

San Jose, Santa Monica, Hollywood Festivals

Innovative California events dedicated to empowerment of independent moviemakers



Director Kurt Kuenne (right) lines up a shot for D.P. Dominique Faix (center) on *Scrapbook* (1998)

Cinequest

San Jose's film festival has matured in its 9th edition with a clarity of intent made relevant by the digital revolution

Unspooling in Silicon Valley during the last week of February, Cinequest featured a number of fine films and star tributes that attracted over 32,000 fans. In line with the festival's unique mandate to celebrate not only maverick movies and moviemakers but maverick technologies that enable them to realize their vision, the program presented an informative series of panels on the latest technological breakthroughs. Particularly interesting was the symposium "Mavericks on Film: digital cinematography" conducted by Sony's Acquisition Systems Vice-President Lawrence Thorpe, who spoke about the qualitative aesthetic

jump video has made in picture sharpness, tonal and color reproduction and exposure latitude. He highlighted both the economic and logistic advantages of digital moviemaking, from pre-production through post-production to exhibition. Recently developed digital projectors being marched around to studios are receiving exceptional feedback, Thorpe said, finally driving the point home by screening excerpts of digitally shot projects of remarkable quality. Another interesting event within The Maverick Film and Technology Showcase section was the D.film mini-festival, a showcase of films made with computers and new forms of digital

technology which included director Doug Liman's (*Swingers*) short *Virtual Date*, as well as a number of wonderfully creative and imaginative shorts. Academy Award-winning cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond's statement "I welcome change" at the festival opening press conference was perhaps the most eloquent statement to date in favor of the digital revolution.

Kicking off with David Corley's comedy *Angel's Dance*, the competition selection offered a diverse selection of international films. Notable entries were, among others, *The Camp of Fallen Women*, by Laco Halama from the Slovak Republic, a harsh and funny commentary on post-war Czechoslovakia where a group of ex-prostitutes is sent to re-education camp by the government so they can be turned into "decent women." Todd Edwards' quirky comedy *Chillicothe* and Emiko Omori's award-winning documentary *Rabbit on the Moon*, both

recently at Sundance, screened during the festival. *Going Nomad*, Art Jones' acerbic yet haunting directorial debut, follows the nocturnal escapades of a young man caught in the mire of a bleak and unfulfilling daily life until his gnawing desire to break free forces him to put his ghosts to rest and seek his own path. The Bay Area's Kurt Kuenne screened his promising debut feature *Scrapbook*, a complex and delicate study of sibling rivalry featuring intense performances by Justin Urich, Eric Balfour and Chadwick Palmatier. World renowned multi-media artist Lynn Hershman Leeson's adventurous filmmaking produced *Conceiving Ada*, offering a fine example, with her use of virtual sets and mixing of film and video formats, of the exciting creative options that technology is opening up for filmmakers.

Audience Choice honorable mentions went to the French-Swiss-German co-production *Full Moon*, directed by Fredi

M. Murer; *In the Navel of the Sea*, by Marilou Diaz-Abaya, *Ok Garage* directed by Brandon Cole, and Kurt Kuenne's *Scrapbook*.