011 34 93 859 28 99; fax: 011 34 93 859 30 00.

ERRATUM

TURIN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF YOUNG CINEMA (CINEMA GIOVANI) Nov.14-23, Italy. The June issue published incorrect deadline dates. The correct deadlines are Aug. 31 (shorts); Sept. 30 (features).

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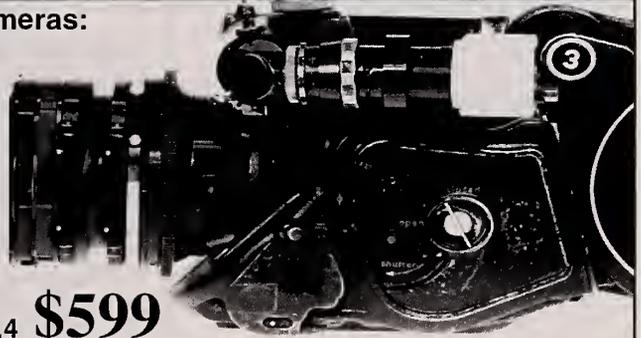
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Diverse, committed, opinionated, and fiercely independent—these are the video and filmmakers who are members of AIVF. Documentary and feature filmmakers, animators, experimentalists, distributors, educators, students, curators—all concerned that their work make a difference—find the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, the national service organization for independent producers, vital to their professional lives. Whether it's our magazine, *The Independent Film & Video Monthly*, or the organization raising its collective voice to advocate for important issues, AIVF preserves your independence while letting you know you're not alone.

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THE INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO MONTHLY

Membership provides you with a year's subscription to *The Independent*. Thought-provoking features, news, and regular columns on business,

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INSURANCE

Members are eligible to purchase discounted personal and production insurance plans through AIVF suppliers. A range of health insurance options are available, as well as special liability, E&O, and production plans tailored for the needs of low-budget mediamakers.

TRADE DISCOUNTS

A growing list of businesses across the country offer AIVF members discounts on equipment and auto rentals, film processing, transfers, editing, and other production necessities. Plus long-distance and overnight courier services are available at special rates for AIVF members from national companies. In New York, members receive discounted rates at two hotels to make attendance at our programs and other important events more convenient.

CONFERENCE/SCREENING ROOM

AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

INFORMATION

We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

WORKSHOPS, PANELS, AND SEMINARS

Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

ADVOCACY

Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

COMMUNITY

AIVF sponsors monthly member get-togethers in cities across the country; call the office for the one nearest you. Plus members are carrying on active dialogue online—creating a "virtual community" for independents to share information, resources, and ideas. Another way to reach fellow independents to let them know about your screenings, business services, and other announcements is by renting our mailing list, available at a discount to members.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS Terra Firma Media provides foreign language services for motion pictures & interactive media. Translations, voiceovers, interpreters. Terra Firma Media (212) 477-0688, 309 E. 4th St., NY, NY 10009; Imontalvo@aol.com

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COMPETITIONS

ATHENA AWARDS FOR LESBIAN EXCELLENCE IN FILM, VIDEO & TELEVISION, sponsored by Northern Arts/Naiad Press. Awards announced Dec. 15. Competitive awards honoring excellence in film/video/TV by &/or about lesbians & lesbian issues. Prizes from film/video labs/screening rooms, etc. Features, shorts, doc, experimental, animation & all forms of television programs accepted. Submissions must be on VHS. No entry fee. Deadline: Oct. 15. For entry form, send SASE to: Athena Awards, Box 763, Williamsburg, MA 01096; (413) 268-9301; fax: 268-9309.

CONFERENCES • WORKSHOPS

EXPLORATION IN MEMORY AND MODERNITY focuses on independent media production & criticism of New York State & Northeast regions. Held Oct. 4-5 at Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY. \$25 registration fee. Contact: Michelle Materre, International Film Seminar, 462 Broadway, Suite 510, New York, NY 10013; (212) 925-3191; fax: 925-3482; ifsnyc@aol.com

MEDIA & DEMOCRACY CONGRESS II: Join hundreds of mediamakers, journalists, and activists in NYC, Oct 16-19. Discussions will incl.: Impact of the Digital Revolution & New Forms of Distribution. Info: (415) 284-1420; congress@igc.org; www.mediademocracy.org

FILMS • TAPES WANTED

AMERICAN CINEMATHEQUE accepting entries for on-going program, The Alternative Screen: A Forum for Independent Film Exhibition & Beyond. Send submissions on 1/2" VHS tape.

Independent film, music video & new media projects wanted. For more info, call (213) 466-FILM.

ASHLAND CABLE ACCESS seeks video shows. VHS, S-VHS & 3/4" OK, any length or genre. For return, incl. sufficient SASE. Send w/ description & release to: Suzi Aufderheide, Southern Oregon State College, RVTV, 1250 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland, OR 97520; (541) 552-6898.

AUSTIN, TX ind. producer offering cable access venue to showcase ind. films & videos, all genres & subjects. Shorts & music videos linked by discussions on ind. films. Films/videos running longer than 40 min. may be aired in series of 2 consecutive shows. Send release & info about film/filmmaker. 1/4" & 3/4" preferable. No payment, but credit & exposure. James Shelton, Tex-Cinema Productions, Box 3633, Austin, TX 78764-3633; (512) 867-9901.

AXLEGREASE: Buffalo cable access program of ind. film & video, accepting all genres under 28 min., 1/2", 3/4", 8mm, Hi8. Send labeled w/ name, address, title, length, additional info & SASE for tape return to: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; (716) 884-7172, wheel@freenet.buffalo.edu; http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel

BIG SHORT FILMS now accepting short films, any genre, for worldwide distribution. Details at www.big-filmshorts.com/ or for info: (888) 464-4211.

BLACK BOOT MEDIA PROJECT of Perry County Ind. Media Arts Center seeks ind. film & video works for regular series of roving screenings at various industrial, commercial & residential venues in Philadelphia & Harrisburg area. Submit S-8, 16mm, VHS or S-VHS w/ SASE to: PCIMAC, Lower Bailey Rd., RR2-Box 65, Newport, PA 17074. For info, contact Jeff Dardozi, (215) 545-7884.

BURLE AVANT curating "530 Lines of Resolution," digital video art night at Den of Thieves on Lower East Side in NYC. Video artists encouraged to submit works; no entry fees required. Send NTSC VHS tapes under 15 min. by UPS or hand deliver to: 530 Lines of Resolution, c/o The Outpost, 118 North 11 St., 4th fl, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 599-2385.

DOBOY'S DOZENS seeks short films for monthly showcases highlighting works by up and coming filmmakers. Contact: Eugene Williams or Marcel Wright, Dobby's Dozens, 1525 N. Cahuonga Blvd. #39, Hollywood, CA 90028; (213) 293-6544.

DOMESTIC HOME VIDEO LABEL seeks films of all genres for possible distribution. Send VHS screening tapes and press kits to: Screen Pix Home Video, Attn: David Eddy, 1219 1/2 W. El Segundo Blvd., Gardena, CA 90247.

IN SHORT, a 1/2-hr program that airs bimonthly, seeks submissions for public access show in NY. Preference given to works created w/ digital video. Works up to 28 min., submitted on VHS for preview, available in 3/4". Send sub. to: P. Lewis, c/o In Short, 315 West 102 St., Suite 3B, NY, NY 10025; (212) 655-4155.

INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE monthly screening program seeks experimental, avant-garde, doc, narrative. Possible monetary remuneration. Submit your films and/or videos on 1/2" or 8mm video. Clearly label tapes with title, length, name, address & phone.

Include SASE if you wish tapes returned. Contact: Blackchair Prod., 2318 Second Ave., #313A Seattle, WA 98121; (206) 282-3592; joel@speakeasy.org

INTERNET TELEVISION service seeks shorts, animation, art film, etc. to be shown in streaming video on the Internet. Get your work shown worldwide. ISP-TV is world leader in cyber-event production & Internet "broadcasting" arenas. Tapes should be VHS or SVHS. Call (301) 847-6573 or bradp@digex.net or visit website: isptv.digex.net

KINOFIST IMAGEWORKS seeks work of all kinds for screenings and distribution within the punk, underground community. DIY/experimental/activist work encouraged. Send VHS, SASE to: Kinofist Imageworks, Box 1102, Columbia, MO 65205; dmwF92@hamp.hampshire.edu

MUSIC AND COLLEGE VIDEOS WANTED by producers of new nat'l broadcast college-oriented show; seek music videos & performance clips of indie bands. Select entries will be broadcast nationally and bands may be invited to perform live for studio audience. Contact: Danny Ameri, Burly Bear Network, 201 Summer St., Stamford, CT 06901. (203) 351-1177.

SAN FRANCISCO POETRY FILM WORKSHOP/LITERARY TELEVISION accepting short poetry or literary films, videos, docs & multimedia pieces for catalog, upcoming poetry video film festival. Request entry form: SOMAR, 934 Brannan St., 2nd fl., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 552-9261; fax: 552-9271; www.slip.net/~gamuse.

TREATMENTS FOR DOC FILMS, not more than 10 pgs, sought by working ind. documentary filmmakers. Contact: Cinnabar Pictures, 62 White St., New York, NY 10013; (212) 334-6838.

VIDEOSPACE BOSTON seeks creative videos for fall & spring programming. Any genre and length. Nonprofit/no payment. Send VHS, Hi-8, or 3/4" w/ description, name, phone & SASE to: Videospace, General Submissions, 9 Myrtle St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

VIDEO/FILM SHORTS wanted for local television. Directors interviewed, tape returned w/ audience feedback. Accepting VHS/S-VHS, 15 min. max. SASE to: Box 1042, Nantucket, MA 02554; (508) 325-7935.

ZOOM Do you remember Zoom? During the '70s, Zoom was unique kids-only TV series on PBS, featuring kids' plays, poems, jokes, films, games & more. Zoom is back and is actively seeking kid-produced films, animations & videos. Every kid who sends something will receive a free newsletter filled w/ fun activities from show. Length: 5 sec.-2 min. Formats: 3/4", VHS, Hi-8, Super 8, 16mm, Beta. Age: 7-14. Marcy Gardner, WGBH/Zoom, 114 Western Ave, Boston, MA 02134; (617) 492-2777 x3883; marcy_gardner@wgbh.org

PUBLICATIONS

ART ON FILM DATABASE wants to know: Have you produced film, video or video disc on

visual arts? Send info on prod. to Program for Art on Film Database, computer index to over 19,000 prods. Interested in prods on all visual arts topics. Welcome info on prods about artists of color & multicultural art projects. Send info to: Art on Film at Columbia University, 2875 Broadway, 2nd fl., NY, NY 10025; (212) 854-9570; fax: 854-9577.

DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO, organized by Int'l Media Resources Exchange, seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info: Karen Ranucci, IMRE, 124 Washington Place, NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108.

MEDIA MATTERS, Media Alliance's newsletter, provides comprehensive listings of New York area events & opportunities for media artists. For a free copy, call Media Alliance at (212) 560-2919 or visit their web site at <http://www.mediaalliance.org>

INTERNATIONAL FILM FINANCING CONFERENCE transcripts avail. Topics discussed by int'l financiers, commissioning editors & producers include: Foreign TV as a Source for Funding, Int'l Distributors, Finding US Dollars & How to Pitch Your Idea. Send \$41 to: IFFCON, 360 Ritch St., San Francisco, CA 94107; (415) 281-9777.

SPECIAL EDITION: A GUIDE TO NETWORK TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY SERIES AND SPECIAL NEWS REPORTS, 1980-1989 by UCLA Television Archivist Dan Einstein details the production of more than 2400 news series, special presentations and reports. Contact UCLA Film and Television Archive, 302 East Melnitz, Box 951323, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

THIRD WORLD NEWSREEL, an int'l network of filmmakers and organizers, seeks submissions for *Newsreel Anthology 1967-1997*, collection of writing documenting the organization's work. Papers should be no longer than 20 double-spaced pages and use MLA citation format. Submit 2 copies to: Cynthia Young, Third World Newsreel, 335 W. 38th St., NY, NY 10018. Deadline: Aug. 15. Fax: (212) 594-6417; twn@twn.org

RESOURCES • FUNDS

APERTURE INC., new 501(c)(3) nonprofit corp., offers grant of \$10,000 to first-time filmmaker shooting a 5-30 min. film. Deadline: Sept 30. For info on 1997 Aperture Grant, send SASE to Aperture, 12335 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 174, Los Angeles, CA 90025, or call (310) 772-8294.

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS announces availability of distribution funds through Electronic Media & Film Program. Grants of up to \$5000 for audio/radio, film, video, computer-based work, and installation art. Deadline: Oct 15. Contact: NYSCA (212) 387-7057; 387-7168 fax; dsilverfine@nysca

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Not-for-profit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made: (212) 319-2910.

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Deja vu, *Till There Was You*: The
lovers who don't quite meet.



ANDERSON: Continued from p. 39

negative. But the most surprising thing is the level of disagreement on almost every scene and every creative issue. For every person who loves the ending, another hates it. FOR: "I like the ending. It's mysterious and very French." AGAINST: "The ending left me cold and confused." What should I do? Change the ending? Move to France? You can drive yourself crazy trying to reconcile these opinions. I'm looking for patterns of agreement. There are a few and unfortunately, they involve exposition, which is really hard to change or make clearer.

April 20

We decided to push picture lock back until the end of May. It will give me more time to work out the kinks.

May 17

Second screening. I've lopped off 12 minutes of fat. Three scenes are gone, two added. Three steps back, two forward. It's like climbing up an avalanche. But everyone agrees this cut is a vast improvement. The difference watching the film this time is that I know what to expect. I know where the laughs are going to kick in. I'm familiar with the slow awkward parts where people feel inclined to get up and go to the bathroom. It's less of an emotional roller coaster ride. Still...one joke that had the first audience roaring falls like a dud. Why? This audience is older. Maybe it's a generational thing? It occurs to me that if this had been the first audience, I would have ended up eliminating that joke. With that logic, scenes I've cut might fly with this audience. I feel like a terminally ill patient who needs another opinion.

May 19

After weeks of deliberation, we have chosen a composer. Most of the music I've laid in up to now has been "temp" music—songs that will eventually be replaced by an original score. One of the great satisfactions of this whole process has been laying in the music, particularly since we're using great Brazilian jazz and Bossa Nova. One caveat: do not get overly attached to your temp music. Sometimes a song seems to magically "fit" a scene so well that it's difficult to imagine the scene without it. Two things tend to change your mind rather quickly: a) your music supervisor informs you the song will cost \$10,000 to license (or \$30,000, as was the case with one song I thought I couldn't live without); and b) your composer comes up with some music that is just as good, if not better.

May 29

Hollywood has beat us to the punch. *Till There Was You*, a romantic comedy about two strangers who don't meet until the very end of the movie, opens tomorrow. The trailer includes one shot



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The Foundation for Independent Video and Film (FIVF), the educational affiliate of the Association for Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), supports a variety of programs and services for the independent media community, including publication of *The Independent*, operation of the Festival Bureau, seminars and workshops, and an information clearing house. None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

The Center for Arts Criticism, Consolidated Edison Company of New York, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, National Video Resources, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York Community Trust, New York State Council on the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, and Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

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Memoranda continued from pg. 64

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.

Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.

Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

Call for dates and times.

Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island, NW

Contact: DC Salon hotline (202) 554-3263 x4.

Westchester, NY:

When: Second Tuesday of each month (starting Sept. 2), 7:30 p.m.

Where: Call for locations

Contact: Bob Curtis, (914) 741-2538;

rec111@aol.com

AIVF/FIVE BOARD MINUTES

The board of directors of the Association of Independent Video and filmmakers (AIVF) and Foundation of Independent Video and Film (FIVE) met in New York on April 19-20, 1997. Attending were Present: Robb Moss (Chair), Bart Weiss (Co-President), Susan Wittenberg (Vice President), Robert Richter (Treasurer), Diane Markrow (Secretary), Carroll Blue, Barbara Hammer, Cynthia Lopez, Peter Lewnes, Jim McKay, Todd Cohen (Sunday only), Ruby Lerner (ex officio). Absent were Loni Ding (Co-President), Laala Matias, James Schamus.

Neil Cheng and Kirk Wong of N. Cheng & Company reviewed the audited financial statements for FY96.

Thomson introduced Ryan Deussing as the new managing editor of *The Independent* and noted a new series of joint AIVF program and editorial department meetings. Deussing reported that the AIVF Website design is almost finished.

LaTrice Dixon, advocacy assistant, reported on the hearing of Manhattan Neighborhood Network's public access cable permit renewal, and the Media in Democracy planning committee meeting.

Leslie Fields, director of membership, reported on AIVF events, salon activities, and marketing projects, noting an adjustment to the marketing schedule because she is waiting for the renewal of FIVE's mailing permit.

Development/resource consultant Jodi Magee reported that the organization received a grant from the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation. Most of Magee's other efforts have been focused on the Capital Campaign. Magee and Diane Markrow passed out the Capital Campaign informational packets. Richter gave the treasurer's report, noted Lerner's tentative projection for FY 1998, and said she'll have more specifics at the June meeting.

Lerner will send Norman Wang a letter thanking him for serving on the FIVE board.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for June 21-22, 1997.

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AIVF believes that Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) providers like Echostar, DirectTV, and AskB must follow the mandate laid out by the 1992 Cable Act, which requires them to reserve 4-7 percent of their channel capacity for non-commercial programming. Educational programmers and independent producers—this directly affects you!

On September 23, AIVF, along with the DC Salon, Libraries for the Future, and other local DC organizations, will hold a telecommunications forum on direct broadcast satellite. Panelists include Gigi Sohn from the Media Access Project and others who will discuss the effect of direct broadcast satellite on independent production, access, distribution, and emerging technologies. For further details, contact LaTrice Dixon at (212) 807-1400 ext. 233. Also, see our Web site at www.aivf.org for more information. Videotapes and transcripts of this forum will be made available.

Staff Updates

Many thanks to our spring and summer interns: *Katy Allen, Laala Matias, Jennifer Brodieri, and Tanya Tedeschi*. Good Luck!

Call for Nominations

It's time to think about nominations for the AIVF board of directors. Board members are elected to a three-year term of office; the board gathers four times per year in NYC for weekend meetings. Members must be prepared to set aside time to fulfill board responsibilities, which include:

- Attendance at all board meetings and participation in conference calls when necessary;
- Preparation for meetings by reading advance materials;
- Active participation in one or more committees as determined by the organization's needs and as requested by the board chair or executive director; fulfillment of commitments with agreed-upon guidelines;
- Commitment to the Millennium Fund Campaign, a three year campaign to create a \$150,000 reserve fund.
- General support of the executive director and staff as needed.

Board nominations must be made by current AIVF members in good standing; you may nominate yourself. Board members must be at least 19 years old. To

make a nomination, send or fax (212/463-8519) the name, address, and telephone number of the nominee and nominator; we cannot accept nominations over the phone. Send attention Leslie Fields. The nomination period ends Sept. 19, 1997.

MEET & GREETs

These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. Free; open to AIVF members only. RSVP required: (212) 807-1400 x 301. For more event info, visit www.aivf.org.

PETER BRODERICK
President, Next Wave Films

Next Wave Films supports emerging filmmakers by providing finishing funds for exceptional ultra-low budget features (\$200,000 or less), for which it serves as a producer's rep, helping filmmakers to implement a film festival strategy to secure distribution. Peter Broderick has been an active board member of the Independent Feature Project/West and *Filmmaker* magazine for a number of years, and is currently VP of IFP/West. *Wednesday, September 17, 6:30 p.m.*

Salon Report

The following is an excerpt from *The Salonista Newsletter*, a quarterly report about AIVF salon activities available only at salon meetings and AIVF's website [www.aivf.org].

Washington, DC (Spring 1997)

The March salon was on producing for the CD-ROM market, and Margaret Buckley, a director for the multimedia division of the Discovery Channel, was guest speaker. Buckley's one-hour presentation was informative...and more than a little sobering. Two weeks prior to the March 11 presentation, Buckley's entire multimedia division was laid off (over 30 people) in an effort by the company to retreat from the money-devouring CD-ROM market.

Nevertheless, Buckley took members through the decision-making process in producing a CD-ROM, using a projector wired to a laptop computer. She showed portions of the recently released CD-ROM *Planet Explorer: Byzantine*, an elaborate and expensively produced educational tool for children featuring 100 species of animals and 800,000 words of text. Buckley explained the intimidating costs involved in producing for CD-ROM (compounded by unexpected problems such as translating text into foreign languages).

The news of the Discovery layoffs put a damper on members' enthusiasm for jumping into the CD-ROM arena, particularly since educational-related products were not faring well in a market that tended to embrace visually and intellectually simplistic game product.

On a lighter note, spring events included a presentation from Darryl Wharton on writing for film and television and the writer-actor relationship process. Wharton is a writer for the NBC series *Homicide: Life on the Streets*; and directors Haile Gerima and Jim McKay spoke to AIVF members on independent distribution.

MAX J. ALVAREZ

GIVE THE GIFT OF TECHNOLOGY!

AIVF is seeking a new or used Macintosh to provide Internet access to members in our library. If you have a heart of gold—or just an old Mac—contact Thomas Pallotta at (212) 807-1400 ext. 232.

MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our copy deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:
 When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.
 Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.
 Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Atlanta, GA:
 Contact: IMAGE, (404) 352-4225.

Austin, TX:
 When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.
 Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street
 Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Bergen County, NJ
 Call for information
 Contact: Allen Chou (908) 756-9845

Boston, MA:
 Call for dates and locations.
 Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:
 When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time
 Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.
 Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Cleveland, OH
 Call for date and location.
 Contact: Annetta Marion, (216) 781-1755

Dallas, TX:
 Call for date and location.
 Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 651-8600

Denver/Boulder, CO
 Call for dates and locations
 Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125 or Jon Stout (303) 442-8445.

Houston, TX:
 When: Last Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.
 Where: Call for locations.
 Contact: Houston Film Commission Hotline. (713) 227-1407

Kansas City, MO:
 When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.
 Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.
 Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

Norwalk, CT:
 Call for dates and locations.
 Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

Sacramento, CA
 call for dates and locations.
 Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

Continued on pg. 63

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In making *Picture Bride* we turned many times to AIVF/FIVF publications for the facts on fundraising, production and distribution. Their books are up-to-date, well organized and accessible. Best of all, it's getting the 411 without the schmooze.

Kayo Hatta -
"Picture Bride" ”

“

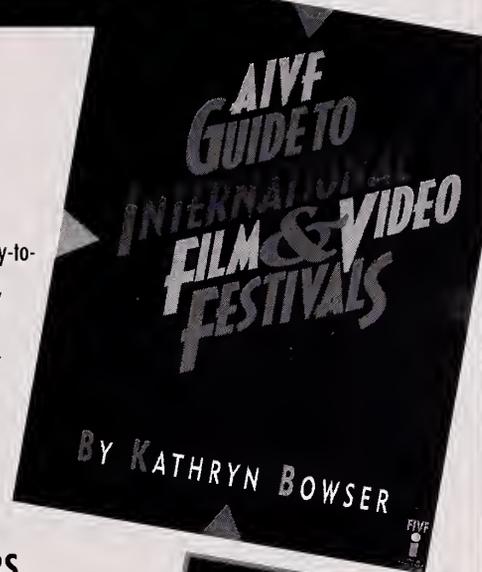
When people ask me how and what festivals to enter, I simply refer them to AIVF/FIVF's Guide. Not only is it the most comprehensive and up to date listing I've seen but the indexes slice and dice the festivals into every conceivable category. It's absolutely indispensable for independent producers.

Frederick Marx -
"Hoop Dreams" ”

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The 4th edition of FIVF's best seller is a completely indexed and easy-to-read compendium of over 400 international film and video festivals, with contact information, entry regulations, deadlines, categories, accepted formats, and much more. The Festival Guide includes information on all types of festivals: small and large, specialized and general, domestic and foreign.



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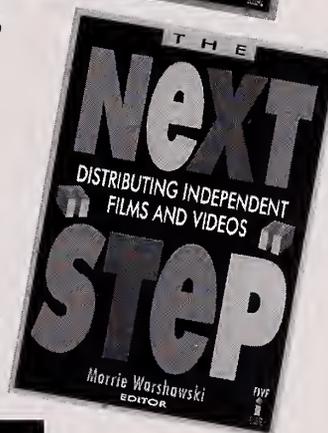
A must-read for film and video makers searching for the right distributor. The Distributors Guide presents handy profiles of nearly 200 commercial and nonprofit distributors, practical information and company statistics on the type of work handled, primary markets, relations with producers, marketing and promotion, foreign distribution and contacts. Fully indexed, this is the best compendium of distribution information especially tailored for independent producers available.



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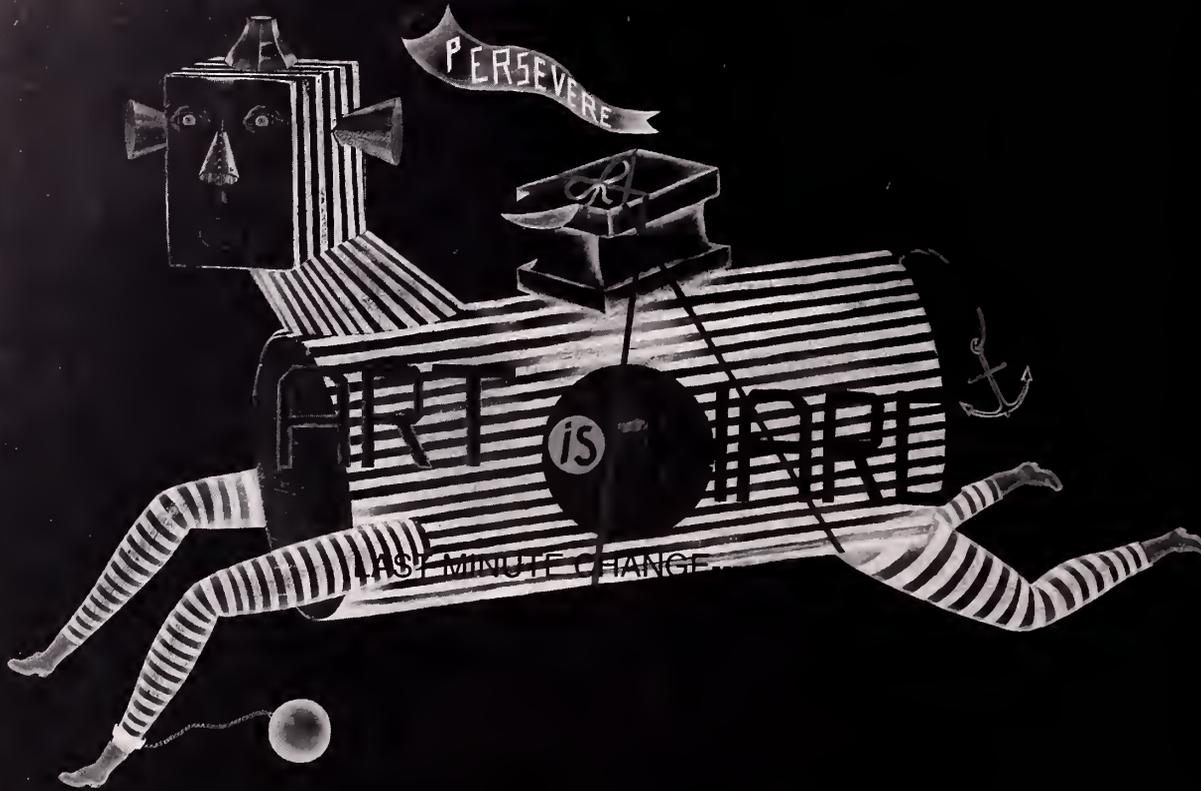
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Please Note:

- Market Pass includes entry to all screenings, seminars and panel discussions
- Passes do not include admission to the Market social events
- Market Passes are sold on a first-come, first-served basis
- To secure a pass, send in the form below by August 30
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Check out the IFP's website Indie Link for advance information on screenings and seminars after August 25th.

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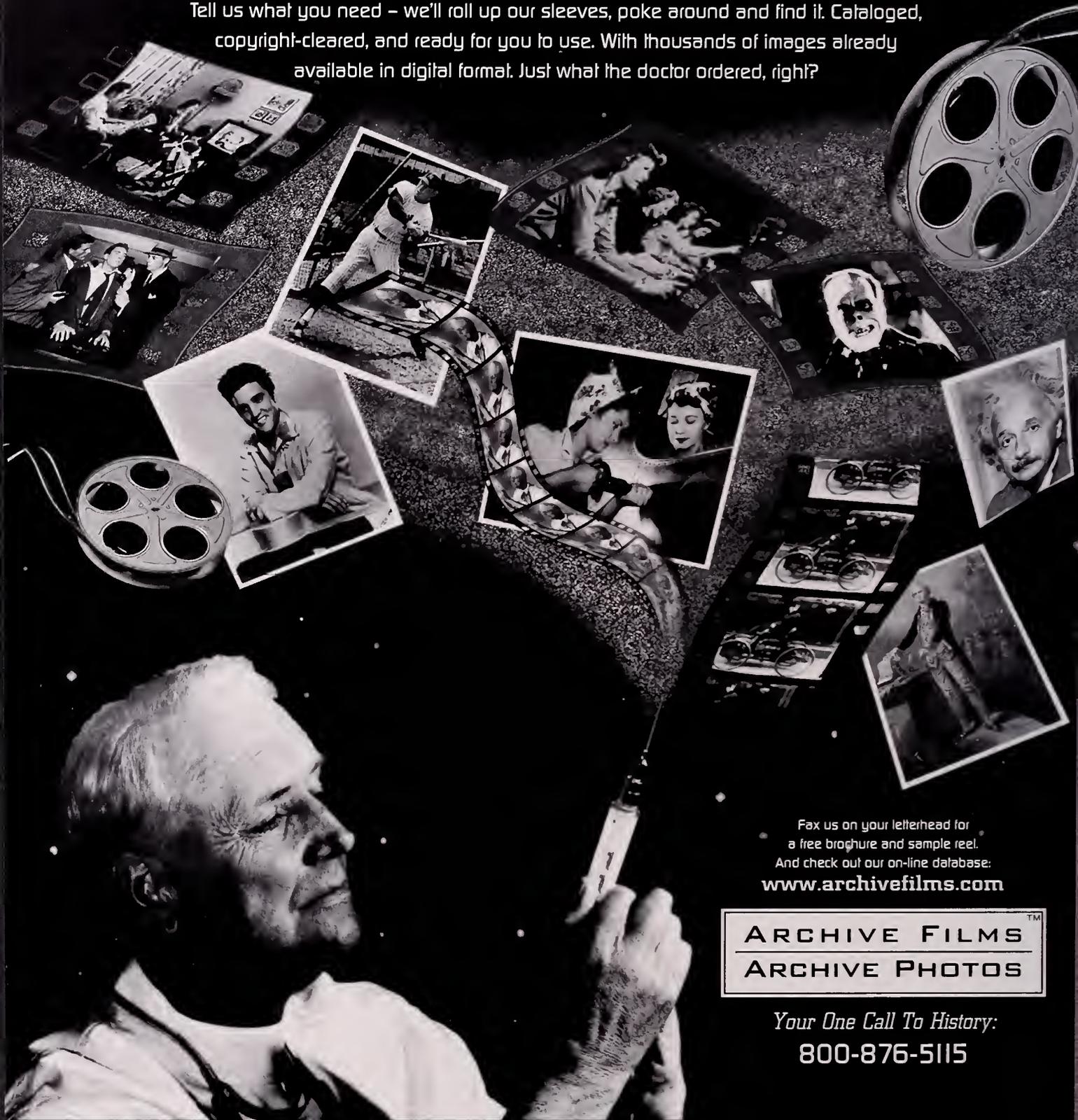
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Albania Cruz and daughter
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Nestled away in Pennsylvania Dutch country is a 24-year-old distributor that handles all things environmental. BY LISSA GIBBS

COVER: When Atlanta filmmaker Carol Cassidy realized that the majority of her teenaged cousins were young moms, she decided to probe deeper and make a film about the reasons why so many teenagers choose to have babies. Through the efforts of ITVS's Community Connections Project, the film has reached adolescent girls through screenings at YMCAs and other community groups. This and other successful outreach efforts are detailed in "Five Paths to the Grassroots." Pictured: Albania Cruz and daughter. Photo: Joyce George, courtesy ITVS.

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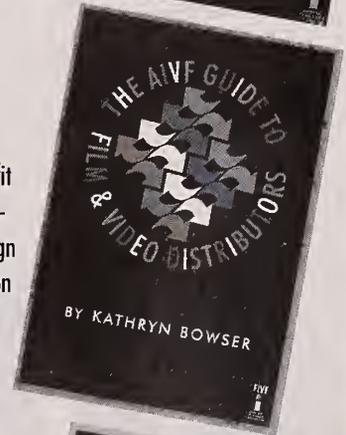
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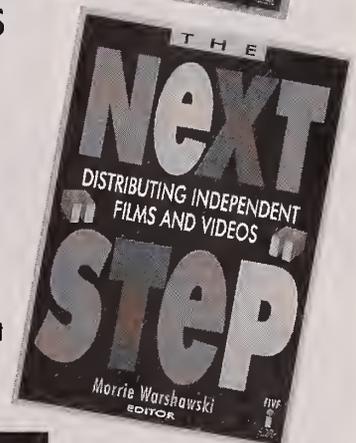
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UP FOR GRABS

Digital Airwaves and the Public Interest

BY MARK J. HUISMAN

LAST SPRING THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS Commission (FCC) issued its much-anticipated schedule for converting the nation's airwaves from analog to digital transmission. At its best (when viewed on a set with a 40-inch or larger screen), digital TV (DTV) has visual quality comparable to 35mm film and the audio quality of a compact disc. The technology encodes audio, video, and data into zeros and ones—a stream of “bits”—that is reassembled by a digital TV or through a converter box attached to an analog set. The compressed digital signal also increases spectrum capacity: the space normally devoted to a single channel can instead transmit as many as six. On April 3, in its “Fifth Report and Order on DTV,” the FCC announced a gradual but methodical DTV roll-out, starting with the largest markets in 1998 and, to ensure no households are left behind, ending in 2006. At that time, broadcasters would return the analog spectrum to the government for reallocation among emergency services and educational, children's, and noncommercial programming.

But even before these plans were announced, the broadcasting industry was changing them for its benefit, at significant cost to the public. Even though the DTV spectrum was meant to be used for just that—digital television—the broadcasters pressured Congress to grant them “spectrum flexibility,” a euphemistic term allowing division of DTV spectrum into multiple channels. Thus, despite their prior promise to use the spectrum to provide better quality TV, broadcasters would only have to provide one “advanced” TV channel, and could fill the others with cash cows like pay-per-view films, paging services, and data transmission such as Internet access.

As the balanced budget agreement was being finalized last summer, the industry made an even bigger grab. Longtime broadcast allies Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA) and Sen. Conrad Burns (R-MT) secured amendments to the

spending bill that give broadcasters the means to evade the digital deadline and, consequently, retain their analog spectrum. The language requires the FCC to grant extensions on the use of the analog spectrum in a market where any one of three things occurs: (1) no major network affiliate (including Fox) carries a digital signal; (2) converter box technology is generally not available; or (3) where 15% of households do not have access to a cable system that provides digital signals. According to Gigi

●
**The backslapping and dealmaking
 are set to continue, as broadcasters
 have begun a new battle to rob the
 public of its legal right to benefit
 from the spectrum.**

Sohn, Executive Director of the Washington-based Media Access Project [www.mediaaccess.org], a nonprofit public interest law firm that has long been active in the policy-making debate surrounding DTV, the first two circumstances probably won't be a problem.

“But the third”—Sohn whistles—“They'll probably very likely get away with it. It will almost certainly give broadcasters an excuse to retain their analog spectrum indefinitely, chiefly because cable systems are not *required* to carry digital signals.” This stunning abuse of the budget process, which effectively eliminated a major tenet of the 1996 Telecommunications Act—the return of the analog spectrum by a specified date—went virtually unnoticed, despite warnings from advocates like Sohn. “I started yelling about this tactic in June,” she says. “But the budget reconciliation process is done so much under the cover of darkness and out of public view. People don't hear about all the little special interest goodies that pile onto these budget bills. The broadcasters basically usurped the regulatory process of the Telecommunications Act.” And, Sohn adds, the broadcasters keep the issue off the nightly news

simply because they control the airwaves.

This was not the first triumph for broadcasters. During debate over the 1996 Act, the industry successfully convinced Congress to abandon spectrum auctions, despite the objections of groups including MAP and Common Cause, and even its own members (then Majority Leader Bob Dole was right to flag it “the giveaway of the century”). Instead of requiring broadcasters to bid for the new spectrum as cellular telephone and pager operators had to do, Congressional leaders instructed the FCC to “loan” the digital spectrum to broadcasters, absolutely free. Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS) publicly promised to hold hearings on the auction issue but promptly changed his mind when he became Majority Leader after Dole resigned his Senate seat to focus on his presidential campaign. Just four days after Dole's departure, Lott wrote FCC Chairman Reed Hundt to “complete all actions necessary to prescribe rules to permit deployment of over-the-air digital broadcasting no later than April 1, 1997.” Perhaps not coincidentally, Eddie Fritts, chair of the National Association of Broadcasters, the industry's biggest and most powerful lobbying group, was Lott's college roommate. The FCC acted on April 3, announcing its plans to grant broadcasters free use of both the digital and analog spectrums through 2006. Such backslapping and dealmaking are set to continue, as broadcasters have begun a new battle to rob the public of its legal right to benefit from the spectrum.

The Communications Act of 1934, the fundamental charter of American broadcasting, codified two basic principles: First, the airwaves are public property. Second, in return for using that public property free of charge, the broadcast industry must serve “the public interest.” “Channeling Influence,” a 1997 study by Common Cause about the spending and lobbying habits of the broadcast industry, describes this dual relationship: “The public allows broadcasters to

build a business on rent-free public property—the broadcast spectrum—in return for the broadcasters' promise that they will provide a service that will benefit the public. Broadcasters receive a quasi-public right to the spectrum... and agree to serve as public trustees." [www.commoncause.org/channelinginfluence] But exactly how must broadcasters serve the public interest? While some formal public interest guidelines do exist, the phrase has seldom been formally defined in legislation and its precise meaning is hotly debated by broadcasters and media activists.

Cable system operators (companies that operate multi-channel systems rather than the single channel usually operated by broadcasters) have essentially two public interest requirements: (1) If they make broadcast time available to a given candidate, they must give equal time to a candidate with an opposing view; and, (2) the system must set aside capacity for "leased access," which means that any member of the viewing public can rent the air time and conduct their own broadcast. However, leased access prices are so high few members of the viewing public could possibly afford them. "That's something independent filmmakers should really care about," says Sohn. "They have the right to free speech. It's not just for the rich guy with the license." Additional public interest obligations are determined by local statutes, like one in New York that mandates a 24-hour public access channel. Calling such leased access requirements unconstitutional, Time Warner sued the FCC (*Time Warner Entertainment Co. v. FCC*) and lost. Time Warner elected not to appeal to the Supreme Court, which has upheld such statutes time and time again.

The only broadcasters whose public interest obligations are specifically codified into law are Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) providers. This is largely because DBS was a brand new business when the 1992 Cable Television Act was passed: Primestar was the sole player and, all alone, it lacked the lobbying muscle necessary to escape such legislation. Two sections of the 1992 Act require that DBS operators (1) provide "reasonable access" and equal opportunities for all eligible candidates for public office; (2) reserve between 4 to 7% of their capacity for "noncommercial" educational and informational programming; (3) allow only public or nonprofit entities to occupy "noncommercial" capacity; (4) not exercise any editorial control over such capacity; and (5) charge a programmer for Section 25(b) space based only on the direct costs of transmitting the signal to the



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uplink facility and the direct costs of uplinking the signal to the satellite. In detailed comments submitted earlier this year to the FCC in response to its invitation for public comment,¹ MAP strongly urged the FCC to be stringent about its interpretation of the 1992 Act, in which the obligations are codified. For instance, MAP says, the law "mandates reasonable access for all candidates, not just some candidates...noncommercial programming does not mean few commercials, it means no commercials."

The historical public interest obligation of broadcasters was restated in the 1996 Act: "Nothing in this [Act] shall be construed as relieving a television broadcasting station from its obligation to serve the public interest, convenience and necessity." Taking her cue from the precedent of DBS public interest obligations, Sohn organized a 70-member coalition of educational, children's, media, minority, and religious organizations (including AIVF) and petitioned the FCC to adopt similar, specific public interest obligations for broadcasters: free air time for political candidates, increased and measurable obligations for children's educational and informational programming (a minimum of three hours a week for each broadcast service) and designated parts of the spectrum for non-commercial uses. The last two requirements are especially important for film- and videomakers: non-commercial channel space could be used to enlarge PBS or to create even more public programming enterprises, such as a channel devoted solely to independent film and video—shown uncut, uninterrupted, and commercial free.

These possibilities have broadcasters shuddering enough to threaten litigation, one of their favorite stalling tactics. But as David Fiske, an FCC spokesperson, told *The Independent*: "The DBS set-aside was upheld by the courts. Besides, when you have the potential of five or six channels from one piece of spectrum, you ought to be expected to give that little back." And last May, the Supreme Court's decision in *Turner Broadcasting v. FCC* upheld the concept of "must-carry," the requirement that cable operators carry local broadcasting channels on their systems. "The broadcasters argued that they were special," Sohn says, "and the Court agreed. But if they want special pro-

tections, such as 'must-carry' provides, they must pay with public service. This ruling strengthens the FCC's power to require public interest obligations."

The future make-up of the FCC itself could also play a hand in the course of this debate. Chairman Hundt, who has actively called for a 5% capacity set-aside, has resigned pending selection of a successor. But media advocates were encouraged in August when President Clinton nominated William E. Kennard, the FCC's General Counsel since 1993, to succeed Hundt (who had hired him for that job) as chairman. Through his oversight of the agency's court battles, Kennard supervised defenses of both the Time Warner and Turner litigation, each of which achieved major public interest victories. At press time he was widely expected to be confirmed by the Senate. In addition, the President recently appointed Michael Powell (the son of Gen. Colin Powell) to fill a vacant Republican seat on the Commission, and it is likely that even more seats will change hands before the public interest obligations issue is settled.

Meanwhile, MAP is not letting anything go by, even the FCC's "Fifth Report and Order", which Sohn thinks "made the best out of an imperfect law." MAP believes the Commission was required by the 1996 Act to adopt new public interest requirements for DTV, and petitioned the FCC to reconsider that April decision. MAP has also asked the FCC to specify that all existing and any new public interest obligations should apply across the board, to both free and subscription services and on both analog and digital spectrums.

Sohn says everyone concerned should not expect the broadcasting lobby's string of devious successes to abate any time soon. "Send a letter to your Congressional Representative and to Reed Hundt supporting the position of the new public interest obligations MAP has suggested," Sohn says urgently. "At the very least, after all they've been given, broadcasters should have to set aside some public space. The industry doesn't have to have, or need, control over every last speck of spectrum."

Mark J. Huisman
[cinemark@mindspring.com] is a New York-based writer and independent producer.

1. The FCC formulates policy by first issuing a "Proposed Rule," and inviting public comment. The FCC then revises and issues the rule as a "Rule and Order." To learn about the process in greater detail, visit the FCC Web site [www.fcc.gov]

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JOHN O'BRIEN MIGHT NOT HAVE ANTICIPATED that he'd turn his 77-year-old next door neighbor, Fred Tuttle, into a national celebrity with the pseudo-documentary *Man with a Plan*, but that's exactly what happened. The quasi-fi-

since January of '96," says O'Brien from his farmhouse in Tunbridge. "We've sold about 17,000 videos just in the northeast area alone, and we're waiting on a possible PBS deal."

O'Brien describes *Man with a Plan* as "an organic, regional version of [Jerzy Kosinski's] *Being There*," and explains that much of the success of the film comes from its status as a Vermont souvenir, because it is so distinctly "Vermont." Thus when QVC came to Vermont looking for regional items to feature on their show, the 34-year-old writer/director saw an excellent opportunity to "Spread Fred"—as the bumper stickers say.

"What QVC does is they go around to all the states and have an open call for all sorts of

world thus far, which is partly what made him turn to QVC.

"Video is this unbelievable Draconian thing," says O'Brien. "There are brokers and sub-brokers placing videos for PBS and Blockbuster stores. It's crazy—it's all middlemen. But what's fascinating is that it's completely new territory and there are no rules. In eight minutes [with QVC] we'll do as well as a TriStar advance."

Meanwhile, life on the farm continues as usual. Fred Tuttle was voted Politician of the Year by the *Vermont Press*, and received a landslide of write-in votes for everything from president to high balliff. O'Brien is busy working on his next feature film, *Nosey*



Vermont filmmaker John O'Brien (L) with Fred Tuttle, the neighbor he made famous in the quasi-documentary *Man with a Plan*, at a Phish bash. The video is now being sold via a home-shopping channel. Photo: Jack Rowell, courtesy filmmaker

tional story of a retired dairy farmer from Tunbridge, Vermont, who runs for Congress under the premise, "Why not?," has made Tuttle the biggest name to come out of Vermont since the rock band Phish or Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream.

And though the film has earned Tuttle lots of kisses from teenage girls and O'Brien critical acclaim, neither has seen much of a profit windfall. In fact, the film, which took two years and \$100,000 to make, has barely broken even.

On September 6, however, O'Brien hopes to sell 2,600 VHS copies of *Man with a Plan* in just under eight minutes—with a little help from the QVC shopping network.

"So far the film has been self-distributed—

nutty entrepreneurs with products," says O'Brien. "In Vermont about 200 people applied, and only 20 were accepted." Fred was one of them.

"It's rare," admits O'Brien. "Most of the people who submitted videos were all turned down, and those are usually how-to videos. But [*Man with a Plan*] has become a Vermont product. I think that's why QVC picked it."

The video is currently being sold by Barnes & Noble bookstores in Vermont, where it has done exceedingly well, making *Man with a Plan* the first feature produced in Vermont to make its money back regionally. Yet O'Brien has had nervous dealings with the video distribution

Parker, which promises to turn more local characters into stars. "It's a mystery/comedy about conflicts between newcomers and natives," says O'Brien. "Basically, it's a comedy about xenophobia."

Richard Baimbridge lives in New York and writes for Paper, Vibe, and Time Out New York.

ERRATA

In the July issue's report on the Ann Arbor Film Festival, a mention of Don Hertzfeld's film *Genre* was followed by a one-sentence description of *Dial M for Mars*, by Jennifer Stefanisko, which also appeared at the festival. Marilyn Levine's *Life, Death, and Baseball* was mistakenly attributed to a Barbara Levine. We regret the errors.

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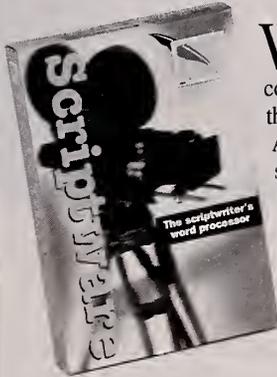
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CANNES' GOLDEN MOMENTS

For its 50th anniversary, the world's most famous fest offers the flippant and the fabulous, the sublime and the ridiculous.

BY BARBARA
SCHARRES

THE STAKES WERE HIGH AT THE 1997 CANNES International Film Festival (May 7-18), due entirely to the self-created hype surrounding its fiftieth anniversary. Even as last year's festival was in progress, the urgent p.r. began wafting hints of the elaborate preparations that would render the birthday festival a world-beater. And in many ways it was: Cannes hotels ushered in a new era of gouge; 4,000 accredited press showed up (a jump of 25 percent); arcs of star-shaped lights transformed the town's narrow main street, the Rue d'Antibes, into a nighttime fairyland; and, oh yeah, there were the films.

"I would just suck it and see," jury member Mike Leigh (*Secrets and Lies*) provocatively replied at the opening press conference, where the 10-member jury was asked umpteen versions of "What flavor will this festival have?" His cohorts, including three Americans—writer Paul Auster, director Tim Burton, and actress Mira Sorvino—managed to look sage behind dark glasses while Leigh, on a roll, continued, "There's one film we've all decided to hate... just kidding."

At a festival the size of Cannes, with its competition, sidebars, and huge market, there are films to be found for every purpose and every aesthetic, every year. But each year, blanket judgments on the quality of the festival tend to focus on the films in competition. Not very far into this anniversary event, Leigh's word "suck" was heard with increasing frequency. Of the American films in competition, Johnny Depp's oddly conceived directorial debut *The Brave* anchored the bottom end of the opinion scale, sometimes joined, depending on who you talked to, by Nick Cassavetes's *She's So Lovely*; while Curtis Hanson's noiresque comedy/drama *L.A. Confidential* drew raves as the guiltiest pleasure for its entertainment quotient, and Ang Lee's *The Ice*



You know how to whistle, don't you? Kim Basinger in Curtis Hanson's popular *L.A. Confidential*. Courtesy Monarchy Enterprises B.V./Regency Entertainment

Storm rated universal respect.

American independents were more or less everywhere. In a continuation of the trend/dilemma/new world order that the Academy Awards made notorious, there was hardly a film to be found that was not, technically speaking, independent. The annual panel of American independents at Cannes, chaired by Roger Ebert in the *Variety* pavilion, featured a rancorous debate over a meaningful definition of the term "independent." Participants included Paul Chart (*American Perfekt*), Curtis Hanson (*L.A. Confidential*), Matthew Harrison (*Kicked in the Head*), Neil LaBute (*In the Company of Men*), Amir Naderi (*A,B,C...Manhattan*), Jonathan Nossiter (*Sunday*), Michael Oblowitz (*This World, Then the Fireworks*), and Rob Tregenza (*Inside/Out*). As usual, the panel

included no women, being limited to those directors whose films screened in official sections of the festival.

Tregenza suggested that the label independent is "virtually worthless," and elaborated, "If you're talking about dependent cinema, which I would rather talk about, what are we dependent on—financing, audiences, critics, the people who give us money? This illusion that we can set ourselves up as independent is a problematic notion." Before long, Tregenza and Oblowitz were functioning as an intellectual tag team, invoking iconic names like John Cassavetes, Stan Brakhage, and Stanley Kubrick, to a belligerent Matthew Harrison, who mugged, yawned, and played the head-scratching proletarian throughout. In an attempt to clarify the situation, Oblowitz stat-

ed, "It's an issue of content, not an issue of form... It's what you have to say that defines whether your cinema is radical or different or alternative, it's not how it's made," to which Harrison responded, "Content...form...Stanley Kubrick...I'm gettin' really bored here, I don't know about you guys."

When Ebert greeted the panel audience with, "I know many of you would like to be on the panel next year," he was acknowledging the ever present but less visible side of Cannes.

Aspiring directors, screenwriters, and producers, many of them Americans, flock to the festival each year, often with huge ambitions and minimal credentials. They cruise the market and hang out in the pavilions, restaurants, and bars to learn a side of the film business that can't be learned anywhere else, always hoping for that lucky contact. Surprisingly, Cannes continues to offer stunning opportunities.

By far the most enterprising effort came from a little maverick company called Cool Loon Movies, run by Calianne Lum, MD, who back home in Minneapolis is an academic surgeon heading an organ transplant program at the University of Minnesota. Having developed the ambition to produce independent films over the past

several years, Lum had already put herself through what she describes as a crash course in the movie business by joining the Independent Feature Project/North and attending numerous seminars and workshops. She saw going to Cannes as the logical next step, a "graduate-level class," as it were. Gathering tapes and press materials from a diverse group of Minneapolis filmmakers she knew, she proposed representing their work without commission for the learning experience. Leasing the smallest and least expensive market stand in the basement of the festival Palais for \$2,100, which included shared video screening facilities, a free parking space, and an initial free shuttle from the Nice airport, she set up shop to represent seven features, six shorts, two docudramas, and numer-

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Bob takes a beating in Amir Naderi's *A, B, C... Manhattan*.

Photo: Claudia Thompson, courtesy Alphaville Films/NYC & Open City Films

ous films in production.

Interviewed during the festival, Lum spoke favorably of the helpfulness of M.I.F. (Marché International du Film) officials, who seemed to be courting the smaller companies, and of the advice she received from many sources. A UPI reporter showed her how to write press releases, for instance, and how to get them distributed through festival mailboxes. She was ecstatic over the prime location of her market stand, next to the Buyer's Club on a cul-de-sac aisle where two lighted columns created the illusion of an exit right in front of her stand. "I hail every single body that walks by," she said. "I snagged numerous potential buyers from Germany, France, Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and I showed them my wares."

Contacted after the festival, Lum's streak of success continues. She reports, "All the major parties I set up 'let's do deals' with in Cannes have called back, including Mark Odersky's office from Fine Line. I'm duping cassettes like crazy to send out to companies interested in co-production deals and distribution. One company in the U.K. is seriously 'in the conversation' about reshooting one of our unfinished films, dressing it up with a British star, adding hot original music...and I have an Asian company interested in joining in on this project and others. A 'rising star' I met in a line at Cannes actually read on his plane back to L.A. one of my scripts, which he loves, and I'm busy putting together financing for that project. If you want to talk surreal, I just got a call yesterday from a producer in France who I met, literally on the run, along the Croisette on my way to the Noga Hilton."

As the festival wore on, there were few rumors regarding who would win the Palme d'Or and even fewer informal betting pools. When asked for his best guess, British critic Derek Malcolm, heading the FIPRESCI jury, uttered an emphatic "Who cares!" That attitude seemed to prevail even to the very door of

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the Palais on awards night, as many of the luminaries did their best to show disdain for pomp. Sean Penn, eventual winner for Best Actor, slouched and chain-smoked his way up the red carpet in the company of Nick Cassavetes, who never removed his porkpie hat, even when accepting cinematographer Thierry Arbogast's award for *She's So Lovely* and *The Fifth Element*. Actor David Thewlis announced a major prize while smacking his chewing gum, one twisting finger thrust deep in his ear.

Expecting little at the closing spectacle, the film world was given pause by the split award for the Palme d'Or. Shohei Imamura's *The Eel* from Japan and Abbas Kiarostami's *The Taste of Cherry* from Iran were each profound, contemplative works by revered masters, films impossible to regard with flippancy. *The Taste of Cherry*, which was leveraged out of Iran by the festival at the last minute, had been banned by the Islamic government for its forbidden theme of suicide. A truly haunting film that had many a seasoned critic speaking the phrase "life affirming" without a trace of irony, *The Taste of Cherry* restored a sense of awe to the cinema and finally bestowed a much-needed solemnity and grace on the fiftieth Cannes.

Barbara Scharres is director of the Film Center at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a freelance writer



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Robert Forster flips in Paul Chart's *American Perfekt*. Courtesy Nu Image

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A LOLLAPALAZZA WITH GROWING PAINS

The New York International Film & Video Festival graduates to the almost credible.

BY RICHARD
BAIMBRIDGE

THOUGH OBVIOUSLY STILL SUFFERING FROM growing pains, the second annual New York International Film & Video Festival (April 22-May 5) delivered far more this year on its promise of being a serious venue for independent artists. Nonetheless, the festival, which has now expanded its scope to include visual art, stand-up comedy, live script readings, and music, continues to raise some concerns over the purpose of a film festival, and who, if anyone, should profit from it.

The event was founded last year by Stuart Alson, who once ran an open-mike night for actors and comedians at a Manhattan nightclub called Le Bar Bat—where most of the fest took place this year. Alson, who is also a filmmaker, said that the open-mike series inspired the festival, in that he saw a need for up-and-coming artists to gain recognition, and decided to turn it into one big yearly event.

However, he also admits he saw a potential for profit.

Indeed, Alson estimates the festival drew about a thousand submissions this year, with entry fees ranging from \$45 for shorts to \$95 for features—considerably higher than most, which average around \$30. Furthermore, the event drew corporate sponsorship, sold advertising on its Web site and in the program, and experienced good ticket sales. Alson estimated his operating costs this year were roughly \$30,000, thus the profit margin could be quite significant.

"For some of the people, [the entry fee] was nothing," he said. "If the filmmaker didn't have money, and we thought it was an important work, we made sure the film made it in."

He also pointed out that the event employs at least two other full-time people, so he is not the sole recipient of festival proceeds.

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers received complaints last year, how-



ever, from a few disgruntled participants who charged that Alson was perpetrating a scam—that the "festival" was held in his home, and that the equipment and promotion were severely inadequate and biased towards advertisers. Marcy Hedy Lynn, an independent filmmaker, and another participant, who preferred not to be identified, both expressed concern over Alson's practice of soliciting ad money from participants for the festival's web site (www.nyfilmvideo.com).

Alson countered those charges, though not denying that last year's event was held in his Manhattan loft space, which he said is often rented out for similar events. "Most people were happy," he said. "Some people argue that Sundance is a rip-off. You're never going to please everyone. If you can satisfy 80 percent of the people, then I think you're successful."

He also said that though ads were solicited (ranging from \$250 to \$1,000), they in no way influenced a film's selection or the results of the judging process.

Thomas Clohessy was one of the filmmakers present for both this year and the festival's debut. His short film, *A Little Tenderness*, won best short last year, and he has few if any complaints about Alson or the event.

"Last year I made a lot of good contacts," he said. "The response I got was actually overwhelming." Clohessy said he also doesn't mind the idea of an individual profiting personally from a festival, as long as it's a legitimate affair. "If nothing had improved this year about the festival, then maybe I'd have reservations, but

they moved into a theater space and things were a lot better. I think this festival is a lot like independent film in gen-

eral. It's slowly improving."

While many of the 200 films shown over two weeks at the Mark Goodson theater and Le Bar Bat were quite enjoyable, such as the premiere feature *No Deposit, No Return* by brothers Chris and Derek Partridge, a good number were appallingly bad.

As for the art exhibits and live readings, they can basically be summed up in one word: schlock. The majority of the visual art was of the starving artist sidewalk sale caliber, displayed haphazardly throughout Le Bar Bat, and the live readings were as inaudible as they were uninspiring.

These complications notwithstanding, Alson said he's committed to helping the festival evolve and improve, though he said he wants it to remain true to its grassroots inception. As for the profit margin, Alson said he's considering a practice next year of refunding the entry fees for those films that are not accepted. He also pointed out that Matthew Spain, whose film *Meat* won best short, received the honor without purchasing any festival advertising.

All told, perhaps the New York International Film & Video festival would do better to narrow its focus to just that—film and video. Then again, maybe the new additions were just experiencing particularly staggering "growing pains."

Richard Baimbridge lives in New York and writes for Paper, Vibe, and Time Out New York.

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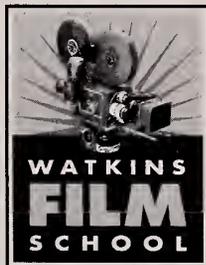


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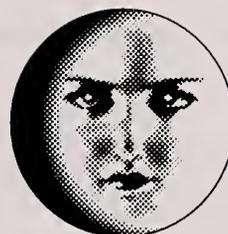
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Get Smart

BY ROBERT I.
FREEDMAN

The ITVS Contract Up Close

Editor's note: As one of the organizations that took a lead in lobbying Congress for the creation of ITVS in 1989, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) remains a staunch supporter of ITVS and its mission. Indeed, some of its latest programs and innovations in outreach are detailed elsewhere in this issue as part of The Independent's report on media activism (see "Five Paths into the Grassroots," by Liz Canner and George Fifield, pg. 32). But in recent months, AIVF has been contacted by numerous filmmakers with concerns about the latest production funding contract from ITVS. While each contract needs to be negotiated individually, the following is an overview of points independents might want to examine in some detail with their attorneys before signing this or any public television contract with similar terms.

THE INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS) was created pursuant to a Congressional mandate obligating the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) to set aside monies for production by independent producers. The ITVS legislation came about through the concerted efforts of independent video- and filmmakers spearheaded by AIVF and other independent media advocates.

The establishment of ITVS was hailed by independents as a discrete source of funding to support their work. ITVS had to engage in lengthy negotiations with CPB to establish terms of funding and accountability for the receipt and distribution of federal funding to independents. Such negotiated terms are the subject of a series of funding agreements between CPB and ITVS. (This author has participated in some of those negotiations.)

CPB receives funds from Congress and allocates a small portion of those funds to ITVS. ITVS, in turn, distributes funding to independents through program production agreements. These are not grants. They are contracts that in part parallel CPB-mandated federal funding terms and in part reflect ITVS's

business decisions.

Originally, ITVS's production contracts had incorporated the minimum CPB requirements, but otherwise permitted the independent to exercise substantial discretion in the production and exploitation of the funded program. ITVS's funding agreements required the granting of domestic broadcast rights for four releases in three years and off-air recording, retention, and reuse in educational institutions. Other uses were at the producer's discretion.

However, in 1996, a strange thing happened on the way to the contract. The user-friendly agreement was replaced by a contract that would make a Defense Department procurement officer proud. ITVS no longer performed the role of independent advocate seeking to minimize CPB intrusion. It created an entirely new level of ITVS control. It was as if independents were visited by the Brave New World of ITVS.

Although one can be sympathetic with ITVS's difficult middleman role and its ongoing accountability to CPB, the new contract seems to take an extremely authoritarian position to achieve accountability at the expense of those independent producers that ITVS was to encourage and support.

The following are illustrative, but not exhaustive, issues that independents receiving the new ITVS contract (the "Contract") need to be aware of. It must be noted that all contract terms, other than those mandated by CPB funding agreements with ITVS, are subject to negotiation, since any terms imposed by ITVS can be removed or modified by ITVS. It should also be noted that many of these issues, in one form or another, may also need to be addressed by independent producers in public television funding agreements issued by CPB, PBS, P.O.V., and others.

Although one can be sympathetic with ITVS's difficult middleman role and its ongoing accountability to CPB, the new contract seems to take an extremely authoritarian position.

1. Rights

ITVS is demanding an option to offer the independent's program to a third party distributor for "Subsidiary or Ancillary Uses." These are rights to the program, the title, and any character in the program. ITVS can make deals for theatrical exhibition, cable TV, commercial TV, foreign broadcast, audio-

visual exhibition, electronic rights, books and other literary works, music rights, and merchandising.

This is ITVS's option, not the producer's. If it sounds a little like giving your child up for adoption...well, it is. This means the independent producer would have no say in who distributes the program, how it is distributed, how it is promoted, the business terms, or the distribution deal. Hardly a provision to empower independent producers.

Although ITVS refers in this Contract to "Joint Rights," ITVS has the exclusive right to "administer and implement" the exploitation of the Joint Rights. Although ITVS is required to consult with and consider the producer's suggestions, the term "Joint Rights" rings hollow in this context.

The producer, however, is required to clear all of the rights for ITVS's distribution, including residuals, from the producer's budget, unless otherwise agreed to by ITVS. By way of example, if a producer can clear television rights in film footage for \$500, but home video and foreign rights are each an additional \$500, the producer would need to pay \$1,500 to clear the rights from the start.

2. Share of Receipts

Although the CPB Funding Agreement for

FY 1996 would appear to mandate that the CPB/ITVS share of ancillary and subsidiary market income be limited to no more than 50 percent, the Contract now seeks a more substantial percentage to ITVS until it recoups its funding. For example, if ITVS contributed \$150,000 of the production's fund-

ing, it could demand 70 percent of proceeds until it recouped its contribution. But as those are percentages of net receipts (meaning after the costs of distribution fees, expenses, advertising, and related costs have been deducted from gross), the deal could result in a 70/30 split until substantially more than \$150,000 is earned. The delay in a producer earning any back-end profit is further exacerbated if there are other funder or coproducer participants. Furthermore, ITVS is to account to the producer three months after each annual period, meaning that ITVS could sit with a producer's money for up to 15 months.

3. Additional Funding

ITVS reserves the right to approve other program funders in its sole discretion. It is understandable that ITVS would want to protect the integrity of the programs it funds from the influence of inappropriate funders. However, this could be accomplished by requiring that funding comply with PBS or similar underwriting guidelines. It is difficult enough to fund independent work. The last thing a producer needs is one funder with an absolute veto power over other funders.

ITVS's approval rights also extend to pre-sales, maybe the most fruitful source of co-financing. ITVS enumerates as a consideration as to whether it will approve such co-financing "ITVS and CPB's right to receive underwriter or sponsorship credit." It seems ludicrous that an independent's ability to obtain completion funding could be held hostage to ITVS's and CPB's self-aggrandizement. This need for credit is further demonstrated by the ITVS requirement for credit not just on the program and on program advertising, but on "postcards, flyers, pamphlets, stationery, posters," and even on the cover of any book based upon the program. These demands go further than those made by commercial licensees.

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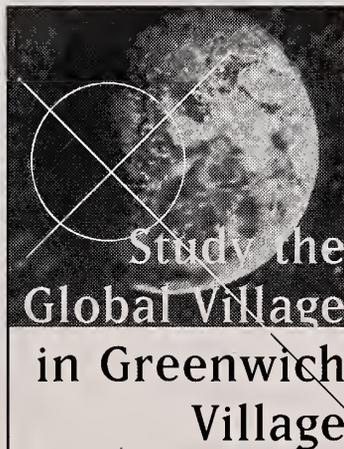
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4. Extension of Rights

ITVS may unilaterally extend its license period for an additional five years, leading to the anomalous situation that producers of worthy programs may have their rights tied up for twice the period that producers of less worthy programs are encumbered without any additional compensation.

5. Film Festivals

The contract provides that ITVS may withhold its approval "in its reasonable determination" for the producer entering the program in film festivals, markets, or awards competition. It is hard to imagine a circumstance where the showing of the program in a festival or entering it for an award could derogate from ITVS's rights. One would think that, to the contrary, being accepted at a festival or winning an award would enhance the program's status.

6. ITVS Advertising and Outreach Rights

ITVS's contract provides that it may use excerpts of any material furnished to it for advertising and institutional promotion. The producer may want to reserve the right to reasonably approve those excerpts selected by ITVS, CPB, or public television entities. In addition, ITVS retains exclusive rights to "package, promote, publicize, and to perform outreach and audience development activities." As this is an exclusive grant of rights, it may not leave the producer with much connection to his or her work.

7. Competing Programs

As a major or sole funder of the program, it is understandable that ITVS would not want the producer to use material produced under the ITVS contract in a competing production. Unfortunately, ITVS casts a broader net in the Contract and requires that the producer and any of the principal production personnel refrain from producing, broadcasting, releasing, or distributing "in any media now known or hereafter developed, any television program or motion picture that directly competes with the program" for a period of up to one year from the first public television broadcast of the program. Competing means if it is "principally based on the same subject or format of the Program." Principal production personnel are "producer, director, writer, cinematographer, composer, editor, and principal cast."

ITVS demands credit not just on the program and on program advertising, but on "postcards, flyers, pamphlets, stationery, posters," and even on the cover of any book based upon the program. These demands go further than those made by commercial licensees.

Leaving aside the legality or business feasibility of the producer preventing employees from working on similar programs, this is a tremendous burden on the independent producer. It is not uncommon for a producer to specialize in a genre or subject. The ITVS contract could effectively prevent the producer from pursuing his or her livelihood. Since ITVS has three years and six months to exploit the public television rights, a producer could be denied producing programs in his or her area of expertise for four and one-half years, should the first broadcast not occur until the end of the initial contract period. While it is unlikely that ITVS would seek to enforce such an onerous provision, it should not be in the Contract in the first place.

8. Compliance

The Contract requires the producer to comply with (i) all federal, state, and local laws; (ii) the Federal Communications Act of 1934; (iii) the Public Telecommunications Act of 1992 [actually, part of the Federal Communications Act]; (iv) FCC regulations; (v) all applicable union rules and regulations; and (vi) CPB and PBS program standards. The producer will need to either engage counsel that specializes in television or spend a good deal of time becoming educated on all of the foregoing rules and regulations.

9. Financial Accountability

The Contract provides that if a producer is over budget, the producer must pay the overage. However, if the producer is under budget, such surplus must be returned to ITVS. Since few productions come out to the penny, the Contract becomes a "heads we win, tails you lose" affair. Put another way, it is a fixed price contract on over-budget productions and a cost reimbursement contract on under-budget productions. There is no reward to the producer for bringing a project in under budget and saving ITVS money.

10. Insurance

Earlier ITVS contracts required producers to obtain general comprehensive insurance and to carry one million dollars in errors and

omissions insurance. The current agreement requires producers to obtain liability and negative insurance through ITVS's designated insurance broker and to carry one million/three million (i.e., one million per occurrence and three million in the aggregate over the coverage period) of errors and omissions insurance, both expensive propositions.

Even more expensive is the obligation to maintain errors and omissions insurance (i.e., *continue* to pay premiums) "as long as the Program's Subsidiary and Ancillary rights are exploited." Premiums must be paid currently, even if there is no assurance that there will be any revenue to the producer, and if there is revenue, it might not be paid until a year after the premium is due. The producer should negotiate to cover only the first one-to-three years of the premiums.

WHAT CAN THE INDEPENDENT PRODUCER DO? Given the intense competition for funding and the producer's desire to get into production at almost any cost, the temptation to sign the contract, collect the money, and get into production is great. However, once the contract is signed, the producer must live with the terms of that agreement for life.

The producer does have an alternative to signing the proffered contract. The producer can require ITVS to negotiate in good faith any objectionable terms of the contract. Although ITVS may be obligated to include some of the terms of the contract by virtue of its contract with CPB, even those terms may be negotiated, as ITVS can be requested to ask CPB to consider a waiver of any objectionable terms in special circumstances.

