Super-8 Film Festival

Organizers of the National Capital area's first Annual Super-8 Film Festival have termed the event a success - despite having been plagued by technical problems and low audience turnouts.

Held August 23 and 24 in Ottawa's new Public Library building, organizers had to contend with problems ranging from failure of a key stereo tape system to unsynchronized sound-tracks on many films.

But, said co-organizer Mark Harada, despite the technical problems and the dismal audience response, the event can legitimately be termed a success because of the interest it generated among area filmmakers.

Mr. Harada said, "the basic purpose behind the event was to see what was available and happening in Super 8 in Ottawa".

The audience reaction was disappointing and only about 50 people were at the Friday night showings. "There was no real interest in the films", said Mr. Harada. Calling the audience "snobbish", he said they seemed to be annoyed at the poor projection facilities. No one however, volunteered to help the organizers. A mere 20 people attended the Saturday afternoon screenings and the reaction was the same.

Films came from as far away as Quebec City and also from Stittsville and Cornwall as well as the Ottawa-Hull region.

A total of 25 films were submitted in the Festival. Some of them included: Colour Dance by Harriet Pakaud, Steam by Sissy Grove, Let A Tree Be Free and Pollution Isn't The Solution by Brian Stoller, Sportorama by L'Atelier Populaire, Sans Titre by Émil de Longue Épée, Cri by Danielle Allaire, L'Univers Infini by Jean Pierre St. Louis, The Cage by Anselmo Suarez, Varesely and Microsomie by Gius Baillarggeon.

Co-ordinators of the event were Carleton University Journalism students, Mark Harada, Rhonda Raven, Greg Miller, Jim Cochrane and Maureen Lynn. The Festival was staged on a budget of only $200 - which came out of the organizers' pockets. "It was too late for sponsorship of the event because it was started in June", said Mr. Harada.

Mr. Harada added, "the French-Canadian films were technically better with better storylines". Two films in particular, Cri and L'Univers Infini possessed a distant Quebec filmstyle. The English-Canadian films were mostly experimental and animation films (Colour Dance and Let A Tree Be Free) which, according to Mr. Harada "were not representative of Canadian films".

"If we do try it again, we will get money for the Festival and then it would be a lot better", he concluded.

The Super-8 Film Festival was a breakthrough for the film community in Ottawa. It proved there are interested young filmmakers working in Super-8 in the Ottawa area. It is unfortunate Ottawa film-goers haven't appreciated or at least become aware of this new medium.

Tony Lojaro