

PRESS COVERAGE

1 R E D Hollywood 2.0

By James Daly

Throughout the 20th century, filmmaking evolved from a nascent industry into a centralized system of stars, studios, and theaters reaching into neighborhoods around the country and the world. Call it Hollywood 1.0. Today, new technologies are exploding this old model and transforming all aspects of moviemaking - from how films are financed, produced, and distributed to ultimately how they are enjoyed. We're watching the birth of Hollywood 2.0.

Here Wired highlights 25 players bringing the 21st-century Hollywood to life. This is an entertainment world where computer-generated actors are competing with flesh and blood. Studios are not studios: feature films are created on desktop computers for less than US\$1,000. Theaters are not theaters: the cinema experience is being transferred to theme parks and onto massive video murals that will forever change our cityscapes. Film is not film: celluloid is going the way of vinyl records as movies are distributed digitally. And Hollywood is not Hollywood: the industry has gone global as fiber-optic cables allow simultaneous work on the same movie by creatives working from Cannes to Calcutta.

Few dispute the immense impact that 20th-century cinema has had on the lives of almost everyone on the planet. Hollywood 2.0 promises to deliver a similar impact - by very different means. Here's a peek at what's to come.

Desktop Filmmaking Stefan Avalos, Lance Weiler - filmmakers

In an era of monstrous budgets and costly postproduction, Stefan Avalos and Lance Weiler (from left below) are boldly going where no filmmaker has gone before: to the desktop PC. For US\$900, the Rushland, Pennsylvania, directors created *The Last Broadcast*, a feature whose production incorporates everyday programs - including over-the-counter editing and image processing software - while commenting on the omnipresence of the same technology.

"We wanted to do something for about the cost of a home stereo system and without begging for money," remembers Avalos. The mockumentary - a gritty *Thin Blue Line-meets-Blowup* investigation of two public-access TV show hosts murdered in New Jersey - took less than a year from conception to premiere, a schedule unheard of for feature films. Promoted from their Web site and projected in DVD, *The Last Broadcast* will tour colleges and art theaters early next year. - Colin Berry



Wavelength releases 1st all-digital pic "The Last Broadcast"

By Marc Graser

Directors have talked about it, studios and exhibitors are still doubting it, now Wavelength Releasing has done it: The independent production studio on Friday began screening the first all-digital film using a satellite-based digital projector in theaters in five markets. The 90-minute pic, "The Last Broadcast," debuted in a string of independent theaters in Providence, R.I., Philadelphia, Orlando, Minneapolis, and Portland, Ore.

The pic is beamed from satellites into the theaters using computer servers inside POWER Display projectors provided by Digital Projection, a Kennesaw, Ga.-based company. "Instead of transferring our digital feature to celluloid and releasing via traditional mechanisms, we took advantage of the new digital distribution possibilities," said Lance Weiler, director of the film and co-founder of Wavelength Releasing.

Producers expect the film to debut in larger markets -- Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Austin -- in the spring.

The pic, a documentary about a team of psychics and sound recordists who search for the Jersey Devil, an urban legend, was filmed entirely on digital film for under \$1,000 and produced on a personal computer using Windows NT.

According to Tim Butler, manager of marketing for Digital Projection, the digital projectors range from \$60,000 to \$90,000, similar to the price of conventional film projectors.

Butler said that although no major exhibitor or studio has yet to adopt the new technology, which promises faster delivery speeds and cheaper printing fees, most are "waiting for the technology to mature."



PEOPLE TO WATCH

By Jennifer Hillner

Lance Weiler broke new filmmaking ground by transmitting the picture he codirected, *The Last Broadcast*, from satellites directly to theaters - skipping celluloid altogether. A watershed event, right? "It has caused a slight rumble," demurs Weiler, who received calls from many awestruck execs at major studios. Humility aside, Weiler knows the true power of distribution, so he's taking his show around the globe, wrapping up with a New York screening this month.



Movies Without Film

By Michael J. Martinez

In October 1997, two young filmmakers, Lance Weiler and Stefan Avalos, finished up the first feature film to be entirely produced on digital video, *The Last Broadcast*. The camera was digital, using magnetic tape instead of film. The post-production work and special effects were all digital, done, of all places, on a rural Pennsylvania turf farm.

A psychological thriller about murder in the New Jersey pine barrens, *The Last Broadcast* has quickly become the poster child for digital filmmakers, not only for its art but for its \$900 budget. On Saturday, the two filmmakers showed it to the Directors Guild of America, and it will be featured in a special digital film exhibition at the Cannes Film Festival later this week.

"We borrowed a lot of equipment" to make the movie, Avalos says while relaxing at the 60-acre farm where the filmmakers set up shop. "We set up an old Pentium 133 to work on a few seconds of digital animation for us. A month later, it was ready to go."

"For a while, we had to haul digital projectors to festivals just so we could show it," Weiler says. "Now, with so many people out there making digital films, the projectors are there waiting for us."



