

2007 AFI FILM FESTIVAL OVERVIEW:



Money Train & Jack Black

Money Train & Anna Faris

The 2007 AFI Film Festival had some great films as usual from around the world. What stood this AFI apart from many others I have attended is that AFI finally got the Red Carpet right for a major film festival. I have been to Sundance and stood in the snow and in the freezing cold to catch a glimpse of Jennifer Aniston whisking by me and other throngs of reporters fighting for her attention. I have also been at Cannes and watched that carnival side show of reporters trying to film stars going to their black tie premieres. So from those experiences I was relieved to see how orderly, efficient and on time the Red Carpet room sessions at this year's AFI Fest.

But there is a downside for me as a reporter because you can get all the pictures and interview quotes for a film premiere at the expense sometimes of actually seeing the film. Practically every film this year at AFI was sold out. And you can't really wait in line for a half hour while the stars of the film are upstairs in the Red Carpet room. Or you are interviewing other filmmakers or actors on the roof. Just being press at AFI or any other major film festival does not mean you automatically get to see the film. And AFI does give reporters chances a few weeks in advance to see certain films. But many times you cannot get an accurate sense of film's impact on a real paying audience watching it at a press screening or watching a screener DVD. And then sometimes because the screenings are sold out quickly for a popular film that you get forced to go see another film at AFI that you would have skipped no matter if you were available. But that's also the fun of being a journalist at AFI. There was some minor drama when a BBC online reporter found out that some other woman was saying she was the real BBC reporter. And this fake BBC reporter actually got interview Jack Black and other celebs at the Margot at the Wedding Red Carpet session. The real BBC reporter was told by the fake one that she was covering AFI for a BBC talk show, but that is highly unlikely because the BBC barely has the budget to have one approved journalist—let alone have two.



Money Train

Money Train & Christopher Dennis aka Superman

The films that I liked the most and recommend with five cheesecakes out of five at the 2007 AFI Film Festival are in alphabetical and not preference order are ***Afghan Muscles***, ***Confessions of a Superhero***, ***Honeydripper***, ***In Search Of A Midnight Kiss***, ***It's Better If Gabriela Doesn't Die***, ***Public Enemy: Welcome To The Terrordome*** and ***Welcome To Nollywood***.

I liked the documentary ***Afghan Muscle*** because it was so simple and blunt. The film documents the importance of body building in Afghanistan. Now this is quite amazing because you could watch a billion-no make that a zillion-hours of news reports and war specials about Afghanistan and never know that body building is a beloved national sport. I mean we have Mr. Olympia contests but we treat body building as an individual sport and not a national sport. In ***Afghan Muscles*** we follow a young Afghan body builder as he has wins a spot on the national Afghan team. You see him wanting to workout like any top athlete, but then scolded by his religious father to forgo his training that day sto go pray. and then trains to win a highly competitive body building contest in Dubai. This doc stayed focused on the difficulties and hardships of being an Afghan athlete. I mean it was quite hard to watch the Afghan national team of body builders stranded at the Dubai airport after a big international event. The team had problems with their travel passports that kept them from going home. The film shows that even those these were the country's most popular body builders they were easily going to be replaced at the next big national event. Thus the film ironically shows that there are many economic hardships, religious barriers, and political obstacles that can effect being a body builder in Afghanistan.

Watching ***Confessions of a Superhero*** was a guilty pleasure for a LA based journalist like myself. The reason being that over the years I regularly see and pass by all the folks dressed as superheroes hanging in front of Man's Chinese Theater. I have to be honest and only thought of these people as more like objects or human props that take picture with visiting tourists. What this simple and well thought out documentary by director Mathew Ogens does is show you that these are real struggling actors and not some photo seeking nuts acting out a delusional fantasy to be a comic book characters like Superman, Batman, Wonderwoman, etc.,. Ogens does the hard part of humanizing easy targets to riddicue, by showing the men and women behind the masks that have real lives.

Nothing is more striking than realizing that these costumed actors are actually living off the tips they get taking pictures with strangers. It was a well paced and informative documentary.

Now the film that was a great treat and was one of the best at this year's was John Sayle's retro rock classic called ***Honeydripper***. Long before ***Crash*** won its Best Picture Oscar by combining many compelling separate storylines into one powerful narrative, John Sayles had perfected this style of ensemble filmmaking. So ***Honeydripper*** is another cinematic milestone of an icon and legendary independent filmmaker. Sayles takes us to a 1950 Alabama that is at the very crucible of when jazz and the blues evolved into Rock n' Roll. What I like best about the film is how Danny Glover is determined to keep his juke joint ***The Honeydripper*** open at any expense. Whether it is lying to the Sheriff about cutting him on the action, planning to deceive townsfolk about a non-appearing Guitar star, stealing liquor from his biggest juke joint competitor, promising gangstas they will get paid off with imaginary profits or planning to fake a power blackout to keep the door profits. Danny is at his best being dishonest. What Sayles does extremely well in ***Honeydripper*** is show how easy it is for a black male in the South to be picked up at anytime by "the law" and forced into jail and also labor. But the true star of ***Honeydripper*** is newcomer Gary Clark Jr, He can really play the guitar and sing like an authentic early rocker. And his acting was quiet natural as well. Other actors who stood out with solid performances in ***Honeydripper*** were Stacey Keach, Eric Abrams, Kel Mitchell, Charles S. Dutton and Sean Patrick Thomas.

Now I have to be honest and say that I saw an early summer screening of ***In Search Of A Midnight Kiss***. So I was beyond excited to see it again at the AFI Fest. Hollywood insiders always say that you need to get name or star actors in a film to get it financed, to get it distributed by a studio or to make a lot of money. But that thought would never be true for ***In Search Of...*** because its cast's chemistry and acting is the best of any film I saw at AFI this year. All the actors are either new and unknowns, but that is not a detriment. Scooter McNairy plays the lead role of the sarcastic, pessimistic realist. Brian McCure plays his lanky, optimistic and romantic best friend. Kate Luong is the shy and devious girlfriend, Sara Simmonds is the neurotic, mean and cynical bull dog of a blind date. Nic Harcourty is the lovesick, possessive and vengeful ex-boyfreind. Twin Caplan is just a pleasant delight playing Scooter's happy-go-lucky mother. This whole cast is a great combination of balance and smarts. No one actor tries to outshine the other and when they do have to step up in their roles they do so handsomely. Alex Holdridge, the ***In Search Of...*** director, is awaiting stardom. He could easily be a the next Judd Apetow if people could see his work. Interesting enough Alex said that he had written a script highly similar to Judd's sleeper summer hit ***Superbad***. Except Alex sent his script to Sony two years before they decided to make Judd's script of about two sex starved nerds growing up in a small suburban town. What I liked the most about Alex's direction was his willingness to show LA so that it did not look like the LA of many stereotypical Hollywood films. ***In Search Of Midnight Kiss*** is destined to be a romance classic—for sure.

It's Better If Gabriela Doesn't Die is set in the wacky world of Mexican telenovellas, but this quirky and dark film will win over anyone who watches it. AFI has always had a tradition of having outstanding Latin films and this film was no exception. What drew me initially is how *It's Better If...* is how it shows a macho and tough minded Mexico cop obsessed with Telenovellas to the point that he is willing to kill a writer who does not create the desired ending he wants. This is a classic Wood Allen scenario like *Bullets Over Broadway* where the writer's work is being influenced by outside forces beyond his control. We see that the Telenovella writer was not taking his career seriously until his very life was on the line. And I also liked the fact that *It's Better If...* does a good job of pacing its narrative as it goes from funny and light to dark and desperate. Ricardo Hernandez Anzola, the screenwriter of *It's Better If Gabriela Doesn't Die*, was at the screening. He told the audience during the Q&A that he was a real telenovella writer for Mexican Soaps, so he said all the wacky situations the writer was involved in the film were based on his on true experiences. I greatly recommend anyone to go watch *It's Better If Gabriela Doesn't Die* when it turns up on Netflix or IFC.

Public Enemy: Welcome To The Terrordome is more of a long overdue feeling of satisfaction for any diehard PE fan. I can remember back in the late 80's at USC arguing with other black students about bringing Public Enemy to our humble, private mainly white campus. At that time PE was embroiled in many controversies with Professor Griff and The Nation of Islam that made some colleges refuse to let black students book them for gigs. In retrospect PE's problems are monumental when one considers today's top conscious Hip-Hop acts, like Nas, being sweated by conservatives about playing at Virginia Tech because of a few songs with gun references. That is why a Public Enemy richly deserves a theatrical documentary that traces the group from its earliest, and simple beginnings to its stature universal acclaim as one of Hip-Hop's most influential and controversial groups. Seeing Chuck D and Flavor Flav before, during and after shows is always refreshing. And the candid moments that Chuck D does periodically in the film to break down the history of PE and all its ups and downs with the media and its critics. Henry Rollins is also the lone white rap prophet who brilliantly explains why Public Enemy is one of Hip-Hop and pop culture's most important and revolutionary music groups. And hold on for your hats if you are a PE junkie because the S1Ws get to actually talk. I mean it is one thing to see PE's S1Ws move in perfect unison on stage doing a unique combo of karate, stepping and army moves. But it seems long past due that we get to see the S1Ws describe their vital role in Public Enemy and how they have been perceived over the years. The only thing I could say I wanted more in-depth analysis in *Welcome To Terrordome* was Chuck D defending Flavor Flav as a the best "Hype Man" in Hip-Hop. Chuck is almost biting his tongue like he really does not want to discuss Flav's crazy and humorous "Mack Daddy" antics on his VH1 hit series *Strange Love* and *Flavor of Love*. I love the fact that *Welcome* showed the true power of Hip-Hop to effect change and raise conscious issues in society, but it should have dealt with the *Flavor of Love* controversy. But either way you go ***Public Enemy: Welcome To Terrordome*** is still a great documentary film.



