# DOCUMENTARIES

INTERNATIONAL NONFICTION FEATURES
ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES, ISSUES AND IDEAS

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THE AGE OF STUPID

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

ENGLAND
2008
89 MIN

DIR Franny Armstrong
PROD Lizzie Gillett
CAM Franny Armstrong
ED David G. Hill
MUS Chris Brierley
WITH Pete Postlethwaite
PRINT SOURCE Spanner Films Ltd, 9 Delancey Street, London NW1 7NL, UK, FAX: 44-870-751-092. EMAIL: lizzie@ageofstupid.net.

CAUSES Environment, Politics & Government Reform, Science & Technology

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

Cartoonist Walt Kelly first used the phrase, “We have met the enemy and he is us,” on a poster for Earth Day 1970. Eighty-five years later, a survivor on our dying planet echoes that refrain, but with less irony and far more urgency. In the year 2055, a man called the Archivist (Pete Postlethwaite) pores through a limitless digital video library in a storage tower high above the stinking brown desolation, wondering why humankind failed to respond to the myriad signs of climate change. He hones in on the late ’00s—as in, right friggin’ now—when records show a rapidly approaching tipping point that will spell doom for our short-sighted species. The footage unearthed by the Archivist turns out to be real-life interviews conducted by filmmaker Franny Armstrong (Drowned Out, SFIFF 2003). Blending these verité stories with cutting-edge graphics and a pinch of gallows humor, Armstrong delivers a cautionary, pre-apocalyptic documentary that succeeds in piercing our complacency to a degree matched only, perhaps, by An Inconvenient Truth. In an earlier time, we would have rooted for Mumbai entrepreneur Jeh Wadia, launching a discount airline he hopes will lift the masses out of overcrowded trains. But it’s hard not to think of jet emissions as we watch French mountain guide Fernand Pareau gaze mournfully down on the glacier that has shrunk 150 meters in his lifetime. Meanwhile, British wind farm developer Piers Guy faces the nebulous yet powerful forces of property values and inertia. The Age of Stupid is a potent testament that we are all in this together, and it’s time to hurry up and get smart.

—Michael Fox

FRANNY ARMSTRONG

Franny Armstrong played drums in the British bands the Playthings and the Band of Holy Joy before taking up filmmaking. Her first documentary, McLibel (1997), recounted the notorious marathon libel trial of a pair of ordinary, uncompromising Brits sued by McDonald’s. Drowned Out (SFIFF 2003) portrayed the plight of an Indian family threatened by the construction of the Narmada Dam. SFIFF’s Golden Gate Awards documentary jury singled it out for special acknowledgment as “a film of enormous heart, grit and insight that is both taut political essay and enormously moving plea.” The Age of Stupid is her third feature-length work.
At their best, great ad campaigns are magic. They somehow transcend grubby, ingratiating mercantilism to open new ways of thinking, seeing, being. TV spots such as “1984” for Apple and Budweiser’s “True” are like great hit singles, while print campaigns featuring artist-designed Absolut bottles or the myriad “Got Milk?” variations have become endlessly inventive old friends. The “Just Do It” campaign for Nike is so powerful it’s practically a movement, a provocation for everything from personal fitness to political action. Art & Copy, the newest film by Doug Pray (Scratch, Surfwise, Hype!), reveals the personal and professional stories behind some of the most influential advertising campaigns of our time. Commissioned by the industry’s One Club, the film focuses on several Advertising Hall of Fame visionaries, a good number of them based in San Francisco, to capture the intelligence, passion and—I know you may be skeptical of this—the high-minded idealism that goes into the billion-dollar business of tarting up and selling products. It might be too much to suggest that advertising is liberating, inasmuch as its sole reason for being is to put us in thrall to widgets, but its creative energy is undeniably exhilarating. Over the course of the film, it becomes clear many of the great advertising campaigns were crafted despite their clients, almost independently of their products. If there is such a thing as soul in a slogan, you will find it here, in the words, images and ideas of the finest Mad Men in the business.

—Graham Leggat
If there’s a gutsier group of journalists anywhere on the globe than the network of youthful correspondents that calls itself the Democratic Voice of Burma, we haven’t heard of them. Just as democracy depends on a free press to keep the powerful in check, tyranny demands the suppression of information to preserve power. The military dictatorship that’s controlled Myanmar for decades utilizes a combination of force and fear rarely glimpsed by outsiders. But the eyes of the entire world were riveted in September 2007, when hundreds of monks marched in silent protest through the streets of Rangoon. They were joined by thousands of chanting citizens thirsting for change. The predictable government reaction of shutting out foreign news teams, unplugging the already restricted Internet and spreading propaganda was thwarted by the DVB’s export of camcorder footage to TV stations in Europe and the U.S. A cadre of reporters risked arrest and torture to stealthily record the marches and the military response, while their bureau chief, “Joshua,” coordinated from a safe house in Thailand. Danish filmmaker Anders Østergaard artfully merges breathless sequences from the smuggled tapes with recreations of Joshua’s cell phone conversations, crafting a harrowing narrative that thrusts us into the protestors’ giddy celebrations and the terrifying aftermath. Burma VJ demonstrates the potential of consumer technology to divert power to the people, but above all salutes the heroes who pressed “record” within eyeshot of the secret police. To paraphrase George Seldes, journalists still need to show the truth and run.

—Michael Fox

ANDERS ØSTERGAARD

Born in Copenhagen in 1965, Anders Østergaard trained at Central Television in London and graduated from the Danish School of Journalism. He’s directed social-issue docs about pesticides in Africa and malaria, portraits of the Swedish jazz pianist Jan Johannson and the Danish rock band Gasolin and Tintin and I, a “posthumous autobiography” of the Belgian cartoonist Hergé that aired in 2006 as part of PBS’s POV series. Burma VJ won the Joris Ivens and the Movies That Matter awards at the Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival. Østergaard’s latest film pays homage to the iconic Copenhagen author and poet Dan Turell.
CALIFORNIA COMPANY TOWN

USA
2008
76 MIN

DIR Lee Anne Schmitt
PROD Lee Anne Schmitt
CAM Lee Anne Schmitt
ED Lee Anne Schmitt
PRINT SOURCE California Company Town, 2658 Cunard Street, Los Angeles, CA 90065. EMAIL: leeanneschmitt@gmail.com.

CAUSES Economic Justice

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

Filmed over a five-year period from 2003 to 2008, Lee Anne Schmitt’s visually ravishing document of the devastation and desolation of California’s abandoned industrial towns is a wholly unique meditation on natural and man-made environs, at once languid and heartbreaking. Set against California’s beautifully diverse yet unforgiving terrain, California Company Town unearths the blight of industry and the failure of utopian naiveté among landscapes that appear ominously disinterested in human triumphs and tragedies, desires and needs. From the fogs of Scotia, a company lumber town behind northern California’s “redwood curtain,” to the parched horizons of the Salton Sea and the blandness of Silicon Valley, Schmitt—and viewers—witness bleak worlds rarely seen by Bay Area denizens or the urbanites of L.A. Images of sweeping horizons and vacant factories are interspersed with poignant commentary, sparsely accompanied by archival sound recordings and footage. The voices of Ronald Reagan and César Chávez provide alternately ironic and poignant commentary on images of giant toppling redwoods and the stoic faces of Italian workers, striking laborers, captains of industry and Japanese Americans interred at Manzanar. Schmitt’s carefully assembled juxtapositions reveal forgotten towns anew, their current states of desolation and decrepitude now haunted by the past and haunting in their silence. In this young and fragile experiment called America, plunderers of nature and culture stand condemned of far-reaching abuses of the once-authentic promise of progress.

