

Short and sweet

**The YoungCuts film fest features
quality cinema by promising
directors
from around the world**



MAD ABOUT THE MOUSE: *The Big Upgrade*

by **MARK SLUTSKY**

Do some time at film festivals and one thing will become very clear, very fast: shorts programs are dangerous things. While there are always a few diamonds in the rough, more often than not, the quality level is depressingly low. Which is why the YoungCuts film festival is a refreshing addition to the Montreal film scene.

Relocating here from Toronto two years ago, the YoungCuts crew sifts through shorts from around the world to put together a week-long, 100-film event that's commendably consistent, quality-wise. What's more, proceeds from the fest go to a good cause: their opening night gala traditionally is a fundraiser for the Colo-rectal Cancer Association of Canada.

"The best films that we see and present at the festival are films where the filmmakers achieve the impossible because no one ever told them that what they were attempting was impossible," says fest director Michael Ryan. "The combined budgets of all the films that we are showing is probably less than the shoe budget of *Sex and the City*, but looking at the films you would never know how little money

the directors had to spend.”

He’s right. Chalk it up to the digital revolution or well-funded film schools or the willingness to take on credit card debt, but the festival films’ production values are impressively high, all told. That said, slick lensing and fancy animation do not alone a good film make. But YoungCuts’ selection is pretty solid in the artistic sense too, with a slate of shorts far more watchable than these kinds of programs tend to be. As Ryan puts it, “Every year, we see films telling new stories or telling old stories in new ways.”

The films range from the live-action to the animated, with a few stops in between. On the live side of things, Giorgia Farina’s 10-minute *Zona Rossa* unfolds like a neat little melodrama as it tells the story of an innocent kid whose older soccer friends take him to a brothel to lose his virginity on his birthday. Andrew Lima’s *Nobody Likes a Mime* is a funny vignette about the eternal rivalry between clowns and mimes (which should be familiar to whoever’s seen Bobcat Goldthwait’s *Shakes the Clown*).

Animated highlights include James Dick’s *The Big Upgrade*, a humorous piss-take on the state of modern animated cinema with plenty of in-jokes and references to Pixar and Disney. On the other end of the animation spectrum, Paul Tom’s hand-drawn *Ton éphémère memoire* is an elegant little meditation on love. In between the cartoony and the “real” is U.K. director Benjamin Bee’s brief *Frank*, about a guy who draws himself a friend. At one minute, it’s short and sweet.

A different program of shorts will screen every night at the Cinéma du Parc for the duration of the festival, with awards given out nightly.

For those who really want to get into the spirit of the fest and are feeling charitable, the opening gala tonight, Thursday, Aug. 14 at the La Coupole restaurant (1100 de la Montagne) will set you back \$90, but will feature a talk by *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* producer Kevin Tierney, movie projections, and of course it’s for a good cause.

**YoungCuts runs from Aug. 15–21 at
the Cinéma du Parc; for more info,
see www.youngcuts.com**

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