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Producer Christine Vachon to Receive Stony Brook Festival Award, Talks Her Career and Advice: "Be Platform Agnostic"

BY JOHN ANDERSON

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Christine Vachon

They say that those who can't do, teach. And those who can't teach, teach gym. But sometimes, those who can do also teach, and if you've made 70 movies over 20 years, while raking in a bunch of Independent Spirit award and Oscar nominations, apparently it's time to share some of the expertise.

Christine Vachon, whose films as a producer include "Boys Don't Cry," "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," "Happiness," "One-Hour Photo," "Kids," "I Shot Andy Warhol," "At Any Price" and virtually ALL the films of Todd Haynes, has joined the faculty of Stony Brook Southampton Arts on Long Island.

As part of the Stony Brook Film Festival, which begins today, she'll will get a lifetime achievement award on July 26, which will coincide with a screening of her latest project, "Deep Powder," a drug-smuggling drama set in the '80s, directed by Mo Ogradnik and starring Haley Bennett and Shiloh Fernandez. Right now, she's spearheading a program called 20-20-20, which is granting 20 full scholarships to 20 students to make 20 short films in 20 days (July 8-28).

Why go into the teaching biz when your film career --



"Deep Powder"

Vachon has made eight films in the last year alone -- is thriving? "The road that I traveled isn't really the right road anymore," Vachon said in an interview at Stony Brook. "What does stay constant is to tell the stories that you want to tell and really stick to that. And these days there's so much opportunity. I would tell [students] to be platform agnostic and be life agnostic. There are so many ways to get your story out there, don't become obsessed with a theatrical release."

Filmmakers have many more tools at their disposal to find an audience, especially with social media, she said. However, "just because an actor has a huge number of Twitter followers, it doesn't mean that they'll go to see his or her film. It does feel like what's really critical is building community over time. Film festivals are really important for that. Whether it starts out at a festival, on YouTube or somewhere else, it's important to know who your audience is. Whether it's a gay and lesbian audience or sports enthusiasts, there are different ways to find people and that's only going to make it more interesting."

Vachon echoed what a lot of people say when they get a lifetime achievement award: "Aren't I too young to be getting this?" But I'm absolutely delighted to have received it and I can't wait to be at the festival," which, by the way, runs through July 28.

FESTIVALS

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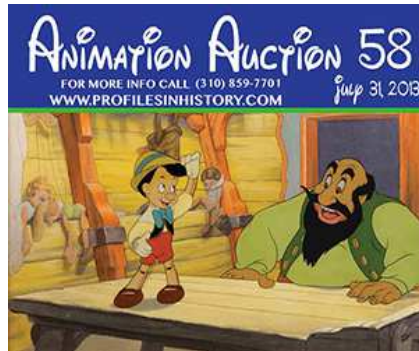
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