

FILM
Another sensational week at Sundance



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Sundance Film Festival is in its 32nd year of showcasing independent films. The festival runs for ten days in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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This past week marked the 32nd anniversary of the Sundance Film Festival. With this comes another lineup of new independent films and some actor/director debuts.

Sundance is a showcase of low budget (or at least lower than the typical budget for a big Hollywood movie) documentaries, international, short and full-length feature films.

Productions are not only from American directors and acted by Americans, but rather span international borders. Movies that appear at Sundance hope to get recognition and open to larger audiences nationwide and internationally.

These films are a whole other breed of cinema. They are movies that are usually underrated and do not always dazzle audiences with elaborate theatrics and stunts, but that charm with their plot lines and darker, usually misunderstood characters.

Donnie Darko was one such movie that had these elements. Jake Gyllenhaal played Donnie Darko, a highly intelligent teenager going through a disturbing phase of his life. While *Darko* did not exactly uphold any expectations, it was praised by critics, and its DVD release brought along a large fan base.

Popular themes in independent movies also include drugs and sex.

The Wackness, shown at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, won the Audience Award for Dramatic Film. Josh Peck plays Luke Shapiro, a recent high school graduate, who deals drugs to make money for his family, for college and pays for his therapy sessions using drugs.

Thirteen may not have been so pleasant to watch, but its strong drug

and alcohol use along with the sexual content made it one of the most controversial movies of 2003. Evan Rachel Wood was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Drama for her character Tracy Freeland, a thirteen-year-old girl who wanders down a bumpy path of sex, drugs and stealing.

Many movies that debut at Sundance have gone on to win or have been nominated for a Golden Globe or an Academy Award.

500 Days of Summer was a standout at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and lead actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt was later nominated for a Golden Globe, as well as other various awards. Levitt is no stranger to Sundance, having been in a multitude of movies shown at the festival. *Manic* and *Brick* were two of his films, with *Brick* being a 2005 Sundance winner of the Special Jury Prize for Originality of Vision.

Hesher, Levitt's most recent film, is featured at this year's festival and is already gaining positive feedback. The title character Hesher (Levitt) basically hates everyone and everything until he meets his new neighbor, TJ (played by Devin Brochu), and they more or less get through life with each other's help.

Little Miss Sunshine also garnered a lot of attention when it premiered at the festival in 2006 and won Academy Awards for Best Original Screenplay and Best Supporting Actor for Alan Arkin. The film follows a rather dysfunctional family, as they drive across the United States to California for a beauty pageant.

Other notable films that have appeared at Sundance include *American Psycho*, *Garden State*, *The Squid and the Whale*, *The Science of Sleep*, and *Be Kind Rewind*.

Already gaining much praise at this year's Sundance Film Festival are the films *Welcome to the Riley's* (starring Kristen Stewart as a hooker), *Bhutto* (a

documentary on the life of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto), and *HIGH School* (a film about a high school student who, with the help of a pothead, tries to get all the students stoned in hopes of undermining his evil principle's plan for expelling anyone who fails his mandatory drug test).

While not all movies that appear at Sundance are full-length films, do not underestimate the power of the shorts. One of the highest-rated films at Sundance so far this year is the short film *My Invisible Friend*. Running at only fourteen minutes, the film centers around a young boy with an invisible friend. The boy, Tomas, realizes with the help of his friend that all he wants is to be able to talk to people and that his life would be better if he could. *My Invisible Friend* is in Spanish with English subtitles, but the language barrier has not proved to be a problem for audiences.

Adding to the international and short film categories is *Madagascar, A Journey Diary*, a visual masterpiece that follows a journey through Madagascar and highlights the Malagasy society.

Another international movie, *All That I Love*, is getting high remarks as well. The movie, set in Poland in 1981, follows a boy, Janek, during the Solidarity movement as he starts a band and falls in love with a girl, Basia. Basia's father highly disapproves of Janek and even more so, his family and their involvement in the military.

The plot lines may at times be complex or heavy and some audiences may not understand the characters and their issues, but this year's festival has already brought attention to unforgettable films that will surely be contenders in the 2010-2011 award season.

