

**FUTURXTV.COM & HIPHOPBATTLE.COM
URBAN/HIP-HOP SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL
2009 FILM BREAKDOWN:**

Sundance Film Festival 2009 will be big this year for black film because of the wide variety of black films: top directors like Spike Lee - *Passing Strange* & Lee Daniels - *Push*; Hollywood veterans like Robert Townsend - *Why We Laugh: Black Comedians on Black Comedy*; star backed projects like Chris Rock's *Good Hair* doc; retro black 70's flick - *Black Dynamite*; German Inter-racial romance - *Lulu and Jimi*; African films *Endgame* & *Johnny Mad Dog*; Africa & Third World docs - *Nollywood Babylon*, *Let's Make Money*, *Thriller In Manilla*, *The Reckoning*, & *Black Aunties*; Multi-racial teen dramas - *Mystery Team* and *Toe to Toe*; black docs - *Prom Night in Mississippi*, *The Carter*, *Reporter & Tyson* and the classic black indie film *Chameleon Street*. That's quite a lineup of black films. Not counting drama films with black leads like Don Cheadle in Antoine Fuqua's *Brooklyn's Finest* or Erica Alexander in *La Mission*. If there was ever a great time to be a black filmmaker at Sundance, then 2009 is definitely the year. And it is an ironic coincidence that these new black films and docs usher in the new era of President Barak Obama.

Sincerely,

David L. "Money Train" Watts



BLACK DYNAMITE

US Narrative Feature Films
U.S.A., 2008, 90 mins., color

When “the man” kills his brother, pumps heroin into the local orphanage, and floods the ghetto with a secret weapon disguised as Anaconda Malt Liquor, there is only one brother bad enough, strong enough, and brave enough to take them on: the legendary Black Dynamite. Black Dynamite is a throwback with an attitude. Hilarious, campy, hot, and sexy, it plays with every cliché from 1970s film and television, with a few new ones thrown in for color. Director Scott Sanders doesn’t need to show his hand to get his point across, making it even more fun to watch. He has miraculously assembled a huge cast that all perfectly tread the line between satire and spoof. Crazy kudos need to go to our leading man, played by Michael Jai White, who offers a pitch-perfect performance in every take. Art direction and costumes are flawless, and the flocked wallpaper holds it own against the faux fur and poly-blend wardrobe. Black Dynamite has something for everyone: chase scenes, gunfights, a house of ill repute, some karate action, and a star with a killer body who takes on bad guys with—and without—his shirt on. And if this isn’t enough, Sanders does the near impossible: he sustains the comedy while taking a nice big sucker punch at the underlying politics of our time.





BIG FAN

US Narrative Feature Films
U.S.A., 2008, 102 mins., color

For legions of people, sports teams are religion, and their favorite players are their idols. This notion sparks the hilarious premise of *Big Fan*, the exhilarating directing debut from Robert Siegel, the screenwriter of *The Onion Movie* and *The Wrestler*. Paul Aufiero, a 35-year-old parking-garage attendant from working-class Staten Island, is the self-described “world's biggest New York Giants fan.” One night Paul and his best friend, Sal, spot star Giants linebacker Quantrell Bishop at a gas station in Staten Island. They impulsively follow his SUV into Manhattan to a strip club, where they finally muster up the courage to talk to their hero. What starts out as a dream come true turns into a nightmare as a misunderstanding ignites a violent confrontation, and Paul is sent down a path that will test his devotion to the extreme. Patton Oswalt is perfectly cast as Paul, infusing him with a humanity that renders him empathetic instead of pathetic. Siegel has an innate understanding of—and reverence for—his characters but finds humor in every scene by perfectly capturing the details of their world. From the posters on the walls, to the NFL bed sheets, to the “spontaneous” smack talking, he nails it. *Big Fan* resonates with truth and insight, and the result is a film that will make you laugh and wince at the same time—a very winning combination.





