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PARTICLES OF TRUTH

“AN EMOTIONAL SEESAW RIDE...

”The images of “Particles of Truth” are so sharp and cut so deep; it’s as if writer-producer-director and co-star Jennifer Elster made them with a scalpel.”

-LOS ANGELES TIMES

“AN INTENSE EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

with standout performances...its damn fine.”

-FILMTHREAT

“FRESH ENERGY”

“(Elster) represents the fresh energy crucial to the vitality of artistic communities.”

-NEWSDAY

“N.Y. Indie airily pulls off what Hollywood mightily strives for

-- a believable romantic comedy.”

-VARIETY

“Sweet believably tormented performances”

-VILLAGE VOICE

LIFE ON THE LEDGE

NEW YORK MAGAZINE names LIFE ON THE LEDGE as one of the films to see

“QUITE FUNNY”

- NEW YORK MAGAZINE, Logan Hill

“DARKLY HILARIOUS TALE...

recalls Woody Allen’s heyday of neurotic comedy”

- TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

“WITTY AND WELL CONSTRUCTED... VISUALLY STIMULATING”

- CINEMA BLEND

“MUCH BUZZED ABOUT SERIO-COMIC FEATURE”

- FLAUNT MAGAZINE, Shari Roman

75 FILMS

75 Films is a Tribeca-based motion picture company that develops and produces original and thought-provoking independent short and feature films.

75 Films' most recent accomplishment is the dark comedy feature film *Life on the Ledge*—a story about a guy who wants to die until he finds out that he's actually dying. *Life on the Ledge* made its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival 2005. Shot in and around Tribeca, *Life on the Ledge* stars writer/director Lewis Helfer and Melissa Sagemiller, along with Broadway veterans Tovah Feldshuh, Mark Blum, Daphne Rubin-Vega, and independent film stars David Thornton, Gale Harold and Jacob Reynolds.

Particles of Truth marked 75 Films' feature film debut, which made its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival 2003, and continued its success at such festivals as IFP/LA, Woodstock, Ft. Lauderdale, Santa Barbara and won the Jury Award for Best Feature Film at the Austin Film Festival and HD Fest. *Particles of Truth*, was also shot in and around Manhattan's Tribeca district. The film chronicles the lives of eight connected New Yorkers over an intensely emotional 48-hour period as they deal with the self-doubt, emotional dishonesty, familial ties, and potential for love. *Particles of Truth* was written and directed by Jennifer Elster in which she stars with Gale Harold (Showtime's "Queer As Folk"). *Particles of Truth* had its NYC theatrical release in September 2004, and is currently available on DVD as well as airing on the Sundance Channel in a series entitled "New Voices".

Tribeca,

With 200 films, the 2nd annual festival moves beyond DeNiro's goal of luring people downtown

By Steve Dollar

Year One of the Tribeca Film Festival was easy enough to peg. New York icon Robert DeNiro comes to the rescue of his longtime neighborhood in the wake of 9/11, puts together a mass-appeal showbiz event, and helps ease the economic devastation surrounding Ground Zero.

It worked like a charm. More than 150,000 people flocked south of Canal Street for the inaugural festival.

"Our goal was this: How many people can you bring downtown?" says Jane Rosenthal, DeNiro's partner in the 15-year-old production company Tribeca Films and the co-founder of the festival. And while that remains the prime directive, the challenges are different for this year's event, which begins tomorrow and runs through May 11.

With more than 200 films—twice that of last year—this eruption of cinephilia

comes across as several festivals at once. "When it's your sophomore outing in anything, you're clearly trying to establish yourself," Rosenthal says. "This is still a very new festival." Yet, if it's still trying to define its identity, the event is one that prefers to err on the side of abundance. It's a "both / and" rather than an "either / or" proposition.

The glitter factor remains important, with invitation-only premieres of mall-friendly Hollywood productions such as "Down With Love" (with Renée Zellweger and Ewan McGregor) and "The In-Laws" (with Michael Douglas and Albert Brooks). And, just to add some crackle, MTV, VH1 and Infinity Broadcasting are throwing a free May 9 concert in Battery Park, with headliners Norah Jones and the Roots.

But with at least two-thirds of the invited filmmakers expected to attend their screenings, there is ample occasion for more intimate encounters. Al Pacino, no less, will screen his



Robert DeNiro in "Once Upon a Time in America." A restored version of the Sergio Leone movie premieres at the Tribeca Film Festival.

For the full schedule of events and more on the festival, visit www.newsday.com/tribeca

COVER STORY the Sequel



Jennifer Elster stars in "Particles of Truth," her directorial debut, shot in TriBeCa. It will be screened at the film festival May 8-10. At left, Albert Brooks and Michael Douglas star in "The In-Laws," which will premiere May 10.

with the same cast. "And I think we're the only festival ever that's had two new films from Afghanistan in competition," Scarlet adds, also mentioning an unusual entry from Honduras called "Calixto, the Landlord." This political parable, 15 years in the making, will garner posthumous attention for its director—Sami Kafati—as a one-man national film industry (he died in 1996 while "Calixto" was being edited).

Between the glitz and the subtitles, there's a surplus of movie-movies and

rarely seen film "Chinese Coffee" in a special May 8 program, to be followed by a conversation with the actor-director. (The next morning, Pacino leads a Shakespeare workshop, followed by a screening of another one of his personal efforts, "Looking for Richard," his take on "Richard III.") Other auteurs on the panel docket include Neil LaBute and Julie Taymor.

Though even the ultra-hip Prada store in SoHo will host such events, most screenings and related programs will be centered at the United Artists Battery Park Theaters, a 16-screen multiplex.

That's only a fraction, however, of what the festival offers. "We're definitely different," says Peter Scarlet, the fest's executive director, who came to New York after a stint running the fabled Cinematheque Francais in Paris. Scarlet briskly reels off a half-dozen or so programming coups. These include premieres of restored versions of Sergio Leone's "Once Upon a Time in America" and "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," and a behind-the-scenes look at "The Night of the Hunter," using extensive audio recordings made by actor Charles Laughton on the set of the only film he ever directed. There's a novel project from France, "La Trilogie," in which director Lucien Béraud shot three separate movies in different genres—a thriller, a romance and a melodrama—at the same time,



Multi-Grammy winner Norah Jones headlines the free concert May 9 in Battery Park celebrating the film festival.

