

# VAIL FILM FESTIVAL 2005

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## Vail Daily

### Vail reels again

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March 24, 2005

VAIL - Aspen's got one. Breckenridge's got one. So does Telluride, Durango and Crested Butte.

Last year, Vail got one, too.

At the second annual Vail Film Festival, which runs Thursday through Sunday, April 3, founders Sean and Scott Cross will project their vision onto the big screen 64 times - with each film.

"It's the perfect place to have a festival. What you look for is someplace where people are interested in film. I think there's a change happening in Vail, not only with all the development but the attitude toward the arts. It's not just a ski community. There's a hunger for art and independent film. While our film festival is not responsible for that change, we're kind of jumping in on it," Scott said. "Also, Vail is just perfectly located between New York and L.A."

Filmmakers and film lovers themselves, the Cross', twin brothers, along with Denis Jensen, brought the festival to life to help cultivate independent film and all of its components. In doing so, the four-day event will showcase feature length films, shorts, interactive panels, a festival music room with singer-songwriters, as well as the Mayor's Lifetime Achievement Award presentation.

On the list of more than 8,000 expected attendees, are Andrew, Luke and Owen Wilson with "The Wendell Baker Story," directed by Andrew and Luke and starring Luke, Eva Mendes and Owen, as well as Tiffani Thiessen with her directorial debut "Just Pray."

"The Wendell Baker Story' is probably the most exciting film. Luke and Owen Wilson are both coming out," Scott said. "Tiffani Thiessen is coming, too."

Also on the bill is "House of D," the feature-film writing and directing debut of actor David Duchovny. Duchovny stars in the film as well as his wife, Tea Leoni, Robin Williams, Frank Langella and Erykah Badu.

"The film critics always asked what the festivals' vision was. This year there's kind of a cohesive vision," Scott said.

"Eleven out of 12 are writer/director films. It's more of an art form. They're telling their story, and it helps to maintain their vision," Sean said.

"It focuses more on the storytelling," Scott said. "I think you have more of a genuine story."

At the outset, the festival touted the North American debut of "Before Sunset," starring Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy, named Best Film of 2004 by The Village Voice film critics poll.

"To have the premiere of that movie was pretty incredible," Scott said.

As awareness among the film community grows, the Cross' goal grows nearer. In order for independent filmmakers to gain exposure, the festival must attract distributors to come and pick up films and gets critics to come and write about it.

The Cross' don't want the festival to get too large, though. They value its intimate feel.

#### The films

"The Wendell Baker Story," directed by Luke Wilson and Andrew Wilson, stars Luke Wilson, Owen Wilson, Eva Mendes. In his return to writing and as director, Luke Wilson plays a good-hearted ex-con who gets a job in a

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retirement hotel. Three elderly residents help him win back his girlfriend (Eva Mendes) as he lends them a hand in fighting hotel corruption. Owen Wilson co-stars as the head nurse.

"House of D," the film writing and directing debut of actor David Duchovny, starring well-known actors such as his wife, Tea Leoni, Robin Williams, Frank Langella and Erykah Badu. The picture is a comical and touching story of a man looking back at his childhood in 1970s Greenwich Village.

"50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," directed by Jordan Hawley, stars Jennifer Westfeldt (Kissing Jessica Stein), Tori Spelling, Fred Willard. The film is about starting over and the unexpected turns life takes.

"Crazy Canucks," directed by Randy Bradshaw, is a story about five young, under-rated and under-funded Canadian men are faced with the daunting challenge of cracking the Euro-dominated world of competitive downhill skiing.

In "The Edukators," directed by Hans Weingartner and starring Daniel Brühl, three activists cobble together a kidnapping plot after they encounter a businessman in his home.

"Fern Hill," directed by Cole Claassen, is a coming of age story about four 13 year-old boys on a weekend in 1987 into the mountains of Colorado searching for a wrecked plane and a lost father.