The independent producer should carefully review all terms of the ITVS contract (or any contract for that matter). The contract should be viewed as an offer and not an ironclad document. Offers can be modified. If the producer does not feel competent to review and negotiate the contract, there are experienced entertainment attorneys who can be retained to represent a producer for such purposes.

Robert I. Freedman is a partner at Leavy Rosensweig & Hyman and author of the television volume of Entertainment Industry Contracts. He is a former general counsel of Thirteen/WNET and is counsel to AIVE.

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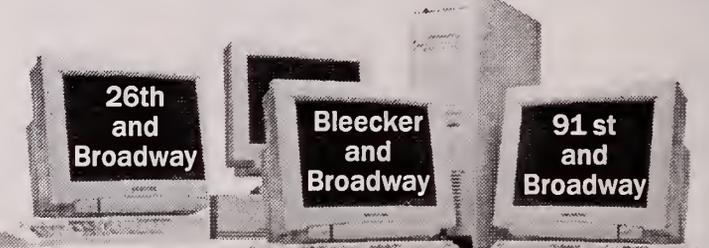
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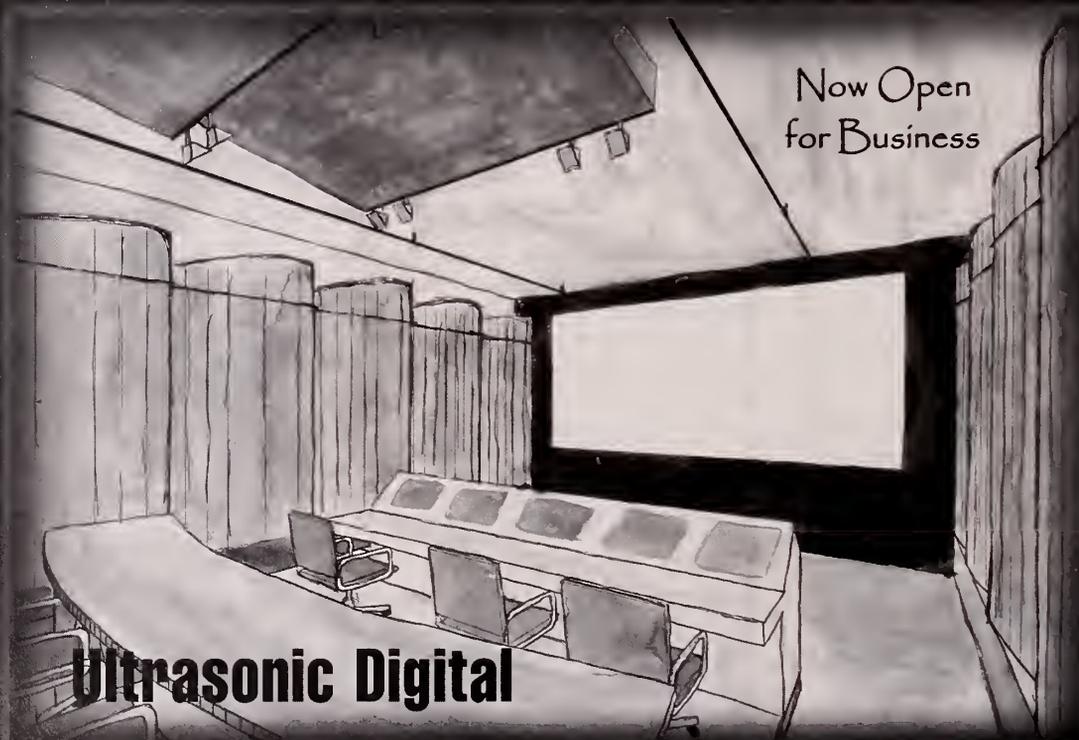
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GENRE BUSTER

Errol Morris

talks about his elegiac

Fast, Cheap & Out of Control

and the thin line between

documentary and fiction.

Errol Morris, director-at-large
All photos: Nubar Alexanian,
courtesy Sony Pictures Classics

BY MICHEL NEGROPONTE

ERROL MORRIS'S QUIRKY VISION HAS CREATED AN IMPRESSIVE FILMOGRAPHY that includes *A Brief History of Time* (1992), *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), *Vernon, Florida* (1987), and *Gates of Heaven* (1978). He describes his newest work, *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control*, as "four versions of the myth of Sisyphus." A lion tamer, a mole-rat photographer, a topiary gardener, and a robot scientist reflect on their life's work and create a memorable metaphysical journey. With its stunning visuals and haunting score, *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control* is a touching meditation on people creating worlds out of their fantasies. Sony Pictures Classics begins its nationwide platform release on October 3 at Film Forum, following its screening at the New York Film Festival.

I want to begin with a comment that Jean-Luc Godard made about how the Western world no longer knows what stories to tell or what fictions to invent. What is it about that thinning line between fact and fiction that fascinates you?

Well, it's not altogether clear there is a thin line between fact and fiction, or whether there is any line at all. In fact, discriminating between the two could be called an elusive task. I often like to think of my movies as various attempts to examine that question in one way or another. The Dave Hoover story in *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control* is in part about his obsession with the legendary lion tamer, Clyde Beatty, who appeared in a whole number of Hollywood movies, serials, radio shows, and comic books. When I was digging through all this Clyde Beatty material, I found his first movie, *The Big Cage*. In it, there's a lion and tiger fight that's clearly crazy. The animals are just ripping each other to pieces. Well, in Clyde's autobiography, he tells the story of how this scene was produced, and it was very much a fight that got out of hand. The lion kills the tiger—if you like, it's a kind of snuff film—and the question I always ask myself about this piece of footage is: is it a documentary or is it a feature?

It appears, of course, in a feature film that's fiction, but it also is a documentary of this particular fight—a fight that was out of control, that ended in one animal killing the other. When you look at this footage, what is it that makes it a documentary in one instance and a piece of fiction filmmaking in the next? I think the answer is that there is nothing that makes it fiction or documentary, save how you look at that material. There's nothing inherent in the filmmaking itself.

There are tools and traditions from narrative filmmaking that have spilled over into nonfiction filmmaking that we don't immediately associate with documentary. For instance, your use of music scoring, production design, and photographic cinematography in *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control*. You use those elements in a very creative and unabashed way.

But they're just simply conventions—conventions of how movies are really put together. We somehow think that documentary filmmaking is documentary filmmaking by virtue of the fact that you have a hand-held camera or you use available light or whatever. Whereas we might associate a completely different style with feature filming. But that's just stylistic stuff.

Yes, but you do choose to adorn the image, and that's a fascinating choice.

I like to think what I've done in documentary film is just to introduce a lot of techniques that are more common to fiction filmmaking.

I wondered if you ever consult the pioneers of documentary like John Grierson or Robert Flaherty. There are very poetic and visual elements in films like *Night Mail* and *Louisiana Story* that seem to have inspired you. Do you like that work?

I do like it, but my own affinity is for a completely different tradition in documentary filmmaking that comes out of Georges Franju, Jean Vigo, and Dziga Vertov. There are other kinds of documentary film that carry a lot of baggage with them, a sort of claim about truth-telling. They

George Mendonca and his garden of earthly delights.



carry an almost scientific veneer, as if the camera were in the hands of a social scientist or anthropologist recording material for future study.

Then there's a completely different tradition of documentary that's a kind of pure filmmaking, if you like, without that additional metaphysical baggage. Or maybe it has a more ironic relationship with the world. What about the fuss people make these days about the dreaded "D" word. Do you ever think you're under too much pressure to produce a documentary that looks and feels different?

Um...

Are the visual pyrotechnics of your film in some way a reflection of the demands of the marketplace?

I actually don't think they are. Maybe I would be the last to know.

Well, more simply, most distributors run away from documentaries, but they don't run away from your work. Why?

I don't know. Because they're free of that idea of adult education or deliberate pedagogy, and they're intended to be movies.

I felt throughout *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control* that you were documenting a state of mind—not only the subjects' state of mind but possibly your own as well. There was both a sense of loss and a sense of wonder.

There's certainly the sense of loss. I often think of the movie as an elegy. An elegy for, among other things, my step-father and mother who died during the making of the movie.

These four stories are all about obsessive characters. In two instances, they're characters who are interested in preserving something of the past. A topiary gardener preserving this very odd privet against all those things that might destroy it—hurricanes, birds, blight, whatever. In the case of the lion tamer, it's this artificial jungle he's created in a circus ring, that he's inherited from one of the greatest lion tamers of all times, that he seeks to preserve, but at the same time realizes that it may be coming to an end, that whole circus world may be a world

on the wane. Those two backward-looking characters and the two forward-looking characters—the mole rat guy, who imagines this odd unitarian society of vermin—and the robot guy, who actually, in true Frankenstein fashion, is creating his own life form that he believes will replace us. So there is that feeling of loss, that feeling of a world that has slipped from our grasp and a world of the future that may not even include us.

I thought of it as the past colliding with the future and causing everything to go out of control.

I like that.

I also found the film to be very tender. It's not a word one would associate with some of your earlier work.

Well, I really like the characters in all my films, at least most of them. That's certainly true in *Vernon, Florida*, which I think has a kind of tender quality; it has an absurdist quality too, but I don't think those two are incompatible

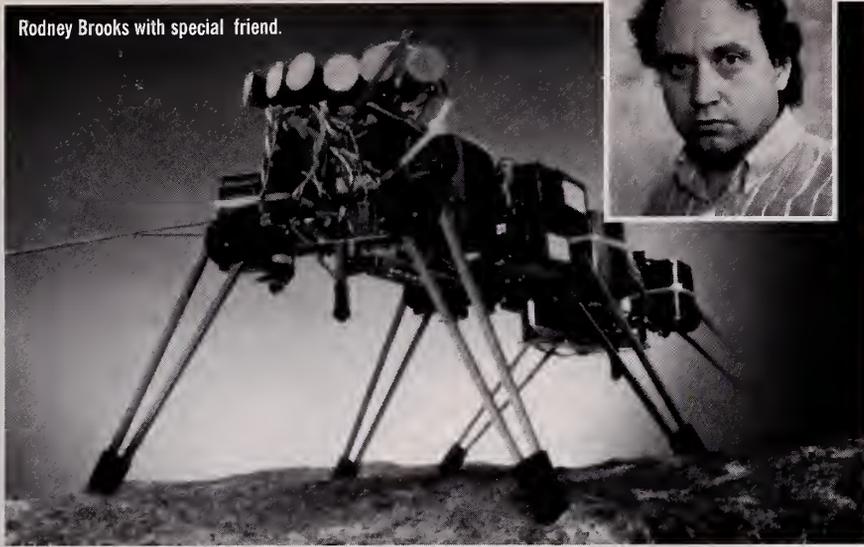
You describe *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control* as the ultimate low concept movie. What do you mean by that exactly?



Dave Hoover and wildcat buoy up a circus world on the wane.



Rodney Brooks with special friend.



When selling a movie in Hollywood, people want a one-line description of what the movie is going to be about. That's a high concept idea. I use low concept in this instance because the movie, I believe, defies those kinds of descriptions. Certainly the last two movies I made are high concept in the extreme: "Innocent man in jail" and "World famous scientist confined to a wheelchair surveys the universe." *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control* isn't really that kind of movie. It works in a different way altogether, and it attempts—whether successfully or unsuccessfully—a different kind of storytelling.

Your film is a very textured landscape, and your concerns have become almost painterly. Talk a little bit about mixing film formats with video, home movies, and film clips. Also the use of severely canted frames, slow motion, and fast motion. I call it the Waring Blender palette.

Well, it is a palette. Often films are put together without a palette, and there's just one style. This film really lends itself to a whole variety of approaches. A part of it certainly comes from my cinematographer. I've had the good fortune to work with a lot of great photographers, from Stefan Czapsky to John Bailey, and in this last movie, Robert Richardson. Richardson is unique. He's attempted a lot of things other people haven't. Certainly he does see filmmaking as a kind of painting with a very broad palette. In the old days, you would hear people talk about the lengths they would go to to get one emulsion batch, to make sure all of the raw stock they were using came from one run at Kodak.

The Richardson idea is just the opposite of that. When we were shooting *Fast, Cheap, & Out of Control*, we were using almost every emulsion you can imagine. Not just black and white, color, and infrared, but every version of color and black and white that you can imagine, from reversal to negative, fine grained to high speed, and so on. Also different gauges: 35mm, Super 16, 16mm, Super 8, as well as video. The last day of shooting at the Philadelphia Zoo, we built mole rat stages and filmed the zoo's mole rats in them. We called in Roto-Rooter. They have a fiber-optic sewer camera that they send into drains to look for obstructions. And so we used their sewer cam in the movie.

A fiber optic sewer cam? I really appreciate the spirit of "anything goes" which clearly drives your film. What about the use of slow and fast motion?

Maybe it comes out of a certain perversity. Film always is in some ironic relationship with the world. I have my own variant of Godard's "film is truth at 24 frames per second." My variant is that film is live at 24 frames per second. The use of different camera speeds is just a way of heightening that irony, if you like. It was certainly used by Jean Vigo in *A Propos de Nice* as a way of creating a kind of surrealism, and I like to think that I've used it to similar effect in my own films. I know that often while shooting I keep saying to myself the one speed that we should avoid is 24 frames per second, because it seems to be the one speed that's inherently the most corrupted. It's a sleight of hand.

You're trying to convince people that they're seeing something real even though you know better.

It also seems to me that a lion tamer, a robot inventor, a gardener, and a man obsessed with hairless mole rats deserve something better than 24 frames per second.



Ray Mendez's mole rats reach escape mole-ocity.

In each of these characters there's the feeling of the quixotic, of the hopeless. I look at this gardener toiling unendingly in his garden. He tells us that it took him fifteen years to produce this one topiary bear and that he won't live long enough to make another one. Or this lion tamer in this cage filled with really senescent animals—they seem to be suffering from a variety of different geriatric complaints—yet he is still lost in this kind of weird phantasmagoria about Africa. Each of the characters in this film seem to be animated by something that is dying, and there is that feeling of sadness and of loss that I think is very much a part of the movie.



Michel Negroponte's recent films include *Jupiter's Wife* and *No Accident*. He is currently working on a science fiction documentary called *Underground Robot*.

media **ACTIVISM**

George Stoney
Photo: Richard Potuck



Oh, Lucky Man

BY DEIRDRE BOYLE

George Stoney's Lasting Legacy



WHO IS THAT MAN IN THE PLAID SHIRT? GEORGE STONEY HAS BEEN A signal presence on the independent media landscape for more than half a century. Probably best known as the “father” of public access cable television, Stoney has worn a number of hats over the many years he has labored as a documentary filmmaker, community activist, video pioneer, university teacher, film department chairperson, and ombudsman for community media worldwide. His filmography is pages long and includes such classic documentaries as the 1952 profile of an African-American midwife, *All My Babies*, the 1975 portrait of pastor John Garcia Gensel and his jazz congregation, *Shepherd of the Night Flock*, the 1982 portrait *The Weavers: Wasn't That a Time!*, and his most recent study of the Southern textile workers' strike, *The Uprising of '34*.

Stoney always has been around wherever interesting things were happening. He went to Canada in 1968 when video became part of the seminal Challenge for Change program. Then he came to New York and co-founded the Alternate Media Center, which helped spawn the public access cable movement in the United States. He calls it luck, but others would differ. Over the years he has worked with some of the giants of the documentary field and passed on this daunting legacy to his own legions of students.

Everyone knows George, but few really know the man behind the genial yet formidable image of the consummate media activist. What were the ingredients that fueled his lifelong passion for racial justice, social responsibility, community, and freedom of speech? What makes him, at nearly 80, so vital and inspiring a leader?

GEORGE STONEY NEVER DREAMED OF BECOMING A FILMMAKER WHEN he was growing up as one of five children in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, during the twenties. He was raised to read the Bible in the morning and Shakespeare or Milton at night by his father, a minister who “forsook the church because it didn't live up to his expectations. Nothing ever did.”¹ His mother died when he was six years old, leaving the family bereft of close relations. Although he wasn't part of the church, Stoney was deeply influenced by the local Moravian community, by their ethical values and attitudes toward music and the central beauties of life. Perhaps his appreciation for community and his sense of being an outsider were born here. Though poor, his father came from the middle class, and he gave his son a sense of Christian obligation crossed with a kind of *noblesse oblige*.

1. Oral history interviews with George Stoney, conducted by Barbara Abrash, Danny Walkowitz, and Faye Ginsberg for the Center for Media, Culture, and History, New York University, 1996.

George, the only boy, was his father's favorite and from the age of 10 he was out of the house, peddling magazines and earning money. He counted on getting a job in a local cotton mill, but when it went to a foreman's son, Stoney took his savings—\$47—and set off for Chapel Hill, where he enrolled in college and never looked back. He worked his way through school, taking odd jobs and hitchhiking whenever he could. Feeling he didn't have much to lose—no social status or family tradition to uphold—Stoney delighted in traveling, meeting and observing people, and writing about them. In time he would discover how to turn his need for “freedom” and his skill as a storyteller into a way of life. He soon gave up the idea of becoming a librarian and concentrated on being a journalist, getting a job writing for a small-town paper in Raleigh. Surrendering to his wanderlust, he joined the merchant marines, sailed to Rio, and eventually landed in New York where he freelanced for the *New York Times* and met Helen Hall of the Henry Street Settlement House.

At the height of the Depression Stoney went to Washington, DC,

where he worked with Ralph Bunche, who was then looking for evidence of a racial factor in Southern politics—or more bluntly put, how pols kept Blacks from voting. Stoney next worked for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) as a publicist in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. His job was to convince middle-class people to support programs that benefited sharecroppers and tenant farmers, people who didn't or couldn't vote be-



Community group watching a rough-cut of *God Help the Man Who Would Part With His Land*, part of the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change program.

Photo: George Stoney

cause of poll taxes or race. Stoney went to Rotary Clubs, churches, and unions, where he began each meeting by screening Pare Lorentz's classic documentary *The River*. He showed it hundreds of times, and it never failed to work. Stoney concluded it was because the film had the form of an evangelical sermon: given Eden, man despoils it, but when he understands the evils of his ways, he can then correct them and start life anew. Because the issues of soil conservation and economic exploitation in *The River* were shared by all Southern communities, the film universally spoke to people; because the film was so emotionally resonant, it opened people up who otherwise would have rejected such an appeal because of differences in class or race. Stoney was able to get middle-class audiences to see that these sharecroppers were the people who buy groceries or furniture in their stores. And they can't buy anything if they aren't making enough growing cotton.

At that time Stoney had no interest in making documentaries himself, but his job was providing him with a unique opportunity to study a film classic, gauge the power of film as an educational tool, and learn how to use it to advocate for social change. Later charged with taking FSA photographers around the South, Stoney learned from master

photographers like Jack Delano how to make pictures. He realized he was good at it, and it was a lot easier to shoot a picture than write a story, and both paid about the same. Meanwhile he kept writing for radio and as a stringer for publications like the *Atlanta Journal*, developing a “semi-lyrical” writing style popular at the time.

Drafted after Pearl Harbor, Stoney was shipped to England as part of an Air Force photo reconnaissance outfit, where he had “a great war” and met his wife. After the war, the idea of making documentaries arose when Stoney’s old school friend Nick Read, who spent the war in the Signal Corps and then went to Canada for four years to work for the National Film Board, came to Georgia on a Rockefeller Foundation-funded project. Read had a vision of community media borrowed from England and Canada, where very active rural and labor film circuits had been created for the screening and discussion of educational and issue-oriented films. Read came to Georgia to help state

agricultural agencies use films for education. Realizing he needed someone who could write for farmers, he hired Stoney, and thus the Southern Education Film Service became Stoney’s baptism as a filmmaker. Read impressed on Stoney the need to show films in the community where they were made, which taught him to be sensitive to local feelings; unless a work was accepted by its own community, it wasn’t a success. Stoney had already learned

from his experience screening *The River* that you need to personify what you are teaching—you need to find people with whom audiences can identify.

After WWII, Stoney received a Rosenwald fellowship and decided to spend time at the National Film Board of Canada, then returned to England for a year, during which he hung out with colleagues like Basil Wright and other British documentary pioneers of the Grierson school. He was impressed by the British documentary, with its mixture of aesthetic style and subject matter. “Almost every time they touched something, there was an extra element of creativity in it,” says Stoney. “They seemed to know that if their films didn’t have some stature beyond being useful films, they wouldn’t get anywhere.” While in England, Stoney began teaching at Oxford in an adult education extension program, launching his 50-year career as a teacher. Stoney believes spending this year in England spared him from Joseph McCarthy’s blacklist, which stunted the careers of so many other socially committed mediamakers.

After his return to the United States, Stoney began making his own films, moving beyond his role as scriptwriter to become director, collaborating with Read and others, and working for various private and

governmental clients. In 1952 he made *All My Babies* for the Georgia Department of Public Health. The film, which uses re-enactments and a dramatic script, owes much to the style and subject matter pioneered by Lorentz in *The Fight for Life*, but it is notable for Stoney’s signature understanding of sensitive issues around race, class, and gender. For example, realizing that white women would be projecting a film about Black women giving birth, he was careful not to include anything that might prove embarrassing for Black women watching it in “mixed” company. The film is a beautiful study of a remarkable midwife, made at a time when strong female role models, especially African Americans, were rare to find. The film is also notable for being, in an age of scripted documentaries, far more natural: Stoney went straight from his story outline to his subjects to find out what they would and wouldn’t do, and then revised his shooting plan.

Stoney claims he knew almost from the beginning of his filmmaking

career that other people could have made a better film than he except they didn’t have the same ability to listen. He paid attention, and if someone was uncomfortable, he changed things. If a farmer didn’t want to be filmed barefoot, even if his feet were never going to be in the shot, Stoney waited until the man put on his shoes. “Being a white, pretentious, middle-class man,” Stoney wryly observes today, “I was always a bit shy in the presence of people not of my class. And kind of

respectful. I learned to let them set the limits.”

During the fifties and early sixties Stoney was raising a family, working hard making films, and teaching. For a brief time he served as director of the Film Institute at City College and later taught at Columbia and Stanford Universities and the International School of America. He teamed with talented cameramen like Terry Filgate, a cinema vérité innovator from Canada, who taught Stoney more than anyone else what you can do with a camera. Stoney, who would never become a doctrinaire follower of any style of filmmaking, decided to borrow what he liked of vérité and incorporate it into his stylistic repertoire.

Stoney says he never thought about the “pedagogy” of community media until he joined the National Film Board of Canada in 1968 as executive producer of the Challenge for Change program; there Bonnie Sherr Klein and Dorothy Hénaut taught him a great deal. He collaborated with Klein on the film *VTR St. Jacques*, which documented the process devised to involve ordinary Montréal citizens in making their own media to improve the quality of their lives. Klein and Hénaut weren’t interested in the prevalent style of organizing that depended on creating antagonisms, Stoney notes. Instead, they



Aran Islanders Peter and Kate Faherty with Colin Tom watching rushes for *How the Myth Was Made*. Stoney used video playback to help the islanders accustom themselves to being taped.

Photo: George Stoney

stressed the building of coalitions and the empowerment that comes when people learn they can speak for themselves. Stoney was convinced this idea could cross the border and work in the United States.

In 1970 he returned to head up the undergraduate film department at New York University, where he soon co-founded the Alternate Media Center (AMC) with funding from the Markle Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The AMC became an important training ground for New York City's first public access producers and helped make the case for national public access requirements to the FCC. In short order the AMC expanded beyond New York City, sending pioneering access producers to pilot projects in four towns, beginning with Reading, Pennsylvania, where they were able to use two-way interactive cable to create an electronic "town meeting."

Inspired by their initial success, the AMC recruited dynamic interns who had already found cable companies willing to co-sponsor their salaries. A unique collaboration between cable companies and the NEA launched a new era in community television production that produced some outstanding leaders in this field. Once the idea of cable support for public access had been established and a generation of producers planted around the country, the AMC pulled back and made way for the creation of the movement's own advocacy and support group, the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. This was also partly due to Stoney's involvement in the making of his autobiographical film and critique of Robert Flaherty, *How the Myth Was Made*, but he also saw a need for the movement to become independent. To this day, Stoney remains involved in the organization, which has since renamed itself the Alliance for Community Media, and he can frequently be found flying somewhere to lend his support at franchise meetings or help to quell a crisis over censorship.

Asked in a recent interview what is the most significant aspect of public access, Stoney responded "the concept itself." He continued: "I think that in its implementation it has always been somewhat flawed. Hemmed in sometimes by the limitations of the medium we have to use. And sometimes by commercial restraints and governmental restraints. But the basic idea of access, that the public has a right to speak, the public has a right to use the airwaves to speak at length, is of fundamental importance. And we need to protect that right. However well or poorly we use it."

Stressing the importance of social responsibility, Stoney observed that though some producers use access with great thought, others use it selfishly. "I think we should emphasize to all these people who are using public access...that they are using something that should be of service to others besides themselves. There is an audience out there. There are people who are depending on this. I think [we need to]

emphasize service to the community, service to the viewer, not simply you have a right to this."²

This notion of being of service to the community, of exercising one's right to freedom of expression by serving an audience beyond oneself, was planted in Stoney early in life and remains a sustaining directive. He is not one to garner accolades, but rather shrugs off a title like "father of public access" by waggishly asserting "paternity is easy to ascribe and difficult to deny."

Asked once how he wanted to be remembered, he replied "As a very happy collaborator." Stoney has collaborated with many editors, camera operators, and directors over the years and is quick to share credit with them. For years he collaborated with Sylvia Betts as editor; most recently he has worked with Suzanne Rostock. Former students Jim Brown, Paul Barnes, and Judith Helfand, to name only a few, have worked with him on films that helped launch their own independent

careers. And his creative contributions to public and private funding agencies, associations, and other media organizations are legion.

Stoney's modesty about his role spills over into his insistence that he has been very lucky in life, taking no credit for being in the right place at the right time, but seeing himself rather as blessed by serendipity. Pressed harder, Stoney admits he has been networking all this life, but that is, after all, a very Southern thing to do. And besides, it's fun.

Stoney remains in touch with many of the people he's made films with and about, many of

whom have become close personal friends. Bill Sloan, a friend since the fifties when Stoney and he first arrived in New York, observed how often Stoney's presence has been felt, invisibly, as he lends his energy and his vast array of contacts to organizations, infusing new life and spirit when the need arose. His connections to people all over the United States and Canada remain important mainstays for him, as do his more far-flung contacts in places like Brazil, where he was a Fulbright Fellow in 1994. Not quite 80, Stoney today is at work on a new production based on the work of innovative educator, theorist, and social animator Paolo Freire, who died last May. He still teaches at New York University, and his life and work remain a model of social activism and media activity.

Much like his trademark plaid shirt, the many strands of his life have been woven closely together, creating a dense and interconnected community in which it is difficult to see where Stoney's influence begins or ends. He has demonstrated his commitment to social-change media by making his own powerful films and by nurturing the voices and visions of many others around the world. The pattern he has created is rich, multi-hued, and warmly inviting—a garment more beautiful than Joseph's coat, which beckons us all to put on.

Deirdre Boyle is author of Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited (Oxford University Press, 1997). She is grateful for the assistance of Barbara Abrash from NYU's Center for Media, Culture, and History.



2. "George Stoney," Manhattan Neighborhood News, a newsletter of the Manhattan Neighborhood Network, Spring 1997, p. 5, 19.

SO YOU'VE JUST FINISHED YOUR DOCUMENTARY on a burning social issue. You've worked on this project for years, identified the forces of good and evil, shot indicting footage, gotten some dramatic interviews, and put together a cogent explanation of what it will take to solve the problem. It was just broadcast across the country on public television and, to boot, you have signed with an excellent distributor to the educational market.

So why aren't you happy?

Though a lot of people saw your documentary last night and were moved, their urge to take to the streets quickly subsided when they surfed over to *The Simpsons*. Your distributor will place it in a few classrooms to be seen by students. But students are not the only audience who can be inspired by your work.

So how do you get your documentary into the hands of the right people—those committed audience members who might use it as a tool for social change?

Partnering with organizations that share the same interest is a major part of the solution to the distribution problem. Through collaborations with grassroots organizations or community groups, you will find that your work can have a greater impact, and, in some cases, might even sell a blockbuster number of cassettes.

As Suzanne Stenson, outreach manager of the Independent Television Service, notes in *The Next Step: Distributing Independent Films and Videos*,¹ "In the same way that publicity and promotion casts a wide net, outreach casts a deep one." Fishermen know to use different types of nets, depending on the catch they seek. The following are examples of strategies independent mediamakers have successfully used to find their target audiences.

***Holding Ground:* Postproduction Networking**

Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street is an hour-long documentary that tells the story of successful revitalization efforts in Dorchester, a devastated inner-city section of Boston. Independent producers Leah Mahan and Mark Lipman worked on the video for five years in collaboration with the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, a development organization made up of neighborhood residents.

Within a year of finishing production, the producers had a distribu-

¹ "Taking It to the Streets," *The Next Step*, edited by Morrie Warshawski and published by the Foundation for Independent Video and Film (FIVF).

When Leah Mahan and Mark Lipman launched an outreach campaign for *Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street*, community development organizations across the country helped promote the film. Photo: Michelle McDonald, courtesy filmmakers



FIVE PATHS INTO THE GRASSROOTS

tor and a date for a national broadcast on public television. But they realized that wasn't enough.

"We had a traditional idea [of distribution]," Mahan recalls. "We were distributed through New Day Films, so we had a pretty good idea about how we would reach the educational market. But we realized that [our audience was] these community development networks that we didn't know a lot about." But they did know this was where the energy was. So they launched an outreach campaign that eventually resulted in numerous community development organizations promoting the film nationwide. "It evolved as we went along—how to link up with these organizations and how to use their networks," says Mahan.

Through the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and with the help of some funders, Mahan and Lipman contacted and partnered with a number of community organizations around the country. Many of them, like the National Community Building Network and the American Planning Association, mentioned the video and its local air dates in their newsletters, which reached thousands of members. The producers amplified on this idea and published their own

newsletter, which they made available to their partner organizations. Actually a brochure in newsletter form, it lists air dates and describes how to hold pre-broadcast screenings and use the broadcast itself within local communities.

Community development organizers helped in other ways, as well. The director of the Neighborhood Funders Group sent a cover letter along with the newsletter to 200 foundations that fund neighborhood initiatives. And the authors of the book *Building Communities from the Inside Out* sent the newsletter to a list of 1,200 people who had purchased their book.

"The broadcast itself was more like an organizing tool to get people interested," Mahan says. "The principal airing was during May sweeps," Lipman adds, "which was not good in terms of our press work. We got drowned." So instead they encouraged community groups to use the broadcast for their own goals. In Indianapolis, the Mayor's office held workshops and screenings. "In New Orleans and Providence, local groups asked their stations to rebroadcast at particular times, so they could organize an event around that," Mahan says. The New Orleans community development group followed the

media Activism

rebroadcast with a specially prepared local program about how to apply the lessons of *Holding Ground* to New Orleans.

As part of this grassroots outreach campaign, Mahan and Lipman negotiated a tiered price structure with New Day Films. Small neighborhood organizations could pay a reduced price of \$59—\$100 less than the regular price. Mahan and Lipman then went one step further after they received a grant from the Casey Foundation, which allowed them to give away 1,000 copies to the smallest community organizations at no charge. They hired a community development consultant to locate the organizations and distribute the tapes. With these outreach techniques, they have distributed over 1,500 tapes.

Young women getting off the U.S. schoolbus to head into work in a Honduran free-trade zone. *Zoned for Slavery* accompanied women laborers from sweatshops on a National Labor Committee speaking tour. Courtesy National Labor Committee



***Zoned for Slavery:* Part of the Campaign**

Whereas *Holding Ground* eventually found its way into community development groups, *Zoned for Slavery* was intended to be part of a larger organizing campaign from the beginning.

Zoned for Slavery is a 23-minute documentary made in collaboration with the National Labor Committee and produced by Rudi Stern and Katherine Keene of Crowing Rooster Arts as part of a campaign against the retail clothing chain The Gap. The video calls for international monitoring of the labor conditions at The Gap's factories in El Salvador and Honduras, and more generally serves as an educating and organizing tool around sweat-shop labor in free-trade zones in developing countries.

Ellen Braune, communications director at the National Labor Committee, explains why they saw video as an active component of their organizing strategy: "We are living in a video age. Some people don't listen to the radio anymore. They don't read anymore. But you have a video, and all of a sudden you become a legitimate cause."

The tape was part of the National Labor Committee's 22-city speaking tour featuring two women laborers from sweatshops in El Salvador and Honduras. "Here we had two young women who put a very real

human face on the issue and a film that addressed it in very concrete terms," Braune says. "When we let organizations know that we had the film and the two women, people started organizing events and requesting that they come." Charlie Kernaghan, executive director of the National Labor Committee, accompanied the tour with a suitcase full of tapes that he sold for \$12.95. During the tour, thousands of copies of the tape were sold to schools, unions, and community organizations, who then turned around and held screenings in their communities.

The producers' strategy included allowing television and radio programs to excerpt segments from *Zoned for Slavery*, believing that mainstream media attention was an effective way of advertising the tape.

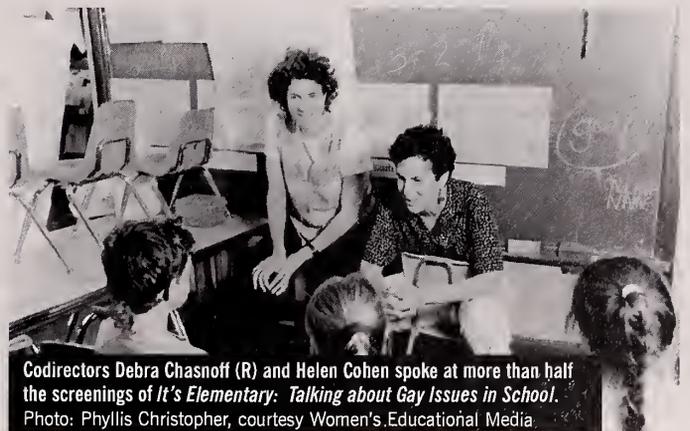
"As the women traveled around, they were getting coverage on the radio, in newspapers, and on local TV. Always as a part of this coverage, they would mention the film, and we would send the film to journalists. We felt like it was a really solid, compelling background piece," Braune explains. Whenever the film was mentioned, their office would be flooded with orders.

Two years after the video was produced, the National Labor Committee still receives daily calls requesting the tape. Due to the hundreds of screenings and the thousands of copies distributed, *Zoned for Slavery* was a critical element in the eventual success of The Gap campaign. "The fact that The Gap now has independent monitoring is a reflection of the enthusiasm and knowledge of the students who got involved after seeing *Zoned for*

Slavery," network coordinator Maggie Poe recalls. Other groups, such as those involved with the campaign against the Nike Corporation, have been inspired by the success of *Zoned for Slavery* and have begun to incorporate video into their own campaigns.

***It's Elementary:* The Screening as Event**

From the beginning of the production of *It's Elementary: Talking about*



Codirectors Debra Chasoff (R) and Helen Cohen spoke at more than half the screenings of *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School*. Photo: Phyllis Christopher, courtesy Women's Educational Media

Gay Issues in School, filmmaker Debra Chasnoff and co-producer Helen Cohen were clear about using their documentary as an organizing tool. "We made this film to change the level of public discussion about when and how it's appropriate to talk to kids about gay people," Chasnoff explains.

"We had a two-pronged agenda with this film," says Chasnoff. "One was to get it used in educational settings, so that people could begin to make a difference in their own school communities. But before that, and equally important, we wanted to influence the political discussion in this country and I knew that we could not do that unless we had a vehicle that could generate publicity. It is much harder to generate publicity with a short video than it is with a feature film."

Originally shot in video, *It's Elementary* was transferred to 16mm. Because of the elevated status of feature films, it had a higher profile at festivals and received more media coverage. Thus, when the film screened in local communities, the advance word-of-mouth heightened its visibility, sales, and the debate surrounding the issue.

When the documentary neared completion in the spring of 1996, Chasnoff and Cohen scheduled a premiere to help raise finishing funds. Working with an event producer and the Gay Lesbian Straight Teachers Network (GLSTN), they held two sold-out screenings at San Francisco's Herbst Theater. Afterwards they were flooded with orders.

"It became really clear that replicating this sort of event in other cities would be a vehicle for many things," says Chasnoff. "Fundraising opportunities to help underwrite our distribution campaign and raise money for like-minded community groups; promotional opportunities, because we were able to get press... We basically decided that the audience at these premiere screenings would be our sales force, and that's exactly what's happened. They were thinking as they sat in their seats, 'I know three people in education, and they have to get this video and show it.'"

With grants from the Ford Foundation, the Paul Robeson Fund, and others, Chasnoff and Cohen organized premieres in 30 cities, treating each as an event. "The foundation funding was absolutely necessary," Chasnoff notes. They collaborated with GLSTN and other community groups they'd met during filming. These groups helped sell tickets, mobilized their members, initiated media coverage, and arranged for guest speakers. The premieres not only generated tape sales, but also became a launching pad for further discussion of the issue and in some cases were catalysts for the formation of new chapters of GLSTN.

As these premieres were happening, the producers launched the second part of their distribution campaign, aggressively targeting the educational market. At conference screenings, someone from their production company would hand out order forms and explain ways people were using the film in their communities. The filmmakers also were able to reach the difficult-to-penetrate grade-school market by attending conventions of elementary-school educators. The tape was given two prices: \$250 for the university market and \$100 for grade schools, community groups, and individuals.

Through devoting a year of their lives to taking their film on the

road (Chasnoff and/or Cohen spoke at more than half the screenings), the filmmakers reached an audience that would have missed their film had it been distributed only through normal channels. Selling more than 900 tapes in the first seven months—even before the producers signed on with New Day Films—*It's Elementary* is on its way to becoming a blockbuster hit by indie standards.

***School of Assassins:* Covering All the Bases**

With *It's Elementary*, Chasnoff and Cohen took the risk of producing a feature-length film for the educational market. With *School of Assassins*, Robert Richter wasn't going to take any chances. Covering

Through constant in-person promotion, Father Roy Bourgeois has sold copies of *School of Assassins* by the thousands. Courtesy filmmaker



all of the bases, Richter made a 20-minute organizing video, and an hour-long version for broadcast, and has optioned the rights to a Hollywood director for adaptation to the big screen.

Richter's subject is the U.S. Army School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia, where U.S. tax dollars support the training of soldiers from Latin America. The school's nickname derives from the fact that many of its graduates have returned home to commit atrocities and human rights violations, and use the torture techniques taught them at the school.

The short version of *School of Assassins*, produced in association with Maryknoll World Communications, was nominated for an Academy Award. To date, 9,000 copies have been distributed. This success is mostly due to the tireless efforts of the video's star, Father Roy Bourgeois, a former Vietnam Vet who has been trying to close the school for years and who is a walking billboard for the video and its mission. On his speaking/screening tours, Father Roy carries an overstuffed duffle bag of tapes, which he sells for \$15 each. Through his constant in-person promotion of the film, his Web site, and newsletter, Father Roy has personally sold between 6,000 and 7,000 copies to churches, schools, groups, and individuals. One fan became so inspired that he sent copies of the documentary to every member of Congress. The ripple effect has helped intensify congressional debate around closing the school.

Maryknoll World Communications, a Catholic foreign mission soci-

ety, also played an active role in the video's distribution. Maryknoll has a long history of producing and distributing media on human rights issues. Publicizing *School of Assassins* through their magazine, which has 800,000 subscribers, and through flyers, Maryknoll sold another couple thousand tapes.

From the beginning, Richter knew he wanted to produce an hour-long version for broadcast, and recently received ITVS funds for this project, called *Father Roy: Inside the School of Assassins*. Interestingly, Richter never allowed any broadcasts of the 20-minute version so as not to disrupt the potential for a U.S. broadcast of a longer version. Thus far, *Father Roy* has broadcast commitments from Spain, Australia, and Quebec.

The unforeseen spin-off is a dramatic film adaptation of *Father Roy's* story. A veteran Hollywood screenwriter/producer/director is currently writing a screenplay based on the documentary, and Richter is excited about the potential of a feature film reaching even wider audiences and furthering the purpose of his documentary.

ITVS: Outreach Beyond the Broadcast

It's rare that a broadcast entity borrows a page from grassroots activists' book. But in the case of the Independent Television Service (ITVS), they have done just that with their new Community Connections Project, which successfully expands on outreach strategies developed



ITVS has assembled a national network of community organizers to act as regional coordinators for select programs, like *Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Struggle*. Photo: George Ballis/Take Stock, courtesy ITVS

by independents.

Congress created ITVS to fund independent productions for broadcast on public television. But many of the documentaries that ITVS has put its money behind address topical social issues, like teenage pregnancy, immigration, and environmental toxins—issues that warrant full-scale educational campaigns that go above and beyond a simple broadcast.

Recognizing this, ITVS outreach manager Suzanne Stenson has assembled a national network of community organizers who act as regional field coordinators for selected ITVS programs. Program organizers represent Los Angeles, Chicago, the Twin Cities, and New England, with one covering Florida, Georgia, Alabama.

SIX DISTRIBUTION POINTERS

You have just finished a film, and you want it to have an effect on the world. Here are some distribution strategies that indies have developed to transform their work into catalysts for social change. The main ingredient in this distribution recipe is partnering with organizations.

- 1) Know your audience. From the beginning of preproduction, you should have a target audience in mind. This will help you when making important production and distribution decisions later on.
- 2) During research, keep records of people with whom you talk. This will aid you when looking for partner organizations and starting a database/mailling list of organizations to contact later.
- 3) The length and format of your documentary should be determined by its final use. Most groups like to screen documentaries that are under 30 minutes, so there is time for a speaker and discussion. A feature-length film, however, has the potential to generate considerably more hype and publicity than a video short.
- 4) Find organizations whose mission matches that of your film, and partner up. They can help your film reach an already interested audience by screening it at house-parties, showing it as part of speaking tours, organizing constituencies around the film's broadcast, offering publicity through organizational newsletters and resource guides, and distributing it to grassroots organizers.
- 5) As part of this collaboration, you may want to produce an educational/organizing/resource guide to accompany the tape.
- 6) It is important to have your tape priced in a range that community groups and individuals can afford. Many indies have a two-tier system: distributor prices for the educational market, and home video prices for groups and individuals.

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"They work to find those people who are in some way affected by this programming, to bring it to their attention, and to encourage [their] use of it," Stenson says. "I want to make the distinction between the promotion of a broadcast and the utility of the program. [But] they end up going hand in hand."

The organizers represent a wide range of social and political fields and are aware of the best paths for outreach in their geographic areas. ITVS hopes not only to increase its broadcast audience, but to get particular groups invested in using the film as a tool or rallying flag. As Stenson says, they hope "to create active roles for viewers."

Rick Tejada-Flores and Ray Telles's *Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers' Struggles*, broadcast last April, was the first ITVS film to benefit from this pilot project. Field coordinators Adrian Anderson, who covers Florida, Georgia, and Alabama, and Cecilia Brennan in California contacted organizations working on immigration issues. Brennan, for instance, contacted over 200 individuals and organizations and was able to arrange a screening at Pasadena City College. Later in the year, in conjunction with the broadcast of *A Healthy Baby Girl*, Judith Helfand's personal documentary about the pregnancy drug DES and her resultant cancer, Susi Walsh in Boston helped organize screenings in the city's many teaching hospitals and with organizations interested in the Northeast's history of industrial toxins. Walsh also did outreach for *Blinking Madonna and Other Miracles*, by Beth Harrington, a witty documentary about Boston's Italian North End.

All of the organizers were able to help get Carol Cassidy's *Baby Love*, which deals with teenage pregnancy, into the hands of YWCAs and other community groups working with adolescent girls. The Twin City organizer, Karen Feinberg, also made inroads into the criminal justice correctional community, according to Stenson. "As a result, we will use *Street Soldiers*, a film by Ava Kirkland about the inspirational program at the Omega Boys Club in San Francisco, and *Baby Love* to talk to correctional groups about fostering better education programs in the prisons.

"The fact that [these shows were] on TV might be an incentive to the people who are heading up these programs to say, 'Well, this must be important; it was on TV.'" The amount of contact between the regional field coordinators and the filmmakers varies. At times the filmmakers are busy with their own outreach and ITVS acts as a conduit between them and the organizers. But in some cases, like *A Healthy Baby Girl*, the producer works closely with with ITVS organizers in identifying, contacting and enlisting the interest of community organizations.

In her chapter in *The Next Step*, Stenson sums up the value of the outreach process: "Long after the review section of your newspaper has hit the recycling bin, there may still be a legion of people who were so profoundly affected by your production that it can gain a meaningful afterlife and continue to act as a catalyst for change in small or complex ways."

Holding Ground

New Day Films, 22 D Hollywood Ave., Hohokus, NJ 07423; (201) 652-6590; www.newday.com/holdingground

It's Elementary

New Day Films, 22 D Hollywood Ave., Hohokus, NJ 07423; (201) 652-6590

School of Assassins

Richter Productions, 330 W. 42nd St., NY, NY 10036; (212) 947-1395

Zoned For Slavery

National Labor Committee; (212) 242-0986

Independent Television Service

51 Federal St., Suite 401, San Francisco, CA 94107; (415) 356-8383; itvs@itvs.org; www.itvs.org

George Fifield [gwf@tiac.net] is adjunct curator of media arts at the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, a member of the Boston media arts collective VideoSpace, and director of VisionSpace, Inc. which is organizing the Boston Cyberarts Festival. Liz Canner [lcanner@aol.com] is a Boston-based media educator and independent documentary producer (State of Emergency: Inside the Los Angeles Police Department and Deadly Embrace: Nicaragua, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund).

THE GOOD FIGHT

The Survival of Public Broadcasting



*Public Radio and Television in America:
A Political History*

by Ralph Engelman

(Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications,
1996) 342 pg.; \$55 hard cover, \$24.95 paper

REVIEWED BY
BARBARA ABRASH

WHEN YOU TUNE INTO RADIO OR TV, YOU'RE probably looking for a little entertainment, the news, or just plain background noise. But to Ralph Engelman, a professor of journalism and chair of the Journalism Department at the Brooklyn campus of Long Island University, the airwaves are a battleground and the most serious casualty has been the public. *Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History* is Engelman's saga of the struggle for noncommercial broadcasting against powerful corporate and political interests, highlighting those utopian moments that provide a glimpse of what truly "public" broadcasting might be. It tracks the continuing evolution of the noncommercial broadcast movement within an economically uncertain and politically treacherous environment in which legislation, court cases, changing technologies, and organizing strategies loom large. It is a tale of "strange bedfellows and shifting alliances."

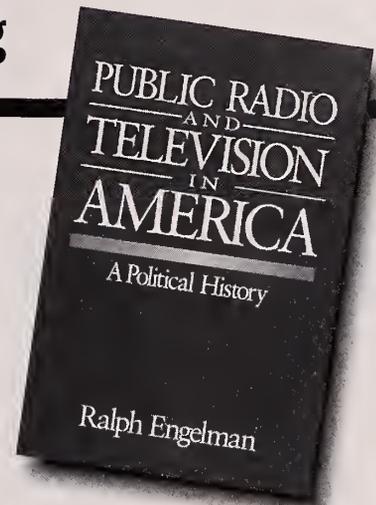
The dominance of commercial broadcasting was not a foregone conclusion. Publicly owned airwaves were home to early ham radio operators; there were 250,000 of them operating 15,000 stations in 1920. These pioneers were then followed by unions, schools, religious groups, and civic organizations that set up community-based stations across the country. But as the commercial value of broadcasting became clear, the burgeoning industry declared war on educational broadcasters and other reformers who were claiming the airwaves for public use. With the 1934 Communications Act, corporations gained control and proceeded to set the terms

for broadcasting. True, the law required that "the public interest, convenience, and necessity" be served. But how and by whom, and who would decide? These questions are at the heart of Engelman's story.

Despite the odds, noncommercial broadcasting keeps asserting itself—often when a new communication technology opens an uncontested space for experimenters, enthusiasts, and visionaries. In 1949, pacifist Lewis Hill started Pacifica Radio in a niche on then-new FM (at a time when big money was focused on television), and listener-supported community radio was born. In the sixties, Portapaks took video production into communities, blurring the lines between amateurs and professionals, media makers and media viewers. In the early seventies George Stoney launched public access on fledgling cable television. These are a few examples of what Engelman identifies as *community broadcasting*. They suggest how media can function as a democratic social space, open to creative ideas, diverse voices, oppositional opinions—where listeners and viewers can participate as programmers and producers.

National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service, which Engelman calls the *federal* form of public broadcasting, were spearheaded by the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation in the fifties and sixties. In the absence of government support for noncommercial radio and television, foundations stepped in as a "third force" between government and corporations to ensure a place for public broadcasting. The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 created a system full of promise but, being the product of political compromise, it lacked two important elements: secure funding and a principle for popular participation. As Engelman puts it, "The public's relationship to public broadcasting has been problematic from the outset."

Tracing the foundation, government, and corporate periods of public broadcasting, Engelman shows how political vulnerability and



funding dilemmas have dogged the system, blunting its potential as a place for critical voices and risk-taking programming. He also gives due credit to the media activists who have worked hard to make public television more diverse and pushed the boundaries on subject matter, style, and accessibility. From early community access shows and public television programs like WNET's *Black Journal* and *The Great American Dream Machine*, to today's *P.O.V.* and Independent Television Service, independents have contributed a partial but critical answer to the question: What can noncommercial broadcasting provide that commercial broadcasting can't or won't?

Engelman's dream of public broadcasting is a system of open and democratic communication, what the Benton Foundation's Andrew Blau describes as "a community resource, not a TV show." We're a long way from that ideal. But given the ferocity and power of the opposition, the persistence of efforts to achieve noncommercial broadcasting through these decades of technological change and political transformation has been remarkable. Though his study ends before the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 dramatically changed the territory, it offers a wealth of information to help guide the continuing struggle.

Barbara Abrash is associate director for the Center for Media, Culture, and History at New York University.



media activism

URGENT BUSINESS

The Human Rights Watch International Film Festival is a fest with something to say.

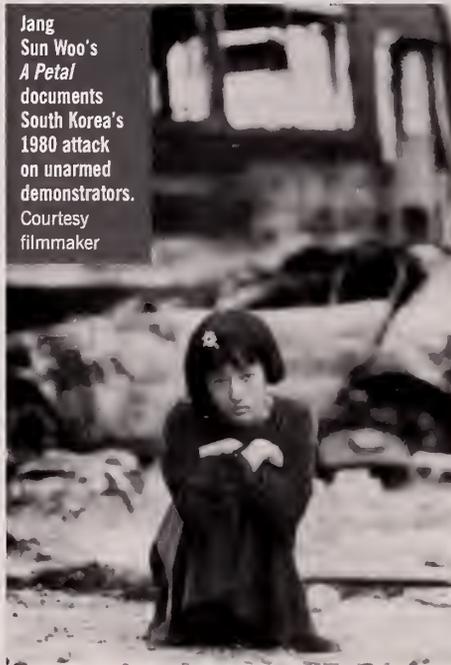
BY LAOISE MAC
REAMOINN

THE 8TH ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH International Film Festival, held June 6–19 at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater, is unlike other festivals. While political filmmaking is not exactly the rage these days, a serious buzz emanates from the crowd waiting in the lobby for the opening night film, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*, William Gazecki and Dan Gifford's controversial indictment of the FBI and its handling of that debacle. At a time when the definition of "independent" filmmaking is in question, when distribution has become harder than ever for features that don't pander to a commercial industry desperate for the next big thing, and when documentaries are made in the full realization that they may never be screened theatrically, here's a festival committed to filmmakers with something to say about the world we live in. As this crowd demonstrates, it's eagerly anticipated by filmmakers and audiences alike.

Founded in 1989, the festival took off in 1991 under the guidance of the well-connected progressive Hamilton Fish, a documentary producer, aspiring Democratic congressman, and former publisher of the left-leaning weekly *The Nation*. He expanded and revived what was already a unique showcase for work with high aesthetic standards and political merit. Today under the directorship of Bruni Burres, the festival continues to thrive and not just within the elegant calm of the Walter Reade, but touring nine or so cities, from London to Port Au Prince, Los Angeles to Bogota.

This year the festival screened 21 films from the U.S., Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Taiwan, the UK, Slovakia, and Korea. First-time filmmakers and old hands delivered a highly charged program of features and documentaries highlighting horrifying abuses of power, sexual repression, racism, torture, and murder condoned by governments

Jang Sun Woo's *A Petal* documents South Korea's 1980 attack on unarmed demonstrators. Courtesy filmmaker



here and elsewhere—not to mention the awesome human cost of war and famine. But the films also shared a focus on the individual experience, the efforts and vision of people who will not accept things as inevitable, and everywhere these works revealed the resilience and humor of the defiant human spirit. A heady mixture, and not for the faint-hearted.

For many first-time filmmakers, the thrill of having their films reach a wider audience is tempered by the realization of just how lucky they are to have made their films in the first place in today's funding climate. Mexican American school-teacher Laura Angelica Simón, director of *Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary*, was so outraged at California's Proposition 187, which denies health care and education to illegal aliens, that she decided to make a film about it. "But I was lucky; I had a

friend [Tracey Trench] who became my producer. She worked at 20th Century-Fox, and when she became committed to the film, she was in a position to get it off the ground." The film went on to win the Freedom of Expression Award at Sundance this year.

English documentarist Antonia Caccia, who has been making films for almost 30 years, thinks the times have gotten tougher for documentarians. She recently completed her trilogy of films devoted to Palestine with *Stories of Honor and Shame*, a low-key profile of Palestinian women living on the Gaza strip. In a series of extraordinary interviews, these women reveal their ways of getting around a society that denies them rights at every turn. Caccia made her film debut back in 1970 with *End of the Dialogue*, one of the first films to show what life in South African Black townships was really like. "It was tough making documentaries back then," Caccia recalls. "I was doing a lot of my work for the BBC, and because I was a woman, they tended to expect me to only want to do work about women or issues related to women. But it was also easier in a way than now. There's very little money out there for documentarists now, and the higher profile stuff tends to be easier to sell. And selling is what everything's about now, isn't it?"

Acclaimed Canadian documentary filmmakers Daniele Lacourse and Yvan Patry lucked out with the distribution of their mo-

ving and powerful *Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold*. The film is a terrifying

depiction of the horrors of the 1994 massacre in Rwanda of more than 500,000 members of the Tutsi tribe by the Hutus, and the revenge now being exacted by the Tutsi extremists. The filmmakers found a "very courageous dis-

A heady mixture, and not for the faint-hearted.

tributor" [Film Tonic, distributor of *Jesus of Montreal*], according to Patry. "So there was a major theatrical event." And the timing couldn't have been better. "We released it at the time that Canada was announcing participation in a major agrarian venture in Zaire. All hell broke loose, and the current affairs interest, combined with a TV release after the theatrical release, made it a major hit."

Nonetheless, the filmmakers, who have a fine track record of award-winning documentaries about Cambodia, Eritrea, and

The Square Circle's friendship between a handsome transvestite and a country girl attracted an Indian audience of all ages and economic backgrounds. Courtesy filmmaker



Namibia, have found the general lack of interest in foreign affairs topics discouraging. "Look at this festival. How many African-Americans have come to see this film? Two." What's more, Patry continues, "TV networks need audiences, [and] local issues are easier to sell."

Among other impressive features at the festival was Ingrid Sinclair's award-winning *Flame*, which has the distinction of being a powerful action film as well as a moving story of two women's friendship and their experiences of the war for the liberation of Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) in 1975. Exceptional, too, was Jang Sun Woo's *A Petal*, a powerfully personalized take on South Korea's brutal attack on unarmed demonstrators in 1980. But one of the most popular films was Amol Palekar's *The Square Circle*, an Indian road movie about the improbable friendship between a handsome transvestite who once played women in musical dramas and an innocent country girl

on the run from work in a brothel, who disguises herself as a boy.

Director/programmer Bruni Burres, at the helm of the festival since 1994 and co-programmer since 1991, felt this year something special was achieved. "I don't think we've ever had such a high concentration of artistically superior films before. This festival is unique in that it has its own identity and isn't just an occasional event. It's taken on a special place." The audiences, surprisingly, are not just human rights advocates and college students. "What's happening is we're getting people from say,

Chile, who come because there's a Chilean film. Then they go to other films, and so on. *The Square Circle* brought in a huge Indian audience, of all ages and economic backgrounds, which was wonderful."

After a slow start, this year the festival was more successful at the box-office than ever before. A grant from the George Soros Foundation meant that more international films and filmmakers could be included. But it doesn't stop there. "We're approaching TV networks, like Sundance, the Independent Film Channel, Bravo, and HBO," says Burres. "We want to get a weekly or monthly series of human rights films. We're also developing a proposal to expand our high school projects; we've started already here in New York City. The idea is to have regular year-round screenings of human rights films for public and private school students at Lincoln Center, with a view to getting it incorporated permanently into the curriculum."

Laoise Mac Reamoinn is a freelance writer based in New York.

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Made possible through funding from the James E. Pendleton Endowment of the Roy H. Park School of Communications.



The Roy H. Park School of Communications enrolls 1,200 undergraduate students in the Departments of Television-Radio, Cinema and Photography, and Corporate Communication. Recent grants from the Park Foundation and bequests from James E. Pendleton have provided the School with state-of-the-art digital communication facilities. In addition, these funds endow two Park Chairs, a Pendleton Chair, undergraduate scholarships, graduate fellowships, a distinguished visitors series, and other programs. For more information about the Park School, contact Dean Thomas W. Eohn, Roy H. Park School of Communications, Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY 14850, (607) 274-3895.



media activism

BULLFROG FILMS

by Lissa Gibbs

Bullfrog Films

P.O. Box 149, Oley, PA 19547
(610) 779-8226; fax: 370-1978
bullfrog@igc.org; www.bullfrogfilms.com

Who is Bullfrog Films?

We're John Hoskyns-Abraham and Winnie Scherrer—"personal and professional partners." John's a soccer-playing, bee-keeping, woods-walking pagan, and Winnie's a gardener with quick wits and a ready laugh. Bullfrog was founded 24 years ago. We have a wonderful staff of six employees: Elizabeth Stanley, Cher Woolley, Sieglinde Abromaitis, Dennis Kohr, Lori Kata, and Fred Tamarri, four of whom have been with Bullfrog for about 10 years.

Where's Oley, Pennsylvania?

It's at the edge of Pennsylvania Dutch farmland, not far from Reading. More importantly, it's equidistant from our places of birth, England (John's) and California (Winnie's).

Why and how did you start Bullfrog?

We started Bullfrog after a two-year stint as part of the Film Production Division of Rodale Press, publishers of *Organic Gardening* and *Prevention* magazines. They decided that a film division was an expensive luxury for a publishing company and gave us the boot. We had made six films with them specializing in environmental issues and knew that there were a lot of other environmental films being made that weren't getting good distribution. So we figured we could start a distribution company and produce one film a year with the profits from the distribution company. It hasn't quite worked out that way, but it's been great nonetheless.

Do you still make films?

Our one-film-a-year plan fell apart when we started having children and production got so expensive. Now that our kids are in college, we're thinking of producing again.

Where'd the name "Bullfrog" come from?

We were living on a farm with a pond full of bullfrogs, and at the time it seemed critical that we have a name for the company by lunch time.



Unofficial motto:

The frog does not drink up the pond in which it lives.

What types of works do you handle?

We handle films and videos dealing with environmental issues, mainly for classroom and community use. "Environmental" is defined broadly, and our collection includes programs on ecology, energy, agriculture, indigenous peoples, women's studies, genetics, marine biology, sustainable development, global issues, economics, ethics, conflict resolution, and media criticism. Styles

range from animation to drama and from personal essay to investigative documentary. We've got programs suitable for all ages, from pre-kindergarten through to adult. We've also got a small, but very strong, collection of programs on the performing arts. Our titles show at schools, colleges, libraries, hospitals, civic groups, and religious congregations in English-speaking countries around the world. And on television (PBS, CBC, Discovery Channel, Free Speech TV, Bravo, A&E). Every once in a while they show in a movie theater.

How many works are in your collection?

Over 600.

Do you mainly release on video?

99.5% of our catalog is video these days. We do still rent and sell shorts on 16mm, but not many folks are interested in classroom use of a 16mm print.

What does it mean to be an "educational" distributor?

Part of our reputation lies in the fact that we've always been ahead of the pack, both in terms of style and content. Content available to teachers through educational videos is often years ahead of what current textbooks are offering. But if your educational film has nothing that relates to the classroom curriculum, then you'll have a tough time selling it because public libraries—with a few noble exceptions—have abandoned the cause of the independent documentary film. In terms of independently produced environmental films or videos, the only real home video "hits" have been things like desert images set to new age music, animal sex, and animal violence.

How do you decide what to add to your collection?

We sit down after dinner and look at whatever has come into our office. We go with our gut feeling about the work, even if our business sense is telling us that it's going to be a tough sell.

Best known title in collection:

In the classroom: a 12-minute, almost wordless, 1977 live-action production called *Toast* by Daniel Hoffmann, about our underlying dependence on fossil fuels. For the public: probably Adrian Cowell's

five-part series for *Frontline* called *The Decade of Destruction*, dealing with the destruction of the Amazon rain forest. Recent titles following close behind are Terre Nash's *Who's Counting: Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics*; Miranda Smith's *My Father's Garden*; and Melissa Young and Mark Dworkin's *Risky Business: Biotechnology in Agriculture*.

What's your basic approach to releasing a title?

First we consult with the makers and find out who the

key people are around a particular issue. We go after endorsements, editorial reviews and commentary, festival awards, and Internet word-of-mouth to get the word out. Then we try to figure out the most likely end users and market directly to them, as well as to our steady customer base.

How do you reach your market?

Within the U.S. we promote by direct mail, through our printed catalog, telemarketing, and through 10 independent sales reps who mainly visit school buyers. We use our own mailing list and some lists from services specifically for schools, both K-12 and colleges.

How much of your business is international and how do you reach that market?

The international educational market is still very small, with Canada far and away the most important country. The Far East, though, is coming up—Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan. The UK and Australia dropped their video prices a few years ago, so making an income from the international market has become tougher. We have dealers for Bullfrog in Canada, U.K., the Far East, and Australia who handle most of our international sales.

Key milestones for Bullfrog:

1) Establishing a working relationship with the National Film Board of Canada early on; 2) getting recognized by our professional peers (1984 retrospective at MoMA, 1989 award at Italy's Medikinale International Film Fest, and 1997 award from the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for our contribution to science education); and 3) successfully resolving a decade-long lawsuit against the U.S. Information Agency—the propaganda arm of the U.S. government abroad—for refusing to grant educational certificates to certain films based on their perceived political bias. Putting the Web to use will be our next important milestone.

Is it possible to make a living making documentaries?

We have just a handful of US producers who make their living as environmental filmmakers. Canadian producers, due to their government's support, tend to fare better, but this is changing as we speak.

Is it possible to make a living distributing them?

We have! But mainly as a simple living cottage industry. We're not sure how the companies with big city overheads manage.

Where do you find your titles and how should filmmakers approach you for consideration?

We used to have to beat the bushes for programs, but now they pour in over the transom. We follow festival winners and Winnie always goes to the National Educational Media Network Conference and Market in Oakland. Filmmakers also contact us directly.

Range of production budgets of titles:

From \$3,000 to \$250,000. We like good production values because we charge a "hardback" price for our videos, but

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John Hoskyns-Abrahall and Winnie Scherrer, personal and professional partners of Bullfrog Films. Photo: Megan Hoskyns-Abrahall, courtesy Bullfrog Films

we're more concerned about content. Plus, we're more likely to recoup production costs if they were low to begin with.

Range of P&A budgets:
From \$4,000 to \$20,000.

On average, what sort of net income might a filmmaker make with Bullfrog over a five-year period for a 56-minute video on a timely social/political topic?

D We used to say on average \$25,000 just from the educational market, but nowadays it's more likely to be \$10,000.

S What caused the change?

T A combination of decreased purchasing budgets at public institution—libraries and schools mainly—and an increase in available titles.

I What's your dream film to distribute?

B Five years ago we would have said a 15-minute elementary science program made from an environmentally conscious point of view. Today, with colleges using more and more videos, we're delighted to get an hour-long trend-setter like John de Graaf's new film, *Affluenza*, about the disease of affluence and the sickness of consumer culture. It's a plea for simple living done with lots of humor and archival footage.

U Other distributors which you admire?

T California Newsreel in San Francisco because of its exceptionally bright and talented staff, and Appalshop in Kentucky for staying true to themselves and their community and bringing international attention to Appalachia.

R Famous last words:

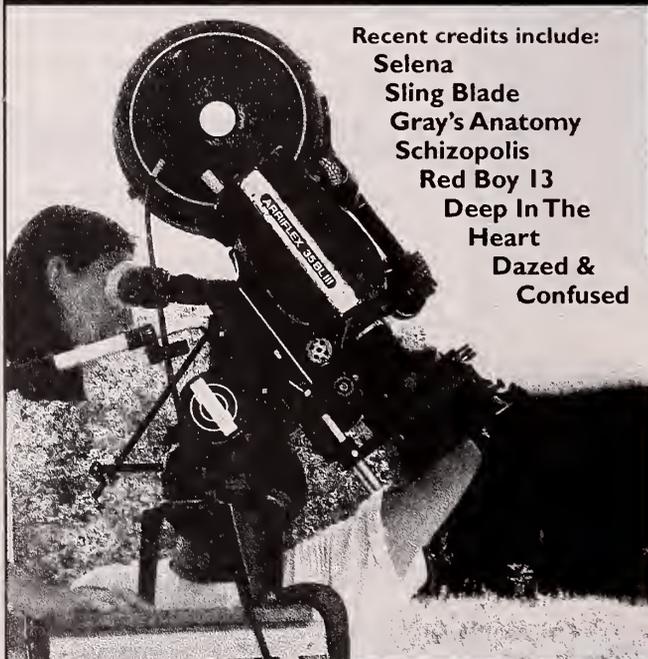
S Robert Louis Stevenson said, "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive and the true success is to labor." We believe him to be right.

Distributor F.A.Q. is a monthly column conducted by fax questionnaire profiling a wide range of distributors. If you are a distributor and want to be profiled or are a maker and want to find out more about a particular distributor, contact Lissa Gibbs c/o The Independent, 304 Hudson St., 6th fl, NY, NY 10013, or drop an email to: lissa@sir-ius.com

Lissa Gibbs is a contributing editor to The Independent and former Film Arts Foundation Fest director.

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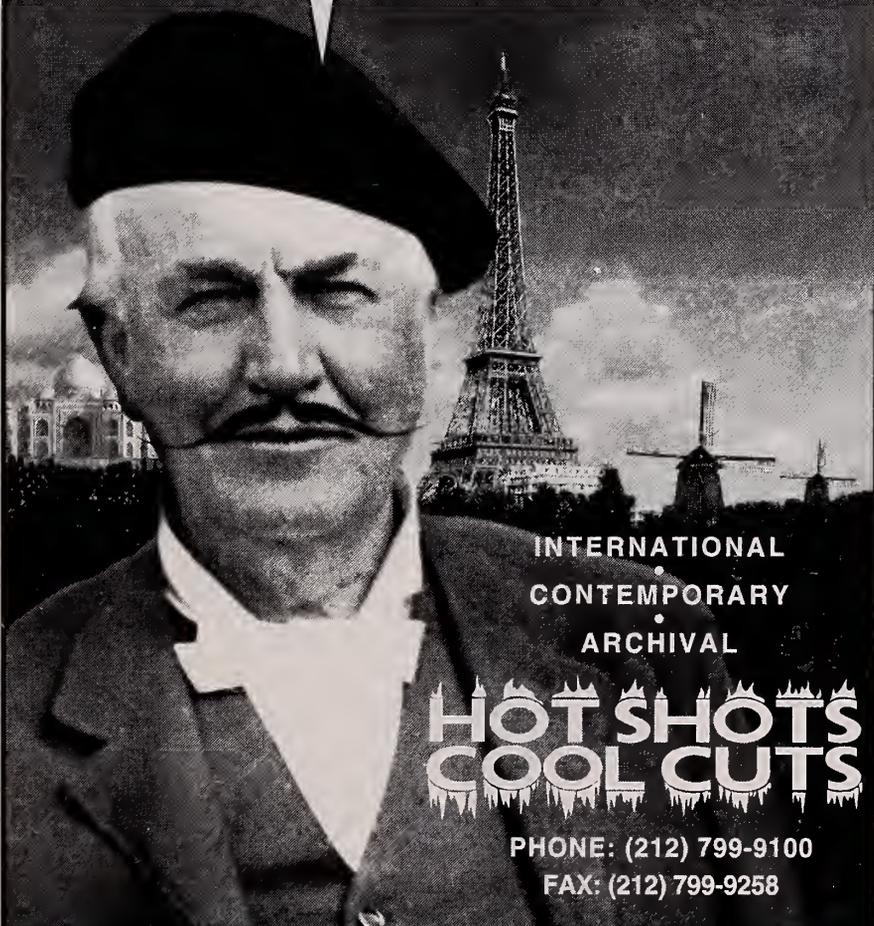
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In today's independent film distribution market, there's no time for slow builds. If exhibitors don't see audiences for independent films in the first two weeks, they figure they're not coming at all. Likewise, if an independent production finds a home on television, the station looks to audience feedback to help determine if they'll keep the niche for independent productions. With that in mind, this section offers shameless plugs for soon-to-be-seen films and videos in hopes that you'll support them. Who knows; maybe they'll do the same for you someday.

