

## ↓ DOWN and out at South by Southwest

### SXSW 2000

BY KYLE WHITACRE  
The Battalion  
PART 1 OF 2

Another year has swept the annual South by Southwest music and film festival into history, which descended upon Austin with all its might and fury this spring break, breaking rules and standards, and setting the bar for modern culture.

My trip began with a two-hour burn down Highway 21 and 290, which brought me straight into the heart of Austin and to the Austin Convention Center, the headquarters of this year's festival, where I hosted the filmmaker's lounge for the next five days. Work began early Friday morning, where one of the first things we learned was that the AC thermostat was broken and the lounge would be a brisk 55° F for the next five days. I lamented not bringing anything long-sleeved.

Saturday I hunted down the MSC Film Society execs, who bought badges for their members but ended up using the badges themselves. We began the day by attending the world premiere of the modern day remake of *Hamlet*, starring Ethan Hawke, Bill Murray and Kyle MacLachlan. It's amazing how well brooding Gen-X actor Hawke can portray Hamlet. The film had excellent night cinematography and musical score but was marred by horrible day photography and bad acting by Bill Murray.

After *Hamlet*, I headed over to the Alamo Draft House for the midnight showing of *Rated X: A*

*Journey Through Porn*, a funny and insightful documentary about the pornography industry and the issues involved.

Sunday started out the same as the previous days, with corporate sponsors freaking out about the fact that no filmmakers showed up for the complimentary breakfasts in the lounge while starved volunteers watched pans of eggs and bacon go untouched. When will people learn filmmakers are second only to musicians as the laziest people alive?

In the afternoon, one of the feature conference sessions of the festival took place — a conversation with John Carpenter (*Halloween*, *Escape from New York*), Robert Rodriguez (*Desperado*) and Harry Knowles (*Ain't It Cool News*). In a conference room fifty people over capacity, the three talked about everything from censorship in film to the revolution in digital filmmaking. Carpenter reminisced on how censorship in the '70s caused more filmmakers to be more creative with the presentation of violence in storytelling and said that because of more government involvement today in censorship and lawsuits, the same kind of creativity is starting to reappear.

Sunday night also saw the premiere of one of the most anticipated films of SXSW, *The Independent*. The line for the film stretched around an entire block, and I arrived an hour early to take my place

behind a hundred other people already in line.

While waiting with the Film Society crew, we talked with Ann, a Canadian film student who was on an internship that gave her three-all-expense paid trips to three U.S. Film Festivals.

