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## Keeping It Reel

### FLIFF documentaries capture the bizarre and the banal

By Dave Amber

*These reviews are part of our continuing coverage of the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival.*

Somewhere on television right now, you can find plenty of "documentary" footage about every aspect of human life. But film festival documentaries — through brilliant cinematography or coverage of issues you'll never see distilled on broadcast news programs — should transcend what you see on the Biography Channel, let alone on the mawkish home makeover shows that litter prime time. With that in mind, here are capsules for a few upcoming FLIFF documentaries:

**Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing.** "What do editors do? Cut," say the opening frames of *Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing*, which extols an often-ignored player in motion pictures. In cinema's early 20th-century womb, it seems, audiences watched every frame of original footage in a level of verisimilitude that bored their bloomers off. Then filmmakers discovered through the magic of juxtaposition that by alternating two images, they could create yet a third, different emotional effect and make audiences weep or, in some cases, follow Hitler. *Cutting Edge* provides cool insight into the ways audiences are manipulated through editing, even as those audiences are watching movies about editing. Hmm, very Escher. (6 p.m. Thursday, October 20, and 10 a.m. Friday, November 4 (free), at Cinema Paradiso; 98 minutes.)

**Mr. Leather.** *Bitchy pageant girls agonizing over wardrobe and their fat butts can mean only one thing: It's time for the 2003 Mr. L.A. Leather Contest, whose contestants' bums are filmed with aplomb in this chronicle of fetish as community. The film follows the guys as they practice PC speeches promoting safe sex and pick out flogging accessories.* Mr. Leather falls into the warm-and-fuzzy school of documentaries. Experts talk softly about the psychology of bondage, and the filmmakers hammer home their message that competition is all about defining leadership in the leather community. Unfortunately, this überleather flick is überboring. Skip it and head straight for the leather bar. (11 p.m. Saturday, October 22, at Cinema Paradiso; 90 minutes.)

**Karen Blixen: Out of This World.** *If you liked Out of Africa and want to know everything, just everything about Karen Blixen, a.k.a. Isak Dinesen, then this film is for you. You'll get obligatory interviews with talking heads, including Tumbo, Karen Blixen's houseboy on the farm in Kenya where the uppity Dane went to grow coffee in the early 20th Century. Yes, Karen — or Tanne, as she was known as a child — had a farm in Africa. Unfortunately, the film uses annoying present tense narration: "Tanne gets malaria and has to suffer the fever for several months." And, "Tanne is shocked when she discovers she's infected with syphilis." This slow biopic is what you'd expect from a continuous loop in some darkened side gallery at an Isak Dinesen museum. Move on. (3 p.m. Sunday, October 23, at Cinema Paradiso; 58 minutes.)*

**A Cry for Madiom.** *Madiom Madiok is a 5-year-old boy in southern Sudan, a walking skeleton weighing in*



**Mr. Leather**



**Karen Blixen: Out of This World**



**Fatboy.**

#### Details

##### Who / What:

Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival

*at only 15 pounds. His dutiful mother has brought him to a Doctors Without Borders feeding center, where lots of other naked, starving people swat flies and wait for food. In this sad film, you see that only the most severely malnourished are allowed into the center. The 13-year-old encountered one day will be dead the next.* A Cry for Madiom is composed of raw, unedited footage from the late '90s shot over several days by an Israeli television journalist who notes that not much has changed in 50 years of drought and political strife. Although the level of suffering is not for the faint of heart, this cry for a boy leaves you wondering about the fate of Madiom (is he still alive five years later?) and what the hell is going on over there now. (6 p.m. Wednesday, October 26, at Cinema Paradiso; 63 minutes.)

**Apaga y Vamonos.** *The United States isn't the only rapist of natural resources or destroyer of indigenous cultures. Our allies in Madrid are in on the game too.* Apaga y Vámonos ("Switch Off and Let's Go") chronicles what happens when little man meets big business. In this case, it's the Mapuche, an indigenous people living in a remote section of the Chilean Andes, against their rival, ENDESA, Spain's megalomaniacal electric company intent on colonization by building a dam on the Mapuche's sacred river. Fascism, it seems, is alive and well in the country of poet Pablo Neruda but also of tyrant Augusto Pinochet. In the film, you'll see craggy Mapuche women tossing coffee cups at government officials during news conferences and screaming at corporate suit lineups at ENDESA shareholder meetings. These people just kept fighting even as turbines were installed in the dam and their lands were flooded. *Apaga y Vamonos* is smartly produced, beautifully filmed, and rightly spare of commentary. This is one to see. (3 p.m. Saturday, October 29, at Cinema Paradiso, and 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 8, at AMC Coral Ridge; 87 minutes.)

**Fatboy.** *Nothing could be more remote from A Cry for Madiom than this film about fat Americans. Meet Miles Forman, a.k.a. Fatboy, a self-deprecating pudge who's had enough. "He was a voracious feeder," his dad says of Forman's baby years. Fatboy is clever and funny during his quest to lose weight, while also tender in its exploration of the family dynamics that perhaps made Forman all the man he is. It's Supersize Me meets Tarnation. Fatboy should not be missed simply for one brilliant scene in which a lovely African-American nurse gives Forman a colonic while singing, "Someone's knocking at the door. Someone's ringing the bell." There's nothing quite like hearing a sassy black woman tell a fat white guy, "I can see you have not missed a meal in quite some time." Priceless. (7 p.m. Thursday, November 10, at Cinema Paradiso; 90 minutes.)*