

Festival not TUFF enough

Written by Dan Pelletier, Contributor

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ImageArt for Commuters and ONESTOP Media Group have come together to bring the first-ever Toronto Urban Film Festival (TUFF) to the city's subway platforms, which hosted the works of filmmakers from Sept. 8 to 14.

TUFF was influenced by the successes of international urban film festivals, which have gained popularity over the past few years. The festival encourages amateur writers, filmmakers and artists to showcase their work to the commuting public in Toronto and its outlying areas. On average, more than one million people of different ages and nationalities use the subway everyday.

"I've heard about TUFF because I take the subway, but I only heard about TIFF on the radio," said Katie Joyce, a ballet student at George Brown College.

Excalibur asked subway users like Joyce if they knew about the festival, and while many confused it with the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), many had no idea that the event was going on.

There are currently more than 200 LCD screens located within TTC property. While looking at the screens (with deep anticipation), it took roughly five minutes to see any sign of the festival, and it took between eight and 10 minutes to catch a glimpse of a film. There were not many advertisements, if any at all, within the subway quarters to promote the event.

The films, which are all silent, had to be 60 seconds long and classified into different categories. Other regulations for the films stated that they had to be appropriate for all ages and nationalities (since they were going to be seen by the general public) and they were not allowed to promote products of any kind.

Entries to the festival could be local, national and even international.

Each individual piece was to be marked by a panel of one judge and six jurors. Jeremy Podeswa, writer and director of *Fugitive Pieces*, which was the opening night gala at TIFF, is serving as the 2007 judge. The job of the panel was to assess the works and reward the best and most deserving filmmakers. The prizes included a trip for two to Jamaica, wireless devices and a camcorder with tripod.

The break that this festival has generated for Toronto filmmakers is unprecedented by other amateur opportunities. Although the festival has not received much publicity, amateur filmmakers are still able to garner a piece of the cinematic spotlight.