

BROCK'S BANTER: A TIFF & Quibble

By Brock Weir

So, how many of you joined me Sunday morning, collectively asking yourself, 'Isn't the definition of insanity doing something over and over again and expecting a different result?'

Seeing ' in real time, no less ' that I was in line (well, online) with over 5,000 people with a singular purpose, I'm sure some of you were in the same boat.

Sunday, August 31, was single ticket day for the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), a day which seems to, year in and year out, always be a day which will live in infamy. Until the next year, of course, when those of us who fancy ourselves armchair film buffs optimistically put on our blinders and log on hoping that this will be the one year that Single Ticket Day does not turn into a hellish free-for-all better suited to TIFF's Midnight Madness Series.

This year, I was primed and ready to go. I finalised my ticket wish list the night before, had a decent schedule worked out that would accommodate Aurora's busy September season of Ribfest, Hoedown, and any variety of local events the last days of summer bring to our fair Town, and was prepared to do battle.

This year, as in every other year, I had all my web browsers primed, just in case of emergencies or a technical glitch, and then awaited the appointed hour. When the clock struck 9 a.m., Firefox, Google Chrome, and Internet Explorer were all deployed at essentially the same time to secure a place in the virtual lineup. The Firefox browser was the ultimate winner, getting in there with just 340 people ahead of me in line, while the other two brought up the rear with 1,200 and 3,100 people respectively.

Once settled into the line, it was time to play the waiting game. The waiting game, however, passed remarkably fast, lulling me into a false sense of optimism. Once the floodgates opened, it was then time to dash around, hunt the desired screenings, secure your tickets, and then fork over your wincing Visa.

So far so good. Some of the screenings I wanted were already sold out, but my Plan Bs seemed to be working out all right. With about a 60 per cent success rate in my basket, I gingerly clicked to check out, thinking that was a relatively painless process. How wrong I was.

Within seconds of clicking the 'checkout' button, disaster struck. Error messages were popping out of places they truly had no business being in the first place. Hitting the back button and clicking checkout again, the error messages kept popping up again, occasionally leaving a tantalizing window in which one can get a glimmer of hope that something positive was happening and then? About an hour later, error messages were still coming up. Also accumulating: Twitter messages from people around the world who were experiencing the same frustration, perhaps an alternative viewpoint to the uniting power of film.

As the clock continued to tick, and the errors mounted, organizers of TIFF added insult to injury by forcing you to watch the tickets you thought you had secured one by one get slashed out of your shopping cart as your time limit on each screening expired. Nearly every time one hit that pesky 'Back' button, there was one less reason to do battle, until, at the end, I was left with a completely empty cart.

Starting back at square one, trying to rebuild what was once a glorious testament to my own bizarre taste in cinema, a futile effort given that as soon as each ticket vanished from my shopping cart they were eagerly snapped up by another, I was left with just two of my first choices and a raft of also-rans.

As I fumed and stewed at the results on what was an otherwise promising Sunday morning, I had to question why I and countless others from Ontario, Canada, and the world, put ourselves through this annual nightmare. The love of film is one thing, but this agony is another thing all together. Maybe the anguish is part of the TIFF tradition. Maybe many of us are too cheap to fork over the hefty fees for specific membership levels in order to jump the queue.

Whatever the reason, it seemed like I was in good company ' and if any of you were members of that same sorry group on Sunday, I sincerely hope you fared much better than I did! And see you there.

WHO HAS TIME FOR TIFF ANYWAY?

Maybe doing battle with your overlords at the Toronto International Film Festival ' and losing spectacularly ' was somewhat of a blessing in disguise. After all this is Aurora in September. Who really has time for that? As much as Toronto will be the centre of the entertainment universe for two weeks beginning Thursday, this season brings no shortage of things to do that just happen to coincide

with the Festival.

First up, of course, is this weekend's annual Ribfest, which kicks off this Friday at Machell Park. Building on last year's success, they are certainly doing things right with one heck of a headliner this Friday night in the form of Glass Tiger. Ordinarily, it would be fun for the whole family, but since Age of Majority kicks in at 8 p.m., it will still be fun but the kiddies will have to find their own fun elsewhere.

Not content to let Friday be the star attraction at Ribfest, Platinum Blonde heads to the stage on Saturday for another show beginning at 9 p.m. It will certainly be a Ribfest to remember, made all the more special by a host of local talent taking part in the Hoedown Showdown Semifinals, as well as representatives from local media outlets taking part in the second annual PRESSure Challenge Rib Eating Contest.

After losing the challenge to the bottomless pits at The Banner (I say that with love, dear readers), those of us who took on the challenge last year, myself included, are happy to pass The Auroran's baton to General Manager Bob Ince and Sports Reporter Jake Courtepatte to settle the score on Friday evening. Good luck, guys!

For the foodie in us, we can head west to King for the annual Feast of the Fields festival, to sample and find inspiration from everything organic farms from across Ontario have to offer, and then there will be a few days of longed-for recovery time.

The fun continues on Friday, September 12, with the 10 finalists from the Hoedown Showdown taking over the massive tent being erected on Wellington Street ahead of next Saturday's Hoedown to play in front of what is hoped to be a large hometown crowd, before being ultimately crowned the Showdown winner by event headliner Tim Hicks.

The ultimate winner will have a chance to perform at the main event, the annual Wild, Wild West Hoedown, performing alongside the headliner Lonestar.

So, if you were, like me, one of the unfortunate people who struck out continually on Sunday, isn't it lucky we have so many opportunities to make up for it in our own back yard?