

Global Doc Days to Showcase Compelling International Subjects

By Noah Stroeble

The SXSW 2008 Film Festival is building upon its strong commitment to the documentary genre with the launch of Global Doc Days March 8-11.



The format of the event is simple: eight countries have been selected to showcase the most innovative

unable to secure a theatrical release or a television broadcast slot.

It's no secret that since its beginning, SXSW Film has been a bastion of support, encouragement and opportunity for independent documentary film directors and producers. Global Doc Days will continue to develop this relationship by offering a higher profile to international independent documentary directors and producers, as well as networking opportunities with the foreign governmental and/or private funding and distribution agencies who will be attending the event. Six of the eight participating countries have already confirmed their participation: Canada, Norway, United Kingdom, China, Australia and Ireland.

Some of the featured projects screening at this year's event include Canada's *Late Fragments*, an interactive feature film that provides the viewer with the option of experiencing the film actively or passively. Passively, the audience watches the narrative sequenced live in real time by a performer at the front of the theater.

Actively, audience members can utilize their home DVD remote to select how the narrative will unfold, much like a director would for live television, only the viewer becomes a participant in the narrative.

One of the Chinese programs featured is *China's Grip on Africa* (www.cmmintelligence.com), a documentary film that examines

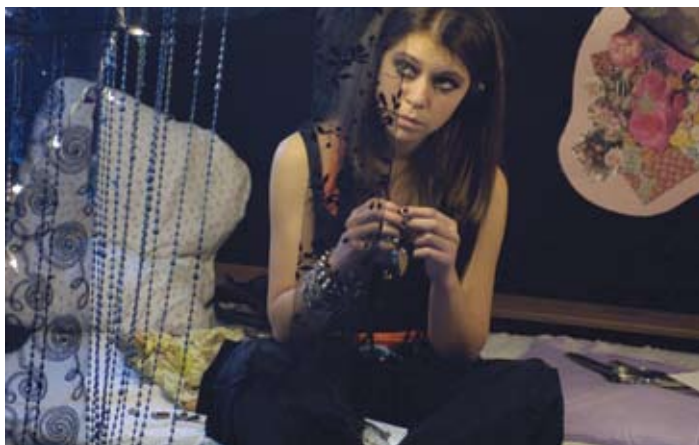


China's Grip on Africa

the role that China is now playing in the development of the African subcontinent. China helps fund infrastructure development and international legitimacy, both of which Africa needs desperately. In exchange, Africa sells enormous chunks of its abundant natural resources to China, which is transforming itself into the manufacturing center of the world. This film also looks at how many African countries now regard China as an economic and political ally, and how this in turn is affecting Africa's relationship with the West.

The United Kingdom presents among its offerings the unique documentary *Here's Johnny*, which cuts a four-year swath into the personal and professional life of a famous graphic artist struggling to keep his life and sanity from being destroyed by the ravages of Multiple Sclerosis. Previously renowned for his work in comics series such as *Judge Dredd* and *2000AD*, Johnny now escapes his demobilized body by drawing, and through the expression of his brilliant, and sometimes disturbing, imagination, we are privy to what it means to find rich reward in the midst of one's mortality.

Norway's youth-oriented fare spotlights a trio of films directed



BEN MARK HOLZBERG

Late Fragments, directed by Daryl Cloran, Anita Doron and Mateo Guez.

programming produced within their respective areas during the last 18 months. There will be two three-hour country screenings each day in the Austin Convention Center, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Global Doc Days will introduce American audiences to factual content that hasn't necessarily been produced for theatrical release. Much of this content could go unnoticed if

and produced to entertain and intrigue: *Board Control*, *Raw Youth*, and *My Daughter the Terrorist*. The first is the story of two generations of skateboarders who defied national law to express their personal passion. The second film examines how and why adults characterize and classify youths so harshly. The third depicts the horrific and heart-breaking portrait of two girls who grow up to become elite soldiers trained to carry out the ultimate sacrifice as suicide bombers.

Like any business, factual producers and directors are constantly having to reinvent themselves to keep up with global industry trends. "The most important thing outside of ratings is story — universal themes, universal stories," comments Jenn Kuzmyk, Canadian Bureau Chief for *Channel 21 International*, a U.K.-based trade publication concentrating on the business of international television production, programming and new technologies. "There

are big opportunities for fresh, new voices in this business. It's not a static creative environment, it's always got an eye for the next innovation that will change everything."

As the search for global content intensifies, not only will new content formats emerge, but new business models as well. Business models will depend more and more on the direct access that independent film directors and producers have to regional and international development, funding and distribution entities.

Global Doc Days will be presented in the Austin Convention Center's Austin Suite from March 8 - March 11. David Jenkinson and Jenn Kuzmyk from C21 Media (U.K.) will be moderating the proceedings. Admission is open to all film festival registrants. For more information on Global Doc Days, including program and schedule updates, please visit: <http://2008.sxsw.com/film>. ■



Here's Johnny

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN HICKENTON



My Daughter the Terrorist

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