

Local filmmakers come out with wins at PlaYR Fest



By Brock Weir

Anyone who has ever wielded a camera knows all too well the feeling that comes when you just have to take a photo. Filmmakers, however, might know the feeling experienced one night by Chris Hau.

The Aurora filmmaker was sitting around one night with friends and the feeling struck: they just wanted to make a music video. So, with whim in mind they set out to make it a reality.

?It just so happened someone was available with some really great equipment, so we went down to the Distillery District, met with another friend who is a professional actor and said, ?Are you around tonight? We'll give you a Starbucks Gift Card!?"

That did the trick, and they quickly assembled crew spent the next two hours shooting in the Victorian industrial splendour of the Toronto landmark.

?It was good it was rush hour, so we had some time to think about it,? laughs Mr. Hau when asked what their overall vision was for the video, nothing they hadn't the slightest idea when they left Aurora. ?We really wanted to get into the idea that with relationships not all of them end in a bad way. Sometimes it is good that you have these relationships in your life [and at the end], it is kind of the end of the battle ? fresh and raw. It is this feeling of reflecting on these relationships. It is hard, but it is about thinking about it and getting to know yourself.?"

The resulting music video for ?Can We Talk?? took home honours at the PlaYR Film Festival ? formerly the York Region Multimedia Film Festival ? which culminated in an awards ceremony on Thursday night after making its way around the Region.

Rebranded for the 2015 festival, this year attracted a record number of video submissions, according to John Watson, Executive Director of the Festival.

?The material we have received has been a whole new level and the quality is really fantastic,? said Mr. Watson.

Along with the number of submissions, the diversity of the films and videos submitted has grown as well. From ?Communist Mummies from Mars? to a creative ? and all too helpful ? tutorial of the various kinds and various methods of using chopsticks, there was a video for everyone.

?Globally right now it is an amazing time with digital media and what is happening out there [and] the things you can capture on your camera, the way we view images, and the way we shape things that are happening in our world right now,? said actress Joanne

Vannicola, who hosted the event. ?I feel this is a time of what feels like difficult times and yet, on the flipside it is also really hopeful because it allows us the opportunity to kind of document and watch human behaviour and change it.

?I am all about change and I am really grateful to live in a time where we can see culturally diverse images, we can talk about LGBT, we can make movies about people from all over the world of all races, cultures, genders, sexualities and I am really excited to be part of this new wave of imaging and digital imagery.?

Aurora filmmaker Alex Broughton is very much a part of this new wave, particularly with his project ?Platform 21?, which won Best Film in the Experimental Category for professionals. Like Mr. Hau, Mr. Broughton's film explores the challenges of navigating those personal relationships, with a mix of traditional filmmaking combined with still photography over voice.

?As an artist, I think it is part of our duty to constantly push whatever it is we're doing, whether it is the medium we're expressing ourselves in, or the content we're addressing,? he said. ?What inspired this story was a bad breakup and being obsessed with current affairs and a lot of projects. Sometimes that takes priority and it did in a relationship and it cost me in the end. It became a learning experience and that is how I wanted to address this project ? something completely different and another learning experience; an experiment.?

The mix of moving and still image, he added, was meant to convey a disconnect ? not only a disconnect between the subject of the film and himself, but also between the audience and what they are seeing. ?The universal message that love is the most important thing to fight for, whether it is love for each other, love for another person, love for a family, or love for life itself,? he said. ?A lot of us get obsessed with ideals and we fight for them, which is good, but you have to be constantly diligent in what you're fighting and doing.?



Alex Broughton