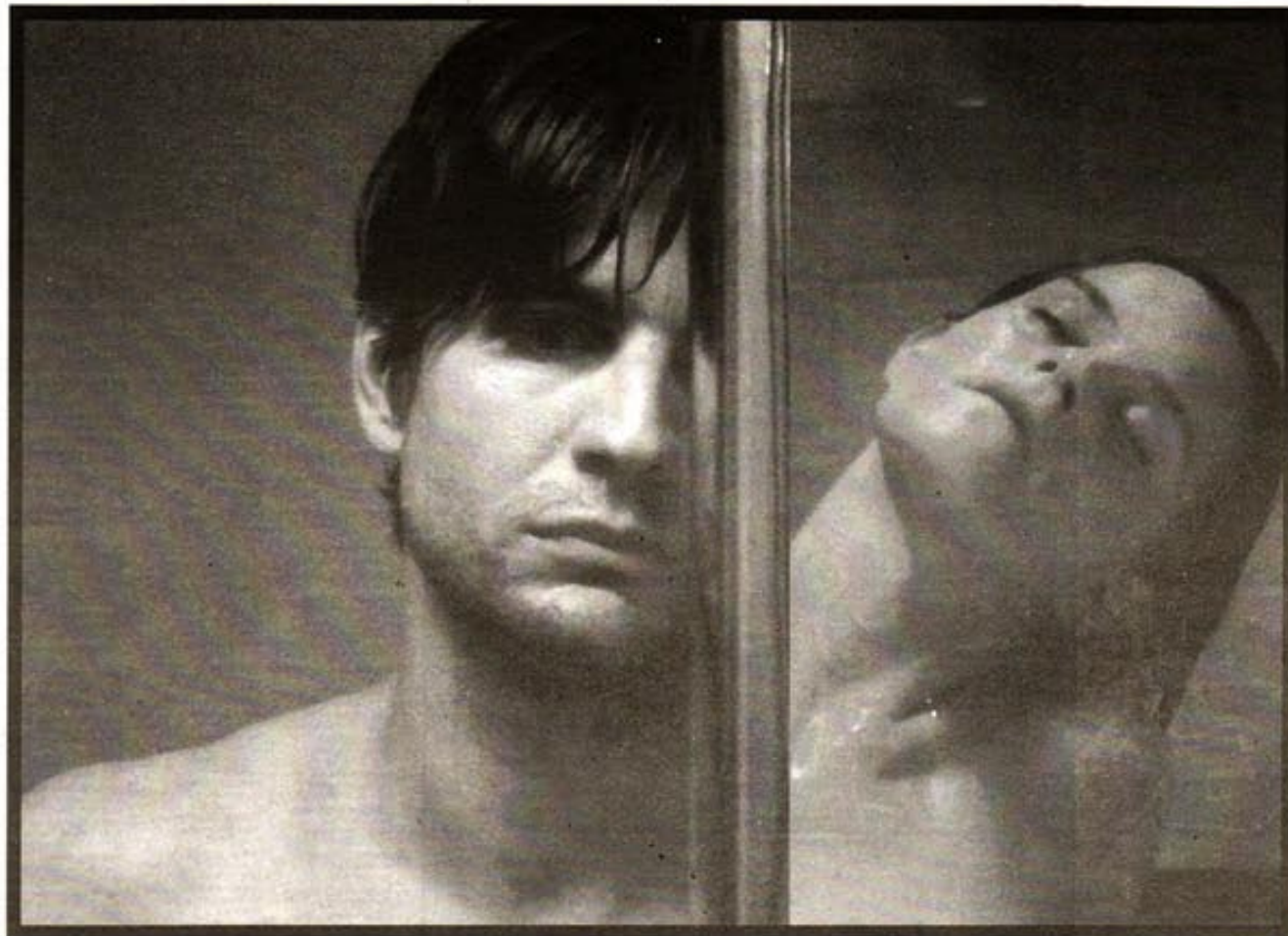
independent spirit. A mini-festival of family films surveys more than 40 titles, from plentiful short subjects to the premiere of "The Lizzie McGuire Movie" starring Hilary Duff in a screen version of the popular Disney TV show for tweens. A slate of midnight movies boasts two documentaries devoted to the Ramones, the quintessential New York rock band. And 22 features and documentaries, shot entirely in New York City, have their own themed category: What else but "New York, New York."

That's enviable exposure for debut filmmaker Jennifer Elster, whose "Particles of Truth" (screening May 8-10) is nearly a "poster film" for the festival: a psychological drama that doubles as a high-definition video postcard of TriBeCa. "I live and work in TriBeCa. We shot in TriBeCa. I was born and raised in New York. So this is very sentimental," says Elster, a former stylist for photo and video shoots who has worked with such rock and roll figures as David Bowie and Marilyn Manson. "This is a scarred part of the city. I'm really proud to have the film playing here."

Elster, who also plays the lead role of a young artist with a tortured family history, is emblematic of what the festival strives for. Not only does she represent the fresh energy crucial to the vitality of artistic communities—such as TriBeCa—but her work subtly evokes the realities of a post-9/11 cityscape, and the sometimes difficult necessity of making new connections. "I'm interested in compassion," she says. "I think New Yorkers are rooting for us, for TriBeCa. This is a festival New Yorkers want to see work out." ■

Steve Dollar is a freelance writer.

The ultimate rock fan



SHARP IMAGES: Gale Harold as Morrison and Jennifer Elster as Lilli in "Particles of Truth," an emotional seesaw ride.

The Los Angeles Film Festival's centerpiece documents a local promoter and legend.

By KEVIN THOMAS
Times Staff Writer

THE Los Angeles Film Festival has chosen as its annual centerpiece premiere George Hickenlooper's documentary on local character Rodney Bingenheimer, "The Mayor of Sunset Strip."

This engrossing work, at once compassionate and rigorous, comprehensive and succinct, would be the centerpiece of any festival for the way it illuminates the life and times of the enigmatic, diminutive Bingenheimer, an influential figure in

rock music for four decades and long-running on-air personality at KROQ-FM (106.7). (A CD of the film's far-ranging soundtrack is scheduled to be released.)

Bingenheimer is essentially a loner, though he's cherished by many. Hickenlooper realizes that while he was typical of a generation of celebrity-crazed, glamour-seeking throwaway kids who flocked to Hollywood in the swinging '60s, he also was special. As Cher observes in the film of those times: "If you were a little different something could happen."

With Bingenheimer, people just naturally seemed to want to look after him. That allowed him to pursue his "Zelig"-like passion for turning up in photos of the rich and famous, while discovering that he was a natural promoter of the music and the musicians he admired.

He wrote about them, he promoted them at concerts and at various record companies, and above all he was crucial in launching them on his radio program. Unassuming, empathetic and encouraging,

Bingenheimer became the kind of person rock bands found useful to have around.

Bingenheimer's life, in fact, is a veritable who's who of rock 'n' roll, and those who speak of him with gratitude and devotion, in addition to Cher, include Nancy Sinatra, Debbie Harry, Joan Jett, Courtney Love and David Bowie. The late Lance Loud, eldest son of the family profiled in PBS's groundbreaking 1970s TV series "An American Family," aptly compares Bingenheimer's personality and modus operandi to Andy Warhol's.

But unlike Warhol, Bingenheimer, who lives in a modest Hollywood apartment, never got rich. Born in Mountain View, Calif., of parents who divorced when he was 3, Bingenheimer inherited his passion for celebrities from his mother, with whom he stayed close until her recent death, though they didn't keep in touch during his early Hollywood years.

His father and stepmother seem decent, ordinary folks but reveal they weren't close to their son. No matter:

Bingenheimer is a survivor blessed with the gift of self-invention, and while he may seem lonely at times, he knows how to take care of himself while extending a helping hand to others. The transitory nature of fame, especially in the world of rock, is a key theme of the film, yet Bingenheimer himself endures.

'Particles of Truth'

The images of "Particles of Truth" are so sharp and cut so deep, it's as if its writer-producer-director and co-star Jennifer Elster made them with a scalpel.

