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“A Snow Mobile for George” 97 minutes, color

Festivals Up-Date:

Three festivals announce “A Snow Mobile for George” as an official selection in their Feature Documentary Competition. The Santa Barbara International Film Festival will screen “A Snow Mobile for George” on Thursday Jan. 31 and Saturday Feb 2 at the Victoria Hall. The film is also nominated for an award from the Fund for Santa Barbara.

The Big Sky Documentary Festival in Missoula, MT placed “A Snow Mobile for George” in its competition (Feb. 19). And the Sedona Film Festival in Sedona, Arizona selected the film for its documentary contest to run Feb 27-March 2.

Synopsis:

“A Snow Mobile for George” is a rambunctious road trip that collects the stories of fishermen, cowboys and firemen who have to face the consequences of environmental de-regulation by the Bush Administration. This is not a typical environmental film in which the audience is lectured to “eat their vegetables” by well-intentioned Ivy League commentators. Instead, the film reveals people who have no choice but to fight for their livelihoods and, in some cases their lives, as a result of environmental rule changes.

Starting with a question over the filmmaker’s used two-stroke snowmobile engine, the documentary uncovers the political strategy and rationale behind a massive sell-off of public resources.

But if close ties between corporations and the Bush White House don’t surprise you the film’s approach may. “A Snow Mobile for George” begins modestly as a one-man, one-machine road film that simply asks why rules to clean up a smoky off-road machine got shelved. With no presumption of guilt or blame, filmmaker Todd Darling tows his family snowmobile across the United States and persists in asking that question.

What starts off as a loopy personal quest steadily morphs as this petroleum Huck Finn takes the viewer to the sites of more serious environmental changes.

Told with a dry sense of humor, the film traces rule changes back to key Administration players. On this coast to coast journey, the filmmaker goes to the Klamath River along the drought stricken California/Oregon border where politically inspired rule changes by the Administration helped cause the nation's largest fish die-off in 2002. A thousand miles East, in Wyoming, he discovers a range war between ranchers and oil-companies started when political appointees in the Interior Department suppressed clean water rules. And finally, he and the snowmobile roll into lower Manhattan. There he meets New York firemen, Wall Street workers and residents worried about their health and their lives because White House environmental officials ordered the EPA to side-step toxic waste protocols in the collapse of the World Trade Center.

The common thread among these stories is de-regulation – the notion that common citizens benefit when “the government gets off their back”. But the film uncovers how the Administration worked efficiently to match up the goals of select industries with the political demands of the White House at the expense of the little guy.

Through out the journey the original question about the resurrection of the smoky two-stroke snowmobile engine becomes the tragic-comic relief. Bouncing from smog checks in Salt Lake City, buffalo in Yellowstone, college engineering contests in Michigan, and lobbyists in Washington, viewers discover that the snowmobile has some powerful allies. And oddly enough, this seemingly obscure off-road vehicle pioneered one of the Administration's most sophisticated computer-based political strategies.

At times beautiful, at times wacky, “A Snow Mobile for George” takes the viewer on an American odyssey that poses thought-provoking questions about the deterioration of the public good.

For more information go to www.asnowmobileforgeorge.com or call 310/828-5662