BY CASSANDRA
URETZ

IN HIS SNUGGLE WITH THE VAMPIRE-NEXT-DOOR, Larry Fessenden nails the Manhattan art scene's vain appetites. Sam, the main character of Fessenden's *Habit* (112 min., 35mm) is your basic cool loser, a Downtown drunk who must choose between sobriety and ruin. Ruin wins his heart when he meets Anna, a passionate predator who gets all his addictions going, at a Halloween party. Convinced Anna is a vampire but helpless to resist her, Sam finally sinks into madness as, threadbare and alone, he prepares for a final confrontation. Fessenden was the recipient of the 1997 \$20,000 "Swatch Someone to Watch Award." Distributed by the artist through his production company, Glass Eye Pix. *Habit* will open October 17 in a platform release.

Everyone finds a death he can live with in *Foto-Novelas* (60 min., video), a series of fantastic clashes between the living and the supernatural, executive-produced by Carlos Avila for ITVS. Based on popular Latin American comic books that tackle difficult social issues with deceptively simple stories, *Foto-Novelas* presents four ghostly fables on PBS throughout October. Playing a misguided prison surgeon, *Star Trek: Voyager's* Roxann Dawson enters the fray by fitting a death row inmate with a computer microchip that forces knowledge into his mind. In later episodes, a family inherits a mirror from which the spirits of dead relatives emerge to meddle from beyond the grave; an adopted Costa Rican boy, transplanted to an American suburb, is comforted by a toy monkey who recreates the boy's homeland in his room each night; and a dissolute boxer tries to reconcile with his estranged loved ones after a *calavera*, or death figure, appears to him during a fight. *Foto-Novelas* will be televised nationally on PBS, airing at 10:30pm on Oct. 1, 8, 15, and 22.

Down on the bayou, Kasi Lemmons directs



Vampire victim
Larry Fessenden is
stalked by *Habit's*
Meredith Snaider.

Photo: Richard
Sandier, courtesy
Glass Eye Pix

her feature debut, a Louisiana yarn of two sisters growing up in a backwater drenched by voodoo lore. Samuel L. Jackson stars as the town doctor, fixing every scrape in *Eve's Bayou* (120 min., 35mm) except the ones his own family gets into. When Jackson's oldest daughter draws her sister into bewitched goings-on around town, the little girl becomes fascinated by a local fortune teller, who shares some dark arts with her new protege. *Eve's Bayou* opens Oct. 24 in New York and Los Angeles, with a platform release thereafter.

Bob Flanagan does his thing in Kirby Dick's documentary *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist* (89 min., 35mm). Flanagan's brutal and often comic domination do's brought him fame in performance art and S/M circles. Racing to let his message out before cystic fibrosis claimed him at the age of 43, Flanagan made his body a battleground in the politics of power, daring the world to watch him bow before his demons. Cinepix will release *Sick* on November 8.

The Coney Island drama that brought director Salvatore Stabile to Spielberg's attention at

the tender age of 22, *Gravesend* (85 min., 35mm) follows four layabout friends lounging blind to passing time in a Brooklyn basement. On this particular evening, one of the friends accidentally sets a gun off, leaving the group burdened by a corpse and no idea of what to do next. Lost in the traps that the Brooklyn streets have set to bring them down, they must face their vulnerability in their relationships with each other and their environment. Already playing in New York and at several California locations, *Gravesend* will open at the Varsity Theater in Seattle on Oct. 3.

Bang (90 min., 35mm), a first feature from London native Ash, follows Darling Narita, an unemployed actress who turns the tables on life with the help of a homeless man played by Peter Greene. Seeking help after a humiliating eviction, Narita is attacked by a motorcycle cop. When she fights back, making off with the cop's uniform and bike, she becomes an authority figure for a day, playing up her role as the long arm of the law. *Bang* had a September opening in New York and Los Angeles, and will tour the country

throughout October.

Riding the Rails (72 min., 35mm) leads a legion of diverse documentaries this October. Historians Michael Uys and Lexy Lovell invited aging "boxcar" children, who braved the Great Depression riding freight trains illegally across America in search of work, to share their stories. These survivors describe their loneliness, their poverty, and the adventurous bravado that kept them wandering while sending home paychecks to sustain their families. Brought back into society by the New Deal, most of the boxcar boys gratefully put down roots to lead established lives. Others such as 72 year-old Bob "Guitar Whitey" Symmonds still "hear the clatter of the steel wheels" and ride the rails in search of their untamed youth. *Riding The Rails* has already appeared in Los Angeles and New York, but will begin its national release in October.

New School Order (53 min., video) describes similarly seismic social change and its economic origins in suburban Pennsylvania. Gini Reticker documents a nine-month clash between the North Penn School District, an area enriched by recent corporate growth, and Christian fundamentalists vying to control their school board's agenda. Enduring heated accusations from colleagues, parents, and various liberal groups, a narrow Christian cross-section is voted into power by taxpayers who resent carrying the burden of rising school costs. Remedial reading courses soon join programs addressing sex education, multiculturalism, and drug awareness on the scrap heap, and parents watch in horror as their school board's remaining heroes resign and their district yields before a fixed ideological view. (Oct. 3, PBS, 10pm)

Levittown, the first American planned community, is suburbia's "ground zero." The place where every house looks the same, where Mars always attacks, Levittown was a national laughingstock from the time it was built in 1947 as a response to post-World War II housing shortages. John O'Hagan's award-winning, loving documentary *Wonderland* (80 min., 35mm) honors the town that launched Zippy the Pinhead, ticky-tacky, and wood paneling satori, chatting up Levittown's bowling buffs and beauty queens to hear their untold legends of yore. Executive-produced by Ted Hope, David Linde, and James Schamus, *Wonderland* opens in New York on October 17, with a platform release thereafter.

Recalling a childhood in which she could "cross five state lines without ever catching a glimpse of another Asian face," Renee Tajima-



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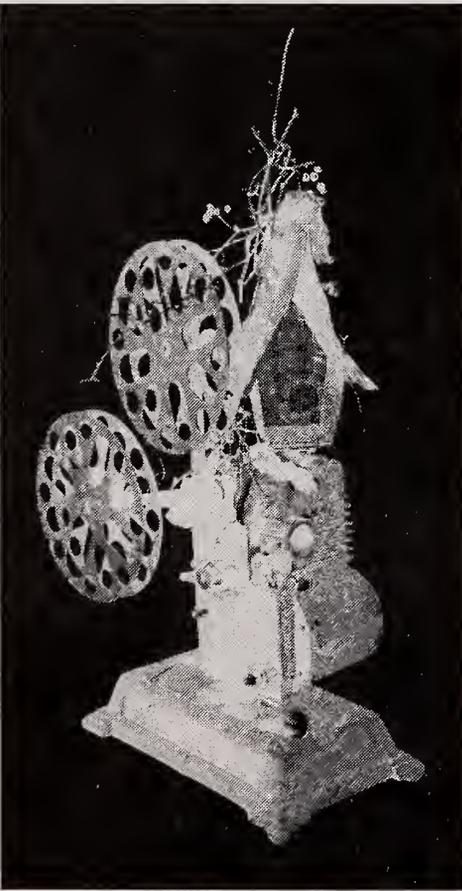
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Michael Uys and Lexy Lovell riding the rails with "Guitar Whitey" Symmonds.

Photo: Sam Henriques, courtesy Out of the Blue Productions

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Pena charts Asian America's dynamic ascent in *My America... or Honk if You Love Buddha* (87 min., 16mm). Treading in Jack Kerouac's path, the Academy Award-nominated Tajima-Pena charts America's fastest-growing ethnic group in a road trip across the nation. Accompanied by Beat performer Victor Wong, Tajima-Pena interviews activists, singers, Southern belles, and students, exploring Asian Americans' new visibility in the struggle for social justice. Presented by the National Asian American Telecommunications Association and ITVS with funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, *My America* opened on September 26 at the Laemmle Grande Theater in Los Angeles.

Family Name (89 min., 16mm) was first conceived when director Macky Alston found a collection of Alston clan wills on his father's shelf. The book listed the names of several hundred slaves that the prosperous North Carolina family once owned, revealing a family history Macky Alston knew nothing about. Determined to dig up more details, the director traveled the South to find some connection with these former slaves, tracing the Alston name across a diverse American landscape. His documentary of the experience closes with a reunion on an old Alston plantation, in which the descendants of slaves and slave owners meet to consider their common bond and negotiate a shared future. Opelika Pictures presents *Family Name* Sept. 3-9 at Film Forum in NY and Oct. 10-17 at the Laemmle Grande Theater in L.A., follow by a platform release nationwide.

A major indie hit during its New York run in July, *A Life Apart: Hasidim in America* (96 min., 35mm) traces the growth of post-Holocaust Jewish communities across America. Directors Menachem Daum and Oren Rudavsky document the first difficulties Holocaust

survivors faced upon arriving to this country, the challenges they encountered in rebuilding their communities, and the inevitable pressure they feel to assimilate into America's contemporary mainstream. *A Life Apart* opens at Philadelphia's Roxy Theater in mid-October, traveling around the country through November and early December.

As reported in *The Independent's* July issue, the **Fuel Tour** is ready to roll on its eleven-city mission, bringing independent films to audiences off the regular art-house circuit. The Fuel Tour will include Suzanne Meyers's *Alchemy* (Best Feature, South by Southwest 1996), Chris Smith's *American Job* (Sundance 1996), CLC Film Collective's *The Delicate Art of the Rifle*, (Best Film, Chicago Underground Film Festival), and Hannah Weyer's *Arresting Gena* (Sundance 1997). Three of the four will also premiere on the Independent Film Channel (IFC), Fuel's primary sponsor, in 1998. Each screening will be accompanied by discussions with the filmmakers, Webcasts on Fuel and IFC sites chronicling the production process, and appearances from indie luminaries in support of this unusual event. For more information call (212) 586-7233.

A selection of independent Chinese videos makes a first-time appearance in the U.S. at the Museum of Modern Art beginning November 24. Most of these examples of the "new documentary movement" based in Beijing have been smuggled to America, revealing not only Chinese social issues usually suppressed by the international media but the rise of a renegade art form. A rare, gutsy event to put in bold on your calendar. For info, call MoMA at (212) 708-9480.

Cassandra Uretz is assistant editor of *The Independent*.



LISTINGS DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT. SINCE SOME DETAILS MAY CHANGE AFTER THE MAGAZINE GOES TO PRESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONTACT THE FESTIVAL DIRECTLY BEFORE SENDING PREVIEW CASSETTES. DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING A CALL FOR ENTRIES IN THE FESTIVAL COLUMN IS THE 15TH OF THE MONTH TWO-AND-A-HALF MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., OCT 15 FOR JAN/FEB ISSUE). ALL BLURBS SHOULD INCLUDE: FESTIVAL DATES, CATEGORIES, PRIZES, ENTRY FEES, DEADLINES, FORMATS & CONTACT INFO. TO IMPROVE OUR RELIABILITY AND MAKE THIS COLUMN MORE BENEFICIAL, WE ENCOURAGE ALL MEDIAMAKERS TO CONTACT FIVF WITH CHANGES, CRITICISM, OR PRAISE FOR FESTIVALS PROFILED.

DOMESTIC

BLACK MARIA FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Jan. through May, national tour. Deadline: mid-Nov. Fest seeks to "identify, exhibit & reward compelling new ind. media, to reach audiences in a wide variety of settings nationwide & to advocate exceptional achievement that expands the expressive terrain of film & video." Fest founded in 1980 in honor of Thomas A. Edison, who developed motion picture medium & whose film studio, the Black Maria in West Orange, NJ, was the world's first. No cat-related restrictions. Fest looking for any combination of inventive, incisive, responsive & provocative work of any style or genre. Featured works screened at over 50 venues throughout US & Canada. Program also cablecast to 250,000 subscribers. Awards: Jurors' Choice Works (share \$2,500); Jurors' Citation Works (share \$2,000); Directors Choice Works (share \$1,000); plus \$5,000+ in exhibition honoraria. Entries must have been completed w/in previous 3-1/2 yrs & may be up to 100 min.. Entry fee: \$35-\$45, depending on length. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-8. Contact: John Columbus, fest dir., Black Maria Film & Video Festival, Dept. of Media Arts, Jersey City State College, 203 West Side Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07305; (201) 200-2043; fax: 200-3490; <http://ellserver1.jcstate.edu/taebmff/index.x.htm>

IMAGEFEST '97 SHORT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Jan 9-10, CA. Deadline: October 10, 1997. Now in fourth year, this noncompetitive short film & video festival is designed to showcase San Francisco Bay-area film/videomakers. Bay-area residents (408, 415, 510, 650 area codes) can submit films and videos under 20 min. and feature-length films. Industrial, promotional, instructional works not appropriate. Formats: 16mm, S-VHS, VHS; preview on VHS. Entry fee: \$25 (IMAGE members, \$15). For entry forms & info, contact Imagefest '98, P.O. Box 60803, Palo Alto, CA 94306; (415) 845-1598; image@mediacity.com

LESBIAN LOOKS FIFTH ANNUAL FILM & VIDEO SERIES, AZ. Deadline: Dec. 15. Lesbian Looks seeks innovative works by and about lesbians for 1998 season. 16mm, 3/4", VHS NTSC only. Send VHS preview tape, brief synopsis, artist bio & SASE for return to: Beverly Seckinger, Media Arts, Harvill 226, U. of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 85721; (520) 621-1239; fax: 621-9662; bsecking@u.arizona.edu

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Jan 30-Feb 8, FL. Deadline: Nov 1. Important regional cultural event bringing new int'l cinema to S. Florida; helps develop audiences for new film talents & highlights "often unrecognized countries for their contribution to film." Fest is known as gateway for Spanish language films into US. All types of films considered: features, docs, shorts, experimental & animation. Seminar Program offers workshops on producing, directing, cinematography, writing, editing. Special events held during fest. Entries should not be in theatrical release in US or Europe. All films must be completed since 1986. All short films must be betw 2-10 min; features must be over 80 min. No entry fee. Formats accepted: 35mm. A written request for appl. must be mailed or faxed to: Film Society of Miami, Film Entries, 444 Brickell Ave., Ste. 229, Miami, FL 33131; fax: (305) 577-9768 (no phone calls).

NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL MEDIA NETWORK'S APPLE AWARDS, CA. Deadline for CD-ROM competition entries is Nov. 1, 1997. Deadline for Film and Video competition entries is Dec. 1, 1997. Deadline for submission to the Media Market is mid-April; entry fee discount for productions already entered in competition. Largest educational media competition in the US. The NEMN Gold, Silver and Bronze Apple Awards represent a seal of approval for educational media ranging from television programs and docs to CD-ROMs, including titles designed for the home market, or for classroom or corporate use. Winning titles selected for their exceptional educational and technical value. They address topics as varied as social and cultural issues, youth and family concerns, health and medicine, science and technology, arts and humanities, sports and travel or business and careers. Winners listed on NEMN's Web site and in NEMN's Catalog of Winners. Awards announced in May and selected winners are showcased also in May, during NEMN's annual Media Market and Conference. NEMN also offers a Student Competition which allows full-time students to submit entries for a discounted fee. Competition regular entry fee is \$90 and up, depending on entry format and length. Submission Formats: Mac/IBM CD-ROMs and NTSC VHS. Contact: Jean Paul Pétraud, competition director, National Educational Media Network, 655 13th Street, Oakland, CA 94612; (510) 465-6885; fax: 465-2835; comp@nemn.org; www.nemn.org

NEW YORK UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, March 18-22, NY. 5th year of renegade festival created to showcase new films by the next generation of cutting-edge artists. Over 80 features and short films screened in this high-profile, downtown Manhattan event. Awards go to best feature, short, doc, animation and experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video, S-8. Preview on 1/2". Entry fee: \$30. Deadline: Jan. 5. Late deadline: Feb. 2. Contact: Ed Halter, NY Underground Film Festival, 225 Lafayette St., Suite 401, New York, NY 10012; (212) 925-3440; fax (212) 925-3430; festival@nyuff.com; www.nyuff.com

NIAGARA FALLS USA INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Late November, NY. Deadline: October 30; fee \$30. Festival is designed to give exposure to and highlight innova-

tive, original features, docs, videos, shorts, and animation, regardless of entrant's previous experience, age, or budget. Competitive and noncompetitive sections, including cash prizes for winners. Event covered by Western NY media. Held in venues around beautiful Niagara Falls and Buffalo, N.Y. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, 3/4" & 1/2" video. All submissions on 1/2" video. Submit directly with name, synopsis, prod. info, video & fee—call for submission form. Contact: Todd C. Pliss, exec. director, B.A. Productions, P.O. Box 57796, Sherman Oaks, CA, 91413; (310) 842-6330; fax: 880-4292.

NORTEL PALM SPRINGS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, January 8-19, 1998, Palm Springs, CA. Deadline: Nov. 1 11 day festival this year, founded in 1990, presents Opening and Closing major films, a black-tie gala with awards given to film industry legends, retrospectives, a special collection of foreign language films submitted for Oscar consideration, audience awards, industry and foreign consulate receptions, seminars, panels, a showcase of film industry companies (their products and services), and, for '98, a special conference for international and American cinematographers offering master classes and discussions on state of the art in the field; Approx. 100 films from 35+ countries; approx 10-15 world premieres; approx 40 average North American /U.S. premieres. Festival provides transportation and accommodations for accepted filmmakers; Application fee: \$45.00; Submissions by videotape or by screening in the So. Cal area; submissions must be able to be shown in 35mm or 16mm, regardless of original format; must be completed within 18 mos of festival; must be in original language with Eng. subtitles if applicable; Films must be 60 min. or longer; shorts not accepted for 1998; print must be available for delivery by Dec. 24, 1997; deadline for industry accreditation is Dec. 15; line-up announced on or about Dec. 1; applications available by contacting Paola Freccero, Artistic Director or Paul Gachot, Director of Programming at NPSIFF, 1700 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Suite #3, Palm Springs, 92262; (760) 322-2930 x248 (Paola) x249 (Paul); fax: 322-4087; filmfest@ix.netcom.com; www.psfilmfest.org

OHIO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Nov 20-23, 1997. Deadline: Oct 15. Founded in 1994, Ohio Independent Film Festival (formerly known as The Off-Hollywood Flick Fest) is film and video festival in Cleveland that provides a unique networking and exhibition space for independent filmmakers. "Committed to providing a consistent and reputable public forum for independent film makers who may not otherwise have the opportunity to show their feature-length and short films and videos." The Ohio Independent Film Festival is a professional arts organization dedicated to supporting, growing, and legitimizing independent filmmaking by providing networking opportunities, media access and literacy, advocacy, education, and exposure to an audience. Welcomes many film- and videomakers, on- and off-screen talent, and musicians for the networking and future project possibilities. In addition, fest exhibits works-in-progress, mixed format work (e.g., 16mm film with accompanying soundtrack on a cassette), and work in non-traditional medium (i.e., video and

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PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Feb 13-Mar 2, OR. Deadline: Oct. 31. Noncompetitive fest focuses primarily on new work from outside the US, but American features, docs & shorts included. Fest attracts audiences of over 25,000. Best of Fest and Audience Award. No entry form. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Entry fee: None. Contact: Bill Foster, Portland Int'l Film Festival, Northwest Film Center, 1219 S.W. Park Ave., Portland, OR, 97205; (503) 221-1156, fax: 226-4842.

PORTLAND JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL, Jan, OR. Deadline: mid-Nov. Now in 4th edition, fest programs int'l selection of film exploring Jewish history, culture & identity as expressed in dramatic features & challenging docs that celebrate diversity of Jewish life. All films followed by discussion; screenings held at Portland Art Museum. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. No entry fee. Contact: Howard Aaron, Portland Jewish Film Festival, Northwest Film Center, 1219 S.W. Park Ave., Portland, OR, 97205; (503) 221-1156; fax: 226-4842.

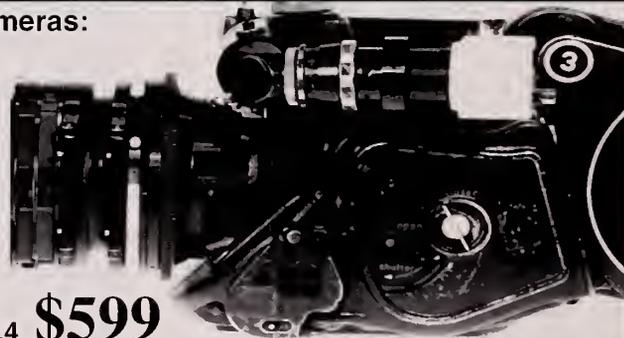
PORTLAND REEL MUSIC FESTIVAL, Jan., OR. Deadline: mid-Nov. Reel Music celebrates intersection of film/video & music. Each yr's program is eclectic blend of new & vintage works that document, interpret & celebrate great artists in jazz, rock, blues, country, reggae, third world, classical, opera & new music. Docs, shorts, animation, musicals, biopics, concerts, etc. welcomed. Special programs incl. live film/music performances & concerts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", 8mm. No entry fee. Contact: Bill Foster, dir., Portland Reel Music Festival, Northwest Film Center, 1219 S.W. Park Ave., Portland, OR 97205; (503) 221-1156; fax: 226-4842.

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, April 23-May 7, 1998. Deadline: Jan 7 for narrative features; Dec 12 for Golden Gate Awards entries. Founded in 1957, presented each spring by the San Francisco Film Society showcasing approximately 175 features, docs and shorts; fest is dedicated to highlighting current trends in int'l film and video, with an emphasis on work without US distrib. Fest comprises two sections: the invitational, noncompetitive section for recent features, archival presentations and retrospectives; and the Golden Gate Awards competition for docs, TV production, animation, shorts & experimental work. There are 35 categories in the GGA's four divisions: Film/Video, TV, New Visions, Bay Area Film & Video. Golden Gate Awards include Golden Spire award and \$500 cash. Silver Spires & Certificates of Merit may also be awarded at discretion of juries. For the first time, all Golden Spire winners in the Film & Video, New Visions and Bay Area Divisions will compete during

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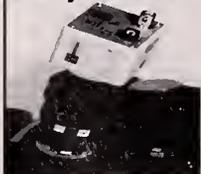


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Diverse, committed, opinionated, and fiercely independent—these are the video and filmmakers who are members of AIVF. Documentary and feature filmmakers, animators, experimentalists, distributors, educators, students, curators—all concerned that their work make a difference—find the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, the national service organization for independent producers, vital to their professional lives. Whether it's our magazine, *The Independent Film & Video Monthly*, or the organization raising its collective voice to advocate for important issues, AIVF preserves your independence while letting you know you're not alone.

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INSURANCE

Members are eligible to purchase discounted personal and production insurance plans through AIVF suppliers. A range of health insurance options are available, as well as special liability, E&O, and production plans tailored for the needs of low-budget mediamakers.

TRADE DISCOUNTS

A growing list of businesses across the country offer AIVF members discounts on equipment and auto rentals, film processing, transfers, editing, and other production necessities. Plus long-distance and overnight courier services are available at special rates for AIVF members from national companies. In New York, members receive discounted rates at two hotels to make attendance at our programs and other important events more convenient.

CONFERENCE/SCREENING ROOM

AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

INFORMATION

We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

WORKSHOPS, PANELS, AND SEMINARS

Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

ADVOCACY

Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

COMMUNITY

AIVF sponsors monthly member get-togethers in cities across the country; call the office for the one nearest you. Plus members are carrying on active dialogue online—creating a “virtual community” for independents to share information, resources, and ideas. Another way to reach fellow independents to let them know about your screenings, business services, and other announcements is by renting our mailing list, available at a discount to members.

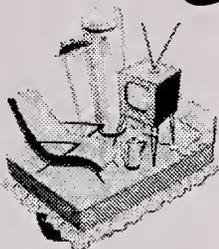
the fest for Grand Prize awards for Best Doc, Best Bay Area Doc, Best Short and Best Bay Area Short. Grand Prize awards include \$1000 in cash. The Festival's SKYY Prize, judged during the fest, honors an emerging int'l feature filmmaker whose film is presented at the fest in the noncompetitive selection and does not have a U.S. distrib. Prize includes a trophy and \$10,000. Noncompetitive awards include Akira Kurosawa Award to filmmaker for lifetime achievement; Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Award to filmmaker for lifetime achievement in short film, animation, doc or TV production; Peter Owens Award to film actor for outstanding achievement; Mel Novikoff Award to individual or institution whose work has enhanced filmgoing public's knowledge and appreciation of world cinema. Also audience awards for Best Feature Film, Best Documentary and Best Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, 3/4"; preview on 1/2" only. Entry fees: \$40-175 (depending on length of film or video). Narrative features: Programming Dept. (415) 929-5016; rsosen@siff.org; docs, shorts, and TV: Golden Gate Awards (415) 929-5014; ggawards@siff.org. San Francisco Int'l Film Festival, 1521 Eddy St., San Francisco CA 94115-4102; (415) 929-5000, fax: 921-5032; www.siff.org

SLAMDANCE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Jan 16-23, 1998 Park City, UT. Deadline: Nov. 12. Primary objective of fest is to present new independent films made by new filmmakers. Started by 3 filmmakers in 1995, fest has developed quickly & is valuable outlet for independent film. Most important component is American Feature Film Competition; in 1996, 12 films competed. Slamdance also shows shorts, docs, foreign features & animated works. All films showcased in 1996 attracted positive industry interest & several received agency rep & distrib offers. Entry fee: \$20-\$50. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Contact: Peter Baxter, dir., Slamdance Int'l Film Festival, 6381 Hollywood Blvd., #520, Los Angeles, CA 90028; (213) 466-1786, fax: 466-1784; slamdance@earthlink.net; www.slamdance.com

FOREIGN

BERLIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Feb, Germany. Deadline: late Nov. Berlin, now in 48th edition, is one of world's top fests, w/ 9,000 guests attending fest and European Film Market each yr. Fest offers participating filmmakers hospitable environment. Fest divided into 7 sections, each w/ own character & organization. Int'l Competition: newly released & unreleased 70mm & 35mm features programmed by invitation of fest director. 2 sections known for strong programming of US ind. films are: Int'l Forum of New Cinema & Panorama (noncompetitive section of official program). Both screen narrative, doc & experimental works. Forum specializes in avant-garde intellectual & political films (60 min. & up, 16mm & 35mm) & also shows more commercial films. Panorama presents wide range of work from low-budget to more commercial ventures, incl. studio films (features & shorts under 15 min., 70mm, 35mm, 16mm). Other sections: Kinderfilmfest, 35mm & 16mm films over 59 min., produced for children; Retros; Lifetime Achievement tributes; New German Films, programmed w/in Forum line-up. European Film Market is important meeting place for screenings & sales, w/ reps from over 40 countries. All

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entries must be produced in 12 mo. preceding fest & not released theatrically or on video in Germany. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. No entry fee: Fest address: Berlin Int'l Film Festival, Budapest Str. 50, D-10787 Berlin, Germany; tel: 011 49 30 25489 0; fax: 011 49 30 25489 249; Forum: 011 49 30 25 48 92 42; fax: 011 49 30 26 15 025 or 25 48 92 46. Entrants may also contact US Forum rep Gordon Hitchens, 214 W. 85th St., NY, NY 10024-3914; tel/fax: (212) 877-6856. In 1998, Independent Feature Project will be supporting "American Independents at Berlin" program. IFP plans to incorporate many services developed by NYFA during its many years of running "American Independents and Features Abroad," incl. market booth, message service for American filmmakers and companies, orientation for newcomers, and "Showcase of American Independent Films" to be presented in market. For info, call Karen Schwartzman at (212) 465-8200, ext. 216; info@filmfest-berlin.de; www.berlinale.de

BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CARTOONS & ANIMATED FILMS, Feb 17-March 1, 1998, Belgium. Deadline: Nov. 1. Since 1982, fest has been showcase for new, interesting works in animation, providing opportunity to be seen by Belgian film & TV distrib. While noncompetitive, it is one of top 8 European animation fests involved in nominating films that compete for Cartoon d'Or. Close to 34,000 spectators attend hundreds of film premieres, retros & exhibits. Computer animation (incl. Pixel Ina prize-winners from Imagina), children's programs & short ind. animation are some fest highlights. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. No entry fee. Contact: Philippe Moins, dir., Brussels Int'l Festival of Cartoons & Animated Films, Folioscope a.s.b.l., Rue de la Rhetorique 19, 1060 Brussels, Belgium; tel: 011 322 534 4125; fax: 011 322 534 2279; folioscope@skynet.be; www.awn.com/folioscope/festival

BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Jan 21-31, 1998, Belgium. Deadline: October 31. Founded in 1974, festival's main section is the European Competition, in which features (longer than 60 mins) and shorts (less than 20 mins) shot in 35mm compete for the Crystal Star Awards (support for European promotion and distribution worth over \$125,000). Other sections: Kaleidoscope of the World Cinema, open to all feature films over 60 mins or shorts under 20 mins shot in 35mm (out of competition) Belgian Focus, competitive for Belgian features and shorts (up to 45 mins) shot in 16 or 35 mm; Belgian docs shown out of competition; 25 Years of Irish Cinema, retrospective of Irish features and shorts from the last 25 years; Special programmes include the Night of the Short Film, tributes, etc. Contact: Christian Thomas, Festival Director, Chaussée de Louvain 30, 1210 Brussels, Belgium; 011 32 2 227 39 80; fax: 011 32 2 218 18 60; infoffb@netcity.be; <http://ffb.cinebel.com>

CINEMA DU REEL, Mar. 13-22, France. Deadline: early Nov. As one of major int'l fests devoted to ethnological & sociological doc, Cinéma du Réel, founded in 1979, is prestigious showcase, held at the George Pompidou Centre in Paris. It is followed by Overview of Ethnographic Films, held at the Musee de l'Homme. Films & videos produced between Jan. 1 & Dec. 31 1996, not released theatrically in France or

aired on French TV channel & unawarded at other French int'l festivals eligible. Works w/ cinematographic qualities & emphasizing filmmaker's point of view likely for selection; informative docs or news reports not considered. Fest sections: Int'l Competition, French Panorama, Non-Competitive Program & Special Screenings. 1997 program dedicated to Japanese documentary. Awards, decided by int'l jury, incl Grand Prix (50,000FF), short film prize (15,000FF), Joris Ivens Prize to young filmmaker (15,000FF) & Multimedia Author's Society (SCAM) Prize (30,000FF). Jury of librarians & professionals award the Libraries Prize (30,000FF for films w/ French version or French subtitles) w/in int'l competitive section or French Panorama & Foreign Affairs Ministry awards Louis Marcocelles Prize. Detailed info (synopsis, technical details, etc.) must be sent to fest by deadline; no cassettes should be sent until requested; entry forms are only forwarded on receipt of preliminary instructions. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta. No entry fee. Contact: Zuzette Glenadel, déléguée générale, Cinéma du Réel, Festival Int'l de Films Ethnographiques et Sociologiques, Bibliothèque Publique d'Information-Centre Georges Pompidou, 19, rue Beaubourg, 75197 Paris Cedex 04, France; tel: 011 33 1 44 78 44 21; fax: 011 33 1 44 78 12 24.

CLERMONT-FERRAND INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Jan, France. Deadline: Oct. 15. Clermont-Ferrand, important stop in int'l short film fest circuit, presents major int'l competition. Over 50 countries represented. Int'l competition provides spectacular view of worldwide cinematographic creation, screening over 70 films, many discoveries of filmmakers who go on to win major awards throughout world. Fest also boasts extremely large audiences of over 115,000, making it one of France's largest fests. Awards: Grand Prix (20,000 to director & Vercingetorix); additional donations & prizes may be awarded. Entries must be under 40 min. & completed after Jan. 1 of preceding yr. French subtitling strongly advised for selected prods. Directors invited to fest for at least 8 days; hotel accommodations & food allowance paid, as well as 450F toward travel. Fest also hosts Short Film market, which has amazingly large catalog listing over 2,000 prods, providing good overview of int'l short film prod. Theater seating 160 equipped for 35mm, 16mm & video. Several buyers have participated over the yrs, incl. Channel 4, Canal +, ZDF, BBC South, YLE, La Sept-Arte, France 2; 1,300 professionals view works in market & utilize catalog. 18 video units available to buyers for viewing approx 2,000 tapes of shorts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. No entry fee. Contact: Roger Gonin, fest director, Festival du Court Métrage de Clermont-Ferrand, 26, rue des Jacobins, 63000 Clermont Ferrand, France; 011 33 473 91 65 73; fax: 011 33 473 92 11 93; festival@gdebussac.fr; http://shortfilm.gdebussac.fr

CRETEIL INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL, April 3-12, France. Deadline: Nov. 15. One of world's oldest fests of films by women & important showcase, now celebrating 20th yr. Held in Paris suburb of Créteil, fest annually attracts audiences of over 35,000, incl. filmmakers, journalists, distributors & buyers. Controversial & critical discussions traditionally part of proceedings. Sections: competition, retro, incl. modern woman director, self-port



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GöTEBORG FILM FESTIVAL, Jan 30-Feb 8, 1998, Sweden. Deadline: November 1. Göteborg is an FIAPF-recognized, noncompetitive 10-day festival arranged since 1979. Scandinavia's most important festival and the biggest in northern Europe. Official national festival in collaboration with Swedish Film Institute. In 1997, 352 films from 46 different countries were screened; 164 features, 163 shorts and 22 documentaries. The festival's aim is to give the audience an opportunity to see films reflecting current state of world cinema outside conventional distribution forms and widen the cinema repertoire. Festival is the big meeting place for Scandinavian film industry. All entries should be Swedish premieres. Formats: 8, 16, 35 and 70mm. No entry fee. Festival director: Gunnar Bergdahl, Göteborg Film Festival, Box 7079, S-402 32 Göteborg, Sweden; 011 46.31.41 05 46; Fax: 011 46.31.41 00 63; goteborg@filmfestival.org; http://goteborg.filmfestival.org

HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, 3-18 Apr., Hong Kong. Deadline: Early Dec. Fest is now in 22nd yr. Noncompetitive event organized by the Provisional Urban Council of Hong Kong aims to serve as platform for int'l film exchange window to world for Hong Kong Cinema. Program incl Int'l Cinema (70-80 new features); Asian Cinema (40-50 new feature); Hong Kong Panorama 97/98 (8-12 films) & Hong Kong Retrospective Cinema (30 films). Films must not have been shown in Hong Kong prior to fest screenings. Program incl features, shorts, docs & animated films. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette. Entry fee: None. Contact: Senior Manager, Hong Kong Int'l Film Festival, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Level 7, Administration Bldg., 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China; 011 852 2734 2903; fax: 011 852 2366 5206.

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independents, since the conference is focused less on what public television is than on what it might eventually become. Independents, station producers, programmers, buyers, commissioning editors, etc. get together for a week to screen and discuss provocative programs from around the world. Submitted American entries go through a two-stage selection process; first in the US and then in Turin, Italy. CPB provides transportation to the conference for selected American producers. No entry fee. Contact: Terry Pound, Input Secretariat, 1101 George Rogers Blvd., Columbia, SC, 29201; (803) 737-3434; fax: 737-3505; pound@scetv.org

LONDON LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL, March 12-26. Deadline: Dec. 8, 1997. Int'l noncompetitive fest addressing lesbian & gay identity and experience. Cats include features, docs, and shorts. Format: 8mm, 16mm, 35mm, 70mm, video. Contact: Jane Ivey, South Bank, Waterloo, London SE1 8XT. 011 44 171 815 1322; fax 011 44 171 633 0786.

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 28-Feb. 8 1998, Holland. Deadline: early Nov. Largest fest in Netherlands w/ rep for programming innovative, experimental new works alongside more commercial prods. 100+ features have world, int'l or European premieres; more than 60,000 visitors put in over 250,000 attendances. Fest on par w/ Berlin & Sundance; describes itself as having eye for uncompromising individualism & political & social aspects of film. More than a showcase, it supports prod. & distrib of work. Main program consists of Tiger Competition, world & int'l premieres, selection from previous yr's int'l fests, sidebars, retros, Dutch Perspective, new Dutch films. Fest cats incl. ind. features/short, doc & experimental. Noncompetitive fest offers a few awards. In 1995, it established 3 Tiger Awards (sponsored by Dutch TV organisation VPRO), accompanied by \$10,000, to encourage promising new filmmakers; winners chosen from ranks of filmmakers premiering 1st or 2nd feature at fest. Other awards: Fipresci Award, presented by int'l organization of film journalists; Netpac Award, awarded by Network for Promotion of Asian Cinema; & Dutch Critics' Award; Citro'n Audience Award of NL15,000 for audience favorite. Fest also hosts Cinemart (deadline Sept. 1), important co-prod. market & meeting place for producers, distributors & financiers; about 40 film projects represented. Additionally, Hubert Bals Foundation offers financial support (deadlines: Sept. 1 & Mar. 1) in cats of script & project development, prod. & postprod. funding & distribution & sales. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". No entry fee. Contact: Programme Dept., Film Festival Rotterdam, Box 21696, 3001 AR Rotterdam, The Netherlands; 011 31 10 411 8080; fax: 011 31 10 413 5132; iffr@luna.nl; www.iffrotterdam.nl

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Foreign country & area codes—especially in Europe—have been changing recently. Be aware that numbers from previous listings may have been modified. We do our best to run the most current information possible, but check with an international operator if you encounter problems.

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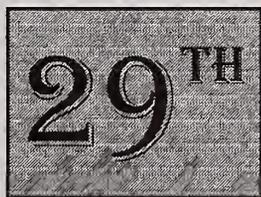
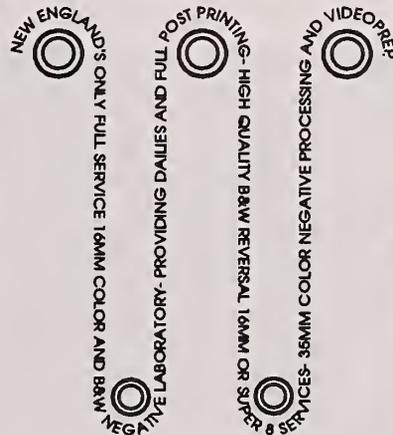
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NOTICES OF RELEVANCE TO AIVF MEMBERS ARE LISTED FREE OF CHARGE AS SPACE PERMITS. *THE INDEPENDENT* RESERVES THE RIGHT TO EDIT FOR LENGTH AND CAN MAKE NO GUARANTEES ABOUT THE NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS FOR A GIVEN NOTICE. LIMIT SUBMISSIONS TO 60 WORDS AND INDICATE HOW LONG INFORMATION WILL BE CURRENT. DEADLINE: 1ST OF THE MONTH, TWO MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., OCT. 1 FOR DEC. ISSUE). COMPLETE CONTACT INFO (NAME, MAILING ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBERS) MUST ACCOMPANY ALL NOTICES. SEND TO: INDEPENDENT NOTICES, FIVE, 304 HUDSON ST., 6TH FL., NY, NY 10013. WE TRY TO BE AS CURRENT AS POSSIBLE W/ INFORMATION BUT PLEASE DOUBLE-CHECK BEFORE SUBMITTING TAPES OR APPLICATIONS.

COMPETITIONS

"SET IN PHILADELPHIA" Screenwriting Competition recognizes exceptional screenplays that involve Philadelphia and encourages the production of feature films in the Philadelphia area. Deadline: Jan. 12, 1998. Contact: Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, 3701 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104; ph. (215) 895-6593, fax 895-6562; pfwc@libertynet.org

APPLE AWARDS seek film/videos & CD-ROMs for largest educational media competition in the US. TV programs, docs, home market titles for classroom or corporate use. Subjects include social/cultural issues, youth & family concerns, health & medicine, science & technology, arts & humanities, sports, travel, business & careers. CD-ROM deadline: Nov. 1. Film/video deadline: Dec. 1. For entry forms, contact National Educational Media Network, 655 13th St., Oakland, CA 94612-1222; (510) 465-6885; fax: (510) 465-2835; comp@nemn.org; www.nemn.org

ATHENA AWARDS FOR LESBIAN EXCELLENCE IN FILM, VIDEO & TELEVISION sponsored by Northern Arts/The Naiad Press. Awards announced December 15, 1997. Competitive awards honoring excellence in film/video/TV by and/or about lesbians and lesbian issues. Prizes from film/video labs/screening rooms, etc. Features, shorts, doc, experimental, animation, and all forms of television programs accepted. All submissions must be on VHS-NTSC. No entry fee. Deadline: October 15. For entry form send SASE to: Awards Coordinator, Athena Awards, P.O. Box 763, Williamsburg, MA 01096; (413) 268-9301; fax (413) 268-9309.

CINESTORY SCREENWRITING AWARDS welcome feature-length scripts of any genre for its 2nd annual competition. Screenplays are judged on the basis of writer's authentic voice and creative approach to storytelling. Three winners receive \$2,000 along with prizes designed by Egg Pictures, Redeemable Features and the Shooting Gallery to develop and promote the winners' work. Deadlines and entry fees: Oct. 1 (\$35), Nov. 1 (\$45). For more info, contact: CineStory, (312) 322-9060.

CONFERENCES • WORKSHOPS

"EXPLORATION IN MEMORY AND MODERNITY" focuses on independent media production and criticism of the New York State and Northeast regions. Held Oct. 4-5 at Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY. \$25 registration fee. Contact: Michelle Materre, International Film Seminar, 462 Broadway, Suite 510, New York, NY 10013; (212) 925-3191; fax: 925-3482; ifsnyc@aol.com

F.O.C.U.S. INSTITUTE OF FILM requests screenings for First Annual Workshop Series held in January 1998. Deadline November 30. Looking for original, compelling, human stories that promote positive values & social responsibility. For info call: (310) 472-1481; www.focusinstituteoffilm.com

IFFCON '98: INTERNATIONAL FILM FINANCING CONFERENCE, three-day intensive event in San Francisco from Jan. 9-11, links independent filmmakers searching for financing w/ international financiers, buyers & co-producers. Including roundtables, private meetings & receptions. Limited to 60 participants, chosen through a selection process. Deadline: Oct. 24. For info & applications, call (415) 281-9777; www.iffcon.com

MEDIA & DEMOCRACY CONGRESS II Join hundreds of progressive, independent and alternative medi makers, journalists and activists October 16-19 at Cooper Union and NYU (Greenwich Village, NYC). Fundraising training, workshops and discussions include: The Impact of the Digital Revolution, Challenging the Public Broadcasting Paradigm, Finding & Building a True American Audience, and New Forms of Distribution. Advance registration strongly advised. For more info & brochure: Viveca Greene, (415) 284-1420; congress@igc.org; www.me-diademocracy.org

THIRD WORLD NEWSREEL PRODUCTION WORKSHOP is an 8-month "hands-on" program that provides practical skills & resources for emerging film & video makers, emphasizing the training & support of people of color who have limited resources & access to mainstream educational institutions & traditional training programs. Instructors & guest speakers are experienced professionals currently working in film & video. Participants must be able to attend regular class mtgs. as well as meet out-of-class demands of the filmmaking process. Prior film, video or related experience strongly recommended but not required. Selection is highly competitive and limited to 8 participants. Initial written app. is required and 2nd round of apps. are selected for interviews. Workshop begins Jan. 15, 1998. Cost: \$475. Deadline: Oct. 31. For application, send SASE to: Third World Newsreel, Production Workshop, 335 W. 38th St. 5th floor, New York, NY 10018; (212) 947-9277 ext. 301; www.twn.org

FILMS • TAPES WANTED

BIG SHORT FILMS now accepting short films, any genre, for worldwide distribution. Details at www.big-filmshorts.com/ or for more info: (888) 464-4211.

CINEMATOGRAFIA PRODUCTIONS is accepting shorts and works-in-progress for upcoming edition of Clips, an industry showcase, which will focus

on works created using new media. November 1 submission deadline. Contact: (212) 971-5846; lou@microedge.com

CINEWOMEN SCREENING SERIES is accepting submissions of features and shorts by female filmmakers through Oct 1st. Screening will take place Nov 4-5 at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in LA. Send VHS preview of Super 8, 16mm, and 35mm films only. For info call (310) 665-2721.

DUTV-CABLE 54, a progressive, nonprofit access channel in Philadelphia, seeks works by independent producers. All genres & lengths considered. No payment. Will return tapes. VHS, S-VHS, & 3/4" accepted. Contact: George McCollough or Maria Elena, DUTV-Cable 54, Drexel University, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927; dutv@post.drexel.edu; www.duvn.ocs.drexel.edu/~dutr

EXPRESSO FILM FESTIVAL seeks SVHS/VHS tapes for on-going weekly short film fest. Pref. new student & ind films on any subject, 15 min. or less in length. Will be seen by key industry people in Hollywood. Send tape w/ one paragraph description: EFF, 1525 Aviation Blvd. #248, R.B., CA 90278.

IND. FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE a weekly TV series & live monthly screening, looking for student & ind. films/video to give artists exposure. Submit on 1/2" or 3/4" video w/ paragraph about artist and work. Send to: IFVS, 6755 Yucca St. #8, Hollywood, CA 90028, Attn: Jerry Salata; jsalata@freemark.com

LOVEBYTE DIGITAL ARTS FESTIVAL invites proposals for multimedia art installations to form a ground breaking exhibition of public art in Sheffield city centre. HyperTribes invites artists to consider modern day tribes and territories. Deadline is Aug. 22; www.lovebyte.org.uk

MANY (Collective of Musicians & Artists in New York): call for interdisciplinary work (new music, exp film, dance, video, art performance, etc.) for first of four events in NYC. Music cat open to non-NYC residents. First entry \$15, additional \$10 each. Send SASE: MANY, c/o James Marentic, 235 E. 5th St. #5, New York, NY 10003; e-mail manti@earthlink.net

MUSIC AND COLLEGE VIDEOS WANTED: The producers of a new nationally broadcast college-oriented show seek music videos and performance clips of indie bands. Select entries will be broadcast nationally and bands may be invited to perform live for a studio audience. Also seeking submissions relevant to college life and/or student-produced. Contact: Danny Ameri, Burly Bear Network, 201 Summer Street, Stamford, CT 06901; (203) 351-1177.

ERRATA

The Aug/Sep *Independent* listed incomplete information regarding the CineStory Screenwriting Awards & Script Sessions conference. The Screenwriting Awards deadlines are Oct. 1 (\$35 fee) & Nov. 1 (\$45); the conference dates are March 27-29, 1998 and registration fees range from \$150-\$325. For more info call (312) 322-9060.

MYRIAD ARTS FESTIVAL accepting entries for its multimedia showcase of short films and one-act plays. Films to be no longer than 30 min. Send submissions in 1/2" VHS format. No entry fee. For submission info, call (212) 431-4930 or email jjb6772@is.nyu.edu

NATIONAL VIDEO RESOURCES is seeking submissions of independently produced films & videos on the topics of race & racism for a video-based resource project entitled "Viewing Race." Shorts, features, narrative, experimental, and doc's will be accepted. Send 1-pg. synopsis w/ name, address, telephone number & format description of work for consideration. Cannot accept videotapes. Contact: John Keene, National Video Resources, 73 Spring St., Suite 606, New York, NY 10012; (212) 274-8080; fax: 274-8081; NVRInfo@nvr.org

NEW DAY FILMS: the premiere distribution cooperative for social issue media, seeks energetic independent film and video makers with challenging social issue documentaries for distribution to nontheatrical markets. Now accepting applications for new membership. Contact: New Day Films 22D Hollywood Ave., Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423; (914) 485-8489; www.newday.com

NEW YORK FILM BUFFS, a film society established to promote independent films, seeking 16mm and 35mm features, shorts & animation for ongoing opinion-maker screenings during the fall & winter seasons. Send submission on VHS tape w/ SASE to: New York Film Buffs, 318 W. 15th St., New York, NY 10011, (212)807-0126.

PINK PONY seeks video submissions for regular screenings at Lower East Side alternative venue. VHS accepted. Send directly with SASE to: Jane Gang, Pink Pony, 176 Ludlow Street, NY NY 10002; (212) 254-5273.

SOUTHERN CIRCUIT tours independent film & videomakers throughout the Southeast. Artists receive air travel within the US to & from home city, advance check of \$100 per diem during tour to cover expenses & an honorarium of \$275 per screening. To be considered for the 1998-99 Southern Circuit, submit VHS, Beta or 16mm film (appr. 1 hr. in length, can be cued for a 30 min. section for judging purposes), application, printed promo materials and resume. Works in progress not accepted. Application fee is \$20. Deadline: January 15. For add'l info & application, contact Felicia Smith, South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais St., Columbia, SC 29201; (803) 734-8689; fax: (803) 734-8526; fsmith@scsn.net

SUDDEN VIDEO call for entries. Independent curators seeking "short works that unpack the cultural, political, and formal dimensions of witnessing the trauma of collective historical dimensions." Looking for experimental works. Works should be under 10 min. long & available on videotape for exhibition/distribution. Send submissions on VHS and SASE to: Gort/Raad, 17 Edward Ave., Southampton, MA 01073.

THE GRAND ILLUSION Movie Theatre in Seattle seeks short films (16mm or 35mm) to play before selected feature films. Possible stipend! Please send a tape or letter of interest to: Northwest Film



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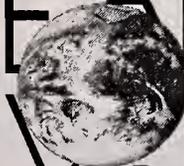
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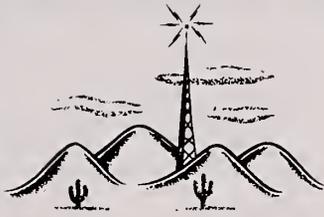
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UNQUOTE TV, 1/2 hr nonprofit program dedicated to exposing new, innovative film & video artists, seeks indie doc, narrative, experimental, performance works under 28 min. Seen on over 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: Unquote TV, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

VIDEOSPACE BOSTON seeks creative videos for fall & spring programming. Any genre and length. Nonprofit/no payment. Send VHS, Hi-8, or 3/4" with description, name, phone & SASE to: Videospace, General Submissions, 9 Myrtle St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

PUBLICATIONS

GUIDE TO TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR FILMS SHOT IN NY STATE is available for producers who want clear instructions on how to claim the numerous tax exemptions available in NY state for film, television & commercial production. Put together by the Empire State Development Corp., the 51-page reference guide can be obtained by contacting NY State Governor's Office or the Tax Office. NY State Governor's Office for Motion Picture and Television Development, 633 3rd Ave., 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10017-6706; (212) 803-2330; fax: 803-2369; www.empire.state.ny.us/mptv.htm.

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NATIONAL MEDIA EDUCATION DIRECTORY for 1997 avail. from the National Alliance for Media Arts & Culture (NAMAC). Over 220 full-page entries for individual & organizational media educators nationwide. Join NAMAC to receive free Directory, or order from Center for Media Literacy for \$19.95. Contact: (415) 431-1391; e-mail: namac@igc.apc.org.

RESOURCES • FUNDS

DISTRIBUTION GRANTS FOR NY ARTISTS
The New York State Council on the Arts is accepting entries through Oct. 15th for grants of up to \$5000 to cover distribution-related expenses for audio/radio, film, video, computer, & installation work completed since January 1996. Decisions announced January 1998. Contact the Council at (212) 387-7057 for application.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER provides grants and presentation funds to electronic media/film artists & organizations. The program provides partial assistance; maximum amount varies. Presentations must be open to the public; limited-enrollment workshops and publicly supported educational institutions ineligible. Applications reviewed monthly. Contact: Program Director, Experimental Television Center, 109 Lower Fairfield Rd., Newark Valley, NY 13811; (607) 687-4341.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE HUMANITIES is accepting applications for pre-production funds of up to \$10,000. Deadline: Dec. 15, 1997. For further info or to obtain an application, contact: National Council of the Humanities, 198 Broadway, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10038; (212) 233-1131; fax: (212) 233-4607; hum@echonyc.com

The Foundation for Independent Video and Film, the educational affiliate of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, supports a variety of programs and services for the independent media community, including publication of *The Independent*, workshops, and an information clearinghouse. None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, Center for Arts Criticism, Heathcote Art Foundation, Albert A. List Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, and Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:

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BY LESLIE A. FIELDS

AIVF Happenings



Welcome to Q&A, the new section of "AIVF Happenings" where we answer some of the most unusual, and not so unusual, questions. If you have a question you would like us to consider for this section, email Johnny McNair at info@aivf.org. Make sure you write "Q&A" in the subject heading.

How can I break into the film business, make money, and be famous like Quentin Tarantino?

Being related to or knowing someone in the business is a huge plus, otherwise you're stuck in the struggle-to-make-it boat, where you'll have to beg someone to listen to your dream and hope they will throw you a few bucks. My suggestion: *learn the craft*, either through a formal school curriculum, workshops at your local media center, on-the-job work experience, or by producing/directing your own short film or video. Knowing what you're doing will take you much further and allow your career to last longer than just knowing someone in the biz.

—Johnny McNair, Information Services Coordinator



Member News Broadcast

TRADE DISCOUNT UPDATES

Edgewood Motion Picture & Video

162 North Main St., Rutland, VT 05701; (802) 773-0510; pbeckw1968@aol.com. Contact: David Giancola
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ATTENTION AIVF MEMBERS

Discounts are available to AIVF members wherever you see this sticker:



For a complete listing of AIVF Trade Discounts available to AIVF members *only*, visit the AIVF website [www.aivf.org] or contact the membership office: (212) 807-1400 x 222. If you would like to provide a trade discount, contact Leslie Fields at ext. 223.

MEET & GREETS

These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. *Free; open to AIVF members only.* Limited to 20 participants. RSVP required: (212) 807-1400 x 301. Please leave name and phone number, and specify event.

PBS's DONALD THOMS

Vice President, Program Management

Learn more about PBS programming and whether or not your project or idea would be of interest. Donald Thoms is responsible for managing the procedures involved in packaging acquired programs for PBS's national program schedule. He works closely with stations, executive staff, and NPS directors to define programming needs for the national schedule and helps to develop broadcast and promotional strategies for high profile programs. He is also involved in evaluating on-going and unsolicited programs and proposals to PBS, and building new bridges with the minority and independent producing communities.

Tuesday, October 14, 6:30 pm

HBO's NANCY ABRAHAM, Director & JACQUELINE GLOVER, Manager

HBO's Documentary Programming division has funded and shown some of the most daring and provocative documentaries including *The Dying Rooms*, *Fetishes*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Four Little Girls*. Meet Nancy Abraham, Director, and Jacqueline Glover, Manager of HBO's documentary programming, department, who oversee the submissions, development, and production of HBO's documentary programming including the award winning series *America Undercover*, and *Cinemax Reel Life*.
Tuesday, November 18, 6:30 pm

OPEN DISCUSSION: TELEVISION CONTRACTS

Spend an evening with Robert I. Freedman who will discuss television contracts and what's fair and negotiable. Robert I. Freedman is a partner at Leavy Rosensweig & Hyman and author of the television volume of Entertainment Industry Contracts. He is a former general counsel of Thirteen/WNET and is counsel to AIVF. Free to AIVF Members (please bring AIVF card); all others \$5.00.

When: Thursday, October 9, 6:30 pm,
Where: AIVF Office 304 Hudson Street, 6th Floor.

On Location



MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our copy deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wed. of each month, 6:30 p.m.
Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.
Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Atlanta, GA

When: 2nd Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.
Where: Manuel's Tavern (North & Highland)
Contact: Genevieve McGillicuddy, IMAGE (402) 352-4225

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.
Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street
Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

Call for dates and locations.

Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time
Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.
Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Chicago, IL

When: 4th Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.
Where: The Star Bar, 2934 N. Sheffield
Contact: Oscar Cervera, (773) 472-1000

Cleveland, OH

Call for date and location.
Contact: Annetta Marion, (216) 781-1755

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Call for locations.
Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver/Boulder, CO

When: Call for dates
Where: Kakes Studio, 2115 Pearl St.
Contact: Diane Markow, (303) 449-7125 or Jon Stout (303) 442-8445.

Houston, TX:

When: Last Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Call for locations.
Contact: Houston Film Commission Hotline. (713) 227-1407

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.
Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

New Brunswick, NJ

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Contact: Allen Chou (908) 756-9845

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Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.
Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 771-7675

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

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Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW
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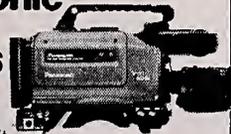
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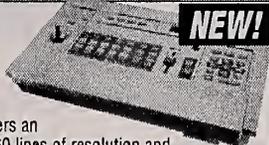
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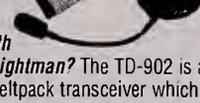
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JULIA REICHERT



COVER (clockwise from top): Neil LaBute's *In the Company of Men*; Prized Pieces's awards night; Richard Myers's *Jungle Girl*; Jim Duesing's *Law of Averages* & Elizabeth Barrett on location. Courtesy Sony Pictures Classics, NBPC & filmmakers; background photo: Patricia Thomson



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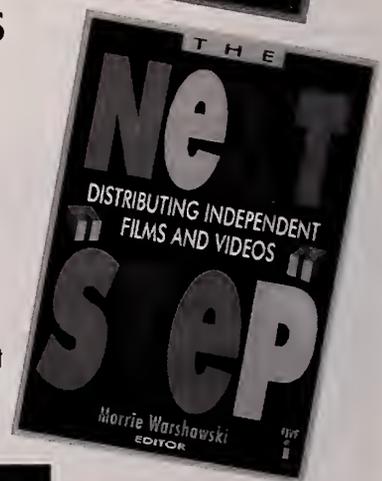
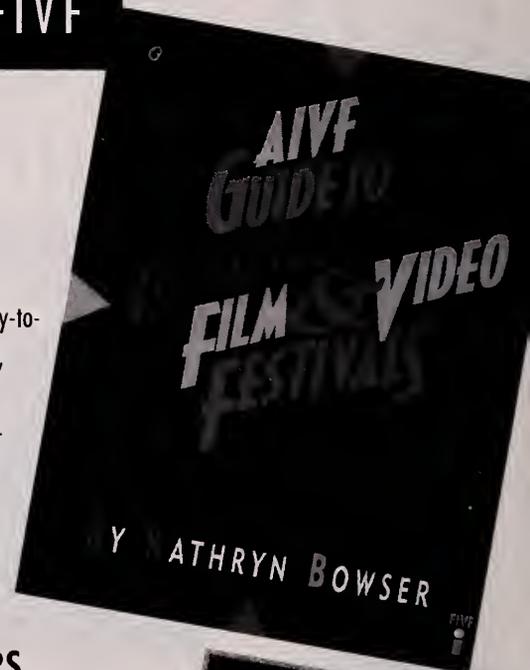
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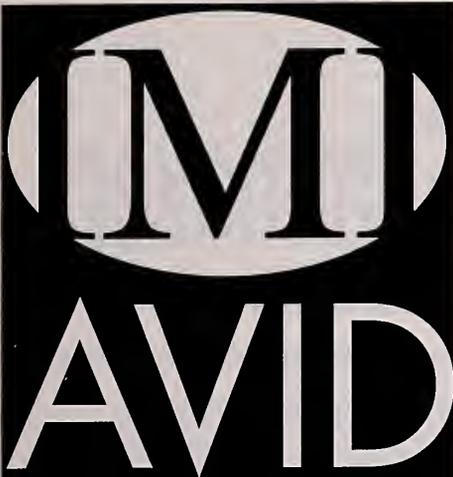
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Columbia TriStar Opens Door to Low-Budget Features

NEED A LITTLE HELP GETTING YOUR FIRST OR second feature off the ground? SearchParty to the rescue.

Columbia-TriStar Home Video (CTHV) and the brawn behind such films as indie phenomenon *sex, lies, and videotape* and blockbuster *Home Alone* are looking to produce two quality low-budget features annually, on an ongoing basis. Touted as a mentor program for fledgling filmmakers, SearchParty is unique in that it focuses on small projects only and seeks to break down the conventional development process by scouting new material in an unusual way.

The submission process is relatively hassle free, say SearchParty reps. Writers and/or directors with unproduced, unoptioned scripts are called upon to submit a cover "pitch" letter and a synopsis of their project as well as some professional background information. SearchParty will then review the submissions and invite scripts from the best pitches.

"This is not a competition," insists SearchParty's Larry Estes, a former CTHV executive who produced Steven Soderbergh's 1989 *sex, lies and videotape*. "It's an organized effort that will hopefully jump-start some careers."

"We're looking for new blood," agrees Scott Rosenfelt, another SearchParty principal who produced both *Home Alone* and *Mystic Pizza*. He also reports the program hopes to avoid the notoriously mired reading-and-notes period endemic to studio filmmaking. "This is not a development program," he says. "We pick 'em and



Scott Rosenfelt (l) with SearchParty cohorts Larry Estes and David Skinner (r). Photo: Courtesy ShadowCatcher Entertainment

make 'em. The budgets will range between \$1 million and \$2 million, so it's hard to get hurt."

According to the SearchParty Web site [www.searchpartyfilm.com], the program aims to produce "small, intelligent, original and yes, even relatively commercial fiction feature film[s] that [are] intended for the theatrical market first, then a healthy long life in home video and television." The script should be devoid of any elements that'll send the budget through the roof. For instance, it should not be "just an excuse to fire thousands of rounds of ammunition and burn and blow up cars and sets." Citing examples such as recent low-budget indie hit *Sling Blade*, Estes

notes the ideal project is a compelling story that merits SearchParty attention. "We should agree



it's good material and deserves the common effort of people who could be making more money doing other films. We're shooting for two a year," he says, "but I'd like to make three or four—if they're out there."

The program has been taking applications since August and plans to make the first round of cuts this fall. The selection committee comprises Estes, Rosenfelt and his partner David Skinner of Seattle-based production company ShadowCatcher, CTHV's Peter Schlessel and Clint Culpepper, as well as a volunteer panel of filmmakers. Estes, who has some 60 low-budget features under his belt, including *One False Move*, *Gas Food Lodging*,

"This is not a competition," insists SearchParty's Larry Estes, a former CTHV executive who produced Steven Soderbergh's 1989 *sex, lies and videotape*. "It's an organized effort that will hopefully jump-start some careers."

and *Passion Fish*, says the volunteer readers are likely to be indie filmmakers he's worked with before. And the chosen projects will profit from those connections. "We intend to call in favors to bring in better than average crews and set up neophytes in a supportive environment that's aimed toward the making of their film rather than some version of their film," he says.

Estes will serve as producer on the SearchParty films; Rosenfelt and Skinner will executive produce.

SearchParty's connection to CTHV is personal and professional. The program is dedicated to the memory of Robert Blattner, the first President of RCA-Columbia Pictures Home Video, who died in a plane crash at age 40. Blattner was a mentor to Estes during his tenure at the studio, thus making the CTHV link to SearchParty a natural one. CTHV's Schlessel and Culpepper are involved as distributors/financiers. They have a mandate to put product in the CTHV pipeline, and usually broker negative pick-ups or finance small projects on a piecemeal basis. "Clint and I don't have to time to go out and find these projects," says Schlessel, who holds down the full time position of Senior Vice President of Acquisitions, Production, and Business Affairs at CTHV. "There are so many scripts out there that don't get made. It would be incredible if [SearchParty] could bring me the next One False Move."

CTHV will hold worldwide rights, but a SearchParty picture won't necessarily be distributed by one of Sony's theatrical outlets such as Columbia, TriStar, or Sony Pictures Classics.

What's the catch? None, say the SearchParty principals. But you have to follow the rules. The program accepts writer-director submissions only—no producers looking for investment coin. Applicants must not have directed more than one completed feature film and own the rights to the material submitted. And, of course, the film's budget requirements should fall in the \$1 million ballpark.

Some exceptions may be made, however, given the right project. "We're keeping parameters loose right now until we see what works," says Rosenfelt.

For more information, contact: SearchParty, c/o ShadowCatcher Entertainment, 400 East Pine Street, Suite 315, Seattle, WA 98122.

Sharon Swart is the International Editor for Special Issues at The Hollywood Reporter.

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The Sundance Imprimatur: Coming to a Theater Near You

GC COMPANIES, INC., PARENT COMPANY OF THE seventh largest theater chain in the country, General Cinemas, unveiled plans on August 20 for a national circuit of theaters bearing the name Sundance Cinemas. A joint venture with Sundance founder Robert Redford, Sundance Cinemas announced a major effort to create "a significant number" of upscale venues for American independent features, as well as foreign, documentary, and avant-garde films in the near future.

The Sundance Institute, a non-profit organization that is responsible for the Sundance Film Festival, is not directly involved in the project. The cinemas are more closely related to the Sundance Channel, Redford's commercial venture for bringing independent films to cable TV audiences. The Sundance Channel, which is owned by Showtime, debuted in February of 1996 and currently reaches more than three million subscribers. The channel prides itself on being a premiere showcase for independent features, and it's likely that there will be a certain amount of crossover between the cable channel and the cinemas. The cinemas might also reach areas not serviced by the Sundance Channel, including the New York area, where the Independent Film Channel recently won the bid for a Time Warner cable contract.

"Sundance Cinemas is the logical extension of our efforts in recent years to expand the opportunities for independent filmmakers to reach the broadest possible audience," says Redford's press release. "I also believe that filmgoers are starved for new ideas, voices and

Sundance Cinemas does not want to be seen as just another attempt to cash in on the vitality of independent film.

"[Redford] is very sensitive to that issue," says a spokesman for Sundance Cinemas. "This is all about expanding the pie, not competing for what's already out there."

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visions. By joining General Cinemas, we hope to create a unique circuit that will bring audiences across the country together with the original work of filmmakers."

Organizers have yet to announce exactly when and where theaters will be opening, but have said they plan on targeting urban, suburban, and college locations where the need for independent venues is either not being addressed at all, or is being done so inadequately. A report in the cable trade publication *Multichannel News* cited an unconfirmed agreement between Redford and General Cinemas for 35 new venues across the country.

Sundance Cinemas does not want to be seen as just another attempt to cash in on the vitality of independent film. "[Redford] is very sensitive to that issue," says a spokesman for Sundance Cinemas, who preferred not to be named. "This is all about expanding the pie, not competing for what's already out there. There is plenty of room for Sundance to go in and fill a void where [independent] filmmakers can't show their work, and audiences can't see the films. I think there are only a handful of cities where the needs of independent cinema are already being met."

Jeffrey Jacobs, a booker for independent theaters including The Paris in New York and Philadelphia's Roxy, says he welcomes Sundance Cinemas, and sees it as no threat to existing arthouses.

"Anything which broadens exhibit potential for American independent and quality international cinema can only help the marketplace," he says. "I think the benefits for filmmakers and audiences will be overwhelmingly positive."

Jacobs also expects that Sundance Cinemas will challenge independent theater owners to upgrade the quality of their theaters in order to accommodate the latest independent fare.

There is no word yet about the planned management of Sundance Cinemas, but the spokesman says theaters will remain true to serious independent works. "This is definitely not a case of just licensing the 'Sundance' name to General Cinemas. Redford is as much involved in this project as in the other Sundance projects," the Sundance rep says.

Redford is currently working on set in Montana, but is expected to make a full announcement on the details of Sundance Cinema by the end of the year.

Richard Baimbridge lives in New York and writes for Paper, Vibe, and Time Out New York.



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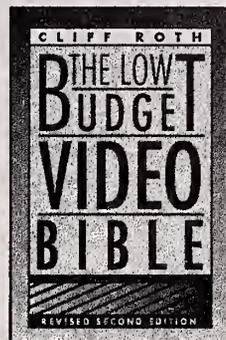
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NEW TALENT IN NEW MEDIA

French Conference Carves out Corner for Student Projects

BY KRIS MALDEN

ALL THE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF A TYPICAL trade show are here: industrial carpet, hordes of frazzled business people scanning one another's name tags, and well-dressed salespeople hawking high-tech wares in their temporary stalls. A closer examination, however, reveals that this is not your typical business convention. For one, everyone seems to be smoking cigarettes with wild abandon and without concern for the carpet underfoot. More importantly, the MILIA market in Cannes, France, may be the only trade show with a section set aside for students—the New Talent Pavilion, which showcases the innovations of some 30 university students from around the world.

Now in its fourth year, MILIA (the French acronym for International Publishing and New Media Market) is held each February on the French Riviera. Begun primarily as an exhibition and meeting place for illustrated book publishers, the conference has evolved quickly to focus on digital content, ranging from CD-ROM projects to the development of on-line media. Each year the festival organizes a juried competition of work submitted from university students around the world, and representatives of the selected projects are invited to demo their projects at the New Talent Pavilion.

The avowed objective of the pavilion is the exhibition of new work that is likely to interest professionals attending MILIA, and while this is most often the case, the jury and festival organizers reserve the right to interpret the concept of "marketability" liberally. One of this year's inclusions, for example, is *Sex, Lies, and Binary Logic*, an immersive



installation that simulates a lie detector test by setting the user face-to-face with a darkened computer screen that asks increasingly personal and impertinent questions. But this project is the exception. Most of the participants are here to demo CD-ROM-based and—to a lesser degree—on-line projects, and all are exploring ways to tell interactive stories. Two of this year's most notable entries, both using video-based narratives as a point of departure, are

HyperCafe, created by Nitin Sawhney and David Balcom at the Georgia Institute of Technology, and *Rash*, by Mary Phillipuk and Felipe Lara of the Pratt Institute.

