

Film Festival

ViewFinders: International Film Festival for Youth

By Michael Conway

With the sights and sounds of Spring ushering in, with its robins, colourful crocuses and daffodils, there is yet another way people are marking the gentler season and saying goodbye to Old Man Winter. The always popular ViewFinders Film Festival is an event for young and old alike, with thoughtful cinematic subjects from the younger voices who are not so always heard in this culture.

The event is slated to run from April 21st to the 25th and promises to be better than ever. Close to 100 films; approximately 30 features and 70 short films of various genres will be screened.

“We look for great storytelling,” says Julie Glaser, ViewFinders Director. “For us it has become really important to tell stories that aren’t necessarily the ones that we get fed by mainstream media. These are great stories from different perspectives; they offer a world view of experiences.”

One example is a film entitled *Afghan*, by filmmaker Pardis Parker. “*Afghan* is a story about how we choose to deal with the cards we’re dealt in life. Specifically, it looks at two friends who use humour to deal with hate crimes,” he says.

In the film two young filmmakers debate how to deal with the anti-Arabic graffiti that has been sprayed on their car, but in a humorous way. The message Parker would like audiences to take away from his film is that one has a choice: one doesn’t have to just react; but one can see the more pathetic qualities in the act of hate. “I want people to leave the theatre laughing at the purveyors of hate crimes, laughing at how pathetic their efforts to be divisive are. I think, too often, our knee-jerk reaction is to feel offended and hurt, whereas, in reality, the more appropriate emotions might be embarrassment and pity.” Filmmaking has always been a passion for Parker. “It’s something I’ve always wanted to pursue,” he says. The young film-



maker made this film on his own, which screened at the Atlantic Film Festival last September. He appreciates the chance to have it screened. “I’m really thankful; it gives people an opportunity to see what our community is producing.”

Another film is called *Sunshine Dairy and the Disco Worm*. “It’s one of my favorites,” says Glaser. “Any disco fans out there do not miss this film,” she says. “It’s about some worms trying to make their way out of the compost heap and onto the stage. It’s really great.” The film is a Danish/German coproduction. Two animation shorts to consider are *This Movie Is More Than It’s Title* a film by local filmmaker Melanie Barron about her time living on the streets of Halifax and another called *Dogumentary*.

Scandinavian countries are really advanced in terms of their film productions for children according to Glaser. “They always tackle issues that don’t get tackled here in North America. They’re very emotional, engaging and very thought-provoking. You can’t leave these films without wanting to talk about them.”

ViewFinders is a five-day film festival which includes a comprehensive school program using film as an enhanced educational tool. It offers various workshops, a full day of French programming, as well as screenings for preschoolers and students at all levels in education. There are other special events during the festival, an Open Mike Comedy Night for example.

Stay tuned for other great cinematic events including the 9th Annual alFresco filmFesto this summer and of course the big kahuna: The 29th Atlantic Film Festival during September.

ViewFinders is a production of the Atlantic Film Festival Association. For more information on ViewFinders go to www.atlanticfilm.com or call 422-6965.