Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

SLASH-dance

Amelia Martin · Thursday, January 31st, 2013

In December, as the Sun- and Slam- Dance acceptance announcements were going out, I was in the majority, along with 8,000 other filmmakers all over the world, whose submissions were not accepted to either festival. I was just beginning lick my wounds and start looking forward to the remaining years festivals when… the text, email and Facebook messages started pouring in.

Brooklyn was in the house! *Hank and Asha, Joy De V,* and *Without Shepherds* were all going to Slamdance! *Hank and Asha* was written, produced and directed by two of my favorite East Village neighbors, James E. Duff and Julia Morrison and shot by my great friend and sometime-collaborator Bianca Butti. I was so overjoyed to hear the good news, my bad news vanished. Producers Robert Profusek and Ryan Silbert of Toy Closet Films (*Without Shepherds*), whom I've also had the pleasure of working with before, got me thinking; I figured, if half my neighborhood was going to be at Slamdance, then so was I. I booked a ticket and made plans to embark to Park City (Treasure Mountain for this girl) with the feeling that this would be one of those rare years that ushered in a new generation of filmmakers.

I wasn't in town for 5 minutes and we entered the first party immediately slamming shots with sponsors, swapping winter weather wardrobe tips with investors, and I, originally from the North Carolina Mountains, couldn't stop taking photos of all the men having their trademark beards hacked off by the barbers…(the party rocked old school barbers complete with chairs, aprons, lather brushes and straight razors providing, for the discerning mountain man or, as the case may be, hipster filmmaker, the closest of shaves). You could feel the electricity in the air permeating everything. So I danced and drank to my heart's delight as we all did, some discussing the finer points of a film, others art and music, others bourbon…and the night was only the first.

Enter the slashers. Celia Rowlson-Hall, in town with her husband, the delightful star of *Hank and Asha*. Celia is an amazing filmmaker in her own right, and has written, produced and directed many of her own shorts and is in the process of gearing up for her first feature. She's what I like to call a Slasher, as are many, if not most these days, a director, slash actor, slash producer, slash… at which time, I met another slasher, Mr. Cary McClelland, the director of *Without Shepherds.* A graduate from Harvard University, by way of Columbia University and American University in Cairo, he gave up a promising career as a NY theater director in order to do "something more important;" so *Without Shepherds* was born. It is a film that is pivotal to the future and is changing the way Americans understand Pakistanis.

I could sense a critical mass being reached with this new wave of filmmakers. The best part was, I felt part of it. Movies are getting made, voices are being heard, and a brave cast of programmers from festivals such as Slamdance and SXSW's new counterpart, RXSM, are taking necessary chances to reach audiences.

As it happened, the Slamdance Audience Narrative award went to Jim and Julia, the directing/producing/writing/pair behind *Hank and Asha.* Maybe there's something to this whole Slash Vibe? The film's cinematographer, Bianca Butti, just finished an amazing short she both wrote and directed, *The Proprietor*. Slamdance's special jury mention winner, *Joy De V*'s bewitching star, Evan Louison, not only co-wrote with director Nadia Szold, but co-produced, location scouted, wardrobed, and yes, composed music for the film. Even the hair slash make-up artist, Sarah Hindsgaul writes and directs her own shorts. The grand jury winner, *The Dirties*' Matthew Johnson, carried a multitude of slashes on their film. Yes, I'm sure there is something to the Slasher indeed.

In the past, a person who does many things (e.g. Vincent Gallo and his credits in *The Brown Bunny*) has been frowned upon, like a musician who chooses to play many instruments instead of focusing on one. Yet, with so many immensely talented multi-faceted filmmakers working their slashes together and finding success; it is evident this is changing. This approach marks a new era for the future of cinema and Park City's 2013 Slamdance festival just might have been the time and place of its birth. Congratulations to all the winners. This Slasher's already making moves and marking her calendar for next year.

Images: From top, the author with Slamdance staffer Ben Hethcoat warpainting for the annual Sled Off; still from Hank and Asha.

This entry was posted on Thursday, January 31st, 2013 at 3:14 am and is filed under Film
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.