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Watershed February 2010 Podcast

Some of you I am sure will be aware of the new feature filmmaking scheme lfeatures which was launched last year in Bristol. The scheme, which will make three low budget features by 2011, has reached that exciting shortlist stage where projects have been selected and teams invited to work up the proposal. The scheme has generated much excitement and galvanised directors, writers and producers to think seriously about feature filmmaking in the city.

To tie in with the ambition of lfeatures we are screening four feature films that perfectly demonstrate that big impact can be made on a low budget. British director Christopher Nolan is one of Hollywood's A list directors with big budget titles such as **Batman Begins** and **The Dark Knight**. However, he started with the small budget taut atmospheric **Following** from 1999 which took a year to make as his crew had proper jobs and could only work at weekends. **Following** barely registered with audiences but its critical reception signalled a talent and his follow up **Memento** propelled him towards the big time.

Once, a tender sweet romantic musical of sorts from Ireland is evidently made on a shoestring but what burns through is the warmth and innocent optimism of the story and characters. Both leads Glenn Hansard and Marketa Irglova are musicians and their self-penned songs went onto with the film an Oscar® and stories of hard bitten industry producers sobbing in the aisles are legion. (One of the most memorable onstage interviews I did was with Glenn and Marketa when they visited Watershed and, guitar in hand, they sung some of

the numbers. Backstage Glenn told me of his meeting with Bob Dylan, but that is for another time.....)

The Blair Witch Project was a filmmaking phenomenon. Made on modest resources but a lot of innovation and invention it is a real shocker in the great horror tradition – bunch of kids go into the dark woods, not a good idea. As well as making a tight little horror film it was also marketed brilliantly using that new thing the world wide web. To date it is the most profitable independent film ever.

Robert Rodriguez, Like Christopher Nolan, is one of Hollywood's top directors with films such as the **Spy Kids** franchise. At 24 though he famously purportedly sold his body to medical science to help finance his debut feature **El Mariachi**. Made in Mexico, it is an exhilarating low budget (circa 5000\$ I believe) reinvention of the western which the studios could see the potential of and gave him some serious money (\$5m) to remake in the English language as **Desperado**.

The films are screening as part of **Low Budget/High Impact Sunday Brunch Matinee Season** throughout February.

This month I'll be heading off to the 60th Berlin Film Festival 10 – 18 February. The Berlinale is one of the most important events in the film calendar, an opportunity to take stock of what is happening in the world of cinema. I am doubly excited this year as I have been asked onto the Europa Label jury to select the best European film from the Panorama section of the festival. For those that tweet, I will be twittering from Berlin @msc45 for those that like a bit more reading material I will be writing a diary of reviews and reflections on the festival which will be published online at our **DShed.net** website. For more information on the festival programme go to www.berlinale.de

Finally I'm sure you will all be aware of the devastation wreaked by the earthquake in Haiti and moved by the scenes and accounts of what has happened. According to experts one of the emotional time bombs of events like this is impact on children who are left traumatised. Our friends at The Cube microplex are taking positive action and looking to take out a projection kit and films specifically for children. I'll read from their website.

THE HAITI KIDS KINO PROJECT

The Cube Cinema is setting up temporary social cinemas for the children affected by the Haiti earthquakes.

This is a basic, micro-humanitarian goodwill project to provide a small opening for fun, escape, community, emotion and social occasion to a people and place the Cube wishes to communicate with, and contribute to rebuilding hope.

Patrick McCormick, emergencies communication officer for the UN explains:

"The worst thing for children in natural disasters isn't just the damage that they see around them, but also when they sit around with nothing to do. It ramps up anxiety and despair, and that's what does even more damage" (The Guardian).

The intention is to improve quality of life through the act of making, sharing and reflecting and forging friendships and exchanges.

The Cube will screen films for children and provide workshops, equipment, mentoring and tuition for children to make their own films.

These will be projected back to them, and back here at The Cube. Similarly, childrens films made through the Cube's Children's group, the Nanoplex, will go to Haiti.

The Haiti Kids Kino Project will create a community in which children here and in Haiti, along with cube volunteers, explore art together, share the magical experience of cinema and storytelling, create friendships, while offering temporary childcare facilities.

This is a long-term project and one that will become self-sufficient.

FFI see: www.cubecinema.com