



which is exactly as the title suggests, a re-enactment of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, condensed into 30 seconds with bunnies instead of Jack Nicholson and company.

Compared to the colourful offerings of *Saddam and Osama*, *This Land* and *The Shining in 30 Seconds*, the black-and-white pencil work of *Son of Satan* and the charcoal shadings in *La Piccola Russia* were stark, dark and frank. Gianluigi Toccafondo's *La Piccola Russia*, which picked up Best Narrative Short Film Under 35 Minutes in the Independent Short Films competition, capitalized on grainy sketching to corrupt photographs, adapting them from portraits and snapshots into a void of disturbing violent and sexual fantasies. Then there was J.J. Villard's *Son of Satan*, described by one festival judge as "fucked up," and for good reason. In this raw and unpretentious film, cartoony young bullies pick on a fellow student. They curse and beat on him and eventually try to hang him while the artist's pencil seems to be motivated by this hate, even driven by it. Nevertheless, *Son of Satan*

is undeniably charged with genuine passion, particularly visible from the hand-drawn nature of the film. And one might ask: Would it have worked so well if had been constructed out of pixels on a sterile computer screen? Of course, the computers will have their chance for revenge next year as the festival has officially announced that it will now be an annual event. In 2005, it will run from September 21 to 25. Based on the talent at this year's festival, I've already noted the dates on my calendar.

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Jennifer Shiman's  
*The Shining in 30 Seconds*,  
Re-Enacted by Bunnies



# Atlantic Film Festival

BY  
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Standing on the edge of a quarter century, the 2004 Atlantic Film Festival (AFF)—the 24th—surprised itself with more local feature films than initially expected in what was supposed to be a slow year.

The proceedings opened with a maximum of Canadian star power with the Nova Scotia-shot Daniel MacIvor feature drama *Wilby Wonderful*. Actors Rebecca Jenkins, Maury Chaykin and Callum Keith Rennie joined producers Sherri Johnson, Camilia Frieberg and MacIvor himself to launch the film—and the festival—in style. Ellen Page eventually won a Best Actress Award for her role in the Altman-lite film about the denizens of a mysterious seaside island in danger of rapid overdevelopment. Other East Coast features that made their debuts included the Saint John-shot comedy *Geraldine's Fortune*, helmed by *Boys of St. Vincent* director John N. Smith and starring Mary Walsh and Jane Curtin, John Vatcher's long-awaited Newfoundland drama *Making Love in St. Pierre*, and the bracing BBC/CBC miniseries *Sex Traffic*, where Halifax stood in for Boston under three feet of snow.

The real strength of the this year's Atlantic work, however, lay in the non-fiction end of things, reflecting the surging strength of documentary right across the board in North America and the rest of the cinematic world. With the East Coast's Salter Street Films (reborn as the Halifax Film Company and retaining most of Salter's previous production commitments such as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and the stop-animation show *Poko*) still basking in the Oscar glory for *Bowling for Columbine*, documentaries seemed to be everywhere at this year's AFF. Newfoundlander Gerry Rogers followed up on the success of her widely-acclaimed *My Left Breast* with a similarly themed cancer-survivor film entitled *Pleasant Street*, which follows, over a period of a year, three neighbours on an unassuming St. John's street as they struggle with the disease. Rogers compassionate, lively and surprisingly humorous film won her a Sobeyes Best Director Award along with the NFB's Rex Tasker Award for Best Documentary.

Other strong nonfiction work came from a new generation of filmmakers including *Trailer Park Boys* cinematographer Adam Liley, whose *Come on Down: Searching for the American Dream* did turn-away business at the cavernous Park Lane Cinema complex where most of the festival



Paul Gross and Rebecca Jenkins in Daniel MacIvor's *Wilby Wonderful*

screenings took place. Liley's road trip adventures include obligatory side trips to Washington and Las Vegas. Channelling Jack Kerouac and Robert Frank, *Come on Down* will receive a national broadcast on CTV sometime in 2005. Speaking of Robert Frank, the legendary photographer and filmmaker—who lives for half of the year in Cape Breton—submitted his first work to AFF this year. Entitled *Paper Route*, it is a 30-minute vérité piece on delivering 150 newspapers in and around Mabou, Nova Scotia, on a cold and blustery March morning. *Paper Route's* next stop is the Tate Gallery in London, England, where Frank's photos and films will be the subject of a major retrospective from October to January, 2005.

One of the most hotly anticipated nonfiction films this year was Warren Jeffries's documentary on three emerging Halifax-based hip hop artists. Entitled *The 902*—Nova Scotia and PEI's telephone area code—the film profiles the lives and art of DJ JoRun, Scratch Bastid and Buck 65, DJs and

turntableists who are transforming Halifax's musical reputation as a citadel for Celtic music and Alternative rock. Their urban beats and international outlook have already gained Buck 65 a recording contract with Warner Music. Jeffries's film manages to catch each artist in their respective element, shedding light on a heretofore underground cultural phenomenon that is just beginning to catch fire in the mainstream.

PEI animator JoDee Samuelson, fresh from a double win at the troubled MWFF, copped another festival prize for her delightful new work, *Mabel's Saga*. A feisty piece that tells the story of a menopausal woman fulfilling various lifelong dreams, *Mabel's Saga* won Best Short Film Honours at this year's AFF. Perhaps the highlight of this year's festivities, however, was a visit from Hollywood producer and director, Ivan Reitman. The man responsible for some of the funniest films in movie history, including *Meatballs* and *Ghostbusters*, Reitman was in town to meet with the *Trailer Park Boys* for an upcoming feature-film project. In a public seminar, Reitman recounted how he and his family arrived at Halifax's Pier 21 in 1951 from Czechoslovakia. Expected to return next year for a spring shoot, Reitman's connection with the raucous and wildly successful Showcase television comedy capped an exciting and busy year for Julian, Ricky and Bubbles, who are in the middle of shooting a fifth season while preparing for an expected Christmas special.

While a handful of major East Coast film artists were conspicuous by their absence—Thom Fitzgerald's *Three Needles* has been delayed until 2005 and William D. MacGillivray's feature-length documentary on the writer Alistair MacLeod hasn't quite finished shooting—2004 showed the Atlantic Region holding up its own amid an industry-wide downturn.

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Not-ready-for-the-big-screen players, Julian, Bubbles and Ricky from *Trailer Park Boys*.