

The Auteur: Byrd McDonald

Gay producer takes locally filmed indie to New York City

by Stephen Marc Beaudoin

What exactly is the rating system for a porno film? Byrd McDonald might have an answer.

It's when he makes a brief cameo in his new film that it suddenly comes to him. McDonald plays a disgruntled X-rated film critic, cracking down on plotless porn, who finds the perfect dismissal for a King Dong dud: "Two dicks down," he sneers.

This is just the kind of low-culture, high-brow humor that is fast garnering acclaim for the Portland producer's latest credit: *The Auteur*, a bro-

mantic raunchy comedy exposing the jizz-crusty underbelly of the adult film industry. After a hit run last month at New York City's Tribeca Film Festival, the flick is being considered by a number of national distributors and could start playing the festival circuit as early as this fall.

And it was all filmed in Stumptown and the surrounding areas, featuring a killing slate of local acting and tech talent. Oh, yeah—porn talent, too. More on that in a moment.

McDonald, in case you haven't heard of him before, is the queer 36-year-old producer behind the 2006 cult hit *Film Geek* and a Portland resident for going on 10 years. After graduating from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and working in the '90s for Jonathan Demme's production company as a development director—sussing out scripts and books for possible film treatment ("I loved that job," he says, "but I really wanted to make my own stuff")—he landed in Portland.

Why the Rose City?

"God, Portland's awesome!" he gushes with usual gesticulating enthusiasm, almost knocking his black-rimmed glasses of his animated face. "Everyone in New York wants to come here."

In fact, it's our fair city's cultural cache that earned *The Auteur* a few of its fans at Tribeca. Directed by up-and-comer James Westby and starring *Film Geek* favorite Melik Malkasian in the title role, the film follows the (re)ascent of X-movie director Arturo Domingo, who skips into PDX to be honored at a film fest and ends up bumping into his ex-wife and clawing his way back to the top of the porno pile with his masterwork, *Gang Bangs of New York*. Portlanders might recognize Sauvie Island—where the film's literal climax, a scene from the director's *Full Metal Jack-off*, takes place—and the Jupiter Hotel among the hometown locales.

McDonald says, "The fact that it's set in Portland helped [the film] immensely; they romanticize this place." And spending three weeks in New York to promote and premiere the film—with a planeload of Portlanders in tow—was enough to make him long for home. "New York's a great

city," he says, "but the smells were beginning to waft out of the sewers."

Although the film isn't out-and-out gay—it does feature genderqueer band Basic Fix, trans actress Denise Dubois, bi actress Viva Las Vegas as well as gay Portland rent stud Ty Hudson in a sweaty cameo—"it's got such a gay sensibility," McDonald says. "Even when we were at Tribeca, it was very clear to me that a lot of programmers that loved the film are gay." There's talk of the film showing at a number of queer film fests around the country or better.

When will it show in Portland? That's not yet clear. Right now McDonald and company are courting distributors and "coming very close to selling the movie." He's guessing, though, that it won't be seen at, say, Lloyd Cinemas anytime soon: "It will not," he deadpans, much like his cameo character in the film, "be playing in multiplexes." **JO**



Mustachioed porn director Arturo Domingo (Melik Malkasian) tries to make a "cumback" in *The Auteur*.



Byrd McDonald (far right) meets the press last month at the Tribeca Film Festival.

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