

a monumental task

Local filmmakers shoot for sophomore success with their Arch documentary

After the runaway success of their 2004 documentary *The World's Greatest Fair*, co-directors Bob Miano and Scott Huegerich would be crazy not to be a little nervous about their next picture's prospects. Their first documentary had crowds lining up around the block for the Fox Theatre premiere, and it won a Telly and a Cine, both national awards. "There's a lot of pressure on us," Miano says. "We've put a mark on the wall, and now we've gotta reach for that."

The boys down at Civil Pictures are doing all they can to ensure that *The Gateway Arch: A Reflection of America* will be a hit when it opens later this summer. Miano says they've taken to heart "that old 'nothing impossible' attitude of St. Louis," but can their sophomore production live up to the expectations spawned by *The World's Greatest Fair*?

Here's how the doc is shaping up so far.

The images. With the help of their studio, Technisonic, the Civil Pictures team plans to convert much of the historical footage they've accumulated to high definition—the first time this has ever been done. In addition, the team has secured long-lost footage of the construction that was unavailable to the makers of *Monument to the Dream*, the 1967 Arch-construction documentary. Says Miano, "When you see folks dangling up there 140 feet in the air on a 40-foot screen—you almost get a sense of vertigo."

The soundtrack. Composer Tim Janis, who's been compared to John Williams, composed the documentary's background music. Ira Spiegel and the sound-design team will contribute subtle sound effects to bring historical photos and film to life.

The stories. Civil Pictures obtained several hours of interviews with Susan Saarinen, the architect's daughter, and some of the most interesting stories center on the lives touched by the Arch—including that of renowned architect Daniel Libeskind, who visited the Arch on his honeymoon. As with *The World's Greatest Fair*, the documentary team plans to focus on stories of the people who made St. Louis great, not just the nuts and bolts of the construction. Says Huegerich, "The story we tell is going to be vastly different than anything anyone else has done."

—Margaret Bauer



EYE CANDY

will party for food

By-the-hour is the new free for the girls who get paid to soiree

These days, there's a party for everything. Movie premieres and nose-to-the-heavens gallery openings are de rigueur, but now there's a silly promotional launch party for every iPod and Xbox gadget—and someone's gotta go. It's a sweet moonlighting gig for celebrities but a hard one to imagine for working stiffs who sucker-punch their alarm clocks at 6 a.m. every day.

What's even harder to come to terms with is the fact that some people actually pocket a paycheck to be there. The girls of So Beautiful Promotions, launched early this year, are paid to party, and they're paid plenty.

Manager Cassandra McDonald came up with the idea after seeing groups of girls dancing and promoting local artists at clubs in town. She and her crew of 15 young lovelies are regularly asked to up the hotness quotient at spots such as The Loft, Dreams and Dante's in groups of three, seven, a dozen or 15 at a time. They dress in the latest finery, dance en masse, smile and generally keep the energy high for far-from-nominal fees.

What's the going rate for standing,

posing, holding a drink and looking hot? At least \$50 an hour. (They earn \$100 for passing out fliers and selling CDs.) Not bad beans for hanging out with the likes of Nelly, Chingy and über-producer Russell Simmons.

Avis, a soft-spoken 20-year-old with impossibly good skin and an associate's degree from Patricia Stevens College, works hard at a day job but goes out a couple of nights a week, banking hundreds of dollars per. But for the aspiring designer and model, it's as much about self-promotion as it is the Benjamins. "And it's not just here," she adds. "I get seen in Miami, Chicago, Las Vegas ..."

By all accounts, this is not a catty group. They don't hurl cell phones. They don't get tipsy or smoke, they rarely curse in public, and they generally don't bare claws. "When we're at events, we conduct ourselves in a certain way," says Tia B, another SBP employee. Hooking up is also a no-no, no matter who the guy is.

McDonald is careful to point out that although her group is paid to play, it's largely about promoting her hometown: "We want St. Louis to be looked at, not looked over."

—David O'Neill

PHOTOGRAPH BY KATHERINE BISH. ARCH DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CIVIL PICTURES