One of the films that greatly surprised me at the 2007 AFI was the documentary film ***Welcome To Nollywood***. I have always been fascinated with how productive the Nigerian film Industry has been. Nollywood is only behind Bollywood and Hollywood in I first was made aware of how powerful this global film biz is at the 2005 Los Angeles Nollywood Conference. I met and interviewed a Nollywood actress that told me she had starred in over 1,000 films. That seems hard to imagine since even a highly popular black actress like Gabriel Union or Halle Berry will be lucky to be in 50 or 75 films in their lifetime. And out of those maybe only twenty or less where they were the lead actress. So doing a 1,000 films has to make you a better actress no matter what the quality of the stories.

And that's where *Welcome To Nollywood* lets a viewer see how the Nigerian directors and producers just go out and crank out a low budget feature film. In the U.S. most filmmakers think the goal of making a film is to get it in a theater. In Nollywood the goal of making a film is getting it done and then sold on DVD or VCD. This type of "make it now and ask questions" later style of Nollywood filmmaking is highly productive at making films, but not at making good films. Watching the top Nollywood directors and producers in action never gave me the true sense that there was any overall concern about the quality of these films. I was left at the end of *Welcome To Nollywood* what would happen if all the talented U.S. black writers, actors and directors spent a few months in Nigeria. I would have to think Nollywood films would improve instantly, but would this come at the expense of how successfully they have been making films so far? I'll never know, but I believe that if Nollywood keeps making films they can only get better.

The other films that really surprised me was the powerful Mexican documentary and violent ***Atenco, A Crime of State***. Legendary African filmmaker Ousmane Sembene's smooth and female empowering saga ***Faat Kine***. ***The Last Mistress*** a highly erotic, deeply sensual and realistic French period piece. I was impressed with ***Big Rig*** the laid back, blue collar Trucker documentary. I liked the shorts ***The Mark***, ***Psycho Hillbillies*** and ***Bitch***. ***Smiley Face***, ***Secret Sunshine*** also were good. The films at AFI that disappointed me was the beyond annoying ***Doghead*** and boring, slow paced and meandering African drama's ***Faro*** and ***Myumanbi***. Overall I had a great time at the 2007 AFI Film Festival and saw many great films. The only question is will all these films get a theatrical release?



Money Train & William C. Riley

Andy Milonokas At Heckler Red Carpet



Money Train & Eric Abrams

Money Train, Shelby Renee & Kel Mitchel



**Money Train & It's Better If Gabriela Doesn't Die Screenwriter
Ricardo Hernandez Anzola**



Honeydripper's Vondie Curtis Hall & Brent Jennings (left)



Q&A with Cast of In Search Of A Midnight Kiss (right)



Money Train and the cast of In Search Of A Midnight Kiss



Money Train and Alex Holdridge director of In Search Of A Midnight Kiss



Money Train & Honeydripper's Stacy Keach



Money Train & Honeydripper director John Sayles



Shaz Bennett (Associate Director of Programming), Lund, Schwarz, Dalsgaard, Lane Kneedler (Senior Programmer), Edgerton, Natalie Mcmenemy (Documentary Programmer), Greenfield, Rose Kuo (Artistic Director)



Stephen Berkov (Director, Brand Marketing & Innovation, Audi of America), Jenny Lund (MUNYURANGABO), Nash Edgerton (SPIDER), Lauren Greenfield (KIDS + MONEY), Jeffrey Schwarz (SPINE TINGLER! THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY), Andreas Mol Dalsgaard (AFGHAN MUSCLES), Micheal Addis (HECKLER), Mike Cagle (Region Director, Western Region, Audi of America)



Berkov, Addis, Cagle



Lund, Edgerton, Greenfield, Schwarz, Dalsgaard, Addis



AFI FEST 2007 Presented By Audi Premiere Of "Lions For Lambs" - Arrivals

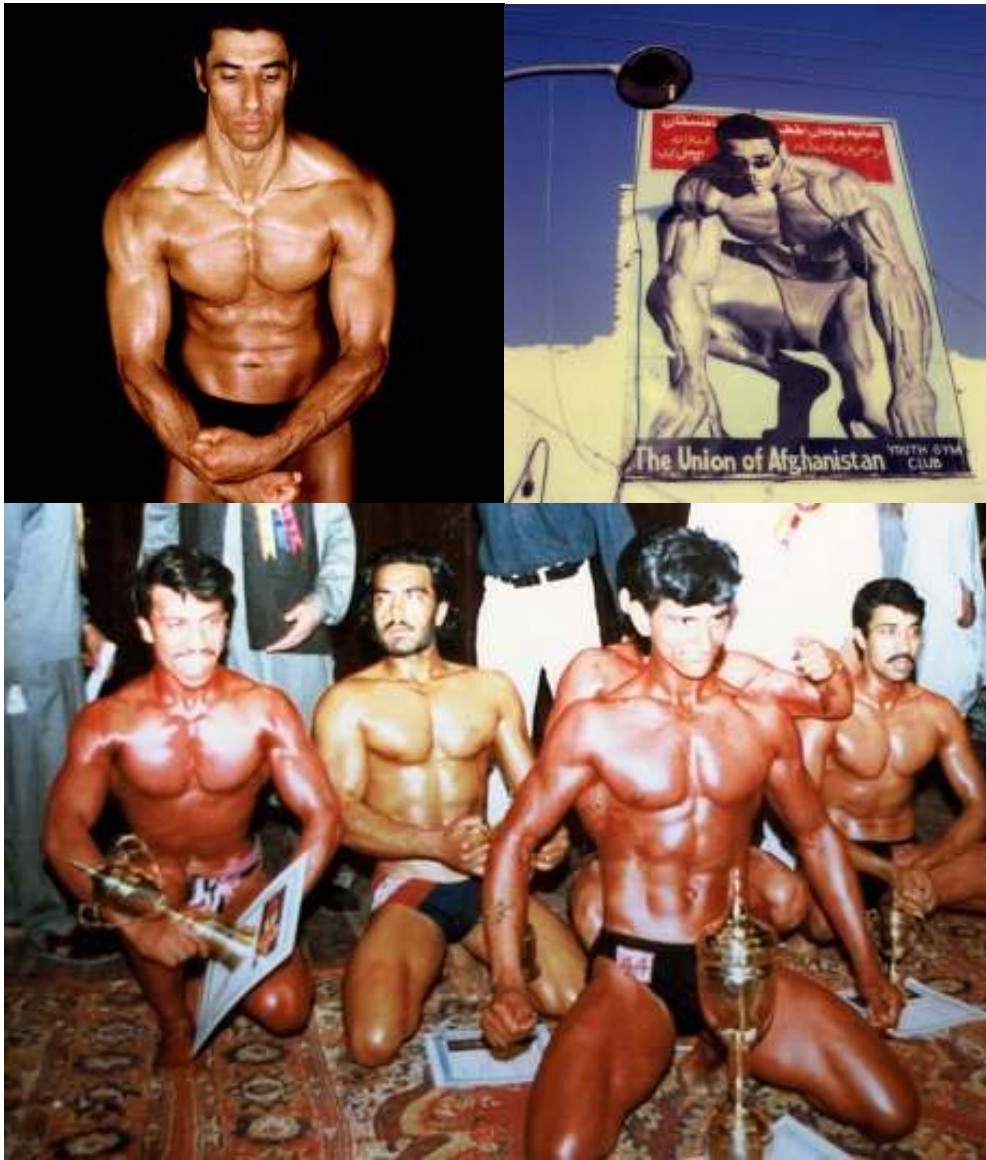


AFI FEST 2007 Presented By Audi Premiere Of "Lions For Lambs" - Arrivals

HOLLYWOOD - NOVEMBER 01: Actors Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes arrive at the AFI FEST 2007 presented by Audi opening night gala premiere of United Artist's "Lions For Lambs" held at Arclight Cinerama Dome on November 1, 2007 in Hollywood, California. (Photo by Kevin Winter/Getty Images) *** Local Caption *** Tom Cruise; Katie Holmes

The 2007 AFI Fest Film Synopsises:

These following AFI synopsises are my favorite films at this year's AFI Fest.



AFGHAN MUSCLES

Intl Documentary Competition

Denmark, 2007, 58 min, VIDEO
In English / Farsi with English subtitles
North American Premiere

DIR: Andreas Mol Dalsgaard
SCR: Andreas Mol Dalsgaard,
Oliver Winding

PROD: Jesper Morthorst, Michael Haslund-Christensen

DP: Frederik Jacobi, Andreas Møl Dalsgaard

ED: My Thordal

MUS: Fridolin Tai Nordsø Schjoldan

In attendance: Andreas Mol Dalsgaard

Danish director Andreas Mol Dalsgaard's relentlessly entertaining documentary follows the most popular sport in Afghanistan: male bodybuilding. And this is not the Afghanistan of your nightly news. Just check out the hilarious scene at a qualifier for the men's national team: competitors strut their stuff in spray-on tans and Speedos while robed, bearded men squeal like teens stricken with Beatlemania. Dalsgaard tracks the athletes as they train for the Mr. Asia championships, capturing a multitude of surreal moments. A sponsorship takes the form of a dozen eggs a day, protein powder is smuggled like drugs and "Arnold" is referred to often, on an exclusively first-name basis. Beyond its incredibly appealing characters and thrilling plot, this film offers something we don't often see: the Afghan perspective. While America remains largely ignorant of the people who live in the countries we are "fighting for," Dalsgaard offers us an invaluable reminder that such a place actually exists.

