

A Cigar at the Beach

by Stephen Keep Mills Awarded Category: Photography, Michael Alba

It is a great honor for me to receive this award together with my Director of Photography Michael Alba. I just love it when the story plays in another country, in another language, and is accepted. This proves to me our commonality. The arts reveal what we all have in common as opposed to politics which reveal only our separations. Now most of my professional life I have been involved in the theatre as an actor, then as playwright, then as director and producer. I'm 59 years old and the language of film is new to me as a director (this film is my debut) and I am grateful for the collaboration I forged with Michael Alba, who is 26, to realize visually what I wanted to say in the story which tells of the private quest for completion that a mid-life married man undertakes while visiting his dying father. We worked very closely as he showed me how specifically the camera can be the story-teller, not only the actors or the direction as it is in the theatre. Whether it was the psychological isolation of the main character as the story begins as revealed through the empty chair and the wide and deserted beach, or the claustrophobic card game aboard the

freighter, or the graceful sweep of the final waves, we discovered ways to make the camera paint the



pictures to make them linger in the memory long after the words are forgotten. A paint brush in the hands of a master becomes a magic wand and I suspect that Michael Alba is well on his way to becoming quite a fine magician. My delighted thanks to you and your jurors of the 2006 Festival du Cinéma de Bruxelles for selecting my film into your festival and for this very encouraging recognition. I will take it as a catalyst to present for your future consideration another short film I'm working on, again with Michael Alba.

Stephen Keep Mills,
Director and Writer

