

Cole Valley filmmakers make their SF IndieFest debut

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adambrody(at)hightashburybeat.com

Let's face it; we live in a wonderful city, and everybody knows it. The steep hills provide beautiful views of the Bay, while keeping us healthy and fit.

It is easy for someone out for a casual stroll to find themselves stumbled upon a picturesque vista, hidden just off the beaten path.

Cole Valley filmmakers Nowell Valeri and Jon Fischer celebrate these solitary moments spent with the city in their first joint film project, Postcard #28, which will be shown at the 10th Annual San Francisco Independent Film Festival in February.

The four-minute short film depicts a solemn figure walking through the city during different seasons and times of day. Many recognizable locations are utilized, as well as some that will keep you guessing.

"It started out with us just shooting around a bit, it was actually one of the things where I learned to use a steady cam," the 28-year-old Valeri said, sitting at a table tucked to the back of the Rockin' Java coffeehouse. "Jon has been taking walks around the city for years and knows of some really cool spots that I normally wouldn't know about."

"Nowell is really good at the technical side of things, and the cinematography, and I've been basically moping around the city for several years," Fischer added. "It was a perfect opportunity to combine his skills and my feelings about the city."

Originally from Pennsylvania, Valeri and Fischer grew up in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia and have been friends for many years. The two have been making movies since high school, where they acquired early skills in the school's TV lab. However, Postcard #28 is their first joint project together.

Fischer, also 28, moved to the Bay Area to study mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley, while Valeri moved to Massachusetts to study filmmaking at the Emerson College in Boston. Valeri said he became disillusioned with the process of filmmaking and moved to Los Angeles where he began working in the visual effects industry. He has worked on numerous feature films including World Trade Center, Fantastic Four and Constantine.

“I started out down there and then I moved up here when they were making the Matrix movies,” Valeri said. “I started working at ESC, which is a now defunct visual effects company that was created specifically for the Matrix sequels. It was located on the Alameda Naval Base.”

Valeri moved to the Bay Area in 2003 and said he feels much more comfortable here than in Los Angeles.

“I really like it up here,” he said. “I’m not an LA guy at all. I was dating someone up here and I just fell in love with the city.”

In 2005 Valeri moved to San Francisco, living in SOMA, and then moved to Cole Valley about a year ago with his wife, Sadie, a painter.

Valeri said he has spent almost a decade doing visual effects and is excited about getting back into making his own movies again.

“Jon called me and said, ‘Look, I have this idea for making it into a big project, and I want to film at all these different places and make it into a short film that’s three or four minutes long,’” Valeri said, adding that he was also greatly inspired by the skyline and landscape he saw on his daily ferry commutes across the Bay. “The landscape in general really made me want to move to the city.”

Fischer said he has been making postcards for some time, and the two derived the name Postcard #28 from those projects.

“It’s kind of the same idea but in film form,” Fischer said. “It’s an interesting challenge because the city is so over-documented already.”

To overcome this fact the two filmmakers attempted to show the city in all its forms and conditions, not just the traditional sun-drenched tourist shots. One scene shows the Golden Gate Bridge during a heavy downpour, perhaps the most honest depiction of our beloved landmark.

“We shot it on so many different occasions, but it ended up playing out thematically that it was a journey through so many parts of the year and so many parts of the character’s life,” Fischer said. “We wanted to do different environments and different times of the year, but then the character’s appearance changes as well, so it kind of created its own narrative.”

“Part of it is that we wanted to explore the more solitary side of the city,” Fischer continued. “It’s so beautiful, but at the same time it can be a really lonely place.”

Fischer said they aimed to create something emotional, though non-specific.

Postcard #28 was shot using a Panasonic DVX100 DVCam, and is Valeri and Fischer’s first submission to the SF Independent Film Festival.

“I’ve submitted some of my other films to other film festivals and haven’t had much luck,” Valeri said. “But people seem to connect with this one a lot more.”

Valeri said the avante-garde films of Maya Deren, particularly *Meshes of the Afternoon*, often inspire his work.

“That one’s really out there,” he said. “It’s very Dali-esque. It’s kind of like a precursor to David Lynch.”

An online version of Postcard #28 can be viewed on Fischer’s Web site at:
<http://www.feather2pixels.com/>

The 10th Annual San Francisco Independent Film Festival runs from February 7 through February 19 at the Roxie Cinemas, 3117 16th Street; the Victoria Theatre, 2961 16th Street; and the Castro Theatre, 429 Castro Street. Tickets are \$10 per screening, and \$25 for the Opening Night gala and after party. For tickets or more information call (415) 820-3907 or go to <http://www.sfindie.com>.

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