



Keith Behrman's *Flower & Garnet*.

with each other and, more importantly, themselves. Despite the description, *Punch* is quite a funny film, and it has been picked up for distribution by ThinkFilm.

*Flower & Garnet* is writer/director Keith Behrman's debut feature, and it's a standout. The disturbing tale centres around a strange child, a father who refuses to participate in his boy's life, and the daughter, played terrifically by Jane McGregor, who keeps them together. Callum Keith Rennie is excellent as the dysfunctional dad, and the script has barely a false moment. A shoe-in for the Citytv Screenwriters Award.

Figuring out who is going to win before the judges make their announcement is enormously satisfying. It's an opportunity to prove how good your instincts are. So, when I finally see *Too Young to Die*, I proudly recognize this year's Dragons & Tigers Award winner. It's a charming and humorous docudrama by South Korean director Park Jin-Pyo that makes you confront your ignorance about the elderly. Seventy-three-year-old Park Chi-Gyu and his 72-year-old partner Lee Sun-Ye have a sex life that puts any swinging single to shame, and we, the audience, are privy to every uninhibited moment. The remarkable thing is that, after a while, you stop feeling uncomfortable, and start to hope that, when you reach their age, you are as fortunate as they are.

Although I'd already pegged the winner for the Citytv Award, I wanted to see Vancouver's perennial sweetheart Mina Shum's latest, *Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity*. Co-written with screenwriter Dennis Foon, it's a gentle movie that follows a young girl, played by Valerie Tian, as she tries to bring happiness back into the life of her harried, single mother, played by Sandra Oh. As usual Shum finds her inspiration in Vancouver's Chinese-Canadian community, and the film is peopled with her cast of eccentric and charming characters. It turns out Shum will win a Special Citation for *Long Life* and I'm truly

Christopher Hinton's *Flux*.



# VANCOUVER

hoping that festivals everywhere put a stop to this strange practice. It seems to me that you either win an award or you don't, and that a tip of the hat to a favourite son or daughter is embarrassing. This, however, is fodder for a whole other story.

The Vancouver festival ended on October 11th with all the usual hoopla. At the closing-night gala screening organizers announced that attendance had climbed past the 150,000 mark, up 10 per cent from the previous year. Not bad considering that the weather was beautiful and, when the sun shines, Vancouverites, determined to get out in it, are notorious for putting off things like watching films and even writing about them. The Air Canada Award for most popular film went to Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*, and Vancouver documentary maker Nettie Wild was honoured for her film *FIX: The Story of an Addicted City*. Wild shared the Federal Express Award for most popular Canadian film with Ontario director Deborah Day, who won for *Expecting*.

When the Citytv Western Canadian Screenwriters Award was announced, I found myself scrambling to borrow a pen from the person in the seat in front of me. Writer/director Nicholas Racz won for *The Burial Society*, which I hadn't seen then, but I have now. It is a smart, intriguing movie full of twists and clever surprises. Rob Labelle is brilliant as the tortured Sheldon Kastner who, after being dangled from a bridge by his employers, decides to change his life. What transpires is a tale of theft, deceit and double-crossing. And yes, despite my previous prediction, *The Burial Society* deserves the Citytv Award.

The ink on the back of my hand was barely dry when I was forced to make another sheepish note. The Dragons & Tigers Award for Young Cinema was given to *Shanghai Panic*. So, in my open-minded, verging on politically correct fashion I have just watched it again, this time from beginning to end. I don't like it any better, but I do now feel better about saying that I don't like it. In any case, the sun has just come out, which means that, like a good Vancouverite, it's time for me to head outside.

## OTTAWA 02 INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FESTIVAL

10/2-6/02

By Patrick Lowe

"I don't make films," quietly proclaims Polish animator Pitor Dumala. "I discover them." Before a captive audience at the Ottawa Courts Library, Dumala demonstrates his signature techniques on a flat slab of plaster. By recarving one image after another directly under the camera, he infuses his films with a fluctuating, ethereal quality—a style that somehow reinvents itself with each passing frame. That same spirit of spontaneous innovation was also evident in the opening ceremonies at the National Arts Centre for the Ottawa 02 International Animation Festival (OIAF), with the presentation of "the world's first performance of live optical sound"—an animated orchestra, as it were. Headed by Richard Reeves and Ellen Bessen, the group Scratch Track projected a freshly hand-painted 16 mm filmstrip

on-screen backed by the snaps, crackles and pops of an optical sound-track being manually pulled back and forth past a projector's sound bulb. "Similar to DJs with their turntables," enthused Reeves. "Just such raw energy on-screen." Very nice, very nice, as the late, great NFB animator Arthur Lipsett would have said.

