

PICTURE PERFECT

MAKING A FLICK ON THE FLY

No background in film, no Mac savvy—nothing except a desire to tell a story about love at first sight. That's how filmmaker and storyteller Dia North hit the hustings.

Dia North's oeuvre of books, films, and TV shows—equal parts human potential feel-goodism and willful New Age aesthetic—is based on the general, overarching principle of using intuition as an ethos. In creating the film based on her latest book, *Lovers at First Sight* (www.loversatfirstsight.com), North was drawn by trenchant commentaries about midlife passages and felt a need to bring the stories to film inexpensively, easily, and quickly. And so began her Mac filmmaking adventure, culminating in an accomplishment she wouldn't have imagined.

"I had never touched a camera before March of 2007," North says. "But these stories are so delightful, and the way they looked when they told their stories about falling in love," she says of the subjects of her film, "well, I knew it had to be captured. Especially since ours is such a youth-directed culture, the stories of people over 40 just needed to be heard."

So after signing up for an intensive digital video course at San Francisco State University, North jumped into a deep end that included 10-hour days, six days a week, for six months of video editing and movie making.

In short order, North, a prior PC user, got herself a MacBook Pro loaded with Final Cut Pro 5 ("I've got version 6 now and think it's much better than Adobe After Effects for the kind of editing I was doing"), a G4 Mac for rendering, a Sony PD-150 DV camcorder, and a pocketful of phone numbers of couples who had fallen in love at first sight.

And that was the simple part—soon she was up against more than 20 hours of raw footage with no sound or lighting worth a damn ("the sound was terrible") and 100 or so interviews, all waiting to be crafted into something not just sensible, but sparkling.

"I designed the credit sequences with Adobe InDesign, all the text placards, slugs, dissolves; recorded the music in GarageBand; and then ended up having to spend 192 hours to compress things down to a 15-minute file." And with ample stops along the way at Mac maven Lynda Weinman's lynda.com training website, North crafted the multihour collection of filmic tales of love into a tight, 5-minute-plus video short that's capturing the interest of National Public Radio, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (natch), and even the folks at the Apple Digital Film Festival, where North pulled off a standing-room-only debut at San Francisco's flagship Apple Store in the early fall.

The film's amazing tales of kismet, serendipity, and downright eerie love coincidences (one woman had been painting pictures of her future husband from her early youth, only to meet him at a yoga retreat in Hawaii in her early 40s) were well received. Which, in true ankle-bone-is-connected-to-the-leg-bone fashion, has led to more assorted film work in Los Angeles, a follow-up video project about how to fall in love (called, not surprisingly, *How to Fall in Love*), and an invite from the events manager at the Apple Store Theater in San Francisco to give a full hour-long chat about *Lovers at First Sight* this month.

Not bad for a self-professed computer novice who has already branched out into Web design ("Thank goodness for iWeb") and more self-realization projects that stand as a living testament to what she's been preaching. "I know it sounds corny," North concludes, "but I really did have a kind of 'Wow, I can really do this' moment. It was after hours and hours and hours of editing and rendering, but it was a nice thing to realize."—Eugene Robinson

