

Ocule Films puts focus on docu features

By Hy Hollinger

Feature-length documentaries are invading the American Film Market, where a company called Ocule Films is touting itself as the first member of the International Film & Television Alliance and the first AFM seller principally dedicated to the financing, production, acquisition and distribution of theatrical-sized docus.

Ocule founders — managing director Kirt Eftekhar and production partner Randy Wooten — see a “definite movement” to documentaries and “a burgeoning overseas market” for those that “have commercial awareness,” especially when comparing the boxoffice and ancillary returns to the cost of producing a docu feature. Eftekhar cited such successes as “March of the Penguins,” “Super Size Me,” Michael Moore’s offerings and his own “Porn Star: The Legend of Ron Jeremy” as among the docus contributing to the new worldwide media curiosity about

See **OCULE** on page 57

Optimum inks with Madman for video label

By Stuart Kemp

British indie distribution outfit Optimum Releasing said g’day Thursday to Australian indie distributor Madman Entertainment in a joint venture to set up a home entertainment label.

Optimum, looking for acquisitions at the American Film Market, has teamed with Madman to launch Optimum Madman as a home entertainment distribution label in the U.K. and Australia.

Optimum Releasing managing director Will Clarke said he is happy to be expanding his business beyond British shores, describing the company as “an exciting venture for both and represents both companies’ continuing growth.”

The startup banner’s debut release in both countries will be

See **OPTIMUM** on page 57

Market now a sign of the times

Growth of ethnic channels, docu alter AFM landscape

By Steve Brennan

This is not your father’s American Film Market. The growing international television appetite for movie titles as well as opportunities in emerging media have helped morph the Santa Monica film market into a much different venue than it was just a few years ago.

Jean Prewitt, president and CEO of the International Film & Television Alliance, which runs



Prewitt

AFM, said Thursday that the presence at the market of big international television buyers continues to increase this year.

A growing influence on the market is the number of channels in the U.S. dedicated to ethnic communities,

she said.

Additionally, one of the most visible results of the television buyers’ influence on the market is an increase in documentaries.

“More documentaries have been successful in theatrical release, and presumably, people are looking in that direction for television also,” she said. Prewitt also noted that the market is featuring more made-for-television movies than in previous years.

“Certainly over the last five years, one of the principal markets for feature-length film has been television,” she added. “And people are producing more and more with a television outlet in mind.”

Prewitt emphasized the importance to the independent filmmaker of the increasing number

See **MARKET** on page 57

digest

‘Desolate’ gets Candy backing

Candy Heart Prods. is on board to produce the low-budget horror film “Desolate,” the production company said Thursday at the American Film Market. “Desolate” centers on a man who awakens to find the world not how he left it. The film, penned by Francisco Castro, will cost less than \$5 million and is set to begin shooting in the spring. Stewart Hopewell has signed on to direct. Candy Heart’s Rachel Belofsky, Brian Gilbert and special effects guru Stan Winston will produce, with the Academy Award-winning Winston creating the film’s creatures. Germany’s MC One, Sven Ebeling and Hagen Behring will executive produce. Castro is repped by Metropolitan. Hopewell is repped by BWCS and Energy Entertainment.



Bonham Carter

Foursome have ‘Conversations’

Shochiku snapped up Japanese rights from Fabrication Films for the Helena Bonham Carter starrer “Conversations With Other Women,” while TVA Films took Canadian rights to the romantic comedy. The deals were announced Thursday at the American Film Market. In addition, Civite picked up rights for Spain, and Filmes Unimundos acquired rights for Portugal for the Hans Canosa-directed film, which revolves around a couple whose reunion at a wedding reception ignites a mysterious attraction. The film employs a dual-frame technique that follows two characters onscreen simultaneously.

‘Tsotsi’ finds home with MK2, Rialto

Gavin Hood’s South African ghetto drama “Tsotsi” has been sold to a slew of territories, including MK2 for France and Rialto for Australia and New Zealand. It is repped at AFM by sales and financing house the Little Film Co. Little Film also said the movie — written and directed by Hood and produced by Peter Fudakowski — has sold to Momentum in the U.K., Castello Lopes in Portugal and Rosebud in Greece. The movie is South Africa’s pick for a foreign-language film Oscar nomination and is based on author-playwright Athol Fugard’s book.

Quartet lined up for Brit tax panel

Organizers of this year’s U.K. Showcase said Thursday that Tenon Media director John Graydon, Libby Savill of London-based law firm Olswang and Ingenious Media commercial director Duncan Reid will join British Film Commission’s Steve Norris at a seminar on the current state of play on British U.K. tax incentives. The event runs Tuesday-Wednesday in Los Angeles and is presented by the British Kinematograph Sound and Television Society and supported by the U.K. Film Council and U.K. Trade & Investment.

Baldwin gets lead entry in ‘Girls’ Guide’

By Gregg Goldstein

Alec Baldwin has been cast as Sarah Michelle Gellar’s love interest in “The Girls’ Guide to Hunting and Fishing,” Odd Lot Entertainment principals Gigi Pritzker



Baldwin

and Deborah Del Prete said Thursday at the American Film Market. Media 8 Entertainment is repping international rights for the film at the market.

Baldwin will be the male lead in the adaptation of Melissa Bank’s best-selling short-story compilation. He’ll play an older Lothario in the publishing biz who wins over Gellar’s ambitious book editor.

The film will be produced by Pritzker, Del Prete and Darryl Taja, with co-producer Linda McDonough. Production is scheduled to start in May, with scribe Marc Klein (“Serendipity”) making his writing-directing debut.

At a breakfast hosted by produc-
See **BALDWIN** on page 57