Elster takes an emotional seesaw ride through the 48 hours preceding the first group exhibition for her heroine, Lilli, a talented young Manhattan painter. Near the outset of the film she connects warily with Morrison (Gale Harold), a young writer who, like Lilli, comes from a dysfunctional family that makes him almost as skittish as she is.

Consumed with a fear of failing and ambivalent in her responses to Morrison, Lilli strives to sort out her feelings as the show's opening draws ever closer and developments, both expected and from left field, start piling up. As taut as a suspension bridge cable, "Particles of Truth," a notably assured and ambitious first film, builds tension as it involves us deeper and deeper in Lilli's destiny.

'You'll Be Back'

Like "Particles of Truth," Antonio Chavarrías' compelling "You'll Be Back" unfolds over a short space of time, deals with the impact of two people upon each other and creates an ever-increasing amount of uncertainty.

Ignacio (Unax Ugaide) is a slim, nice-looking architectural student prepared to follow in his highly successful, domineering father's footsteps when he has a chance encounter, after much time, with his ne'er-do-well older brother, Carlos (Tristan Ulloa), a scruffy-looking gambler down on his luck. To Ignacio, Carlos represents the excitement and apparent freedom of living on the edge.

It's one thing, however, for Carlos to present a constructive challenge to Ignacio as to what the younger man really wants to do with life, and quite another to lead him astray, even into serious danger. "You'll Be Back" is deceptively low-key and highly accomplished.

'Iran Is My Home'

Two years ago Iranian American television personality Fariborz David Dilaan,

who hosts a talk show aimed at the Iranian expatriate community around the world, returned after a 24-year absence to his homeland, which he left at 16. He came back to Los Angeles with "Iran Is My Home," a heartfelt 70-minute video record of his visit, which will have special meaning to anyone fortunate enough to have visited Iran about the time he left it and who by chance took virtually the same journey he did, from Tehran and north to the magical city of Esfahan and back.

Fariborz observes, listens, appreciates, remembers and embraces. Yes, he takes note of the rigid Islamic rules posted everywhere, he hears the despair of two young men, both with degrees but jobless, saying, "We're under pressure here." But Fariborz also captures the beauty of the Iranian landscape, the magnificent mountain ranges and vast plains and the timeless vitality of Tehran.

He even manages to capture — against regulations — the mirror-mosaic splendor of the interior of Golestan Palace, and takes in street life everywhere he goes. But above all he captures the personalities of the Iranian people, unchanging in their warmth and hospitality. Fariborz begins by filming his mother offering greetings to friends and relatives in Iran; he ends with a visit with the equally gracious lady to whom his mother sold her spacious Tehran residence years ago.

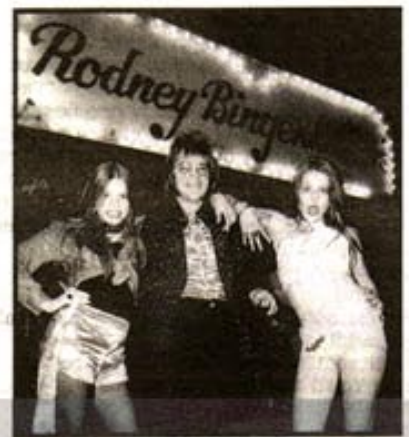
Screenings

The Mayor of Sunset Strip: Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., ArcLight Cinemas, 6360 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; next Thursday at 2:30 p.m., Laemmle's Sunset 5, 8000 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, (866) FILMFEST.

Particles of Truth: Saturday at 4:30 p.m., the Directors Guild, 7920 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; also Monday at 7 p.m., Laemmle's Sunset 5, (866) FILMFEST.

You'll Be Back: Tonight at 7:15, Friday at 2:45 p.m. and next Thursday at 9:45 p.m. at Laemmle's Sunset 5, (866) FILMFEST.

Iran Is My Home: Saturday at 7 p.m. and June 20 at 5 p.m. at the Directors Guild, (866) FILMFEST.



PROMOTER: Rodney Bingenheimer



GERM MAN: Gale Harold plays a germaphobe in romantic comedy "Particles of Truth," written and directed by Jennifer Elster.

TRIBECA

PARTICLES OF TRUTH

A Matter production. Produced by Jennifer Elster. Co-producers, Lewis Helfer, Terry Leonard.

Directed, written by Jennifer Elster. Camera (color, HDCam), Toshiro Yamaguchi; editor, Ron Len; music supervisor, Mark Wike; production designer, Cherish Magennis; sound, Eban Baume. Reviewed at Tribeca Film Center, New York, April 24, 2003. (In Tribeca Film Festival — NY, NY.) Running time: 101 MIN.

With: Jennifer Elster, Gale Harold, Richard Wilkinson, Elizabeth Van Meter, Alan Samulski, Larry Pine, Leslie Lyles, Susan Floyd, Mark Margolis.

By RONNIE SCHEIB

This pretentiously titled, zero-budget N.Y. indie airily pulls off what Hollywood mightily strives for — a believable romantic comedy. Admittedly, pic's loving couple, two certifiably neurotic artists, hardly spring from central casting. She, a painter (writer-director Jennifer Elster), can't bring herself to visit her drug-addict father who's dying of AIDS, while he, a writer (Gale Harold of "Queer as Folk" repute), has got major germ issues. But together they're unbeatable, so shocked at successfully initiating human contact that they impatiently drop their defining neuroses. Basically a chick pic, "Particles" may prove too marginal to reach wide auds, but charm of players might woo limited theatrical life before cable beckons.

Pic unfolds over 48 hours, the pre-credit sequence sampling out-of-context scenes labeled "today" or "tomorrow" before settling into straight-ahead chronology. Lilli

(Elster) is spooked about her imminent gallery opening and haunted by visions of her father. She flashes back to her childhood in the hands of her affectionate but hopelessly stoned dad that has left her defensive and insecure about her art.

Enter germaphobe Morrison (Harold), who sits in his car all day, unwilling to sally forth into the microbe-crawling streets, jotting down notes for what's presumably the sequel to his first book, the fittingly titled "Notes From a Vehicle." He holds strained conversations with his painfully aloof father in his parents' luxurious home, and performs complex sanitary ablutions involving surgical caps and sterilized gauze in the stainless steel bathroom of his own apartment.

Subject matter seemingly leans toward the pathetic, but Elster graces both main characters with a wry distance from their own dysfunctionality that makes them

strangely appealing. Kindred spirits, they immediately recognize each other's need to keep the world at bay. Neither magically escapist nor psychologically correct, "Particles" proposes a pragmatic adaptability at one with the lived-in New York neighborhoods and artists' hardscrabble career paths.

Within two days, the couple triumphantly sheds years' worth of hang-ups. To Elster's credit, she makes the characters' instant conversions seem less miraculous than long overdue.

Cherish Magennis' production design tends toward the lush and color-saturated, and Toshiro Yamaguchi's hi-def lensing gives upbeat patina to Gotham streets and rooms.



