Alumni

They Shot it Their Way

By
Joshua Friedman '08JRN
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"The Kids Are All Right," directed by Lisa Cholodenko, received four Oscar nominations and won a Golden Globe. (Suzanne Tenner / Focus Features)

Columbia filmmakers have collected prizes for some of 2010's most daring and original movies.

Lisa Cholodenko '97SOA, who directed and cowrote *The Kids Are All Right*, led the way down the red carpet. Her film, starring Annette Bening, Julianne Moore, and Mark Ruffalo, depicts a lesbian couple whose world is disrupted by the appearance of their children's sperm-donor father. It won the Golden Globe Award for Best

Motion Picture, Comedy.

Cholodenko and her cowriter, Stuart Blumberg, also won New York Film Critics Circle and Independent Spirit awards for best screenplay. *The Kids Are All Right* was nominated for four Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay.

Jennifer Redfearn ’07JRN and Jed Rothstein, who studied at the School of the Arts in 1996 and 1997, both received Oscar nominations in the category of Best Documentary, Short Subject. Redfearn directed and coproduced *Sun Come Up*, which tells the story of the 2500 residents of the Cartaret Islands, in the South Pacific, who were uprooted and forced to relocate to another island because of rising sea levels.

Rothstein directed and coproduced *Killing in the Nam*e, which follows Ashraf al-Khaled, a Jordanian man whose wedding was attacked by a suicide bomber in 2005 and who is now on a mission to speak out against terrorism in Muslim communities.

“I remember getting up nearly every morning during the height of the Iraq War and hearing about horrific bombings in market squares and busy streets, and always asking, Why?” Rothstein said in a recent interview with the International Documentary Association. “I set out to find someone who had experienced this type of trauma firsthand, and who was trying to answer the same basic questions that interested me.”

At Sundance, a documentary coproduced by faculty member Maureen Ryan ’92SOA won the World Cinema Documentary Directing Award. *Project Nim* tells the story of a chimpanzee raised like a human child in the lab of Columbia psychologist Herbert Terrace, who attempted to teach language skills to the chimp but was largely unsuccessful. Markus Kirschner ’09SOA and Geoffrey Quan ’08SOA also worked on *Project Nim*.

Pariah, whose executive producer was adjunct film faculty member Mary Jane Skalski, won Sundance’s Excellence in Cinematography Award for a U.S. dramatic film. The film is a coming-of-age story about an African American teenager in Brooklyn who struggles with her sexual identity.

One of the most provocative films screened this year at Sundance, *Circumstance*, edited by Andrea Chignoli ’07SOA, won the Audience Award for a U.S. dramatic film. Set in Tehran and filmed in Lebanon, the film depicts a lesbian relationship between

two teens in present-day Iran.

“I know everyone, especially the cast and crew, have given up a lot to do this,” the film’s director, Maryam Keshavarz, told Iranian magazine *Persianesque*. “We believe in this story, in human rights, and in artistic expression.”

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