

DUCK THIS!



Peter Utsey Emerald

Festival has world views from Palestine to Lilith Fair

■ This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Vancouver International Film Festival, with screenings of over 300 films

By Jennifer Hezel
for the Emerald

VANCOUVER, B.C. — From footage of Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914 Antarctica expedition to Spike Lee's latest flick, "A Huey P. Newton Story," the 20th annual Vancouver International Film Festival gave participants the chance to go around the world through movies.

The festival, set in the beautiful and enchanting Canadian Rockies, offered a total of 217 feature films and 78 shorts, organized into 28 different themes and genres for the

viewing pleasure of film lovers. The theme of the festival, which started Sept. 27 and ends Oct. 12, is "Same Planet, Different Worlds."

While this event might not rank as high as Cannes, Sundance or the Toronto Film Festival, it offers film buffs and filmmakers an array of opportunities to see and display a variety of movies. The films are shown at eight participating theaters in downtown Vancouver, and festival organizers expected more than 135,000 people to attend over the course of the event.

As it has been since the festival's inaugural year, a special showcase is given to Canadian filmmakers from around the country. First-time feature film director Robin Schlaht's movie "Solitude," which was filmed in the province of

Saskatchewan, premiered Oct. 7.

In this film, which flashed me back to the 1990s David Lynch film "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me," three people meet at a monastery one summer and have experiences that change their lives. "Solitude" mainly focuses on questions of faith and identity in the abstract, leaving its viewers with the feeling that life is truly about the ground beneath our feet and the air that we breathe.

Special emphasis was also placed upon 13 filmmakers from the Middle East, whose work was grouped with that of filmmakers from approximately 60 other nations in the Cinema From Around the World category.

I made it a special point to catch "Promises," a documentary that addresses the complexities of the

Middle Eastern conflict between Israel and Palestine through the eyes of seven children.

These children's stories are honest, open and touching because the children are less influenced by the social and political environment.

As a 7-year-old Palestinian said in the movie, "What would the value be if the Arab and the Jewish children met, and not the politicians?"

A special treat came with the hour-and-a-half screening of the documentary film, "Lilith on Top," made by Lynne Stopkewich, a Canadian filmmaker who took the last two-month-long journey on the Lilith Fair tour.

According to the VIFF Web site, in 1997, musician Sarah

McLachlan "set out to prove that an all-woman line-up could be a hit," and Lilith Fair "became one of the most successful multi-artist tours of the last decade."

"Lilith on Top" is scheduled to be in video stores and small theaters in the United States this spring.

Passes for the festival range from \$125 to \$575 in Canadian dollars. An alternative to paying full price is to volunteer at the festival. The Greater Vancouver International Film Society counts on its volunteers to help and host this event and rewards them with tickets to individual screenings and multiple-day passes. For more information on this or next year's festival, visit www.viff.org.

Jennifer Hezel is a freelance reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald.

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