

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
CONTACT: John David Ware
818-843-6060, john@168project.com

168 FILM FESTIVAL TEAM STORIES & DETAILS

Team Details:

Co-Stars: Victoria Jackson (SNL, 1980s) and daughter Aubrey Wessel (Team 72, Burbank, CA)
Why do they keep doing 168? (see Team 72, Burbank, CA & 81, Culver City, CA)
Deaf Actors in Film (Team 3-Santa Rosa, CA)
Newlywed Producers in Jerusalem (Team 31, a documentary)

Awards Categories

Competitor info below includes team number, title, producer(s) of record, city, state or country of origin, logline, foundational Bible verse, genre and interviews with selected teams.

LOS ANGELES -- (Mar. 18, 2010) INTERVIEW: Team 72-"The Journey"-Tim Lowry/Mike Wech, Burbank, CA. Doubting and dysfunctional people learn to hear God and find direction for their lives. Genesis 46:2-4a. Drama.

Veteran filmmakers and post production experts, Tim Lowry and Mike Wech teamed up again this year to produce "The Journey," their collective 5th foray into the 168 Contest.

Their entry this year includes a comedy spoof of an infomercial (The "Omegaphone" headphones allow the wearer to hear God through any interference) and a drama with an original song written by Victoria Jackson (SNL Star from the 1980s) and sung by Jessica Specht.

This was Jackson's first ever song about God, inspired directly by their verse Gen. 46:2-4a. Her 15-year-old daughter is a Best Supporting nominated, first time actress, Aubrey (Jackson) Wessel, who said of the experience, "Because I was acting with my mom, it felt so real and raw, it didn't even feel like acting. But, it taught me what's involved and what you have to bring to the table. I loved it. But, in the future, I'm more interested in playing the piano and singing and writing my songs."

According to Victoria Jackson, "I'm still coming down from the spiritual high. There was no angst or nail biting to the experience - just joy. I sort of floated into the project, not even sure if I was in it or not."

"The song I wrote came out in 5 minutes," she said. "And, hearing Jessica Specht's unbelievable voice sing it brought tears to my eyes. My song's lyrics describe how this obscure verse made me feel, 'It's a mystery, He would talk to me...' God speaks to everyone individually and in different ways. My conversation with God may sound silly to you and yours may make no sense to me. Only you can hear when He speaks to you, and only you can answer yes or no."

"And, there is something really intense about meditating on one random verse. It becomes multifaceted like a diamond. It takes on eternity," said Jackson.

The film's production saw many miracles, including getting a nationally known hit song cleared over the internet in one day. Jackson is a fan of national recording artist Sara Groves. She wrote and got approval from the artist the same day for the song "This Journey is My Own" from Groves' debut album, "Conversations."

Lowry and Wech were both very ill with the flu and sinus infections during production, which they say made them press in even harder to God, asking for help and strength. They used the same process as last year: incorporating the entire cast and crew's prayer-inspired vision in the literal exercise of "Hearing God."

According to Lowry, "168 and our process allows us to see how multifaceted God is. It's a real test to see if we are willing to give Him the entire film. I usually give him most of (the control of) the film and then take it back somewhere in the post production phase. That's why I have failed to deliver on time (3 times in past 168 competitions)."

"We took the theme this year ("Hearing God") as a challenge, literally, we wanted to hear God and not us. We acknowledged that we weren't the directors of this film, He is," said Wech, "We were just the crew, waiting for direction and getting the story in little bits and pieces, so it was kinda like a Rubic's Cube. It could be rather unnerving to traditional filmmakers, but we've done this before. And we did much better this year in dealing with the fear, anxiety part and especially in trusting Him. The "Journey" you will never see is in the hearts of all those who we loved as best we could on set."

According to Wech, "The most gratifying thing to us was seeing the transforming effect the process has on **us and** those around us. Getting less of me and more of God allowed us to do way more than ever before, while getting sleep every night. We took Sunday off to go to church and we even celebrated Valentines Day with our families."

Lowry said, "When we hear God, a lot of times, the communication won't make sense to others, because he knows us so well—he doesn't have to say much. We got to see many on our set get much closer to God and have "mountaintop experiences."

