



Jessica Yu

TOMMY LAU

PICTURE TALK

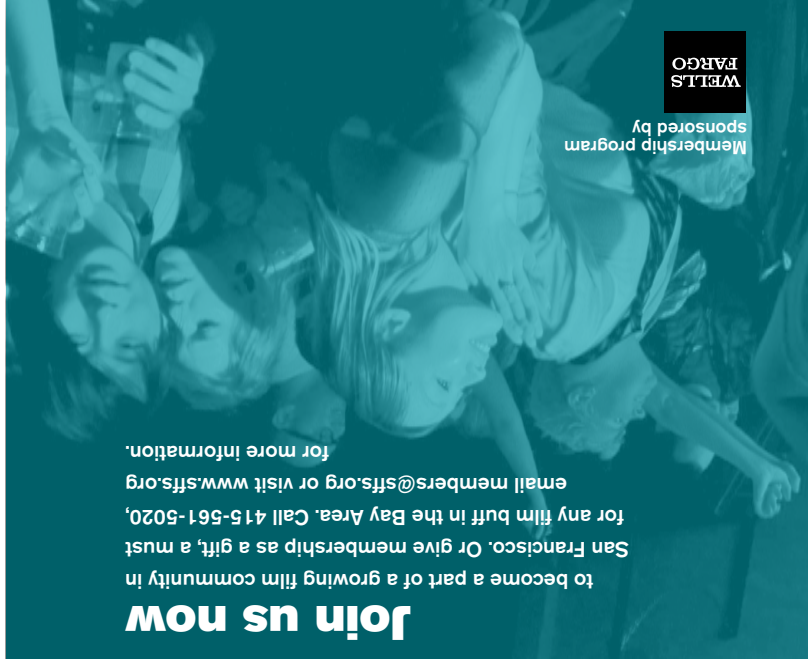
SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY

AUGUST 2007 V17 N4

SF360 INITIATIVES EXPAND

EDUCATION PROGRAM GROWS

TALES FROM THE FESTIVAL



WELLS FARGO

Membership program sponsored by

to become a part of a growing film community in San Francisco. Or give membership as a gift, a must for any film buff in the Bay Area. Call 415-561-5020, email members@sffs.org or visit www.sffs.org for more information.

Join us now

For information visit www.sffs.org

November 11-18: New Italian Cinema

November 8-11: Second San Francisco International Animation Festival

September 29: Film in the Fog

Upcoming Events

SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY™

SF FILM SOCIETY
39 MESA STREET
THE PRESIDIO
SAN FRANCISCO CA
94129

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN FRANCISCO CA
PERMIT NO. 13681

SF360 Initiatives Expand with Comcast TV Show

By Ben Friedland

Launched in February of this year, SF360 Movie Scene is the latest addition to the SF360 slate of activities. Each month, the Film Society's Rod Armstrong and the S.F. Bay Guardian's Cheryl Eddy discuss what's new in Bay Area film and offer recommendations on what not to miss.

Premiering the first Monday of each month on Comcast Channel 11 (with repeat broadcasts throughout the month), the show regularly interviews festival programmers and local filmmakers.

"We've had a lot of fascinating talent on the show," said Armstrong, who believes he's the Ebert to Eddy's Roeper. "People like and want an alternative to the ubiquitous

series of initiatives designed to showcase the scene's extraordinary vitality and variety. Movie Scene has joined other ongoing SF360 events, which include Film+Club and SF360.org, the online news magazine. Adding to the mix are occasional events like SF360 SF Movie Night and SF360 Live panels.

Exploring the social aspects

"People want an alternative to the ubiquitous mediocre blockbusters spewed out weekly in cinemas."

mediocre blockbusters spewed out weekly in cinemas."

Keep an eye out for a potential new look to the show. "I'd like to have the freedom to conduct interviews or do some filming off site where content is not determined by the day of the month we film the program," Armstrong said. "A spiffier wardrobe should probably be another goal, but I loathe shopping for clothes."

The monthly half-hour program, which premieres the first Monday of the month, is the only television show devoted to the Bay Area's independent film scene. SF360, which was launched in January 2006, is the Film Society's citywide

of going to the movies, SF360 Film+Club takes movies out of the traditional theater and puts them in a club setting. The monthly series, copresented with Mezzanine and Rehab, has become one of the most popular and varied film events in the city. Most recently, the series featured selections from the latest Wholphin, the quarterly DVD magazine put out by McSweeney's, which included Taika Waititi's short **Two Cars, One Night** as well as a documentary about a Scottish metal band comprised of nine-year-olds, called **Heavy Metal Jr.**

The Film+Club series is nine screenings young, and past events at Mezzanine have

featured **Macbeth** (directed by Geoffrey Wright) set in present day Melbourne; Doug Pray's comprehensive and thrilling documentary **Infamy** about graffiti art and culture; and **Trapped in the Closet Sing-Along**, showcasing R. Kelly's 45-minute hip-hop opera. Whenever possible, the series includes post-screening fun that adds depth to the content, underscoring how dynamic and wide-reaching film can be. Various DJs, a super high speed UC Berkeley camera and the graffiti artist Onesto have all been incorporated at one time or another.

"Programs in this series are films that should be seen in San Francisco," said Film Society programmer Sean Uyehara. "We also try to take advantage of the unique space and technical capacity of Mezzanine. Where else can you find a sing-along, live painting, a VJ and trap jaw ants?"

In the coming months, expect films about Icelandic music, skateboarding and maybe even the band Knife.

In recent weeks, articles on SF360.org, the thriving daily magazine devoted to the Bay Area's film and media scene, have included previews of both the S.F. Silent Film Festival and S.F. Frozen Film Festival; reviews of **Dr. Bronner's**



Brazilian artist Onesto creates a painting live at SF360 Film+Club event at Mezzanine February 20

Soapbox and **Ten Canoes**, both of which were opening in San Francisco that week; and an interview with one-time Bay Area resident Jasmine Dellal about her new film **Gypsy Caravan**, also opening in the city. The site is a rich and compelling magazine for film buffs, examining all sides of the local film community and all types of film. It has become a destination for all those interested in local independent film, art-house film or film festivals.

"I've had great feedback from the local film community," said SF360.org editor Susan Gerhard, who along with a few interns and about six regular contributors, runs the site. "But we are looking for ways to build our presence and better serve both film audiences and filmmakers in the Bay Area. Now taking suggestions!"

Often, it's the photos that generate the most buzz. "People love that someone is out there noticing how much fun they're having at all these incredible one-off film events and film festival parties," Gerhard said. "Even the film community needs its own 'Society' page."

Watch for Gerhard to steer the site even deeper into the filmmaker community. She hopes to devote more space to independent documentary filmmakers as well as animators and the tech innovators "who are so vital to the Bay Area film industry."

Ben Friedland is the Film Society's membership manager. You may contact him at bfriedland@sffs.org to ask about SF360 activities.

Rod Armstrong



Cheryl Eddy



Susan Gerhard





PHOTOS BY PAT MAZZERA

Cyrus Frisch

Peter Coyote, Michael McClure, Diane DiPrima and Barry Gifford

Pernille Rose Grønkjær

Tales from the Festival

The 50th San Francisco International Film Festival brought hundreds of filmmakers and guests from all over the world. Here are a few of their stories.

A Phantastic Performance

Jonathan Richman's six-piece orchestra was greeted with cheers and received a standing ovation at Friday's screening of the silent film classic **The Phantom Carriage** at the Castro Theatre. Led by Richman on Spanish guitar, the sextet performed an original score featuring violins, sax, trumpet, woodwinds and some very eerie brass bells which were rung at the arrival of the titular carriage, a ghostly coach driven by a hapless sinner who dies on New Year's Eve. Multiple-exposure photography created the unearthly special effects, many surreal enough to provoke surprised laughter from the audience, as when the transparent carriage is cleverly superimposed over crashing ocean waves. At the close of the performance, Richman paused while packing up instruments to chat with fans and sign an autograph or two.

