

Aurora Filmmakers win big at Multimedia Film Festival



(Above: Alex Broughton collected multiple trophies at the ceremony held Wednesday at Newmarket Theatre. Auroran photo by Brock Weir)

By Brock Weir

Local filmmakers walked the red carpet at Newmarket on Wednesday evening for the York Region Multimedia Film Festival where, once again, Aurora's Alex Broughton took top honours, collecting multiple trophies for his film *Kazu and Azul*.

It was the third year in a row that Mr. Broughton has walked away a winner. Although he sat in the director's chair in his first two entries, this year's offering was his first as a producer.

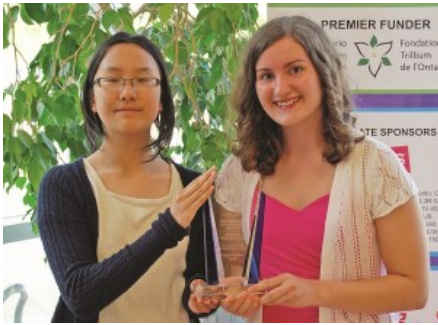
"I am starting to get to know myself a little bit better," said Mr. Broughton following the first of his wins that evening of looking at things through a producer's eye. "Before it was about getting my story across and now it is about getting the story across, whatever the story is that needs to be told. It is about finding the message that needs to get out into the universe, whether as a director, an actor, a writer or a producer."

Kazu and Azul was produced in 2010 and directed by Esteban Diaz. It was a film that was literally and figuratively pulled out of the fire as the director-producer team's original vision of using puppets to bring the story of a mermaid and a fisherman to life was scuttled after the puppets themselves were burned before delivery.

"This film had so much energy put in and it goes to show you that the amount of energy you put into it comes back in return," said Mr. Broughton. "It's a shame this film didn't have more legs than it did, just because there was no money to send it to festivals, so it was great to have it appreciated one last time because it is an older film and festivals only accept film to a certain point."

"Any exposure is great for starting any sort of career, and the amount of exposure this festival has through TV, through screenings at different towns and regions, it is just great for emerging filmmakers to get their feet wet and give them a little bit of confidence that they are creating something that people will actually appreciate."

A healthy cross-section of filmmakers from eight out of nine York Region municipalities of all ages and all walks of life were represented in the film festival, whether they were student filmmakers at the primary level, such as a number of submissions produced and directed by students at Aurora Senior Public School, to documentary shorts and features from a wide spectrum of categories, to professional films and full-length feature trailers.



Teresa Shi and Edna Bozhuri, students at Aurora Senior Public School, won for their animated short "A World Out There." Edna Bozhuri and Teresa Shi, both students at Aurora Senior Public School were on hand to see their animated short, A World Out There, win the Best Animation (Elementary) category. Through images created by student artists, including Teresa, and directed by Edna, the film explores kids turning off their computers, setting their cell phones aside and actually re-connecting with the physical world outside and all around them and, at the end of the day, truly experiencing everything life has to offer.

The girls originally found their inspiration from a Shel Silverstein poem where roses bloomed from the heads of the people whenever they had beautiful thoughts, but not wanting to lean on the late Mr. Silverstein, they took it to another level.

"We thought about this idea of something beautiful being produced and being drawn into it, and sometimes ashamed it was being ignored," explained Edna. "We came to create a character who drew the boy outside of his room to the great outdoors and she was representative of the beauty of nature."

Edna has always dreamt of being a director, becoming adept at Movie Maker and all the essentials from a young age.

Teresa has always had a penchant for visual art. When Teresa downplayed her talents by saying she was just "okay" at drawing, Edna praised her "amazing" talent which prompted a "Hush! It's my time!" from the artist in question, who wanted to make sure teammate Rachel, who also had a hand in bringing the story to life, but was unable to attend the ceremonies, got her recognition.

Vaughan filmmaker Rob Tari, who won Best Professional Full-Length Feature Trailer, said he hopes the film festival continues to give new generations of local filmmakers an outlet to express themselves and indeed receive recognition for their talents.

"I have lived in Vaughan for almost all my life and there was nothing like this anywhere in Vaughan when I was a kid," he said. "Now it is here and it is making young people say, 'You know what? You don't have to go to L.A. or even Downtown Toronto. Make films here and we'll all come out and see it.'"

"This is saying, stay here, make some money here, make films here, and show off who you are. I am very happy that Vaughan is finally getting up and saying 'we have a voice.'"