—Sean F. Diggins

Lee Anne Schmitt is on the faculty of the film and video program at the California Institute of the Arts. Her films have screened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Vancouver International Film Festival and the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley. She is particularly drawn to making essay films that “explore the juncture between fiction and documentary.”
CITY OF BORDERS

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

USA/ISRAEL/PALESTINE

2009

66 MIN

DIR Yun Suh

PROD Yun Suh

SCR Yun Suh

CAM Karin Thayer, Robin McKenna

ED Jean Kawahara

MUS Shranny, Musa Hanhan, Jonathan Zalben, Ronen Landa

WITH Sa’ar Netanel, Boody, Samira Saraya, Ravit Geva, Adam Russo

PRINT SOURCE Yun Suh, 2319 Howe Street, Berkeley, CA 94705. EMAIL: playbigger@gmail.com.

CAUSES LGBT Issues; Social Justice; War, Conflict & Reconciliation

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

In English, Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is seen anew through a rainbow of sexual identity in this heartfelt documentary centered on the diverse denizens of Jerusalem’s lone gay bar, a haven of unity amid the region’s seemingly eternal clash of cultures and religious strife. Presided over by tenacious proprietor Sa’ar, who serves as the film’s political conscience and is also the first openly gay man elected to public office in the Holy City, Shushan is a colorful nexus of community engagement, hands-in-the-air dancing and late-night flirting, and a safe space for queers of all backgrounds to congregate. “It was like finding fresh water in the middle of the desert,” a bar regular marvels. Among Shushan’s patrons are Jewish Israeli doctor Ravit, whose relationship with Palestinian-Israeli nurse Samira earns a double “oy vey” from her mother; and Boody, a devout Muslim Palestinian who receives death threats in his West Bank hometown of Ramallah, where his flamboyant drag queen persona, Miss Haifa, isn’t welcome, and whose no-nonsense mother prays daily for her son not to be gay (before her own closeted identity is revealed). First-time feature director Yun Suh deftly balances the many dichotomies with which her remarkably candid subjects must contend as they bravely shun societal mandates and cut through barbed wire fences in pursuit of self.

TONGZHI IN LOVE

In this visually stunning short, a candid trio of alternately serious and campy young men discuss the difficulties and covert thrills of gay life in modern-day China, where family ties and cultural traditions challenge formations of sexual identity. (Ruby Yang, USA 2008, 30 min)

—Steven Jenkins

Born in South Korea, Yun Suh immigrated to Connecticut at age eight and learned English by watching movies and television, from which she also formed an appreciation for cultural studies and visual storytelling. Suh earned a degree in biology from UC Berkeley but eschewed science in favor of radio and broadcast TV jobs, producing documentary shorts in her spare time. While on assignment as a journalist in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, she discovered Shushan and decided to base her first feature film around the bar’s owner and patrons. Suh is now based in the Bay Area.
CRUDE

WEST COAST PREMIERE

USA/ECUADOR/ENGLAND

2008
101 min

DIR Joe Berlinger
PROD Michael Bonfiglio, Joe Berlinger, J.R. Deleon, Richard Stratton
CAM Juan Diego Pérez, Pocho Álvarez, Joe Berlinger, Michael Bonfiglio
ED Alyse Ardell Spiegel
MUS Wendy Blackstone

WITH Pablo Fajardo, Luis Yanza, Germán Yáñez, Adolfo Callejas, Diego Larrea, Emergildo Criollo, Steven Donziger, Rafael Correa

PRINT SOURCE @radical.media, 435 Hudson Street, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10014. FAX: 212-462-1600. EMAIL: bonfiglio@radicalmedia.com.

CAUSES Environment, Health, Social Justice

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

In English, Spanish, A’ingae and Secoya with English subtitles.

Lawyers from both sides of the class action lawsuit Aguinda v. Chevron have descended upon the office of an Ecuadorean judge, resulting in a verbal battle that continues into the building’s corridors as attorneys grandstand and news cameras roll. By the company’s own estimates, it spilled nearly 17 million gallons of oil into soils and waterways—a staggering figure that is nearly double the notorious Exxon Valdez spill off the coast of Alaska in 1989. Lead attorney for the plaintiffs Pablo Fajardo and Chevron lawyer Adolfo Callejas litigate on location at the contaminated rain forest sites for which the plaintiffs—30,000 Ecuadoreans—maintain that current owner Chevron is responsible. Adding to the drama of the showdown, Fajardo, who began his working life in the oil fields at 14, and activist Luis Yanza have been awarded the Goldman Prize, environmentalism’s equivalent of a Nobel. Filmmaker Joe Berlinger spent three years documenting the unfolding court case, interviewing lawyers on both sides and following the story from Chevron stockholder meetings to the jungles of Ecuador. The result is a gripping David and Goliath story of activists pitted against a corporate giant, graphically illustrating the impact of corporate energy exploitation on the indigenous people of the Amazon, who face rising cancer rates, birth defects and other health problems as they struggle to survive in a poisoned landscape. Berlinger allows Chevron to make its case, too, which makes this story more nuanced than you might expect. Alternately inspiring, funny, disturbing and infuriating, Crude offers a thoughtful and complex look at the issues surrounding human rights and corporate behavior in Latin America.

—Pamela Troy

Joe Berlinger is best known for his work on documentary films Brother’s Keeper, Emmy Award–winning Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills and the Emmy-nominated Revelations: Paradise Lost 2, all in collaboration with Bruce Sinofsky. He also works as a nonfiction television director and producer for ABC News, PBS Frontline and HBO. Future projects include a music documentary on B.B. King and two narrative features, Education of a Felon, about prison novelist Edward Bunker, and Facing the Wind, based on Julie Salamon’s nonfiction book about multiple murderer Robert Rowe.
Pat Spurgeon is the drummer, the foundation and, with his cartoonish afro, the most recognizable member of the San Francisco–based indie rock band Rogue Wave. A musician to the core, he’s charismatic, funny, big-hearted and has only one kidney, which is failing. Pat’s search for a new organ (he’s on a six-year waiting list) and his inspiring ability to balance health and work form the center of Jim Granato’s remarkable documentary. Pat’s been battling kidney issues his whole life. As the film begins, he has a tube inserted in his stomach for twice-daily dialysis, a process that simulates kidney function. Dialysis now can be done just about anywhere, provided there’s a sterile environment—not exactly a guarantee for a touring musician. Nonetheless, Pat wants to gig—it’s all he’s ever wanted—and the band hits the road on what they dub their D(ialysis) Tour. Interweaving interviews with Pat’s band and family members as well as footage from a benefit concert with Rogue Wave, Nada Surf, John Vanderslice, and Ben Gibbard of Death Cab for Cutie, the film is a unique travelogue, raising issues of friendship, self-preservation, identity, health care, indie rock and, most notably, organ donation. Throughout, Pat’s coping ability is a thing to behold. Granato subtitles his documentary, “a rock ‘n’ roll film about life, death and bodily functions,” which, while true, doesn’t quite capture the urgency, desperation and raw emotion running throughout.