—Julie Davis

A Modern Take on Euripides

How do you make a documentary about Euripides? Yes, the Greek playwright, who lived in the fifth century B.C. Approached with this proposition by the Carr Foundation, filmmaker Jessica Yu admitted that her first reaction was laughter. "It was so out of the blue," she recalls. But then she went on to make **Protagonist**, a documentary based on the recurrent themes of Euripides' works—fate and profound reversals. The four subjects of

Protagonist—a former German terrorist, an ex-bank robber, a closeted preacher-turned-transvestite entertainer and a martial arts enthusiast—all had lightning bolt moments when their conceptions of the world changed. "Finding these moments was the most complicated thing," says the director. Yu chose to punctuate her film with scenes from different Euripidean tragedies, reenacted by puppets. She recalls, "I was struck by how contemporary his characters and their psychology are."

—Maria Belilovskaya

Third Person

"This has been quite a fairy tale for me, doing this film," said director Pernille Rose Grønkjær, of her award-winning documentary **The Monastery**. Grønkjær's lifelong fascination with charismatic old folks led her to Mr. Vig, the eccentric 82-year-old subject of the film, and his quest to bequeath a ramshackle Danish castle to the Russian Orthodox Church. But her fascination also caused her difficulties at times, as she formed a grandfatherly bond with the old man. "There was actually a third character in the movie, and that was me," Grønkjær said. The director appears as a behind-the-camera voice in the film and even onscreen in one scene, a shot included in the final cut at the urging of her editors. "I pushed the film in different directions at some points, and we found that very interesting." Even so, Grønkjær restrained herself from interfering

with the story unfolding in front of her, as in a scene where the nuns unknowingly destroy some of Vig's careful restoration work. "That's one of these moments when you, as a filmmaker think, 'Oh, it's so good. He's going to be so angry! Maybe something will come out of this, and maybe he'll show character.' And he did."

—Julie Davis

From Cellular to Celluloid

Cyrus Frisch finds a growing tension between immigrant kids and the longtime residents of the charming square in Amsterdam where he lives. In making **Why didn't anybody tell me it would become this bad in Afghanistan**, the director says he tried to find a way of capturing this hostility. The first feature shot entirely on a mobile phone, Frisch's film exploited the limitations of the phone camera to convey the distrust both groups

Jonathan Richman



PAMELA GENTILE

have for each other. Frisch says, "There is a shift in economic power from the West to Asia, and we are blaming it on a few immigrant kids." He didn't face any resistance while he was shooting, though he did get the permission of people he was lensing, out of a sense of moral responsibility. The message of the film, according to Frisch, is to "not be so paranoid."

—Seema Arora

On the Road Again

A full house at the Kabuki welcomed actor Peter Coyote and literary icons Barry Gifford, Diane DiPrima and Michael McClure to pay tribute to friend and mentor, Jack Kerouac, and celebrate the golden anniversary of his groundbreaking **On the Road**. Jack Boulware and Jane Ganahl, cofounders of Litquake, introduced this extraordinary group as they recalled Kerouac's influence on their lives and work. Gifford

reminded Festivalgoers what the book continues to teach readers young and old, "You don't have to stay in Dipstick, Ohio—you can get out and change your life." DiPrima candidly recalled late nights in New York with Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg; when an audience member chimed in that she couldn't hear, the author quipped, "Make it up!" Amidst hearty audience laughs were humbled, heartfelt readings from **On the Road** and McClure's powerful recitation of an excerpt from **Mexico City Blues**. Heads nodded in recognition as Coyote noted, "An underground river connected the hipster, beat, hippie and outsider." Everyone in the theater, from ages 25 to 65, left with Boulware's inspirational words: "All of you should pick it up and read it again—it's a healthy thing to do."

—Katherine Pickard

Education Program Reaches Thousands

By Keith Zwölfer

The Film Society's Education Program continues to expand its year-round activities. The first six months of 2007 saw 13 screenings and events, 17 Schools at the Festival screenings and 23 Schools at the Festival in-class filmmaker visits. The program has reached 5,871 students and teachers this year and since October 2006 has reached 7,007 students and teachers at 103 educational institutions.

January 4, 310 teachers attended the kickoff of the teacher training program, Media in the Classroom: Conversation and Collaboration, with a screening of **Freedom Writers**, a movie inspired by the diaries of real Long Beach teenagers and their 23-year-old English teacher, Erin Gruwell, who teaches her students to keep diaries, dubbing themselves the "Freedom Writers" in homage to the civil rights activists the Freedom Riders. The Media in the Classroom training sessions—to be held bimonthly throughout 2007—are daylong hands-on workshops for teachers in a small group setting that teach how to integrate film, video and new media technologies into the classroom.