PARTICLES OF TRUTH

by Eric Campos
(2003-06-20)

2003, Un-rated, 101 Minutes, Matter Productions
[OFFICIAL SITE](#) [CREDITS](#)

Beneath all of the psychosis; beneath all of the self-doubt; beneath the lies; and beneath the misery is a simple, but inspiring message – Don't be afraid to live your life because you never know how much longer you're going to have it. Something like that, anyways. Very unusual that a film focusing on characters this miserable can be so uplifting, but here it is, and it's damn fine.

Taking place within a 48-hour period, our main character, Lilli (played by director Jennifer Elster), is preparing for her art show where her paintings will be on display for all to see. Lilli should be excited, and maybe even a little nervous, but as we get to know her more, we find that she's more disgusted with the idea of showing her work publicly than elated. She doesn't like people very much and she trusts no one. This is quite possibly due to the crazy upbringing she had, raised by a couple of drug addict parents. She's disconnected herself from the world, so when Morrison (Gale Harold from "Queer As Folk") shows up in her life, you'd think the two would be a perfect match. You see, Morrison is a fellow artist, a writer, but he also keeps himself distanced from the world around him, wary of the germs that people spread. But when hanging out, the two end up bumping heads more than getting along, their fears of opening up to another human being prohibiting them from establishing a relationship. If this helping of self-doubt and obsessive compulsiveness isn't enough for you, it is soon revealed that everyone they know all have a deep, dark secret that is quietly eating them alive.

"Particles of Truth" is quite an intense emotional rollercoaster with standout performances, especially from Elster. One of the more remarkable scenes has Lilli being beaten by some creep in the backroom of a bar with Eddie Rabbit's "I Love a Rainy Night" blaring over the violence. The performance from Elster and the creep are scary, add Eddie Rabbit to the mix and you've got yourself a total nightmare.

This is an excellent first feature from Elster and I look forward to seeing what next she has up her sleeve. Now back in the dump truck filled with meds, these characters need to chill out.



"Particles of Truth" is quite an intense emotional rollercoaster...



Very unusual that a film focusing on characters this miserable can be so uplifting...

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PARTICLES OF TRUTH ABOUT LIFE IN NEW YORK

By Brad Balfour - September 9th, 2004

When actor/director Jennifer Elster's **PARTICLES OF TRUTH** opens this month, she will finally realize both a dream and cleanse herself of the debris from 9/11. A few days before she had planned to begin production on her first feature, 9/11 happened. Elster and husband Lewis Helfer were thrown into turmoil-especially because they lived down the street from the World Trade Center. While dislocated and despairing due to the tragedy that had just affected them so directly, they persevered and Elster began shooting during the summer of 2002.



Once this former stylist to the stars finished her debut, and started entering the film festival circuit, she began receiving critical acclaim. The film had its World Premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival 2003, and continued racking up successes at such festivals as IFP/LA, Woodstock, Ft. Lauderdale, Santa Barbara. In fact it won the Jury Award for Best Feature Film at the Austin Film Festival. Now, four years since she had planned to begin shooting on September 15th, 2001, this film about street-worn, psychologically dislocated New Yorkers will finally get seen by New York at large.

Have you finally recovered from the effect of being so close to Ground Zero?

JE: The trauma of 9/11 has healed, but it's like a bad memory from your childhood, it stays with you for the rest of your life. We went through a lot during that time. We also grew from the experience.

When did you decide you were going to make films?

JE: I had written since I was a child and always wanted to write. Somewhere along the path, I became a fashion stylist and had worked with the likes of David Bowie, other rock stars and celebrities, and had an exciting career. I fine-tuned my own aesthetic during this period. One day, I was on a shoot with an artist that I really respected and had become plainly unhappy. I couldn't take the thought of being on another shoot and not telling the stories I had pent up inside of me. So, finding a balance, I worked with the band Garbage, which was steady and lucrative for over a year and wrote Particles of Truth during every spare second. When I was through, I made a couple of shorts, then the feature. I was determined.

**Why this story line?**

JE: I have a natural propensity to be drawn towards complicated story lines where everyone has a secret. There is something mysterious and fascinating to me about people's personal unveilings and it is an area I am interested in portraying. My next script, A NERVOUS SOCIETY, treads on this same ground, but with older and more sophisticated characters. I think most of people are hiding from their fears of their own insignificance.

What made you decide to be the lead?

JE: Playing Lilli in the story was one of the most challenging things I've ever done. She was required to be so emotionally raw which is the opposite of what you need to be as a director to get it all done. It was tricky flipping back and forth. I wasn't originally going to be in the movie, but then (after seeing two hundred actresses) I had learned the lines and embodied the part. I'm glad that I did it.

Since you play such a troubled character have people thought the she was autobiographical?

JE: A raw and emotional character like Lilli was exhausting to play at times but never traumatic. Being generous with the character and making sure I was alive in the performance meant that I was there in that room with the danger, with the tragedy, with my emotions. It was an exercise in baring myself but there is no personal trauma attached to it.

For a first film, it had a great look and crisp editing --wasn't it a bit much to take on all the jobs you did in making this?

JE: It was a lot for one person and at the same time I'm glad I did it. I never imagined I would have taken on as much as I did. I play chicken with myself all the time. When I was a kid, if I was scared to go on the rollercoaster, I would force myself to do it. On this set, I challenged myself and took on so much, but I learned so much in the process. I work hard and pay attention to details. Now I

have the knowledge and I get to move on, improve and mature.

What were your illusions about being a filmmaker?

JE: My illusions then aren't any different from what they are now. Like everything, things take time and development. I'm in a really good head space. I feel incredibly fertile.

What was the hardest part to making this film?

JE: Having big ideas and no money.

