

trained to become killers. While in Uganda an Ebola epidemic broke out, and suddenly a new story captured Belluz's attention. The award-winning film chronicles the experiences of several nurses who volunteered to work in the isolation wards in Uganda hospitals in October 2000. The film was a difficult one, subject-wise, for the first-time director. "The wards weren't a lot of fun. There were a lot of people who were very sick and a lot of the people were in a lot of pain." Belluz has since been back to Uganda, following child soldiers over a two-year period to make a film that will air on SCN in September. "If not for SCN, I probably wouldn't be here," he said, adding it has provided more than financial support for his projects.

Other multiple winners at this year's festival were Brenda Longfellow's *Tina in Mexico* and Justin Simms's *Asbore*, which both picked up three awards, and *Nina's Muse* and *The*

*Sacred Balance: The Matrix of Life*, each captured two awards. Well-known Saskatchewan-born actor Gordon Tootoosis was also recognized during the festival for his long career in television and film. The award was presented by ACTRA at a noon luncheon. "Gordon is an extraordinary actor," said Sean Hoy, president of the Saskatchewan branch of ACTRA, when presenting the first award of its kind from the association. Tootoosis, who was born and raised on the Poundmaker Reserve, was also presented with a lifetime membership in ACTRA. "When I look back, I think I've been kind of a bulldozer clearing the way. It's been rough, but I've enjoyed it," said Tootoosis, adding maybe because of his efforts and success, today "it's a little easier for young Aboriginal actors." Tootoosis said an award that recognizes his career has made him reflect on his body of work, something he rarely does. "The fact is, I don't really consider my work,

work. It's something I enjoy doing but it's a great honour to have my peers recognizing my efforts over the years."

Festival chairperson Janet Hill said she was pleased with this year's event as she helped to clear tables following the Golden Sheaf Awards ceremony. "I think it was fantastic," she said. "We had about four times as many students as last year for the emerging filmmaker's day." Mini Cinema was also popular as people took an opportunity to preview the 443 entries in the festival. "We added to the number of booths, and they were always full," she said. As for the awards gala, Hill said it is the highlight of the festival each year. "The production is a big part of Yorkton. The festival wouldn't be the same without it," she said.

*CALVIN DANIELS IS THE ASSISTANT EDITOR AND SENIOR REPORTER WITH YORKTON THIS WEEK. HIS ARTICLES HAVE BEEN WIDELY PUBLISHED IN SEVEN COUNTRIES AND HE HAS WON 15 FIRST-PLACE SASKATCHEWAN WEEKLY NEWSPAPER AWARDS.*



**WORLDWIDE  
SHORT FILM  
FESTIVAL** (6/3-8/03)

BY LINDSAY GIBB

**THE ADS FOR** the Worldwide Short Film Festival (WSFF) claimed, "Long Is Bad, Short Is Good," and yet there was no evident animosity against the longer-form films at this festival. The slogan simply emphasized the pride the filmmakers and festival programmers hold in the shorter form that isn't seen as much by mainstream audiences. But as actor Eric McCormack said at the screening of his film *Pirates*, making a short can be a stepping stone on the way to becoming a feature director. McCormack himself is in the process of writing the screenplay for his feature-directing debut as a result of the impression he made with his short.

Other films that were screened at this year's festival have pushed their filmmakers on to full-time director status. A year ago, Jonathan Hayes was one of four finalists vying for recognition

in WSFF's pitch session. He won the session and though there was no monetary award, it created momentum that led him to a grant from Bravo!Fact. And from there the ball just kept rolling. His bright and hilarious film *The School* was screened at this year's festival. Based on a short story of the same name by American author Donald Barthelme and adapted by Hayes, *The School* is the story of a teacher who is diligently trying to teach his students how to be responsible when taking care of living things in the classroom; with sad yet intensely funny results. It won the Audience Award.

Brad Peyton who, after showing his 2002 film *Evelyn: The Cutest Evil Dead Girl* at a number of different festivals, has been asked to write and direct his first feature, *The Spider and the Fly*, for Tom Hanks's company, Playtone. *Evelyn*, the story of an undead girl looking to

# festival wraps

make living friends, felt like an Edgar Allen Poe tale as told by Vincent Price and directed by Tim Burton. I half expected to see Johnny Depp show up and start pruning trees with his clipperhands. *Evelyn* got an honourable mention in WSFF's Best Canadian Short category.

While they may help up-and-coming directors get their feet in the door, short films aren't simply tools to take directors to the big time. That's why this festival is about celebrating the short film, not as a stepping stone but as an art form in its own right. Established in 1994 and run for the past three years under the banner of the Canadian Film Centre, this year's WSFF screened many premieres of short films from around the world. Since all the films were less than 32-minutes long, six or seven films were screened together to avoid crowds constantly filing in and out of the theatres, and to give the festival-goers their money's worth.

One popular program was the Animator's Perspective on Aardman

Animation, the company behind *Chicken Run* and the Wallace and Gromit shorts. After viewing classic stop-motion creations as well as Wallace and Gromit's new *Cracking Contraptions*, the audience was given the opportunity to speak to Merlin Crossingham, a key Aardman animator who attended the festival to lead a symposium on its style of stop-motion animation. Another highly anticipated program was the *Matrix*-inspired animated collection, *The Animatrix*, which was repeated a second time due to popular demand.

The opening gala featured films that were worthy of the hype they may have received. Kicking off the festival was the stunning Canadian stop-motion film *The Stone of Folly* from Jesse Rosensweet, which left one awestruck by the well-crafted characters and settings. Reminiscent of the work of the Quay Brothers (whose films have been featured at this festival in past years) and more stunning than the Tool music videos, *The Stone of Folly* is a virtually silent look at an ancient mental ward and the removal

of a stone from one patient's head. Alastair Dickson, the designer of all the models and sets for *Folly*, also designed the awards given out for the WSFF's best films.

Whereas some festivals announce the winners after the last film is shown, leaving attendees thinking "I wish I had seen that movie," a clever and much welcomed concept at the WSFF was to announce the award winners before the end of the festival and to close with a screening of the winning films. The \$25,000 prize for Best Canadian Short went to Dale Heslip's *The Truth about Head*, which stars Bruce Hunter, one of Canada's most recognizable ad actors, as Ed. Ed is just a head who feels that he needs a body to make him whole. But, as this 12-minute, brightly coloured comedy warns, sometimes what makes others whole is precisely the thing that makes us incomplete. Unsurprisingly, Heslip is now pitching a feature-length script.

LINDSAY GIBB

