



Yale in Hollywood Festival of Film



Attendees mingle during the intermission of the First Annual Yale in Hollywood Festival of Film

From the most lauded actors, the most prolific and acclaimed writers, directors and producers to the savviest executives in Hollywood, Yalies past and present have maintained a high profile in the entertainment industry.

The Yale in Hollywood Festival of Film was created to showcase the cinematic achievements of Yale students and alumni with an evening of films and festivities. Together, Yalies both novice and veteran share in the celebration of their work, while making valuable contacts and renewing ties to Old Blue.

With over 60 films submitted and attendance of more than 200 alumni and their guests, the inaugural year was a rousing success. The second annual festival promises to be even bigger and better. Filmmakers are clamoring to submit their projects and sponsors are lining up.



Filmmaker Sarba Das, Board of Director member Bruce Cohen and 2004 Festival Co-Directors Jeff Pickett and Debbie Ezer

SPONSORS for our Inaugural Year included: Stella Artois, Alize, Urbanworld, MPGuide.com (The Motion Picture and Television Directory), 3 Vodka and DVS InteleStream, among others.

The Board of Directors

Bruce Cohen (Producer, *American Beauty*, *Big Fish*), George Hickenlooper (Director, *Mayor of the Sunset Strip*, *The Man from Elysian Fields*), Shawn Levy (Director, *The Pink Panther*, *Cheaper By the Dozen*), David Milch (Creator/Writer, *Deadwood*, *NYPD Blue*).

The Board of Directors is currently being expanded to include additional prominent Yale alumni in the entertainment industry.



Cocktails and refreshments abounded at the 2004 festival, thanks in large part to support from our sponsors

Be a sponsor of the 2005 Yale in Hollywood Festival of Film!

The film festival falls under the umbrella of the Yale Club of Southern California, a 501(c)(3) corporation, making donations tax deductible.

There are three levels of sponsorship:

Silver: \$250 donation affords $\frac{1}{4}$ page ad in festival program and choice of company logo on festival website or projected in slides at festival

Gold: \$500 donation affords $\frac{1}{2}$ page ad in festival program, choice of company logo on festival website or projected in slides at festival and 2 tickets to festival

Platinum: \$1,000 donation affords full page ad in festival program, company logo on festival website and projected in slides at festival and 4 tickets to festival

Individual donations are appreciated at any level and will be recognized in the festival program.

One Evening, Nine Movies

When Jeff Pickett '98 started receiving submissions from alumni for the first (and hopefully annual) Yale in Hollywood Film Festival, he thought he'd be happy if 20 films came in. But word got out, the trickle turned into a flood, and Pickett and his fellow organizers ended up with a pool of 60. They chose nine short films for a November 10 screening before a capacity crowd at the old Silent Movie Theater (which does have a sound system, despite its name) on Fairfax Avenue in Los Angeles.

The purpose of the festival, says founding director Pickett, was to "celebrate Yale's cinematic tradition." A thriving alumni club has been running panels, screenings, and other Hollywood-oriented events in the area for several years, and a festival seemed the logical next step. Since four relative industry heavyweights sit on the festival's board – including Bruce Cohen '83, who produced *Big Fish* and *American Beauty* – and industry executives and agents were invited, the event also provided exposure for the filmmakers. Still, says Pickett, "for me, it wasn't so much about networking as about showing interesting works of art and having people discuss them." (He admits to an additional incentive: "On a sort of shallow level, Princeton had done something like this in L.A., so we thought, "If they can do it, then we can do it and do it better.'")

The strongest films shown at the festival were tight, character-based narratives, such as *Coming Down the Mountain*, by writer-director James Ponsoldt '01 and producer Josh Newman '01, who have a two-year-old indie production company in New York City. Shot in Kentucky, the film touches on Appalachia's Oxycontin epidemic but focuses on a single, difficult day in the lives of a father and son.

Two of the best films were about South Asians in America. *Mausi, or How an Old Lady Finds Her Way Back to India*, is a lush and funny short by Sarba Das '97, a Los Angeles writer and director. In *Good Thing*, a man of South Asian descent named Juggie longs to travel in Africa but finds himself married and running a variety store in Los Angeles with his pregnant wife. *Good Thing* was made by UCLA film student Keshni Kashyap: the Yale connection is actor Chayton Arvin '89, who carries the film with a perplexed but piercing hangdog stare.

Other titles were *Joe's Flyin' A-Garic*, a fantastical animation about a jazz piano player born aching for Dreamland; *Bracia* (Brothers), which recounts two Jewish brothers' attempt to escape from the Lodz ghetto after the mass deportation to Auschwitz; *The Old Man and Hemingway*, a documentary visit with the 104-year-old captain of Hemingway's boat; *A Spoonful of Sugar*, about a teenaged girl who was born with HIV; *Next Question*, a documentary about high school students doing an oral history of the 1970 Black Panther trial in New Haven;



Can Old Blues make a better film festival than Princeton alums? Nine Yale movie makers say yes.

and *Filet of 4*, a split-screen narrative about two unhappy couples, with time-lapse film and superimposed philosophical musings.

Filmmaker Kamala Lopez-Dawson, a festival organizer, says *Filet of 4* was shot digitally in three or four days.

Then she spent a year editing it. "That movie cost a hundred bucks," she says. "My last short film cost more than \$25,000." *Filet* came out of her involvement with a film workshop called Catme, which has half a dozen Yale alumni members.

Everyone involved is hoping to expand the 2005 event. This year, organizers showed a wide spectrum of work rather than full-length features. "We had to get a foothold, obviously," says Pickett. "But we would love to have more days, more separate sessions, more programming time." He points out that Alexander Payne's *Sideways*, a critically acclaimed Fox Searchlight release, would have been eligible, since it stars Paul Giamatti '89, '94MFA. "Strangely," says Pickett, "he didn't submit this year."

Maybe next time.

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