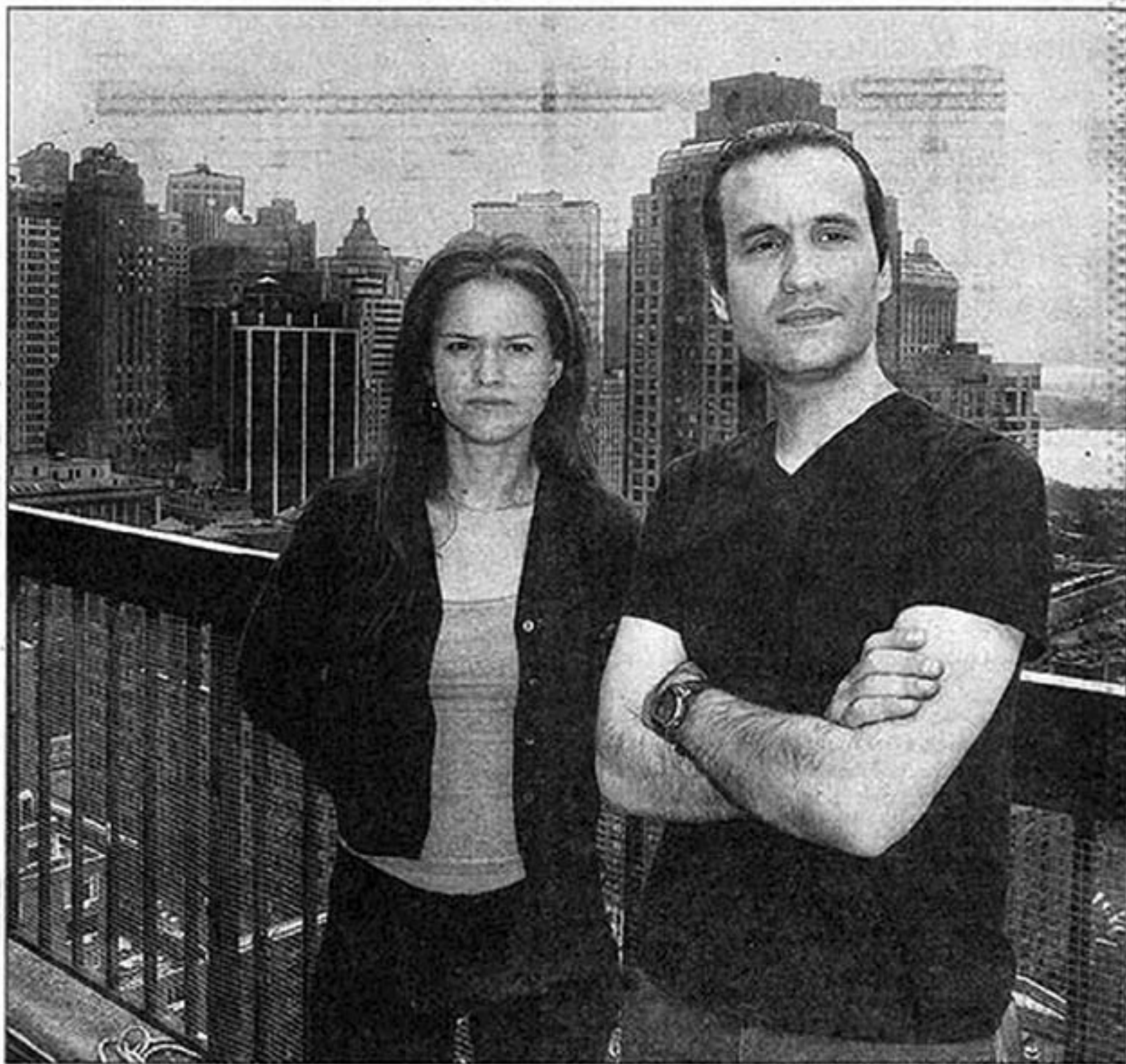
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Interrupted by Sept. 11, A Filmmaker Resumes



Photographs by Edwina Seymour for The New York Times

Her first feature is part of the TriBeCa festival.

By TRISH HALL

It can be great to work at home — until home becomes unlivable.

Jennifer Elster was just about to start the preproduction phase of her first full-length movie in September 2001 when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center. From the terrace of the one-bedroom apartment she shares with her husband, Lewis Helfer, in Battery Park City, she could see the second plane hit.

"I ran inside and told my husband what I had seen, but neither he nor I believed it," she said. "We had no electricity or plumbing and could not put on the news to confirm what was going on."

A thick cloud took over their apartment, she said, and "we just thought we were going to die." They fled down 30 floors of stairs, having no idea what would happen next, knowing only that they had to get out.

They found Mr. Helfer's parents, who lived nearby, at a pier on the Hudson River, and they all took a boat to New Jersey. From there they could stare at their building, distraught that their dog, G, was still there. "We could not believe we were without him," Ms. Elster said.

The next day, at nearly midnight, they sneaked past all the military checkpoints, returned to their building in Gateway Plaza on South End Avenue, walked up to their apartment and got G, a 4-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback. "He was crying and we were crying," Mr. Helfer said.

For several months, they lived at the W hotel in Union Square, which took in many downtown residents. They were displaced from their home, and work became something that was nearly impossible, but Ms. Elster kept trying to develop her feature. When they returned to their apartment in December 2001, she picked up where she left off.

It wasn't, of course, the same. The verdant retreat on their large terrace, which Mr. Helfer had planted with dwarf peach and nectarine trees, and with strawberries and tomatoes, had been destroyed. Debris



Jennifer Elster and Lewis Helfer on the terrace of their one-bedroom apartment in Gateway Plaza on South End Avenue in Battery Park City. They were forced to flee on 9/11, and they returned that December when she continued work on her first feature film.

covered the 6,000 pounds of soil they had carted up to the terrace.

Everything in their apartment, where they have lived for 10 years, was filthy. "I threw out all of our furniture and started casting for my movie," she said.

For many of the actors, the trip to her apartment in December 2001 was their first to the scene of the attack. "They would often arrive at the door crying, or overwhelmed," she said. It was hard for her too. "You just feel like everything is irrelevant," she said. On the other hand, because it was frightening, not knowing whether there would be another attack, she felt more driven to make a movie.

She had grown up in New York, gone to New York University and worked as a fashion stylist before becoming involved with moviemaking. She made two short films, "Dirty" and "Ill Will," which were shown at the Los Angeles Film Festival in 2001.

The disaster made her feel that it was important to go forward. "Maybe I wouldn't have the opportunity to do it in the future," she said.

Her movie, "Particles of Truth," is

about love, life and the fear of failing, she said. "It's about two people that connect to one another but don't allow themselves to go there," she said. "The story is about finding out why." She is convinced that the intensity of the time is reflected in the film.

Ms. Elster shot her movie last summer, mostly in TriBeCa although also in Harlem and Williamsburg, and finished it just a month ago. She sent a copy to the TriBeCa Film Festival, and it was accepted and scheduled to be shown last week — Thursday, Friday and yesterday.

She wrote, produced and directed the movie, and she also plays the female lead, opposite Gale Harold, who plays Brian Kinney on the Showtime television series "Queer as Folk."

Now Mr. Helfer is in preproduction for his first movie, which he said is "about someone who wants to die until he finds out he is dying." Mr. Helfer grew up in Brooklyn and worked as a commodities trader before deciding to become a filmmaker; he is now an investor with some real estate holdings and, like Ms. Elster, he raised financing for his film privately. He helped produce her movie, and she will participate in his.

Neither wanted to say how much their movies cost, or how old they are, although standing on the terrace, looking at the wide views to the west and the south, they volunteered one number: their dog, G, weighs 105 pounds.

Their apartment has still not returned to what either considers normal. They have no sofa or television set in the living room. Furnished only with tables and desk chairs, it looks like an office. The terrace has a few pieces of furniture, but no greenery yet.

They came back, they said, because they felt as if they had to, to deal with the trauma. But it's obvious they haven't really decided to make it home again. At the moment, they are just focused on home as a place to work, not to see friends.

"It was a home before," Ms. Elster said. Now, she said, "it's a home, but it's not a home where I'd want to entertain."



They consider their home a place to work, not to see friends.

FILM

JENNIFER ELSTER

WRITTEN BY SHARI ROMAN PHOTOGRAPHED BY CASS BIRD

"No more coffee," Jennifer Elster sweetly entreats the waitress at New York City's Soho House, putting a quick hand over the top of her coffee cup. "I'm about ready to spin out of this chair."

She twists her long hair behind her slim shoulders, revealing a determined face dominated by coal-black eyes rimmed with dark lashes. She shifts in her seat, scans the room for cigarettes even though she has recently quit smoking. Again.