—Benjamin Friedland

Jim Granato, a member of San Francisco’s independent filmmaking community, has directed and produced several short films and music videos. His documentary short, Vivid Dreams (2007), has played at numerous festivals throughout the world. In various roles, including cinematographer and sound recordist, he’s worked on Revolution Summer (SFIFF 2007), The Real Dirt on Farmer John (SFIFF 2005) and Audience of One (SFIFF 2007), among many others. He also collaborated with local punk rock band the Bobbyteens on their cult documentary, Rock-n-Roll Show. D tour is his first feature film.
In 1974, choreographer Michael Bennett recorded a series of conversations with fellow dancers about their lives spent striving for Broadway greatness. The result was the 1975 smash hit musical *A Chorus Line*, directed by Bennett and co-choreographed with Bob Avian. Insightful, pitch perfect for its era and packed with witty numbers, the Tony Award–winning production was celebrated for giving voice to the countless young dancers living hand to mouth at the edge of the limelight. *Every Little Step* picks up three decades later, at auditions for the 2006 Broadway revival with directors James D. Stern and Adam Del Deo capturing the exhilarating, agonizing casting process in all its nail-biting glory. The filmmakers take full advantage of this opportunity—*A Chorus Line* is about a grueling audition, after all—seamlessly interweaving audition scenes with vintage footage, interviews and snippets from the unearthed 1974 audiotapes. We are privy to the casting panel’s brutally difficult task of choosing actors who can both embody and refresh well-known roles. The echoes between the present-day process and the musical are endless, and the filmmakers brilliantly tease out the most telling moments. Dancers struggle to show support for each other while fighting tooth and nail for the same part; an egotistical young man feigns nonchalance yet jumps to attention when a casting agent calls his name; a young woman, still chasing her big break, philosophizes that auditioning is like life: You must face your biggest fears in order to stand within grasp of your greatest dream.

—Laurie Koh

Veteran Hollywood and Broadway producer James D. Stern has previously collaborated with codirector and coproducer Adam Del Deo on *... So Goes the Nation* (2006) and *The Year of the Yao* (2004). Every Little Step marks their third documentary collaboration. Stern is the founder and CEO of Endgame Entertainment, through which he has produced a wide range of films, including *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004), *Proof* (2005) and *I'm Not There* (2007). His stage accolades include a 1994 Drama Desk award for *Stomp* and a Tony Award for the 2003 production of *Hairspray*.

Adam Del Deo produces and directs films for Endgame Entertainment. In addition to his collaborative work on documentaries with James D. Stern, Del Deo has produced the thriller *Solstice* (2008) and executive-produced the horror film *Stay Alive* (2006). Prior to joining Endgame, Del Deo served as co-executive producer on Stern’s *All the Rage* (1999) and producer on Steven Brill’s *Late Last Night* (1999).
For the Love of Movies: The Story of American Film Criticism

For a century, film critics have separated the wheat from the chaff and made the case for great films. But who will make the case for these bleary-eyed, ink-stained devotees? Boston Phoenix film critic Gerald Peary sharply evaluates the history of critical-analytical writing on moving pictures in this stimulating tour through the rise, fall and reorientation of film criticism in the United States: Early silent-era plot summarizers give way to the daily newspaper reviewers of the '30s, replaced by auteur-theory debaters of the '60s, succeeded in turn by the alt-weekly thinkers of the '70s who, finally, face extinction via the past decade's upsurge in bloggers. Peary's documentary begins by calling film criticism "a profession under siege," but this is no strident whine from a victim class. It's a smart look at key figures and how they've changed public consciousness of both the movies and criticism itself. Peary prioritize the wry over the dry, even giving Andrew Sarris the opportunity to dish on his adversary Pauline Kael, who was not above gay-baiting her rival in the early stages. (His retort: "I took one look at Pauline, and she was not Katharine Hepburn.") In addition to the iconic Sarris, interviewees include The New Republic's stately Stanley Kauffmann, self-starting phenom Harry Knowles (aintitcoolnews), pop-and-academic theorist B. Ruby Rich, Boston Globe daily reviewer Wesley Morris, the Los Angeles Times' sometimes embattled Kenneth Turan and breakthrough newspaper-to-TV critic Roger Ebert. Few opinions are shared, but all stand shoulder-to-shoulder on a broad and abiding love of film.

—Susan Gerhard

Gerald Peary

Gerald Peary, a film critic for the Boston Phoenix and a member of the National Society of Film Critics and the International Film Critics Association (FIPRESCI), has published for more than 25 years in a variety of outlets, including the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe, Film Comment, Cineaste, Sight and Sound and Positif. He is the author of eight books, his latest being John Ford: Interviews. Several of his original screenplays have been optioned, and he has also worked as a story editor for documentary filmmakers Errol Morris and Ron Mann.
Apart from his status as a charter member of the “Axis of Evil,” Kim Jong Il has remained enigmatic to most Westerners, who likely know as much about the North Korean dictator via Trey Parker and Matt Stone’s Team America: World Police (2004) as they do from the evening news. This is by design, of course. Kim presides over one of the world’s most isolated nations, where he retains power with tactics of fear, misinformation, imprisonment and cultivated hero worship. N.C. Heikin’s documentary Kimjongilia gives long overdue voice to those who’ve suffered under the dictator’s reign. The film’s backbone is a series of interviews, in which about a dozen refugees tell their thrilling stories of escape from horrific conditions: Multiple generations of families are sent to prison camps for one person’s perceived crime, prisoners are systematically executed in front of their loved ones, and famine and sickness plague the countryside. Though the film maintains a furious tone, it is far from homogenous. Kimjongilia playfully mixes interviews with dance performances, North Korean propaganda films, reenacted sequences and animation. Heikin’s choice of interview subjects is equally varied—from impoverished peasants to former military officers and upper class artists. The result is a devastating indictment of one of the world’s worst dictators and a call for justice; as one interviewee so aptly puts it: “If the person who created such a place isn’t a criminal, I don’t know who is.”

—Jonathan L. Knapp

A veteran of many dance and theater productions, N.C. Heikin began working on film and television projects in 1986. She made her film directorial debut in 2004 with the award-winning short Mañana. Kimjongilia, which received a grant from the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program, is her first documentary. It was invited to the Sundance Institute Edit and Story Lab in 2008 and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2009.
Raymond Depardon, the preeminent photojournalist turned filmmaker, doesn't approach ethnography in its widely understood sense—the attempt to explain (or explain away) the Other. Living closely with his subjects in the course of filming, his interest is always in individuals. This is all the more so in his series on the changing landscape—physical, economic, emotional—of rural France, *Profils Paysans*, for Depardon spent his childhood on a farm. In *Modern Life* he returns to the Ardèche and the people he knows, both as a type from his youth and as individuals who appeared in his earlier films. At the center are the octogenarian Privat brothers, well named given their lonely, hardscrabble existence as bachelor dairy farmers whose way of life is threatened not only by diminishing grazing land and flocks, but by the arrival of a young nephew and his standoffish wife who have come to take over the business. The philosophical Raymond comments enigmatically, “The farmer's lot has improved, but women's lot has improved even more,” while taciturn Marcel grumbles, “Farming can't be a job, it must be a passion.” Other subjects bear this out: an old couple still shoveling shit, because their children have gone the way of most rural youth—away; a farmer mourning the death of a cow (“one of his favorites”); a young couple trying, and failing, to make a go of raising goats. Of these intimate portraits of everyday passion and struggle, captured in a delicate, fading light, Depardon says, “I'll sing out my love for these farms and farmers.”

—Judy Bloch
MY NEIGHBOR, MY KILLER
KINYARWANA

WEST COAST PREMIERE

USA/FRANCE
2009
80 MIN

DIR Anne Aghion
PROD Anne Aghion
SCR Anne Aghion
ED Nadia Ben Rachid
PRINT SOURCE Gacaca Productions, PO Box 1528, New York, NY 10276. FAX: 212-254-2690. EMAIL: anneaghion@gmail.com.

