Fantasia 2011 ending has left me pretty much devoid of purpose, and I have to admit I've been struggling quite hard to come up with words for these last write-ups. After taking a few days off, I decided to compile a short "short film highlights" article, which is criminally slim considering the amount of short film I could've—and probably should've—been watching during the festival. Per example, missing the annual Small Gauge Trauma collection was as big a journalistic misstep is it was a personal mistake, and would've added great content to this article.

BOBBY YEAH

Robert Morgan's intensely creepy stop-motion animation work, which I wasn't aware of before Mitch Davis took the stage to introduce the outrageous BOBBY YEAH, remains one of my favorite discoveries of this year's Fantasia. Morgan's latest short—which played in front of SAINT, of all things—blew my mind, insuring I'd never sleep again…or dare look at stop-motion in the same light. Dark, dense and extremely well-made, the four-years-in-the-making experimental work tells the story of its mischievous titular character and the terrifying consequences of curiosity. After stealing a disgusting wormlike creature from God-knows-where, Bobby (as is rightfully assumed from the title, considering the whole film is dialogue-free) finds a red button on the creature, which, when pressed, triggers a horrifying transformation…which in turn spawns new monsters with more buttons to press. Bobby, motivated by a delightful cartoon curiosity, can't resist the urge to keep pushing the buttons, unleashing further explosions of claymation body horror…

Structured like a downward spiral into madness, BOBBY YEAH is set in a kaleidoscopic world which furthers Morgan's fascination with body as abject object and physical transformations

(going as far as showcasing creatures made out of what I only assume—but most probably—are hundreds of fingernail clippings), as well as his characteristic twisting of spaces, creating another isolated character seemingly living in an inward world of his own fabrication. Slime and sexual suggestion cohabit in this monstrously skin-crawling realm, and amusement leads to horror and back again, as each scenario put in motion by Bobby's button-pushing unleashes a creation speaking to our natural, culturally ingrained aversion to alien bodies, shapes and impure textures—from genitalia to tentacles, organs to nail clippings, which the creatures all suggest and exhibit to varying degrees.

Nightmarish in the best way possible, BOBBY YEAH is a 23-minute adventure I will never forget. For its pervasive horror, structure of infantile exploration, tackling of themes of morbid, deathly and self-sacrificing curiosity as well as its unbelievable visual bravura—known monstrous elements colliding with pure inventions, in a beautiful blue, purple and pink palette—this film stands out among Morgan's impressive *oeuvre* as a major step forward and a unique piece of work in the landscape of experimental film and stop-motion animation as well.

THE LAST POST

Better known for her horror journalism (including for Fango) and occasional acting, Axelle Carolyn proved to Fantasia audiences with her first short film THE LAST POST (screened with Shunji Iwai's VAMPIRE) that she can deservedly add director to her growing résumé. Colette (Jean Marsh), an old woman in a nursing home, starts seeing a ghostly figure, but no one seems to see him but her. The encounters accumulate, and slowly, the apparition's identity becomes clear…

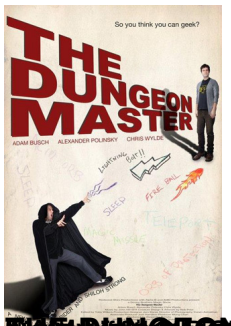
Dealing with the age-old theme of mortality and subverting common ideas about the fabled Grim Reaper, the film could only peripherally be considered horror, as it takes basic elements and preoccupations from the genre (ghostly visitations, death) to craft a touching dramatic tale about facing the end. Working at a very calm and controlled pace, Carolyn exhibits talent in how she gives her main character life in a mere 17 minutes—character cemented by the legendary Marsh, who provides a great, quiet and appropriately melancholic performance. The nursing home offers a touching backdrop of solitude—planting the seed of possible mental illness, thus making the viewing experience more ambiguous.

Despite a somewhat predictable outcome, THE LAST POST is a successful, contemplative mood piece, as touching as it is effective, and hopefully a mere taste of what this promising director might have in store next.

NIGHT FISHING

Playing before Sion Sono's COLD FISH was one of the most-anticipated short films of the year, namely the return to the screen of one of the greatest and most popular Korean directors of the last decade. This effort from PARKing CHANce (a.k.a. the acclaimed Park Chan-wook of the VENGEANCE trilogy and THIRST with his brother Park Chan-kyong) is an expectedly masterful film that has one particularity: It was entirely shot on an iPhone 4, using proper lighting and consumer-market DSLR lens adapters. Benefitting from the low-fi aesthetic, which, instead of hindering the film, brings it a unique dreamlike texture, NIGHT FISHING finds Chan-wook's characteristically brutal narrative obsessions taking a metaphysical turn. Starting off like a weirdly inexplicable music video, the film quickly finds its subject, a fisherman (portrayed by Oh Kwang-rok of OLDBOY and LADY VENGEANCE) who catches a mighty big fish…perhaps the biggest of them all.

Shot on a considerable budget with a professional crew, not to mention the many gadgets enhancing the iPhone4 workflow, NIGHT FISHING is nonetheless fascinating for its showcase of the possibilities of filmmaking on highly portable home-video formats. A fascinating and profoundly folkloric story of what happens at the boundaries of death, the absolutely mesmerizing NIGHT FISHING is, in imagery and tone, as dark as Park's previous work, but ultimately deals with more hopeful and beautiful themes, drawing from rarely dramatized Korean traditions that imbue the film with a sense of exoticism quite novel in the usually globalized landscapes of contemporary Korean cinema.



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