



[http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print\\_story&articleid=VR1117957603&categoryid=-1](http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print_story&articleid=VR1117957603&categoryid=-1)

To print this page, select "PRINT" from the File Menu of your browser.

**Posted: Wed., Jan. 17, 2007, 9:25pm PT**

## Slamdance sticks to rowdy roots

### The other Park City fest

By [STEVEN ZEITCHIK](#)

Ever since fest opener "Mad Hot Ballroom" snagged a Par Classics distribution deal and a subsequent \$8 million in box office two years ago, Slamdance has registered differently for many pic execs.

The festival is still far from an acquisitions hotbed, but by hewing closely to its mission as a filmmaker-driven event, it has managed to keep a focus on a small number of quality indies and hold the interest of distributors.

"It's much more on our radar now than it ever was," says First Independent Pictures topper Gary Rubin. "The odds aren't that high that you're going to find another 'Mad Hot,' but we're definitely paying more attention."

Headquartered at Park City's Treasure Mountain Inn at the top of Main Street, Slamdance (running Jan. 18-27, almost parallel to Sundance), was founded in 1995 and has earned its share of fame over the years. In 1998, for instance, it jumped into the limelight when it nearly snagged Nick Broomfield's Kurt Cobain docu "Kurt and Courtney" after it was forced to pull out of Sundance. (In the end, the film showed at a private screening in Park City.)

This year, organizers have made some tweaks. They've added two documentary slots to the competition, which now touts an even 10 docs and 10 narrative features. Slamdancers felt they wanted to emphasize the form, even though docs are already a Sundance mainstay.

"This year's lineup really reflects that documentaries are equal to narrative films," notes Sarah Diamond, Slamdance's programming director.

Among the notable docs screening this year: "Bad Boys of Summer," a baseball drama set in San Quentin; "Children of God," an account of a Christian cult; "King of Kong," a tale of obsession for vintage videogames; and "Red Without Blue," a story of identical twins and transgender politics.

In a shift that was a little less intentional, as many as six of the 29 features unspooling at Slamdance feature actors of some note, including opening night pic "Weirdsville," an oddball road pic starring Scott

Speedman and Wes Bentley.

Among the other features that could draw buzz are "American Fork," a comedy about a grocery store clerk, featuring Billy Baldwin, Kathleen Quinlan and Mary Lynn Rajsckub; "Crime Fiction," about a struggling writer who gets involved in a murder; and Spanish-language drama "Tijuana Makes Me Happy."

Overall, this year's fest drew 1,200 feature and 2,100 short submissions -- both record numbers.

Slamdance organizers have come to realize that fest branding and marketing of its filmmakers are important goals, even as the festival continues to emphasize its rowdy indie roots.

"Slamdance is about a bunch of filmmakers who got together out of rejection," says Slamdance Media Group co-prexy/ CEO Peter Baxter. "We've tried to keep a hold on that all these years, but we also recognize that the indie film business is very different from 1995, let alone 1985."

But don't expect Slamdance to start growing to Sundance or Toronto fest proportions anytime soon. Organizers still want to keep it small, in part because of space limitations -- Treasure Mountain Inn can't exactly accommodate hundreds of films -- but also out of its sense of mission.

Competition films still must have budgets of less than \$1 million, ensuring that newer artists get exposure. And all fest selections are agreed upon a by a committee of filmmakers.

"Slamdance will always be an alternative festival," notes one Gotham indie film exec. "But for us the end of January is less about Sundance or Slamdance. It's about Park City."

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117957603.html>

Like this article? Variety.com has over 150,000 articles, 40,000 reviews and 10,000 pages of charts.

Subscribe today!

<http://www.variety.com/emailfriend>

or call (866) MY-VARIETY.

Can't commit? Sign up for a free trial!

<http://www.variety.com/emailfriend>

© 2007 Reed Business Information

Use of this Website is subject to [Terms of Use](#). [Privacy Policy](#)