



Lights, camera, action!

LORI GALLAGHER Fredericton Daily Gleaner

August 5, 2014

The New Brunswick Film Co-op hosts teen film camps to teach participants the fundamentals of movie-making.

Above, from left, are William McCready, Sarah Martini, Owen Vose Jones, Anika Boehler, Michel Guitard, instructor, and Gabriel Guitard.

Photo: James West/The Daily Gleaner

There were some scary things going on in the basement of the Charlotte Street Arts Centre last week.

Scientists had trapped a group of people in a room and were running all kinds of experiments on them. Most of them weren't faring well.

Luckily the chains were plastic and the blood fake, as the horror unfolding was simply a scene from the film being put together by the 10 participants in the annual weeklong Teen Film Camp offered by the New Brunswick Filmmakers' Co-operative.

It's been a busy few days according to 14-year-old Quentin Palmer.

“We watched and studied cool filmmaking tricks by watching *The Art of Film*,” he says. “And then we made a plan.”

That was Monday. Tuesday, the group wrote their script. On Wednesday, they built their set so that Thursday could be devoted to shooting. Friday was for editing, with a film screening planned for the afternoon.

There was some debate among the group about whether the film could be categorized as action, science fiction or horror, but it sounded like it had elements of all three.

“I’m having a whole whack of fun,” says William McCready, 16.

He was chained to a chair and seated across a table from a similarly chained Gabriel Guitard, 16. The pair were about to shoot a scene involving a game of Russian roulette. According to Gabriel, the scene would not be ending well for William.

The teens came to the camp for different reasons, but all seemed to be enjoying the creative process.

Sarah Martini, 14, is from Moncton. Her grandmother is a member of the New Brunswick Film Co-op and told her about the camp.

“I wanted to do this,” she says, though she isn’t sure what she wants to do with filmmaking. The camp has given her a general overview and she’s really liked that.

Anika Boehler, 18, went to a film festival at Fredericton High School and it piqued her interest in film and design. During the week, she was hoping to learn more about the techniques of film.

“It’s a first taste,” says Michel Guitard, the camp instructor. “It takes thousands of hours (to learn about film).”

A lot of film making is hurry up and wait, points out Cat LeBlanc, who takes care of membership services for the New Brunswick Film Co-op.

“It’s a lot of prep work and the kids do need downtime. You can’t have them doing this all the time all week,” she says.

The camps are a lot of fun for the kids, says Michel Guitard.

“It’s a lot of high energy all week,” he says, even with the breaks.

William adds, “It’s kind of stressful sometimes.”

After all, they only have five days to come up with, write, shoot and edit a short film. That’s a short window of time, but seeing the finished product is worth it.

That's something their instructor understands. Michel Guitard is a prolific filmmaker, award winning cameraman and editor who has worked on hundreds of productions through and outside the New Brunswick Film Co-op in different crew positions from the age of 10 to 24 years old. He's also the part-time technical director at the New Brunswick Film Co-op.

Joining him in instructing the two camps is Geneviève Gagné, with a little help from their dog and film set mascot, Ella.

During their week at camp, kids learn everything about filmmaking from idea/concept to scriptwriting, production design, costumes, acting, shooting, editing, sound effects and sound placement, music placement, finished film and distribution.

"It basically takes them through the whole film-making process of coming up with a concept or idea, then the majority have to agree it's OK and the script gets written," says LeBlanc.

"Then they start breaking down the script for the props, actors, all that stuff."

The work they do is what any filmmaker has to do, she says, whether they're kids or adults.

"They shoot on the Thursday, sometimes the Friday, then they edit, they have to pick the sound effects, literally the whole process," she says. "And on the Friday, the parents come to pick them up at 4:30 and we show them the finished film." LeBlanc admits she's amazed by what the kids come up with each year.

"They have really vivid imaginations," she says. "And when I was a kid, we didn't have such things as camps and things like this."

Now a lot of the kids do camps all summer long, she says, "So camps are really important."

The Teen Film Camp is one of two camps offered by the New Brunswick Film Co-op.

The Kids Film Camp ran from July 14-18 and was for students aged eight to 14. It had 11 participants.

Both camps are breeding grounds for young filmmakers, some who discover a passion for making movies that leads them to take courses with the N.B. Film Co-op and even become members.

One of the people who was on that trajectory was Isaac "The Puma" Miller. Though only 14 years old when he died, he was a huge part of the New Brunswick Film Co-op's Kids and Teen Film Camps, says LeBlanc, and was a participant in the Fredericton 48-Hour Film Competition.

The NBFC created a special award in Isaac's memory with the donations it received when he passed away early in the year. Isaac's annual seat in the Teen Film Camp will now be given to a deserving teen annually at no cost to their family.

"We really miss him. He and I had been talking about him joining when he turned 16 and he was taking workshops with all the adults in Saint John and Fredericton," she says.

"He was doing all this stuff and he was such an interesting young guy, he was so intellectual in a lot of ways. And he loved to make films and skateboard, that was his thing."

Also helping kids discover their artistic passion this summer is Isaac's Way.

"For the first time this year, they sponsored two kids in the Kids Film Camp," she says. "They do so much for the community."

To learn more about the New Brunswick Film Co-op, visit nbfilmcoop.com.