THE PLAYLIST

A different side of country music?

DAN KINEM
senior reporter

When most literate people hear the word "country" today, they immediately cringe and turn away. Modern country is often a thing of disgust, a joke for all true

lovers of music as an art form to chuckle at. It defines "mediocrity," and you can immediately label any fan of it as moronic. However, there appears to still be some diamonds in the rough out there, existing so country as a genre can still barely have an ounce of merit in the music community.

Langhorne Slim being a major one, the other major act being the multi-talented The Avett Brothers.

Their blend of folk and alt-country with an almost punk twist is nothing new. They have been doing it for a decade now and they have nearly perfected it. With each album they keep improving, and their new near masterpiece, *I and Love and You*, is no exception. It takes all the elements that made their previous works great and fine tunes them. What results is half an album of knee-slapping joyous sing-a-longs and half an album of heartfelt beautifully sung ballads. And if

you ask me, that's a perfect combination.

It's rare to have music coming out this decade that feels so real and pure. And when it's at its best you can feel it running through your veins and in your heart. It's powerful stuff. At its most beautiful it can bring tears to your eyes, and at its most fun it can have you moving and singing along. In a world where Lady Gaga can have five different "songs" on the radio in one day that lack any ounce of emotion and come across as some of the blandest music ever produced, it's a miracle that something like this can even exist; fortunately, it does.

In one minute their voices can go from soulful to a raspy punk scream and everything in between. They are as versatile as bands come, playing various instruments including the banjo and stomp drum. You can really never tell what you are going to expect in any given song or on any given album, whether it be a sudden bellowing scream out of nowhere or a completely CCR Revivalist sounding part thrown in the middle of a acoustic love song. All you can expect is for it to be great.

If you want to feel something when you listen to your music, then do yourself the favor and check this band out. Listen to the song "Distraction #74" for an overall taste of their sound and off the new album, *Perfect Space* (and listen all the way till the end, too). If you listen to music for quality and enjoyment you could never be disappointed with The Avett Brothers.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Avett Brothers released their album *I and Love and You* in September 2009. It was *Billboard.com's* number one selling folk album of the year.

CAMPUS MUSIC

Behrend's spring concert

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The 2010 Concert Committee sent out a survey via email to get students' opinions on who should play this year's concert. There were three basic questions that the Concert Committee asked: one asked students which genre of music they would like to see, another on what band they would like to see perform, and a question on how much students are willing to pay. Each question had five options, all of which were legitimate choices.

Students were able to choose between Ludacris, The Fray, Goo Goo Dolls, Motion City Soundtrack and Lady Antebellum.

The Concert Committee will take every response to the survey into consideration when making the final decision. "There's a lot of factors that go into it, but [students] definitely have a say" says Jill Caldwell, Assistant Director of Student Activities.

Some 1,000 surveys have already been submitted. There is no deadline for the survey, but Caldwell says that she will not "put it back out again, but it's still live. It'll be live for a little bit."

Results of the survey will be kept in the Office of Student Ac-

tivities until the committee agrees on one artist and Caldwell can move on with the final process.

Behrend has held a large-scale concert just about every year for the past ten years.

The Concert Committee starts working with a middle agent in the fall. The agent basically negotiates with the artists and Behrend. About nine students, all of whom applied to be on the committee, come up with ideas for musicians to play, with regards that they are within Behrend's price range. The students also choose who they think students will want to see depending upon the musician or band's schedule.

Right now, all artists listed in the survey are good possibilities, and the Concert Committee should find out within the next week who will be playing. The concert will be held in April this year in the Junker Center, and tickets are once again expected to sell out as they have in the past.

Tickets will be available in the Office of Student Activities and online, and students have the added options of paying with Li-onCash or check.

Caldwell says that "as soon as the artist is booked and their people say that we can start selling," tickets will go on sale.

IMANI WINDS



Imani Winds played in McGarvey Commons on Tuesday at noon. The group was started in 1997 and has since been featured in *The Wall Street Journal* as well as being nominated for a Grammy in 2006.

Photos by Daniel Smith / The Behrend Beacon