- Jon Korn



ATENCO, A CRIME OF STATE
ATENCO, UN CRIMEN DE ESTADO
Intl Documentary Competition

Mexico, 2007, 70 min, VIDEO
In Spanish with English subtitles
US Premiere

DIR: Klamve Colectivo

In attendance: Cristina Híjar and Adriana Casasola Rojas

Atenco is a symbol of pride in Mexico. The documentary that bears its name captures the peoples' revolt frame-by-frame as it unfolded on May 3 and 4, 2006, by a collective of filmmakers who recorded the darkest days in Mexico's recent history. Atenco villagers formed the "Peoples Front for Defense of their Land" in response to a government plan for a new Mexico City airport and the reclamation of their land. In May of 2006, they came to the aid of their brothers in neighboring Texcoco when state police blocked flower vendors at a local market. What ensued was a peasant uprising pitting 300 civilians against over 3000 policemen, who used excessive force and violence to quell what they perceived was a mounting rebellion. The result was hundreds wrongfully imprisoned, dozens seriously injured, brutal rapes and two dead. The filmmakers known as Klamve Colectivo put the viewer in the middle of the violence, with riveting footage from the front lines. Images of villagers and supporters marching on the government to let their voices be heard to end human rights violations create a powerful document of our times.

- *Natalie McMenemy*



BIG RIG

Documentary Showcase

USA, 2007, 95 min, VIDEO

DIR: Doug Pray

SCR: Doug Pray,
Brad Blondheim

PROD: Brad Blondheim

EXEC PROD: Kirt Eftekhari, Randy Wooten

DP: Doug Pray

MUS: Buck 65

In attendance: Doug Pray, Brad Blondheim

Sleek steel monsters roll through the night on a cross-country odyssey that keeps the wheels of the American machine turning. Meet the working-class heroes who deliver your food and all the goods you can't live without. Doug Pray (SCRATCH, HYPE!, SURFWISE), travels 21,000 miles—spanning 45 states and dozens of truck stops—riding with truck drivers and interviewing a community that faces mounting challenges including rising fuel costs, an unsympathetic public and government interference. With hauls becoming less and less profitable, the truckers soldier on, knowing the importance of their role in the American economy and bolstered by a quiet pride. As we look inward as a country to address the challenges our excessive consumption has created, **BIG RIG** is especially relevant. Featuring a soundtrack by Buck 65, **BIG RIG**'s gorgeous American vistas and a unique cast of trucking characters, take you along on a much-cherished road trip that will make you think twice the next time you speed past an 18-wheeler...roger that good buddy.

- *Natalie McMenemy*



BITCH

Intl Shorts Competition

USA, 2006, 15 min, VIDEO

DIR: Lilah Vandenburg
SCR: Lilah Vandenburg
PROD: S.J. Main
ED: Lilah Vandenburg
DP: Jarin Blaschke
MUS: Timothy Den
CAST: Keira Leverton, Jaun Garcia, Katlin Rivers, Zia Harris, Kathy Bell-Denton

- www.bitchthemovie.com

In attendance: Lilah Vandenburg

Love at first sneer.



BLIND MOUNTAIN
MANG SHAN
World Cinema

China, 2007, 95 min, 35 MM
In Mandarin with English subtitles

DIR: Li Yang
SCR: Li Yang
PROD: Li Yang
EXEC PROD: Alexandra Sun, Li Shan, Li Hua
DP: Jong Lin
ED: Li Yang, Mary Stephen
CAST: Lu Hunag, Youan Yang, Yuling Zhang, Yunle Ha

In attendance: Alexandra Sun

A demographic time bomb haunts China today. Den Xiaoping's One-Child Policy has left too few women available for Chinese men to marry, especially in the less prosperous countryside. Writer/director Li Yang's film, which received sustained ovations at Cannes,

uses this society-wide crisis as the basis for a raw and powerful melodrama. The promise of a decent paying job lures the naïve, ingenuous Bai Xuemei (beautifully played by Huang Lu in her screen debut) to a desolate farming village in Northern China. Once there, she discovers she's been sold into a marriage that is essentially slavery. Her desperate efforts to find help escaping the village and the brutal family holding her captive disclose an ironic pattern of interlocking injustices. Bai's destiny, including a last minute act of resistance, symbolizes an entire society caught in the disorienting crisis of radical change. And Li, whose film *BLIND SHAFT* captured the agony of China's unregulated mining industry, establishes himself as his country's most important social-realist director—an Asian counterpart to Ken Loach.

- *Larry Gross*



BODY OF WAR

Documentary Showcase

USA, 2007, 87 min, VIDEO

US Premiere

DIR: Ellen Spiro,

Phil Donahue

PROD: Ellen Spiro, Phil Donahue

EXEC PROD: Phil Donahue

CO-PROD: Karen Bernstein

DP: Ellen Spiro

ED: Bernadine Colish

MUS: Jeff Layton Original Songs Eddie Vedder

FEATURING: Tomas Young

In attendance: Phil Donahue, Ellen Spiro

One of the most effective ways to give an important story life beyond the 60-second news bite is to present it in a film. So it is no surprise that Phil Donahue, the father of modern television talk show, has collaborated with veteran documentary filmmaker Ellen Spiro to give us an unsanitized account of one young man's evolution from enlisted soldier to anti-war veteran.

Tomas Young grew up in Kansas City and like many patriotic young men and women, he responded to a call to action after 9/11. After less than one week in Iraq, he received a bullet injury to the spine that paralyzed his body. The film cleverly inter-cuts two parallel stories: Tomas struggles to deal with the complexities of his injuries while we see the congressional deliberations granting President Bush authority to invade Iraq. The effect is a startlingly powerful juxtaposition of cause and effect and the personal consequences of misguided vision.

Featuring two original songs by Eddie Vedder, the film was the runner-up for the People's Choice Awards at this year's Toronto International Film Festival.

- Rose Kuo



CARAMEL
World Cinema

France, Lebanon, 2007, 96 min, 35 MM
In Lebanese with English subtitles

DIR: Nadine Labaki

SCR: Jihad Hojeily,
Rodney Al Haddad,
Nadine Labaki

PROD: Anne-Dominique Toussaint

DP: Yves Seznaoui

ED: Laure Gardette

PROD DES: Cynthia Zahar

MUS: Khaled Mouzanar

CAST: Nadine Labaki, Yasmine Al Masri, Joanna Moukarzel, Gisele Aouad, Adel Karam, Sihame Haddad, Aziza Semaan, Fatme Safa, Dimitri Stancovski, Fadia Stella, Ismail Antar

In her gorgeous and love-affirming feature debut – which was the sleeper hit of this year's Cannes Film Festival – Nadine Labaki finds gold in the hot goo used to strip body hair. Set in and around a Beirut beauty salon, *CARAMEL* stirs together the stories of five women's lives. In Beirut, five women meet regularly in a beauty salon, a colorful and sensual microcosm of the city where several generations mix, talk and confide in each

other. In the salon, the women's intimate and liberated conversations revolve around men, sex and motherhood, in between haircuts and sugar waxing with caramel. Nisrine (Yasmine Al Masri) is a spirited bombshell on the verge of marrying a conservative Muslim even though she is no longer a virgin. Jamale (Gisele Aouad), an aging actress and divorced mother of two, goes to absurd lengths to hold back time. Rima (Joanna Moukarzel), suppresses her attraction to women, until her own dream girl walks through the door. Seamstress Rose (Siham Haddad) deflects the attentions of a gentleman suitor to care for her older sister. And Layale (played by the stunning Labaki), the owner and lifeblood of the salon, carries on a hopeless affair with a married man. When her lover beeps his car horn outside the shop, the other women roll their eyes, but they let her go.



CHOP SHOP

Intl Feature Competition

USA, 2007, 84 min, 35 MM

US Premiere

DIR: Ramin Bahrani

SCR: Ramin Bahrani,
Bahareh Azimi

PROD: Jeb Brody, Marc Turtletaub, Lisa Muskat

DP: Michael Simmonds

ED: Ramin Bahrani

PROD DES: Richard Wright

EXEC PROD: Peter Saraf

MUS: M. Lo

CAST: Alejandro Polanco, Isamar Gonzales, Rob Sowulski, Carlos Zapata, Ahmad Razvi

In attendance: Jeb Brody, Ramin Bahrani, Lisa Muskat

Combining the powers of observance and understatement, director Ramin Bahrani is able to render an emotional tale of two siblings who struggle to stay together and get their own little piece of the American dream.

Small in stature but huge in ambition, 12-year-old Dominican orphan Alejandro works every angle in his struggle to support himself and his older sister. He lives and works in an auto-body repair shop in a sprawling junkyard on the outskirts of Queens, New York. CHOP SHOP is a portrait of a young boy navigating his way through a chaotic adult world. Set in a stunning and unique location, it is subtle and simple, but tells a profound story about the people who live, work, and dream there.

With its terrific performances from both Alejandro Polanco (a first-time actor found in a public school in Manhattan) and Isamar Gonzales, CHOP SHOP is a thoughtful, evocative portrayal of family, longing and the chaotic nature of life. Bahrani firmly establishes himself as a bright light in cinema and a passionately inventive filmmaker.

- *Shaz Bennett*



CONFESSIONS OF A SUPERHERO *Documentary Showcase*

USA, 2007, 92 min, VIDEO

DIR: Matthew Ogens

PROD: Jamie Patricof, Charlie Gruet, Matt Ogens

DP: Charlie Gruet

ED: Rick Lobo, Mick Legrande, Jason Djang, Michael Vicor

MUS: Greg Kuehn

- www.therealsuperhero.com

In attendance: Matthew Ogens, Charlie Gruet, Jamie Patricof,

This is the quintessential Los Angeles story. Young people with heads full of lofty dreams move to Los Angeles with hopes of making it big. But fate holds far too many twists for the naive newcomers and before long they are slapping on spandex for a living.