Lowry uses his 168 experience to advise him in national and even international productions, "Letting God lead is actually really fun because you can let go. Anxiety levels are way down when you don't have to rely on just your own strength. Soon, I will shoot a project in China, for which I will have only ten days, and it looks pretty impossible. 168 has been an amazing part of my training for getting things done. If you let him lead, he'll tell you when to walk, run and when to just sit and listen, whatever you are doing," he said.

"I would recommend our process for everyone in the 168," said Lowry, "Let God lead you all the way and you will lead others. Our cast and crew walked away saying things like, 'I've never experienced so much joy on a set.' They said this because of our love of God and of them. Take time to pray for everyone on the set and then run a very professional set. It will blow people's minds, in a good way."

For his entry in 2008, Mike Wech's vision of a car crash happened to him two weeks before the competition, and he was nearly killed. He recovered and persevered as the film's director in a neck brace. As a result of Mike and Tim's unique process, one of the actors came back to faith and checked into a drug rehab.

INTERVIEW: Team 81-"Forsaken"-David Kiang, Culver City, CA. After the loss of his daughter, Dante is tempted on many levels. Isaiah 30:15. Drama. David was a finalist with 2009's "The Call," his 5th 168 film.

On sabbatical from LA in Seattle, Filmmaker David Kiang answered the call on the day of the deadline for the 168 Film Project when his wife and usual co-producer, Jerusha, told him to go make a film, this time on his own.

So, David flew to LA to get the verse assignment, sans team, actors or crew. The Kiang's brand of "media ministry" and filmmaking has been a staple for 5 years now in the 168 Film Project competition. Their films include "Broken" ('04), "Better off Said" ('05), "All I Want," the seminal music video ('07), "The Call" ('09), and 2010's 13-time nominated "Forsaken," the story of a dying alcoholic, who finds freedom from his inner demons.

"It's always a faith walk for us," said Kiang, "as usual, the verse spoke directly into my life, this time addressing some messy, unresolved emotional and spiritual issues in my life. In a way, the film mirrored allegorically my own personal faith 'Heart of Darkness' journey."

Pre-production was no picnic for Kiang who would wake up in the middle of the night, his heart racing, knowing the arduous journey before him. "I literally had nothing other than a script I was still working on 2 days before the shoot," he said, "but, it all miraculously came together 48-hours before the shoot and after a lot of prayer."

Perennial 168 stalwart, JJ Rogers helped out (as he did for nearly a dozen teams) with gear and inexpensive insurance. "He was a God-send," said Kiang, "Especially when he suggested actress-turned fledgling producer, Elizabeth Carlson (a regular on-screen talent at 168) who served as line producer."

"Helping cast and crew try different things is part of what 168 is about," said 168 founder John David Ware, "Whether it's an actor turned producer or a DP turned director, it's really a safe environment in which to learn."

Production was similarly challenging for Kiang, who got little sleep while serving as producer, writer, director, editor, and colorist. "We shot 4 scenes in 3 hours," said Kiang. In the sprint for the deadline (which if missed, means no awards eligibility and huge disappointment for cast and crew), Kiang collaborated with an editor and classmate from USC Film School as well as from Eric and Susu Keepman Lee (writers "Mad About You," and producers of four 168 films, including "No 'I' in Security," 2006).

WHY DOES HE KEEP ENTERING 168? With all of these problems, no sleep and personal difficulties, it begs the question, why do David Kiang and other 168 Filmmakers keep doing the 168 Film Project? According to David, "In the middle of pre-production, I ask myself that question every time, but the amazingly great thing about doing the 168 is the opportunity to see what God is going to do through the verse in my own life, in production, on set with actors and crew where talking about Christ is not awkward but naturally built into the process of filmmaking and the gospel gets to be lived out in loving and serving one another, in post-production, and finally the festival screening. I'm always amazed to see the quality of films made in such a short period of time where filmmakers hopefully are pushing the boundaries of what it means to explore faith on film."

168 FILM FESTIVAL'S FINALIST FILMS FOR 2010: (by team number)

NARRATIVES:

Team 3-"Skip Listening"-Christopher Shaw, Santa Rosa, CA. A radio host finally hears how bad he sounds. Nehemiah 8:9b-10. Comedy. Cast includes deaf actress Lexi Marman, the first deaf/hard of hearing entertainment host hired to perform on the Disneyland stage. Christopher is a returning producer, who said, "We had a phenomenal cast and crew. I'd do the 168 more than once per year (if I could). The nominations mean I'm so much closer to doing what I love to do full-time - redemptive filmmaking." According to Deaf actress Lexi Marman, "We all had faith that everything was going to work out! This was such a beautiful message that we all were working on telling. I heard from God when I saw the beautiful connections being made, when I saw the Deaf actors and the Hearing crew mingling and making jokes. To hear doesn't necessarily mean to hear with your ears. (The 2010 theme "Hearing God" to me meant Feeling God...with every aspect of my body and every sense possible!"

