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Film: Science at Sundance

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ARTS REVIEWED:

Sundance Film Festival

The 2008 Sundance Film Festival, ending this week in Park City, Utah, included a healthy handful of science-themed films. Since the successes of 2005's feel-good Antarctic birdfest, *March of the Penguins*, and 2006's feel-bad Al Gore lecture *An Inconvenient Truth*, scientific documentaries have been in the ascendant — especially those about the environment.

Among the documentaries angling for a screen at the local multiplex, or at least a slot on television, are two that tackle conservation issues. *Fields of Fuel* is a paean to biodiesel starring the young activist Josh Tickell. *Flow: For the Love of Water* is a global look at how water scarcity drives corruption and big profits for certain corporations, a theme also explored in the science-fiction film *Sleep Dealer*.

Meanwhile, *The Linguists* documents two researchers travelling the globe recording languages that are about to become extinct. "It points out a global crisis that people may have only been vaguely aware of," says one of the pair, David Harrison of Swarthmore College near Philadelphia.

More upbeat fare is to be found in the shorts. A series on the sex lives of insects, collectively titled *Green Porno*, sees Isabella Rossellini — also the director — dressed as a dragonfly (pictured) in the mood for love. Another, artsy short, *Untitled #1*, imagines a strange world in 2507. Creator Nao Bustamante has run a booth at the festival where attendees leave video messages for the future that, she promises, will be lovingly transferred from medium to medium as technology changes in the coming 500 years.

Finally, a hip short film that is actually a preview for a forthcoming flash-based computer game, *Gas Zappers*, spotlights the goofier side of global warming. It depicts a polar bear (what else?) defeating carbon-emitting villains with the help of such figures as Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change chairman Rajendra Pachauri — who is clad as Moses and uses his tablets to beat back waves threatening to flood Venice.

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