BROOKLYN'S FINEST

US Narrative Feature

U.S.A., 2008, 125 mins., color

Something of a genre homecoming, Antoine Fuqua's latest film once again finds him delving into the gritty, brutal realm of cops and crooks—as he did in *Training Day*. Tango is an undercover officer on a narcotics detail that forces him to choose between duty and friendship. Having been to hell and back, he wants out, but the powers that be won't let him quit. Family-man Sal is a detective tempted by greed and corruption. He can barely make ends meet, and now his wife has an illness that threatens the life of their unborn twins. Eddie is nearing retirement age and has long since lost his dedication to his job as a cop. He wakes up every morning trying to come up with a reason to go on living...and he can't think of one. Fate brings the three men to the same Brooklyn housing project as each takes the law into his own hands. Crosscutting between multiple subplots, *Brooklyn's Finest* unfolds violently and passionately as coiled, constantly roving cinematography contributes a measure of unease to the underworld action. Richard Gere, Don Cheadle, and Ethan Hawke bring all of the intensity and complexity required to breathe stunning life into their characters' fractured souls. Fuqua flourishes in this terrain. Showing complete command of the cinematic language of the genre, he creates a visceral and emotional punch that displays a master at work.

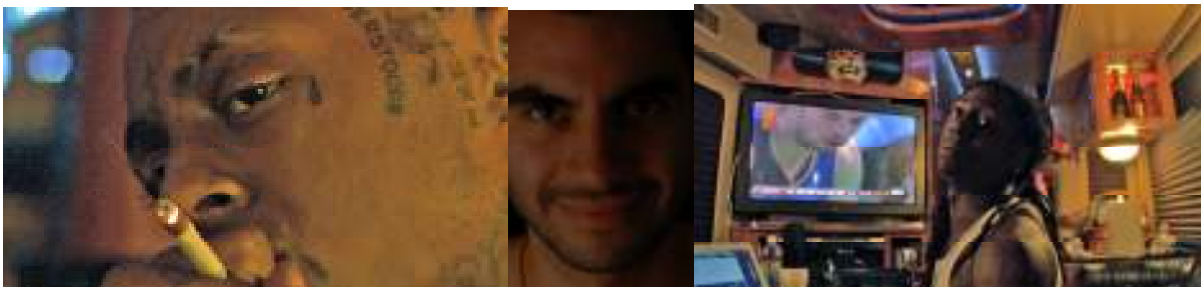




THE CARTER

US Documentary Feature Films
U.S.A., 2009, 90 mins., color

The Carter is a documentary about Dwayne Michael Carter Jr. aka Lil' Wayne. An internationally known rapper, his most recent album went platinum in a week, and he just might be the voice of his generation. But this ain't no VH1 rock doc. Rather, it is an intoxicating, cinematic journey into the thoughts and world of an extremely complicated man whose creative force is something to behold. He never stops recording. He has a portable studio that he carries around in a black bag, and it allows him to lay down a track anytime anywhere. It is his pressure valve and makes him a refreshing anomaly in a sea of manufactured prefab ""singers."" His work is his own: unfiltered, uncensored, raw, and powerful. Director Adam Bhala Lough, whose fiction film Weapons premiered in competition at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, has unbelievable access to Lil' Wayne's public and private lives. He captures remarkably candid moments, such as Lil' Wayne recounting his first sexual experience, as well as him talking openly about his drug habits. Following him all over the country and to Amsterdam, Lough mixes fly-on-the-wall footage of Lil' Wayne in his hotel room and on his bus with artfully composed concert footage. The result is a shockingly intimate portrait of one of the most inspired (and eccentric) musicians of modern America.





CHAMELEON STREET

US Narrative Feature

U.S.A., 1990, 94 mins., color

Filmmaker/actor Wendell B. Harris Jr. heard about the exploits of William Douglas Street and knew he had to make a film about him. Street is a bright, articulate black man trapped in a menial job installing burglar alarms. Driven by his desire for more money and influence and eager to satisfy his shopping-obsessed wife, Gabrielle (Angela Leslie), Street decides to work his way up the middle-class white ladder by impersonating professionals. As a journalist, he interviews celebrities; as a doctor, he performs surgery; as a foreign-exchange student, he speaks French; as a lawyer, he negotiates with corporate clients. Eventually he is caught and goes to prison. When asked why he behaves as he does, Street's explanation is simple: "I give people what they want." As well as directing and writing the film, Harris portrays Street, which makes the parallels between the two even sharper. Like Street, Harris is a black man trying to find his niche in a white man's world. He has more in mind than entertaining us with Street's adventures. Street's story also becomes social commentary on the frustrations inherent in the black experience in America. Although *Chameleon Street* won the Grand Jury Prize at the 1990 Sundance/United States Film Festival, it never received wide distribution, an added incentive for adding it to the Sundance Collection. Harris recently restored the film and mastered it on HD Cam, and this screening offers a rare opportunity to see it again.