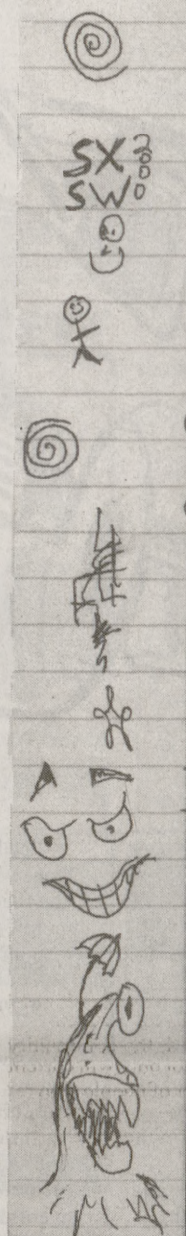
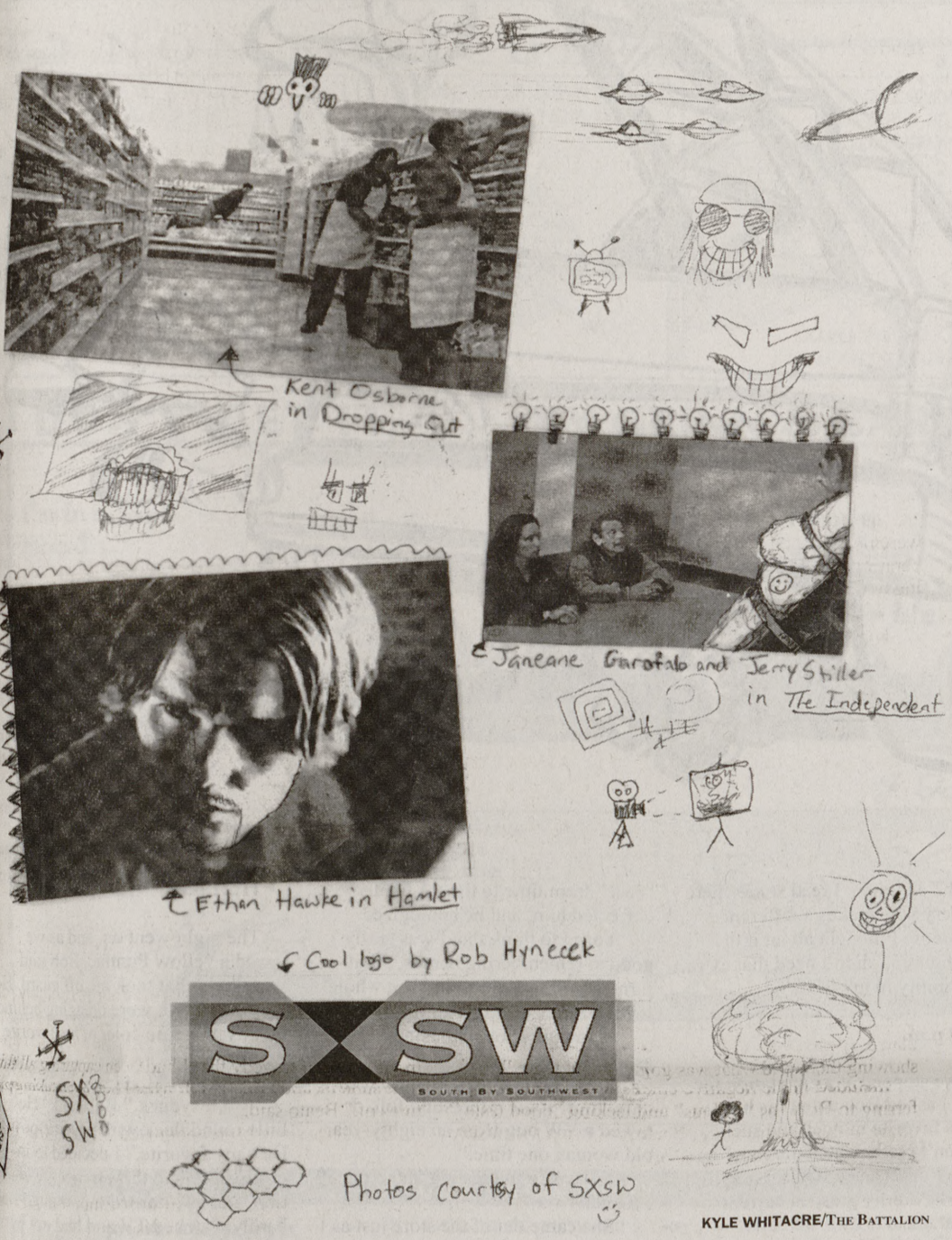
She explained to us why many U.S. film business is moving to Canada and taking with them big-budget projects like the upcoming *X-Men* movie. Apparently the government there does not tax and censor films, but instead supports them financially, gives them tax breaks and funds the education of artists. Impressed by the brilliant ideas of the Canadian government, I told her how most our taxes go to military research, and while most of our creative minds struggle to eat, we could wipe Canada off the face of the Earth.

We were then let into the theater where Janeane Garofalo and Jerry Stiller introduced the film. What followed was an hour and a half of non-stop comedy centering around the life of fictitious exploitation director Morty Finemann (Stiller), whose films include *Acupuncture Academy II: Pointy, Pointy, Pointy*, *World War III II* and *The Justice League of Superfreaks*.

Monday, after a boring day in the filmmakers' lounge, Jason Puckett, next year's chair of MSC Film Society, and I headed over to see the animated shorts. All the shorts were amazing, but the best was *When The Day Breaks*, an animated short from Canada which is up for an Oscar this year.

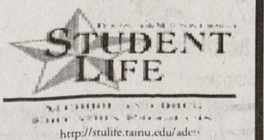
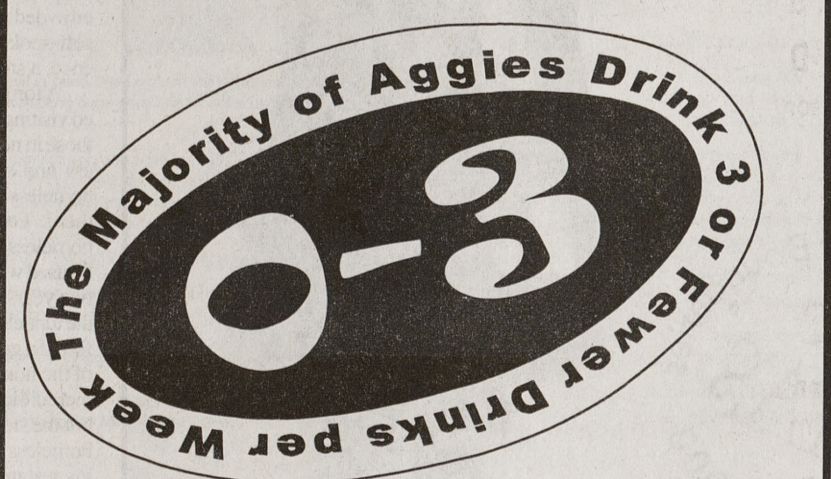
After the shorts, we met up with everyone else to see the much-anticipated *Dark Days*, a

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