"Kings & Queen," directed by Arnaud Desplechin, stars Catherine Deneuve, Emmanuelle Devos, Mathieu Amalric, Magalie Woch. It focuses on two people who find their paths crossing and their lives inextricably linked.

"Kung Fu Hustle," directed by Stephen Chow,

In Shanghai, China in the 1940s, a wannabe gangster aspires to join the notorious "Axe Gang" while an obnoxious landlady and her apparently frail husband exhibit extraordinary powers in defending their turf.

"Loggerheads" is a tale of three overlapping stories of estranged families in three regions of North Carolina, directed by Tim Kirkman and starring Tess Harper, Bonnie Hunt, Michael Learned, Kip Pardue, Chris Sarandon

Starring Ellen Barkin, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Richard Masur, "Palindromes," directed by Todd Solondz, is about an awkward 13-year-old girl and the juxtaposing relationships among family, friends and neighbors.

"Southern Belles," directed by Paul S. Myers and Brennan Shroff, stars Anna Faris and Justin Chambers. Belle and Belle want to break out of their trailer park lives and get up and out to the "Big City" of Atlanta. Just when they think they are on their way to getting a nest egg, Belle falls for a handsome police officer named Rhett Butler.

In "Steal Me," directed by Melissa Painter, 15-year-old Jake chases his wayward mother to Montana. Instead, he finds the picture perfect Tucker family instead who photoshop him into their lives, despite his questionable past. Too bad Jake can not stop himself from stealing, being seduced by the sexy next door neighbor, courting the mother of the house, encouraging the son in his first love affair, and leading the neighborhood boys in an ever escalating series of pranks.

## Short films

The festival would not be complete without a plethora of short films.

Tiffani Thiessen (Saved by the Bell, 90210) brings her directorial debut, "Just Pray," to the short film category. Misunderstood, yet wise beyond his years, a nine-year-old boy unknowingly finds hope and salvation in a beauty shop of his rural, Southern town.

"Clean," directed by David Palmer, is a brief look at a man and his obsessive desire for a spotless car. The film also offers a possible reason for his behavior.

The festival also presents the Oscar Shorts Showcase, featuring Oscar winning films "Ryan" and "WASP," as well as Academy Award nominees.

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## Awards

Edward R. Pressman, who has produced more than 70 diverse motion pictures over the last 30 years, will receive the Mayor's Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Mayor Rod Slifer. A number of Pressman's productions have received nominations and Academy Awards, including "Das Boot," "Wall Street" and "Reversal of Fortune."

The prolific Pressman is a leader in the independent movement, whose work continues to promote talented writers and directors.

Kip Pardue will receive the film festival's Rising Star Award. The Atlanta native got his start modeling for Abercrombie and Fitch and Polo. He next turned to acting and landed TV roles on "7th Heaven" and the WB Hit "Popular." Kip got his big break with his role in "Remember The Titans" with Denzel Washington. He then starred as Sylvester Stallone's Indy racing protege in "Driven." He has since appeared in "The Rules of Attraction," "Thirteen," and "Loggerheads," which will screen at the festival.

## Music Room

The Red Lion will host the Festival Music Room, from 2-5 p.m. Friday, April 1 and Saturday, April 2. The live music room will feature singer-songwriters, including Cary Brothers (Grammy Award®-winner for his music for Zach Braff's "Garden State").

"The point of the whole thing is to marry filmmakers with musicians," Scott said. "It's really tough to get musical licensing for independent filmmakers because it can be expensive. It's also a chance to get fresh music into these films."

## Panels

The festival will showcase a variety of panels, such as a discussion between film critics and people in the industry.

"The panels are great for aspiring filmmakers. They get a chance to listen to directors and producers talk about making movies," Sean said.

"You not only get to see the films which are hard to catch, but you get to interact with the filmmakers, as well," Scott said.

For more information, go to [vaifilmfestival.org](http://vaifilmfestival.org).