CONFESSIONS OF A SUPERHERO is a feature-length documentary that chronicles the lives of three mortal men and one woman who make their livings working as superhero characters on Hollywood Boulevard. This deeply personal look into their daily routines reveals their hardships and triumphs as they pursue and achieve their own kind of fame. The Hulk sold his Super Nintendo for a bus ticket to LA; Wonder Woman was a mid-western homecoming queen; Batman struggles with his anger, while Superman's psyche is consumed by the Man of Steel. Although the Walk of Fame is right beneath their feet, their own paths to stardom are long, hard climbs. This film gets it right. Compelling subject matter and characters are coupled with beautiful doc technique and style. It's like a common comic book raised to a loftier purpose in the hands of a master storyteller. The film is a well-crafted ode not only to its subjects but to the American Pantheon and the men and women who live in its shadow every day.

- Lane Kneedler



CYRANO FERNANDEZ
Latin Showcase, World Cinema

Spain, Venezuela, 2007, 100 min, 35 MM
In Spanish with English subtitles
World Premiere

DIR: Alberto Arvelo

SCR: Alberto Arvelo

PROD: Maria Eugenia Jacome

EXEC PROD: Pedro Mezquita, Carlos Lizarralde, Miguel Perello, Emilio Oviedo, Edgar Ramírez.

DP: Cezary Jaworski

PROD DES: Matias Tikas

MUS: Mario De Benito, Nascuy Linares

CAST: Edgar Ramirez, Pastor Oviedo, Jessika Grau, Ximo Solano, Rafael Uribe

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In attendance: Alberto Arvelo, Ananda Troconis, Miguel Perelló

Once honor was the sole possession of those few rich enough to cultivate it, nowadays it is a fossil, a self-imposed handicap for moral Luddites. Certainly that's the case for Cyrano Fernandez (Edgar Ramirez), a true idealist whose devotion to the notion of romantic, courtly love is both his reason for being and his Achilles' heel. In the sure hands of director Alberto Arvelo, Edmond Rostand's swashbuckling tale of misplaced love has been transported to the crowded slums of Caracas. There, amid poverty, corruption and murder, Cyrano pines for the impossibly beautiful Roxana (Jessika Grau), crafting unsent declarations of love in between stints ghostwriting for a local rapper. Everything changes with the arrival of young Cristian (Pastor Oviedo), who, while challenging Cyrano for Roxana's affection, inadvertently sparks a gang war. Arvelo's camera swirls throughout the ensuing chaos, capturing the small joys of a destitute community, without neglecting the accompanying hardships. Powered by hypnotic music and a remarkable lead performance, CYRANO suggests that honor isn't dead yet —you just need to look harder, and in unexpected places, to find it.

- Jon Korn



DOGHEAD
CABEZA DE PERRO
World Cinema

Spain, 2007, 91 min, 35 MM
In Spanish with English subtitles

DIR: Santi Amodeo

SCR: Santi Amodeo

PROD/MUS: Santi Amodeo

DP: Alex Catalán

ED: Jose Manuel Garcia Moyano

CAST: Juan Jose Ballesta, Adriana Ugarte, Julian Villagran, Ana Wagener, Eugenio Roca, Jorge Roelas, Ana Gracia, Mariano Pena, Manuel Alexandre

In attendance: Eugenio Roca

Director /screenwriter Santi Amodeo (ASTRONAUTS) utilizes personal insight and poetic storytelling to craft a thoughtful story of a man looking to get outside. Samuel is an 18-year-old boy who suffers from a strange neurological disease since childhood. Sometimes he stops hearing, can't see or is incapable of walking or uttering a word. As a result, Samuel has lived in an overprotected environment until an unexpected event takes him to Madrid, where he meets Consuelo—a girl in her 20s as disoriented as he is. They develop a relationship as unusual as they are.

Samuel is a heartbreakingly unforgettable character and the charming Juan Jose Ballesta (4TH FLOOR, SEVEN VIRGINS) is pitch perfect in his depiction. The film is an infectiously fun film from a director who has the uncanny ability to encompass the endearing and the bleak, the innocent and the contemptible. With richly drawn characters and atmospheric music, director/screenwriter/musician Santi Amodeo captures and intensifies the joys and pains of modern life—and all the people in it.

- Shaz Bennett



FAAT KINE *Milestones*

Senegal, 2000, 118 min
In French, Wolof with English subtitles

DIR: Ousmane Sembene

SCR: Ousmane Sembene

PROD: Wongue Mbengue

DP: Dominique Gentil

ED: Kahéna Attia

MUS: Yandé Codou Sène

CAST: Venus Seye, Mame Ndoumbé, Ndiagne Dia, Mariama Balde, Awa Sene Sarr, Tabata Ndiaye

When Kine (the marvelous Venus Seye), a gas-station manager in present-day Senegal, realizes that she is financially unable to provide for her two college-age children's desired European travel and study, she starts to reevaluate her own life of dreams deferred and achievement denied.

She was a student once too, with aspirations of becoming a lawyer, but all that changed after an affair with a charismatic, married professor landed her shamed, pregnant, and expelled from school. Later, the father of Kine's second illegitimate child wooed her while slowly siphoning away her life savings, landing himself in prison before their son was born. So, Kine is a survivor, of her own life and the men in it—one of a long succession of African women exploited by a callow patriarchy.

The penultimate film directed by the late Ousmane Sembene (who was 78 at the time of its release), *FAAT KINE* is at once an intimate, human family drama and a spry, nimble consideration of a new West Africa at odds with its colonial legacy.

- *Scott Foundas*



FARO - GODDESS OF THE WATERS

FARO - LA REINE DES EAUX

African Showcase, World Cinema

France, Canada, Mali, Burkina Faso, Germany, 2007, 96 min, 35 MM
In Bambara with English subtitles

DIR: Salif Traore

SCR: Salif Traore,
Olivier Lorelle

PROD: Philippe Quinsac, Daniel Morin, Bärbel Mauch, Salif Traoré, Ismaël Oueadrogo

DP: Jean-Pierre Gauthier

ED: Laure Budin

MUS: Bassékou Kouyaté

CAST: Sotigui Kouyate, Fili Traore, Michel Mpambara, Habib Dembele, Helene M.
Diarra

In attendance: Salif Traore

In this assured debut from Salif Traoré, a former assistant to Souleymane Cissé and Abderrahmane Sissako, we follow the story of an engineer who returns to his rural village in Mali many years after having been cast out for being born out of wedlock.

Zanga (Fili Traoré) returns to the village of his birth to uncover the identity of his father and initiate a waterworks project. However, the fact that his arrival coincides with the drowning of a young villager alerts the village elders, who confer and determine that Faro, the spirit who rules the waters has been angered by Zanga's return and the only way to appease her anger is with sacrifice. The African landscape is photographed beautifully and the script, co-written by Salif Traoré and Olivier Lorelle deftly navigates the maelstrom of modern Africa while giving voice to the power of one individual to affect change.

- Jacqueline Lyanga



HECKLER

Intl Documentary Competition

USA, 2007, 80 min, VIDEO

DIR: Michael Addis

PROD: Michael Addis, Jamie Kennedy

CO-PROD: Chris Roletter

ED: Tom McArdle, Alex Ward

FEATURING: Jamie Kennedy, David Cross, George Lucas, Bill Maher, Mike Ditka, Rob Zombie

In attendance: Michael Addis, Jamie Kennedy

Although the exact details have been lost to history, one imagines that the first critic judgment was closer in form to a Bronx cheer than to Aristotle's Poetics. Both significant and uproariously funny, Michael Addis's documentary focuses on this age-old antipathy between performers and their audiences, exploring where it comes from and what it ultimately means. Addis gets ample help from a wide-ranging group of interviewees and his master of ceremonies, actor/comedian Jamie Kennedy, who is something of a Zelig of contemporary critical loathing. Kennedy is so maniacally driven to get an explanation for the hate he engenders that he reads some of his worst notices back to their authors, in person. Their resulting equivocation, not to mention our discomfort, is worthy of Larry David, or perhaps a White House press secretary. As Addis and Kennedy deepen their investigation, they discover that in the 21st century, criticism has been democratized in

ways that are both inspiring and terrifying. Brutal, brash and surreal, HECKLER is a film that will challenge you as it delights. Just be careful what you post about it when you get home ...

- Jon Korn



HAPPY DESERT
DESERTO FELIZ
Latin Showcase, World Cinema

Germany, Brazil, 2007, 89 min, 35 MM
In Portuguese with English subtitles
US Premiere

DIR: Paulo Caldas
SCR: Paulo Caldas,
Marcelo Gomes,
Manoela Dias,
Xico Sá
PROD: Germano Coelho
EXEC PROD: Fernando Zagallo
DP: Paulo Jacinto dos Reis
ED: Vânia Debs
MUS: Erasto Vasconcelos, Fábio Trummer

CAST: Nash Laila, Peter Ketnath, Hermila Guedes, Zezé Mota, Magdale Alves, Servilio Holanda, João Miguel, Aramis Trindade, David Rosenbauer, Marilia Mendes
Is it possible to quantify something so ephemeral as happiness? As we watch Jessica, a Brazilian runaway forced into prostitution, it becomes hard not to wonder when, exactly, she was most happy. Certainly it was not in her sun-blasted hometown, where she was abused by her stepfather. But is she happier now, on her own but forced to sell her body to survive? HAPPY DESERT is devoid of the cliches that only serve to either simplify or sensationalize difficult subject matter. Displaying remarkable cinematic eloquence, director Paulo Caldas makes surprising choices, finding original, organic ways to document Jessica's agonizingly unstoppable slide. He always presents her as a person to be understood, rather than as a situation to be pitied, and as he does, he extracts an incredible and indelible performance from the young actress Nash Laila. Though shot largely in documentary style, HAPPY DESERT is a film filled with the rich contradictions of great art: terrible beauty, baffling simplicity and joyful sorrow.

