



Reflections on Slamdance

Slamdance (which gets underway this week) is the quintessential festival for misfit filmmakers. So when the festival asked me to shoot *Harold's Bad Day*—which won their short film screenplay writing competition, I agreed faster than an account exec to a wardrobe change.

My first film, *Dill Scallion*, premiered at Slamdance back in the pre-Google era. A handful of my then-unknown actors, including Lauren Graham, Peter Berg, and Kathy Griffin, all came to Park City on their own dime. LeAnn Rimes, who also had a cameo in the movie, sat in the crowd. When I pointed her out, she stood up and blessed us with a spontaneous, a cappella rendition of “Amazing Grace”. Yes, it was odd, but we landed a nice home video deal on the spot.

Afterwards, we held a swanky private party, which was what filmmakers did before the Great Recession. We flew up Sheryl Crow, who scored the film, to play live. We created such buzz, that I leaked a rumor that Harvey Weinstein would arrive at midnight on a jet pack. Hearing it spread by an ICM agent was pure gold. We had pulled the red carpet out from under Sundance. More importantly, we secured two cable sales and an art

house theatrical run.

My not-fake documentary about comedians, *I Am Comic* premiered at Slamdance '10. As before, several stars made the voyage to Park City on their own dime. If we had premiered at Sundance, they might expect a chalet, per diem and free lift tickets. Comedians Tommy Davidson and April Macie handed out freeze pops when the packed screening room's air conditioning suddenly broke.

The crowd went nuts. After a 45 minute Q&A, we marched everyone across the street to our free pizza party for 1,200 fans and fellow filmmakers. Sheryl Crow was replaced by an iPod. But we licensed the movie to Showtime and snagged a great distributor, Monterey Media.

Cut to making *Harold's Bad Day*. This wry, dark comedy was a tart creative sorbet after two years of steady spotmaking for the likes of Doner, AKQA, Tracy Locke and Barkley. I seduced my crew into helping me. Luckily, we shot a nice gig for Cramer Krasselt/Phoenix earlier in the week.

Tapping into the Slamdance voodoo, we got a stellar cast: Nick Sadler, comic Doug Benson and two young guys destined for greatness. I wanted the writer, R.J. Buckley, to enjoy the full Hollywood experience, so I bas-

tardized his dialogue and ignored him on set. We used no video playback. No approval. Just my crew capturing great actors doing one, maybe two takes.

We just screened at Hybrid Editorial for finicky friends and strangers before locking the cut. Test screenings are always crucial. Charlie Chaplin screened for tired coal miners; I tapped creatives and offline editors. Big shout out to Brickyard VFX for the helping hand.

More fun than dropping names and making mediocre deals is witnessing that packed house of indie film lovers enjoying your film. The Slamdance crowd is there to celebrate the accomplishment of making a film. They want it to be great. They laugh at all the right places, soak up the drama and cherish the Q&A's. Okay, got to start packing.

(Director Jordan Brady is co-founder of production house Superlounge.)

Flash Back

January 26, 2007 Über Content has signed director, producer and writer **Todd Field** for exclusive U.S. spot representation....Director **Steve Chase**, formerly of **Reactor Films**, has joined bicoastal **Go Film** for U.S. spot representation....Director **Rob Luehrs** has landed his first career production house roost, signing with **Reactor Films** for spots.... Exec producer **John Marshall** has assumed sole ownership of **Villains**....Animation studio **Klasky Csupo's** commercialmaking shop **ka-chew!** has expanded its reach into live action with the formation of **Punch Company**....

January 25, 2002 **Bob Nelson** has joined **D'Arcy, NY**, in the newly created role of **EVP/managing director** of global creative services....**Rob Lieberman**, two-time winner of the **DGA Award** for commercial directing, has come aboard **Plum Productions**....**Bravo Zulu** has signed comedy director **Jordan Brady**, formerly with **HKM Productions**....**Post Perfect**, a leading **VFX/post** house for much of the late 1980s and through the '90s, closed its doors last week (1/18)....