

ONSCREEN

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it, including director Sergei Bodrov (*Prisoner of the Mountain*) and producer Jean-Jacques Annaud, the marvelously odd French nature-fetishist who gave us *The Bear* and *Quest for Fire*. *Running Free* bears out my long-standing theory that Annaud — *The Name of the Rose* aside — is a master of visual storytelling whose best movies result when the characters involved aren't forced to rely on the deceptions and inadequacies of human language to get their points across.

The story begins in 1914, mid-ocean, as a newborn colt slides from the womb

of a German workhorse bound for mines located somewhere along the notorious Namibian Skeleton Coast. This is Lucky, who will eventually grow up to lead one of the secretive herds of wild horses still currently roaming the vast Namib desert. It's a fascinating subject, well worthy of coverage, set in a wonderfully exotic, sensually intoxicating landscape whose colours and textures lend themselves perfectly to Bodrov's respectfully inventive eye for detail and spectacle.

Unfortunately, however, Bodrov and Annaud were unwilling to let Lucky's story just play itself out in docudramatic silence. As with Disney's *Dinosaur*, they instead make the alienating decision to

EVEN BETTER THAN THE TRAILER

desert, the other destroys it and vice versa. It's funny and mean and, don't worry, humanity prevails in the end. *Mulberry Red* No. 17 (Kelly Ann Beaton) makes me miss my mom. In a sad and humorous exposé of women who enjoy their lipstick, Beaton subtly taps into a real desire. At the end, I wonder why I never wore lipstick myself.

Rope (Siobahn Devine) cuts right to the point. Though the shooting of this film is nothing special, the drama is clever with great moments of tension.

Among the international films at the festival are the Argentinean short *Familie Fortone* (Guido Lublinsky), where a rich and neurotic cemetery owner goes to great lengths to remove

brings some wacky animation to the screen where two humans participate in a cycle of produce-and-destroy. One guy grows a plant in the

have Lucky — as voiced, with reedy lack of emphasis, by actor Lukas Haas — narrate the film all the way through. This leads to rampant sentimentalism and annoying anthropomorphization for dramatic purposes, plus a truly awful series of howlingly inappropriate lines. Lucky, observing another animal, muses, "I didn't understand what I'd done wrong... but the oryx had a girlfriend now, and he didn't want to be my friend anymore."

Final analysis? If you're looking for something child-appropriate that'll actually keep the little darlings awake for an hour and a half, you'd do better (and cheaper) to just stay at home with the Discovery Channel. — GF

a man living on his property. The opening commercial for the cemetery is the best part of the movie. Afterward, it loses some of its lustre.

If you're a Hitchcock nut, you'll appreciate the German flick *When Hitchcock Met Eisenstein's Else in Auerstedt* (Birgit Lehmann). This documentary reveals where Hitchcock found many of the storylines he brought to films like *Psycho* — and it's even interesting if you're not into Hitchcock.

This year the Short Film Festival profiles John Ford's documentaries on World War II. Sure, Ford made some great films in his day, but *Battle of Midway* (1942) wasn't one of them. It's a dated, corny film that sinks of American patriotism. I guess someone still likes these films if they're being programmed.

The Toronto Worldwide Short Film Festival runs



Chase Moore with Lucky in *Running Free*

during the Holocaust. The strength of this film lies in the compelling voice-over of Weiss' mother and the brilliant cinematography. Though the spoken story remains focused on life in Budapest, Weiss uses super-8 footage from her grandparents' vacations in Hawaii, Venezuela and Arizona, plus a whole lot of footage from Weiss' hometown of Toronto. It's a strange device, but a successful one. Check out the premiere of *Timepiece* on Saturday, June 3. First screening starts at 8pm, and if you miss that you can try again at 9:30pm. Both screenings take place at the National Film Board's John Spotton Theatre, 1150 John.

FRESH IDEAS FOR A FAMILIAR STORY

At first I thought, "Please, not another rendition of how so-and-so survived the Holocaust." It may be the most horrific tragedy of the 20th century, but it's also become a storyteller's obsession to the point where I thought there weren't any new angles left. Well, I was wrong. *Valerie Weiss'*

Timepiece tells a moving tale about how her mother and grandparents escaped from Budapest

— DAVID COFFEY

Gossip, news, events, info? Let Film Week know at 504-4339 x: 226, fax 504-4348 or email ctunnac@eye.net.