- Jon Korn



HOLLYWOOD CHINESE
Special Screenings

USA, 2007, 89 min, 35 MM

DIR: Arthur Dong

SCR: Arthur Dong

PROD: Arthur Dong

DP: Hiroki Miyano, Robert Shepard

ED: Arthur Dong

MUS: Mark Adler

FEATURING: Joan Chen, Nancy Kwan, Ang Lee, Amy Tan, Christopher Lee, James Hong, B.D. Wong, Wayne Wang, Luise Rainer

In Attendance: Joan Chen, Nancy Kwan, Amy Tan, Justin Lin, Lisa Lu, James Hong, Tsai Chin, Mai Lon, Gittlesohn & Marcella Wong-Yasuhiro (daughters of Violet Wong, star of the 1916 film, "The Curse of Quon Gwon"), James Leong, Jr. (son of James B. Leong, producer/writer of the 1921 film, "Lotus Blossom")

Moderator: Randy Haberkamp
 Mr. Haberkamp is a film historian and founder of The Silent Society, a silent film preservation and appreciation group based in Los Angeles. He is probably most recognized by Southern Californian cinephiles as the insightful and popular master of ceremonies for public film programs presented at the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, where he serves as Director of Educational Programs.

Produced, directed, written and edited by Academy Award nominee and triple Sundance award-winning filmmaker Arthur Dong (LICENSED TO KILL, COMING OUT UNDER FIRE, FORBIDDEN CITY, U.S.A.), HOLLYWOOD CHINESE presents 11 of the community's most accomplished Chinese American film artists who share personal accounts of working in film. Ang Lee, Wayne Wang, Joan Chen, David Henry Hwang, Justin Lin, B.D. Wong, Nancy Kwan, Tsai Chin, Lisa Lu, James Hong, and Amy Tan are among the storytellers who have wrestled with being the "other" in Hollywood. The film is punctuated with a dazzling treasure trove of clips from over 90 movies, dating from 1890s paper prints up to the current new wave of Asian American cinema. During the documentary's production, Dong remarkably discovered two nitrate reels of what is now thought to be the first Chinese American film ever made, THE CURSE OF THE QUON GWON (1916).

At once humorous, maddening, and inspiring, the film weaves a rich and complicated tapestry, one marked by unforgettable performances and groundbreaking films, but also one tainted by a tangled history of race and representation.

- Rose Kuo



HONEYDRIPPER
Special Screenings

USA, 2007, 123 min, 35 MM

DIR: John Sayles

SCR: John Sayles

PROD: Maggie Renzi

DP: Dick Pope

ED: John Sayles

PROD DES: Toby Corbett

MUS: Mason Daring

CAST: Danny Glover, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Yaya DaCosta, Charles S. Dutton, Vondie Curtis-Hall, Gary Clark Jr.

In attendance: Maggie Renzi, John Sayles

Using a steamy blues soundtrack to tell the story of the birth of rock and roll, iconic independent filmmaker John Sayles' (RETURN TO SECACUS SEVEN, PASSIONFISH) new film HONEYDRIPPERS is set in an Alabama juke joint in 1950,

and is steeped in the miasma of the South. The film features an all-star cast including Danny Glover, Charles S. Dutton, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Stacy Keach, Mary Steenburgen, Yaya DaCosta and Sean Patrick Thomas, with newcomer Gary Clark Jr. making an impressive film debut. Noted musicians Keb' Mo' and Dr. Mable John also appear. Deep in debt to the liquor man, the chicken man and the landlord, Tyrone (Glover) is desperate to lure young migrant farmers and local Army recruits to his juke joint as a way to keep his business alive. When his efforts to get a famous electric guitar player to come play at the club go awry, he hatches a last ditch plan. Graceful filmmaking, strong seductive performances, vibrant musical numbers and gorgeous cinematography combine to create a profoundly sensual journey, visceral in its effect on the viewer. Sayles is firmly at the helm of this beautiful film that unfolds with sharp insight and dramatic flair. HONEYDRIPPERS is a stirring example of the power of cinema to enlighten as it defies the boundaries of culture and time.

- Shaz Bennett



IN SEARCH OF A MIDNIGHT KISS

American Showcase, World Cine

USA, 2007, 97 min, VIDEO

DIR: Alex Holdridge

SCR: Alex Holdridge

PROD: Seth Caplan, Scoot McNairy

EXEC PROD: Anne Walker-McBay

DP: Robert Murphy

ED: Frank Reynolds, Jacob Vaughn

CAST: Scoot McNairy, Sara Simmonds, Brian McGuire, Katy Luong, Twink Caplan, Nic Harcourt

In attendance: Alex Holdridge

SEXLESS, the 2003 film by comedy director Alex Holdridge is the only movie to have won both the Jury and Audience Award for best feature film at the SXSW film festival. Holdridge's new work is a rollicking comic ride and tender journey though love, sex, and modern romance in Los Angeles. On New Year's Eve, Wilson (Scoot McNairy), a 29-year old guy completing the worst year of his life, is new to Los Angeles, has no date, no concrete plans and every intention of locking the doors and forgetting the last year ever happened. Then his best friend Jacob (Brian McGuire) browbeats him into posting a

personal ad on Craigslist. When Vivian (Sara Simmonds), a strong-willed woman hellbent on being with the right guy at the stroke of midnight responds, a chaotic, sometimes hilarious, sometimes touching journey through the black-and-white streets of L.A. begins. In the waning hours of the year, emotional vulnerability and bitterly honest humor seem to lurk around every corner.



IT'S BETTER IF GABRIELA DOESN'T DIE
MEJORES QUE GABRIELA NO SE MUERA
Latin Showcase, World Cinema

Mexico, 2007, 96 min, 35 MM
In Spanish with English subtitles
World Premiere

DIR: Sergio Umansky

SCR: Ricardo Hernandez Anzola

PROD: Sergio Umansky

EXEC PROD: Maite Argüelles, Carlos Morales

DP: Celiana Cardenas

ED: Max Chamberlain

MUS: Renaud Barbier

CAST: Mauricio Isaac, Dagoberto Gama, Gabriela Roel, Miguel Pizarro, Salvador Garcini, Rene Casados, Roberto Malta, Alejandra Barros, Eduardo Santamarina, Alexis Ayala, Julio Casados, David Ostrosky, Jorge Perez Zamora, Stephanie Salas

In attendance: Sergio Umansky, Daniela Schmidt, Ricardo Hernandez Anzola

Have you ever met someone and then forgotten they ever existed? That's what happens to Miguel (Mauricio Isaac), a writer stuck on a popular telenovella who talks his way out of a ticket by supplying the policeman with 'inside information' about a future plotline. Unfortunately, Bracho (Dagoberto Gama) is a cop with an inflated self-image, and when Miguel's tip proves false the lawman blames Miguel for his loss of face. First-time director Sergio Umansky weaves this tightly constructed plot into a challenging film. The director keeps his focus on his characters, and the first-rate cast delivers a lot of hilarity along the way. Umansky loves telenovellas while recognizing their inherent ridiculousness, but, more importantly, he understands their power as cultural currency, and their power to echo and underscore the dramas and tensions of the workaday world.

And so as Bracho's fury turns to violent action, the 'real world' of the film transforms: colors pop, music cues explode from nowhere and bizarre 'twists' somehow seem reasonable, even logical. As we travel through Umansky's looking glass, or perhaps his cathode-ray tube, we understand we are in the hands of an emerging master.

- Jon Korn



JELLYFISH
MEDUZOT
World Cinema

Israel, 2007, 78 min, 35 MM
In Hebrew with English subtitles

DIR: Etgar Keret,
Shira Gefen

SCR: Shira Gefen

PROD: Amir Harel, Ayelet Kait, Yael Fogiel, Laetitia Gonzalez

DP: Antoine Heberle

ED: Sasha Franklin, Francois Gedigier

PROD DES: Avi Fahima MUS Christopher Bowen

CAST: Sarah Adler, Nikol Leidman, Gera Sandler, Noa Knoller, Ma-nenita De Latorre, Ilanit Ben Yaakov, Zharira Charifai

Co-directed by popular Israeli novelist and short-story writer Etgar Keret and his wife, screenwriter Shira Geffen, this entertaining, memorably unsettling film introduces us to three women at a Tel Aviv wedding. Batiya (Sarah Adler) has lost a boyfriend and works the wedding in a dead-end waitress job. Joy (Ma-nenita De Latorre), a Filipina domestic, tends an aged woman while longing to be with her own child thousands of miles away. And bride Keren (Noa Knoller) breaks her ankle setting up a tragically disastrous honeymoon. Each of the three brings us into their own unique world of missed attempts at communication, stifled longing for family and sudden reversals of fortune. Keret and Geffen, who won Cannes' Camera d'Or for their film (which was nominated for 10 Israeli Oscars), establish a deadpan comic tone that is subtly modified with unexpected bolts of pain and magic, in a manner reminiscent of Kieslowski at his best.

