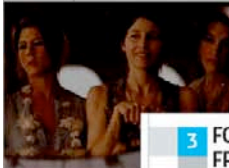


# SPECIAL ISSUE! PREMIERE



THE MOVIE MAGAZINE

**SUNDANCE'S 10 TO WATCH** A RELIGIOUS SEX COMEDY, A LOOK AT CROSSWORD OBSESSIVES, AND THREE WILDLY DIFFERENT L.A. STORIES WERE JUST SOME OF OUR FESTIVAL FAVORITES. —HOWARD KARRER, TOM ROSTON, JESSICA LETKEMANN, AND PETER HERBST



**1 FRIENDS WITH MONEY** When a social satirist grows in depth and accessibility, it's well worth heralding, as Sundance did by making this modern fable the opening night film. Writer-director Nicole Holofcener's biting follow-up to *Walking and Talking* and *Lovely & Amazing* stars Holofcener stalwart Catherine Keener, Joan Cusack, Frances McDormand, and a quietly subversive Jennifer Aniston as L.A. friends living with various degrees of wealth and dysfunction in their relationships. The movie finds little, unglamorous places to which *Sex and the City* could never go. (Due April 7 from Sony Pictures Classics)

**3 FORGIVING THE FRANKLINS** The perfect antidote to

*The Passion of the Christ*. First-time writer-director Jay Floyd's semiserious morality play, shot on video with unknowns, chronicles the spiritual journey of a repressed Christian family that gets into a terrible car crash. The joke is that after a near-death meeting with Jesus they reawaken as guiltless sensualists in their own private Eden—except for the teenage daughter, who remains earthbound. Mom and Dad become sexual experts (with a few eye-opening tricks), and their older son comes out and sleeps with his burly coach. This scandalizes friends and neighbors, of course, as well as the daughter, who conspires against them, bless her heart. (Release TBD)

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**13 72**

**9** not, if you Sebastian faithful die both vaguely familiar and uncannily new. (Release: TBD)



**4 HALF NELSON** Ryan Gosling dazzles in this honest and elegantly understated drama, which follows the downward spiral of a crackhead history teacher in a Bedford-Stuyvesant high school who befriends a female student (Shareeka Epps) and tries in vain to protect her from the influence of a drug dealer (Anthony Mackie). Cowriter-director Ryan Fleck has fleshed out his 2004 Sundance award-winning short, *Gowanus*, in *Brooklyn*, into a moving feature that explores the awkward conflicts of clashing cultures and living with addiction without ever resorting to predictable resolutions. The lack of closure is frustrating yet painfully true. (Due in August from ThinkFilm)



**5 STAY** You'll never look at your mate (or your dog) the same way again after seeing this raucous farce meets the parents' comedy, written and directed by Bobcat Goldthwait. The *Fockees* farces look awfully tame in comparison, as Goldthwait, a former stand-up with an uninhibited comic imagination, elicits charming SoCal-yuppie performances from Melinda Page Hamilton, Bryce Johnson, and Coby French. Respectful of the family values it skewers, the film even deals soberly with the death of loved ones and nasty breakups that can't heal. (Due in summer from Roadside Attractions/Samuel Goldwyn Films)

**7 QUINCEANERA**

Among Mexican-Americans in L.A., a girl's 15th birthday (or *quinceañera*) is a major social event. And in Wash West-morland and Richard Glatzer's sharply observed movie, it's a coming-of-age hurdle for Maglalema, who learns that she's pregnant and moves in with her great-uncle and gay cousin. Neither contrived nor judgmental and unfolding with seemingly effortless grace, *Quinceañera* is a hopeful slice of 21st-century life. (Release: TBD)

after his wife (Mary McCormack) drives off to the office. As survivors seal themselves inside with duct tape, the movie grounds its horror in the moral decisions of survival, making even its over-the-top twist ending that much harder to dismiss. (Release: TBD from Lionsgate)

**2 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE** With a dream cast—Toni Collette as the frazzled mom; Greg Kinnear as the self-help guru dad; Alan Arkin as the heroin-sniffing grandfather; Steve Carell as the depressed, gay, Ph.D.-scholar uncle; and Paul Dano as the silent son—this comedy goes for a wild and very funny ride in a clutchless VW bus, ending up at a frightful “little miss” beauty pageant that the family's young daughter (Abigail Breslin) hopes to win. Though achieving success is not the point of this movie, it's a natural audience pleaser. (Due in July from Fox Searchlight)

**WORDPLAY** This delightful documentary centers on *Now*

**5** *York Times* crossword puzzle editor Will Shortz, who explains the pastime's mysteries and intricacies. Also on hand are such famous puzzle-solvers as Bill Clinton and Ken Burns, as well as colorful regular folk like Ellen Ripstein, “the Susan Lucci of crossword,” who finally won the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament after 23 years. “I don't know how they do it. I don't know why they do it,” deadpans Jon Stewart, himself a fan. (Due June 16 from IFC Films)



**RIGHT AT YOUR DOOR**

**10** With a tiny budget and simple effects, this resourceful thriller about infectious “dirty” bombs hitting downtown Los Angeles easily surpasses the terror quotient of major blockbusters. Gary Loehne plays a work-at-home husband who watches the world he knows fall apart