CAUSES Human Rights, Social Justice, War, World Culture

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

Anne Aghion has spent over a decade documenting a small village in Rwanda where, since 1999, government trials called the Gacaca have attempted to move toward reconciliation and healing in the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, where Hutus killed Tutsis on a mass scale using machetes and makeshift weapons. The Gacaca are open-air trials; perpetrators of the genocide are released from jail and move back to the neighborhoods where family members of their victims still live. Here, citizen judges try their cases and the women whose families have been destroyed are asked to find forgiveness for the murderers. Aghion punctuates her devastating narratives of recrimination and forgiveness with audio from local radio broadcasts and shots of the beautiful local landscape, which too easily covers over the traces of unspeakable crimes. The film’s unflinching eye carefully captures the resentment of many of the women, skeptical that these trials will lead to real justice and tired of hearing the denials of their killers. Nonetheless, when in an unbearably moving scene Aghion films a woman who commutes the sentence of the man who murdered her children and family, we confront evidence of an unfathomable capacity for human forgiveness. Aghion provides no easy answers, but the strength of this woman and that of many of the others interviewed in the film provides a glimmer of hope that, 15 years later, Rwanda is slowly seeing past the horrors of the genocide.

—David Gray

ANNE AGHION

Award-winning filmmaker Anne Aghion has made two previous films about Rwanda, Gacaca, Living Together Again in Rwanda? (2002), and In Rwanda We Say . . . The Family That Does Not Speak Dies (2004). Her film Ice People, about a group of scientists working in Antarctica, screened at SFIFF in 2008. Aghion worked for years at the New York Times and the International Herald Tribune before becoming a filmmaker.
NEW MUSLIM COOL

From behind the headlines on inner-city crime, clashing civilizations and the War on Terror comes filmmaker Jennifer Maytorena Taylor’s illuminating portrait of Puerto Rican Muslim Hamza Pérez, a former gang member and drug dealer turned politically outspoken hip-hop artist, anti-drug counselor, community activist, family man and devout convert to Islam. By following the gentle but determined Hamza over the course of three years—during which he and a group of roughly 60 American Muslims move from Massachusetts to found a religious community in Pittsburgh’s crime-ridden North Side—New Muslim Cool offers an intimate vantage on a new generation of Latino and African American Muslims, youth in many cases drawn by the example of Malcolm X as well as the culture of hip-hop to weave a communal identity in the interstices between differing languages, ethnic backgrounds, religious ideals and the racial and class tensions in American society post-9/11. Far from a static account, these three years hold many changes and an evolving understanding for single father Hamza, who enters a new marriage and an expanded interracial family, performs and records his music—pointed rhymes and exhortations laid over brooding beats under the band name Mujahideen Team—and finds both his Pittsburgh masjid (Muslim school) and his job as a religious speaker in the county jail subject to surveillance and challenges by suspicious federal authorities.

Broaching urgent contemporary themes, New Muslim Cool is a story as inherently complex as it is strikingly American.

—Robert Avila
NOMAD’S LAND

WEST COAST PREMIERE

SWITZERLAND/TURKEY/IRAN/Pakistan/AFGHANISTAN/CHINA/INDIA/SRI LANKA

2008
90 MIN

DIR Gaël Métroz
PROD Francine Lusser, Gérard Monier
CAM Gaël Métroz, Séverine Barde
ED Jeanetta Ionesco
MUS Julien Pouget
PRINT SOURCE Films Distribution, 34, rue du Louvre, Paris 75001, France. FAX: 33 1 53 10 33 98. EMAIL: caraux@filmsdistribution.com.

CAUSES World Culture

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

In German and English with English subtitles.

“One thinks that one is going to make a journey, yet soon it is the journey that makes or unmakes you,” Nicolas Bouvier (1929–1998) wrote in The Way of the World (L’usage du monde). Steeped in the writings of this Swiss traveler/philosopher—admittedly, in his thrall—filmmaker Gaël Métroz sets out to follow the road Bouvier traveled in 1953 in his iconic Fiat Topolino: from Yugoslavia, through Turkey, to Iran, then Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Whereas Bouvier had Thierry Vernet as a companion, Métroz is alone, at once author and observer, subject and object of his own journey. But time has marched forward (urbanization) and backward (politicized tribal violence, Taliban in the streets), and the East is unrecognizable as the world Bouvier described. So Métroz leaves the Topolino’s path for the hinterlands, trades car for camel, wine for opium, inns for yurts, peripatetic freedom for wheat gathering in deep valleys and sheep herding in mountains locked in snow until spring, philosophical musings for the hard work of “starting my life over.” Befriended by womenfolk he dare not smile at; living alongside the oppressed Kalesh, persecuted for “believing in this world, not the next”; lost in the desert and rescued by “untouchables”—at each turn Métroz finds, “I’d forgotten I wasn’t born here.” So, in spite of himself, he emulates the transformations of Nicolas Bouvier, who said, “If one does not accord the journey the right to destroy us a little bit, one might as well stay at home.”

—Judy Bloch

Gaël Métroz (b. 1978) still lives in the Swiss canton of Valais where he was born in 1978. Having earned a master’s degree in French, philosophy and art at the University of Lausanne, he has taught literature and worked as a journalist in television, radio and written media. The recipient of several Swiss prizes for literature and journalism, he has been a traveler since 2004. His first feature-length documentary, Rimbaud’s Africa, was shot in 2005 and released on DVD in 2008.
Veteran documentarian Heddy Honigmann, a citizen of the Netherlands, was born in Peru, and there she returns for this typically quirky, deeply humanist exploration of everyday resilience and resignation. For Honigmann, Lima is “the forgotten city,” though its citizens live in the shadow of the presidential palace. If presidents and dictators in endless parade have forgotten about the citizens of Lima, the citizens have not forgotten about them. In fact, if you want a concise history of the “scandals, dirty wars and towering inflation” of the last few decades, just ask a bartender, a waiter, a leather craftsman. All recall to the ever-approachable Honigmann how they have created their own reality to survive an economy in ruins. What is revealed in their faces and their wisdom is, in the words of a poet, “a deep, unexpected tenderness: the paradox of the beast.” Take note, ye newly depressed Americans, this is something as serviceable as the social contract.

From the youngsters doing backflips in the street for coins to the waiter who sagely admits, “I’m a clown,” survival is a performance. For all the good it does these average Peruvians, having their eyes wide open is a point of pride. But if realism is good, magical realism is better—the sort that allows you to juggle glass balls in the air in the middle of a crowded intersection and call it progress.

—Judy Bloch

Heddy Honigmann, recipient of the Festival’s 2007 Persistence of Vision Award, is the peripatetic director of documentaries and fiction films that have variously explored Paris’s Père-Lachaise Cemetery (Forever, SFJFF 2007), music and survival in Rwanda and Bosnia (Crazy, SFJFF 2000), middle-aged passion in Brazil (O Amor Natural, SFJFF 1997), and Alzheimer’s (Mind Shadows, 2003). Two vital themes weave through her many topics and approaches: memory and poetry. John Anderson wrote, “Her films are . . . antidepressants. . . . She champions the dispossessed without sermonizing.”
THE RECKONING

WEST COAST PREMIERE
USA/UGANDA/CONGO/COLOMBIA/NETHERLANDS
2008
95 MIN

DIR Pamela Yates
PROD Paco de Onís
SCR Pamela Yates, Peter Kinoy, Paco de Onís
CAM Melle van Essen
ED Peter Kinoy, Dara Kell
MUS Roger C. Miller
PRINT SOURCE Skylight Pictures, 330 West 42nd Street, 24th Floor, New York, NY 10036. FAX: 212-643-1208. EMAIL: info@skylightpictures.com.

