

Young filmmaker satirizes conventional surf movies - Hawaii News - Honolulu Star-Advertiser

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By Michael Tsai

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Long before he directed "A Clockwork Orange" and "2001:A Space Odyssey," Stanley Kubrick cut his directorial teeth on a nine-minute film titled "The Flying Padre," about a Catholic priest in New Mexico who uses an airplane to minister to his congregation.

David Lynch ("Blue Velvet," "Twin Peaks") began honing his unique artistic vision with a four-minute oddity called "Six Figures Getting Sick," which he called a "film-painting" depicting six human heads (modeled after Lynch's own impressive noggin) sprouting limbs and torsos and then, well, vomiting.

There's no telling yet what Mid-Pacific Institute senior Adam Simon's first short film might portend about his cinematic future, but it is an entertaining, frequently hilarious snapshot of the auteur as a young man.

In "Foliage:Roots of the Tree Barrel," which screens at the Hawaii International Film Festival on Saturday, Simon harnessed the improvisational skills of a cadre of MPI friends to turn a mildly amusing premise — the emerging sport of land-surfing (skateboarding) through tree barrels (overhanging trees) — into a surprisingly sophisticated parody of surf feature films.



Adam
Simon

"I have a lot of quirky friends," says the haltingly self-aware 17-year-old. "This basically grew out of the weird energy that you get with private-school kids — wealthy hapa kids who are into a lot of strange, unique things."

A standout student with talent in music and an interest in art media, Simon spent the last two years working as an intern for Kinetic Productions, a local production company involved in television commercial production and feature films.

Under the guidance of acclaimed director James Sereno, Simon found himself immersed in nearly every facet of production.

Over the summer, Simon took what he learned about planning and organization and applied it to his first "serious" film project, drawing on his familiarity with surf culture and his weariness with by-the-numbers surf documentaries to produce "Foliage."

"There are so many cliches and patterns that are repeated in those films," Simon says. "The archetypes are all the same."

For Simon, a National Merit semifinalist, the genre was ripe for parody.

In "Foliage," Simon, cinematographer Keita Funa-kawa and pals tweak familiar tropes: the misty mythos of the sport's origins, tension between old and new, the implications of modern technology, the redemptive

emergence of a young natural.

"I wanted to do the 'Spinal Tap' of surfing," Simon says, laughing.

Simon plans to hone his filmmaking skills at either the University of Southern California or New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

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