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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

Innovative Website Builds Bridge To Success

Eighty-Watt Cinema offers aspiring filmmakers a unique resource by detailing their own experiences online

(New York, New York) May 1, 2004 — Joshua Dilworth and Nicholas White had one thing in mind when they started building their company's new website: they wanted to give aspiring filmmakers unfettered access to everything they wish they had known two years ago, before they began working on their first film.

With that simple goal in mind, Dilworth and White set about creating a resource that would meticulously detail the making of their first professional short, *The Surprise*. "As we were tying together the few lingering aspects of production, Nick and I couldn't help but think what a pity it would be if everything we had learned along the way never made it outside our office" says Dilworth. "If you're just starting out and you have to continually reinvent the wheel, the quality of work inevitably suffers. We designed the site to function as a resource and a jumping-off point for filmmakers working to make that first short."

As a means of creative expression, filmmaking has never been so accessible, but the co-presidents of Eighty-Watt Cinema still feel that there is a very distinct void in both the available literature and the film school curricula across the country.

"Before *The Surprise*," White explains, "Josh and I made dozens of shorts, but this was the first time that we had the crew we needed and the equipment we wanted. It was a unique opportunity for us — given six more weeks at the same level and pace, we would have had ourselves a feature. More than anything, *The Surprise* was an incredibly important and productive learning experience. Successful shorts build an important bridge between the 16mm film you made in Washington Square Park with an beat-up Arri SR, and the full-fledged feature-length project that is your ultimate goal. Our aim with the website was to help ease the transition between these two extremes, to show exactly how you get from point A to point B."

Dilworth agrees: "For instance, you can glean a lot about framing and shot choice and camera movement by practicing and experimenting with a hi-8 camcorder. But filmmaking is also a *process* that requires certain skills and techniques that you just can't acquire if you're just working by yourself or with another friend or a fellow student. In order to capture the things you want to capture — in order to tell the stories you want to tell — it's so important to be able to take advantage of the process and everything it offers — and entails. But the specifics of how to manage and master that process is not something that is widely talked about or taught. Our website tries to show our process in its every detail. And of course everyone's process is different, but hopefully our experiences can serve as a guide."

As White emphasizes, "Once that seemingly ineffable process of filmmaking is broken down into manageable pieces, your confidence soars. As a film-goer you are transported to another world, as in a dream. But as a film-maker, the experience is quite different. You have to look behind the artifice, and when you do it's hard not to be overwhelmed by the process. You are surrounded by a million questions and you hardly know where to begin. We're just trying demystify what at first seems like an insurmountable challenge. We're just trying to answer some of those questions."

The website offers an array of important features, including but not limited to:

- a comparison of key storyboards with stills from the completed film, insightfully narrated by producer Dilworth and director White;
- clips from the film's soundtrack, complete with the corresponding sheet music and thoughtful commentary on the development of the pieces by composer Corinne Nordmann;
- a behind-the-scenes documentary detailing the trials and tribulations of a difficult scene;
- downloadable copies of the scene breakdowns, lined script and shooting schedule;
- a viewing area for the film's posters and trailers;
- full galleries of production stills and behind-the-scenes photos;
- a press room with a complete EPK, updated news blurbs and numerous press releases;
- a vast collection of interesting links, helpfully organized by category; and
- a comprehensive recommended reading list

Dilworth and White did not go to traditional film school, though they did take several intensive filmmaking seminars at NYU's School of Continuing and Professional Studies. Veterans of the theater, the duo knew that it was important to "fill out" their knowledge of cinematography, editing, and screenwriting. But they also felt confident that their unusually strong background in producing, directing, creative writing, performance theory, actor training, improvisation, and sketch comedy had already provided a solid foundation for their chosen career path. In short, the large amount of time and money required to attain an M.F.A., they felt, could be better put to use by immediately starting their own film company and making a series of successful shorts – and, eventually, a feature film.

"In the last year I've learned more about personnel management, accounting, on-set procedure, union rules, marketing strategies, payroll services, publicity, and entertainment law than I ever imagined I'd have to know," says Dilworth. "These are the sorts of things that you don't necessarily learn in film school, but that are nonetheless requisite."

In many respects, "we were just shooting from the hip," as White puts it, but as he goes on to explain, "we really didn't have any other choice – we were at a point in our studies where we weren't learning anything new. We had to get out there and start making things happen. We didn't want to wait three years to work on a film that we felt we were already prepared to make."

And the gamble has paid off. A year after co-founding Eighty-Watt Cinema, Dilworth and White have a thesis-level film to show for their efforts. "And more importantly," says Dilworth, "we've both come an extraordinarily long way in a very short space of time." Tim Naylor, the award-winning cinematographer of *The Surprise* and a professor at the New York Film Academy, vividly remembers how he "saw Nick and Josh learn inside a week what it took many of my film-school colleagues literally years to figure out."

Eighty-Watt's website is designed to encourage a similarly high learning curve in curious and hard-working filmmakers like themselves. "I'm sure that the site will continue to evolve," says Dilworth, "but at the very least the information is out there now, and I hope that people find it helpful as they continue down their chosen paths. As for us, we've got to get back to work on that feature I keep talking about!"

Eighty-Watt Cinema's new website can be found at <http://www.eighty-watt.com>. Questions and comments are encouraged and should be directed to comments@eighty-watt.com.

Surprise, The (2004, 35mm short) was officially completed in March of 2004. It is currently is touring the country on the festival circuit and is seeking educational distribution.

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.

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