HyperCafe is an experimental hypermedia system application that allows the user to follow video-based conversations in a hypertextual manner. Upon entering the café space, you begin eavesdropping on

bits of conversations. As one character discusses car crashes, another video clip begins to emerge, and both play simultaneously. In this new video window, a woman is also talking about car crashes but in a completely different context. Moving your mouse over her video image makes her voice louder, clearer, more

audible. If you click on her image, you begin to follow her story thread, and the first video recedes. If you don't click, her image begins to fade as it becomes less relevant to the primary story—it is an opportunity missed. As in the real-world experience on which the *HyperCafe* metaphor is based, you cannot expect to absorb everything. You have to make choices about which actions to watch, which noises to ignore, which words to heed.

Citing inspirations from like-minded auteurs in film (Robert Altman, Jean-Luc Godard, Alfred Hitchcock) and hypertext fiction and theory (Stuart Moulthrop, Michael Joyce, and Jay Bolter), Nitin Sawhney and David Balcom set off to explore the vast terrain of rework-

Most of the participants are here to demo CD-ROM-based and to a lesser degree on-line projects, and all are exploring ways to tell interactive stories.

Narrative Sequences



A scene from *HyperCafe*.

ing cinematic conventions within a nonlinear structure. What they found was that there weren't any tools available for such a project, so after several prototypes, they created a hyper-video engine in Lingo (the language used to program Macromedia's Director, a popular multimedia authoring tool) that would allow other film and video artists to retell their stories in an unconventional way.

"With hypervideo, the film isn't one work anymore; it's many, [with] the number of outcomes and textures available in the film open to any number of readers and readings. Of course not every film would stand up to such radical re-engineering of its structure, but some would do pretty well—better than you'd think," says Balcom. The team has since made their hyper-video engine available on the Web [www.lcc.gatech.edu/gallery/HyperCafe].

Central to *HyperCafe* is the idea that the viewer can participate in the narrative's unfolding. "The space of the screen can be explored, and the viewer can do something, rather than just sit and watch. Reader becomes writer, stitching narrative strands together by choices he or she makes," Balcom explains. It is less the end result than the user's navigation of the bank of interconnected video vignettes that gives shape to the experience.

Certainly, the degree of user participation is one of the most fundamental issues with which multimedia artists struggle in determining how best to tell their stories. In creating *Rash*, Mary



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Phillipuk and Felipe Lara grappled with these very issues but made markedly different choices about the development of their story about a frivolous fashion model who develops an obsession with a minor skin irritation.

Although the user of *Rash* does not control the final outcome of the story, he or she does determine the sequence of events and can choose which character's point of view to follow. As individual scenes unfold, they are framed by additional media—text, images, quirky sounds, and brightly colored animated games—that add layers of meaning, some obvious, some arbitrary. These audiovisual media alternately supplement, contradict, or distract from the central storyline.

"We wanted to make an interactive story, but based on what we had seen in other projects, we were not interested in creating the

story, we decided that we wanted a plot that was superficial and absurd. As in life, we allowed our characters' impressions to be colored by a host of conflicting stereotypes, and most of the dialogues in the story show characters absorbed in their own silly or melodramatic thoughts rather than listening to one another. We were also trying to suggest that our perceptions and representations are always partial and many times absurd." It is both the humor and the novelty with which it's delivered that make *Rash*,

"The space of the screen can be explored, and the viewer can do something, rather than just sit and watch. Reader becomes writer, stitching narrative strands together by choices he or she makes," David Balcom explains.

like many of the other New Talent projects, so engaging and intelligent.

The New Talent Pavilion is an atypical space, especially within the context of a trade show like MILIA. The projects on this side of the floor don't always work flawlessly, and even when they do, they don't always make perfect sense.



On the conference floor at MILIA

While the Web has made possible myriad self-published endeavors, the outlet for other forms of new media is not so self-evident—especially on this side of the Atlantic, where most of the hype revolves around the on-line industry. Europeans involved with new media, meanwhile, seem

much more committed to exploring the potential of the CD-ROM. Whether you call it progressive, cautious, or backward, this perspective on the industry's development is partially responsible for the existence of the New Talent Pavilion. The selection process is competitive—only 27 out of more than 140 submissions were chosen to participate—but in an industry whose direction is often determined by the daily advances of technology mega-corporations, it's promising that there is a forum for independent artists and authors and their innovations, at least for the time being.

illusion that the user can effect an outcome that is not predetermined. We wanted to use multimedia to allow different experiences of a given moment in a story," explains Phillipuk. The user can choose, for example, to watch the interaction between the fashion model and her lecherous doctor from either character's point of view and be privy to the unvoiced assumptions each makes of the other.

In deciding to explore the multiple associations possible between the story's characters and the user, Phillipuk and Lara opted for a simple plot, one that would effectively offset the complexity of narrative interactions. "When we considered the great potential for complexity in any moment of even the simplest

much more committed to exploring the potential of the CD-ROM. Whether you call it progressive, cautious, or backward, this perspective on the industry's development is partially responsible for the existence of the New Talent Pavilion. The selection process is competitive—only 27 out of more than 140 submissions were chosen to participate—but in an industry whose direction is often determined by the daily advances of technology mega-corporations, it's promising that there is a forum for independent artists and authors and their innovations, at least for the time being.

Kris Malden is a freelance writer and multimedia consultant working for MSNBC.

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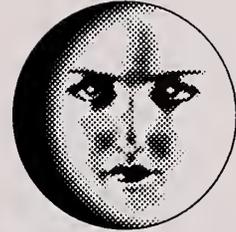
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S P O T L I G H T O N T H E

BY STEVEN BOGNAR

GEOGRAPHY TEMPER, TESTS, AND INSULATES THE MIDWESTERN INDEPENDENT. The insulation keeps us warm, but

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lonely. The thing about living in a region like the Ohio River Valley is just how amorphous, and maybe meaningless, such geographic distinctions can be. The Ohio is a fine river, but it runs north, south, east, and west. Hardly works as a guiding reference point.

Road maps and tape decks make for good companions out here. Film and video whirl to life in every city and many towns between Pittsburgh and Paducah. But the mile markers keep us from feeling fully connected to each other. We hit the road, get together, work on each other's stuff, watch a rough cut, talk over a beer. But even then, the community thing, the sense of being part of something, gets away too easily.

You'd think it would occur in the planned moments, at conferences or panel discussions. But scraps of community happen after most everyone has left, when you and few others are standing in an empty auditorium, or out on a sidewalk on an early May night. It's in those moments, when the last of us are about to get in our cars and go away, that we might realize our part in something.

You can take solace in knowing that your friends are somewhere, reading student essays or pounding galvanized nails, looking for a missing Maffer clamp or crying over a crashed hard drive. But it's not the same as being there.

We work in pockets, enclaves of community separated by long miles of agriculture. There's not much distraction, plenty of time to do work.

Does geography form a unique regional voice? In a time of e-mail, I doubt it. Genre, identity, and taste are the new geography—just look around. Austin Allen weaves new forms of documentary in Cleveland. Susan Halpern constructs rich, brief personal tapes in Columbus. Mimi Pickering honors the activist media tradition in Whitesburg. Jeff Wray crafts layered narratives in Athens. Jim Klein saves another film from its own lack of structure in a cutting room just down the road from here.

We live close to the ground. We work on each other's films, taking turns at bat. We dislike pretensions. We talk about moving, and frequently do. New kids come up, and soon you're not one of the young ones anymore. In my state, we've got an amazing arts council. They do more than anyone to fight for us, and take less credit than they should.

We use roadside corn and radio signals to mark our travel. But geography marks narrative as well. We come and we go, and so chapters begin and end. The miles between us out here don't let us forget it.

Steven Bognar started shooting Super 8 at age 16 and continues now at 34. His first feature, Personal Belongings, debuted at the Sundance Film Festival, played at South by Southwest, the San Francisco International Film Festival, and the Gen Art Film Festival, and it won the Audience Award at the Atlanta Film and Video Festival. The film aired on P.O.V.

the Midwest

OHIO RIVER VALLEY

BY JULIA REICHERT

I HAVE TO ADMIT, MY PERSPECTIVE ON THIS REGION IS AN OLD FART'S VIEW. When I sit back and try to figure out

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what makes this region different, I take a long view.

Why "different"? We're decentralized. In fact, we sprawl—Paducah to Pittsburgh, Cleveland to Whitesburg. A long day's drive across. I picture the interstates that link us, the city streets, small town blocks, and rural roads we live on. There's nothing glamorous between Paducah and Pittsburgh. We don't have charming accents or longhorns or mountains or rain forests. No one thinks of coming here for vacation. We're The Middle.

I have buddies who make horror films, left-wing documentaries, sweet fiction stories, gonzo animation, experimental video, corporate industrials. We're too few not to be accepting of all.

What makes the Midwest tick? Dynamic film festivals, some of the country's best indie makers, some of the best film schools, exhibition venues par excellence, and, yes, communities of makers—pockets of furious, purposeful, significant, creative activity, places where the collective process of film/videomaking is being sustained. The latter, to me, is a near miracle.

When I cast my mind around the region, a handful of places stand out as truly significant. All are connected with individuals. Years ago each began building toward some kind of vision—one that embraced building community, that was clear about not being in a filmmaker-saturated mecca (and proud of it), that was based on being around regular people. It was at heart dedicated to the tricky idea of independent filmmaking within the United States. The vision had to include how to bring in the younger ones, how to survive financially, how to incorporate the many styles and desires of makers.

In my old fart's eye, key individuals come into focus. All are now within sight of 50 years old. All have been at it for decades. There's Tony Buba and Brady Lewis in Pittsburgh, who make terrific films themselves and who have been the lifeblood of Pittsburgh Filmmakers. There's Ruth Bradley in Athens, matron supreme of the Athens Film Festival and the Department of Film there at Ohio University. There's Austin Allen in Cleveland, center-force for African American makers. There's John Ewing in Cleveland, master of ferreting out rare gems for exhibition at the Cleveland Cinematheque. There's our oldest and best model, Appalshop, brain child of Bill Richardson, sustained by the likes of Mimi Pickering, Elizabeth Barrett, Dee Davis, and Anne Lewis Johnson. There's myself and Jim Klein, the old timers of an incredibly vibrant young and mid-career community of filmmakers and helmers of the Wright State University Film Production Program. There's Mike Covell, way over there in Carbondale, a maker and mentor to dozens of youth via the Big Muddy Film Fest and University of Southern Illinois Film Program. All of us are makers who have put a big part of our life's energy into building institutions that will last. All of us are friends.

Remaining independent makers in America is a challenging proposition. Where to compromise, when to hold the line, which battles to fight, how to survive psychically and financially are constant questions. We in The Middle offer our models to the edges. Read on.

Julia Reichert has been an independent filmmaker since 1970. She has made Growing Up Female, Union Maids and Seeing Red. Emma & Elvis was her solo effort. She is co-founder of New Day Films and a board member of OVRMAC.

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4. Cleveland Filmmakers

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5. Pittsburgh Filmmakers

See "Roadside Attractions," page 18.

6. University of Toledo film/video program.

Progressive, experimental film/video education. Faculty include Elsbeth Kydd and Bob Arnold.

7. Wexner Center for the Arts

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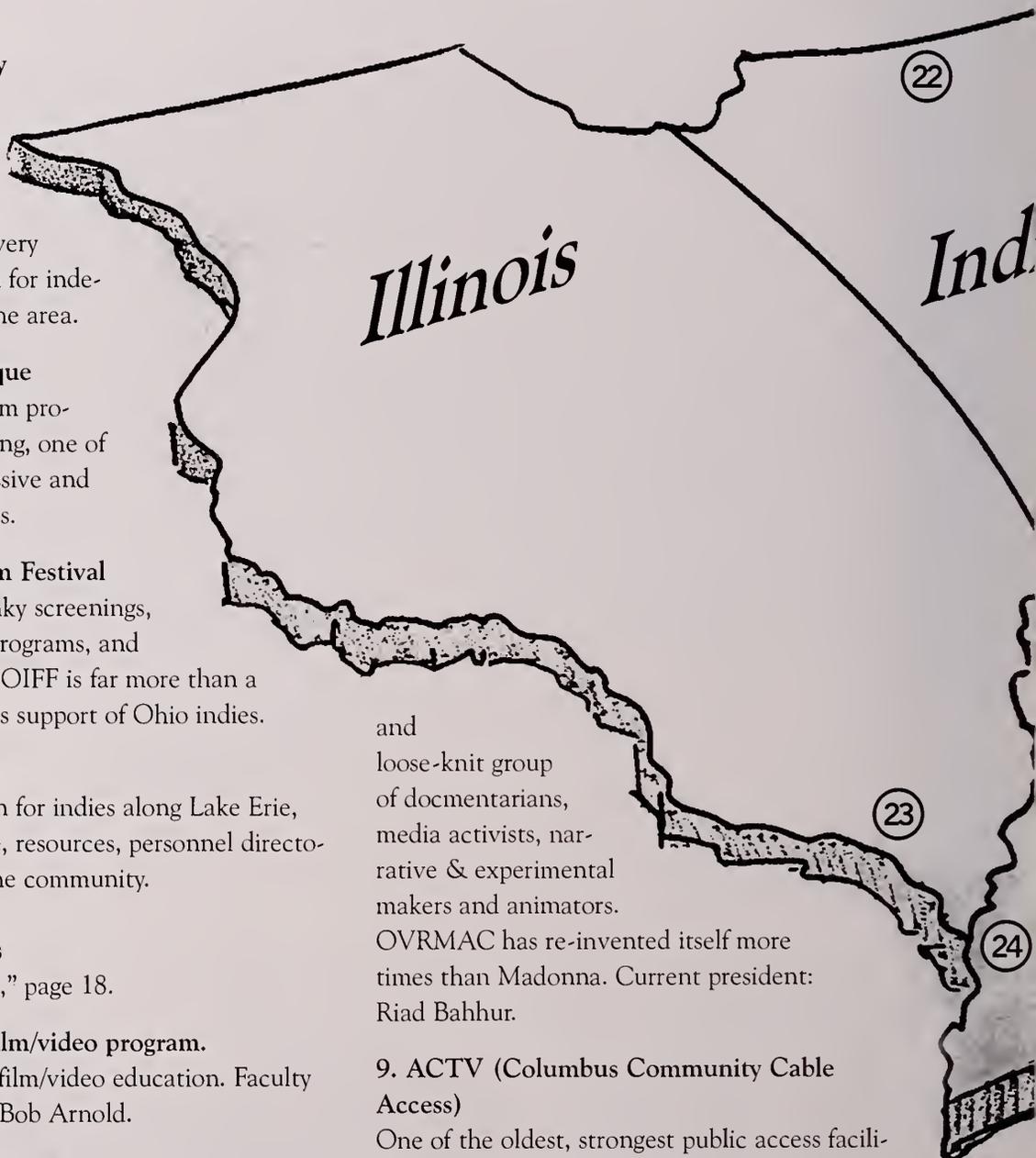
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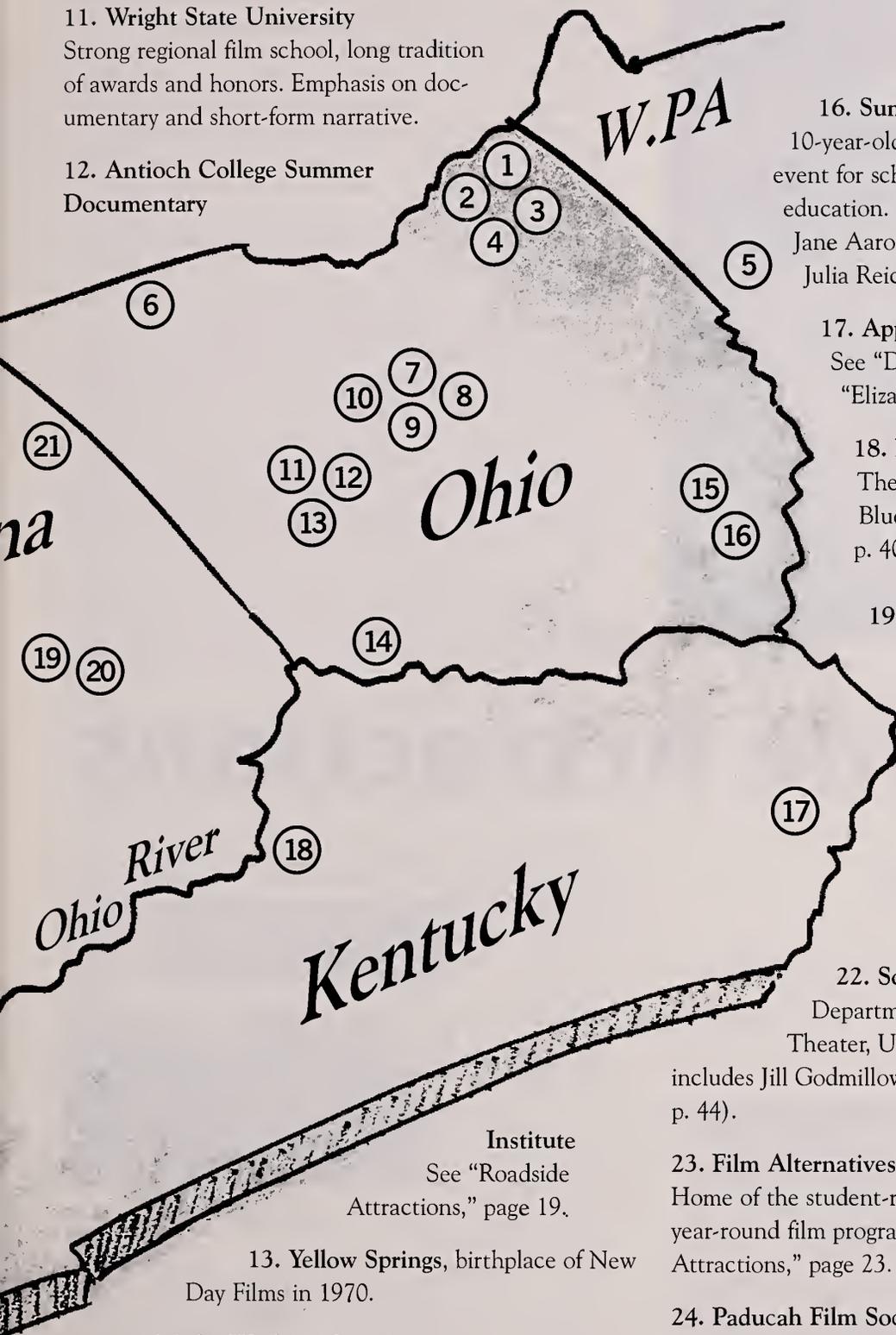
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11. Wright State University
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12. Antioch College Summer Documentary

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14. Media Working Group
See "Roadside Attractions," page 20.

15. Athens Center for Film & Video
Home of the Athens International Film Festival, the Ohio University School of Film, and hub of independent media in the Appalachian foothills. See "Midwest Fests" p. 40.

13. Yellow Springs, birthplace of New Day Films in 1970.

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16. Summer Media Institute

10-year-old Ohio Arts Council-sponsored event for school teachers wanting media arts education. Past instructors include Loni Ding, Jane Aaron, Skip Blumberg, Cecelia Condit, Julia Reichert, Jim Klein.

17. Appalshop

See "Distributor FAQ," page 38, and "Elizabeth Barrett," page 36.

18. Louisville Film Festival

The biggest film festival in the Bluegrass State. See "Midwest Fests" p. 40.

19. Indianapolis Film Society:

Home of the Indy Awards, visiting filmmaker series, and fine barbecue.

20. Heartland Film Festival

See "Midwest Fests" p. 40.

21. Fort Wayne

Home of Neil LaBute and *In the Company of Men*.

22. South Bend

Department of Communications and Theater, University of Notre Dame, faculty includes Jill Godmillow (see "In & Out of Production," p. 44).

23. Film Alternatives

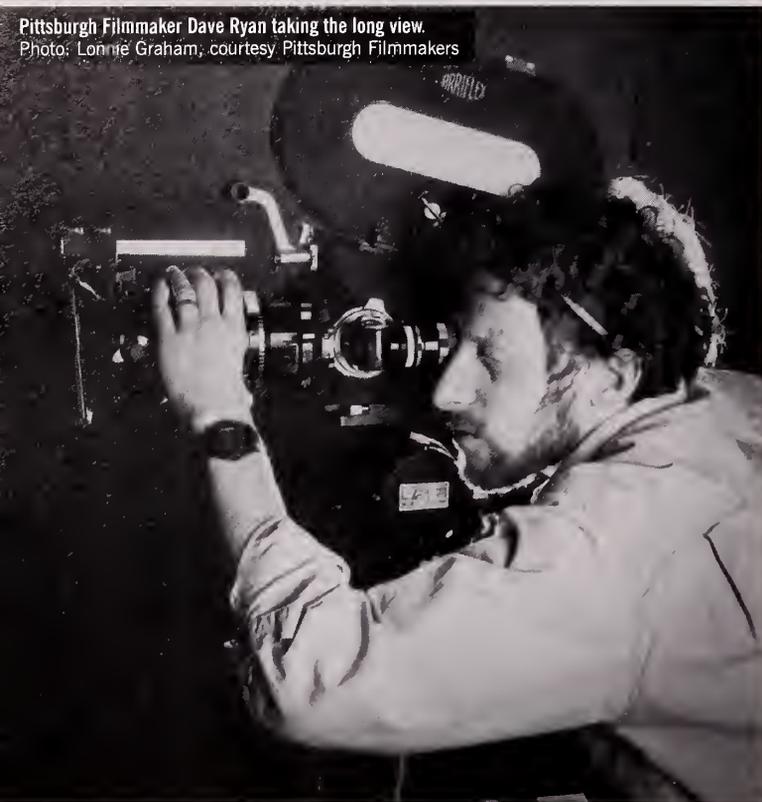
Home of the student-run Big Muddy Film Festival and year-round film programming. see "Roadside Attractions," page 23.

24. Paducah Film Society

Year round screenings of independent film and video work.

— S. B.

Pittsburgh Filmmaker Dave Ryan taking the long view.
Photo: Lonnie Graham, courtesy Pittsburgh Filmmakers



Many of the city's top film and video artists work closely with Filmmakers in one way or another. Dave Ryan, a teacher there, creates short contemplative experimental films and videos, lately with rich audio tracks. He's part of Pittsburgh's long history of experimental film and video work. "In many ways experimental film is a misunderstood contemporary art form, because conventional narrative is so ubiquitous," says Charlie Humphrey, Filmmakers' executive director.

While the city's experimental tradition is continuing unabated, Pittsburgh has recently seen a burst of dramatic features. Grace Ts'ao, for instance, another Filmmakers teacher, is working on her first feature, *Cola for Tea*, the story of a Chinese woman and her assimilation into American culture.

Then you have the anchors of the Pittsburgh film scene, whose work straddles genres: Brady Lewis, Filmmakers' director of education, makes short, ironic, experimental live-action and animated films. He is currently tackling his first dramatic feature, *Daddy Cool*, a story of transsexuality, psychiatry, televangelism, a mad scientist, and a werewolf. And Tony Buba, a long-time chronicler of working-class Pittsburgh and Filmmakers teacher, easily shifts between personal documentary (*Lightning over Braddock*), dramatic fiction (*No Pets*), and traditional documentary (*Struggles in Steel*, on African-American steelworkers, coproduced with Ron Henderson, which airs on PBS in February).

A number of local filmmakers use the school's resources for things like editing, postproduction, or equipment loans. Kenny Love, a documentarian, has just completed *Frank Lloyd Wright in Japan*, which

Roadside Attractions

ohiorivervalley

Mediamakers will travel to a region of the country if they are attending a festival there, or are on location for a shoot. But the states bordering the Ohio River have more to offer itinerant filmmakers. Here are a few of the hot spots worth a stopover.

At the Mouth of the Ohio River: Pittsburgh Filmmakers, et al.

WHEN INDIE FILMMAKERS THINK OF PITTSBURGH, THEY RIGHTLY THINK of Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the city's well-established film school and media center. It's the biggest game in town, yet it's not the only one in a city whose indie film scene is loaded with styles, interests, and subcultures.

explores the influence of Japanese art on Wright's architecture. Love's daughter, Julia, a high school student, has made *From Pickles to Gliders*, a documentary about how the city's famous Heinz plants helped the Allies during World War II. Billy Jackson, a filmmaker and educator, is close to finishing *Things That Fit*, his video documentary on an August Wilson play.

But Pittsburgh's indie film scene has more to boast about than just its media arts center. There's Harish Saluja, a native of India who has used his adopted hometown as the locale for his award-winning feature, *The Journey*, the story of an Indian man coming to America to visit his son. Saluja shot on 35mm, which makes him unique in local filmmaking today. The Indian embassy in Washington, DC, showed the film last summer as part of a celebration of India's 50 years of independence. Now Saluja is talking to distributors—dozens of them—to get the film shown nationwide.

And there's Michael Johnsen and Greg Pierce, who have been collaborating on what Johnsen calls "film performances." Their shows feature multiple projections and unusual use of sound, sometimes employing their own experimental films, but lately using archival footage. They also run Orgone Cinema, an occasional venue for visiting artists and their experimental films.

Buba says the local film scene has "generated a lot of successful people" whose work has won recognition at festivals around the world. He fears that the loss of the National Endowment of the Arts would be "a real blow to regions like Pittsburgh," where filmmakers have been so

successful in getting NEA grants.

With their feature film ambitions, artists like Lewis, Buba, Ts'ao, and Haluja have launched a new mini-trend in Pittsburgh. But they're not likely to alter the overall character of Pittsburgh's indie scene, which still boasts healthy doses of experimentation and documentary to complement its fledgling features.

Pittsburgh Filmmakers, 477 Melwood Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213; (412) 681-5449; fax: 681-5503.

HARRY KLOMAN

Harry Kroman reviews movies for *In Pittsburgh Newsweekly* and teaches journalism at the University of Pittsburgh.

Ohio's Avid Oasis: The Wexner Center for the Arts

COLUMBUS, OHIO, IS NOT READILY KNOWN AS A MECCA FOR THE ARTS. Unlike Cincinnati, where the censorship of a Mapplethorpe photo exhibition attracted national attention, or Cleveland, where the Cleveland Orchestra regularly draws international acclaim, Columbus has not been on the big-picture arts map very often.

But for mediamakers in the know, the sprawling state capital can be a destination of choice. The lure is the Wexner Center for the Arts. Part of Ohio State University, the arts center is funded in part through a private endowment from Leslie Wexner, who earned his fortune as owner of The Limited clothing chain. The center screens about 150 films a year, often with appearances by guest artists, and regularly programs art exhibitions and cutting edge performances that are often more reflective of New York tastes than the Ohio farmland surrounding Columbus.

For media artists, the center's plum is the Arts and Technology Lab. Created in 1989 as part of the Wexner's media department, A&T is a



Todd Haynes and Christine Vachon's project *Domestic Violence* at the Wexner.
Photo: Richard K. Loesch/Cam Tech

postproduction facility whose wares are offered free to two media artists per year who are selected for a coveted school-year-long Media Arts Residency Award. These residencies also include cash awards to help media

artists complete specific projects, varying from feature-length films to installations. (For the '96-'97 residencies, curator William Horrigan selected filmmakers Julie Dash and Isaac Julien.)

This year, the Wexner also initiated a special *Class of 2001* four-year project. The media arts department selected four video artists—Helen DeMichiel (San Francisco), Inigo Manglano (Chicago), Tom Poole (New York), and Steven Bognar (Dayton, Ohio)—to begin working with groups of Ohio State freshmen and design a project that will follow them until college graduation in 2001. Each artist will receive production funding and free use of the Wexner's post facilities.

In addition, other artists have access to the Wexner's state-of-the-art equipment through mini-residencies. According to associate cura-

tor Maria Troy, approximately 25 artists work at the facility per year. In the last eight years, that's added up to more than 200 artists from all over the country, including choreographers Bill T. Jones and Twyla Tharp, artists William Wegman and Laura Mulvey, independent filmmaker Beth B. and Tom Kalin, videomakers Steve Fagin and Coco Fusco, and video collectives such as Paper Tiger Television and Not Channel Zero.

The lab includes a production studio with both film and video equipment, online video editing, three Avid editing systems, and access to staff editors. In addition, it is an Avid Authorized Training Center, and offers classes with Avid Certified Instructors each month to artists and media professionals.

Film/videomaker Barbara Hammer has used the facility twice, most recently for her documentary *The Female Closet*, an hour-long program on the ways lesbians have closeted themselves since the turn of the century. "I had 28 hours of video and it would have taken me much longer without access to nonlinear equipment. In three weeks I was able to get a very tight cut," says Hammer. She notes the Wexner's staff editors are generally available from 9 to 5, but can work later if necessary, even on weekends if you get into a deadline jam. "The only negative is that the department is overworked, so you might want eight hours with an editor but get only six," she says.

Because of the success of this program, the lab is upgrading and putting all three Avid systems online. With the support of Wexner director Sherri Geldin, media curator Horrigan and his staff have been able to create a much-sought-after and growing oasis in central Ohio.

According to Troy, selected film- or videomakers are invited to submit proposals to work at the Wexner. Wexner Center for the Arts, 1871 N. High St., Columbus, OH 43210-1393; (614) 292-7617; fax: 292-3369; troy.18@osu.edu

CINDY BARBER

Cindy Barber is editor of the *Cleveland Free Times*, an alternative newsweekly that regularly covers independent filmmaking in Northeast Ohio.

Doc Spot at Antioch

UNVEILED THIS SUMMER IN A LUSH, PROVENCE-LIKE STRETCH OF ROLLING hills, green oaks, and maple trees in southwestern Ohio was "a won-



Barbara Kopple on the mic at the newly formed Summer Doc Institute.
Photo: Dennie Eagleson

derful creation of a filmmakers' village," according to a 1997 grad.

Formally the Antioch College Summer Documentary Institute & Series, the fledgling 10-week program in Yellow Springs was remark-

able for the intensity and variety of its offerings as well as for the sense of community it inspired, says Antioch faculty member Anne Bohlen (Academy-Award nominee *With Babies and Banners*).

Bohlen and Bob Devine, Antioch interim president, founded the new venture last spring, assisted by funding from the MacArthur Foundation. Modeled on the Flaherty seminars, the institute is open to anyone interested in exploring the world of documentaries in greater depth than can be done during an academic term, says Bohlen.

The institute's first participants, who ranged in age from 17 to 55 from all over the US, ate, slept, and breathed documentary. Daily classes in video production and talks by a wide range of distinguished documentarians were augmented by sessions led by such cutting-edge filmmakers as Andy Garrison (*Fat Monroe*) and Anne Lewis (*Fast Food Women*) of Appalshop, and George Stoney (*The Uprising of '34*), who conducted a workshop titled "Social Change Oriented Media and Documentary Making."

Further enrichment was provided by a multi-level documentary series spanning the summer. Film screenings (including works-in-progress) and public discussions, plus workshops and lectures by distinguished filmmakers, were undergirded by selections from the impressive Margaret Mead Documentary Film Festival.

"The wide spectrum of documentary subjects and styles accessed by the students via the series, guest presentations and workshops was intentional," said Bohlen. "When people hear 'documentary,' most tend to think of it in terms of PBS, the History Channel, or A&E. But we wanted to get the students out of the little TV box and show them what has been and can be done in film."

To do this the institute brought together a mix of some 25 veteran and emerging young filmmakers from different cultures and orientations as teachers and presenters, including those who came of age in the great wave of the late sixties and early seventies. Representative of the three generations were the panelists who discussed the state of the art during the July Film Frenzy weekend. Panel moderator and Oscar nominee Julia Reichert (*Seeing Red, Union Maids*), Academy Award winner Barbara Kopple (*Harlan County: USA, American Dream*) and Oscar nominee Jim Klein (*Taken for a Ride, Seeing Red*) came of age in the seventies; Steve Bognar (*Personal Belongings*) and Thomas Allan Harris (*Vintage: Families of Value*) in the eighties; and Yvonne Welbon (*Remembering Wei Yi-Fang, Remembering Myself*), Alex Rivera (*Papapapá*), and Aishah Shahidah Simmons (*No!*) in the nineties.

If the shorts produced by the institute's first grads and their assessments are any indication—"the working activists were inspiring," "best in terms of actual relevance and usefulness"—Antioch has laid the groundwork for what could become a midwest documentary mecca.

Also boding well for the future are the institute's reasons for being, which were summed up by Reichert at the panel's conclusion: "I'm saying this to the people of the older generations and to the younger generations: People respect our struggle, our research, the passion that drives our independence. We have a very important place in the culture wars. We need to support each other, band together, and recognize the singular role we have to play. Let's not ever forget that."

For more information and enrollment deadline for summer 1998, contact: Anne Bohlen, (937) 767-6406; 767-6490; summer@antioch-college.edu

BETTY GABRIELLI

Betty Gabrielli is a writer and documentary maker (*Dreams So Real: Three Men's Stories and Follow the Morning Star*) in Oberlin, Ohio.

Straddling States & Worlds: The Media Working Group

"WE MAKE SENSE OUT OF CHAOS," IS HOW JEAN DONOHUE SUMMARIZES the mission and success of the Media Working Group (MWG). Based



in Covington, Kentucky, an old river town facing Cincinnati, but working with the media arts throughout the Ohio River Valley while slowly expanding from a regional to a national focus, MWG is "a new kind of media arts organization," says Donohue, MWG's development director.

"We're a hybrid," she explains. "The complexity of what we do pushes the very definition of what media arts is." Elaborating on their diversity, she says: "Media Working Group combines research, planning, development, and education with artistic practices. The group produces films and video (documentaries, experimental film/video, narrative films); we provide media literacy education to educators and students; we have ongoing media arts residencies in the schools and community centers; we initiate telecommunications policy discussions and planning in our community and nationally; we do research and development around communications; we do community development around communications issues; we provide professional development for teachers and staffs of nonprofits around cultural diversity, organizational transformation, managing change; [and] we train cultural groups in video production, video oral history and critical view-

ing of TV and film for cultural stereotypes." She continues, "We publish critiques about our field and telecommunications; we define our work as a cultural industry using economic development language; we build partnerships to further our work and help organizations address media issues; we provide training to nonprofit/arts and cultural organizations in new communications technologies, computer/Internet literacy; we screen independent film and video; and we encourage filmmaking by providing a sensible production infrastructure to artists."

This year the group celebrates its tenth anniversary. Donohue credits this longevity in part to the group's willingness to change with the times and jump feet-first into the "global society."

Their willingness to embrace new technologies is reflected in one of their evolving projects, *The Trail of Hope: A Ceremonial Earthwork*. Begun in 1994 as a "community-based large-scale sculpture and sacred space project" by Kaylynn Sullivan Twotrees, a Media Working Group board member, it subsequently turned into both a video documentary and a CD-ROM. Donohue is currently producing and directing the documentary.

On a larger scale, MWG's technological savvy is evidenced by the \$35,000 Mentor Site Grant they received from the Benton Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts under their "Open Studio: The Arts Online" program, the first national initiative to help arts organizations serve their communities through the Internet. As one of seven sites selected, MWG will become a regional training center, teaching 10 artists and 10 arts organizations how to design, produce, and maintain a presence on the Web. Each trainee will then train another artist or organization in an "each one teach one" strategy.

In the current funding climate, Media Working Group doesn't try to follow traditional funding patterns, choosing instead to form partnerships within the community, working with labor, health, environmental, government, architecture, and planning organizations. This has proven to be a cornerstone in the group's philosophy and its success.

One recent example is the Video Oral History Training Project, a collaboration with the Northern Kentucky African American Heritage Task Force (NKAHATF). MWG raised the funds for the training from the Kentucky Arts Council's Folk Arts Program. Donohue designed the training. Mary Northington and Hensley Jemmott from the NKAHATF collaborated and the budget was about \$4,000. Donohue says, "The symbiosis involved relationship building over a couple of years of doing small projects together, particularly professional development for teachers around cultural diversity. We have been using oral history gathering techniques and traditional 'talking circles' to raise awareness about cultural and ethnic diversity."

In Donohue's view, this project has helped "create a consciousness in the region about cultural identity and tolerance—an identity partially forged by [the fact we're] sitting on the Mason-Dixon line," defined by the Ohio River.

Donohue characterizes media artists in the nineties as "information migrant workers." She explains, "As documentary makers, telecommunications policymakers, and planners, we are grappling with global issues that affect local places. Through our work we try to help communities define themselves within the global economy. Therefore, our practice has to be global. It shows up in our documentaries, our organizational development and planning activities, and in our telecommunications development work. As practicing artists and people who must make a living, we often find ourselves and our colleagues drawn out of our local geographies to work, to seek funding, make production

and distribution relationships. We live in a global economy whose most significant and rapidly growing economic sector is information workers. Visual artists, film- and videomakers, writers, Web producers, audio artists. . . are all information workers. If our local governments have not engaged in the kind of strategic economic development to create the infrastructures for this kind of work to be done efficiently and effectively, we often have to leave the region to work. This is not necessarily permanent but a fact of life. MWG's infrastructure provides a way for media artists, researchers etc. to maintain a longterm relationship with the organization, their work, funders and partners." MWG is positioned to allow these migrants to "work where they have to. . . and still maintain a geographic identity and institutional base."

Media Working Group, Fifth St. Center, 525 W. Fifth St., Ste. 321, Covington, KY 41011; (606) 581-0033; fax: 581-0116; media@igc.apc.org; www.mwg.org

RHONDA REEVES

Rhonda Reeves is a freelance writer and editor of ACE Magazine, Lexington's alternative bi-weekly.

Homegrown Features in the Bluegrass State

KENTUCKY MAY NOT BE the epicenter of show business, says Louisville independent filmmaker Archie Borders, but he believes the film community is "beginning to take notice" of the bluegrass state. With a thriving schedule of features currently shooting there and persistent rumors swirling around the possibility of

Werner Herzog signing on for an adaptation of one of author Lee Smith's Appalachian novels, Kentucky is slowly but surely securing its spot on the filmmaking map. Borders hopes that "the attention will get the financial community to take notice of [Kentucky filmmakers]." As the critical reputation grows, the hope in the filmmaking community is that the dollars will follow.

While Borders' 1995 independent feature *Reception to Follow*, which he wrote, directed, and coproduced, recently sold to the Sundance Film Channel, Borders, like independents across the country, has to juggle jobs to support his work as a filmmaker. Borders maintains a day job at the Louisville Visual Arts Association, an organization that is supportive of his filmmaking career. He is up-front about the need for most local filmmakers to stay flexible and diverse in their approach to the art and business of filmmaking. He frequently crews on other people's features (recently driving the distance to work with Lexington producer George Maranville on *100 Proof*). Borders sees the key to success and survival in a person's ability to seamlessly shift gears between divergent tasks, crewing on a blockbuster for a day or two of location shooting, then perhaps pursuing a shoestring-budget documentary in



Straight outta Lexington: Jeremy Horton's *100 Proof*. Courtesy filmmaker

one's spare time.

Lexington filmmaker Patrick McNeese, echoes Borders's sentiments about the need for diversity. His resumé runs the gamut from production designer to art director to assistant director to director to writer. His project credits include docudramas, educational short, commercials, music videos, documentaries and features.

Unable to secure funding for his "history of hemp" documentary in the early ninties, he shelved the project until the current groundswell of interest in the subject enabled him to obtain financing through a video distributor. Although his project takes an historical, what he terms "Ken Burns-style approach," the "giggle factor" and once-sensational nature of the topic closed many traditional funding doors to him.



Shooting in Indianapolis, G. Allen Johnson brought his feature *The Waiter* in at \$27,000. Courtesy filmmaker

Now that "there are so many voices in the hemp debate," he says, from medicinal to fiber to ecological, audiences are realizing hemp's not just for potheads anymore. (Not that it ever was.) And McNeese's documentary is a long way from being just another "smoke more dope" movie that traditional funding sources are so leery of. The documentary will actually end where the present-day controversy begins, "washing up on the shores of Woody Harrelson [and other activists]," McNeese says.

Fellow Lexington filmmaker George Maranville worked with both Borders and McNeese on *100 Proof*, a gritty independent feature produced by Maranville and directed by Jeremy Horton, also a Lexingtonian. Audiences at the 1996 South by Southwest film festival compared the film's disturbing verite with *In Cold Blood* and *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer*. The film, which also played at Film Forum in New York City, was loosely inspired by a sensational murder spree in the late eighties by two Kentucky women.

For Maranville, whose credits include documentary work for PBS, *100 Proof* is a "perfect bridge to narrative filmmaking. My background was in nonfiction filmmaking/storytelling prior to *100 Proof*. We knew we wanted to take a nonfiction story and, instead of using the facts as a jumping off point, we wanted to work our way backwards from the crime. It was very similar to how a documentary would have started.' He adds, "We've yet to premiere in this area, so it will be interesting to see people's reactions to our embellishments."

Maranville is no exception in a community of Kentucky filmmakers who seamlessly switch back and forth between fiction and nonfiction, drama and documentary. Sometimes it's a simple matter of maintaining financial viability and survival; sometimes it affords another window into creativity. As Maranville puts it, "[Kentucky filmmakers] tend to emphasize story over commercial appeal—whether it's documentary or narrative. . . . If someone tries to reinvent Hollywood here in our own backyard, they either fall on their faces in the execution or

never shoot an inch of film. The chances of success, both artistically and commercially, are directly proportional to the originality of the story and ingenuity of the production."

RHONDA REEVES

Indy Indies Cook Up Low-Budget Treats

THE BIG STORY OUT OF INDIANA IN 1997 WAS *IN THE COMPANY OF MEN*, written and directed by Neil LaBute. As everyone knows by now, LaBute shot this searing look at male one-upsmanship games in Ft. Wayne in 11 days on a shoe-string budget. The initial seed money came from an insurance settlement from a car accident involving executive producers Mark Hart and Toby Graff. And while postproduction funds and the three principal actors came from New York and LA, much of the film was made possible by local support. The other actors were Fort Wayne friends and associates, and Fort Wayne residents were kind about lending space to the production. "We had a 'home field advantage,'" says LaBute.

Indiana presents a number of advantages to the home team: no shooting permits needed; a nonunion below-the-line talent pool eager for experience; lots of parking; lower costs; and an easier time all around.

When Indiana University student Chris Litton went about making *Save the Bones for Henry Jones*, about an animal rights activist who is captured by cannibals, he seemed to be reading from the same page as LaBute, funding his 70-minute film partly through an insurance settlement from a car accident, as well as from supportive Bloomington businesses and credit cards. Litton estimates the total production budget was about \$7,000.

Many other Indiana filmmakers are also turning out features for a pittance. Indianapolis native G. Allen Johnson recently co-wrote, directed, and produced *The Waiter*. For the \$27,000 production budget, Johnson approached friends, relatives, and businessmen. When he needed money for post-production, Johnson set up a limited partnership, attracting mostly local investors.

Ann Anderson, one of the few women on the scene, shot her most murder mystery, *Cab Woman*, in Indianapolis for under \$500,000. She lives and makes films in Indiana's capital because it is "pleasant" do to so. "The city has matured," she says, and "there's a diversity of looks." She shot *Cab Woman* there because it has a generic urban look, and she loves the architecture. Anderson is one of many filmmakers who points out that it is more reasonable to shoot in Indiana than on the coasts because nonunion, yet experienced crew



Neil LaBute's *In the Company of Men* Courtesy Sony Pictures Classics

workers are available.

The place to see many of these local productions is the Indiana Film and Video Festival (the Indy Awards, formerly known as the Video Barbeque), sponsored by the Indiana Film Society. "We hope the Indy Awards encourages filmmaking around here," says Penny Millar, co-president of the IFS. Works by students or residents in Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan are eligible for the annual festival, held in July. "The Indy Awards started out as just Indiana. We wanted to make it regional," Millar continues. "We get about 60 entries a year," mostly from Chicago, Wright State University in Dayton, and Bloomington, home of Indiana University. Winners at the 1997 festival included Kirk Walter for *Twenty-Nine Stories* ("Best of the Show"), Douglas Fry for *Again Pushing—If You Say So*, and Jason Doty for *Dinner 5:30a* ("People's Choice Award"). All winners receive a cash prize and handsome statue, and the "Best of Show" winner receives \$1,500 worth of film from Kodak.

LaBute's advice to other filmmakers is to "get out there and make projects. It's possible." Clearly, in Indiana, many locals are already doing just that.

Indiana Film Society, 820 E. 67th St., Indianapolis, IN 46220; (317) 299-1800.

TONI MORRIS

Toni Morris teaches Film Studies at the University of Indianapolis and is co-president of the Indiana Film Society.

Gettin' Down 'n' Dirty with the Big Muddy

THE OHIO RIVER FLOWS INTO THE BIG MUDDY, MORE COMMONLY known as the Mississippi River. Standing at the confluence of these two great rivers, you can almost see yourself on a map at the very tip of southern Illinois.

The Big Muddy carries a heavy history. "There are lots of stories in Southern Illinois," says Jesse Mitchell, a recent film graduate of Indiana University. "Southern Illinois has gangsters, murders, pirates, ghosts, political dramas, miners, unions, massacres, whatever." The river's nickname also gave birth to a unique venue for independent film and video, the Big Muddy Film Festival, held at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Now in its 20th year, the festival has grown considerably from its ramshackle origins.

"I remember sitting in the coffeehouse, watching films—really short, really good films—with all these people. It was like a scene in a movie," says Mitchell, who grew up in Carbondale with the Big Muddy Film Festival. "There are a number of things in Southern Illinois that look like scenes out of movies," he adds. Mitchell mentions Bald Knob Cross at Alto Pass, a monolithic white cross built on top of a hill in the middle of a rolling landscape. "It's beautiful, and so weird," he says. "A number of student films have been made there."

Students are also the main force behind the Big Muddy festival, which is the oldest student-run film fest in the country. Part of its strength is its high caliber judges—established film and video artists who both view the festival's line-up and present their own work to the region. "We've had Jim Jarmusch, Santiago Alvarez, Kathy Rose, Robert Frank, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Loretta Smith," says festival

cofounder and filmmaker Mike Covell.

"For the first ten years of the Big Muddy," adds Covell, "the jurors stayed in the houses of people working on the festival. When Robert Frank was a judge, there was a lot of crossover between the film and photo communities around here. I remember coming over to a house at 7:00 a.m. one morning and seeing still photos scattered all over the kitchen floor, breakfast all over the place, Robert Frank looking at everyone's pictures."

The Big Muddy Film Festival may be the event for independent filmmakers in this region, but there's more of interest here. Southern Illinois is also home to the Douglass School Art Place in Murphysboro, Associated Artists Gallery in Carbondale, Cedarhurst Art Center and Mitchell Museum in Mount Vernon, and the Little Egypt Arts Association of Marion, organizations dedicated to supporting a variety of arts.

But overall, support for the arts in geographically isolated areas is



**The First Big Muddy Film Festival
March 30, 31, and April 1 Carbondale, Illinois**

The Big Muddy's first program, in 1979

tough. "Between St. Louis and Chicago, between Memphis and Indianapolis, the Big Muddy is about the only place where you can still find independent films," says Covell, "It's got the spirit of true independents—not the people making features so they can go to Hollywood, but those people working independently, politically or otherwise."

So independently, in fact, that the festival has attracted some unexpected devotees. "When Santiago Alvarez was here from the Cuban Documentary Film and Newsreel unit in Havana, the FBI scrutinized the festival heavily. The FBI kept picking up lots of programs," Covell notes with a laugh.

Big Muddy Film Festival, Dept. of Cinema & Photography, Mailcode 6610, Southern Illinois Univ., Carbondale, IL 62901; (618) 453-1482; fax: 453-2264; bigmuddy@siu.edu; www.siu.edu/~films/

RICHARD L. WILLIAMS JR.

Richard L. Williams Jr. is a performance artist living & working in Southern Illinois.

EVER SINCE CONGRESS DECLARED WAR ON THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT for the Arts, tax-supported filmmaking has seemed bound for extinction. But in Ohio, independent filmmakers and state officials have forged a rare alliance to bring a new source of public funds to the business of moviemaking: the state's job-training monies. The Ohio Department of Development's \$10 million Industrial Training Program (OITP) typically works with manufacturers, retail stores, and service businesses. But in the last several years, four independent film projects have been approved for amounts ranging from \$50,000 to \$200,000 to train new workers in film production skills.

The state's interest is economic, not artistic. The same theory applies to film as to any other field: On-the-job training increases the pool of skilled workers, which in turn attracts more investment and keeps more Ohioans working. OITP is one of many efforts that falls under the nationwide "School to Work" initiative, a drive to boost job-readiness among college and high school graduates, among other pots

from poet Aralee Strange, expected to shoot next spring in Cincinnati and rural Adams County; and \$200,000 for *Coming of Age*, which—despite setbacks in collecting matching funds—Myrl Schreiberman still hopes to shoot in 1998 around Kenyon College in Knox County.

The training grants do not represent a quick fix for anemic budgets. For one thing, they are reimbursement funds, paid out after training expenses have been met by the film company. Plus, filmmakers who apply for the grants take on a whole slate of weighty responsibilities:

Matching Funds: ITP grants come with a requirement that the filmmaker raise an equal amount of matching funds from other grants and investors. "It's the responsibility of the grantees to show they have the funding to complete the project, and to go out and get their matching funds," says Steve Tirpak, regional training coordinator with the state's Office of Industrial Training, which distributes and monitors the grants.

A Training Plan: Each grant is based on an original proposal that specifies when, how, and by whom interns will be trained and evaluated. Funds pay for training costs only—for instance, a portion of each

ohio river valley

LABORS OF LOVE

Ohioans Tap into a New Source of Film Financing: Job Training Funds

of money. The impetus was a finding that employers sorely need new workers who are better equipped to handle more technically demanding, higher paying jobs. Media production already contributes millions to the state's economy, so when Ohio Film Commission director Eve LaPolla approached Department of Development officials with the idea of a film grant, they were ready to listen. LaPolla brought with her filmmaker Julia Reichert, who in 1990 was beginning work on her 1992 feature *Emma and Elvis* and hit on the idea of seeking economic development aid. She and LaPolla began discussions with the development office, and over about eight months Reichert developed a proposal to incorporate training for 33 interns into the production. It earned her a grant of \$56,000.

In the past two years, three more projects have won grant approvals: \$54,000 for *The Dream Catcher*, by Ed Radtke, scheduled to shoot this fall near Dayton and in locations as far west as Nevada; \$100,000 for *This Train*, a first feature



This Train director Aralee Strange
Photo: Elizabeth Logan Harris

department head's salary, depending on time allocated to seminars, one-on-one technical training, and mentoring. Interns may receive a small stipend.

Schreiberman, a film professor at UCLA, wrote a seven-week curriculum drawing on other professionals from Los Angeles working on the film, including cinematographer Tom DeNove, line producer Emil Safi, and

Media production already contributes millions to the state's economy, so when Ohio Film Commission Director Eve LaPolla approached Department of Development officials with the idea of a film grant, they were ready to listen.

costume designer Madelyn Kozlowski. The proposal stresses "the holistic approach to filmmaking, rather than a technical approach," Schreiberman says. "When we take the 30 interns and train them, we're not just going to be

training them in a department. We're literally getting them involved in the creative part as well, the problem solving." He adds, "We're all teachers. We all believe in this."

Recruiting Interns: Ohio's program requires applicants to be state residents. Each proposal identifies target recruiting pools, often groups underrepresented in filmmaking. For *The Dream Catcher*, director Radtke, who survived a troubled adolescence in a small Southern Ohio town, emphasizes minorities and disadvantaged youth. For *This Train*, Strange and Harris are looking for women and Appalachians—a significant, often

"When I interviewed these interns," says Myrl Schreibman. "I realized I was looking at myself 35 years ago."

impoverished, population in rural counties of Southern Ohio, like the one where part of the film will be shot. "We're committed to involving the entire community," says Harris. "We have been adamant on that point since we started working on this project" more than three years ago.

The one criteria the filmmakers cite unanimously is "passion." They use words like "enthusiastic," "energetic," "driven," and "hungry" to describe their ideal intern candidates. "We need people with that fire," says Radtke. "That's what separates the wheat from the chaff: people who can somehow keep that long-term focus on what you're doing, that desire.

"When I interviewed these interns," says Schreibman. "I realized I was looking at myself 35 years ago."

Trainers: The entire crew must be attuned to the program's aim—not always a given with "hard-bitten" pros, says Reichert. "You have people in the first week stumbling around, they don't know what their job is. That's what the professionals have to provide." On her film, she says, everyone shared the payoff. "What you got back was this tremendous bonding and enthusiasm. The young people were all eyes and ears. Here they were working with jaded union people, who got a lot of juice, a lot of energy from these young people."

Time: It takes longer to film with training going on. "When I'm staging a scene," says Schreibman, "[DP] Tom [DeNove] may be



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over on the side saying why I'm staging it the way I am and where I'm going to go with it. That takes more time than usual. That's why this is a little more difficult to put together than a normal picture."

Oversight: "When the training is happening, we'll make occasional visits to meet the trainees to see that everything is going the way it was planned," says Tirpak. "We're pretty hands-on."

Reichert and Schreibman both praised Tirpak for navigating them through the inevitable red tape. "We train each other," says Tirpak. "We learn about each other's processes, procedures, and needs. I have to be upfront to say, 'Here's the money, but. . .

As with any job-training program, the state wants to know it got its money's worth. Each program must report carefully on how it spends the funds, how trainers spend their time, and what the interns are learning.

here's what we have to accomplish.' "

Funds are distributed through a nonprofit fiscal agent, most often a school. *This Train* is relying on the nonprofit Media Working Group [see story pg. 20], an organization that provides educational and technical services to schools, businesses, and government agencies. It will also help recruit and screen intern candidates.

Evaluation: As with any job-training pro-

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Finding funding from unusual sources: *Dream Catcher* director Ed Radtke
Photo: Steven Bognar



gram, the state wants to know it got its money's worth. Each program must report carefully on how it spends the funds, how trainers spend their time, and what the interns are learning. "Our measurement [of success] is the number of students trained and their skill enhancement," says Linda O'Connor of the Department of Development Office of Industrial Train-

ing. "At the beginning, they're assessed on what level they're at and where they need to be placed. They may have a mentor or shadow a worker in their area of interest. They get cross-training, so they get a flavor of all the career options in that field."

Each intern must receive a final evaluation, and the state agency asks for follow-up reports to track where the interns go afterward. In the case of *Emma and Elvis*, the only completed film in the program so far, all but a few of the interns are still working in film or video today, Reichert says.

Commitment: The glue that binds all the players in the experiment is their commitment to a vision. Ohio's experience has shown the value of a supportive film commission, an inventive state agency, cooperative schools, and a dedicated film crew. "Without Eve [LaPolla], this never would have happened," says Reichert. "We couldn't have opened the doors." LaPolla credits the enthusiasm and careful preparation of the filmmakers, as well as the open-mindedness of development officials. Schreiber credits Donald Jakeway, director of the state development department and his staff. "I have to take my hat off to the state," Schreiber says. "It takes courage to do this, and I know that courage is coming from that office of development."

Margaret A. McGurk [mmcgurk@enquirer.com] is the film critic for The Cincinnati Enquirer.



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The National Black Programming Consortium

BY CAROL HECTOR-HARRIS

"I SAT HERE AT MY DESK FROZEN FOR A MONTH. 'OH, MY God. What am I supposed to do?' Then I plunged in, and I tried to do everything." That's how Mable Haddock describes her feelings back in 1979 after becoming the first executive director of the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC), one of five "minority consortia" created by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) for the purpose of financing, packaging, and promoting TV programming by people of color.

For Haddock, "everything" included not only setting up a grant-giving apparatus for Black-produced programming, but also packaging it into series, publishing a monthly newsletter, starting an archive, and organizing a major annual conference—as well as dealing with the bureaucracy of PBS (e.g., creating a fee schedule for stations to become members of NBPC, giving them access to NBPC programs). It's a list that could overwhelm a superwoman. But in typical Haddock style, she and her staff set everything in place with breakneck speed. And all this on a budget of \$180,000—considered big money back then.

"Within three years, we basically burned out," Haddock recalls, "and we had to step back and re-evaluate who we were, what kind of environment we were in, what kinds of changes were taking place, and where we were going."

They dropped the labor-intensive conference, but kept a full slate of projects. Since then, they've grown into a \$3 million operation that supports Black productions on both a national scale and also in NBPC's own backyard in Columbus, Ohio.

The National Profile

1997 was a banner year from NBPC. Ten NBPC-funded independent productions were offered to PBS and broadcast on its national schedule, including Louis Massiah's *W. E. B. DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices*, Demetria Royals' *Conjure Women*, Avon Kirkland's *Street Soldiers*, Juanita Anderson's *Black America: Facing the Millennium*, Mike McAlpin's *Record Row: Cradle of Rhythm & Blues*, Ada Gay Griffin and Michelle Parkerson's *Audre Lorde: A Litany for Survival*, Lisanne Skyler's *No Loans Today*, Yvonne Welbon's *Remembering Wei Yi-Fang*, *Remembering Myself*, Judith McRae's *Mississippi, America*, and Michael Smith's *Jesse's Gone*.

These 10 programs came to NBPC through its



Mable Haddock, the National Black Programming Consortium's executive director
Photo: PictureAmerica

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annual open call for proposals, which is mailed to thousands of producers. NBPC has a production funding pool of around \$600,000 per year, which goes towards the open call and also towards contingency funding, to which producers can apply between the Open Call request for proposals. Awards range from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

The other major endeavor NBPC undertakes is its highly regarded Prized Pieces Competition Film & Video Showcase. A remnant from the annual conference, this festival was originally designed to showcase just programs by African American public television producers. Over the years it has grown to include the works of independents who are not affiliated with a television station and a gala awards ceremony. Since 1985, the festival has screened feature films as well as television productions. Today, NBPC receives 150 titles annually from producers in Africa, Europe, Canada, and the U.S. for inclusion in the competition.

Back when NBPC was reexamining its mission in the early eighties, "Our focus really became working with independent producers to encourage getting the product on the national PBS schedule,"

W.E.B. Du Bois, A Biography In Four Voices, by director Louis Massiah and associate producer Valerie Linson (inset).
Photo: Carlton Jones/Scribe



MAKING ITS MARK

Haddock says. "Prized Pieces also became a way of showcasing, supporting, and nurturing the less experienced producer whose products weren't on the national schedule, but could be seen during the community screenings."

On the Local Level

Community is a watchword in Haddock's vocabulary. NBPC's mission isn't just about the national PBS schedule; over the years, it has developed a number of programs that serve their immediate neighborhood.

One such project is NBPC's Heritage Video Store and Learning Center, located on an historical stretch of East Long Street in Columbus. Entering the center is like going into a library full of information on filmmakers, past and present.

"I passionately want us to walk into the video store and see the independent work that truly represents us, from all of the producers who have made a difference and are really trying to tell our story from our perspective," says Haddock. "Those producers need to become household words right along with the big names like Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Haile Gerima, Spike Lee, Oscar Micheaux, and Spencer Williams. It is so important that we support that kind of work. But before we can support it, we need to have access to it, rent it out, and sit down and look at it."

NBPC has recently spread its wings, establishing outposts in Pittsburgh and Atlanta as part of its community education and media literacy project, meant to expose people to independent productions and draw community support to public TV.

Through a grant from Carnegie Mellon, NBPC has developed a residency program for producers at WQED-TV in Pittsburgh, a public television station with a tradition of producing African American programming for local and national broadcast. Starting in August, NBPC also has a series titled *Black Horizons* on WQED's sister station,

WQEX, which showcases some of the past Prized Pieces programs.

In Atlanta, NBPC is moving more directly into education. Through a small grant from

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CPB, NBPC is training 24 teachers and media resource specialists at WPBA-TV, the Atlanta Board of Education station, in how to use independent works in the classroom and incorporate them into the curriculum.

"If you want people to pledge around public television and to support and understand independent work, what better

place to grow that support than in the educational system?," Haddock points out. "It's not just about getting work on the national schedule. Community connections and linkages are equally important.

"When I first came into the business," she recalls, "I could count at least 25 to 30 public television stations that had community public affairs and news shows devoted to Black, minority, and multicultural issues." But as public television became more strapped for funds and PBS changed its emphasis from local to national programming, the first programs to go were the public and community affairs programs, where many successful Black independent producers in today's industry got their start.

Haddock believes that PBS must now come full circle and reclaim its original mission

through its other services, like PBS 2, PBS Plus, and PBS Select. "In order to survive, public television has to come back around to its original mandated mission to serve local communities, by providing diversity in programming and sustaining a connection between the community and public television through education," she insists.



Yvonne Welbon (r) and still from
Remembering Wei Yi-Fang
Courtesy P.O.V.

programming and sustaining a connection between the community and public television through education," she insists.

"When history is written," reflects producer Demetria Royals (*Conjure Women*), "I think Mable will have played a very pivotal role in being very clear that the full spectrum of the Black experience will have its place in media history. The way I would describe Mable is how my grandmother used to give one of her peers a compliment. She would say, 'Such-and-such is a person who is a race woman.' And Mable is a race woman."

Contact: NBPC, 761 Oak Street., Columbus, OH 43205; (614) 229-4399; fax: 229-4398; nbpc@supptec.com; www.nbpc.org.

Carol Hector-Harris is a freelance writer and co-founder of Caribbean Exposures International, which distributes independent films in the Caribbean.

Filmmaker Michael Smith, whose film *Jesse's Gone* was broadcast by P.O.V.
Courtesy P.O.V.



BY JULIA REICHERT

INDEPENDENTS OFTEN WAIT ANGRILY OUTSIDE the gates of public television, feeling powerless to enter. Public TV programmers often have no contact with independents, or view us with suspicion. Yet all across the U.S., excellent indie work exists that would be of great interest in a particular state or region. The gulf between public TV and independents locally always seemed crazy to me. The work should be seen. But where to start?

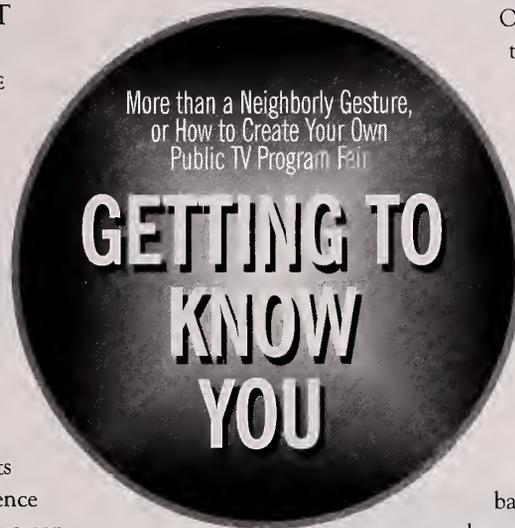
For us, it happened informally. Back in 1988, the Ohio Valley Regional Media Arts Coalition (OVRMAC) presented a conference on public TV and independents. I struck up a conversation there with Don Freeman, the director of Ohio Educational Broadcasting (OEB). This moment turned out to be catalytic. OEB, I learned that day, is the center of coordination and communication for all eight Ohio PTV stations. Freeman had a genuine interest in independent work and in pushing the envelope of PBS. So I pitched the concept. Why not find a mechanism for the eight

The gulf between public TV and independents locally always seemed crazy to me. The work should be seen. But where to start? Why not find a mechanism for the eight Ohio stations to see and choose among the best of Ohio indie work?

Ohio stations to see and choose among the best of Ohio indie work? reporter. Freeman later said, "It was crucial that the first people who approached OEB were filmmakers who had a track record of producing work that aired on PBS nationally and a non-antagonistic attitude towards PBS."

Susan Halpern, an experienced experimental videomaker who is connected state-wide, and I became a team, along with Freeman and Linn. This first round was surprisingly hassle free, though time consuming. Drawing on two models, the Arden House PBS Seminar (a sort of Flaherty Seminar for PBS programmers and independents that existed from 1971 to 1980 and paved the way for INPUT) and the annual PBS program fair market place, the team envisioned a hybrid version. We decided all eight program directors should sit in a room for eight hours with indie moderators. A carefully chosen series of films/videos would be screened. Discussion would be encouraged. Face-to-face contact was a must.

The indies' biggest job was to find and present the work. Halpern and I beat as many bushes as existed in the state of Ohio. We aimed to be very democratic. Our job throughout, representing OVRMAC, was to be the organizer of the work and the conduit of information to



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Longer pieces were excerpted, shorter ones shown whole. On the day of the Program Fair, I as moderator tried to bring out the significance of each piece and encourage frank feedback. At the end of the day, we asked them what pieces they'd consider programming on their station. Some indicated one or two, others many more. We all left energized. It was positive.

Then began months of tedious follow up. OEB was great—without them the whole process would have fallen apart at this stage. Freeman wrangled them to commit to air time and packaging. He also made sure each piece was technically ready for broadcast. In a few cases this meant providing the maker with free postproduction time and staff to trim their work. In the end, 14 pieces made their way onto the airwaves in at least one city. Seven were shown in most of Ohio. Our most outstanding support came from Bob Olive at WVIZ/Cleveland, who actually created a series with wraparound intro, called *Made in Ohio*. We loved that.

FAST FORWARD TO 1997. OVRMAC IS NOW EMBARKED ON THE 4TH Program Fair, which will be held next spring. The Ohio Arts Council's support gives us a coordinator's salary and money to match the station's small contribution toward producer payment. The OEB is still a cornerstone of the process, with Dan Smith now at the helm. The pre-screening panel has expanded over the years. We learned some hard lessons along the way. It's important that the call for entries be rigorously publicized. It's important that the pre-screening panel have an eye for what PBS can use. It's especially important that the program directors sit down together, look at the work, and talk about it with a skilled advocate present. (In its third year, the program directors were sent work over the satellite to view at home. The whole process fell apart. No work was chosen.) Finally it's crucial that the indies set a timeline for the whole process—ours is almost a year—and stick to it. On the positive side, we learned the stations were accustomed to and liked work that was "packaged," however simply. Shorts can be put together, a logo created, etc. More broadly, this process has greatly upped the level of interaction between the independent community and Ohio PBS. This is to everyone's good.

For more information, contact Julia Reichert, 726 Xenia Ave., Yellow Springs, OH 45387; (937) 767-1924; julia@donet.com.

indies.

OEB played a central role in several ways. First they worked hard to rally the program directors around the concept of considering Ohio independent film/video for their schedule. This was not easy. Second, OEB provided crucial administrative support. Pre-screening and the Program Fair, complete with a nice lunch, were held at their facility; Freeman even did the technical tweaking needed to get some of the selected shows up to broadcast par.

Here's how the selection worked. After Halpern and I gathered the work, the team sat down and watched it. A great deal was bad. But gems emerged. We came up with a slate that was strong. We then carefully planned the order of presentation we felt would win the program directors.

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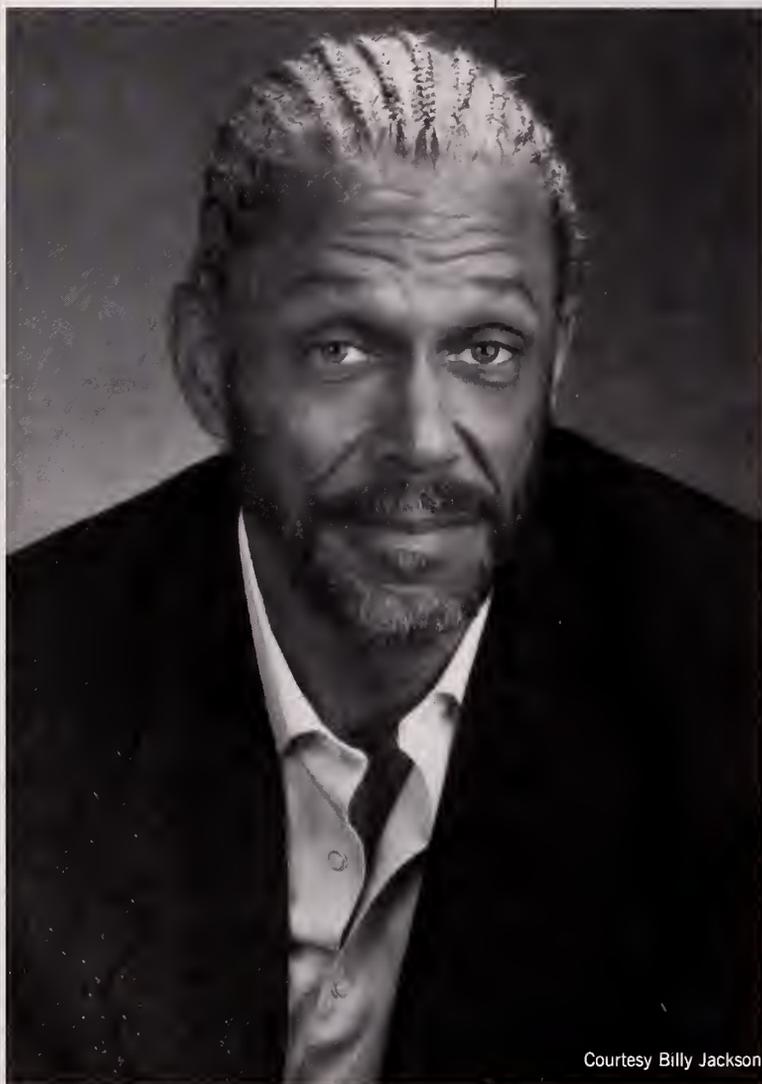
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BILLY JACKSON

PITTSBURGH,
PENNSYLVANIA

BY HARRY KLOMAN

LIKE A LOT OF COLLEGE KIDS, BILLY JACKSON worked to put himself through school. But a bit of serendipity at a moving-company job one



Courtesy Billy Jackson

day led to his career as a filmmaker.