DON'T LET ME DROWN

US Narrative Feature Films
U.S.A., 2008, 105 mins., color

At the center of Cruz Angeles's touching first feature are Lalo and Stefanie, two high-school kids living in Brooklyn. Lalo comes from a Mexican immigrant family that struggles financially. His father, formerly a janitor at the World Trade Center, now works at Ground Zero cleaning up debris. Stefanie's family moved back to Brooklyn after her sister was killed in the attacks. While her mother tries to hold the family together, her father's emotions have no outlet but anger. Lalo and Stefanie meet at a birthday party, and although they start off on the wrong foot, the ice melts, and their budding friendship becomes a clandestine romance. Down Let Me Drown features an elegantly simple story, layered characters, and standout performances, notably from its young leads. The director's approach feels intuitive and brings a refreshing spontaneity to the story. He clearly knows everything about his characters and creates an authenticity that brings out both their emotions and humor. The character interactions seem so slight, couched mostly in everyday, often-funny situations, but gradually the film accrues weight. The textures of the city and the lives of ordinary people are shaded with a wistful sense of struggle, but the fabric of the film is woven from compassion. We care about these characters because they care about each other: that's how they keep their heads above water.





ENDGAME

International Narrative Feature Films
United Kingdom, 2009, 101 mins., color

South Africa...the late 1980s. The African National Congress (ANC) wages an armed struggle against apartheid; President P.W. Botha clings to the last threads of power; the country is on the brink of bloody insurrection. In a gripping thriller based on real-life events, *Endgame* drops us into this brutal conflict's control centers: Nelson Mandela's prison, Botha's chambers, ANC headquarters, and, to our surprise, the rented car of a British bureaucrat. It turns out that Consolidated Gold, a British mining concern, convinced that peaceful resolution in South Africa serves their interests, has initiated covert, unofficial talks between opposing sides. Brilliantly building suspense befitting the situation's high stakes, *Endgame* chronicles this dangerous mission, where Michael Young, Consolidated's head of public affairs, doggedly assembles a reluctant, yet impressive, crew to confront intractable obstacles in the way of reconciliation. ANC leader Thabo Mbeki and Afrikaner philosophy professor Willie Esterhuyse are chief among them. Zeroing in on the growing emotional empathy between Mbeki and Esterhuyse, which becomes the linchpin for the talks, this enormously moving story dramatizes the way that meticulous strategies, combined with serendipity, finally unlock change. While Mandela endures house arrest, terrorist bombs threaten the dialogue, and Botha's regime gives way to F.W. de Klerk's leadership, an unlikely cadre, secreted in a distant British manor, pave the way to black South African freedom and form a template for peace negotiations around the world.





GOOD HAIR

US Documentary Feature Films
U.S.A., 2009, 95 mins., color

When Chris Rock's daughter, Lola, came up to him crying and asked, "Daddy, how come I don't have good hair?" the bewildered comic committed himself to search the ends of the earth and the depths of black culture to find out who had put that question into his little girl's head! Director Jeff Stilson's camera followed the funnyman, and the result is *Good Hair*, a wonderfully insightful and entertaining, yet remarkably serious, documentary about African American hair culture. An exposé of comic proportions that only Chris Rock could pull off, *Good Hair* visits hair salons and styling battles, scientific laboratories, and Indian temples to explore the way black hairstyles impact the activities, pocketbooks, sexual relationships, and self-esteem of black people. Celebrities such as Ice-T, Kerry Washington, Nia Long, Paul Mooney, Raven Symoné, Maya Angelou, and Reverend Al Sharpton all candidly offer their stories and observations to Rock while he struggles with the task of figuring out how to respond to his daughter's question. What he discovers is that black hair is a big business that doesn't always benefit the black community and little Lola's question might well be bigger than his ability to convince her that the stuff on top of her head is nowhere near as important as what is inside.





