

The Oregonian

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The Indie 15

Summer blockbusters line up their shots, but some of Portland's hot independent filmmakers have fireworks of their own simmering

Indie: Director opted for 'adventure' over film school

Portland breeds independent filmmakers like blackberries. Local icon Gus Van Sant was and is one of a growing tribe of writers/directors to turn Portland into his own private movie set. So, summer season of big money blockbusters aside, Marc Mohan, M.E. Russell and Karen Karbo -- who spend most of their time reviewing those mainstream studio movies -- thought it'd be intriguing to see what the local talent was up to while the rest of us line up to see "Spider-Man 2."

The original plan was to track down an even dozen -- but three directing teams brought the total to 15. We discovered a huge variety: makers of cheeky short films and dramatic full-length features, award-winning documentaries and experimental films that aren't even meant to be projected on a traditional theater screen.

We found being an "independent" today means making the rules up as they go. Instead of waiting for outside funding, they come up with their own. They do their own bookings and even open their own theaters. So we asked our rogue's gallery of writers/directors to talk not just about their upcoming work but also their "most guerrilla moment" -- that dumb, absurd or risky thing they did to get their movie made.

Lastly, this is not meant as a definitive look at Portland's top independent talent. With an apology to our brilliant local animators, we zeroed in on live-action work that could be seen around town during zucchini-growing season. We hope you find these renegades as interesting as we do. -- Karen Karbo, Marc Mohan and M.E. Russell Special to The Oregonian

IAN McCLUSKEY

31, director of NW Documentary Arts & Media (www.nwdocumentary.org) Latest project: "Sun Gu Ja: A Century of Korean Pioneers" -- a one-hour, \$10,000 documentary funded by the Korean Society of Oregon and the Oregon Korean Foundation. Through firsthand accounts, it tells the 100-year story of Koreans in the United States. Where to see it: Portland Art Museum's Whitsell Auditorium,

Friday, July 9. Background: McCluskey discovered documentary filmmaking at the University of Oregon, where he was getting his master's degree in journalism from 1998 to 2000. His award-winning student documentary about the destruction of Celilo Falls led to a three-and-a-half-year stint in public television -- much of it at OPB. Most guerrilla moment: While working with a minuscule budget on a documentary about World War II, he wound up conveying one woman's concentration-camp experience by shooting hand-held shots of the railroad tracks behind the offices of OPB. He added some images of trees, and footsteps on cobblestones. When the woman watched it, she said, "That was exactly how it felt." I'll know I've hit it big when . . . "I can afford to buy Beth Harrington a cup of coffee."