



this man from their booth in his bedroom for a long time by all the material they draw on when looking back on his losing race to work. As the announcers say, "He's an ambassador to sleepyheads everywhere." Another comedic piece is the British film *Fluent Dysphasia* starring Stephen Rae. Rae, a father who is more interested in going out for pints with his mates than helping his daughter with her homework, finds himself needing his daughter's help when a lump on his head causes him to forget how to speak English and leaves him babbling in Irish.

Worldwide Short Film Festival (6/14–19/05)

By Lindsay Gibb

Bridging the wide gap between Toronto's manic film-festival season from April through to June and the beginning of the Toronto International Film Festival in September, this year's Worldwide Short Film Festival (WSFF) proved that it is one of the best. Chris Landreth was the toast of the 2005 festival, and rightfully so. Even though it got a bit tiring watching *Ryan* three times within a week, it is still a brilliant film that deserves all the accolades and multitude of awards it has received since its release in 2004, including Best Canadian Short at last year's WSFF. So it only makes sense that at a Canadian festival focusing on short films, the most prominent short-film director of the moment, who happens to be working in Canada, should get some recognition. Saturday evening at the Isabel Bader theatre there was a Landreth retrospective that screened his earlier, lesser known shorts as well as Ryan Larkin's (the subject of *Ryan*) two influential NFB animated shorts, *Walking* and *Street Musique*, which was followed by a Q&A hosted by critic Cameron Bailey. In *Ryan*, Larkin humbly says that everyone gets nominated for an Academy Award someday. Little did he know that the animated documentation of his life would turn out to be a winner.

For those who may not have wanted an entire night of Landreth, *Ryan* also screened alone as part of the opening night's gala presentation. As always, the WSFF started with an evening of award-winning short films from around the world. This year's batch wasn't as impressive as past years, but there were a few gems in the lot. The Norwegian film *Hjemmekamp* (*Home Game*) is a hilarious spoof on sports commenting. Two announcers passionately narrate the waking habits of a lazy 20-something male who can't drag himself out of bed to face the day. We get the impression that these commentators have been watching

As usual, the Celebrity Shorts program attracted a long lineup outside the Isabel Bader Theatre; partially because fans like to come out to see if they can get up close with a star, but mostly because the programming is always of a high quality. A nice mixture of comedies and moving dramas made up the package this night. Of the comedies, two American films came out on top. *Keep Right*, starring Ewan Bremner and Lance Henriksen, is the absurd story of two men who seem to be chasing each other with guns, but are really running around like overgrown children playing a shooting game they take very seriously. Most impressive is *Spelling Bee*, which takes the innately funny subject matter of these children's competitions and, by piling on even more bizarre situations, creates a hilariously silly world of spelling worship. The two commentators (Charlie Sheen and Anna Feris), who oversee the match, are reminiscent of those in *Best in Show*, with Sheen playing himself in a Fred Willard-like role, making inane, some times wonderfully disgusting comments.

This year marked the 10th anniversary of BravoFACT!, and with this came a special presentation of some of the best shorts to come out of this grant program. The program was bookended by two operatic comedy shorts starring Mark McKinney and Barbara Hannigan. Filmed four years apart, *Toothpaste* and *Burnt Toast: I Am Sooo Over You* are



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Toothpaste

two parts of a whole story about a couple's breakup and their individual ways of dealing with the separation. In *Toothpaste*, McKinney's Trevor sings about his frustration with his wife, Constance, who's always leaving the lid off of the toothpaste. It ends in an emotional scene when she leaves him holding a tube of paste. In *Burnt Toast*, years have past and they run into each other at the grocery store. She is not taking the divorce very well and goes through many transitions from one pathetic image to another while begging him to take her back. By the end of the film she has given up on life and is lying in the freezer section with the frozen fish. It is at this moment that it becomes clear that it is actually Trevor who can't forget about his lost love, particularly when Constance catches him kissing a fish as he dreams of her.

To its credit, unlike other festivals, the WSFF makes a point of announcing the award winners before the end of the festival and screening the films again for audiences who may have missed them the first time around. One of the most notable winners this year was *The Sadness of Johnson Joe Jangles*, a film by Jeffrey St. Jules, winner of the Jackson-Triggs Award for Best Emerging Canadian Filmmaker. In this story of the struggle to survive in the days of the pioneer, two men (Joe and Pete) move to a new city in hopes of a better life for them

and their unborn child. The absurdity of this film goes much past the image of a pregnant man when Joe gives birth to a stuffed donkey that he names Mimi, and Pete gets angry because he was expecting a stallion. With wacky bits and pieces popping up all over, this film was a perfect ending to the festival. If this year is any indication, the WSFF will have a bright future.

Lindsay Gibb is the film editor at Broken Pencil and assistant to the editor-in-chief of Take One.



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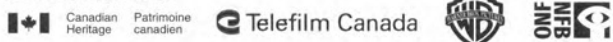
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