Team 9-"Got A Light"-Mark Blicht and Matt Brundige, Plano, TX. Quitting smoking is a family affair. Acts 26:17-18. Comedy. Three of 2009's Best Actor nominees (Adam Kitchen, Mark Blicht, Todd Terry-winner Best Actor 2009 for "Still Born") will share a scene together. As a writer, Mark won Best Comedy Screenplay in 2009.

Team 12-"Sumo Joe"-Geoffrey Black, Burbank, CA. A boy's sumo dreams wrestle with mom's wishes. Judges 6:10. Comedy. The cast includes Dan Kalbfleisch, the U.S. Heavyweight Sumo Wrestling Champion, 2009. <http://www.sumodan.com> Geoff is a first time producer.

Team 17-"Bountiful"-Amber Deegan/Susan Shearer, Hollywood, CA. A gambler bets it all on divine intervention. John 15:1-2. Susan and Amber are returning co-producers. For photos at CBS in Studio City

by Nathaniel Bluedorn: Friday: [click here](#), Saturday: [click here](#), Sunday: [click here](#)

Team 18-“Just Cops”-Theo Love, Anaheim, CA. Dirty cops don't wash. Exodus 19:7-8. Thriller. This is Theo's 6th film with 168. A 6X returning producer, Theo won Best Picture-Comedy in 2009.

Team 20-“The Death Of Takmos”-Mary Burkin, Burbank, CA. Does God speak to teens through videogames? 2 Chronicles 24:19. Comedy. Mary is a returning producer.

Team 28-“The Ceed”-Josh Flynn, Pasadena, CA. A seed that blooms must first die and be broken. Jeremiah 6:10. Experimental Film. First time producer Josh's film is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Ralph Winter of the US Center for World Missions.

Team 35-“Out Of The Fire”-Jeanette Reedy Solano, Glendale, CA. A father and ex-gang member is torn between his two families. Deuteronomy 4:35-36. Drama. Jeanette is a first time producer, who lost most of her team early on, but recovered nicely.

One day before her shoot, having lost all of her crew and gear, the professor (Religion and Film)-turned-Producer had thrown in the towel. But, when the actor-poets in her production sent their poetry, inspired by their verse (Deut 4: 35-36), she persevered. “I knew I couldn't let them down, that this story had to be told,” Jeanette explained, “Their verse was so painful and powerful and real.”

For the film, Jeanette partnered with Father Greg Boyle, Homeboy Industries and former gang member artists. The soundtrack was produced by Homeboyz Music. (www.homeboy-industries.com).

Team 42-“Through My Sister's Eyes”-Mark Weber, Newport Beach, CA. A sister's blindness forces the family to see. John 8:12. Drama. Mark is a first time producer. Team 43-“In The Company Of Sinners”-Mike Cahill, Burbank, CA. One man's redemption is another man's hell. Joshua 1:6-7. Drama. Mike is a returning producer, whose music has been played in outer space NASA flights.

Team 44-“Rising Waters”-Brandon Riley, Sugarland, TX. A successful insurance agent refuses to hang ten. Genesis 7:1. Drama. Brandon is a first time producer.

Team 46-“Pesan Terkirim” (Message Sent)-Onggo Susilo, Indonesia. A devout girl's bitterness reflects in the mirror of technology. James 1:23-24. Drama. Onggo is a first time producer.

Team 53-“Perspective”-Clinton Elmore, Pat Daugherty, Columbus, OH. A gift to the homeless blesses the not-so-cheerful giver. Psalm 27:14. Drama. Pat is a returning producer.

Team 57-“Moya” (mine in Russian)-Caleb Brown/Joshua M. Bott, Santa Monica, CA. A man's foray into sin leads to danger. Exodus 20:20. Drama.

