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Direct contact

Flick-fest lets budding auteurs reach out to mainstream

By SARAH GILBERT

"It's like having a baby!" producer Susan Behr groaned as she and director Nathaniel Kahn picked up canisters of their freshly printed film, **"My Architect."**

Plenty of novice filmmakers will feel the same way in the next few days, as their labors of love finally make it to the screen at the **New Directors/New Films** festival, a joint presentation by the Film Society of Lincoln Center and MoMA's department of film and media.

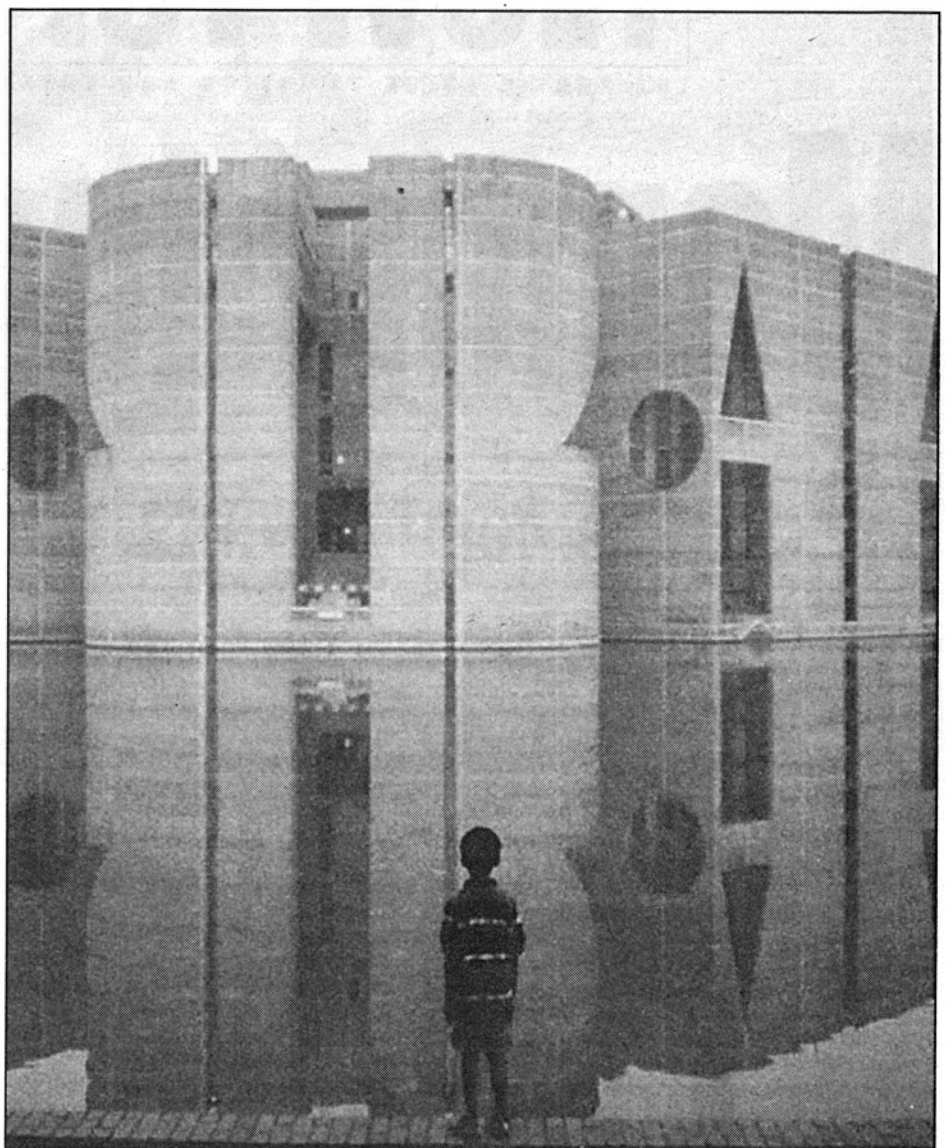
"It's the place I wanted most of all to premier my film," said Kahn, "because they've found films from all over the world and put together a festival that I think has meaning."

"My Architect," Kahn's first feature-length documentary, will screen this evening.

Now in its 32nd year, the festival takes credit for introducing New York audiences to such luminaries as Pedro Almodovar, Wim Wenders and Brooklyn filmmaker Spike Lee.

Like most independent filmmakers, Kahn, 40, who lives in Manhattan, had to drum up his own funding to make his movie, which is about his father, American architect Louis Kahn.

Louis Kahn died of a heart attack in Penn Station in 1974, but he led an extraordinary life — or lives — juggling three separate families while creating a handful of spectacular buildings, from the Salk Institute in La Jolla, Calif., to the Parliament and Capitol Buildings in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Louis Kahn, master builder, is the subject of the indie documentary "My Architect."

He had a wife and daughter, but also two lovers in his life, who each had a child, the youngest of whom is Nathaniel.

The film follows Nathaniel Kahn's journey as he tries to piece together his father's life and character, interviewing everyone with any insights to offer, from fellow architect Frank Gehry, who drew inspiration from Kahn's work, to the cabbies who drove him around his hometown of Philadelphia.

Along the way, the movie explores the struggle Nathaniel faces as he lets go of his "child's-eye view" of his father.

"Through making the film, my vision of him grew up," he said.

And while the film captures the beauty and majesty of Kahn's buildings, it's essentially a father-and-son story, and a meditation on the effect genius can have on those closest to it.

This weekend, you can also catch: **"Ticket to Jerusalem,"** a hybrid doc/fiction film set in the West Bank, Israel; **"Respiro,"** an Italian chick-flick starring Valeria Golino, Tom Cruise's glamorous girlfriend in **"Rain Man"**; **"Angel on the Right,"** a dark comedy from Tajikistan; **"The Day I Will Never Forget,"** a doc about female circumcision in Kenya; and **"The Embalmer,"** an Italian thriller.

Through April 6, various times, at Alice Tully Hall, Broadway and 65th Street; the Walter Reade Theater, 65 W. 65th St., near Amsterdam Avenue; and the Gramercy Theater, 127 E. 23rd St. at Lexington Avenue Call (212) 875-5050 or visit www.filmlinc.com.