

## Press angles for EXPIRATION DATE:

Please refer to the PRESS NOTES because many stories suggest themselves. However, here are some ideas...

1. Native angle—What makes EXPIRATION DATE especially interesting from a native perspective is that that lead role was not initially written for a native---it was just cast that way. As a result, native communities have embraced the film because it was refreshing to see a native actor play an everyman part where he didn't have to ride a horse or take off his shirt. The film has been accepted into the prestigious HEARD MUSEUM FILM FESTIVAL in October which celebrates native art. Rick Stevenson, the director, remembers, "the best day of shooting was the day 500 natives showed up as extras in full regalia and honored us with their traditional dances. Some of their elders had read the script and endorsed it."
2. Business angle—The film business is seriously broken. Every year 25,000 movies are made around the world. The Hollywood Studios make about 450 of them. About 550 of them get distributed. How many of those films are studio films? About 450. Why? Is it because the Hollywood studios make the best 450 films? No. It is because the studios have a monopoly on the distribution system. A lucky 100 indie films sneak into that system when they get attention at film festivals but most of them fail at the box office because they cannot compete with the attention-getting, noise-making budgets(on average \$36 million a film) of Hollywood. For this reason, **THERE IS NO VIABLE MODEL FOR DISTRIBUTING AND HENCE, FINANCING INDIE FILMS.** One cannot tell an investor that he or she has even a reasonable chance of getting their money back. **WITH THIS IN MIND,** Rick Stevenson, the director/co-producer spent the last four years studying the business inside out with the aim of building a model that works. Whether it will is still unclear but so far so good. These are the principles upon which EXPIRATION DATE was made and will be distributed: First, the film for a fraction of a normal film budget. Spend less and there is a better chance of getting into profit. Second, everyone worked for minimum wage. Third, the difference between minimum wage and what people were worth was made up for in GROSS profit shares(Producer's gross). Fourth, everyone including investors were given exactly the same definition of gross profit so, if one person made money, everyone would make money. The deal was simple and transparent. As a result, producer John Forsen recalls, "I have never been on a set whether money was less of an issue". Finally, everyone including the drivers, read the script and were invested in it creatively. As a result of the above, everyone's interests were exactly the same. Everyone wanted to work hard to make a great movie. In a way, it was the ultimate egalitarian approach to the ultimate capitalist venture. **If this works, Decathlon Films will make ten more of these movies in Seattle and the northwest.** Of course, one of the biggest obstacles to returning investment is distribution. Normally, all rights are given away just to get a chance at theatrical distribution. Nine out of ten of these arrangements fail leaving the investors and participants with nothing even though some money is

made on the movie. It is a buyer's market. The EXPIRATION DATE team has sought to bust this model by raising their own distribution budget and skipping the distributor altogether saving 35% on every dollar of income AND avoiding creative accounting. They made a direct deal with the best arts distributor in the country—the Landmark Theatre Chain—which also boasts the most sophisticated digital projection system of any outfit. As a result, they pay a one time fee of \$2000 to digitize the film---not \$3000 a print to go out in 100 theatres. They are also developing a website that will closely track those who have seen the film. This will be significant as they tighten the window on dvd distribution, offering advance orders for the films release on dvd and providing many extras to those who order after having seen the film. After taking a BEST FEATURE award at the Spiritual Cinema Festival-at-Sea, they are also engaged in a campaign offering this film to churches and other organizations as a mutual fundraiser. While the film is not religious, it does have a compassionate view of the universe and has been embraced by organizations longing for something hopeful and positive. The innovative list goes on and on. **Most significantly, the EXPIRATION DATE filmmakers don't fear piracy. Piracy is the enemy of the studios. Anonymity is the enemy of the indie.** They are happy to have as many people see the film as possible in hopes that it will fuel more interest in its ancillary rights. This approach can work when you've got a good product and don't have the money to let people know about it. Note the growth of the DAVE MATTHEWS BAND when they allowed people to tape their concerts. The fan base expanded and spends millions on concerts and their related products. But the jury is still out on this entire approach. It is exciting to follow because everything they do is transparent.

