

SPIRIT OF SILVER LAKE FILMMAKER AWARD

ROB NILSSON

SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2006 – 7:30 PM AT THE ARCLIGHT CINEMAS
FOLLOWED BY A SCREENING OF [NEED](#)

The 2006 Spirit of Silver Lake Filmmaker Award recipient, Rob Nilsson, embodies the quintessential virtues of self-sacrifice, modesty, open collaboration, emotional sincerity and the pursuit of truth that define the pinnacle of true independent filmmaking – something very rare in this era of celebrity and super-sized egos. Especially rare is his ability to remain prolific despite an absence of media worship, mass distribution or an easily digestible brand of genre identification.

Nilsson's films are his own or, better put, are the culmination of artistic creativity inputted by everyone that works with him, which form a distinct perspective and vision unlikely to resemble anything you might find in the typical art-house circuit, let alone the big budget, high-concept amusement parks of the megaplexes. His attitude (not to mention his improvisational tone) towards filmmaking reminds one of John Cassavetes—not surprising, given that Rob Nilsson was a close friend and colleague, always willing to listen carefully to any advice Cassavetes might have thrown his way.

Early in his career Rob Nilsson achieved an overwhelming amount of recognition for his work. He won the Camera d'Or at Cannes for *NORTHERN LIGHTS* in 1978 and the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival for *HEAT AND SUNLIGHT* in 1987. In between those two films he made what is now regarded as a landmark film, *SIGNAL 7*, in 1986 (showing at this year's SLFF), that was the first small format video feature blown up to 35mm film and distributed around the world, a novelty at the time that has now become a standard in the independent film world.

Living in San Francisco, Rob Nilsson has taken the spirit of community-based filmmaking from impractical idealism to concrete pragmatism. He is currently working on the ambitious *9@Night* film series – nine dramatic feature films about the lives of 50 inner city inhabitants. These films are cast from an acting workshop he created in 1991 called the Tenderloin yGroup, which gives intensive training to homeless, inner city residents and professional actors alike. The first film produced using the actors from this group was *CHALK* in 1996. He has since completed his sixth film in the cycle, our feature presentation, *NEED*.



NEED

USA, 2006, 95 MINS

Sunday, March 26th, 7:30 pm,
ArcLight Cinemas

Director: Rob Nilsson; Story: Rob Nilsson and the Tenderloin Ygroup

NEED is about a friendship between four women who work in the sex business in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. Petite (Diane Gaidry) struggles to hold onto her relationship with Tyrone, a pool hustler, while Jane (Marianne Heath) works as a stripper in the Gold Club. Lou (Brette McCabe), Jane's mother and a heroin addict, is a renegade who works the streets and bars. Francesca Gabriele Maltz Larkin) does phone sex in the evenings while managing St. Tre's escort and modeling service during the day. In spite of the bravado she displays over the phone, she is disturbed by her lesbian feelings and tries to repress them. *NEED* challenges the stereotypes of underworld life and explores the ways in which human connections are at the root of every social structure. The film concentrates on the shared experiences which hold these women together and the strains of the business which threatens their friendship. In a profession which thrives on fantasy and martyrdom, they struggle to hold onto their reasons for caring for each other.

SIGNAL 7

USA, 1986, 92 MINS

Sunday, March 26th, 2:45 pm,
ArcLight Cinemas

Director: Rob Nilsson; Story: Rob Nilsson

A film way ahead of its time. Shot on 3/4 video and then transferred to 35mm, *SIGNAL 7* was the first small-format-video-to-film feature release in history. Nilsson's efforts attracted the attention of Francis Ford Coppola – a real videophile at the time – who attached his name to the film as a presenter, which allowed the film to have a healthy international distribution. Dedicated to John Cassavetes, this gritty drama centers around a day in the life of two middle-aged San Francisco cab drivers. Marty (Dan Leegant) is a cynical and sarcastic fellow who likes to be center stage at the DeSoto cab garage gatherings with other drivers. His buddy Speed (Bill Ackridge) is undergoing a mid-life crisis which has affected his marriage. *SIGNAL 7* speaks volumes about the anger, loneliness, and anguish of men alone and in groups. "An unusual, touching, intelligent film. . ." – New York Times.

STROKE

USA, 2000, 97 MINS

Sunday, March 26th, 4:45 pm,
ArcLight Cinemas

Director: Rob Nilsson; Story: Rob Nilsson and the Tenderloin Ygroup

Phil Berkowitz (Teddy Weiler), a 55-year-old street poet, survivor of the days of wine and roses with San Francisco's Beats, has a stroke. He lies for four days, virtually paralyzed, in his flea bag hotel room in San Francisco's Tenderloin until he is found by Johnny (Edwin Johnson), his neighbor across the hall, who ekes out a living working part-time as a janitor in a seedy strip club and escort service. After his stroke Phil is helpless and cannot work, so, breaking hotel rules, Johnny lets the recovering Phil stay in his room and tries to help him regain his speech. He also tries to play Cupid, introducing Phil to Svetlana, an attractive, recovering alcoholic Tenderloin waitress. Svetlana feels sorry for Phil, but Phil mistakes her kindness for attraction, a recipe for disaster. Thrown out of their hotel for breaking house rules, Johnny and Phil become homeless in San Francisco's chilly streets, aware that if anything were to happen to them, no one would even know they were gone. People society has forgotten might as well have been picked up by space ships. Unknown and unremembered, they simply cease to exist. "Riveting drama." – Variety.