

press release

for immediate release

For more information and screening copies, please contact:

Joshua P. Dilworth
Eighty-Watt Cinema
Phone: 212.712.2509
Fax: 917-441-4354
press@eighty-watt.com

***The Surprise* Embarks on Maiden Voyage**

(New York, New York) April 1, 2004 – *The Surprise*, the debut film from writer-helmer Nicholas White and producer Joshua Dilworth, marks the duo's entry into professional filmmaking and the launch of their own production company, Eighty-Watt Cinema.

The film centers around Katie Miller, who on her thirtieth birthday is sent into a tailspin by a newly discovered pregnancy and an increasingly disappointing marriage. At a time in her life when assurances should outnumber surprises, Katie is left with a struggle only she can resolve.

The film came to White "in that wonderful moment between sleeping and waking. It was just there, playing in my mind." He set about writing the film immediately, though it would be several months before the project became Eighty-Watt's maiden project.

"All my life I've been excited by ideas," he says. "All my life I've just wanted to understand, and with *The Surprise* the goal was no different. The creative process allows you to experiment with life itself, as you perceive it, and therefore it enables you to make astounding discoveries about yourself and the world around you."

And rightly, White is enthusiastic about the result: "So far there's been a tremendous response to it," he says. "It's sparking a lot of conversation, and that's how you know that you're reaching your audience. I couldn't ask for anything more."

The Surprise, for its part, has been submitted to a number of film festivals for what producer Dilworth calls "a healthy round of cinematic triage." He too, has high hopes for the film: "*The Surprise* was a big departure for us, both stylistically and thematically. And I think that we passed the test with flying colors. The film demonstrates a versatility, especially on Nick's part, that I know will open doors for us."

Dilworth and White have been working together for many years, ever since they met as part of an improv and sketch comedy troupe at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. *The Surprise* is the latest in a long line of successful projects that have spanned the legit, comedy, and film worlds.

For the time being, however, the two are intent on putting together their first feature-length project. "We've been pretty quiet about it so far," says Dilworth, noting that there is a lot of work to be done with the publicity, marketing, and distribution of *The Surprise* before the two can begin work on another film, but he readily admits that "we're really excited about what's on the horizon."

The Surprise, shot on 35mm film by award-winning cinematographer Tim Naylor, is steeped in the visual style of Edward Hopper. "Hopper has always been one of my favorite artists," says director White, "and with this piece we were particularly interested in him for the amazing way that his paintings manage to express loneliness. Katie's central problem is that she is fundamentally alone. And I think that the sensibility that Hopper instilled in me and the rest of the team carried us through the shoot, even though our aesthetic organically evolved into something quite different. Though, there are still a few direct homages to the master."

A theater vet known for avant-garde reimaginings of classic plays, White met a new challenge in directing his own script for the first time. Also an experienced scribe, White had nonetheless never attempted to bring his own work to the screen, save for a few comedic projects in college. “When directing someone else’s script, you have that comforting, objective distance,” he remarks, “which is a luxury I didn’t have with this project. That notwithstanding, occupying both roles was an exciting experience in its own right. There’s a very certain synergy between writing and directing that’s hard to describe. This project was particularly personal for me because I wrote it, but somehow it seemed to take on a life of its own. The material was so persistent: it was always challenging me, always raising new questions, always presenting new opportunities.”

White particularly enjoyed working with a full-size crew that was able to perfectly serve his vision. “We had a wonderful crew,” he says. “But part of what I valued about the experience was the diversity of perspectives. The space between people is frequently where the most interesting stuff arises. As we go through each phase of the process, I get the opportunity to look at the project in different ways, as my own established perspective evolves and the perspectives of the other people working on the film are introduced. And frequently the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

The film was shot over a week on location in 4 of the 5 boroughs of New York City and in Easton, Pennsylvania with a crew of 45-50. “As a producer I was really impressed with what we accomplished in so little time,” says producer Dilworth. “We stretched every hour and every dollar to the fullest, and as I have told the crew many times, they are in every frame, even if no one ever notices.”

White was amazed by the whole experience: “There are literally hundreds of elements, even on a smaller film like ours, that come crashing together and then split apart when the shoot is finished. I discovered so much about the process and myself through the making of this film – I think that’s the principle joy of it.”

The Surprise (2004, 35mm short) was officially completed in March. It is currently is touring the country on the festival circuit and is seeking educational distribution. Screening information and behind-the-scenes features can be found at <http://www.eighty-watt.com>.

Eighty-Watt Cinema, LLC was founded in 2002 by Joshua Dilworth and Nicholas White. Located in New York City, Eighty-Watt Cinema produces dramatic and comedic shorts, features, and educational films.

#