January 29, we partnered with our San Francisco Film Centre neighbors, the special effects company the Orphanage. The visit took place at City Arts & Tech, a magnet high school that focuses



Keith Zwölfer

on arts and technology. Two presentations were given separately to 230 students. Effects supervisor Aaron Rhodes presented the latest CGI effects with clips from his recent projects. Study guides were given to the students to continue

discussion in the classroom.

February 6, 320 students and teachers attended a screening of **Bridge to Terabithia**. An adaptation of Katherine Paterson's 1978 Newbery Award-winning children's book, which is known for its honest presentation of death and grieving to a young audience. After the screening we were joined by the stars of the film, Josh Hutcherson and AnnaSophia Robb, as well as author Katherine Paterson and screenwriter David Paterson.

"Our teaching must become more relevant to our students, and using film to elicit critical viewing, thinking and writing will play a central role in that effort." Jan Speller, El Camino High School teacher

March 20, 150 kids from the CAS program at Berkeley High School joined us for a screening of **American Blackout** (SFIFF 2006), a look at the career of former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and the disenfranchisement of Black voters in the United States. CAS emphasizes media literacy and communication skills in a context of social justice. The director of the film Ian Inaba (who is a Berkeley High grad) was there for a Q&A ranging from film budgeting and camera techniques to civil rights.

March 21, a group of 190 elementary school students from around the Bay Area attended an advance screening of **The Last Mimzy**. Based on the acclaimed sci-fi short story by Lewis Padgett, the film tells the story of two



Director Michael Jacobs discusses his film **Audience of One** with a group of Roosevelt Middle School students during the 50th San Francisco International Film Festival.

children who discover a mysterious box filled with strange toys. After the screening we were joined by Aaron Rhodes and Cory Rosen from the Orphanage, who offered

of student council races in four different middle schools across the U.S. The screening served as a kickoff to the Schools at the Festival program. The teachers also participated in a Q&A with one of the young subjects of the film, Mick Del Rosario.

April 19, 125 high school students at June Jordan High viewed **The Hip Hop Project** in their school auditorium. The documentary tells the compelling story of Chris "Kazi" Rolle, a formerly homeless teenager, who inspires New York City teens to transform their life stories into powerful works of art, using hip hop as a vehicle for self-discovery and redemption. Following the film Rolle and director Matt Ruskin led a Q&A.

During the 15-day San Francisco International Film Festival, April 26–May 10, students participated in 17 screenings, including shorts programs, documentaries and narrative features. Countries represented included Cuba, Germany, France, Malaysia and China, with a participation of 3,260 students from 61 institutions. Filmmakers also visited the schools to discuss their work. There were 23 classroom visits from 20 guests that included directors, producers, actors and film subjects. Over 900 students participated in the visits.

Keith Zwölfer is the Film Society's education program manager. To inquire about participating in the program, email him at kzwolfer@sffs.org.

insights into the math and science behind the story in the film.

March 13, students gathered for a screening of **Phoenix Dance** (SFIFF 2006) at the Bay School in the Presidio. The film tells the story of Homer Avila, a dancer whose battle with cancer left him with only one leg. After the screening, director Karina Epperlein recounted the experience of seeing Avila dance. "The story of life for me was in this dance," she said. She showed students how to move with the camera and emphasized the importance of using the viewfinder to create intimacy with her subject.

March 24, 150 teachers participated in a Saturday morning preview screening of **The Third Monday in October** (SFIFF 2007). This documentary tells the story



SF360

New Experiences from America's Film and Media Frontier

SF360 Film+Club: Bringing movies out of the theater and into the club

SF360 Live: Provocative discussions about experiences surrounding filmmaking

SF360 Movie Night: One City, One Night, One Film

SF360.org: Read about the Bay Area film and media scene

SF360 Movie Scene: Monthly on Comcast 11

For more information visit SF360.org or email info@sf360.org



William Randolph Hearst Foundation
Tin Man Fund