CAUSES: Human Rights, Politics & Government Reform, Social Justice

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

Two men walk through long grass on an African plain. One pauses and, his face expressionless, points at an object on the ground. The other bends to pick it up. He turns it over in his hands then holds it out. It is a human skull. "In this place," says an onlooker who has joined them, "killers go unpunished." The opening scene in The Reckoning is a deft and deceptively restrained moment that captures the rationale behind the International Criminal Court, an unprecedented effort to establish a permanent international institution for prosecuting crimes against humanity. This documentary follows ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo, Senior Trial Attorney Christine Chung and Deputy Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s efforts to prosecute the criminals most likely to get away with horrific crimes, whether in the Congo, Uganda, Colombia or Darfur. The ICC’s targets are not the foot soldiers who committed the atrocities, but rather the leaders who issued the orders. This is a daunting task for an organization that has no police force and must depend on its member states to honor arrest warrants. Through accounts offered by victims, ICC lawyers and advocates and at least one active opponent of the ICC—former Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton is given a moment to weigh in—director Pamela Yates has created a fascinating and often heartening account of the pursuit of justice and its effect, direct and indirect, on murderers who formerly believed they could act with impunity.

—Pamela Troy

PAMELA YATES

Pamela Yates’ first full-length documentary was the Sundance Special Jury Prize-winning 1983 film When the Mountains Tremble. She is the co-founder of Skylight Pictures Inc, a company "committed to producing artistic, challenging and socially relevant independent documentary films on issues of human rights and the quest for justice." This passion for human rights is reflected in her past films, which include State of Fear (2005), about Peru’s own “war on terror;” Presumed Guilty (2002), a study of San Francisco public defenders; Cause for Murder (2002), which deals with the deaths of two young Mexican lawyers; and Brotherhood of Hate (1999), an examination of white supremacy.

SUN MAY 3 5:30 KABUKI RECK03K
TUE MAY 5 6:00 PFA RECK05P
WED MAY 6 6:15 KABUKI RECK05K
REMBRANDT’S J’ACCUSE

“Just because you have eyes does not mean you can see,” challenges the great director-contrarian Peter Greenaway in his new cine-essay, which reveals the mysteries hidden in plain sight in one of the most famous paintings of all time, Rembrandt’s The Night Watch. Where most see only a great work of art, Greenaway dissects the Dutch masterpiece to uncover an indictment, a conspiracy and a murder mystery sweeping across the ruling elites of Amsterdam’s Golden Age. Hosting the proceedings like a well-mannered 21st-century judge, Greenaway “investigates” each of the painting’s 34 characters, their poses and costumes, as well as the picture’s setting and lighting, to discover clues to Rembrandt’s fascinating take on, and indictment of, the power struggles of 17th-century Amsterdam. In the process, Greenaway moves far beyond narrative and documentary filmmaking (further beyond his already out-there early works like Drowning by Numbers or The Cook the Thief His Wife & Her Lover) to level his own j’accuse on contemporary visual illiteracy. With actors (including Martin Freeman of British TV’s The Office) restaging certain scenes and Greenaway’s clever intellectual side-notes and diversions (the development of candle-making in relationship to painting aesthetics, for instance), Rembrandt’s J’Accuse will change how you view art, and the world.

—Jason Sanders

WEST COAST PREMIERE

ENGLAND/NETHERLANDS
2008
90 MIN

DIR Peter Greenaway
PROD Femke Wolting, Bruno Felix
SCR Peter Greenaway
CAM Reinier van Brummelen
ED Elmer Leupen, Irma de Vrie
MUS Marco Robino, Giovanni Sollima
CAST Peter Greenaway, Martin Freeman, Eva Birthistle, Jodhi May, Emily Holmes

CAUSES The Arts
The district of St. Leon in Ouagadougou, capital of the West African country of Burkina Faso, sits between the cathedral and the mosques. It’s here that, while screening his 1999 film Chief! at FESPACO (the long-running biennial Pan-African film festival in Ouagadougou), Cameroonian filmmaker Jean-Marie Téno shot this documentary about the very different film culture in one of the last poor neighborhoods not yet plowed under by the bulldozers of the city center. Nanema Boubakar, cinephile proprietor of Votre Cine Club, inspects and schedules the day’s offerings delivered in VHS and DVD format. Among the usual Jackie Chan and Wesley Snipes action films is the rare Burkinabe film like Yaaba (1989), which Bouba is delighted to screen, since native films are practically inaccessible to his customers. Téno interviews Yaaba director Idrissa Ouedraogo, who confesses that, because filmmakers like himself receive French subsidies, he neglects the potentially huge market for native African films these hundreds of cine clubs represent. Meanwhile, Bouba lays out prayer mats—his cine club doubles as a Muslim prayer room during the day—and djembe drum maker Bamouni strolls the streets announcing show times between beats of his drum. Bouba can only yearn to buy a flat-screen TV someday, and thus to compete with the big-screen open-air cinema showing the Hindi films preferred by the local women.

HOMAGE

In Jean-Marie Téno’s early short film, various images of public life in Cameroon before and after Independence appear as an elderly farmer recalls his past. (1987, 13 min)

—Frako Loden
A SEA CHANGE

Is it too late to save the ocean? Grandfather and environmentalist Sven Huseby was stunned to discover in a New Yorker article that ocean acidification and global warming is threatening life under the sea. Fish had always been a part of Huseby’s life. His parents owned a fish market in his native Norway; his father worked in an Alaskan salmon cannery; and Sven grew up in Seattle eating fish nearly every day. Now Huseby wonders, what ocean life will remain when his five-year-old grandson Elias grows up? Compelled to learn more, Huseby travels with award-winning director Barbara Ettinger from upstate New York and California to Alaska and Norway to interview scientists, professors, fishermen, entrepreneurs, journalists and others about the changing chemistry of the ocean and what people are doing to reduce carbon emissions. Huseby finds himself enamored with pteropods, the tiny, beautiful sea butterflies crucial to the ocean’s ecosystem. Today pteropods can only survive up to 48 hours before the water’s acidity eats through their translucent shells. A Sea Change features astonishing underwater footage as well as stunning scenes of the Arctic ice shelf as pieces of it fall into the sea, making global warming a stark reality. This eye-opening film sounds the alarm about ocean acidification while offering hope for the future by highlighting the people working on projects to reduce carbon emissions. Huseby’s quest also constitutes a letter to his grandson, conveying his love of the sea and his sincere desire that Elias will inherit a world with oceans teeming with life.

—Chuleenan Svetvilas

WEST COAST PREMIERE

USA
2009
84 MIN

DIR Barbara Ettinger
PROD Barbara Ettinger, Sven Huseby, Susan Cohn
CAM Claudia Raschke-Robinson
ED Toby Shimin
MUS Philip Glass
PRINT SOURCE Niijii Films, 776 Westminster Road, Brooklyn, NY 11230. FAX: 718-407-0670. EMAIL: angela@aseachange.net.

CAUSES Environment, Science & Technology

BARRABA ETTINGER

With her first documentary Martha and Ethel (1994), Barbara Ettinger explored the unique relationship between herself and coproducer Jyll Johnstone and their childhood nannies. The film screened in festivals and was distributed theatrically by Sony Pictures Classics and aired on Cinemax. Her second, Two Square Miles (2006), which enjoyed festival screenings and aired on PBS’s Independent Lens series, focused on a small town in upstate New York and the community’s response to a proposed $300 million cement plant project. Ettinger received an MA in education from Stanford University. She is also the co-founder of the Native American Preparatory School in New Mexico.

