

WILTED: A SHORT FILM THAT NEVER WILTS

Written by Marla Newborn

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It's me, Marla - once again blogging about the short film. I am such the fan that I just can't help myself! I love the horror short format. I definitely like watching the shorts as much as the filmmakers enjoy making them. And while mentioning the filmmakers, kudos to all for the amazing effort.

And what recognition do they get? After heart and soul poured in – not to mention cash – they do get some accolades and awards, but then many of the films go into posterity. Thus, in order to keep things fresh I feel a desire and an obligation to keep them alive. Mind you, I have not met half of the 100 or more filmmakers with whom I correspond. However, I did meet Rafael De Leon this past weekend and I am such a fan of his short film “Wilted” that I just had to write a bit about him. And for all you fellow short filmmakers, read on. This is for you! And I promise the NEWBORN DEAD will always devote itself partially to short films. I never give up!!

I asked De Leon about his background and how he got into horror and Fangoria. De Leon told me, “When I was 3 years old, I mastered operating my father's beta machine watching films with horror elements such as Masters of the Universe and The Goonies. I'd watch these movies over and over again until the machine literally malfunctioned! After that, I became hooked on stuff like Spookies, Fright Night, Scarecrows and anything else I could get my hands on. Fangoria didn't come to my attention until I was 10, when “Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers” was the cover story. I loved reading every word in the magazine and made frequent trips to the newsstand to buy the latest issue.”



De Leon's passion made me think. Did he have any formal training or was he just a guy with a camera who decided to go for it? De Leon explains, “My interest in film production was piqued the first time I actually picked up a camera with the intention of telling a story. This was when I took some film/video courses at Fordham University. It wasn't an extensive film program by any

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means but it was enough to get my feet wet through making short films and music videos, some of which went on to place well in contests. This was enough to convince myself that I should keep working at it. So, I went out of my way to learn a great deal on my own by reading filmmaking books and websites.”

However now you may be thinking, what about “Wilted?” “[Wilted](#)” is a very powerful short. De Leon remembers back to his inspiration, “

[Wilted](#)

” was inspired by personal and frustrating experiences surrounding my high school prom and my late grandmother’s battle with Alzheimer’s disease. As my grandmother’s mind was slowly deteriorating over the span of a few years, I’d watch my mother struggle the best she could to take care of her. It was a difficult period of time for my family and I thought about how far one would go to try to get rid of a loved one’s life-threatening ailment.

De Leon continues, “To put it simply, “[Wilted](#)” is about a young man who introduces his homecoming date to his mother, a gravely ill woman with sinister intentions. The core of the film is the mother-son relationship, despite how odd it may appear by the end. I’d say that “Wilted” can be described as a brief, twisted look at how family will always prevail in the end, despite illness and the sting of rejection.”



“Wilted” is scary. And it is a [short short](#) – maybe 5 minutes or so. There are many implicit themes overlapping and I believe that is what scared me the most. Rafael De Leon is a strong talent and “Wilted” can be seen below. I do want to mention that I ran “Wilted” at the LA Weekend of Horrors last year and the audience was riveted. Again I think it is due to the film being extremely short with all these scary and creepy things going on at once.

And so today, as true on many days, I am thinking of short films and those who make them. And these are my thoughts for today!

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