Jackson found an old Kodak camera lying around the company's office. He liked it, so his boss let him have it. Then he took photography courses his junior and senior years at Northeastern University in Boston, made a little money with his camera, and got a grant

from the National Endowment for the Arts to make *We Are Universal*, a film about the "Black Is Beautiful" movement in the arts.

It was an impressive start for a young filmmaker. And though Jackson has gone on to experience some racism in his career, he talks about it with the same soft-spokenness as he uses to talk about everything in his life. His resolute outlook shows in his work, and also through his involvement with Community Media, a nonprofit organization he began in 1989 to help educate people—especially young people—about film and video.

Born in Pittsburgh in 1946, the son of a pioneering Black real estate agent, Jackson got his

undergraduate degree in 1970, the same year he formed his own company, Nommo Productions. Four years later, he got a Master's in education from Harvard. He then spent five years on the faculty of Boston's Emerson College, teaching film and freelancing for Henry Hampton's Blackside Films. Then came three years of freelancing in New York. Finally, he moved back to his home town of Pittsburgh in 1985.

Through Nommo, Jackson has produced a number of documentaries, including the award-winning

Didn't We Ramble On, a film on the evolution of the Black marching band, narrated by Dizzy Gillespie. That documentary is distributed by the Film Library of New York, and Jackson says it does rather well. Just two years ago, Jackson got an offer from the National Black Programming Consortium to distribute

his first film, *We Are Universal*. His current Nommo project is a documentary about the alto saxophone player Gary Bartz. These are the sort of personal projects Jackson uses to recharge his batteries after the taxing work of running of nonprofit media training organization.

At any given time at Community Media, Jackson has between five and eight interns—usually teen-agers from city high schools—working with him in all areas of production. His staff is small: Just him and a full-time administrative assistant. In their short video documentaries, Jackson and his students have tackled such diverse topics as violence, a youth theater group, and the John Henry Redwood play *A Sunbeam*, the story of a family with a mentally retarded son and the treatment people face in mental institutions. Jackson calls this documentary *Layers* because that's how Redwood refers to the themes of his work.

When choosing Community Media interns, Jackson doesn't just look for media smarts. "We want someone who's out to kick butt, for whatever reason—visually, thematically, culturally," he says. He's even taken a few interns whom he felt weren't prepared to work, sensing that "all we had to do was surround them with people who were a little more focused." In two cases out of three, his bet paid off.

The interns spend their first 10 days in the classroom learning about cameras, lighting, sound, and editing. After that it's 15 weeks (or more) of hands-on work, for which they're paid \$5 an hour. Sometimes they even earn their money watching videos and discussing them with Jackson. "They have to learn how to visualize a story," Jackson says, "and a lot of times they're called to task for thinking too literally."

Jackson fears that young people who watch too much television may learn some lessons that are counterproductive when they get to his class. "TV does all the work for them, and it really dampens their imagination," he says, "especially because so much of TV is 'crisis entertainment.'" He believes it's important for young filmmakers to study documentaries so they can first "learn how to tell a straight-ahead story."

With funding for the arts in shorter supply than ever, Jackson worries about urban arts groups like Community Media. "People who say they prioritize youth don't look at media as one of the tools," he says, "not as much as they look at social services." With that in mind, he has begun to approach corporations like Sony

and Macintosh, asking them to donate equipment for his students. Jackson says, "We hope they'll see it as the future."

Contact: Community Media, 7119 Hamilton Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15208.

Harry Kroman reviews movies for *In Pittsburgh News-weekly* and teaches journalism at the University of Pittsburgh.

JIM DUESING

CINCINNATI TO CARNEGIE MELLON

BY STEVE RAMOS

IT'S A LONG WAY FROM CINCINNATI TO PARK City, Utah, in more ways than one. Jim Duesing's computer animations generally receive little notice in his Ohio hometown. His colleagues at the University of Cincinnati,

where he taught for 11 years, aren't even aware of his critically-acclaimed animated shorts, *Tugging the Worm* (1987), *Law of Averages*, and *Maxwell's Demon* (1991). So being mobbed by an audience at last year's Sundance Film Festival was a dramatic change of pace.

But Duesing says he doesn't miss the spotlight. In fact, his inconspicuous work routine suits the soft-spoken Duesing just fine. "Being an animator is not like being a movie star," says Duesing. "I couldn't survive if people knew me everywhere I went."

But they're getting to know his work. *Law of Averages* went on to win a first-place prize at the World Animation Celebration in Los Angeles this past spring and was one of only four American works selected for the Prix Ars Electronica, an internationally renowned Austrian computer art festival. Later this year, the 15-minute animation will be shown at the British Short Film Festival and broadcast on the

Times Square Jumbotron as part of the fifth Digital Salon. Duesing's films are in the collection at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and have been shown on MTV and Canal Plus in France.

Such exposure, according to Duesing, is important for an avant-garde filmmaker like himself. "These are true independent films, which function as contemporary allegories," he says. "[They] deal with the idea of living with the AIDS crisis and losing so many friends to AIDS. When you make a comment about politics and being gay and

how that affects your perception of things, you don't get your films into the mainstream."

Duesing appreciates the impact that cable broadcasters like MTV have had on his career. "Being an animator was like being a poet," says Duesing. "But MTV changed the face of everything." Offers for commercial work often follow such commercial exposure. But Duesing says he's not interested in making 10-second bits of animation, no matter how good the money. Sometimes he gets jealous of colleagues who have moved on to exciting careers at Walt Disney and Industrial Light & Magic. A Hollywood career is tempting, he admits, but the financial support for the type of eclectic animation Duesing prefers isn't any better on the West Coast. In fact, it's probably worse.

"The best thing about living in Cincinnati is that people don't realize how really supportive the Ohio Arts Council is," says Duesing. "It's just amazing that it's there. I've talked to so many people from California and New York, and there is nothing for them. It's amazing. The OAC has been just incredibly supportive to me."

But Cincinnati's conservative nature can make things awfully uncomfortable for an experimental artist. This is, after all, the city that rejected the Playboy Channel, the young Larry Flynt, *Last Tango in Paris*, Pier Pasolini's *Salo*, and Robert Mapplethorpe. For a while, it was a challenge Duesing's tenured teaching position allowed him to face. "If you're living in a really conservative city where you do experimental work or things that might be construed as offensive, tenure means you can't be fired for experimenting or seeing how far you can go in your field," he says. Recently, however, Duesing was offered a teaching position at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University and he took advantage of the opportunity to move away from Cincinnati's cultural climate.

Surprisingly, Duesing says he's not so sure whether he'll remain in animation. In fact, his current project is an interactive Web site. "Even though I've been doing computer animation for 10 years, I don't really think of myself as a computer animator as much as I just think of myself as an artist. My goal is mainly just to be able to keep doing it."

Jim Duesing, c/o School of Art, Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890; (412) 268-7809. His videos and films are available from Video Data Bank and the Museum of Modern Art respectively.

Steve Ramos is film editor of *CityBeat*, Cincinnati's alternative weekly newspaper.



Photo: Tony Walsh, courtesy filmmaker

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RICHARD MYERS

KENT,
OHIO

BY RUTH
BRADLEY

SOMETIMES WHEN we think an artistic era is locked down and defined, we find out about another artist whose work turns around that historical paradigm. One such artist is Richard Myers. Those in the "old-guard" of American avant-garde cinema know Myers as a filmmaker whose career has always been at the center of creative, first-person filmmaking. While the "outside" world may not have heard of him, "insiders" have always regarded Richard Myers as one of the giants of experimental cinema.

Myers has always lived in and around Kent, Ohio, where for many years he taught filmmaking at Kent State University. Since 1960, in films such as *First Time Here*, *37-73*, *Deathstyles*, *Floorshow*, *Akran*, *Jungle Girl*, *Moving Pictures*, and *Monster Show*, he has synthesized his own dream world with that of America's collective unconscious, creating films that, while deeply personal and "site-specific," nevertheless resonate within the larger American landscape.

Myers's films often times depict journeys to places that seem close by, but that virtually explore vast distances within the terrain of dreams and fantasies. His films are like reconnaissance tours through middle America, melancholic searches for something—an object, an idea, a person, a feeling. And the milieu of his films is often that of the carnival, the medicine show, or the movie theater.

Myers started out as a painter, printmaker,



Courtesy filmmaker

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and photographer. As he puts it, "I was always interested in theater, movies, set design, etc. What excited me most was the idea that a film could be done by one person, that he or she could do everything: conceive of the idea, shoot the film, make the sets and costumes, edit the film, do the sound, select the music. Film allowed me to do all these things, and hopefully 'paint' images from my dreams, observations, and personal memory." For Myers, "film is basically design, poetry, writing, painting, and photography, all in one."

His first film, *The Path*, established his "palette." "*The Path* was a short, silent film based on a dream," Myers explains. "I tried to direct the viewer through forms and substances, rather than with narrative and story. I thought of the film as a myth—myth as an intermediate and indispensable stage between conscious and unconscious cognition." And, emblematic of most of his later films, *The Path* features stunning black-and-white cinematography.

His basic process hasn't changed much. He waits to be moved—sometimes by just a single idea—to start a project. "Digging out an old 8mm *Frankenstein* film I made when I was twelve provided the basis for *Monster Show* (1995)," Myers explains, "Or discover-

ing a print of a 1941 Republic serial helped me embark on *Jungle Girl* (1984). Other times, it's a series of dreams and concepts that help to inaugurate the process." For Myers, "the film has to visually and rhythmically evolve from a more unconscious direction. I've never been concerned with what follows what—'narrative'—but rather with what goes with what."

In *Jungle Girl*, for instance, Myers weaves together a biography of Frances Gifford, real-life star of that 1941 Republic serial, with scenes from the serial, but remade using older, nonprofessional actors (actually close friends who have appeared in many of his films), and staged in a desolate landscape of abandoned warehouses, rail tracks, and highway overpasses. Moments from the life of the "real" Frances Gifford are intercut with a dreamy recreation of her adventure serial—a parallel dream-world, where points from Myers's life are inextricably mingled with the personal life and professional persona of this second-rate Hollywood star. The film stunningly interrogates how we "make sense" of movies, how we desire characters and idolize stars who invade our psyches.

"Jean Francoise Millet said that the painter need not go beyond his own backyard for suitable subject matter," says Myers, who will continue making films in Ohio. "As a filmmaker, I have tried to translate realities in and around me. Art is not the imitation of reality, but

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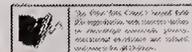
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rather one's articulation of that reality—the intellectualization of one's own experience." Few American filmmakers equal Myers in breadth of work and perseverance of vision, built upon self-examination and a deep love of cinema. In articulating his own reality, his own dreams, Myers has created a body of work that constitutes one of the outstanding achievements in American filmmaking.

The films of Richard Myers are available from Canyon Cinema in San Francisco and Film-makers Coop in New York.

Ruth Bradley is director of the Athens Center for Film and Video and editor of Wide Angle.

ELIZABETH BARRETT

WHITESBURG,
KENTUCKY

BY RUTH
BRADLEY

IN 1967, A CANADIAN film crew was shooting a documentary in eastern Kentucky when the film's director, Hugh O'Connor, was shot dead by Hobart Ison, upon whose property the O'Connor crew had set up. The incident became legendary in that area, home to Appalshop, a nonprofit, multi-arts center dedicated to preserving and celebrating the arts and culture of Appalachia. For Appalshop filmmaker Elizabeth Barrett, "It was always a significant event in the

lives of people doing film and video in this county. We carried it around with us, because we were working in the same place; people would refer to the story about 'the guy who was shot taking pictures.' It was something we didn't take lightly. It was a predecessor to any Appalshop work, because it happened in '67, the trial was in '68, and Appalshop began in

1969, so it was always a tale that we heard about, but we never had a really full picture of it."

Barrett's latest film, *Stranger with a Camera*, finally presents a full picture of the incident, explored from Barrett's unique position as both an "insider" from the region and as a "picture-taker" herself.

As a lifelong resident of the region, Barrett has firsthand experience of the belittlement and degradation generated by stereotypical images of mountain culture, so often depicted as awash with poverty and despair, or as a romantic, simple life filled with country bumpkins. "I sort of understood or shared some of this suspicion of 'out-



Photo: John Perkins, courtesy Appalshop Films

siders,' " says Barrett. "We could understand how this could have happened, what was under some of this hostility."

But another milestone occurred when one of the members of O'Connor's 1967 film crew came to Appalshop to make a film about poverty in Appalachia for the National Film Board of Canada. "That really hit home," Barrett admits. "He was drawn

back to this place he hated, where he had lost a friend. He talked about what he had witnessed, about the long-term impact of replaying the shooting over and over in his mind. Here was the first individual contact we'd had with someone from O'Connor's crew, and we began to see the other side of this whole story. I carried this story around with me; it was something I wanted to pursue, to understand what happened and why."

Barrett has been pursuing stories from the mountains for nearly 25 years. She came to Appalshop in 1973 straight out of college (from neighboring Perry County, 30 miles away) to enter a filmmaker training program. Her first experience with a camera was for a film called *Nature's Way*. One segment was about an elderly midwife. When the director and Barrett arrived at the midwife's home, they learned that a mother of twins would be giving birth that evening. They could film the birth, but no men would be allowed in the room. Barrett, never having used a camera before, would have to do the filming.

Watching that segment, it's fairly clear that the camera-person was a complete novice. Since then, however, Barrett has gone on to make numerous films on topics ranging from wood-carvers and story-tellers to coal-mining women and cultural migration. Each work is steeped with intimate knowledge of the Appalachian people and their culture. In many ways, Barrett's films are truly "home movies."

Barrett says, "That's why Appalshop is so unusual: we are primarily people from the region making films about the region. You don't leave. This is for the long term." Staying home has forced Appalshop makers to be particularly sensitive about their roles as artists in their community. Barrett admits, "Your immediate audience can be really hard on you—they know as much or more than you do. But that keeps you on your toes; it keeps you, hopefully, honest.

"People may not like all of Appalshop's work," she continues, "but they still support our effort, because within the community there's different points of view. Mountain culture may look homogeneous, but there's more diversity than may seem on the surface. We affiliate with each other on some things and not on other things. It's what communities do to get along, it's how people have figured out how to live with each other."

Stranger with a Camera is currently in post-production, with a projected release date of March 1998. Appalshop, 306 Madison, Whitesburg, KY 41858; (606) 633-0108.

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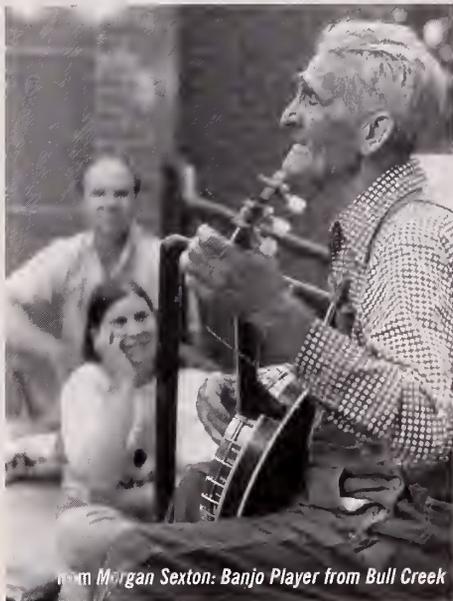
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APPALSHOP



Morgan Sexton: Banjo Player from Bull Creek

BY LISSA GIBBS

Appalshop, 306 Madison Street, Whitesburg, Kentucky 41858; (606) 633-0108 or (800) 545-SHOP; fax: 633-1009; appalshop@aol.com; www.uky.edu/Projects/Appal/films; distribution contact: Carolyn H. Sturgill

Who and what is Appalshop?

We are a group of people tied by a common thread, Appalachia. We are a worker-run nonprofit media cooperative governed by by-laws and a Board of Directors. We have no executives. Most of us have not been formally trained or educated in the field in which we work. Yet we continue to thrive. We all wear numerous hats and are usually tired and cranky. Appalshop is our second home and, according to our families, sometimes our first. We started out as a handful and are now a body of 32 individuals—sometimes more—struggling to enlighten the world about Appalachia through film, video, theater, recordings, a radio station that broadcasts to five states, and one-on-one, face-to-face confrontation in a downstairs art gallery and theater. We have a film/video production program, a television program of self-produced works for Kentucky Educational TV and other public television stations (*Headwaters Television*), a media literacy

and training program for high school students (Appalachian Media Institute), a distribution program for works in film and video, a record label (June Appal), a community radio station (WMMT-FM, with over 40 volunteers), and a traveling theater ensemble (Roadside Theater).

How, when, and why did Appalshop come into being?

Appalshop began in 1969 as the Appalachian Film Workshop, an OEO program (Office of Economic Opportunity's War on Poverty Training Program), to train young Appalachian students in filmmaking. These young filmmakers decided their region had a wealth of creative resources to keep them busy for a very long time and decided not to move to Hollywood. They realized the work they were doing was a way of giving the Appalachian people a voice to tell their own stories. June Appal was one of the first independent record labels to distribute nationally. Nationally-known folk artists first recorded on June Appal, including Jean Ritchie, David Holt, Robin and Linda Williams, and John McCutcheon. Our film and video programs have been broadcast nationally on P.O.V., the Learning Channel, and on public television stations. We also distribute to colleges and universities, community organizations and churches, museums and arts centers, stores, distributors, and individuals, both nationally and internationally.

Driving philosophy behind Appalshop:

To let as many people as possible know about the richness of Appalachian life, culture, and history and to draw attention to the economic, educational, and environmental issues that affect the region.

What would people be most surprised to learn about Appalshop and its distribution arm?

Maybe that we're just plain folks, several without a college degree (oh, no, I've said it). Our entire distribution staff is only two people: two middle-aged mothers with six kids between them.

How many works are in your collection?

84 films and videos, with half a dozen more in production. Recordings of 76 storytellers and musicians, including Ray Hicks (he wasn't a National Heritage winner until after the recording). We pick recording artists for their content, not always their quality of sound. We've recorded singers who did not have their teeth in during the recording session and storytellers who were difficult to

understand, even by people like myself who are Appalachian born and raised.

Do you only distribute Appalshop produced work? Yes

What sorts of works are they?

Mainly documentaries pertaining to economic, environmental, women's, cultural, and educational issues. They range from *Whoa, Mule*, a three-minute music documentary that aired on TNN and CMT, to *Hand Carved*, an 88-minute documentary on chairmaker Chester Cornett. We have documented chemical spills in West Virginia as well as coal strikes in the coal fields of Virginia. We even have a short narrative starring Ned Beatty, based on *Kinfolks*, short stories by Kentucky author Gurney Norman.

How does one become an Appalshop producer?

By living here and getting involved and understanding what Appalshop and the region are about. They must be willing to suffer to produce work that may not be funded, as most production funding here is generated by the filmmakers themselves.

Best known title in collection:

Probably *Strangers and Kin*, produced by Herb E. Smith. The film was released in 1984 and traces the evolution of the "hillbilly" image through Hollywood films, network news, entertainment shows, dramatic renderings of popular literature, and interviews with contemporary Appalachians to demonstrate how stereotypes are created, reinforced, and often used to rationalize exploitation. And *Fast Food Women*, by Anne Lewis, which aired on P.O.V. in 1992. It takes an inside look at the lives of women who fry chicken, make pizzas, and flip burgers in four fast-food restaurants in eastern Kentucky. These women, mostly middle-aged and raising children, are often the sole income source for their families. They work for wages barely above the minimum wage, have trouble getting full-time hours, and are without health care or other benefits.

What's your basic approach to releasing a title?

Mainly through letter-sized flyers that we send to our current buyers, film festivals, reviewers, and "our friends." We get the information out quickly and cheaply and maybe make a bit of quick money. This flyer is

used as a marketing tool to gather information and to learn how our audience feels about the work. We then develop a longer version of the flyer and send it to a targeted, bought educational mailing list.

Range of Appalshop production budgets:
From \$20,000 to several hundred thousand.

Words of advice to indie makers the world over:

A lot of producers—because they believe in their work—think that a million copies of it will sell. This is not likely to happen. Independent documentaries are like music; there are only a few stars that shine. And the ones that shine are usually determined by a market over which we usually have no control. Maybe filmmakers may need to be satisfied in knowing that they have created a work that is worthwhile to mankind. But I know that this advice doesn't feed the cat.

Highlight of your 14 year career at Appalshop:

To be considered a friend by one of our documentary subjects, Morgan Sexton, an 80-year-old banjo player from Bull Creek. He was

a hard-working, kind, and considerate father, husband, friend, and neighbor who worked in the coal mines shoveling coal by hand, in logging, and farming in order to make a living for his family. Morgan was the kind of person that means "Appalachia" to me.

Most pressing issue facing Appalshop distribution:

Our distribution has always been difficult because of our objectives. Funding from grant sources is becoming scarce and more difficult to obtain, which means fewer works will be produced. I fear our voice will be heard less in a time when our people and region are being affected the most by welfare reform, loss of jobs due to industrialization, environmental pollution, and the rape and plunder of our land and natural resources.

Other distributors you admire:

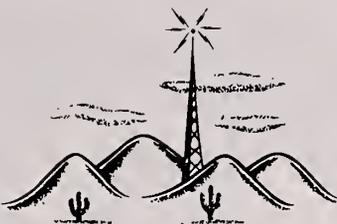
Debbie Zimmerman with Women Makes Movies. Deb is a scrapper who believes in her work and works hard to accomplish her goals. And Bullfrog Films because of their concern for the environment.

Famous Last Words:

Fighting to survive sure makes you tired.

Distributor F.A.Q. is a monthly column conducted by fax questionnaire. If you are a distributor and want to be profiled or a maker and want to find out more about a particular distributor, contact: Lissa Gibbs c/o *The Independent*, 304 Hudson St., 6th fl., NY, NY 10013, or drop an email to: lissa@sirius.com

Lissa Gibbs is a Bay Area-based media savant and former Film Arts Foundation Fest director



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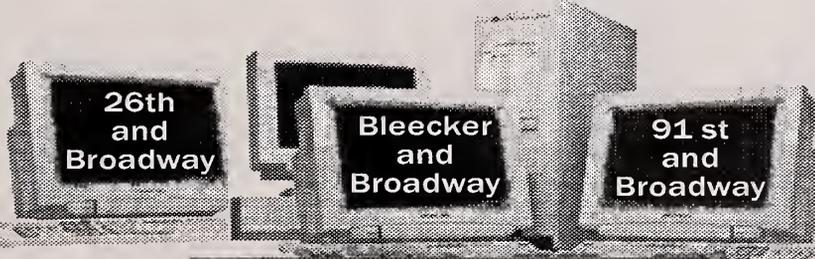
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MIDWEST FESTS

From Athens to Three Rivers: Offerings from the Heartland



BY CHARLES
CASSADY JR.

WHEN CLEVELANDER ANNETTA MARION WENT to the Slamdance Film Festival, she was amazed. "Our house is bigger than theirs!" she reported back to patrons of the Off-Hollywood Flick Fest, a grassroots Cleveland film/video fest she cofounded. The Flick Fest's "auditorium" is the idle ground floor of a smallish alternative playhouse in a dodgy part of Cleveland. Yet, said Marion, this ersatz cinema is larger and more accommodating than the nationally-known Utah venue.

Midwesterners, so the stereotype goes, are easily impressed. Perhaps they should be more impressed with themselves. Yes, there are cows. But there are also large cities, sprawling college campuses, respected art museums, and more serious filmmakers, fans, and patrons among the country's "flyover people" than you might think.

Ruth Bradley is the longtime director of the Athens International Film and Video Festival, an annual high point for the Ohio college town. "When I first came here I was sitting in a [fast food restaurant] and I overheard two people in the next booth say, 'I just can't wait

for the next film festival.'" The event, at that point, was still a good several months away. It continues to represent Athenians' main opportunity to enjoy indie cinema and video artists. "The whole town goes berserk. This is our once-a-year fix."

Although Chicago tends to get all the attention, many other film communities of the so-called Rust Belt have been shining quietly for years. Here's an informal rundown of the festival scene.

Athens International Film & Video Festival

Box 388, Athens, OH 45701; contact Ruth Bradley; (614) 593-1330; fax: 593-1328; rbradley1@ohiou.edu

The Athens Center for Film and Video, home of the journal *Wide Angle* (and not affiliated with nearby Ohio University), has sponsored this widely attended festival since 1973. Venues are spread around the lovely hills of this funky/hippie Appalachian town, and events take place in a casual, beer-drinking sort of atmosphere. More sobering is the total of \$8,000 in cash prizes. Last year 370 pieces were entered for competition, of which approximately 60 made the final cut. The festival has a Web site [www.vis.com.ohiou.edu/filmvideogifs/FilmVideoGenInfo.html] (take care not to confuse it with the new Athens Film Festival, launched this year in Athens, Georgia [www.negia.net/~gafilm/]).

Special Note: Next year's fest (May 1-8; submission deadline mid-February) marks the event's 25th anniversary. "What we're doing is putting together a list of all the films that we've ever shown, and all the guests who've ever been here," said festival director

Ruth Bradley. She has a \$10,000 budget to defray returnees' travel expenses. In addition to all-star workshops and seminars, milestone celebrations including a "Silver Prom," for which revellers should wear something silver.

Big Muddy Film and Video Festival

Department of Cinema & Photography, Mailcode 6610, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 69201; (618) 453-1482; fax: 453-1482; bigmuddy@siu.edu; www.siu.edu/~films/

Founded in 1978, this competitive festival for film and video is organized and run by the Southern Illinois University campus group Film Alternatives and provides experimenters with the opportunity to "challenge the traditional boundaries of the visual media." Three seasoned filmmakers traditionally serve as judges (retrospectives of their work are part of the fun) and award \$3,000 in cash prizes. News is certainly out about Big Muddy; around 300 entries are submitted annually, from which 70 or so are selected for the late February/early March event. Submission deadlines can be as late as early February, but material must have been completed after December of the preceding two years.

Cleveland International Film Festival

1621 Euclid Ave., Suite 428, Cleveland, OH 44115; contact David Wittkowky; (216) 623-0400; fax: 623-0103; CFSDWitt@aol.com; www.ciff.org.

One of the region's biggest film festivals got even

bigger when it moved its annual operation from a modest multiscreen arthouse to a Hoyts Cinemas multiplex in a brand-new downtown shopping/hotel/ amusement complex (an enclosed walkway runs straight from the cinema to a new baseball stadium). That draws a nice crowd of general moviegoers, loyal festival followers, and filmmakers for this class act. Invited filmmakers are put up at the posh Ritz Carlton-Cleveland and taken out to eat by fest supporters. National celebs are often in attendance (like Ohioans Debra Winger and Joe Eszterhas). The program is a good mix of foreign epics, independents, and low-budget semi-under-



(left to right): The last of the independents: screenwriter Joe Eszterhas (center), one of the many celebs who descend upon the Cleveland International Film Festival.

Annetta Marion and Bernadette Gillota, cofounders of Cleveland's funkier alternative, the Ohio Independent Film Festival (formerly the Off-Hollywood Flick Fest).

Indy indie accepts an award for his film *Dinner at 5:30* at the Indiana Film & Video Fest.
Courtesy festivals

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ground fare, and the central location couldn't be more convenient. Runs for two weeks in March; deadline is late November. Special entry classifications include family films, African/Black American images, Ten Percent Cinema (gay/lesbian), and particular themes, though all features are eligible for the same audience award.

Columbus International Film and Video Festival
5701 North High St., Suite 200, Worthington, OH 43085; contact: Joyce Long; (614) 841-1666; chrisawd@infinet.com; www.infinet.com/~chrisawd

Founded in 1952, this is one of the country's oldest nontheatrical competitive showcases, accepting independent and corporate/educational productions in up to 97 (count 'em) categories, from "Screenwriting" to "Health and Medicine for the Professional." There's even a competition for outstanding press material relating to film and video. The late October playdate (deadline for entries is July 1) serves as an Oscar qualifier, particularly for documentary short subjects. An awards presentation banquet takes place on the last Thursday in October. The festival is coordinated by the Film Council of Greater Columbus, a nonprofit educational group.

Special Note: The playdate nearly coincides with the Columbus International Festival, a paean to global understanding and multiculturalism sponsored by a local chapter of the United Nations, that brings scores of distinguished visitors to area.

Heartland Film Festival

613 N. East St., Indianapolis, Indiana 46202; contact: Jeffrey Sparks; (317) 464-9405; fax: 635-4201; www.heartlandfilmfest.org

The Heartland Film Festival was founded in 1991 with the explicit mission of "expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life." Past specials have included a cast/filmmaker reunion for *Hoosiers*, a guest shot by the star of TV's *Touched by an Angel*, and a speech by critic Michael Medved, author of *Hollywood vs. America*. Get the general drift? Especially if you've got a film like *Sick* or *Crumb*, best check out their fine Website to get the lay of the land.

Special Note: *Daily Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* are known to give this November event (deadline in mid-June) respectful coverage.

Indiana Film & Video Festival

820 East 67th St., Indianapolis, IN 46220; contact Dave Thomas: (317) 299-1800; inartctr@inetdirect.net; www.inetdirect.net/inartctr/ifs.html

Held in association with the Indianapolis Art Center, this juried competition is open to students, amateurs, and professionals from Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and Kentucky—and, of course, Indiana. Several broad categories of entries run the gamut from fiction to experimental/avant-garde to "Music Video." Winners share over \$10,000 in cash and prizes. Student finalists in the late July contest (submission deadline: early June) are eligible for internship opportunities.

Special Note: Works submitted also have the chance to be broadcast on the Indianapolis PBS-TV affiliate as part of the show *Reel Time*.

Louisville Film and Video Festival

2337 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, KY 40206; contact Andy Perry: (502) 893-9661; fax: 893-9661; jap40@aol.com

Entries for this early November festival (deadline August 1) can be in a wide array of formats and may range from experimental to conventional narratives, but all must have been completed sometime during the prior three years. Founded in 1990, the competitive event is sponsored by Artswatch, a nonprofit local contemporary arts organization and multimedia gallery described as "tiny"; film/ video exhibits are held at various sites around town.

Ohio Independent Film Festival

2258 West 10th St., Cleveland, OH 44113; contact Bernadette Gillota: (216) 781-1755; OhioIndie FilmFest@jumo.com; www.rinestock.com/flickfest/index/html

This is the revamped version of the Off-Hollywood Flick Fest (est. 1993). The showcase of film and video is open to all, but as co-founder Annetta Marion says, "We bend over backwards for Ohio people." Formerly there was enough material for the weekend-long Flick Fest to take place four times per year, but demands on the organizers' time (they're filmmakers as well) have cut the Ohio Independent Film Festival back to a semiannual event, held in November and April. Deadlines are in early August and early January. The fest, which adds panel discussions and performance art to the projected media, attracts an enthusiastic alternative young audience.

Prized Pieces International Film & Video Competition

761 Oak Street, Columbus, OH 43205; contact Jacqueline Tshaka; (614) 229-4399; fax: 229-4398; nbpc@supptec.com; http://www.nbpc.org

Sponsored by the National Black Programming Consortium [see story pg. 28], this April event (Deadline: September 5) recognizes and honors Black film and video production in numerous categories of nonfiction and fiction. Entries must have been produced within the last two years, with the exception of the student competition (5 years). Event includes a formal awards dinner, with clips from winning entries and eminent keynote speakers.

Three Rivers Film Festival

477 Melwood Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213; contact Pittsburgh Filmmakers: (412) 681-5449; fax 681-5503; www.pgh.pa.us/FilmFest/

Held late October to mid-November (deadline September 1), this two-week, noncompetitive festival encompasses features, shorts, foreign films and videos, and usually presents a program of 40-50 features with a sidebar of short subjects. Exhibitions are split between several different theaters. Local interest runs high, with the "Midnight Madness screenings" always attracting the most colorful audiences. Limited funds are available to underwrite visits from filmmakers.

Charles Cassady, Jr. (eb375@cleveland.freenet.edu) writes on local film production for the Morning Journal of Lorain, Ohio, and the Cleveland Free Times.

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BY CASSANDRA
URETZ

NOW THAT EVERYPLACE ON EARTH HAS BEEN explored, cannibals on Willa Walla Island are losing their food supply. With no new anthro-



Bhakti at the Beach: Miss India Georgia hopera brings down the house. All photo courtesy filmmakers

pologists coming by for a fry to keep their vibrant gourmet tradition going, the natives in Sherrill Shaw's video project *Hunger* launch a desperate publicity campaign to lure some tasty little Frenchmen back to the island for dinner. Their bait includes a bogus Rosetta Stone, vultures glued with prehistoric get up, a Fountain of Youth, and the usual hula babes. *Hunger*, Hungry Wolf Productions, Phoenix Studios, 427 Market St., East Liverpool, OH 43920.

Confirming your suspicions that everyone around you is out to lunch, *The Waiter* explores the world of a lonely food service professional who dips his toe into several urban melodramas swirling around his workplace, only to find them just as dead-end as his own. But these entanglements are more hot to handle than his usual fare, and the gentle cave of a life he's been hiding in becomes charged by their changing fortunes. *The Waiter*, Broad Ripple Films, (510) 525-2503.

The "Miss India Georgia" Pageant is a hodgepodge of dissimilar assimilations. Every

summer, girls representing Atlanta's 20,000 Indian-Americans take to the stage, mixing it up with the glittering stereotypes of both cultures in a race to exemplify their community's successful integration into Western life. But as *Miss India Georgia* reveals, behind each girl's cheerleading routine is a grueling struggle to find herself despite family indictments, pressuring peers and her own opinion toward the traditions she is forced to shoulder and whose future her choices will inevitably change. *Miss India Georgia*, (937) 767-7982/dfriedman@antiochcollege.edu

Decades into the battle against the beauty myth, we still find ourselves at square one: advertisers tell us who to be, and we listen. In *Public Images*, videographer Carol Tizzano takes on the glam feminine ideal current in pop media, images of "girls and women (that) are unrealistically...sexualized" in a way that wears down women's self-esteem, driving them into painful, often dangerous behavior as they strive to measure up. "There's a standard of attractiveness that's almost unattainable," says Tizzano, that makes eating disorders, depression, and obsession with appearances a rite of passage for many modern

women. Although Tizzano interviews men and women from age five to 75, she focuses on younger people who, as prime targets of the media blitz, are most susceptible to its influence. *Public Images*, The Public Images Project, 1425 Waterbury Road, Lakewood, OH 44107; (216) 228-7420.

The seamy seduction beneath America's long-running romance with the road comes clean in *Taken for a Ride*, an exposé of the automobile industry's war on public transportation. Robber baron General Motors and its ilk sent "highway lobbies" into city governments over a 25-year period beginning in the 1930's,

bulldozing the bantam weight rail systems then in place to build the smog-infested highway maze we now call home. Not ones to profit by experience, the lobbies have come back in the '90's, swatting at environmentalists with a plan to increase auto use once again. *Taken for a Ride*, New Day Films, 22D Hollywood Ave., Hohokus, NJ 07423; (202) 652-6590.

Cincinnati's Jane Goetzman and Dorothy Weil, CINE Golden Eagle recipients for their Ohio River series (1985-1994), recently completed *Mountain Shadow: Four Appalachian Artists*, a video documentary following four women who left the country to bring their creative lives to light in the urban world. Now successful artists, these women recall how lost they felt leaving their homes for the big city, the well-meant attempts they met to make them over in a mainstream mold, and the work that eventually grew from their small-town roots. The program chronicles "first lady of bluegrass" Katie Laur; photographer Dee Smart and her fellow Kentuckian, poet Brenda Saylor; and Omope Carter Daboiku, a traditional storyteller from Ironton, Ohio. *Mountain Shadow: Four Appalachian Artists*, TV Image, Inc., 187 Greendale Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45220.

Jill Godmilow is putting the finishing



Jim Klein's *Taken for a Ride* sees the Pacific Electric Railway's "Red Car" off on a road to nowhere

touches on What Farocki Taught, her English translation of German director Harun Farocki's 1969 classic *Inextinguishable Fire*. Farocki meticulously recreated Dow Chemical's development of napalm, refusing to coddle his audience with classic documentary technique. Godmilow intends her version as "a second edition of a film that should



Dow project director confers with worker over a napalm test batch in Jill Godmilow's *What Farocki Taught*.

Courtesy filmmaker

have been... distributed in the U.S... and as a stubborn refusal to go on to future, slicker wars until the corporate crimes of Vietnam have been fully considered." *What Farocki Taught*, Laboratory for Icon & Idiom, Inc., 125 W. Marion St., South Bend, IN 46601; (219) 631-7167.

When Susan Smith confessed to drowning her two sons, she became the media's demon. After keeping America sensationalized for weeks with tales of a Black kidnapper whisking off her children, Smith's revelation made her a lightning rod for the nation's rage against racism, domestic violence, and wicked single moms hellbent on felling the family tree. Cincinnati documentarian Lynn Estomin travels a more thoughtful road in *Motherhood on Trial*, checking out the real social attitudes that drove the abused, abandoned Smith to murder. *Motherhood on Trial*, Filmmaker's Library, 124 E. 40th St., NY, NY 10016; (212) 808-4980.

Quilting gets its day in *A Scrap of Pride*, the new documentary from Emmy Award-winners Luanne Bole-Becker and Bob Becker. "Quilting is unique," explains curator Jonathan Holstein before the Becker camera. "It is one of the few direct living links with our past." In this true tale of the Cleveland Bicentennial Quilt, more than 200 locals collaborated as part of a community project to fight racism, putting some personal, positive witchery into the stitchery. Currently available to educators and community group leaders as part of a resource package, *Scrap* won a 1997 Silver Apple Award from the National Educational Media Network. *A Scrap of Pride*, BB Sound & Light Ltd., 1524 Lewis Drive, Cleveland, OH 44107; (216) 228-5015.

The *Toledo Conspiracy*, the aforementioned city's first full-length 35mm feature, finished shooting in June 1997. A shaggy dog satire of the conspiring genre, the film follows three innocents who stumble on a secret government canister (contents unknown) and try,

L.A.

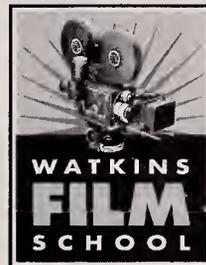
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Russ Johnson's *Necropolis* looks at man's urge to mark territory.

naturally, to sell it on the black market. The loyalist local directors Jason Hamilton and Gregg Stoffel have primarily used Toledo actors, musicians, and crew members. *The Toledo Conspiracy*, Leata Films, 1914 Alvin St., Toledo, OH 43607; (419) 475-6895.

In *Necropolis*, filmmaker Russ Johnson brings together images of earthen dams, Indian burial mounds, landfills and assorted urban blight to examine civilization's compulsive need to mark its territory and engrave evidence of its existence into the landscape. Johnson disregards the inner life society shouts about with its artful debris, letting the landscapes themselves do the talking in a montage of competing spatial constructs. *Necropolis*, Media Working Group; ph: (606) 581-0033.

Kenneth and Julia Love, the Pittsburgh-based documentary duo, are completing two new projects. Julia Love recently collaborated with historian Susan Rhodes on *Women in the Wings: Pittsburgh's World War II Workers*, a study of glider production the H.J. Heinz company secretly conducted during World War II. Interviewing pilots, various riveting Rosies who put the planes together, and Heinz hangers-on who recall the company's clandestine efforts, Love deepens our understanding of the war at home. Kenneth Love's film *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese Art* rediscovers Frank Lloyd Wright's inspired relationship with the Far East, joining archival footage with previously unheard recordings of Wright describing his creative process. Kenneth and Julia Love, (412) 682-4948; fax: 682-4738.

Appalshop cohort Andrew Garrison carries on the company standard with *The Wilgus Stories* trilogy. Debunking the Texas chainsaw pastoreale so many city mice fancy America to

be from Vegas to Miami Beach, Garrison captures the authentic mid-mountain experience in his one-hour adaptation of author Gurney Norman's Appalachian coming-of-age stories. Each short film follows key events in the life of Wilgus Collier, a boy growing up in the coalfields. ITVS will be contributing completion funds to *Maxine*, the third installation in the series. *The Wilgus Stories*, North Fork Films, 180 Weisser Ave., Louisville, KY 40206; (502) 899-1859.

Director Tom Hayes takes on the controversial Palestinian dilemma, challenging U.S. foreign aid policy to the Middle East with a rigorous evaluation of Israel's dealings in the occupied territories. With two previous documentaries confronting cultural displacement to his credit, Hayes's *People and the Land* brings a spirited approach to a situation seconds away from a flashpoint. *People and the Land*, Diverse Media Zone, Inc., 208 Maynard Ave., Columbus, OH 43202; (614) 268-9816.

Chris Iovenko, producer of such works as *Star Maps* and *Hawgwild in Suurgis*, is currently finishing his 35mm short film *Remember This*, a black comedy about a chain smoker who falls under the influence of a snakeoiling hypnotist. *Remember This*, Pan-Opticon Films, 1224 E. Broadway, Louisville, KY 40204; (502) 581-1105.

Bible Stories, a 16mm feature based on Larry Dean Harris's play, presents three different directors taking issue with moral and spiritual questions through 12 short monologues. *Bible Stories*, 2130 Scottwood Ave., Apt. 4, Toledo, OH 43620.

Cassandra Uretz is editorial assistant at The Independent.

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DOMESTIC

ANTI-FILM FESTIVAL, Feb., FL. Deadline: Early Jan. Founded in 1993, fest emphasizes films "that challenge status quo, present difficult ideas & feature social, political or structural analysis." Organizers of fest define it as: "Anti-Film Festival", not 'anti-film', in opposition to fests as gala marketing affairs w/ corporate sponsorship, etc. Seek marginal, obscure minority of filmmakers w/ taste for poetry, danger & complete disregard for market. Entries should be under 15 min, completed w/in last yr. Cash prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", super 8. Entry fee: \$25. Contact: Geraldine Smythe, Co-op Manager, Alliance Film Video Co-op, 924 Lincoln Rd., Ste. 208, Miami Beach, FL 33139; (305) 538-8242; fax: (305) 532-9710; filmvideo@netrunner.net

ASPEN SHORTFEST, April 1-5, CO. Deadline: Dec. 5 (early), Jan. 15 (final); fee \$20 (early), \$30 (final). A five-day celebration of the art of short film, showcasing approximately 60 films under 40 min. in length. An int'l competitive event, awarding over \$10,000 in total cash prizes, Aspen Shortfest encourages submission of works in all genres, including animation, comedy, doc, drama & children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta. Preview on VHS. Contact: George Eldred, Aspen Shortfest, 110 East Hallam, Suite 102, Aspen, CO. 81611; (970) 925-6882; fax: 925-1967; shortsfest@aspenfilm.org; www.aspen.com/filmfest

ATHENS INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 1-8, OH. Deadline: Feb. 9. Fest seeks entries for its 25th Silver Anniversary Festival. In acknowledging current technical possibilities in film/video production, the Athens Festival defines "film" as a work whose primary intended viewing context is as a projected celluloid image; "video" as a work whose primary intended viewing context is as a video image on a monitor/TV, or as presented via video projection. Each entry is pre-screened by a pre-screening committee comprised of filmmakers, videomakers, and other artists associated with the Athens Center for Film and Video. Cash prizes will be awarded to competition winners in each category. Categories include Narrative (traditional and experimental),

Documentary (traditional and experimental), Experimental, and Animation. Each entrant must provide pre-paid return shipping/insurance. For preview purposes, 1/2" NTSC, 3/4" U-matic, and 16mm prints are acceptable. All works that evidence a high regard for artistic innovation, sensitivity to content, and personal involvement with the medium will be welcomed. Entry fee: \$25 plus pre-paid return shipping/insurance. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2"; preview on cassette. Contact: Athens Int'l Film & Video Festival, Athens Center for Film & Video, Box 388, Athens, OH 45701; (614) 593-1330; fax: 593-1328; bradley@oak.cats.ohiou.edu; www.viscom.ohiou.edu/filmvideogifs/Athensfilmvideofest.html

ATLANTA FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, June, GA. Deadline: Mid Jan. Presented by media arts center IMAGE, competitive fest founded in 1976 and dedicated to innovative, entertaining productions. \$7,000 in cash, services & equipment awarded in several cats; film & video awarded separately. Film: Grand Jury Award, Best Doc, Best Experimental, Best Narrative, Best Animation, Best Student, Southeastern Film & Video Makers Award. Video: Juror's Award for Achievement and Best Doc, Experimental, Narrative, Student, Animation, plus many others that judges create. All work must be independent & must have been completed since Jan. 1 of preceding 2 yrs. Sponsored works (industrials, commercials, etc.) ineligible. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Super 8, 8mm. Entry fee: \$40 (individual/nonprofit); \$30 IMAGE members/students; \$50 (distributor/for profit); add \$5 for foreign. Contact: Gabriel Wardell, fest director, Atlanta Film & Video Festival, IMAGE Film/Video Center, 75 Bennett St., Ste. N1, Atlanta, GA 30307; (404) 352-4254; fax: 352-0173; afvf@imagefv.org; www.imagefv.org

CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, March 19-29. Deadline: Nov. 30. OH CIFF is one of Cleveland's premiere film events. Presents approx. 60 new feature films from around world in various cats & more than 100 short subjects presented in collected programs. Film Forums follow selected films, giving audiences opportunity to discuss films w/ filmmakers, critics & other guest panelists. Audiences estimated at 25,000. Entries submitted (VHS preview) must have been completed within previous 2 yrs & not previously submitted. In recent yrs, cash awards of \$500 have been presented for Best Short, Student Short, Ohio Short, African-American Short, Women's Short, & Doc Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry Fee: \$35 shorts, \$60 features. Contact: Angie Stetzy, Entry Coordinator, Cleveland Int'l Film Festival, 1621 Euclid Avenue, Ste. 428, Cleveland, OH 44115; (216) 623-0400; fax: 623-0103; www.ciff.org

DALLAS VIDEO FESTIVAL, March 5-8, TX. Deadline: Nov. 8. The 11th Dallas Video Festival will be held at the Dallas Theater Center and is a showcase of new works by ind artists. Presented by Video Association of Dallas, features general fest programming (state of medium—as art, as entertainment, as document, as archive & as commerce, basically all genres). Cash prize in memory of video artist and teacher Barbra Aronofsky Latham; rental fees paid to participants. This year the Latham Award is \$1200 for the best work from an emerging video artist. Program features Texas Show, juried program of new

FESTIVALS by Thomas Pallotta

works prod by Texas artists, Interactive Zone, for interactive works & KidVid, for works by & for children/teens. Entries must be prod or post-prod on video or shot on film & transferred to video, or primarily meant to be exhibited or distributed on video or other electric media; works previously entered ineligible. Annual audiences est. at 5000-8000 for program of 150-250 works. Extensive local coverage. Formats: Beta SP, 3/4", 1/2", multimedia, installations. Fee: \$25 for members of the Video Association of Dallas, \$30 for non-members. Contact: Bart Weiss, fest director, Dallas Video Fest, Video Association of Dallas, 1405 Woodlawn ave Dallas, TX 75208; (214) 651-8600; fax: 651-8600; bart@onramp.net; www.videofest.org

GEORGE FOSTER PEABODY AWARDS, May, NY. Deadline: Mid Jan. Estab. in 1940, awards recognize "distinguished achievement & meritorious public service" by domestic & int'l radio & TV nets, stations, producing orgs, cable TV orgs & individuals. Awards administered by Henry W. Grady College of Journalism & Mass Communication of Univ. of Georgia. Selections made by Nat'l Advisory Board. Competition also open to entries produced for alternative distribution, incl. corporate, educational & home video release; those intended for theatrical release ineligible. Award cats: News; Entertainment; Programs for Children; Education; Doc; Public Service; & Individuals, Institutions or Organizations. All program entries must be for programs broadcast, cablecast or released for nonbroadcast distribution during calendar yr preceding jurying process. All entries become permanent part of Peabody Collection, one of nation's oldest & largest moving image archives; entry materials not returned. Formats accepted: Beta SP, 3/4", 1/2" (for judging). Entry fee: \$150. Contact: Director, George Foster Peabody Awards, College of Journalism & Mass Communications, Sanford Dr. at Baldwin St., Univ. of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-3018; (706) 542-3787; fax: 542-9273; peabody@uga.cc.uga.edu; www.peabody.uga.edu

INT'L SURREALIST FILM FESTIVAL, CT. Dec. 5 & 6. Deadline: Nov. 15. Fest to take place in Fairfield County, CT. All genres accepted. Panel of judges, which range from rock stars to filmmakers, decide what is surreal and will send a written critique to all entrants regardless of acceptance. Live organist will be present for silent films, if filmmaker desires. Grand prize is a 16mm Bolex movie camera. Other prizes and categories will be decided after judges see all films. Last years categories included "most abrasive" and "most oblique." Submit preview on VHS. \$25 entry fee. Formats: 16mm, S-8 & video, single system sound only. Send complete cast and credits list along with all pertinent production info. Contact: Int'l Surrealist Film Festival, c/o Alexander Berberich, Festival Director, Box 1285, New Rochelle, NY 10802; (914) 738-2209; oniongod@ix.netcom.com

LAGUNA BEACH FILM FESTIVAL, Mar 13-15, CA. Deadline: Dec. 31. Feature films, shorts & docs, must be independent and completed after Jan. 1, 1997. A non-profit event, all money is donated to child abuse prevention programs. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2" VHS. Entry Fee: features \$35,

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shorts \$20. Contact: Program Director, Laguna Beach Film Festival, Box 4444, Laguna Beach, CA 92652; ph/fax: (714) 494-1313; lainco@fia.net; www.lagunafilmfestival.org

LOS ANGELES INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Apr. 16-20, CA. Deadline: Jan. 15. Showcases "best in independent film from throughout the country." Full-length feature films, shorts & docs, completed after Jan. 1, 1997. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2" VHS. Contact: Rebeka Mata, Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, 5455 Wilshire Blvd. #1500, Los Angeles, CA 90036; (213) 937-9155; fax 213-937-7770; www.laiff.com

MONITOR AWARDS, July, CA. Deadline: Jan 30. Sponsored by Int'l Teleproduction Society, competition honors excellence in electronic production & postproduction. Cats & craft areas incl. TV series; TV specials; theatrical releases; music video; nat'l commercials; local commercials; promos; children's programming; sports; docs; shorts; show reels; corporate communication; opens, closes & titles; transitions; logos & IDs. Awards: best achievement honors to producers, directors, editors, etc. in each cat. Entries must have been produced or postproduced w/in previous calendar yr & entries originating on film must be postproduced electronically. Formats: Beta SP 3/4", CD-ROM or URL address. Entry fee: \$175-\$200. Contact: Int'l Monitor Awards, 2230 Gallows Rd, Suite 310, Dunn Loring, VA 22027 (703) 641-8770; fax: 641-8776.

FESTIVAL

NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS, March 21-April 6, NY. Deadline: Jan 17. Highly regarded non-competitive series presented by Film Society of Lincoln Center & Museum of Modern Art. Founded in '72, fest presents average of 23 features & 15 shorts each yr at MoMA. About 900 entries submitted. No cats; all genres & lengths considered. Shorts presented w/ features. Films generally shown twice; however, docs may be shown only once. Films selected by 3 programmers at Film Society & 3 curators from museum. Fest is well publicized; all programs reviewed in *New York Times* & *Village Voice*. Generally sells out (attendance averages 93% & estimated at 25,000). Entries must have been completed w/in previous yr & be NY premieres with no prior public exhibition. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on cassette, tapes not returned. Entry fee: None. Send SASE for entry form or download from website starting in November. Contact: Sara Bensman, film coordinator, New Directors/New Films, Film Society of Lincoln Center, 70 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York NY 10023-6595; (212) 875-5638; fax: 875-5636; www.filmline.com

PHAT SHORTS, THE FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. NY. Deadline: Dec. 20. Premier NYC venue in its third year, celebrating the artistry of shorts, and the ingenuity and community of independent filmmakers; presented by Packawallop Productions, a not-for-profit prod. co. Seeking narrative, experimental, doc & animated films/videos of 30 min. or less. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2". Entry fee: \$15. Contact: Packawallop Productions, 136 East 13th St., NYC 10003; (212) 979-6792

PHILADELPHIA FESTIVAL OF WORLD CINEMA, Apr. 29 - May 10, PA. Early deadline: Dec. 1; \$15 (US), \$20 (int'l). Final deadline: Jan. 12; \$20 (US), \$25 (int'l). 7th annual noncompetitive fest offers "an enriching view of world culture & a diver-

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Diverse, committed, opinionated, and fiercely independent—these are the video and filmmakers who are members of AIVF. Documentary and feature filmmakers, animators, experimentalists, distributors, educators, students, curators—all concerned that their work make a difference—find the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, the national service organization for independent producers, vital to their professional lives. Whether it's our magazine, *The Independent Film & Video Monthly*, or the organization raising its collective voice to advocate for important issues, AIVF preserves your independence while letting you know you're not alone.

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technical, and legal matters. Plus festival listings, funding deadlines, exhibition venues, and announcements of member activities and new programs and services. Special issues highlight regional activity and focus on subjects including media education and the new technologies.

INSURANCE

Members are eligible to purchase discounted personal and production insurance plans through AIVF suppliers. A range of health insurance options are available, as well as special liability, E&O, and production plans tailored for the needs of low-budget mediamakers.

TRADE DISCOUNTS

A growing list of businesses across the country offer AIVF members discounts on equipment and auto rentals, film processing, transfers, editing, and other production necessities. Plus long-distance and overnight courier services are available at special rates for AIVF members from national companies. In New York, members receive discounted rates at two hotels to make attendance at our programs and other important events more convenient.

CONFERENCE/SCREENING ROOM

AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

INFORMATION

We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

WORKSHOPS, PANELS, AND SEMINARS

Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

ADVOCACY

Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

COMMUNITY

AIVF sponsors monthly member get-togethers in cities across the country; call the office for the one nearest you. Plus members are carrying on active dialogue online—creating a "virtual community" for independents to share information, resources, and ideas. Another way to reach fellow independents to let them know about your screenings, business services, and other announcements is by renting our mailing list, available at a discount to members.

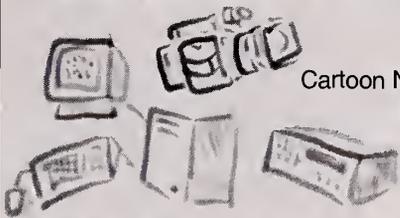
sity of filmmaking culminating in a region-wide celebration of cinema." Fest includes premieres of int'l & US independents, classic cinema, tributes, guest filmmakers, seminars, panel discussions, Cine Cafes, extensive local press coverage, parties & more. Last yr's fest included 135 features, docs & shorts from 34 countries, w/ audiences estimated at 20,000. Entries must be Philadelphia premieres produced after May 1996. Formats: 35mm & 16mm; preview on VHS (NTSC or PAL) preferred. Contact: Cindi Rowell, Open Call Coordinator, Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, 3701 Chestnut St., Phila., PA 19104; (215) 895-6593; fax: 895-6562; pfwc@libertynet.org; www.libertynet.org/pfwc

ROSEBUD COMPETITION, April, DC. Deadline: Jan 18. Rosebud is all-volunteer org. formed in '90 to promote ind. film & video in Washington, DC area. Goal is to honor "innovative, experimental, unusual or deeply personal in creative filmmaking." Competition accepts works completed or first released since Jan. of preceding 2 yrs; eligible entrants are producers or directors who are current residents of DC, MD, or VA. Works accepted in all cats, incl. narrative, doc, art/experimental, music video & animation; works-in-progress/trailers/promos welcome if they stand on their own. Nominees not selected by category, all works compete against each other. 20 nominees & 5 winners incl. Best of Show, chosen by ind. panel of film & video professionals. Cash & equipment/supplies prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta-SR 3/4" and 1/2". Entry fee: \$25. Deadline: Late Jan. Contact: Stacy Surla, Administrative Director, Rosebud Competition, Box 21309, Washington, DC 20009; (202) 797-9081; rosebudwdc@aol.com; http://members.aol.com/rosebudwdc

SAN DIEGO LATINO FILM FESTIVAL, CA. Mar. 3-7 Deadline: Nov. 30. In the last four years, some 200 Latino student films and videos have been screened at venues across San Diego and Baja California to some 5000 people. The festival, known then as "Cine Estudiantil", has been the largest annual Latino/Chicano film and video festival in Southern California. Award-winning student films/videos from throughout the United States, Mexico, Latin America have been screened. In addition, distinguished filmmakers and actors have shared their passion for the medium and its challenges with students, aspiring filmmakers & general audiences. As in previous years, fest will include screenings throughout the San Diego and Tijuana community, discussions with filmmakers, and a catalogue of all films and videos screened. The curators will be looking for works by Latinos &/or about the Latino experience produced between 1994-1997. Formats: 35mm, 16mm (preview on cassette), 3/4", 1/2". Fee: \$10 handling fee payable by check or money order to Centro Cultural de la Raza. Contact: Ethan van Thillo, the San Diego Latino Film Festival, c/o Centro Cultural de la Raza, 2125 Park Blvd., San Diego, CA 92101, (619) 230-1938, LatinoFilm@aol.com; http://members.aol.com/LatinoFilm/index.htm

SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, March. CA. Deadline: Dec. 1. Founded in 1986 & committed to diverse programming. Comprising approx. 125 films, seminars, workshops, tributes, retros, gala parties & special events. Awards: Best Feature, Artistic Excellence, Best doc feature, Best doc short, Best live action short, audience

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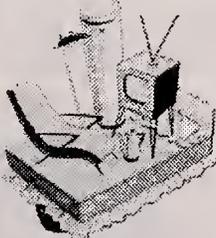
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choice, Best local filmmaker. Jury of film related professionals selects winners in each category. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$40 US/\$45 int'l. Contact: D. Durst, director, Santa Barbara International Film Festival, 1216 State St., Ste 710, Santa Barbara, CA 93101-2623; (805) 963-0023, fax: 962-2524; sbiff@west.net

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST FILM FESTIVAL (SXSW), Mar. 13-21, TX. Deadline: Dec. 13. Regional & ind. film & video showcases approx. 150 works, incl. shorts, for audiences estimated at 20,000 over 9 days. Entries must have been completed in 1997. Works completed prior to 1997 considered for showcasing outside competition. Awards: Best Narrative & Doc Feature, Best Narrative, Doc, Animated & Experimental Short, Best Music Video. SXSW Film Conference kicks off fest, featuring 4 days of panel discussions on aspects of filmmaking geared toward working film & videomakers as well as screenwriters, aspiring professionals & movie aficionados. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$20. Contact: Nancy Schafer, exec. producer, SXSW Film, Box 4999, Austin, TX 78765; (512) 467-7979; fax: 451-0754; sxsw@sxsw.com; www.sxsw.com/sxsw

TAOS TALKING PICTURE FESTIVAL, Apr. 16-19, NM. Deadline: Jan. 15. Estab as artists' colony more than a century ago, Taos is known for eclectic mixture of cultures, traditions & philosophies. In this context fest organizers program over 100 new ind. features, docs, videos & shorts during 4 day fest. Highlights incl. Tributes; Open Sheet screenings (come-one-come-all showcase for emerging filmmakers); Hispanic & Native American programs, as well as comprehensive Media Literacy Forum that offers attendees panel discussions, workshops & demonstrations focusing on state of media. Innovation Award of 5 acres of land to be awarded to narrative, doc or experimental film, 70 min. or longer, which takes fresh approach to storytelling &/or cinematic medium. Entries should have been completed w/in 18 mos. of fest. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video; preview on VHS. Entry fee: \$15-\$25 (no fee for int'l entries). Contact: Kelly Clement, Dir. of Programming, Taos Talking Pictures, 216M North Pueblo Road, #216, Taos, NM 87571; (505) 751-0637; fax: 751-7385; ttpix@taosnet.com; www.taosnet.com/ttpix

FOREIGN

EURO UNDERGROUND, Deadline: Jan 10. A cross-cultural arts organization exhibiting works in Europe. Exhibition opportunities in Germany, England and Prague Czech/Republic. Euro Underground seeks underground, independent and experimental film and video. Categories include: Features, Shorts, Docs, Animation & Experimental. Euro Underground will exhibit work on a year-round basis and give interested film/videomakers the chance to show in one or more cities in Europe. Contact: Euro Underground 2501 N. Lincoln Ave., Suite 187, Chicago IL, 60614; (888) 864-9644, fax: (773) 292-9205; cuff@ripco.com; www.EuroUnderground.org

LOCAL HEROES INTERNATIONAL SCREEN FESTIVAL: March 8 to 14, Canada. Deadline: Mid Dec. This fest has several components, including seminars (present case studies of current issues facing independent filmmakers); and Declarations of

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MALMO CHILDREN & YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL (BUFF), April, Sweden. Deadline: early Dec. Fest is noncompetitive. About 120-150 titles are shown to audiences estimated at 12,000 over 4 days. Features, shorts, docs, experimental & animated works accepted. Main feature is latest films from Nordic countries. Program incl. seminar for teachers & others who use film; different theme each year. Co-produced w/ Swedish Film Institute. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. No entry fee. Contact: Ola Tedin, fest director, BUFF (Barnoch Ungdomsfilmfestivalen), Box 179, S-201, 21 Malmo, Sweden; tel: 011 46 40 30 78 22; fax: 011 46 40 30 53 22; buff@kajen.com; www.kajen.com/buff

SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, April, Singapore. Deadline: Mid Jan. FIAPF-recognized invitational fest for features, shorts, docs & animation. Offers noncompetitive & competitive section for Asian cinema, w/ award for best Asian feature. Open to features completed after Jan. 1 of preceding yr. Entries must be Singapore premieres. About 120 features shown each yr, along w/ 60 shorts & videos from 35 countries. Main section shows 35mm; all other formats accepted in fringe programs. Several US ind films have been featured in past editions. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Fee: None. Contact: Philip Cheah, fest dir, Singapore Int'l Film Festival, 29A Keong Saik Rd., Singapore 089136; tel: 011 65 738 7567; fax: 011 65 738 7578; filmfest@pacific.net.sg; www.filmfest.org.sg

TAMPERE INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Mar. 4-8, Finland. Deadline: Jan. 5. In 28th year. Latests in Finnish & int'l productions & selected films from earlier yrs for audiences of over 40,000, w/ over 200 int'l guests & large group from Finnish film industry & press. Over 400 films from 40 countries showcased. 3 cats in int'l competition (100 films): animated films, docs & fiction. Running time may not exceed 30 min. & films must have had first public screening on or after Jan. 1 of 1996. Educational, industrial, advertising & tourist films not accepted. Awards: Grand Prix: statuette "Kiss" & 25,000 FIM (about \$4,545); Cat Prizes: "Kiss" & 4,000 FIM (about \$730) for best film in each cat; Special Prize of Jury: "Kiss" & 4,000 FIM (\$730); Diplomas of Merit. About 20 thematic programs. There is also film market (w/ over 1,300 shorts) & seminars (specializing this year on Baltic & Eastern European productions). Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on VHS. Contact: Tampere Int'l Short Film Festival, Box 305, FI-33101 Tampere, Finland; tel: 011 358 3 213 0034; fax: 011 358 3 223 0121; competition hotline: 011 358 3 2196 149; film.festival@tt.tampere.fi; www.tampere.fi/festival/film



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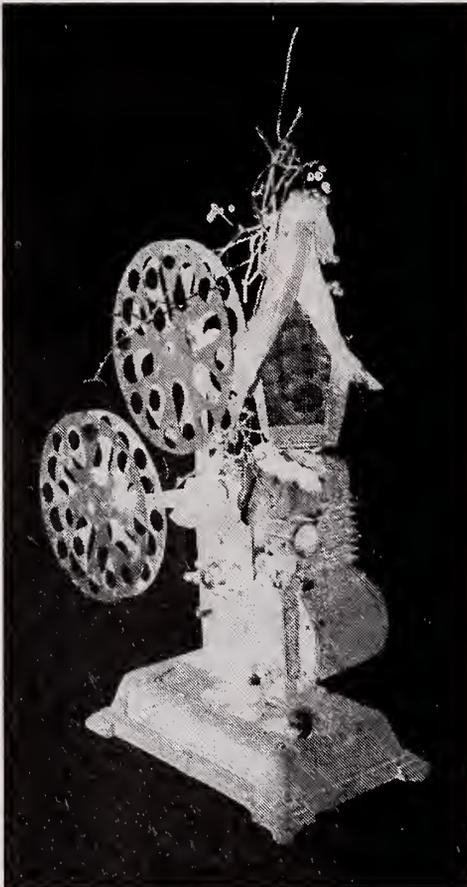
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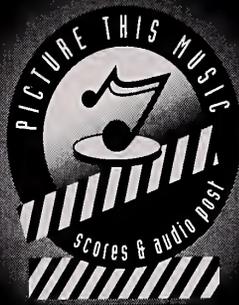
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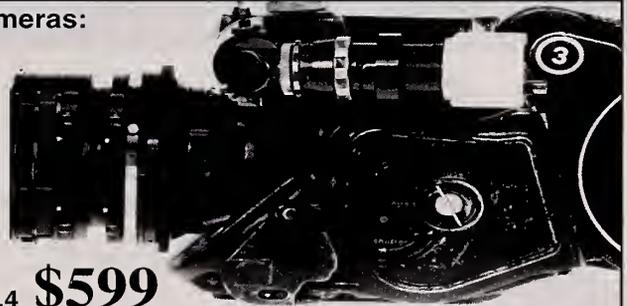
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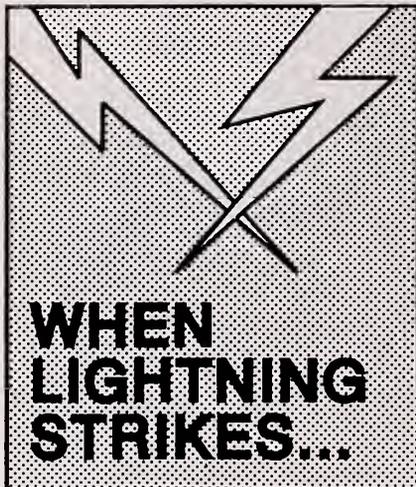


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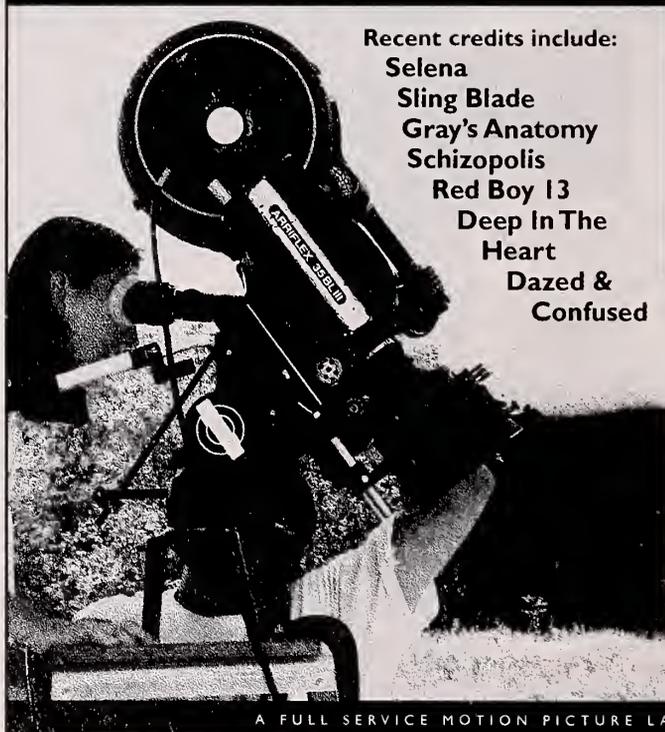
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NOTICES OF RELEVANCE TO AIVF MEMBERS ARE LISTED FREE OF CHARGE AS SPACE PERMITS. *THE INDEPENDENT* RESERVES THE RIGHT TO EDIT FOR LENGTH AND CAN MAKE NO GUARANTEES ABOUT THE NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS FOR A GIVEN NOTICE. LIMIT SUBMISSIONS TO 60 WORDS AND INDICATE HOW LONG INFO WILL BE CURRENT. DEADLINE: 1ST OF THE MONTH, TWO MONTHS PRIOR TO COVER DATE (E.G., NOV 1 FOR JAN/FEB ISSUE). COMPLETE CONTACT INFO (NAME, MAILING ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBERS) MUST ACCOMPANY ALL NOTICES. SEND TO: INDEPENDENT NOTICES, FIVE, 304 HUDSON ST., NY, NY 10013. WE TRY TO BE AS CURRENT AS POSSIBLE W/ INFORMATION BUT PLEASE DOUBLECHECK BEFORE SUBMITTING TAPES OR APPLICATIONS.

FILMS • TAPES WANTED

DUTV-CABLE 54, a progressive, nonprofit access channel in Philadelphia, seeks works by indie producers. All genres & lengths considered. No payment. Will return tapes. VHS, S-VHS, & 3/4" accepted. Contact: George McCollough or Maria Elena, DUTV-Cable 54, Drexel University, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927; dutv@post.drexel.edu; duvm.ocs.drexel.edu/~dutr.

EXHIBIT YOUR FILMS AT GRAND ILLUSION! Seattle's Northwest Film Forum seeks 16mm & 35mm shorts (60 min. or less) for ongoing exhibition. Selected works shown before regular programming at Seattle's only ind. art house theater. Send video & SASE to NWWF c/o Grand Illusion, 1403 NE 50th St., Seattle, WA 98105.