Johnny Mad Dog

International Narrative Feature Films
France/Liberia/Belgium, 2008, 93 mins., color

Fiction based on horrifying fact, *Johnny Mad Dog* portrays the atrocities of an ongoing civil war in an unnamed African nation. Although challenging to the core, it's an important work that will scorch the sensibilities of the most jaded viewer; it also raises the question, can evil be forgiven? Fifteen-year-old Johnny Mad Dog heads a platoon of soldiers who are younger than he is. They're armed to the teeth, sport a variety of bizarre outfits (odd headgear, angel wings, a wedding dress), and have adopted names such as No Good Advice, Captain Dust to Dust, and Chicken Hair. Charged with overtaking a city in an attempt to unseat the government, Johnny leads this band of killers on a murderous rampage toward their destination. Meanwhile, the studious Laokolé lives with her young brother and disabled father and dreams of a better life—until Johnny's hurricane of destruction comes her way. Shot in Liberia, *Johnny Mad Dog* pulses with atmosphere and authenticity; many of the phenomenal young actors actually lived through conflicts similar to those in the film. They bring the weight of their experience to the screen and unleash some of the bravest and most genuine performances I have ever seen. Writer/director Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire firmly grasps the gravity of the issues, yet packs them into a hyperstylish, almost-surreal package that shows a true visionary at work.



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Let's Make Money

US Narrative Feature Films
Austria, 2008, 108 mins., color

Erwin Wagenhofer has crafted a momentous and chilling work of reportage in this documentary that maps and analyzes the contemporary global financial system. Shuttled around the world in private limousines and welcomed to corporate offices atop gleaming towers, we are treated to a litany of explanations by people close to the action, outlining how the financial world works and where it stands. It is unsurprising for many to learn that capitalism is ruthless. More alarming is the degree to which the financial (ad)ventures of an unaccountable and often-invisible few are facilitated by public policies and monies and arcane schemes that drain vast quantities of wealth away from civilizations into private hands. In settings ranging from India to Austria, from Burkina Faso to Washington, D.C., the legacies of decades of relaxed credit, deregulation of markets, and privatization of public facilities are illustrated by concrete examples so bizarre, outsized, and chilling that you'd expect to find them in a science-fiction movie rather than a documentary. The testimonies of economic theorists, proponents of offshore tax havens, and even one "economic hit man" combine to create a portrait of high stakes and shortsightedness, with war, mass migration, and ecological disaster as only a few of the downsides. Viewed in such volatile economic times as these, this prescient, shocking, and expertly crafted primer will spark many urgent debates.





Lulu and Jimi

Germany, 2007, 95 mins., color

In 1950s Germany on a sunny afternoon in an amusement park, Lulu, a prized beauty from a well-heeled, white German family, meets Jimi, the impossibly handsome son of a damaged African American World War II veteran, and falls head over heels in love. Lulu's scheming mother, Gertrud, together with her secret lover, Schultz, the chauffeur, and a wicked old shrink, Von Oppeln, do all in their power to tear the two lovers apart, but the trio are only the first of many obstacles that will stand in the way of the couple's passion. Thus starts Oskar Roehler's dazzling feature film *Lulu and Jimi*, a stylish, musically infused romance that plays as hot and heavy as the chemistry between the interracial lovebirds. Roehler crafts a colorful, magical world full of visual whimsy, revved up with a sizzling soundtrack of rock and roll, as Lulu and Jimi's love sweeps out the stale air of the 1950s. Actors Jennifer Decker and Ray Fearon turn in magnetic performances as Lulu and Jimi, a couple that fearlessly takes on the evil powers of a deeply bigoted society. Roehler's *Lulu and Jimi* is a sexy and exceedingly entertaining watch that aims to set hearts thumping and fingers snapping as you wait to see if love saves the day.





