

SUN DOGS

(DOCU — U.S.-CANADA)

A Palm Pictures release and presentation, in association with Dog Leg Media. Produced by Andrea Stewart. Executive producers, Chris Blackwell, Danny Melville, Leigh Ingleby, David Koh.

Directed by Andrea Stewart. Camera (color, HD video), Paul Cuthbert; editor, Michele Francis; music, Eric Cadesky, Nick Dyer; music supervisor, Euan Hunter; supervising sound editor, Terry Wedel; re-recording mixers, Wedel; animation, Ben Mazzotta; dogsledding advisers, Rick Johnson, Annette Johnson, Alan Stewart. **Reviewed at CineVegas Film Festival**, June 16, 2007. Running time: **89 MIN.**

With: Danny Melville, Devon Anderson, Oswald "Newton" Marshall, Dudley Stokes, Jimmy Buffett, Simon Anholt, Alan Stewart, Tim White, Rick Johnson, Annette Johnson, Francois St. Juste, Ayesha Dawes, Wilmot Perkins, Carolyn Gomes, Ken Davis, Lyman Wolkse, Ted Wallace.

By **ROBERT KOEHLER**

Man and dogs struggle together in Andrea Stewart's affectionate if slight doc, "Sun Dogs," a straightforward portrait of the efforts of some scrappy Jamaicans to replicate the island's incongruous fame with team bobsledding — only this time, with dogsledding. Odds seem even longer with this sport than with the Olympic bobsled foray romanticized in 1993's "Cool Runnings," and pic's unabashed profile as a booster for Jamaican tourism lessens its seriousness. Palm's DVD rollout Oct. 2 should deliver fine fall and holiday homevid numbers.

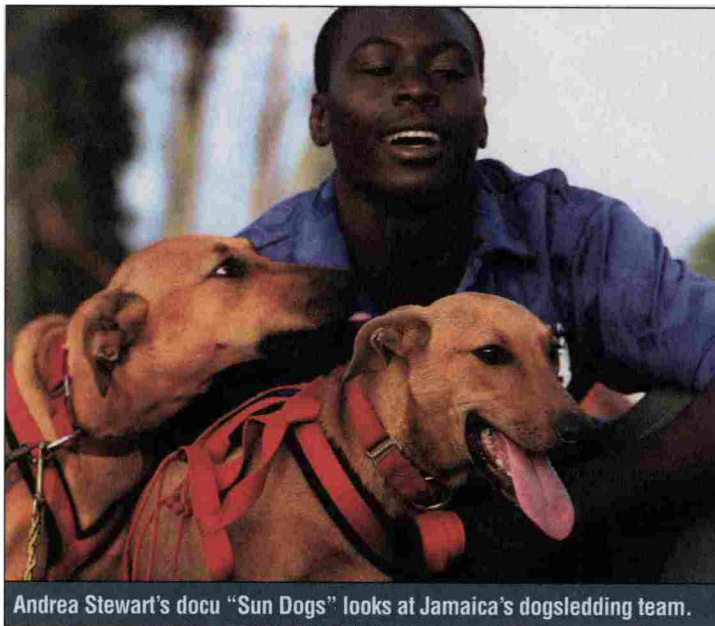
Shrewd, forward-looking businessman Danny Melville — owner of *Chukka Cove*, a small chain of adventure parks — launched Jamaica's dogsled team hoping to save the island's neglected canines, provide job opportunities and create a fresh tourist spin for his visitors. With sponsorship from the always enthusiastic and chummy pop institution Jimmy Buffett, Melville's team is shown forging ahead in fits and starts with a sport designed for the frigid north, not the sun-drenched Caribbean.

Stewart inserts some thoughtful observations from human rights advocate Dr. Carolyn Gomes and local political commentator Wilmot Perkins on Jamaica's chronic underdevelopment, much of which

stems from poverty and a lack of quality education. Pic's most touching element is how it parallels the difficult lives of everyday Jamaicans — repped here by dogsledders Oswald "Newton" Marshall and Devon Anderson — with the dire conditions for the island's often-neglected dog population. Newton's promising start with the team is undone by some terrible decisions on his part that get him booted off, lending pic a dash of social realism.

As expert Minnesota dogsledders Rick and Annette Johnson aid the team, and coach Alan Stewart pushes things along further once Devon and his team get to race in a Scotland competish, viewers will become starkly aware of how utterly Anglo-dominated the sport is, though pic itself is much too genial and light on its feet to stress such issues. "Underdogs" would be an obvious alternate title, suggesting project's crowdpleasing sentiment, underlined by cheesy animated sequences (by Ben Mazzotta) apparently meant to appeal to tykes.

Stewart, with high-def vid lenser Paul Cuthbert, keeps her coverage moving along, with some requisite shooting aboard the sleds. Music is generally annoying and needless.



Andrea Stewart's docu "Sun Dogs" looks at Jamaica's dogsledding team.