Team 57 was a large team of accomplished pros, which can often spell “creative differences.” According to producer, Caleb Brown, “We heard from God through collaboration; none of us had the complete vision for what this project should be. We worked toward an ego-free production...difficult, but in the end there was superior safety, superior product and superior joy over and above going it alone. God furnished last-minute locations and financing, and on the set, we ministered peace and prayed for those on our crew.” For photos on the set in Glendale, by Nathaniel Bluedorn: [click here](#).

Team 58-“Relentless Heart”-Alberto Portillo, Whittier, CA. Tony's hip, artist friends dislike his newfound faith. Acts 18:9-10. Drama. This is Alberto's very first film. His original goal was to be a college ministry pastor, but filmmaking has always been a strong draw. A job in TV taught him the power of the media. He started taking classes at UCLA for screenwriting, which friends and family thought backsliding, from ministry to movies. At a 168 signup event he and his wife jumped into the competition. “168 served as a catapult for me and my team, taking us from a group of insecure daydreamers to actual filmmakers.” The bulk of the cast and crew are from his community bible study in Whittier, CA.

Team 59-“Adoptation”-Alan Tregoning, Plano, TX. An infertile couple's prayers are answered as they adopt a 42-year old man. Romans 8:15. Comedy. Alan is a first time producer. He also won the 168 Write of Passage Screenplay Competition in Oct. 2009.

Team 62-“Connectivity”-Elena Beuca, LA, CA. A man on the verge of destroying his family has one last chance. Jeremiah 7:13. Drama. Elena and her writer/actor-husband David Rogers are returning filmmakers. Their crew boasts A-list Steadicam operator, Ron Vidor (“JAWS,” “Romancing The Stone,” “Lethal Weapon”).

Team 64-“The Party”- Helen Urriola and James McKinney, Decatur, GA. A 6-year-old with an alcoholic father must discern right from wrong. Jeremiah 1:6-8. Drama. McKinney is a returning producer and a journeyman director of photography in Atlanta, GA. In 2008, 168 was his first foray into directing. This year, he shot in a major snowstorm. “168 is great, both as a filmmaker and for my faith. (168 hours is) realistic, I’m very happy with what I got in a week. It’s not too long to be overwhelming, but not too short to where you can make excuses,” he said.

Team 83-“Try Hard”-David Gaw, Monrovia, CA. Bobby's greatness is obvious (to him). You should thank him for pointing that out. John 8:47. Comedy. David is a returning producer, who stars in his film. He doesn’t really have an ego problem.

UNLIMITED DOCUMENTARIES: In this category, producer's pick their own scripture, instead of getting one randomly assigned.

Team 23-“Let’s Start Talking”-Clint Loveness, Dallas, TX. Hearing God's Call in China! Luke 10:2. Doc. Clint is a returning producer, who shot this film in China.

Team 31-“Desert Ark”-Sarah Williams, Jerusalem, Israel. With no money, an Israeli man builds housing for Sudanese refugees. Hebrews 11:7. Doc. This crew is helmed by newlywed, first-time 168 producers Greg and Sarah Williams, who felt a call from God to serve Him with their media skills in Israel, and both now teach at a vocational training school for Bible believing Israelis (both Jewish and Arab) and for international believers (www.kingsschoolofmedia.com).

"Desert Ark" focuses on the true story of the kibbutz-like home of a man named Avishi on the Southern border of Israel, South of Gaza, about 100 meters from the Egyptian border.

According to Sarah, "We didn't know what to expect when entered the 168 Film Project. There are many challenges: like working with students and working across language barriers (many Sudanese speak various dialects of Arabic). This experience taught us new lessons in faith and in creative production, our first day of shooting began in the middle of a Sinai Desert Sand storm!" she said.

The 21 Award Categories include Best: Film (drama or comedy), Comedy, International Film, Unlimited Documentary (instead of being assigned randomly, these filmmakers pick their own foundational verse), Director, Actress, Actor, Supporting Actor, Supporting Actress, Screenplay – Drama, Screenplay – Comedy, Cinematography, Editor, Sound Design, Original Score, Production Design, Make-Up, Scriptural Integration (how well the story fits the verse), 168 Behind-the-Scenes Documentary and the (new) Evangelista award, which celebrates films which present the gospel of Jesus. New this year is the “Newcomer” award, celebrating the best of completely new talent (sponsored by the Bible Society-UK).