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Sundance Says “Thank You” to “Worthy” Film

Committee said to have “appreciated” recent viewing

(New York, New York) January 15, 2004 — *The Surprise*, a 20-minute short film from upstart production company Eighty-Watt Cinema, was officially rejected yesterday from the prestigious Sundance Film Festival.

Geoffrey Gilmore, Director of the Festival, informed the film’s producer and director via e-mail that he “must” inform the applicants of the committee’s decision “not” to select the film, adding that he was doing so “regretfully” and that he and the committee greatly “appreciate having had the opportunity” to enjoy this “worthy” film.

Gilmore noted that the committee’s decision regarding *The Surprise* was an undeniable testament to the fact that it was “more. . . than we had space for.” He added that “the decision was a difficult one” and wished the filmmakers the very “best of luck” with their “forthcoming” work.

Joshua Dilworth, producer of *The Surprise* and co-prexy of Eighty-Watt Cinema, offered his thoughts on the so-called dismissal in a phone interview late Monday night. “I know what people are saying, but ultimately I agree with Mr. Gilmore. I, too, hope that we will nonetheless give the festival the same consideration in the future, and certainly no one can deny that the programming committee is not able to provide feedback about your film. I mean, our film.”

When pressed further, Mr. Dilworth simply remarked: “It should suffice to remember Mr. Gilmore’s kind words about the number of entries received by the festival,” explaining that he was honored to be grouped with anyone and anything “sincerely” described by the Sundance Film Festival as “extraordinary.”

Nicholas White, helmer/scribe of *The Surprise* and also co-prexy of Eighty-Watt, was similarly unfazed over lunch at Gotham’s 21 Club. “Hey, did you hear whether or not Britney and J-Lo are planning on attending again this year?” he asked. When informed of my ignorance regarding the matter, White unabashedly informed me that “they’ll probably come” and that he is “totally stoked” to get his copy of *In the Zone* autographed. When asked what effect he thought Gilmore’s decision would have on his career in independent film, White simply smiled. He says that although it’s a “huge compliment” to have received “all this attention” from such an important film festival, and he’s determined “not to let it go to my head.” White emphasizes that despite “all the hub-bub” he is trying to stay focused on *The Surprise*, which he says has finally earned “the industry buzz it deserves.”

As Dilworth concludes, “Things are going exactly as planned. We’re very excited to show *The Surprise* to other festivals, and we have Sundance to thank for this amazing opportunity.”

The Surprise centers around Katie Miller, who on her thirtieth birthday is sent into a tailspin by a newly discovered pregnancy and an increasingly troubled marriage. Ultimately she is left to resolve her struggles alone, at a time in her life when assurances should outnumber surprises. The film will be screening next for the understandably excited selection committees of the Cinequest, Slamdance, SXSW, Florida, Clermont-Ferrand, and Berlin film festivals. For more information on the project, visit <http://www.eighty-watt.com>

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