EXPRESSO FILM FESTIVAL seeks SVHS/VHS tapes for on-going weekly short film fest. Pref. new student & ind films on any subject, 15 min. or less in length. Will be seen by key industry people in Hollywood. Send tape w/ one paragraph description: EFF, 1525 Aviation Blvd. #248, R.B., CA 90278.

KINOFIST IMAGEWORKS seeks work of all kinds for screenings & distribution within the underground community. DIY, exp. & activist work encouraged. Send VHS, SASE to Kinofist Imageworks, Box 1102, Columbia, MO 65205; dmwf92@hamp.hampshire.edu

MCKINNEY AVENUE CONTEMPORARY is now accepting film & video work that explores issues of gender & sexual identity for a series screening at the Cinemac this winter. Please send VHS copy of work along w/ brief resume or biography & SASE (if you want work returned) by Nov. 21. Contact: McKinney Avenue Contemporary, 3120 McKinney Ave., Dallas, TX 75204; (214) 953-1212; themac@cyberramp.net; www.atypical.com/THEMAC.

MIDNIGHT MATINEE seeks alternative videos for monthly cable access show on Maui. Possible Hawaiian distribution. Any topics, genres; the more "out there", the better. Send SVHS or VHS copy & release w/ SASE. Paradise Productions, 326 Pukalani St., Pukalani, HI 96768.

MUSIC AND COLLEGE VIDEOS WANTED.

Producers of new nationally broadcast college-oriented show seek music videos & performance clips of indie bands. Select entries will be broadcast nationally & bands may be invited to perform live for a studio audience. Also seeking submissions relevant to college life and/or student-produced. Contact: Danny Ameri, Burly Bear Network, 201 Summer St., Stamford, CT 06901; (203) 351-1177.

NEW YORK FILM BUFFS: film society promoting indie films seeks 16mm & 35mm features, shorts & animation for ongoing opinion-maker screenings during fall & winter seasons. Send submission on VHS tape w/ SASE to: New York Film Buffs, 318 W. 15th St., New York, NY 10011; (212)807-0126.

SOUTHERN CIRCUIT tours indie film & video-makers throughout the Southeast; six artists travel with prints & present individual shows at designated sites. Artists receive round trip air fare, advance check of \$100 per diem during tour, \$275 honorarium per screening. To be considered for the 1998-99 Southern Circuit, submit VHS, Beta or 16mm film (appr. 1 hr. in length, can be cued for a 30 min. section for judging purposes), application, printed promo materials & resume (7 pgs max, w/ last name at top right of each sheet). Works in progress not accepted. Application fee is \$20. Deadline: January 15. Contact Felicia Smith, South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais St., Columbia, SC 29201; (803) 734-8689; fax: 734-8526; fsmith@scsn.net.

SUDDEN VIDEO call for entries. Ind. curators seek short works. Looking for experimental works that approximate emotional tone of events that inspired their production. Works should be under 10 min. long & be available on videotape for exhibition/distribution. Send submissions on VHS & SASE to: Gort/Raad, 17 Edward Ave., Southampton, MA 01073.

TREATMENTS FOR DOCUMENTARY FILMS not more than 10 pgs, sought by working independent doc filmmakers. Contact: Cinnabar Pictures, 62 White St., New York, NY 10013; (212) 334-6838.

UNQUOTE TV: 1/2 hr nonprofit program original music that suits all film & video artists, seeks ind. doc, narrative, exp, performance works under 28 min. Seen on over 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: Unquote TV, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

VIDEO IN PARTICULAR @ ART IN GENERAL: Four-part series for '97-'98 season seeks videos addressing formalism, cultural self-representation, existentialism & political media. Contact: Laurie Brown, Art in General, 79 Walker St., New York, NY 10013; (212) 219-0473.

VIDEOSPACE BOSTON seeks creative videos for fall & spring programming. Any genre & length. Nonprofit/no payment. Send VHS, Hi-8, or 3/4" with description, name, phone, and SASE to: Videospace, General Submissions, 9 Myrtle St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

COMPETITIONS

APPLE AWARDS seek film/videos & CD-ROMs

for largest educational media competition in the US. TV programs, docs, home market titles for classroom or corporate use. Subjects include social/ cultural issues, youth & family concerns, health & medicine, science & technology, arts & humanities, sports, travel, business & careers. CD-ROM deadline: Nov. 1. Film/video deadline: Dec. 1. Contact: Nat'l Educational Media Network, 655 13th St., Oakland, CA 94612-1222; (510) 465-6885; fax: 465-2835; comp @ nemn.org; www.nemn.org.

CINESTORY SCREENWRITING AWARDS welcome feature-length scripts of any genre for its 2nd annual competition. Screenplays are judged for writer's authentic voice and creative approach to storytelling. Three winners receive \$2,000 w/ prizes designed by Egg Pictures, Redeemable Features & The Shooting Gallery to develop & promote the winners' work. Deadlines & entry fees: Nov. 1 (\$45). Contact: CineStory, (312) 322-9060.

ROY W. DEAN VIDEO GRANT sponsored by Studio Film & Tape, Mazell Tape & Hollywood Film Institute awards \$40,000 in goods & services to doc. filmmaker for project that is "unique and makes a contribution to society." Forms in FAF office or contact: Roy W. Dean Video Grant, Studio Film & Tape, 1215 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood, CA 90038; (213) 760-0900 ext. 864; fax: 463-2121; www.sftweb.com

2nd ANNUAL FILM IN ARIZONA SCREENWRITING COMPETITION introduces new material that can be filmed regionally to entertainment industry. Winning screenwriter receives professional script notes, introductory meetings w/ agents & development reps. Contact: Linda Peterson Warren, Arizona Film Commission, 3800 North Central Ave., Bldg. D, Phoenix, AZ 85012; Ph: (602) 280-1460 or (800) 523-6695.

SET IN PHILADELPHIA: Screenwriting Competition recognizes exceptional screenplays that involve Philadelphia & encourages the production of feature films in the Philadelphia area. Deadline: Jan. 12. Contact: Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, 3701 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-6593, fax: 895-6562; pfwc@libertynet.org

RESOURCES • FUNDS

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL offers various grants & programs for film & mediamakers. Contact: California Arts Council, 13001 I St., Suite 930, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 322-6555; (800) 201-6201; fax: (916) 322-6575; cac@cw.com; www.cac.ca.gov

THE JOHN D. & CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION offers various grants & programs supporting film and mediamakers. Contact: John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 140 S. Dearborn St., Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60603-5285; (312) 726-8000; 4answers@macfdn.org; www.macfdn.org.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE HUMANITIES is accepting applications for pre-production funds of up to \$10,000. Deadline: Dec. 15. Contact: National

Council of the Humanities, 198 Broadway, 10th floor, New York, NY 10038; (212) 233-1131; fax: (212) 233-4607; hum@echonyc.com

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES Division of Public Programs is offering grants to U.S. nonprofit organizations. Deadline: January 12. 12 copies of application must be received by NEH on or before the deadline. All applicants encouraged to submit preliminary drafts of proposals by December 1, for consultation w/ program staff. Contact: National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Public Programs, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Rm 426, Washington, DC 20506; (202) 606-8267; publicpgms@neh.fed.us

NEW DAY FILMS: premiere distribution cooperative for social issue media, seeks energetic independent film & videomakers w/ challenging social issue documentaries for distr. to nontheatrical markets. Now accepting applications for new membership. Contact: New Day Films 22D Hollywood Ave., Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423; (914) 485-8489; www.newday.com

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS offers grants to film, mediamakers. Deadline: March 1. For application, contact: NYSCA, 915 Broadway, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10010; (212) 387-7000; fax: 387-7164.

REPRESENTATIVE WANTED for team making "organic" videomovies through improv. Expenses & commission. Our markets are entertainment centers, fairs, cruise ships, camps, schools, restaurants. Contact: David Shepherd, 65 Broadway, E.

Hampton, NY 11937; 777-7830.

SHORT-TERM ARTISTS RESIDENCY PROGRAM sponsored by Illinois Arts Council, provides funding for Illinois nonprofit organizations to work w/ professional artists from Illinois to develop & implement residency programs that bring arts activities into their community. Each residency lasts from 1 to 5 days or the hourly equivalent. The IAC will support 50% of the artist's fee (min of \$250 a day plus travel); the local sponsor must provided remaining 50% plus other expenses. Applications must be received at least 8 weeks prior to residency starting date. IAC encourages artists to seek sponsors & initiate programs. Call for availability of funds. IAC, 100 W. Randolph, Suite 10-500, Chicago, IL 60601; (312) 814-6750; fax: 814-1471; ilarts@artswire.org.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS offered by the Illinois Arts Council. Matching funds of up to \$1,500 to Illinois artists for specific projects. Examples of activities funded are registration fees & travel for conferences, seminars, workshops; consultants fees for the resolution of a specific artistic problem; exhibits, performances, publications, screenings; materials, supplies or services. Funds awarded based on quality of work submitted & impact of proposed project on artist's professional development. Applications must be received at least 8 weeks prior to project starting date. Call for availability of funds. Illinois Arts Council, 100 W. Randolph, Suite 10-500, Chicago, IL 60601; (312) 814-6570 toll-free in IL (800) 237-6994; ilarts@artswire.org

WOMEN'S FILM PRESERVATION FUND of New York Women in Film & Television is seeking

proposals for the funding & preservation or restoration of American films in which women have had significant creative positions. Application deadline: March 15. Contact: NYWIFT, 6 E. 39th St., New York, NY 10016; (212) 679-0870; fax: 679-0899.

PUBLICATIONS

GUIDE TO TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR FILMS SHOT IN NY STATE is available for producers who want clear instructions on how to claim the numerous tax exemptions available in NY state for film, television & commercial production. Put together by the Empire State Development Corp., the 51-page reference guide can be obtained by contacting NY State Governor's Office or the Tax Office. NY State Governor's Office for Motion Picture and Television Development, 633 3rd Ave., 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10017-6706; (212) 803-2330; fax: 803-2369; www.empire.state.ny.us/mptv.htm

WORKSHOPS • CONFERENCES

RESIDENCY PROGRAM at the Experimental Television Center offers artists opportunity to study video image processing techniques in 5-day intensive workshop. Open to U.S. residents w/ prior exp in video prod. Send resume, project description detailing use of image processing. Deadline: Dec. 15. Contact: Experimental Television Center, 109 Lower Fairfield Rd., Newark Valley, NY 13811; (607) 687-4341.

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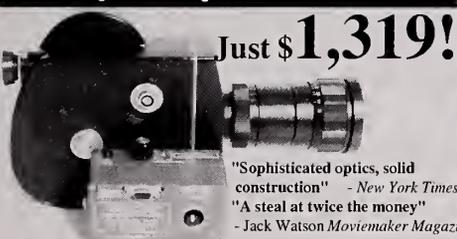
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Scriptware requires: 100% IBM compatible computer. DOS - 80386 or better, 640K RAM. 2M HD space, DOS 2.1 or higher. Windows - 80486 or better, 2M RAM, 4M HD space. © 1997 Cinovation, Inc. 1750 30th St., Suite 360, Boulder, CO 80303 303-786-7899

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TRADE DISCOUNTS FOR AIVF MEMBERS

ARIZONA

FX Factory

Tucson, AZ; (520) 623-3175;
email:FXFactory@aol.com

Special effects production studio, specializing in film effects, prosthetics, and makeup effects. 15% - 30% discount on labor for AIVF members.

CALIFORNIA

Aries Post

1680 Vine St., Suite 216, Hollywood, CA 90028; (213) 463-6296/Contact: Kevin Glover. 10% off rate card for all video post production services; including Beta SP, Hi8, 3/4", and SVHS and DVC to Beta SP analog A/B editing and Avid non-linear suite.

Cinetopia Production

923 E. 3rd St. #112, Los Angeles, CA 90013; (213) 617-2429/Contact: Steve Choe. Complete Arri BL4 pkg, camera, grip, truck & more. Negotiable low rates for AIVF members

Rick Caine Productions

856 1/2 N. Occidental Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026; (213) 413-3222/Contact: Rick Caine or Debbie Melnyk. 15% discount on Sony Betacam SP equipment, crew rentals, dubs & offline editing.

Mill Valley Film Group

104 Eucalyptus Knoll, Mill Valley, CA 94941; (415) 461-8334/Contact: Will Parrinello. 40% discounts on Beta SP production packages, production personnel & VHS off-line editing facilities. Rates further negotiable for selected projects.

Studio Film and Tape

6674 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90038; (213) 466-8101/Contact: Richard Kaufman. 10% discount on new Fuji 16mm film. Ilford 16mm b/w film, Maxell videotape in all formats, all editorial supplies including leader, mag stock, splicing tape, and computer storage media.

Sudborough Productions

8548 Minuet Pl., LA, CA 90038; (818) 895-1194 Contact: Ric Sudborough. 50% off on 1" editing & production, portable 1" deck & camera, film, lighting equipment & post sound studio.

COLORADO

MovieMaker

4730 Table Mesa Dr., Ste B-100, Boulder, CO 80303; (303) 499-6300 /Contact: Susan Lyle Kinney. 15% discount on video production services including shooting, editing, script consultation.

FLORIDA

Film Friends

4019 No. Meridian Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33140; (305) 757-9038 or (305) 757-9795/Contact: Mik Cribben. 30% discount on extensive range of equipment rentals - camera, lighting,

sound, grip, editing.

ILLINOIS

Brella Productions

1840 Oak Ave., Evanston 60201; (708) 866-1884/Contact: Bernadette Burke. 35% off nonlinear editing & 3D animation work.

EditMasters

17 W. 755 Butterfield Rd., Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181; (708) 515-4340/Contact: Michael Sorenson. 30-50% discount on digital nonlinear post-production services.

Picture Start Productions

1727 W. Catalpa Ave., Chicago, IL 60640; (312) 769-2489/Contact: Jeff Helyer. 40-60% discount on Avid editings; Beta-SP, Hi8, 3/4", VHS.

Studio Film and Tape

110 W. Kinzie St., Chicago, IL 60610; (800) 497-0700, Contact: Max Good. 10% discount on new FUGI 16mm film. Ilford 16mm b/w film, Maxell video tape in all formats, all editorial supplies including leader, mag stock, splicing tape, and computer storage media.

NEW YORK

BCS Broadcast Store, Inc.

460 West 34th St., 4th fl., NY 10001; (212) 268-8800/Contact: Michael Rose. 10-15% discount on all used video equipment.

Best Shot Video

81 Pondfield Rd., Bronxville, NY 10708; (914) 664-1943/Contact: Adam Shanker. 10% discount on video editing, duplication & production services.

Bill Creston

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/Contact: Barbara Rosenthal. 5% discounts on all Super-8 film & sound production services, including editing, sound transfers, VHS to VHS dubs. Also: low-cost services on Amiga computer & still photography.

Cup O'Joe Productions

21 W. 85th St., #2A, NYC 10024; (212) 362-1056 Contact: David Fuhrer. 10% discount on VHS & SVHS editing equipment rentals of one week or more.

Downtown Community TV Center

87 Lafayette St., NYC 10013-4435; (212) 966-4510, (800) VIDEO-NY, (212) 219-0248 fax/Contact: Hye Jung Park or Paul Pittman. 10-20% discount on video workshops & seminars; 10-30% discount on all editing services & equipment packages for nonprofit projects; Avid nonlinear editing, CMX editing, off-line editing, Beta SP & EVW300 Hi8 camera pkg rental.

DuArt Film and Video

245 West 55th Street, NYC 10019; (212) 757-4580 x 637/Contact: David Fisher. Negotiable

discounts on color negative developing, workprinting, blow-ups from 16mm & S16mm to 35mm, & titles.

Film Friends

16 East 17th St., NY 10003; (212) 620-0084/Contact: Jay Whang. 10% discount on 3/4", VHS and interformat editing, tiling, dubbing special effects, Hi-8, Amiga computer, still photography, slides and photos to tape, S-8.

Harmonic Ranch

59 Franklin St., NYC 10013; (212) 966-3141/Contact: Brooks Williams. Discounts on sound editing, music, mixing and sound design.

Media Loft

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/Contact: Barbara Rosenthal. 5% discount on 3/4" VHS & interformat editing, tiling, dubbing, special effects, Hi8, Amiga, slides & photos to tape, S-8.

Mercer Street Sound

133 Mercer St., NYC 10012; (212) 966-6794/Contact: Bill Seery. 50% discount off corporate book rate for audio postproduction

Metrovision Production Services

138 East 26th Street, NYC 10010; (212) 689-7900/Contact: John Brown. Discount on video and film equipment packages

L. Matthew Miller Associates, Ltd.

48 West 25th Street, 11th Fl., NYC 10010; (212) 741-8011 x 229/Contact: Steve Cohen. Discounted videotape and hardware.

Picture This Music

50 West 34th Street, Suite 9C9, NYC 10001; (212) 947-6107/Contact: Paul D. Goldman. 10-30% off digital audio postproduction: music, voice-over, sound design, SFX, audio mixing (ProTools work stations).

Post Digital

236 West 27th Street, 3rd Fl., NYC 10001; (212) 366-5353/Contact: Michael Helman. 40% discount off nonlinear offline editing facility; duplication; animation production

PrimaLux Video

30 West 26th St., NYC 10010; (212) 206-1402/Contact: Matt Clarke. 10%+ discounts (nonprofits encouraged) on studio production facilities, remote production packages, postproduction & more.

Rafik

814 Broadway, NYC 10003; (212) 475-7884/Contact: Charles Kephart. 25% discounts on used cassettes over \$100, 10% on single invoices over \$100 for video services, editing, duplication, viewing, film-to-tape transfers.

Sound Dimensions Editorial

321 West 44th Street, #602, NYC 10036; (212) 757-5147/Contact: Jason or Bernie. 15% discount on transfers, effects, and sound studio services: Foley, ADR, narration, mixing.

Splash Studios (Digital Audio Post Production)

168 5th Ave., 5th Fl. NW, NYC 10010; (212) 271-8747/Contact: Peter Levin. 35% off on most audio editing, SFX, ADR, Foley and transfer services. This does not apply to media and already discounted equipment.

Star Tech

152 West 72nd Street, #2FE, NYC 10023; (212) 757-5147/ Contact: John Hampton. Discounts on paging equipment & services & 10% off Audio Limited wireless mics & accessories.

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630 9th Avenue, NYC 10036; (212) 977-9330/ Contact: Rudy Benda. 10% discount on new FUGI 16mm film. Ilford 16mm b/w film, Maxell video tape in all formats, all editorial supplies including leader, mag stock, splicing tape, and computer storage media.

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330 West 42nd St., Ste. 2410, NYC 10036; (212) 947-1417/ Contact: Peggy Leggit. 10% discount on all editing services and facilities: 16mm; 3/4" to 3/4"; Betacam to Betacam; AVID; Betacam SP to Betacam SP - A/B Roll, Chyron, Digital FX.

Technicolor Inc., East Coast Division

321 West 44th St., NYC 10036; (212) 582-7310/ Contact: Ray Chung. Discounts on processing; deeper discounts available to students and feature-length projects.

Terra Firma Media

309 E. 4th St., #2A, NYC 10001; (212) 477-0688/Contact: Ileana Montalvo. 10% discount on translations, voiceovers, and on location interpreters.

Quark Video

109 W. 27th St., NYC 10001; (212) 807-7711/Contact: Michael Levin.

10% discount for all postproduction services, including 3/4", 3/4" SP, SVHS, VHS, Beta, Beta SP, A/B Roll editing to 3/4 SP, Betacam SP or 1". 10% discount for all duplication orders over \$25.00

NORTH CAROLINA

The Empowerment Project

3403 Highway 54 West, Chapel Hill, NC 27516; (919) 967-1863/ Contact: David Kasper. 20% discount on video editing; up to 35% discount for selected projects.

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Avid, Betacam SP, 3/4" on-line; and audio mix
services.

WASHINGTON, DC

Five Star Film and Video

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(202) 232-3605 Contact: Carolyn Projansky.
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Yellow Cat Productions

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Contact: Jennifer Del Percio. Offers special dis-
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AIVF HAPPENINGS: continued from p. 64

Brooklyn, NY:

When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time
Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.
Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Chicago, IL

When: 4th Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.
Where: The Star Bar, 2934 N. Sheffield
Contact: Oscar Cervera, (773) 472-1000

Cleveland, OH

Call for date and location.
Contact: Annetta Marion, (216) 781-1755

Dallas, TX:

When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Call for locations.
Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver/Boulder, CO

When: Call for dates
Where: Kakes Studio, 2115 Pearl St.
Contact: Diane Markow, (303) 449-7125 or Jon Stout (303) 442-8445.

Houston, TX:

When: Last Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Call for locations.
Contact: Houston Film Commission Hotline. (713) 227-1407

Kansas City, MO:

When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.
Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

New Brunswick, NJ

Call for date and locations
Contact: Allen Chou (908) 756-9845

Norwalk, CT:

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Contact: Guy Perrotta, (203) 831-8205

Sacramento, CA

call for dates and locations.
Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

San Diego, CA:

Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA

Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:

When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.
Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:

Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:

Call for dates and times.
Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW; Contact: DC Salon hotline (202) 554-3263 x4.

Westchester, NY:

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Welcome to Q&A, where we answer your most unusual, and not so unusual questions. If you have a question that you would like us to consider for this section, email Johnny McNair at info@aivf.org.

Where should I go for information on funding resources? The best place to start is the Foundation Center. You'll find information about corporate sponsorship, private and public grants, how to raise funds through individuals, who gave to what, how much money was given, grant application requirements, and much more. The Foundation Center is located at 79 Fifth Avenue in New York City and has regional branches around the country. To find the one nearest you, call (212) 620-4230 or visit their website: www.fdncenter.org. Tell them AIVF sent you!
-Johnny McNair, Information Services Coordinator

STAFF UPDATES

AIVF wishes a fond farewell to Brent Renaud, who has served as Membership Associate since February 1997. LaTrice Dixon, currently AIVF's Advocacy Assistant, is the new Membership Associate.

MEMBER NEWS BROADCAST

AIVF Elections. Don't forget to vote! Ballots must be received by Dec. 8.



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MEET & GREETs



These are opportunities for members to meet producers, distributors, funders, programmers, and others to exchange information in an informal atmosphere at the AIVF office. Free to AIVF members; \$10 others. Space is limited. RSVP required: (212) 807-1400 x 301. Please leave name and phone number, and specify event. For more information on upcoming events visit our website: www.AIVF.org



NANCY ABRAHAM, Director & JACQUELINE GLOVER, Manager, HBO Documentary Programming

HBO's Documentary Programming division has funded and shown some of the most daring and provocative documentaries on television including *The Dying Rooms*, *Fetishes*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Four Little Girls*. Meet Nancy Abraham and Jacqueline Glover who oversee the submissions, development, and production of HBO's documentary programming including the award winning series *America Undercover* and *Cinemax Reel Life*.

When: Tuesday, November 18, 5:30 PM

SCREENING SERIES

Television Without Borders: A Tribute to ARTE. The Museum of Television & Radio is sponsoring this screening series that celebrates the innovative programming of the French-German cultural channel ARTE. ARTE has encouraged producers throughout the world to create arts programming with a multi-cultural perspective. The museum's screening spotlights 15 programs that exemplify this spirit of innovation and mutual tolerance. November screenings include: *The Age of Possibilities* by Pascale Ferran, *Ex* by Mark Schlichter, *Tabu: Last Voyage* by EW. Murnau, and *The Second Life of Marlene: Unpacking the Dietrich Estate* by Christian and Matti Bauer. Tickets: \$10. AIVF members can bring a friend free to the screenings (must present AIVF membership card). For more information and/or a screening schedule call (212) 621-6600.

WORKSHOPS

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Learn how to distribute and pitch your film idea to television executives. Don't miss this exciting panel on how some of today's hottest independent producers sold their script idea to television. Cosponsored by the Hollywood East Foundation. Fee: \$10 for AIVF members (must show AIVF membership card), \$15 others. For more information contact Elisa Keyes, Hollywood East Foundation (212) 714-7741

When: Tuesday, December 2nd

Where: New York University, 566 LaGuardia Place, Top of the Park, 5th floor, 7:00 p.m.

4TH ANNUAL AIVF HOLIDAY PARTY

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When: Mon., Dec. 8, 7-9 p.m.



ON LOCATION

AIVF ON THE ROAD: OHIO RIVER VALLEY REGION

To celebrate this special issue of *The Independent*, AIVF Membership Director Leslie Fields will be traveling to the Ohio River Valley region to meet local media makers. For more information contact Annetta Marion (216) 781-1755.



MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our copy deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:

When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.

Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Atlanta, GA

When: Second Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Manuel's Tavern (North & Highland)

Contact: Genevieve McGillicuddy, IMAGE (404) 352-4225

Austin, TX:

When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.

Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street

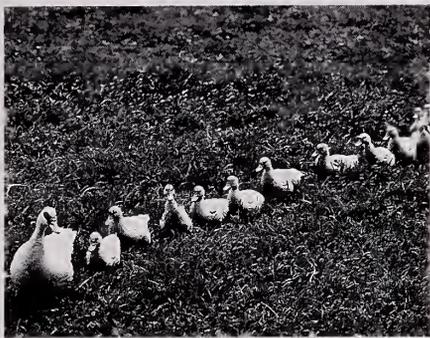
Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:

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Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

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AIVF/FIVF staff: Ruby Lerner, executive director; LaTrice Dixon, membership/advocacy assistant; Leslie Fields, membership coordinator; Jodi Magee, development consultant; Johnny McNair, information services coordinator; Tommy Pallotta, Webmaster; Leslie Singer, director of administration.

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Mr. Economy

Noah Baumbach (*Kicking & Screaming*) pulls a rabbit out of a hat with his back-to-back shoot of *Highball* and *Mr. Jealousy*.

BY EVE CLAXTON



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The Avant Garde Meets the Upper West Side

This year the New York Film Festival expanded its long-running avant-garde program four-fold. Festival director Richard Peña talks about the whys and wherefores.

BY RYAN DEUSSING



Cover & above illustration: Lewis Klahr

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Ban the Drum

Eighteen years after its release, Volker Schlöndorff's 1979 classic *The Tin Drum* is deemed obscene by a court in Oklahoma, and video cassettes are ripped from shelves and consumer's houses. While the ACLU has issued a call to arms, censors have a list of 150 more suspect videos.

BY ADAM PINCUS



Pennies from Heaven?

PBS aims to cut competitors off at the pass by laying claim to all noncommercial space set aside within Direct Broadcast Satellite channels. But not everyone agrees they should be the only game in town.

BY MARK J. HUISMAN

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Zeitgeist Films

A boutique distributor provides a taste of the times.

BY LISSA GIBBS



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Open Doors at No Borders

No Borders is the place to be at the IFFM, which is otherwise an exercise in chaos theory.

BY RYAN DEUSSING

Rebirth in Venice

A new festival director injects an arthouse sensibility into this A-list event.

BY CAROLA SPADONI

The Kids Are Alright

Using interns on the set.

BY BILL STAMETS



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In making *Picture Bride* we turned many times to AIVF/FIVF publications for the facts on fundraising, production and distribution. Their books are up-to-date, well organized and accessible. Best of all, it's getting the 411 without the schmooze.

Kayo Hatta –
“*Picture Bride*” ”

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When people ask me how and what festivals to enter, I simply refer them to AIVF/FIVF's Guide. Not only is it the most comprehensive and up to date listing I've seen but the indexes slice and dice the festivals into every conceivable category. It's absolutely indispensable for independent producers.

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“*Hoop Dreams*” ”

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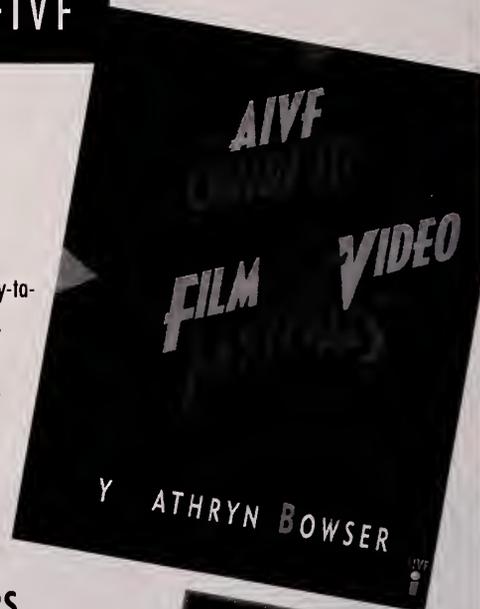
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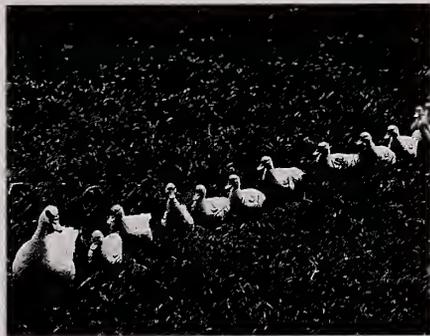
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CONTRACT DISPUTE

To the editor:

The opinions expressed by Robert Freedman in his article "Get Smart: The ITVS Contract Up Close" [October 1997], of course, remain his own. Mr. Freedman neglects to mention that he has represented a number of producers during their negotiation of the ITVS agreement. Not an insignificant omission considering the tone of his article. What we find most markedly surprising, particularly given his experience with the document, are the inaccuracies and errors.

ITVS always welcomes the opportunity to discuss the contract with a producer and his/her representative and only asks that they fully review and understand the agreement. This is a matter of fact and not opinion. ITVS and the Producer collaboratively discuss all aspects of the program, including all other items mentioned by Mr. Freedman, to come to an agreement. The idea that ITVS leverages rights, credit, and other points on the basis of our rarefied status is a perception that is to be acknowledged, but can only be fully understood in a context that is open and discussive. Producers funded by ITVS are, without exception, afforded this opportunity. Contrary to his characterization, the document is an interactive process requiring both parties to come to a mutual agreement.

On the issue of credit, we are quite sure that Mr. Freedman did not mean to suggest that funders such as ITVS should quietly contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars to production budgets without credit. With public and foundation support for the arts shrinking—a point he himself declares—the resulting lack of awareness and support for these funding sources would certainly mean their disappearance. It would be shortsighted indeed to deny the need for any funding source to be recognized for programs that they have helped to make possible. Public recognition of the role ITVS plays in independently produced programming is essential if the funds are to be deemed an effective expenditure by Congress. All print materials are specified.

Approving of other funders is a clause that has existed in all ITVS contracts. Although Mr. Freedman chose to disregard the facts here, this is driven by the requirements of the CPB contract with ITVS, which states, "ITVS further agrees to obtain CPB's written consent before granting a right of underwriter identification, for any reason, at any time, to any third party." If ITVS has to seek CPB's consent, the producer must get ITVS's consent.

ITVS and the Producer jointly discuss the potential distribution opportunities for the program in subsidiary and ancillary markets. This discussion reveals how existing relationships between ITVS, the producer, and other distributors can be most effectively utilized to gain the greatest possible exposure for the program. Decisions are then *jointly* made with respect to who will be responsible for presenting the program to the distribution markets. The rights for each program (beyond public television) are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. What happens beyond public TV is discussed in good faith until an agreement is reached. It is not uncommon for a producer to retain subsidiary and ancillary rights.

Having just completed an exhaustive survey of the state of independent distribution and its relationship to ITVS programming, we are confident that the course we are on is, by and large, supported by these other organizations. The perpetuation of myths in the areas of rights and distribution is a regrettable step backward.

It would have been far more helpful to the community and would have presented a more balanced opinion if a broader cross-section of other funding agreements had been reviewed. One very well-known source for foundation funding now incorporates the following language in its agreement: "If you . . . derive a profit from such transactions in excess of 100% of the grant amount now being awarded to you, you shall be required to return . . . the entire amount of this grant." Another public source of funding applies rights acquisition language to their contracts which specify their nonexclusive rights over 10 years in all markets worldwide—for funding amounts as low as \$2,500. If the desire of the writer were to provide the independent producing community with valuable information, he could have accomplished this by broadening his research.

It is not a new provision, either, that ITVS approve distribution agreements (this clause exists in all ITVS contracts). It is a necessary provision for three reasons: 1) CPB requires it; 2) ITVS production expenditures increasingly secure rights beyond public television and public accountability is a necessity; and 3) it is critical that agreements for distribution of ITVS production do not conflict with the rights granted to CPB and ITVS. Examples include CPB requirements that Canadian broadcast wait until after domestic public television and the home video rights not commence until a project has aired.

To stick with the issue, rights related to advertising, promotion, and outreach are also required by CPB. As for the exclusivity clause, ITVS's rights are only exclusive with respect to public television. Mr. Freedman again chose not to mention the term in the boilerplate contract that stipulates that the producer is expected (and usually

very much wants) to be involved in promotional work, and their needs and wishes are often the very basis for activity.

Similarly, ITVS supports film festival participation. On rare occasions, ITVS has encouraged a maker to reconsider a festival screening to prevent "double booking conflicts." Additionally we have negotiated entry fees (successfully waiving them in some circumstances) and we want to help filmmakers get the most bang for their buck by not unknowingly disqualifying their program from a larger festival (which we agree "enhances the program's status") by first showing it a smaller festival. ITVS has proven repeatedly and to an overwhelming degree that it supports film festivals, and we encourage funded makers to be involved in film festivals. Just one recent example is the orchestration of a very strong showing for ITVS programs at Sundance, at San Francisco International Film Festival, and at Berlin.

And like it or not, ITVS is in the business of public television broadcast. While festivals can absolutely help to "enhance the program's status," extended festival press in the forms of reviews (as opposed to previews) can actually end up damaging the public television broadcast marketing campaign. On more than one occasion, ITVS programs have enjoyed healthy festival runs which garnered so many reviews and feature stories from various festival appearances that when it came time to convince TV critics to write about the show, they passed due to the film's preview exposure. ITVS's policy here is intended to serve the widest possible audience, *in addition to* the ego of the maker. It's important, again, to point out that a broader research base would have shown that other broadcasters, including public TV entities, are even more restrictive than is ITVS.

On the issue of E&O insurance, this requirement is the same as it has always been, and, despite Mr. Freedman's remarks, is industry standard. It is also required by PBS. Errors and Omissions Insurance exists for the Producer's and for ITVS's protection. It should also be noted that when a program has been out for a while without claims, there is a reduced cost to extend the E&O to other markets.

Regarding the share of receipts, Mr. Freedman misread the 1996 CPB/ITVS Contract. It states: "Net proceeds from . . . a Program produced by a Subgrantee [a Producer funded by ITVS] will be apportioned in accordance with the following calculation: the total amount of ITVS funding for the Program divided by the total production budget for the Program equals the percentage of Net Proceeds to be divided equally between CPB and ITVS . . ." In layman's terms, this would mean that if ITVS funds 100% of a program, *per CPB*, ITVS would get 50% and CPB would get 50%. The Producer would receive 0%.

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ITVS negotiated at length with CPB to return to the previous 50% Producer/50% ITVS formula to no avail. As a result, ITVS made the decision to relinquish a portion of the ITVS share to the producer and has adopted the following formula: 50% CPB, 30% Producer, 20% ITVS, proportional to the ITVS percentage of the total budget. In the ITVS contract, this reads as 30% Producer, 70% ITVS, (20/50 ITVS/CPB). After ITVS recoups its funding, the entire ITVS portion reverts to the Producer, resulting in 50/50 Producer/ITVS (all to CPB)—again, pro rata. Further, all ITVS receipts are plowed back into the production fund, making additional funds available for other independent productions.

On the issues of compliance and accountability, ITVS requires both—rightly. They are, after all, issues of compliance with federal law. And, for years, public television naysayers have accused the system of being on the dole, of taking public funds and using them irresponsibly, of creating a welfare system for the arts. ITVS recognizes and takes seriously our stewardship of one of the last—and arguably largest—sources of public funds for independent production, heeding the fall of others before us. It seems ludicrous to be conversely attacked from those we serve.

In upholding our responsibility to the American public—idealistic, perhaps, but real—and by continuing to advance the cause of non-commercial independent production and its subsequent distribution to the public, we are attempting to safeguard the future of this funding: funding, which after all, serves your readership and their viewing audiences.

There is one point on which ITVS and Mr. Freedman agree—we always recommend that Producers offered an ITVS Production License Agreement consult with an attorney.

James Yee, executive director, ITVS
San Francisco, CA

Robert Freedman replies:

Jim Yee maintains that I neglected to mention my role as representative to several producers who negotiated contracts with ITVS. He intimates that perhaps I was writing as an advocate. I hasten to remind Mr. Yee that I also represented ITVS in their contract negotiations with CPB.

Mr. Yee says, "Contrary to his [Freedman's] characterization, that document is an interactive process. . . ." I wrote, "The contract ITVS furnishes should be viewed as an offer and not an ironclad document." I think we are saying the same thing. I was attempting to put the "interactive" into the dialogue.

My primary objections to the contract were not the ITVS "offers" of assistance which Mr. Yee says the contract provides. I applaud the assistance

and share Mr. Yee's view that this is vitally important to both ITVS and the independent producer. If the contract had stopped there, the article would probably never have been written. The contract crosses the line of affording help in most areas and tells the producer that ITVS has the right to dictate and/or veto in these areas. . . even where ITVS is a minority funder.

Mr. Yee has suggested that the article would have been more helpful if it had examined other funding agreements, including those more oppressive than the proposed ITVS agreement. I don't disagree, but my assignment was to write about this particular agreement. [Editor's note: Since numerous filmmakers had contacted AIVF with complaints about the ITVS contract and not about others, we felt it would be a service to address the issues raised by this specific contract in some depth.]

ITVS also points out that some of its provisions are mandated by CPB. I did point this out in my article. I also recognized ITVS's delicate position between CPB and independents. However, over a period of time, one would hope that ITVS would get CPB to lighten up a bit, not the other way around.

With respect to other specific provisions raised by Mr. Yee, I leave the determination of their meaning and effect to the individual ITVS contractees, many of whom I have represented.

In conclusion, it is my personal opinion that ITVS needs to remain a positive force in the independent production community and needs to be supported by independent producers. A more independent producer-friendly contract would help. Since Mr. Yee recognizes that "producers offered an ITVS Production License Agreement [should] consult with an attorney," he should not be surprised when the attorney subjects that Agreement to scrutiny.

WHAT'S AN INDEPENDENT (IN HONG KONG)?

To the editor:

I was quite puzzled by Michael Benson's attack on Duan Jinchuan's *No. 16 Barkhor South Street* ["Canary in a Coal Mine: The 1997 Hong Kong Film Festival," August/September 1997]. It is Mr. Benson's right not to like the piece, but not to spread false information about it. In the context of its production, describing *No. 16, Barkhor South Street* as "nominally independent" (suggesting it is really a pro-government propaganda film) amounts to slander. Duan Jinchuan is one of the leading exponents of the "new documentary movement" in Beijing, and it is difficult to imagine work produced in more independent conditions (the artists invest their own money, shoot in video

because it's cheaper, and their work can only be shown abroad).

After graduation, Duan and a number of other independent documentarists elected to move to Tibet to make films there. Duan didn't hesitate to co-direct the highly controversial *Sacred Site of Asceticism* (1992), about the survival of religious and mystical practices in Tibet. Prior to *No. 16, Barkhor South Street*, he co-directed *The Square* (1994) with leading independent filmmaker Zhang Yuan, director of the banned *East Palace, West Palace* whose fate Benson mentions in another part of the article.

No. 16, Barkhor South Street, a rigorous example of cinema verité (it has often been compared to the work of Fred Wiseman), dispenses with a voiceover altogether and quietly, yet disturbingly, records the activities of a "street neighborhood committee" in Lhasa. You have to read between the lines to understand the enormous amount of social criticism Duan gets away with—in particular in the grotesque preparation of the official ceremony celebrating China's takeover of Tibet that is described in minutia (where to pee, what to wear) in the end. More puzzling is Mr. Benson's statement that the film "depicts the enlightened Chinese occupiers." There are no Chinese in the film (even though there are pointed references to social tensions between Tibetans and Han Chinese); the cadres are Tibetan, as evidenced by their names and the language they speak. Indeed, neighborhood committees exist throughout China, and Duan's original idea was to make a documentary about the intricate inter-relationship between citizens and the organs of power, even at such a minimal and local level. (Zhang Yuan's *East Palace West Palace* tackles the same subject, albeit metaphorically—unfolding the love-hate relationship between a straight cop and the gay man he arrests.)

I have screened *No. 16, Barkhor South Street* many times—with Chinese friends and foreign experts—and the universal reaction has been respect and admiration for Duan's subtlety and boldness in handling his subject matter. Maybe Mr. Benson should remember that Duan is himself subjected to intense censorship, and has to find original solutions to express his message. The film was awarded the Grand Prix du Festival du Reel in Paris. Moreover, it was invited by Jacob Wong, the new programmer of the Asian section of the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF). His predecessor, Wong Ain-ling, resigned in April 1996 after years of being harassed by the Chinese Film Bureau for her commitment to showing independent documentaries from China, such as Duan's work. No yes-man, Jacob Wong should be praised for continuing and expanding Wong Ain-ling's legacy.

I share Mr. Benson's admiration for Huang

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Jianxin's *Signal Left, Turn Right*—possibly the most interesting filmmaker of the Chinese Fifth Generation—but he gets a few facts wrong. First, he seems to imply that the film is "more independent" than *No. 16, Barkhor South Street*. In fact, it was produced by the Xi'an Film Studio, and it is a tribute to Huang's intelligence that he has been able to work within the system and come up with such original, ironic, and personal work. Second, *Signal Left, Turn Right* was *not* programmed to replace another Chinese movie (that was indeed withdrawn by the Chinese authorities at the last minute): both films were invited long in advance, are listed in the catalog, and the HKIFF does not have a system of "quotas per country." The film Mr. Benson mentions, *In Expectation* (aka *Rainclouds over Wushang*), is *not*, however, "a virtually risk-free drama about the construction of a dam on the Yangtze river," but a devastating, albeit subtle, unfolding of the relationship between three people—a lighthouse attendant, a hotel receptionist, and a cop—linked together by an accusation of rape. Also studio-produced, it was the first movie of a young director, Zhang Ming—now forbidden from making more films. The censors of the Film Bureau didn't like the image of ordinary Chinese citizens conveyed by the film and tried to stop its exportation. However, before receiving an official approval, Zhang sent his film to the Pusan Film Festival in Korea last fall, where it got a prize. Because of this disrespect for official orders, the film is now banned in China (where nobody has seen it) and abroad, where, nonetheless, smuggled prints subtitled in German and English are circulating, allowing some festivals (Vancouver and Vienna, for example) to program it. The curators of the HKIFF were hoping to show one of these smuggled prints, but the Film Bureau put pressure on the Urban Council, and one of the Council members refused to back the festival, causing the film to be withdrawn at the last minute.

The situation of independent films in China is complex, and understanding how the censorship system works is even more difficult, and I cannot criticize a non-specialist for getting lost in this maze. However, spreading false information about people who work courageously in very difficult conditions we can only barely imagine in the West could be very damaging for them, which is why I felt compelled to write this letter.

Bérénice Reynaud
Santa Clarita, CA

Michael Benson replies:

Yes, Bérénice Reynaud is right about Duan Jinchuan, whom I never mention by name, and I would like to extend my apologies to the filmmaker. Ms. Reynaud, however, does me a disservice when she quotes the first half of my sentence,

"The film depicts the enlightened Chinese occupiers..." then goes on to say that there are no Chinese in the film and fails to quote the rest of my sentence, which was "as represented by the ubiquitous resident committees." Yes, they were represented largely—but not exclusively—by Tibetan stooges. If that's not too strong a word. Like money, power is fungible. I would note that recent reports indicate that the population of Lhasa is now approximately half Chinese, due to massive resettlement.

As for Duan Jinchuan, it's true that he is a fully operational independent filmmaker working in extremely difficult conditions. I certainly never intended to "slander" him or anyone. I was simply reacting to the substance of a film which, in my subjective perception, was constrained in what it could say. As Ms. Reynaud says, the filmmaker is subject to "intense censorship." However, she's right that I should have made allowances for exactly that. Clearly there are mortal dangers in being too explicit about what has happened to Tibet. According to a new Amnesty International report, 42 "separatists" were executed in the annexed nation this year alone. Not being as overt as another might have wanted or expected is not the same as being "nominally" independent. Again, I apologize to Duan Jinchuan.

When it comes to the story of the replacement of *In Expectation* by *Signal Left, Turn Right*—and when it comes to it being a "virtually risk-free drama" about the construction of a dam—I got both directly from the mouth of a HKIFF contract employee. (In fact, I have it on tape, which I just checked.) I couldn't see *In Expectation* because it had been pulled from the festival. Clearly this could be viewed as a cautionary tale about not relying on a single uncorroborated source. In my defense, though, I had no reason to believe these facts could be wrong, as the person in question had no conceivable reason to lie about them. But if Ms. Reynaud has it right, *mea culpa*.

I'm not sure what Ms. Reynaud means when she says that the HKIFF doesn't have a system of quotas per country, which seems to imply that I would have it otherwise. I never suggested such a thing and had no reason to believe they would have such a system.

Finally, I would never call Jacob Wong a "yes man" nor ever imply it. I can understand why Wong would want to show a Chinese documentary on Tibet, even if this particular writer didn't receive it the way the filmmaker intended. Audiences can draw their own conclusions. Let's hope the HKIFF remains free to give them that right. When it comes to that question, I assume Ms. Reynaud and I are watching the same movie.

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BAN THE DRUM SLOWLY

THE CONTROVERSY THAT BREWED TO A thick sludge of litigation in Oklahoma City this summer—and one that continues to percolate in Federal courts even now—is a recurrent one. Some 18 years after its original release, *The Tin Drum*, an award-winning German film adaptation of the novel by Günter Grass, has been deemed obscene and subsequently banned and confiscated in Oklahoma City. Back like a rash is the struggle between those who would protect the public from noxious influence and those who hold that the right to choose—and the responsibility it engenders—lie in the hands of the individual. Nobody in Oklahoma these days is saying, “It’s just a movie.”

The tumult began early this year when a community group calling themselves Oklahomans for Children and Families targeted the “open access” policy of Oklahoma City’s Metropolitan Library System, accusing it of exposing children to “sexually explicit” materials and demanding that the library segregate what was deemed “objectionable.” Library commissioners countered that they did not acquire materials considered obscene under state statutes, and furthermore, it was the parents’ job—not the library’s—to decide what their children can see.

Thwarted by the library commission’s defense of open access, the OCAF took to tactics at once more focused and more incendiary (leafletting a March meeting of the Midwest City Council with literature that referred to the library as an “adult bookstore,” and its librarians “smut peddlers”). The group selected a single film from the library stacks, one they deemed unquestionably pornographic: *The Tin Drum*, winner of both the 1979 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and, along with *Apocalypse Now*, the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. *The Tin Drum* is disquieting to be sure, a allegorical film in which three-year-



The Tin Drum was targeted by the Oklahomans for Children and Families, a community group protesting open access to controversial art. Courtesy Kino International

old Oskar wills himself to stop growing for 18 years as a reaction against Nazism and the adult behavior he witnesses. It’s not *The Sound of Music*. But pornography?

The OCAF certainly thought so, and they continued to agitate. Members of the group, including executive director Bob Anderson, attended a June 19th Metropolitan Library Commission meeting to demand that the commissioners watch selected scenes from *The Tin Drum*. Libraries, like many publicly funded institutions (the NEA comes to mind), are frequent battlegrounds for highly charged debate on controversial works; the commission directed Anderson to follow their established procedure for “challenged materials”—a route he rejected with vociferous discontent. Instead, he checked *The Tin Drum* out of the library and put it in the hands of the police.

The tape Anderson delivered to the Oklahoma City police actually contained a single scene from the film, a simulated and oblique act of oral sex between Oskar and a teenage girl. The scene is in no way explicit. In fact, the film’s director, Volker Schlöndorff has since insisted that, despite the effect on the screen, there was no frontal nudity. “It is the artifice of editing that creates the scene. Parents and all juvenile legal representatives were present at the set all the time of the shooting.” Nudity or no, the OCPD sought a ruling from Oklahoma

County District Judge Richard Freeman, and on June 25th, Judge Freeman declared what he saw obscene.

“You can have a beautiful story,” the Judge said in an interview with the *Daily Oklahoman*. “But if there is one scene where minors are having sex, you’re sunk under Oklahoma law.” Armed with a sense of rectitude and the ruling, Oklahoma City police began rounding up copies of the film. They seized cassettes from five local Blockbuster

Video stores and other rental outlets; but more disconcerting, the police sought the names and addresses of individuals to whom the tape was currently rented. And so it came to pass that the Oklahoma City police arrived at the door of Michael Camfield.

Camfield is development director of the local chapter of the ACLU. Aware of the controversy, he had been watching *The Tin Drum* by way of research. Confronted by the police, he first attempted to explain, then dissuade. Then he gave them the tape.

In the weeks that followed, the ACLU filed suit against members of the Oklahoma City police and city officials, charging violation of free speech (1st Amendment), unreasonable search and seizure (4th Amendment), and due process (14th Amendment). In addition, the Video Software Dealers Association has filed a federal class action suit on behalf of the video stores that owned confiscated tapes. In the meantime, the Oklahoma City police deny they “seized” or “confiscated” anything.

“There were no searches. There were no seizures,” said Police Captain Ted Carlton in an article from the *Daily Oklahoman*. “We sought voluntary compliance and explained to them the judge’s ruling and that if they continued possession of the tape, it could make them in violation of the law. They surrendered them to us.”

Certainly explanations by the OCPD proved more compelling than those of Mr. Camfield, whose own dissertation on the Constitutional

incongruity of this non-seizure failed to move police officers that night at his home.

At its heart, the debate is about access. The Oklahomans for Children and Families—whose name alone suggests a specious syntactic logic where any opposition is somehow against Children and Families—believe that the Law must protect our society from polluting influence. But does a librarian have the responsibility of monitoring access to the materials in their library? A 16-year-old can check-out *Tropic of Cancer*, after all. The OCAF should find comfort in the fact that last year's federal Child Pornography Prevention Act makes it illegal to portray someone who even appears to be under eighteen in a sex act. This raises a cautionary specter over every filmmaker whose work deals with youth and sexuality. Certainly *Kids* would not play well in Oklahoma, but neither would Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. In fact, the OCAF purports to have a list of 150 targeted titles they'd like to see deemed obscene.

The Oklahoma Metropolitan Library System contends that they house nothing that state statutes on obscenity forbid, and that parents, i.e. individuals, should remain responsible for what their children see.

Meanwhile, the ban breeds box office. Outside of Oklahoma County, where *The Tin Drum* remains at large, area theaters have been screening the film, and distributor Kino International now offers a "censorship special," selling the film at cost (\$10) to Oklahoma libraries and at a discount to Oklahoma residents. At last count, 1,000 copies of the tape have been sold. Kino's Jessica Rosner attributes approximately 70 percent of those to the trouble in OK. If nothing else, controversy is good business. Just ask Miramax.

Adam Pincus is producer of Sundancechannel.com.

Pennies from Heaven?

DBS, PBS, and the Public Interest

MORE CHANNELS MAKE FOR MORE CONTROVERSY, as the debate over the policies governing direct broadcast satellite bears out.

The story begins in 1991, when Primestar became the first multi-channel broadcasting service to transmit digitally compressed signals via satellite, offering subscribers access to more channels than ever before. Because Primestar was a partnership composed of major cable television organizations (TCI, Time-Warner,

Cox, Comcast, and Continental) and its service did not include local television channels, broadcasters considered the new direct broadcast satellite (DBS) industry a significant threat to their market. With this in mind, broadcasting lobbyists successfully pressed Congress to enact specific public interest obligations for the fledgling DBS industry in the 1992 Cable Television Consumer Protection Act (the 1992 Act). Among those obligations, DBS providers are required to set aside between four and seven percent of their channel capacity for

DBS providers are required to set aside 4–7% of channel capacity for "noncommercial programming of an educational or informational nature." Despite the efforts of advocacy groups, none of this space has so far been placed in the hands of independent producers and programmers.

"noncommercial programming of an educational or informational nature."

Despite the efforts of advocacy groups, none of this channel space has so far been placed in the hands of independent producers and programmers. Ironically, one obstacle standing between independent producers and this set-aside of channel space is actually public television. While DBS providers like Primestar are relatively new, PBS has transmitted at least some of its programs via satellite since the late 1970s. PBS now broadcasts all programming this way and has an operations division devoted solely to DBS. Not surprisingly, public television is using its experience and position as the nation's only legally-defined, noncommercial public broadcasting enterprise as evidence that it should be given control over the DBS reserve.

In 1992, four to seven percent of capacity of the sole existing DBS provider (Primestar) would have been a mere two to four channels. But since then, four additional DBS providers have started operations: DirecTV, USSB, Echostar (popularly known as DISH), and AlphaStar. The total number of channels currently offered via DBS is around 500. So if the

law were enforced today, between 20 and 35 channels should be set aside for public-interest programming. Nervous at the thought of losing potentially profitable channel space, however, the DBS industry has made some highly suspect arguments to the FCC in a thinly veiled attempt to re-write the law.

First, DBS providers believe any programming already being broadcast that could be deemed "educational or informational" should count towards their public-interest obligation, and that the total should be held to four percent—the bare minimum. Second, they want to count commercial programs they already carry, like the Discovery Channel and the History Channel, as educational programming. Third, claiming Senate and House election campaigns are of primarily local interest, they want to provide broadcast time only for presidential candidates. Fourth, DBS providers want to include the construction and launching of satellites in "direct" costs, for which noncommercial programmers would be responsible. *

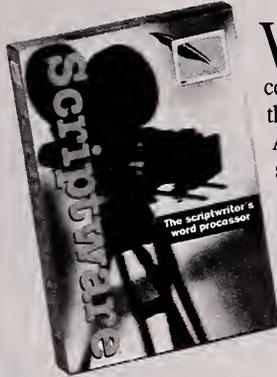
"I think Section 25 [of the 1992 Act] is unusually specific in its mandates," said Media Access Project staffer Gigi Sohn at a forum on DBS policy organized in Washington, DC by AIVF and Libraries for the Future on September 26. "DBS providers have had five years. They've grown. They've matured. They have to live up to their responsibilities." Because the law requires DBS providers to set aside broadcast time for programs made by other organizations, two other issues arise: How will nonprofit organizations or independent producers obtain programming financing? Who will exercise editorial control over the channels?

"The networks' great advantage," says Pat Auferderheide, chairperson of the School of Communications at American University, "is that they can afford to fail for an entire season and come back again." Cynthia Lopez, advocacy director at Libraries for the Future, suggests a funding model based on public television in Britain. "There should be a tax on the satellite dish itself," she says. "And the DBS providers should also pay a tax based on their subscriber base: the more subscribers, the more they should be responsible for fos-

* To read statements against these positions, visit the websites of the Alliance for Community Media (www.alliancecm.org) and the Media Access Project (www.mediaaccess.org), which have submitted arguments to the FCC far more eloquent than can be adequately summarized here.

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tering the production of public programming.”

Sohn has suggested different versions of a programming consortium, made up of educators, nonprofit programmers, children's advocates and public broadcasters that would, on the model of cable access corporations, choose and schedule public access programming based on criteria including production quality and content. The consortium would be funded collectively by all DBS providers. “If DBS providers don't want to set aside the entire four to seven percent,” adds Sohn, “they can put more money into the consortium's noncommercial production pot.” (*The Independent* attempted to contact executives or spokespersons at Directv, USSB, Primestar and Echostar to ask them to comment on the reserve, the definition of educational/informational programming and suggested funding mechanisms, those inquiries were not answered.)

But during the DC forum, Rosalee Chiara, an official in the International Bureau of the FCC, which oversees domestic and international satellite policy, raised an interesting objection. “The FCC is concerned about a content-based requirement that can be challenged in court,” she said. “We have to be careful of creating a First Amendment problem.” The Alliance for Community Media and Media Access Project contend that it is absolutely crucial for the FCC to prevent DBS providers from exercising editorial control over the set-aside. But America's Public Television Stations (APTS), the official organization of public television stations, agrees with the FCC.

“As long as the programming comes from qualified entities under the statute, the DBS provider really should choose what to put on the set-aside, otherwise you're treading on thin First Amendment ice,” says Lana Thompson, director of legal affairs for APTS. But the only organizations specifically mentioned in the legislation are public television stations, national public telecommunications entities (like PBS), and institutions of higher learning. While their comments to the FCC don't actually say so, APTS would hardly object if the set-aside were given in entirety to an entity like PBS, which would prevent any other noncommercial or nonprofit organization from control of even a single channel. As Aufderheide says, “PBS can make a very good argument that they can use this space efficiently. And they would be very happy to use all of the space. But will PBS use it to distribute programming that is really educational?”

In recent years, public television has turned

increasingly toward corporate underwriting as its primary financing source. Last year there was a heated debate among public television stations as to whether or not they should actually start showing commercials. But the 1992 Act is clear: the entities that create the programming must be nonprofit, but the programming must also be noncommercial. “Some groups have interpreted noncommercial as being commercial-free. We don't agree with that interpretation,” says Thompson. “Congress intended [the set-aside] for entities who cannot usually access new means of telecommunications distribution. Our concern is that if the space is held to mean commercial-free, that other programmers who were not intended by Congress will get to use that set-aside.”

But PBS seems to have several conflicts of interest here. First, as it has for decades, PBS already enjoys a publicly subsidized, virtual monopoly over national, noncommercial programming. Does it really create access for “entities who cannot usually access new means of telecommunications distribution” if public television is the entity controlling that space? After all, public television has had access to satellite distribution for 20 years. Second, PBS has already received at least one huge grant from a DBS provider—\$2.5 million from Primestar last March—to underwrite its Ready to Learn Service. This service, which is carried in about 100 markets, features television series including *Barnes & Friends* and *Sesame Street*. Will PBS, a present recipient of DBS underwriting, be able to hold DBS providers accountable to their obligations once it is made the gatekeeper? Who polices public television?

Moreover, while it actively wants all of the set-aside, public television does not want to be prohibited from entering into the commercial partnerships it has so frequently used in recent years to fund its programming. In other words, public television would continue to get production financing from corporate giants like Ford and Hallmark, but would not have to keep the programming it broadcasts completely noncommercial.

“While we're very dependent on federal appropriations, they can't do the whole job,” says Thompson, exasperated at the idea that public television is competing with other media organizations. “Our stations have always had the need to obtain sufficient financing through other means. People say ‘Noncommercial stations are trying to use

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excess channel space to generate revenue.' But it goes back to the non-commercial purpose of the station." But Thompson leaves no doubt that public television sees itself legally entitled to the space. "If I were a producer I would be interested in forming some partnership with public broadcasting and getting some access to the set-aside. To an extent we are trying to limit the set-aside. But the entities Congress intended are clearly enumerated in the language. We don't have any intent to exclude anyone who qualifies in the statute." For better or worse, the FCC seems similarly inclined.

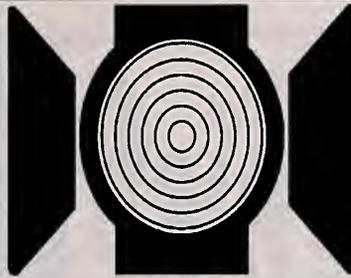
"PBS is what we know," Chiara told *The Independent*. "When they came to us, we could easily understand their position and what they felt they would be able to do." The FCC is also concerned about the amount of available non-commercial programming. "If we're going to ask broadcasters to give the maximum, the entire seven percent," Chiara continues, "we want to make sure there will be programming to fill this space."

Lopez understands that point of view but says possibilities abound. She thinks the space is a terrific opportunity for film festivals to partner up and broadcast films without distributors. "Let's get a group of festivals together—women's film festivals, gay and lesbian film festivals, Native American film festivals and so on—and offer their films exposure. There's a huge amount of programming that's already been produced but doesn't have a venue for distribution. It's the responsibility of the DBS providers to make broadcast time for that programming available, but it's our responsibility to claim that time."

Sohn cautions, "A perception exists at the FCC that nobody wants to use this space except PBS. . . Just pretend somebody gave you a digital channel up there in the sky. What would you do with it? You have to tell the FCC. And you have to tell them now."

Mark J. Huismann [cinemark@mindspring.com] is and New York-based independent producer and writer.

By the end of the year, the FCC will finalize rules governing the DBS set-aside. Independent filmmakers and producers should immediately contact the FCC about the programming they have available that could fill this valuable space. Send your letters immediately to: William C. Caton, Acting Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 1919 M. St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554. Be sure your correspondence references "Docket Number 93-25," the FCC's file number for the DBS reserve.



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ketability—by which we mean those qualities that will enable us to sell the film to exhibitors and ancillary markets.

Spirits of the Age: recent Zeitgeist acquisitions include (clockwise from right): Arnaud Desplechin's *My Sex Life... or How I Got Into An Argument*, Deepa Mehta's *Fire*, and Abbas Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry*. Azmi photo: Dilip Mehta, photos courtesy Zeitgeist Films



Nancy Gerstman (L) and Emily Russo
Photo: Patricia Thomson

Zeitgeist Films, Ltd.

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What is Zeitgeist?

We're an effective, cutting-edge theatrical distribution company that caters to the discriminating and adventurous filmgoer. We acquire between five and six feature films each year. So far this year we have *Irma Vep*, by Olivier Assayas; *Anthem*, by Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn; *Conspirators of Pleasure*, by Jan Svankmajer; *Fire*, by Deepa Mehta; and *My Sex Life... Or How I Got into an Argument*, by Arnaud Desplechin; and *Taste of Cherry*, by Abbas Kiarostami.

Who is Zeitgeist?

We are Nancy Gerstman and Emily Russo, co-presidents and co-founders; Adrian Curry, vice president, operations; and Pear Sintumuang, marketing and acquisitions assistant.

How, when, and why did Zeitgeist come into being?

We started the company in 1988 in order to identify new filmmaking talent and to distribute the types of films that weren't being distributed effectively, if at all.

What were the first titles you acquired?

with \$2,000 and a lot of good will.

What's been the highlight of your career with Zeitgeist?

Sitting at Passover seder and seeing the controversy over *Poison* end up as Dan Rather's lead-off story on the six o'clock news.

How many works are now in your collection?

At this point, over 80.

A few filmmakers you distribute:

Olivier Assayas, Brothers Quay, Atom Egoyan, Todd Haynes, Derek Jarman, Deepa Mehta, Jennifer Montgomery, Yvonne Rainer, Greta Schiller, and Bruce Weber.

What types of works do you distribute?

Feature-length fiction films and documentaries. No shorts, except those made by feature filmmakers we already distribute.

What drives your acquisition decision-making process?

We tend to acquire only works about which we feel very strongly. So multiple criteria help us make this decision: passion for a film, its quality and prestige, and its mar-



Best known titles in your collection:

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (1964), starring Catherine Deneuve and directed by Jacques Demy, which we re-released in 1996. Todd Haynes's *Poison*, Bruce Weber's *Let's Get Lost*, and Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick's *Manufacturing Consent: Conversations with Noam Chomsky* are all pretty well known, too.

What's your basic approach to releasing a title?

The opposite of a cookie-cutter approach. We work very hard to tailor the distribution to the film.

The difference between a New York-based distributor of independent films and an L.A.-based one is... three hours.

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Where do you find your titles, and how should filmmakers approach you for consideration?

At film festivals, through our connections with sales



agents, and through tips from our allies around the world. We have never picked up a film that was sent to our office unsolicited.

Range of production budgets of titles in your collection:

From \$30,000 to \$3 million.

What would be your dream title to distribute?

A film that makes \$10 million at the box office.

A few words of advice to indie filmmakers the world over:

If you're making a decision about any aspect of your film, get advice, recommendations, and comparisons from at least three sources; these should not include your mother, but should include other filmmakers.



If you weren't distributing films, what would you be doing?

Making a decent salary, but not having as much fun.

What's the most important issue facing Zeitgeist today?

Seeking and acquiring capitalization monies.

Where will Zeitgeist be 10 years from now?

Bigger office, more staff, strategic partnerships, great films.

Other distributors you admire:

Dan Talbot at New Yorker Films, for a great catalog and the prescience to build theaters; and Wendy Lidell at International Film Circuit, for her taste, passion, and persistence.

Upcoming Zeitgeist titles to watch for:

The American release of Sandrine Veysset's *Will It Snow for Christmas?*, a highly acclaimed 1996 family drama that was a huge box-office success in France, about a mother's love for her children as they struggle to survive through winter.

Famous last words:

Don't use diminutives when describing Zeitgeist. We may not be large in terms of personnel, but we're formidable.

Distributor F.A.Q. is a monthly column conducted by fax questionnaire profiling a wide range of distributors of independent film and video. If you are a distributor and want to be profiled or are a maker and want to find out more about a particular distributor, contact Lissa Gibbs c/o The Independent, 304 Hudson St., 6th fl., NY, NY 10013, or drop an e-mail to: lissa@sirius.com.

Lissa Gibbs is a contributor editor to *The Independent*.

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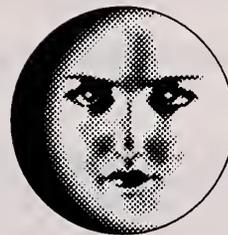
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BY RYAN DEUSSING

WHILE THE INDEPENDENT FEATURE FILM MARKET (IFFM) may seem to the uninitiated like a dizzying experiment in chaos theory, the annual event is nonetheless an arena where filmmakers, distributors, and financiers can come face-to-face and actually get things done. In its 19-year history, the market has grown immensely, and screenings have been augmented by dozens of seminars, workshops, and other programs designed to line up promising projects with interested parties from around the world. The best example of this strategy is the No Borders program—now in its third year—which brings these parties together to help them reach their common goal of getting projects financed and distributed. For documentary filmmakers, No Borders represents a rare opportunity to familiarize potential buyers with a work-in-progress and forge contacts that can get the project finished.

Unlike the market at large, the No Borders program requires that participating filmmakers fulfill certain criteria. To be considered, projects must have 20 percent or more of their financing arranged; one of the principals (writer, director, or producer) must have a track record (one feature distributed or with major festival recognition); and the project must be deemed to have strong co-financing potential. All market submissions are considered for the No Borders program, and a panel of representatives from the program's four presenting organizations—the Independent Feature Project (IFP), the Rotterdam Film Festival/CineMart, Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen, and the Sundance Institute—make the final selection. Selected projects are then presented to over 60 participating distributors, producers, and financiers who come to the market looking for co-financing opportunities. Though the program is also open to feature projects, 15 of the 17 works-in-progress in this year's program were documentaries.



To filmmaker John Anderson, qualifying *Secret People* for No Borders made a "world of difference" in promoting his project. Photo: John Anderson.

No Borders is already establishing a track record of helping documentary projects secure funding. Last year's program featured Sandi Dubowski's *Trembling Before G-d*, Doug Block's *Homepage*, and Ruth Leitman's *Alma*, all of which are now in production thanks in part to the exposure afforded by No Borders.

"The program really builds a buzz about the projects it includes," says Dubowski. "The amount of interest we generated at No Borders gave me the confidence to quit my day-job and devote myself to getting it finished." After several months of negotiations begun at IFFM, *Trembling Before G-d* secured a \$15,000 investment from Paris-based Pretty Pictures—funds that have served as seed money, attracting another \$100,000 from foun-

dations and individual investors.

Doug Block had already dealt with HBO/Cinemax before last year's No Borders, but, as he points out, "I might have been able to get the deal without the program, but it didn't hurt one iota for the folks from

HBO/Cinemax to see me meet with 10 other interested buyers over the course of a few days." He also says that he felt his film, *Homepage*, was a must-see by virtue of its inclusion in No Borders. "The foreign folks basically start with No

Borders and everything else is gravy," he explains. The screening and buzz at No Borders also convinced his former collaborator, Paris-based Jane Wiener (who coproduced *Silverlake Life* with Block) to sign onto *Homepage* as coproducer.



The *Farm* director Liz Garbus went to No Borders seeking funds for a theatrical release. Courtesy Gabriel Films

This year's participants hope for similar results. Contacted a few weeks after the event, the directors of several documentary projects seem pleased with their experience and optimistic about their chances at securing funding as a result of their participation.

Byron Pickett, director of *The Buddha from Brooklyn*, explains that "No Borders is all about momentum. We went in knowing we wouldn't walk away with a check, but that we were on a lot of buyers' lists. We had over twenty meetings during the market and walked away confident that we'll finish what we started."

John Anderson's *Secret People* went into No Borders with 85 percent of a \$155,000 budget in place. "We faced a tough decision because we could have finished the project in time for the market, but decided not to push it," he explains. "It's ironic, but being unfinished allowed us to qualify for No Borders, and that made a world of difference." Most of all, Anderson appreciated the fact that he didn't have to sell his film as hard as the rank-and-file, because buyers participating in No Borders arranged to meet him individually.

The Farm director Liz Garbus had already sold U.S. and British broadcast rights before coming to the market. "But we're really hoping to get funding for a theatrical release," she explains. "A&E is being very cooperative by allowing us to shoot for festivals and theaters before they air the film." She hopes that inclusion in No Borders will create just enough buzz to help her get *The Farm* into key festivals, such as Amsterdam and Sundance.