- Larry Gross



CENTERPIECE GALA: JUNO

Gala Presentations

USA, 2007, 92 min

DIR: Jason Reitman

SCR: Diablo Cody

PROD: Lianne Halfon, John Malkovich, Russell Smith, Mason Novick

EXEC PROD: Joe Drake, Nathan Kahane, Daniel Dubiecki

CO-PROD: Jim Miller, Kelli Konop, Brad Van Arragon

DP: Eric Steelberg

ED: Dana E. Glauberman

PROD DES: Steve Saklad

MUS: Mateo Messina

SONGS: Kimya Dawson

CAST: Ellen Page, Michael Cera, Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman, Allison Janney, JK Simmons, Olivia Thirlby

In attendance: Jason Reitman

While most girls in *Dancing Elk* are updating their MySpace pages or shopping at the mall, Juno, a whip-smart Minnesota teen, lives by her own rules. A typically boring afternoon becomes anything but when Juno has sex with the charmingly unassuming Bleeker (Michael Cera of *SUPERBAD*). Faced with an unplanned pregnancy, she and best friend Leah (Olivia Thirlby) hatch a plan to find Juno's unborn baby the perfect set of parents via the local Penny Saver. They set their sights on Mark and Vanessa Loring (Jason Bateman and Jennifer Garner), an affluent suburban couple longing to adopt their first child. After the initial shock, Juno's dad and stepmother (J.K. Simmons and Allison Janney) bands together to help. Dad accompanies Juno to size-up the prospective adoptive parents to make sure they are not a couple of "wing nuts." But as Juno moves closer and closer to her due date, the veneer of Mark and Vanessa's idyllic life starts to show signs of cracking. With an intellect far above the usual teen angst, Juno conquers her problems head-on, displaying a youthful exuberance both smart and unexpected.

JUNO is superbly directed by Jason Reitman (THANK YOU FOR SMOKING) from a script by Diablo Cody (CANDY GIRL).



THE LAST MISTRESS
UNE VIEILLE MAITRESSE
World Cinema

France, 2007, 114 min, 35 MM

In French with English subtitles

US Premiere

DIR: Catherine Breillat

SCR: Catherine Breillat

PROD: Jean-Francois Lepetit

DP: Yorgos Arvanitis

ED: Pascale Chavance

PROD DES: Francois-Renaud Labarthe

CAST: Asia Argento, Fu'ad Aït Aattou, Roxane Mesquida, Claude Sarraute, Yolande Moreau

Catherine Breillat is known for her transgressive studies of female sexuality in film. In shocking contemporary dramas including *FAT GIRL* and *ROMANCE*, she combines graphic interest in female sexual pleasure with ironic portrayals of power struggles in a male-dominated society. *THE LAST MISTRESS* sets these themes in a strikingly different setting: the aristocratic universe of 19th-century France. This is no conventional costume drama, however. With a noticeable absence of a classical music soundtrack and the requisite wide shots of opulence, Breillat focuses on the minutiae of interpersonal exchange and sexual politics. Adapted from Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly's novel, *MISTRESS* chronicles the love affair between tempestuous Spanish mistress La Vellini (Asia Argento) and the womanizing Ryno di Marigny (novice Fu'ad Ait Aattou). Breillat made the film exactly one year after suffering a stroke and it cost as much as all of her other films put together. Argento fuels the film with her brilliant performance as a female seducer who is furiously enraged at the hypocritical values of polite society.

- Rose Kuo



LUCKY MILES
World Cinema

Australia, 2007, 105 min, 35 MM
North American Premiere

DIR: Michael James Rowland

SCR: Michael James Rowland,
Helen Barnes

PROD: Jo Dyer, Lesley Dyer

EXEC PROD: Michael Bouchier

CO-PROD: Michael James Rowland

DP: Geoff Burton

ED: Henry Dangar

PROD DES: Pete Baxter MUS Trilok Gurtu

CAST: Kenneth Moraleda, Rodney Afif, Srisacd Sacdpraseuth, Glenn Shea, Sean
Mununggurr, Sawung Jabo, Arif Hidayat, Don Hany

In attendance: Michael James Rowland

In an unlikely setting—Australia’s outback in 1990— first-time director Michael James Rowland gives us a wickedly funny comedy peopled with refugees— human cargo smugglers and army reservists patrolling the shores for smuggling boats.

When the asylum seekers swim for shore at the start of the film they are searching for a bus that will take them inland specifically to Perth, where a Cambodian refugee believes he will find his Australian father. Instead, they are lost in the Australian outback and there isn’t a bus stop for hundreds of miles. At one point, aside from wondering if they are even in Australia, an Iraqi refugee asks aloud, ”If this is such a great country, why haven’t we heard of their soccer team?” The comedy gets broader and more physical as the dry landscape takes its toll and dust and delirium set in. At its core, the film is a tender exploration of humankind’s unfortunate tendency towards cross-cultural misunderstanding.

- *Jacqueline Lyanga*



MAD DETECTIVE
World Cinema

Hong Kong, China, 2007, 89 min, 35 MM
 In Cantonese with English subtitles
US Premiere

DIR: Johnnie To,
 Wai Ka-fai

SCR: Wai Ka-fai,
 Au Kin Yee

PROD: Johnnie To, Wai Ka-fai

EXEC PROD: Charles Heung

DP: Cheng Siu Heung

ED: Tina Baz

PROD DES: Raymond Chan

MUS: Xavier Jamaux

CAST: Lau Ching-wan, Andy On, Lee Kwon Lun, Lam Ka Tung

Back together at the helm, Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai set incendiary cinematic material ablaze to create a fiery action drama. This film is both a thrilling adventure exposing the dark side of Hong Kong's police force and a fascinating journey into the meanderings of a contorted mind. In one of his best performances to date, Lau Ching-wan plays the multi-dimensional role of Bun, an outcast detective whose psychotic personality and unorthodox investigative methods have cost him his job—even though he always solved the cases entrusted to him. The only person who still believes in Bun is power hungry inspector Ho (Andy On). Ho is determined to solve the complex case of a missing police gun and its vanished owner, Wong (Lee Kwok Lun). The consummate skill of To and Wai in scripting and directing a complex story of crime and madness carries the film from start to finish.

- *Rose Kuo*



MANUELA Y MANUEL
Latin Showcase, World Cinema

Puerto Rico, 2007, 94 min, VIDEO
In Spanish with English subtitles
World Premiere

DIR: Raul Marchand Sanchez

SCR: Jose Ignacio Valenzuela

PROD: Frances Lausell Diaz

EXEC PROD: Sonia Fritz Macías

DP: Sonnel Velazquez

PROD DES: Rafi Mercado

MUS: Geronimo Mercado

CAST: Humberto Busto, Elena Iguina, Luz Maria Rondon, Sunshine Logrovo, Marian Pabon, Marisol Calero

In attendance: Frances Lausell, Raul Marchand Sanchez, Sonia Fritz, Jose Valenzuela

Director Raul Marchand Sanchez and screenwriter Jose Ignacio Valenzuela are innovative storytellers with an extraordinary sense of humor and visual flare, they have cleverly molded a delightfully appealing film. Deep inside, Manuel has always been Manuela. But in the middle of her worst love crisis, Manuela reinvents herself as Manuel in order to pass as the fiancée of her best friend Coca—who is pregnant from a one-night stand and must face her conservative family. Hidden identities, misunderstandings, and the tension between two friends pretending to be what they are not, create a colorful and up-beat story, with gorgeous drag performances to boot. Brilliantly executed, the film artfully combines the surreal, the comic, the poignant and the tragic, crafting a potent story about identities—both hidden and overt. And the fabulous ensemble cast is infectious and fun to watch!

- *Shaz Bennett*



MARGOT AT THE WEDDING
Special Screenings

USA, 2007, 93 min, 35 MM

DIR: Noah Baumbach

SCR: Noah Baumbach

PROD: Scott Rudin

CO-PROD: M. Blair Breard

DP: Harris Savides

ED: Carol Littleton

PROD DES: Anne Ross

CAST: Nicole Kidman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jack Black, John Turturro, Ciarán Hinds, Zane Pais

In attendance: Noah Baumbach

With *THE SQUID AND THE WHALE*, writer/director Noah Baumbach drew comparisons with Woody Allen by depicting neurotically self-aware, New York literary types. In his new film, Baumbach audaciously approaches the mode of Allen's hero, Ingmar Bergman.

Nicole Kidman and Jennifer Jason Leigh are both superlative as Margot and Pauline, sisters who are alternately volatile and cerebral, and also sexually provocative. When Pauline gets married (to a bohemian type played by an unexpectedly subtle Jack Black), Margaret compulsively criticizes everyone and everything around her. Pauline barely keeps it together, struggling to contain her resentments despite the New Age theories she spouts.

Their meticulously rendered sibling dynamic—with its half-spoken accusations, memories both nostalgic and bitter and all-consuming need—is alternately hilarious and painful, with Harris Savides's fluid camerawork capturing all the complicated cross-currents at work. The superb ensemble also includes Ciarán Hinds and John Turturro.

- *Larry Gross*



THE MARK
Intl Shorts Competition

USA, 2006, 5 min, VIDEO

DIR: Thomas Barndt

SCR: Thomas Barndt

PROD: Samara St. Croix

DP/ED/MUS: Thomas Barndt

CAST: Buddy Barnett, Frank Mengwasser, Cocoa Conley, Kathe Duba-Barnett, Jason
Leinwand

In attendance: Tom Barndt, Samara St. Croix

A lawyer rents a room to a human lightning bolt.