ON DOT-COMMON GROUND
FEBRUARY 24, 2000

A growing number of indie filmmakers are finding their own distribution routes. Philadelphia-based co-producer and co-director Lance Weiler shot the 87-minute *THE LAST BROADCAST*, which follows a fictional public-access TV crew into the New Jersey woods, using a mini-DV camera and edited it on his desktop PC. The \$ 900 in production costs were from the costs of tape stock, gas, food and tolls.

"People don't want to believe it cost \$ 900. It's a direct call to action because filmmakers can't hide behind the fact that you need a lot of money anymore," says Weiler.

The film was released theatrically in five theaters. Weiler has self-distributed over 15,000 DVDs and 30,000 VHS cassettes over the Internet and at brick-and-mortar retailers.



THE NEW DIGITAL DEMOCRACY
MARCH 27, 2000
ROMESH RATNESAR AND JOEL STEIN

Lance Weiler and Stefan Avalos, two freelancing filmmakers, spent all of \$900 in 1997 to shoot a digital-video movie called *The Last Broadcast*, which, like *The Blair Witch Project*, was a mockumentary horror movie involving a murder in the woods (in the future, it seems, "*Arboreal Murder Mockumentary*" will surpass "*Romantic Tearjerker*" as the most popular Blockbuster category).

Rather than shell out \$60,000 to make a celluloid print of the movie so they could show it on theater projectors, Avalos and Weiler partnered with satellite companies to retrofit theaters in five cities to project the movie digitally--from hard drive straight to the big screen. That stunt made Avalos and Weiler, who live on a 200-acre sod farm in rural Pennsylvania, the first to project a movie digitally in movie houses. They became instant icons of the film-geek crowd. They also became pretty rich. Through video rentals and sales--and distribution in 20 countries--*The Last Broadcast* has grossed more than \$1 million, making it, percentage-wise, "one of the most profitable movies ever made," Avalos says.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"A slick thriller. There is betrayal, death and a twisty climactic frisson in this dark, media mauling parable."

-TIME MAGAZINE

"... a gritty Thin Blue Line meets Blow Up investigation of two public access TV show hosts murdered in New Jersey ... Avalos and Weiler boldly go where no filmmaker has gone before ..."

-WIRED MAGAZINE

"The Last Broadcast is creepy and provocative ... a startlingly good feature ... a smart, assured work no matter how exactly it was made."

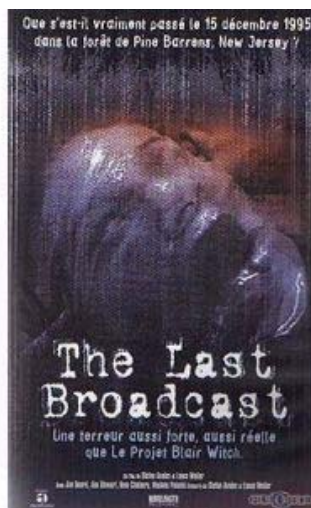
-PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

"... the film itself goes beyond a Spinal Tap-esque joke and ends up tackling the supreme weirdness of the 90's: tabloid television spun out of control, corporations controlling everything, internet frenzy and ambitious, delusional, egomaniac do-it-yourselfers. What Coppola's The Conversation was to Nixon's Watergate, The Last Broadcast is to Clinton's Monicagate."

-RAYGUN MAGAZINE

"Sixty Minutes meets War of the Worlds meets The X Files meets the O.J. Simpson trial ... The acting is realistic ... The story is well told ... It's terrific."

-FOX TV



French Box Art



UK Box Art

Full Review



THE LAST BROADCAST

April 2000 EMPIRE MAGAZINE UK

★★★★★
Out of 5

Long before Eduardo Sanchez and Daniel Myrick embarked on **The Blair Witch Project**, Stefan Avalos and Lance Weiler posted a website advertising their film about the Jersey Devil and the murders attendant on its legend. Chicken and egg considerations aside, this technically astute mockumentary places similarly eerie occurrences in the context of the media mentality that made *Witch* such a hit in the first place.

Loner Jim Suerd (Seward) is jailed for the slaughter of his companions while camping in the Pine Barrens investigating an unexplained New Jersey myth for the public access show, *Fact Or Fiction*. But documentarist David Leigh (Beard) isn't convinced that the self-proclaimed psychic and the media-tarred psycho are one and the same, and sets out to expose the flaws in the evidence and the media's part in manipulating the truth.

Meticulously forging archival footage, interviews, cable outtakes, press clippings and graphics, Avalos and Weiler have performed a minor cinematic miracle. Shooting exclusively on digital video, then editing using their desktop, they brought the film in for a remarkable \$900.

But the structure of this dazzling dissertation on the capriciousness of the press, science and the justice system is every bit as ingenious as its construction. Exploiting the credibility and pizzazz of the Errol Morris brand of documentary, it lures the viewer ever deeper into a conflicting morass of "facts" that makes it impossible to see the wood for the trees. It's ambitious, sophisticated, intelligent and demands to be seen.