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THE BLOG

From the Filmmaker's Mouth

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 **The CUNY Film Festival at Macaulay Honors College**
 The official film festival of CUNY's 24 college campuses

By Aria Feliciano

I like talking to people. I'm not a very technical person beyond my art and graphic design programs, so when the professor asked what everyone in the class would like to do on our itinerary, I skipped over the camera and editing jobs in favor of doing the talking and asking questions. The idea was that the New Media Lab would film some interviews of any willing film makers that submitted to the 2016 CUNY Film Festival, and then edit them down to short videos to put on the website. It would give people who visited the website just a taste of what the festival has to offer, and encourage them to check out the other films.

Interviews can be difficult. We're so used to talking about ourselves casually, but when it comes to answering questions, it gets a little more complicated. It's what I noticed when I was preparing questions that Friday, when I saw a lot of the film makers wringing their hands and pausing to think of what they wanted to say. Despite the nerves, however, they all shared one thing in common, and that was a love for their films. They were all eager to tell me, and the rest of the Media Lab crew, about the work and love they put into their films. Compliments were often met with big smiles and bashful "thank you". It was very obvious that the filmmakers were proud of their works, and proud to get the opportunity to talk about them. Filmmaking is not something I am personally well versed in. I've always liked animated movies though and I respect the amount of work that goes into making a film. My experience with the CUNY Film Festival at Macaulay Honors College really expanded that notion when

I got the chance to really see these filmmakers in action. It's easy to dismiss art, but art is subjective and difficult. It is not an easy path to take; because you are making something and putting yourself out there in the hopes people will like and appreciate your creations. Lately, it feels like it can be anyone's game with all of the technological advances and routes created with the Internet. Still, there is no denying that for newcomers, competition with more seasoned professionals is still fierce, and it can be difficult to get your stuff noticed on such a vast plane.

A lot of these filmmakers felt the same as I did, naturally. Most were submitting their first ever film to a festival, partly because the experience is daunting and expensive for some of the more big name competitions. Brian DeJesus, who submitted his film 'In Pursuit of a Dream' with his co-director, explained to me that it was a new but exciting experience for him. Some others like Brian P. Katz, who submitted his experimental short 'to the filmmaker's film', has had a little more experience with other film festivals and understands the difficulties for new comers to break into the scene. The most important thing about the CUNY Film Festival at Macaulay Honors College, to me, is what it represents to these new filmmakers I got to meet: a chance to be seen. Exposure is so important to getting the word out, but artists have to pay a high price to cut through the noise and the tight knit groups if they want to hope to have their works viewed. The CUNY film festival is different. Since its inception, it's served to primarily showcase the films of the CUNY student body, faculty and alumni, free of charge and to a wide audience. It prides itself on diversity in content and in people, as well as promoting quality works and fostering talent. It's this sort of ideal that allows for even timid filmmakers to feel confident enough to pursue creating something. This is what I learned from talking to these filmmakers and seeing the passion behind their eyes as they talked about the processes they went through making their stories: a chance.

By the end of the interview session, I felt like I had learned a lot. The filmmakers' words all left me with a positive feeling and inspiration, and I'm rooting for all of them to find some success in mid-April. My hope is that with this year's festival, as well as future festival's to come, more and more people will come around and help support their fellow students in encouraging them to make more films. It certainly is worth watching them, as they'll likely leave an impression on other people the way they left an impression on m

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