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**Industry Buzz**

Hugh Hart  
Sunday, October 5, 2008

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**Thinking globally:** On Monday the **Global Film Initiative** announced nine movies from around the world that will be presented in its 2009 **film Global Lens** series, screening in more than 40 North American towns. Several of the movies were made in regions not known for their feature **film** output, including Mozambique, Indonesia and Iran. Even Kazakhstan, the remote central Asian nation famously maligned in "Borat," will be represented by filmmaker **Marat Sarulu** in his dark comedy "Songs from the Southern Seas."

Director of programs **Santhosh Daniel** is especially proud of the Macedonian feature "I Am From Titov Veles," about three sisters struggling to survive in a disintegrating Balkan village. GFI helped fund the project, and earlier this month, Macedonia submitted the movie for a best foreign language Oscar. Daniel says, "A few years ago we saw 'Titov Veles' in script form and felt it deserved to be supported with a filmmaker grant. And now we're picking it for **Global Lens** and the **film's** been submitted or an Oscar."

GFI moved from New York to the Bay Area in 2006, and last month relocated to the Ninth Street Independent **Film** Center, where it operates cheek-to-jowl with organizations including Frameline, the Center for Asian American Media, the San Francisco Jewish **Film** Festival, the San Francisco Cinematheque and Canyon Cinema.

From its new headquarters, GFI continues to reach out to local **film** societies in Paducah, Ky.; Aberdeen, S.D.; Greenbay, Wis.; Homer, Alaska; and other burgs to establish monthly screenings of the **Global Lens** selections. Daniel explains, "In addition to building a **global** community around **film**, part of our mission is to create a similar community here in the United States. If people in these small towns want to go away from where they are and experience the world through **film**, we're the people who can help them do that."

For all its success in small-town America, one city has become a major challenge when it comes to lining up a permanent screening space: San Francisco. Daniel notes, "It's been a challenge for us to find a venue here - not because the crowd is tough - you always have people who want to see these movies."

So what's the problem?

He points out, "This town has something like 60 festivals, more than any other city in the country, and they're all vying for the same space."

**Thumbs up from NHL:** He used to be a professional hockey player - and he's gay! That's the hook for "Breakfast With Scot." The Canadian comedy adapted from **Michael Downing's** novel casts **Tom Cavanagh** (TV's "Ed") as a former member of the Toronto Maple Leafs who temporarily adopts an 11-year boy with issues of his own. Officially

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sanctioned by the National Hockey League, "Scot" represents the first time a professional sports league has allowed their logo and uniforms to be used in a gay-themed movie.

"Scot" director **Laurie Lynd** says, "The NHL is very careful about their image. They get hundreds of scripts every month and turn most of them down. We were green-lit within six weeks. Their reasoning was very simple - they liked the script and appreciated its message about good parenting - loving your child for whoever he or she is."

**Fred spreads the word:** "City of Ember" is precisely the kind of fantasy spectacle that in previous years has propelled "Narnia" and "Harry Potter" franchises to record box office. But unlike those blockbusters, "City of Ember" lacks a built-in audience of readers who are pre-sold on the chance to see characters from best-selling books spring to life on screen.

The question for "City of Ember," which opens Friday: How to raise awareness for a title few people have heard of? Fox Walden marketing president **Jeffrey Godsick** says its mainly a matter of tapping into the Internet. "We know that both the sci-fi audience and the kid and teen audience spends a lot of time on the Internet. It's an interesting thing to crack because you know where the audience is, so you can buy pop-up ads and banners and things like that, but we're looking for things that find their way into the zeitgeist of the audience. Ultimately, for us, it's about the marketing becoming the content."

To spread the word about "City of Ember," Fox Walden is working with 14-year old YouTube sensation **Lucas Cruikshank**, who's made a "City of Ember"-themed video for his fans. Cruikshank developed the popular Fred character on YouTube.

"Fred's Channel gives you a couple of things," Godsick explains. "You get this endorsement factor - whatever Fred does is kind of fun and cool - and you also get distribution. He's the second most popular person on YouTube with more than half a million subscribers. The moment they get a video they send it to their friends. Fred's 'City of Ember' video has been up for five days and it's already got nearly 1.6 million viewers. It builds a sense of urgency when you've got Fred's fan base pushing the video out there."

Godsick says Web-savvy **film** fans are turned off by obvious hard sell. Instead, the marketing messages needs to be packaged as free-standing entertainment in their own right.

"The Internet is the most **global** medium in the world but you have to fit into the culture of the Web," Godsick says. "You can't just say, 'Oh, let's just throw stuff out there because people are on the Internet.' It takes time to figure out how to impact people in ways that grow awareness in a way that leads to them ultimately buy a ticket for your movie."

*Hugh Hart is a Chronicle correspondent.*

*This article appeared on page N - 31 of the San Francisco Chronicle*

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