

Circle” tells the story of his career-threatening injury – right down to one the most graphic surgeries I’ve seen on film – with great drama and cinematography. Adams does some incredible tricks, and director Gregg Godfrey gets some incredible footage.

Unfortunately, I caught “Full Circle” right after seeing “Black Gold,” the African coffee movie, so the question of whether the California boy would be able to pay for his \$100,000 medical bill and get back on his bike kind of paled compared to whether thousands of Africans can survive selling their coffee for 11 cents a kilo.

— Richard Anderson

“Bootyful World”

You’d be an ass not to enjoy “Bootyful World,” a documentary about butts that was the highlight of my film festival experience.

A well-imagined and -executed film, it took its audience on a ride about the human ride. From colorful commentary on the butt’s many shapes and forms by an eclectic Venice Beach crowd to graphic footage of rear end enhancement surgery (moving fat from the belly to the bottom), “Bootyful World” achieved a balance of humor while raising questions about the butt’s role in society today.

The film also earned my respect for talking about Sir Mix-A-Lot’s “Baby Got Back” while never playing an audible clip from the most ridiculous song ever written.

— Danny Bobbe

“By the People”

You may think you know how elected officials win their offices, but unless you’ve actually taken part in a big campaign in a big city, you probably have no idea how tenuous the process is.

“By the People” is a behind-the-scenes look at the 2004 presidential election in Marion County, Indiana – home of Indianapolis. It’s a good-natured film, full of humor but also gravely aware of what’s at stake. There are no real villains but there are some heroes, most notably County Clerk Doris Anne Sadler, who appears to be largely in charge of pulling off the 950-precinct election. She manages through good times and bad to keep her grace and dignity, and in the end comes across as an extremely capable civil servant.

The final 30 minutes are devoted to election day, and the drama is incredible. The vote comes off like a bull ride, with its rider barely staying on. If you thought the computer era made elections a byte of cake, think again: There appear to be thousands of people involved in this effort. And the paper! What a mess!

Most admirable was how non-partisan “By the People” was. I don’t recall the presidential candidates even being mentioned by name, and I don’t believe the party of any of the election officials was offered, either. Which of course helps drive home the point: It’s not about Democrats or Republicans winning; it’s democracy itself.

— Richard Anderson

“All About the Crazy Train”

This movie about big waves and those

who ride them, is the type of film that earns collective gasps of disbelief from the audience. The movie included great aerial views of giant walls of water towering over mere men, sometimes swallowing them whole, sometimes spitting them, and sometimes giving them amazing rides.

Two things shocked me: First how helicopters were used to tow riders into position. Using the same idea behind water-skiing or wake-boarding, a line with a handle at the end pulled behind a moving vehicle, riders like the famed Laird Hamilton got help from their friends above so they could defy death and reason.

The second thing was my introduction to a whole new way to surf called foil boarding. What appears to be an average surfboard with foot bindings has a fin-like attachment a few feet below it. When the entire contraption is in motion, the fin causes the surfboard to rise out the water and makes it appear as though the surfer is hovering above the surface. You’ve got to see it to believe it!

— Danny Bobbe

“Black Crowes: Freak ‘n’ Roll”

When the Black Crowes performed at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco during their 2005 reunion tour, it was so well documented visually and audibly that, when turned into a movie and played to an audience, it received cheers from the crowd, as though they were actually attending the concert.

“Black Crowes: Freak ‘n’ Roll” featured the band in top form backing their haunting rock melodies with saxophone, trumpet and female vocals. High definition cameras panned vintage Gibson and Fender guitars across the big screen as they were immaculately shredded by true rock legends.

It was inspiring. So much so that I couldn’t sit through the entire two-hour set: I had to run home, grab my six-string and give my best attempt at the Crowes’ “No Speak No Slave.”

— Danny Bobbe

“Flying Downhill”

After the bulk of intense documen-

taries during this festival, “Flying Downhill” was an easy and rather matter-of-fact account. It touches on pieces of U.S. Ski Team phenom Bode Miller’s life – from childhood to the present – and his ski racing from the mid-’90s through the 2002 Olympics and the 2003 World Championships, the backwoods of New Hampshire to the steeps of Europe.

According to the film, Miller’s climb to the top of ski racing comes from his inner sense that a race course can be approached differently than most racers from the past handle a course. Bode wants to challenge the mountain in as straight a line downhill as possible. A method that is faster – so long as you can handle that line. One problem: He often cannot.

Bode is a well-spoken and seemingly unshakable young man – a pleasure to hear speak on a variety of life’s topics, as he can take a skiing question and turn the answer into a little more.

— Shannon McCormick

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