SAT APR 25 3:45 KABUKI  SEA25K
MON APR 27 6:15 KABUKI  SEA27K
THU APR 30 1:30 KABUKI  SEA30K
SOUL POWER

USA
2008
93 MIN

DIR Jeffrey Levy-Hinte
PROD Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, David Sonenberg, Leon Gast
CAM Paul Goldsmith, Kevin Keating, Albert Maysles, Roderick Young
ED David Smith
WITH Muhammad Ali, James Brown, B.B. King, Miriam Makeba, Celia Cruz
PRINT SOURCE Sony Pictures Classics, 550 Madison, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10022.
EMAIL: info@spe.sony.com.

CAUSES The Arts, World Culture

For three nights in 1974, music filled the air of Kinshasa, Zaire, during a historic music festival that preceded the Muhammad Ali–George Foreman world heavyweight title bout, the legendary ’Rumble in the Jungle.’ Conceived by South African musician Hugh Masekela and his partner, record producer Stewart Levine, and made reality with the help of fight promoter Don King, ’Zaire 74,’ as it came to be known, was a summit of sorts, a gathering of African American rhythm-and-blues royalty and their southern African counterparts. Masekela, James Brown, Miriam Makeba, The Spinners, Bill Withers and B.B. King are among the stellar talents that take the stage in this cinema vérité documentary capturing not only highlights from the concerts but also the complicated preparations, backstage machinations, street life in Kinshasa and reactions of the American performers to their ancestral homeland. Crafted from outtakes of When We Were Kings—the Academy Award-winning 1996 documentary that spun the tale of the celebrated boxing match—the leftover footage does more than document a hitherto lost musical moment as significant as Woodstock. It also captures a slice of history from the waning days of the Black Power movement. For the American musicians involved in the endeavor, the shows were not merely a gig but a political statement and a vital reconnection to their African roots. Beginning with Brown’s exuberant rendition of the titular song, the performances themselves are electrifying, every bit as thrilling today as they were 35 years ago.

—Pam Grady

The heated debate over bilingual education usually takes place in courtrooms, at academic conferences and in editorial missives. At its most vitriolic the "English only" camp skews toward xenophobia and racism, while the opposition at times sounds utopian themes of American global economic resurgence with the aid of multilingual classrooms. Often neglected in this discourse is the firsthand experience of students, an oversight that veteran documentarians Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider beautifully rectify with their latest effort. Closely following four very different local public-schoolers through an academic year, they draw on subtle nuances of the kids’ stories to illustrate the complex shades and permutations of bilingual schooling. Two children are placed in immersion programs to retain their native tongues while learning English, and the other two are in the reverse situation. Their parents list both familiar and surprising reasons for enrolling their children, but each remains a strong proponent of the programs despite criticism from extended family, friends and a loud chorus of English-only activists. Even while dismissing common barbs, the families must confront unique challenges both humorous and serious. With San Francisco becoming the first city to mandate access to bilingual opportunities for all public schoolchildren, this thought-provoking document could hardly be timelier.

Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider founded Patchwork Films, a local company that produces and distributes documentaries that explore contemporary social issues through intimate character stories. Jarmel is the director of Born in the USA (2000), an investigation of the professional roles women take on in the birthing process, and The Return of Sarah’s Daughters (1997), a look at secular women who are attracted to Orthodox Judaism.

Ken Schneider is widely regarded as one of the top local documentary film editors. His extensive credits include Peabody winner Regret to Inform, a haunting personal comparison of the human costs on both sides of the Vietnam War, and Freedom Machines, an investigation of the role technology has played in the disability rights movement. Of his latest film Schneider says, “Bilingualism is a metaphor for what could be breaking down those barriers between our neighbors and us. We’re talking about transformation: personal, cultural and national.”

—Ilya Tovbis
UNMISTAKEN CHILD
HA-GILGUL

ISRAEL
2008
102 MIN

DIR Nati Baratz
PROD Ilil Alexander, Arik Bernstein, Nati Baratz
SCR Nati Baratz
CAM Yaron Orbach
ED Ron Goldman
MUS Cyril Morin
PRINT SOURCE Oscilloscope Pictures, 511 Canal Street, #5E, New York, NY 10013.
EMAIL: info@oscilloscope.net.

CAUSES Religion & Spirituality

In English, Tibetan, Hindi and Nepali with English subtitles.

Israeli filmmaker Nati Baratz’s visually captivating documentary follows Tenzin Zopa, a 28-year-old disciple of recently deceased Tibetan Master Geshe Lama Konchog. “Geshe La,” as he is affectionately called, leaves behind pearl relics upon his cremation that strongly suggest his impending reincarnation. Prompted by the Dalai Lama to search for his former master in child form, Zopa embarks on a quest throughout the stunning Tsum Valley of Nepal to find the spiritual patriarch, thought to now be a little boy no more than a year old. Shooting over a four-year period, Baratz accompanies Zopa on his trek from village to village, snooping for clues that may lead him to the young reincarnate. He searches out a few cold-ridden, muddy-faced children in hopes that the sought-for youngster may knowingly react to Geshe La’s rosary beads. The outlook appears bleak until Zopa encounters a cherub-faced boy with whom he immediately connects. Zopa’s decision to bring the child back with him to the monastery solidifies his ultimate transformation from humble servant to divine master in his own right. The boy, meanwhile, with his parents’ somewhat reluctant blessing, goes with Zopa to begin his journey (return?) to Tibetan masterhood. An intimate, emotionally enthralling and colorful depiction of the living Buddhist tradition, Baratz’s documentary leaves you curious to know more and just may even turn nonbelievers into the most faithful of followers.

—Rachel Langus

Nati Baratz was born in Jerusalem and studied film at Tel Aviv University. Since graduating in 2000, he has worked as a freelance director and producer, screening work at both the Berlin and Toronto International Film Festivals. His short documentaries include 2001’s Tel-Aviv-Kyrgyzstan and 2004’s Noches, both of which were broadcast on Israeli television.
Z32

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE
ISRAEL/FRANCE
2008
81 MIN

DIR Avi Mograbi
PROD Serge Lalou, Avi Mograbi
SCR Avi Mograbi, Noam Enbar
CAM Philippe Bellaïche
ED Avi Mograbi
MUS Noam Enbar
PRINT SOURCE Doc and Film International, 13 rue Portefoin, Paris 75003, France. FAX: 33-1-42-77-56-87. EMAIL: d.elstner@docandfilm.com

CAUSES The Arts; Social Justice; War, Conflict & Reconciliation

GGA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CONTENDER

In Hebrew with English subtitles.

Presented with support from the Consulate General of Israel, San Francisco.

Israeli “docu-essayist” Avi Mograbi reveals the deepest longings of a nation in conflict in this genre-breaking and original work. A young Israeli, while serving in the army, participates in a revenge operation following the ambush and murder of six Israeli soldiers. His elite unit is dispatched and two innocent Palestinian policemen are murdered. The film works as a confessional for the young man, who faces the camera to speak to his girlfriend about his guilt. By partially concealing their faces with digitized masks, the anonymous confessor reveals the contradictions between a soldier’s adrenaline-driven experience of real combat and a civilian’s need for forgiveness. The girlfriend, a thoughtful listener, raises the moral issues while assimilating the unbearable thought that her lover is a murderer. Mograbi effectively inserts himself in the narrative like a Greek chorus, singing a libretto of his own self-doubt as an artist and political activist. His ironic commentary underlines his ambivalence toward his subject. His protagonist is so genuinely likeable that you forget what he has done. Mograbi’s ingenious film, a self described “musical documentary tragedy,” leads us through a maze of national duty, admissions of guilt, desire for forgiveness and a soldier’s reality that is rarely discussed. A challenging film, the title Z32 is taken from the case number assigned the testimony by Breaking the Silence, an organization of ex-soldiers dedicated to collecting testimonies about their service.

