

## Feature: Bring the SXSW Film Festival Home With IFC Direct on Demand

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 1, 2009 - 1:57pm

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CHICAGO – Most film fans don't have the time, money, or connections to get to film festivals in their own city, much less ones that take place out of town. The festival circuit has created many an independent film hit but most of them don't make their way to even Chicago much less the small towns of America. Now you can bring the film festival experience home with [IFC Direct](#) [6].

IFC Films' On Demand channel has a particularly notable series this month called "IFC Festival Direct & SXSW". The series of films available on IFC Direct On Demand creates the first-ever nationwide on-demand film festival experience, bringing the South by Southwest Film Festival home to people who would never get a chance to go there. A select group of five films that screened at the 2009 SXSW Film Festival will be simultaneously available in 30 million homes and virtually all major U.S. markets.



Alexander the Last

*Photo credit: IFC Films*

The most high-profile film for IFC at 2009's SXSW was Joe Swanberg's "[Alexander the Last](#) [2]," an entry in the "mumblecore" sub-genre that has been so popular on the festival circuit the last few years. [Jess Weixler](#) [8] ("[Teeth](#) [18]") gives a fantastic performance in this sexy ensemble drama that attempts a tale of temptation and how artistic people can be easily led into it.



In a film co-produced by [Noah Baumbach](#) [13] (“The Squid and the Whale”) and Anish Savjani (“[Wendy and Lucy](#) [19]”), Weixler plays a young actress named Alex who is cast in a sexually-charged play just as her husband, a musician, goes out of town for a while. As this married actress is directed into increasingly compromising positions with her co-star, a young man who she even lets crash at her apartment when he can’t make it home after rehearsal, the possibility of infidelity lingers in the background.

Meanwhile, her sister Hellen (a strong supporting turn by Amy Seimetz), to which Alex is unusually close, becomes romantically entangled with her co-star. Weixler and Seimetz feel wonderfully genuine and Jane Adams and Josh Hamilton are interesting in small roles as the play’s director and writer, but “Alexander the Last” often feels like a film “trying to be natural” more than just feeling natural.

I couldn’t shake the feeling that I was watching a movie trying to feel like real life instead of something that actually felt genuine. See it on IFC Direct if you’re a fan of Swanberg, mumblecore, or Weixler, but “Alexander the Last” only barely works outside of the indie glow of an actual film festival.

“Alexander the Last” plays On Demand through June 11th, 2009.



Medicine For Melancholy

*Photo credit: IFC Films*

A much better film that first debuted at the 2008 SXSW Festival and a movie that was already nominated for Independent Spirit and Gotham Awards is Barry Jenkins’ “[Medicine For Melancholy](#) [12],” which returned for an encore screening at this year’s SXSW and has been included in the IFC Direct package.

Despite having one of the best movie names of the year, “Medicine For Melancholy” is a beautifully shot tale of love after sex. An African-American pair of twentysomethings wake up in a bedroom at a party and realize they don’t even know each other’s name. Micah (Wyatt Cenac) tries to be friendly but the beautiful Jo (Tracy Heggins) remains distant. Micah doesn’t give up easily.

“Medicine For Melancholy” is a lovely film that has already had a fantastic theatrical run at the IFC Center in New York City. A.O. Scott of The New York Times called the film “an exciting debut, and a film that, without exaggeration or false modesty, finds interest and feeling the world just as it is.”

“Medicine For Melancholy” has been lumped into the mumblecore subgenre but it feels more poetic and beautiful to this viewer than the often-overdone tales of hipster twentysomethings that litter the film festival landscape. Highly recommended.

“Medicine For Melancholy” has been On Demand for a while and only continues through May 4th, 2009. Don’t miss it.





Paper Covers Rock

*Photo credit: IFC Films*

Another 2008 SXSW Film Festival hit returned to the 2009 SXSW fest for an encore screening - Joe Maggio's poignant drama "[Paper Covers Rock](#) [14]". The film is "a gripping drama about a troubled young woman struggling to regain custody of her daughter".

Joe Maggio has made a buzz on the indie scene before with "Virgil Bliss" and "Milk and Honey". "Paper Covers Rock" was made in only 10 days for \$7,000 and is the first installment in a ten-film series inspired by arguably one of the most important film series of all time, Krystof Kieszlowski's "Decalogue".

"Paper Covers Rock" plays On Demand from now through June 4th, 2009.



Zift

*Photo credit: IFC Films*

IFC Films had two premieres at this year's SXSW Film Festival besides "Alexander the Last". The first is a film that had made the circuit before, even playing at the [EU Film Festival](#) [20] here in Chicago last month, where we covered it at HollywoodChicago.com. We told you if you went to EU that you'd see some films that would build buzz around the world. Hopefully, you went.

The film in question is Javor Gardev's striking