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Growing up to be a feature

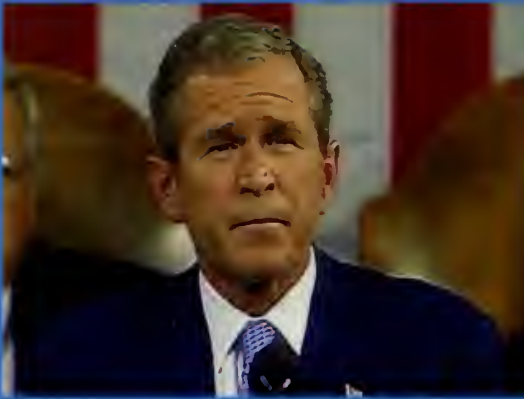


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Rebecca Carroll [Editor-in-Chief]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

The short film—what a perfect genre. Like the perfect snack. Or the very best poem: intensity and imagination distilled down to the most crucial and poignant of words. Short films are the quintessential starting point, and for some filmmakers, the definitive end goal. Many of you will be reading this issue while at the Sundance Film Festival 2005—and perhaps some of you who are returning may recognize this issue's cover shot from *Curtis*, the brilliant short film by Jacob Okada that debuted at Sundance last year. Jacob shared the process of making his very poetic film in this month's Production Journal column (page 16).

There are new and inveterate shorts people all around us. You probably know one or several, or even as likely, you are one. We at *The Independent* were fortunate (and smart) enough to entice contributions and time from a good number of these makers for this issue. Rusty Nails, of Chicago's Movieside Film Festival (touted as the largest short film festival in the United States), who has been described in print as "the hippie-haired, irreverent local filmmaker with a penchant for the bizarre," offers up a sound First Person piece on what he's seen new and interesting—and perhaps not so interesting—in short films in recent years (page 12). Portland, Oregon-based writer and lit blogger Laila Lalami (Moorishgirl.com) gives us a look into the life and work of talented and tireless filmmaker Kevin Everson, whose oeuvre includes over 20 short 16mm, 35mm, and digital films about the working class culture of black folks in America (page 22).

In the feature well, west coast writer Marisa S. Olson walks us under the tent poles of the short film as genre (page 40)—says Shane Smith, artistic director of the Worldwide Short Film Festival at the Canadian Film Centre: "The short film is increasingly becoming respected as an art form in its own right." Brilliant. Let's talk about it. A contributing writer for *The Independent*, Margaret Coble, rounded up a group of working short-filmmakers (page 44)—some with great new projects in the hopper, others still riding the wave of their last—among them Gina Levy (*Foo Foo Dust*), Jesse Epstein (*Wet Dreams and False Images*), and Tom Wilson (*Pulling Rank*).

Writer and filmmaker Kate Bernstein (whose short *Ladies Room* is currently touring the festival circuit) checked out the growing trend of independent actors-turned short film directors that includes Illeana Douglas, Hank Azaria, and Ralph Macchio. Yes, *that* Ralph Macchio (page 52). And assistant editor at *The Independent*, Rick Harrison (page 48), considers the jump from short to feature for a few lucky filmmakers (or not so lucky. There's a whole lot more riding when a film is 101 minutes as opposed to, say, 8).

Freelancer Colin Ginks went On the Scene (page 36) with the Asbury Shorts of New York's 25th anniversary celebration; our own Lisa Selin Davis offers up an insightful review of *The Scarecrow Video Movie Guide* (page 56); Los Angeles-based writer Fiona Ng talks to "the go-to man for all things short film," Big Short Films founder and president, David Russell (page 34); and Ben Chung, arts chair of *The Harvard Crimson*, took in the fifth annual Chlotrudis Short Film Festival in Brookline and Cambridge, Massachusetts (page 30).

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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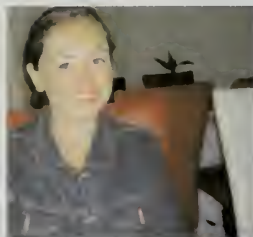
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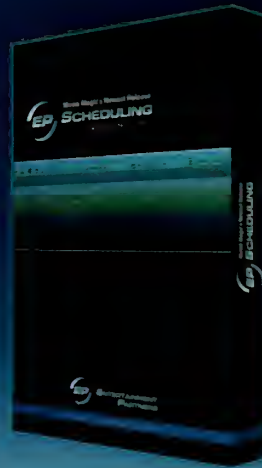
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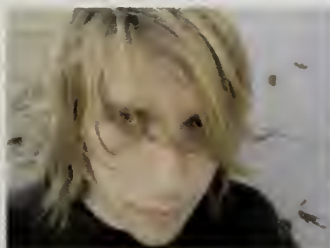


LINDSAY GELFAND is an editorial associate at *The Independent*. She recently received a BA in film from Northwestern University, and now lives in Brooklyn.

COLIN GINKS is a 36-year-old Brit who relocated to New York after leaving England 15 years ago. He is a shown painter and published author (*Charlene's Angels*), and is working on his second novel, *Fire Down Below*, as well as a second art show in 2005.

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RUSTY NAILS is a filmmaker, actor, teacher, writer, and the director of the Movieside Film Festival. In addition to his feature film *Acne*, he is collecting 13 of his short films for an upcoming DVD release. He is currently in post-production of *Highway Robbery*, a documentary about the taking of a 65-year-old blind veteran's property via eminent domain. He has written for *Venus*, *Bridge Magazine*, *Stop Smiling*, and *Supersphere.com*.

FIONA NG is a freelance writer living in New York. She has written for *Bust*, *RES*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, and other publications.

JACOB OKADA graduated in 2002 from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with a BFA in film production. He is the recipient of the Warner Bros. Pictures Production Award

for his documentary *Curtis*. He was also awarded NYU's prestigious Russell Hexter Filmmaker Grant in recognition by his peers for artistic merit and collaborative spirit. Jacob has taught filmmaking at the School of Cinema and Performing Arts and worked for various artists, including Philip Glass. Jacob is currently fundraising for his first feature film as well as developing his next documentary.

MARISA S. OLSON has written for *Flash Art*, *Wired*, *Afterimage*, *Art on Paper*, *Mute*, *Planet*, *Surface*, and many other publications. She has curated media art exhibitions at SF-MOMA, White Columns, Camerawork, and is an internationally-exhibiting artist whose work *The New York Times* recently called "anything but stupid."

FERNANDA ROSSI is a filmmaker and script/documentary doctor. She also leads the nationwide Documentary Dialogues discussions offered by AIVE. For more info, visit www.documentarydoctor.com



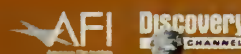
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NEWS

DOING FILM THE RIGHT WAY

By Lindsay Gelfand



***Brainwashing 101*, which presents college as a PC indoctrination center, was one of the shorts screened at the Liberty Film Festival in Los Angeles (Evan Coyne Maloney)**

Conservative filmmakers have rallied in response to the left-wing liberal films that peppered our theaters this election season and as their slogan proclaims, “There’s nothing Michael Moore can do about it!”

A few years ago Jim and Ellen Hubbard walked out of their local theater disappointed to find their only options were *Frida* (2002), the biopic of a communist artist, and Michael Moore’s left-of-center *Bowling for Columbine* (2003). Frustrated with the lack of films for “regular people,” they organized the American Film Renaissance Film Festival, a self-proclaimed first conservative film festival in order to counter the liberal monopoly on independent film and give the right a voice. The American Film Renaissance Film Festival in Dallas and the Liberty Film Festival in Los Angeles (of all places) boast programs infused

with what conservatives tout as traditional pro-American values.

From September 10-12, AFR screened 21 films in the Dallas suburb of Addison, Texas, and although Michael Moore was not invited, his presence at the festival was undeniable. Michael Wilson’s optimistic documentary *Michael Moore Hates America* received a 10-minute standing ovation. Provocative title aside, Wilson’s film depicts an American dream achieved by hard work and faith, exemplifying Jim Hubbard’s intention: “We’ve got to have a film festival for the 70 percent of the country who believe America is a good, decent place.” Talk show host and columnist Larry Elder’s documentary *Michael and Me* also attacks Moore, challenging the gun control advocacy presented by his Academy Award-winning *Bowling for Columbine*.

Films screened at the AFR didn’t simply

attack the obvious targets like Michael Moore, the Clintons, and Fidel Castro, but celebrated their conservative counterparts, figures like Anne Coulter, President George W. Bush, and the man who brought you *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson.

With titles like David W. Balsinger’s *George W. Bush: Faith in the White House*, Tim Chey’s *Beyond the Passion of the Christ: The Impact*, and Jorge Torres’s *Peace Commies*—“a gritty look at the subversive radicals behind the peace movement”—the AFR throws a blow in what the Hubbards refer to as “the cultural war waged between the traditional and the modern, the spiritual and the secular.”

Shortly after the American Film Renaissance debuted, another right-wing film festival surfaced, this time in the epicenter of liberal filmmaking—Hollywood. Co-directed by Jason Apuzzo and Govindini Murty, the



Liberty Film Festival co-directors Jason Apuzzo and Govindini Murty introducing the festival on opening night (courtesy of Liberty Film Festival)

Liberty Film Festival screened numerous films from October 1-3 that had made their world premieres at the AFR along with a host of other right-wing movies including *Celsius 41.11: The Temperature at which the Brain Begins to Die*.

"After seeing the impact of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, we decided that there must be a response to correct the record," said David Bossie, president of Citizens United and executive producer of *Celsius 41.11*. Billed as "The Truth Behind the Lies of *Fahrenheit 9/11*," *Celsius 41.11* not only refutes Moore's anti-Bush film but also deconstructs Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry.

But not all filmmakers made jabs at liberals; in fact, the festival paid homage to the late Ronald Reagan with the screening of *In the Face of Evil*, which documents his 40-year struggle against communism. And by opening with a film depicting Hollywood's true minority, *Greg Wolfe: Republican Jew*, the festival gave the audience permission to sit back, relax, and enjoy. Attendees of the Liberty Film festival did just that as some even took to "booing" the screen at the sight of prominent liberals like Al Gore. They even held a

panel discussion on the blacklisting of conservatives in Hollywood. But Jim Hubbard of AFR claims: "Our biggest criticism is not with liberals. Our biggest criticism is with conservatives" who should be making more films.

The married festival directors Apuzzo and Murty point out that the recent success of family films like *Spider-Man* and *Harry Potter* proves movie-goers want more traditionally valued films, and claim they have simply recognized film's influence on American culture. As Jim Hubbard says, while film reaches everyone, it doesn't speak to everyone. The creation of these right-wing film festivals acts as the conservatives' game of cultural catch-up, the first step in their efforts to even out the political imbalance of independent film.

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Cinematographers who shot early tests reported that the new negative captures high-light and shadow areas with more nuanced details in both natural and artificial light. Allen Daviau (*Van Helsing*, *E.T.*, *Bugy*) was among the cinematographers who tested the film. "This new stock includes several innovations that make it a more natural recorder of daylight," he told CMP UBM. "The contrast is a touch softer, and it records a quieter rendition of reds. It is a distinct improvement that offers new opportunities for telling stories. We're always trying to do things we haven't done before. Each new advance in film technology allows us to be more daring."

THE L WORD

A number of legislative efforts have been waged to save San Francisco's single-screen movie theaters which have dropped from 35 to a mere 12 in the past 25 years. The most controversial solution to date is Proposition L, which intended to take 15 percent of the money raised by local hotel tax, about \$10.5 million a year, and give it to the private nonprofit Save Our Theaters in the hopes of acquiring, preserving and maintaining neighborhood and single-screen movie theaters, and thus promoting the local film community. But critics charged that founder of Save Our Theaters, aspiring filmmaker Greg Stephens, has a lack of experience in theater ownership and management and have deemed Proposition L the "San Francisco indie scam."

Stephens emphatically defended the proposal, insisting that his actions were in the best interest of the independent film artist and chalked up theater owners' lack of support to their fear of competition. But theater owners aren't the only members of the local film community who united against Proposition L, they were joined by a high-profile group including city Mayor Gavin Newsom and actor Sean Penn. Francis Ford Coppola, Philip Kaufman, Bill Banning from The Roxie, Anita

Monga from the Castro, Gary Meyer from the Balboa, Gail Silva of Film Arts Foundation, as well as Landmark Theaters, the San Francisco Film Society and others also joined the opposition. Adamantly opposing the measure, Newsom and all 11 supervisors on the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce cited fiscal irresponsibility as Proposition L would hand over millions in public subsidy that would usually go toward supporting the arts, parks, and affordable housing to an organization not yet recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit corporation.

"Proposition L claims to 'Save Our Theaters.' In fact, it would hijack ten million dollars a year from City Funds, and give it to a group that has never managed a theater and didn't exist until they wrote this proposition," said Sean Penn in a prepared statement posted on the website created by the anti-L group (www.noonl.com). "Proposition L is the wrong solution for saving our neighborhood theaters, and it's wrong for San Francisco." As it turned out, 75 percent of San Francisco's voting residents agreed with Sean Penn and gave Proposition L "two thumbs down," officially scuttling the measure. ★



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The State of Short Films

The director of the largest shorts fest muses about the genre

By Rusty Nails



George Romero at the Movieside Film Festival (Dan Miles)

Cinema was born as a short form. Most early films were mere seconds long. Throughout the history of celluloid, countless great filmmakers have worked in the short format, and in many cases it is the medium that gives film and video-makers their best shot at creative freedom.

One of my personal all-time favorite short films is Francois Truffaut's *Les Mistons* (1958), which is a simple and beautiful film about a group of adolescent French boys whose frustrated, unrequited love for an unattainable young woman serves as the central point of their ascent into maturity. While the editing, story, and acting are all superb, what makes the film most effective is its unique voice and creative care.

As a filmmaker and the director of the Movieside Film Festival, the world's largest short film festival, I have watched thousands of short films and videos. In the three years since its inception, Movieside has screened over 400 short films by filmmakers from all over the world and held over 40 screenings in theaters, museums, and schools across the country. And a number of these films have

been amazing—films like Sarina Khan Reddy's politically charged *With Us or Against Us* (2001), Nathan Pommer's hilariously self-explanatory *Don't Trust Whitey* (2003), Bryan Boyce's brutally sardonic George W. Bush eye-opener *State of the Union* (2001), Christine Hart's restless personal essay piece, *Construction One: A Perfect Cheerleader* (2001), Ray Harryhausen's delightful puppet romp *The Tortoise and the Hare* (2002), and Matt Marsden's creature-filled animation *Small Green Scratches* (2001).

But along with the good and great work comes a mountain of poor, mediocre, and lackluster pieces with the main purpose it seems, of acting as a foot in the door to the Hollywood palace. I consider these projects "business card" films or videos, and the problem with making these kinds of mini-Hollywood monsters is that they're not even as bad as most major Hollywood monsters—they're much worse.

When we first began the festival in June 2001, most of the submissions we received were shot on film, and 60 percent of those submissions were screened. But increasingly,

as video becomes the primary production medium for shorts, that percentage has dropped dramatically. Even though more video-produced work means more overall submissions, unfortunately that also means more poorly made films. To be completely blunt, there are a lot of badly made videos out there.

Judging from the recent crop of videos we've received, it seems that a lot of budding directors are afraid of making interesting or different shorts for fear the film may not be liked, bought, or distributed. In the end, a shocking amount of current work serves up the zillionth portion of screaming men with guns facing off against one another—works that I am positive will go no further than the filmmaker's personal DVD rack. In addition to rampant violence, many of these films feature blatant homophobia, misogyny, and racism. And they lack a sense of humor.

Even if your plan is to make bad Hollywood movies, couldn't you at least make a couple of good short films before you get there? Give yourself something to glance at occasionally on the fancy marble shelf after

the millions have poured in and your tax shelters are firmly intact? This will act as a way to set the old mental embers tumbling back to a past when you wanted to do something worthwhile with film.

Make the movie that you want to make, regardless of what the audience might think, and your chances of being noticed will be 100 times better. If David Lynch had made his early film *The Alphabet* (1968) with a Hollywood audience in mind, it would not be the intense, horrific master short we know and love. For many established feature filmmakers, their short films are their greatest triumphs. Only John Waters's trashy exploitation short *The Diane Linkletter Story* (1969) could logically lead to the sweet filth of *Multiple Maniacs* (1970) and *Pink Flamingos* (1972). Guy Maddin's *The Heart of the World* (2000) and *Odilon Redon* (1995) are renowned for their beauty and ingenuity.



Lydia (Piotr Tokarski)

Todd Haynes would not have breathed life into *Far From Heaven* (2002) if he had not first made the tragic *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (1987), and then followed it with *Poison* (1991). Jane Campion's gripping family malfunction short *Peel* (1982) would lead us to the even more twisted *Sweetie* (1989). All of these short films have the same integral ingredients in common: passion, great stories, and humor.

Movieside has always received a broad range of submissions in terms of content, but

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Viewers at the festival (Piotr Tokarski)

one particular constant is that we get films that would be so much better if they were shorter by half or two thirds their submission length. Short films are called short films for a reason. This is a concern echoed by programmers all over the world—we've all had to pass on films because the length inhibited its potential.

When our festival began three years ago, many short-filmmakers saw the internet as a mystical money-making rainbow where they could dash off to, armed with an empty briefcase to stuff money into after someone bought their projects and billions of viewers logged on to screen the goods. As a programmer/curator, I rarely visit sites to check out videos. A good number of people continue to ask me whether they should put their films on the net. And I say, the days of people making money from showing their shorts on the web (and very few did actually make money) are completely over. It can't hurt to have your work posted around, just don't sign any exclusive agreements that restrict the screening of your work (keeping it out of festivals or venues), unless you're comfortable with what is being offered in return. Many festivals are very particular about where your work has screened, so do your homework on the subject.

For some short filmmakers, the emergence of microcinemas has eclipsed the "prestige" festivals like Sundance, Slamdance, Cannes,

Telluride, and Toronto, because sending short films to these festivals can seem so hopeless—filmmakers feel that their work will be a grain of sand on the beach of tapes. Whereas microcinemas—like Balagan, Ice Capades, Independent Exposure, Microcinefest, 20,000 Leagues Under the Industry, The Inflatable Duck Film Festival, Flicker, Shock-O-Rama and thousands of others are popping up around the world—require only a light submission fee of about \$10, or no entry fee at all, and you're good to go.

A major plus to these programs is the accessibility, friendliness, and ease with which



Mel (above) with Meredith (facing page)
(Piotr Tokarski)

organizers can be contacted. Many offer rewards in the form of certificates, cash prizes, or even your initials made out of pancakes (Hi Mom! Film Festival). But it's the appreciative audiences at these smaller venues/festivals that serve as the real reward. People who come to these theaters, store fronts, loft spaces, and warehouses are often only charged as little as \$5 (or what you can afford) and are truly there to see the films—not to ogle the red carpet pageantries or catch a glimpse of a famous person. Microcinemas are one of the best things to happen to independent filmmakers and festivals in a long time.

In recent years, I've noticed a massive push among short-filmmakers to grab hold of the punk-inspired, do-it-yourself aesthetic—many are pushing festivals to the wayside completely and holding personal screenings at bars, clubs, galleries, apartments, parking lots, and anywhere else you can fix an image. I've been to a number of these events and there is often an air of excitement and relief that the work has finally gone public. Video projectors are becoming more affordable, and used 16mm projectors are so cheap you'd think someone left them on the sidewalk. We're getting to the point where every short-filmmaker will have a screening somewhere, which is as it should be. Their films are made to be seen. ★

Special thanks to Leah Pietrusiak.



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Filming Curtis

By Jacob Okada

How one man's life became a movie

Curtis Wheeler (Jacob Okada)

When I was a teenager, I took a poetry workshop in Brookline, Massachusetts with Barbara Helfgott Hyett, a wonderful teacher and poet. One day as we leafed through a book of photographs of snowflakes by Wilson Bentley, I was struck by this simple, yet elegant definition of beauty: "A snowflake is beautiful because of its strength and stability." This clear statement still resonates with me today as I discover that it applies as much to the structure of a film as it does to the structure of a snowflake.

I took this to heart and mind when I made *Curtis*, the documentary short I worked on for three years about Curtis Wheeler, an African American artist living with AIDS in New York.

"Make 'em want more," is what veteran editor Jean Tsien advised me after seeing a rough cut of *Curtis*. What she means is: tell enough of the story so that it is complete, but

don't overstay your welcome. Your beginning should capture your audience and immediately transition into the conflict that is central to the film.

Curtis Wheeler felt utterly alone at Rivington House, a New York City healthcare facility for AIDS patients. For many, Rivington House is a wonderful, life-saving place. Many of the residents have nowhere else to go. Curtis certainly wasn't well enough to live on his own, but he didn't fit into an institutional environment—his natural curiosity, need for intellectual stimulation, and his artistic nature were not served by the activities offered at Rivington.

Taking stock of Curtis's malaise, I realized that his story isn't only about AIDS as much as it is about seeing how an artist deals with being deprived of his environment, especially since Curtis's home was literally his palette. Curtis used the living room in his Washington Heights townhouse to express his love of

Renaissance art by painting murals on the floors, walls and ceilings. One felt awestruck upon entering Curtis's space; his home was his temple. The central questions for my film, therefore, became: Will Curtis return home? Will he paint again? What brings meaning to our lives?

As an African American gay man in his 50s, Curtis had seen a great deal of resistance from others about who he was. In spite of that or perhaps because of it, he left home for Europe where he pursued an academic and artistic life. He once told me how he snuck into a tool shed at Chartres Cathedral to stay overnight, study the art, and be alone in that holy place. I wanted to make sure that Curtis's personality, his stubborn will to live and his need to express himself came across in the film.

But first, I had to get to know him and earn his trust. Not every filmmaker believes in spending time with his or her subject before



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Curtis in his apartment (Jacob Okada)

shooting. My impression is that it's not mandatory, but it helped me in the making of *Curtis*. Filming another human being is participating in that person's life, especially at a time of an impasse. Bearing witness to suffering or joy is an act of strength. People have dignity by nature and I learned the strange and intuitive line not to cross as I spent time with Curtis, listening to him and sharing with him who I am. This is how Curtis and I became friends and how he also became my mentor.

About a year into the making of the film, I shot a scene of Curtis playing Bingo at Rivington House, an activity he loathed. Later, I interviewed him about his experience for over an hour. We had a great time laughing about the intellectual challenges of playing Bingo. "Do you think government leaders play Bingo during stressful situations? I do," Curtis said, rolling his eyes. The stuff I actual-

ly ended up using in the film was culled from the last five minutes of the tape. Curtis synthesized everything funny he had said and expressed it in a 30-second, brilliant diatribe against having his entertainment reduced to playing Bingo and living in a nursing home. This became the unexpected beginning of the film.

It also became emblematic of the way Curtis and I worked together. Because Curtis had a performer's flair and a teacher's instinct, his content was always thought-through. But when I asked him to repeat himself, he invariably became more focused and succinct.

Curtis had a difficult time, and so did I. It was tough to watch him go blind. He was amazing as he kept trying to read his beloved art books and wrestled with his desire to continue to paint. His blindness, more than anything else, nearly sapped him of the hope to regain his independence. AIDS attacks in so



many ways, allowing other diseases to saddle the body.

One of the reasons why I chose to make *Curtis* a short film is because death is boring. It's a banal and stale thing, not worth documenting. As a child I witnessed the deaths of many close family members with a sense of powerlessness about the process. What you do while you are still alive is what interests me. Why bother to make life meaningful, when you know you are going to die anyway? Watch *Curtis* and you'll see.

I put together a 40-minute rough-cut of the film, which my editor, Alex Berger, and I compared to his initial, hour-long version. The two of us spent days arguing and synthesizing these two cuts, taking our favorite bits from each and creating a new, leaner 39-minute film. Both of us sacrificed scenes we felt strongly about, but we made a much better film this way.

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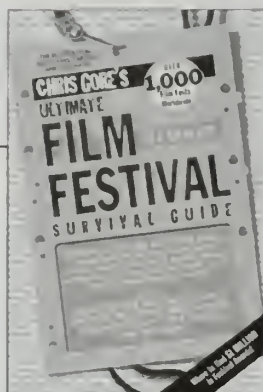


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Jean Tsien's editorial advice sunk in deep during screenings with Alex, particularly at moments when we both wished a scene to be interesting that simply wasn't. You can't root for a scene; it just has to be good.

We were practical—our shooting schedule was dictated by Curtis's health, his dialysis appointments, and the many crises that landed him in and out of the hospital. Several times, we thought we had lost him. Once, he was so ill that he had his last rites performed. But Curtis kept rallying. He was determined to finish the film.

During one of Curtis's many hospital stays, I asked his best friend, Don Yorty if I could film them together. Knowing how important this film was to Curtis, Don readily agreed. The result turned out to be one of the most moving scenes in the film. Before he died, Curtis told me that the scene with Don was one of his favorites. It is no accident that Curtis hung on until he completed the film and when he finally let go, Don Yorty was at his side reading him a poem.

Throughout the shoot, I was lucky to have the consistent help of two individuals who were my sound crew: Nicole and Adam Morrow, talented filmmakers in their own right. On more than one occasion I relied on their invaluable advice that went way beyond recording sound. One of the best scenes from *Curtis* is the result of this collaboration. Nicole Oppen and Curtis had become friends. As she was recording sound, he told the story of why he painted. "Sometimes art is a medicine in itself," Curtis confided as I kept filming. I was too exhausted to pay close attention, but luckily, Nicole listened and kept recording. I managed to get a few good shots that we ended up using, but without Nicole's concentration on content, that shoot would have been lost.

Later, during an all-night editing session, Alex took this audio cut and transformed it into one of the central scenes of the film. I was fast asleep from exhaustion, while Alex spliced-in shots of Curtis painting the floor of his home as he spoke. What comes through is that despite blindness, an emaciated body, and the specter of death, Curtis was an artist to his very core. Following this scene are shots of Curtis's legs, which were in serious decay. One of the most disturbing, yet powerful scenes shows him in the hospital, unraveling a bandage on his arm and peeling off a band-aid. Curtis felt strongly about seeing the ugliness of the disease. Somehow we both felt that it was beautiful as well.

The purpose of a documentary is to awaken people from their inability to see and feel and to empathize with other human beings and their situations. It is both the reason why documentaries are great but also why they are often ignored. I know from personal experience. When AIDS comes up, I see people's eyes glaze over. They have already made a snap judgment about the film, without seeing it. It's natural, of course. AIDS is a tough subject. As a result, I had to grow a thick skin and look at the bright side: a lot of people love Curtis and his story. There have been many films about AIDS, but there is only one *Curtis*—just as there was only one Curtis Wheeler.

Now that *Curtis* is complete and has had a successful run at Sundance, Tribeca, and many other film festivals, I am continuing to work on outreach to high schools across the country to promote AIDS awareness, tolerance towards gays, and to use Curtis's story to show what life can be like when lived deeply, intentionally and spiritually. ☆



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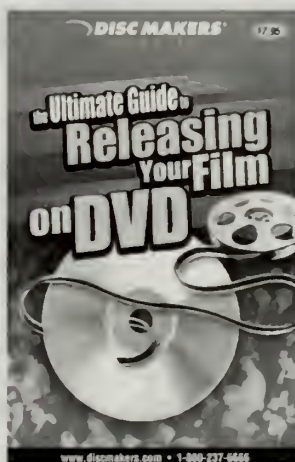
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A detail of one of Curtis's paintings

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FILM



(Kevin Everson)

The Pay-Off

KEVIN EVERSON TURNS THE ORDINARY INTO THE EXTRAORDINARY

By Laila Lalami

In the first few minutes of Kevin Everson's new film *Spicebush*, the screen splits into two frames, one showing a brick factory employee at work, the other a hostess announcing the winning numbers for the Ohio lottery. The juxtaposition serves as context, but it's clear from the rest of the movie that Everson's interest lies in the relentlessness of labor. Perhaps this is not a coincidence—he works indefatigably. Currently, 39-year-old Everson is making final edits to *Spicebush*, casting a new feature film, and working on a

screenplay with playwright and historian Talaya Delaney—all in addition to teaching a full course load in art at the University of Virginia.

Born in Mansfield, Ohio, Everson received a BFA from the University of Akron, and an MFA from Ohio University in Athens. After graduation, he took a position as assistant professor of art, first at the University of Tennessee and then at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. As an artist, Everson is first and foremost a consummate

craftsman. "Each fall," he says, "I like to set myself up a new goal, a new design, a new challenge." As a result, he's built a very impressive list of credits in just 10 years: well over 20 short films, a few solo screenings, dozens of festivals, including Sundance and South by Southwest, and numerous grants and awards, most notably a Guggenheim and an NEA.

None of this appears to be on Everson's mind at the moment, as he's focused on *Spicebush*. "I just trimmed three minutes from

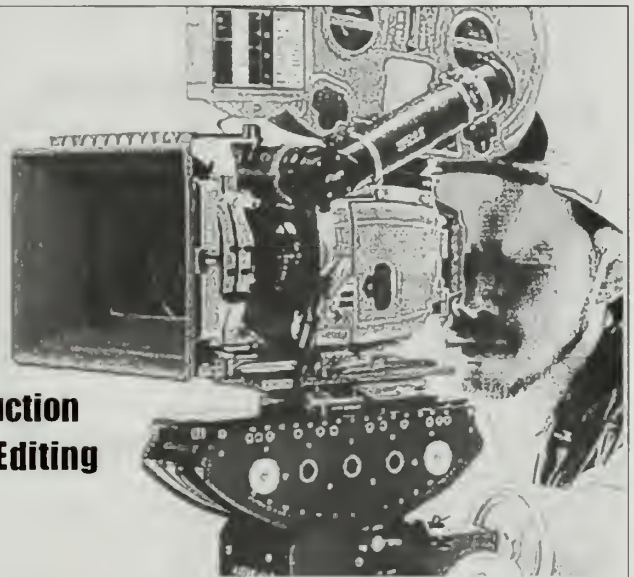


Decarrio, Everson's son, at the brick factory in *Spicebush* (Kevin Everson)

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Everson's daughter Matilda at Tilly Lake, from *Spicebush* (Kevin Everson)



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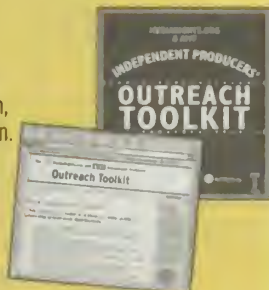
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the version you've seen," he tells me in a cheerful voice. We speak the day after he's shown it at the Virginia Film Festival, and the audience's reaction was part of his decision to make a few editorial adjustments. Having people respond to his movie is still a new experience for him, even though he's a veteran of many festivals. "Did they like it?" I ask. "Yeah, they did," he says. "Someone came up to me and said, 'I liked your film because nobody died.'" Everson laughs again, and we chat about what other venues he has in mind for the film. He's hoping to premiere it at Sundance.

Originally, *Spicebush* was supposed to be a series of shorts, but Everson thought, given his long experience with short films, perhaps it was time to try something new. For this experimental feature, he used several media (16mm, still photography, video) and genres (documentary-style scenes, scripted scenes, found news footage, and footage doctored to look real). Brief stays at the MacDowell and Yaddo writer colonies inspired him to structure the narrative in chapters, 17 in all. The result is a collage representing the African American landscape from the mid-20th century to early 21st, a stunning overview of black experience in this country, from segre-

gation to desegregation to resegregation. Throughout, Everson also offers peeks into labor, love, and conflict.

The found footage from the mid-20th century was hard to come by, and when asked why, Everson says, "Nobody aimed a camera at black folks back then." Most of what's available from that period doesn't represent the diversity of black experience, but instead it focuses on the serious, newsworthy events from the civil rights era, like school desegregation in the South or African Americans hard at work in factories. In other words, Everson says, African Americans were documented only insofar as "they fit within the white culture." I ask him if his longstanding interest in everyday life stems from a desire to document current African American life for future generations. "Maybe," he says, "but I'm an artist first." He always looks for the art object first, regardless of how it fits within the larger discourse. "As for righting the wrongs of the Western image-making machine," Everson quips, "I just don't have the cash for that."

In his short film work, Everson often features characters talking about their jobs or learning a new craft. His interest stems

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"As for righting the wrongs of the Western image-making machine," Everson quips, "I just don't have the cash for that."

in part from his own working-class background and in part from a personal desire to know how things work—what makes things tick. In his acclaimed short, *A Week in The Hole* (2001), he chronicles a worker's first day on the job at a paint factory, adjusting to materials and to his work, learning from others. In *Second Shift* (1999), he observes a guard's daily routine of gaining access to a correctional facility. In *Avenues* (2000), a taxi cab driver works as a mechanic to keep his job. The passing of knowledge from one generation to the next (how to mix paints, the routine of gaining access to a building, or where a lug nut goes on a Buick) is important to Everson. He views the workers as artists in their own way, preservers and transmitters of skills.

To Everson's surprise, however, his portrayals of ordinary labor life sometimes seem extraordinary to audiences—some people even find them "quaint" or "exotic," maybe because they're not accustomed to seeing working class people take center stage in movies. Interestingly, some audience members, particularly liberals, think that he should be using his film work as an opportunity for activism. "People have their own narrative," he says, "and when they don't see the expected narrative, they get confused." He's been asked why he doesn't do more, but he doesn't think that it's his job. As an artist, he's inter-

ested primarily in the art, even when there is a social agenda to it. Besides, he feels that people who have an agenda ought to go work for it themselves.

In addition to his film work, Everson also works in photography and sculpture. He carries with him a sketchbook everywhere he goes, even leaving it by his bedside when he goes to sleep. He writes or sketches out all his ideas but usually decides on a medium later, depending on a few considerations—artistic as well as monetary. Money worries are always in the background as he strives to get financing for projects, but Everson wouldn't trade his artist's life for any other. "I can't afford to do it, and I can't afford not to do it," he says.

Appropriately enough, his next feature film is about a bank teller whose branch is held up. Everson was inspired by his mother's own experience as a bank clerk during a robbery and the ease with which the FBI found the thieves. (It took the federal agents two hours to make an arrest.) The film also features a race car driver, another occupation where people expect the worst, but Everson tries to draw relationships between the two starkly different jobs, both of which are done behind three-quarter-inch plexiglass. Scouting is being done by Virginia's film commission, and casting is already well under way. By the time the shoot wraps, Everson will probably already be well into his next project. ★

ASK

the Documentary Doctor



Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

Is a short film the obligatory starting point of a filmmaking career? If so, what can I do with it when it's finished? It doesn't seem to make financial sense to make a short.

Some filmmakers start with a short either while in film school or out on their own, and that initial piece sometimes becomes their calling card for future unrelated documentaries. Others use their short as a sample or sort of fundraising trailer to raise money for the full-length version. And many others make shorts and continue making shorts just because that's the format they want to work on.

In all cases, a short is a great chance to learn and experiment. That short will also tell investors and producers that you understand the overall process of filmmaking from camera shots and sound to editing and post. However, a short cannot teach you the story structure demands of a full-length film or how to navigate the distribution maze of long-format documentaries, because the procedure has no parallel.

That's why attorney and producer's rep Innes Smolansky recommends: "In my experience, most of the filmmakers that approach me to represent them have done a short first. However, if a filmmaker has the means and resources to make a feature-length film, I would suggest they do that."

And that's what filmmaker Leslie Shearing did with her film *Unscrewed* (2003). She went for the feature-length film first, while keeping her expenses within a moderate budgeted short—only possible thanks to new technology. "It was easier to raise money for a feature-length film because it has more potential for financial return, and fortunately the subject lent itself to that format." So after a successful film festival run, her film is opening theatrically—a less likely possibility for a short.

If you are not ready to make the big feature-length jump, or you feel your topic can't stretch that far, go with the short. But don't forget to have a long-term plan. Your career deserves high expectations.

Dear Doc Doctor:

Is there a story structure specific to short films? I'm told my documentary should be a short, but I'm not convinced yet.

There is a widespread misconception that a short is the abridged version of a feature-length film. To some degree, it is indeed a smaller-scaled version—the budget and schedule are compressed in most cases. But for everything else, the short is a format in and of itself with its own demands, different and at times as challenging as any other format. Remember the quote attributed to Blaise Pascal (and also Cicero): "I didn't have time to write you a short letter, so I wrote a long one."

The misconception is born out of faulty analysis of the story structure. There are two axes in story structure—the horizontal axis and the vertical axis. The horizontal refers to the structure curve, the order of the scenes, the unfolding of the story, and subsequently its length. The vertical axis of analysis refers to the cross cut of each scene, the amount of characters and subplots, and



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layers of meaning.

With a short, most filmmakers place the emphasis on the horizontal axis, making sure all elements are condensed, or expanded to a certain length, disregarding the fact that modifying the horizontal axis will inevitably affect the vertical axis. A short can rarely sustain more than one or two story lines and a couple of main characters. Polysemy, or multiple layers of meanings, is rare, and when it is possible, most often each layer of the film tends to lose its strength.

When you are advised to make something shorter, in whatever length you are working, that is code for: "the structure is not working as it is." You will find that the "make it shorter" directive doesn't mean whittle away to a two-minute piece. Shorter pain does not mean less pain. And ultimately you don't want your audience to suffer any pain at all.

Many embrace the short format as a safe haven, but the consequences are visible. Competition coordinator of the Chicago International Film Festival, Philip Bajorat, can attest to those consequences after seeing 1,100 shorts this year, 152 of them documentaries. "The most common mistake is not to have a focus in the story. There may be an interesting subject, but the film doesn't go in an interesting direction. Sometimes there's no theme or narrative or investigation, and instead it feels like the filmmaking involved doesn't go much further than setting up the camera."

Going for the short format, in a documentary that you trust has the potential for a full-length, will bring a whole new set of issues. Instead, why not deal with the foundational problems first and then see if the solution leads to a shorter format? And even if you skip the short format now, remember that sooner or later you will have to shrink your work for the educational market. Think big now while you can. ★

Want to ask the Doc Doctor a question for a future issue of The Independent? Write to her at info@documentarydoctor.com

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The Cry by Russian filmmaker Kirill Davidoff

By Ben Chung

Several couples chat casually, surrounded mostly by empty red velvet seats inside Brookline, Massachusetts's Coolidge Corner Theatre in early November. It's 7:12 pm, exactly 12 minutes after the lights should have dimmed and about 11 after the projector should have whirled into action. The crowd starts to show signs of restlessness just as the screen flickers with the clear sign of an uncooperative DVD player. The manager steps forward to announce that the screening will be delayed yet another five minutes. One begins to feel that if this event intends to adopt the moniker of "film festival," it will have given the concept an emphatically low-rent makeover.

The first night of the Chlotrudis Short Film Festival took place on November 1 with a second identically programmed evening on

November 3. It's only the festival's fifth year, but it is already undergoing significant changes. Formerly a one-night affair at Coolidge, a second night has been added across the Charles River at Cambridge's Brattle Theatre. Though the festival has traditionally been held in February as a lead-in to the annual Chlotrudis Awards, an anti-Oscars ceremony to recognize achievement in independent film, it has been moved to November to avoid schedule crowding and to give it stand-alone attention.

Even as the festival seeks to expand, it maintains an inviting small-scale charm. The 10-film lineup was introduced by the Chlotrudis Society's president, Michael Colford with warm gratitude, and the festival incorporated a silent auction with the Coolidge event offering such prizes as hand-

made quilts and screening time at the theater. Of the two directors present to discuss their films, one admitted he was missing his bowling game to be there.

Unfortunately, this year's festival encountered a number of problems—most notably, poor attendance. As the festival owners proudly proclaimed, the last incarnation of the festival, held in February earlier this year, sold out the Coolidge Corner Theatre, but on opening night, the venue was only at about one-quarter capacity. The second night also fared poorly, with only about 40 filmgoers evading post-election trauma to seek entertainment. The festival organizers quickly pointed to the occasion's unfortunate scheduling as an explanation. Hilary Niekirk, program director for the festival, said, "This

time of year is tricky with the World Series and the election."

The films in the 100-minute event were also disappointingly middling. Only 10 shorts made it through the screening process, a notch down from the previous festival's 13. Of those 10, the ratio between the mundane and the memorable was damningly high. By the festival organizers' own admission, this was not a particularly good year for submissions. Colford, also the festival's founder, admitted that there were "a lot of bad films this year." He attributed the dearth of quality films to the calendar shift, which allowed only nine months for new submissions between this and the last go-around. "There was just not enough lead time," Colford says, so they "couldn't get the call out earlier."

Nevertheless, the collection of films did feature some vivid highlights and a particularly strong climax, that demonstrate several robust auteur talents at work. The first entry, *Stray Heart*, directed by Jason Di Rosso, is a heavily narrated character study of a church caretaker who gradually becomes obsessed with shoplifting. The film features effectively bleak black-and-white cinematography and some witty visual embellishments, as when the protagonist positions a Godzilla amidst a set of crosses. But the distractingly overt *Pi* cribbing results in a work in which dourness gets the better of it.

John Jameson's *Out and About* tracks a couple as they simultaneously navigate the mazes of video store aisles and relationship woes. A good lead performance by Phil



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Van Hest and a handful of punchy one-liners can't elevate the utterly banal, predictably gendered dialogue above cutting-room-floor Kevin Smith.

Tico Tico, a small delight by Nisa Rauschenberg, pairs a madcap rendition of the titular song as performed by Shoooby "The Human Horn" Taylor with a dynamic construction paper collage. Rauschenberg's attention to minutiae in the trembling and dancing of the images to the beat recalls some of the song visualization music videos of Michel Gondry, and its position in the program was a welcome respite amidst the festival's grim first half.

The subsequent transition from *Tico Tico* to Kirill Davidoff's *The Cry* was an inexplicably awkward one, juxtaposing a frothy sing-along with a wintry expose of post-tragedy Chernobyl. The grimy, Corbijn-informed photography obsesses over destroyed machinery and dying Ferris wheels, propelled by a muffled children's choir that is ultimately besieged by the buzzing drone of radiation detectors. Hilary Nieuverkirk pointed to Davidoff's short for its unique style and film stock, and indeed, the isolating effect of the oversaturated imagery is genuinely evocative, particularly in a horrifying scene where a majestic horse faces imminent death at the claws of a pack of wild dogs.

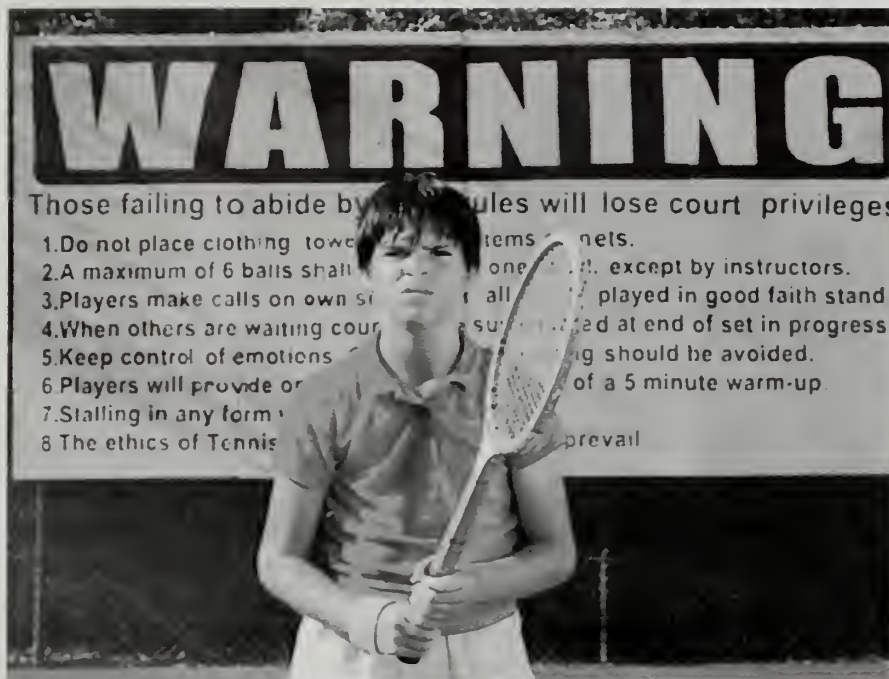
The most enlightened works arrived at the screening's climax in the form of a trifecta of flawed but abundantly promising shorts. *Once Upon a Time There Was a King*, directed by Massimiliano Maureri, depicts a couple in

a heated row, then recreates it with the characters' roles reversed. The set-up is gimmicky, but the tension in the film's one-take approach, the flashes of color that emerge out of the black-and-white palette and the operatic musical interludes suggest a firm grasp of cinematic forms. The short also raises an interesting filmic possibility, likely unintentional, in the framing of the subtitles above the actors' heads, evoking creative potential for interplay between subtitles and the on-screen action.