—Janis Plotkin

AVI MOGRABI

An internationally celebrated and controversial filmmaker, Mograbi employs innovative techniques and seriocomic musings to tell stories that he hopes can change the political reality that he lives in. Mograbi works as a political filmmaker in Israel and is actively involved in Breaking the Silence, an organization of ex-soldiers dedicated to collecting testimonies about their service. His short film, Deportation, launched his career as a filmmaker of note in 1989. He followed this with How I Learned to Overcome My Fear and Love Arik Sharon (1997) and Happy Birthday Mr. Mograbi (1999), among others.
SHORTS

MULTIPLE GENRES, MANY GEMS

172 Foreign Territories
173 Handle with Care
174 No Voice Too Small
175 Parting Shots
176 A Thousand Pictures
177 Voices Carry
178 Youth Bring the Truth
Total running time 109 min.

The daunting challenges of being placed in situations outside one’s comfort zone—whether physically or in the mind’s eye—are reflected in these penetrating presentations of life viewed from an outsider’s perspective. In this program of narrative and documentary shorts, a couple takes a road trip to salvage a broken relationship, a young girl in Iraq witnesses the shooting of an American soldier and a boy growing up in 1960s Japan finds his life altered after hearing Elvis Presley and bluegrass music.

ANGELS DIE IN THE SOIL

The legacy of Iraq’s chemical warfare is revealed in this story of a young girl who digs up remains of dead Iraqi soldiers and sells their bones. One day she witnesses an American soldier being shot by terrorists and attempts to save him. (Babak Amini, Iran/Iraq/Germany 2008, 30 min) In GGA competition.

IMMERSION

Moises, a bright young Mexican immigrant who speaks only Spanish struggles to succeed in school. Using untrained child actors from public schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, Immersion movingly captures a child’s attempt to understand his new environment. (Richard Levien, USA 2008, 14 min) In GGA competition.

WAITING FOR A TRAIN: THE TOSHIO HIRANO STORY

With its title taken from the Jimmie Rodgers song, this film paints a humorous and engaging tale of how bluegrass music changed and inspired the life of a young Japanese man. (Oscar Bucher, USA 2008, 21 min) In GGA competition.

UTOPIA, PART 3: THE WORLD’S LARGEST SHOPPING MALL

China’s economic boom is examined through a visual tour of a gigantic shopping mall in Southern China. (Sam Green/Carrie Lozano, USA 2008, 12 min) In GGA competition.

HISTORY OF SOLITUDE

The ache of a relationship slowly disintegrating is honestly and vividly captured in this road movie with no clear destination. (Mathew Szymanowski, Poland 2008, 32 min) In GGA competition.

—Audrey Chang
HANDLE WITH CARE

Total running time 85 min.

The seven artist-made films gathered in this program vary from a cutout collage, a hand-processed film and a puppet and costume drama to two films with 3-D imagery. Whether a single shot recording 93 candles flickering on a birthday cake or an allegorical recounting of a near-death experience, these films remind us of the fragility of life and the power of the moving image medium—as well as the reverse.

CHROMATIC COCKTAIL

The vibrant, abstract spirals of Kerry Laitala’s experiments with chromovision leap off the screen in pulsating 3-D. (Kerry Laitala, USA 2008, 9 min)

EXPERIMENT ON PERIPHERAL VISION, #1

In the first of a series of experiments, a man and a woman note what they see from the corners of their eyes. (Adele Horne and Paul VanDeCarr, USA 2008, 3 min)

THE PARABLE OF THE TULIP PAINTER AND THE FLY

Charlotte Pryce’s luminous, hand-processed film reaches across the centuries to find inspiration in a 17th-century Dutch painting. (Charlotte Pryce, USA 2008, 4 min)

ON A PHANTOM LIMB

An imaginative allegory draws on ink paintings, live-action and puppets to explore a woman who finds herself part bird after a life-threatening occurrence. (Nancy Andrews, USA 2009, 35 min)

SPEECHLESS

This beautiful yet uneasy weaving of images of human vulvas and landscapes draws on medical 3-D View-Master images. (Scott Stark, USA 2008, 13 min)

FALSE AGING

Longing and regret are evoked in this haunting collage-film, crafted from the detritus of the past. (Lewis Klahr, USA 2008, 15 min)

NINETY-THREE

A succinct, silent portrait of resilience. (Kevin Jerome Everson, 3 min)

—Kathy Geritz and Irina Leimbacher
NO VOICE TOO SMALL

Total running time 77 min. Recommended for ages seven and up.

Little kids, runty pups, busy bugs, lost toys—even the big bad wolf—just want to be noticed and understood sometimes, but it can take some extra effort (or a little bit of blind luck) for the smallest among us to make themselves heard or seen. Luckily, audiences of all sizes can be easily entertained by this multilingual, biodiversified collection of animated and live-action shorts.

WAWA

A lost stuffed animal passes through many hands and goes on a circuitous urban journey. Will WAWA ever find his way back to his young owner? (Mona Achache, France 2008, 10 min) In GGA competition.

GOOD ADVICE

With a new baby brother on the way, Rasmus has some insightful suggestions for how to deal with mom and dad that may be more helpful than he realizes. (Andreas Tibblin, Sweden 2008, 15 min) In GGA competition.

DIARY OF A FLY

Those annoying multi-ocular insects that buzz in our ears have interesting lives of their own, you know. (Gene Deitch, USA 2008, 9 min)

THE TURTLE AND THE SHARK

A Samoan mythical tale comes to life through beautiful animation. (Ryan Woodward, USA 2008, 4 min) In GGA competition.

MADAM PRESIDENT

Though we didn’t elect our first female president this year, one young girl has no trouble imagining what the world would be like if she were living in the White House. Hail to the Chief! (Pete List, USA 2008, 10 min)

ALEX’S HALLOWEEN

If it were up to Alex, he’d wear a Halloween costume every day of the year. But on the one day that counts, he can’t get anyone to understand that it’s more than just costumes and candy that matter. (Daniel Persitz, USA 2008, 14 min)

THE TRUE STORY OF THE 3 LITTLE PIGS

Paul Giammatti narrates a bit of revisionist fairytale history, from the point of view of the big bad wolf. Was he wrongly accused? (Konstantin Bronzit, USA 2008, 8 min)

MUTT

A playful pooch, a crabby farmer and a hungry cow all follow the bouncing ball to a hilarious conclusion. (Glen Hunwick, Australia 2008, 7 min) In GGA competition.

—Joanne Parsont
PARTING SHOTS

Total running time 96 min.

This collection of experimental films and videos presents visual and aural sparring sessions that may or may not prepare you for various states of demise. Does someone need a warning? Are your affairs in order? These pieces may leave you with more questions than answers, but after seeing them at least you’ll know where to start—or end.

CIRCLES OF CONFUSION

This winner of a Student Academy Award is a documentary tracing the effects of hurricane Katrina on two filmmakers: one a suicide victim in New Orleans, the other returning to the city while trying to come to grips with tragedy. (Phoebe Tooke, USA 2008, 11 min) In GGA competition.

