

Lights! Camera! Pierson!

"Do you know the story behind that?" might be John Pierson's favorite question. And as host and co-creator (with his wife Janet) of The Independent Film Channel series "Split Screen" he gets to ask it all the time. His answers offer viewers a scrappy, insider's look at the world of independent movies ranging from film

has indulged. A follow up book is a definite, although the topic (Miramax? the cable industry?) is still up in the air.

As "Split Screen" winds up its first season of episodes (just as IFC lands a valuable cable slot in Manhattan), Pierson is gearing up for year number two. Hard as it may be to fathom, the

John Pierson, all around "it" man to the indie film world, finds life on the small screen.

festivals, to high school filmmakers it dubs "Taranteenies" to a Brooklyn stoop for a chat with actors Steve Buscemi and John Turturro. The story behind Pierson, whose name is synonymous with new and emerging American filmmakers, includes a range of jobs in the movie industry: exhibition, promotion, financing, producing. More recently, Pierson mined this experience as the author of "Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes," a highly entertaining and well received book about the years from 1984 (Jim Jarmusch's STRANGER THAN PARADISE) to 1994 (Quentin Tarantino's PULP FICTION)—a decade of filmmaking that he himself describes as "remarkable." Now with "Split Screen" Pierson takes on the present and the future, as a member of the media covering the sort of movies he used to make (an impressive list that includes SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT, SLACKERS, ROGER & ME, CLERKS).

So why move on? "Well, the success of CLERKS and Kevin Smith's collaboration with me on the book finally felt like the turning of a page," says Pierson. Besides, giving readings and interviews to promote "S,M,S & D" gave him a taste for the spotlight that "Split Screen"

series has given him yet another perspective on movies. Now when Pierson watches a new film, he admits, "Instead of thinking 'Oh, can this film make it?' I think, 'Oh, this filmmaker could do a really good segment for the show!'"

Michael Giltz