Next in the trifecta, the disquieting *A Troublesome Desire*, directed by Anna Sikorski, manifests the confused desires of a young girl for her older sister's lover with startling edits and grotesque imagery. With almost no dialogue, the story of the girl's sexual frustration is carved in the expressive faces of the three leads and represented with a series of bewildering symbols that include herring eyes bobbing in red soup and slender slits of rice gathering in the boyfriend's palm.

The last in this small group, and this festival's best, was *Fault*, a psychological battle of homoerotic hostility between a tennis instructor and his younger student. The opening composition fills the screen with "WAR," until the camera pans out to reveal a tennis court "WARNING" sign and an anxious pre-pubescent boy lobbing tennis balls. Director Justin Swibel smears a polyester gloss over the vibrant cinematography, faithfully replicating the muted, bleached pastels of 70s cinema.

The festival concluded with three throw-away films of dubious quality. Though



Josh Podoris as David in *Fault* (Justin Swibel)

The short also raises an interesting filmic possibility, likely unintentional, in the framing of the subtitles above the actors' heads, evoking creative potential for interplay between subtitles and the on-screen action.

Colford touted his favorite entry at the festival as Justin Fielding's *Dwaine's Big Game*—a “perfect five-minute movie”—it's ultimately an unremarkable vignette about a Bostonian's dream to bowl a perfect game. *Jane Doe*, directed by Kramer O'Neill, seeks to deconstruct the mundane trappings of suburban and female existence, but relies too heavily on a nonsensical payoff for shock value. The final short, Ronnie Cramer's *Highway Amazon*, a documentary about a female bodybuilder who engages in curiously non-sexual wrestling with customers in hotel rooms, merely hints at and fails to fully delve into the emotional depths of its subject.

After the 10 films shuffled offscreen, two of the directors emerged for a question-and-answer session that further emphasized the festival's role as a haven for fledgling and often penniless filmmakers. Both Fielding (*Dwaine's Big Game*) and Jameson (*Out and About*) shot on digital and credit the format's affordability and proven mainstream appeal in films like *Collateral*, with Jameson noting “if Tom Cruise can do it, anyone can.”

Any festival can have an off year (just look at the spotty Cannes offerings of the past few years), and the best that Chlotrudis has to offer still shows that the potential of independent filmmakers continues to percolate. ★

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Q/A

David Russell

By Fiona Ng

David Russell is the go-to man for all things short film. In 1996, he started Big Film Shorts, a distributor which specializes in the unsung short form. Eight years later, Russell and his company are getting ready to partner with Canadian short film channel Movieola to launch the first short film cable channel in the United States. We talked with Russell about the business side of short filmmaking.

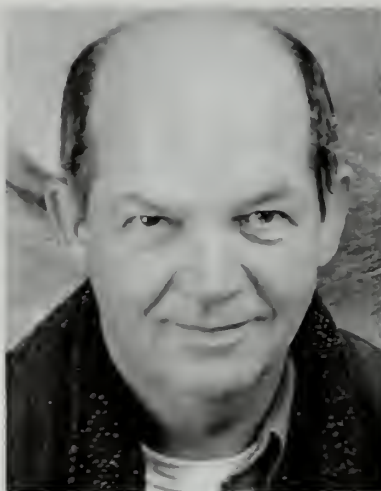
Fiona Ng: Talk about the Movieola merger.

David Russell: It's still unofficial, but it's underway. Movieola has been up and running in Canada for over three years as a digital, 24/7 cable channel for short films. They decided it was time to launch in the US [and that] they need to have a little bit more control over their content. So they were either going to have to create their own distribution arm or find someone to merge with. That's when they approached us. One of the inspirations for us to consider the offer was so we can get into the exhibition business ourselves.

FN: Movieola will be the first short film channel in the United States. Why hasn't that been attempted before?

DR: I think it's because it's so labor intensive. People have talked about [doing] it, but it's such a gargantuan effort to program and to get the number of films for content. Most people, unfortunately for now, don't know enough about short film—they can't conceive of it, they don't know how it should be programmed.

Another big problem is marketing. Say we have a new, great short film, even though it is a festival winner, it's still not enough. Most wide audiences don't even know what a short is, or they have a preconception that it's a student, grainy thing. So our focus has to revert to the old tried-and-true, genre-specific stuff,



David Russell

be it DVD collections, video-on-demand, or pay-per-view packing. The niche of short film is a niche; then you actually have a niche within that. [It's important] that an audience understands [they are watching] a comedy, gay/lesbian, sci-fi, etcetera. To just say, "short film channel" is too broad.

FN: What are some other avenues of exhibition for shorts?

DR: We have buyers and renters, and we have broadcasters all over the world. We have our video-on-demand, pay-per-view in Canada and in the US. We also work with Frontier Airlines, providing shorts for their Cloud 9 film festival, which is a monthly in-flight film festival.



Rugged Rich and the Ona Ona, a short distributed by BFS (Eric T. Finkel)

Many new technologies coming out are going to need the short form, like cell phones and PDAs—it's happening in Asia and parts of Europe already. One of our filmmakers just did a 120-minute soap opera series for a cell phone company in Denmark, all in one-minute episodes. They are delivered daily through people's cell phone subscriptions. That's a new kind of film idea. The general 20-minute shorts we're used to seeing in festivals would

not be right for some of these markets. Hopefully, if filmmakers know that there is a viable market that will actually pay them, they will come up with some great ideas for that kind of stuff.

FN: How big is your catalogue?

DR: About 500 films.

FN: How do you acquire your titles?

DR: We go to some festivals and markets, and we get a lot of referrals from filmmakers we already rep. And a lot of what I call "over-the-transom" submissions. People just send us their films. It's generally those three ways films come to us. We preview each of them to decide if we think they are commercially viable for distribution.

FN: What do broadcasters, buyers, exhibitors generally want?

DR: Short comedy, no matter what country you are talking to. But that doesn't mean there isn't room for a good little drama, or any kind of genre-specific stuff. They generally want five to 12 minutes, max. But I do rep a lot of 30-minute films. Each buyer has their own calendar—how often do they buy, how big is their budget, and their criteria.

FN: What are the advantages of being represented by a short film distributor like you guys?

DR: It's not so that they can make more money, that's for sure. What we can bring is our expertise and relationship with buyers around the world. We'll put our best effort to getting their film out there to commercial markets so that filmmakers can hopefully move on to their next project. A lot of them are very dubious about distributors. But it's such hard work. Be it feature or short, part of the [filmmaking] process is about including the people who know how to get the film out there. If they want to do that themselves,

they'll find that that's pretty much all they do—it takes that much time and effort. Forget [about finding the] time to move on to another project.

FN: Do you have any advice for short-makers?

DR: Make sure your film can be seen legally. If you are going to go through the effort to make a film, why not make it legal? Then you might have a chance to actually get some of your money back.

We've received wonderful films that we wished we could rep and knew would sell, but [the filmmakers] can't afford to clear their music, or have side contracts that are prohibitive, or owe way too much money to SAG. Sometimes it's [violation of] trademarks, logos, or locations, depending on how the locations are used. [Before I rep a film], I have to see all the contracts the producer has with everyone—composers, record companies, etcetera—to make sure that they really got permission to use them.

FN: Is the "calling card" rationale behind short film a myth?

DR: One of the things that [Hollywood] will pay attention to is a successful short film. If there's some buzz around it, then you'll probably get someone to sit down and watch it. But the short film as the calling card is only good if you have a feature script in your back pocket, because it's only good for a meeting. There's nothing they are going to do with it. The filmmakers I know who've got great meetings in Hollywood have done it based on very successful five to eight-minute films that are not three-act structure. But they are exciting enough and interesting enough as talent to get a meeting. It's up to them from there on to convince someone they should be taken seriously for another project. ☆

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Zen and the Art of Landscaping directed by David Kartch

The 25th Anniversary Asbury Shorts Show

By Colin Ginks

For 25 years the Asbury Shorts of New York has provided a welcome home for the short film in the somewhat nebulous territory known as New York State, happily accommodating Oscar winners and unknowns in the same bill, while adding a dash of zany fun to the mix. This year's anniversary celebration was for the most part programmed as a "Best of Asbury Shorts," and did not disappoint. Certainly, the content was heavily biased toward the last 15 years or the much more recent past, enough to pose the question as to whether short films were even any good before 1990. But there was enough in evidence to prove that a consistent trail of quality and diversity has passed through the Asbury Shorts Show during its 25-year run.

As with previous years, the festival was comprised of two events—one at its "spiritual home," the New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury, Long Island, and the other at the Tishman Auditorium of The New School in Manhattan. In the past, festival screenings have been shown at various Manhattan locations such as the Fashion Institute of Technology and the Tribeca Performing Arts Center. Doug

LeClaire, who has served as Asbury's director since the group's inception in 1980, understands the importance of having a forum in the city. "We have effectively been a travel show for the past five years, but our base is New York, where we have developed our audience and a loyal following which has grown with us," he says. "It is also the flagship show of the festival, where we show our new entries."

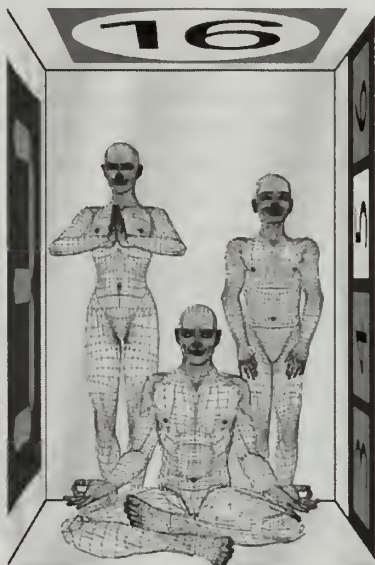
The Long Island show this year, fashioned as a sentimental tribute to Asbury's roots there, was well-attended by a good-natured mix of Long Island media and business luminaries, the general public, and the film student population, who according to LeClaire, came for the opportunity to "see world class films, which might inspire them to upgrade their aspirations and pursue the film business." Notable films in Long Island included the crowd pleasers *Lunch*, directed by Matthew Ehlers (a finalist at Sundance in 2001 and the Chrysler Million Dollar Shorts Competition), *This is John* (2003) by Jay and Mark Duplass, and festival perennial, *Zen and the Art of Landscaping*, by David Kartch (the film is also part of the permanent collection of

shorts at the Museum of Film and Television in New York).

International works made their mark and apart from the belly laughs provoked by Belgian noir-ish fave *The Bloody Olive* (1996) by Vincent Bal, the tone of these films was far more somber than the domestic offerings. Some of the best short animated features were European, including the sublime 1990 Oscar winner *Balance*, by Christophe Lauenstein of Germany. One of the world's most heralded animators, Jan Svankmajer of Prague, was represented by *Darkness/Light/Darkness* (1989), in which claymation was used to stunning effect. But you have to hand it to American filmmaker Kimberly Miner, who in just one minute and thirty seconds managed to bring the Manhattan house down with her animated 2003 Student Academy Award Winner, *Perpetual Motion*.

Leafing through the program notes, much is made of Oscar-winning director John Avildsen dropping his pants in front of the crowd as a presenter at Asbury in 1990—a somewhat warped gesture of solidarity in honor of the exposure of shorts (get it?) that also kicked off a spate of celebrity interest in Asbury (John Turturro, Andrew Bergman, Harvey Keitel, Matthew Modine and Edie Falco, among others). According to LeClaire, the incident serves to illustrate the unpredictable, sheer fun quotient of the festival from its beginning to its present incarnation.

"The general public doesn't go to film fes-



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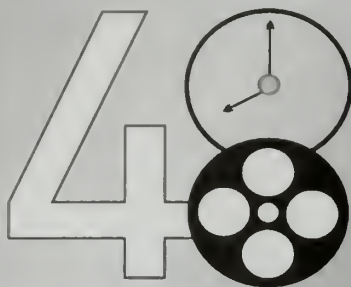
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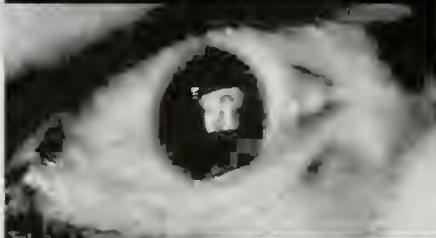
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tivals," says LeClaire, who then proceeds to work hard at proving himself wrong every year. "We try to promote the festival as more of an 'off-Broadway' show than a film festival per se, which takes place in every city in the United States and is dominated by the screening, seminar, and master class formula. Also, they have to do this without a lot of money to go around, while catering to the same audience of filmmakers, distributors, and the press. We're trying to get to people that don't have knowledge about good short films, which are never seen in theatres. When these same people watch the Academy Awards, they ask: 'Where are these films, and where can we see them?' Well, they can see them at Asbury Shorts."

Though the festival endeavors to attract the best and has earned followers and a fine reputation within the independent film industry, the emphasis is on this being a non-exclusive 'family affair.' LeClaire says that the selection process has no specific guideline, but simply tries to be audience-friendly. "We are not an issue-related festival," he says. "We tend to lean towards fast-paced comedies but

will venture beyond that." An example of venturing beyond is demonstrated by Asbury's screening of *The Show* (2003), a powerful new entry from Cruz Angeles, winner of the Directors Guild of America Award for Best Latino Student Filmmaker. The film is a dramatic commentary on the last moments of one man's life as seen by the graphic photograph of his lynching when it resurfaces in an art gallery.

While not the most obvious venue for the showcasing of new talent (Manhattanites scowl at getting the Long Island Rail Road at the best of times), the New York Institute of Technology is regarded as an innovator in the film industry for its sophisticated digital/animation work—a NYIT research group formed in 1974 pioneered 3-D computer animation for nearly two decades and various Pixar, Disney, and DreamWorks movers and shakers are NYIT alumni.

Asbury Shorts was actually started at NYIT in 1980—Manfred Kirchheimer (director of the forthcoming doc *Tall*) was a film instructor there during the 70s, and LeClaire, along with lighting director Ray Preziosi and tech-



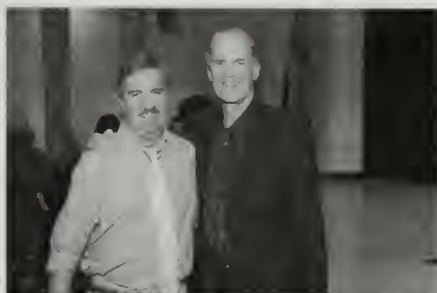
Jon Avner and Mary-Louise Parker in Stephen Marro's *The Quality of Mercy*, an award-winning short featured at the 25th Asbury Shorts Show

nical director Michael Sanchez, were his students. "We were feeding on [Kirchhemier's] inspirational guidance to the extent of wanting to screen local student films—in a church basement in Westbury," LeClaire says. As the festival gained momentum from 1988 onwards, it had screenings at the Lake Placid Center for the Arts, guested at the Woodstock Film Festival and also Visions Cinema in Washington DC. "We never wanted to compete with the resident film festivals and never promoted ourselves as such," LeClaire says. This led to invites for successful screenings at London's Royal Festival Hall in 1996 and a trip to Berlin in 2001 as guests of a daily German newspaper.

Asbury is also known for doggedly pursuing commercial ad directors—since 1999, their fall show in Manhattan allows them to promote new talent to advertising agencies and television companies. "We have generated interest in about six or seven filmmakers,"

LeClaire says. "We try and make the hook-up but after that, it's up to them." Matthew Elhers (*Lunch*), though a little skeptical about the viability of such a free-flowing exchange of creative talent, recognizes that some new directors have managed to get bread-and-butter commercial work, and readily admits he wouldn't turn the work down himself.

After 25 years, LeClaire says: "I'm most proud of having been associated with so many filmmakers who have agreed to let us use their films, and the fact that Asbury Shorts has achieved so much without major sponsorship or advertising. We call ourselves New York's most popular unknown film festival." And what of the future? "We would like to present an Asbury Shorts event in every major city in the world," he says. "A new goal could possibly be the setting up of a long-run theatrical presentation on a nightly basis in New York—The World's Greatest Shorts." ★



Asbury director Doug LeClaire (l) with show guest host Tom Mooney (Paula Vlodkowsky)

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The Anatomy of a Short

BY MARISA S. OLSON

Ten years ago two witty gents from Colorado, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, made a riotous animated short called *The Spirit of Christmas* (aka *Jesus vs. Santa*). The film was originally commissioned by Fox executive Brian Graden as a personal holiday card but was ultimately turned down due to its explicit content. It did not hit a single festival or win any awards, but it did form the prototype for a television phenomenon, thus launching the careers of the duo now affectionately known as The South Park Guys.

While many of cinema's earliest films were short in length, as the medium expanded and became more narrative-based, shorts were relegated to the dual personae of experimental work (think *Un Chien Andalou*, 1929) and star vehicle (witness Sofia Coppola's 1998 film, *Lick the Star*). But today, the short has become a venerable art form with a plethora of festivals and awards devoted to the genre, not only reinforcing its earlier legitimacy, but also establishing precedents, aesthetics, and benchmarks for its success. Whereas a director's greatest hope may once have been to see her short preface a festival feature, she can now have her work seen on a far vaster circuit of solo screenings.

On a daily basis, shorts are screened at DIY (Do It Yourself) microcinemas in cities everywhere—from IFF/New York's Buzz Cuts series at the Two Boots Pioneer theater in Manhattan to San Francisco's backyard Cole Valley Film Festival. And shorts are all over TV. The

short, once interstitial filler between longer programs, is now taking center stage on cable channels like Sundance or Movieola (see page 34), the world's first digital cable channel dedicated to shorts, which has now begun its fourth year of broadcast in Canada. In addition, IFC occasionally showcases shorts and in November Comedy Central began a weekly half-hour series of comedic shorts called "Jump Cuts."

Joel S. Bachar, founder of Microcinema International and the Independent Exposure screening series, says that even if a filmmaker doesn't net a distribution contract with a channel or some other "Hollywood-based bottleneck," there is a glut of emergent independent distributors ready to pick up short films. His Blackchair DVD division is a good example. "We are going out there and finding all of the under-represented feature films and short film compilations available on DVD and pushing them into the mainstream marketplace," Bachar says.

The early shorts of then-music video star Spike Jonze have suddenly made their way into the glossy *The Work of Director Spike Jonze* and packaged together with the works of colleagues Chris Cunningham and Michel Gondry. These titles sit beside compilations ranging from censored commercials to Stan Brakhage animations. DVDs seem to merely scratch the surface of the distribution channels offered by new technologies. Today one can watch shorts almost anywhere, from their



The 1929 experimental film *Un Chien Andalou*, directed by Luis Buñuel and written by Buñuel and Salvador Dalí

cell phone to their airline's in-flight programming. And then there's the web. There, viewers can download countless short films ranging from the Library of Congress's digitized catalogue of early actualities to the shorts commissioned by BMW and Amazon to lure art-savvy consumers.

"The short film is increasingly becoming respected as an art form in its own right," says Shane Smith, artistic director of the Worldwide Short Film Festival at the Canadian Film Centre. "And in some ways, the internet can take some credit for that." Smith is thankful to the web for "increasing the awareness that short films actually exist—before the internet, short films were that category at the Oscars that you had no idea about." Now, he says, "the prevalence of shorts on the internet has, at the very least, put the words 'short film' into many more people's vocabulary. Of course, those people often think that a short film is a three-minute piece that has a funny joke at the end, but at least they're aware of shorts. And that's a step forward."

In the nanosecond world of computers, that awareness has the potential to spread quickly. Take the example of *405*, the 2000 short by Bruce Branit and Jeremy Hunt in which police block off a section of the freeway to allow an airplane to make an emergency landing. The film is approaching five million hits on ifilm.com—directors of indie shorts could never reel in such audiences before the internet.

"The audiences have changed because people expect more choice," Bachar says. "The internet has done a great job of turning people on to all sorts of choices for information, entertainment, and shopping." Bracketing the refinement of one's palate that comes with so much sampling, film programmers seem to think that the increase in supply has generated an increase in demand.

Genevieve Villafior, one of three members of the selection committee for the New York Film Festival Short Films program of the Film Society of Lincoln Center, believes that audiences have become more appreciative of short films. "I heard someone in the lobby of Avery Fisher lament that there was no short film with the New York Film Festival Opening Night film," Villafior says. "No longer are short films there so that you can arrive late to a film."

Still, festival staffs that balance features and shorts regret the obstacles of luring "the mainstream" into making short programs a viewing priority. The growing sentiment is that theater-goers find features a better bang for their buck. And at the same time, Smith points out, "people love shorts when they see them, but there are so many marketing dollars being thrown at features, video games, and other forms of entertainment that shorts can't cut through the clutter of advertising and options that bombard us."

Somehow, this seems in keeping with what Smith sees as the core



The experimental film *Ryan* is an animated biopic of celebrated Canadian animator Ryan Larkin (Chris Landreth)

audience for shorts: the younger demographic. "They've grown up with the internet and are comfortable watching shorts on their computer, and emailing them to friends. They watch MTV, email video clips to their friends' cell phones and PDAs, and make shorts on their computers at home." Smith finds that short films are perfect for the short-attention-span generation because they are "all killer, no filler." Still, he warns, "Short film is an industry, but it's a small one—you're never going to get rich, and most of the people in it are in it because they're passionate about the work." As it turns out, the work itself has changed with the shifts in the short genre.

The predominant creative struggle these days is between the short film as an artwork and the short as a means of achieving greater Hollywood success. Writers, directors, performers, programmers, and audiences all seem complicit in this struggle. "I'd love to see the day when short films are as accepted and exulted as an art form in the way that short stories are," Smith says. "No one accuses short story writers of wanting to write novels. But because so many short filmmakers do want to make features, it's not an entirely fair comparison."

Smith sees at least half of the shorts being produced as "calling card" vehicles. "Look what I can do," he says with mock enthusiasm. "Please let me make a feature, direct TV, or shoot a music video or commercial." But ultimately Smith sees no real problem with this relationship. "Unless the short is the first act of a feature and doesn't stand alone on its own merits," he says. "Then it's not a short film, it's a trailer."

The quasi-complete/quasi-trailer phenomenon is a trend with a legacy. Villaflor notes that each year's submissions to the IFF seem almost to have their own theme, with 2002 bringing in the post-9/11 patriot acts and this year offering numerous meditations on the concept of time. But, in general, she says, "I have noticed there are more short films that are studies of longer films that directors are hoping to make. It allows them to test the waters in terms of characters, etcetera."

What have not changed in the world of short films are the genres that artists and audiences find compelling. Economic shifts and the development of network technologies just haven't proven mighty enough to sway whatever it is in human nature that led to the rise of a sci-fi geek culture, to a fascination with coming-of-age pics, or to the weakness for readily available goods that finds war shorts cropping up in every major city with an army surplus store.

The radical changes we have seen are due to technology, says Kim Adelman, author of *The Ultimate Filmmaker's Guide to Short Films* (Michael Wiese, 2004). "DV filmmaking is more democratic, allowing more than just film school students



to make films. Also, desktop filmmaking means something like the computer-generated jet landing in *405* can be made by two guys on their home computer."

"Animation," Adelman says, "has obviously been radically liberated by computer programs." And manifestations of this liberation proliferate. Among the most noteworthy is the experimental Canadian film, *Ryan* (2004), Chris Landreth's animated biopic of celebrated Canadian animator Ryan Larkin. The piece won awards at Cannes and Toronto's Worldwide Short Festival and has been swarmed by Oscar buzz, largely for its success in pushing the animated medium to tell a story about pushing animation in an earlier era of technological innovation.

"All in all," Bachar says, "I still say that short films tend to be very personal films." Nevertheless, new technologies have affected the means by which individuals tell their stories—and even the time that it takes them to do so. Smith recalls that shorts about 9/11 were out in a matter of hours, whereas it took a year for the first feature film about the events of that day to reach audiences.

But if directors are no longer bound by the constraints of production time and money, they are still beholden to a few formal standards. The most binding of these are the unspoken laws of length. Adelman, who also teaches "Making and Marketing the Short Film" at UCLA, advises filmmakers to be aware that "what Hollywood and indie financiers are looking for is a unique voice and true talent." She believes that it's easier to "show that spark" in a shorter film than a longer one. Once upon a time filmmakers were called on to make short films that

clocked in at around 30 minutes, she says, "to prove that they had the chops to handle shooting a feature film."

Adelman says that this is no longer true. "Most of the impressive and original shorts are truly short," meaning less than ten minutes. She adds, "It's a rare Hollywood bigwig who has 30 minutes to invest in watching a short. They'll only watch the first few minutes and they can tell from that if the filmmaker has talent."

The author has worked out a whole matrix of dos and don'ts in the length department. "As for the marketplace, short—10 minutes or less, or best five minutes or less—is the way to go." She says many distributors won't even look at a short that is 15 minutes because they don't believe it will sell. The demand for shorter interstitials does also persist and, of course, bandwidth issues mean that smaller is better for the internet and wireless devices. Still, Adelman concedes there are exceptions to every rule—memorably, *Two Soldiers*, Aaron Schneider's 40-minute short film that won the Academy Award last year for Best Live Action Short Film, after collecting a slew of festival prizes.

In the end, the million-dollar question becomes that of how a short can come to be considered a success, especially in an era of shifting benchmarks. Smith observes, "Making a profit on a short film almost never happens, so monetary benchmarks don't really figure into the success-o-meter for shorts." Nonetheless, Adelman recalls that, in 1999, Joe Nussbaum seemed to have hit the elusive mark with *George Lucas in Love*, a funny spoof about Lucas's days as a struggling film student in the 60s. The film was a smash at festivals and became a legend when it outsold the newest *Star Wars* chapter on Amazon when it was released on video. It garnered lucrative distribution deals, more than broke even, and yet it took years before Nussbaum made it to major theatres with the teen flop *Sleepover* (2004).

The key, critics advise, is to stay focused on personal success: making a work of art, telling a moving story, even meeting the ambitious goal of finishing a film in the first place. The new markets and technologies simply help people do this. "That's probably the most beautiful thing about short film," Smith says. "It's one of the most democratic, accessible ways to create moving images and to share your story—that, and the passion. That's why so many people make shorts—they've got something they want to say." ★

Short People

Short filmmakers are a diverse bunch with varying motivations and inspirations for working in the short format, and with widely divergent results. So to take the temperature of the shorts scene for the upcoming festival season, we checked in with a number of short filmmakers who've made their mark in recent years, to see what they're up to for 2005.

A roundup of some top short-makers

BY MARGARET COBLE

Gina Levy

Los Angeles-based filmmaker Gina Levy captured the attention of festival audiences from Sundance to Silverdocs with her first documentary short, the disturbing drug-addicted mother-son portrait *Foo Foo Dust* (2003), which she co-directed with filmmaking partner Eric Johnson.

Her current project, however, is a return to the fictional format of her first film *Ask Again Later* (2003), which she adapted from the Joyce Carol Oates short story "Revenge of the Foot." "I feel like I've progressed as a filmmaker, so I want to do another fiction short," Levy says about *Darkest Africa*, the working title for her new self-penned project in pre-production. "It's basically about an American woman who travels to Africa. It's about fear, cultural issues, America in the world, and gender issues."

Levy's also working with a distributor to cull a collection of edgy documentary shorts (*Foo Foo Dust* included) for theatrical release, tentatively titled *Midnight Docs*. "The main challenge with short films is that they're no less expensive or time consuming to make, but there really are very few avenues to make your money back," Levy says. "If you put a collection of short docs together, there's more flexibility in terms of getting things into the theater." www.ginal Levy.com



Harvey Wang

Harvey Wang is an accomplished photographer, commercial director, and documentary filmmaker with an impressive resume. He's also an avid short-maker, particularly of the six-minute variety. "I've probably made about 25 short films, and they range from 30 seconds to 10 minutes, but I seem to like six minutes," Wang says with a laugh, in a phone interview from his home in Brooklyn.

His latest is called *Vault Keys*, a poignant reflection on aging through home videos of his father as he walks around the house, explaining his finances and important papers, in preparation for his death. Covering a time span of 12 years, it becomes a walk through the elder Wang's life, and shows his gradual deterioration. "It's very touching," says Wang the filmmaker. "A lot of my life as a documentarian has been looking outward, but it's also great to mine my own life for the material."

Wang feels his experience as a commercial director not only freed up his photography to be less commercial, but also inspired the more personal direction he's taken with his short film-making. "I didn't need big budgets, big crews, or even really a script—I could just do them myself," he said. "And it doesn't really matter, the length. It just matters if you're connecting with the heart of the subject or the viewer. A short film, like any film, should touch somebody." www.harveywang.com



Terri Edda Miller

Terri Edda Miller spent three quarters of the past year traveling the festival circuit to promote her buzz-short *Dysenchanted*, an eight-minute skit that places classic fairytale characters in modern-day group therapy, kvetching about their unhappily-ever-after lives. It's been a hit with critics and audiences alike, taking the film from Sundance to Sydney and most recently Lunafest, the 70-city breast cancer fundraising tour that plays across the United States through March 2005.

"That's the thing that's really interesting about a short film, the life of it—it's a huge responsibility," Miller says, describing the lengthy process from pre-production through the end of a film's festival run (*Dysenchanted* has had 50 screenings). But all that traveling is taking a toll on her creativity. "At one point, I had to stop and become a hermit and start to write!" She's currently working on a screenplay and pitching a book adaptation from material submitted to her due in part to the success of *Dysenchanted*.

Despite her frustration with the lack of commercial outlets and financial return on shorts, Miller remains positive about her experience in the genre. "The best thing about working on a short is that for the filmmaker who is a writer-director, it's all you," she says. "And that total creative freedom is unbelievably fun and satisfying and gratifying." She mentions the burgeoning commercial arena of "branded" shorts as one possibility for future short projects. "I'd do it if the opportunity came up," she says. www.dysenchanted.com



A scene from Miller's *Dysenchanted*



Jesse Epstein

An NYU grad with a background in media activism, Jesse Epstein won a Jury Award from last year's Sundance Online Film Festival for her documentary short *Wet Dreams and False Images*, which explores issues at the intersection of body image, the beauty industry, and commercial media. "My initial interest in filmmaking started off from that angle of thinking of media as a tool to get ideas across and to start discussion," Epstein says. "With *Wet Dreams*, I

was trying to experiment with how do you take a social issue and then make it into a story where something's happening in the present tense? How do you take someone on a journey and show them getting educated?"

Wet Dreams was conceived as the first of four freestanding shorts themed around body image that Epstein hopes to tie together into a one-hour program. "One is about aging; one is about a friend of mine who is a gay man, who has his own issues; and the second one is about an actor, a fiction script actually," she says.

She's also working with Ohms Media Collective on a documentary feature called *Divided We Stand: The Story of Three Patriots*, which follows the lives of a photojournalist, a marine, and an anti-war activist in an attempt to define what patriotism means to each of them. www.newday.com, www.ohmsmedia.org



Tom Wilson

"What I've done in the past is features," says writer-producer-actor Tom Wilson. "Most people go the other way." Indeed, most do, but Wilson is a decidedly iconoclastic filmmaker and entrepreneur. Noted for writing, producing and starring in the Hollywood mockumentary *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?* (2000), which has a cult-like following due to repeated airings on the Independent Film Channel, Wilson is now working on two short projects that embody his wicked sense of humor.

The first is *Pulling Rank*, a 12-minute romantic comedy featuring characters cheekily named General Foods, General Motors, General Electric, Colonel Sanders, and Sergeant Flea Collar. "It's this wacky comedy piece, kind of Pythonesque," Wilson says. "It's not really a commentary on the military, it just uses the military as a vehicle."

The other is a short to promote his new documentary feature *Sleep Across America*, presently in post-production, in which Wilson crowns himself The King of Sleep and quite literally dozes his way from Los Angeles to New York in a customized Winnebago dubbed The Sleepmobile, outfitted by sleep-industry sponsors. www.sleepacrossamerica.com

Martina Radwan

German-born cinematographer Martina Radwan cites politics as the impetus for her short film work. "I am happy as a DP, to find visual language for other directors," she says. "But when it comes to certain political topics that I don't find covered elsewhere, or not the way I want to see it, I am motivated to tell the story my way."



Her four-minute experimental short *Spring In Awe* (2003)—which won the Media Awareness Award from AIVF at MediaRights' 2004 Media That Matters Film Festival—is a perfect example, eloquently expressing her outrage about the media's coverage of the war in Iraq via a dreamy music video collage of Times Square imagery. "I wanted to find a way to put people in a certain mood or create emotions rather than telling a story," she says.

Her next short project is a documentary about post-9/11 US immigration policies—specifically the controversial Special Registration Program—called *Postcards From Afar*. In it, she follows six men who are forced to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, detailing how the experience affected them and their families.



Bo Mehrad

A contributing editor to this publication and information services director of The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Bo Mehrad likes to keep busy. After directing a string of TV commercials in recent years, Mehrad is currently in development on his narrative feature *Diamond Days* after wrapping the 10-minute romantic comedy *Ping Pong Love*, and has just started shooting a new short, *Thirsty*.

"Directing for me is a vocation," Mehrad says. "The more you do, the better you get. And shorts are a great opportunity to do that. The stories are contained, but there's not so much on the line. And it keeps me on top of my game."

Ping Pong Love, a short romantic comedy about a screenwriter with writer's block who unwittingly serves as matchmaker for his two neighbors, was shot on 35mm and written by Dan McCormick. "When you're an independent, there's this whole thing that you should be a writer-director," Mehrad says, recounting the genesis of *Ping Pong*. "But for the life of me, I couldn't come up with a good concept for a short." McCormick's 10-page script proved to be just what he was looking for. "It jumped off the pages," he says. "It was funny. It was great. And there's a positive detachment that came from working with material that I hadn't written."

Thirsty, on the other hand, is something Mehrad collaborated on with writer Caitlin Cassaro. It's a darker comedy, shot on super 16mm for a more experimental feel. "[Writing a short] is a different kind of muscle than writing a feature," he says. "But the same rules apply. It's just that your first act is two pages rather than thirty." www.uglybetty.com



Pete Chatmon

Pete Chatmon debuted at Sundance in 2001 with his NYU thesis short *3D*, a 25-minute drama that went on to enjoy a successful festival circuit run. Since then, he's gotten his production company Double 7 Film off the ground, completed the comedy short *Chameleon* (2003), and is in pre-production on his first feature, a romantic drama called *Premium*.

His most recently completed short, the seven-minute *Confessions of Cool*, offers an interesting twist on the typical short-film-as-calling-card concept. "*Confessions of Cool* is basically about a character, a guy named Reginald Coolidge, who goes by 'Cool,'" Chatmon says. "It's an exposé and deconstruction of what it is to be mid-20s and black. It's pretty heartfelt, but it's funny and it deals with the stereotypes at the same time. It's definitely a stand-alone short, but the 'Cool' character is also the lead in my feature that we're raising money for. I figured, if you can make something that can stand alone and get people intrigued [by the character], then you can say, 'This guy right here that you liked so much is what the next film is about.'" www.double7inc.com



Garret Savage

Brooklyn-based Garret Savage says he makes films because it's fun. "There's not much else I'd rather be doing," he says. And his active resume proves it. In the past year and a half, he's completed three shorts: *For Food* (2003), an eight-

minute comedy about unemployed New Yorkers doing offbeat things on the streets to make money; *4-Cylinder 400* (2004), a 23-minute doc about a backyard car race in rural upstate New York; and *Shoot The Freak* (2004), a nine-minute ode to the popular Coney Island live action shooting gallery game.

As an editor, actor and director, Savage has worn many filmmaking hats, but is taking his time getting to feature-length projects. "I'm looking at [shorts] as a great chance to tell a really tight story on a smaller scale and get better at filmmaking much faster than if I tried to make one feature that would take many years," he says.

His next short in pre-production is a fictional piece about a woman with Alzheimer's disease, inspired in part by his late grandmother. "[It] isn't going to be a dramatization of her experience, per se, but knowing her and being with her has opened my heart to what it must be like as Alzheimer's begins its slow assault on your mind," he says. "It terrifies me, so I'm exploring that loss of control and blurring of self-identity." www.garretsavage.com



A scene from Reitman's *Consent*

Jason Reitman

Acclaimed commercial director and budding feature director Jason Reitman has got making

shorts down to a set schedule. "I want to do one a year," he says, while detailing his current slate, which includes directing multiple commercials, writing a screenplay (*Home*), and preparing to direct his debut feature, *Thank You For Smoking*, an adaptation of the same-titled book by Christopher Buckley. "It's a valid medium," he says. "I know most people don't think of it as relevant, only as a calling card, but I see it as a form of storytelling. In literature short stories are taken seriously, and some authors are only known for short stories. In fact, I'd like to one day make a feature of short films, just like there are books of short stories."

Son of famed film director Ivan Reitman (*Ghostbusters*), Jason has had a long string of successful and award-winning shorts, including *Operation* (1998), *H@* (1999), *In God We Trust* (2000), *gulp* (2001), and most recently, *Consent*, a humorous six-minute spoof on the concept of sexual negotiation which took honors at the 2004 Aspen Shortsfest and the Seattle International Film Festival and is still active on the festival circuit. "I like short films that are entertaining," Reitman says. "Too often [they] are these dark sad expressions of life, and while there's a place for and an art to that, I love to see entertaining short films because there are so few out there." www.tateusa.com

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How (some) shorts grow long

the Feature

BY RICK HARRISON

A long time ago, in a film school far, far away (from NYU), a young man with big dreams and a small bank account made a short film with a long title. His name was George. And in 1970, between graduating USC's School of Cinema and pursuing a master's, George made the student award-winning *Electronic Labyrinth: THX-1138 4EB*, which he eventually expanded into a feature. The first film released by Francis Ford Coppola's American Zoetrope Studios, *THX 1138* was a visionary, sci-fi, sharp-sounding, ground-breaking, dystopian, unmarketable box office dud.

But like many directors who believe like proud parents that their special little short films can aspire to one day grow up to be full length feature films, captivating wide audiences for hours longer than 20 minutes at a time, George's story ends in success. Not, as you might imagine, because his last name was Lucas and he went on to change filmmaking forever, but simply because he earned the opportunity to make a feature at all.

For many fledgling filmmakers in the United States—where about 4,000 shorts are produced every year, and only around 400 feature films are released theatrically—the path presents unique obstacles. Of course, not every short-filmmaker intends to do anything more than tell a short-form story, such as the case with experimental, abstract, slice-of-life, and one-joke films. And not every film that does make the

attempt busts through from its short origins to feature success with the impact of *Sling Blade* (1996), *Bottle Rocket* (1996), *Raising Victor Vargas* (2002), or *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004). But it's that crucial first step that means everything.

Eight years ago, John Krokidas was earning the distinction as the worst intern ever at Sandy Stern and Michael Stipe's production company, Single Cell Pictures. "If you called me, rest assured I didn't get the message," Stern says with a wry chuckle. Today, Single Cell has optioned Krokidas's feature-length script that he is set to direct. The feature expands on his award-winning 24-minute short *Slo-Mo*, a stylized, quirky social-commenting comedy in the broken mold of Charlie Kaufman in which the lead character, struggling with writer's block and abandoned by his girlfriend, finds everyone and everything in the city of New York zipping by in fast motion except him.

Thirty-year-old Krokidas, with a tuft of chin hair, brown wool-knit cap, and eager-to-please eyes, sips on black coffee while explaining that he made *Slo-Mo* at NYU Film School after being dumped five years ago, and that he had never intended it to be a feature film. "I was done with it emotionally and artistically," he says.

But, he realized two inviolate truths of filmmaking: While people might love your short, the most common question you will be asked is, "What are you working on next?" So it is crucial that you always have



Avenue X's director Phil Roc & DP Alfonso Pollard

a spec-script to pitch. "A great short can get you attention," Krokidas says, "but it can't get you work." And the second reality is that it helps to be lucky.

His break came at the first screening of his film in 2001 at the Cantor Center at NYU. Somewhere in the crowd of 200 people, attending as a guest of another director, sat Winona Ryder. In an East Village bar afterwards, Ryder approached Krokidas and offered to help him get an agent if he promised to work with her someday.

"It was my first celebrity encounter as an actual filmmaker," he says. "And the whole experience was incredibly reaffirming—the feeling you get when you realize a whole new world is opening up in front of you. Immediately afterwards, I ran to my family who was there and said OHMYGODWINONARYDERLOVEDMYFILMAND-WANTSTOWORKWITHME!"

The first challenge for Krokidas, and any other filmmaker considering to adapt their short, was determining if he was prepared to remain with the same material. He had already lived with *Slo-Mo* for three years, including a year he spent marketing it to festivals and television outlets around the world which eventually paid off with a sale to HBO, recouping his costs and allowing him to repay investors, including \$1,000 returned to his dentist.

After girding himself for the long haul, Krokidas needed to face the

new realities of writing and preparing to direct a much longer story on a much larger budget. Characters needed stronger motivations and back stories, new characters and subplots needed to be created, and the somewhat antisocial ending needed to be tweaked so that the paying audience could take something away from it and apply it to their own lives. "What people take at face value in a short, they're going to have to challenge in a feature," Krokidas says.

A budget 20 times as high as his short film means all new actors with familiar faces who can sell the film. It means shooting with proper location fees and licensing instead of stealing shots from subway platforms on the sly. "You can't just shoot into a crowd and call them extras," Krokidas says. And the higher the budget, the more worried the studio becomes about their investment, and the more pressure they put on the director. This all assumes that the film will make it through studio gates.

But Stern, whose company produced *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and first-time director Brian Dannelly's *Saved!*, boasts boundless confidence in his one-time crappy intern (who now has a three-picture writing deal at Miramax and finished writing a script set to star Goldie Hawn, who is also attached as a producer). And Stern considers the short film to be his most useful sales tool when they begin pitching it to studios and talent. "It's very hard to get a first-time director's film



Drey in Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden's *Gowanus, Brooklyn*

made," Stern says. "But the short film will open doors. You can see the vision of the feature in that short and know that this director will deliver what he has on the page." For Stern, it was the feature script that caught his attention first, but after seeing the short, he said: "Oh, this guy is a filmmaker. He knows what he's doing."

Kelly DeVine, manager of film acquisitions at IFC, agrees that a short can provide an accurate measurement of a writer-director's ability. "It shows the industry that you can take an idea on paper and realize it," DeVine says. "Everybody has an idea in their head, but it's a huge leap to making it a finished film. Especially films that are more conceptual in nature."

Sometimes that leap can be both strategic and conceptual. When Debra Granik's first short film at NYU film school, *Snake Feed* (1997), won Best Short at Sundance, everyone told her that this needed to be her next feature. Her film, a gritty portrait of an upstate New York woman and her boyfriend struggling with drug addiction as played by a real-life couple struggling with drug addiction—often recreating scenes from their own lives—was based on a hefty period of observation, questioning, videotaping, and improvisation. The subjects/actors were both in a precarious place, testing their sobriety with what Granik

calls "guts and soul."

So when friends and admirers pointed out to Granik that she likely has thousands of scenes that couldn't make it into the short, why not just expand it? "The 'just' is the bitch," Granik says. "There's no way to 'just.'"

So Granik threw herself back into the lives of what she calls her "life models," understanding that she would need to know them more intimately, expand their stories, and prepare professional actors to play them. Their lives were changing rapidly as she wrote the script, diverting her interest to what was happening at the moment from the scenes she was carefully constructing. The script grew to the size of a phone book before Granik put on the breaks and refined what she had.

"There was never a day when I thought I was expanding my short," Granik says. "I had to feel I was embarking on a new adventure."

The destination was Sundance again, where her (now) feature film, *Down to the Bone*, won both the 2004 Special Jury Prize and Dramatic Directing Award. For Granik, the experience of making the short was such an integral part of the process that she considers making one to prime herself for her next feature. "A short puts you in the hot seat," she says. "You've decided you will make some filmic piece, and after



Debra Granik's *Down To the Bone*

some energy, you will have strived to make something watchable and understandable. And even if the short reveals some big gnarly problem with the film, I'll be able to fix it."

Director Phil Roc shot his 10-minute short *Avenue X*, over two days for about \$4,000 after post-production, just to prove that he could. He is now working with his writing partner, Aaron Schnore, to give the festival crowd what they've been clamoring for. "People want more, so we're going to give them more," Roc says. "Might as well capitalize on the momentum rather than just walk away."

His film, following two teen boys who scam money from a bodega owner to finance a day at Coney Island, strikes a nerve with audiences, because the two lead characters are deaf—something uncommon in the film marketplace. Roc is confident he will find financing for the feature and recognizes the role of his short in accomplishing that. "The short shows people in the industry that I can do this and hopefully take those ten minutes and turn it into 110 minutes," he says.

Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden were thinking along the same lines when they wrote a feature script and then made their short, *Gowanus, Brooklyn*, partly as a means of getting the feature financed and partly for practice. "We got to workshop characters, workshop story," Boden says. "We wound up revisiting the feature and making changes. With other shorts, we didn't know what we were doing and were just messing around with video."

Gowanus, Brooklyn tells the story of a somewhat rebellious, somewhat distant 12-year-old girl who discovers that her no-nonsense, existentially philosophizing teacher is hiding a crack habit. To create the short from the feature script, Boden and Fleck took the inciting incident and built an entirely new script around it. While the short unfolds from the child's point of view, the feature will focus on the teacher. While the short ends on an unspoken understanding between two characters, it's the type of everyday moment that could hardly sustain a feature ending.

The process of working from a feature to a short and back, Fleck explains, has had some unintended consequences. "We know all the secrets, but there is more mystery in the short," Fleck says about the untold stories and relationships between the characters. "Now that people have read the feature script, they have all the mystery solved."

Well, you can't please everyone.

The trick, as almost any filmmaker will tell you, is to please yourself and hope for the best. And whether that first step eventually takes you to a distant galaxy of film success—where you'll be tempted to one day taint your legacy with a series of maddeningly insipid prequels—or maybe just takes you to a quick screening at a theater near you, it might be heartening to believe: one small step for a short film can be one giant step for a short-filmmaker. ★



Alex on the escalator in *Slo-Mo* (John Krokidas)

The Talented Tenth

Indie actors-turned short filmmakers



Love Thy Brother, a short film by actor Ralph Macchio

BY KATE BERNSTEIN

While so many of Hollywood's high-paid actors spend their paychecks on the kind of luxury items the rest of the world only comes in contact with on trashy celebrity television shows, some are emptying their bank accounts and charging up their credit cards like the rest of us—making movies. A rising group of thespians are stepping behind the camera and taking a shot at directing. And their format of choice is increasingly the short film.

Just as with other budding filmmakers, the short film emerges into the actor's consciousness as the burning desire to tell a childhood story or work out a current emotional crisis. And the bolt of necessary kick-in-the-butt inspiration from an encouraging peer contribute to 10 minutes-worth of celluloid and hopefully a nervous, exhilarating, exhausting trip to Sundance. Of course, there are just a few differences that would be impossible to ignore. Making friends work for free could mean major star power in an established actor's film—upping the chances of that illustrious Sundance possibility, but also having a much more critical eye cast on cross-over potential.

And then there are the benefits and drawbacks unique to the creative process of actors taking on the role of director. What emerges is a slightly charmed yet, ultimately, universally challenging experience of making that first glorious short film. Many famous faces from *The Lord of the Rings*'s Sean Astin to Hank Azaria and Kevin Connolly, the

actor most recently seen in HBO's "Entourage," have newly made short films. Four other actors shared their war stories with us from that concise but massive undertaking.

Ileana Douglas, known for many sharp comedic roles in both television and film, made her first short *The Perfect Woman*, 10 years ago and has kept going ever since. "I was working on *Alive* with Ethan Hawke," Douglas says of her directing origins. "We had a lot of free time on our hands and were talking about making movies. He had just made a short and really inspired me to do it." With Hawke's help, Douglas quickly cast, wrote, and directed a small budget film loosely based on her dating experiences as well as her quest to become the perfect mate. *The Perfect Woman* played Sundance and was chosen for the closing night of The New York Film Festival that same year, opening for *The Piano*. The experience hooked Douglas on short films.

"I had all these ideas that wouldn't sustain an entire film, yet I thought they were funny and tapped into things that everybody was thinking about," Douglas says. "I come from a stand-up and sketch comedy background, and my films are like little comedy sketches where I plan out four or five really good jokes." Douglas found short film to be her perfect outlet—she was able to play out her short comedic ideas, combining her writing, performance, and point of view, while learning to direct. "The short film is the easiest shorthand way to

take a stab at trying to express yourself in a different way," she says.

The Perfect Woman caught the attention of The Independent Film Channel, and they funded Douglas's next short, *Boy Crazy, Girl Crazier* (1996). That film, a lightly sardonic, neurotic, and hilarious peek into the relationship of two actors, was based on Douglas's own experiences trying to work in Hollywood. Supported by IFC, Douglas was able to shoot for five days and on 35mm, as opposed to the 16mm two-day shoot of her previous (and future) film. "It was a luxury," Douglas says. Her next short *Devil Talk* (2003)—an amusing six-minute phone conversation between the Devil and his mother—played at Sundance and had a theatrical run opening for Errol Morris's *The Fog of War*. As a result, Sundance approached Douglas about creating a retrospective of her work for them. The outcome was another short film, *Supermarket*, which debuted at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival.

Supermarket, originally intended to work as a framework for Douglas's other shorts, turned out to work on its own, following the out-of-work actress as she attempts to manage the ins and outs of a "regular" job while unable to fight the urge to perform in the aisles.

All of Douglas's shorts have had as successful a run on the festival circuit as possible. "What helps is that I did *Devil Talk* last year and one year later I had another short," she says. "Consistency is really good. A lot of these festivals like to see you do something else. They really want to support the consistent filmmaker." Douglas also believes that the genre of short films she makes is very conducive to the festival environment. "They're always looking for comedy shorts. I always tell people [to] make comedy shorts, don't make dramatic ones. They're very popular, especially if you keep them short."

It also helps that heavy players like Jeff Goldblum and Daryl Hannah, both also short-filmmakers, appear in *Supermarket*. However, the star of the film, and of the pilot Douglas is currently shooting for Oxygen based on *Supermarket*, is Douglas herself. She has put herself in almost all of her shorts. "Who wouldn't?" she says with a laugh. "I'm a perfectionist and because it's comedic and I know exactly what I want, I know I will deliver exactly what I need." Plus, as Douglas explains, when you are on your own tight budget, it is a great way to avoid actors' fees.

Another actress-turned-director who began her short-filmmaking career at the suggestion of peers, is Guinevere Turner, who made her on-screen debut in 1994's indie lesbian classic *Go Fish*, and appeared last year in Showtime's critically acclaimed original series, "The L Word." She had never thought of directing before being approached by



Jeff Goldblum and Illeana Douglas in Douglas's short *Supermarket* (courtesy of Illeana Douglas)

the Seattle International Film Festival in 2001 to make a short film in seven days. *Spare Me*, about how mean teenage girls are to each other, premiered the following year at Sundance. Turner returned to Sundance again in 2003 with another highly acclaimed short film *Hummer*, this time made with funds from her own pocket, inspired by someone Turner dated who hummed maddeningly and incessantly. "It was a piece to make fun of myself—how I obsess over stupid details about people all the time and drive myself crazy," Turner says.

Like Douglas, Turner likes being both on and off camera. She co-starred in *Hummer*, "mostly because people always warn against it so heavily, and I hate being told that I can't do something." To aid in the process, Turner had a trusted director friend on set who helped when she was in front of the camera. Doing both gave Turner a valuable perspective on each. "With that perspective comes a respect for how challenging and unique each role on set is," Turner says. Now working on her third short, she feels more secure as a director, and hopes to direct a few more shorts in the future. "I still have so much to learn and it's a safer way to make mistakes," she says. "It's like school for me."

While creatively exciting, the transition from actress to director hasn't been a necessarily easy one for her in the industry. "There's a sense of needing to prove that you're not just some insecure, egomaniacal yet untalented schmo who has a couple of bucks to throw around on a vanity project," Turner says. And of course there's also the issue of what being an attractive actress symbolizes for many people. For example, when recently driving to the studio lot where she's editing her current short, the guard at the gate immediately assumed she was there for an audition and was confused when she explained she was there to

go to the post-production house. "That makes me want to pull out my resume and just hand it to them," she says.

Perhaps for that reason, some actors-turned-filmmakers choose not to put themselves in their directorial debut. Ralph Macchio, whose 2002 debut short film *Love Thy Brother* premiered at Sundance, opening for Project Greenlight's *Stolen Summer* and later acquired by HBO, could have easily cast himself in his film but decided to leave himself out so as not to deflect attention from his directing aspirations. "I just thought I have to maintain full focus," Macchio says. "I'm going to have enough to deal with the first time out. Of course if it would have completely financed the movie, I might have looked at it a different way."

Macchio even went one step further to pull himself out of the film's content. At the last moment he decided to delete his name from the film's opening credits, instead only revealing the writer and the director after the film had finished. "People draw conclusions about what they think you are," he says. "If my name was at the beginning, people would [think], 'Now you think you're a director. Show me what you're going to do.' I wanted the film to speak for itself." The decision proved fruitful as the audience and critical response focused primarily on the film's merit, with the director's identity more of an afterthought.

Being Ralph Macchio, or any famous actor, is in Macchio's words, "a double-edged sword." But the actor believes that "when you lay down the pros and cons, there's more on the good side." Macchio's acting reputation and connections lured GreeneStreet Films on board to help produce, and a top-notch cast and crew. "When they mentioned who was directing the film, it was like 'I never met him but I grew up watching his stuff, so sure, I'll do it.'"

Love Thy Brother does, however, completely stand on its own cinematic merits. The film is a poignant and hilarious comedy about two pre-teen brothers whose sibling rivalry is temporarily interrupted by a robbery, only to be further intensified by the event. The decision to shoot a short in the first place came out of Macchio's long-time desire

to tell this specific story, based on something that happened to him and his brother when they were kids in suburban Long Island. "I told the story to every filmmaker I've ever worked with, and every one of them said it was a great movie and I should do it," he said. "Making it was a nice full circle."

Macchio credits acting with preparing him for directing, having learned something from each filmmaking legend he has worked with as well as his time spent on sets. "Ever since I started acting in films, I was hanging around the camera truck and the camera guys asking a zillion questions," he says. They want to share and pass down their knowledge." For *Love Thy Brother*, Macchio stuck with the cinematic style of "the polished studio look" (35mm and fluid expensive camera movements) he had grown up with and that also fit his specific suburban comedy genre.

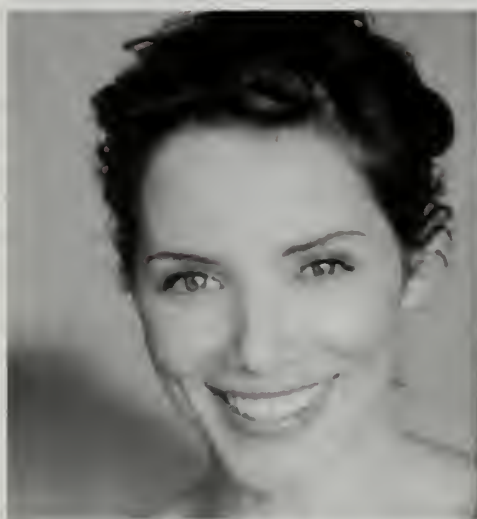
Macchio sees the experience of screening a film he wrote and directed at Sundance as another chapter in his life. "After 18 years of being recognized for *The Karate Kid*, to have someone grab my arm and say something about how funny my short is, was very rewarding," he says.

Like Macchio, actress Mili Avital, who started working in the US film industry opposite Johnny Depp in Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) and has had a steady flow

of television and film roles ever since, had a burning desire to tell a specific story that drove her to make her first short film. *I Think Myself I Am All The Time Younger*, which debuted at the 2004 Tribeca Film Festival, follows Eva Capsouto, a Turkish-Egyptian-Jewish immigrant living in New York City helping her sons run their Tribeca restaurant for 41 years. Avital knew she wanted to capture Eva on camera ever since the actress lived with Capsouto for a few months after emigrating from her native Israel. Almost a decade later, Avital decided to finally make the film. "I was turning 30," Avital says, "and you start thinking, 'What's my life about? What am I doing?' And I saw this old lady dealing with aging in such a fascinating way that doesn't exist anymore in



Eva Capsouto in Mili Avital's *I Think Myself I Am All The Time Younger* (Bruce Weber)



Filmmaker Mili Avital (*Theo & Juliet*)



A scene from Guinevere Turner's film *Hummer*

in such a fascinating way that doesn't exist anymore in this age of self-consciousness. She just lived with her aging so peacefully."

Avital made *I Think Myself I Am All The Time Younger* over a period of three years. She filmed it herself with a mini-DV camera and only the light that was available to her. She invested her "pocket-budget" in editing equipment and edited the film herself in her house over a five-month period. While Avital's small production was determined by her small budget, it allowed her an intimacy with the subject that proved vital to the heart-warming and heart-wrenching film.

Unlike so many actors that tackle directing a short film in the fictional form they are most familiar with, Avital entered the unfamiliar realm of documentary, though being an actress still helped her immensely in making the film. "It's a movie made by an actor because it is a portrait of a character," she says. "I wanted to capture the minutia of this woman's life, the little things." In finding what to film, Avital looked for the same kinds of elements in Eva that she would create for any character she might play in another film. In capturing the old woman's cane, her funny walk, her false teeth, Avital brought details of both strength and loneliness to the forefront of the film. Making the documentary also taught Avital a valuable lesson to use in her acting—

the strength of silence. "As an actor you're so focused on the text you have to deliver," she says. "With Eva, it was an older woman remembering her past in silent moments that was the most interesting to watch."

Most of all, making her first short was creatively and personally liberating for Avital. "As an actor, there is so little control over the final product," she says. "It's not just hurtful, but also tedious and boring. Unless you move from one lead to the next like Nicole Kidman, you have to wait until someone allows you to be creative. You can't act for yourself. You have to sit around until someone calls you." Avital, like many actors-turned-filmmakers, was too hungry and creative to wait. She was also driven by a great desire to look outwards, not just inwards. "Directing is a very rich experience compared to acting because there are a lot more elements to play with—music, or a close-up, or timing, or a still shot—it's not just my emotions. With filmmaking you can express yourself in a deeper and more personal way."

Hers was a sentiment expressed by all the actors who embraced directing the short film format. Of course, there is also Ralph Macchio's favorite theory, which he attributes to his friend, Danny DeVito: "Actors become directors because the job of God is taken."★

THE VIDEO CLERKS

ANTI-CHAIN STORE OWNERS PUBLISH THEIR PREFERENCES

By Lisa Selin Davis

The Scarecrow Video Movie Guide,
Sasquatch Books, 808 pages, \$24.95

Many a film fanatic has made the pilgrimage to the Mecca of Seattle's Scarecrow Video, which carries over 72,000 titles—many of them off the Hollywood radar screen. Famous trekkers include Quentin Tarantino, John Woo, and Bernardo Bertolucci (who called it “the best video store in the world”), among other independent film legends. It was the favored video haunt of Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love, and 90,000 loyal customers have fed their movie hunger there. Now, Scarecrow aims to return a little of that love and share it with a larger audience as they introduce the *Scarecrow Video Movie Guide*. The “staff and friends” of Scarecrow compiled this over 800-page behemoth to express their very strong opinions, indoctrinate newcomers, and educate movie lovers all around the nation.

The guide is not merely a collection of reviews. It's also a treatise on the importance of the independent video store and the independent film viewer and a polemic against the rise of the chain stores. “As a movie lover, do

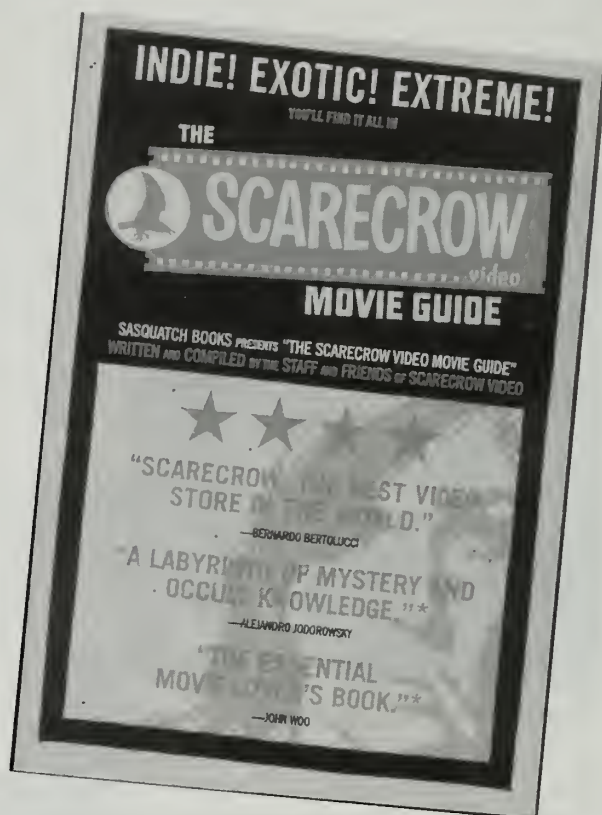
you want any government, any corporation, any limits put on your maddening pursuit of that which you have never seen?” internet film critic Harry Knowles asks in the introduction. The authors point out that chains like Blockbuster and Hollywood video restrict their offerings to R-rated movies and below, refusing to rent even NC-17 art films like *Henry & June* (1990). The independent video store, they argue, is a version of free speech in a country that's increasingly prone to corporate consolidation—a pro-choice stance for cinema.

In the User's Guide section, Scarecrow inventory manager Kevin Shannon explains their motto/business philosophy: bringing people and movies together. “We just love movies, and love bringing movies to people. And that's all of it, really. It sure doesn't make a business plan, that's for sure, and we have

just a whole lot of zero money in our pockets to prove it.”

OK, so the book is not a hallmark of correct grammar and usage, but their film literacy is what counts. At Scarecrow video, they take a sort of libertarian/communitarian approach to the business—they promise to unite patrons with every and any movie they wish to view. “We aspire to movie nerdism so you don't have to,” they write. “We watch movies of every ilk, from the thickest and thinnest margins in the realm of cinema, from the tiniest tributaries to the mainstream of film, popular and unknown movies from every nook and cranny of the world.”

But Scarecrow's guidebook is not about volume. They review around 4,000 titles here, carefully selected by the new owners, former owners, local film geeks, and loving Scarecrow





THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS

TO SUCCEED AS AN INDEPENDENT you need a wealth of resources, strong connections, and the best information available. Whether through our service and education programs, the pages of our magazine, our web resource, or through the organization raising its collective voice to advocate for important issues, AIVF preserves your independence while reminding you you're not alone.

About AIVF

The oldest and largest national moving-image media organization, The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides support for individuals and advocacy for the media arts field. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, AIVF offers a broad slate of education, information, and resource programs for members and non-members alike.

Information Resources

AIVF workshops and events cover the whole spectrum of issues affecting the field. Practical guides on festivals, distribution, exhibition and outreach help you get your film to audiences (see other part of this card).

The Independent

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AWARDS



"Movies We Like From Directors We Usually Hate" includes *Annie Hall* (United Artists)

loiterers. These are films they want you to see, as well as the films they think you should absolutely pass up. They write: "The only chance the independent video store owner has ever had to survive corporate invasions takes us back to where we started, the tastes and aspirations of the owners." The Scarecrow contingent has very specific tastes and high aspirations because, yes, they just love movies, all kinds of movies.

The book guides you through films in every genre, theme, and category that tugged on the heartstrings of Scarecrow's loyal gang, whether they're crowd pleasers or not. Jumping on the listmania bandwagon that flared up around the turn of the century (remember the top 100 American movies, books, short stories, etc.), they've compiled a series of movie lists that would make Rob

Fleming—the listmaking hero of Nick Hornby's book *High Fidelity*—proud.

Included in the guide are: Directors Who Should Have Larger Followings (Kenneth Anger, Todd Haynes, and Derek Jarman, for instance); Favorite Giant Monsters (Godzilla, Gamera and Giant Martians from *The Angry Red Planet*, 1960); Best Movies Starring Animals (*Alligator*, 1980, or *The Cat from Outer Space*, 1978); Best Animated Movies for Grown-ups (*The Time Masters*, 1982, *Cat Soup*, 2003, and *I Married a Strange Person*, 1997); Essential Hip-Hop Movies (*Wild Style*, 1982, *Scratch*, 2001); Movies About Food (*Delicatessen*, 1991, *Love on a Diet*, 2001, and *Motel Hell*, 1980); Scariest Movies Ever (*Alien*, 1979, *The Exorcist*, 1973, and the less well-known *Suspiria*, 1977); and Movies We Wish Were on DVD (*The Exterminating Angel*,



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1962, and Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket*, 1959). And don't forget the Movies We Like That Most People Hate list (*A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, 2001, *A Night at the Roxbury*, 1998, and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, 1996).

Not all the lists are positive—in a not-so-fair and balanced look at the movie industry, the antipathy runs just as deep as the love. The guide offers warnings, as in Our Least Favorite Remakes, like *Godzilla* (1998), *The Haunting* (1999), and *The Shining* (1997). Or Worst Movies by Favorite Directors (Ridley Scott's *G.I. Jane*, 1997 and Paul Verhoeven's *Hollow Man*, 2000), followed by Directors We Truly Hate (Joel Schumacher tops the list, along with Woody Allen, Jane Campion, and Lars Von Trier). But they aim to be diplomatic, so they include another list: Movies We Like From Directors We Usually Hate, including *Annie Hall* (1977), Gregg Araki's *Splendor* (1999) and Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book* (1996).

The Scarecrow guide also educates readers in the fine art of watching movies on video and DVD, with a section explaining how the aspect ratios of academy, cinemascope and Panavision differ, as well as "intermission" sections that describe various genres like blaxploitation and anime, along with genres you didn't even know were genres, such as French crime films or sexploitation. These intermissions profile 46 different directors, from international independents like R.W. Fassbinder to as-yet undiscovered talents like Alejandro Jodorowsky and Victor Erice.

The tone of the book is both casual and impassioned, a movie bible that preaches to the converted. The Scarecrow contingent seems to share a particular aesthetic, privileging movies I like to call "macho-sensitive." They love Tarantino, Jarmusch, and the Coen brothers—the same directors who love Scarecrow.

This mutual love fest means that movie



Godzilla is one of the authors' "Favorite Giant Monsters," although the 1998 version is one of their "Least Favorite Remakes"

fanatics whose tastes are aligned with the Scarecrow gang will most benefit from this book. When you buy a book from Amazon.com, for instance, their website shows you books that appeal to a similar sensibility, or at least books other folks bought with the one you've just ordered. *The Scarecrow Movie Guide* works the same way. If you liked *The Usual Suspects* (1995) and *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984), then you'll probably like most of the movies they've lauded in the book. If you tend to turn your thumbs up at the same movies as Roger Ebert, maybe you'll want his book, or maybe some other less opinionated, more politically correct sort of publication.

But a traditional video guidebook won't provide the zeal of this compilation, nor will it include the sweet history of this beloved store, begun in 1988 with 619 films from original owners Rebecca and George Latsios's personal collection, which has blossomed to

more than 100 times the size. It won't be compiled by a community of film lovers who clearly wish to spread their love around. And though you can certainly find guides that review larger numbers of films—the *DVD & Video Guide 2004* by Mick Martin covers 18,000 movies, and Leonard Maltin's 2004 guide reviews 19,000—those guides do not include the rare, underground, off-the-charts and undiscovered movies found in this collection. This book is a sampling of what you'd get if you visited Scarecrow Video: a highly biased and impassioned tour through their collective cinematic vision.

The foreign film section, for instance, includes pictures from countries whose national cinema we rarely get to glimpse. (When was the last time you saw an Ecuadorian picture or a film from Burkina Faso?) Icelandic and Iranian films are included, not to mention a couple from Macedonia. Other categories include Action, Adventure

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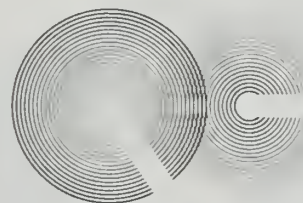
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Westerns, Directors, All Things Music, Pyschotronic, and Silent Films—not quite how Mr. Maltin would break it down. Perhaps you have a craving for a little klezmer music in your evening entertainment? The Scarecrow guide offer Joseph Green's 1936 *Yiddle With His Fiddle*. Or you can choose from the Most Depressing Movies list, and settle in for a sad evening of *The Great Silence* (1968), which they describe as "Beautiful and bleak, the trademark cynicism of director Corbucci (*Django*) is complicated by the nature of its ruthless nemeses." The writing is smart and witty, but not pretentious. Read one blurb and you'll likely know whether or not this is the movie for you.

The *Scarecrow Video Movie Guide* is an invitation to join their club. It is a celebration of the world's finest—and so-bad-they're-good—films. Somehow, they're able to be highly opinionated without being snobbish: anyone can join them in their fight to free the world from the constraints of direct-from-studio-to-chain-store domination. Only one problem. If you're not lucky enough to live in Seattle, or some other fine city with as stellar an independent video store as Scarecrow, how will you see these hard-to-find films? Access remains a curious paradox, since we don't yet have Scarecrow Video stores across the land. ★



From the "Movies We Like That Most People Hate" list: *A Night at the Roxbury*

FESTIVALS

By Bo Mehrad

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org.

DOMESTIC

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN CINEMA

FILM FESTIVAL, March 24-26, NY. Deadline: Feb. 1. Fest seeks Films & Scripts by women who are of the African, Latino or Asian Diaspora. Cats: feature, doc, short, script, animation. preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (films/scripts). Contact: Terra Renee; (212) 769-7949; fax: 871-2074; info@aawic.org; www.aawic.org.

ANTELOPE VALLEY INDEPENDENT FILM

FESTIVAL, May 13-15, CA. Deadline: Feb. 1; March 15 (final). Fest seeks short & feature films of all genres & formats for its annual fest. Cats: short, doc, feature, music video. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV. Entry Fee: \$25; \$40 (Final). Contact: Michael Traina; (661) 722-6478; fax: 772-6612; info@aviff.com; www.aviff.com.

ARIZONA STATE ART MUSEUM SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

, April 23, AZ. Deadline: Feb. 14. The fest is a one night outdoor fest. Entries should be no longer than 10 min. All entries become a part of the Museum's video library. Founded: 1997. Cats: short, experimental. Awards: Juror's Choice (2), LeBlanc Audience Choice & AZ award (Arizona artists only). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: John D. Spiak, Curatorial Museum Specialist; (480) 965-2787; fax: (480) 965-5254; spiak@asu.edu; asuartmuseum.asu.edu/filmfest/.

ARTWALLAH, FESTIVAL OF SOUTH ASIAN ARTS, SUMMER

, CA. Deadline: Feb. 15. Annual fest seeks innovative films & videos by or about South Asians that express personal, political, & cultural struggles of the

South Asian diaspora. Cats: any style or genre. VHS- NTSC only. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Senain Kheshgi; film@artwallah.org; www.artwallah.org.

BAC INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

, April 28-May 21, NY. Deadline: Jan. 28. The fest serves the community by providing quality film & video programs from all around the world free of charge. Criteria for selection: the work's artistic quality, the artist's cohesive artistic viewpoint, demonstrated knowledge of the medium, appropriateness for diverse audiences, & the originality of the work. Features must not exceed 150 min. Founded: 1966. Cats: Feature, Short, Experimental, Doc, Animation, Student (Adult/College), Youth (K-12), student, youth media. Awards: Certificates given to Best in each category. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta SP, DVD, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 Independents; \$25 Students; \$10 Youth. Contact: The Brooklyn Arts Council; (718) 625-0080; fax: 625-3294; filmfest@brooklynartscouncil.org; www.brooklynartscouncil.org.

BICYCLE FILM FESTIVAL

, May 12-15, NY. Deadline: Feb. 17. Festival is a celebration of bicycles & those who ride them through film, arts & music from around the world. The Festival embraces all the various bike subcultures. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: Festival; (212) 726 8505; info@bicyclefilmfestival.com; www.bicyclefilmfestival.com.

CAROLINA FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

, Feb. 23-26, NC. Deadline: Dec. 15; Jan. 15. Fest held at Univ. of NC at Greensboro, fest's continuing goal is to exhibit works of independent artistry & personal vision. Fest accepts work in all genres & cats, incl. animation, doc, exp., narrative & students short. Projects of all lengths & originating on all formats accepted. Founded: 1989. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experi-

mental, script, student. Formats: 16mm, Beta SP, VHS, 1/2", S-VHS, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$45. Contact: Festival; (336) 334-4197; fax: 334-5039; carolinafilmfest@excite.com; www.carolinafilmandvideofestival.org.

CHICAGO DOC FILM FESTIVAL

, April 1-11, IL. Deadline: Jan. 12. Fest describes its programming as "designed to extend appreciation of the art of documentary film & its unique power to inspire & communicate a world of ideas & cultures." Founded: 2003. Cats: doc. Awards: Cash Awards in various cats. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP, DV-Cam, DVD, DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$50. Contact: Festival; (773) 486-9612; fax: 486-9613; info@chicagodocfestival.org; www.chicagodocfestival.org.

DANCES WITH FILMS

, April 8-14, CA. Deadline: Jan. 3; Jan. 31 (final). Dances With Films promises "No politics. No stars. No shit." Festival is a competitive event featuring a line-up of a dozen feature-length narrative films & more than a dozen narrative shorts. All films admitted for screening are selected using only one major criterion: they must have been completed w/out any known director, actors, producers, or monies from known sources (e.g., known production companies). Films must have been completed by Jan. 1 of previous year. Founded: 1998. Cats: family, youth media, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: Best of (feature, short); Best Screenplay (feature, short); Audience Award (feature, short). Formats: Beta SP, 16mm, 35mm, DV, HD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Entry fee: \$60 (feature); \$40 (short); all late entries are \$75. Contact: Leslee Scallon; (323) 850-2929; fax: 850-2928; info@dancesw/films.com; www.DancesWithFilms.com.

DIRECTOR'S VIEW INT'L STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL

, May 6-10, NY. Deadline: Jan 15. Part of the Director's View Film Festival, this program is designed to introduce the work of young people (under 19 years of age) to the

general public. Cats: Shorts (30 Minutes Max) , Doc , Narrative, . Awards: Prizes awarded by panel of judges. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, VHS, DigiBeta, Beta SP, Beta, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: DVFF; (914) 533-0270; fax: (914) 533-0269; info@thedirectorsview.com; www.dvff.org.

FAIRFAX DOC FILM FESTIVAL, April, CA. Deadline: Feb. 15. Doc shorts & features are accepted. Festival seeks works by filmmakers working in Northern California. No entry form required. Founded: 1999. Cats: doc. Awards: Award for Best of Fest selected by audience. Formats: Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: David Weinsoff, Festival Director; 415-460-9760; fax: 460-9762; Weinsoff@ix.netcom.com; www.fairfaxdocfest.org.

FARGO FILM FESTIVAL, 2-5, ND. Deadline: 7. A special selection titled Native American Voices Showcase. Festival is for a wide variety of films, showcased in the historic Fargo Theatre. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Awards: Yes, unspecified. Formats: 16mm. Contact: Festival; (701) 239 8385; info@fargotheatre.org.

FIRSTGLANCE: PHILADELPHIA FILM FESTIVAL, May 11-15, PA. Deadline: Jan. 1; Jan. 15 (final). Fest encourages student & professional film & videomakers at all levels for underground alternative event whose mission is to exhibit all genres of work, from mainstream to controversial, in a competitive, casual atmosphere. Festival's mission is to bring together film- & videomakers from around the world, to promote & exhibit Philly talent, & to expose Philadelphia to film- & videomaking from around the corner & around the world. Winners will also screen in LA. Founded: 1996. Cats: animation, experi-

mental, student, feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Awards: Over \$50,000 in prizes. Formats: 16mm, Beta, DV, 35mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-VHS, Beta SP, super 8, Hi8, U-matic, 8mm, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (NTSC) & DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Firstglance Films; (818) 464-3544; (215) 552-8566; wropro1@email.msn.com; www.firstglancefilms.com.

HI/LO FILM FESTIVAL, April, CA. Deadline: Jan. 1; Jan. 15 (final). Non-competitive fest "celebrates films w/ high concepts & low budgets for the adventurous & disenchanted." Festival seeks films that cannot be found at the multiplex: films that are more smart than slick, that privilege ideas over commerce; that prove great filmmaking has more to do w/ brains than wallets. Any genre, any subject, any length—bring it on! Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: super 8, 35mm, 16mm, digital, Hi8, 3/4", VHS, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (late). Contact: Festival; (415) 558-7721; info@hilofilmfestival.com; www.hilofilmfestival.com.

HIGH-DEF FILM FESTIVAL, World Tour Event. Deadline: Jan. 10. HDFEST is known as "the world's only high-definition film fest" due to the fact the fest showcases projects in HD which have been shot in HD format exclusively. HDFEST works to bring together filmmakers & technological innovators from all over the world. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, TV, music video. Awards: World tour screening. Formats: DVD, VHS. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (under 40 min); \$50 (others). Contact: Hdfest Productions; admin@hdfest.com; www.hdfest.com.

HUMBOLDT INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL,

April 2-7, CA. Deadline: Jan. 31; Feb. 11. Since its inception in 1967, the Fest continues to support & celebrate filmmakers working in experimental & non-traditional ways. Whether you are a first time filmmaker in the process of developing your unique visual style, or an established independent continuing to push the limits of the mediums, the Festival invites you to submit your 16mm film or digital video. Nestled between the redwood forests & the pacific ocean, the Fest has the distinction of being the oldest continuous student run film fest in the world. Films must be under 45 min. in length & completed in the last three years. Selected entries must be avail. for projection in film print format or on DVD, if DV. The fest takes place in Arcata, California, home to Humboldt State University. Founded: 1967. Cats: narrative, experimental, animation, doc, & the "you call it" category, short, any style or genre. Formats: 16mm, Digital Video. Preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (under 9 min.); \$20 (10-29 min.); \$30 (30-60 min); \$10 additional for Int'l entries. Contact: Pablo Koontz; (707) 826-4113; fax: 826-4112; filmfest@humboldt.edu; www.humboldt.edu/~filmfest.

HYPEFEST, July 29-31, CA. Deadline: Feb. 11; April 1. Fest accepting short films (25 min. or less), commercials, music videos & promos for competition screening. Only works completed in the current or previous yr. eligible. Cats: short, music video, commercials. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (student w/ ID), \$35; final: \$45, \$30 (student). Contact: Festival; (323) 938-8363; fax: 938-8757; info@hypefest.com; www.hypefest.com.

INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL OF BOSTON, April 21-24, MA. Deadline: Feb. 28. Fest was created to discover unknown filmmakers, incl. students, first-timers, & int'l directors.

Festival specializes in films still seeking distribution. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: Best Fiction Feature & Short, Best Doc Feature & Short, Festival Filmmaker, & Audience Choice. Formats: 35mm, Beta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$10-\$45. Contact: Festival; (857)891-8693; info@iffboston.org; www.iffboston.org.

INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL (LOS ANGELES), April 20-24, CA. Deadline: Jan. 5. Fest showcases films from & about India by Indian & int'l filmmakers. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Awards: Audience Award in all cats. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (NTSC or PAL). Entry Fee: \$30 (up to 60 min.); \$40 (Over 60 min.). Contact: Christina Marouda; (310)364-4403; fax: 278-3499; info@indianfilmfestival.org; www.indianfilmfestival.org.

INT'L WILDLIFE FILM FESTIVAL, April 30-May 8, MT. Deadline: Jan. 31. The central focus of fest is to bring awareness to non-domesticated wildlife species & natural habitats. Cats: children, doc, feature, TV, music video, news story. Formats: Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$200. Contact: IWFF; (406)728-9380; fax: 728-2881; iwff@wildlifefilms.org; www.wildlifefilms.org.

IOWA CITY INT'L DOC FESTIVAL, April 15-18, IA. Deadline: Jan. 31; Feb. 15 (final). A competitive fest showcasing short documentaries. Length of entries is limited to 30 min.. Festival seeks short documentaries of 30 min or less. The definition of a "documentary" is open to wide interpretation Founded: 2002. Cats: doc, short. Awards: Cash prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: T. Seeberger; (319)335-3258; info@ICDocs.org; www.icdocs.org.

LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL, June 16-26, CA. Deadline: Jan. 14; Feb. 18 (final: shorts, music video); March 1 (final: features). Fest showcases the best of American & int'l independent cinema. The fest screens over 80 features & 60 shorts. Fest is widely recognized as a world-class event, uniting emerging filmmakers w/ critics, scholars, film masters, & the movie-loving public. Founded: 1995. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Music Video, Student. Awards: Narrative Competition receives a \$50,000 cash grant, Doc Competition winner receives a \$25,000 cash grant, both funded by Target Stores. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DigiBeta, HD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$50/\$65 (features); \$35/\$45 (shorts); \$20/\$30 (music videos). Contact: Varky James; (310) 432-1208; lafilmfest@ifp.org; www.lafilmfest.com.

MEDIA THAT MATTERS FILM FESTIVAL, May 15, NY. Deadline: Jan. 5; Jan. 15 (final). A celebration of short films about social, political or environmental work, this yearlong fest incl. community screenings around the country, online streaming, television broadcasts & DVD distribution to thousands of educators & activists. Cats: any style or genre, short, doc, experimental, animation, music video, youth media. Awards: \$1,000 cash awards. Formats: DVD, DigiBeta, Beta SP. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: Wendy Cohen; (646)230-6288; fax: 230-6328; wendy@mediarights.org or www.MediaThatMattersFest.org.

METHOD FEST INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 1-8, CA. Deadline: Dec. 5; Jan. 25 (final). Named for the 'Stanislavski Method,' fest highlights the great performances of independent film. Seeking story driven films w/ outstanding acting performances. Founded: 1999. Cats: Feature, Short, student. Awards: Sculpted statuettes in various cats. Awards

to Best Actor, Actress, Screenplay, Feature, Short, Quality Low Budget, & Audience Favorite Feature. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, DV, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Student: \$25; Shorts: \$30, \$40 (final); Features: \$40, \$50 (final). Contact: c/o Franken Enterprises; (310) 535-9230; fax: 535-9128; Don@methodfest.com; www.methodfest.com.

NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS, March 23-April 7, NY. Deadline: January 8. Highly regarded noncompetitive series presented by Film Society of Lincoln Center & Museum of Modern Art. 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 w/ no prior public exhibition. Founded: 1972. Cats: TV, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Awards: None. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Digital Video. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Sara Bensman, Film Coordinator ; (212) 875-5638; fax: 875-5636; festival@filmlinc.com; www.filmlinc.com.

NEW YORK ASIAN AMERICAN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 15-31, NY. Deadline: Feb. 4. The oldest fest in the U.S. showcasing works by film & video makers of Asian decent. Known as the "first home to Asian American cinema," the fest incl. screenings, panels, workshops, works-in-progress screening, screenplay reading, networking

receptions, after parties, & much more. Founded: 1978. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script, music video. Awards: Emerging Director Award (1st/2nd time feature directors); Screenplay & shorts Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$30. Contact: Asian CineVision; (212) 989-1422; fax: 727-3584; info@asiancinevision.org; www.asiancinevision.org.

OUTFEST: THE LOS ANGELES GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, July 7-18, CA. Deadline: Jan. 28; March 11 (final). The mission of Outfest is to "build bridges among audiences, filmmakers & the entertainment industry through the exhibition of high-quality gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender themed films & videos, highlighted by an annual fest, that enlighten, educate & entertain the diverse communities of Southern California". Fest also offers a weekly screening series yr. round, as well as a screenwriting lab. Founded: 1982. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Experimental, script. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Features (over 50 min.): \$25, \$35 (final); Shorts: \$15, \$25 (final); Screenwriting Lab \$25 (1/28 only). Contact: Festival; (213)480-7088; fax: 480-7099; programming@outfest.org; www.outfest.org.

PALM BEACH INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 14-21, FL. Deadline: Dec. 30, Feb. 4 (final). Festival showcases over 80 American & Int'l independent features, shorts & documentaries. Set in Florida's tropical playground, fest gatherings range from stimulating seminars to casual beach parties & a black tie affair hosting some of top names in the film industry. Founded: 1996. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, experimental. Formats: 35mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30-\$70. Contact: Festival; (561) 362-0003; fax: 362-0035; info@pbifilmfest.org; www.pbifilmfest.org.

POLYESTER PRINCE ROAO SHOW, May-Sept.,

CA. Deadline: March 1. A non-competitive traveling Film Fest, touring US, Mexico & Europe. Work must originally be shot on Super 8, 16mm, Pixel 2000 and/or hand manufactured. No video and/or Digital video submissions. Cats: experimental, animation, doc. Formats: 16mm, super 8, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Paolo Davanzo; (213) 484-8846; polyesterprince@hotmail.com; www.polyesterprince.com.

ROSEBUD FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, March 27-28, DC. Deadline: Jan. 23. Founded in 1990, the competition is open exclusively to DC, Maryland & Virginia film & video artists & seeks to honor the innovative, experimental, unusual & deeply personal in creative film & video making. The competition is open to all works released in previous year. Founded: 1990. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: 5 winners incl. one Best of Show will be chosen. Winners each receive a \$1,000 cash prize, plus additional products & services. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (Entry fee incl. a one-yr. membership to Arlington Community Television, the sponsoring organization). Contact: Jackie Steven, Festival Director; (703) 524-2388; fax: 908-9239; jax@arlingtonmedia.org; www.rosebudact.org.

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL / FRAMLINE 29, June 16-26, CA. Deadline: Jan. 7, Feb. 4 (final). Fest one of the oldest & most respected, is committed to screening the best in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Film. Many works premiered in fest go on to be programmed or distributed nat'lly & int'lly. Rough cuts accepted for preview if submitted on 1/2". Fest produced by Frameline, nonprofit arts organization dedicated to gay & lesbian media arts. Founded: 1976. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, experimental. Awards: Frameline Award, Audience Award, 1st Feature Award (\$10,000), Excellent Doc Award (\$10,000). Formats: 35mm, 1/2", Beta, 16mm, BETA cam SP- NTSC only. VHS-

NTSC/PAL. Entry Fee: \$15-25. Contact: Program Coordinator; (415) 703-8650; fax: 861-1404; info@frameline.org; www.frameline.org.

SAN FRANCISCO SEX WORKERS' FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, May, CA. Deadline: March 1. Fest "provides a forum for the accomplishments of sex worker film & videomakers in a contemporary cinema." Works must be directed/produced by someone who has worked in the sex industries or be about any aspect of sex work or sex industries. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, music video, student, youth media, installation, any style or genre. Awards: Sex Worker Sinema Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4", DV (mini DV preferred for screening). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Carol Leigh; (415) 751-1659; swfest@bayswan.org; www.bayswan.org/swfest.html.

SANTA CRUZ FILM FESTIVAL, May 5-13, CA. Deadline: Feb. 15. Fest dubs itself as a "culturally diverse event that honors the accessible to the avant-garde in moving pictures". Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student, youth media. Awards: Best of in all cats. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10(youth); \$20 (student); \$35 (short); \$45 (feature). Contact: Festival; (831) 459-7676; jane@seebrightproductions.com; www.santacruzfilmfestival.com.

SEATTLE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 19-June 12, WA. Deadline: Feb. 1; March 1. SIFF is the largest film fest in the US, presenting more than 200 features & 80 short films to an audience of over 150,000 filmgoers each year. Fest is one of five N. American film fests in which presentation will qualify a film w/out distribution for submission to the Independent Spirit awards. Founded: 1976. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Best American Independent Film, Best New Director (Int'l), Best Short Film & audience-based Golden Space Needle, given for fea-

ture film, director, actress, actor, doc, & shorts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$90. Contact: Cinema Seattle; (206) 264-7919; fax: 264-7919; info@seattlefilm.com; www.seattlefilm.com.

SILVERDOCS: AFI/DISCOVERY CHANNEL DOC FILM FESTIVAL, June 14-19, MD. Deadline: Jan. 28; March 4 (final). Fest was created through an alliance between AFI & the Discovery Channel to "showcase, honor & expand the audience for independent documentaries". The Int'l Doc Conference runs concurrently June 15-17. Filmmakers can attend all Conference panels & workshops & sign up for Silver Sessions, small group meetings w/ industry pros that connect filmmakers w/ decision-makers: program executives from Discovery, IFC, ITVS, HBO, PBS, & more. Networking opportunities abound at free breakfasts, lunches & cocktail receptions. Cats: doc, any style or genre. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (short), \$30 (feature); \$30 (short, final), \$35 (feature final). Contact: Festival; (301)495-6776; fax: 495-6777; info@silverdocs.com; www.silverdocs.com.

SPINDLETOP/LAMAR UNIVERSITY FILM FESTIVAL, April 15-17, TX. Deadline: Feb. 12. Annual fest is dedicated to bringing to light the work of new & emerging filmmakers. Enjoy workshops and master classes with writers, directors, and industry professionals. The fest is known for the networking and contact opportunities it provides for participants. Cats: experimental, feature, narrative, short, music video, doc, student, animation. Formats: 16mm, super 8, DigiBeta, Beta SP, 1/2", S-VHS, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$15 (student). Contact: O'Brien Stanley, Dept. of Communication/ Lamar University, P.O. Box 10050, Beaumont, TX 77710; (409) 880-7222; ruthstanley@juno.com; www.spinfest.org

TELEVISION DOC FESTIVAL, April, NY. Deadline: Jan. 15. The Museum of Television & Radio hosts this annual fest that premieres

documentaries of all types, followed by discussions w/ filmmakers, & celebrates the work of influential documentary makers. Founded: 2000. Cats: doc, TV. Formats: Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: TV Doc Festival; (212) 621-6600; (212) 621-6699; TVDocFest@mtr.org; www.mtr.org/tvdocfest.

TEXAS FILM FESTIVAL, March 28 - April 2, TX. Deadline: Jan. 2. The Texas Film Festival is a non-competitive invitational fest run entirely by student volunteers w/in the MSC Film Society. Since 1993, their purpose has been to celebrate contemporary independent filmmakers & to promote film as an artistic medium focusing on education rather than securing distribution. Founded: 1993. Cats: doc, feature, short. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30 (features); \$20 (student features); \$15 (Shorts). Contact: c/o MSC Film Society; (979) 845-1515; fax: 845-5117; txfilmfest@msc.tamu.edu; www.txfilmfest.org.

TRENTON FILM FESTIVAL, April 29 - May 1, NJ. Deadline: Nov. 1, Jan. 15 (final). Located one hour south of NYC, 30 min. north of Philadelphia & 8 miles from Princeton, Trenton is a great showcase for independent & foreign filmmakers. The three-day fest screens over sixty films at four venues & has the New Jersey State Museum as its main theatre. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: Ernie Kovacs award in each category. Formats: Beta, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35/\$45 (features); \$25/\$35 (shorts). Contact: Kevin Williams; (609) 396-6966; fax: 392-3634; info@trentonfilmfestival.org; www.trentonfilmfestival.org.

TRIBECA UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, April 21-May 1, NY. Deadline: March 1. Works can range between 5 to 30 min.. Founded: 2004. Cats: short, any style or genre. Formats: DVD. Preview on DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: c/o A Taste of Art; (212) 964-5493; info@befilm.net; www.tribecaundergroundfilmfestival.org.

UNITED STATES SUPER 8MM FILM & DIGITAL VIDEO FESTIVAL, February 18-20, NJ. Deadline: Jan. 21. Annual fest encourages any genre, but work must have predominantly originated on Super 8 film or hi-8 or digital video. Festival mandate is to spread the 8mm & digital word. Toward that end the Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC has sponsored seven touring programs, culled from fest winners for the past several years, which have travelled extensively & seen new audiences. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: \$4,000 in cash & prizes; selected winners go on Best of Fest Int'l Tour. Formats: Hi8, super 8, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4", DV, 8mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (check or money order payable to Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC). Contact: A.G. Nigrin; (732) 932-8482; fax: 932-1935; njmac@aol.com; www.njfilmfest.com.

WESTCHESTER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, March 10-12, NY. Deadline: Feb. 1. This Festival is situated in Westchester, New York state's premier location, offering extraordinary sites for filmmaking, still photography & commercials. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student, script. Awards: Jury Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DV, VHS. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (screenplays & students), \$35 (all others). Contact: Iris Stevens, Director; (914) 995-2917; fax: (914) 995-2948; iis3@westchestergov.com; www.westchestergov.com/filmoffice.

WORLDVEST HOUSTON INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 22-May 1, TX. Deadline: Nov. 15; Dec. 15; Jan. 15 (final). WorldFest has reduced the number of films screened to a maximum of 60 feature & 100 short premieres, w/ a total & absolute emphasis on American & Int'l Independent feature films. Fest honors films from Mexico, Canada, France & Germany. Associated market for features, shorts, documentaries, video, independent/experimental & TV. Fest also offers 3-day seminars on writing, producing & directing, plus distribution & finance. Founded: 1961. Cats: feature, doc, short,

script, experimental, animation, music video, student, youth media, TV, children, family. Awards: Student Awards Program. Scripts & screenplays also have competition. Cash, services & equipment awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP, S-VHS, DigiBeta, U-matic, DVD, CD-ROM, Web. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40-\$90. Contact: Team Worldfest, Entry Director; (713) 965-9955; fax: (713) 965-9960; mail@worldfest.org; www.worldfest.org.

INTERNATIONAL

\$100 FILM FESTIVAL, March, Canada. Deadline: Jan. 28. Annual fest encourages new & experienced filmmakers from around the world to exhibit short Super 8 & 16mm films. Entries outside Canada should label packages: "Cultural Purposes. No Commercial Value." Founded: 1991. Cats: short, experimental. Awards: Cash awards: \$500-\$1,000. Formats: super 8, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers; (403) 205-4747; fax: 237-5838; info@csif.org; www.csif.org/100filmfest/index.htm.

ANNECY INT'L ANIMATED FILM FESTIVAL, June 6-11, France. Deadline: Jan. 15. Annecy is the top ranking competitive int'l fest entirely dedicated to animation. The Festival competition is now open to four cats giving a diversity of techniques ranging through watercolour to 3D, by way of paper cut-outs & plasticine. Cats: animation, feature, short, music video, children. Awards: Annecy awards. Formats: 35mm, Betacam SP, Digital Betacam Pal, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS, DVD, BetaSP PAL. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Laurent Million; 011 450 100 900; fax: 450 100 970; info@annecy.org; www.annecy.org.

BANFF TELEVISION FESTIVAL, June 12-15, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 14. This fest is Canada's premier int'l event for program makers & content creators in television & new media. Founded: 1979. Cats: animation, arts docs, children, comedies, continuing series, history & biography, info, made-for-TV-movies, mini-series, performance, popular science & natural history, short dramas, social & political docs, sports programs, doc, TV. Awards: Producers of programs judged best in the 14 cats will receive a

"Rockie" Award sculpture. Other prizes include: Global TV Grand Prize, \$50,000; NHK President's Prize, \$25,000 (project shot or postproduced on HDTV); Telefilm Canada Prizes, two \$20,000 awards for the Best Independent Canadian Production in English & in French. . Formats: Beta, Beta SP, VHS (PAL). Entry Fee: \$250 (payable in U.S. or Canadian dollars); \$100 (original content created for webcasting, w/ no prior or simultaneous appearance in another medium). Contact: Festival; (403)678-9260; fax: 678-9269; info@banfftvfest.com; www.banff2003.com.

CANADIAN FILM CENTRE'S WORLDWIDE SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, June 14-19, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 28. This fest is dedicated to celebrating & sharing w/ audiences the exciting world of short film. Cats: short, doc, animation, experimental. Awards: cash awards & various prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, NTSC, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: Canadian Film Centre; (416) 445-1446; fax: 445-9481; short-filmfest@cdnfilmcentre.com; www.worldwideshortfilmfest.com.

DUBROVNIK INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 24-29, Croatia. Deadline: March 1. Dubrovnik is a tiny city but nonetheless uniquely impressive & historical, neatly enveloped in the blanket of thick stone fortress walls. Following the rich heritage of its location, this film fest strives to showcase the very best in the world of film arts & cultural treasures. Cats: doc, short, feature, music video. Awards: Various juried awards. Formats: 35mm, Betacam SP, DVD, Pal, NTSC. . Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts); \$35 (features); other fees (check website for details). Contact: Program Department; (310) 903-0483; program@dubrovnikiff.org; www.dubrovnikiff.org.

EILAT INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 6-9, Israel. Deadline: Jan 15. The fest provides a platform & respectable stage for veteran & beginner filmmakers alike of quality films from all over the world to showcase & promote their creations. Cats: feature, children, Israeli. . Formats: VHS. Preview on VHS. Contact: Festival; www.eilatfilmfest.com.

INSIDE OUT: TORONTO LESBIAN AND GAY FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 20-30, Canada.

Deadline: Jan. 14. Fest hosts the largest lesbian & gay fest in Canada & one of the largest in the world. Previous years fests screened 300 plus films & videos in 84 programs w/ sold out screenings. Fest has assisted in securing theatrical & broadcast distribution for several films & videos through relationships w/ Canadian film & TV entities. Fest is not only a highly anticipated cultural event renowned for its hospitality & integrity in programming, but an excellent opportunity to network w/ other independent film & video makers & interested industry representatives. Founded: 1991. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student, youth media, family, children, TV. Awards: Awards are given for both local & int'l work. The Bulloch Award for Best Canadian Work, the Akau Award for Best Lesbian Short, the Cruiseline Award for Best gay Male Short, & the Charles St. Video Award for Best Emerging Toronto Artist. Audience Awards incl. the Showcase Award for Best Feature, the Ellen Flanders Award for Best Doc & the Mikey Award for Best Short. In all, more than \$5,000 in cash & prizes is awarded annually. Formats: 16mm, Beta, 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Kathleen Mullen; (416) 977-6847; fax: 977-8025; inside@insideout.on.ca; www.insideout.on.ca.

INT'L FEATURE FILM COMPETITION FOR WOMEN FILM DIRECTOS, April 12-17, Germany. Deadline: Jan. 9. Festival organizes every 2 years as an int'l film fest centered on one topical theme which also incl. historical aspects. They highlights those films that came into being largely as a result of women's efforts director, screenwriter, sound technician, camera operator or editor. The fest is a non-competitive framework. Founded: 1987. Cats: Any style or genre, feature, doc, short. Awards: Grand prize 25,000 Euro. Formats: All formats accepted, 35mm, 16mm, S-VHS, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, U-matic. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: 25 Euro. Contact: femme totale e.V., c/o Kulturburo Stadt Dortmund, ; 011 49 231 50 25 162; fax: 011 49 231 50 25 734; info@femmetotale.de; www.femmetotale.de.

INT'L FILM FESTIVAL OF URUGUAY, March 19-April 3, Uruguay. Deadline: Jan. 15. Annual fest devoted to short & feature length, doc, fiction, experimental, Latin American & int'l

films, w/ purpose of promoting film quality & human & conceptual values. Ind. fest aims at being frame for meetings & discussions of regional projects & of mutual interest. Fest has 4 sections: Int'l Full Length Film Show; Int'l Doc & Experimental Film Show; Info Show; Espacio Uruguay. Films should be subtitled, have Spanish version, or have a list of texts or dialogues translated into Spanish or in English, French or Portuguese for fest to translate. Films wishing to compete must be completed after Jan. 1 of the past two years. Founded: 1982. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, student. Awards: Best Film; Jury Prize; Opera Prima Prize. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, S-VHS, U-matic, Beta SP, DVD, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Manuel Martinez Carril; 011 5982 418 9819; fax: 5982 419 4572; cinemuy@chasque.net; www.cine mateca.org.uy.

INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL HAMBURG, June 8-13, Germany. Deadline: Feb. 15. Annual Festival is a forum for presenting diversity of int'l short films & providing a meeting place for filmmakers from home & abroad. Consecutively run w/ the Hamburg Children's Film Festival. Shorts must be under 20 min., except for Three-Minute Quickie entries (must be under 3 min.). Founded: 1985. Cats: short, any style or genre, children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, S-VHS, Beta SP, DVD, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. If previews are not in German or English, please enclose text list. Entry Fee: None. Contact: c/o Short Film Agency; 011 49 40 39 10 6323; fax: 39 10 6320; festi_val@shortfilm.com; www.short-film.com.

MILAN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, March 10-20, Italy. Deadline: September 30 (early), January 31 (final). MIFF was founded to encourage & support the work of independent & experimental filmmakers & provide a world-class int'l platform to showcase their films. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Features: \$50 (early), \$90 (final); Shorts: \$30 (early), \$50 (final). Contact: MIFF, or FFIM; 011 39 02 8918 1179; info@miff.it; www.miff.it.

NATFILM FESTIVAL, April, Denmark. Deadline: Jan. 1. Annual fest is the biggest

film event in Denmark showcasing 140 feature-length films & attended by 40,000 people. Again this yr. a number of foreign films secured theatrical release or TV-sale in Denmark as a direct result of successful fest screenings. Note that only features are screened (minimum 65 min.). Only prints w/ English dialogue or subtitles accepted. Cats: feature, doc. Awards: Nat'l Prize & Distribution Prize (awarded by audience). Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DV-cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Kim Foss, Fest Dir.; 011 45 3312 0005; fax: 45 3312 7505; info@natfilm.dk; www.natfilm.dk.

OBERHAUSEN INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, May 5-10, Germany. Deadline: Jan. 15. The world's oldest short film fest offers a forum for aesthetic & technological innovation & reflection. There are no limits as to form or genre but films in the Int'l & Children's & Youth Competitions must not exceed 35 min. & have been made after Jan. 1 of the previous year. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP/PAL, DV, S-VHS, Super 8, DVD. Preview on VHS or S-VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Melanie Piguel, Coordinator; 011 49 208 825 2652; fax: 49 208 825 5413; info@kurzfilm tage.de; www.kurzfilmtage.de.

SINGAPORE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 15-30, Singapore. Deadline: Jan. 15. Invitational fest offers non-competitive & 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 60 countries. Main section shows 35mm; all other formats accepted in fringe programs. Several US ind films have been featured in past editions. Cats: Short, Feature, Doc, Animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Philip Cheah, Festival Director; 011 65 738 7567; fax: 011 65 738 7578; filmfest@pacific.net.sg; www.filmfest.org.sg.

SKIP CITY INT'L D-CINEMA FESTIVAL, July 16-24, Japan. Deadline: Jan. 15. Fest celebrates the growing possibilities & rising talents powered by cutting-edge technology. The main program showcases the new wave of digital productions. Cats: feature, short, any

style or genre, animation, experimental, doc. Awards: A total of 150,000 Yen in awards. Formats: Most Digital formats, DVD, Mini-DV, 1/2". Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 81 48 263 0818; fax: 011 81 262 5635; info@skipcity-dcf.jp; www.skipcity-dcf.jp.

TURIN INT'L GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, April 24-28, Italy. Deadline: Jan. 31. Italy's oldest gay & lesbian fest. Entries should be by lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender filmmakers or address related themes & issues. Competition section divided between 3 juries: doc, long feature & short feature. Panorama section features new int'l productions. Founded: 1986. Cats: doc, feature, short. Awards: Ottavio Mai Award presented to Best Feature in competition worth \$1500.. Formats: 1/2", 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Angelo Acerbi, Head programmer; 390 11 534 888; fax: 535 796; info@tlgff.com; www.tlgff.com.

VIDEOEX INT'L EXPERIMENTAL FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 19-29, Switzerland. Deadline: Jan. 30. Cats: experimental. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 41 43 322 0813; fax: 322 0815; info@videoex.ch; www.videoex.ch.

YORKTON SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 26-29, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 15. Longest running fest of its kind in Canada. Awards avail. in 18 genre cats, 16 craft cats. Festival incl. public screenings, mini cinema, workshops & activities. Cats: Doc, Children, short. Awards: The Golden Sheaf Award. Formats: 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: CAN \$75. Contact: Festival; (306) 782-7077; fax: (306) 782-1550; info@yorktonshortfilm.org; www.yorkton shortfilm.org.

**AIVF members can
access more festival
listings at
www.aivf.org/festivals**

CLASSIFIEDS

By Michael Tierno

Deadline: First of each month, two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Contact: (212) 807-1400, x241, fax: (212) 463-9519; classifieds@awf.org; per issue cost: 0-240 characters (incl. spaces & punctuation): \$45 for nonmember/\$30 for AWF members, 241-360 chars. \$65/\$45, 361-480 chars. \$80/\$60, 481-600 chars. \$95/\$75, over 600 characters: Call for quote. (212) 807-1400, x241. Frequency discount: \$5 off per issue for ads running 5+ times. Ads exceeding the specified length will be edited. Place ad at www.awf.org/independent/classifieds or type copy and mail with the check or money order to: AWF, 304 Hudson St., 6th Fl., New York, NY 10013. Include billing address, daytime phone, # of issues, and valid member ID# for member discount. To pay by VISA/MC/AMEX include card #, name on card and expiration date.

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theOffice serves as the ideal backdrop for people who want to feel inspired. We are a quiet workspace in a café-like atmosphere. We offer ergonomic furniture, full reference library, complimentary internet access, Bose Noise Reduction Headphones, espresso drinks and teas. Visit theOfficeonline.com or call 310-917-4455.

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reel: Tom Agnello (201) 741-4367; roadtoindy@aol.com.

ACADEMY, EMMY NOMINATED EDITOR

(HOOP DREAMS) seeks edit jobs: docs, fiction; film, video; experimental, traditional TV. Cut on Avid, FCP, flatbeds. Also consulting, cut reviews, etc. No sweat equity or deferrals. fdm@fmarxfilm.com.

ACCOUNTANT/BOOKKEEPER/CONTROLLER

Experience in both corporate & nonprofit sectors. Hold MBA in Marketing & Accounting. Freelance work sought. Sam Sagenkahn (917) 374-2464.

ANDREW DUNN, Director of Photography/camera operator Arri35 BL3, Aaton XTRprod S16, Sony DVCAM. Experience in features, docs, TV & industrials. Credits: Dog Run, Strays, Working Space/Working Light. (212) 477-0172; AndrewD158@aol.com.

CAMERAMAN/STEADICAM OPERATOR:

Owner Steadicam, Arri 35 BL, Arri 16 SR, Beta SP, Stereo TC Nagra 4, TC Fostex PD-4 DAT, lighting packages to shoot features, music videos, commercials, etc. Call Mik Cribben for info & reel, (212) 929-7728 in NY or 800-235-2713 in Miami.

COMPOSER: Acclaimed composer and film music producer Richard Martinez will work

with you to add the music that will give your film its final weight. His Academy award winning experience (Frida) and technology expertise of every facet of music production, will make your film or doc shine. Call (917) 739-9410.

CLASSY YET AFFORDABLE. Credits and demos at: www.lightbodymusic.com Light Body Music, Inc. 914-739-9410. New York area.

COMPOSER KEVIN KELLER specializes in music for documentary and feature films. Recent projects: NY Times 9/11 and Roundabout Theater docs. Download free demos at www.kevinkeller.com or call (917) 520-8115; kkproductions@earthlink.net.

COMPOSER MIRIAM CUTLER LOVES TO COLLABORATE

- docs, features. Lost In La Mancha/IFC, Scout's Honor, Licensed To Kill, Pandemic: Facing Aids/HBO, Indian Point/HBO, Positively Naked/HBO, Stolen Childhoods, Amy's O & more. (310) 398-5985 mir.cut@verizon.net. www.miriamcutler.com.

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2003-4 NYFA Grant Winner. \$65/hr or by day/wk. Discounts: Members of Arts Orgs, Unions, Students, Seniors. Transfers, labels, dupes, stills, photos, DVDs. Village. Bill Creston, eMediaLoft.org (212) 924-4893.

FREELANCE CAMERA GROUP IN NYC seeking professional cameramen and soundmen w/ solid Betacam experience to work w/ wide array of clients. If qualified, contact COA at (212) 505-1911. Must have documentary/news samples or reel.

GRANTWRITING/FUNDRAISING: Research, writing & strategy (for production, distribution, exhibition & educational media projects). Successful proposals to NYSCA, NEA, NEH, ITVS, Soros, Rockefeller, Lila Acheson Wallace Foundation. Fast writers, reasonable rates. Wanda Bershen, (212) 598-0224; www.reddiaper.com.

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STEADICAM OPERATOR NY based, experienced and professional. Top of the line equipment: TB-6 monitor, 2x BFD Follow Focus/ Aperture, Modulus. 35mm, 16mm, HD, BetaSP. Call George @ 212-620-0084.

TRANSCRIBING FOR FILMMAKERS! Use transcripts for logging, editing, translations, DVD extras, fundraising. Email wav, mp3, etc. and I return Word doc. Write to discuss your project. I love my work! DrFlexMatrix@yahoo.com.

OPPORTUNITIES I GIGS

50 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR VIDEO BUSINESS. FREE REPORT. Grow a successful video business in Legal, Wedding, Corporate, TV and more. <http://videouniversity.com/50web.htm>.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF A FACULTY POSITION in the Department of Communication Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill **POSITION:** Assistant Professor in Media Production, beginning July 1, 2005. Appointment is tenure track. Qualifications include the following: an MFA or PhD (or completion during the 2004-2005 academic year) in media, film, television, communication, or a related discipline. Candidates should demonstrate a significant record of, or potential for, the production of creative work in narrative and/or experimental filmmaking, as well as strong teaching, and service. Salary is competitive. **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Responsibilities will include teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in media production, supervising theses, engaging in creative research and production, and performing departmental service, and broader community service. Applicants should have expertise in one or more areas of media production including but not limited to video/film/multimedia production. The department is committed to the integration of theory and practice. **GENERAL INFORMATION:** The Department of Communication Studies has 22 full-time faculty positions with existing areas of emphasis in Media Studies,

Communication and Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, Rhetorical Studies, and Interpersonal and Organizational Communication. Approximately 1000 undergraduates and 60 MA and Ph.D. graduate students major in the Department. Additional information about the Department can be found at www.unc.edu/depts/comm. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is located in one corner of the Research Triangle and has an enrollment of approximately 26,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. UNC-CH enjoys a reputation as one of the nation's leading research universities. The Triangle area, including Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, has a population of over one million people and contains over 100 research and business institutions. The Research Triangle area has been ranked as the best place to live in the United States. Please do not send samples of creative work unless specifically requested to do so. Unsolicited materials will not be returned. Applications will be reviewed beginning January 7, 2005 and will continue to be reviewed until the position is filled. **APPLICATION PROCEDURES** Qualified applicants should send a current vita, evidence of teaching effectiveness, and four letters of reference to: Francesca Talenti, Chair Media Production Search Committee Department of Communication Studies CB# 3285, Bingham Hall The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3285 The University of North Carolina is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

THE DIGITAL CINEMA SOCIETY, is a format agnostic nonprofit dedicated to educating filmmakers about digital production, post, delivery, and exhibition. Have access to streaming content, forums, classified and more for \$15.00 www.digitalcinemasociety.org filmmakers@aol.com.

Cinema and Story

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Program announces a half-time, tenure-track position, beginning fall 2005 to teach film and new media production as part of a liberal arts curriculum. The ideal candidate will have a strong background in teaching and filmmaking, an extensive exhibition record and the ability to teach beginning and advanced students in both group and individual study. Please send resume, proposals for two courses (one beginning; one advanced) and three letters of recommendation (please, no films) to: Filmmaking Search, c/o Rosemary Weeks, Sarah Lawrence College, 1 Mead Way, Bronxville, NY 10708. Application deadline: February 25, 2005. Sarah Lawrence College is a small liberal arts college with a unique pedagogy based on small classes and individual tutorials. For information on Sarah Lawrence College, our curriculum, teaching methods, and philosophy of education, please visit our Web site: <http://www.slc.edu>. For information about the College's new Visual Arts Center, go to: www.slc.edu/vacenter. Sarah Lawrence has a strong commitment to the principle of diversity. In that spirit we especially welcome applications from under-represented groups.

PREPRODUCTION I DEVELOPMENT

HOLLYWOOD SCRIPT CONSULTANT

Internationally award winning writer/director, story analyst for Phoenix Pictures (Holes, Apt Pupil, U-Turn), offers in depth constructive critical analysis of your screenplay. Get essential feedback before making important submissions. Ezmiar Productions, 818-841-3616 or scriptconsultant@earthlink.net

W/ 8 YEARS MIRAMAX EXPERIENCE, script/story/creative consultant Maureen Nolan offers a full range of consulting services for writers and filmmakers. Script consults, coaching, story development, rewrites, etc. 212-663-9389 or 917-620-6502.

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AUDIO POST PRODUCTION: Full service audio post-production facility. Mix-to-picture, ADR, voice-over, sound design & editing. Features, shorts, docs, TV & Radio. Contact Andy, All Ears Inc: (718) 399-6668 (718) 496-9066 andy@allearspost.com.

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VETERAN PICTURE & SOUND EDITOR- credits include Kojack, Ron Howard's Parenthood, and Woody Allen's Bananas-looking for features, docs, shorts, commercials and music videos. Rates negotiable, but no deferments. References available. Platform includes latest Final Cut Pro and Avid Xpress Pro. (917) 414-8843 montlack@ix.netcom.com. quality work and absolutely clean cuts. Great prices. Matthew 617-244-6730 mwdp@att.net.

CLASSIFIEDS

FILMS/TAPES WANTED

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices and screening opportunities are listed free of charge as space permits. Commercial notices are billed at classified rates. The Independent reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aivf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by The Independent or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending.

DISTRIBUTION

EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTOR SEEKS VIDEOS

on guidance issues such as violence, drug prevention, mentoring, children's health & parenting for exclusive distribution. Our marketing gives unequaled results! Call Sally Germain at The Bureau for At-Risk Youth: (800) 99-YOUTH x. 210.

FANLIGHT PRODUCTIONS 20+ years as an industry leader! Join more than 100 award-winning film & video producers. Send us your new works on healthcare, mental health, aging, disabilities, and related issues. (800) 937-4113; www.fanlight.com.

NEW DAY FILMS seeks energetic independent film and video makers with social issue docs for distribution to non-theatrical markets. If you want to maximize your audience while working within a remarkable community of activist filmmakers, New Day is the perfect home for your film. New Day is committed to promoting diversity within our membership and the media we represent. Explore our catalog at www.newday.com, then contact Heidi Emberling at join@newday.com or (650) 347-5123

THE CINEMA GUILD, leading film/video/multi-media distributor, seeks new doc, fiction, educational & animation programs for distribution. Send videocassettes or discs for evaluation to: The Cinema Guild, 130 Madison Ave., 2nd fl., New York, NY 10016; (212) 685-6242; Ask for our Distribution Services brochure.

ITVS funds, distributes and promotes new programs primarily for public television. We work with independent producers to create and present programs that take creative risks, advance issues and represent points of view not usually seen on public or commercial television. ITVS is committed to programming that addresses the needs of under-served and underrepresented audiences. We look for programs that bring new audiences to public television and that expand civic participation by bringing diverse voices into the public sphere. For more info on receiving funding, visit www.itvs.org.

MICROCINEMAS I SCREENING

AMERICAN CINEMATHEQUE accepts entries for its ongoing program, The Alternative Screen: A Forum for Independent Film Exhibition &

Beyond. Looking primarily for feature films w/o wide distribution, but also will consider shorts, animation, new media, etc. for other programs & showcases. Send 1/2" VHS viewing tape, press kit (any written background materials), cover letter w/ contact info & S.A.S.E. to: Margot Gerber, The Alternative Screen, 1800 N. Highland, Ste. 717, L.A., CA 90028. Tel.: (323) 466-3456 x115; fax: 461-9737; www.americancinematheque.com.

CELLULOID SOCIAL CLUB is a monthly screening series in Vancouver featuring the best in independent provocative short & feature films & videos followed by fun & frolic. Hosted by Ken Hegan at the ANZA Club, #3 West 8th Ave., Vancouver, BC. No minors. Prizes galore. For info call (604) 730-8090; info@alterentertainment.com; www.CelluloidSocialClub.com.

CINEMARENO a year-round festival of films. Monthly screenings showcase independent films and videos. Formats: 16mm, Beta-SP, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry fee: \$20; fee waived for AIVF members. Entry form & instructions at www.cinemareno.org. Contact: Cinemareno, PO Box 5372, Reno,

FILMS/TAPES WANTED

NV 89513 Entry form and guidelines at www.cinemareno.org.

DAHLIA'S FLIX & MIX, a weekly showcase of new film & music held on Tuesdays at NY's Sugar, is seeking submissions. Showcases fresh and previously undistributed film & video work, as well as DJs spinning great music. No guest list, cover charge, or submission fee. For more information, contact dsmith@independentfilm.com or stop by Sugar any Tuesday evening (doors open 7pm, screenings begin 8pm). To submit your film, please send a VHS or DVD copy and a brief synopsis to: Dahlia Smith, c/o SUGAR, 311 Church St., New York, NY 10013.

DEAF & HARD OF HEARING FILM PROGRAM, hosted by Film Society of Lincoln Center, seeks original films or videos, from 1-20 min., to include w/ monthly screenings of open-captioned featured films at Walter Reade Theater. Films w/ artistic involvement from deaf artists preferred, but not required. Seeking original work that can be understood by deaf audience (dialogue must be subtitled). Send 1/2" video copy (nonreturnable) to: The Film Society of Lincoln Center, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Film Program, 165 W. 65th St., 4th fl., New York, NY 10023; (212) 875-5638; sbens_man@film-linc.com.

DETROIT FILM CENTER accepts short films on an on-going basis! No entry fee. Submissions on mini DV, 16mm or super 8 are preferred (VHS or DVD is okay for preview). Send submissions (on Mini-Dv, 16mm, or Super 8) to: Detroit Film Center c/o Boxcar 1227 Washington Blvd. Detroit, MI 48226 Please include SASE for return of your work. For more information please visit www.detroitfilm.org/pages/boxcar.html or email boxcarcinema@hotmail.com.

FIRST SUNDAYS COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL is a monthly festival featuring the best in comedy and short film/video/animation followed by an after-screening networking event. An ongoing festival held the first Sunday of each month in New York, First Sundays is the premiere opportunity to showcase your work and meet talented directors and other indie dv/film folk. For submission application and other festival guidelines email film@chicagovitylimits.com

or visit www.firstsundays.com.

FLICKER NYC is a bi-monthly show of new Super 8 and 16mm films by local filmmakers held at the Knitting Factory. Each show features new films, vintage Super 8 reels, homemade cookies, raffles for Super 8 stock, T-shirts, and Flicker Super 8 guides. Submissions are ongoing and FREE. Please visit www.flickernyc.com for more information or to be added to the mailing list.

MAKOR continues its Reel Jews Film Festival & ongoing screening series showcasing the work of emerging Jewish filmmakers. Now accepting shorts, features, docs, and/or works in progress, regardless of theme, for screening consideration. Program sponsored by Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation. Contact Ken Sherman: (212) 413-8821; ksheeraman@92ndst.org.

MICROCINEMA'S INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE 2005, an ongoing microcinema screening program of international short films, videos & digital works has been presented hundreds of times in 35 countries and Antarctica and 2005 is its tenth season. Seeking short video, film & digital media submissions of 15 min. or fewer on an ongoing basis for the ongoing screening and touring program. Artists qualify for a nonexclusive distribution deal, incl. additional license fees for DVD sales. Looking for short narrative, alternative, humorous, dramatic, erotic, animation, etc. Works selected may continue on to nat'l & int'l venues for additional screenings. Submit DVD or VHS (NTSC/PAL) labeled w/ name, title, length, phone # & any support materials, incl. photos. Submissions will not be returned. Contact: Joel S. Bachar, Microcinema International, 531 Utah St., San Francisco, CA 94110; info@microcinema.com; www.microcinema.com.

NEW FILMMAKERS at New York's Anthology Film Archives seeks submissions for weekly screening series. No fee or form required. Send a VHS copy of your film or video w/ a brief synopsis to David Maquiling, New Filmmakers, Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10009. For more info, visit www.newfilmmakers.com.

ROOFTOP FILMS is accepting submissions for our ninth annual Summer Series. Short film submissions should be postmarked by MARCH 1st, 2005, feature submissions by FEBRUARY 1st, 2005. We accept films of all genres and lengths. The festival consists of weekly shows from June 10th through September 9th in parks, along piers, in historical locations or on rooftops in New York City. Curators encouraged to submit entire programs of films. For information, please visit www.rooftopfilms.com or email Dan Nuxoll, programming director, at submit@rooftopfilms.com.

TIMEBASE, a new moving image series in Kansas City, seeks innovative short films, videos, installations & web-based projects. No entry fee. Rolling deadline. Send VHS, DVD, or CD-Rom: Timebase, 5100 Rockhill Rd Haag 202, Kansas City MO 64110. Tel: (816) 235-1708; www.time-base.org

GALLERIES | EXHIBITIONS

EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY HISTORIC SITE in PA seeks artists for exhibition at the site. Some funding avail. for media arts. Proposals are reviewed annually each fall. See website for information and deadline. To request an application, or schedule an orientation tour, contact Brett Bertolino at (215) 236-5111 ex. 12, or at bb@EasternState.org, or visit www.easternstate.org

RUNNING FREE, a touring collaborative video installation presented by Montreal's View 72, seeks shorts (5 min. or fewer) of a single person running continuously. Format must be mini-DV, but send VHS for preview. Immaculate_conception@view72.com; www.view72.com.

TRUE STORIES is a monthly sneak preview for new documentaries. Any length accepted, VHS or DVD format. No deadline, tapes held on a rolling basis until entire series is programmed. For more info contact Sean Frechette, Film Arts Foundation, 145 9th St. Ste. 101, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 552-8760 x324; www.filmarts.org/exhibition/truestories.html.

UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY at Central Michigan University reviews proposals year-round. All media considered, incl. 2-D, 3-D, performance, video & computer art. Artists interested in exhibition at the University Art Gallery should send 20 slides, video or disc, resume, artist statement & S.A.S.E. to: Central Michigan University Art Gallery, Art Dept. Wightman 132, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

TOURING PROGRAMS

FREE FORM FILM FESTIVAL is a year-round touring event created by Loaf-i.com and Inner Mission Productions is now taking submissions. Seeking films/videos of all formats and genres (but please submit on NTSC VHS for initial consideration). The FFFF brings an eclectic collection of innovative films to cities and towns across the United States. Enter now to be considered for our West Coast tour in September. Enter anytime for other tours/exhibitions. The FFFF is non-competitive, but offers opportunity for screenings all over the U.S. Entry fee is \$15 for residents of the U.S. and Canada. There is no entry fee for residents of other countries. See freeformfilm.org for details and entry forms.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA ARTS COMMISSION MEDIA ARTS CENTER seeks entries for the 2005–2006 Southern Circuit. The film series provides the opportunity for filmmakers to travel throughout the Southeast with their works and screen them to new audiences. Each filmmaker presents individual shows between 45 minutes to 1 hour screening time, followed by a half-hour discussion. In return for the tour, each filmmaker receives air travel within the United States to and from his/her home city, a per diem to cover food and lodging during the tour, and an honorarium for each screening. Please submit a completed application and a copy of your work on VHS or DVD (of approximately 1 hour in length—you may cue to a 30 minute section for judging purposes. You may submit a single work or a collection of short works), \$20 application fee, and printed promotional materials and resume. Application deadline is January 31, 2005. For more info visit <http://southcarolinaarts.com/circuit> or email Susan Leonard at sleonard@arts.nstate.sc.us

BROADCASTS | CABLECASTS

DUTV: A progressive, nonprofit educational channel in Philadelphia seeks works by indie producers. All genres & lengths considered. Will return tapes. BetaSP, DV, dvd accepted for possible cablecast. Contact: Debbie Rudman, DUTV, 3141 Chestnut St., Bldg 9B, Rm 0016, Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927; dutv@drexel.edu; www.dutv.org.

IMAGEMAKERS is a half hour program airing in San Francisco (PBS) that features the best short films from around the world. Prefer shorts between 2 min and 25 min. No experimental or docs. Prefer shorts shot on 35mm, 24p or in letterbox. Submit on vhs. Send to: Scott Dwyer, KQED-TV, 2601 Mariposa Street, San Francisco, CA 9411. Visit web site at www.kqed.org/imagemakers.

THE SHORT LIST is a weekly, half-hour international short film series on PBS and cable now licensing for 13th season. Considers shorts 30 secs. to 19 mins. Send DVD screener with application form downloaded from www.theshortlist.cc or email shortlist@mail.sdsu.edu.

VIDEO/FILM SHORTS wanted for cutting-edge television station from Nantucket Island, Mass. Must be suitable for TV broadcast. Directors interviewed, tape returned w/ audience feedback. Accepting VHS/S-VHS, 15 min. max. S.A.S.E. to Box 1042, Nantucket, MA 02554; (508) 325-7935.

ZOOM: ZOOM is a kids-only series on PBS, featuring kids plays, films, games & more. ZOOM is seeking films, animation & videos made by kids (some adult supervision okay). Every kid who sends something will receive a free newsletter filled w/ fun activities & may see their film on TV. Length: up to 3 min. Format: 3/4", VHS, Hi8, super 8, 16mm, Beta, digital formats. Age: 5-14. Subjects should be age appropriate. Contact: Marcy Gunther, WGBH/ZOOM, 125 Western Ave., Boston, MA 02134; marcy_gunther@wgbh.org.

WEBCASTS

ALWAYS INDEPENDENT FILMS shows independent feature films, short films, docs & animation. In addition, AIF features original made-for-Internet content as well as on line film festivals. www.alwaysif.com.

ATOM FILMS seeks quality films & animations for worldwide commercial distribution to our network of television, airline, home entertainment & new media outlets, including the award-winning AtomFilms website. Submissions must be 30 min. or fewer. For more info & a submission form, visit www.atomshockwave.com.

D.FILM Digital Film Festival is a traveling & online showcase of shorts made w/ computers & other new & radical technologies. D.FILM was official digital film program at 1999 Cannes Film Festival. Look for it in your city & visit web site to make your own movie online w/ the Movie Maker Game [www.dfilm.com].

FILMFILM.COM: the internet's complete movie studio [www.filmfilm.com] seeks submissions on on-going basis for its Internet 24/7 screening room. Are you ready for a worldwide audience? Seeking shorts & features of all genres. Contact: info@filmfilm.com.

THE NARCOLEPTIC VIDEOGRAPHER is a short-film producing comedy collective made up of actors, writers, filmmakers and musicians. With a signature blend of guerrilla-film aesthetic, visceral cutting and entirely improvised dialogue. The NV seeks humour in character details and situational absurdity rather than with set-up punch lines. <http://narco.ca>.

NETBROADCASTER.COM seeks films & videos for streaming. Seeking all genres & formats from drama, horror, comedy, animation, docs, experimental, music videos, as well as reality-based videos. We want it all! Netbroadcaster.com launched last fall. Site hosted by Alchemy Communications, one of largest ISPs on the net: films@alchemy.net.

NOTICES

Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@awf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless double-check details before sending anyone anything.

COMPETITIONS

ALWAYS INDEPENDENT FILMS shows independent feature films, short films, docs & animation. In addition, AIF features original made-for-Internet content as well as on line film festivals. www.alwaysif.com.

APPLAUSE SCREENWRITING COMPETITION calling for original works of an author or authors and not previously optioned, purchased, or produced. Adaptations (no documentaries) are welcome provided the author assumes sole legal responsibility for obtaining copyrights to the adapted work. Prizes: Script submission to agents, managers, producers, lunch with Hollywood execs, exposure and promotion packages, coverage, script critiques, software, magazines, and other great product prizes. For more information visit www.applause4you.com.

DRAMA GARAGE seeks completed and original feature-length screenplays that do not

exceed 120 pages and have limited camera angles. If chosen, you'll receive a fully produced, staged reading of your screenplay in Hollywood, referrals, contacts, and much more. Please visit www.dramagarage/submissions.htm, call 323-933-5700 or email info@dramagarage.com.

ITVS FUNDS, distributes and promotes new programs primarily for public television. We work with independent producers to create and present programs that take creative risks, advance issues and represent points of view not usually seen on public or commercial television. ITVS is committed to programming that addresses the needs of underserved and underrepresented audiences. We look for programs that bring new audiences to public television and that expand civic participation by bringing diverse voices into the public sphere. For more information on receiving funding, visit their website: www.itvs.org.

SHORT FILM SLAM, NYC's only weekly short film competition, is looking for submissions. Competition on Sundays at 2 p.m. At the end of each show the audience votes for a winning film, which receives further screenings at the Pioneer Theater. To enter, you must have a film, 30 min. or less, in a 35mm, 16mm, BetaSP, VHS, or DVD format. To submit your film, stop by the Pioneer Theater (155 E. 3rd St.) during operating hours, call (212) 254-7107, or visit www.two.boots.com/pioneer for more information.

CONFERENCES | WORKSHOPS

THE AMERICAN SCREENWRITERS ASSOCIATION has partnered with Gotham Writers' Workshop, New York's leading creative writing school, and Final Draft, the world's leading screenwriting software, to bring professional screenwriting workshops to members over the Internet. Now you can hone your skills with an expert instructor from any location that has web access. Please refer to

www.writingclasses.com for a complete listing of available courses.

THE CREATIVITY WORKSHOP is offering a four day intensive in New York March 11-14, 2005. Tuition is \$600. Please visit www.creativitycourses05.com or call toll-free 1-866-217-1980 for more information.

DI2004 CONFERENCE, January 30-February 1, 2004 at the San Francisco Marriott Hotel. This conference will bring together indie innovators in film, TV, music, games, policy and the arts unite to tackle the impact of digital production and distribution on independent content makers. Open to the public, registration required and press passes are available upon request; for a full description of sessions, panelists and moderators, visit the website at www.digitallindies.com.

8TH INT'L FILM FINANCING CONFERENCE ANNOUNCES ANNUAL OPEN DAY: Jan. 12, San Francisco, a full day of panels & networking opportunities w/ key int'l film financiers & buyers. The only day of IFFCON w/ registration open to the public. Topics include: "Pitch Perfect, How to Sell your Idea" & "Funding the Future: The Digital Wave." Registration fee: \$150. Info & registration: (415) 281-9777; www.iffcon.com.

GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT & MEDIA SUMMIT 2005 New York City: May 14-15. A lively and engaging forum of people with vision from the independent and mainstream music, film, video and multimedia worlds of the entertainment, media, and communications industries. People connect with people, exchanging ideas and creating projects in a context of innovation, reinvention, and possibility. Together, this community is proactively effecting new ways to achieve sustainable careers and the direction of the revolution now taking place in marketing and distribution. For more information visit www.globalentertainmentnetwork.com.

THE MEGAHIT MOVIES HOLLYWOOD STORY DESIGN WORKSHOP AND SCRIPT MAGAZINE PITCHXCHANGE will be held Saturday, February 19, 2005 in Orlando, Florida. The 16-hour workshop covers industry guides on topics ranging from character and story

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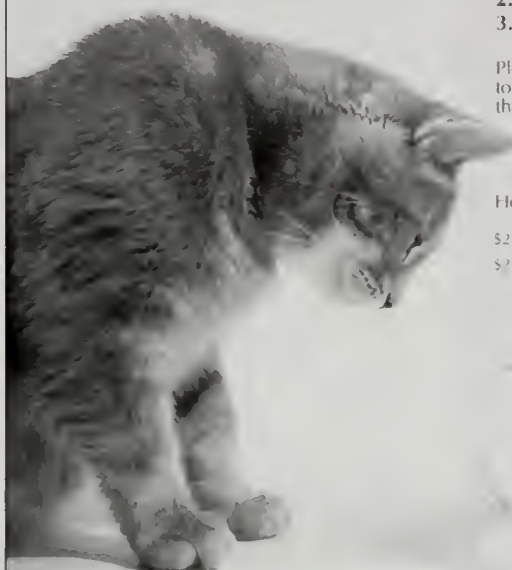
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director, Touching the Void

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design to pitching your finished script. The registration fee after January 1, 2005 is \$195; please visit www.TheMegahitMovies.com or email contact Richard Michaels Stefanik at rms@TheMagahitMovies.com.

VISUAL STUDIES WORKSHOP MEDIA CENTER

in Rochester, NY, accepts proposals on an ongoing basis for its Upstate Media Regrant Program, NO-TV fest (for film and video artists), SMARTFEST (Student film/video festival), and residencies for Artists. The Media Center provides equipment and services in its access program, including low cost 16mm film to video (most formats) transfers. For more information call Rich Della Costa at (585) 442-8676.

RESOURCES | FUNDS

ANTHONY RADZIWIŁL DOCUMENTARY FUND,

administered by IFP/New York, provides seed/development grants for independently produced documentary features by U.S. resident filmmakers. Six to ten grants up to \$10,000 are given annually over two grant cycles. Next deadline is March 1, 2005 for grants to be awarded in June. On-line applications, submission requirements, and complete guidelines for proposals are available at www.ifp.org/docfund. Hard copies of guidelines may be obtained by sending a SASE to Anthony Radziwill Documentary Fund, IFP/New York, 104 West 29th Street, New York, NY 10001. For further questions write docfund@ifp.org or call 212-465-8200, ext 830.

THE FLEISHHACKER FOUNDATION

offers \$1,000-\$10,000 biannually to support works by San Francisco Bay artists that are in post-production in film, video and media arts projects. Priority will be given to new works and projects with a good chance of being completed. Students are ineligible. The annual operating budget must be between \$100,000- \$750,000 annually. Deadline is July 15th and January 15th. For more information, www.fleishhackerfoundation.org.

GLOBAL CENTER, a nonprofit, IRS-certified 501(c)(3) educational foundation, seeks film-

makers seeking fiscal sponsors. For more info, call (212) 246-0202, or email roc@globalvision.org; www.globalvision.org.

GRAND MARNIER FILM FELLOWSHIPS

are awarded to graduate film students enrolled in an educational institution in the U.S. (excluding CA and TX) for work in filmmaking, video, or critical writing. Three awards of \$5,000 each will be given to students who excel in either film, video or critical studies. Award to be presented at the New York Film Festival. Forms online (www.filmlinc.org) or contact: Grand Marnier Film Fellowships, Film Society of Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., 4th., N.Y., NY 10023-6595.

JAPAN FOUNDATION

provides film production support to experienced independents or corporations for production of films, TV programs, or other a/v materials that further understanding of Japan and Japanese culture abroad. Contact: Japan Foundation, 152 W. 57th St., 39th Fl., New York, NY 10019; tel: 212.489.0299.

KQED-TV IN SAN FRANCISCO

provides in-kind postproduction assistance to a number of independent projects each year. Subject must be compelling & of interest to KQED's viewers, or attract new audiences. Material must pass technical evaluation for broadcast quality. Producer must supply rough cut for review. KQED also takes on a number of co-productions each year. For more info, call (415) 553-2859.

NEWENGLANDFILM.COM:

is a unique online resource that provides local film & video professionals w/ searchable industry directory, listings of local events, screenings, jobs, calls for entries & upcoming productions, in addition to filmmaker interviews & industry news. Reaching over 20,000 visitors each month. All articles & listings on sites free to read: www.nefilm.com.

ROY W. DEAN NYC \$50,000.00 film grant is now taking applications. The Dean Writing/Researching grant that takes you to New Zealand is closing 2/28/05. Please see the web site for full information: www.fromtheheartproductions.com.

THE SEVENTH GENERATION FUND provides technical assistance in the form of work-

shops, conferences, training, and grant funding for projects. Small grants range from \$600 to \$10,000 per year in assistance to seed emerging organizations, to help cover the general operation costs of an existing organization or specific project, or to cover related expenses that help a project accomplish its work and fulfill its mission in the community. Training & Technical Assistance Financial support of \$600 to \$5,000 per year to facilitate project-specific training, pay for experts/special consultants, and /pr provide for other capacity building needs. (Training and Technical Assistance grants are also available for projects to acquire new skills through regional workshops, national forums, and special conferences); and mini-grants are offered from \$50 to \$500. For more information, visit www.7genfund.org Deadline is: December 1, 2004 March 1, June 1, September 1, 2005.

SUNDANCE DOCUMENTARY FUND, formerly the Soros Documentary Fund, supports int'l doc films & videos on current & significant issues in human rights, freedom of expression, social justice & civil liberties. Development funds for research & preproduction awarded up to \$15,000; works-in-progress funds for production or postproduction up to \$50,000 (average award is \$25,000). www.sundance.org.

THE CENTER FOR ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND CULTURE offers grants to independent filmmakers in post production. Filmmakers who make films that focus on issues in the economy, class, the poor, women, war and peace, race and labor. Grants from \$100-\$10,000 are distributed four times a year. Phone (212) 977-2096.

THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING has allocated up to \$2 million dollars this year to create the New Voices, New Media Fund. Objectives of this fund are to harness new media by supporting creation of mission-driven, diverse new media content & providing opportunities for diverse content creators working in public broadcasting to develop the skills that new media demand. Project applications are accepted throughout the year. For more information, visit: www.cpb.org/tv/funding.



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SALONS

The AIVF Regional Salons provide an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country.

Visit www.aivf.org/regional for an overview of the broad variety of Regional Salon programs.

Be sure to contact your local Salon leader to confirm the date, time, and location of the next meeting.

ALBANY/TROY, NY:

UPSTATE INDEPENDENTS

When: First Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Bulmer Telecommunications Center, Hudson Valley Community College, 80 Vandenburg Ave., Troy, NY

Contact: Jeff Burns, (518) 366-1538

albany@aivf.org

ATLANTA, GA:

IMAGE

When: Second Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 353 Means Street

Contact: Sonia Vassell, (404) 352-4225 x20

atlanta@aivf.org; www.imagefv.org

CHARLESTON, SC:

When: Last Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun Street

Contact: Peter Paolini, (843) 805-6841; or

Peter Wentworth, charleston@aivf.org

CLEVELAND, OH:

OHIO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

Contact: Annetta Marion or Bernadette Gillota, (216) 651-7315

cleveland@aivf.org; www.ohiofilms.com

COLUMBIA, SC:

When: Second Sundays

Where: Art Bar, 1211 Park St.

Contact: Wade Sellers, (803) 929-0066

columbia@aivf.org

DALLAS, TX:

VIDEO ASSOCIATION OF DALLAS

When: Bi-monthly

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 428-8700

dallas@aivf.org

EDISON, NJ:

Where: Passion River Productions, 190 Lincoln Hwy.

Contact: Allen Chou, (732) 321-0711

edison@aivf.org; www.passionriver.com

FORT WAYNE, IN:

Contact: Erik Mollberg

(260) 691-3258; fortwayne@aivf.org

HOUSTON, TX:

SWAMP

When: Last Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: 1519 West Main

Contact: Mary Lampe, (713) 522-8592

houston@aivf.org

HUNTSVILLE, AL:

Contact: Charles White, (256) 895-0423

huntsville@aivf.org

JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL:

Contact: Paul Godby, (205) 956-3522

jeffersoncounty@aivf.org

LINCOLN, NE:

NEBRASKA INDEPENDENT FILM PROJECT

When: Second Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.

Where: Telepro, 1844 N Street

Contact: Jared Minary, lincoln@aivf.org,

(402) 467-1077, www.nifp.org

LOS ANGELES, CA:

When: Third Mondays, 7:30 p.m.

Where: EZTV, 18th Street arts Center, 629 18th St., #6, Santa Monica

Contact: Michael Masucci

(310) 829-3389; losangeles@aivf.org

MILWAUKEE, WI:

MILWAUKEE INDEPENDENT FILM SOCIETY

When: First Wednesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Milwaukee Enterprise Center, 2821 North 4th, Room 140

Contact: Laura Gembolis, (414) 688-2375
milwaukee@aivf.org; www.mifs.org/salo

NASHVILLE, TN

Where: See www.naivf.com for events

Contact: Stephen Lackey, nashville@aivf.org

PORTLAND, OR:

Where: Hollywood Theatre

Contact: David Bryant, (503) 244-4225

portland@aivf.org

ROCHESTER, NY:

Where: Visual Studies Workshop

Contact: Liz Lehmann

(585) 377-1109; rochester@aivf.org

SAN DIEGO, CA:

When: Monthly

Where: Media Arts Center, 921 25th Street

Contact: Ethan van Thillo (619) 230-1938

sandiego@aivf.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA:

Contact: Kathy Vaguilar

(510) 482-3484; sanfrancisco@aivf.org

SEATTLE, WA:

SEATTLE INDIE NETWORK

When: Bi-monthly

Where: Wiggly World and 911 Media Arts Center

Contact: Andrea Mydlarz, Fiona Orway;

seattle@aivf.org

TUCSON, AZ:

Contact: Jana Segal, (520) 906-7295

tucson@aivf.org

WASHINGTON, DC:

Contact: DC Salon hotline,

(202) 661-7145, washingtondc@aivf.org

THANK YOU

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including *The Independent* and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:



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Productions; College of New Jersey, Department of Communication Studies; Freedom Film Society, Inc.; Princeton University, Program in Visual Arts; NM: Girls Film School; University of New Mexico; NY: American Museum of Natural History; Arts Engine; Cornell Cinema; Council for Positive Images, Inc.; Creative Capital Foundation; Crowing Rooster Arts; Department of Media Study SUNY Buffalo; Dutchess Community College; Educational Video Center; Experimental Television Center; Film Forum; Film Society of Lincoln Center; Firelight Media; Hourglass Group; International Film Seminars; LMC-TV; Manhattan Neighborhood Network; Melted.org; National Black Programming Consortium; National Museum of the American Indian; National Video Resources; New School University; New York Women in Film and Television; Parnassus Works; POV/The American Documentary; RIT School of Film and Animation; School of Visual Arts, Film Department; Squeaky Wheel; Standby Program; Stonestreet Studios Film and TV Acting Workshop; Stony Brook Film Festival; Syracuse University; United Community Centers; Upstate Films, Ltd.; WaxFactory; Witness; Women Make Movies; OH: Athens Center for Film And Video; Independent Pictures/AIVF Ohio Salon; Media Bridges Cincinnati; School of Film, Ohio University; Wexner Center; OR: Media Arts, MHCC; Northwest Film Center; The Oregon Film and Video Foundation; PA: American Poetry Center; Philadelphia Independent Film & Video Assoc. (PIFVA); Pittsburgh Filmmakers; Scribe Video Center; RI: Flickers Arts Collaborative; SC: South Carolina Arts Commission; TN: Indie Memphis Film Festival; TX: Austin Film Society; Southwest Alternate Media Project; UT: Sundance Institute; WA: Seattle Central Community College; Thurston Community Television; Canada: The Banff Center Library; RIDM; France: The Carmago Foundation

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THE LIST

NOTHING SHORT OF IMPRESSIVE

By Lindsay Gelfand

Over a century after the Lumiere brothers' *Workers Leaving the Factory*, short film has evolved into a calling card of sorts for student and feature filmmakers. But this stepping stone proves deceptively challenging—given the limitations of length, and in many cases, budget.

So, assuming that if they hadn't made one, they had at least seen a few, we asked some of our favorite filmmakers: what makes the quintessential short film?

"From someone who made a slough of indulgent, masturbatory, high concept art films before doing anything remotely digestible, I'd say a good short film is one that forces its audience to give a shit about what's happening because they are invested in the characters."

—Christopher J. Forrest, writer/director, *From A to You*

"A friend of mine who's a development person at an indie company once told me at a shorts screening at Sundance, 'The shorter the short, the better—new directors have less time to mess the movie/story up.' I thought this was pretty funny and relevant considering how many bad short films are out there!"

—Gala Magrina, writer/director, *The Anti Film*

"The shorter the film the less suffering. This means, the suffering and the budget are directly proportional to the length and inversely proportional to what the spectator can stand sitting in his stall. This is why there are short long films that seem short and long short films that become eternal. And one aspect, probably everyone agrees with, is that a good short film always tells a good story: small or big, sad or happy, universal or singular; but for heaven's sake, that entertains."

—Imanol Ortiz Lopez, writer/director, *Night Express*

"Grab 'em hard, tell a good story with great characters, then, end it."

—Terri Edda Miller, writer/director/producer, *Dysenchanted*

"Just because you shot for 20 minutes does not mean you edit for 20 minutes. I was told by the Independent Film Channel that they would pay no more than \$500 for a short film. So keep in mind: shorts are truly a labor of love."

—Tom Wilson, Nobody Productions

"A short film is like a poem. There are no rules other than the need to have an intimate dialogue with your reader/viewer, whereby they are able to absorb the story and find their own connections to it. Ultimately, both features and shorts at their best function as canvasses for personal interpretations, little visual trips that lead the viewer into the nooks and crannies of their own souls."

—Anita Doron, director, *Not a Fish Story* and *Elliot Smelliot*

"Sophisticated, concise storytelling of a simple, great, original idea that has a beginning, middle and very satisfying, unpredictable ending. Zero fat. Not a single wasted shot. And when it's over, I'm so excited that I think, 'Short films are so great, I've got to make another one.'"

—Kurt Kuenne, writer/director/composer, *Rent-A-Person*

"The 'quintessential' short film demonstrates, through inspired writing and directing, a compelling story that evokes a range of emotions by making the best use of cinematography, sound design, and editing to succinctly tell its story. It takes you away in 15 minutes or less and hope-fully leaves you thinking for longer."


—Chris J. Russo, director, *A Woman Reported*

"The shorter a film is, the more it's forced to jettison everything boring from its structure. The shorter a film is, the more it's forced to do strange things. All of life in a super short film is boiled down to one extremely good idea. A good short film happens when modesty meets ingenuity. It happens when a filmmaker has one incredible idea—no more, no less—and manages to strike that idea right between the eyes."

—Jenn Kao, director, *The Plug*

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THE

FILM AND VIDEO MONTHLY

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Kimberly Elise in *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*

Aimee Mann's indie sounds

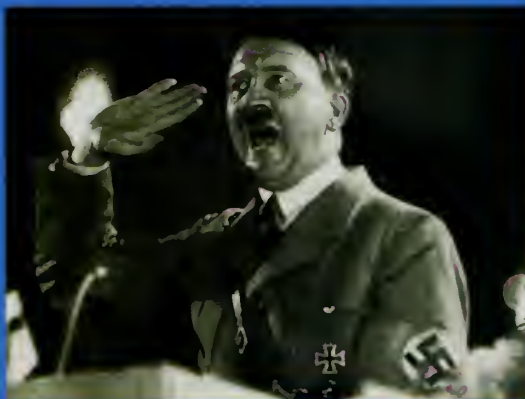
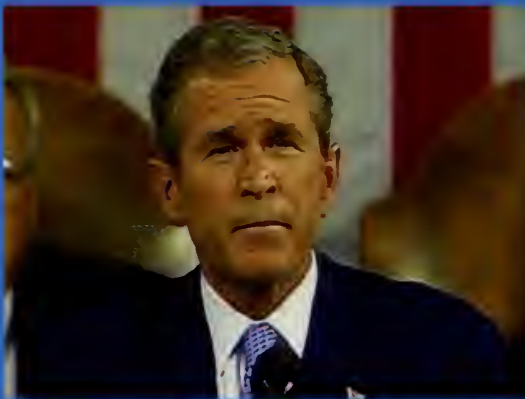
Dreamer-turned-filmmaker Rebecca Miller

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March 2005

A Publication of The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers
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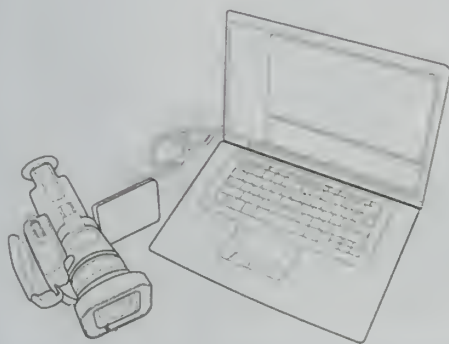
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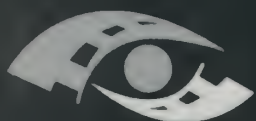
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Cover: America Ferrera who stars in *How The Garcia Girls Spent Their Summer* signs the Volkswagen Jetta at 2005 Sundance Film Festival (Soren McCarty/WireImage.com)

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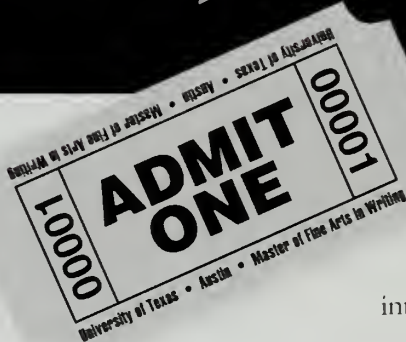
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Rebecca Carroll [Editor-in-Chief]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers:

Sisters are doing it for themselves. She works hard for the money. Meeting in the ladies room (for all y'all old schoolers—remember the fierce, ebony-skinned women of the 80s group Klimaxx?). A room of her own. Women on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The 24-hour woman. Girl, you're a woman now.

Hey, I like empowerment as much as the next gal. And I love having the titles of books and films and songs named after us—and all our inherent complexities, to say nothing of our extraordinarily beguiling mystique. But what I really love most is being and living that good stuff—and highlighting the same in others. Not because we women need attention or praise to keep us in the game, but because there's so much good stuff to go around and to celebrate.

With that in mind, here we are again with our annual Women in Film issue. Two shorter profiles feature indie rocker and soundtrack songstress Aimee Mann (page 27) and documentary filmmaker Ruth Leitman, whose *Lipstick and Dynamite* has its theatrical release this month (page 30). A longer profile looks at the somewhat enigmatic and elusive, though most certainly talented Rebecca Miller, who says that had she known before embarking on a film career how much work was actually involved with getting a film financed and made, she "probably would have just gone to bed and forgotten about it." Miller's latest film, *The Ballad of Jack and Rose*, premiered at Sundance in January (page 48).

Contributing writer Elizabeth Angell gives us a glimpse inside the vibrant, multi-tasking world of documentary filmmaker and philanthropist Catherine Gund, whose 9-year-old Aubin Pictures has released several award-winning documentary films, including the recent *Touch of Greatness* (page 40). It's always exciting to see new film talent emerge—male or female, directors or actors—but last year presented powerhouse performances from four young actresses in particular (page 36). And the films weren't bad either. *Brother to Brother's* Aunjanue Ellis, *Down to the Bone's* Vera Farmiga, *Everyday People's* Bridget Barkan, and the Academy Award-nominated (perhaps winning by the time this issue hits the stands) Catalina Sandino Moreno from *Maria Full of Grace*—all gave gorgeous, nuanced performances and delivered characters you might feel any number of things about, but that you will definitely remember.

While for the most part I feel ambivalent about the (mis)labeling of film genres (and by that I mean calling a film something that it isn't, or imposing a nomenclature upon a select handful of films that appear similar in theme), I must admit to being curious about the notion of "gospel cinema"—not least of all because it's been compared to the theater world's chitlin' circuit. Africana.com media columnist Amy Alexander talked to independent producer Reuben Cannon, who offered up the first installment of gospel cinema last fall with *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*, based on the self-help books by Bishop T.D. Jakes and starring the lovely Kimberly Elise. The second of what Cannon claims will be many films in the catalog of gospel cinema, *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, was released by Lions Gate in February.

All that, plus the women of Sundance, the godmother of St. Louis's independent film community, and one doc director's journey to capture the women's world of synchronized swimming.

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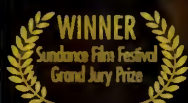
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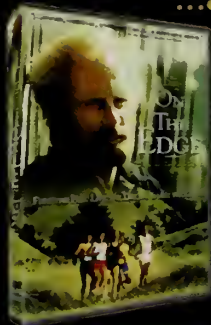
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Photojournalist Mel Hurley (Rob Nilsson) agonizes over his faltering relationship with his lover Carmen over the last 16 hours of their love affair.



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Chicago Sun-Times



On the Edge

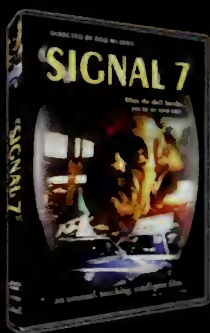
Bruce Dern stars as a once-promising runner who sets out to recapture his lost glory and train for one of the toughest races in America.

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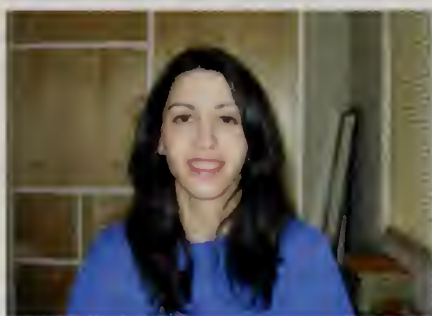
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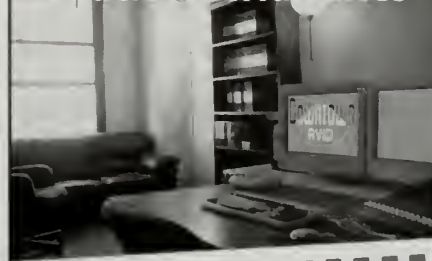
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NEWS

HIV Goddesses

Capturing the untold story of women with AIDS

By Leah Hochbaum

When it comes to the subject of AIDS, most of America still thinks of Africa or gay men or heroin addicts. They don't think Emmy Award-winning heterosexual female journalists. In fact, most people don't think of heterosexual females at all. And that's what director Sharon Sopher, 59, is hoping to change with her new autobiographical documentary *HIV Goddesses: Stories of Courage—Diary of a Filmmaker*.

If and when she can scrape the money together, Sopher, who recently filed for bankruptcy, hopes to take the doc and an accompanying photo exhibit featuring pictures of typical Midwestern women who are both living with and dying from AIDS, on a cross-country trip dubbed the "Goddessmobile Road Tour" that will likely kick off in New York in late May.

"There's a dearth of information about women infected with AIDS," said Sopher, a journalist who worked for NBC for 13 years, calling from her Madison, Wisconsin home in late December. "Why is this?" she asks. "Because no woman has had it before me?"

When she realized she was sick—an event documented in the film—she said she searched her mind for another woman in America who had the disease and was terrified to discover that she couldn't think of a single one, although, according to the Centers for Disease Control, AIDS is a top-10 killer of US women ages 20-54.

The movie tells the heartbreaking tale of how after being misdiagnosed by 27

doctors over a five-year period, Sopher diagnosed herself in under two hours armed only with a computer mouse and the URL for WebMD.com. She was appalled to learn that her nausea, loss of lean muscle mass, fatigue, and swollen lymph glands weren't just a near match for AIDS, but the classic symptoms of the disease. Yet as a straight female, she had never been tested for it.

Though she was told early on by medical professionals to keep news of her illness from even her loved ones, Sopher, who'd been nominated for an Oscar for her 1986 film *Witness to Apartheid*, knew she wouldn't be able to survive without the support of her family and friends.

"With a chronic illness, you need emotional support," Sopher said. "The pills alone are not enough. They are like little nuclear bombs," she said, referring to their many side effects.

So Sopher decided it was time to take action.

"I had never before turned the camera

on myself," she said. "My style was always to shoot subjects very tight. They either let you in or they don't. And if they let you in that close, you usually get something extraordinary. I felt it was dishonest to ask people to tell their own story if I still hadn't told mine."

So with doctors' bills up the wazoo and no real certainty that she would live to see the project through to its end, she set about trying to get her movie made. She applied and was turned down for grant after grant until one day, her luck abruptly changed. She got a \$5,000 grant from the Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media, which finances the pre-production and distribution of films that deal with social issues. Then Marv Turner, an Emmy Award-winning cameraman living in Madison offered to shoot the film for free. Eventually, Wisconsin videographer Jeffrey Pohorski volunteered his services as well.

"It was a little unusual from a cameraman's perspective because we had to shoot



Sharon Sopher, who has AIDS, is making a film about women with AIDS (Trust Mashoro)

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without a lot of lighting and to catch life as it happened," said Pohorski, founder of the Madison-based production company Skunk-films. "But here it was about getting the raw story on tape. The more raw the better. The more real the better. Her vulnerability with allowing herself to be taped throwing up every morning, it impressed me."

Hip-hop meets the western

Black people love David Carradine. Or so says Jean Claude LaMarre, director of *Brothas in Arms*, which is currently filming in California.

"David has this huge urban fan base," says LaMarre, calling from the movie's Santa Clarita set. "'Kung Fu' is the story of the consummate outsider. Every black kid



Rapper Karupt (l) and David Carradine (r) in *Brothas in Arms* (Jean-Claude LaMarre)

Next up for Sopher—and she seems optimistic that there will be something next up for her though she recently changed her daily drug regimen and is unsure whether the new treatment will work—is the second film in what she hopes will one day be an AIDS-themed trilogy called *The Ultimate Betrayal*. It will tell the true-life tales of women infected with the virus by their cheating/drug-using/gay-sex-having husbands.

Sopher doesn't know what the future holds, but she knows before she dies she needs to spread the message that AIDS is not just a gay man's disease. Or Africa's. Or a junkie's.

"The greatest untold story is the story of women with AIDS in America," she said. "And that's the story I have to tell."

understands walking into an all-white town and being on the receiving end of that [animosity]."

So when LaMarre was looking to cast the villainous role of Driscoll, a ruthless bounty hunter, in his new urban western—a term he coined to denote an unlikely blending of the western genre and the hip-hop world—he looked no further than Carradine. "He plays a villain in a way that not a lot of actors do—real passive, real subtle," LeMarre says. "He just embodies the villain."

Carradine, who has appeared in 141 movies according to the Internet Movie Database (and "lots more than that" according to Carradine himself), agrees. "Bad guys, they're juicy," he says, calling from the set after just having learned he'd been nominated for a Golden Globe award for his portrayal of the venomous

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title character in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill: Vol 2*. And his take on Driscoll? "I'm gonna make him juicy."

When it came time to cast the other roles in the film, which tells the tale of a group of Robin Hood-like outlaws who band together to rob a bank at the end of the Civil War and are thwarted by Carradine's bounty hunter, LaMarre chose to round out the cast with a who's-who of the hip-hop world. Wyclef Jean chews on his first meaty role, and Death Row rapper Kurupt, a relative newcomer to the acting scene, whose most notable credit thus far has been a featured role in the National Lampoon wannabe *Johnson Family Vacation*, stars as the mellow Kansas.

"I'm the black Doc Holliday," says Kurupt from a California studio where he's working on his next album, tentatively titled *Against the Grain*, for which he records tracks between scenes and hopes to have in stores by this summer. "Doc was real smooth. He was hip to the times—a real ladies' man. Jean Claude calls my character a real gentleman."

Though he's appeared in a handful of films, Kurupt, whose given name is Ricardo Brown, never thought he'd appear in a western, a genre not usually known to make use of great numbers of minority actors. So when he was offered the part, he jumped at the chance—with the caveat that he be given a stunt double.

"I'm the black Burt Reynolds," he says, apparently attempting to be a darker-skinned version of a number of random American pop culture icons. "I do all my own stunts. Except for this film. I don't get along with horses. They tell you to be the aggressor, but the horse weighs 18 tons. I'm not messing with them horses."

Carradine doesn't share his co-star's equine-related fears. "I love horses. I love guns," he says simply.

And with that, here's betting that white people around the world are opening their hearts to him just a little.

Battling with buffalos

In 1998, when Vietnamese screenwriter



and director Minh Nguyen-Vo was writing the first draft of what would eventually become *Buffalo Boy*, his first feature, he had everything he needed to make the film. Everything, that is, except the cash.

So when he heard that a New York-based organization called the Global Film Initiative was giving out production and post-production grants to films coming out of developing countries, he sent in an application immediately. Shortly thereafter, he learned that not only had he won the grant, but the Initiative wanted to include *Buffalo Boy* in its touring film series, the Global Lens Tour, which kicked off in early January.

"We gather a group of exceptional films," says executive director Holly Carter, at the Initiative's Greenwich Village offices in mid-December. "Films that are creative, beautiful, culturally illuminating. And we create a traveling film festival to help promote cross-cultural understanding."

This year's second annual festival features 10 movies from countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Algeria, Argentina, Mali, China, and Uruguay. Five of the films received grants from the Initiative and many say they might never have been



Buffalo Boy is set in 1940 French-occupied Vietnam (Minh Nguyen-Vo)

able to finish their films had it not been for the Initiative.

"We were working on a shoestring budget," says Nguyen-Vo, during a phone interview from his home in Los Angeles. "We couldn't have any computer-generated special effects. The camera broke down twice. Some of the lighting went bad. It was a real nightmare."

Set in 1940 French-occupied Vietnam, *Buffalo Boy* tells the coming-of-age tale of 15-year-old Kim, whose father entrusts him with the all-important task of herding the family's water buffaloes to higher pastures during Vietnam's rainy season. Unable to fund the special effects needed to tell the story, Nguyen-Vo was forced to actually wait for Vietnam's rainy season to begin filming, and beg to borrow water buffaloes from neighboring villages, many of which had to be walked to the set each day from 9 miles away because their owners couldn't afford to give them up for lengthy stretches of time.

Nguyen-Vo is so grateful to the Initiative for allowing him to finish his film, which took home the Youth Jury Award at the Locarno Film Festival and the Silver Hugo for new directors at

the Chicago International Film Festival, that he made a point to be at the first screening of the film in Seattle, where the tour kicked off before heading to, among other cities, Boston, New York, Denver, Minneapolis, Miami, and Chicago.

Other films on the roster include the Argentine *Today and Tomorrow*, the story of an aspiring actress who turns to streetwalking for money, which took home the prize for Best Editing at the 2004 Havana Film Festival; *Whisky*, from Uruguay, which tells the tale of an owner and employee of a sock factory who are forced to pose as a married couple; the Algerian *Daughter of Keltoum*, about a young woman raised in Switzerland who returns to Algeria to reunite with her estranged mother; and the Argentine *Lili's Apron*, a comedy about a man masquerading as a woman so he can work as a live-in maid.

Nguyen-Vo is confident that *Buffalo Boy* won't be his last film, and he hopes that anything he does from now on will be easier than working with water buffaloes.

"They kept fighting," he says. "We weren't able to direct them." ☆

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Q/A

Sharon Lockhart

By Fiona Ng



Conceptual filmmaker Sharon Lockhart (Patrik Andersson)

Los Angeles-based artist, photographer, and conceptual filmmaker Sharon Lockhart makes films as minimal as they are pensive. There's a predilection for long takes, little edits, and a fixed, straight-ahead framing within which actions transpire. Repetitions and circularity permeate. Time is let to elapse.

In *Khalil, Shaun, A Woman Under the Influence* (1994), Lockhart remade, with non-actors, a scene from the 1974 Cassavetes film. Confusing the line between fact and intervention, the hour-long *Goshogaoka* (1997) stages and choreographs a middle school girls' basketball team through a series of fancy warm-up drills. *Teatro Amazonas* (1999) exercises a sustained self-reflexivity on its viewers, as they watch an audience watching a choral

performance happening offscreen, in an opera house Lockhart came across through Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982). In *NO* (2003), two farmers collect and spread hay in perfect order. Lockhart's films have played at Sundance, the New Films/New Directors Festival in New York, the New York Film Festival, and Rotterdam Film Festival. She is currently working outside of Los Angeles on her fifth film.

Fiona Ng: Describe your style as a filmmaker.

Sharon Lockhart: Style is dictated by how I use the variables of the camera. I use long takes, no camera movement, and a normal lens. I am not interested in distorting the image or in traditional narrative or editing techniques.

FN: What is your process like?

SL: A lot of the enjoyment I get when making work happens in the process, in my exchanges with the people I work with—both in front of the camera and behind. I do a lot of researching at the beginning of a project, and then I work with the film's subjects so they understand my goals and in the end, the shoot is usually one or two takes on a single day.

My research varies from one film to the next, depending on the project. Researching a project is also something I really enjoy—nothing is on the line—it's all about learning and discovering. I get pretty heavily into it and work pretty intuitively, letting one thing lead me to the next. For *Goshogaoka*, I researched ethnographic and documentary film,

postmodern dance, and basketball routines and exercises. In *NO*, I researched farms, farmers, growing and harvest cycles in rural Japan as well as avant-garde Ikebana and landscape painting. And in *Teatro Amazonas*, I looked back into experimental ethnography and worked with anthropologists and ended up continuing the research by interviewing 600 people from every neighborhood in the city of Manaus, Brazil.

FN: What are you working on now?

SL: I am making a film in a small village in the mountains a few hours north of Los Angeles. It features 27 of the 43 children that live there. I've been filming off and on for a little over a year and a half now, which is new to me. In the past, I have always rehearsed for weeks at a time and then shot in one day. As far as my process is concerned, this film has been more like a number of very small films put together. I also have had to learn to operate a camera in order to obtain and continue an intimate relationship with the kids. I am almost to the post-production stage though—just one more shot. It's a long film—it will be a little over two hours long with 12, 10-minute static shots. I have loved it all, but it has been really difficult without a crew for the first time.

FN: Who are your favorite filmmakers and films?

SL: I have so many favorites, but recently I have been very interested in Jean Eustache. There is really very little written on him, even in French, so it's been hard to research him. He died way too young, it's so sad. He was so talented. If you can see *Mes Petites Amoureuses*, you should. It's really incredible and wasn't appreciated nearly as much as it should have been when it was made. I also love [Robert] Bresson an awful lot and his writings on cinematography. Oh, and I was blown away by [Lars Von Trier's] *Dogville* (2003). I really wished I had made that film. It was so ambitious and uncompromising. I also just recently saw *The Time of the Wolf* (2003) by Michael

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"I do a lot of researching at the beginning of a project, and then I work with the film's subjects so they understand my goals and in the end, the shoot is usually one or two takes on a single day."

Haneke and thought it was one of the best films I've ever seen. He is uncompromising as well. He doesn't rely on the usual tropes of filmmaking and alternates between narrative events and the non-narrative looks.

FN: You shot a series of photographs called "Audition," based on a first-kiss scene in Truffaut's *Small Change* (1976). You also made *Khalil, Shaun, A Woman Under the Influence*, based on Cassavettes's film *Woman Under the Influence*. What do you like about these two filmmakers?

SL: The reason I like Cassavettes and Truffaut is their relation to realism and narrative. I think both of them looked at traditional narrative film and found it to be forced and inauthentic. They both adopted a more natural style that allowed viewers to look at an interaction or activity without it being completely in the service of plot. A lot of it has to do with how they work with people, how they work with actors, how they work with non-actors. And that is very much part of my practice. It's about creating a situation, through duration, where something can happen. It's meant to be very familiar—it's friends and family acting. Cassavettes was constantly searching for some kind of authenticity and he would just keep going and going until he found that thing he was looking for. Or he would create a fiction that somehow exposed people or a situation and let it play out in front of the camera.

FN: Are you a structuralist filmmaker? Or do you care to identify as working in that tradition?

SL: I don't mind that affiliation at all. It certainly has been an influence on me. When I began making films as a graduate student at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, some of the first films that had an effect on me were those of Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton, Andy Warhol, and Morgan Fisher. At the same time, I think that a lot of the reasons for that label have been diluted by 40 years of practice. It was originally a very specific challenge to mainstream filmmaking, but I think some of the ideas have been adopted by the mainstream and limiting oneself to those structural options can be claustrophobic.

FN: Your films have a transcendental, meditative aspect to them...

SL: Rarely in cinema do audiences have the opportunity to both spend time looking and listening. Because of that, they might think of watching as "transcendental" or "meditative." However, what they are experiencing is a proactive relationship with the screen—that is, they have the time to engage through looking and listening. This is a much different experience than when one watches a traditional narrative film with information coming directly to the viewer with little work on their part.

FN: You shoot on film and not video. Why do you prefer shooting on film?

SL: Well, I think it began with my

training in photography—my first photograph was taken with a 4 x 5 camera, and that process of slowing down in order to make an image has stayed with me. I can't imagine not having the level of concentration and attention to the frame that you have when working with a large format camera. I am also very interested in the situation that is created when setting up a shot in this way—making the moment more heightened or theatrical. With film you shoot less and work toward that moment versus shooting hours of footage. Extra attention is paid, duration is noted. It becomes more of an event in the making with the subject, more like a play. If I were to shoot video I would have a different approach and so would my subjects. It also has to do with my interest in the social experience of the cinema and the level of concentration and expectation an audience brings.

FN: What part of your films do you associate with film history, what part with video history, and what part with photography history?

SL: I'm really hesitant to locate my practice in those terms. I think there are parts of each of those histories as well as others in all my work, photographic and filmic. I am constantly looking at historical materials for inspiration and guidance. I think it is a real trap to say this or that history can't be part of your practice. It is what makes art stale and limited. So I look outside of things that are familiar and bring in histories that are new to me, that haven't been approached from a contemporary perspective. ★

The Indie Godmother

By Roberta "Bobbie" Lautenschlager



Roberta Lautenschlager (left) moderating a panel for new filmmakers at the 2004 St. Louis International Film Festival (Jimphoto.com)

A former medical missionary nurtures St. Louis's film community

While covering the 2003 St. Louis Filmmakers Showcase, where one of my films was showing, Joe Williams, film critic of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, wrote an article in which he referred to me as the "godmother of the St. Louis filmmaking community." I was flattered but also a bit embarrassed. I have no idea how he came up with it, but the name stuck. More and more people began calling me "the godmother," and I felt slightly uncomfortable bearing the title without really knowing what it meant. I certainly didn't start my career in film as any kind of godmother.

In 1989, after serving 20 years as medical missionaries in West Africa, my physician husband, John, and I returned to the United States. John decided to go

back to Africa a year later to trace the course of the Niger River—an adventure he had always dreamed of. I decided to remain in the States to earn our living and to reconstruct my American life.

To familiarize myself with the Niger River history while John was away, I read the diaries of 18th-century Scottish explorer Mungo Park's expeditions to the river, and as soon as I finished, I knew that I had to retell his story. I quickly realized that film would probably be the best medium for his dramatic tale, so I decided to become a screenwriter. It made sense at the time. After five months of intensive research and seven months of writing (often while working as the night shift nurse at a local hospital), I had an epic story condensed into a 120-page script. But I knew that a script was not

enough and that I would need to learn the business of film as well. I ordered *Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* and began to chart the language and conventions of film industry subculture—much as I had learned the culture of West Africa. Thus armed, I naively set out to conquer the film world.

Several key events happened right around that time. 1) I heard John Singleton speak at a local St. Louis university, and he emphasized that volunteerism played a critical role in his success. 2) I attended my first film festival in St. Louis and became an immediate fan of independent and foreign film. 3) *Joliba*, my screenplay about Mungo Park, placed first in a contest and was selected for the 1994 Independent Feature Film Market. Those ten days in



A participant at the 2004 St. Louis International Film Festival panel (Jimphoto.com)

New York City slammed me into the thick of the indie film industry, and I took to it like a duck to water. And 4), I gained two mentors—John Grissmer, a New York writer-director who later became an investor in my company, ALLfilm, Inc., and Gesine Thompson, a Los Angeles writer-director whose phone calls energized me time and time again.

Taking John Singleton's advice, I volunteered to help the St. Louis Film Commission during preproduction for the 1996 Bill Murray film, *Larger than Life*. When MGM asked me to be the health officer for the set, I saw it as a terrific opportunity to learn film production from the inside out. The set nurse often has little to do, so I became fast friends with the publicist, talked to all the crew, learned about everyone's job, and was getting paid for my education. Most importantly, though, I learned set protocol.

After several more gigs as a set nurse, I volunteered to produce an independent feature film, *Amateur Hour* (1996), I learned two major lessons from this experience: that age and responsibility are an asset, and if you invest your own money in a project, be prepared to lose it. In spite of disappointment, I kept a steady course in pursuit of my film career.

I continued to market *Joliba*, which included sending the screenplay to the

agent of actress Alex Kingston (of "ER" fame), who then called and said Alex wanted to meet me. I flew to London over a long weekend, and met her at a Soho restaurant. She was the exact image I had of Mungo Park's wife, Allie. We had a delightful meal together and, by dinner's end, Alex was attached to the project. On another occasion, I attended a production conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, during which I visited places where Mungo Park lived and worked, and then stopped in London on the way back to meet Dick Pope, Mike Leigh's award-winning cinematographer. Dick, very familiar with Africa himself, said he would like to shoot *Joliba* "even if I'm in a wheelchair." Now all I needed was the director and a Mungo.

Along the way, I have collaborated with writer/director Tom McDonough on several script and film projects. We reworked a script from a Milwaukee writer into *Anna Petrovic, You Rock!* with

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Roberta Lautenschlager, the Sundance bear, and Nick Muccini—her LA producing partner

Michelle Phillips attached as the rock-band singing mom. Tom and I worked hard on developing it, even attending the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, but in the end we weren't able to get the project going. After losing the option, we decided to write our own scripts. Tom wrote the charming romantic comedy, *For Love or Money* (1999). Together we wrote a low-budget drama, *The Lady Next Door* (1999) and the short film, *America's Favorite Pastime* (2001), which Tom directed and I produced. I was especially proud of obtaining permission from Sony Music and Bruce Springsteen to use "Glory Days" for our closing credits. *America's Favorite Pastime* played in several film festivals across the United States.

I have also been the volunteer curator of the New Filmmakers Forum for the St. Louis International Film Festival for the past seven years. I spend many hours watching submitted films to choose five competition features, cultivate personal relationships with the selected filmmakers before they arrive in St. Louis, and support them and their films in every way I can. For the 1999 New Filmmakers Forum, I chose a delightful, hybrid-doc-

umentary, Bret Stern's *Road to Park City*. After the festival I became the producer's rep for the film. It was chosen as the opening night film for Slamdance 2000. We were able to get a small distribution deal and opened theatrically in New York City. It is now available at specialty video rental stores. I still enjoy watching this classic story about filmmaking, which should be in every film school library alongside *Living in Oblivion* (1995).

Twice I was selected for the Sundance Producer's Conference, where I made some lifelong friends including percussionist extraordinaire Will Calhoun, who was attending the Composer's Conference at the same time. Will composed the music for the two short documentary films I produced with director/editor Pat Scallet (*The Niger River Trek*, 2003 and *Fundamental Fairness*, 2004). The latter was produced in an effort to gain clemency for Bill Hanes, a man convicted of murder in a bizarre case. *Fundamental Fairness* won two first place awards at its first two film festivals (Lake Arrowhead Festival of Film, and the St. Louis International Film Festival).

I have been a judge for the

Cinemascope Screenplay Competition sponsored by Cinema St. Louis, for which I concentrate on critiquing format, an area that is often weak, and one I feel especially confident about. I also represent scripts and finished films to distributors I know. With my help, St. Louis documentarian Doug Whyte made a deal with Seventh Art Releasing for his film, *Pushing up Daisies* (to be released this year). Attending Sundance yearly (this was my ninth year) helps me keep my industry relationships up-to-date.

Today, my script about Mungo Park has a new title, *River of Sorrow*. Nicholas Muccini, an experienced Los Angeles producer, is now my co-writer and co-producer on the project, and my old friend Will Calhoun has agreed to compose the music. Nick and I are currently developing a family holiday drama, *Lives of the Saints*. Screenwriter, and St. Louis native, Brian Hohlfeld, (*He Said, She Said; Pooh's Heffalump Movie*) will direct. Actor James LeGros is tapped to play the lead role. The film will shoot in St. Louis next Christmas season.

So does any or all of this rightfully earn me the title "godmother of St. Louis film?" I don't know. Maybe it's less complicated than accomplishments and pedigree—maybe it's simply because I am a woman filmmaker of a certain age. Either way, I feel comfortable with the title now, because to me, it's about respect for the experiences I've had and am willing to share with others. I glory in championing talented St. Louis filmmakers, and value the fact that people trust me to read their scripts and give them advice about their projects. I like being a godmother—a nurturer, a comforter, and an encourager. ★

The Women of Sundance

2005



Melissa Painter (l) directed *Paz de la Huerta* (r) in *Steal Me* (Fred Hayes/WireImage.com)

Their smart, provocative films help redefine “chick flick”

By Kate Bernstein

Flipping through the catalog of this year's Sundance Film Festival, the faces of American narrative filmmakers are unsurprisingly still predominantly male, reflecting the state of the industry at large. However, there are a few renegade female faces that thankfully interrupt the gender homogeneity. Whether their films have overtly feminist subject matter that directly relates to women's issues or their films deal with sexuality in a more genderless realm alongside other equally important themes, these women brought a unique and much-needed voice to the cinematic landscape of American narrative film at the country's most attention-grabbing festival.

How the Garcia Girls Spent their Summer follows three generations of women—daughter, mother, and grandmother—as each deals with a complex and personal battle between newly aroused sexual desires and societal as well as religious norms. Quirky, witty, and heartfelt, the film poses these three women's individual explorations against the judgments they make about one another's choices. The result moves the characters from introspection to enlightenment. *Garcia Girls* is happily unapologetic in embracing female subject matter not often seen on screen—from masturbation and menstruation to sex in the over-60 set.

“To an extent I wrote the three women as virgins,” says 27-year-old writer-director Georgina Garcia Riedel. “You could have lost your virginity at a very young age, but maybe you have an experience 20 years later that blows your mind, and it's like losing your virginity all over again. I tend to make films about topics that scare me myself—as my characters are exploring, I'm exploring, too.”

Riedel wrote the film during her last year at the American Film Institute's Masters program in directing. After graduating and having her thesis short film *One Night It Happened* play the festival circuit, she worked a series of receptionist jobs before taking the plunge and making her first feature with the financial support of her family. “Making the film and finishing it was hard, but the hardest part was deciding to do it in the first place. The fear of being a professional office girl for the rest of my life made me finally do it,” she says with a laugh.

Riedel had a wonderfully powerful cast of female leads to help her make that leap of faith. Veteran actresses Elizabeth Peña and Lucy Gallardo joined new sensation America Ferrera, who made her on-screen Sundance debut in the 2002 hit *Real Women Have Curves*. In *Garcia Girls*, Ferrera returns as yet another strong-willed, sharp-mouthed Latina teenager.

"Young women are represented in film as timid victims of circumstance for whom coming of age is a hard, horrible thing," Ferrara says. "It's a refreshing feeling to be able to play a young girl who's smart and self-assured. Growing up, I never fit the stereotype of an angst[-filled] teenager so it's wonderful to have a more diverse representation of what a young woman is."

Also at Sundance this year, *Saving Face* blasts gender taboos and explores cross-generational women poignantly and entertainingly. Set in the Chinese-American immigrant community of Flushing, Queens, *Saving Face* follows a 48-year-old widowed mother who is banished from her parents' home and neighborhood when she is impregnated out of wedlock by a younger man. She goes to live with her daughter Wil, a successful doctor, who in turn enrages her mother by coming out as a lesbian. By the end of the film, both women find the strength to be who they really are and learn to understand each other better.

"The film was a love letter to my mother after I saw her being ostracized by



Michele Krusiec as Wilhelmina Pang and Joan Chen as Ma in *Saving Face* (Larry Riley/Sony Pictures Classics)

her Chinese immigrant community," says 33-year-old American director Alice Wu of her first feature film. "Specifically for women there's a clock on us for appropriate times to do things—but we actually get so many chances in life to decide to

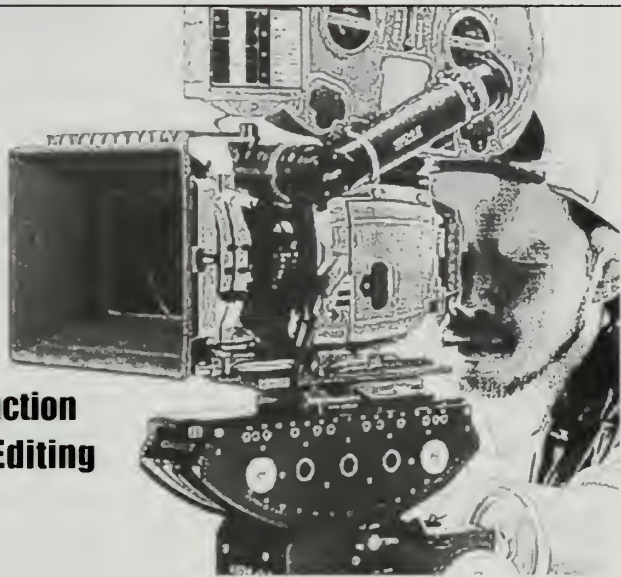
live honestly. I wrote *Saving Face* to say no matter what your sexuality, love can start at any point in life you want it to."

Saving Face also radiates with strong female performances. Acclaimed actress Joan Chen plays the displaced matriarch

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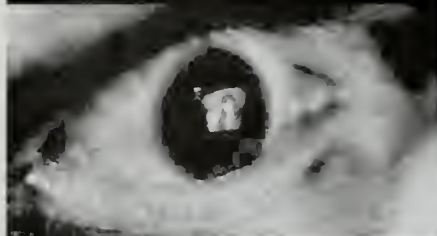
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Miranda July (Christine) in a scene from *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, directed by Miranda July (IFC Films)

and joins newcomers Michele Krusiec, who plays Wil, and Lynn Chen, who plays Wil's girlfriend Vivian, to create a diverse emotional exploration between these three women trying to find their way in rigid community traditions.

"It was a blessing to play someone who knows what they want and isn't ashamed to ask for it," Lynn Chen says. "My character represents a lot of women who don't exist on screen. I hope it's not only inspiring for women, Asian women, and lesbians, but normalizes these sort of characters for everyone."

The film's message is no doubt inspired by Wu's own history, having daringly quit her career as a computer engineer in Seattle at age 28 to move to New York and learn what it takes to make a movie. It was a move that earned her the respect of her actresses.

"I'm inspired by Alice," Krusiec says. "I was so impressed by her decision to leave her old career and enter into filmmaking. It is empowering to see another woman really take a risk and believe in herself. Being a fellow female artist, you see a lot of repression and inability to have the courage and strength to express what you hope to accomplish. And she really took bull by horns."

Wu's strength paid off. Five years later

she was in production and Sony Pictures Classics bought *Saving Face* before its premiere screening at the Toronto Film Festival this past September.

Another first-time narrative filmmaker who found great success and buzz at Sundance is Miranda July. Her film, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, is an experimental narrative that weaves together an ensemble cast of new actors—ranging from young children to an elderly couple—whose stories flow in and out of each other with the grace and coincidence of real life. All the characters, young and old, explore their sexuality with a raw sensibility, but it is the candid portrayal of the film's youth that is truly innovative.

"It's about children and power," July says. "The kind of power they have in their own right and even over adults. The girls in the film are trying to figure out how to move things forward, how to grow up and become women."

Although a new feature filmmaker, July, who also stars in the film, is no stranger to film and performance. Ten years ago she started making short films and putting out a video chain letter of girl-directed cinema called *Joanie 4 Jackie*. She released audio recordings on famed underground record label Kill

Rock Stars, and took her shows from punk clubs to theatres. It was her reputation as an artist that got her backburner script made into a film—from the screenwriting and filmmaking labs at Sundance to finding a producer and getting backing from IFC Films and Film Four, to finally debuting her film in competition at the festival.

"One thing I would say about directing the movie is that I was pretty emotional the whole time," July says. "It wasn't unusual for me to cry. And there were

through being a promiscuous teen, an irresponsible neighbor, and now a mother in a marriage."

Steal Me is Painter's third feature film since completing NYU's graduate film school. But it is the first time that she's had a feature film at Sundance. While she believes that "what people want from woman directors is to tell stories that other people can't tell," Painter also feels that there is a type of film necessary to grab the attention of the Sundance festival gatekeepers.



Director Georgina Garcia Riedel on location for *How the Garcia Girls Spent their Summer*

moments where I felt I was completely undermining myself. Now, I want that to be the new thing that's OK. When there are millions of women directors, there's going to be all sorts of different ways to direct."

Directing with female themes consciously in the forefront is a method that another Sundance filmmaker, Melissa Painter, favors, even though the main protagonist of her film *Steal Me* is a 15-year-boy. The film follows Jake, a runaway boy who identifies himself through kleptomania and promiscuity. He moves in with a friend's family, attempts to win the love of his friend's mother in the absence of his own, has an affair with an older single mother next door, and bonds with a sexually promiscuous girl his own age.

"I cannot imagine making this film not as a woman," Painter says. "It's 100 percent based on my experience of becoming a woman who has gone

"With this film, I decided I was over being wandering and lyrical and pretty," she says. "It doesn't do me any good to tell my story my way if no one wants to see it the way that I told it. I wrote *Steal Me* to be loud, big, and shake people enough that it would be accessible to a programming department."

Regardless of when and how one ultimately winds up at Sundance, there's still no doubt that being one of the women in the catalog brings attention to a filmmaker's work and can be a major career turner.

Or, as Amy Redford, daughter of Sundance founder Robert Redford and star of festival film *This Revolution*, says: "If you can look away from the people in stilettos and all that madness and by-product, Sundance is a wonderful way for women to mine the experience of their colleagues and make connections with producers and executives." ★

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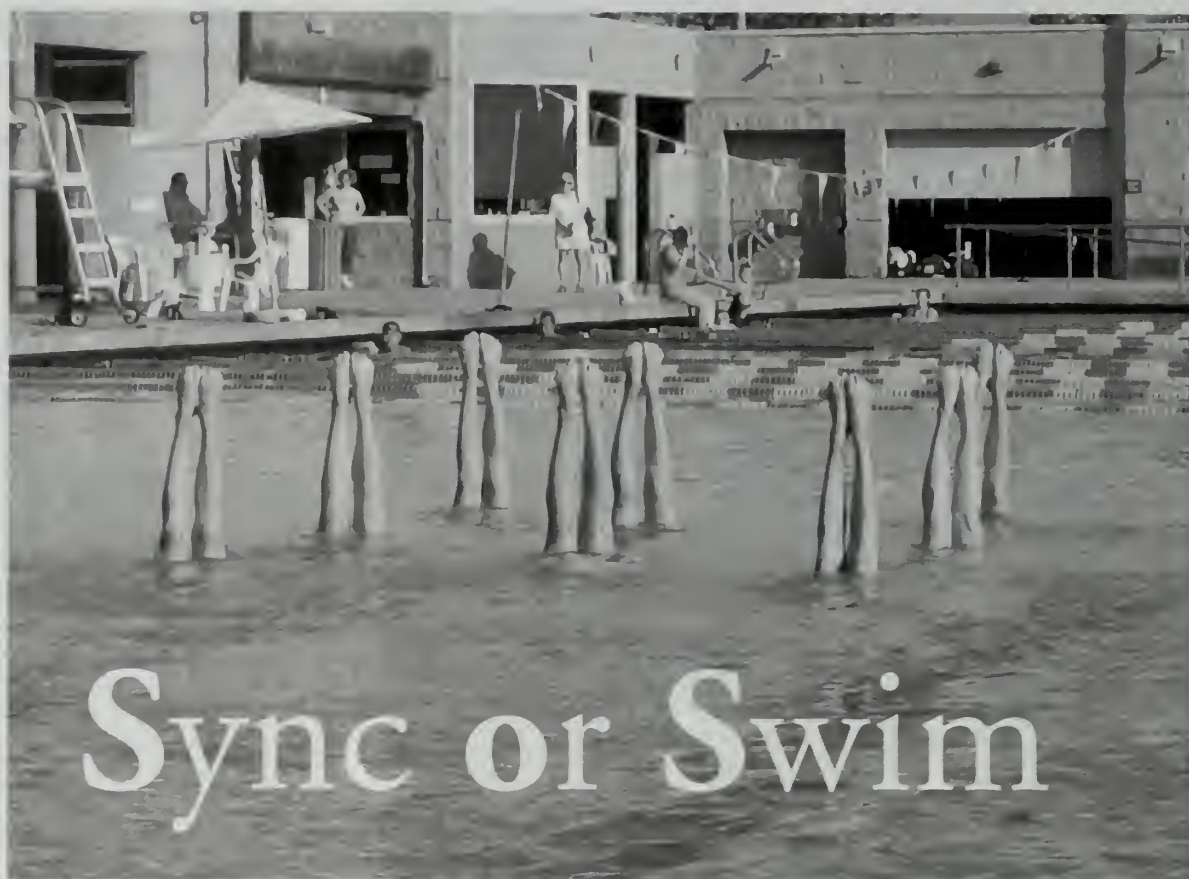
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Bottoms up: The Olympic team at their daily training session in California, July 2003 (Cheryl Furjanic)

Sync or Swim

A captivating documentary makes it through some deep waters

By Cheryl Furjanic

I saw synchronized swimming for the first time while watching the Sydney Olympics on TV in the summer of 2000. I knew what it was, but it never really made an impression on me like it did that day. It seemed a little strange with the make-up, the smiles—but the longer I watched it, the more compelled and impressed I was by this amazing sport.

As a documentary filmmaker, I'm always on the lookout for film topics that are exciting and visually interesting—stories that take us places we haven't been or show us a new side of something we thought we knew. Synchronized swimming (or synchro) had it all. So when I heard that the synchronized swimming Olympic trials were approaching, I knew that a behind-the-scenes look at the road to the Olympics would make a good documentary. It would be both visually stunning and enlightening for people who

think it's an easy sport in which swimmers walk on the bottom of a pool wearing sequins and smiles.

I sent a letter to the USA Synchro media director telling him of my interest in making a documentary about the team, even though I was convinced he probably wouldn't respond. A few days later, I got his reply: "I received your letter and materials today. USA Synchro would love to work with you on your documentary project."

Oh, crap. Even though this film had been a dream of mine for over two years, it was more of an idea than a plan. I hadn't written anything that even resembled a proposal, and I hadn't raised a penny. But I didn't dwell for too long. I couldn't; I had a film to make. I quickly assembled a crew—DP Laela Kilbourn, sound mixer Gabriel Miller and PA Amanda Steigerwald—got myself a brand new credit card, and scheduled our first shoot.

Luckily, I didn't have time to think about how big this project could turn out to be, how long it might take, or how much money it would cost.

The major shoot deadline for the project was August 2004—the Summer Olympic Games. When I looked at the team's schedule, I wanted to shoot it all—the trials, training, and international competitions—which would make for 20-plus shoots. In reality, our shooting strategy turned out more like this: Raise money (or get new credit card), fly to the team training facility in Santa Clara, California, shoot for five to seven days, and fly back to New York. Rinse. Repeat.

In January 2003, my crew and I traveled to the West Coast where we spent a week shooting the first phase of the Olympic trials. Our first shoot went really well—synchro was as visually captivating as I had imagined, we had great access, the swimmers seemed really open



The 2004 bronze medal-winning Olympic synchronized swimming team take a breather, poolside in Athens, Greece (Cheryl Furjanic)

to having us there, and the coach, Chris Carver, was smart and strict (and she looked great on camera and gave amazing sound bites). Based on this first experience, I was extremely optimistic.

The following month we got word that Tammy Crow, one of the swimmers we were following at the Olympic trials the month before, was in a terrible car accident. Her boyfriend and the other passenger in her car were killed, and she had a broken arm and severe back injuries. I thought this would be a straightforward synchro movie. I never anticipated that such a horrible event would become part of the story we were telling.

By March 2003, I knew I needed help. So I called my former NYU film school collaborator, Amanda Keropian and said, "I've got two words for you: synchronized swimming." Amanda was immediately

interested and agreed to come on board as a producer at the same salary as me (\$0 an hour). The *Sync or Swim* producing team was complete.

Our second shoot—the National Championships on Long Island—was a little rougher. Evidently, the media director hadn't fully explained the film to the team. They didn't seem to understand that we planned to follow them for the next year and a half to the Olympics. The coach kept walking out of range of our microphone. At lunch, the president of USA Synchro asked me if we'd be done shooting the movie at the end of the day. I wanted to puke. We shot for one day and sent the crew home. The following day, I finally got a chance to explain to the coach what I wanted to do. Her response: "You want to follow us all the way to the Olympics?" She was into it,



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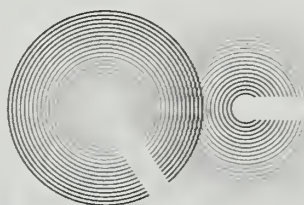
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DP Laela Kilbourn (left), sound mixer Gabriel Miller (background), and director/producer Cheryl Furjanic (right) on location for *Sync or Swim* (Amanda Steigerwald)

and recalled that after they won the gold medal in 1996 they'd missed an opportunity to really promote the sport. They hadn't won in 2000 and hoped to capture at least the bronze in 2004. Next we explained the project to the swimmers who also seemed enthusiastic. We were (finally) all on the same page.

By this point, I was so excited about the project that I assumed people would be throwing money my way based on my enthusiasm alone. But my fundraising experience seemed to mirror that of the swimmers. Synchro is so unsupported by sponsors that the Santa Clara Aquamaids, reigning national champions and producer of many Olympic team members, owns and operates a bingo parlor to raise enough money to pay for their training facilities and coaches salaries.

We didn't open a bingo parlor, but we hosted several fundraisers. I also sent out a monthly e-newsletter, "Movie News," to give my colleagues, friends, and family an update and an opportunity to help out. Early on we set up a website where prospective donors could see our trailer and learn more about the film. We man-

aged to raise about \$30,000 in financial and in-kind donations from over 100 individual donors. We often didn't have enough money to do a shoot until the week before we were scheduled to leave. Through all of this, my amazing crew was incredibly patient. I'm grateful they didn't plan a revolt.

For the next year, we traveled between New York and Santa Clara to document as much of the Olympic synchro experience as possible. This was both a complete joy and totally wrenching. When the team was training and choreographing, they were open and friendly. During the Olympic trials they were, as was to be expected, stressed and preoccupied. For many of them, this was their last chance to make the team. Amazingly, Tammy Crow recovered from her accident and secured a spot on the Olympic team only to find out a month later (after the Olympics) that she would have to serve 90 days in a California jail for two counts of vehicular manslaughter.

After about 11 shoots (including one with the "godmother of synchronized swimming," Esther Williams), suddenly

the Olympic Games loomed. When people asked me questions about going to the Games, I tried to avoid them. I knew we didn't have the money to go. On the other hand, I knew the movie wouldn't be complete without the climax of the Olympics. I managed to attract some interest from corporate sponsors, but nothing panned out.

Then, three weeks before the Olympics, a generous donor committed \$3,000 to the project. Although \$3,000 wasn't much, it would buy plane tickets. We were going to the Games! By this time, I had almost no money left on my credit cards to cover the rest of the costs, but I stuck to my decision. A week later, we got a \$3,500 donation from The Heaney Family Fund of the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation. I started breathing again. One week later, we cleaned out our account with our fiscal sponsor, The Center for Independent Documentary. This brought the total to almost \$10,000 (including credit cards borrowed from friends). We arranged for a Greek PA to be our driver/translator, and we were off.

When we arrived, Athens was buzzing with the Olympic spirit. NBC paid a lot of money for the rights to broadcast the Games, and though I'm pretty sure we were not a threat to them, we were still denied media credentials. So we gave the synchro team a Mini-DV camera to document their Olympic experience for us to use in the film. We also got permission to shoot two of the team's practices. They seemed excited that we traveled this far

(in miles and months) to see them compete. We spent a lot of time with the families of the swimmers and got plenty of Athens B-roll. We attended the synchro competitions to cheer the team on, knowing that we would have to license the competition footage eventually. Tammy Crow, fully recovered from her accident, competed for Team USA. After five days of intense competition, the team captured two bronze medals. The swimmers cried, the parents cried, I cried.

Six months later, Amanda and I are still working our way through 130-plus hours of footage and are choosing an editor. We're still trying to raise the money needed to finish the film (about \$100,000) or at least enough to get a rough cut done so we can shop it around to broadcasters. We're planning post-Olympic interviews with the swimmers and researching archival footage for a historical section of the film.

I've had Olympic fever ever since I can remember. I grew up playing sports and harbored secret fantasies of being in the Games. In an email to our crew right before we left for the Games, Olympic coach Chris Carver told us: "You are far more than a documentary crew to us. You are a part of the team." So in the end, I did make it to the Games—not to compete, but to make a movie. ★

See www.synchromovie.com for more information.



Sara Lowe and Stephanie Nesbitt prepare for the Olympic duet trials (Cheryl Furjanic)

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(Carlos Serrao)

Tracking Aimee Mann

HER TUNES HAVE MADE—AND BEEN MADE—BY INDIE FILMS

By Dianne Spoto Shattuck

Aimee Mann is one tough woman to track down. After a month of scheduling and rescheduling an interview time, I was finally about to sit down and talk with Mann about her role as composer of independent film soundtrack, and about how the art of film inspires her as a songwriter.

Before her critically acclaimed soundtrack to Paul Thomas Anderson's brilliant film, *Magnolia* (1999), Mann was best known as the front woman to the 80s post-new wave band 'Til Tuesday. After she left the major label group to embark on a solo career in the mid 90s, Mann scored some hits and was able to find the freedom to express and market herself the way she wanted to as an indie label artist.

Like indie films, the indie music business has its perks, most of which having to do with the quality of the work. "You get so much more work done as an indie artist," she says in her familiar mellow voice. "With majors, everybody has to have control, and you can't get anything done—they have a system. As an artist, you're constantly trying to do something different. I recall my manager and I trying to come up with alternative ideas of how to promote my albums, but the label refused. They're simply terrified to try anything else." Seems only fitting, then, that Mann would pair with an independent filmmaker like Paul Thomas Anderson.

"Paul and I were friends before the film was made," Mann says. "But it was

serendipity, really, the way the music worked within the film. I actually wrote the songs first and he took them for the movie." It's rare that a musician will have an entire soundtrack composed for a film prior to the screenplay being written, though as Mann explains, "I read some of the screenplay, yes, but it was amazing in that I had the songs and he had a [screen]play, and the two fused together perfectly."

Anderson's critically acclaimed *Magnolia* is a collage of about ten separate stories. Yet, they are all interconnected by the paradoxical and sometimes tragic state of being both together and alone in the universe. This sacred synchronicity is the foundation of the film, and the core of its

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(Carlos Serrao)

moment of unexpected beauty, simplicity, and emotional wallop when the core characters all take turns, in their isolation, singing Mann's "Wise Up" in their own voices. It's almost subconscious how it sneaks up on you—a perfect bridge at the perfect moment in a bold movie.

Magnolia's complicated plot—or rather plots—follow two families and several loosely connected characters through a single, unbelievably eventful (somewhat biblical) day in the San Fernando Valley. And Mann's consistent and repeated voice throughout the film is a comforting reminder that we are all

connected on a certain level, even if the connection is that we are alone. Mann confesses, "I didn't expect all the songs to remain—the music in a movie is really a flavor that you add to or subtract from, depending on what story needs to be told. To me [the soundtrack] acts like an effective extension of the dialogue in a film."

Mann has since extended the dialogue in a few films, as well as in television. Her cover duet with husband Michael Penn—brother of the actors Sean and Chris Penn—of The Beatles song "Two of Us" is the opening track of the *I am Sam* (2001) soundtrack. In 1995, Mann's hit "That's Just What You Are" was included on the soundtrack to the television series, "Melrose Place." "There are two ways to go about this participation," Mann says. "The first way is where the filmmaker or TV producer will ask you to write for the movie specifically. The other way is where they want a song that you've already done—and you can only hope it's going to be right for the movie." She chuckles. "I usually ask to see the scene first. I try to stay away from the most egregious stuff, especially TV work. I don't want my music associated with something awful!"

So far, so good. "I wish more people would use music more carefully in movies. A lot of people use it but they just throw it in there. I think the thing I love about

soundtrack. Mann's cover of "One" (the Harry Nilsson tune popularized by Three Dog Night) plays ingeniously throughout the film, and Mann, with her trademark hauntingly lonely voice, actually serves as a narrator of sorts, weaving together each forlorn tale by its common theme of loneliness: "One is the loneliest number...Much much worse than two...One is a number divided by two."

And then there is that pure cinematic

Anderson's use of music is that he really lets songs take over a scene, on equal par with the narration."

Regarding writing specifically for screenplays, Mann says, "Sometimes they ask me to write songs for the movie based on a particular script, which is not that easy to do. I'll give it a shot, but it is much easier to go at it the other way around."

But even if the song ends up not being used in a film, it still has its rewards. "I wrote a song for a movie called *The Human Stain*," Mann says. "The director [Robert Benton] ultimately decided to have no songs—just an instrumental score, so I had the song back. I'm actually including it on my new solo album, which is a concept album, using boxing as a metaphor. I was quite proud of the song because it not only went with the movie but also stood on its own."

So how does film affect the process of songwriting in terms of inspiration? "Paul has really inspired me as a writer," Mann says. "His first movie *Hard Eight* has a scene in it where the characters run off and drive away together. I actually had that in mind when I wrote the song 'King of the Jailhouse' on my new album," Mann says. "It is a concept album, and I never quite realized until this very moment just how much film and imagery plays a part in my songwriting process."

Mann has gone even further beyond film and music on her new record to include yet another art form, painting. "We're even going to hire an artist/painter for the album artwork," she says. "I really want to include other mediums, and it is not common to have actual paintings in an album today. It takes time to paint, and the major labels are on intense schedules that would not tolerate this kind of creativity. It's going to take a while to complete, but it is going to be beautiful."

"At this point, the working title of the new album is 'The Forgotten Arm.' There is a very cinematic, visual concept to this project. The story takes place in the 1970s. It's about a boxer and this woman he gets involved with. He had spent time in Vietnam and developed a drug problem there. When he comes back to her, it is a very dysfunctional relationship. The term 'the forgotten arm' comes from an old boxing trick: if you are fighting close to

the ropes, you can rest your right hand near the opponent's waist, and then suddenly hit them with that 'forgotten arm'—the opponent has a false sense of security. And that is a metaphor for the two people in this relationship. The drug addiction and trauma is the 'forgotten arm' here."

Sounds like the makings of a powerful independent film. Maybe someone out there reading this is up for the task and can pitch it to Mann before P.T. Anderson gets his hands on it. ★

Save Me

You look like a perfect fit
For a girl in need of a tourniquet

But can you save me
Come on and save me
If you could save me
From the ranks of the freaks
Who suspect they could never love anyone

'Cause I can tell
You know what it's like
The long farewell
Of the hunger strike

But can you save me
Come on and save me
If you could save me
From the ranks of the freaks
Who suspect they could never love anyone

You struck me dumb like radium
Like Peter Pan or Superman
You will come to save me...

—Words and lyrics by Aimee Mann

"Save Me" is the Academy Award-nominated song from the *Magnolia* soundtrack.

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Filmmaker Ruth Leitman (Audrey Cho)

Wrestling with the Truth

RUTH LEITMAN'S DOCUMENTARIES LIE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN
FACT AND FICTION

By Lisa Selin Davis

Don't expect what you read in this article to be true. The subject, Ruth Leitman, is not interested in truth, not in the traditional sense. "You can fact check all you want, but really there aren't a lot of facts," she says. "They're very subjective facts, individualized facts. I'm really interested in those versions and layers of the truth, and I'm also really interested in how and why people tell lies."

Leitman, 42, a Chicago-based filmmaker and photographer, has made five feature-length documentaries to date, each of which delves into that murky space between fact and fiction. Her latest work, *Lipstick and Dynamite, Piss and Vinegar: The First Ladies of Wrestling*

(2004) tells the story of six elderly women who once stood inside a wrestling ring and, well, kicked butt. But she never asked them—and doesn't really want to be asked—about whether the wrestling was real.

"It is performance art and it's always been performance art," Leitman says. "You don't say real or fake in the wrestling world."

You don't say real or fake in Leitman's documentary world, either. Her films are not searches for the ultimate truth, but explorations of how people want to present themselves, what they wish to be true, and the stories around which they construct their lives. They're about truth and construction, self-reliance and helplessness,

and surviving and succumbing.

Leitman grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia, but hers was not a traditional childhood. "I lived an adult life as a teenager," she says. "My parents were separated, and I was involved with an older man. Those typical teenage experiences were not part of what I was able to have. I was really outside of all that stuff, and I was really very curious about it." That curiosity has led to a running theme in Leitman's oeuvre. "Teenage girls have been at the center of all my work," she says.

So she began her career as a still photographer, investigating the lives of teenage girls along the boardwalk in Wildwood, New Jersey. "It was the place

that everyone that I grew up with went to lose their virginity, learn about boys and love and fighting and sex, and try to get away from their parents," Leitman says. "I was photographing the experiences that I didn't have—the prom, the high school football game—through the eyes of a teenage girl."

But as she was photographing these girls—first surreptitiously and later with their consent and even enthusiastic approval—Leitman was struck by the stories they told. "I had this frustration of not getting to hear what they had to say," she says. She returned to the boardwalk with a super-8 synch sound camera and an all-female film crew, and thus her first documentary, *Wildwood*, New Jersey (1994), came to be.

Once the girls in *Wildwood* started talking, Leitman noticed how they seemed to create fictions for themselves. And rather than probe them to find out if their stories were true, Leitman wanted to probe their lives to find out what prompted them to exaggerate or even lie. "The character that I was closest to [in *Wildwood*] was Bonnie, who claims to have killed someone," she says. "Still to this day I don't know if that's really true, but she wants us to think that about her. Why does she want us to think that? She kind of brags about it, like she has a certain sense of accomplishment. That really fascinates me."

She continued that theme in *Alma* (1997), a southern gothic documentary about the complex relationship between a woman and her mentally ill mother. While *Wildwood* is framed around a series of interviews with girls along the boardwalk, *Alma's* structure is more complex. "There were times that I would go back and re-film a story that Alma [the film's titular subject] told because I

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Ella Waldek in the ring in Ruth Leitman's
Lipstick and Dynamite (Koch Lorber Films)

wanted to explore how she might explain it to me on a particular day," Leitman says. "There were different versions of the truth in Alma, and then there were certain stories that would never change."

If the idea of a documentary where scenes and stories are re-filmed and recreated makes you nervous—too Robert Flaherty for some folks—to Leitman, pushing the limits of documentary is key to her investigation of the truth and its versions. "A lot of people said, 'That's not a documentary,'" she says. "It's not an ethnographic documentary and it was not a personal documentary." Leitman was a close friend of Margie, Alma's daughter, co-star, and co-producer of the film. Leitman's participation in the film is not hidden—you can see and hear her on the periphery, feel her presence within the film. "I really am very interested in pushing the subject-filmmaker boundaries," she says. "I've always been sort of a little put off by documentaries where the filmmaker is obviously the removed expert. I'm never the removed expert. Never. I don't want to be."

When she came across the first ladies of wrestling, Leitman dove in wholeheartedly (you can even see footage of her

in a body-lock during the credits). She says: "It had everything that I was really interested in: women who are faded beauties and women who have the bravado that they have. They were beautiful creatures and also strong and physically defiant."

The film combines interviews with these women—major wrestling stars in the 1950s—with archival footage (including, naturally, footage from the TV game show "To Tell the Truth"). While it's Leitman's most structurally traditional film, it continues to investigate the strength/weakness, truth/fiction dichotomies with which she's been so fascinated. "I'm not a women's sports fan, but I was really interested in these women and their lives," she says. "The wrestling becomes a backdrop to talk about these other things."

The women—Gladys "Killem" Gillem, Johnnie Mae Young, The Fabulous Moolah, Ida May Martinez, Penny Banner, and Ella Waldek—all came from hard knock lives long before they stepped into the ring. Many of them created stages names ("The Fabulous Moolah" is not on any birth certificate) and with them, new identities. They came from poverty, violence, and abuse, and most were recruited in the 1940s and 1950s by the infamous women's wrestling promoter Billy Wolfe. He was their pimp, their stand-in father, and for some of them, their lover.

"I was really fascinated that there was this one man who traveled around the country and found these girls who were looking for a way out," Leitman says. "They were pimped out, they got nothing. All of them have serious physical health issues because of wrestling, and they didn't have any health insurance. They got paid in cash."

But they were not helpless creatures. They threw one another around the ring, gouged each other's eyes, punched and kicked and jumped and scratched. They may look like sweet old grandmothers, but they don't sound like them. "I wrestled dirty and I was a tough son of a

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The Fabulous Moolah and Judy in the ring in *Lipstick and Dynamite* (Ruthless Films)

gun," Johnny Mae says. And The Fabulous Moolah says happily, "I was mean."

Over the course of the film, the women tally their injuries, which include "a cauliflower on the back of the head," "eyes hanging from their sockets," and "a broken stomach." Whether or not the wrestling was "real," they came out bruised and beaten. "They certainly didn't have the special effects that they have today," Leitman says. "They got hurt more, and they were more athletic."

But the women used their years in the wrestling world to springboard to other things. One became a nurse; another, a lion tamer. A few of them are still involved in the wrestling world. In the end, the women really did come out on top, and despite the exploitation they endured during their wrestling years they continue to feel a sense of pride, and even

nostalgia, about their glory days.

"I really wanted the audience to see that in a certain way the film was about the duality of the powerlessness and the powerfulness that the women had at the time," Leitman says. "Most of my subjects are people who are often never asked anything about themselves. These are girls that, often, people looked at but never really wanted to know what they had to say. They are dying to talk about themselves and to be heard." The stories they tell, whether or not they ring completely true, are always about women wanting to recreate themselves in the world, riding the line between fact and fiction.

These days, Leitman herself is riding that line. She's moving toward narrative film and has just finished a feature-length screenplay about—what else—a girl wrestler. Her goal is to get back to

her photographic roots, where she has more creative control over the aesthetics—control that's much harder to find with documentary work. She's also working on a personal, experimental film that deals with a tragedy she endured while working on *Alma*. Leitman miscarried during the shooting of the film, and then conceived again during the editing process. "*Egbert and Ella* is about the two daughters that I had in one year," Leitman says. "It really deals with the materiality of film and the fragility of life."

Like all her films, *Egbert and Ella* will explore what it's like to live through hardship and come out on the other side. "That was my sort of survival test as an artist, as a woman and a filmmaker," she says. "If I could survive that and keep going, I could probably do anything." ★

ASK

the Documentary Doctor



Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

I think I made the mistake of putting myself in my film as the inquisitive filmmaker—as a woman, I'm not sure if the role really suits me. What can be done at this stage to save the film?

Changing major structural and creative decisions once the film is shot is extremely challenging. Before you embark on the re-edit of your life, let's save you from cultural influences before we save the film.

The "quest" or "essay" documentary genre has been re-popularized by films with men in the lead role, and not coincidentally, these are the films that have made it to the big screen. This is, however, a cultural issue, not just a characteristic of documentary films.

There seems to be a tacit consensus that men, and only men, can be the fighters, the conquistadores, inquirers, judges, and bearers of good and bad news alike.

While women sit in the back re-charging the weapons and healing the wounded—in film terms, the associate producers who set up interviews and digitize all night. (Men readers, please forgive the generalization).

Fortunately, many female documentarians have decided that it can be quite ladylike to shove a camera and microphone in someone's nose when necessary. We might not see these films at the local cineplex but they are out there at festivals and on networks and educational/out-reach circuits. From Judith Helfand in *A Healthy Baby Girl* (1997) and *Blue Vinyl* (2002), to Maggie Hadleigh-West in *Warzone* (1998), to the soon to be finished Kelly Gallagher's *Mercury in Retrograde* (2004).

On a more personal level, the quest documentary reduces its narrator to just one aspect: the inquirer, sometimes the angry pushy inquirer. A liberating experience, but maybe not too glamorous to watch. Being a well-rounded person, see-

ing yourself reduced on the screen to just one part of your complex self can be painful to watch.

Who better than Therese Shechter (*I Was a Teenage Feminist*) to relate to women's struggles on and off the screen? "For a long time, I resisted being the lead character in my film," she says. "I thought: Who would want to see me on screen? Who would care about my own search for my lost feminism and the feminist movement? But I realized that my character could act as a surrogate for all the women out there who were asking the very same questions."

I strongly believe in first instincts. If early on you felt you had to be in the film leading the narrative, I'm sure that is still so, and you simply need to adjust to your "screen self." And if you just can't get used to it, try thinking of the future generations of female filmmakers who need your help to keep diversity of voices in the filmmaking business.

Dear Doc Doctor:

I always have problems getting the crew to do what I need them to do, when I need them to do it. Often I find myself yelling or being the unreasonable, crazy one on location. Can women in a position of power be heard?

We all have seen in films, and maybe also in real life, some version of the tyrannical director with beret, pipe, horse riding pants, and a megaphone screaming orders to the stressed-out crew. That image never gained popularity among documentary filmmakers. For better or

worse, crews are smaller, and interviewees don't respond well to personal questions being screamed through a megaphone.

I don't see the director—male or female, fiction or documentary—as the almighty powerful god of the set or location. I rather see him or her as the quiet skillful manager of people's creativity, including his/her own. A few screams and intimidating looks might get people moving, but it doesn't guarantee their talent and creativity.

When camera people and editors shuffle their feet, they are not challenging your authority for the sake of discrediting you, but rather showing symptoms of discomfort. You want to be heard, and they want to be heard, too. Rather than raising your voice and becoming a part-time monster, search for the cause of rebellion. Something is wrong and you have to find out, because that dash of disobedience can ultimately be prohibiting you and your film.

The *New York Times* bestseller *Crucial Conversations* by Kerry Patterson et al, explains in easy steps how to handle conflict without resorting to the use of authority, which almost always backfires and snowballs into more conflict.

In short, listen first and listen deeply, beyond the apparent cause. Acknowledge their position or argument. Explain how his or her attitude reads from your side. Find common ground and a common solution that suits both—"common" being the operative word. It might feel like compromising, but you will be surprised what happens when your crew has a chance to be part of the solution. ★



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Women on the Verge of a Breakout

Four females from different backgrounds rise as indie stars

BY DAVID ALM

In 1965 Claudine Auger landed the female lead in *Thunderball*, a James Bond film about—what else?—thwarting a brilliant, evil thug from dominating the world. Just 24 at the time, and French, Auger made a perfect Bond girl: she was gorgeous. And really, that was about it. Though Auger went on to play in dozens of other films (most of them French), her fame probably peaked in 1958, when she was crowned Miss France.

Maybe this is because *Thunderball* was a relative flop, or maybe it's because she wasn't a very good actor. Whatever the reason, Claudine Auger never became a household name—at least not in American households.

Now consider the other women who auditioned for the role: Julie Christie, Faye Dunaway, and Raquel Welch—all roughly the same age as Auger. Among them, only Welch had made a name by that time, and she was actually hired for the role. But she quit for a part in another film. Why the other two were beaten out by someone of such dubious talent may seem a mystery. After all, Christie and Dunaway have become icons of 1960s and 70s independent film—known then, in homage to the French, as the American New Wave.

Clearly, their talent didn't go unnoticed for long. The same year, Julie Christie achieved public and critical acclaim for her portrayal of Lara Antipova in *Dr. Zhivago*, and she won an Oscar for her role in John Schlesinger's *Darling*. Faye Dunaway continued auditioning until she was cast in Otto Preminger's *Hurry Sundown* and Elliot Silverstein's *The Happening*, both released in 1967. But it was her unforgettable portrayal of Bonnie Parker in Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*, also in 1967, that catapulted Dunaway into stardom.

None of this was inevitable. Aside from their beauty, these women share two additional characteristics: they can act, and their breakthroughs were thanks to independently minded directors

willing to cast young women in tough, character-driven parts.

Prior to the American New Wave, roles for women in American cinema were few and generic. There were the maternal, pillar-of-virtue roles, epitomized by Doris Day and Julie Andrews; the subjugated protagonists of so-called "women's films" and melodramas like *Rebecca* (1940) and *All That Heaven Allows* (1955); the conniving, sexually depraved femme fatales of film noir classics like *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Big Sleep* (1946). And let's not forget the vapid sex goddess, exemplified par excellence by Marilyn Monroe.

Fortunately, the film industry has since opened its doors to a wider range of talent—both in front of and behind the camera—than ever before. As the art critic René Clair once said of the late painter, Jean-Michel Basquiat: "No one wants to be part of generation that ignores another Van Gogh." But this also means that we have to pay closer attention to a wider variety of films than ever before, lest we neglect to see stars that might be rising just out of sight.

About ten years ago, a cadre of bold women actors stepped into the limelight after a series of middling roles on soap operas, TV shows, and minor feature films. Often portraying unglamorous, unsexy, and unmotherly characters, they represented another shift in our perception of women on screen. Think of Julianne Moore in Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993), playing an artist trapped in a dysfunctional marriage. She was 33—too old to be Hollywood's next It girl, but on the cusp of a phenomenal career nonetheless. Larry Clark's *Kids* (1995) debuted a 21-year-old Chlöe Sevigny as a casualty of teenage life in lower Manhattan during the early 1990s. Even Calista Flockhart, though primarily known as the neurotic, lovelorn litigator Ally



Vera Farmiga as Irene in *Down to the Bone* (Sebastian Mylarnarski)

McBeal, had her first major role at age 31 in *Drunks*, a poignant 1995 film about a motley assortment of AA-ers exorcising their demons in a New York City church basement.

Those women paved the way for a new group of women, profiled below, whose performances in four recent independent films could easily be such breakout work. In *Everyday People*, Bridget Barkan plays a young single mother working at a soon-to-close Brooklyn diner; Aunjanue Ellis plays the Harlem Renaissance poet Zora Neale Hurston in *Brother to Brother*; Vera Farmiga plays a working-poor single mom and drug addict in *Down to the Bone*; and Catalina Sandino Moreno plays a Colombian drug mule in *Maria Full of Grace*, for which she received an Oscar nomination for Best Actress.

It's both telling and refreshing that none of these women share any similarities beyond profession. Barkan, 24, is a tough, white New Yorker; Ellis is 33, black, and originally from Mississippi; Farmiga, 31, is of Ukrainian descent and has spent her life in the working class enclaves of New Jersey and Upstate New York; and Moreno, 23, comes from Colombia. Together,

they indicate the industry's expanding horizons and suggest a bright future for other aspiring women actors who exist, in some way, outside the traditional Hollywood paradigm.

In *Everyday People*, a heartfelt film from director Jim McKay about gentrification and the lives it adversely affects, Bridget Barkan plays Joleen, a reserved, serious young woman who's known her share of rough times. Though *Everyday People* is an ensemble piece, and Barkan is in just four or five scenes, those are the scenes that stick with you even weeks after seeing the movie. Her quiet, steady performance provides the bass in the film's narrative.

But unlike Joleen, Bridget herself radiates an infectious, indomitable optimism. "There's always the moment where you can question if something is going to happen or not going to happen," she says of her career thus far. "But at the end of the day, those thoughts are only illusions of your mind. They're the doubt and the fear. They come from not knowing."

Barkan started acting at nine months, when she posed as baby Jesus for a wall plaque. As a child, Barkan was cast in commercials for Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Pepsi. She studied film at Temple University in Philadelphia, but left after just two years to



Aunjanue Ellis in *Brother to Brother* (Rodney Evans)

revive her acting career in earnest—a decision her agent and her father both encouraged. And though she's had some trouble landing roles beyond the street-wise New York mom, that's a part she plays extremely well. McKay says that when she auditioned to play Joleen, she clicked instantly.

Most recently Barkan realized her dream of working with Maggie Gyllenhaal on Laurie Collyer's forthcoming feature *Shall Not Want*. Again, she plays a maternal role, as the surrogate mother to Gyllenhaal's baby. She's not complaining, but she's also hopeful for broader opportunities down the line. "You never know, and that's what's so exciting about life," she says

with characteristic buoyancy. "You never know when something is going to happen, but you know it's going to."

Some actors, like Barkan, have always known they wanted to act. Others arrive at the profession almost by chance. "I was always a little bit, or more than a little bit, of an activist," Aunjanue Ellis says. "Acting just kind of happened to me." Still, Ellis's pitch-perfect portrayal of Zora Neale Hurston indicates profound innate skill. She shines in the only significant female role in *Brother to Brother*, Rodney Evans's debut feature about a young gay man's friendship with an elderly Bruce Nugent—the openly gay Harlem Renaissance poet—and Nugent's memories of that era.

Ellis attended Tougaloo College in Mississippi before transferring to Brown, where she met Evans and began acting seriously. After graduating in the midst of a recession, she found that her liberal arts training made her "unmarketable" in the work world. So she went to grad school at the Tisch School for the Arts at NYU. "And before I finished grad school I got a job, and I just went on this journey of consistently getting roles for a few years," she says.

That may sound easy, but Ellis is anything but arrogant about it. She describes her career as a utility, a means to pay the rent and her mother's mortgage. "She's a very down to earth, very driven person who understands the complexity of everyday life, the texture of everyday life," says Evans, who determined to cast Ellis one day after seeing her in Ntozake Shange's play *For Colored Girls Who've Considered Suicide When the Rainbow's End* during his sophomore year at Brown.

Ellis, who's done stints in Los Angeles but lives in West Harlem, also sees acting as a chance to effect change: to be a positive role model for kids and to hopefully increase the opportunities available to African Americans in the film industry. "Black people aren't just romantic and comedic," she says. "That's why I'm so excited about Rodney. I'm so happy for him, and I'm happy for him selfishly. Not because I think he'll hire me again, but because I want beautiful pieces of art to be in the market and for people to see those things."

Though *Brother to Brother* could be considered Ellis's breakout role, her recent performance as Mary Ann Fisher in *Ray*



Jhon Alex Toro and Catalina Sandino Moreno in *Maria Full of Grace* (Christobal Corral Vega/HBO Films/Fine Line Features)



Bridget Barkan in *Everyday People* (Jo Jo Whilden/HBO)

(2004) might ultimately do more for her career. *Brother to Brother* features superb performances by Ellis, Anthony Mackie, and Roger Robinson, and it's an impressive first-time effort for Evans. But the film's public appeal may be limited by its overt and occasionally explicit treatment of gay identities and subcultures. *Ray*, on the other hand, is decidedly more mainstream.

Another actor who has sampled and foregone the Hollywood scene, Vera Farmiga brings an almost palpable realism to her work. Farmiga attended Syracuse University and now lives in Ulster County, a collection of industrial towns along the Hudson River that also provided the setting for *Down to the Bone*.

A first-time feature from Debra Granik, *Down to the Bone* is based on the true stories of two recovering drug addicts. Granik employs a cinema verité style to convey the harsh emotional and physical conditions born of poverty and drug addiction, and she couldn't have done better than Farmiga to carry the part. "When Vera showed up [to audition] she just ripped through the air, in

terms of her desire for the role," Granik says. "It was literally like a force that came gushing out of her."

Farmiga plays Irene, a single mom in her early 30s who works at a grocery store, earning barely enough to support her two little boys and a longstanding cocaine habit. She hits bottom and enters a rehab clinic, where she falls in love with a male nurse there, Bob (Hugh Dillon), also a recovering addict. Before long, Irene and Bob find themselves on a slippery slope of codependency and regress back to using.

Farmiga is movie star-beautiful, while Irene is not. Nor is she ugly—she just looks the part. And Farmiga played her without a trace of self-consciousness. "She didn't ask for a makeup crew to come in and make her look more strung out, or more difficult, or more depleted," Granik says. "She just wanted to work that herself—no gimmicks."

Finally, in Joshua Marston's first-time feature, *Maria Full of Grace*, Catalina Sandino Moreno stars as a desperate 17-year-old drug mule transporting a belly full of cocaine pellets from Bogota to New York. The film was already a hit among critics and at the major festivals, as well as a success with general audiences, grossing \$6.5 million in US theaters due largely to Moreno's captivating, and indeed, graceful performance.

Marston first saw Moreno in a play three years ago when he traveled to Bogota to cast his film. Moreno was then a college junior studying advertising. He called her shortly after and invited her to audition for the role, which she did with no prior film experience. Marston offered her the part the same day.

"It was so scary to see the camera there and everybody waiting for me," Moreno says of her first day of shooting. But she also says her background in theater proved to be perfect training for such an intimate role. "In theater you have to be there, and I think it was much easier for me not to imagine that I was an alien—to just interact with people directly."

That may sound simplistic to anyone used to seeing independent films, but in Colombia, where the only films shown tend to be Hollywood blockbusters, such a theatrical approach to acting seems at odds with film acting. "I've always thought it would be very hard to act in sci-fi movies," she says. "And I thought all American movies were big Hollywood movies. But going to festivals and talking to people, I've realized that there's a big indie industry here, I mean, as important as the Hollywood industry."

Like the character she plays, Moreno first came to New York in 2002, to shoot the film and decided to stay. Working "real" jobs to pay the rent—from ushering at the Public Theater to waiting tables in the East Village—she's getting another lesson in the American film business: it's tough. But thankfully, and now with an oscar nod on her resume, she also has no intention of leaving.

Keep watch for these films in the coming year, their directors in the years to come, and especially for the futures of these four women. With any hope, their faces will become as known as Julie Christie's, Faye Dunaway's, and Julianne Moore's. And now is the time to pay attention. ★

Career

BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

In a spacious, light-filled, duplex loft near New York's Chinatown, Catherine Gund lives with her family and runs her nine-year-old documentary production company, Aubin Pictures. The apartment has few walls and almost no doors, and the space swirls with the detritus of its daily occupants: Gund; her partner, Bruce; a long-time Aubin Pictures employee, Angelina Sapienza; four children; a cat; and a lazy, sweet-faced dog. Children's coats and shoes, colorful rain boots and diminutive bicycles are lined up in the entryway. A small riot of toys dominates the living room. Family snapshots are everywhere, tacked to the refrigerator in the open-plan kitchen, to the walls of Gund's office, and to the mirror in the bathroom. Gund is a self-described "neat person," but it is clear that no amount of effort could contain all that goes on in this apartment. So she offers up her home as an apt metaphor for Aubin and her myriad other projects: everything is connected, and no activity or role can be isolated from another. "[My work] is like this house, this workspace," she says. "It's all interrelated."

Gund's resumé includes a dizzying array of pursuits. She is a director, a producer, a sometime camerawoman and editor, a feminist, a philanthropist, an AIDS activist, and an advisor to countless people interested in any of these topics. Her description of any single project close to her heart inevitably leads into another. Aubin's next release, a film about a teacher called *Touch of Greatness*, reminds Gund of her children's progressive public school down the street, which reminds her of her early work producing public-access television shows that deconstructed the media, which reminds her of something her

daughter once said about a Cheerios commercial. And so on.

When pushed to list her professional titles in their preferred order, Gund chooses filmmaker, then media activist, then donor organizer. "And always and forever a mom," she says.

This list is deceptively straightforward. For Gund, each title represents an umbrella of activities. Filmmaking is collaborative and allows her to work with different people on every aspect of making a film. Media activism "covers so many bases," she says, "watching media critically and teaching critical thinking, making media and supporting media projects which challenge the mainstream." She chooses "donor organizer" because it encompasses not only her own philanthropy but her work as a mentor to young people who wish to have an impact, either financially or through volunteer work.

Several colleagues noted Gund's ability to move easily in and out of different roles. "Catherine is extremely articulate and very knowledgeable," says Scot Nakagawa, an old friend who worked with Gund on *When Democracy Works* (1996), an educational video about several radical, right-wing initiatives that affected elections in the mid 1990s. "She is a good listener, and she has this ability to quickly assimilate new information. She has a sort of chameleon-like quality to her."

Gund began her film career in the late 1980s as an AIDS activist, making documentaries for ACT UP and using her videos for outreach and awareness in hospitals and with community groups. She spent the 1990s making a series of short films that explored gender and sexuality, and she wrote extensively about feminism, class, and lesbian issues. She was deeply concerned with the growing influence of the conservative movement, and she remains committed to progressive causes and to discussing difficult topics like money and sex.

"The dominant society paints such a prosperous picture of people living in this country," she wrote in one essay, "[and] it can perpetuate the wholly inaccurate image of this as a classless society. We have bought in, so to speak: most everyone, it seems, will define herself as middle class. That is, until she starts talking specifically about the parameters and experiences of her life. Then everyone has a story. These are the voices, the stories, the dialogues that could create change."

Collision

Catherine Gund's dizzying array of pursuits include filmmaker, activist, and donor—**in that order**



Filmmaker Catherine Gund (Judith Haleck)

Her interest in “stories” eventually lead Gund to full-length documentaries. In 1996 and 1997, she directed and produced *Hallelujah! Ron Athey: A Story of Deliverance*, a film about a controversial performance artist. Athey’s work explored religion, sexuality, and violence, and the HIV-positive artist gained notoriety for the sometimes extreme self-mutilation he practiced during his performances. Athey garnered nationwide attention when right-wing activists and politicians launched an attack on the National Endowment for the Arts, which had funded the Walker Arts Center, where he performed in 1994. Gund set about making Athey’s work accessible to a far wider range of people than the few who had been in his audience. The film, which won a Silver Jury Prize for documentaries at the Chicago Underground Film Festival and was included in one critic’s contribution to *The Village Voice’s* Top Ten Films of 1998, allowed Gund to transition from activist to full-blown documentary filmmaker.

Gund formed Aubin Pictures in 1996 to produce and distribute documentaries that would “promote cultural and social awareness and change.” Despite her interest in reaching a wider audience, she remains attracted to projects that reflect

her political convictions. In 2000, Aubin released *On Hostile Ground*, a film that Gund produced about three embattled abortion providers and the ongoing assault on Roe v. Wade. And this year, the company will release two films, *A Touch of Greatness* and *Making Grace*, which was directed by Gund.

“At Aubin, we focus on whatever’s timely, whatever is going on in the world,” says Sapienza, who has worked with Gund at Aubin since 2000. “We try to stay in the world, and we try to be involved in every part of the process, from distribution to doing outreach and making the film an activist tool.”

A Touch of Greatness, a film by Leslie Sullivan, profiles Albert Cullum, an elementary school teacher who used poetry and drama to work with students in unconventional ways. The film includes lovely footage of Cullum and his students in the early 1960s, recorded by Robert Downey, Sr. On its surface, the film is an uplifting portrait of a dedicated teacher. But



Ann Krsul (left), Leslie Sullivan (right) and their daughter Grace Ann Emerson Krsul-Sullivan (John Krsul)

Gund points out that she saw something more in Cullum's dedication to inspiring students: a commitment to each child's individuality. Cullum adamantly rejects the lowered expectations that characterized so much of public education, and Gund hopes the film will illuminate the debate over the best way to educate children today. (The film won Best Documentary at the Hamptons International Film Festival and the People's Choice Award at the Starz Denver International Film Festival, and it premiered on PBS in January.)

Gund's own film, *Making Grace*, is a portrait of a lesbian couple and the first child they have together. She followed Ann Krsul and Sullivan (director of *A Touch of Greatness*) as they chose an anonymous sperm donor, went through the grueling process of insemination and the hormonal joys of pregnancy, and faced the occasional difficulties of being a lesbian couple in straight society.

Gund had strong political and personal feelings on the subject—she came out in college (eventually returning to a heterosexual relationship) and shares custody of her first three children with a woman who was her long-time partner—but she wanted to make a verité film that would reveal a story, not a polemic. "I really like documentary because it takes a story and tells it in a language that people can understand," Gund says. "It's recognizable, it touches on our basic humanity. I know [nonfiction films are] subjective—I believe we tell the story that we want to tell. But that story takes place in a recognizable space." (*Making Grace*, distributed by First Run

Features, will be released theatrically in June, and will be available on DVD on their website: www.firstrunfeatures.com.)

Gund's populist leanings may come as a surprise to anyone who recognizes her family name. She is a member of a clan famous for its wealth and philanthropic generosity—not a background in which one would expect to find someone who advocates so openly for social change and even, in her own words, "revolution." But Gund credits her mother, Agnes Gund, for talking about lefty issues and for supporting her unconditionally as a child.

Aggie, as Catherine calls her, is a legendary art collector and sponsor of the arts who served as president of the board of the Museum of Modern Art for many years. Her mother also gave to many progressive causes, and in the 1970s, when public school budgets were being gutted and art programs eliminated, she created Studio in a School. The pioneering nonprofit helped to place artists in hundreds of public schools, after-school programs, and homeless shelters across New York City. She also supported ACT UP before Catherine had even heard of the group. Many of Agnes Gund's friends in the art world died of AIDS, and Catherine remembers her mother mourning them all.

"My mother is a wonderful example of someone who prioritizes people over anything else," Gund says.

Catherine was raised in Cleveland, Ohio, and Greenwich, Connecticut, and though these were conservative communities, she says that she and her siblings were encouraged to be creative and outspoken. "[My siblings and I] inherited security and safety from our skin, and our class," she wrote in a 1996 essay called "Lucky." "Being a political activist, an artist, and an out lesbian were all things that wouldn't, (and didn't), topple my world or my parents' world, wouldn't compromise my safety or my ability to succeed. That's how it was in my rich family."

Gund's mother may have nurtured her daughter's artistic instincts, but it was at Brown University that Catherine embraced the politics that still inform her work. Gund entered Brown in 1983, at a time when the school was at its activist



Catherine Gund and her children (L-R) Sadie, Kofi, Tenzin, and Rio (Bruce Morrow)

heyday. She was involved in myriad social causes: South African divestment, nuclear proliferation issues, the school's "third world" center, and protesting the American involvement in El Salvador. She eventually spent a semester at UC Santa Cruz, and graduated in 1988 after five years. "Nobody went in less than five years," she says with a laugh. "It just took you so long because you were so busy protesting everything."

Gund had learned early that her family had money and that it came with unique responsibilities and obligations. She is the first member of her generation to serve on the board of the George Gund Foundation. That foundation, which gave away almost \$28 million in 2004, was established by her grandfather in Cleveland, where the Gunds made their money in banking.

Gund says that she decided early that she never wanted to make a contribution to something out of guilt, only out of conviction. She married these instincts with the activism she had embraced at Brown. In 1993, she co-founded the Third Wave Foundation, a group which funded feminist issues and works with women between the ages of 15 and 35. She has also been part of several organizations that promote giving within groups not usually associated with philanthropy, from women and people of color to young adults and gay and lesbian men and women.

"I want my money to effect a more just society," Gund wrote in "Lucky." It is a sentiment that has surely guided Aubin Pictures as well. ☆

Woman, Thou Art Loosed

Kimberly Elise stars in what might be the first gospel film



Kimberly Elise as Michelle in *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* (Magnolia Pictures)

BY AMY ALEXANDER

Is America ready for gospel cinema? Independent producer Reuben Cannon thinks so. The former veteran casting director sees a vast, untapped audience similar to that which propelled Mel Gibson's 2004 religious epic *The Passion of the Christ* to a multi-million dollar success. Except in Cannon's version, the untapped audience is made up of several million black Americans from across the economic strata—a "core audience," Cannon suggests, who are socially conservative and woefully under-served at the local cineplex.

"The expression of black life in American cinema has been very narrow," Cannon says. "That's why people are responding to *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*—it's so rare that you see the full complexities of black life up on the screen."

Woman, Thou Art Loosed, which opened in a limited theatrical release last September, is the story of a young black Los Angeles woman, played by Kimberly Elise (*Beloved*), who struggles to get her life on track following childhood sexual abuse. The film drew mixed-to-good reviews for its portrayal of a subject that is certainly complicated, untidy, and raw. Some critics, though, understood the significance of its healing potential: "By mixing the dramatic and the realistic, *Woman, Thou*



Kimberly Elise as Helen McCarter and Tyler Perry as Brian in *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (Alfeo Dixon)

Art Loosed offers a therapeutic metaphor and does so with a sense of familiarity,” wrote *Africana.com* film critic Armond White.

Like *Antwone Fisher* in 2002—which starred and marked the directorial debut of Denzel Washington—*Woman, Thou Art Loosed* is a milestone in the history of American cinema: a relatively mainstream major motion picture that takes an unflinching look at the emotional and psychological state of its black characters. Starring alongside Elise and veteran black actors Loretta Devine, Clifton Powell, and Debbi Morgan, is a contemporary figure familiar to millions of black Americans but unknown to much of Hollywood—an African American Christian minister and entrepreneur named Bishop T.D. Jakes.

Playing a version of himself in *Woman*, Jakes makes a

startlingly vivid presence, and if perhaps he seems more natural than other actors in the film it’s because his best-selling self-help books served as the basis for *Woman’s* screenplay, penned by Stan Foster. Bishop Jakes, who oversees a large Dallas-based ministry, was first approached by Cannon in 2002 with the idea of turning Jakes’s books—including his *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*—into a major motion picture. As Jakes has said in interviews following the initial release of *Woman*, he knew he wanted to write about the troubling subject of sexual abuse in the black community after spending years ministering to women who were emotionally damaged by the experience. The books and now the film are designed to encourage “healing” and “forgiveness,” Jakes told *BlackAmericaWeb* in September: “It’s not just divine forgiveness, which is part of the message. But also, it deals with the struggle that we have to forgive people who have

done things to us, and how you're never really free until you forgive people who have mishandled you," Jakes said.

For Cannon, Jakes's message of healing and forgiveness presented a unique challenge: Would it be possible to fashion a work of cinematic entertainment from such a difficult subject? And if so, would enough people be willing to pay to see a film concerning this bleak part of American life?

The answer came after Cannon attended a large-scale 2002 revival meeting held by Jakes in Houston. "There were literally thousands of people in that hall, I mean something like sixty thousand people there," Cannon says. "And once I felt the energy in that audience and saw how Jakes was able to encourage hundreds of women to get up and basically admit that they'd been sexually abused, I knew there was something there, something larger than just what was happening in that room."

For his part, Cannon, an active member of West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, where the revival scenes in *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* were filmed, had been interested in tapping into church-going black audiences even earlier than 2002. In cities and towns across America, plays by black writers like Tyler Perry (*Madea's Family Reunion*, *Why Did I Get Married?*) have for decades been drawing millions of mostly black audiences to legitimate theaters. Sometimes dubbed the "chitlin' circuit" of the theater world, these plays are morality tales, filled with melodramatic accounts of cheating husbands, drug-addicted young adults, and women on the edge. According to Cannon, they represent a parallel universe to the mainstream entertainment world, but also indicate a healthy audience of black Americans who are starved for message-laden entertainment.

"These plays are off the radar of mainstream Hollywood, but they make millions of dollars every year," Cannon says. Indeed, in February, Lion's Gate released the second of what Cannon is calling his gospel cinema catalog, *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, which again stars Kimberly Elise, along with Cicely Tyson, and, in the role of an older black woman character, Tyler Perry, who also adapted his play for the film version.

With the relative success of *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* (it was originally conceived as a DVD-only release), Cannon believes he has a good shot at establishing gospel cinema as a legitimate sub genre of the major motion picture world. *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* was produced for about \$3.5 million, much of it raised from individual celebrity investors including Danny Glover, Cedric the Entertainer, and Oprah Winfrey. It was shot on digital but has the look of a traditional big-budget picture. Director Michael Schultz, whose film credits include the modern classics *Cooley High* (1975) and *Car Wash* (1976), shot *Woman Thou Art Loosed* in 12 days. The film has grossed almost \$7 million at the box office and Cannon expects strong returns after the DVD is released this month. "We earned back all the investors' money, which you have to do if you want to keep going as an independent," Cannon says. It helped that Winfrey featured the film on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" last October. Cannon recognizes that *Woman* has received its share of more



Debbie Morgan and Kimberly Elise in *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* (Magnolia Pictures)

than average backing. "This film does have difficult subject matter, but it has been blessed—anointed, you might say."

As an independent filmmaker, Cannon said he has to be as concerned with the business end of his movies as much as the creative end. And, while the message of *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* undoubtedly helped convince investors to contribute financially, Cannon maintains that it's his track record as a producer whose films usually earn back their investment that made *Woman* possible in the end. "You can't approach people and ask for money if you don't believe you can return their investment," Cannon says. "It's my job to make sure that the three major components of the project are going to come together before we even get started: the budget, the script, and the cast. Somehow, those three stars have to line up, and in this case, they did."

The future success of Cannon's gospel cinema, then, rests with his core audience theory: "It's those millions of black church ladies," Cannon says. "They are out there, and I have faith that they will want to see these movies." If one examines the pallid history of films concerning black life in America, it might seem that Cannon has a pretty good shot at making a go of gospel cinema.

The fact that millions of black Americans represent 11 percent of movie-going Americans today (compared with 15 percent for Hispanic attendance and 68 percent for White), most



Kimberly Elise (left), Daniel Smith (middle) and Denzel Washington (right) in the 2002 film *John Q* (New Line Cinema)

filmmakers agree that offering films that appeal to black Americans makes good business sense. And, following several box office successes in the 1980s and 1990s by black directors like Spike Lee, John Singleton, and F. Gary Gray, it is clear that a market exists for films by and about African Americans. Yet, there remain huge swaths of the black population—working to middle-class, church-going black folks—whose experiences and beliefs rarely turn up on the big screen. Cannon, who left Chicago as a 17-year-old high school graduate with dreams of working in the movie industry, is uniquely qualified to tap into that overlooked audience.

Cannon, whose producing credits include *Get on the Bus* (1996), directed by Spike Lee, and author Maya Angelou's 1998 directorial debut *Down in the Delta*, acknowledges that his task is difficult and the road facing any black filmmaker seeking true independence, long. If the business of making films is intricate, complex, and to a large degree perilous to filmmakers whatever their skin color, it is doubly so for black directors and producers. At the same time, Cannon says, the groundwork continues to be laid for more films like *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* and new expressions of black life on the big screen. Indeed, after starting out in the mailroom at Universal Pictures back in the early 1970s and working his way up to becoming one of Hollywood's most respected casting directors, Cannon has personally helped guide the careers of a new generation of black filmmakers, including John Singleton.



In *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*, Kimberly Elise plays a woman struggling to get her life on track after childhood sexual abuse (Magnolia Pictures)

"Hollywood isn't going to change, so it's up to us to try to take control of our own images in movies," Cannon says. "For years, it was easy to complain about what wasn't being shown of black life, to spend energy on the fact that the film community just couldn't seem to get it right. But, I say, it's on us now. We shouldn't have the expectation that someone else is going to tell our stories. We have to have the courage of our convictions." ★

The Miller's Daughter



(L-R) Paul Dano (Thaddeus), Ryan McDonald (Rodney), and Catherine Keener (Kathleen) in a scene from *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (IFC Films)

Rebecca Miller's lives out (and films) her dreams

BY RICK HARRISON

Rebecca Miller needs to recharge. Well, her phone at least.

Plugged into an ancient socket behind me and perched on a café table supporting a plate of hummus and a soy-milk coffee, the little bugger buzzes in its charger twice, prompting Miller to twice interrupt an already brief conversation with whispered instructions to her husband—concerning AOL icons and DVD rewritable disks in desk drawers—that she smiles off with throaty and playful exasperation.

"My husband doesn't use computers," she says. "He types in longhand."

You won't read an article about writer-director Rebecca Miller that doesn't mention her husband of eight years, actor Daniel Day-Lewis, the famously intense, reclusive, enigmatic and elusive prize of world-renown starlets and with whom Miller shares two children and homes in Ireland and Manhattan's Greenwich Village—not far from where we are chatting.

Or, no matter how wily or exhaustive the search, you cer-

tainly won't find an article that omits mention of her father, Arthur Miller, America's greatest living playwright—a distinction no less exalted because of his 89 years and declining health.

And then, so these articles invariably go, they'll be a bit about how Rebecca Miller was born in 1962, a month after the death of her father's second wife, Marilyn Monroe. How she lived the first four years of her life at New York's Chelsea Hotel—with sometime neighbors like Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, and Norman Mailer—and spent her more formative years on a 350-acre farm in tony Roxbury, Connecticut, where French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson might read to her beside a pond. (Rebecca's mother, who died in 2002, was *Magnum* photographer Inge Morath, who met Arthur on the set of *The Misfits*, a film he wrote for Monroe and which would be her last.)

All this celebrity-worshiping gossip amounts to nothing. It's tawdry, superficial, and completely irrelevant, for the most part. It's also endlessly fascinating (admit it). And you'd really be trudging over dusty, pockmarked terrain if you were to further

peruse these indulgent, pop-psychoanalyzing stories of which I speak, and point out certain curiosities in the burgeoning oeuvre of Rebecca Miller.

Like: how her new film, *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (out this month) portrays the relationship between a loving, but overly idealistic, obsessive father and his attractive, sheltered pubescent daughter; how her second film's second act showcases the relationship between an ambitious young woman's struggle to live up to the judgments of her famous and imperious father; how she recently adapted for film *Proof*, a play about a daughter struggling with her father, a brilliant math professor losing his grip on reality; and how her first film (*Angela*, 1995) depicts a platinum blonde, breathy, one-time starlet struggling with bipolar disorder and sporting—during one memorable breakdown—a very Marilyn, white, plunging halter top.

But then this isn't original. Or truly beguiling. And it doesn't take more than a quick meeting with Rebecca Miller to determine that she is both.

Miller's protective air of mystery, though perhaps just endearing social awkwardness and a natural defense against journalistic vultures, might be her greatest asset. Concerning *Proof*, David Auburn's award-winning play set for a 2005 release directed by John Madden and starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Anthony Hopkins, Miller speaks of the challenge of not creating character but trying to adapt a form and get in the head of another writer. "I felt I understood the relationship," she says of the father-daughter pair the film depicts, "as someone who has a close relationship with my father—who has a powerful figure as a dad." But, as though conditioned not to stray too close to an invisible, electrified fence that her publicity people erect with most journalists, she warns of this and all other amateur headshrinkers. "It's important to be careful someone doesn't become a shoddy detective and make assumptions," she says.

Miller is dressed in a loose, gray, fuzzy shirt that must feel like hugging a 12-year-old Scottish terrier. Adornments include a purple cowboy neckerchief, small loop earrings, and a large, silver man's watch on her left wrist that she buries in a shirt sleeve



Catherine Keener (Kathleen) and Daniel Day-Lewis (Jack) in *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (Nicole Rivelli)

when I glance at it. Her vibrant blue eyes invite nothing but assumptions.

A striking unadorned beauty, Miller has acted opposite Harrison Ford (*Regarding Henry*, 1991) and Kevin Spacey (*Consenting Adults*, 1992) as a way to snoop around sets run by Hollywood legends (Alan J. Pakula, Carroll Ballard, Mike Nichols) and educate herself about filmmaking. She appears in a production feature on the DVD of her Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winning film *Personal Velocity* (2002) as a natural-faced frump with wavy, grizzled, almost charcoal gray hair and baggy clothes, directing her cast and crew with earthy charm—like a woman who doesn't give a damn how she looks.

In a way, this subservience to her work helps explain her curious allure while hinting at even greater curiosities. She's actually completely forthcoming about personal and somewhat embarrassing admissions so long as they relate to her creative life—really the only life she's ever known.

Asked if it was inevitable that a child of artistic parents would develop an artistic career, Miller says: "I couldn't do anything else. I really *couldn't* do anything else. Like athletes get trained really early, I think I was training from a really early age."

As a child, Miller has admitted, she engaged in magical thinking, ascribing meaning to everyday events and finding signs of good and evil everywhere she looked. In her bedroom in Roxbury, which was outfitted with a golden shag carpet, a white furry bedspread with a netted back to it, flowered drapes, and pink walls, an 8-year-old Rebecca wrote a series of stories about a squirrel named Flemming and feared that Satan was living in her basement. She wouldn't dare venture down there until she was 10, and soon after, though her Jewish father and Protestant mother weren't religious, she petitioned them to let her be baptized as a Christian.

If any of this sounds familiar, you likely have seen *Angela*,



Director Rebecca Miller on Prince Edward Island filming *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (IFC Films)

Miller's first feature film, for which she won the Filmmaker's Trophy at Sundance in 1995. The film's titular protagonist (Miranda Stuart Rhyne) at first tries to scare her younger sister (Charlotte Eve Blythe) with stories of Lucifer in the basement but then develops a series of increasingly bizarre rituals to form an elaborate belief system of guilt and punishment that she hopes will cure her mother's disaffection and sadness. It doesn't end well.

But Miller's life takes a less tragic trajectory, attending church regularly with Catholic neighbors and arriving at Yale University in 1980 to study painting. At school, she has said, she was still prone to some compulsive behavior, forcing herself to answer the phone before anyone else in the dorm suite for fear of dying before she reached 36, occasionally bolting from the shower to do so.

While such obsessive-compulsive behavior might hold some people back, Miller survived and channeled her experience artistically, coaxing preternatural performances from the young actors in *Angela*. As she explains on the film's DVD commentary track, she rehearsed Miranda and Charlotte partly by walking around the film's upstate New York town, observing people, pointing out good angels and bad angels, looking for signs, making sure the children knew they were only playing a game. This led to a pair of eerie, convincing performances, the seductive power of which is typified by the commentary track revelation that prior to shooting a scene in which the sisters have

reached an emotional crisis and form a circle of their toys beyond which they cannot step until The Virgin Mary appears, the young actors got so worked up and expectant, that they asked Miller what they should do if she did arrive.

Not surprisingly, Miller's paintings were inspired by dreams. But at an artist colony in Germany in 1985, she realized that she wanted them to do more. "I realized that I wanted to make films," she says. "It was kind of heartbreaking because I didn't know how to make films. But I was painting from dreams, and I realized I wanted my dreams to move."

She also recognized the inconvenient snag of her epiphany. "I was totally impractical about it," she says. "If I had known how difficult it was to get financing, I probably

would have just gone to bed and forgotten about it."

But she went to New York instead, where her father's agent, Sam Cohn, helped line up acting auditions so she could best learn her craft. In 1985, she took a summer film class at The New School of Social Research where she became "a pet" of then 92-year-old professor Arnold Eagle, who let Miller use his editing equipment to make short experimental films. "He recognized something in me," she says. "He called me 'an inventor' because he couldn't think of a better way to describe these little films I was making."

In baby steps toward feature film, she had already been experimenting with painted sculptures that incorporated video. She made one that John Malkovich bought which had a video loop of a woman dancing in slow motion half-naked on a beach with her head wrapped in cheese cloth and a gauze tutu. That woman was her friend Barbara Browning, now a professor of performing arts at New York University, who explains: "I am a very docile friend. I'll do anything."

Another dream inspired a short film featuring Browning and another Yale friend, writer Naomi Wolf, in which the two women sat naked and holding swaddled babies on two seats dangling from an elaborate crane that dipped them into buckets of milk.

"She wasn't telling stories yet," Browning says. "I think moving to first film as a medium, and then narrative, had to be a slow process. She was dealing with a pretty heavy legacy on both



Camilla Belle (Rose Slavin) in *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (IFC Films)

sides. Her mother was a brilliant photographer, so to use film was already over-determined. And then there was her dad, so you can see what writing a script meant. But she kept moving in that direction, which I think was the right one. Her films are all still very painterly.”

After the limited attention *Angela* received, Miller wrote a collection of short stories called *Personal Velocity* published in 2001 from which she would select three to form the basis of the film by the same name. Her spare, observant writing, ear for dialogue and ingratiating wit resemble Nora Ephron’s biting, neo-feminist *Esquire* and *New York* magazine essays without the belly laughs.

The film features intense, discrete, idiosyncratic performances that resonate with wondrous attention to detail. Kyra Sedgwick plays an abused mother whose wonderfully large mouth flattens into a pancake of scorn while she masturbates a callow young man in an act of assertive defiance. Parker Posey melts unfortunate hearts (like mine) with her adorably ambitious daddy’s girl who has serious daddy issues. Too smart for her own good, occasionally confident and cruel, though insecure at heart, she tells her whole story with a single gesture as she impulsively clutches her sweet, gumption-deficient husband’s shoulder, and with a grimace and a pregnant stare, averts her eyes to hide a quickly dawning realization that she will leave him. And Fairuza Balk does that thing that Fairuza Balk does to make her manic confusion and dangerous naiveté seem like a free spirit chained down by circumstances.

And now comes *The Ballad of Jack and Rose*. Quirky and tragic—maybe not as bouncy or snide as “The Ballad of John and Yoko”—but filled with riveting, warm, and often volatile performances by Day-Lewis, Catherine Keener, and relative newcomer Camilla Belle.

Miller wrote the film in 33 drafts over 10 years, filming in sequence with her longtime cinematographer Ellen Kuras (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Summer of Sam*) during the summer of 2003 on Prince Edward Island off the coast of Canada.

The story centers on Jack (Day-Lewis), a flawed utopian raising his 16-year-old daughter Rose (Belle) alone on a failed island commune. Faced with his own deteriorating health, he struggles to prepare his innocent daughter for a life without him, and she begins a forced coming-of-age that she had hoped would never come.

Belle and Day-Lewis built the dining room table of their characters’ grass-covered Scottish Iron-Age home, which Day-Lewis also had a hand in constructing, as part of a dedicated hands-on preparation that is his wont when immersing himself in a role.

“I was thankful he wasn’t Bill the Butcher and I was his enemy,” Belle says with a chuckle. “He was playing my father and we had a great relationship. He was the character and I became Rose as well.”

Miller actually pitched Day-Lewis the role through his agent before they eventually met at a screening of Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (1996), the film adaptation he starred in and that spurred him to remark at the time: “There’s something about Arthur that makes you wish he was your father. I’d like to turn up on his doorstep with adoption papers.”

The couple’s own, actual children, Ronan, 6, and Cashel, 2, were on the set, joining the cast and crew for lunch and dinner and shifting Miller into what Belle calls “mommy mode.”

“She is charmingly frazzled,” Browning says of the balance Miller achieves between mother and film director. “She can seem extremely flaky and disorganized, but when she’s working on a film she becomes shockingly authoritative and has no trouble laying down the law. She’s actually very lovable with her crew, from what I can see. They all get very close, but she’s definitely in charge.”

It’s mommy mode that drains most of Miller’s energy these days. Spent from the children, the holiday shopping, an ailing father, and catering to the intrusive curiosity of an intrigued but unsatisfied magazine writer (with another one waiting for her outside in the downtown December New York cold), it’s no wonder she can smile at all. But she often does.

“At this moment, I’m completely filled up with what I’m doing,” she says.

And the rest, like a scarfed-down celebrity tabloid meal, leaves indigestion and almost immediate pangs for more—an empty guess. ★

Scenarios USA

The Real Deal



Scenarios USA 2004 writers and directors at the December premiere of their films (Scenarios USA)

By Lindsay Gelfand

Sex Ed isn't just your gym teacher and that fallopian tube diagram anymore.

December 8, high school students and adults alike filled the screening room of the Tribeca Grand Hotel in lower Manhattan to view what Salon.com has deemed "the hippest, best-edited, most entertaining sex education videos ever made." The event was the Fifth Annual Real Deal World Premiere and Awards ceremony, sponsored by the New York-based nonprofit organization, Scenarios USA.

As in years past, the winning writers and their scripts were selected from hundreds of applicants and paired with well-known filmmakers and professional crews who produced short films that screened at film festivals, conferences, schools, community groups, and teen programs across the country.

"When kids see something written by their peers, it speaks directly to them," says Scenarios co-founder Maura Minsky. "They feel it reflects their lives."

In the summer of 2003, filmmaker Ben Younger (*Boiler*

Room, Prime) joined up with writers Laura Coria, 17; Juan Carlos Ramirez, 17; Amanda Ramirez, 17; Gladys Sanchez, 19; and Kristal Villarreal, 18; in their hometown of Mission, Texas to workshop and shoot their winning script, *Toothpaste*. Originally written as part of an assignment for English class, *Toothpaste* follows best friends Jennifer and Christina as they make crucial decisions about sex and its responsibilities.

The film is a direct response to the high teen pregnancy rate in Mission, which lies on the Texas-Mexico border. The writers acknowledge that *Toothpaste* doesn't give any single answers, but rather, seeks to raise important questions. The film's open ending allows teen viewers to leave with their own individual choices in mind—those that are best for them. Younger said he was impressed with the drama's realistic dialogue and treatment of universal teenage concerns. "[Coria, Ramirez, and Sanchez] have their finger on the pulse of what most kids are feeling," he said.

The film's touchy subject spawned opposition from Mission's local church, and the high school's administration requested additional editing before screening. But Ramirez makes it clear that the film's purpose is to show, and not shy away from, the serious, real-life consequences of decisions young people make about sexuality. "[Sex] is realistic," she says. "And it happens."

All Falls Down, based on a story written by 15-year-old Chantel Woolridge and directed by David Koepp (*Stir of Echoes*, *Trigger Effect*, *Secret Window*), follows three best girlfriends as they begin the school year. Like many New York City teens, they take the subway to and from school. During their daily commute they meet a group of boys, relationships form, various interpersonal and sexual choices are made, and each person is challenged to figure out who they are and what they want. Reflecting on the production, Koepp noted the refreshing idealism that came through working with teenage filmmakers. "This shoot was one of the most energizing experiences I've had," Koepp said.

Adapted from the story Woolridge wrote with Francine Kitson, also 15, *All Falls Down* touches on themes of alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, and relationships. Woolridge prides herself in the description of her work as "the way teenagers really think and talk." "It's not like the movies they used to show in health class," she says.

The last film to screen at the December awards was *A Memoir to My Former Self*. Adapted from a short story written by 17-year-old Katrina Garcia of Miami, Florida and directed by Jamie Babbit (*But I'm a Cheerleader*), the film follows the smart, beautiful and popular Chloe, who, in the context of high school, seems to have it all. During meals and behind closed doors, however, she struggles with the psychological and physical effects of bulimia. When a high school adversary challenges her, both in the classroom and at the lunch table, Chloe is forced to confront her disease. Shocked out of her comfort zone, Chloe realizes that the road to health requires not just a physical change, but an attitude change as well. Babbit, who was eight months pregnant by the film's weekend shoot, requested special permission from her doctor to fly in order to



Shooting a scene with the boys on the subway, for the NYC film *All Falls Down* (Edward Pagan)

keep her promise to Garcia.

The winning writers in attendance, all of whom happened to be female, expressed sincere gratitude to their directors and to Scenarios for giving them such a unique opportunity. But the thanks didn't end there. Scenarios presented Eastman Kodak with an award acknowledging its "genuine commitment to corporate responsibility." And filmmaker Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*) was honored as a longtime advocate of the Scenarios mission, starting with his direction of the program's debut film, *He Said, She Said* (1999). Ravi Lambert, the screenwriter of that winning film, presented Liman with the award.

Scenarios USA endorses the notion that by valuing youth and listening to their opinions, society can have an impact on promoting healthy relationships and lowering the rate of HIV and pregnancy among teenagers. And by providing young people with an arena where they can teach one another instead of being lectured at by others, says Minsky, it is giving teenagers "control over their own media messages." By bringing realistic scenarios from page to screen, Scenarios USA has not only provided a creative outlet for talented high school writers, but it has also revolutionized the way in which sexual education reaches our youth today.

Perhaps, more effectively than bananas, condoms, and giggles. ★

Please visit www.scenariosusa.org for more information.



Robert Cerda and Mirna Garcia in the Texas film *Toothpaste*

CLASSIFIEDS

By Michael Tierno

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ARE YOU STUCK? Fernanda Rossi, script & documentary doctor, specializes in narrative structure in all stages of the filmmaking process, including story development, fundraising trailers and post-production. She has doctored over 30 films and is the author of "'Trailer Mechanics.'" For private consultations and workshops visit www.documentarydoctor.com or write to info@documentarydoctor.com.

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CHECK OUT THE DIGITAL CINEMA SOCIETY, a format agnostic nonprofit dedicated to educating Filmmakers about digital production, post, delivery, and exhibition. Have access to streaming content, forums, classified and more for \$15.00 www.digitalcinemasociety.org filmmakers@aol.com.

DHTV, a progressive, nonprofit community media center and tv station in St. Louis, MO seeks works by indie producers. Half hour and 1 hour lengths. S-VHS accepted, DVD preferred. Nonexclusive rights release upon acceptance. No pay but exposure to 60,000 cable households. Contact Mariah Richardson, dhTV, 625 N. euclid, St. Louis, Mo 63108, 314.361.8870 x230, mariah@dhtv.org.

FILM PRODUCTION FACULTY Asst., Assoc., or Full Professor of Film/Video/New Media Production. The Film Dept of UW-Milwaukee seeks 2 media artists with widely recognized reputations in the production of film, video and/or the digital arts. Along with a strong portfolio of creative accomplishment, applicants should have an established record of teaching experience and a

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MANHATTAN NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK is pleased to announce the 2005 Community Media Grants, available to 501c3 nonprofits and community organizations based in Manhattan. The grants fund the innovative production and use of community media and television. To find the complete guidelines and application forms, visit <http://mnn.org/cm/grants.html>. Application Seminars in January. Deadline Feb. 14, 2005.

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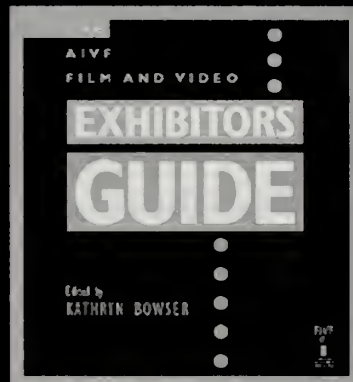
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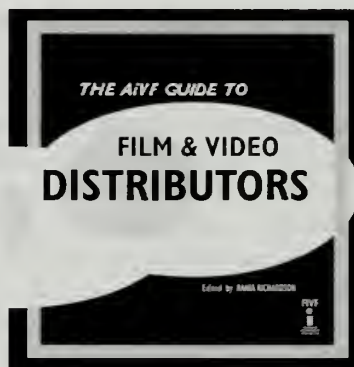
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FESTIVALS

By Bo Mehrad

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cast-sets, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aavf.org.

DOMESTIC

ACTION/CUT SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, CA. Deadline: March 15; May 15. Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: \$35,000 in cash & services. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$40-\$85. Contact: Action/Cut Filmmaking Seminars; filmmaking@actioncut.com; www.actioncut.com.

ALGONQUIN FILM FESTIVAL, May 19-22, PA. Deadline: Apr. 30. This Festival welcomes entries from all over the world & strives to promote independent film, w/ an emphasis on work from the "genius belt" between New York & Philadelphia. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, short, music video, student. Awards: None. Formats: 3/4", VHS, DV, Beta, Digifilm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts & students), \$40 (features). Contact: Algonquin Film Festival Screening Committee; (267) 981-1139; info@algonquinfest.org; www.algonquinfest.org.

ANTELOPE VALLEY INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, May 13-15, CA. Deadline: Feb. 1; March 28 (final). Fest seeks short & feature films of all genres & formats for its annual fest. Cats: short, doc, feature, music video, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV. pre. Entry Fee: \$25; \$40 (Final). Contact: Michael Traina; (661) 722-6478; fax: 772-6612; info@aviff.com; www.aviff.com.

BROOKLYN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, June 3-12, NY. Deadline: Nov. 30 (early); March 15 (Final). In the effort of consolidating its international presence, BIFF has been developing solid ties with major over-

seas film fests and distribution companies as well as successfully pursuing international sponsorship. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short, animation. Awards: \$50,000 in services and cash. Formats: All formats accepted, 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-VHS, Beta SP, super 8, 8mm, Hi8, DV, DVD, Beta, CD-ROM. Preview on VHS (non-returnable). Entry Fee: \$30 (early); \$50 (final). Contact: Mario Pego, 180 South 4th St., Ste. 2 S., Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-4306; fax: 599-5039; 2005@wbff.org; www.wbff.org

CHICAGO UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, May 5-11, IL. Deadline: Jan. 1; Feb. 15; March 1 (final). Largest Midwest showcase for Underground, experimental & independent films & videos. Chicago's premiere independent film event, fest was created to promote works that innovate in form, technique, or content from "indie" mainstream & to present adventurous works that challenge & transcend commercial & audience expectations. Cats: Feature, Doc, Experimental, Short, Animation. Awards: Cash prizes & choice for: narrative feature, narrative short, doc, experimental, animation, music video, audience choice & "made in Chicago". Formats: 16mm, 35mm, S-8, Video, Mini DV, DVD, Mini-DV, 1/2". Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$40 (late). Contact: c/o Bryan Wendorf; (773) 278-3119; fax: 327-3464; info@cuff.org; www.cuff.org

CONNECTICUT GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, June 3-11, CT. Deadline: March 15. The Festival organizers are committed to bringing outstanding gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, & queer film to the New England community. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, Video. Entry Fee: \$10 (US); \$15 (non US). Contact: Dan Millett; (860) 586-1136; fax: (413) 618-9312; glff@yahoo.com; www.ctglff.org.

DC ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 6-15, DC. Deadline: April 1;

May 1 (final). The fest's mission is to "bring attention to the creative output from APA communities & encourage the artistic development of APA films in the greater Washington DC metropolitan region." The screenings are held at the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art's Meyer Auditorium, the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture, the Canadian Embassy, & other venues. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Betacam. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (shorts & features); \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; gene@apafilm.org; www.apafilm.org.

EPFC EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, May 13-15, CA. Deadline: April 1. A Festival devoted to filmmakers working in the experiential & doc genres. Films will screen in the Echo Park Film Center micro-cinema fest. Cats: doc, experimental, short. Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: Echo Park Film Center; paolofilm@hotmail.com; www.echoparkfilmcenter.org.

FILM LIFE'S AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-17, FL. Deadline: April 8. Festival is 5 days of independent films, panels, workshops, Hollywood premieres, live entertainment and the ABFF Awards Dinner. Filmmakers, actors, industry executives, journalists and the film-loving public form a creatively charged atmosphere on South Beach that leads to serious business. Fest dubs itself as "the premiere international black film market and retreat." Founded: 1997. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Formats: All formats. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30. Contact: Festival, c/o Film Life, 584 Broadway, Ste 1004, New York, NY, USA 10012; (212) 966-2411; fax: 966-2219; abff@thefilm.life.com; www.abff.com.

HAWAII OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL, Spring, HI. Deadline: April 1. Fest features films about the marine environment, ocean recreation & our cultural connections to the sea. Cats:

feature, doc, short, student, youth media. Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Meli Sandler; (808) 826-4581; h20film@yahoo.com; www.hawaiiocanfilmfestival.org.

HONOLULU RAINBOW FILM FESTIVAL, May 26-29, HI. Deadline: March 15. Formerly the Honolulu Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, the fest welcomes works of any length or genre made by or about lesbians & gay men. Fest prefers US, Hawaiian, or World Premieres. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Experimental, Any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15 (shorts); \$25 (features). Contact: Connie Florez, Program Director; (808) 381-1952; fax: 943-1724; info@hglcf.org; www.hglcf.org.

HOT SPRINGS DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 21-30, AR. Deadline: April 8; May 20 (final). Annual fest accepting nonfiction film submissions for one of the country's premier nonfiction film celebrations.

Noncompetitive fest honors films & filmmakers each yr. in beautiful Hot Springs Nat'l Park, Arkansas. More than 85 films are screened, incl. the current year's Academy Award nominees in nonfiction cats. Special guest scholars, filmmakers & celebrities participate in forums & lectures. Founded: 1992. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", DVD, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$55. Contact: Darla Dixon, HSDFI; (501) 321-4747; fax: (501) 321-0211; ddixon@sdfi.org; www.hsdfi.org.

HYPEFEST, July 29-31, CA. Deadline: Feb. 11; April 1. Fest accepting short films (25 min. or less), commercials, music videos & promos for competition screening. Only works completed in the current or previous yr. eligible. Cats: short, music video, commercials. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (student w/ ID), \$35; final: \$45, \$30 (student). Contact: Festival; (323) 938-8363; fax: 938-8757; info@hypefest.com; www.hypefest.com.

HUNGARIAN MULTICULTURAL CENTER FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Aug 17-19, Hungary. Deadline: April 20. Annual fest accepts film is dedicated to promote cultural expansion of the visual arts between Hungary & the United States. Work must be under 60 min. in length & been completed in past 2 years. Cats: Animation, Feature, Short, Doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Preview on VHS (NTSC), incl. SASE for return. Entry Fee: US\$35. Contact: Hungarian Multicultural Center, Inc.; (972) 225-8053; fax: (972) 308-8191; bszechy@yahoo.com; hungarian-multicultural-center.com.

