



ERIC STOCKLIN

Steven Fischer views a copy of his Emmy-nominated film, 'Silence of Falling Leaves.'

Balto. indie gets Emmy nod

Fischer cited for Katyn Memorial film

BY BRUCE MILLER

Daily Record Business Writer

A Baltimore-based independent producer might be getting a needed break and some more credibility for his work, after being nominated for a local Emmy award by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for his 60-second public service announcement.

The spot, "Silence of Falling Leaves," produced by Steven Fischer, promotes TCI Communica-

tions of Baltimore's support of the National Katyn Memorial, a monument erected last year in Fells Point commemorating the 15,400 Polish POWs killed by Russian secret police in April 1940 in Poland's Katyn Forest.

"From the very start it was something that I totally fell in love with because it was a chance where art could mix with humanity, and for me those are the projects that turn me on," said Fischer. "TCI basically gave me an assignment saying, 'We want this PSA to promote our involvement ... with this monument, to show the world that we promote it, support it and gave money for its promotion.'"

The spot started out, Fischer said, as simply another corporate promotional piece. But after meeting with Alan Christian, vice president of the promotion and marketing company Diverse Dimensions, who explained the story of the Polish massacre, Fischer's interest was sparked to make this more than just a regular assignment.

"I started getting really excit-

May 23, 2001

Volume 112 • Number 192



SEE FILM PAGE 8A

Film

Continued from page 1A

ed about this idea that I had about going into the forest and using leaves, no people at all, just leaves to represent the people that were involved, and I wanted to make it into a very metaphorical piece," said Fischer.

The spot, comprised entirely of falling leaves, was photographed on Super 8mm film at a park in Anne Arundel County, using only a ladder and a bag of leaves. Fischer also decided to make the narration in Polish with English subtitles — a decision that would prove prophetic.

He said he made the film in Polish as a way to pay appropriate homage to the fallen soldiers in their native tongue. As chance would have it, the film, which was intended only for local broadcast, will now be shown nationally in Poland by the country's major broadcasting network, TV Polonia.

"It's very hard to be an independent film producer," said Diverse Dimension's Christian. "If he wins an Emmy at the local level, it's almost like a stamp of approval on his work. ... The primary benefit for him, being nominated, is that it will give him credibility and make it easier for him to raise money."

Fischer said he usually does not enter his pieces in competitions because he does not believe in the idea of judging art. However, this piece was made on a limited budget and he was not able to pay his crew adequate salaries. As compensation, he entered the piece in five different competitions and has, in addition to the Emmy nomination, received an Addy Award nomination and a

Telly Award.

"Nobody made out on this project financially," said Fischer. "Everybody worked for way below scale just because the sponsoring company TCI only wanted to invest a limited amount of money."

Fischer said that he and his crew made the film for only \$2,000, about \$28,000 less than the original price quote he gave to TCI.

"I presented TCI with a \$30,000 budget and they looked at it and we had a good laugh and they sent me away to rework the idea," Fischer said. "Originally I wanted to do two things. I wanted to shoot this on 35mm film and I wanted use literally a million leaves because I wanted to give it this feature film kind of quality."

"If I couldn't do that I had this other plan to use cutaways and smaller shots and really scale everything down to a smaller crew and smaller camera," Fischer said. "I always had that idea as a reserve and that's the idea that TCI ultimately went with."

Cinematographer John Chester, who filmed the spot, said he spends about 50 percent of his time working on underbudgeted projects with strong creative visions. This, he said, spurred him to work with Fischer despite limited compensation.

"It was a good cause, plus I respect Steven's creative vision to do something original and not be prevented by a limited budget," Chester said. "It would be great if we turn out to be the winner, but it has already surpassed my expectations."

The 43rd Emmy Awards for the Washington Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences will be held June 16 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington.