

Disappearing acts and a good dose of humour offered by Aurora filmmakers



By Brock Weir

Disappearing acts abounded at the Aurora Cultural Centre Thursday as local filmmakers showcased their works in the Multimedia Film Festival of York Region.

There were the comic disappearances of the most popular girl and hamster in school, in 'A Guessing Game' by Aurora's Josh Conley and in 'The Professional' respectively; disappearing from one world into an idyllic dream in 'Kazu and Azul' brought by Aurora producer Alex Broughton; disappearing from the connected and co-dependent technological world we live in and reconnecting with nature in 'A World Out There' directed by Aurora's E. Bozhori; and retreating from worlds of bullying and social stigma in 'Type Away My Pain' and 'Reversible.'

While these films provided food for thought for the small but dedicated film-going crowd that filed into Brevik Hall last week, it was not simply a sea of deep thought. Laughs were provided in 'Piece of Cake', a film producers described as an 'I Love Lucy-inspired take' on TV cookery, a scent-free whiff of 'teen spirit' in 'Youth', an epic chess battle royale in 'Checkmate' by Aurora's L. VanderPloeg, and in the tender love story 'Samantha' which turns into something completely different by the time the credits roll.

Whether filmmakers set out to entertain, or find a voice, there was something for everyone. For Festival coordinator Mona El Baroudi, whether people are looking to be entertained, moved or both the reception to this year's crop of filmmakers by the public has been very encouraging.

'I think people have been really astounded by the production quality, but I think it is the stories that are really something different and make the screening,' she says. 'When you find what the [film] adjudicators see in a theme which is just a little bit different and unexpected, we find the audience responds in very much the same way.'

The wide scope of filmmaking beyond the confines of Toronto is also something she says resonates with the people who come to the screening, raising questions about the filmmakers in their own back yard.

The York Region Multimedia Film Festival was originally founded to give youth a voice and an outlet for their creativity. In the common themes exhibited at Thursday's screening, such as bullying.

"When we're getting to our youngest filmmakers, you're looking at what's important to you in your life," she says. "We're asking people to speak from their hearts because the more personal something is, the more universal it is. The films that have really touched

people is where we have gotten our filmmakers of all ages to be courageous and daring in telling a story that means something personal for them.?

Attending last week's screening were Mr. Broughton and Mr. Conley. Mr. Conley's offering covered the disappearance of the most popular girl in school, a story brought to life with humour and cinematic inspiration by him and his fellow St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School students. Mr. Broughton's efforts were a visual-effects heavy concoction of stop motion animation and live actors green screened into the action. The result was a dreamlike experience as a fisherman heads out to encounter his own mermaid.

While the two filmmakers took vastly different approaches to their work, creativity won the day and they came to a meeting of the minds.

?Those guys obviously have some pretty good talent with the writing and pacing,? said Mr. Broughton of his fellow Aurorans. ?I am writing a sitcom right now so I am taking classes on acting, writing, and producing so I would love to work with those guys on doing a comedy.

?I think they would really kick ass at writing comedies.?

Both men and their films will be vying for awards at May 29's Closing Night Gala and Awards Ceremony. The event will take place at Newmarket Theatre ? doors open 5.30 p.m. ? and tickets are available for \$35 for adults and \$25 for seniors and students from 905-953-5122 or by visiting www.yorkregionfilmfestival.com.