

Copyright 1998 The Washington Post  
The Washington Post  
View Related Topics  
January 26, 1998, Monday, Final Edition  
**SECTION:** STYLE; Pg. C07

**LENGTH:** 434 words

**HEADLINE:** 'Slam' Locks Up Sundance Prize; D.C.-Based Prison Film Named Top Drama at Utah Festival

**BYLINE:** Harlan Jacobson, Special to The Washington Post

**DATELINE:** PARK CITY, Utah, Jan. 25

**BODY:**

"**Slam**," which is set in Washington and depicts the experiences of a black man sent to prison on a drug charge, was named best dramatic feature at the Sundance Film Festival, which ended today. Actress and member Alfre Woodard presented the Grand Jury Prize to director Marc Levin.

The annual festival, which is held under the auspices of Robert Redford's Sundance Institute, has become a showcase for independent films, some of which come away with recognition and distribution. Notable prize winners in previous years have included "The Brothers McMullen" and "Blood Simple."

Darren Aronofsky was named best director for "," his edgy, black-and-white fiabout a loner mathematician. In the nonfiction category, the grand jury prize was split between two documentaries: "The Farm," by Liz Garbus and JonatStack, which details the lives of five inmates at the Angola Prison Farm in Louisiana; and "Frat House," by Todd Phillips and Andrew Gurland, which looks at the ugly side of American male fraternities, including hazing and pledging.

Sundance audiences voted for Chris Eyre's "Smoke Signals" as the most popular film. A product of the festival's writers' workshop, the film examines the legacy transferred from father to son on an Idaho Indian reservation. "Smoke Signals" was also voted the favorite

dramatic movie by competing filmmakers. Audiences named Jeff Dupre's "Out of the Past," about a struggle to form a gay-straight social club in a Salt Lake City high school, as best documentary. Filmmakers voted for Steve Yeager's "Divine Trash," an appreciation of Baltimore filmmaker John Waters's "Pink Flamingos."

Of course, the real winners at Sundance are not necessarily the films that earn prizes. Brad Anderson's Boston yuppie romance, "Next Stop Wonderland," for example was picked up by Miramax, which paid some \$ 6.5 million to show the film and option future work. Also noticed were Bill Condon's "Gods and Monsters," which featured Ian McKellen in a sterling performance as "Frankenstein" director James Whale, and Walter Salles's affecting "Central Station," about an orphan in Brazil.

Filmmaker Nick Broomfield left the festival as both a winner and loser for his "Kurt and Courtney." Sundance canceled special screenings of the documentary after Courtney Love threatened legal action, ostensibly over music rights. The film implicates Love in the 1994 suicide of her husband, Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. The Sundance controversy helped put the film on the map, but distributors and some critics who saw it at a guerrilla midnight screening were reportedly unimpressed.

**GRAPHIC:** Photo, John Kirby, Marc Levin, right, directing cast members of "Slam," which was honored yesterday at the Sundance Film Festival.

**LOAD-DATE:** January 26, 1998