

The Birds Eye View Film Festival, now in its fourth year, is a celebration of international women filmmakers. Birds Eye View was originally launched back in 2002, with a programme of short films by emerging women filmmakers. Our motivation for it was one startling statistic: that women make up only 7% of film directors in the UK. This percentage is actually precisely the same as for female directors of the FTSE 100 companies. But what is unique about film is its storytelling power: stories which permeate our culture, shape our society and affect the way we see ourselves and each other. Birds Eye View is based on a passionate belief in the importance of a balanced perspective for the health of our society.

Since 2002 BEV has grown rapidly from one short film event to a week-long international film festival across London (BFI Southbank, ICA, Curzon, Ritzy), with year round activity including national tours (in 2008 we'll be taking a programme of films & events to Manchester, Glasgow and Newcastle), the First Weekenders Club (promoting the all-important opening weekend of woman-directed film releases) and soon creative labs, hothousing female talent from various disciplines and providing opportunities to pitch feature ideas to be taken into development.

Have we had an impact? On individual filmmakers, certainly. Hattie Dalton, director of BAFTA winning short film *The Banker*, told me that it was attending a BEV event in 2003 that gave her that final bit of chutzpah she needed to get out there and make her film. Other filmmakers have expressed relief that such a community exists to celebrate and encourage them to forge a larger niche in this highly competitive, male-dominated industry.

But have the stats improved? I contacted the UKFC Research & Statistics Unit and learned that out of all UK films released so far this year (62 films) only 6.5% (4 out of 62 films) were directed by, and only 12.1% written by women, so there is no sign of a positive trend. In fact these numbers are down since the last UK Film Council analysis. Can we improve things? I think so, yes. Can we actually achieve 50-50 equality? Not until child-rearing is shared, which means proper paternity leave, part time and flexible hours for men as well as women at all career levels, and a major shift in public attitude.

But it's Women in Film and Television, not us, who are there to lobby parliament about flexi time initiatives. We're the softer side of this crucial mission. We're here to inspire, persuade, excite. To shift people's perceptions and fire their imaginations. We signal hope – there is a place where women lead the creative vision, and it's a place of enormous talent and potential.

One thing we also attempt is to prevent any misconception that women only make certain types of film. There is something quite profound about the extraordinary skill of women to create complex & subtle emotional dramas. But let's not be so shortsighted as to confine the talents of women to that box. As part of our 2008 film festival we are partnering with the BFI to show a retrospective celebrating women in early comedy. Watching these films makes clear the deprived state of film today. Which female comedy actresses own the silver screen with their comic force? Where are the female Woody Allens,



## SISTERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

THE BIRDS EYE VIEW FILM FESTIVAL IS SPREADING ITS WINGS

By Rachel Millward

Eddie Murphys, Ben Stillers, Steve Martins? Indeed, where are the Mae Wests, the Betty Balfours, the Katherine Hepburns?

Julie Delpy turned our heads this year with her comic genius in *2 Days in Paris* – written by, directed by and starring Delpy (not to mention her composition work on the soundtrack). We celebrated this at the Edinburgh Film Festival this August as we launched the BEV First Weekenders Club. This is a year-round, national initiative which signifies BEV's desire to be more than 'just' a festival. The success of a movie depends to a ridiculous extent on its opening weekend. To ensure we have a greater diversity of films in the cinema, we need to be canny audiences and wise up to the power of our ticket-buying. If women-directed features get good First Weekend audiences, those filmmakers are more likely to get the next film funded, so our new club will, through active promotion of the opening weekend of woman-directed features, impact on the careers of female directors in new and effective ways.

I wish I could say that equality is just around the corner. I can say that something exciting is happening here and invite you to join us to celebrate.

Birds Eye View Film Festival 2008 takes place at the ICA, BFI Southbank and Curzon Soho from 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> March 2008 ([www.birds-eye-view.co.uk](http://www.birds-eye-view.co.uk)).

Rachel Millward is Director of Birds Eye View.



In conjunction with Birds Eye View, Vertigo is pleased to offer a pair of tickets to the Birds Eye View Comedy Launch, held at BFI Southbank in London on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to readers who can answer the following question:

**What is the name of the first female film director at the Gaumont Film Company in Paris?**

Please email your answer, with full contact details, to [vertigo@vertigomagazine.co.uk](mailto:vertigo@vertigomagazine.co.uk) by March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 quoting 'BEV' in the subject line.