MUNYURANGABO
Intl Feature Competition

Rwanda, USA, 2007, 97 min, 35 MM
In Kinyarwanda with English subtitles
US Premiere

DIR: Lee Isaac Chung

SCR: Lee Isaac Chung,
Samuel Anderson

PROD/DP/ED: Lee Isaac Chung

EXEC PROD: Han Gil Chung, Robert Liang, Alex Hsiong Chu

CO-PROD: Samuel Anderson, Jenny Lund

PROD DES: John Kwezi

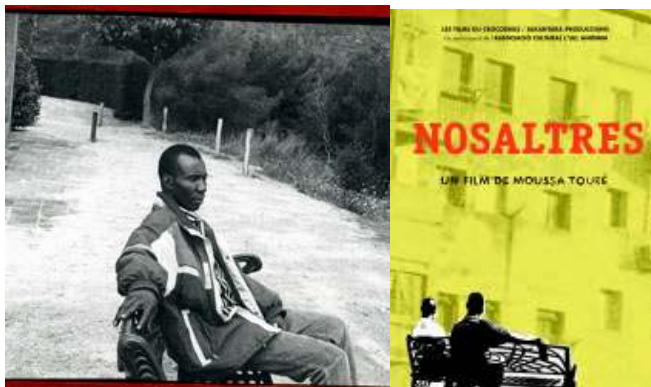
MUS: Wibabara Claire

CAST: Jeff Rutagengwa, Eric Ndorunkundiye, Jean Marie Nkurikiyinka, Jean Pierre Mulonda Harerimana, Edouard B. Uwayo

In attendance: Isaac Chung, Jenny Lund

Lee Isaac Chung, a Korean-American filmmaker working out of New York makes his feature debut with an outstanding film about two young Rwandan men – one Hutu and the other Tutsi - on a journey through Rwanda’s haunted countryside. Set in the years after the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the film opens with Ngabo (Jeff Rutagengwa) – who is named after the ancient Rwandan warrior, Munyurangabo - stealing a machete from a market. It is a purposeful act, as shortly after, Ngabo and his best friend Sangwa (Eric Ndorunkundiye) set out into the countryside to find the man who killed Ngabo’s father during the genocide. Chung and his actors – first-time actors who were also involved in writing the script – articulate the pain of memory, betrayal and loss with poignancy in this rare and moving film about the delicate ties that bind friendship and family.

- *Jacqueline Lyanga*



NOSALTRES

African Showcase, World Cinema

Senegal, 2007, 71 min, VIDEO

In Spanish, French, Wolof with English subtitles

North American Premiere

DIR: Moussa Toure

SCR: Moussa Touré

DP: Moussa Touré

ED: Thierry, Cheik Touré, Madior

MUS: Ramón Solé

In attendance: Moussa Toure

One man has paid 750 euros to be smuggled out of Africa, while another has lived in the small town in Catalonia, all of his life: what do these two men say to each other as they pass each other on the street each morning? Nothing. Award-winning Senegalese filmmaker, Moussa Touré, takes us to the Catalan village of Saint Feliu where immigrants from Mali have changed the cultural makeup of the village. There is no communication between the two communities; they are like ghosts to each other. Touré steps in with his camera and forces change. Through his interviews with the Malian and Catalan residents of Saint Feliu, Touré forces them to confront their ignorance, their prejudices and their fears. When a number of African men wash up on a beach populated by sunbathing Catalans, the Catalans quickly grab their beach towels and wrap them around the shivering men, and Touré perfectly captures the humanity of a simple gesture of kindness.

- *Jacqueline Lyanga*



OLDEASTSIDE

Intl Shorts Competition

Philippines, 2006, 6 min, VIDEO
In Tagalog / English with English subtitles
North American Premiere

DIR: Khavn

SCR: Khavn,

Lav Diaz

PROD: Khavn

EXEC PROD: Khavn

ED: Lawrence S. Ang

PROD DES: Cesar Hernando

MUS: Tengal

CAST: Joel Torre, Yul Servo

- www.kamiasroad.com

Very short five-minute, non-malignant parody by Khavn De La Cruz on the ultra-long films by Lav Diaz in general and the five-hour Batang Westside in particular. Diaz himself chose the five quotes that are digitally deconstructed. The film was made for a conference about piracy in Manila (a hotbed of DVD pirates) and based on a bad VHS pirate copy of Diaz's film.



OUSMANE

Intl Shorts Competition

France, Senegal, 2006, 15 min, 35 MM
In Wolof with English subtitles

DIR: Gaye Dyana

SCR: Remi Mazet

PROD: Eric Idriss Kanago, Arnaud Dommerc

DP: Remi Mazet

MUS: Baptiste Bouquin

CAST: Abbasse Ba, Oumar Seck, Nianga Diop, El Hadj Dieng, Coly M'baye, Thierno N'diaye Doss, Yalli Diagne, Moustapha Gaye

- www.andolfi.fr

Dakar, Senegal. Ousmane, a 7 year -old child, begs in the streets. He decides to write a letter to Santa Claus.



PSYCHO HILLBILLY CABIN MASSACRE!
Intl Shorts Competition

USA, 2007, 17 min, VIDEO
World Premiere

DIR: Robert Cosnahan

SCR: Doug Howell, Wendy Wegner

PROD: Doug Howell

CO-PROD: Wendy Wegner

DP: Robert Toth

ED: Lynarion Hubbard

CAST: Cali Fredrichs, Angela Schnaible, Charlie Capen, Hunter Huston, Zoe Warner, Patty McCormack

In attendance: Doug Howell, Robert Cosnahan, Wendy Wegner

A bloodbath erupts when a group of Ivy League students discover an isolated hillbilly cabin in the woods.



PUBLIC ENEMY: WELCOME TO THE TERRORDOME
Intl Documentary Competition

FuTurXTV • P.O. Box 6313 • Lancaster, CA 93539-6313 • (909) 331-6995 • futurx5@yahoo.com • www.hiphopbattle.com

USA, 2007, 100 min, VIDEO

World Premiere

DIR: Robert Patton-Spruill

PROD: Walter Leaphart Jr and Lathan Hodge

CO-PROD: Patricia Moreno

DP: Richard Moos, Todd Walker, Michael Norville, Jon Marc Sandifer, Maxie Collier, Robert Jett, Sharman Perskin, Louis Tash, Jonas Durfor, Tim Palmer, Chang Cho, Justin Bradshaw, JFW Don III, Joanna Hunsberger, Josh Martin, Kathryn Payne. William Durfor, John Dunfor, Andrew Johnson and Nozomi A. Johnson

ED: Robert Patton-Spruill and Beecher Cotton

In attendance: Robert Patton-Spruill, Walt Leaphar, Patricia Moreno

Public Enemy's 20 year career has had a monumental impact on the music world. Robert Patton-Spruill's *WELCOME TO THE TERRORDOME* chronicles their legacy, their history and what icons of the music world say about their influence.

Two decades later, the most controversial rap group of the 80's is all grown up...and still touring. Their ability to weave serious messages of activism and societal ills into completely accessible songs revolutionized rap and hip-hop. Artists such as the Beastie Boys, Tom Morello (Audioslave, Rage Against The Machine), Henry Rollins, Talib Kweli and Jonathan Davis of Korn reflect on the group's power. With live concert footage from near and far—Moscow, Rio, Italy, Spain, the UK and finally Austin, Texas—Public Enemy demonstrates they still have the power to get the crowd on their feet with insanely infectious music and relentless beats. With an album of new material out this year, Public Enemy is ready to terrorize your town. So raise your fist in the air and don't miss this historic, must-see music documentary.

- *Natalie McMenemy*

PUBLIC ENEMY ANNOUNCE
PUBLIC ENEMY: WELCOME TO THE TERRORDOME
NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM
TO REFLECT THE BAND'S HISTORY AND LEGACY,
COMMEMORATING THE ICONIC GROUP'S
20th ANNIVERSARY

Includes Interviews With Beastie Boys,
Henry Rollins, Talib Kweli, Jonathan Davis of Korn
Tom Morello (Audioslave, Rage Against The Machine)

In a fitting tribute to mark their 20th anniversary, Public Enemy will release a new documentary film detailing the history and legacy of their powerful and highly influential career. *Public Enemy: Welcome To The Terrordome* is currently in production and will make its debut at the AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles later this year. In addition to interviews with some of the most creative and dynamic artists in contemporary music, the film will feature moments from historical concerts from their career.

Public Enemy: Welcome To The Terrordome recounts the groups monumental impact on music and global culture over the past two decades through behind the scenes interactions between Chuck D and Flavor Flav, live concert footage from shows as far flung as Moscow, Rio, Italy, Spain, the UK and finally Austin, and interviews with artists such as the Beastie Boys, Tom Morello (Audioslave, Rage Against The Machine), Henry Rollins, Talib Kweli and Jonathan Davis of Korn.

The film is directed and co-produced by Robert Patton-Spruill, whose directing credits include *Body Count* (Forest Whitaker, Ving Rhames, David Caruso, John Leguizamo) and the critically acclaimed independent film *Squeeze*. Walter Leaphart and Lathan Hodge serve as Producers and Patricia Moreno is Co-Producer. *Public Enemy: Welcome To The Terrordome* is a Creamwerks production in association with Film Shack.

-more-

At the close of 1999, The New York Times named Public Enemy's music to their list of the "25 Most Significant Albums of the Last Century" and in May 2005 The US government's Library of Congress included *Fear of a Black Planet* in a list of 50 recordings worthy of preserving in the National Recording Registry. Rolling Stone magazine called the group one of the fifty greatest artists of all time, and in 1999 Vanity Fair profiled the group in their Icons of Rock special section. Spin magazine chose two PE albums for their "100 Greatest Albums (1985-2005)" list, with *It Takes A Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* coming in at #2 and *Fear of a Black Planet* at #21.

The numbers that reflect their extraordinary career are staggering: The band has embarked on over 56 tours, performing over 1300 concerts to fans in 45 countries. Three albums are certified multi-platinum, three more are gold, with four gold singles and a platinum-selling home video.



SALIVA

Intl Shorts Competition

Brazil, 2007, 15 min, 35 MM
In Portugese with English subtitles

DIR: Esmir Filho
SCR: Esmir Filho
PROD: Adipe Neto
EXEC PROD: Lorenzo giunta, Simoni de Mendonca
DP: Marcelo Trotta
ED: Caroline Leone
MUS: Fernanda Takai, John Ulhoa
CAST: Mayara Comunale, Gabriel Cavicchioli, Hellen Vasconcelos
A young girl is about to experience her first kiss, but a crippling fear of being drowned by saliva threatens to overtake this seminal moment.



