

Six projects vie for Documart cash

by: **Susan Tolusso**

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In addition to all the pitching that goes on at the Banff World Television Festival in meetings, on the green, at the bar and in the hallways, there are half a dozen formal pitching events. These include the Bell Broadcast and New Media Fund iPitch, UK Style Lifestyle, The Comedy Network Comedy Pitch, The Network Youth Drama, and the fox 21 Reality Pitch. But the CTV Canadian Documart competition offers the most cash, with six finalists vying for a total of \$60,000 (\$40,000 less than last year) in development funding, with \$30,000 going to the winner, \$20,000 to second place and \$10,000 to third.

Documart entrants have three minutes to pitch and seven more to answer questions from Canadian and international commissioning editors. Every year, proposals span a spectrum of subjects and approaches, and the producers represent a variety of regional home bases.

Below is a preview of this year's pitches, followed by progress reports from last year's finalists. While being part of the Documart puts projects in front of industry heavyweights, the updates show that it nonetheless remains challenging to move doc projects forward.

2007 CTV CANADIAN DOCUMART FINALISTS

Title: Suck It Up, Princess

Format: TV hour

Producers: Susan Nation, president, Hop To It Productions, and Nina Beveridge, CEO, Hop To It and president, Beevision Productions, Toronto

Pitch to be delivered by: Nation and Beveridge

Synopsis: The producers say it's "an edgy, interior, musically enhanced look at the world of Renee Rodriguez - an 18-year-old website designer, reporter, charity organizer and victim of degenerative congenital muscular dystrophy. A powerful exploration of courage and strength"

Title: Boy Genius & Bobby Fisher (working title)

Format: TV hour, plus possible feature-length version

Producers: EyeSteelFilm, Montreal

Pitch to be delivered by: writer/director John Christou, and maybe one of EyeSteelFilm producers Daniel Cross and Mila Aung-Thwin

Synopsis: In 1986, Canadian Jeff Sarwer was the under-10 chess champion and heir apparent to Bobby Fisher. But family dysfunction - and a kidnapping - short-circuited his career. That is, until now, as he searches for Fisher, and a game

Title: Taqwacore!

Format: TV hour, plus possible feature-length version

Producers: Mila Aung-Thwin, Daniel Cross, EyeSteelFilm, Montreal

Pitch to be delivered by: director Omar Majeed, Aung-Thwin and Cross

Synopsis: Punk musician Basim Usmani and his Taqwacore band, The Kominas, perform songs repudiating conservative Muslim ideas. The doc follows their North American tour and what happens when they arrive at the ISNA convention, described as "the largest Muslim event in North America"

Title: Murder for Love: The Jadah Walker Story

Format: TV hour

Producers: Erin Lawrence, producer, Larry Day, supervising producer, Pyramid Productions, Calgary

Pitch to be delivered by: Lawrence

Synopsis: Tells the story of Jadah Walker, a small-town Saskatchewan girl who began a destructive relationship with a drug dealer and became addicted to hard drugs at 15. Convinced there was no other way to save Jadah, her father gunned down the dealer and is now serving time for murder. Jadah has

reconciled with her father and is supporting his appeal

Title: Bureaucracy: Ottawa v Flying Squirrel

Format: TV hour

Producer: Diane Woods, producer, AquaCulture Pictures, Toronto

Pitch to be delivered by: Woods

Synopsis: A naturalist follows all the rules to import a flying squirrel from the U.S. into Canada. Then the Canadian government unleashes an international incident by trying to deport the critter in this "incredible but true story of one man and one squirrel versus a legion of ridiculous bureaucrats..."

While there were few details available at press time, the other finalist is Beaten by Culture, from producers Antonio Hrynychuk and Karen Parhar of Fahrenheit Films in Saskatoon.

UPDATE ON 2006 FINALISTS

Title: The Dolphin Dealer

Format: TV hour

Producer: Leigh Badgley, Omni Film Productions

Prize: \$50,000 top prize

Synopsis: No developments to announce

Status: A look at the illegal world of dolphin catching

Title: Inventing the Future: Atanasoff, Mauchly and the First Computer

Format: 90-minute feature, plus TV-hour version

Producers: Mila Aung-Thwin, Daniel Cross, EyeSteelFilm, Montreal

Prize: \$30,000 second prize

Synopsis: A story of "deceit, greed, fraud, and perhaps even murder" connected to John Vincent Atanasoff's invention of the computer

Status: History Television is the Canadian broadcaster. The producers have pitched it twice more, attracted a Quebec caster, foreign coproducer and potential presale, and if they land European or U.S. funding, the film will shoot this summer

Title: Web Warriors

Format: TV hour

Producer: Edward Peill, Tell Tale Productions, Halifax

Prize: \$20,000 third prize

Synopsis: Examines the conflict, stakes and combatants in the "escalating global battle for control of cyberspace"

Status: Peill says two-thirds of the financing is in place. Global is the first-window caster. He needs a European or U.S. presale and hopes to shoot this fall, and deliver next spring/summer

Title: Devil in a G-String

Format: TV hour

Producers: Anne Pick, producer/director, Real To Reel Productions, Toronto

Synopsis: In a Polish village, a cottage industry of traditional lace-makers is nearly forced out of business by the advent of the European Union - until some enterprising women change their product line from linens to G-strings

Status: Pick reports ongoing interest from European broadcasters, but no progress on development

Title: Asphalt Cowboys

Format: TV hour

Producer: Daniel Cross, producer, EyeSteelFilm, Montreal

Synopsis: Takes a look at truck driving through a father-son relationship

Status: No progress to report

There was no information available at press time about Dead to Rights: Burial of a Billion Dollar Funeral, the other 2006 Documart project, by producer David Lint at Toronto's CineNova Productions.

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