

# Making life through the camera lens

BY AVI LAMBERT

The Atlantic Film-makers Cooperative's seventh annual AFSCOOPALOOZA last weekend reflected the hype and momentum of the movie industry in Halifax and the maritimes.

I was expecting a lot of the 'beautiful people' at last weekend's screening, but I was surprised. People were a tad outrageous and others were beauties, but there were few Hollywood types — the crowd was mostly filled with normal people, several of whom I'm sure see life as though it was through a camera lens.

The screening-palooza festival had to turn away over sixty people to make space for the chaotic crowd that packed NSCAD's Bell Auditorium. Following the cramped two hour screening of almost 32 short films there was a cash bar, free food and a performance by Knifey Moloko.

The filming of Titanic on the Halifax waterfront and the recent creation of Electropolis studios is a sign of the times. These developments are incentives for international studios to come to Halifax to produce films.

But the co-op prefers to focus on the work of local film-makers.

"Rather than big sweeping Hollywood productions coming in," says Tanis Rodiuk, "we have talent being cultivated here at the ground level."

Rodiuk is co-ordinator of the 24-year old Atlantic Film-makers Cooperative, which hosted the event. Rodiuk and other people involved in the festival are positive that Halifax and the east coast has more to offer than typical maritime scenery.

The co-op runs film workshops, collectively called *Shortworks*, which were created to support and teach new and old people in the industry.

Also, the co-op has created many programs intended to aid up-and-coming artists. The "Film Five" program provides desperately needed funding to those involved in the industry who come up with a good script. Thom Fitzgerald, of the acclaimed film *The Hanging Garden*, is a graduate of the program. His film, *Cherries*, was one of the nominated shorts at the screening four years ago.

And the work of new film-makers on the scene is extraordinary. It's truly amazing what can be accomplished in under 15 minutes. One of the short films at the 'palooza was a film called *Terminal Lunch*. In 13 minutes a truly powerful and eye opening dilemma is developed. Though you're left asking yourself if the cliffhanger ending would have been avoided if the film was longer, you wonder why you pay so much for big-budget three hour motion pictures that don't leave you with the same amount of satisfaction.

Michael Greer, whose film *Bird in the House* was recently sold to CBC, received funding by "Film Five".

"It's going to be a busy summer in Halifax and this region," Greer says. "[The 'Film Five' program] gives that helping hand."

Andy Pedersen is one of this year's recipients of a \$10,000

Atlantic Film Cooperative's intermediate level film funding grant. Pedersen says that the funding program is a "great opportunity when you don't have a lot on your own reel."

The co-operative and its programs and courses are closely run with the Center for Art Tapes and Flashfire Productions. Four films are awarded funding from the co-op and the Center for Art Tapes each year. This means that films are being created in two different

mediums, but in a closely related environment. Ann Verrall of the Centre for Art Tapes says that "the film and video industry [in Halifax] are working together on the cutting edge."

It looks like Verrall is right. The beautiful and somewhat quirky shorts shown at the 'palooza this year are only a taste of the film talent in this city. The list is long, and I'm not one for name dropping, but...Lulu Keating, Scott Simpson, and Bill McGillivray are but a few.

"Film Five" gets 64 per cent of its funding from the government, with ties to such organizations as the CBC, Telefilm Canada, the Nova Scotia Film Development Corporation, the Nova Scotia Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. The rest of the funding comes from membership fees and courses taught at NSCAD. It is significant that these NSCAD courses are the only film-for-credit courses east of Montreal.

Sean Kelly, the chair of the

AFSCOOPALOOZA organizing committee, says that next year will be the "retrospective", as it marks the Atlantic Film-makers Co-op's 25th anniversary. He told me that the event is always improving.

I didn't know what to expect from the film industry in Halifax. Now I know it's movin'. I'd like to see the Atlantic film industry get the recognition it deserves everywhere and surpass everyone's expectations. I know they've surpassed mine.

## Yellow Fever is good medicine

BY RYAN LASH

At a little show at the Market St. Jazz Cafe on Saturday night Dr. Yellow Fever and the Jive launched their new CD, *DIY*. They didn't send me one, but if it is anything like their live show, it will be worth the 17 bucks.

The show was typical Yellow Fever fare. With the solid support of the Jive, Doctor Yellow Fever himself impressed with his swingin' hips and sexy lips. With a bunch of original tunes, many from the new CD no doubt, and at least one Michael Jackson cover, the show drew many on to the dance floor.

So now with a CD and a handful of live shows under their belts, the Yellow Fever seems to be more than just a 24-hour flu. In fact, they seem to be in a position to make quite an impression on the Halifax music scene. Not celtic and not part of the incestuous indie-rock family (well OK, frontman Kamran Abdi was part of Three Penny Opera, but hey it's Halifax — it's even more impressive that he isn't directly related to any of the members of Sloan), the group has a sound that Halifax hasn't heard too much of. And I'm sure I'm not the only one



Fans and the like caught Dr. Yellow Fever's latest gig at the Market Street Jazz Cafe. (Photos by Ryan Lash)

who thinks that's a good thing.

So before they too run off, chasing after bigger and better things (I hear that Calgary doesn't have a Halifax band to call their own yet), Dr. Yellow Fever and the

Jive could inject some musical diversity into our bland indie-pop landscape.

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