Market organizers make a concerted effort to bring No Borders projects to the attention of potential buyers. All of the participating companies, which range from the BBC to ZDF/Arte, are introduced to the projects before the market has started and encouraged to arrange meetings with the filmmakers. One of the most popular participants is Dieter Kosslick, who heads Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen and oversees the annual allocation of \$50 million in film financing for both German and international productions. Referring to NRW-financed documentaries like *Nico: Icon* and *East Side Story*, Kosslick wants to make it clear that his fund "works with government money, but we're not stupid." He's also committed to fostering independent projects that may have no other chance of being produced. "We're involved with real independent movies, not the kind of stuff that shows up at the Gotham Awards."

Ryan Devssing is managing editor of *The Independent*.

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The Rebirth of Venice

A new festival director injects an arthouse sensibility in this A-list event

BY CAROLA SPADONI

THIS YEAR THE VENICE INTERNATIONAL FILM Festival donned new clothes. Unlike years past, when big blockbusters, the who's who madness, and glitter spread onto the Lido, feeding the massive hunger for glamour, the 54th edition of this festival (held August 27 to September 6) swung its spotlight over to up-and-coming filmmakers and arthouse attractions. Under the new stewardship of Felice Laudadio, a former critic and producer who replaces outgoing festival director Gillo Pontecorvo, 10 out of the 18 films in competition were by first- or second-time directors. A hands-on festival director, Laudadio says he watched more than 300 movies and hand-picked the 18 in competition along with a five-member selection committee. As Laudadio claims, "I am not against stars. I wanted to select films on the basis of their quality, not by who was in them."

In addition, a good deal of documentaries and a brand new shorts competition marked the large and more experimental Officina Veneziana (Venetian Workshop) section (although too many works had well known TV station logos in their opening titles).

All these changes are good news for U.S. independents, who had a renewed presence at this year's festival. An independent film was included in the prestigious competition, alongside Paul Schrader's complex family drama *Affliction*, Wayne Wang's *Chinese Box*, Spike Lee's documentary *4 Little Girls*, and Woody Allen's hilarious *Deconstructing Harry*. This was



Incoming festival director Felice Laudadio. Courtesy Venice International Film Festival

Niagara Niagara, the latest from New York production company the Shooting Gallery. The lead actress, Robin Tunney, was awarded Best Actress for her stunning performance as a young woman afflicted by Tourette's Syndrome in this updated road grunge flick, by director Bob Gosse. By the time of its press screening, *Niagara Niagara* already had an Italian distribution company lined up.

Good Machine International was also on the Lido representing two American indies: Jim Jarmusch's *The Year of the Horse*, a rock documentary on Neil Young and the Crazy Horse band, proudly shot in Super 8, Hi8, and

16mm (as the opening titles read), and *The Sticky Fingers of Time*, a noir sci-fi by first-time feature director Hillary Brougher. Also in non-competitive sections were Rea Tajiri's feature *Strawberry Fields* and Barbara Kopple's *Wild Man Blues*, a documentary on Woody Allen's jazz tour in Europe.

Stirring up a scandal was *Gummo*, the directorial debut of *Kids* screenwriter Harmony

Korine, which was presented in the Critic's Week section. *Gummo* riled the Italian animal rights league and some politically correct critics with its depiction of bored southern teenagers killing stray cats just for fun and a few bucks. Set in a small town (Xenia, Ohio) that never recovered from a devastating tornado, *Gummo* is a clever film in which white-trash high school kids take over the screen. Chloe Sevigny and Carisa Bara give fresh and funny performances as bleach-headed sisters with nothing to do all day, and the two glue-sniffing cat-killing leads, Nick Sutton and Jacob Reynolds, are remarkable. Most of the actors are nonprofessionals. Without a traditional movie structure and going beyond conventional cinematographic lexicon with its mixed formats, *Gummo* is at times unpredictable. "I shot and edited as if I had a collage of images, skipping the predefined order of classical filmmaking," says the 23-year-old director. "About 75 percent of what you see is from my screenplay. The rest came out of situations I would set up for the characters to let them act freely. I told the cinematographer, Jean Yves Escoffier, just to be ready to catch their moves and moods. The script is just a place to fall back to."

On the business side, Venice is currently without an official market, but one is promised for next year. Nonetheless, this year most producers were making deals or at least making headway towards distribution. The festival also included a two-day symposium on European-American coproductions, "Can we produce together?", during which key industry figures from both sides of the Atlantic discussed co-production prospects. Between such networking opportunities, the upcoming market, and the new indie-friendly festival director, Venice is evolving into an event that might just make it onto independents' must-attend festival roster.

Carola Spadoni is a filmmaker and freelance writer living in New York.



Robin Tunney and Henry Thomas in Bob Gosse's *Niagara Niagara*. Courtesy Shooting Gallery

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THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Using Interns on the Set

BY BILL STAMETS

NEITHER SCABS, SUCKERS, NOR SAVIORS, student interns are an important resource for independents. Many filmmakers can identify with the fresh-faced hustle of an intern keen on acquiring real-world experience. Typically unpaid, short-term, school-insured, and union-loopholed apprentices, their drive can shame blasé pros on the set. Wise mentors will welcome even naive questions from their interns that may lead to new angles on production routines.

Internship coordinators at New York University (NYU), the University of Southern California (USC), and Columbia College in Chicago sketched out their guidelines and suggested how both sides of an internship can make informed choices.

If you're looking for a student intern, check out a school's curriculum. What hands-on skills are taught there and when? A first-year student at Columbia College can pick up a Bolex in the first week of class, while USC students don't begin their 16mm films until the second semester of their junior year. Does a school screen, monitor, and support its interns? Can you create an educational experience for an intern, or are you only trawling for drones?

If you're an intern, you should decide where you're headed professionally. Internships can be found in commercial film and TV, of course, but they're also offered by independent production companies and even individual media artists. Seek internships where you can be useful, not just used. This field trip into the world o' work could demystify your preconceptions. You might get a headstart up the corporate ladder, or flee into solo artistry after an up-close encounter with the Industry beast.

"Whatever you're doing, you're learning. People who understand that tend to get the most out of an internship," says Gordon Quinn, co-owner of Kartemquin Films in Chicago, the independent documentary group

that produced *Hoop Dreams*, among other films. Quinn was once an intern himself, shooting 16mm segments for a local PBS show called

Typically unpaid, short-term, school-insured, and union-loopholed apprentices, interns can shame blasé pros on the set.

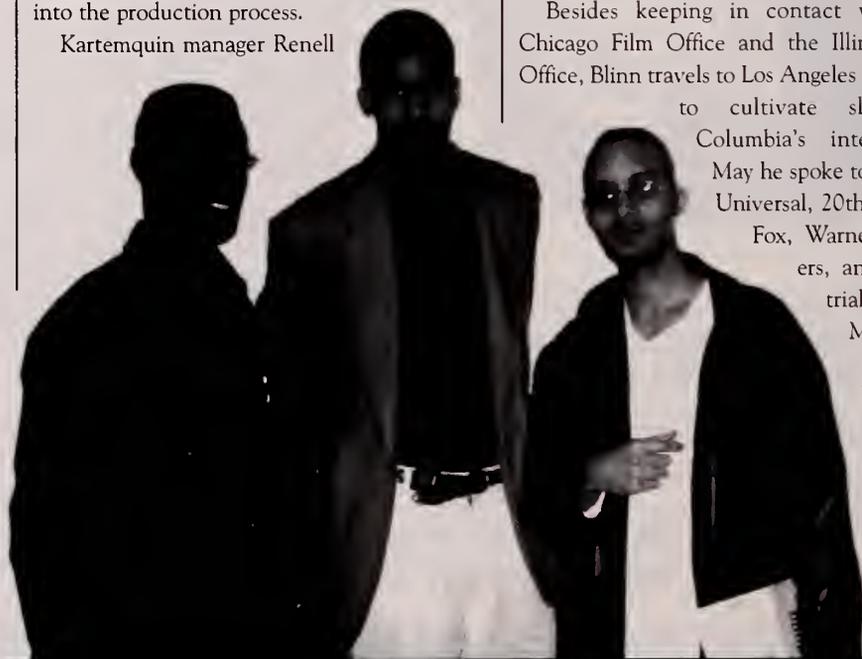
Student Journal as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago in 1963. Kartemquin regularly uses interns from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Columbia College, and other schools. Quinn suggests that simply answering the phone at a busy production office offers an alert novice insight into the production process.

Kartemquin manager Renell

Doremus urges prospective interns not to inflate their resumes. "Some students err on the side of showing over-qualification. Sometimes those who do not have a huge amount of experience can get more out of [an internship]." Yet employers should not mistake a more skilled intern as a hire. "A big mistake is trying to fill a void in your staff," adds Doremus. There are stories of development companies set up by one person who then recruits a transient staff made up of unpaid interns to read screenplays. Students may feel flattered to play gatekeepers in the creative pipeline, but those gigs abuse the internship ethos. Faculty in charge of internship programs try to screen out companies that are simply seeking free employees. Bob Blinn, internship coordinator at Columbia College, rejects about 10 requests for interns each week because "I don't think they're good enough for our students." Blinn also turns down many students he deems unmotivated, like an aspiring director of photography who had never read an issue of *American Cinematographer*.

Besides keeping in contact with the Chicago Film Office and the Illinois Film Office, Blinn travels to Los Angeles each year

to cultivate slots for Columbia's interns. In May he spoke to execs at Universal, 20th Century Fox, Warner Brothers, and Industrial Light & Magic. One of his students spent three



Columbia College intern Damon "Dee" Glaspie (center) chats up his former bosses, Chicago auteurs George Tillman, Jr. (*Soul Food*) (l) and Theodore Witcher (*Love Jones*). Photo: Bob Blinn, courtesy Columbia College

months last fall working with Columbia alum Janusz Kaminski on the set of *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*.

Schools closer to Hollywood come with their own contacts. "It's not so much the alumni base as the faculty who are active in the business who serve as sources of contacts," says Jerry Eisenberg, who coordinates over 30 internships each semester at USC in Los Angeles. Almost 20 percent of USC's interns end up being hired full-time by film companies.

New York offers a different internship environment. Cameron Fowler, a 22-year-old senior at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, scanned his school's placement office for postings and big binders listing internships. "I was impressed by the rapport NYU has with companies like Paramount, HBO, *Saturday Night Live*, and Conan O'Brien's show," says Fowler, who landed a spot assisting a promotions vice president at Warner Brothers. "All the phone numbers put me directly in contact with the people with power to hire. I called the director of advertising and promotions at Warner Brothers, who helped me bypass the human resources department."

Internships may be scarce, however, in certain specialties where there's an oversupply of talent. "There's an awful lot of free labor who'll work for nothing out here," notes USC's Eisenberg. Campbell Daghish, NYU's director of internships, fielded an inquiry from a union official representing editors who was concerned about an NYU intern placed in a postproduction spot. "Frankly, they don't encourage interns because there are so many card-carrying members who are out of work," Daghish says.

Nonetheless, internships can usually be found by the enterprising student. Bernhard Larson, one of Columbia College's 1,200 film students, changed his career plans after interning on a Hamburger Helper spot with a Chicago producer. "I realized there's more possibility for being creative in the postproduction phase," says Larson, who found shooting on the set far more restrictive than cutting in the suite.

"We're forcing the student to get clear about what they want to do," explains NYU's Eisenberg. As Columbia's Blinn put it: "The internship is really the beginning of your reputation."

Bill Stamets is a super 8 filmmaker and a freelance news photographer, and writes on film for the Chicago Sun-Times and the Chicago Reader

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INSIDE HBO

The Dish on the Documentary Division

BY SHELLEY GABERT

FEARLESSNESS. FREEDOM. FUNDING. THESE ARE the three magical elements that have allowed documentary filmmakers to thrive at HBO.

Over the past 15 years, HBO has evolved into an undisputed home for nonfiction filmmakers. Many stay for a long time; others visit and move on. Either way, Sheila Nevins, senior vice president of documentary and family programming, puts out the welcome mat. HBO's roster includes a varied and impressive group: Jon Alpert, Alan and Susan Raymond, Albert Maysles, Nick Broomfield, Renee Tajima and Chris Choy, Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, Spike Lee, and Bruce Sinofsky and Joe Berlinger, among others. During Nevins's tenure, HBO documentaries have won 10 Emmy Awards, five Academy Awards, eight George Foster Peabody Awards, and 21 Cable Ace Awards.

Even with this formidable track record, Nancy Abraham, director of documentary programming, says HBO is always open to hearing from new filmmakers—provided they do their homework first. "I don't respect filmmakers who ask me what I want," says Nevins.

While there's no real formula, it's important that filmmakers know what HBO doesn't do—multi-part series, nature documentaries, and historical programming—as well as what they're known for: provocative and visceral fare that offers an inside perspective on issues (often controversial) with contemporary social relevance.

"HBO allows our viewers to go places they couldn't see very easily on their own—to prisoners on death row, crack houses, convents," says Nevins, "and we do it in a manner that's certainly not boring. Our audience expects this from HBO, because we're known for not censoring our movies or any of our programming."

And who is this audience? More than 32.4 million people across the country currently subscribe to HBO/Cinemax. "They're like



Spike Lee's first documentary, *4 Little Girls* (left), and Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's *The Celluloid Closet* both screened theatrically as well as on HBO, which helped finance the films.

Courtesy HBO

me—not the me that's the executive, but the me that's part of mainstream America," she says. "They call me the Coca-Cola kid, because I really relate to and understand that audience."

3 Plus 1 Strands

Currently there are three documentary divisions within HBO: documentary specials, *Family Video Diaries*, and the 15-year-old *America Undercover* series.

Each year HBO premieres 14 to 15 hours of vérité style programming under its *America Undercover* banner. These are one-hour programs on topics like abortion, asylums,

Alzheimer's, crime, crack, convicts, drugs, death, demons, schizophrenia, skinheads, and sex.

"It's rare that we find a completed or a work-in-progress that we incorporate into *America Undercover*," says Abraham. HBO is involved in 98 percent of the series's projects from the beginning, often at the idea stage.

Subjects that fall outside *America Undercover*'s domain are featured in the two or three documentary specials HBO premieres each year. Again, these are HBO productions, not acquisitions. Films like Epstein and Friedman's *The Celluloid Closet* and Spike Lee's *4 Little Girls* fall in this camp. In addition to their HBO broadcasts, documen-

tary specials often live on through theatrical and home video releases.

The third programming strand is *Family Video Diaries*, a series that focuses on family relationships, usually told from the perspective of a family member, and intended for family audiences. HBO also works with independents on this series, generally making it an HBO production.

In 1995, HBO's sister station, Cinemax, also began showing 10 to 12 documentaries a year under the banner *Reel Life*. With no bounds in terms of the subject matter, HBO allows filmmakers to present quirky or more personal films, like *Jupiter's Wife*, Michel Negroponte's portrait of a homeless woman in Central Park, or Nick Broomfield's *Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam*.

Unlike *America Undercover* and the specials, *Reel Life* generally presents acquired programs and acts as a completion-funding financier, usually stepping in at the end of most projects.

According to Abraham, HBO's documentary budgets range from \$40,000 to close to \$1 million. While every deal is different, generally if it's a fully funded HBO project the company retains all rights and final-cut approval. However, HBO tries to be flexible, says Abraham, and has worked out arrangements with filmmakers who want to release their films theatrically.

Getting in the Door

Roughly two-thirds of the ideas that make it on the air are generated by HBO, with the other third pitched by filmmakers, either in a proposal or a rough cut. Abraham says they try to screen almost everything, because they have received several powerful films through the mail, such as Thomas Goodwin and Gerry Wurzburg's Academy Award-winning

documentary *Educating Peter*.

Filmmakers with ideas should send a three-to-five-page proposal that describes the project and the people involved, both in front of and behind the cameras. Keep in mind that the idea alone probably won't be enough to spark HBO's interest. "There's not that many completely original ideas," says Abraham.

What often sets a proposal apart is the filmmaker's insight and access to the subject matter. For example, Richard Farrell made a film about a friend who died of AIDS contracted from drug usage. He sent the film along with a letter in which he confided that he himself was an ex-crack addict. Nevins believed this subject would work well for *America Undercover*, so she introduced Farrell to veteran documentary-maker Jon Alpert and that's how *High on Crack Street: Lost Lives in Lowell* was born.

"We prefer to make our own marriages," says Abraham. If someone with little experience pitches a compelling idea, they will suggest an arrangement with either an in-house producer or a filmmaker HBO has worked with before.

"I'm a good doctor and a good casting agent," says Nevins. "Matching the filmmaker to the subject is very critical to me."

But what Nevins believes is the best subject for someone isn't always what that filmmaker expected. "I've often gone in with one idea and come out with another," says Marc Levin, an accomplished filmmaker who with his father, Al, has worked with Bill Moyers and made programs for Discovery and PBS. Over the years, Levin had pitched a number of ideas to HBO, but none ever moved forward. One day Nevins called him in to gauge his interest in living with street gangs in Little Rock, Arkansas, and making a film about the experience.

"I thought gangs had been done to death and really wasn't that interested. But Sheila persevered. Somehow she intuited that I would be good at dealing with underworld types."

And she was right. *Gang War: Bangin' in Little Rock* turned out to be an incredible experience for Levin that led to a number of other projects at HBO.

"Sheila's watching all the time, and if she sees a person who is talented, she's going to try to get them to do a project. I've seen her really go after people," says Jon Alpert.

Impressed with Bruce Sinofsky and Joe Berlinger's *Brothers Keeper*, Nevins wanted to find a project for them. Originally, she called them in to discuss an exposé on dying in America. Even though they weren't that interested, the two had wanted to work for HBO, so

they began researching the subject. But in the middle of that process, Nevins noticed an article about the horrific murder of three eight-year-old boys in West Memphis, Arkansas, and the subsequent arrests of several youths.

"She knew we could handle crime investigation, so she asked us to look into the situation," says Berlinger. He and Sinofsky would eventually spend three years in West Memphis watching the story unfold and shooting more than 150 hours of tape.

HBO was involved in the production and the editing process, which Berlinger describes as being hammered out collectively. "Sheila can be tough, but she's fair, and we never had a cross moment." Unlike other productions, Nevins had filmmakers edit their own work, rather than bring in an outside editor. "We spent so much time editing that we couldn't work on other things," says Sinofsky. "Golden handcuffs," adds Berlinger.

Paradise Lost was a fully funded HBO product (the final budget was close to \$800,000), yet the duo worked out a deal where the film could be released theatrically after its HBO premiere. The filmmakers retained the North American home video and nontheatrical rights, but split any profits with HBO. (It was also released on home video by Cabin Fever Entertainment this past May.)

Spike Lee came to HBO for funding for his first feature-length documentary, *4 Little Girls*, about the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in 1963. Lee had wanted to do this project since film school, and when the father of one of the girls who had been killed agreed to be interviewed, he moved forward. To qualify for an Academy Award, *4 Little Girls* was shown in a limited engagement in New York before premiering on HBO in February 1998.

It isn't just famous filmmakers who make it to HBO; lesser knowns have ended up with deals as well. San Franciscan Abraham Wilson sent HBO a rough-cut of his film *Bubbeh Lee*, about his Jewish grandmother, along with a letter requesting finishing funds. HBO gave him the money. And Ellen Stokes, a St. Louis filmmaker, and Michael Ryan, a writer for *Parade* magazine, sent their one-hour film about Henry Nichols, a hemophiliac who contracted AIDS from blood transfusions, and his efforts to educate his Cooperstown, New York, community (and eventually the country) about the disease. Nevins wanted the program, but shortened to 30 minutes. She paid for that and also provided money for some additional shooting. *Eagle*



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Scout: The Story of Henry Nichols premiered in 1995 and was nominated for an Emmy and won the Cable Ace Award for outstanding children's special.

The "Fearless" Part

Kelly Anderson and Tammy Gold sent a letter and a tape of *Out at Work* to HBO before its premiere at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival. The \$65,000 documentary follows the stories of three gay and lesbian workers over the course of five years and deals with harassment, domestic-partner health benefits, and discriminatory job loss.

"I expected this intellectual, issue-oriented piece, but was very surprised to find a human approach, touching on these middle America situations of gay people being fired," says Abraham. "It had heart," adds Nevins.

In order to make it an HBO production, however, Nevins felt that the most compelling story was the woman fired by Cracker Barrel for being a lesbian. Like many, Nevins was unaware that this is legal in 41 states. She wanted the filmmakers to research other incidents, shoot additional material, and reedit it into an entirely new production. They are in the process of that now, and the new program will be shown in early '98.

Ironically, Gold and Anderson didn't initially consider HBO a home for *Out at Work*. Throughout its development, they thought it belonged on PBS, so were thrilled when P.O.V. accepted their piece. PBS, however, refused to approve it as part of the season. In a letter to P.O.V., PBS's Sandy Heberer said that even though the piece was compelling television, it didn't meet PBS guidelines on funding. PBS took issue with several small funders, like the United Auto Workers of America and the National Lesbian Action Foundation, because their involvement might give the appearance they had exercised editorial control over the program content, even though it's clear in this case the underwriters had not.

"PBS said that we're not going to censor you because your show is about gays and unions but because [these funders] support you. We hadn't been able to get any ITVS funding, and yet we were punished for the funding we could get," Gold says. "It's still painful and ironic that we were rejected by the public sector and embraced by the private sector."

"HBO was a saving grace, in that they were a major opportunity in a moment of need," says Anderson. "HBO has been much more welcoming."

Another case of HBO's boldly going where networks dare not tread is with the documentaries of Jon Alpert. For 15 years he had a unique freelance arrangement with NBC. He and coproducer Maryann DeLeo had developed a show that followed two criminals in Newark, New Jersey, documenting their domestic violence at home, their drug buying, and their robbing stores. NBC wanted to broadcast some of the material, but was afraid to broadcast the whole program. HBO, on the other hand, did, running it as an *America Undercover* show called *A Life of Crime*.

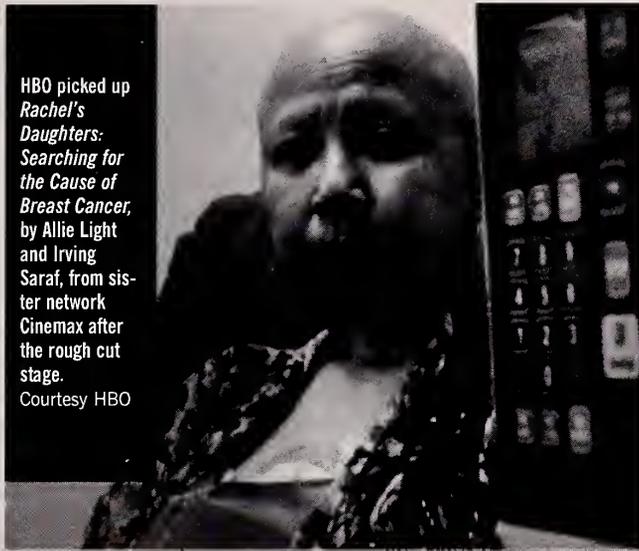
"Sheila's like a heat-seeking missile," says Alpert, who is now working on *A Life of Crime II*.

Catching Flack

Yet Nevins takes flack, mostly from the documentary community, about HBO's commercial and often sensationalistic programming.

"Just because a documentary isn't about a social issue doesn't mean it's not representative or showing a reality," she responds. "We make room for everything from *I Am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School* to *Real Sex*. It's like showcasing an

HBO picked up Rachel's Daughters: Searching for the Cause of Breast Cancer, by Allie Light and Irving Saraf, from sister network Cinemax after the rough cut stage. Courtesy HBO



evening of dance. You do everything from ballet to jazz to Broadway to strip."

In Nevins's view, the criticism partly stems from snobbishness in the documentary community. She cites the case of Nick Broomfield's *Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam*. Nevins had wanted an organization to screen the award-winning film, but the organization's head said, "No way am I going to put this pussy film out," according to Nevins. "But if it had been a lousy documentary about starving children, they would have run it," she says.

On the whole, Nevins's instincts are good. "If you look over the work that Sheila has had her name on, it's unbelievable; it's an incredible body of work," says Levin.

"I hold people very dear who are so passionate that they can scarcely separate themselves from their work," she says. "I'm a little like that, too." Indeed she is, Alpert affirms. "Sheila's obsessive about working on these programs. [HBO] treats the filmmakers with respect; they put your programs on the air and they are proud of you. Nobody ever threw us a party or celebrated our work like Sheila," he continues. "HBO would invite our parents and friends to screenings and feed everybody with shrimp."

"HBO is the best," says Levin. "They give you the time and money to do what you love."

For Sinofsky and Berlinger, it's even more divine. "We really felt like we had died and gone to heaven."

For all series, contact: HBO Documentary Programming Division, Time Warner, 1100 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036.

Shelley Gabert is a freelance writer living in St. Louis. She last wrote about the independent film channels in August/September 1996 issue of *The Independent*

When filmmakers Kelly Anderson and Tammy Gold sent a copy of their documentary *Out at Work* (below) to HBO, impressed executives asked them to shoot additional footage and create an entirely new production, at HBO's expense. Courtesy filmmakers



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CK WITH *HIGHBALL* AND *MR. JEALOUSY*

who appear in *Highball* (as guest and host, respectively) were at Vassar College with Baumbach and share the film's writing credits with the director. Jacott explains the writing process: "Noah came up with the premise for the movie; he knew it would have to have one location to work, and we split up the characters and scenes between the three of us. We wrote the parts with each of the actors in mind.

"Most of the time we weren't even in the same city," continues Reed. "We communicated by phone and e-mail and then got together before the shoot for re-writes." Both guys are delighted with how *Highball* is shaping up. "It's excellent. How often do you get to see Rae

Lizard man has now revealed himself to be John Lehr, who also appears in *Kicking and Screaming* and *Mr. Jealousy*. He gets me up to speed on the web of connection between the actors and the director. "Well, a lot of us, including Noah, come from a theater background, then so many of us worked on *Mr. Jealousy*: me, Carlos, Eric, Annabella, Chris, Lauren (Katz), and Chris (Eigeman). And even before that Lauren, Carlos, Chris (Reed), and I were in comedy improv groups together." The improv spirit may inform the atmosphere on set, but all the actors I speak to agree that *Highball* is definitely not a improvised film. "The script is really tight; it kicks ass," asserts Lehr. "So we



Scenes from Noah Baumbach's low-budget *Highball*. Photos: John Clifford, courtesy Highball Productions

Dawn Chong make out with a lizard?" asks Reed.

Upstairs in the tiny space the actors share as their hang-out and dressing room, Eric Stoltz is slumped in a canvas chair thumbing a copy of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, which he has to confess he's "not reading." Stoltz plays the part of a party guest, Darien, who comes out two-thirds through the movie. His take on the proceedings is delivered in a characteristic sleepy drawl. "It's miraculous, is what it is. I think we all sort of feel like we've been caught up in a natural disaster, a flood or a tornado. It's like watching your house being destroyed in front of you and all you can do is watch it happen. We've set something in motion that has no breaks, or airbags, or safety devices." He wanders off to have his hair cut just as *Highball*'s producer, Joel Castleberg, walks in. Like Baumbach, Castleberg, who also produced *Kicking and Screaming* and *Mr. Jealousy*, displays an impressive and relaxed authority. He heads straight to the phone.

Annabella Sciorra, who plays party guest Molly, is waiting to go over rewrites for a scene shooting tomorrow. "Noah's a friend," she says, looking somewhat exhausted from the *Highball* schedule and her involvement in *Mr. Jealousy*. "If we didn't think we were going to have a good time, we probably wouldn't have done it, because you have to like each other to work under these conditions." The "conditions" include getting green fuzz up your nose, and so she heads off to remove it.

stick to it, but then when we get to the end of the scene or at appropriate times, we start to riff and insert improv, and he'll let us go. But Noah's really good at keeping on top of it."

Although the actors appear to be reveling in the movie's slapdash process, I expect a different story from the crew. DP Steven Bernstein, whose last movie before *Mr. Jealousy* was the Wesley Snipes big-budget vehicle *Murder at 1600*, slows down for long enough to admit to having reservations about the project. "I felt that what Noah was doing polemically was diminishing the value of the crew. If you do a movie in seven days, then you eliminate the perceived value of the DP, the designer, all those people, and I didn't want to be involved in *that*." Nevertheless Bernstein's here because he "loves Noah" and because "my moral code is ultimately more important to me than my career code."

He lets me in on some of the tactics that are helping *Highball* to succeed within its stringent time and budget constraints. "We're using 16mm because it's cheaper and I can hand-hold it, which is important because there's not a lot of space around here. We've also managed to eliminate the tripod by using something called a mono-pod, which I can clip on the camera and walk around with." Bernstein then points to the pre-rigged lighting grid (much like the kind you find in TV studios). The grid, which runs through a central control panel, practical-

ly eliminates the need for time-consuming lighting set-ups. "Rather than Noah rehearse actors alone," Bernstein relates, "he'd rehearse one day with me and one day without me, so everything was blocked for lighting before we started shooting."

At this half-way point, *Highball's* DP admits to being pleasantly enthralled with the movie. "What I did discover as we began to make the film was that by shooting in order, by the crew being able to perceive the structure of the film, by the actors being able to build on each others' performances, there's a dynamic that suddenly appears that I haven't witnessed in a film before. The force of it is fabulous. By the time the blow-up's finished, having shot on 16mm and with this sort of

fingers. "With *What's Up Doc?*, it was three months from the time I said 'Let's make a movie like this!' to the time we were shooting." He feels the advantages of a limited time-frame far outweigh the disadvantages. "When a project takes six years, there's no sense of excitement."

Meanwhile, party hostess Diane (Katz) and host Travis (Reed) are shooting a scene in the kitchen with a vegan ghost played by James P. Engel "So there are many fascinating dishes that can be made from meat substitutes...." intones the ghost. Diane nods drunkenly yet politely, Travis assumes the sheet is an indication they have just come from the bedroom and goes to attack the ghost. When the scene



Noah Baumbach and his *Highball* family.
Photo: John Clifford, courtesy Highball Productions

lighting and shooting *25* takes a day, it's not going to be Oscar-contender cinematography, but it's going to be a very funny, very strong, well-structured film."

Veteran actor/director Peter Bogdanovich, who has a cameo as a party guest, knows more about the trials and joys of filmmaking than most. He originally came on board for *Mr. Jealousy* at the request of executive producer Stoltz. "What I didn't know until I worked with Noah is that he's an awfully good director," asserts Bogdanovich. "Very good on set, in control without being aggressive." In *Highball*, Bogdanovich plays a man who hits on women by doing impressions of forties film stars like Cary Grant and James Stewart. He conceived his own part after alerting Baumbach to his prowess for impersonations. He does Cary Grant then and there for me. It's spot on.

Bogdanovich admits to being surprised and delighted by Baumbach's processes. He even goes so far as to make the correlation between *Highball* and the movies of a bygone Hollywood era. "When I started in pictures, you could still say, 'Let's do a picture!'" He snaps his

wraps, Halloween is over and the crew knuckles down to redecorate for New Year's. It's time for me to leave, but before I do, the hyper energetic First AD, Chad Braden, throws me the quote on *Highball* I'd asked him for earlier. His two words are about all he has time for right now: "Controlled chaos!"

THE NEXT WEEK I SPEAK TO BAUMBACH VIA TELEPHONE AND HE TELLS me *Highball* has come in on schedule and on budget thus far. "I always thought *Kicking and Screaming* would be made this way, with no money and with friends," muses the soft-spoken director. "In the end we had over a million for the film (not that I'm complaining), and then we doubled that budget on *Mr. Jealousy*, so I wanted to go back and fill in the gap. Also, my other films have had a strong melancholy streak, and I wanted to do something that was all out funny, that an audience could just laugh at all the way through."

Before the shoot, Baumbach had been concerned that he wouldn't have time to get enough good material, but that hasn't turned out to

be the case. Obviously, making *Highball* with close friends and colleagues helped the director get results in the short time span. "I'm at a point with these people when I can say a few words and it speaks volumes," says the 27-year-old director. "And having rehearsals helped enormously. Mostly things went off in one take." Writing the parts with specific actors in mind made directing actors "even easier."

So did the shoot, which came in on schedule, live up to his expectations? "It was an experiment, but I guess I always knew it would work. There's a sense in which I've been rehearsing for this film ever since college. In college we'd put on a play a week, so you just do it in the time you

excellent atmosphere on set, which always helps. The cast were such great improvisers and the pre-rigged lighting saved us a lot of time."

So where did the money for *Highball* come from? "Getting the money wasn't at all tough," he goes on to reveal. "It took about two weeks. Several people put up the \$250,000 right away, because they trusted Noah and the cast. Originally we'd had the idea to use the contingency budget for *Mr. Jealousy*, but we hadn't anticipated that *Mr. Jealousy* would be a union film and that used up the contingency." Similarly, there was no problem getting the cast to come back for more after *Mr. Jealousy* finished shooting: everyone was happy to work together again.

Baumbach (center) a few weeks earlier on the set of *Mr. Jealousy*, with executive producer Eric Stoltz and costar Annabella Sciorra.



have, you know? In that it turned out how I imagined it would, it exceeded my expectations. And in the end it was such a great group of people to work with, they made it easy for me." He also enjoyed working with *Highball*'s young and largely inexperienced crew, saying, "It was the first set I've worked on where I felt anything like old."

All in all, *Highball* is an experience that Baumbach's eager to repeat. "I want to do another *Highball* after my next movie. The actors are already coming up with ideas for it." He also hopes other directors will follow his lead and make more movies on less time and less money. At least for the moment, the director who's shot two films in almost as many months is busy editing *Mr. Jealousy*, which is due for release this spring. *Highball* is scheduled to have a separate life and will probably be released soon thereafter.

When, later in the day, I ask producer Joel Castleberg how he and Baumbach pulled off the *Highball* shoot, he laughs, "It was kismet!" But he also acknowledges that certain factors led to its success. "Well, the director and actors rehearsed on set with the DP, and there was an

I ask Castleberg what other tactics were used to help *Highball* come in on budget. "Well, there were no trailers, no dressing rooms, no generator, and no vehicles, with the exception of a van for props," he replies. "The entire crew got the same rate of \$75 per day, even the DP. The actors worked on a very low rate, the SAG modified low budget, which worked out at about a third of the regular rate. Now that Noah wants to do this after every film, we'll finance it in advance next time."

One thing's for certain, the *Highball* experiment takes all the noise about the "advantages" of low-budget movie-making and puts them to the test. It remains to be seen if the end product will be the indie version of an extended episode of *Friends*, or if *Highball* will live up to its energetic promise. Still, with so little money and time expended, no one should be complaining.

Eve Claxton is a freelance journalist living in New York.

The Avant Garde meets the UPPER west side



BY RYAN
DEUSSING

The New York Film Festival, now in its 35th year, has programmed avant-garde and experimental film almost every year since the

arrival of Festival Director Richard Peña in 1988. Though

1996 saw a lapse in such programming, this year's festival featured more avant-garde film than ever—more than 20 works in four programs. With the help of curators Gavin Smith and Mark McElhatten, Peña seems dedicated to preserving a role for experimental film within the festival. Screening new works by Stan Brakhage, Lewis Klahr, Mark LaPare, Matthias Müller, Robert Frank, and many others, this year's Avant Garde Visions program acknowledges the strong tradition of the avant garde, as well as the presence of a new generation of experimental filmmakers. The following conversation with Richard Peña took place shortly after this year's festival.

There's a very curatorial sense to the program.

We've stayed a small and exclusive festival, and the exclusivity leads one to see the program as a curated one, something that's really been selective. It's not panoramic, and it's not necessarily representative of anything but a point of view, for better or for worse. I think people see



the festival as a portrait or vision of cinema at a certain time and there's argument over each space, because each space is precious.

Who was on the selection committee this year?

Myself and Wendy Keyes are permanent members of the committee and three others change on a rotating basis. This year it was David Anson from Newsweek, Jonathan Rosenbaum from the Chicago Reader, and Robert Sklar, who's a professor at New York University. Pretty much every year someone leaves the committee and another person comes on. Of course this year programs I & II of Avant Garde Visions were programmed by Gavin Smith and Mark McElhatten, without whom this year's event couldn't have happened.

How has Avant Garde film fit into the festival in past years?

I came to the festival in 1988, and I think that year we called it Avant Garde Voices, but we've always had an avant-garde program, except for last year. In 1996 we got a little frustrated and figured "If we're not doing this right let's not do it."

Where'd the frustration come from?

I think we realized last year that to really create a program that we could stand behind, we'd have to go far beyond the films we were receiving. In years past, when we received Ernie Gehr's *Sidewalk Shuttle* or Pat O'Neil's *Water and Power* and things like that, we had in essence the lynchpin of the program and could just fill it out with a few other things. Last year nothing struck us that way; we had maybe seven films and each was endorsed by two people. Decisions like that also have to do with the condition of the committee, but ultimately it didn't seem like a good idea to force a decision out of a sense of obligation when we didn't agree on the films.

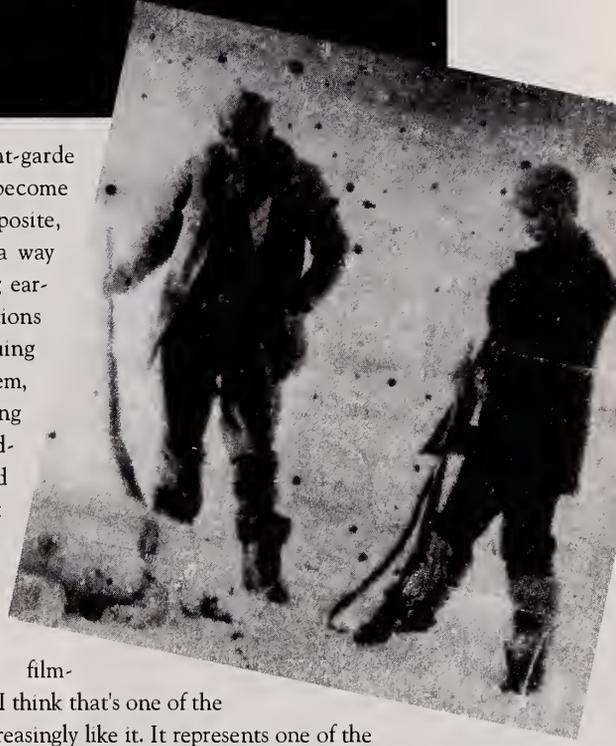
That said, what gave rise to this year's extensive Avant Garde Visions program?

Basically we wanted





Film from this year's Avant Garde Visions Program. From top (clockwise): Lewis Klahr's *Pony Glass*, Rebecca Baron's *Idea of North*, Peter Tscherkassky's *Happy-End*, and Kerry Laitala's *Secure the Shadow*. All photos courtesy the filmmakers.



to reth-ink the program, and I think it was at the back of my mind for a while to move it out of Alice Tully and into the Walter Reade. During the course of the year I met with a few people and brainstormed a bit and decided to run it during the festival, but to move it out of Alice Tully. Originally we planned to put together two programs of contemporary work, but then we got in touch with Robert Beavers and soon proposed to him a third program focusing on his work, since it's so wonderful and so seldom seen. We did that, and then Robert turned us on to the fact that they were about to print the first part of Gregory Markopoulos's *Eniaios* cycle. One thing led to another, and suddenly we had a chance to present that in a fourth program.

In creating this year's program, did you and the other curators feel compelled to come up with a definition of avant-garde? Did you perhaps exclude other work that might be deemed experimental, but not a part of the avant-garde tradition?

I know what you mean, but I don't really think we faced much of a problem. We just decided to look at work that appealed to us. There was the question of certain short films that we might want to show in the film festival. For example, Georg Misch's *Insight* is a fabulous film that we would have liked to include in the Avant Garde Visions program, but it ultimately ran in the festival before Sokurov's *Mother and Son*. Our notion of the avant-garde is not hard and fast, though we tend to think of work that in one way or another makes an interesting formal address to the medium.

What role do you think avant-garde film plays in the grand scheme of things? What influence does it have in the film world at large?

In a certain way that's why the term is so problematic. 'Avant garde' suggests something that actually opens up new trails,
 new ways of
 approaching the
 medium, but
 to a degree
 what's

called 'avant-garde film' has become just the opposite, it's become a way of examining earlier traditions and continuing to work them, like working with found-footage and silent film. It has very little to do with more popular or commercial film-making, and I think that's one of the reasons I increasingly like it. It represents one of the few truly alternative models, especially because the term "independent" has become so hopelessly muddled, so that maybe half of what qualifies as independent just looks like low-budget Hollywood. Avant-garde film reminds us that there are people out there still truly making their own films.

I recall when we started showing these films in 1988, one critic asked me why we bothered to program avant-garde films when the movement was already long dead. Actually, what's been pleasantly surprising is just how young and energetic a lot of these filmmakers are.

There's a wonderful new group of people out there

The way I approach programming or curatorial work is as a process of creative selection, so that there's an element of montage that goes on in the arrangement of works. That had a lot to do with the formulation of these programs.

I want to create experiences that affect the audience as a whole, not only as the sum of their parts.

—Curator Mark McElhatten



From top (clockwise): Robert Frank's *The Present*, Julie Murray's *If You Stand with Your Back to the Slowing of the Speed of Light in Water*, two images from Nathaniel Dorsky's *Triste*.

dedicated to this tradition and working intelligently and well within it.

Is there any chance that the Avant Garde Visions program might spin off the way the video program became the New York Video Festival?



It's a curious thing. Everything is a work-in-progress and we're always thinking about the possibility of

change. My own sense is that the program went very well this year—people enjoyed the films and attendance was great. I'd like to see it for the foreseeable future (i.e. next year) certainly remain linked to the festival. I think we could even raise some questions about the overall wisdom of the video festival having left. Although we were always con-

I wanted to make a statement with these programs that Avant Garde film is alive and well. It's like the research & development side of making movies. It's a laboratory where all kinds of experiments take place. Obviously no one believes that it will transform the face of cinema, but there's no question that ideas trickle down and fertilize more mainstream films.

—Curator Gavin Smith



cerned that the video program was overshadowed by the rest of the festival, in point of fact attendance was much better when it took place simultaneously than it was this year. At the time it seemed perfect for it to coincide with the Lincoln Center Festival, which highlights cutting-edge work, but you never know.

This year we put the program together and then sort of waited to see what would happen, if anybody would come. I don't know if you were there on Saturday, [when all four programs were shown in succession] but it was certainly one of the nicest days I ever spent in the Walter Reade, it was such a good feeling. People were really happy. Most of them seemed to enjoy the work, but even if they didn't like it all they were really pleased that there was a place where this kind of work is being shown.

Ryan Deussing is Managing Editor of The Independent

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photo: Piscina Plog, Ann Elizabeth Miller

How to choose between Avid MCXpress and Media 100XS

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR INNER EDITOR

BY ROB ROWND

Digital Therapy

IT WAS WARM, AND THE SOFT HUM OF LATE afternoon traffic drifting through the closed blinds was soothing. I was excited, relaxed, and confident all at the same time. After the usual introductory pause, I announced that I was planning to terminate therapy in a couple of sessions.

"Hmm . . .," my digital therapist murmured. "Say some more."

Okay, I said. I felt I'd dealt with every issue in my analog past. I'd come to terms with that feeling of inadequacy that reared its ugly head every time I collated the time-code numbers from all the Post-it notes ringing the monitor of my tape-based off-line system. I no longer felt overwhelmed by the sense of a loss of control when I gave a project over to an on-line editor. But it was time to put away childish things like paper edits and window dubs. It was time to get my own digital editing system.

Think about it, I said, digital is finally here. The new editing system will be perfect. It will never crash. It will output to tape, CD-ROM, and the Web. Multiple revenue streams will rush over rock solid EDLs [Editing Decision List], which are readable by all tape-based online systems. My God, I cried, it will even provide accurate 24 frame-per-second match-back lists for projects to be conformed on beautiful, old fashioned film. It would do all that and leave enough room on my Power Mac to run all my business and personal software. If I can get it for the price of a new truck—hopefully with financing—wow!

I paused as my mind refocused on the here and now. Looking up from my shoes, I said, "The dilemma I now face is, which is the more perfect of the two major Mac-based nonlinear editing systems: the Avid MCXpress or the Media 100 XS?"

"Ach, Kinder," my digital therapist sighed.

"Your search for the perfect digital editing system reminds me of my own search for the Perfect Father in my actual father. You are at peace with your analog past, and that is good, but it only gives you the space and freedom to deal constructively with the digital present as it actually exists. In reality, the digital present is far from perfect—but it is far better, cheaper, and faster than it was even two years ago.

"Remember the Linda Hamilton character looking at der magnificent Arnold playing with her son at the end of *Terminator II*? She sees a perfect father—a man who will never be too busy, too distracted, or too tired to protect John Connor. However, once the penultimate threat has been eliminated through some nifty gun fire and molten steel, both Linda and the wise-beyond-his-years-John accept that this near-perfect father has a fatal flaw and must be eliminated or become a danger to John and the human race in general.

"The same is true of your perfect editing system. To put complete faith in anything currently on the market for under \$30,000 is to live in denial and frustration. Instead of believing in a false god, accept the fact that the key to contentment in the digital media age is self-knowledge and a set of definable priorities. Well, it seems our time is up. See you on Friday."

I terminated therapy anyway. This sage wisdom whacked upside my head so hard I was left



Media 100: Interface-off with the digital cuisinart.
Courtesy Media 100

with nothing but mindful clarity. I knew now that it was not what the two nonlinear editing (NLE) systems did that was so different, but how they interacted with human beings, being based on very disparate metaphors. Hence, deciding whether an Avid MCXpress or a Media 100 is the system for you depends more on you than on the machines themselves—where you're from, how you learned to edit, and what you produce.

The Digital Steenbeck

The Avid was developed by engineers who spend months talking to editors about how they liked to cut. This paid off in spades. The codex, or symbolic command language, is constant throughout the entire Avid product line. Learn to cut on any old model, and you can sit down at a Media Composer 8000 (the big \$80,000 machine) and continue working. Further, it's easy to guess how to do something new on the Avid, because the underlying logic of commands is also consistent.

Since Avid is the oldest NLE system to have survived, it has had over 10 years of development and software revisions to mature into a graceful, intuitive, and complete system. The software is now universally

considered stable, and the company's longevity have given it a significant degree of familiarity in all areas of the post business. There may or may not be an equal number of Avids and Media 100s in the work-world today (it depends whom you ask), but a quick glance at the trade papers in L.A., New York, Chicago, or San Francisco shows there are many more positions for Avid editors and assistants than for Media 100 specialists.

However, Avid's attempt to maintain a complete system of products independent of outside influences is also its chief liability. Most of the Mac world embraces the open-architecture world of software plug-ins and add-on hardware. The growth of digital post has been fueled by companies that produce a flag-ship product that does something better than anybody else. Avid, on the other hand, continues to require purchasers to use Avid proprietary hardware, and it counters the encroachment of third-party software developers by continually offering its own special effects additions. But few of Avid's homegrown effects impress those who work with them. They just aren't as good as what is available through other vendors. Avid software still performs split cuts (which are 90 percent of the cuts an editor makes) much more efficiently than the Media 100, and it outputs solid EDLs. Yet a fair number of editors now complain that Avid's preoccupation with autonomy is getting in the way of its supporting their evolving needs.

The Digital Cuisineart

If the Avid is intended to mimic the elegant sophistication and narrow professionalism of the Steenbeck, a machine that performs one function very well, Media 100 markets their product as a rough-and-tumble contraption that iconoclasts can use as they see fit. You can blend just about anything in it.

Although this is not a machine designed specifically by and for filmmakers, that need not intimidate you. If you can balance your checkbook using Quicken, you can master most of the straight editing functions in about two weeks. In an additional two weeks, you'll get to a point of familiarity with the software where you'll wonder, "Why can I hit one key to perform this common edit function, but I can't hit a single key to perform that one?" The Media 100 is no more complex than the Avid in terms of the number of keystrokes or mouse moves, but the command lingo seems to lack a certain consistency. As a result, the operator tends to rely as much on rote memorization of

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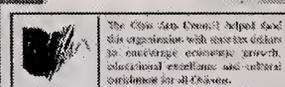
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The digital Steenbeck: Avid's MCXpress. Courtesy Avid

Media 100 people, "off-line" and "on-line" are terms that refer to image quality.

In contrast, the Avid product line began with

commands as on intuiting a new move from previous experience. This slows down the learning process, taking more repetition of tasks to grasp the commands and more time with the manual. A user-definable system of personal macro commands would be a great next step, enabling the user to tailor this flexible machine to his or her needs.

Digital Choice

This level of functionality is where the Avid MCXpress and Media 100 part company. If the work you do simply mimics either the online video or film conforming process, your choice between machines is fairly straightforward. Lay the tape-to-picture output of the MCXpress and Media 100 XS HDR side by side, and the Media 100 looks better. Lay the Media 100 XS HDR picture next to top-of-the-line Avid Media Composer 8000, and the difference is minimal, but the Media 100 still wins. However, in shots with subtle color changes or slow camera moves through strong horizontal vectors, none look as good as Digital Betacam mastered to D2; while that slightly blocky digital video look is much improved, editing artifacts (odd bits of digital misinformation) still turn up in the fine details.

For those who need EDLs to export to other platforms, the Avid family has a far better reputation for exporting stable and translatable lists. This seems to be a cultural difference between the companies. Media 100 wants its customers to "on-line" their projects on the same machine on which they "off-lined," but at a higher level of resolution. Most of their research time and money seems to have gone into their machines' picture quality and making their redigitizing process work so well. To

machines that were intended to be used to produce a lower-res simulation of the final edit, rather than perform the final edit itself. For Avid folks, "off-line" and "on-line" refer to the exchange of information between machines through compatible edit decision lists. The choice for the consumer is how you want to get the best image quality you can afford.

Another cultural difference lies in the companies' solutions to their respective inadequacies. While Avid is constantly working to improve image quality, they choose to go it alone. In comparison, Media 100 is working with third-party vendor Trakker Technology to promote Slingshot, an add-on package designed to make Negative Conforming Lists from EDLs and Telecine lists.

The big hole in Media 100's range of products is its lack of a 24-frame matchback system for conforming good old-fashioned film. Slingshot is a software solution designed to work with all Mac-based nonlinear editing systems, including the Avid. The openness to competition, cooperation, and improvement displayed by Media 100 bodes well for an industry characterized by continuous change. If the past is any indication, the best new toys will pop up from new or spin-off companies. Image quality will improve as the major companies leap-frog ahead, but flexibility and compatibility will be key to other innovations.

Another significant cultural difference isn't inherent in the machines, but has to do with how you learn to use them. You can go to school to learn the Avid and move from being a complete novice to a mechanically

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adroit editor in a structured environment of seminars, boot-camps, and training sessions. It isn't cheap, but it is thorough. Media 100 also offers seminars, but most of the learning is self-directed and requires more dedication and discipline. People learn the system by playing with it. Given the independent nature of its users, it isn't surprising that Media 100's phone and email technical support is well staffed. By comparison, Avid's tech support is a sore spot for a lot of customers seeking help outside their structured educational system.

Digital Suppleness

The most significant difference between the two systems lies in the Media 100's flexibility for both input and output of material. At this level, the Media 100 becomes more difficult to operate but offers a good deal more in return. To get the most out of the machine—and there is a lot there—you need to become Mac literate. Computers work in layers—the commands you enter are translated into the language in which the program was written, which in turn is translated into a machine language that drives the Central Processing Unit. Therefore the key to control lies in being able to function beneath the surface command level.

While the Avid can be finicky about importing or exporting data to third party programs, Media 100 provides multiple file formats for the exchange of audio and picture information. Being able to alter or create information via Adobe AfterEffects, Boris, KPT Brice, Sound Designer, or Deck II greatly increases the potential range of finished products. It also increases the degree of difficulty and requires a greater level of knowledge and, let's face it, thought.

Digital Nirvana, for now

Both the Media 100 and MCXpress are amazing machines. While they seem designed to compete, they really don't. If you don't like computers or are moving toward digital post for an off-line or match-back system only, the MCXpress is easier to learn and use. However, with a little bit of extra effort, the Media 100 provides not only a decent off-line system but an open architecture authoring system that will get better and more diverse along with the rest of the industry.

Rob Rownd is (RRound@aol.com) is a writer and filmmaker based in Chicago.

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AMERICA HASN'T SEEN PRISONERS TOILING AWAY at hard labor in shackles and striped uniforms since chain gangs were abolished as cruel and unusual punishment in the 1960s. Yet amidst current debate about prison reform, the chain gang, originally meant to replace slave labor in the post-Civil War South, has reappeared in two prisons in Alabama. Xachery Irving's **American Chain Gang** captures this anachronistic milieu. Not only does the feature-length documentary examine the forced, volatile intimacy of check forgers, murderers, drunk drivers, and rapists working together in close, often tense quarters, but Irving's camera also records how tedious labor affects the prison wardens minding the group. Granted almost unlimited access by each chain gang's facility, Irving's film offers a remarkably close investigation of the historical and cultural legacy of the chain gang with a balance of real-life events, interviews, and archival footage. *American Chain Gang*, Irving Pictures, 300 E. 70th St., New York, NY 10021; (212) 737-5012.

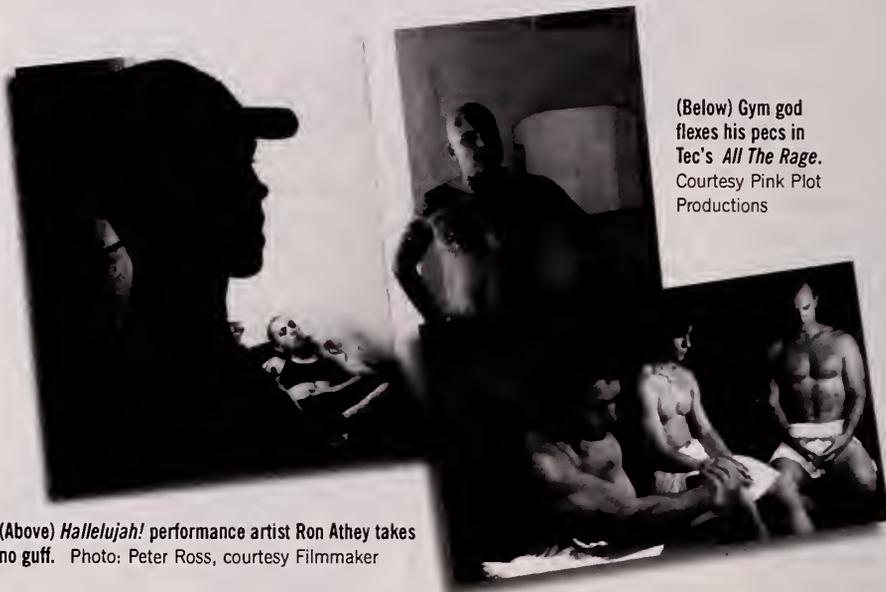
In another strike against debt, dishonor, and credit cards run amok, the very clever filmmakers Paul Griffin and Risa Morimoto actually sewed 2,250 lbs. of seed corn into microwavable heating pads. These so-called Dream Pillows sold like hotcakes on the streets of New York City, raising \$20,000 in production funds almost overnight. The proud result is **The LaMastas** (Sicilian for "the idiots"), a comic tale of a lovestruck fool and his merry misfit friends who try to rob a bank and lock themselves in a vault. *The LaMastas*, Lonely Seal Pictures, 30961 W. Agoura Rd., Ste. 311, Westlake Village, CA 91361; (818) 879-7495.

Director/producer Joe Murphy knows we all crave a bale on the pop-culture bandwagon, or at least a lead on the latest underground hang where everybody, or maybe just the doorman, knows your name. So in the interest of getting his black comedy **Shadow of Death: A Comedy** on screen, Murphy is raffling off speaking parts in the film, bed and breakfast getaways, and dinner at a cool New York venue called the Vynl Diner. *Shadow's* narrative is about a meeting of minds between an actor and the Devil who buys his soul for a minimal fee, promising fame, fortune, and on-site instruction to raffle hopefuls. Whether you're "old, young, man or woman," says Murphy, if

you "have the acting ability of a potato, we'll find (you) a spot." *Shadow of Death, A Comedy*, 747 10th Ave., #4A, New York, NY 10019; tel/fax: (212) 765-1721.

Ron Athey is the sort of artist that right-wing reformers cite as an reason to destroy the NEA. Onstage, Athey destroys his own flesh with self-flagellation, bloodletting, self-mutilation, and other violent and sexual acts. **Hallelujah!**, a feature-length documentary

footage of clips of old educational films and adult lesbians reminiscing about their own first crushes, Friedrich's film has etched itself into consciousness with great success at Sundance and the Berlin International Film Festival. The 65-minute feature has also stirred a good deal of controversy, cited by anti-NEA factions as "obscene" and "pornographic." *Hide and Seek* is distributed by Women Make Movies. *Hide and Seek*,



(Above) *Hallelujah!* performance artist Ron Athey takes no guff. Photo: Peter Ross, courtesy Filmmaker

(Below) Gym god flexes his pecs in Tec's *All The Rage*. Courtesy Pink Plot Productions

produced and directed by Catherine Saalfield, mines this strange, disturbing artist's life and work to unearth the substance underneath the sensationalism. Saalfield clarifies the conceptual framework behind the shock value by tying Athey's sadomasochistic ritual to his fanatically Penecostal religious background and sense of spirituality. Using a handheld Hi-8 camera, Saalfield combines verité footage and interviews of the artist with pieces of Athey's own video work. Saalfield is currently seeking funding to blow up the video to 35mm. *Hallelujah!*, Aubin Pictures, Inc., 136 Grand St. #5EF, New York, NY 10013; (212) 274-9782; fax: 274-0551.

Charting the subterranean limboland between girl and woman, Su Friedrich's **Hide and Seek** audaciously explores the murky world of early lesbian adolescence. The center of the film is Lou, a 12-year old tomboy growing up in the 1960s and navigating her way through unarticulated and as-yet unrecognizable feelings of desire. Counterpointing Lou's black-and-white world with documentary

Downstream Productions, 222 E. 5th St., Rm. 6, New York, NY 10003; (212) 475-7168.

Joel Marsden's **Ill Gotten Gains** has already garnered attention for its intriguing parallels to Steven Spielberg's forthcoming slave ship rebellion epic, *Amistad*. After all, both films share the same subject matter, the same set, and even the same actor. Yet Marsden's work, shot in black and white, lacks the financial muscle of Dreamworks; this debut feature was financed entirely by Marsden's Spats Film partner, Don Wilson, a successful commodities trader at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, and such a move gives the team total creative control. Shot entirely in Cameroon, the tale of rape, torture, humiliation and murder also features Eartha Kitt and Akosua Busia (*The Color Purple*). Spats Films, fax: (213) 466-4469.

The Lower East Side underground bands highlighted in Ethan Minsker's documentary **Anything Boys Can Do** revise the term and ghetto category "girl group." Bands like Tribe 8, *The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black*,

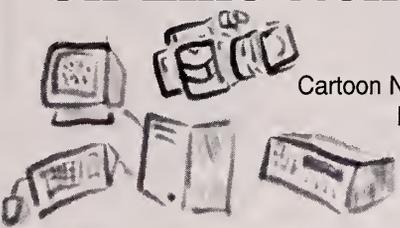
and Vitapup may be all-female, but they are anything but cutesy. Minsker's feature-length video doc zigzags between live performances and interview, sketching the role of gender within the confines of a supposedly-egalitarian "alternative" music scene. The video has already been screened at a diverse group of film festivals and can be rented from Kim's Video, Tower Video, and Two Boots Video. *Anything Boys Can Do*, East Coast Exchange, 45 Avenue B Apt. #2, New York, NY 10009; (212) 979-8165; fax: 529-5880.

The Pink Triangle is a new project from two artists whose work we're always waiting for: Academy-Award winners Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (*The Celluloid Closet*). The duo revisit the Holocaust to retrieve stories already disappearing from the world's consciousness. By examining the lives of five homosexuals, the filmmakers explore many widespread atrocities still unrecorded 50 years after the war. These men, like many incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps for their homosexuality, were persecuted and imprisoned as criminals in post-war Germany, surviving impossible odds in the camps only to suffer continuing ostracism at home. *The Pink Triangle*, Telling Pictures, 121 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 864-6714; fax 864-4364.

With *All The Rage*, Harvard alum Roland Tec tells the terrifying tale of Christopher, a buff yup obsessed with finding the ideal mate. "As I tell people about the project, they say, 'Oh my god, that's my life story . . . I know him, I've dated him,'" warns director Tec. Or have been him, perhaps? High-powered, handsome, wealthy, and wild, Christopher has won all the laurels of urban gay culture, but still seeks his Holy Grail: the perfect husband. Then some homebody who just wants to read sweeps Christopher off his feet, forcing him to choose between his fantasy and true love. *All The Rage*, Pink Plot Productions, Box 1930, Boston, MA 02205; (617) 266-6669; fax 262-7626.

Andre Steiner, a Slovakian architect who helped slow the deportation of over 7000 Jews during the Holocaust, goes home for the first time in 50 years in Brad Lichtenstein's *Andre's Lives*. As a member of the "Working Group" negotiation team during World War II, Steiner funnelled American funds to Nazi officials in exchange for Jewish lives, Steiner was able to keep Slovak citizens bound for German death camps on local farms. Steiner emigrated to Atlanta in 1950, where he took part in many of the city's major architectural projects. He returns to Slovakia with his son, who was only

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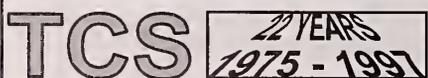
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seven years old when the Steiner family fled to the Tatra Mountains before leaving the country. *Andre's Lives*, Lumiere Productions, 26 W. 17th St., New York, NY 10011; (212) 727-3157.

Keep an eye out for the ITVS production *I Stare at You and Dream*, Susan Mogul's candid gaze at Highland Park, the Los Angeles Latino neighborhood she calls home. In her fiery film about "longing and loss, about the tides of love, sacrifice, anger, and hope that run through the lives of its maker and her friends," Mogul examines the roles of rebel and peace-maker, loner and lover her friends invest with their individual, original energy and struggle to rise above. *I Stare at You and Dream*, c/o Susan Mogul, 4920 Echo St., #14, Los Angeles, CA 90042; (213) 255-1262.

Also in production or recently completed:

• A short walk to the post office turns into a day-long exploration of a city in *Tax Day*, which chronicles two women's city-drifting on the ominous April 15th and the joy of "non-virtual living." Laura Colella has already shot this feature in Providence, Rhode Island, and is currently seeking postproduction funds. *Tax Day*, Lucky Pictures, Box 41695, Providence, RI 02940; (401) 453-4372.

• International co-financing is the name of the game with *The Man with Rain in His Shoes*. Produced by L.A.-based Wild Rose Productions and Madrid-based Esicma Productions, this hybrid of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *When Harry Met Sally* is a comic tale of a man in love with a woman who is marrying another. *The Man with Rain in His Shoes*, Wild Rose Productions, 584 North Larchmont Blvd., 2nd fl., Hollywood, CA 90004.

• In *Nana, George, and Me*, filmmaker and AIVF member Joe Balass weaves together a series of disarmingly candid conversations about sexuality with his 92-year-old Iraqi-Jewish grandmother and a 73-year old gay writer. The film is currently in postproduction and is seeking completion funds. *Nana, George, and Me*, Compass Productions, (514) 393-7297; baljfilm@aol.com; www.spectr.com/blork/nana/

• Screwball comedy is alive and well with *My Girlfriend's Boyfriend*. Shot in Long Island, Kenneth Schapiro's film careens through chase scenes, mistaken sexuality, and fist fights; it also features '80s wunderkind Debbie Gibson (who now goes by Deborah, if you've ever wondered whatever happened to her). *My Girlfriend's Boyfriend*, 131 E. 23rd St., Suite 10A, New York, NY 10010; (212) 477-

7088.

• Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* is the inspiration behind first-time director/writer/producer Joseph Manes' *Alfred Hitchcock's Gun*, which, like its classic source, uses real-time long cuts, a hidden corpse, and a singular setting instead of today's omnipresent rapid cutting and quick-fire dialogue. *Alfred Hitchcock's Gun*, Higher Ground Pictures, Box 4317, Westlake Village, CA 91359-1317.

• The ups and downs of long-term couples can be melodrama, tragedy, or (for some) fantasy. Shot in New York by a husband-and-wife team with newborn in tow, *Dress Up* offers a darkly humorous take on the matter. *Dress Up*, Wasteland Productions, 346 E. 59th St. #21, New York, NY 10022; (212) 421-2820.

• The video short *Resume of an Addict* is a day-in-the-life of a college student struggling with substance abuse and the problems it engenders. Director/producer Tim Ranier's camera follows the anti-hero Mike as he drifts from bar to bed to drugs right back to bar. *Resume of an Addict*, N.O.R. Productions, P.O. Box 7242, Pittsburgh, PA 15213; (412) 554-0786.

• Art thievery and relationships clouded by greed are the plot points of the 28-minute video *Painted Sun*, a drama shot in Provincetown and Cape Cod using a crew assembled through AIVF networking. Gary Wortzel's third film has already had a premiere at 911 Media Arts Center in Seattle. *Painted Sun*, 8325 11th Ave. NW, Seattle, WA 98117; (206) 599-1935.

• One-named Boston-area videomaker Lev has created a 55-minute video parodying not-so-wholesome American rhetoric and values in *Liberty Beast*, which uses puppets, dolls and other Sesame Street aesthetic trademarks to level its satire. *Liberty Beast*, Lev, 63 Waterhouse St. #4, Somerville, MA 02144; (617) 625-8289; lev@world.std.com; www.tiac.net/users/lev

In & Out of Production presents works by AIVF members that are currently in production or recently completed. Nonmember projects will be included as space permits. Send descriptive text, labeled black & white stills, and contact information to:

In & Out of Production

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OPENING THIS MONTH

Public Housing, Frederick Wiseman's 30th feature-length documentary, airs on December 1 on PBS. While this latest work runs a daunting 200 minutes, don't let its length scare you. *Public Housing* is one of Wiseman's strongest recent works. An absorbing verité look inside Chicago's Ida B. Wells housing project, a complete socio-economic system unto itself, it's the welcome return of Wiseman to the topic of complex public institutions. Focusing on the relationships the Wells residents cultivate to aide their daily survival—both through self-help groups and through city and federal programs—Wiseman records the paralyzing bureaucracy and the heroic struggle to

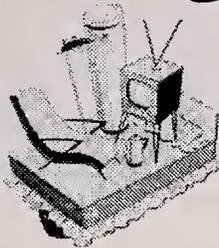


Chicago Hope: In the projects with Frederick Wiseman's *Public Housing*.
Courtesy New York Film Festival

improve living conditions. *Public Housing*, Zipporah Films, 1 Richdale Ave., #4, Cambridge, MA 02140; (617) 570-3603.

Bent, an adaptation of Martin Sherman's brilliant 1980 stage play, will be opening in New York and Los Angeles on November 26, with a national platform release throughout December, courtesy MGM. A gorgeous, generous, and rightly celebrated manifesto on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals during World War II, *Bent* not only makes visible a much-denied cultural tragedy but unequivocally affirms the existence of love with passionate certainty. Reworked by Sherman for the screen, the film stars Clive Owens, Lothaire Bluteau, Sir Ian McKellen, and Mick Jagger, and is the directorial debut of Sean Mathias.