With packed houses at the screenings and standing-room capacity at 28 workshops, not only did Ottawa 2002 set new records for attendance, but it also redefined itself in other directions. "I got a little sick and tired of seeing the same old Sjvankmajer, Quay Brothers, McLaren that you see at festivals," admitted Chris Robinson, OIAF director. "I went an extra step to find people within the circle of the animation world not as well known. So this year's retrospectives focused on such lesser-known talents such as Dumala, David Ehrlich and Peter Woloshen—a Montreal avant-gardist who had been painting directly on film for 20 years in relative obscurity. He even admitted to not knowing of the festival's existence until recently "because I hide a lot."

Complementing such exposure in competition was the addition of the non-narrative category. "Certainly with the big four or five animation festivals, we're the first to do it," says Robinson. "It simply did not make sense for narrative stories to compete with non-narrative. They're different animals." This once again put into the spotlight the rough-around-the-edges spontaneity of films like Reeves's own *1:1* and Woloshen's *Ditty Dot Comma* and *Bru Ha Ha!*, as well as the simple, but mesmerizing digital motifs of Adrian Lokman's play of light and shadow in *Barcode*. Even the narrative films were pushing their own boundaries. Piotr Sapegin's *Aria* took a new twist on Gilbert and Sullivan's *Madame Butterfly*, where the lead character undergoes an act of stop-motion deconstruction, by literally baring its own armature. Christopher Hinton's *Flux* (which won for Best Narrative Short) takes a skewed look at a domestic dilemma, splattering its erratic ink-splotch characters across the screen in a result that's half-cartoon, half-Rorschach test.

Two awards for humour, as well as a special jury mention were given to Andrew Horne's *Leunig: How Democracy Actually Works*, a one-minute exposé about where our civic votes actually go, although the biggest laughs and cheers went to Igor Lazin's *The Little Cow*, featuring a small cow swinging and singing in a tree for three minutes straight (that's it). Mixing humour and pathos went a long way in *Tornehekken* (Best Film for Children), a touching Norwegian cut-out film about the effects of wartime on childhood, as well as in the British commercial *Cartoon* (winner for Best Commissioned). Featuring a squash-and-squeeze figure bullied to death by his abusive live-action father, it effectively contrasted Tex Avery-inspired antics with real-life domestic violence. Finally, a well-deserved Grand Prize went to Robert Bradbrook's *Home Road Movies*. Combining live action with airbrushed *Popular Mechanics* illustrations, it delves into the relationship between a father and the family car, reminiscent of the art deco parody paintings of *New Yorker* artist, Bruce McCall.

The only downside to this year's competition was the category of television series. Entertaining as they were, given the wide exposure *Teacher's Pet* and *SquareBob SpongePants* can get on YTV or Teletoon, such episodes seemed an unnecessary commercial intrusion into the

festival's more independent spirit; although, Genndy Tartakovsky's *Samurai Jack* (Best Television Series) works very well on the big screen. Nonetheless, it provided a well-deserved showcase for animation's wild man John Kricfalusi. Featuring commercials, Webtoons and episodes of *Ren & Stimpy* and *Mighty Mouse* too raunchy or politically incorrect for the networks, the screening displayed yet another edge to this year's festival, that of uncensored comic revelry, free of all the liberal constraints of good taste. You hasn't lived until you see Yogi and Ranger Smith engage in a man-to-bear wrestling match coloured in *really* homoerotic overtones in *Boo Boo Runs Wild*. Kricfalusi himself perhaps summed it all up best: "Cartoons are meant to be fun. Santa Claus never feels guilty. He doesn't give asparagus for Christmas."

## 31<sup>ST</sup> MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF NEW CINEMA AND NEW MEDIA

10/10-20/02

By Claire Valade

The audience numbers were significantly up at this year's FCMM, with reportedly close to 100,000 visitors of all sorts taking Ex-Centris, the Cinéma du Parc and Cinémathèque Québécoise by storm for 11 straight days. Each section of the festival enjoyed its round of sold-out screenings, more than any year before. Press coverage was extensive, diversified and highly appreciative, as critics generally hailed the overall selection as one of the most impressive in years: a gathering of the best and most thought-provoking titles from the world's most important festivals combined with a number of prestigious tributes—luminaries Michael Snow and Gena Rowlands; British television screenwriter Dennis Potter; French documentary filmmaker Nicolas



Peter Mettler's *Gambling, God's and LCD*.