KANSAS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 9-16, KS. Deadline: March 31; April 30 (final). The fest is a celebration of independent cinema & features a Think! series of socially conscious documentaries, experimental works, foreign films, & American indies. All films screen in beautifully restored theatres operated by the Fine Arts Theatre

Group in the Greater Kansas City area. The Lucid Underground Film Festival of shorts w/ a punk tenacity also screens during KIFF. Cats: doc, feature, short, experimental. Awards: Audience awards; \$250 cash prizes in each category. Formats: 35mm, DV Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$40 (final). Contact: Dotty Hamilton; (816) 501-3646; info@kansasfilm.com; www.kansasfilm.com.

LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL, June 16-26, CA. Deadline: Jan. 14; Feb. 18 (final: shorts, music video); March 1 (final: features). Fest showcases the best of American & int'l independent cinema. The fest screens over 80 features & 60 shorts. Fest is widely recognized as a world-class event, uniting emerging filmmakers w/ critics, scholars, film masters, & the movie-loving public. Founded: 1995. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Music Video, Student. Awards: Narrative Competition receives a \$50,000 cash grant,

Doc Competition winner receives a \$25,000 cash grant, both funded by Target Stores. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DigiBeta, HD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$50/\$65 (features); \$35/\$45 (shorts); \$20/\$30 (music videos). Contact: Varky James; (310) 432-1208; lafilmfest@ifp.org; www.lafilmfest.com.

MADCAT WOMEN'S INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept., CA. Deadline: March 25; May 13 (final). MadCat showcases innovative & challenging works from around the globe. Fest features experimental, avant garde & independent works by women of all lengths & genres. Works can be produced ANY year. It is the fest's goal to expand the notion of women's cinema beyond the limitations of films about traditional women's issues. All topics/subjects will be considered. Founded: 1996. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, Beta SP, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$30 (sliding scale, pay

what you can afford). Contact: Festival; (415) 436-9523; fax: 934-0642; info@madcatfilmfestival.org; www.madcatfilmfestival.org.

MAINE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 15-24, ME. Deadline: April 30. A leading New England regional film fest w/ an exceptional emphasis on int'l productions. Festival seeks features & shorts "shot in Maine or w/ a significant Maine focus." Recent fest guests & winners of MIFF's Mid-Life Achievement Award incl. Sissy Spacek, & Terrence Malick. Founded: 1998. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Awards: Audience Award (Best Feature). Formats: 35mm, 3/4", Beta SP, 16mm, S-VHS, 1/2", Beta, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35; \$45 (final). Contact: MIFF; (207) 861-8138; fax: 872-5502; info@miff.org; www.miff.org.

MARGARET MEAD FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, November 11-16, NY. Deadline: April 30.

FESTIVALS

Premiere US fest for nonfiction work, w/ no restrictions on subject, length, or yr. of production. Held at the American Museum of Natural History, the fest incl. forums & discussions with filmmakers. Founded: 1977. Cats: Short, doc, animation, experimental, student, youth media. Awards: No awards, some financial assistance & honorarium. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (212) 769-5305; fax: 769-5329; meadfest@amnh.org; or see www.amnh.org/mead.

MOONDANCE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 15-18, CO. Deadline: April 1. Moondance encourages & promotes screenwriters & filmmakers. Held in Boulder, Colorado, the competition is open to all writers & indie filmmakers. Cats: Feature, Doc, Animation, short, experimental, script, music video, student, youth media, family, children, TV, any style or genre, radio drama, puppetry theatre, lyrics & libretti, TV MOW's, TV Episodes, Stage plays. Awards: Columbine Award for film, screenplay, stage play, or short story that best depicts problems or conflicts solved in non-violent manner. Spirit of Moondance Awards (for & by women all genres & cats), Seahorse Awards (for & by men & women, all genres & cats), Dolphin Awards (for & by kids & youth). Formats: Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 Animation; \$50 shorts; \$75 features. Contact: Festival; (303)545-0202; moondanceff@aol.com; www.moon-dancefilmfestival.com.

NANTUCKET FILM FESTIVAL, June 15-19, MA. Deadline: April 1. Fest focuses on screenwriters & their craft, presents feature films, short films, docs, staged readings, Q&A w/ filmmakers, panel discussions, the "Morning Coffee With" series, Late Night Storytelling, Teen's View on NFF Program & NBC Screenwriter's Tribute. Fest's goal is to "foster a creative film industry community of screenwriters, filmmakers, directors & producers where

partnerships are formed & deals are made." Cats: any style or genre, script, short, feature. Awards: Tony Cox Award for Screenwriting Competition, Moby Dick Award for Best Screenwriting in a Feature Film & Short Film, Audience Awards for Best Feature & Short Film, Best Storytelling in a Doc Feature & Teen's View on NFF Short Film Award. Formats: 35mm, Video, 16mm, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (features); \$25 (shorts, 35 min. or less); \$45 (screenplays). Contact: (212) 708-1278; fax: 226-5054; info@nantucketfilmfestival.org; www.nantucketfilmfestival.org.

NEW JERSEY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June & July, NJ. Deadline: April 1. Annual fest showcases the best in independent film & video, featuring premiere screenings of award-winning works, seminars, panels discussions & guest appearances. Max. film age is 24 months, no repeat entries. Founded: 1996. Cats: animation, short, experimental, feature, doc, any style or genre, children, family, youth media, student, music video. Awards: Over \$4,000 in cash & prizes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", Beta SP, Hi8, 1/2", S-VHS, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$65. Contact: Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC; (732) 932-8482; fax: 932-1935; njmac@aol.com; www.njfilmfest.com.

NEW YORK VIDEO FESTIVAL, July, NY. Deadline: March 10. Annual int'l electronic arts fest presented in association w/ Lincoln Center Summer Festival. All genres & platforms of any length will be considered: video art, doc, computer animation, interactive (CD-ROM etc.). All videos chosen will be projected in the Film Society's Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center. There are no cats or awards. All work must be originally produced and/or postproduced in video/computer. Average of 40 works presented in 10 programs; coverage in NY Times & Village Voice, as well as out-of-town & int'l coverage. Submitted works

should be recent (w/in past two years); NY premieres required. Founded: 1992. Cats: experimental. Formats: 1/2", 3/4", Beta SP, CD-ROM, Digital. Preview on 3/4", 1/2" (NTSC, PAL), CD-ROM (for PC). Do not submit preview in Beta. Do not send masters; tapes not returned. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Sara Bensman; (212) 875-5638; fax: 875-5636; festival@filmlinc.com; www.filmlinc.com.

NEWPORT INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 7-12, RI. Deadline: Mar. 15. This Festival aims for stellar programming & claims that it has "cemented its reputation as one of the most exciting & exclusive fests of its kind." Founded: 1998. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation. Awards: Juried awards. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30 (shorts); \$40 (features & docs). Contact: Sky Sitney, Festival director; (646) 442-2082; email programming@newportfilmfestival.com; check out www.newportfilmfestival.com.

OCEAN CITY FILM FESTIVAL, June 3-6, NJ. Deadline: March 1; April 1 (final). Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Festival; (609) 646-1640; admin@oceancityfilmfestival.com; www.oceancityfilmfestival.com.

OUTFEST: THE LOS ANGELES GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, July 7-18, CA. Deadline: Jan. 28; March 11 (final). The mission of Outfest is to "build bridges among audiences, filmmakers & the entertainment industry through the exhibition of high-quality gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender themed films & videos, highlighted by an annual fest, that enlighten, educate & entertain the diverse communities of Southern California". Fest also offers a weekly screening series yr. round, as well as a screenwriting lab. Founded: 1982. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Experimental, script. Formats: 35mm,

16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Features (over 50 min.): \$25, \$35 (final); Shorts: \$15, \$25 (final); Screenwriting Lab \$25 (1/31 only). Contact: Festival; (213)480-7088; fax: 480-7099; programming@outfest.org; www.outfest.org.

PHILADELPHIA INT'L GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL

July 7-18, PA. Deadline: April 23. Competitive fest screening int'l features, documentaries, & shorts, w/ cash prizes for both jury & audience awards. Cats: feature, short, doc, children. Awards: Audience Award, Best Feature (\$1,000); Audience Award, Gay Male Short (\$500); Audience Award, Lesbian Short (\$500); Jury Award, Best Feature (\$500); Jury Award, Doc (\$500); Jury Award, Lesbian Short (\$250); Jury Award, Gay Male Short (\$250). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (215) 733-0608 ext. 249; fax: (215) 733-0668; rmurray@phillyfests.com; www.phillyfests.com.

REEL VENUS FILM FESTIVAL

July 20-22, NY. Deadline: April 15; May 13 (final). A showcase of Film/Video Shorts, 30 min. & under, all genres, directed & written by emerging & established women filmmakers from the United States & Abroad. Founded: 2003. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Melissa Fowler, Festival Director; info@reelvenus.com; www.reelvenus.com.

RURAL ROUTE FILM FESTIVAL

July 23-25, NY. Deadline: March 25. Festival has been created to highlight works that deal w/ rural people & places. Works that incl. alternative country, country western & folk music are encouraged. Founded: 2002. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta, mini-DV, DVD. preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$15 shorts; \$35 features. Contact: Alan Webber; (718) 389-4367; filmfest@ruralroutefilms.com; www.ruralroutefilms.com.

SAN FRANCISCO BLACK FILM FESTIVAL

June 8-12, CA. Deadline: Feb. 1; March 1 (final). The San Francisco Black Film Festival offers an array of cutting edge films & videos from the most recent cinematic works from emerging & established filmmakers that highlight the beauty & complexity of the African & African American experience. Films must have been completed since January of previous yr. & one of the film's principals (director, writer producer) must be Black or of African heritage. Other activities incl. educational seminars, panels, youth events & an awards ceremony. Founded: 1998. Cats: feature, short, narrative, doc, children, family, youth media, animation, script, music video, any style or genre. Awards: Melvin Van Peebles Maverick Award to overall winner; Best Feature, Best Short, Best Doc, Jury Award for Best Screenplay. Formats: 35mm, Beta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (films); \$35 (screenplays). Contact: Ave Montague, director; (415) 771-9271; fax: 775-1332; info@sfbff.org; www.sfbff.org.

SAN FRANCISCO SEX WORKERS' FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

May, CA. Deadline: March 1. Fest "provides a forum for the accomplishments of sex worker film & videomakers in a contemporary cinema." Works must be directed/produced by someone who has worked in the sex industries or be about any aspect of sex work or sex industries. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, music video, student, youth media, installation, any style or genre. Awards: Sex Worker Sinema Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4", DV (mini DV preferred for screening). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Carol Leigh; (415) 751-1659; email swfest@bayswan.org; www.bayswan.org/swfest.html.

SEATTLE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

May 19-June 12, WA. Deadline: Feb. 1; March 1. SIFF is the largest film fest in the US, presenting more than 200 features & 80 short films to

an audience of over 150,000 filmgoers each year. Fest is one of five N. American film fests in which presentation will qualify a film w/out distribution for submission to the Independent Spirit awards. Founded: 1976. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Best American Independent Film, Best New Director (Int'l), Best Short Film & audience-based Golden Space Needle, given for feature film, director, actress, actor, doc, & shorts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$90. Contact: Cinema Seattle; (206) 264-7919; fax: 264-7919; info@seattlefilm.com; www.seattlefilm.com.

SILVERDOCS: AFI/DISCOVERY CHANNEL DOC FILM FESTIVAL

June 14-19, MD. Deadline: Jan. 28; March 4 (final). Fest was created through an alliance between AFI & the Discovery Channel to "showcase, honor & expand the audience for independent documentaries". The Int'l Doc Conference runs concurrently June 15-17. Filmmakers can attend all Conference panels & workshops & sign up for Silver Sessions, small group meetings w/ industry pros that connect filmmakers w/ decision-makers: program executives from Discovery, IFC, ITVS, HBO, PBS, & more. Networking opportunities abound at free breakfasts, lunches & cocktail receptions. Cats: doc, any style or genre. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (short), \$30 (feature); \$30 (short, final), \$35 (feature final). Contact: Festival; (301) 495-6776; fax: 495-6777; info@silverdocs.com; www.silverdocs.com.

SPROUT FILM FESTIVAL

May 7-8, NY. Deadline: March 1. Festival was created to showcase film & video related to the field of developmental disabilities at screening at the NYU Cantor Film Center. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short. Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (over 30 min.). Contact: Anthony Di Salvo; (212) 222-9575; email anthony@gosprou.org; www.filmfestival.gosprou.org.

SUBMERGE INT'L ART & ENVIRONMENT FESTIVAL

June-Oct., NY. Deadline: April 1. Fest mission is "presenting film, video & photography which reflects our concerns about our fragile aquatic environments, all about Water." Fest is presented each yr at various venues incl. outdoor & theatrical screenings, Gallery Exhibits & Public Art Installations. Founded: 2002. Cats: any style or genre, doc, short, experimental. Awards: Best Photography; Best Subject. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, Beta, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: Festival; urbandivers@urbandivers.org; www.urbandivers.org.

TRIBECA UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL

April 21-May 1, NY. Deadline: March 1. Works can range between 5 to 30 min.. Founded: 2004. Cats: short, any style or genre. Formats: DVD. Preview on DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: c/o A Taste of Art; (212) 964-5493; info@befilm.net; www.tribecaundergroundfilmfestival.org.

WOODS HOLE FILM FESTIVAL

July 30-Aug. 6, MA. Deadline: April 1; May 15 (final). A showcase for independent film w/ special emphasis on regional filmmakers & cinematography. Founded: 1991. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script. Awards: Best of the Fest, Best feature: drama, comedy, documentary; Short: drama, comedy, animation, documentary, experimental; Director's Choice Award for Cinematography. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: features: \$40, \$50 (final); shorts (under 40 min.): \$20, \$30 (final). Contact: JC Bouvier; (508) 495-3456; email: info@woodsholefilmfestival.org; www.woodsholefilmfestival.org.

ZEITGEIST INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

June 13 / July 11 / Aug. 8, CA. Deadline: April 30. ZIFF is an "irreverent" fest, held in San Francisco in the backyard of the Zeitgeist Bar (seats 300). Works can be in any category/genre "that can hold the attention of the average bar patron". Cats: short (15 min or less). Formats: 16mm, 1/2", DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: B Berzins; (415) 786-9967;

ikooking@yahoo.com; www.overcookedcinema.com.

INTERNATIONAL

AFRICA IN THE PICTURE

Sept. 3-14, Netherlands. Deadline: April 15. Africa in the picture is one of the oldest African film fests in Europe. The bi-annual fest is held in Amsterdam & other cities in the Netherlands, featuring works from Africa & the African Diaspora. Founded: 1987. Cats: feature, doc, short. Preview on VHS PAL/NTSC. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Sasha Dees; (212) 864-5921; deessasha@cs.com; www.africainthepicture.nl.

CATALUNYA INT'L ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL

June 1-6, Spain. Deadline: April 1. Cats: feature, doc. Contact: Festival; 011 34 936 336 852; fax: 936-336-852; ficma@ficma.com; www.ficma.com.

DUBROVNIK INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

May 24-29, Croatia. Deadline: March 1. Dubrovnik is a tiny city but nonetheless uniquely impressive & historical, neatly enveloped in the blanket of thick stone fortress walls. Following the rich heritage of its location, this film fest strives to showcase the very best in the world of film arts & cultural treasures. Cats: doc, short, feature, music video. Awards: Various juried awards. Formats: 35mm, Betacam SP, DVD, Pal, NTSC. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts); \$35 (features); other fees (check website for details). Contact: Program Department; (310) 903-0483; program@dubrovnikiff.org; www.dubrovnikiff.org.

DURBAN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

June 15-26, South Africa. Deadline: April 1. The fest screens over 200 of top films from around the world, incl. special reflections on 10 years of democracy in South Africa. Most of the films are premiere showings in this country. The fest also offers seminars & workshops featuring local & int'l filmmakers. The programme incl. screenings in township areas where cinemas are non-existent. Cats: doc, feature, short, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, S-VHS, Beta,

DVD, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Centre for Creative Arts; 011 +27 (0) 31 260 2506; fax: 011 +27 (0) 31 260 3074; diff@ukzn.ac.za; www.cca.ukzn.ac.za.

EMDEN AURICH NORDERNEY INT'L FESTIVAL

June 1-8, Germany. Deadline: Mar. 1 (shorts); Mar. 21 (features). This independent fest programme focuses on Northwestern Europe & aims to create a cordial & personal atmosphere for its knowledgeable & enthusiastic audience. Cats: feature, short. Awards: audience & cash awards. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Int'les Filmfest Emden; (011) 49 4921 9155 31; fax: 4921 9155 99; filmfest@vhs.emden.de; www.filmfestemden.de.

FESTIVAL OF NATIONS

June 13-19, Austria. Deadline: April 1. All noncommercial films & videos qualified to participate. Please enclose short description of film. Film/video must be completed w/in the last two years. Duration of film is limited to 30 min. Films rated by int'l jury. Cats: any style or genre, short, length from 3-30 min.. Awards: "Ebeneser Bear" in gold, silver & bronze. Special Award for the "Best Film" in the competition; Special award for best short under 3 min.; special award for best experimental film. Formats: 1/2", S-VHS, DV, DVD, Mini DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Erich Riess; 011 43 732 673 693; fax: 666 2 666; eva-video@netway.at; www.8ung.at/filmfestival.

FUKUOKA ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

early July, Japan. Deadline: March 31. Most popular Asian film fest in Japan. Welcomes participation by any Asian directors, directors of Asian extraction, & directors of any nat'lity if they are working w/ Asian themes. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation, experimental, student, music video, any style or genre. Awards: non-cash prizes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 1/2", 3/4", S-VHS, Beta SP, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Shu Maeda; 011 81 92 733 0949; fax: 81 92 733 0948; faff@gol.com; www2.gol.com/users/faff/english.html.

INT'L FILM FESTIVAL INNSBRUCK, June 1-5, Austria. Deadline: Mar. 31. IFFI presents over 50 films from & about Africa, South America & Asia. Submitted films must be Austrian premieres. Founded: 1992. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation. Awards: Tyrol Award (5,000 E); Audience Award (1,000 E); French Cultural Institute's Francophone Award (1,000 E). Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS PAL. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Raimund Obkircher; 011 43 512 57 85 00 14; fax: 57 85 00 13; info@iffi.at; www.iffi.at.

INT'L SCIENTIFIC FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 8-13, Hungary. Deadline: March 31. This fest presents works of various genres, which are somehow related to science, scientific activity & achievements. Festival provides free accommodation for one author of each film accepted for competition. Cats: doc, short, experimental, animation. Preview on VHS PAL or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Istvan Demeter, Managing Director; 011 36 56 511 270; fax: 36 56 420 038; festival@tiszamozsi.hu; www.tiszamozsi.hu.

KARLOVY VARY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 1-9, Czech Republic. Deadline: April 15. Annual FIAPF-recognized competitive fest, founded in 1946. This fest is intended for lay as well as professional public & it offers to its visitors a carefully composed program, high-quality background, & a wide amount of services. Founded: 1946. Cats: Doc, Feature, Short. Awards: Grand Prize of Crystal Globe, Special Jury Award, Best Director Prize, Best Actor/Actress & Lifetime Achievement Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: KVIFF; (011) 420 221 411 011; fax: 420 221 411 033; program@kviff.com; www.kviff.com.

NETHERLANDS TRANSGENDER FILM FESTIVAL, May 21-25, Netherlands. Deadline: March 1. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Kam Wai Kui; 011 31 20 636 3727; fax: 31 20 636 3730; info@transgenderfilmfestival.com; www.transgenderfilmfestival.com.

NICKEL INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO

FESTIVAL, July 6-9, Canada. Deadline: March 15; April 15 (final). The fest dubs itself as a "fest created by filmmakers for filmmakers". In addition to screenings of films & videos, the fest stages actor's workshops, Q & A periods w/ filmmakers, showcases local theatre pieces & features local music & readings between screenings. Founded: 2001. Cats: feature, doc, short, music video, any style or genre. Awards: Awards in various cats. Formats: Beta SP, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (shorts); \$20 (features). Contact: Roger Maunder; (709) 722-3456; nickelfestival@yahoo.ca; www.nickelfestival.com.

ODENSE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, August 15-20, Denmark. Deadline: Apr. 1. This Festival is an independent short film fest w/ both an int'l & a nat'l competition. This fest is designed to screen unusual short films of high quality w/ an original & imaginative sense of creative delight. Founded: 1975. Cats: experimental, feature, short, animation. Awards: Grand Prix, most imaginative, most surprising & special jury prizes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (011) 45 6613 1372; fax: 45 6591 4318; off.ksf@odense.dk; www.filmfestival.dk.

PARNU INT'L DOC & ANTHROPOLOGY FILM FESTIVAL, July 3-10. Deadline: Apr. 1. The aim of the fest in general is to support cultural survival of peoples. Only documentary films & videos of high value & quality, recording human activities in social, historical or ecological context are accepted for competition screenings. Cats: doc. Awards: Grand Jury awards & Estonian People's award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Vaiko Edur; (011) 372 44 30772; fax: 372 44 30774; aip@chaplin.ee; www.chaplin.ee.

SALENTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 10-18, Italy. Deadline: March 30; June 10 (final). This Festival promotes Italian and international independent films to the public, in recognition of the fact that movies are the most powerful form of cul-

tural communication and link between cultures and peoples. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Grand Jury awards. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30 (shorts); \$50 (features). Contact: SIFF, P.O. Box 931075, Los Angeles, CA 90093; (818) 248-2349; fax: (818) 248-1647; Email Info@salentofilmfestival.com; www.salentofilmfestival.com.

SPLICE THIS! THE TORONTO ANNUAL SUPER 8 FILM FESTIVAL, June 17-19, Canada. Deadline: April 15. Non-competitive fest dedicated to the exhibition of small gauge films, showcasing a wide range of work by first-time filmmakers & seasoned super-eighters. All entries must be shot on Super 8. Video will be screened only if original print isn't avail. or if the film was edited on video. 16mm blow-ups of super 8 films are also considered. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: super 8, silent super 8, super 8 w/ live accompaniment, super 8 w/ sound, super 8 w/ audiocassette, Super 8 work on: 1/2", DVD, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$5. Contact: Festival; splicethis@yahoo.com; www.splicethis.com.

WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL/AUCKLAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July, New Zealand. Deadline: Mid April. Noncompetitive fest, w/ a core program of 120 features (& as many shorts), fest simultaneously presents Auckland & Wellington Film Festivals & programs that travel to cities of Dunedin & Christchurch & other cities throughout New Zealand. Founded: 1972. Cats: Feature, Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Bill Gosden; 011 64 4 385 0162; fax: 801 7304; entries@nzff.co.nz; www.nzff.co.nz.

**AIVF members can
access more festival
listings at
www.aivf.org/festivals**

WORK WANTED

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices and screening opportunities are listed free of charge as space permits. Commercial notices are billed at classified rates. The Independent reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@iawf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept 1 for Nov issue). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by The Independent or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless double-check details before sending.

ASOLO ART FILM FESTIVAL seeks entries by May 20, 2005 that fit into the following five categories: films on art, artists' live, auteur cinema: the challenge of eroticism, videoart—computer art, and productions. Please send submissions with entry form, filmography, slides and synopsis to AsoloArtFilmFestival, Foresto Vecchio, 8, 31011 Asolo [TV] Italy. Email info@asolofilmfestival.it or visit www.asolofilmfestival.it for more information.

BOXCAR, a screening series held every two months at the Detroit Film Center, is currently seeking submissions of short experimental and documentary work. Send submissions on mini DV along with a 2-3 sentence synopsis. There is no form or entry fee. Send work to: Detroit Film Center, c/o Boxcar, 1227 Washington Blvd. Detroit, MI 48226. Please include SASE for return of tape. boxcarcine.ma@hotmail.com

CAPE COD FILM SOCIETY SCREENING SERIES of Brewster, MA, seeks experimental, documentary & fiction films & videos on an ongoing basis. Films can be any length, genre or

style, but should fit into one of these 7 categories: war, women filmmakers, race & identity, religion, Cape Cod, masculinity or grief. Please send work on VHS, DVD, or mini-DV w/ filmmaker bio & suggested category. Also indicate your availability to appear with your work for Q&A. Send to: Rebecca M. Alvin, Belly Girl Films, Inc., PO Box 1727, Brewster, MA 02631-7727; belly_girl@earthlink.net.

CELLULOID SOCIAL CLUB is a monthly screening series in Vancouver featuring the best in independent provocative short & feature films & videos followed by fun & frolic. Hosted by Ken Hegan at the ANZA Club, #3 West 8th Ave., Vancouver, BC. No minors. Prizes galore. For more info call (604) 730-8090 or email celluloid@shaw.ca; www.CelluloidSocialClub.com.

DREAM SERIES: Seeks challenging social-issue documentaries that promote frank community discussions about issues of racial prejudice and social injustice that fall under the Martin Luther King, Jr., legacy. Selected works are screened for this ongoing monthly series at the MLK National Historic Site in Atlanta, GA,

and promoted, listed, and reviewed in local print. Formats: VHS, Beta. Send non returnable VHS screeners to Exhibitions Curator IMAGE Film & Video Center 535 Means Street, NW, Suite C Atlanta, Georgia 30318 or visit www.imagefv.org for more info.

INDIEEXPOSURE is a new festival that is designed to build an ongoing and more open network for independent film professionals and "enthusiasts." The goal is to provide continued opportunities for great filmmakers to showcase their work, while offering film buffs more variety and easier access to a broader independent film community. I.E. will sponsor screenings of select films on a monthly basis at a local Los Angeles theatre. For submission procedure, email IndieExposure@verizon.net and type "SUBMISSION" in the subject line. Questions may be directed to IndieExposure@verizon.net.

MADCAT seeks provocative and visionary films and videos directed or co-directed by women. Films can be of any length or genre and produced ANY year. MadCat is committed to showcasing work that challenges the

Coming Soon!



"Fernanda Rossi, the Documentary Doctor, has written the perfect prescription for your documentary doldrums. Trailer Mechanics—soon to become the bible on this topic so long ignored yet so central to the process of creating and funding your documentary."

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use of sound and image and explores notions of visual story telling. All subjects/topics will be considered. Submission Fee: \$10-30 sliding scale. Pay what you can afford. For an entry form and more details go to www.madcatfilmfestival.org or call 415 436-9523. Preview Formats: VHS or DVD. Exhibition Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Super8, Beta SP, Mini DV, VHS. All entries must include a SASE for return of materials. Early Deadline: March 25, 2005. Final Deadline: May 13, 2005.

REELBLACK PRESENTS is a Philadelphia-based film and video showcase designed to promote, develop and nurture an audience for quality African-American film. We're currently looking for recent Features, Shorts & Docs by and/or about Black Folks. No entry fee. Please send (non-returnable) VHS or DVD screeners w/ presskit to REELBLACK, P.O. Box 12302 Philadelphia, PA 19119. For more info contact Miked@reelblack.com.

T 2005 TAURI FILM FESTIVAL, a division of Ozark Foothills FilmFest, is open to filmmakers age

18 and under. Entries will be judged by peer panels at three grade levels: 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Entries are being sought in the following categories: narrative, documentary, music video, public service message, and animation/experimental. Awards will be given for the best film at each grade level in each category. Award-winners and other films selected by the judges will be included in a "Best of T Tauri" regional touring program. VHS or DVD formatted entries should be sent to T Tauri Film Festival, 195 Peel Road, Locust Grove AR 72550 by May 1, 2005. Additional information is available at filmfest@direcway.com. Email filmfest@direcwat.com or call 870-251-1189.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT FILM FEST, CA. Deadline: APRIL 1st Fest: May 6-8, 2005 Fest highlights films made by youth Cats: Experimental, Doc, Animation & Narrative Awards: Honorarium & prizes awarded. Formats: All Preview: DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: None Contact: Kids Director Echo Park Film Center 1200 N. Alvarado Street LA CA 90026 (213) 484-8846 www.echoparkfilmcenter.org

NOTICES

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@avf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

COMPETITIONS

BUSINESS FILMS ELAN announces new screenplay contest: The India Screen 2005 \$500 - \$1000 Short & Feature Screenplay Contest. Deadline: April 30, 2005 — Entry is free and winning films will be slotted for production. For more information and submission guidelines, please go to: www.businessfilm.com/businessfilmelan.html.

CONFERENCES WORKSHOPS

GERALDINE R. DODGE FELLOWSHIPS are available to qualified New Jersey residents to attend the 51st Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, titled CINEMA AND HISTORY and curated by Jesse Lerner and Michael Renov, at the Claremont Colleges in California, June 11-18 2005. Awards cover registration fee of \$750. Deadline: March 26 2005. Contact: Margarita De la Vega-Hurtado, Executive Director, The Flaherty, 6 East 39th St 12 floor, New York, NY 10016, (212) 448-0457, ifs@flahertyseminar.org or visit www.flahertyseminar.org.

THE 51ST ROBERT FLAHERTY FILM SEMINAR, titled Cinema and History and curated by Jesse Lerner and Michael Renov, will be held at the Claremont Colleges in California, June 11-18 2005. International Film Seminars awards partial fellowships to attend seminar for those involved with independent media. Fellowships cover part of the registration fee. Deadline: March 26 2005. Contact: Margarita De la Vega-Hurtado, Executive Director, The Flaherty, 6 East 39th St 12 floor, New York, NY 10016,

tel (212) 448-0457 ifs@flahertyseminar.org or visit www.flahertyseminar.org.

GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT & MEDIA SUMMIT 2005: New York City: May 14-15. A lively and engaging forum of people with vision from the independent and mainstream music, film, video and multimedia worlds of the entertainment, media, and communications industries. People connect with people, exchanging ideas and creating projects in a context of innovation, reinvention, and possibility. Together, this community is proactively effecting new ways to achieve sustainable careers and the direction of the revolution now taking place in marketing and distribution. For more information visit www.globalentertainmentnetwork.com.

THE CREATIVITY WORKSHOP is offering a two day intensive in New York April 16-17, 2005. Tuition is \$350. Please visit www.creativitycourses05.com or call toll-free 1-866-217-1980 for more information.

RESOURCES FUNDS

CREATIVE CAPITAL, a New York City-based nonprofit organization which supports artists who pursue innovation in form and/or content in the performing and visual arts, film and video, and emerging fields. For the 2004-05 grant round, Creative Capital will be awarding grants to individual artists in the fields of Visual Arts and Film/Video. Visual arts may include painting, sculpture, works on paper, installation, photo-based work, contemporary crafts, and interdisciplinary projects. Film/video arts are all forms of film

and video, including experimental documentary, animation, experimental media, non-traditional narrative in all formats, and interdisciplinary projects. Deadline: March 15; For more information, visit: www.creative-capital.org

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER's finishing funds provided to artists with grants up to \$1,500 to help with the completion of electronic media and film art works which are currently in progress. Deadline: March 15, 2005. For more information, visit: www.experimentaltvcenter.org. Phone/Fax 607-687-4341.

FILM AND VIDEO ARTS institute, a non-profit media arts organization which has been around for 33 years, provides production and post-production equipment, fiscal sponsorship, plus mentorship programs to members. Funded productions are of any length and genre. For More information and guidelines, visit their website: www.fva.com.

FILM FORUM, a non-profit cinema, accepts applications from filmmakers in need of fiscal sponsorship. Film Forum retains 5% of all funds received on behalf of the filmmaker from funding sources. To be considered, please send a letter of introduction along with a project narrative to: Film Forum Fiscal Sponsorship Program 209 West Houston Street New York, NY 10014. Please email Dominick at Dominick@filmforum.org.

FLINTRIDGE FOUNDATION is a family foundation based in Pasadena, California. The foundation awarded its first grants in 1986 and

established the Awards for Visual Artists in 1997. Our grantmaking (nearly \$1.7 million annually) is concentrated in four areas: Visual Arts (through the Awards for Visual Artists program), Theater, Conservation, and Community Services. Each of these programs has a specific focus and is directed to a particular region. The biennial Flintridge Foundation Awards honor the contributions of mature visual artists who live and work in California, Oregon, and Washington. Deadline: March, 2005. For more information, visit: www.flintridgefoundation.org.

FORD FOUNDATION MEDIA, ARTS & CULTURE GRANTS fund independent film, video, radio & digital media that meets the foundations goals to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty & injustice, promote int'l cooperation & advance human achievement. Email secretary@fordfound.org or for more information visit: www.fordfound.org.

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS) seeks proposals for public TV programs in all genres. Diversity Development Fund supports ethnic minority artists for research and development, up to \$15,000. Deadline: April 1, please visit www.itvs.org/producers/funding.html for more details.

KQED-TV IN SAN FRANCISCO provides in-kind postproduction assistance to a number of independent projects each year. Subject must be compelling & of interest to KQED's viewers, or attract new audiences. Material must pass technical evaluation for broadcast quality. Producer must supply rough cut for review. KQED also takes on a number of co-productions each year. For more info, call (415) 553-2859.

LINCS provides matching funds up to \$100,000 to partnerships between public TV stations and independents. Deadline: May 26. Please visit www.itvs.org for more info.

POWER UP grants filmmakers funds to produce short films. These films will be screened at POWER UP's POWER PREMIERE, a festive black-tie dinner celebration with industry leaders, community and members. The films will continue on to festivals and venues during the following year.

POWER UP is the only non-profit organization to finance, produce and distribute member's films through our unique film grant program. Each year POWER UP awards three writers and directors the resources to produce short films. Total available money for grants is \$500,000, distributed in a mixture of sponsorships and in-kind services from studios and production houses. Deadline March 30, 2005. For more information, visit: www.power-up.net

SOUTHERN HUMANITIES MEDIA FUND awards will award a total of approximately \$120,000 to provide production support for one to three significant regional media projects. Projects that take creative approaches to interpreting Southern Life and culture will be most competitive. We are particularly interested in film, television or radio that focuses on the "New Face" of the South – on stories that offer insights into the region's changing social, economic, and political conditions. Deadline March 18, 2005. For more information, visit: www.southernmediafund.org.

THE CENTER FOR DOCUMENTARY STUDIES at Duke University offer The John Hope Franklin Student Documentary Awards, of up to \$2,000, to undergraduates at four local universities (Duke University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina Central University, and North Carolina State University) to help them conduct summer-long documentary fieldwork projects. For more information, visit: <http://cds.aas.duke.edu/grants/> or call 919 660.3663/Fax: 919.681.7600. Deadline March 10, 2005.

THE CORPORATION OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING [CPB] has launched the Challenge Fun & Crossroads to showcase emerging media makers of diverse backgrounds for public broadcasting's national audience. In collaboration with stations and the Minority Consortia, POV, CPB seeks out mentor minority producers to bring multicultural programming to the series. Amount: about \$500,000. www.cpb.org. Deadline: March, 2005.

THE MALKA LUBELSKI CULTURAL FOUNDATION offers ongoing grants for completion of multi-disciplinary, visual, video, and installa-

tion art projects with an international slant. Application process is informal; send brief proposal with some supporting information. Not open to students. Please call (212) 274-8993 for more information.

THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION and IFP Minneapolis/St. Paul have announced a new fellowship program for individual film artists in Minnesota. McKnight Artist Fellowships for Filmmakers will recognize the professional and artistic accomplishments of mid-career Minnesota artists working with film and video. Fellows will be selected on the basis of two examples of completed, original short or feature-length works in the narrative, documentary, experimental, or animation genres. Amount: \$25,000. Deadline: March 2, 2005. For more information, visit: www.ifpmsp.org.

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR HUMANITIES supports television projects that are designed for national broadcast and that will engage diverse public audiences in the ideas, approaches, and resources of the humanities. Consultation grants enable television professionals to confer with humanities scholars in the earliest stages of developing programs to ensure that the humanities themes and questions are well conceived and that the project is informed by significant scholarship. Television projects may be single programs or multi-part series. They can also be documentary programs or historical dramatizations. Amount: up to \$10,000. Deadline: March 22, 2005. For more information, visit: www.neh.fed.us.

THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CULTURE fund for documentary filmmaking is designed to support the creation of original documentary films and videos that promote thoughtful consideration of Jewish history, culture, identity, and contemporary issues among diverse public audiences. Priority in funding will be given to those works-in-progress. Most grant awards fall in the \$20,000-30,000 range. Deadline: March 11, 2005. For more information, visit: www.jewishculture.org.

MICROCINEMAS/SCREENINGS

ECHO PARK FILM CENTER EXPERIMENTAL FILM FEST, CA. Deadline: April 1st Fest: May 13 - 15, 2005. A Festival devoted to filmmakers working in the experimental & documentary genres. Films will screen in the Echo Park Film Center micro-cinema festival. Formats: All Preview: VHS or DVD Entry Fee: \$10 Paul Davis - Echo Park Film Center 1200 N Alvarado Street LA CA 90026 paolofilm@hotmail.com www.echoparkfilmcenter.org.

BROADCASTS/CABLECASTS

HENDERSON TELEVISION (HTV), Henderson State University's cablecast network seeks short films for weekly TV programming. Student projects are given priority. Send contact information, filmmaker's bio, a brief description of the work and a VHS, SVHS, DV or DVD copy to: HTV, 1100 Henderson Street, HSU Box 7582, Arkadelphia, AR 71999. (870) 230-5215 or gastd@hsu.edu. Include a SASE if you want your project returned. All submissions will receive notification of arrival, acceptance and screening.

IMAGEMAKERS is a half hour program airing in San Francisco (PBS) that features the best short films from around the world. Prefer shorts between 2 min and 25 min. No experimental or docs. Prefer shorts shot on 35mm, 24p or in letterbox. Submit on vhs. Send to: Scott Dwyer, KQED-TV, 2601 Mariposa Street, San Francisco, CA 9411. Visit www.kqed.org/imagemakers.




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Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-5425

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For more information, call 631-632-7235

or e-mail: filmfestival@stonybrookfilmfestival.com

AA/EOE

www.stonybrookfilmfestival.com

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CENTER FOR THE ARTS

SALONS

Be sure to contact your local Salon leader to confirm the date, time, and location of the next meeting

Visit www.aivf.org/regional for an overview of the broad variety of Regional Salon programs.

The AIVF Regional Salons provide an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country

ALBANY/TROY, NY: UPSTATE INDEPENDENTS

When: First Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Bulmer Telecommunications Center, Hudson Valley Community College, 80 Vandenburg Ave., Troy, NY

Contact: Jeff Burns, (518) 366-1538
albany@aivf.org

ATLANTA, GA: IMAGE

When: Second Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 353 Means Street

Contact: Sonia Vassell, (404) 352-4225 x20
atlanta@aivf.org; www.imagefv.org

CHARLESTON, SC:

When: Last Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun Street

Contact: Peter Paolini, (843) 805-6841; or Peter Wentworth, charleston@aivf.org

CLEVELAND, OH:

OHIO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

Contact: Annetta Marion or Bernadette Gillota, (216) 651-7315
cleveland@aivf.org; www.ohiofilms.com

COLUMBIA, SC:

When: Second Sundays

Where: Art Bar, 1211 Park St.

Contact: Wade Sellers, (803) 929-0066
columbia@aivf.org

DALLAS, TX:

VIDEO ASSOCIATION OF DALLAS

When: Bi-monthly

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 428-8700
dallas@aivf.org

EDISON, NJ:

Where: Passion River Productions, 190 Lincoln Hwy.

Contact: Allen Chou, (732) 321-0711
edison@aivf.org; www.passionriver.com

FORT WAYNE, IN:

Contact: Erik Mollberg
(260) 691-3258; fortwayne@aivf.org

HOUSTON, TX:

SWAMP

When: Last Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: 1519 West Main

Contact: Mary Lampe, (713) 522-8592
houston@aivf.org

HUNTSVILLE, AL:

Contact: Charles White, (256) 895-0423
huntsville@aivf.org

JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL:

Contact: Paul Godby, (205) 956-3522
jeffersoncounty@aivf.org

LINCOLN, NE:

NEBRASKA INDEPENDENT FILM PROJECT

When: Second Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.

Where: Telepro, 1844 N Street

Contact: Jared Minary, lincoln@aivf.org,
(402) 467-1077, www.nifp.org

LOS ANGELES, CA:

When: Third Mondays, 7:30 p.m.

Where: EZTV, 18th Street arts Center, 629 18th St., #6, Santa Monica

Contact: Michael Masucci
(310) 829-3389; losangeles@aivf.org

MILWAUKEE, WI:

MILWAUKEE INDEPENDENT FILM SOCIETY

When: First Wednesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Milwaukee Enterprise Center, 2821 North 4th, Room 140

Contact: Laura Gembolis, (414) 688-2375
milwaukee@aivf.org; www.mifs.org/salo

NASHVILLE, TN

Where: See www.naivf.com for events

Contact: Stephen Lackey, nashville@aivf.org

PORTLAND, OR:

Where: Hollywood Theatre

Contact: David Bryant, (503) 244-4225
portland@aivf.org

ROCHESTER, NY:

Where: Visual Studies Workshop

Contact: Liz Lehmann
(585) 377-1109; rochester@aivf.org

SAN DIEGO, CA:

When: Monthly

Where: Media Arts Center, 921 25th Street

Contact: Ethan van Thillo (619) 230-1938
sandiego@aivf.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA:

Contact: Kathy Vaguilar

(510) 482-3484; sanfrancisco@aivf.org

SEATTLE, WA:

SEATTLE INDIE NETWORK

When: Bi-monthly

Where: Wiggly World and 911 Media Arts Center

Contact: Andrea Mydlarz, Fiona Otway;
seattle@aivf.org

TUCSON, AZ:

Contact: Jana Segal, (520) 906-7295
tucson@aivf.org

WASHINGTON, DC:

Contact: DC Salon hotline,
(202) 661-7145, washingtondc@aivf.org

THANK YOU

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including *The Independent* and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:



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THE LIST

WHAT CAN MEN LEARN FROM WOMEN ABOUT FILM?

By Lindsay Gelfand

Or perhaps we should ask what women can teach men about film. From the responses below, it seems that the answer is: everything—and nothing.

"As someone who has produced ten indie films, I'd have to say the answer is 'Nothing.' Women in a position of power tend to be as ruthless as men, and women in creative positions behind the camera tend to be as resourceful and dedicated. The nature of filmmaking tends to homogenize the playing field. I think there's a slight difference in content when it comes to women directing porno films, but that's about it as a generality."

—Roy Frumkes, *Document of the Dead*

- "1. It's not a competition, there's plenty of room for all types of films.
2. If you don't know how to use a piece of equipment, ask.
3. If you can't find the location, ask.
4. All short films are not trailers for YOUR BIG FEATURE.
5. Please don't call me honey, sweetie, or anything you wouldn't want to be called.
6. There's no harm in trying something, even if it wasn't your idea
7. The size of your camera does not correlate to anything..."

—Alice Elliott, director, *The Collector of Bedford Street*

"What a woman can teach a man about filmmaking is never to close your eyes. I say experience everything."

—Caitlin Dahl, writer/director, *Place to Be*

- "1. How to use short ends.
2. That magic hour is not just at sunset.
3. How to get an actress out of the make-up chair and onto the set in under three hours.
4. How to shoot an erotic sex scene.
5. Craft services can be healthy.
6. Watch "Thirteen" and find out.
7. How to manipulate the suits."

—Mark Groubert, comedy writer

"Sorry to be politically incorrect, but I don't think female filmmakers are different from male filmmakers. Being a director is a gender unto itself. It might even be a SPECIES unto itself. We can all learn from each other. On second thought, I guess we could give male filmmakers a few pointers about putting on make-up at 4 am on the way to a shoot..."

—Eva Saks, director, *Colorforms & Sesame Street*

"Patience, empathy, humility. The ability to talk to 15 people, frame a shot, remember parents' evening, and plan dinner simultaneously."

—Samantha Moore, *Doubled Up* and *Success with Sweet Peas*

"I feel like some of my greatest lessons have been from female filmmakers, though I don't view what I learned as gender-specific. My teachers included women like Rose Troche, Bette Gordon, and Katherine Dieckmann—each of whom are strong, intelligent directors. I don't believe there are 'distinctive traits' of female filmmakers, and in an industry that is rife with chauvinism, that line of thinking can be destructive."

—James Ponsoldt, writer/director, *Junebug* and *Hurricane*

"I first interpreted the question to be about art, story or craft. But to assume that women could teach men a certain aspect or experience of filmmaking would only perpetuate a stereotype that women and men have specific qualities that can be utilized simply by having a gender. Filmmakers have many different traits, but the constants are creativity, leadership, and resilience—attributes that are uniquely defined by each individual, which is of course affected by their experience as a man or woman, but not defined by it. The major difference between men and women filmmakers isn't in their artistic abilities or viewpoints, but in the degree to which they're accepted in the profession."

—Michael Fimognari, director, *Ocha Cups for Christmas*

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