

The 10th annual FirstGlance Philadelphia, which took place September 28 - October 7, 2007, provided moviemakers with the trademark originality that moviemaker Alex Orr describes as "one of the many great things about FirstGlance." Orr, whose *Blood Car* won the 2007 Feature Narrative category, claims "FirstGlance really excels at programming great indie films looking for an audience, [as opposed to] just recycling the Sundance program." FirstGlance's methodology also provides moviemakers with much-appreciated individual attention. Steven Scaffidi, who won this year's Feature Documentary Award with his film, *Forgotten on the Bayou*, was especially enthusiastic about the "friendly and accommodating" atmosphere at the festival.

Other winners at FirstGlance 10 included Jack Swanstrom's Short Narrative A.W.O.L., Mini-Doc *Alex Scott: A Stand for Hope* by Larry Mendte, Adam Walker's *Sam & Piccolo* in the Animation category and Andrew Watson's music video *Gone*.

At FirstGlance, all short-film selections are collected and distributed on DVD sets each year and the festival hopes to expand distribution options for all of its films in the future. By working to gain recognition from industry guilds and support from commercial partners, Ostroff plans to "grow our festivals into a community that can offer funding, distribution (including download, video-on-demand, pay-per-view, DVD), exhibition on digital screens and alternative venues and production to indie filmmakers." With a grasp on the future of moviemaking and a continuing focus on the needs of the individual moviemaker, FirstGlance is a festival that is ready to grow with the industry.

Visit www.firstglancefilms.com for more information. —Daniel Fritz



The life of Don Dohler, B horror movie director, is explored in John Kinhart's *Blood, Boobs & Beast*.

Coney Island Film Festival

Carnival of cinema in the birthplace of pop culture

FOR NEARLY 100 YEARS, the off-the-beaten-path shoreline of Brooklyn, NY has been home to the roller coasters, sideshows and general carnival atmosphere that is Coney Island. For the past seven it has also played host to the Coney Island Film Festival, formed as a means to resuscitate one of America's original cultural havens. "Coney Island is often considered the birthplace of American popular culture. It's where motion picture innovator Thomas Edison shot some of the earliest films on record," says festival director Rob Leddy. "Coney Island is an inspiration to filmmakers from around the world."

For Ramen Cromwell, whose appropriately titled *Coney Island* won the Best "Made in Coney Island" Award, this could not be more true. "I love Coney Island," he says. "You can turn on the camera and point it anywhere; you just can't take a bad shot out there." Same goes for Gary Beeber, director of the Best Documentary Short, *Bally Master*. "For me it's a treasure trove of material, and so unlike anywhere else in the world I've ever been."

Held at Sideshows By The Seashore and The Coney Island Museum, last year's festival ran September 28 - 30, 2007 and hosted features such as *Two Tickets to Paradise*, actor D.B. Sweeney's directorial debut starring Ed Harris, and shorts that starred HBO royalty James Gandolfini (*Club Soda*) and Adrian Grenier (*Off Hour*). But the beauty of CIFF is that, just like the town it exists to serve, the festival hosts the small-name, big-talent artists who are rarely seen elsewhere—and no matter

who you are, you're treated like a creative genius. "I'd like to make a \$100 million film someday and premiere it at Coney Island, because they really give you your moment," says Cromwell.

"I've been to a few festivals and when you get scheduled at 4:20 p.m. on a Tuesday in a cineplex, it's tough to get a full house," Cromwell notes. "So the highlight for me was watching my film in a packed house and feeling that audience respond to the work. I'm sitting there and people are experiencing my film blocks away from where it was made, and suddenly I don't feel like an idiot for maxing out those credit cards. Suddenly I'm the black Steven Soderbergh."

Visit www.coneyislandfilmfestival.com for more information. —Mallory Potosky

The Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival kicks off in Birmingham, AL.



Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival

Finding independence in Birmingham, Alabama

IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, MM has often touted the merits of Birmingham, Alabama's Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival, but we're not the only ones. Included as one of Chris Gore's "Best Vacation Film Fests" and named a "Film Festival for the Rest of Us" by *Time*, the fest has no shortage of enthusiastic supporters. "It's the electric energy that Sidewalk creates that keeps filmmakers and filmgoers coming back for more," says Catherine Pfitzer, Sidewalk's executive director. What's the recipe for that electric energy? "It certainly begins with a large audience very thirsty for good independent cinema," continues Pfitzer, "so first and foremost, the films programmed at Sidewalk are all top-notch. But we also try to connect the filmmakers with the audience as much as possible, which both sides seem to enjoy. A very high priority is filmmaker hospitality. Attending filmmakers are taken care of from the moment they step off the plane, and are provided with many opportunities to really connect with each other."

Moviemaker Jeremy Saulnier agrees. After traveling the festival circuit for most of 2007 with his film, *Murder Party*, the fest's "Filmmaker to Watch" was "lucky enough to make my last stop at the Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival. It's rare that a director of a sleaze-ball horror comedy is treated with such respect—I felt like hot shit and got into all the parties." While making a few connections is great, circuit-workers aren't solely interested in making a deal. Saulnier applauds the fact that "acquisitions reps, lawyers and talent reps didn't occupy half the real estate, so it was an opportunity to connect with fellow filmmakers and honest-to-goodness film fans."

As it has done in years past, the ninth annual celebration of independent films, which took place September 28 - 30, 2007 in downtown Birmingham, managed to land screenings for some hotly anticipated indies, like David Wain's *The Ten*, starring Winona Ryder. "Sidewalk has built a reputation over the years for consistent quality programming and a highly organized festival, and those attending filmmakers who have enjoyed themselves have been kind enough to spread the word," says Pfitzer. Award-winner Zack Godshall, for one, will be singing the fest's praises: "The Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival is a special event. The staff, the programmers and the audiences are among the most welcoming and hospitable out there. Winning the Best Feature and Best Director awards really helped give *Low and Behold* the momentum it needed for the rest of the year."

Visit www.sidewalkfest.com for more information. —Jennifer M. Wood