

Forest festival showcases best young filmmakers of Lambton County

SARNIA THIS WEEK

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A scene from the short film Quarantine Anthology, Lucian Austin's short film and winner of the People's Choice award during this year's Youth Shorts Competition. Handout/Sarnia This Week

Organizers of the Youth Shorts Competition – a short film festival presented annually by the Optimist and Kiwanis Clubs of Forest that showcases the work of young and aspiring local filmmakers – say this year's competition was a “stunning success” despite the pandemic.

Nearly 40 young filmmakers from Lambton County submitted short films in a variety of categories to the Youth Shorts Competition, with \$2,800 in prizes – \$2,000 of which was donated by cineSarnia with the balance coming from the Optimist and Kiwanis Clubs – awarded to the winners after the festival was held online over the May 22 weekend.

With the submitted films covering a wide variety of genres, organizers said they were thrilled by both the quantity and quality of the material submitted.

“Last year we had a record 23 submissions from across the region,” said the Optimist Club’s Scott Ferguson. “This year we saw a dramatic rise in both the number and quality of submissions, with just under 40 films submitted to the judges.”

While the ongoing pandemic presented a challenge to the fledgling filmmakers, they appeared to make the most of the situation, Ferguson added, creating some captivating cinema.

“We are a strong, hardworking, creative community, as evidenced by the quality and record number of submissions,” he said. “This year’s judging was the most difficult to date.”

And while a panel of judges deliberated over the award winners in each category, 260 people were able to view all of the films at www.LaFFF.ca and then vote online for the People’s Choice award.

Due to social distancing measures, filmmakers and their families were unable to gather at Forest’s Kineto Theatre to watch their productions on the big screen.

Organizers said once restrictions on social activities are relaxed, the clubs will stage an event for everyone at the theatre. They also thanked everyone who made the competition successful.

“We are deeply grateful to the teachers and students who have made this year such a success, and look forward to next year’s competition,” said Ferguson.

The Winners

Judges’ Choice Awards

Last Man Standing by Joseph Barclay – A poignant film about a robot who is coping with sorrow and loneliness after losing his human family.

BFFs by Mathew Pettit-Claymation – An animation with a strong social message about love and social acceptance.

In it Together by Isabela Gorgonzola – A documentary style film which examines poverty, social responsibility, and the generosity of those working to make a difference in the lives of those in need.

The End by Elliott Courtney – A drama exploring the suicide of a depressed teen and the impact on his younger brother.

SIFI by Caelan Babenko – A digital 3D animation which explores escapism through art.

Isolation by Josiah Pettit – A powerful film which focuses on the disorienting solitude of the pandemic.

Climate Change by Sarah Houle – A film which explores the impact of climate change on the environment.

People’s Choice Award

Quarantine Anthology by Lucian Austin – A drama/comedy about life during the pandemic.