La MISSION

US Narrative Feature Films
U.S.A., 2008, 117 mins., color

Set in the colorful, seedy streets of the San Francisco district that bears its name, *La MISSION* is a story of redemption imbued with the curative power of Aztec tradition. Feared, yet respected, as the baddest Chicano on the block, Che (Benjamin Bratt), a reformed inmate and recovering alcoholic, resorts to violence and intimidation to get what he wants. A bus driver by day, Che lives for his beloved son, Jesse, his lifelong friends, and his passion for lowrider cars. Che and the “Mission Boyz” salvage junked cars, transforming them into classics. Che’s macho world is crushed when he discovers that Jesse’s been living a secret life. In a violent rage, Che pummels Jesse and throws him out of the house. Lena, an attractive neighbor and a force to be reckoned with, is a woman with a few secrets of her own. Mutual attraction percolates as Lena challenges Che to reconcile the life he thought he had. Sundance veteran Peter Bratt (*Follow Me Home*) returns with a powerful second feature. Propelled by commanding performances from Jeremy Ray Valdez as Jesse and Erika Alexander as Lena—and featuring an exceptional turn by Benjamin Bratt—*La MISSION* is a haunting story of healing and transformation: the healing of a broken man, of a father’s relationship with his son, and of a neighborhood struggling to break the chains of violence.





MYSTERY TEAM

US Narrative Feature Films
U.S.A., 2008, 105 mins., color

If Encyclopedia Brown, the kids from American Pie, and Nancy Drew all had sex, their baby would probably look something like Mystery Team, a wonderful blend of innocent and seedy humor from the Derrick Comedy group. Already an Internet phenomenon, they transition gloriously into the realm of feature films. When they were kids, the Mystery Team solved pint-size mysteries like “Who stuck his finger in the pie?” Now it's senior year of high school, and they are still solving mysteries the same way. Though each member of the team has a supposed specialty—Jason is the Master of Disguise; Charlie is the Strongest Kid in Town; and Duncan is the Boy Genius—they are really just stunted and naïve kids. When a little girl asks them to find out who killed her parents, Jason realizes they have an opportunity to prove to the town, and themselves, that they are real detectives. A dark comedy that hits on classic mystery conventions, Mystery Team cleverly places the naïve innocence of yesteryear within the jaded, crime-laden world of today. What makes the ludicrous premise work so magnificently is the impeccable chemistry among the three leads. This is a film for anyone who is nostalgic for a time when solving a mystery was the greatest feeling in the world, but adult enough to like a little raunchy humor.





Nollywood Babylon

International Documentary Feature Films

Canada, 2008, 75 mins., color

Hasta la vista, Hollywood! Welcome to the wild and wacky world of Nollywood, Nigeria's explosive homegrown movie industry, where Jesus and voodoo vie for screen time. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, known in Lagos as "Da Governor," is one of the most influential men in Nollywood, a term coined in the early '90s for the world's fastest-growing national cinema, surpassed only by its American and Indian counterparts. Undeterred by miniscule budgets, Da Governor is one of a cadre of resourceful filmmakers creating a garish, imaginative, and wildly popular form of B-movie that has frenzied fans begging for more. Among the bustling stalls of Lagos's Idumato market, films are sold, and budding stars are born. Creating stories that explore the growing battle between traditional mysticism and modern culture, good versus evil, witchcraft and Christianity, Nollywood auteurs have mastered a down-and-dirty, straight-to-video production formula that has become the industry standard in a country plagued by poverty. Nollywood is tapping a national identity where proud Africans are telling their own stories to a public hungry to see their lives on screen. Peppered with outrageously juicy movie clips and buoyed by a rousing score that fuses Afropop and traditional sounds, Nollywood Babylon celebrates the distinctive power of Nigerian cinema as it marvels in the magic of movies.





PASSING STRANGE

US Narrative Feature Films

U.S.A., 2008, 135 mins., color

In this astounding and explosive documentary, Spike Lee captures the eponymous Broadway musical show written by singer/songwriter Stew (with music cowritten by his creative partner, Heidi Rodewald). The resulting work unites revelatory theater with superb filmmaking, raising the whole to a dizzyingly plateau of emotional engagement. The story (developed at the Sundance Theatre Lab) concerns the uneasy relationship of a young black man (called simply Youth in the show's credits) with his life. Raised somewhere south of Interstate 10 in Los Angeles, our hero, a would-be songwriter, stews in a sea of conflicted cultural signals. He chafes under his mother's fixation on family ties and church and her bourgeois aspirations. So he sets out on his own—like pioneers Josephine Baker and James Baldwin—to Europe, seeking something “real.” Picaresque misadventures with sex, drugs, politics, and art await Youth in far-out Amsterdam and hypermilitant Berlin. His eyes are opened ever wider, even revealing what he left behind. An absolutely superb cast, ably supported by sparing (but pitch-perfect) costumes, design, and stagecraft, bring to life the emotionally charged story with its astounding original music, narrated and overseen by Stew himself. Lee's multicamera coverage of the event (including backstage scenes) involves the audience in not only the text but the electricity of the ensemble's onstage adventure. It's a tour-de-force of creative collaboration and inspiration.