DANSE MACABRE

A literal dance of death emerges in the details of a corpse and its unexpected beauty. (Pedro Pires, Canada 2008, 8 min) In GGA competition.

FRIDA IN THE MIRROR

Twenty women take turns resurrecting the spirit of Frida Kahlo. The sets are perfect, the visual style intense and the costumes and makeup are spot-on. Unibrows for everyone! (Adrian Arias, USA 2008, 5 min) In GGA competition.

THE LAST RITES

Wrapping one’s mind around the utter immensity of the grounded tankers in the ship-breaking yards of Bangladesh is difficult even with this visual aid. (Yasmine Kabir, Bangladesh 2008, 17 min) In GGA competition.

LAST THOUGHTS

A series of flashing sequences take us through the delicate last moments of a dying man. (Paul Burke, USA 2009, 5 min) In GGA competition.

ME BRONI BA (MY WHITE BABY)

The tangled legacy of European colonialism in Ghana is investigated at the sites of hair salons and markets. (Akosua Owusu, USA/Ghana 2009, 22 min) In GGA competition.

RUNNING SUSHI

Literal and figurative combat ensues from the mental associations made with sushi boats floating by two customers. (Chris Haring, Mara Mattuschka, Austria 2008, 28 min) In GGA competition.

—Sean Uyehara
A THOUSAND PICTURES

Total running time 88 min.

When can a word be worth a thousand pictures? “Lies,” “slaves,” “war,” “Jesus”... “AANAATT”? These terms need unpacking. These animated shorts heap image after image in an attempt to edify as well as excite, enlighten and entertain. They investigate their subjects through techniques ranging from CGI and rotoscope to stop-motion and hand-inking.

AANAATT
The inventive Max Hattler returns to SFIFF with this perspectival conundrum. Are we upside down? (Max Hattler, England 2008, 5 min) In GGA competition.

FAR AWAY FROM URAL
A tour-de-force in stop-motion puppetry, this strange and charming film features a Prussian soldier who is part man, part horse, part suitcase. (Katarina Lillqvist, Finland 2008, 25 min) In GGA competition.

THE HEART OF AMOS KLEIN
Hand-drawn, live-action and archival footage combine to explore significant moments in the history of Israel from the perspective of an aged senior army officer. (Michal and Uri Kranot, Israel 2008, 15 min) In GGA competition.

KANIZSA HILL
Where the mind goes the body will follow. Usually. In this case the head and body are separate (in the literal sense) and desperate. (Evelyn Lee, USA 2008, 8 min) In GGA competition.

LIES
Following his wildly successful Never Like the First Time, Jonas Odell again taps a series of true stories, this time centering on the machinations and effects of lying—and there are some doozies. (Jonas Odell, Sweden 2008, 13 min) In GGA competition.

PHOTOGRAPH OF JESUS
An archivist at Getty Images details the strategies involved in informing customers that there is no photograph of Jesus available. Likewise, Santa Claus doesn’t exist (i.e., no photographs of his actual person available at this time, but we will keep you posted). (Laurie Hill, England 2008, 7 min) In GGA competition.

SLAVES
Two children abducted by government-sponsored militia in Sudan recount their experiences. Heartbreaking and harrowing, their stories are part of a series of nonfiction animated shorts about children in difficult situations. (David Aronowitz, Hanna Heilborn, Sweden 2008, 15 min) In GGA competition.

—Sean Uyehara

176
Total running time 105 min.

In this program, listeners will delight and be moved by the dulcet sounds of a ring tone, the poignant last recording of Harvey Milk and the musings of an elderly artist who gleefully admits, “I live for beautiful women.” These films depict a variety of real people and fictional characters whose voices impact with humor, insight, experience and tragedy.

**ZIETEK**

A retired sculptor lovingly creates a variety of female figures, filling his studio and home with women who “watch” him as much as he watches them. (Bartosz Blaschke, Poland 2008, 17 min) In GGA competition.

**THE LAKE**

Young Yoni, recently fired and possessed of a hilariously malfunctioning cell phone, joins his brother on a very particular fishing trip. (Boaz Lavie, Israel 2008, 26 min) In GGA competition.

**575 CASTRO ST.**

Shot in a storefront recreated for Gus Van Sant’s *Milk*, the final words of the slain politician play in voiceover. (Jenni Olson, USA 2008, 7 min)

**THE CONSCIENCE OF NHEM EN**

At 16, Nhem En was forced to take pictures of several thousand Cambodians before they were murdered by the Khmer Rouge. Nominated for an Academy Award, this film interrogates the photographer who is endeavoring to come to terms with his actions. (Steven Okazaki, Cambodia 2008, 25 min) In GGA competition.

**KONVEX-T**

A delightfully creepy, Cronenbergian tale of an unprepossessing man who discovers a boil in a most uncomfortable place. (Johan Lundh, Sweden 2008, 18 min) In GGA competition.

**NEXT FLOOR**

At an opulent and diverse banquet, diners discover the perils of abundance and gluttony. (Denis Villeneuve, Canada 2007, 12 min)

—Rod Armstrong
YOUTH BRINGS THE TRUTH

Total running time 81 min. Recommended for ages 11 and up.

They may be underage, but they’re not to be underestimated. Young filmmakers are grabbing their cameras and tellin’ it like they see it: From voting to NAFTA, Vietnam to immigration, their take on the world is both fresh and focused.

CAUSES The Arts, Youth

YOUTH VOICES
Too young to have their votes counted but determined to have their views recorded, some Oakland teens set up their own Election Day voting booth. (Sydney Paige Matterson, USA 2008, 7 min) In Youth Film for Change Award competition.

POETRY IN THE DARK
A touching tribute to a hard-working grandfather who emigrated from the Ukraine. (Daniel Kharlak, USA 2008, 11 min) In GGA competition.

THE BEGINNING
Clever claymation takes us back to the start of it all. One man. Lots of aliens. (P. Roxanne Smith, USA 2008, 4 min)

DAILY BREAD
An eye-opening examination of the North American Free Trade Agreement and its impact on Mexico. (Yianeth Saenz, USA 2008, 25 min) In GGA & Youth Film for Change Award competition.

THE FREEZE
Even a claymation character can suffer a computer freeze. But only he can climb inside afterward. (P. Roxanne Smith, USA 2008, 4 min) In GGA competition.

NO LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL
2008’s GGA Best Youth Work Award–winner returns with a hard-hitting look at a singular event in the Vietnam War. (Charlotte Burger, USA 2008, 10 min) In GGA competition.

HEADPHONE HAROLD
Turning up the tunes and tuning out the world may be hazardous to more than just your hearing. (Jason Kummerfeldt, USA 2008, 1 min)

CHANGE: TODAY, TOMORROW, ALWAYS
New schools, big moves, mom’s new boyfriend—three teenage girls discuss changes they’ve endured and the ways they’ve adapted. (Savannah Stone, Hannah Vickers and Anna Baker, USA 2008, 6 min)

NUESTRA DIGNIDAD
Do Lady Liberty’s promises hold true for today’s immigrants? (Kathy Vega-Munoz, USA 2008, 2 min) In Youth Film for Change Award competition.

GENERATION OF CONSOLIDATION
Amid unprecedented media consolidation, young people call for a diversity of voices—and step up to incite change. (Samantha Mullenburg and Brooke Noel, USA 2008, 10 min) In GGA & Youth Film for Change Award competition.

—Joanne Parsont