

Nevada filmmakers thrive at Dam Short Film Festival

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As part of its 12th year anniversary celebration the Dam Short Film Festival screened shorts in a number of categories such as drama, comedy and documentaries. One group that always garners attention is the Nevada Filmmakers block featuring the work of some of the state's most talented moviemakers, who you might like to get to know.

An Armenian raised in Russia, Eduard Osipov started acting at the age of 7 in school theater. He also studied Martial Arts for seven years winning championships in junior league before moving to the United States in 2006 to pursue his lifelong dream of being an actor and director. He chose this profession because, "I think filmmaking is one of the best forms of art for one to express himself. And I always loved to tell stories."

Osipov's Dam Short Film Festival selection PATHOS was made specifically as an entry for Project Green Light on HBO, which is a contest for new filmmakers. Aside from this screening, PATHOS has also been shown at the Visionaria Film Festival in Italy.

Fellow filmmaker Drew Mavrick was born and grew up in Southern California, where he spent his days riding skateboards and his nights dedicated to watching raunchy comedies and horror movies from his mother's collection of dubbed VHS tapes. Shortly after high school graduation in 1995, Drew moved to Las Vegas to attend UNLV. After finishing school he met his wife Jen, had two kids and continued to grow as a moviemaker.

Drew admits always being fascinated with film. "Just like most filmmakers my age that I know, I spent a lot of time making my own horrible movies on my parents CamCorder when I was a kid. And I spent even more time watching movies. In spite of his love for movies, he thought his dream to make them was an unrealistic career goal assuming you had to grow up in Hollywood to be a filmmaker. Since Drew lived over an hour away he decided to follow his dad's advice and get a business degree instead. It wasn't until his business management skills landed him a full-time job at a Vegas production company that he realized he might still have a chance. After spending the last 10 years working on commercial sets, and helping other people make their dream projects and he is now taking the time to work on his own.

SCARED TO DEATH, a tribute to the movies Drew grew up watching, has already screened at the Horror Block Short Film Festival, Vegas Indie Film Fest, Snake Alley Festival of Film and the Atlanta Horror Film Festival. Following The Dam Short Film Festival it will be seen next month in the Silver Scream Film and Comic Fest in Santa Rosa, CA, the last stop on its current festival tour.

Born and raised in Michigan, Andrew Laurich became hooked on directing after reading a biography on Steven Spielberg in high school. During freshman year he made a very crude short film and showed it to his acting class. "I have no idea if they actually liked it, but the thrill

of interacting with an audience on that level became an opiate I've been chasing ever since," he explained.

Following his passion Laurich attended film school at the University of Michigan then relocated to LA after graduation. He took a job as a PA with Anonymous Content where he became intrigued by the idea of directing commercials which he's done for the past six years with ContagiousLA. He's also been working on a number of TV and feature projects while maintaining a close collaborative relationship with Gabriel Miller, his co-writer on A REASONABLE REQUEST, the short that was screened in the Dam Short Film Festival.

Aside from being shown in Boulder City, A REASONABLE REQUEST has played in the US Narrative competition at Sundance, Rainedance in London, the Portland Film Fest and Hollyshorts. Andrew credits the "uniquely twisted mind of Gabriel Miller", with getting him on board with the project by pitching him a hypothetical idea with an absurd premise that Laurich first thought was ridiculous then viewed as a unique challenge.

A native Nevadan, Kaleb Temple grew up in Carson City before moving to Reno in 2001 for college. "In school I studied all forms of art and focused my B.A. degree on photography with a minor in journalism." Following a stint at a local news station he got a job in the operations area of the Nevada Museum of Art nine years ago, writing movie scripts and drawing in his spare time. "

Kaleb's desire to become a filmmaker comes from telling stories with his artwork. He stated that he grew up on movies, even worked at several video rental stores and movie theaters when he was younger and that cinema has always been appealed to him not just as entertainment, but as a means of artistic expression.

SCHNOZZLED, Kaleb's Dam Short Film festival entry previously screened at the 2015 annual 3 Minute Film Competition in Reno where it took the main jury prize and second place by audience vote. It was also shown at the 2015 Action On film Festival receiving Best Short Comedy award. Temple said he was working on a number of feature length scripts when the idea to make a simple, silly short film about a clown and his nose came to him.

No stranger to the Las Vegas independent filmmaking scene, Michael Tushaus is a Regional Emmy® & Festival Award-Winning Director, Producer, Cinematographer, Editor, Actor & Composer who also has a B.A. in Theatre and Music. Michael has been a filmmaker most of his life and has garnered several awards on the festival circuit prior to having THE EXCHANGE screened at the Dam Short Film Festival.

The short also screened recently at the Action On Film Festival in Monrovia, CA where it was nominated for two awards; one for Beatrix Wiersma in the Best Child Actor/Actress category and the other for Michael himself for Best Cinematography in a Short Film.

Tushaus said that his initial reason for making the film was that he'd bought some new gear and needed a project to use it on, but the film quickly became more important. The morning before setting out for setting out on location for a one day shoot, Michael got a call from his

family alerting him that his father had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. Faced with cancelling his plans and letting the news sink in or moving forward and trying to keep his mind off of the situation he decided to proceed.

“My dad was an entertainment guy, too, and his motto, which he had reminded me, is that ‘the show must go on.’ And it did and it has,” Michael shared. He edited the film on his laptop during flights to make hospital visits and back home while his dad underwent chemo, radiation and surgery. During this period Tushaus showed him the various edits as the short progressed.

The filmmaker explained, “The message of this film resonates even more because of my personal experience. The Man in the film symbolizes that longing to go back to childhood.” That message means even more now since Michael lost his dad in October 2015. Now more than ever, I wish I could go back to that innocent time as a child and get back that which I lost, my dad. But I have to say, I think in a weird way, going through losing him, and all that we did together in those months leading up to his passing, I regained my inner child,” he concluded.

Thirty-seven year old Eric West lives in Las Vegas and has been making films since 1991. He knew he wanted to become a filmmaker since the late 80’s when his dad showed him how to edit on VHS machines and he decided to start doing his own projects. They soon progressed from making parodies to filming their own original videos.

The Dam Short Film Festival is the only event where Eric submitted PRIVATE STASH. “In the past I’ve entered and been selected at other fests, but they usually require travel so I don’t attend. The crew at Dam Short are top Notch and make the filmmakers feel welcome,” he said.

West came up with the concept for PRIVATE STASH about 2-3 years ago, but couldn’t figure all the beats out so he put it aside for awhile. When he revisited it later on it all snapped into focus. He continued, “I wrote it quickly, but found my locations were going to be difficult to get.” This wasn’t Eric’s greatest challenge, however, since the film takes place on a plane and he had to rely heavily on CGI to make the short.

Leonardo Portillo is among the first generation of his family to be born in the U.S. He grew up in Las Vegas and his original ambition was to be a comic book artist until he discovered during adolescence that visual stories could be told with more immediacy by a camera rather than a pencil. That’s when he developed a love for moviemaking. “It was the experience of showing my work to a live audience for the first time, and realizing firsthand the power that film has to move people,” he related.

THERE IS NO HOLLYWOOD, Portillo’s latest project premiered at the Dam Short Film Festival although Leonardo is awaiting notification from other events. He made the short out of his desire to share something personal explaining that it is not only the story of how he became a filmmaker, but why, and how success as a filmmaker has nothing to do with Hollywood.