Prom Night in Mississippi

International Documentary Feature Films
Canada, 2008, 90 mins., color

In 1997, Academy Award–winning actor Morgan Freeman offered to pay for the senior prom at Charleston High School in Mississippi under one condition: the prom had to be racially integrated. His offer was ignored. In 2008, Freeman offered again. This time the school board accepted, and history was made. Charleston High School had its first-ever integrated prom—in 2008! Until then, blacks and whites had had separate proms even though their classrooms have been integrated for decades. Canadian filmmaker Paul Saltzman follows students, teachers, and parents in the lead-up to the big day. Freeman addresses the student body. Girls shop for dresses and get their hair done. Boys rent tuxedos and buy corsages. These seemingly inconsequential rites of passage suddenly become profound as the weight of history falls on teenage shoulders. We quickly learn that change does not come easily in this sleepy Delta town. Freeman’s generosity fans the flames of racism—and racism in Charleston has a distinctly generational tinge. Some white parents forbid their children to attend the integrated prom and hold a separate white-only dance. "Billy Joe," an enlightened white senior, appears on camera in shadow, fearing his racist parents will disown him if they know his true feelings. *Prom Night In Mississippi* captures a big moment in a small town, where hope finally blossoms in black, white, and a whole lot of taffeta.

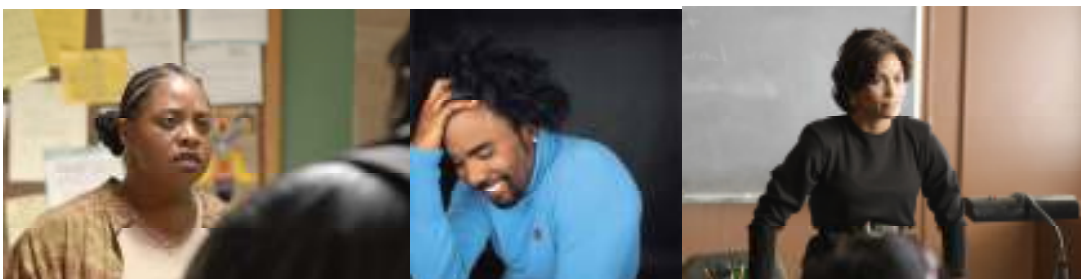




PUSH: BASED ON THE NOVEL BY SAPHIRE

US Narrative Feature Films
U.S.A., 2008, 105 mins., color

With sheer audacity and utter authenticity, director Lee Daniels tackles *Push: Based on the Novel by Sapphire* and creates an unforgettable film that sets a new standard for cinema of its kind. Precious Jones (Gabourey Sidibe) is a high-school girl with nothing working in her favor. She is pregnant with her father's child—for the second time. She can't read or write, and her schoolmates tease her for being fat. Her home life is a horror, ruled by a mother (Mo'Nique) who keeps her imprisoned both emotionally and physically. Precious's instincts tell her one thing: if she's ever going to break from the chains of ignorance, she will have to dig deeply into her own resources. Don't be misled—*Push* is not a film wallowing in the stillness of depression; instead, it vibrates with the kind of energy derived only from anger and hope. The entire cast are amazing; they carry out a firestorm of raw emotion. Daniels has drawn from them inimitable performances that will rivet you to your seat and leave you too shocked to breathe. If you passed Precious on the street, you probably wouldn't notice her. But when her story is revealed, as Daniels does in this courageous film, you are left with an indelible image of a young woman who—with creativity, humor, and ferocity—finds the strength to turn her life around.



