

'It's never too late to try something new': Top Ten reasons to see Sean Cisterna's Silver Screammers



The screening of the documentary Silver Screammers at Town Square last month was one of those feel-good experiences that can warm even the coldest of hearts.

Director Sean Cisterna documents not only the making of his horror film *The Rug* at historic Hilary House in Aurora, but he explores the journey of seven seniors who embrace various aspects of filmmaking while being mentored by an understanding, knowledgeable, and patient film production crew.

After the screening, Cisterna presented the eight Golden Agers—ranging from their mid-sixties to their mid-nineties—on-stage to the 220 attendees at Town Square along with the author of *The Rug*, Edo van Belkom.

A lively Q&A ensued as 'The Magnificent Seven' discussed their foray into filmmaking and embodied the essence of the documentary: 'It's never too late to try something new.'

Diane Ament (Make Up Artist), Sonny Lauzon (Camera), Lucia Pattera Catania (Production Designer), Bari-Lynne Butters (First Assistant Director), David Swift (Special Effects) as well as Aurora residents Anthony Garramone (Props) and Diane Buchanan (Wardrobe) brought much local color and infectious energy to the discussion.

All seven seniors took on vital production roles in the creation of Cisterna's thriller about a vengeful rug that makes the murderous plant in *Little Shop of Horrors* look comparatively docile.

Cisterna's short horror film is available on CBC Gems.

The documentary on the making of *The Rug* has dozens of charming and amusing moments, but here are ten good reasons to see Silver Screammers:

- First and foremost, the theme at the heart of Cisterna's documentary is about the beauty and sanctity of life-long learning and the seven seniors wheedle their way into your soul as they take on tasks that will inspire you to be bold and resolute; -
- Any film with local service club legend Anthony Garramone in it is going to be fun. Garramone is involved in so many of the good things that happen in Aurora. He was resplendent in his Grinch costume during last weekend's Santa Under the Stars Parade—just one of the many costumes and props that he owns in real life. As with everything he does, Garramone throws himself into 'the contest of life' as Cisterna's Props manager and the resourceful Aurora resident secures unique stage

properties for the production. His shopping trip in Richmond Hill to secure 'The Rug' as the movie's key prop turns out to be a hilarious, over-budget adventure that Garramone recounts in amusing confessional detail. - The positive light by which Cisterna presents the Town of Aurora is another selling feature of the documentary, although some of the municipal after-glow is lost when the production crew is charged for moving some artefacts at Hilary House. Ouch.

Cisterna's caring and risk-taking nature is on full display in Silver Screammers. The kindly director contributes significantly to the cognitive and emotional health of the seven selected Golden Agers by giving them integral roles in the making of his 11-minute horror flick. His connection to each of them is evident in the documentary and the same spirit manifested on stage on Sunday night in his live interactions.

- Worth the price of admission is the crisp comic moment when 83-year-old local dynamo Diane Buchanan put in charge of securing wardrobe items for the film's characters seeks to secure a police uniform at the local York Region detachment and endures an epiphanic moment: 'I didn't know they don't give out uniforms.' Distinct disappointment over the local constabulary's lack of helpfulness as she stares into Cisterna's camera. - The ribald anecdotes of Lucia Paterra Catania kept the audience in stitches. The gifted design artist discloses that she fell in love with the cinema because she and her brother used to be sent to the movies EVERY Sunday afternoon. She acknowledges that 'I didn't figure it out until my 20's why my mom and dad wanted us out of the house every Sunday for a couple of hours.' Her bawdy on-camera explanation brought the house down at Town Square. - The making of any film is immediately interesting for movie lovers, but when Cisterna showed the retirees grappling with the challenges of technology, the pressures of deadlines, the fine points of tasks the film turns into a triumph of the human spirit. These scenes, when the new senior filmmakers turn back the clock and embrace their cognitive challenges, are particularly poignant.

The congeniality of Cisterna's crew was a heart-warming element. What a world it would be if we all had such patient, knowledgeable, and kind mentors to help us learn new skills to cope with the challenges of the 21st century-- where the only constant is change.

On a personal note, seeing two of my service club colleagues, Diane and Anthony, embrace roles on the silver screen was adorable in the truest sense of that word. Both contribute mightily to the social fabric of Aurora with inspirational levels of youthful energy and that zest for life was very much on display during their on-screen moments in Silver Screammers.

Spoiler Alert: The end of the documentary functions as an homage to classic horror films including Nightmare on Elm Street, Saw, Poltergeist, Psycho, It, and Texas Chainsaw Massacre and the seven seniors do, indeed, turn into 'Silver Screammers' as they meet their cinematic demise in an amusing graphic gorefest. Cisterna hits a home run with the closing stretch of stylized mayhem as the documentary winds its way back to the thriller upon which it is based.

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