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## Pizarro: Movie satire wows Cinequest audience

By Sal Pizarro  
Mercury News

The Cinequest Film Festival unveiled its 16th edition Wednesday night with a great movie and packed after-party at the Paragon Bar and Restaurant.

``Thank You for Smoking," a satire about the tobacco industry, had a crowd lined up at the California Theatre, and the moviegoers left buzzing about its hilarious, amoral tone. And if all they wanted was to see the **Katie Holmes** sex scene, mysteriously ``lost" at the Sundance Film Festival screening last month, they weren't disappointed.

Later at Paragon, Cinequest co-founders **Halfdan Hussey** and **Kathleen Powell** were like new parents making the rounds among the scores of sharply dressed partygoers, independent filmmakers and movie lovers. The crowd included familiar Cinequest faces -- longtime supporters **Al** and **Carmen Castellano**, and artist **Carlos Perez**, who designed the trophy Cinequest gives each year to its Maverick Spirit Award winner. One of the new faces was **Donald McDonald**, a VP at Intel, which signed on as Cinequest's major sponsor this year and is using the festival to show off new products.

**OSCAR PRIDE:** San Jose Gay Pride has been hosting an Oscar Night for eight years, but this year is special because two movies with gay or transgender themes are up for major awards. ``I think especially in the gay community there's a lot of excitement because `Brokeback Mountain' and `Transamerica' have gotten so much attention," said San Jose Gay Pride board member **PJ Matarese**.

Sunday's party at downtown San Jose's swanky Corinthian Event Center starts with red-carpet coverage at 4 p.m. Tickets are available for \$70 at (408) 278-5563.

**MORE OSCARS:** **Rhonda Marion**, general manager of the Park Place restaurant in Cupertino, reports that the popularity contest between its five Best Picture-themed drinks has gotten tight as the awards approach. ``Crash on the Long Beach" has taken over as the most-ordered. The ``Brokeback Martini" started out strong, Marion says, but has dropped to fourth place. . . . You've heard about all the free swag handed out to guests at the Academy Awards ceremony? One of the cool collectibles being inserted into every bag this year is a colorful pop-art watch by South Bay artist **Sonya Paz**. You can check out the watches at her Santa Clara gallery or online at [www.sonyapaz.com](http://www.sonyapaz.com).

**BILINGUAL HONOR** **Cecilia Barrie**, principal at Grant Elementary School in San Jose, was honored Thursday as the Administrator of the Year by the California Association for Bilingual Education. The group is holding its annual conference for about 7,000 people this week at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, and will cap it off tonight with an awards dinner and dance, featuring the music of Bay Area Latin funk band *Mystique* and the *Herrera Sisters*.

**UPON FURTHER REVIEW** My scope was too small when I wrote about the food drive being held Sunday at the Mercado Shopping Center. It's actually being hosted by 23 of the Curves fitness clubs in the South Bay, not just the Sunnyvale club. Get information at [www.southbay.curves.com](http://www.southbay.curves.com). . . . For anyone seeking information on the March 11-14 Irish Week celebrations, the correct Web site to go to is [www.sanjosedublin.org](http://www.sanjosedublin.org).

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