

# Independent filmmakers bomb at live auction

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Independent filmmakers drew laughs and a few bids at the first live movie auction but failed to sell a single film.

Promoters are still holding out hope that some bidders will follow through and snap up some of the 15 films that included a tale of four 20-something sunbathers talking about sex and a documentary starring live rodents from the nation's capital.

"It's not like we threw a party and no one came," said Alfred Newman, an event spokesman, who pointed to the

romantic comedy dubbed "Killing Cinderella" said festivals like Sundance have become a showcase for polished works, not for getting independent films distributed. Even if her film didn't get picked up at the auction, Lisa Abbatiello, 29, thought it might be good just to say she was part of the premiere event.

The Films4Auction event Friday night was touted as a new way for independent films to get distribution. Some 300 people gathered at a hotel ballroom for the public sale and watched clips of the independent films, but only an estimated 27 in the audience were potential buyers, organizers said. A few waved paddles to offer bids.

The entire lot failed to meet the non-disclosed reserve prices set by the organizers, the auction house and the movies' producers.

The screenwriter and director of a

romantic comedy dubbed "Killing Cinderella" said festivals like Sundance have become a showcase for polished works, not for getting independent films distributed. Even if her film didn't get picked up at the auction, Lisa Abbatiello, 29, thought it might be good just to say she was part of the premiere event.

"I just decided to take the risk," she said.

Bidding for her film, a romantic comedy about a young woman torn between a sophisticated Prince Charming and her bartending best

friend, was started at \$175,000, but the minimum price needed to sell the film was not met.

Rudolf Van Den Berg of Holland was trying to get distribution for his sixth feature film, "For My Baby," about a troubled man who dresses up like his dead sister as a way to remember her. But the \$750,000 minimum bid passed with no interested buyers.

The director said before the auction that a no-sale would make him sad but said "it's all in the game" of moviemaking.

Entrants had to pay \$375 to get their film in the auction. Fifty films

were submitted, and a panel whittled them down to 15, said Hal "Corky" Kessler, a lawyer and partner in the group that staged the event. Many of the works were first time projects. Eleven had been at various film festivals.

Kessler said representatives from reputable companies — he wouldn't say which ones — had approached him after the auction and told him to let them know which films were still available. He said representatives from Miramax, USA Films and Tristar had attended.

"The very fact that we had bids out there tells us this works," Kessler said.

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