



Compare Collection Agency Price Quotes And Save!

Continue



September 18, 2009

Film festival brings AIDS orphan's work to world

By LYNN ELBER
AP Television Writer

Writer-producer Neal Baer is accustomed to 12 million or so Americans flipping on their TV sets for an episode of his drama "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit."

But for a film Baer deems his "passion project," the distribution is far different. "Mozambique," by teenage African AIDS orphan Alcides Soares, will show in theaters, art centers and galleries worldwide as part of the 12th annual Manhattan Short Film Festival.

Beginning Sunday, the festival is showcasing 10 short films that will screen more than 500 times over an eight-day period in every U.S. state and a total of 173 cities worldwide.

Baer shepherded "Mozambique" from start to finish after meeting Soares, then 16, through Baer's work with a project to teach photography to African youngsters from AIDS-devastated families.

"I spoke to him for about half-an-hour and could see that he was a gifted storyteller," Baer recalled. "I asked him if he wanted to learn how to make a movie in order to tell his story and he leapt at the opportunity."

"Mozambique," a documentary chronicling the youngster's quest to find a new family, "gives voice not only to the plight of AIDS orphans, but also to one young man's dreams of overcoming this terrible pandemic," Baer said.

Soares' film is among the finalists that include U.S. entry "The Boundary" by Julius Onah, "Love Child" by Daniel Wirtberg of Sweden and "Parking" by Jose Molina of Spain. Each is 14 minutes or shorter.

Audiences can vote for their favorite, with the winner to be announced Sept. 29. Some past films have gone on to garner Academy Award nominations, Manhattan Short founding director Nicholas Mason said. One, 1998's "Bunny," by "Ice Age" filmmaker Chris Wedel, received the Oscar.

But the New York-based festival's chief goal is to bring fresh perspectives to a wide audience, Mason said.

"There is no better insight to what is happening in the world or how the world is feeling than through the eyes, ears and lenses of these short filmmakers," he said.

Soares, now 19, lives in Maputo, Mozambique, and attends a private high school with help from Baer. The two were brought together through a photography project, "The House Is Small but the Welcome Is Big," co-founded by Baer and the Los Angeles-based nonprofit Venice Arts to bring attention to Africa's AIDS crisis and promote action.

Baer, a physician-turned-TV producer long interested in using storytelling to illuminate social and health issues, called on his circle to help with Soares' film.

"Law & Order: SVU" stars Mariksa Hargitay, Christopher Meloni and the NBC show's writers donated a video camera, and funding came from the NBC Universal and "Law & Order" franchise creator Dick Wolf's Wolf Films, producer of the 2003 Oscar-winning "Twin Towers" documentary and an upcoming one on the Doors, "When You're Strange," narrated by Johnny Depp.

Festival founder Mason encouraged Soares to trim the film from its original 27-minute length to meet the festival's requirements. He said its message remains as powerful for the worldwide audience it will reach.

"I was just sent a press clipping from Galway, Ireland, where the films will screen, and there's a picture in the paper of Alcides," Mason said. "It brings awareness to the situation."

On the Net:

<http://www.homeiswhereyoufindit.org>

<http://www.ManhattanShort.com>

<http://www.venicearts.org>



In this film publicity image released by Venice Arts, teenage African AIDS orphan Alcides Soares, is shown. He stars in the short film "Mozambique," showing in theaters, art centers and galleries worldwide as part of the 12th annual Manhattan Short film festival. (AP Photo/Venice Arts)



2009 Associated Press. Permission granted for up to 5 copies. All rights reserved.

You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing http://license.icopyright.net/3.5721?icx_id=D9APTN8G0 into any web browser. Press Association and Associated Press logos are registered trademarks of Press Association . The iCopyright logo is a registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.