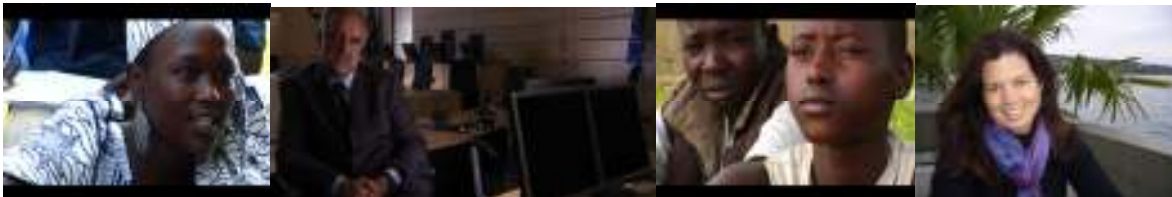
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RECKONING

US Documentary Feature Films
U.S.A., 2009, 100 mins., color

Late in the twentieth century, in response to horrific atrocities igniting increasingly around the world, more than 60 countries united to launch the International Criminal Court (ICC)—the first permanent home for prosecuting perpetrators (no matter how powerful) of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. Pamela Yates's *The Reckoning* follows charismatic ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo for three years across four continents as he and his team tirelessly issue arrest warrants for Lord's Resistance Army leaders in Uganda, put Congolese warlords on trial, challenge the U.N. Security Council to help indict Sudan's president for the Darfur massacres, and shake up the Colombian justice system. As you can imagine, building cases against genocidal criminals is no cakewalk. Moreno-Ocampo has a mandate but no police force. At every turn, he must pressure the international community to muster political clout for the cause. Like a deft thriller, *The Reckoning* keeps you on the edge of your seat, in this case with two riveting dramas—the prosecution of unspeakable crimes and the ICC's fight for efficacy in its nascent years. As this tiny court in The Hague struggles to change the world and forge a new paradigm for justice, innocent victims suffer and wait. Will Moreno-Ocampo succeed? Will the world ensure that justice prevails?





REPORTER

US Documentary Feature Films
U.S.A., 2008, 90 mins., color

As focused as this superbly conceived examination of New York Times reporter Nicholas D. Kristof is on its subject, filmmaker Eric Daniel Metzgar has a much greater arena in mind in this multilayered exploration of journalism than just the work and impact of the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist. That journalism, at least as we have known it, is undergoing a massive transformation is certainly no secret, but Metzgar amplifies this limited insight with a fully fleshed-out portrait of the importance of real news gathering in enabling democratic nations to function and illuminating a world in chaos. Tracking Kristof as he traveled during the summer of 2007 to the Congo to report on the conflict and desperate poverty besieging that African republic in an attempt to put this crisis on the international radar, as he did with his articles on Darfur, the film immerses us in a discussion of the ways this kind of reportage reaches the public, effects change, and creates a humanitarian response. It is far too simple minded to see virulently opinionated blogging and brainless infotainment overtaking and defining the future of knowledge and understanding, but the crisis in journalism is real, and this sophisticated, analytical, and lyrically heartbreaking account should become required viewing for anyone who cares about the future of ideas.





ROUGH AUNTIES

International Documentary Feature Films
United Kingdom, 2008, 103 mins., color

Jackie, Mildred, Eureka, Sdudla, and Thuli are the women behind Bobbi Bear, a nonprofit organization based in Durban, South Africa, that counsels sexually abused children and works to bring their abusers to justice. Born out of a recognition of cultural stigmas that discourage reporting abuse and inadequate methods of communicating with young victims, Bobbi Bear developed a method of letting children use teddy bears to explain their abuse. Since 1992, the multiracial staff has become the fearless and powerful voice for those victims who would otherwise continue to live in fear, powerless against their oppressors and ignored by the legal system. Director Kim Longinotto (*The Day I Will Never Forget* screened at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival) adeptly and intimately follows Bobbi Bear staff in difficult direct sessions with children and consultations with family members, and on raids with authorities to arrest the perpetrators of these heinous acts. Facing tragedy daily as part of their advocacy work and, heartbreakingly for some, in their personal lives, the women draw strength from each other and find hope despite the suffering around them. Equally as compassionate to the young victims as they are steadfast in their pursuit of justice, these five exceptional women have found themselves transformed by their mission into "rough aunties," crossing barriers of race, culture, and socioeconomic status to become formidable agents of change in their community.

