

Students learn a lot from Mayfield's film festival

By Bill Rea

Plenty of creativity was in evidence recently for the Mayfield Secondary School Student Film Festival 2015.

There were eight student-made films that covered a range of topics, looking into such issues as friendships, dealing with stress, parental authority, dealing with troublesome neighbours and comedy, which sometimes got a little surreal. One of the films was called Attack of the Jell-O Monster, and at one point had one of the characters buying \$500 worth of pills for \$20 and half a roll of breath mints.

The films were adjudicated by Inglewood resident David Storey, an executive producer and director on the sitcom Corner Gas. "There was some good work there, I felt," he said. "Really good."

The award for best supporting actress was a three-way tie between Claudia Masatti, Sashauna Rhoden and Brittany MacFarlane, who all appeared in Dollz.

Storey looked to his comedy background for selecting the best supporting actor from Attack of the Jell-O Monster, naming Carson Somanlall.

Storey lamented there weren't many great roles for women in the films, adding it's up to the women themselves to address that. "I'll tell you, the men won't do it," he declared, adding the award went to Monica Przyborowski in Salmon Point. For best actor, he chose Callum Gibson in Attack of the Jell-O Monster. "I think your performance was really funny and really natural," Storey told him.

Sara MacLennan-Nobrega got the editing award for the film For Good, Adam Bartley took the prize for cinematography for My Story and Adrienne Ramsingh was named best director for High Off Anxiety.

Storey named My Story the best film, calling it "quite an amazing piece of work," and "a story well-told."

The people's choice award went to Harnoor Bhagtana for his film Threefold.

Storey also used the occasion to talk to the aspiring film makers.

He said he was in a theatre program in Richmond Hill and took radio and television arts at Ryerson. He said there are a lot of good courses that will help young people get into the industry, but the "fantastic course" at Ryerson is the best.

"You've got to be prepared to start at the bottom and work your way up," he added. "You've got to be prepared to suck it up."

Storey said the pitching of ideas is the hardest part of the job of directing, adding the actual directing is the best part. He also said he's in the habit of setting an idea aside if it doesn't sell, waiting to see if there's a place where it can be used later.

Comedy is a lot of fun to do, Storey told the students.

He also stressed the importance of persistence in the industry, pointing out that people going in are going to face a lot of negativity and rejection along the way. "If you are persistent, it's going to happen for you," he said.

There are also lots of long hours to be faced. Storey said he worked 12-hour days, four days per week when doing Corner Gas.

Commenting on his directorial approach, Storey said the casting process is often the time when it can be determined if the right people are being brought in for the project. He also said the performers should have a good idea going in of what's wanted. Once production starts, Storey said he tries to be positive and supportive.

"I like someone who comes in and knows what they're doing," he commented, adding a big mistake actors make is when they get the idea of how they view the character in their head.

"You've got to be fluid," he said. "You've got to be flexible."

"You've got to be able to turn on a dime," he added.

In terms of advice for people interested in getting into the industry, Storey said, "Start bugging people like me."

"You've got to get out there and knock on doors," he added.

He also warned there are no permanent jobs in the industry. "You're constantly looking for a job," he said.

As well, he said made his own movies when he was starting out. He agreed it's hard, but "doing that is how you're going to perfect your craft."

Storey was asked what his favorite movie was, replying off the top of his head, The Godfather.

"It was such a good story," he said, adding it was well written, and that can be hard to find.



Those taking part in the Mayfield Secondary School Student Film Festival 2015 included Harnoor Bhagtana, Sara MacLennan-Nobrega, Emily Rea, Carson Somanlall, Maddy Crowther, Callum Gibson and Adam Martley.