

# The Arts

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## A Comeback for Sundance, Documentaries Leading the Way

By ELVIS MITCHELL

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan. 19 — After last year's lowered attendance — this place was a like a ghost town where most of the ghosts have taken a vacation — the Sundance Film Festival has bounced back to previous levels of popularity and hype. The gossip has been thicker than this winter wonderland's precipitation levels, which, incidentally, isn't difficult since it doesn't seem to have snowed here since last

Critic's  
Notebook

year.

In contrast to the snow shortage, the documentary competition, often strong, is jammed with a welcome surfeit of quality.

Anne Makepeace's expert "Robert Capa in Love and War" sifts through the memories of that photographer's circle, coming up with a film full of defining, little-known stories about the forces that compelled him. It is documentary as divining rod. "The Murder of Emmett Till" by Stanley Nelson builds a narrative as meticulously as a driven, sly prosecutor builds his case. The filmmaker understands that the convincing

(and the conviction) is all in the details.

Sundance seems to have subtly noted the observance of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday by including "The Murder of Emmett Till" and a documentary on the maverick civil rights figure who is the focus of "Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin" by Nancy Kates and Bennett Singer.

"Brother Outsider" moves through the complications of Rustin's life — a black man who stayed out of the spotlight because he knew his homosexuality would cost the movement mainstream credibility — like a

lunar cycle, tracking all of the turbulence around him and the power of his own gravitational pull. Like the film about Capa, "Brother Outsider" is packed with information that hasn't been widely circulated. But the unfortunate implication is that black men have to be dead to become the subject of major films at Sundance.

Another political power was featured in a Sundance nonfiction film: Fidel Castro, the subject of "Comandante," a documentary by Oliver Stone. That's right: Oliver Stone. In his introduction Mr. Stone generously

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