



Sundance searches for the next cinema hit

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If the Super Bowl is the goal for a football player, the Sundance Film Festival is the goal for filmmakers. Every year for one thrilling week in January, the Park City, Utah is transformed into an artist's den where filmmakers eagerly premiere their films, celebrities flock to support their films, and movie studios look for their next surprising moneymaker.

The festival gives young filmmakers the opportunity to show their films in a venue full of cinema fanatics. The festival also gives more established directors the freedom to stray

from the norm and create more eccentric films. For many filmmakers, the honor of having their film selected to show at Sundance sustains their appetite for success. However some filmmakers hope Sundance will be a pad for their film.

The most hyped up films at the festival will go on to show in theaters to mainstream audiences. Films such as "Little Miss Sunshine," "Juno" and "500 Days of Summer" first gained notoriety after premiering at Sundance.

For a lucky group of USD students, Park City became their classroom for intersession. Dr. Eric Pierson and Dr. Roger Pace of the communica-

tion department guided students during the Sundance experience.

Students descended upon the snowy slopes of Park City to gain insight into the world of independent cinema, while viewing its newest productions.

During the week, entertainment industry insiders predicted which film will be the next "Juno." In an ideal world, theaters would fill the screens with Sundance films, but often films such as "Twilight" take their place. Below is a recap of some of the most buzzed about films of the festival, which a few USD Sundance students predict could be the next hits.

I'M HERE

DIRECTOR:
SPIKE JONZE

Spike Jonze is no stranger to the film industry. This year he directed the hyped up film, "Where The Wild Things Are." Directors like Jonze tend to find comfort in the accepting audience of Sundance which allows them to experiment with subject matter outside of the mainstream.

At Sundance, Jonze premiered his short film, "I'm Here," a simple robot romance story. The film features a couple robots, some good music and quick wit. Based on "The Giving Tree," the film comments on the downfalls of relationship dependency. Through the mastery work of Jonze, the film manages to wisely comment on romance in our modern world.

HAPPYTHANKYUMOREPLEASE

DIRECTOR: JOSH RADNOR

"Happythankyoumoreplease" is the Sundance directorial debut for actor Josh Radnor, who is the star and screenwriter of this contemporary film about young love in the New York summer. At the center of the film is Sam (Josh Radnor), a young writer in New York City who becomes responsible

for a young boy who is abandoned on a subway. Sam enjoys the company of his best friend Annie (Malin Ackerman), who struggles with the lesser talked about, but quite noticeable, disease alopecia. The film explores Sam's relationship with his eccentric friends and potential lover. Throughout the film, Sam

and his friends struggle personally and professionally as they search for some sort of acceptance with their present life and look toward their future.

The film received the Audience Award at Sundance for best drama and will likely find a comfortable spot in U.S. theaters.

HIGH SCHOOL

DIRECTOR: JOHN STALBERG

"HIGH School" is the quintessential stoner comedy, mixed with a coming of age tale of two friends. Henry (Matt Bush) is the valedictorian of his suburban high school who strives to achieve perfection. After a brief reunion with his childhood friend Tra-

vis (Sean Marquette) Henry indulges in drugs, assuming there will be no drastic consequences. Meanwhile, sick of dealing with stoned students, the boys' principal (Michael Chiklis) decides to give every student a drug test and expel them if they test positive. Henry and

Travis join forces to try to save Henry from his biggest fear, expulsion and failure. The film is not perfect, but nonetheless a nice comedy that many young adults may find HIGHlarious. Plus, Oscar winner Adrien Brody plays a drug dealer in a surprising, yet comedic role.



Matt Bush, Sean Marquette, and director John Stalberg KAITLIN PERRY/THE VISTA

BLUE VALENTINE

DIRECTOR: DEREK CIANFRANCE

Often there are films that give romantics hope for a happy ending, but there are also films that paint love in a negative light, taking away any hope that a true romantic may have had for a happy ending. "Blue Valentine" manages to portray both types of love. It portrays a romantic relationship as a blissful, happy and rewarding relationship. Yet it also shows how a romantic relationship can lead to codependency and the destruction of self.

Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams portray Dean and Cindy, a working class couple who are facing the disillusion of their marriage.

As the couple makes one last effort to save their marriage by taking a trip to a hotel, the two individuals reflect on the start of their relationship. These past memories take the viewer on a journey through the blissful and joyous moments of the couple's budding relationship and the eventual destruction of their marriage.

The strength of the film lies in director Derek Cianfrance's ability to portray love in two completely different ways. Superb acting by Williams and Gosling, as well as an adorable performance by newcomer Faith Wladayka add to the integrity of the film. Music by Grizzly Bear throughout the film does not hurt either.

The film is likely to find popularity in mainstream theaters due to the star power of Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams. However, viewers should be warned that the darling Gosling we all know

from "The Notebook" is no longer charming. Instead he is a desperate and heartbroken man. Although grim and dark, "Blue Valentine" provides an appropriate look into the reality of a destroyed marriage.



Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams in "Blue Valentine" DAEMONS MEDIA

BURIED

DIRECTOR:
RODRIGO CORTES

"Buried" was one of the most buzzed about films at Sundance. The film stars Ryan Reynolds, but it is the plot that had most moviegoers talking. Paul Conroy (Reynolds) is a contractor in Iraq who is captured and buried alive. The film

stars Reynolds, a cell phone, a lighter and a deadly coffin. It is 94 minutes of suspense and fear as Conroy tries to escape the fate of the coffin. Lionsgate bought the film at the festival, so a wide release will happen soon.



Ryan Reynolds in "Buried" DAEMONS MEDIA

RESTREPO

DIRECTORS: TIM HETHERINGTON & SEBASTIAN JUNGER

There is no shortage of documentaries about the current war, but "Restrepo" manages to stand out from the rest. This war documentary lets its viewers join the Second Platoon in the Korengal Valley which is the deadliest area in Afghanistan according to the men who lived and fought

there. The soldiers spend a year at Outpost Restrepo, engaging in combat daily, all while the filmmakers film every moment of fear, anger and despair.

The film earned the Jury Prize for Best Documentary and was one of the three films shown on premiere night at

Sundance. Clearly the industry sees the importance in this film and hopefully it will be available for a larger audience. The film may make its viewers angry that soldiers are still sent to Afghanistan, but it will no doubt make its viewers express great respect and gratitude to our brave soldiers.