

Film Reviews



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Full Frame Documentary Film Festival



One of the best and most anticipated documentary film festivals in the world, the Full Frame Documentary Film Fest, will take place on April 3-6 in our own backyard in Durham, NC. The list of films to be shown will be released on March 6, and due to deadline for going to press, I can't give specific details on the films that will be screened at Full Frame in this issue.

But I do urge readers, whether they live in the "Triangle" area of North Carolina or elsewhere in the Southeast, to take advantage of this four-day documentary film festival, the largest of its kind in the country. It attracts an international audience to often packed screenings of films that are both of high quality and, perhaps surprising to some who may have preconceptions of "stodgy" documentary film, tremendous interest.

Started by *New York Times* editor and 1993 Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Nancy Buirski, and originally known as the DoubleTake Documentary Film Festival, this will be the eleventh year of the Festival. Because of the continued sponsorship of organizations like the *New York Times* and the reputation for quality (last year, for example, over 2100 films were submitted from which 85 were chosen), people from far and wide book local hotel rooms often a year in advance so that they can attend.

Films that I have enjoyed over the years have included ones on the Indian immigration experience, arranged marriages in Bangladesh and Singapore, unusual musical instruments, the Helvetic festival, an outdoor musical club in Havana, a man in India and the crowds he attracts in showing films in rural makeshift tent "cinemas," and many more. In past years, one may have at least 4-7 concurrent films to choose from at each of the screens at the historic Carolina Theatre, as well as screens at nearby venues. Films run each day, Thursday-Saturday, from approximately 9am through midnight and sometimes beyond. After film awards are announced on Sunday, some winning films are reshowed.

Film executives and well-known filmmakers (such as, in past years, Mira Nair, Martin Scorsese, Jonathan Demme, and Michael Moore), as well as others in the industry, attend and share their creativity in talks, screenings, and just informal chance meetings between films. Several years ago, for example, Ken Burns previewed his then work-in-progress of the epic

900-minute *The War* that was released last year.

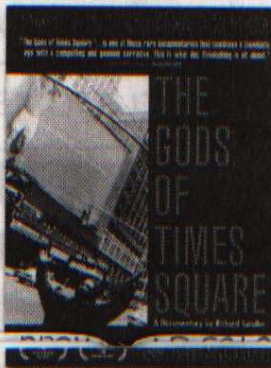
If you attend, you can look forward to meeting many of the filmmakers immediately after their screenings, when there is often a question and answer period, as well as enjoy a number of parties and discussions. You will likely be privy to some films that your friends will years later get to see and love; some of the films are not generally available.

While Full Frame has not, as of press time, released the film selections, there are always films on a wide variety of topics. Filmmaker Lourdes Portillo will be curating a set of films on the theme of migration, likely to be of special interest to *Saathie* readers. Back in the May 2006 issue of *Saathie*, I had mentioned that that year's Festival seemed to include more films about India than any other country except the United States and Iraq. Last year, that may also have been true if the region is expanded from India to South Asia.

Visit the Full Frame website, fullframefest.org or call 919-687-4100 for full details about the festival. The complete schedule will be published on March 20. I encourage you to consider taking Thursday and Friday (April 3 and 4) off, buying a pass (or individual film tickets) and relaxing, while taking in a lot of exciting and meaningful films on those days and during the weekend. I hope to see you at the Carolina Theatre!

The Gods of Times Square (Brink) DVD

By Samir Shukla



The Gods of Times Square is a cinematic documentary film by Richard Sandler chronicling the eccentric characters that once inhabited one of the most famous plots of real estate in the world, Times Square in New York City. His angular filming documents the religious fanatics, assembly prophets, drug addicts, and various other oddities that are usually

just a blur to all the fast moving workers and tourists that ply the streets around Times Square. Especially interesting are the various sidewalk musicians that create an urban soundtrack while street preachers of all religious persuasions howl, scream and jostle people into listening to them.

The Gods of Times Square, Sandler's first feature documentary, was shot between 1993 and 1998, the period when Mayor Rudy Giuliani began cleaning up the area that has now become a tourist haven. The two-disc set is choppy at times, but showcases all the sights, sounds and vibes of Times Square with either quick strobelight-like flashes or lingering mini featurettes all blended into nicely flowing sequences.