



by Eugene Hernandez (March 18, 2008)

Born out of anger, to use the words of filmmaker **Jason Kohn**, the inaugural **Cinema Eye Honors** for documentary films awarded three prizes to "**Manda Bala (Send A Bullet)**" on Tuesday night in New York City. Kohn's doc, nominated in six of the eight Cinema Eye categories, was honored as best picture and also received awards for cinematography and editing.

"Manda Bala" debuted more than a year ago at the **Sundance Film Festival** where it won the documentary grand jury prize and the cinematography award and was later released by **City Lights Pictures**, earning about \$120,000 in theaters. Recounting his own frustration while attending a film festival in Sao Paulo, Brazil and noticing the tiny attendance for a documentary, Jason Kohn expanded on the sense of frustration he feels.

"When these movies don't get seen, you feel like you're fucking losing," Kohn said, after accepting the best picture award. Continuing the thought amidst laughter, he quipped, "You feel like somebody else is winning and that person is no good. So, this movie was made out of anger, it was made out of a lot of anger."

Indeed, the new Cinema Eye Honors were conceived out of frustration. Spurred by the recent short list of nominees for the annual Academy Awards, filmmaker **AJ Schnack** enlisted doc programmer **Thom Powers** and distributor **IndiePix** to launch the new awards. The nominations were created by the programmers of a dozen festivals and, with the exception of the audience award, winners were chosen by about 140 film community insiders.

Seth Gordon's "The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters" won the first Cinema Eye audience choice prize, while this year's Oscar winner **Alex Gibney** received the award for best director for his latest film, "**Taxi to the Dark Side.**"

The ceremony, held at the IFC Center in downtown Manhattan, featured extended film clips, tributes to the late **Tony Silver** and **St. Clair Bourne**, music from **Ionic** of **Force Theory**, a brief panel discussion interlude, and award presentations from a number of accomplished filmmakers, including **Barbara Kopple**, **Joe Berlinger** and **Bruce Sinofsky**, **Ricki Stern** and **Annie Sundberg**, **Sam Pollard**, **Ross Kaufman**, **Alan Berliner**, and **Marshall Curry**. Following the two-hour plus show, guests headed uptown for an after-party in NYC's Meat Packing District.

After a pair of unexpected brief musical numbers, award founder AJ Schnack delivered extended remarks criticizing the honoring of documentarians purely as journalists and activists, rather than artists.

"The Cinema Eye Honors exist because we as filmmakers recognize that from the earliest days of the form, people like Vertov and Flaherty made creative choices, they experimented with cinematography, they experimented with editing and even animation, they staged scenes, they constructed." Concluding, Schnack added, "They believed that the cinema eye was more truthful and more real than the human one."

Complete list of Cinema Eye winners:

Outstanding Achievement in Nonfiction Filmmaking

"Manda Bala (Send A Bullet)"

Director - Jason Kohn, Producers - Joey Frank, Jared Goldman & Jason Kohn

Outstanding Achievement in Direction

Alex Gibney

"Taxi to the Dark Side"

Outstanding Achievement in Production

Seth Kanegis, Tomas Radoor & Mikael Rieks

"Ghosts of Cite Soleil"

Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography

Heloisa Passos

"Manda Bala (Send A Bullet)"

Outstanding Achievement in Editing

Doug Abel, Jenny Golden & Andy Grieve

"Manda Bala (Send A Bullet)"

Outstanding Achievement in Graphic Design and Animation

Animation by **Curious Pictures**

"Chicago 10"

Outstanding International Feature

"The Monastery - Mr. Vig & The Nun"

Director - Pernille Rose Gronkjaer, Producer - Sigrid Dyekjaer

Audience Choice Prize

"The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters"

Director - Seth Gordon