SECRET SUNSHINE
MILYANG
World Cinema

South-Korea, 2007, 142 min, 35 MM
In Korean with English subtitles

DIR: Chang Dong Lee
SCR: Chang Dong Lee
PROD: Hanna Lee
EXEC PROD: Kim In-su, Lee Chang-dong
DP: Jo Yong-gyu
ED: Kim Hyeon
PROD DES: Sihm Jeom-hui
MUS: Christian Basso
CAST: Jeon Do-yeon, Song Kang-ho, Seon Jeong-yeob

Lee Chang-dong's movie possesses the fullness and complexity of a great novel, revealing new layers to us the deeper we move into it. It begins as the story of a recent widow (Jeon Do-yeon) and her young son adjusting to their new lives in a small town that suddenly, without warning, becomes a thriller and then a Bressonian study in human suffering. Lee guides SECRET SUNSHINE through these switchblade reversals of comedy and despair, darkness and light with remarkable agility. To say more would be to compromise the film's many surprises. But a few words are owed to Jeon, winner of Cannes' Best Actor prize. Continuously onscreen, she fearlessly navigates the movie's

turbulent emotional currents, slowly revealing the extraordinary inner strength and grace of a seemingly fragile, uncertain woman. And we begin to behold a saintly figure cast down from the heavens.

- *Scott Foundas*



SMILEY FACE

American Showcase, World Cine

USA, 2008, 88 min, 35 MM

DIR: Gregg Araki

SCR: Dylan Haggerty

PROD: Henry Winterstern, Kevin Turen, Steve Golin, Alix Madigan-Yorkin, Gregg Araki

EXEC PROD: Jörg Westerkamp, Thomas Becker, Stuart Burkin, H. Jason Beck

DP: Shawn Kim

PROD DES: John Larena

MUS: David Kitay

CAST: Anna Farris, John Cho, Jane Lynch, Adam Brody, John Krasinski, Danny Masterson,

In attendance: Gregg Araki

OK, just hang on a second, because it's not like this is a complicated movie with tons of shadows or peasants, but there's, you know, a lot of moving parts and stuff. It definitely starts on a Ferris wheel, which I just realized is TOTALLY WEIRD because it also stars Anna Farris. Farris on a Ferris wheel! Nice. Anyway, there's a lot that happens with all kinds of different actors, and actresses, of course, but it mostly has to do with this one day when Jane eats waaaaay too many of her roommate's cupcakes. Like SERIOUSLY special cupcakes. So she's all 'NOOO!' but then she still has to do a lot of stuff. And her roommate is not even a little, like, sympathetic. Plus there's all these actors, and actresses, who — did I already tell you this? It's deja vu central in my head right now. And I'm pretty sure I saw that dude from "The Office" ...Gregg Araki totally rules.

- *Jon Korn*



SOUTH CENTRAL FARM: OASIS IN A CONCRETE DESERT
Intl Shorts Competition

USA, 2007, 24 min, VIDEO
World Premiere

DIR: Sheila A. Laffey

PROD: Geoffrey Pepos, Shelia A. Laffey

EXEC PROD: Jodi Evans, Sheila A. Laffey

DP: Jeff Forster & footage by Haskell Wexle, Daryl Hannah & Michael Kuehnert

ED: Geoffrey Pepos

FEATURING: Daryl Hannah, Martin Sheen, Willie Nelson, Tom Morello, Julia Butterfly Hill, John Quigley

- www.envirofilms.com

In attendance: Sheila Laffey, Geoffrey Pepos

This doc tells the true story of the high profile controversy involving poor farmers and their supporters, including celebrity tree sitters, the developer and the city over the largest urban farm in the US. It includes a rare interview with the developer and highlights the farmers determined efforts to stay connected to the land after eviction and bulldozing.



VIVA
Dark Horizons

USA, 2007, 120 min, 35 MM

DIR: Anna Biller

SCR: Anna Biller

PROD/ED/PROD DES: Anna Biller

CO-PROD: Jared Sanford

DP: C. Thomas Lewis

CAST: Anna Biller, Jared Sanford, Bridget Brno, Chad England, Marcus DeAnda, John Klemantaski, Barry Morse, Paolo Davanza, Cole Chipman

In attendance: Jared Sanford, Anna Biller, Bridget Brno

Get ready for a kinky night at AFI FEST, as Anna Biller takes us on a trip back to the swinging 70s for a delicious tribute/parody to soft-core pornography and sexual liberation.

This fantastic, one-of-a-kind sexploitation film seems at once wholly fresh in its spot-on execution and, at the same time, like some artifact from a randy cinematic past. Biller, a multi-hyphenated talent in the extreme, writes, directs, stars in, edits, shoots and designs the costumes and sets. The film tells the hilariously off-kilter tale of a suburban housewife in 1972 who is abandoned by her husband and goes out to find herself in the middle of the sexual revolution. As she seeks love and adventure, she is dragged through the worlds of nudist colonies, hippies, modeling, prostitution, bi-sexuality and bohemia.

A singular work of art with a lot on its mind, VIVA illustrates cinema's unique ability to blend high and low culture. And there are plenty of lewd laughs along the way. So let down your hair. And leave your underpants at home.

- Lane Kneedler



WELCOME TO NOLLYWOOD
African Showcase, World Cinema

USA, 2007, 57 min, VIDEO

DIR: Jamie Meltzer

PROD: Cayce Lindner, Henry S Rosenthal

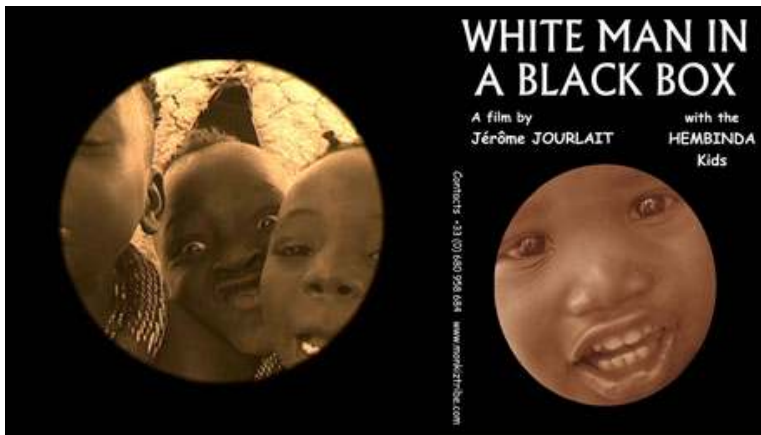
DP: Bruce Dickson, Akinola Davies, Jamie Meltzer

ED: Daniel J. Friedman

In attendance: Henry Rosenthal, Jamie Meltzer,

Nigeria produces 2, 400 films a year - it's the third largest producer of films worldwide. Nigerian filmmakers are not dreaming about making it big in Hollywood, they're just picking up a camera and making a movie in Nollywood. Nollywood director, Izu Ojukwu, learned how to make movies by building a projector from scratch. At the center of this film is the production of his epic film LAVIVA. Ojukwu employs a cast of 700 for his epic African war film, but hiring a cast and feeding them are two very different things. When there is no money to pay the "welfare" lady (catering), she simply stops making food and the actors are forced to act through their hunger. This is a lesson in guerilla filmmaking, Nigerian style. In Nigeria, you're not a real filmmaker until, like Chico Ejiro (aka "Mr. Prolific") you've made so many films that you don't remember the plotlines. Welcome to Nollywood.

- *Jacqueline Lyanga*



WHITE MAN IN A BLACK BOX
HOMME BLANC DANS UNE BOITE NOIRE
Intl Shorts Competition

FRANCE, NAMIBIA, 2007, 4 min, VIDEO
North American Premiere

DIR: Jerome Jourlait
SCR: Jerome Jourlait
PROD: Jerome Jourlait
ED: Nicolette Nel, Jerome Jourlait
MUS: Giles Massolo

Yourself seen through the lens of a camera by young kids of a Himba tribe of the north of Namibia



THE YEAR OF THE NAIL
AÑO UÑA
Latin Showcase, World Cinema

Mexico, 2007, 78 min, 35 MM
 In Spanish with English subtitles
North American Premiere

DIR: Jonás Cuarón

SCR: Jonás Cuarón

PROD: Jonás Cuarón, Eireann Harper, Frida Torresblanco

EXEC PROD: Alfonso Cuarón

ED: Jonás Cuarón, Eireann Harper

DP: Jonás Cuarón

CAST: Diego Catano, Eireann Harper, Salvador Elizondo, Michele Alban, Cristina Orozco, Mariana Elizondo, Pia Elizondo, Emilia Garcia, Mateo Garcia, Jeronimo Garcia, Katie Hegarty

In attendance: Jonas Cuarón, Eireann Harper

THE YEAR OF THE NAIL (AÑO UÑA) is a thoughtful, evocative portrayal of friendship, love, longing and the sometimes static nature of life. Director/Screenwriter Jonas Cuarón (Alfonso Cuarón's son) tells this story through photographs and voiceover.

Using a year's worth of photos that Cuarón took of spontaneous events and day-to-day activities, he creates an understated but powerfully observed fictional story. Fourteen-year-old Diego (Diego Catano, his half brother) and visiting American college girl Molly (Eireann Harper, his girlfriend) spend a year together in Mexico. Instantly in love, Diego says, "She has a gringo ass, and she talks like a Mexican!" Unfortunately, it's hard for them to get close because his grandfather is sick, his cat must be spayed and neutered, and Molly must return to New York. THE YEAR OF THE NAIL—the title derives from an ingrown nail that bothers Diego—is mostly about life's fleeting moments.

Imbued with Cuarón's energy, a cleverly fractured story structure, rich soundtrack and beautiful photographs, this is one of this year's most inventive films.

- *Shaz Bennett*