

DAILY BRUIN

Sundance Film Festival to screen UCLA-affiliated films

Films from alum, faculty entered into different categories, Windrider Forum

By [Daniel Boden](#)

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For 10 days every January, a small skiing town in the Rockies opens itself up to thousands of film-loving pilgrims seeking new and compelling movies. The ski slopes step out of the limelight as the town transforms itself into one of the largest cinema meccas of North America. The occasion is the Sundance Film Festival, which begins Thursday, and this year, like many others, UCLA will have a rather large contingent of Bruins presenting their work.

The UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television announced that 11 alumni and faculty will screen their films in Park City, Utah, for either the Sundance Film Festival or the Windrider Forum at Sundance.

The seven films playing in Utah span different genres and formats: three documentaries, two feature-length films and two shorts. The alumni filmmakers come to Sundance as directors, cinematographers, editors and producers. The festival circuit is a great opportunity for filmmakers to have their movies seen, make connections within the film industry and sometimes find companies to distribute their films to a broader public.



“Everyone wants to screen at Sundance because it is very prestigious,” said Quyen Tran, who graduated from UCLA with a master’s in cinematography in 2008.

Tran was the cinematographer for Thabo Wolfaardt’s film, “Joburg.” The film short, which will be showcased at the Windrider Forum, was originally created as Wolfaardt’s thesis film while studying directing at UCLA. A native South African, Wolfaardt’s

“Joburg” focuses on problems of the heart and two people caught at different ends of Johannesburg’s current carjacking crisis.

“My writing partner and co-producer and his wife have been carjacked. While we were shooting, another manager was robbed,” Wolfaardt said, explaining his film’s relevant context. “While we were shooting the carjacking scene, my first AD (assistant director) told me that I was doing it wrong, which is kind of not protocol when you’re on set.” The AD, it turns out, had once been a carjacker himself. “We stopped the whole rehearsal and re-blocked it because he obviously knows what he’s talking about.”

Bruins At Sundance

UCLA will have a strong presence at the Sundance Film Festival, which starts on Jan. 21 in Park City, Utah. Here is a listing of the

Alexandra Fisher’s short, “Desert Wedding,” will play alongside “Joburg” at the Windrider Forum. Fisher’s film features a Bridezilla on her wedding day who learns about the meaning of love when her limousine driver gets in an

city, Utah. Here is a listing of the different works featuring students and faculty from the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television.

Sundance Film Festival
“Casino Jack & The United States of Money” – U.S. Documentary
Alumnus Alex Gibney, director

“Douchebag” – U.S. Dramatic
Marius Markevicius MFA '02, producer

“Lucky” – U.S. Documentary
Professor Bill Barminski, animator

“A Small Act” – U.S. Documentary
Jennifer Arnold MFA '99, director
Carl Pfirman MFA '00, co-editor
Patti Lee '88, cinematographer
Neil H. Weiss MFA '00, associate producer

“Southern District (Zona Sur)” – World Cinema Narrative
Paul de Lumen MFA '08, cinematographer

Windrider Forum
“Desert Wedding” – Short
Alexandra Fisher MFA '08, director

“Joburg” – Short
Thabo Wolfaardt MFA '07, director
Quyen Tran MFA '08, cinematographer

SOURCE: UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television
Compiled by Daniel Boden, A&E contributor.

accident with catastrophic results.

While not officially affiliated with the Sundance Film Festival, the forum showcases many films, including many also presented at Sundance. Discussions and classes with the Sundance filmmakers often follow screenings organized by the Windrider. Wolfaardt said that the discussions and panels between filmmakers and students are great teaching tools.

The Sundance Film Festival will be the main event in Park City. Excellence is the only common denominator in selecting its films as the festival is indiscriminate towards genre, format or country of origin. Sundance screens shorts and features, comedies and dramas, and foreign and domestic films.

Paul de Lumen, another cinematographer who graduated alongside Tran, worked as the director of photography on Juan-Carlos Valdivia's feature film, “Southern District” (“Zona Sur”). The film has already screened at many film festivals, including those in Tokyo, Spain and Bolivia, the country in which the film takes place.

While in Spain, de Lumen claimed the Colón de Plata Award for best cinematography in a feature film. This award was the first festival accolade of de Lumen's career, which started at George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch after graduating from San Francisco State University and has only intensified after graduating with a master's from UCLA in 2008.

“I'm really looking forward to (Sundance) because this will be the first time that it's shown to an American audience. Regardless of how the critics comment (on) it, I think it's great that an American audience can see a movie of this quality and this type of content. I think it's important in that way,” de Lumen said.



A film may play at various festivals across the globe for a number of years. “Joburg” has been on the festival circuit for about two years now; Tran said that its screening at the Windrider Forum may be its last festival showing. Fisher's “Desert Wedding” is in a similar situation and may not see much more screen time after playing in Park City.

“It's kind of funny how the



whole festival thing works,” Fisher said. “You start applying to some and then other festivals pass your film on to other festivals because suddenly I get these e-mails from festivals I never even knew I applied to saying, ‘Hey, your film’s playing at our festival.’ It’s kind of like, ‘Oh, okay.’ It ends up taking on its own life, which is kind of interesting.”



While Wolfaardt plans to expand “Joburg” to feature length, Fisher does not see her film taking on a different form. Rather, she will focus on other commercial shorts and looks to features as a future challenge.

“Southern District,” however, still has quite a life ahead of it. De Lumen explained that the film has already been accepted by the Berlin Film Festival and is the official Bolivian entry to the Academy Awards. De Lumen

and the film’s crew are also hopeful for a potential berth at the Cannes Film Festival.

“In terms of the film from its exposure, it will most likely be bought by a distributor and then hopefully shown in theaters, at least selected theaters throughout the world and the U.S.,” de Lumen said.