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"Path to Sundance Film Festival" interview with "The Still Life" director Joel Miller

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Joel Miller Interview

"Path to Sundance Film Festival"

By [Ali Ghezalbash](#)

First-time director Joel Miller and Los Angeles-based Albion Entertainment explore the fragile separation between failure and success and love and tragedy with their debut film, THE STILL LIFE, set to be released in September 2005. Starring Jason Barry (Titanic), the film is about the redemption of an artist who struggles to regain himself and his identity after giving in to conventional success.

Joel Miller discusses the Sundance Film Festival and his new film "The Still Life."

Q: As a young filmmaker, what is the appeal of The Sundance Film Festival?

A: I like the reason Sundance was started. The festival was setup to give people like me a break. To get to the independent film maker without the big connections. I think it appeals to the real artists who don't yet have the resources.

Q: Have you ever attended Sundance, and if so, what was that

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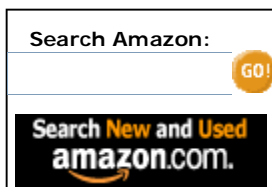
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experience like? A: No, I never have but I hear the parties Rock!!!

Q: How did the desire to submit "The Still Life" to Sundance shape your vision for the film and the filmmaking process itself?

A: I'm the kind of person who finds their goal and then seeks to achieve them. I've always been into what Sundance is all about and now I want to win it. The Still Life is an independent art film made with limited resources. It is funded off of inspiration and perspiration. Sundance inspires me because of the success of its past winners and the kind of attention it draws. Now I've put something together that I hope kicks their ass lol j/k. No, really I hope that in finding an outlet for my film I will find what I'm looking for which is opportunity.

Q: Bravura performances by actors in leading roles have been at the center of many of the most acclaimed films that have been showcased at Sundance, such as Paul Giamatti in "American Splendor" and Geoffrey Rush in "Shine". How did this affect the casting process for your film?

A: I sought to find people who were into film for the art. Since I didn't have much money I had to find the real artists. The people who do their craft because they love it. There isn't a single person involved with my production who's pay scale reflects anything like what they got paid on my film. So we were and are all a team. The acting performances from the actors listed above were so incredible because both actors were given the opportunity to act. Something that Hollywood doesn't really allow actors to do all the time anymore. Jason Barry was given the opportunity to act and thanked me for it almost every day. He was better than good. He was great!

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Q: Several of the winners of the festival's Grand Jury Prize, such as "Welcome To The Dollhouse" and "The Brothers McMullen", have depicted characters dealing with conflicts that resonated with a broad spectrum of people. In this regard, how does your film fit into the festival's history?

A: Conflict on a personal level means dialogue. Lots of dialogue can mean "done cheaply." So in that regard I'm right in the same ballpark as those guys. My character was constructed to appeal to all the young artists. I want to inspire people to create. I want people to think about what they do and more importantly what they are not doing. If we are all here for a reason why aren't we all trying to achieve our goals and seek to be successful at them? My story is about an individual who becomes successful doing something he doesn't believe in. If you believe in yourself and continue to work towards your goal, using criticism as fuel, you will achieve more than even your fantasies projected. I want people to find themselves and seek their own Sundance's out. If I don't win Sundance my next film will be going after an Oscar. =-)

Q: What would you like to get out of the Sundance experience besides showcasing your film?

A: I'd really like to push the limits of what independent film can do. We were talking yesterday about throwing a concert up there to help push the films success at the festival. I guess that is assuming they accept the film. I really hope they do though. It sure would be cool to have a show with Dizzy Reed (Guns N Roses) to Dean Dinning (Toad the Wet Sprocket) showcasing the films songs as well as the film. I think that even though Sundance is obviously huge, films

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like The Still Life could make it even bigger and cooler. The Oscars have songs during their awards how come Sundance doesn't? I'm gonna bring some rock and roll up there...

Q: What is in store/what would you like to see in store for your film after the Sundance Festival?

A: Well like every other independent film maker I hope to secure a really good distribution deal. I think we'll find a deal somewhere but my hopes are that you can see The Still Life in art houses globally. It's already on www.netflix.com so we are off to a good start.

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