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DOMESTIC

ANN ARBOR FILM FESTIVAL, Mar. 17-22, MI. Deadline: Feb. 15. All cats & genres of independent filmmaking accepted in this fest of 16mm film, founded in 1963 & one of oldest ind. film fests in country. \$12,000 in cash prizes awarded. Awarded films & highlights programmed into 4-hour program that tours colleges & film showplaces across US for 4 months following fest, w/ rental fee of \$2/min. per tour stop paid to filmmakers. Entry fee: \$32 (\$37 Canadian & foreign). Formats: 16mm; preview on 16mm only, no video. Contact: Ann Arbor Film Festival, Box 8232, Ann Arbor, MI 48107; (313) 995-5356; fax: 995-5396; vicki@honeyman.org; <www.citi.umich.edu/u/honey/aaff>

CHICAGO ASIAN AMERICAN SHOWCASE, Mar/Apr. IL. Deadline: Feb. 1. Chicago's annual Asian American film/arts festival. Presented by Fortune4 Asian American Media Group and Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Seeking features, shorts, docs & videos by &/or about Asian Americans. No entry fee. Early acceptance deadline: Dec. 1. Send VHS videotape & bio/production notes, SASE for tape return. Contact: Chicago Asian American Showcase, 3314 N. Lake Shore Dr. #8A, Chicago, IL 60657 (773) 871-1977; fax: 384-6463; fortune4@fortune4.com <www.fortune4.com/showcase.htm>

CUCALORUS FILM FESTIVAL, May 1-3, NC. Deadline: Feb. 2. Cucalorus seeks independent work of all styles and budgets. With a focus on filmmakers and their work, Cucalorus is in its 4th year & styles itself as "one of the premiere film fests in the south-east." Submit preview copies on VHS. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, Beta SP, 3/4" & 1/2". Entry fees: \$10 early fee Jan. 15, \$20 fee for entries received by Feb. 2. Contact: Cucalorus Film Festival, Box 2763, Wilmington, NC, 28402; bwatkins@wilmington.net

CHARLOTTE FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, May, NC. Deadline: Feb. 16. Late deadline: Mar. 2. Competitive fest "seeks to foster & encourage art of

ind. film & videomakers, esp. those w/ unique point of view." Ind. film & videomakers working in US eligible for fest, which awards \$7,000 in cash prizes. Jurors are Alan Berliner & Cheryl Dunye. About 50 works (9% of entries) screened; all accepted works are paid cash. Features & shorts completed since 1/1/95 accepted. Cats: doc, narrative, experimental & animated. Exhibition sites incl. Mint Museum of Art, Afro-American Cultural Center, Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County & The Light Factory. Choice Cuts, selected exhibit travels to venues throughout US; rental fees for each add'l screening. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, QuickTime, 1/2", Beta, CD-ROM. Entry fee: \$30. Late entry fee: \$45. Contact: Robert West, dir., Charlotte Film & Video Festival, Mint Museum of Art, 2730 Randolph Rd., Charlotte, NC 28207; (704) 337-2019; fax: 337-2101; film@mint.uncc.edu; <www.mintmuseum.org>

FILM FEST NEW HAVEN, April 3-5, CT. Deadline: Jan 31. 3rd annual fest is broadly focused, accepting works of all types: drama, doc, experimental on any subject and in any genre. Goal is to expose audiences to work of new innovative filmmakers, and to foster contact between filmmakers and distributors. Filmmakers may enter in or out of competition. All entries eligible for Audience Choice awards. New Century Writers Awards screenplay competition with cash prizes sponsored by Escape Films. Formats: 35mm, 16mm and video. Contact: Box 9644, New Haven, CT. 06536; ph/fax (203) 865-2773; info@filmfest.org; <www.filmfest.org>

HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL/WORLDFEST-HOUSTON, April 17-26, TX. Deadline: Feb. 1. Large fest w/ many competition cats, now in 31st yr. New Remi Award is Grand Prize, going to top fest winners. Associated market for features, shorts, docs, video, ind./experimental & TV. Student Awards Program offers \$2,500 cash for grand prize & \$500 cash & \$1,000 of Kodak film for best student film in each cat of high school, college & graduate. Scripts & screenplays also have competition. Cats: theatrical features; TV & Video Production; Film & Video Production; short subjects film & videos; TV commercials; experimental films & videos, filmstrips/slide/multimedia programs; student films & videos; super 8mm film & videos; screenplays; music videos; new media; print advertising; radio advertising. Fest also offers 3-day seminar on writing screenplays, producing & directing, plus distribution & finance. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", super 8 (on videotape). Entry fee: \$50-\$200; market fee: \$300. Contact: J. Hunter Todd, festival dir., Houston Int'l Film & Video Festival/Worldfest-Houston, Box 56566, Houston, TX 77256; (713) 965-9955/(800) 524-1438; fax: (713) 965-9960; worldfest@aol.com; <www.worldfest.org>

HUMBOLDT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, April, CA. Deadline: Jan. 30. Now celebrating its 31st yr, this is oldest student-run fest in US. All cats of 16mm & super 8 films under 60 min. accepted for juried competition by active ind. filmmakers. This yr fest continues to feature experimental, animated, doc & narrative films. Int'l entries encouraged. Approx. \$3,000 in cash & prizes awarded.

Entries must have been produced in last 3 yrs. Entry fee: sliding scale. Contact: Humboldt Int'l Film Festival, Theater Arts Dept., Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA 95521; (707) 826-4113; fax: 826-5494; filmfest@axe.humboldt.edu; <www.humboldt.edu/~theatre/filmfest.html>

HUDSON VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL, May 29 - Jun. 6, NY. Deadline for screenplays: Feb. 1. Deadline for films: Mar. 1. This collaborative, non-competitive fest celebrates the screenwriter w/ screenings of features, shorts & docs, as well as screenplay readings. Fest also includes two unique events w/ deadline of Mar. 1: The First Drive-In Film Fest, currently seeking 35mm genre films to be screened at a drive-in theater, and Scored Shorts, which seeks films under 20 min. to be scored by members of Hudson Valley Philharmonic. All entries must be submitted on VHS or Screenplay. Formats: Features & docs, 35mm & 16mm. Shorts, 16mm, or Beta. Contact: Shawn Folz, Hudson Valley Film & Video Office, 40 Garden St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601; (914) 473-0318; fax: 473-0082; hvfo@vh.net; <www.sandbook.com/hvfo>

LOS ANGELES INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 16-20, CA. Deadline: Jan. 15. Recognized as one of most prominent film fests in North America. LAIFF '98 continues its Audience Awards, is expanding to incl. more features, shorts and docs, as well as additional seminars & events. Films given in-depth profiles in fest catalogue, written by industry journalists. Submissions must be completed after Jan. 1, 1997. Formats: 35mm, 16mm; preview on 1/2" VHS. Contact: Rebeka Mata, Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, 5455 Wilshire Blvd. #1500, Los Angeles, CA 90036; (213) 937-9155; fax: 937-7770; <www.laiff.com>

MADCAT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Mar, CA. Deadline: Jan 21. 2nd annual fest seeks unconventional & innovative works by women: all genres, lengths, and formats considered. Preview NTSC/VHS only. Entry fee: Sliding scale \$10-\$30. Contact: MadCat, 937 Fell St., San Francisco, CA 94117; (415) 826-6017; wemajbd@aol.com

NEW YORK WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL, Apr 22-26. NY. Deadline: Feb. 1. 2nd annual New York Women's Film Fest celebrates the growing presence of women filmmakers in today's cinema by providing an annual forum for emerging & experienced filmmakers from around world. Fest will showcase narrative, doc, experimental, feature & short film & music videos. Contact: New York Women's Film Fest, 341 Lafayette St. #302, NY, NY 10012; (212) 465-3435; fax: 431-9694; info@nywfilmfest.com; <www.nywfilmfest.com>

NEW YORK LESBIAN AND GAY FILM FESTIVAL—THE NEW FESTIVAL, June, NY. Deadline: Feb. 9. Fest, "committed to presenting diverse & culturally inclusive programs of film, video & new digital media," showcases all genres of film & video of any length by, for, or about gay men, lesbians, bisexual, or transgendered people, incl. dramatic features & shorts, docs & experimental works. Jury awards for Best Narrative

Feature, Best Feature Doc & Best Short. Submissions of digital media accepted (including QuickTime video & interactive media). Committed to presenting diverse & culturally inclusive programs of film & video. Works-in-progress considered if they will be completed by May 1998. Fest also accepting proposals for lecture & film clip presentations, curated film/video programs & interactive media installations. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", CD-ROM; preview on 1/2", CD-ROM. Entry fee: None for works postmarked on or before Jan 5; \$20 after. Contact: New York Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, 47 Great Jones St., 6th fl., New York, NY 10012; (212) 254-7228; fax: (212) 254-8655; newfest@idt.net; <www.newfestival.com>

RETIREMENT RESEARCH FOUNDATION NATIONAL MEDIA OWL AWARDS, Apr, IL. Deadline: Feb. 6. Competition for outstanding films, videos, TV & community/cable-access broadcasts that address aging issues, capture images of older persons & illuminate challenge & promise of an aging society. Entries must deal w/ concerns of older persons or those working in the field of aging. Cats: ind. films, TV nonfiction, training/educational films & community videos. Awards: 1st Prize: \$5,000, bronze statuette; 2nd Prize: \$2,000 & plaque; Honorable Mentions: \$1,000 & plaques; Community Video Award: \$2,000 & statuette. Entries must have been produced in US & released or initially copyrighted during 1997. Formats: 3/4", VHS. No entry fee. Contact: Ray Bradford, Project Dir., National Media Owl Awards, Retirement Research Foundation, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Ste. 401, Chicago, IL 60631-4170; (773) 714-8080; fax: 714-8089; bradford@rrf.org; <http://fdncenter.org/grantmaker/rrf/medowl.html>

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL, June, CA. Deadline: late Feb. Founded in 1976, this is one of world's largest & oldest events of its kind. Many works premiered in fest go on to be programmed or distributed nat'ly & int'ly. 3 diverse pre-screening committees review submissions from Feb-Apr, accepting works at 1:3 ratio. Rough-cuts accepted for preview if submitted on 3/4" or 1/2". Fest especially encourages appl. from women & people of color. Entries must be San Francisco Bay Area premieres. Awards: Frameline Award, Audience Award. Fest produced by Frameline, nonprofit arts organization dedicated to lesbian & gay media arts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Entry fee: \$20. Contact: Jennifer Morris, fest. dir., San Francisco Int'l Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, Frameline, 346 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 703-8650; fax: 861-1404.

THAW 98, Apr, IA. Deadline: Jan. 31. Fest of film, video & digital media. Seeks new, independent film, video, CD-ROM, or Website for festival celebrating independent spirit of the moving image. Entries must have been completed after Jan. 1, 1995. Fest discourages submission of purely doc, educational, or industrial work; welcomes student, professional & int'l artists. For jurying purposes, will accept film and video entries on VHS-NTSC only. Digital work may be submitted on CD-ROM or as URL. Film producers whose work is selected will be asked to provide 16mm print. Cash prizes will be awarded for exemplary work. Entry fee: \$15 for works of 30 min. or less,

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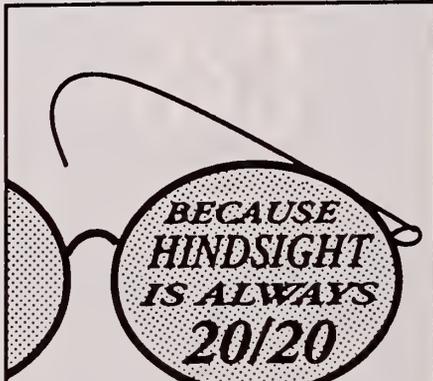
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UNITED STATES SUPER 8MM FILM/VIDEO FESTIVAL, Feb. 13-15, NJ. Deadline: Jan 23. Fest is to any genre (animation, doc, experimental, fiction, personal, narrative, etc.) but work must have been predominantly shot on super 8/8mm film &/or Hi8/8mm video. Judges award \$1,200 in cash & prizes. Selected winners go on Best of Fest Int'l Tour. Entry fee: \$35. Contact: United States Super 8 Film/Video Fest, Rutgers Film Co-op/New Jersey Media Arts Center, Cinema Studies Program, 108 Ruth Adams Bldg-Douglass Campus, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903; (908) 932-8482; fax: 932-1935; njmac@aol.com; <www.rci.rutgers.edu/~nigrin>

WASHINGTON, DC INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Late April/early May, DC. Deadline: Jan 15. 12th annual noncompetitive fest that brings "best in new world cinema" to nation's capital. Known as Filmfest DC, fest presents over 65 feature premieres, restored classics & special events. All are Washington, DC premieres. Programs: fiction, doc, animation, family & children's programs, educational panels & workshops. Fest "attempts to represent the broad geographical diversity of world cinema—the newest films of emerging countries and the latest work from newly recognized young directors." Attendance last edition totaled 30,000; fest brings together city's major cultural institutions, incl. Smithsonian, Library of Congress, American Film Institute, Black Film Institute, DC Public Library, National Gallery of Art, & commercial movie theaters. Special programs include Filmfest DC for Kids; Global Rhythms, series of music films; Cinema for Seniors, & regional focus. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Entry fee: \$25 features, \$15 shorts. Contact: Tony Gittens, fest dir, Washington DC Int'l Film Festival, Box 21396, Wash., DC 20009; (202) 724-5613; fax: 724-6578; filmfestdc@aol.com

FOREIGN

BERMUDA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, May 1-7. Bermuda. Deadline: Jan 31. 2nd annual event in relaxed, intimate & casual setting is open to all genres, w/ Jury Prize, Bermuda Shorts Award & Audience Choice Award. New & unknown filmmakers welcome. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, preview on VHS only. Contact: BIFF, Box HM 2963, Hamilton HM MX, Bermuda; (441) 293-FILM; fax: 232-1137; bdafilm@ibl.bm; <www.bermuda.bm/filmfestival>

DREAMSPEAKERS FESTIVAL, May 25-31. Canada. Deadline: Feb. 28. Founded in 1991, this is int'l aboriginal, cultural, artistic & competitive film fest. Film & video entries must be aboriginal productions (or coproductions) &/or on aboriginal theme. About 70 productions showcased each yr. Fest awards Alanis Obomsawin Award for Film Excellence, along w several other awards. Formats: 16mm, 3/4," 1/2", 16mm. Entry fee \$25. Contact:

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Members are eligible to purchase discounted personal and production insurance plans through AIVF suppliers. A range of health insurance options are available, as well as special liability, E&O, and production plans tailored for the needs of low-budget mediamakers.

TRADE DISCOUNTS

A growing list of businesses across the country offer AIVF members discounts on equipment and auto rentals, film processing, transfers, editing, and other production necessities. Plus long-distance and overnight courier services are available at special rates for AIVF members from national companies. In New York, members receive discounted rates at two hotels to make attendance at our programs and other important events more convenient.

CONFERENCE/SCREENING ROOM

AIVF's new office has a low-cost facility for members to hold meetings and small private screenings of work for friends, distributors, programmers, funders, and producers.

INFORMATION

We distribute a series of publications on financing, funding, distribution, and production; members receive discounts on selected titles. AIVF's staff also can provide information about distributors, festivals, and general information pertinent to your needs. Our library houses information on everything from distributors to sample contracts to budgets.

WORKSHOPS, PANELS, AND SEMINARS

Members get discounts on events covering the whole spectrum of current issues and concerns affecting the field, ranging from business and aesthetic to technical and political topics. Plus: members-only evenings with festival directors, producers, distributors, cable programmers, and funders.

ADVOCACY

Members receive periodic advocacy alerts, with updates on important legislative issues affecting the independent field and mobilization for collective action.

COMMUNITY

AIVF sponsors monthly member get-togethers in cities across the country; call the office for the one nearest you. Plus members are carrying on active dialogue online—creating a "virtual community" for independents to share information, resources, and ideas. Another way to reach fellow independents to let them know about your screenings, business services, and other announcements is by renting our mailing list, available at a discount to members.

Sharon Shirt, exec. director, Dreamspeakers Festival, #201, 15620-111 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5M 4R7; (403) 451-5033; fax: 452-9042; dreams@planet.con.net;

<www.discoveredmonton.com/dreamspeakers>

GOLDEN ROSE OF MONTREUX TELEVISION FESTIVAL, April 23-28, 1998. Deadline: mid-Feb. Montreux, Switzerland. Organized by Swiss Broadcasting Corporation and City of Montreux under auspices of European Broadcasting Union, this is Europe's largest fest for light entertainment TV, now in 38th year and attended by 1,000 professionals from 30 countries. Entries compete in cats of comedy, music, game shows, sitcoms & general light entertainment w/ various int'l juries. Broadcasters, distributors & indie producers eligible to compete. 2 awards in ea. cat: Silver Rose, Bronze Rose. In comedy cat, 1st prize is Special Prize of City of Montreux. First prizes in each category submitted to Grand Jury for Golden Rose of Montreux top award. Fest also awards Prix UNDA to program that best reflects human values. Press prize & 3 add'l prizes at jury's discretion. Entries must have been completed after Jan 1, 1997, w/ running time of 20-60 min. Complimentary Videokiosk screening facility. Heavy int'l press coverage. Formats: Beta, Beta SP; 1/2" for Videokiosk. Entry fee: SFr. 300. Fest address: Pierre Grandjean, Sec. Gen., Rose d'Or de Montreux, TV Suisse Romande, 20 quai Ernest Ansermet, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland; tel: (41-22) 708 8998; fax: (41-22) 781 5249; pierre.grandjean@tsr.srg-ssr.ch; US contact: John Nathan, Golden Rose of Montreux, (516) 726-7500; fax: 726-7510; johnnathan@compuserve.com; <www.rosedor.ch>

HOT DOCS! CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL, March 19-22, Canada. Deadline: Dec 30. Competitive fest which celebrates Canadian and Int'l doc filmmaking and encourages an appreciation and awareness of the doc genre. Preview on NTSC-VHS. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Betacam, Betacam SP. Entry fee: (Canadian) \$107 features, \$53.50 shorts. Contact: Hot Docs!, 344 Dupont St., Suite #206, Toronto, Ontario Canada M5R 1V9; tel: (416) 975-3077; fax: (416) 968-9092.

VUES D'AFRIQUE, Les Journées du Cinema Africain et Creole, April 23 - May 3, Canada. Deadline: late Feb. Along with FESPACO, fest, founded in 1983, is important showcase for films from Africa & diaspora. Over 55,000 people attend. Cats. incl. Panorama du cinema africain, Images creoles, Televisions Africaines, Regard Canadien, Ecrans Nord-Sud, Clips, Women's Images, Human Rights, and new section Franco-Sud. Expositions, info kiosks, music, dance, literature & food part of Salon Africain et Créole (African & Caribbean Fair) held at same time. Fiction & doc, long & short programmed. Fest also travels to other cities in Canada. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Entry fee: None. Contact: Francoise Wera, Vues d'Afrique, Les Journées du Cinema Africain et Creole, 67 rue Ste. Catherine Ouest, 5eme étage, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2X 1Z7; (514) 284-3322; fax: 845-0631; vuesda@cam.org; <www.vuesdafrique.org>

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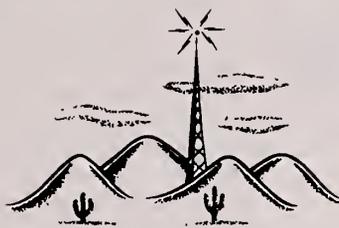
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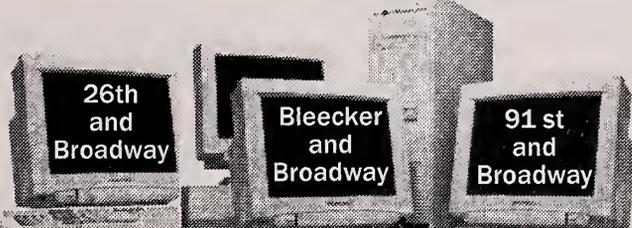
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EXPRESSO FILM FESTIVAL seeks SVHS/VHS tapes for on-going weekly short film fest. Pref. new student & ind films on any subject, 15 min. or less in length. Will be seen by key industry people in Hollywood. Send tape w/ one paragraph description: EFF, 1525 Aviation Blvd. #248, R.B., CA 90278.

FILMMAKERS UNITED: nonprofit org., presents monthly film series at Silent Movie Theatre in Los Angeles. Year-round venue for ind. shorts. Must have 16mm or 35 mm print for screening, no longer than 40 min. To submit, send 1/2" video copy w/ SASE to: Filmmakers United, 1260 N. Alexandria Ave., LA, CA 90029; (213) 427-8016.

FITNESS, SPORTS & BODY BUILDING: creative & training videos wanted for an upcoming show at Videospace, Boston. Nonprofit/no payment. Deadline: Dec. 12. Send VHS, Hi-8, 8mm, or 3/4" w/ name, phone to: Videospace, Res Extensions, 9 Myrtle St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

FLOATING IMAGE seeks film/video animation & shorts for public/commercial TV program. Send VHS/SVHS to Floating Image Productions, Box 7017, Santa Monica, CA 90406 (incl. SASE for return). (310) 313-6935;
<www.artnet.net/~floatingimage>

GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS seeks short videos (10 min. or less) for *Living with AIDS*, half-hr. magazine seen weekly in Manhattan, Queens & Brooklyn, prod. by GMHC & NYC Dept. of Health. No budget for licensing programs, but opportunity to be seen by millions. VHS or 3/4" tapes (no originals) must deal w/ HIV/AIDS issues or present person(s) infected/affected by HIV/AIDS. May not be sexually explicit. All tapes returned. Send to: Kristen Thomas, Living w/ AIDS Showcase of Independent Video, GMHC Multimedia Dept., 129 W. 20th St., NY, NY 10011; (212) 337-3655.

INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE: monthly screening program seeks exp, avant-garde, doc, narrative. Possible monetary remuneration. Submit films/videos on 1/2" or 8mm video. Clearly label tapes w/ title, length, name, address & phone. Include SASE for return. Contact: Blackchair Prod., 2318 2nd Ave., #313A Seattle, WA 98121; (206) 282-3592; joel@speakeasy.org

IN SHORT: 1/2-hr program that airs bi-monthly, seeks submissions for public access show in NY. Preference given to works created w/ digital video. On every 4th program, work prod. by or featuring women highlighted. Works up to 28 min., submitted on VHS for preview, available in 3/4". Send sub. to: *In Short*, 240 East 27th St., Suite 17N, NY, NY 10016; (212) 689-0505.

KNITTING FACTORY VIDEO LOUNGE seeks VHS tapes for on-going weekly series. Any genre or subject. Send tape w/ brief bio to: Joanna Spitzner, Box 1220 Canal St. Station, NY, NY, 10012. SASE for return.

LO BUDJIT FILMZ & VIDEOS seeks submissions for VHS or Less, show focusing on camcorder movies. Embarrass old friends, showcase your dusty old tapes. Large bi-coastal audience. Send to: Lo Budjit, 147 Ave A, Box 1R NY, NY 10009; (212) 533-0866.

MIDNIGHT MATINEE seeks alternative videos for monthly cable access show on Maui. Possible Hawaiian distribution. Any topics, genres; the more "out there," the better. Send SVHS or VHS copy & release w/ SASE. Paradise Productions, 326 Pukalani St., Pukalani, HI 96768.

MUSIC & COLLEGE VIDEOS WANTED: producers of new nationally broadcast college-oriented show seek music videos & performance clips of indie bands. Select entries will be broadcast nationally & bands may be invited to perform live for a studio audience. Also seeking submissions relevant to college life and/or student-produced. Contact: Danny Ameri, Burly Bear Network, 201 Summer St., Stamford, CT 06901; (203) 351-1177.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TELEVISION seeks story proposals from U.S. citizen or permanent resident minority filmmakers for *National Geographic Explorer*, award-winning doc series. To request appl. for CDP (Cultural Diversity Project), call: (202) 862-8637.

NEW BREED FESTIVAL seeks student/ind. shorts—narrative only—for bi-monthly cafe screenings in Lambertville, NJ & on NJ & PA pub-

lic access. Send 1/2" VHS & info w/ SASE to: *New Breed*, 217 N. Union St., Lambertville, NJ 08530.

OCULARIS: New screening room seeks 16mm shorts for regular screenings in East Village/Williamsburg area of NYC, esp. by local filmmakers. Call or send SASE for info: Ocularis, 91 N. 4th St., #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-8713.

PINK PONY seeks video submissions for regular screenings at Lower East Side alternative venue. VHS accepted. Send directly w/ SASE to: Jane Gang, Pink Pony, 176 Ludlow St., NY, NY 10002; (212) 254-5273.

REAL TV looking for dynamic videos: news, weather, sports, bloopers, busts, "caught in the act." *Real TV*, syndicated, daily video magazine, showcases compelling videos from around the world, from professionals as well as amateurs who capture video snapshots of life in the '90s. Tapes will not be returned. Contact: *Real TV*, Hollywood Center Studios, Stage 2, 1040 N. Las Palmas, Los Angeles, CA 90038; (213) 860-0100.

SOUTHERN CIRCUIT tours indie film & video-makers throughout the Southeast; six artists travel with prints & present individual shows at designated sites. Artists receive round-trip airfare, advance check of \$100 per diem during tour, \$275 honorarium per screening. For 1998-99 Southern Circuit, send VHS, Beta or 16mm film (appr. 1 hr. in length, can be cued for 30 min. section for judging purposes), application, printed promo materials & resume (7 pgs max, w/ last name at top right of each sheet). Works-in-progress not accepted. Appl. fee: \$20. Deadline: Jan. 15. Contact: Felicia Smith, South Carolina Arts Commission, Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais St., Columbia, SC 29201; (803) 734-8696; fax: 734-8526; fsmith@scsn.net.

SUDDEN VIDEO call for entries. Ind. curators seek short works. Looking for exp. works approximating emotional tone of events that inspired their production. Works should be under 10 min. & avail. on videotape for exhibition/distribution. Send submissions on VHS & SASE to: Gort/Raad, 17 Edward

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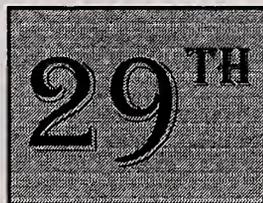
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TREATMENTS FOR DOCUMENTARY FILMS not more than 10 pgs sought by working ind. doc filmmakers. Contact: Cinnabar Pictures, 62 White St., New York, NY 10013; (212) 334-6838.

TYME TOWER ENTERTAINMENT seeks feature-length & short films for *Ind. Filmmakers* video series. 16mm, 35mm, B/W or color. Send 3/4" or 1/2" VHS copy to: Tyme Tower Entertainment, c/o Tyme Tower Home Video, 810 E. Coliseum Blvd., #107, Fort Wayne, IN 46805; (219) 481-5807.

UNQUOTE TV: 1/2-hr nonprofit program original music that suits all film & video artists, seeks ind. doc, narrative, exp, performance works under 28 min. Seen on over 40 cable systems nationwide. No payment. Submit to: *Unquote TV*, c/o DUTV, 33rd & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927.

UPLOAD YOUR VISIONS: The Sync Internet Video Gallery seeks short noncommercial ind. films to showcase on Website. Filmmakers must own rights to all content, incl. music. Send videos & written permission to display film to: Carla Cole, The Sync, 4431 Lehigh Rd., #301, College Park, MD 20740; (301) 806-7812; www.thesync.com.

VIDEO IN PARTICULAR @ ART IN GENERAL: Four-part series for '97/98 season seeks videos addressing formalism, cultural self-representation, existentialism & political media. Contact: Laurie Brown, Art in General, 79 Walker St., New York, NY 10013; (212) 219-0473.

VIDEO/FILM SHORTS wanted for local TV. Directors interviewed, tape returned w/ audience feedback. Accepting VHS/SVHS, 15 min. max. SASE to: Box 1042, Nantucket, MA 02554; (508) 325-7935.

VIDEOSPACE AT DECORDOVA MEDIA ARTS ARCHIVE: DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park seeks VHS copies of video art & documentation of performance, installation art & new genres from New England artists for inclusion in new media arts archive. Contact: Videospace at DeCordova, DeCordova Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Rd., Lincoln, MA 01773-2600.

VIDEOSPACE BOSTON seeks creative videos for spring & fall programming. Any genre & length. Nonprofit/no payment. Send VHS, Hi-8, or 3/4" w/ description, name, phone, & SASE to: Videospace, General Submissions, 9 Myrtle St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

WORLD OF INSANITY looking for videos & films to air on local cable access channel, particularly anything odd, bizarre, funny, cool. Any length. One hour weekly show w/ videos followed by info on the makers. Send VHS or SVHS to: *World of Insanity*, Box 954, Veneta, OR 97487; (541) 935-5538.

ZOOM: Do you remember *Zoom*? During the '70s, *Zoom* was a unique kids-only TV series on PBS featuring kid's plays, poems, jokes, films, games & more. *Zoom* is coming back & we are actively seeking kid-produced films, animations & videos. Every kid who sends something will receive a free newsletter filled w/ fun activities from the show. Length: 5 sec.-2 min.

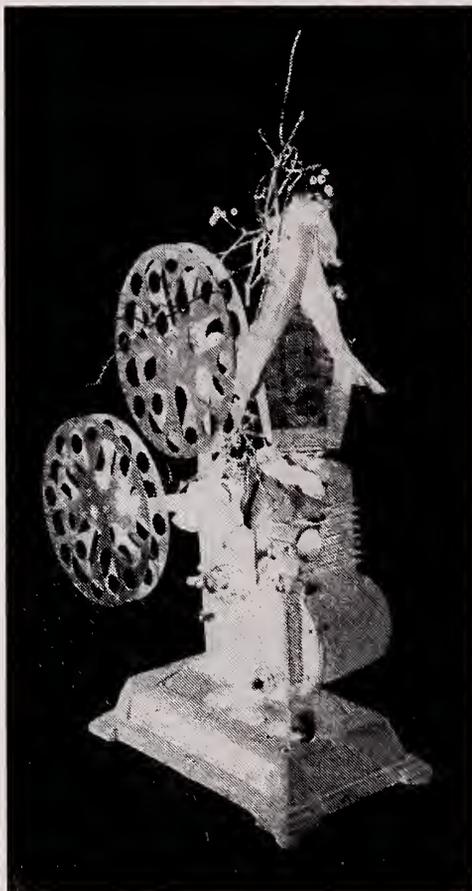
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COMPETITIONS

2ND ANNUAL FILM IN ARIZONA SCREENWRITING COMPETITION introduces new material that can be filmed regionally to entertainment industry. Winning screenwriter receives professional script notes, introductory meetings w/ agents & development reps. Contact: Linda Peterson Warren, Arizona Film Commission, 3800 North Central Ave., Bldg. D, Phoenix, AZ 85012; (602) 280-1460 or (800) 523-6695.

4TH ANNUAL SHORT SCREENPLAY COMPETITION awards \$300 & video copy of 16mm film. Any subject or genre, must be possible to produce on low-budget. Deadline: Dec. 15. Contact: John Harper Philbin, Screenplay Competition, School of Communications, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI 49401; (616) 895-3668; philbinj@gvsu.edu

AUSTIN HEART OF FILM FESTIVAL SCREENPLAY COMPETITION: Writers can compete for \$3,500 grand prize in three categories: mature, children/family, student short). \$35 entry fee. Deadline: Spring 1998. Contact: Austin Heart of Film Festival, 1600 Nueces, Austin, TX 78701; (800) 310-FEST.

APPLE AWARDS seek film/videos & CD-ROMs for largest educational media competition in US. TV programs, docs, home market titles for classroom or corp. use. Subjects incl. social/cultural issues, youth & family concerns, health & medicine, science & technology, arts & humanities, sports, travel, business & careers. CD-ROM deadline: Nov. 1. Film/video deadline: Dec. 1. Contact: Nat'l Educational Media Network, 655 13th St., Oakland, CA 94612-1222; (510) 465-6885; fax: 465-2835; comp@nemn.org; www.nemn.org.

F.O.C.U.S. INSTITUTE OF FILM announces nat'l call for screenplays for 1st annual workshop series in Spring 1998. Appl. deadline: Dec. 30. F.O.C.U.S. seeks original, compelling stories that promote positive values & social responsibility. One project/screenplay will be selected for production & distribution w/ major studio sponsor. Fax appl. requests to: (310) 472-1481; www.focusinstituteof-film.com

MONTEREY COUNTY FILM COMMISSION SCREENWRITING CONTEST. Open to writers who have not yet sold scripts to Hollywood. All genres and locations accepted. First prize: \$1,500. Entry fee: \$40. Rules and entry forms under "local events" at: <http://tmx.com/mcfilm>; or send SASE to: MCFC, Box 111, Monterey, CA 93942; (408) 646-0910.

POSTPRODUCTION GRANT: Island Media Int'l offering grants to four outstanding film/video projects. \$3,000 Avid editing given to winning fiction & doc features; \$1,500 editing goes to fiction & doc shorts. Deadline: Jan. 1. Contact: Island Media, (212) 252-3522.

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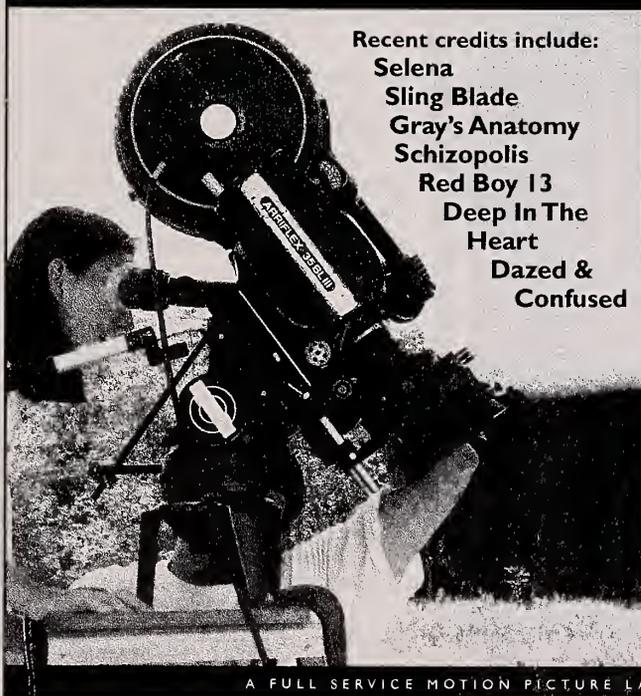
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NOTICES

SET IN PHILADELPHIA: Screenwriting Competition recognizes exceptional screenplays involving Philadelphia & encourages prod. of features in Philadelphia area. Deadline: Jan. 12. Contact: Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, 3701 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-6593, fax: 895-6562; pfwc@libertynet.org

STUDENT GRANTS: University Film & Video Association offers funding prizes to narrative, doc, exp, animation, multimedia & cinema research projects. Deadline: Jan. 1; awards announced by March 31. Contact: Prof. Julie Simon, UFVA Grants, University of Baltimore, 1420 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201.

URBAN INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS seeks proposals for future exhibitions. Encourages proposals for unconventional solo & curated shows that experiment w/ nontraditional creative practices. Deadline: Feb. 15. Send one-page statement (artistic or curatorial), resume (max. 2 pgs), max. 10 slides w/ labels, SASE, & \$15 entry fee (check or money order made out to UICA). Mail to: UICA PROPS, 88 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

RESOURCES • FUNDS

ARTS-IN-EDUCATION RESIDENCY PROGRAM sponsored by Illinois Arts Council, provides support to primary & secondary educational institutions, community colleges & nonprofit local & community orgs for artist residencies lasting 1 week to 8 months. Residencies use individual artists, performing arts companies or folklorists. To be considered for Residency Program, artists must apply to AIE Residency Program Artists Roster. Decisions based on quality of work submitted, professional achievement & teaching &/or residency exp. Deadline: Spring 1998. Contact: Illinois Arts Council, 100 W. Randolph, Suite 10-500, Chicago, IL 60601; (312)814-4990; ilarts@artswire.org

BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from ind. producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Reviewed on ongoing basis. Contact BFVF for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; bfvf@aol.com.

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL offers various grants & programs for film & mediamakers. Contact: California Arts Council, 13001 I St., Suite 930, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 322-6555; (800) 201-6201; fax: (916) 322-6575; cac@cwo.com; www.cac.ca.gov

CREATIVE PROJECT GRANTS: Subsidized use of VHS, interformat & 3/4" editing suite for ind. creative projects. Doc, political, propaganda, promotional & commercial projects not eligible. Editor/instructor avail. Video work may be done in combination w/ S-8, Hi8, audio, performance, photography, artists, books, etc. Studio includes Amiga, special effects, A&B roll, transfers, dubbing, etc. Send SASE for guidelines to: The Media Loft, 727 6th Ave., NY NY 10010; (212) 924-4893.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER provides grants and presentation funds to electronic

media/film artists and orgs. Program provides partial assistance; max. amount varies. Presentations must be open to public; limited enrollment workshops & publicly supported educ. institutions ineligible. Applications reviewed monthly. Contact: Program Director, ETC, 109 Lower Fairfield Rd., Newark Valley, NY 13811; (607) 687-4341.

ETC RESIDENCY PROGRAM offers artists opp. to study video image processing techniques in 5-day intensive workshop. Open to U.S. residents w/ prior exp in video prod. Send resume, project description detailing use of image processing. Deadline: Dec. 15. Contact: Experimental TV Center, 109 Lower Fairfield Rd., Newark Valley, NY 13811; (607) 687-4341.

ILLINOIS ARTS COUNCIL (IAC) SPECIAL ASSISTANCE ARTS PROGRAM: Matching grants of up to \$1,500 avail. to Illinois artists for specific projects. Activities that may be funded: registration fees & travel to attend conferences, seminars, or workshops; consultant fees for resolution of specific artistic problems; exhibits, performances, publications, screenings; materials, supplies, or services. Funds awarded based on quality of work submitted & impact of proposed project on artist's professional development. Appls must be received at least 8 wks prior to project start date. Students not eligible. (312) 814-6750.

JOHN D. & CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION offers various grants/programs supporting film & mediamakers. Contact: John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 140 S. Dearborn St., Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60603-5285; (312) 726-8000; 4answers@macfdn.org; www.macfdn.org.

MEDIA ALLIANCE assists NYC artists & nonprofit organizations in using state-of-art equipment, postprod. & prod. facilities at reduced rates. Contact: Media Alliance, c/o WNET, 356 W. 58th St., NY, NY 10019; (212) 560-2919.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR HUMANITIES: Public Programs Division offers grants to U.S. nonprofit organizations. Deadline: January 12. 12 copies of application must be received by NEH on or before the deadline. All applicants encouraged to submit preliminary drafts of proposals by December 1 for consultation w/ program staff. Contact: NEH, Public Programs Division, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Rm 426, Washington, DC 20506; (202) 606-8267; publicpgms@neh.fed.us

NEW DAY FILMS: premiere distribution cooperative for social issue media seeks energetic independent film & videomakers w/ challenging social issue documentaries for distr. to nontheatrical markets. Now accepting applications for new membership. Contact: New Day Films 22D Hollywood Ave., Hohokus, NJ 07423; (914) 485-8489; www.newday.com

NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES accepting appls for preproduction funds of up to \$10,000. Deadline: Dec. 15. Contact: NYCH, 198 Broadway, 10th fl., New York, NY 10038; (212) 233-1131; fax: 233-4607; hum@echonyc.com

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS provides grants for development of nat'l public TV broadcast programming by & about indigenous Pacific Islanders. Appls available from: PIC, 1221 Kapiolani Blvd., #6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814; (808) 591-0059; fax: 591-1114; pic-com@elele.peacesat.hawaii.edu.

ROY W. DEAN GRANT, created by Studio Film & Tape lab, offers \$5,000 in film stock, \$3,500 in processing, \$3,000 in equipment rentals & much more. Open to students & indie doc makers. Appl. fee: \$26. Deadline: Dec. 16. For appl. & details, contact: Studio Film & Tape, 630 Ninth Ave., 8 fl., NY, NY 10036; attn: Roy W. Dean Grant.

SHORT-TERM ARTISTS RESIDENCY sponsored by Illinois Arts Council provides funding for Illinois nonprofit organizations to work w/ professional artists to develop & implement residency programs that bring arts activities into their community. Each residency lasts from 1 to 5 days or hourly equivalent. IAC will support 50% of artist's fee (min of \$250/day plus travel, local sponsor must provide remaining 50% plus other expenses). Applications must be received at least 8 weeks prior to residency starting date. IAC encourages artists to seek sponsors & initiate programs. Call for availability of funds. IAC, 100 W Randolph, Suite 10-500, Chicago, IL 60601; (312) 814-6750; fax: 814-1471; ilarts@artswire.org.

SOROS DOCUMENTARY FUND supports int'l doc. films and videos on current & significant issues in human rights, freedom of expression, social justice & civil liberties. Three project categories considered for funding: initial seed funds (grants up to \$15,000), projects in preproduction (grants up to \$25,000), projects in production or postproduction (average grant is \$25,000, but max. is \$50,000). Highly competitive. Proposals reviewed quarterly. For more info., contact: Soros Documentary Fund, Open Society Institute, 400 W. 59th St., NY, NY 10019, (212) 548-0600.

STANDBY PROGRAM provides artists & non-profits access to broadcast quality video postprod. services at reduced rates. Contact: Standby Program, Box 184, NY, NY 10012-0004; (212) 219-0951, fax: 219-0563.

VISUAL STUDIES WORKSHOP MEDIA CENTER in Rochester, NY, accepts proposals on on-going basis for Media Access program. Artists, ind. producers & nonprofits awarded access at reduced rates, prod. & postprod. equipment for work on noncommercial projects. (716) 442-8676.

WOMEN'S FILM PRESERVATION FUND of New York Women in Film & Television seeking proposals for funding & preservation or restoration of American films in which women have had significant creative positions. Appl. deadline: March 15. Contact: NYWIFT, 6 E. 39th St., New York, NY 10016; (212) 679-0870, fax: 679-0899.

PUBLICATIONS

FILMMAKER'S RESOURCE: A new Watson-Guptill publication by Julie Mackaman, formerly of Film Arts Foundation in San Francisco. A verita-

ble "supermarket of great opportunities—more than 150 of them—for a wide variety of filmmakers...from feature to documentary to educational to animated films." Contact: Watson-Guptill, Amphoto, Whitney Library of Design, Billboard Books, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036.

GUIDE TO TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR FILMS SHOT IN NY STATE avail. to producers who want clear instructions on how to claim numerous tax exemptions avail. in NYS. Put together by Empire State Development Corp., 51-pg reference guide can be obtained by contacting: NY State Governor's Office for Motion Picture & TV Development, 633 3rd Ave., 33rd fl., New York, NY 10017-6706; (212) 803-2330; fax: 803-2369; www.empire.state.ny.us/mptv.htm

INTERNATIONAL FILM FINANCING CONFERENCE transcripts avail. Topics discussed by int'l financiers, commissioning editors & producers include: Foreign TV as a Source for Funding, Int'l Distributors, Finding US Dollars & How to Pitch Your Idea. Send \$41 to: IFFCON, 360 Ritch St., San Francisco, CA 94107. (415) 281-9777.

MEDIA MATTERS: Media Alliance's newsletter, provides comprehensive listings of New York area events & opportunities for media artists. For free copy, call Media Alliance at (212) 560-2919 or visit website at <http://www.mediaalliance.org>.

MEDIANET: Guide to the Internet for Video & Filmmakers. Available free at <http://www.infi.net/~riddle/medianet.htm>, or e-mail riddle@infi.net.

THE SQUEALER. quarterly journal produced by Squeaky Wheel puts an upstate NY spin on media-related subjects. Once a year, The Squealer publishes "State of the State," a comprehensive resource issue w/ detailed info on upstate media arts organizations, access centers, schools & coalitions. Subscriptions \$15/year. Contact: Andrea Mancuso, Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wheel/>

SPECIAL EDITION: A GUIDE TO NETWORK TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY SERIES AND SPECIAL NEWS REPORTS, 1980-1989, by UCLA Television Archivist Dan Einstein, details production of more than 2400 news series, special presentations & reports. Contact: UCLA Film and Television Archive, 302 East Melnitz, Box 951323, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

WORKSHOPS • CONFERENCES

IFFCON '98: INTERNATIONAL FILM FINANCING CONFERENCE: 3-day intensive event in San Francisco from Jan. 9-11, links ind. filmmakers searching for financing w/ int'l financiers, buyers & co-producers. Roundtables, private meetings & receptions. Limited to 60 participants, chosen through selection process. Open Day has no deadline, but space is limited. Call (415) 281-9777; <http://www.iffcon.com>.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Not-for-profit Incorporation and Tax Exemption," & more. Reservations must be made: (212) 319-2910.



**it's back and it
still ain't pretty.
Call for entries.
the 5th new york
underground film
festival, march 18-
22, 1998. 16 mm,
35 mm, video, docs,
features, shorts,
and animation.
Deadline:
jan 5, 1998.
late deadline:
feb 2, 1998.**

**for festival entry
forms:
212/925-3440
festival@nyuff.com
http://www.nyuff.com**



TRADE DISCOUNTS FOR AIVF MEMBERS

ARIZONA

FX Factory

Tucson, AZ; (520) 623-3175;
email:FXFactory@aol.com

Special effects production studio, specializing in film effects, prosthetics, and makeup effects. 15% - 30% discount on labor for AIVF members.

CALIFORNIA

Aries Post

1680 Vine St., Suite 216, Hollywood, CA 90028; (213) 463-6296/Contact: Kevin Glover. 10% off rate card for all video post production services; including Beta SP, Hi8, 3/4", and SVHS and DVC to Beta SP analog A/B editing and Avid non-linear suite.

Cinetopia Production

923 E. 3rd St. #112, Los Angeles, CA 90013; (213) 617-2429/Contact: Steve Choe. Complete Arri BL4 pkg, camera, grip, truck & more. Negotiable low rates for AIVF members

Rick Caine Productions

856 1/2 N. Occidental Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026; (213) 413-3222/Contact: Rick Caine or Debbie Melnyk. 15% discount on Sony Betacam SP equipment, crew rentals, dubs & offline editing.

Mill Valley Film Group

104 Eucalyptus Knoll, Mill Valley, CA 94941; (415) 461-8334/Contact: Will Parrinello. 40% discounts on Beta SP production packages, production personnel & VHS off-line editing facilities. Rates further negotiable for selected projects.

Studio Film and Tape

6674 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90038; (213) 466-8101/Contact: Richard Kaufman. 10% discount on new Fuji 16mm film. Ilford 16mm b/w film, Maxell videotape in all formats, all editorial supplies including leader, mag stock, splicing tape, and computer storage media.

Sudborough Productions

8548 Minuet Pl., LA, CA 90038; (818) 895-1194 Contact: Ric Sudborough. 50% off on 1" editing & production, portable 1" deck & camera, film, lighting equipment & post sound studio.

COLORADO

MovieMaker

4730 Table Mesa Dr., Ste B-100, Boulder, CO 80303; (303) 499-6300 /Contact: Susan Lyle Kinney. 15% off video production services, including shooting, editing, script consultation.

FLORIDA

Film Friends

4019 No. Meridian Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33140; (305) 757-9038 or (305) 757-9795/Contact: Mik Cribben. 30% discount on extensive range of equipment rentals - camera, lighting, sound, grip, editing.

ILLINOIS

Brella Productions

1840 Oak Ave., Evanston 60201; (708) 866-1884/Contact: Bernadette Burke. 35% off nonlinear editing & 3D animation work.

EditMasters

17 W. 755 Butterfield Rd., Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181; (708) 515-4340/Contact: Michael Sorenson. 30-50% discount on digital nonlinear post-production services.

Picture Start Productions

1727 W. Catalpa Ave., Chicago, IL 60640; (312) 769-2489/Contact: Jeff Helyer. 40-60% discount on Avid editings; Beta-SP; Hi8, 3/4", VHS.

Studio Film and Tape

110 W. Kinzie St., Chicago, IL 60610; (800) 497-0700, Contact: Max Good. 10% discount on new FUJI 16mm film. Ilford 16mm b/w film, Maxell video tape in all formats, all editorial supplies including leader, mag stock, splicing tape, and computer storage media.

NEW YORK

BCS Broadcast Store, Inc.

460 West 34th St., 4th fl., NY 10001; (212) 268-8800/Contact: Michael Rose. 10-15% discount on all used video equipment.

Best Shot Video

81 Pondfield Rd., Bronxville, NY 10708; (914) 664-1943/Contact: Adam Shanker. 10% discount on video editing, duplication & production services.

Bill Creston

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/Contact: Barbara Rosenthal. 5% discounts on all Super-8 film & sound production services, including editing, sound transfers, VHS to VHS dubs. Also: low-cost services on Amiga computer & still photography.

Cup O'Joe Productions

21 W. 85th St., #2A, NYC 10024; (212) 362-1056 Contact: David Fuhrer. 10% discount on VHS & SVHS editing equipment rentals of one week or more.

Downtown Community TV Center

87 Lafayette St., NYC 10013-4435; (212) 966-4510, (800) VIDEO-NY, (212) 219-0248 fax/Contact: Hye Jung Park or Paul Pittman. 10-20% discount on video workshops & seminars; 10-30% discount on all editing services & equipment packages for nonprofit projects; Avid nonlinear editing, CMX editing, off-line editing, Beta SP & EVW300 Hi8 camera pkg rental.

DuArt Film and Video

245 West 55th Street, NYC 10019; (212) 757-4580 x 637/Contact: David Fisher. Negotiable discounts on color negative developing, workprint-

ing, blow-ups from 16mm & S16mm to 35mm, & titles.

Film Friends

16 East 17th St., NY 10003; (212) 620-0084/Contact: Jay Whang. 10% discount on 3/4", VHS and interformat editing, titling, dubbing special effects, Hi-8, Amiga computer, still photography, slides and photos to tape, S-8.

Harmonic Ranch

59 Franklin St., NYC 10013; (212) 966-3141/Contact: Brooks Williams. Discounts on sound editing, music, mixing and sound design.

Media Loft

727 Ave. of the Americas (23rd St.), NYC 10010; (212) 924-4893/Contact: Barbara Rosenthal. 5% discount on 3/4" VHS & interformat editing, titling, dubbing, special effects, Hi8, Amiga, slides & photos to tape, S-8.

Mercer Street Sound

133 Mercer St., NYC 10012; (212) 966-6794/Contact: Bill Seery. 50% discount off corporate book rate for audio postproduction

Metrovision Production Services

138 East 26th Street, NYC 10010; (212) 689-7900/Contact: John Brown. Discount on video and film equipment packages

L. Matthew Miller Associates, Ltd.

48 West 25th Street, 11th Fl., NYC 10010; (212) 741-8011 x 229/Contact: Steve Cohen. Discounted videotape and hardware.

Picture This Music

50 West 34th Street, Suite 9C9, NYC 10001; (212) 947-6107/Contact: Paul D. Goldman. 10-30% off digital audio postproduction: music, voice-over, sound design, SFX, audio mixing (ProTools work stations).

Post Digital

236 West 27th Street, 3rd Fl., NYC 10001; (212) 366-5353/Contact: Michael Helman. 40% discount off nonlinear offline editing facility; duplication; animation production

PrimaLux Video

30 West 26th St., NYC 10010; (212) 206-1402/Contact: Matt Clarke. 10%+ discounts (nonprofits encouraged) on studio production facilities, remote production packages, postproduction & more.

Rafik

814 Broadway, NYC 10003; (212) 475-7884/Contact: Charles Kephart. 25% discounts on used cassettes over \$100, 10% on single invoices over \$100 for video services, editing, duplication, viewing, film-to-tape transfers.

Sound Dimensions Editorial

321 West 44th Street, #602, NYC 10036; (212) 757-5147/Contact: Jason or Bernie. 15% discount on transfers, effects, and sound studio services: Foley, ADR, narration, mixing.

Splash Studios (Digital Audio Post Production)

168 5th Ave., 5th Fl. NW, NYC 10010; (212) 271-8747/Contact: Peter Levin. 35% off on most audio editing, SFX, ADR, Foley and transfer services. This does not apply to media and already discounted equipment.

Star Tech

152 West 72nd Street, #2FE, NYC 10023; (212) 757-5147/Contact: John Hampton. Discounts on paging equipment & services & 10% off Audio Limited wireless mics & accessories.

Studio Film and Tape

630 9th Avenue, NYC 10036; (212) 977-9330/Contact: Rudy Benda. 10% discount on new FUGI 16mm film. Ilford 16mm b/w film, Maxell video tape in all formats, all editorial supplies including leader, mag stock, splicing tape, and computer storage media.

Suite 2410

330 West 42nd St., Ste. 2410, NYC 10036; (212) 947-1417/Contact: Peggy Leggit. 10% discount on all editing services and facilities: 16 mm; 3/4" to 3/4"; Betacam to Betacam; AVID; Betacam SP to Betacam SP - A/B Roll, Chyron, Digital FX.

Technicolor Inc., East Coast Division

321 West 44th St., NYC 10036; (212) 582-7310/Contact: Ray Chung. Discounts on processing; deeper discounts available to students and feature-length projects.

Terra Firma Media

309 E. 4th St., #2A, NYC 10001; (212) 477-0688/Contact: Ileana Montalvo. 10% discount on translations, voiceovers, and on location interpreters.

Quark Video

109 W. 27th St., NYC 10001; (212) 807-7711/Contact: Michael Levin.
10% discount for all postproduction services, including 3/4", 3/4" SP, SVHS, VHS, Beta, Beta SP, A/B Roll editing to 3/4 SP, Betacam SP or 1".
10% discount for all duplication orders over \$25.00

NORTH CAROLINA

The Empowerment Project

3403 Highway 54 West, Chapel Hill, NC 27516; (919) 967-1863/Contact: David Kasper. 20% discount on video editing; up to 35% discount for selected projects.

TEXAS

R.W. Productions

(713) 522-4701/Contact: Ken Herbert. 10%-25% discounts on production and post production equipment and rentals.

Texcam

3263 Brenard Ave, Houston, 77098; (713) 524-2774; (800) 735-2774
Up to 15% discounts on film camera packages.

VERMONT

Edgewood Motion Picture & Video

162 N. Main St., Rutland, VT 05701;
Contact: David Giancola. 25% off production-Beta SP, 3/4", Arri 16mm, 35mm; post services-Avid, Betacam SP, 3/4" on-line; and audio mix services.

WASHINGTON, DC

Five Star Film and Video

1919 Park Rd., NW Washington, DC 20010; (202) 232-3605 Contact: Carolyn Projansky. 20% discount on scriptwriting; 15% discount (20% to all non profits) on all video production services including shooting, editing and distribution.

Yellow Cat Productions

505 11th St., SE, Washington, DC 20003; (202) 543-2221/Contact: Mary Flannery. 15% off a full-day video shoot with a 2 person crew; 15% off any Avid editing.

PRODUCTION-RELATED INSURANCE PLANS

Alliance Brokerage Corp.

990 Westbury Rd., Westbury, NY 11590; (516) 333-7300; fax: (516) 333-5698/Contact: Jay Levy. Exclusive AIVF insurance program for owned equipment - can include rentals. Worldwide, all-risk, replacement cost basis, Annual rate \$55.00 per \$1,000 of insured value.

C&S International Insurance Brokers, Inc.

20 Vesey Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10007; (212) 406-4499; Fax: (212) 406-7588/Contact: Jennifer Del Percio. Offers special discounted rates on commercial General Liability Insurance to AIVF members.

Marvin S. Kaplan Insurance Agency, Inc.

68 Fargo Street, Boston, MA 02210; Tel: (617) 345-0666; Fax: (617) 261-0666/
Contact: Marvin Kaplan. A one of a kind program for film/video production insurance. Offers coverage of equipment owned or rented. Policy covers all states.

LEGAL/CONSULTING

Cinema Film Consulting

333 W. 52nd St., NYC 10008; (212) 307-7533/Contact: Robert Seigel.

Cowan, Gold, DeBaets, Abrahams & Sheppard

40 W. 57th St., NYC 10019; (212) 974-7474/

Contact: Timothy DeBaets.

Stephen Mark Goldstein

186 Riverside Dr., NYC, 10024; (212) 878-4078/Contact: Stephen Goldstein.

OVERNIGHT MAILING SERVICES

Airborne Express

1-800-642-4292. Discount Code: 1340130100. Save up to 40% on overnight air express services. Member rate is \$9.75 for an 8 oz. overnight letter express. Further discounts for volumes over 10 packages a month.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Comparing health insurance plans is very confusing, and we at AIVF are not specialists in the field. Please contact the following agents who will be happy to talk things through with you..

Meyer Briterman

(718) 965-3505

Diamond Insurance Group Trust

(212) 758-5656; (800) 886-7504/Contact: Burt Diamond

Jeff Bader

(718) 291-5433

DENTAL INSURANCE

CIGNA

Contact Burt Diamond listed above.

Community Dental Program, Inc. (888)

9504-2259.

Northeast Dental Plan

(212) 688-5555; (800) 828-2222.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Creative and Career Development

19 W. 34th Street, Penthouse Suite, NY, 10001; (212) 957-9376
Contact: Michelle Frank, CSW
Licensed psychotherapist with film and TV experience assists indie filmmakers with creative and career development. 10% discount on individual sessions. AIVF members only.

We are constantly expanding this list and are particularly interested in developing discounts for members outside NYC. If you have a business or service you can offer, contact Leslie Fields, (212) 807-1400.



Welcome to "Q&A," where we answer some of the most unusual questions. If you have a question that you would like us to consider for this section, email Johnny McNair at info@aivf.org. Make sure to write "Q&A" in the subject heading.

I want a rehearsal space that won't eat up half my budget. Where should I look?

Look in the back pages of the trade magazine Back Stage. They list hundreds of rehearsal spaces for less than \$25. If you are a student or have a student on your crew, you can usually reserve a classroom on campus. Dance rehearsal space, churches, and community centers are also great possibilities. If your budget is real tight, make a phone call to Grandma and see if her garage is clean enough for you to set up some chairs and a table. Remember, creative ways to cut costs on the front-end will help keep you within your budget and possibly free up money for the back-end.

Johnny McNair, Information Services Coordinator



MEMBER NEWS BROADCAST

AIVF ELECTIONS.

Don't forget to vote!! Ballots must be received by December 8, 6 PM.

TRADE DISCOUNT UPDATES

Echo Communications Group, Inc. (212) 292-0900; fax: (212) 292-0909; <http://www.echonyc.com>; Contact: Josh Chu, jchu@echonyc.com. AIVF members receive a 25% discount on all echo conference and slip/PPP accounts. Up to 25% off on commercial and nonprofit web hosting packages.

AIVF MEMBER BENEFIT SEMINAR: RETIREMENT PLANNING & LIFE INSURANCE

It's never too late or too early to start planning for retirement or considering life insurance. Meet Deborah Baum and Lisa Glass, from The Guardian Life Insurance Co. of America, who will discuss retirement planning, life insurance packages, and disability insurance for individuals. This seminar is for AIVF members only. RSVP (212) 807-1400 x301. When/Where: Tuesday, December 2, 6:30 p.m. at AIVF

AIVF'S HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

AIVF will be closed from December 22 to January 2. We will reopen on Monday, January 5. Have a safe and prosperous holiday and a Happy New Year!



AIVF ACTIVITIES WORKSHOPS

TELEVISION: "GET WIT THIS"

Learn how to distribute and pitch your film idea to TV execs. Don't miss this exciting panel on how some of today's hottest independent producers sold their script idea to television. Cosponsored by the Hollywood East Foundation. Fee: \$10 for AIVF members (must show AIVF membership card), \$15 others. For more info, contact Elisa Keyes, Hollywood East (212) 714-7741

When: Tuesday, Dec. 2nd
Where: New York University, 566 LaGuardia Place, Top of the Park, 5th fl. 7 p.m.

ON LOCATION



MONTHLY MEMBER SALONS

This is an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country. Note: Since our copy deadline is two months before the meetings listed below, be sure to call the local organizers to confirm that there have been no last-minute changes.

Albany, NY:
When: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.
Where: Borders Books & Music, Wolf Rd.
Contact: Mike Camoin, (518) 895-5269

Atlanta, GA
When: Second Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.
Where: Manuel's Tavern (North & Highland)
Contact: Genevieve McGillicuddy, IMAGE (402) 352-4225

Austin, TX:
When: Last Monday of the month, 8 p.m.
Where: Electric Lounge, 302 Bowie Street
Contact: Ben Davis, (512) 708-1962

Boston, MA:
Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Susan Walsh, (617) 965-8477

Brooklyn, NY:
When: 4th Tuesday of each month; call for time
Where: Ozzie's Coffeehouse, 7th Ave. & Lincoln Pl.
Contact: Glenn Francis Frontera, (718) 646-7533

Chicago, IL
When: 4th Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.
Where: The Star Bar, 2934 N. Sheffield.
Contact: Oscar Cervera, (773) 472-1000

Cleveland, OH
Call for date and location.
Contact: Annetta Marion, (216) 781-1755

Dallas, TX:
When: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Call for locations.
Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 823-8909

Denver/Boulder, CO
When: Call for dates
Where: Kakes Studio, 2115 Pearl St.
Contact: Diane Markrow, (303) 449-7125 or Jon

Stout (303) 442-8445.

Houston, TX:
When: Last Tuesday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Call for locations.
Contact: Houston Film Commission Hotline. (713) 227-1407

Kansas City, MO:
When: Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd.
Contact: Rossana Jeran, (816) 363-2249

New Brunswick, NJ
Call for date and locations
Contact: Allen Chou (908) 756-9845

New Haven, CT:
Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Jim Gherer, ACES Media Arts Center, (203) 782-3675

Sacramento, CA
call for dates and locations.
Contact: Armond Noble, (916) 457-3655

San Diego, CA:
Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Carroll Blue, (619) 594-6591

Seattle, WA
Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Joel Bachar, (206) 282-3592

St. Louis, MO:
When: Third Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.
Where: Midtown Arts, 3207 Washington St.
Contact: Tom Booth, (314) 776-6270

Tucson, AZ:
Call for dates and locations.
Contact: Beverly Seckinger, (520) 621-1239

Washington, DC:
Call for dates and times.
Where: Herb's Restaurant, 1615 Rhode Island Ave., NW
Contact: DC Salon hotline (202) 554-3263 x4.

Westchester, NY:
Call for date and locations
Contact: Bob Curtis, (914) 741-2538; email: rec111@aol.com

MINUTES OF THE AIVF/FIVF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING JUNE 20-21, 1997

The board of directors of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) and the Foundation for Independent Video and Film (FIVF) met in New York on June 20-21. Attending were Robb Moss (Chair), Loni Ding (Co-President), Bart Weiss (Co-President), Susan Wittenberg (Vice President), Ruby Lerner (ex officio), Diane Markrow (Secretary), Jim McKay, Carroll Blue, Peter Lewnes, Todd Cohen (Student Rep.), Laala Matias (Student Rep.), and Cynthia Lopez. Absent were Bob Richter (Treasurer), Barbara Hammer, and James Schamus

Tommy Pallotta, AIVF's new web and tech-

Continued on p. 63

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BUSINESS HOURS

Sunday: 10-1
Mon-Thu: 8:30-6:30
Friday: 8-2

**DCRVX1000
3CCD Mini**

SONY

DV Camcorder

The DCRVX1000 offers over 500 lines of resolution along with excellent color fidelity & S/N ratio. It features a 10x Optical zoom which can be extended digitally to 20X. Sony's new Super SteadyShot drastically reduces camera movements like never before. Its PCM stereo audio delivers superb sound. Some of its ease of use features include: Color Viewfinder, Lithium-Ion battery, & Extended data code. Its editing capabilities include DV interface for direct input to your computer without quality loss, & Built in Time Code Reader/Generator. It has many digital features such as Digital Fader, Overlap Transition, Still Frame, Interval and Frame Recording.

DHR-1000 Digital VCR Mini DV VCR

The DHR-1000 offers video insert editing capability, & 2 PCM audio tracks. It features a built in edit controller that provides a 10 segment edit window. Drop frame time code is included along with a jog shuttle, TBC, audio level meters, slow motion, & a cable ready tuner. The DHR-1000 is also capable of playing back DVCAM tape.



Panasonic

**AG-DP800H
3-CCD S-VHS
Camcorder**

Also known as the supercam, it has 380,000 pixel FIT CCD's w/750 lines of resolution for high performance & low smear. Its advanced digital processing takes flexibility & creativity to a new level. It has Auto Gain control, & with Super High Gain mode, shooting under illumination as low as 1.5 lux is possible while still retaining a high quality picture. The Supercam is a lightweight ergonomic camcorder that rivals pricier cameras at a fraction of the price.

**AG-DS840H/AG-DS850H
S-VHS Player/Recorder**

These Panasonic VTR's offer Digital S-VHS Circuitry, Digital 3-D Time Base Correctors, Digital Slow Motion, & DNR. They also have VITC/LITC Time Code, & component outputs for connection to other equipment.



JVC

**KY-D29 Digital
Camera**

The KY-D29 is a new & improved Dockable camera, with 760,000 pixels, 850 lines of res. & an incredible S/N ratio of 65dB. With JVC's new 3D digital noise reduction, it produces incredibly clean pictures, rivaling the best of cameras. With a sensitivity of F11 at 2000 lux & next generation super low lux technology it provides superior performance under any lighting conditions.

**BR-DV10 Dockable
Recorder**

Achieving maximum DV performance is both easy and affordable. The BR-DV10's 4:1:1 digital quality makes it a sensible choice to get started in digital video. LCD displays VTR status. Composite & Y/C video out, and 2 XLR audio inputs.

BR-D40 Digital S Call
BR-S422U S-VHS Call



HITACHI



**Z-2000A
13 Bit Digital Camera**

The Z-2000 is a 2/3" CCD Dockable camera. It has 13 bit digital processing for high picture quality. With double sampling aperture it captures a high resolution of 850 lines along with a S/N ratio of 63dB, & low flare makes it a great camera for all applications. Its digital detail & control functions such as: Flesh Tone Detail, 6 Vector & Linear Matrix, High Chroma Detail, allows enhancing of the picture to a particular situation. With 4 Scene Files, recreation of a scene is as easy as the touch of a button. Studio configuration is also available.

Panasonic

WJ-MX20

Digital A/V Mixer

The WJ-MX20 is a 4-input switcher/effects mixer. It delivers an extremely clear picture with 460 lines of resolution and a S/N ratio of 50dB. Utilizing 23 basic patterns up to 298 fades and wipes are possible. It has 8 effect memory compression, color correction & 2-channel frame synchronization. It is capable of RS-422 serial control for optimum interaction with your controller.

WJ-MX50 CALL!

WJ-AVE55 CALL!



NEW!

MACKIE

MS1402-VLZ

The micro series is a fantastic and affordable tool for all sorts of mixing environments, whether its video post production, live performance, or multimedia. It has special circuitry to minimize noise and crosstalk, studio grade discrete preamplifiers, low cut filter, and accurate faders with complex resistive elements to ensure true logarithmic taper.



Video Tape Specials

MONTHLY TAPE SPECIALS

Fuji VHS T-120 AV Master	4.69
Fuji VHS SG-120	4.49
Fuji S-VHS H471S-ST120	7.95
Fuji Hi8 M221 P6-120	8.69
Fuji Hi8 M221 E6-120	13.99
Sony Hi8 E6 120 HMEAD	19.99
JVC Mini DV MDV60ME	13.29
Sony DVCAM PDV184ME In Stock	
Sony Betacam BCT-30MA	18.99

WIRELESS SOLUTIONS

TD-902

**EARTEC
PROF.
WIRELESS
INTERCOM
SYSTEM**

Need To Communicate with Your Partner or Lightman? The TD-902 is a portable rugged beltpack transceiver which delivers outstanding quality sound in the 900Mhz in full duplex. It features 2 user-selectable channels for noise-free transmissions. It's prof. headset mic is super directional, canceling out everything but your voice. This system rivals all the pricier systems. Includes hard carrying case.....\$849.95/pr

SENNHEISER K6/ME66

The K6 series is designed to deliver studio-quality audio to the video production market. It is capable of



being combined with a variety of capsules, from omni to super directional patterns. The K6 pro mini module is balanced with low impedance (200 ohms), and terminates to a 3-pin XLR, with phantom power capability. The ME66 is an Electret Short Shotgun mic, is great for interviews within a crowd. Superior performance, backed by the Sennheiser name \$429.95

CAPSULES ALSO AVAILABLE: ME62, ME64, ME65 & 67

**SONY WRR810A UHF
SYNTHESIZED RECEIVER**

The WRR810A is a UHF camera mountable receiver. It delivers crystal-clear sound for long ranges. It features 6 pre-programmed channels with up to 94 selectable frequencies, for optimum interference free reception. It provides 6 hours of continuous operation with 2 AA batteries...\$849.95

WRR810A Handheld Wireless Mic...\$699.95



ACCESSORIES

**Portabrace Hiker Case
Tired Of Lugging Those
Bulky Camera Cases?**

The Hiker Backpack is designed for videographers in the field who are looking for an easy and efficient way to carry their camera. The Hiker has a hard plastic shell & is extremely lightweight. It includes extra pockets for tripod plates, tapes, etc... and like all Portabrace products is hand-crafted\$389.95

NRG VaraLight Pro 56001/4 (100w Dc)

The VaraLight is a rugged, efficient, versatile light which accepts 20-100 watt dc lamps. There is a knob on the side of the light to adjust the intensity of light from 10-100% making it perfect for a wide range

of applications. The VaraLight Pro is available terminated with a 4-pin XLR or a cigarette lighter plug.

56001	\$219.95
56004	\$234.95
05009 Color Effects Grid Pack (9 grids in different colors).....	\$89.95

Our Customers Write...

"I have dealt with a lot of companies out there and you guys are the greatest! I know I can depend on you!"

— J.G., Producer, Hollywood, CA

"You constantly provide great prices and have saved me from spending money on things I really don't need. Thanks!"

— O.M., Business Owner, Milwaukee, WI.

"We're thrilled to have found MVP. Keep those great prices coming. Without you, our shoot would've been impossible. You'll soon be hearing from us again."

— A.T., Executive Producer, Los Angeles, CA.



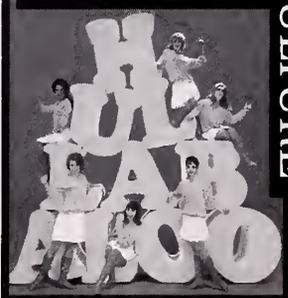
All merchandise shipped with manufacturer-supplied accessories and warranties. All merchandise is exchangeable or refundable within 7 days (with all packaging material and in mint condition), please call for return authorization. All refunds are less shipping & handling. NY residents add 8.25% sales tax.

Join THE WPA IMAGE NETWORK



POPULAR

CULTURE



POPULAR



HISTORY



NATURE



As producers, we know what is required of a good film archive, and have built the WPA Image Network accordingly.

To ensure the best **quality** of the film image, we stock mostly original camera elements, including 35mm negatives that go back to 1895!

But the quality of the image matters little if you can't have **quick access**. So we have invested in an enormous film-to-tape **transfer program** - putting thousands of hours of historical programming on D2 videotape, allowing us 24-hour turnaround.

And we learned, as producers, that licenses must be worth more than the paper on which they are printed. So we have secured **valid copyrights** to the film, and we protect you accordingly.

Finally, with 40,000 hours of original film material, we asked ourselves a tough question: What does that mean? There is no content without context! So we've hired some new **experts** . . . and designed a new **database** . . . and launched a new **website** . . .

and set the stock footage world on fire!

RETRO



WILDLIFE



NOSTALGIA



BEAUTY



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