



DARFUR WINS BEST FILM IN NEW YORK

Making the festival circuit rounds ahead of its international release, *Darfur (Attack on Darfur, USA)*, scooped up Best International Film at the recent New York International Film Festival (NYIFF). Directed by Uwe Boll, *Darfur* is as gut-wrenching and brutal as it is poignant. The action-drama, starring Billy Zane, Kristanna Loken and Edward Furlong, revolves around six Western journalists who get caught up in atrocities perpetrated by the state-sponsored Janjaweed militia.

"The award is great. We wanted to open eyes to what is happening in Darfur and hopefully awards like this will help generate a wider audience," says Uwe.

Darfur has been selected at several film festivals, including PAFF and VIFF, and has received praise from the likes of director Ron Howard and Amnesty International. The NYIFF award is the first win for *Darfur* and is, according to writer/producer Chris Roland, part of a grassroots approach to marketing the controversial film.

"A film like *Darfur* can't be thrown into the mainstream circuit or even the art house circuit and hope to do business. This is a specific film for a specific audience and it's that audience that will help market *Darfur* to others. Our approach has been to slowly build awareness through a grassroots campaign aimed at our core audience. It started with NGO tours and progressed into festivals. With the current buzz circling it, we're ready to release in the US followed by international," says Chris.

When asked whether this approach is wise in today's quick in-and-out business model, Chris quickly responds. "To quote Saint Augustine, patience is the companion of wisdom. You can't go for the quick hit and run approach on this kind of film; sometimes old school is the best approach. *Darfur* will continue to find an audience over years."

Awareness for the film has been rising steadily over the past year through its NGO, festival and other pre-release screenings, including several hosted by Uwe in North America. It's an approach most producers try to avoid for fear of losing momentum and because of the need to quickly generate a return on investment.

"Of course *Darfur* is a financial venture but we also want to make a statement and change minds, which that takes longer. NYIFF and other festivals shows that people are responding. It's more than making a fast profit," says Uwe.

Darfur is being released in the US and Canada by Phase 4 Films on 26 October 2010. The film has sold in several territories in Europe, including Germany, France and UK, as well as Russia and Australia through Event Film. ZenHQ Films is currently planning distribution in Sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa.

"TV and DVD sales are the main revenue generators in Africa. Theatrical releases focus predominantly on star-driven mainstream US films and more recently in South Africa a shift to homegrown local stories. I'd love to see a wider theatrical release, because *Darfur* really gets under your skin on the big screen," says Chris.