"Why do I feel so restless?" Elster asks herself, momentarily slumping against the cushions. "I guess it's because talking about myself in relation to the film makes me feel vulnerable." According to Elster, *Particles of Truth*, her emotionally charged debut feature, in which she wrote, directed, and stars, is such a soul-bearing public act of intimacy. "But up until recently, I've never taken the film apart, taken each individual scene and matched them with different aspects of my life," she says. "All I knew is, unless I got this story out of my system, I couldn't get onto the next level of my life."

Particles of Truth tells the story of Lilli Black (Elster), an insecure, yet headstrong painter from a poor background who lives in New York,

barely making ends meet. Unwilling to visit her AIDS-stricken, drug-addicted father (Alan Samuelski), and too afraid to attend her first solo exhibition, life surprises her when she meets another equally odd fish—a well-bred, obsessive-compulsive author (*Queer As Folk*'s Gale Harold) who's afraid of opening himself to love. Forced to redefine their relationship to each other and to the snug neuroses that have insulated them from the world, this is a film that is, among other things, an authentic disclosure into romantic warfare. Lensed by Toshiro Yamaguchi on HD (with a voyeuristic restiveness that seems to sneak into the souls of the performers), the film explores the queasy, subtle, dark moments between people, where nothing really seems to be happening, but devastation ripens all the same.

"When you are strong, it doesn't mean you have lost any of your frailties," says Elster, 29, who, by her own assessment, is very stubborn. "But it wouldn't be human to have one without the other, which is why the characters have such extreme emotions and have very much their own way of doing things. Just because you know what your flaws are, it doesn't mean you can control what's within you."

Yet, it is not mere passion that drives Elster (she is already at work on her second film, as well as producing her husband Lewis Helder's much buzzed-about serio-comic feature, *Life on the Ledge*), but a real canniness and intelligence that propelled her to where she is today.

Just a few years ago, Elster had given up on an exponentially successful career as a fashion stylist, although it seemed determined not to give up on her. She dazzled, working on photo and video shoots for the likes of Moby, Bowie, and Gwyneth, but she was becoming more and more restless with its limitations.

"I would be mentally rewriting the character's back story, cramming too much detail into the visuals," she says. In her off hours, she would bury herself in the works of cineastes such as Lars von Trier, Paul Thomas Anderson, Jane Campion, and Andrei Tarkovsky: "I was driving myself and everyone around me crazy. I realized I didn't want to be just a contributor, I wanted to do it all. And even though I had never directed anything, I knew quite clearly that I could do it, and do it well."

Never the kind of woman to wait for things to happen, Elster, an NYU graduate, returned to school for intensive film training and, in rapid

order, won notice with two short films which launched her into production for *Particles*.

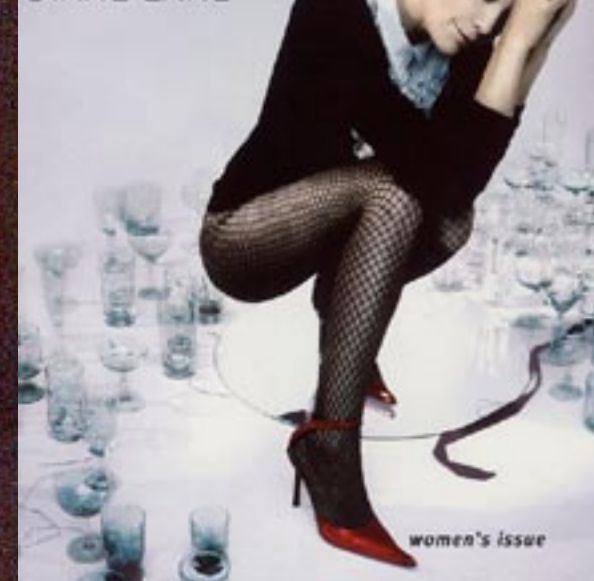
"And of course, I almost got us all arrested," she says, throwing her head back and letting out a loud belly laugh. "We were on the subway in Harlem, holding the doors open over and over again because we had to get these particular shots. So the conductor, of course, stops the train and calls the police, but there's no way we can get off."

"There we are with these huge cameras and the sound trolley and the entire crew. So when the police came, I hopped off and started crying hysterically, told them I had been in an argument with my boyfriend and I had lost him in the subway. I only let them calm me down as the cars pulled out of the station," she says, slapping the table. "Just talking about it, it still gives me this rush. I was absolutely terrified, but there was no freaking way we were getting off that train. I needed those moments. They were so important."

"I prefer to take those chances, and if not everybody gets me, gets the film, that's fine. It's part of the game. But more importantly, I took the risk."

FLAUNT

DIANE LANE

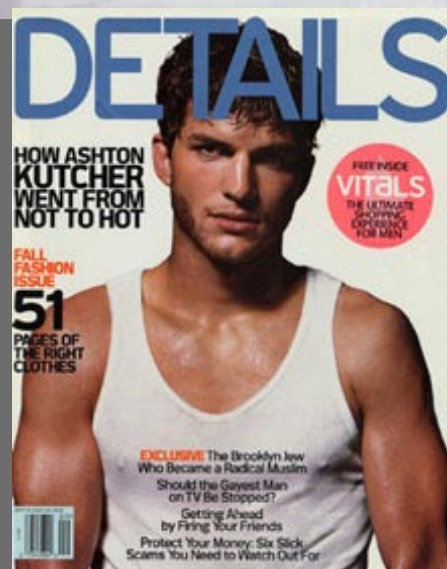


women's issue

A NEW YORK LOVE STORY

JENNIFER ELSTER

Jennifer Elster took a break from her job as a stylist to create her first feature film, *Particles of Truth*, shot entirely in New York. Jennifer wrote, directed and starred opposite actor Gale Harold in this story about life, love and the fear of failure. Clothing available at Lady Foot Locker.



How do you look right now? At home in my skin.

Jennifer Elster

When were you best dressed in your life? The night of my film premiere. I felt like I was on fire. **What's your favorite article of clothing?** Martine Sitbon dress tied into a top. **Top or bottom: which did you last purchase?** Gap jeans... a couple of months ago. **Have you ever worn an oppo-**

site sex article of clothing? Men's Fruit of the Loom underwear make me feel sexy and close to my lover. **Do you have a lucky piece of clothing?** I'm not lucky enough to have lucky clothes. **Have you ever stolen an article of clothing?** My entire wardrobe at age 12. **Honestly, have**

you ever worn bike shorts? Yes, when I was obsessed with cycling. **What was your least understood (worst) outfit to date?** Every other day I am wearing something I am baffled by—utter laziness. **Which celebrity inspires you to look good?** Bjork.

[Home](#) > 'Innocence' finds home

http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print_story&articleid=VR1117921790&categoryid=1918

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Posted: Wed., Apr. 27, 2005, 7:42pm PT

'Innocence' finds home

Sanders-helmed docu snapped up by New Yorker

By **IAN MOHR**

NEW YORK -- Arthouse distrib New Yorker Films has sealed a deal at the Tribeca Film Festival to snap up U.S. theatrical and homevid rights to the docu "After Innocence" from Showtime.

Pact marks the first domestic bit of biz at Tribeca.

Pic, by writer-helmer Jessica Sanders, profiles a group of wrongly accused inmates freed on DNA evidence who are trying to piece their lives back together. Crusading attorneys Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld, founders of the Innocence Project, are also featured.