3. Personal angle/Seattle angle—Director Rick Stevenson says his primary motive for making EXPIRATION DATE in Seattle was selfish; “I'm madly in love with my wife and family and wanted to stay home. I have made ten movies and directed lots of television, but never in my home town. I now have a two year old son along with a 16 year old daughter and 20 year old son and it was time to try to make it happen here. While Vancouver has effectively killed the Seattle film industry with its economic incentives, Seattle can still compete in the smaller budget range. It also provides fresh locations and a supportive mayor. So when I set out to re-think this broken business, I was free to start from scratch and think outside the box. If this model works, several investors are standing by to finance ten more of these through the Decathlon Films partnership. My producing partner, John Forsen, has spent his career making commercials and industrials here in Seattle. For him, EXPIRATION DATE represents a big gamble--a leap into feature film making.”
4. Creative angle—The first national review called EXPIRATION DATE ‘an utterly original, quirky film’. If it's anything, it's fresh. It takes risky tonal chances given its absurd set up. But the payoff is comically black and emotionally satisfying. It is challenging without being alienating.
5. Award angle—Part of the strategy for the filmmakers was to lay low, see if they could collect some festival awards. In fact, as Stevenson recalls, “we passed up a chance to go to Sundance in order to premiere at Palm Springs International Film

- Festival and the Seattle International Film Festival. When Palm Springs called accepting the film two weeks before Sundance was to announce, we called Sundance and asked if they could give us an early decision. They said they could not. So we pulled out of consideration—which according to them filmmakers never do. Who knows if we would have been accepted or not but the gentle, non-pretentious spirit of Palm Springs seemed perfect for the premiere.” The film scored in the top 8% of all films, including all of the Oscar nominees. It then went on to the Sedona International Film Festival where it took an Audience Award for Best Feature and then on to the Omaha Film Festival where it won the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award for Best Feature. It took the BEST DIRECTOR prize at Methodfest and another Audience Award at the Spiritual Cinema Festival-at-Sea. It is up for many more awards in the coming months.
6. Local business angle—Smith Brother’s Dairies gave the filmmakers about \$500,000 worth of support through their location and trucks. While the film, in the end, celebrates milk, its set up involves milk trucks running people over. The filmmakers credit Smith Brothers for having a great sense of humor in backing this effort. They will be making appearances with the film offering milk and cookies and promoting the film on their milk cartons.
  7. Non-offensive/Family angle-- EXPIRATION DATE manages to be a black comedy without sex and profanity. The limited violence is cartoon in nature. It will have to work hard to get a PG rating. In the words of Rick Stevenson, director/co-writer, “I was not out to make some statement. I don’t mind edgier or profane elements if the material demands it. But this material didn’t demand it and it’s fun to see kids enjoy something with their older brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents. For a film with a college soundtrack, it played amazing well to a 70 year old audience in Palm Springs.”
  8. Music/Seattle Sound angle—The score was written by BC SMITH who is a LA-based Seattle composer who has a unique way with native sounds. He also wrote the score for Smoke Signals. The soundtrack also boasts many of Seattle’s Subpop groups—thanks to music supervisor and Seattle music guru David Minert—IRON AND WINE, THE FRUIT BATS and THE HELIO SEQUENCE as well as many Seattle indies—Damien Jurado, Chris DeGarmo, Pink Martini, etc. All of the acts provided their music at a fraction of their rates to support the movie and the goal of jumpstarting a film industry in Seattle.
  9. Star angle—Dee Wallace Stone is best known as the mother in ET but has come to prominence again recently in the ABC television show, SONS AND DAUGHTERS. She plays Lucielle Silvercloud, Charlie’s mother. David Keith(OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN) forewent his normal fee to play WILD WILLIAM which showcases his talents more than anything in recent years. Local luminaries Cynthia Geary(Northern Exposure) and Richard Saunders(WKRP Cincinnati) lent their talents as well.
  10. Discovery angle—The most significant discover is Robert Guthrie, the young native actor who leads the cast. Director Rick Stevenson recalls, “I saw every native actor from Canada to Mexico and could not find the perfect actor. Finally, my friend, Michelle Satter, who runs the Sundance Institute, told me about Robert and how he had been in the acting group at the institute the summer before. I

knew within minutes of meeting him that he was the one. Sascha Knopf, who plays Bessie, was also a vital discovery although she already had a body of work. Recalls Stevenson, "I had to find an actress who could be annoying and appealing at the same time. It wasn't easy." As for local talent, Brandon White, who plays Arnold the Coffee Addict, steals the show.