Headed by indie vet Dan Talbot, New Yorker is planning a fall release. Showtime keeps premium cable rights.

Cable unit's Showtime Independent Films provided finishing funds to Sanders and producer Marc Simon. Project was also made with the American Film Foundation.

Pic won a special jury prize at Sundance this year.

The Film Sales Co.'s Andrew Herwitz repped Showtime and the filmmakers and sealed the pact with New Yorker's Jose Lopez.

Meanwhile, indie marketing, production and sales banner Carmichael Films said it has sealed a pact to serve as U.S. sales agent on a trio of Tribeca features: tyro helmer Alicia Scherson's "Play," Gigantic Pictures' "Satellite" and Scott Perry's feature docu "The Outdoorsmen."

All three pics had their world preems at Tribeca.

"Play" follows a contempo urban couple searching for love, while "Satellite" is a romance about young lovers who leave it all behind for a better life. The docu chronicles a group of pals who create perhaps the most elaborate drinking game in history.

Also at the fest this week, partners Jennifer Elster and Lewis Helfer unveiled plans to formally launch a Gotham production banner dubbed 75 Films.

The duo's "Life on the Ledge" is screening here as a world preem. Comedy concerns a man who wants to die until he finds out he really is a goner. Helfer wrote, directed and stars in the pic.

Pic lensed almost entirely in Tribeca.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/story.asp?i=story&a=VR1117921790&c=1918>

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Rever Shoon
Reviewed this issue. 1:30 min
Life, Translated
ImaginAsian Reviewed this issue.
WEEKEND: Never Been Thawed
Cinema Village Reviewed this issue. 07 min
WEEKEND: The Squid and the Whale
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas See the Short List. 81 min
A Tale of Two Pizzas
Reviewed this issue.



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Lars von Trier's **MANDERLAY** starring Bryce Dallas Howard and Willem Dafoe.



Writer/Director Lewis Helder stars in **LIFE ON THE LEDGE** screening in competition.

For a complete list of panelists and participants, more information, or to register, call 512-478-4795 | 800-310-3378 or go to

WWW.AUSTINFILMFESTIVAL.COM

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WEEKEND 2046
Landmark Sunshine Cinema 129 min
3 Days of Rain
Quad 3 Days of Rain intercuts six Chekhov stories, relocated to Cleveland and updated with mild "subversion" of the junkie-mother-post-cue-tody-lesbian sort. The real subversion is director Michael Meredith's insistence on not capturing interactions between human beings in a frame, which seems like a Mendoza line. But I don't

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- A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE**
2:15 (Fri—Sun only), 4:40, 7, 9:40pm
- EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED**
2:30 (Fri—Sun only), 4:50, 7:10, 9:30pm
- THE CONSTANT GARDENER**
3 (Fri—Sun only), 6:30, 9:20pm

Call for Change: Third World Newsreel
Oct 7—9

BAMcinématek

- DOUBLE DUTCH: THE FILMS OF JOS DE PUTTER & PETER DELPEUT**
Diva Dolorosa Dir. Peter Delpeut
Wed, Oct 5 at 6:50, 9:15pm
Felice...Felice... Dir. Peter Delpeut
Thu, Oct 6 at 4:30, 6:50, 9:15pm
- CALL FOR CHANGE: THIRD WORLD NEWS**
The Healing Passage Dir. S. Pearl Sharp
Fri, Oct 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50*, 9:15pm
*Q&A with S. Pearl Sharp
- All Power to the People! (shorts program)
Sat, Oct 8 at 2, 6:50pm
- The Immigrant Experience (shorts program)
Sat, Oct 8 at 4:30*, 9:15pm
*Q&A with Filmmakers
- Newsreel in NYC (shorts program)
Sun, Oct 9 at 2, 6:50pm
- Raise Your Voice (shorts program)
Sun, Oct 9 at 4:30*, 9:15pm
*Q&A with Filmmakers
- ZHANG YIMOU TRIAD**
Raise the Red Lantern Dir. Zhang Yimou
Mon, Oct 10 at 7, 9:30pm
- The Story of Qiu Ju Dir. Zhang Yimou
Tue, Oct 11 at 4:30, 6:50, 9:15pm

a fashion-mag editrix (Elizabeth Banks) disrupted by the appearance of her moody, manipulative high school sweetheart (Justin Theroux). 91 min **WEEK**
WEEKEND: Broken Flowers
62nd & Broadway 105 min
WEEKEND: Capote
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Chelsea, First and 62nd Dust off the Oscar—it's the Phillip Seymour Hoffman show. The star and co-producer of Bennett Miller's account of how Truman Capote came to write (or perhaps be written by) *In Cold Blood* and thus achieve the status of America's most famous author, Hoffman nails Capote's querulous drawl and pudgy hauteur. He plays the writer as a vain and poevish monster of self-absorption—accurate perhaps, but a performance that uses up the oxygen for the rest of the cast. 98 min **WEEKEND**
WEEKEND: Chain
IFC Center

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VOICEFILM

the village VOICE
THE MORE INTENSE THE PAIN WAS, THE BETTER I FELT.
Self-tutilation in Prison
By Jennifer Gonnerman
Don't Smoke Pot on TV
George Clooney on Celebrity Journalism

PHOTOGRAPHS: FROM LEFT, COURTESY OF LIONS GATE; COURTESY OF SONY CLASSICS PICTURES

More pathetic are the clips secured by the filmmakers of warm company pep rallies including Ken Lay—close enough to President Bush to have been granted a Dubya-generated nickname, "Kenny Boy"—perform skits encouraging cheering employees to invest all their money in the company's 401(k) plan, whose funds would, of course, evaporate after the stock collapsed and the plunderers were indicted. (CFO Fastow, for example—dubbed "the Sorcerer's Apprentice"—was slapped with 78 charges including conspiracy, fraud, and money laundering.) Were these, in fact, "the smartest guys in the room"? No: They were the most arrogant, bally, unfeeling, power-hungry guys in the company. Fortunately, their power-lust ignited and consumed them until they were burned by their own greed, and left charcoal-suited empty shells in handcuffs—with smudgy-front-page-news smirks that implied overseas bank accounts. Unfortunately, by that time they had already wrecked the lives of many innocent, loyal people: the poorest guys and gals in the room.

THE DVD FILTER
HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS Zhang Yimou's martial-arts romance is one of the most beautiful films in recent years, with a few set pieces that are instant classics. Accented with billowing silk and specks of blood, homicide never looked more ravishing or felt more heartbreaking. **PG-13**; \$28.95. **BIRTH** Nicole Kidman's child-molestation mystery failed to capture audiences as, say, Michael Jackson's has—partly because Jonathan Glazer's arid cinematography only amplified his preposterous plot. **R**; \$27.95. **DYNASTY: THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON** The Carringtons come crawling out of the woodwork. **NR**; \$39.98. **MEET THE FOCKERS** Hasn't everyone seen this dreck already? **PG-13**; \$29.98. **A LOVE SONG FOR BOBBY LONG** Hasn't everyone skipped this dreck already? **R**; \$26.96. **SEED OF CHUCKY** Don Mancini's reinvention of his franchise—in which the killer doll has a gender-confused

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
There are more than 200 films at this year's Tribeca Film Festival, and nearly an equal amount of parties. What to do? BY LOGAN HILL



- 1. DRINK UP!**
Judging by last year, the parties may overwhelm the films: Wrangle an invite to *The Interpreter* premiere to get a glimpse of Nicole Kidman or, more likely, your fill of Billy Bush—but the savvy will weasel into the after-party at MoMA. Meanwhile, rock royalty (Steven Tyler, Joni Mitchell) may show up at the Union Square W Hotel for Rosanna Arquette's doc, *All We Are Saying*, on April 22; while Broadway's babies head to Tribeca Grille on the 25th to celebrate *Show Business*. Lefties will toast the Lewis Lapham-scripted doc, *The American Ruling Class*, in the belly of the beast: on the NYMEX trading floor.
- 2. PLAY IT SAFE.**
At some festivals, it's a thrill to pick a film at random. At Tribeca, this can be as dangerous as betting on a horse because it has a cute name. Be smart—and place your money on these ringers: local premieres of films that have already passed out-of-town tests. **Our picks:** From Cannes: *2046* (pictured, right), Wong Kar Wai's sumptuous science-fiction fable. From Sundance: *Rize* (pictured, left), David LaChapelle's wild, butt-shaking tribute to "krump" break dancing. From Russia with gore: *Night Watch*, a horror film with Hollywood-style effects that became a record-breaking hit back home.
- 3. KEEP IT REAL.**
So far, the does look stronger than the dramas. Many are solid—though not terribly memorable—tributes to extraordinary characters (James Toback, Robert Drew, Melvin Van Peebles, Roy London, Taylor Mead, and the *Dog Day Afternoon* bank robber John Wojtowicz). But there are some early standouts. **Our picks:** *Favela Rising* explores the Afro-reggae movement in Rio; *Punk: Attitude* rounds up all the right punk legends. And the lo-fi *TV Party* is a fascinating slice of downtown arcana about a New Wave cable-access TV show that played host to regulars like Debbie Harry and Jean Michel Basquiat.
- 4. ROOT FOR THE HOME TEAM.**
If you're going to take a chance on a non-doc, gamble on the "NY, NY" series newcomers. Most entrants are rough, but there is at least one terrific film (*The Great New Wonderful*) and a few raw-but-promising debuts. **Our picks:** Georgia Lee, the director of the family drama *Red Doors*, was Scorsese's assistant, and like her ex-boss, she's artfully mining her New York roots (in her case, Chinese-American). On the other hand, a certain neurotic New York filmmaker clearly inspired actor-writer-director Lewis Helder, whose *Life on the Ledge* is occasionally quite funny, despite all its ersatz Allenisms.
- 5. RIDE THE DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES WAVE.**
In *Transamerica*, Felicity Huffman plays Bree. No, not her rival on *Desperate*: This Bree is a transsexual parent at the center of writer-director Duncan Tucker's contrived but lively debut feature. Bree discovers she has a son—a male prostitute—just days before gender-reassignment surgery. Too embarrassed to admit her paternity, Bree poses as an Evangelical, then takes her son on a cross-country road trip. Improbably, the handsome Kevin Zegers gives a strong, Michael Pitt-ish performance as her son. And Huffman is magnetic in a role that's sure to draw mixed reviews but cement her resurgent fame.

NEW YORK
FREE LUNCH
He went to Horace Mann, traded at Goldman Sachs and is now facing the death penalty for a mysterious killing outside Bogislad.
The tragedy of a Manhattan warrior.
MURDER AND THE PREPPY MARINE
BY STEVE FISHERMAN

off-screen, where they must have been scrounging for props and lights and obsessively tweaking a marvel of a script. *Commentary by Carruth and cast*; **PG-13**; \$27.95. L.H.



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TRIBECA 2005: Life On The Ledge

By Joshua Tyler: 2005-04-26

Stefanie's back with her latest from the Tribeca Film Festival in New York. The great thing about a festival like this isn't just the big stars or flashy films, but also the weird little nuggets you can dig up and might not have heard of anywhere else. At least I assume. My only experience is the Deep Ellum Film Fest in Dallas. They try hard, but Tribeca it isn't.... yet. This time Stef's been out and about at the movie *Life on the Ledge*... - Josh



Life on the Ledge

Directed by: Lewis Helfer

Starring: Lewis Helfer, Melissa Sagemiller, Tovah Feldshuh, Mark Blum

Report by: Stefanie Jackowitz

"If you try something new, something bad will happen."

Lewis Helfer is a true neurotic New Yorker. The writer and director of the dark comedy *Life On The Ledge* couldn't rest with just two film credits to his name- he added producer and lead actor to the list as well. Ironically, Helfer's Brian Leib, a single and jobless 30-something still living with his wealthy parents (Tovah Feldshuh and Mark Blum), has a world of neuroses all his own. His life consists of reoccurrences like baking fresh bread each week and devouring the crusts. The only occasions Brian gets out is when he visits his shrink or when he frequents the apartment balcony contemplating ending it all with one jump. It's not until Brian's life may be in medical jeopardy that he decides to truly enjoy life.



Life On The Ledge is visually stimulating and Helfer's use of fantasy sequences is quirky, yet intriguing. Paired with an original musical

backdrop composed by John Swihart (*Napolean Dynamite*), it is easy to travel inside Brian's head and see what he sees. Scenes where audiences catch a glimpse of Brian's younger self acting as his conscience are witty and well constructed.

Brian's relationship with the enraged Claire (Melissa Sagemiller) is strange, however sweet. After scaring the girl with his overanalytical bantor, Brian woos her over nut loafs and cranberry muffins. In return, she teaches him a bundle of ways to kill with everyday household objects. Hmmm. Sounds like love is in the air.

Life On The Ledge is a film that plays like its actors do- eccentric and obsessive. Even though occasionally length and irritating, the film's peculiarity is welcomed and may be even enjoyable.



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Got a comment? E-mail me.
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ENTERTAINMENT | 10/21/2005

ACTION: AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL

By Scotty Loewen and Pheobe Moore

"Life on the Ledge"
Directed by Lewis Hefler

Neuroticism and psychosis are the norm in Lewis Hefler's dark, psychological comedy "Life on the Ledge." Hefler portrays Brian Leib, a neurotically ritualistic 32-year-old who still lives with his parents. After being told he is going to die, he becomes involved with Claire (Melissa Sagemiller), another patient of his psychiatrist. In an attempt to help Claire, Brian finds himself grappling with a collection of bumbling gangsters.

Hefler is at the helm of the project, taking on the roles of writer, director and star. He pulls off all three roles seamlessly, importing the viewer into Brian's twisted reality.

The plot unravels through Brian's oddly comical narratives, conversations with his inner child and dream sequences as well as the occasionally slow-paced action.

Though the film finds itself wandering at times, the greater

momentum of the plot never slows.

Sagemiller shines in her supporting role as Claire, pulling off frequent, sickly comedic attempts at homicide.

"Life on the Ledge" succeeds in entertaining as well as providing a poignant look at one man's psychosis and the humor within it.



Lewis Hefler's "Life on a Ledge"

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